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## 'Fulfilling your Dog's Potential': Changing Dimensions of Power in Dog Training Cultures in the UK

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## 'Fulfilling your Dog's Potential': Changing Dimensions of Power in Dog Training Cultures in the UK

### **Abstract**

This paper explores the workings of power in dog training cultures through an analysis of UK dog training manuals from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to the present. We focus on gundog and companion dog training cultures, investigating the dog-human relations they assume, the changing conceptions of human-animal relations they represent, and the inequalities and relations of power in which they are embedded. Rather than thinking about changing training practices in terms of a shift from dominance to positive training, or from instrumental to affective relations, we argue that training cultures reveal how inter-species inequalities are conceptualised and reproduced in a range of historical periods and cultural spaces. We suggest that dog training cultures can be distinguished by contrasting understandings of dogs as: (1) rational, thinking beings, (2) instinctive creatures, and (3) autonomous active agents as well as by the inequalities of gender, class, race and species structuring the spaces in which they are embedded. Furthermore, the modalities of power which characterise dog training cultures favour different groups of human actors rather than dogs, even in training cultures which are based on partnership and are 'dog centred'. Our analysis shows how inter-species relations are lived and thought through the cultural practices of dog training.

### **Keywords**

inter-species relations; dog training cultures; gender; power; inequalities

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There have been significant changes in dog training in the last few decades. These are epitomised in the contemporary idea that training is a way of enabling you and your dog to engage in mutually enjoyable activities that, in the slogan of the UK Kennel Club, will fulfil 'your dog's potential'. This is a far cry from more 'traditional' training that required the dog's absolute obedience to their human 'master' and which predominated for much of the 20th century. This shift has been characterised by some as indicative of a change in human-animal relations in post-modern cultures, with instrumental relations being replaced by affective ties (Franklin, 1999). In this paper we explore these changes through an analysis of UK dog training manuals published between the mid-19th century and the present day. We pay particular attention to changing understandings of dog-human relationships and how different training cultures are embedded in social inequalities and relations of power.

Within animal studies, the training relationship is contentious. Training is often understood as enabling an animal to perform specific work tasks (Włodarczyk, 2019) and therefore associated not only with the exercise of power over animals but also with their exploitation (Donaldson and Kymlicka, 2011). Recently scholars have begun to explore work for animals in a different way, arguing that it is something that animals can benefit from and that conceptualising it solely as a form of exploitation denies animal subjectivity and renders the collaboration between human and animal invisible (Porcher and Estebanez, 2019; Blattner, 2019). Similar debates are evident in discussions of training. Some understand training relationships as an instance of inter-species communication (see for e.g. Hearne, 2007; Haraway, 2008) while others are critical of animal training seeing it, with some exceptions, as exploitative (Donaldson and Kymlicka, 2011; Hurley, 2018). Tuan, for instance, sees it as embedded within wider relations of 'domination and affection' (Tuan, 1984) arguing that 'the basis of all successful training is the display of an unchallengeable power' and that, 'The dog must not be in doubt as to who is the master and as to the consequences of disobedience' (Tuan, 1984:108).

More recent analyses of training distinguish between 'dominance' or 'human centred' training, which seems to be what Tuan has in mind, and 'positive' or 'dog centred' training, with the latter being seen as a progressive development for dogs (Weaver, 2017; Browne et al, 2017; Orłowska, 2016; Koski and Backlund, 2015). Underpinning these accounts is the view that dog training has become more dog-centred and that training regimes are now beneficial to dogs in ways that they were not in the past (Weaver, 2017; Pregowski, 2015; Greenebaum, 2010; Gabrielsen, 2017). This story of a progressive 'gentling' of training methods has, however, been criticised as a 'dominant fiction' citing evidence of 19th century proponents of 'gentle' training methods and 21st century champions of methods based on 'dominance' (Włodarczyk, 2018:2; see also Weaver, 2017; Browne et al, 2017).

Other ways of understanding the training relationship draw on Foucault's conceptualisation of power. Thus, it has been argued that horses trained for dressage are subject to a disciplinary power that creates docile bodies (Hansen, 2017; Patten, 2003), that the way power operates in the training relationship reflects changing modalities of power in society (Włodarczyk, 2018; Hansen, 2017), and that an oppressive power has been replaced by one that constructs animals 'as experiencing subjects and resisting agents' (Chrulaw, 2017:235). In this vein, Włodarczyk suggests that, in the mid-19th century, social power 'which operates on the soul of the individual' (Włodarczyk, 2018: 12) characterised the dominant training regime, in the early years of the 20th century it was disciplinary power and, in the second half of the 20th century, pastoral power. In the first two decades of the 21st century, a training regime has emerged which recognises dogs as ethical subjects and enjoins their humans to 'be more dog' (Włodarczyk, 2018: 24).

The different training regimes Włodarczyk identifies are marked by assumptions about human-animal relations and rooted in inequalities of gender, class and race. Those

based explicitly on human dominance are associated with forms of masculinity, particularly military masculinities, and legitimated by ideas of dogs being pack animals in need of a leader (Weaver, 2017; Pregowski, 2015). Positive training, in contrast, is associated with a feminisation of companion dog training, an ethics of care and a responsiveness to the dog's agency (Włodarczyk, 2016; Gabrielsen 2017). Along with the feminisation of dog training, since the 1990s some dog training cultures have become professionalised and, at least as far as companion dog training is concerned, a domain of the middle classes (Pregowski, 2015).

Training regimes also assume and create particular kinds of relationship between dog and human. Thus companion dog training in post-modernity, rather than creating an instrumental relationship based on the usefulness of the dog, constructs a relationship rooted in affective ties that are mutually beneficial (Włodarczyk, 2018). Haraway, following Despret (2004), conceptualises this in terms of becoming with and emphasises the partnership between dog and human and the authority of the dog which is alluded to in the exhortation 'trust your dog' (Haraway, 2008: 224). This partnership is material and embodied. As Weaver puts it, 'thinking-with dogs through training involves communication through a shared language of bodies and bodily movements rather than a human-centric language of verbal obedience' (Weaver, 2017:10; Despret, 2013). The language of partnership, however, belies the continuing operation of power in the dog-human relationship (Hurley, 2018 and see for horses Hansen, 2017; Birke, 2007; Patton, 2003) albeit no longer relying on physical force or the infliction of pain. There are similar problems with the notion of care which is said to characterise positive training. Some suggest that positive training is feminist because it 'involves a caring cultivation of happiness' (Weaver, 2017:8) while others note the association of an ethics of care with women and that positive training involves a relational 'caring for'. This type of account courts the danger of essentialism, seeing caring as stereotypically feminine and therefore associated with women (Włodarczyk, 2016). It also glosses over the power relations intrinsic to caring which is 'more than an affective-ethical state: it involves material engagement in labours to sustain interdependent worlds, labours that are often associated with exploitation and domination' (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012:198).

Taking up these arguments, we explore the way that animal training provides a microcosm of the workings of power in inter-species relationships and, at the same time, reflects wider societal changes. We focus on dog training in order to show that dogs are understood in different ways in different training cultures and that these understandings provide an insight into how inter-species relations are lived and the power dynamics characterising them. We define dog training cultures as a set of ideas and practices relating to dogs and how they should be trained and explore their representation in a selection of training manuals published in the UK since the mid-19th century. We focus on gundog and companion dog training, investigating the dog-human relations that they assume, the changing conceptions of human-animal relations they represent and the inequalities and relations of power in which they are embedded. We identify 3 phases in dog training: the first phase, from the mid-19th century, when dog training was influenced by the ethics of kindness; the second phase in the first half of the 20th century when dominance theory predominated; and a third phase beginning in the 1960s and 1970s when the science of animal behaviour and learning became influential. While these dominant paradigms of dog training can be identified, our analysis shows that in practice they are not so clearly distinguished and that dog training cultures combine elements from different paradigms, have different temporalities and influence and change each other.

## Dog training manuals

The analysis presented here is part of a larger study exploring how different training cultures shape dog-human relations.<sup>1</sup> As part of this project, we analysed a number of dog training manuals in order to understand the historical and cultural context of 21st century training cultures. We recognise that the way dog training is presented in manuals may not reflect how training is practised, indeed many were written in order to improve on current practice thereby presenting an ideal-typical account of dog training. In addition, it is the dog training practices of particular social groups that is codified. What dog training manuals provide, therefore, is an insight into understandings of dogs, the way they learn and the relationship between dog and trainer which are socially and culturally specific. The manuals we analysed date from the mid-19th century to today and are held in the Kennel Club Library in London. We focus on some key texts from each period (see Table 1).

<b>Table 1: Dog training literature analysed</b>
<b><i>Gundog training</i></b>
Hutchinson, W N (1848) <i>Dog Breaking: The most expeditious, certain and easy method</i> , London: John Murray (ten editions)
Fitt, N (1890) <i>The scientific education of dogs for the gun</i> , (second edition 1910) London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington
Sharpe, R (1924) <i>Gundog training by amateurs</i> , Rhyl: Tideline Books
Moxon, P R A (1952) <i>Gundogs: Training and field trials</i> , London: Popular Dogs (18 editions, most recent 2010)
Mattison, P (2012) <i>Total recall</i> , Shrewsbury: Quiller
Mattison, P (2014) <i>The happy puppy handbook: Your definitive guide to puppy care and early training</i> , London: Ebury Press
Allen, M (2013) <i>In the bag! Labrador training from puppy to gundog</i> , Marlborough: The Crowood Press
<b><i>Companion dog training</i></b>
Longhurst, E H S (1947) <i>Dog training simply explained</i> , Manchester: Our Dogs Publishing Company Ltd
Holmes, J (1954) <i>Obedient dogs and how to have one</i> , Edinburgh: W. & R. Chambers Ltd
Holmes, J (1962) <i>The family dog: Its choice and training</i> , London: Popular Dogs
Pettit, F (1967) <i>Sane dogs and Englishmen</i> , London: Pelham Books
Woodhouse, B (1954) <i>Dog training my way</i> , London: Faber & Faber
Fisher, J (1990) <i>Think dog! An owner's guide to canine psychology</i> , London: Cassell Illustrated
Fisher, J (1991) <i>Why does my dog?</i> London: Souvenir Press
Fisher, J (1992) <i>Dogwise: The natural way to train your dog</i> , London: Souvenir Press
Fennell, J (2000) <i>The dog listener: Learning the language of your best friend</i> , London: Harper Collins
Stilwell, V (2005) <i>It's me or the dog: How to have the perfect pet</i> , London: Collins
Whitehead, S (2012) <i>Clever dog</i> , London: Harper Collins

<sup>1</sup> 'Shaping inter-species connectedness: training cultures and the emergence of new forms of human-animal relations', <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/research/currentresearch/interspeciesconnectedness/>

The training manuals relate to gundogs and companion dogs and the earliest we were able to locate relate to gundogs. We selected manuals which were UK-based, had long print runs with several editions, were cited by other authors and, for gundogs, were by authors who had a presence in contemporary shooting magazines. Training manuals for companion dogs were scarce for the latter part of the 19th century, increasing in number after the second world war, with the growing companion dog population and the perceived need to control dogs' behaviour in urban areas. In the early years of the 21st century dog trainers began to disseminate their training methods via the internet as well as in books and pamphlets and we include some internet-based texts in our analysis of recent materials. We drew on the expert knowledge of the Kennel Club librarian to point us to the most influential authors in these fields.

## Training with kindness

The themes that emerge from gundog training manuals in the latter part of the 19th century concern kindness, human self-control and a recognition of dogs' ability to reason. These manuals were written by men of the upper classes in the context of the emergence of animal protection movements and attempts to curb what was seen as largely working-class men's cruelty to animals. Thus, the Cruelty to Animals Act, passed in 1849, outlawed fighting and baiting with animals which were the sports of the working classes; those of the landed classes, including the sports for which gundogs were trained, were exempt (Ritvo, 1987). Kindness to animals was seen as an intrinsic part of civilised behaviour (Kean, 1998) and, as well as the working classes, children of the middle classes, especially boys, needed civilising (Ritvo, 1987). This was also the era when Darwin's ideas became influential, emphasising the links between human and other animals. Dogs, like horses, were regarded as 'noble' (Ritvo, 1987:21; Loudon, 1851), as moral creatures able to experience shame and as the 'most sagacious' of all animals; this latter refers to the dog's 'obedient subordination' (Ritvo, 1987: 37-38). Dogs were regarded by some as inferior only to humans in intelligence (Worboys et al, 2018). The way Darwin wrote about animals endowed them with subjectivity and their worlds with meaning (Crist, 2000) and these ways of understanding and writing are also found in the training manuals of the time.

One of the earliest dog training manuals (Hutchinson, 1848) went into more than ten editions over a period of fifty years and later writers refer to its author as 'the pioneer of dog *training*, as opposed to *breaking*' (Moxon, 1952:11; Clark, 1938; Russel, 1931). It was aimed at upper-class 'gentlemen' (Hutchinson, 1848) and epitomised a particular form of masculinity, one that was tied to class and ethnicity, rational and able to rise above the baser 'animal' instincts. At the time it was only landowners who could legally hunt wild animals. Indeed, from as early as 1016, laws had restricted 'hunting and the ownership of hunting dogs to the upper class' in England (Menache, 2000:50). Gundog training was therefore firmly linked to the aristocracy (Worboys et al, 2018). The key training techniques outlined by Hutchinson were, however, made available as shilling chapters for gamekeepers (Devonald, 2015).

Hutchinson was 'appalled by the ignorant and usually cruel methods adopted by keepers, trainers (or "breakers" as they were then) and "shooting men" for the purpose of "breaking" a gundog' (Moxon, 1952: 11). He called for more humane training methods and the exercise of self-control; this latter was a mark of civilised behaviour and contrasted with acting on impulse which was akin to animality. Well-bred dogs could be distanced from animality and civilised through training. He sets out the case for kindness and self-control:

Great excellence in dog breaking is only attainable by the teacher exercising constant kindness towards his pupil. The chief requisites of breakers are firstly, command of

temper, that he may never be betrayed into giving one unnecessary blow, for with dogs, as with horses, no work is done so well as that which is done cheerfully. (Hutchinson, 1848: 3)

He was aware that dogs learn through imitation (Fugazza, 2014), and recommended that you demonstrate what you want the dog to do with your own body movements: ‘whisper to him, “care” and let him see by your light slow tread your anxiety not to alarm the game’ (Hutchinson, 1848: 115). He recognised the dog as a subject capable not only of imitating bodily movements but also of understanding the reasoning behind them.

The relationship between reason and instinct, and the idea that it was desirable for both dogs and ‘men’ to control their instincts is commonly found in gundog training manuals (Fitt, 1890 [1910]; Coaten, 1910). Indeed, it was precisely through training that dogs could achieve reason ‘little inferior to that of an educated man’ (Coaten, 1910: 4). Both Coaten and Fitt insist on the need to understand the relationship between instinct and intelligence in order to become a good trainer and, like Hutchinson, they sought to promote understanding over physical coercion in the training relationship. This did not mean, however, that physical correction was absent. On the contrary it was seen as a necessity in order to elicit ‘implicit, unhesitating, instant obedience’ (Hutchinson, 1848:15).

The tool of choice for punishment, a word used by Hutchinson, was the whip (rather than beating or kicking which were deemed vulgar) although Hutchinson only advocated its use as a last resort. The trainer was expected to exercise self-control, never punishing a dog in a fit of rage, rewarding good behaviour and administering correction in a calm, thoughtful and controlled way. Hutchinson writes about using a whip in the following way:

give but few cuts; let them, however, be tolerably severe. Your pupil’s recollection of them, when he hears the crack of the whip, will prevent the necessity of their frequent repetition. (Hutchinson, 1848: 202)

At this time trainers of dogs (and ‘men’) were ‘unable to conceptualise the process of training as not based on punishment’ (Wlodarczyk, 2018:13) though they clearly saw dogs as intelligent and able to reason. They were also clear that a trainer needed to work in ways that made sense to the dog thereby implying that an understanding of the dog underpins successful training. This foreshadows Hearne’s insistence on the importance of ‘coherence’ in order to be able to communicate effectively with the dog (Hearne, 2007).

Hutchinson was writing ‘before breed’ (Worboys et al, 2018) and his methods of training are generic.<sup>2</sup> He distinguished the training of different types of dog according to the tasks they were required to carry out rather than according to breed characteristic or temperament, regarding each dog as an individual requiring adjustments in the approach and deportment of the trainer.

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<sup>2</sup> In the first edition, he was mainly talking about pointers and setters and, to a lesser extent, spaniels. The preface to the second edition mentions expanding on the training of spaniels and retrievers and, the preface to the third edition mentions adding material on spaniels, retrievers and bloodhounds. In the fourth edition, he refers to retrievers as a cross between ‘the setter’ and the Newfoundland or the ‘setter and the ‘strong’ spaniel (Hutchinson, 1865:73); he also mentions other crosses and held the view that any dog can be taught to retrieve. Indeed retrievers were a later entry to the shooting field than pointers and setters, only becoming more widely used with the introduction of a different form of shooting early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Worboys et al, 2018).



Training gundogs was a masculine endeavour and the authors of gundog training manuals were dismissive of women trainers (Hutchinson, 1848/1909; Fitt, 1910; Pitt, 1931); this is clear in the following rather patronising comment.

The fair sex, though possessing unbridled and most proper control over us, notoriously have little control over their canine favourites. This however strictly arises from their seldom enforcing obedience to the orders that they give them. (Hutchinson, 1848: 91)

Indeed, men who engaged in field sports, such as shooting, generally held ‘ladies’ dogs’, and the ladies themselves (at least as trainers), in contempt (Ritvo, 1987:88; Worboys et al, 2018). Women, particularly of the leisured classes, kept ‘lap dogs’, often toy breeds, - amongst which were the popular King Charles spaniels - and were widely regarded as indulging them (Worboys et al, 2018; Ritvo, 1987). Written advice on ‘managing’ companion dogs emerged with the growth of pet-keeping as a bourgeois pursuit amongst the Victorian middle-classes (Ritvo, 1987; Kean, 1998) but advice on training seems to have been confined to sporting dogs (see for e.g. Meyrick, 1861). Pet dogs were taught tricks (Włodarczyk, 2018). This was seen as an educational activity for children and women which, like gundog training, could improve the dog’s faculties of reason and bring to the surface positive qualities such as loyalty and courage (Włodarczyk, 2018); it was not, however, seen as training which involved discipline and the expectation that a dog would do a useful job of work.

Intrinsic to these training manuals are ideas about class, gender and species and, implicitly, race. An upper-class, white masculinity is appropriate for training gundogs - women were defined as unable to train working dogs -- and this civilised masculinity, which was also apparent in the trained dog, was rational and able to rise above ‘animal instincts’. The human party to the training relationship was the one who was in control of the dog as well as their own animality and there was no room for emotion in the process of training.

## **Dominance and hierarchy: the influence of the armed forces**

The early years of the 20th century saw the emergence of a new role for dogs in the police and military which involved an emphasis on dominance and hierarchy. The training methods used and the assumptions about dogs and dog-human relations on which they were based became influential during the first decades of the 20th century through the work of Konrad Most (2010), a German military and police dog trainer (Gabrielson, 2017; Włodarczyk, 2018). Despite Most’s own book not being published in English until 1955, others, heavily influenced by his ideas, were widely available (e.g. von Stephanitz, 1923). In these dog training was no longer seen as developing a dog’s intelligence but as a way of channelling and controlling their instincts so that they could be used for human ends.

According to Włodarczyk, the institutionalisation of training in the armed forces marks the emergence of a disciplinary regime based on assumptions that dogs are ‘natural’ rather than ‘civilised’, driven by instincts, incapable of reason and in need of domination through superior physical force (Włodarczyk, 2018). These training cultures were associated with masculinities, which emphasised ‘firmness, strength [and] courage, rather than gentleness, benevolence and patience’(Włodarczyk, 2018:16). The rationality and self-control which characterised 19th century gundog training cultures were no longer desirable. Dogs’ aggression needed to be controlled and their instincts channelled to make them into a weapon for the use of the masculinised nation state (Pearson, 2017; Skabelund, 2008). Training was imagined as a conquest over the wild forces of nature, based on the assumption that dogs needed to be physically subdued in order to prevent them from becoming dominant within the dog-human pack. Most was the first trainer to refer explicitly to the idea of pack hierarchy within human-

canine relations long before theories of the hierarchical nature of wolf packs emerged (Shelbourne, 2012).

As in a pack of dogs, the order of hierarchy in a man and dog combination can only be established by physical force, that is, by an actual struggle, in which the man is instantly victorious. Such a result can only be brought about by convincing the dog of the absolute physical superiority of the man. (Most, 1955 [1910]: 35)

## **Obedient gundogs**

Gundog manuals at the time continued to advocate kindness combined with physical correction (Sharpe, 1924) and a belief in dogs' ability to reason was still present. Moxon's (1952) book, written for the novice trainer and focussing on retrievers and spaniels, is different, however, and here the influence of Most's ideas can be discerned. Moxon distances himself from the belief that a dog can reason and attaches importance to 'habit, instinct and the association of ideas' rather than 'mental reasoning' for a dog's learning (2010: 10). He argues that a dog needs to know what is 'right' and 'wrong' and for the precise and effective administering of physical punishment. This was no longer via a whip but involved physical confrontation. Thus, if a dog does not come when called, 'go back to him and drag him by the skin of the throat in the direction he should have taken when you whistled' (Moxon 1952: 32).

Moxon wrote his book partly in response to the increasing number of people training their dogs and was particularly exercised by the influx of 'lady handlers'. He wrote: 'I have long felt that, given the knowledge, the "gentler sex" make efficient and patient trainers, and certainly the most enthusiastic' (Moxon, 1952: 14). This is, however, a back-handed compliment; according to him the most common mistake women make is over enthusiasm which, he says, ruins dogs. It was fairly standard practice for gundog training manuals at that time to speak disdainfully of women as trainers of working dogs and, in contrast with the world of companion dog training, women had not yet become writers of training manuals.

Thus far we have argued that training working dogs, whether gundogs or police and military dogs, is associated with masculinities and with specific breeds of dogs. We now turn our attention to companion dog training manuals, which were not breed specific, and the increasing influence of women.

## **Obedience training for companion dogs**

The extreme forms of physical confrontation advocated by Most do not seem to have been absorbed by trainers of companion dogs in the post-war period although technologies associated with him, such as the choke chain, certainly were. Ideas of kindness and reason were still present together with the emergence of a language of love, care and family. Some authors, such as Longhurst (1947), followed in the footsteps of early gundog trainers arguing for the reasoning powers of dogs, their mindedness and individuality and, like many contemporary companion dog trainers, believed that the foundations of successful training were, 'kindness, patience, perseverance and understanding' and the absence of physical punishment (Longhurst, 1947: 16).

Others, however, were more influenced by the ideas associated with Most. Holmes, for instance, asserts that 'a dog does not reason and ... the whole foundation of training is a matter of correction and reward' (Holmes, 1954: 10). This dismissal of dogs' reasoning powers reveals a sharp difference from trainers such as Longhurst, suggesting variation amongst dog trainers in their beliefs about the nature of dogs and how they learn. Whilst advocating for fair

treatment, Holmes's methods included physical punishment such as jerks on the choke chain and, like Moxon, shaking.

Barbara Woodhouse, who came to prominence in the 1950s and 1960s, was influenced by Most's ideas though, unlike him, she talked about dogs being family members and emphasised the emotional connection between dogs and their humans. She was one of a new wave of women trainers, including early US trainers, which marked the beginning of the post-second world war gender shift in companion dog training (Włodarczyk, 2018). With this gender shift came the emergence of a familial idiom: dogs were now firmly embedded in the heteronormative family with its associated age, gender and species hierarchies and relations of authority (Charles, 2014; Fox, 2007). Woodhouse likened dogs to children, claiming that they 'have a brain equal to that of a child of about 5 years old' (Woodhouse, 1954: 12; 1978). Ideas about care, love and affection came to the fore, paving the way for an affective relationship between dog and owner/trainer rather than the instrumental one that characterised training cultures involving working dogs. Woodhouse recognised the importance of the emotional relationship between dogs and people in the context of the heteronormative family:

[Y]ou must love your dog terribly to get good results...including them in your family circle with practically the same rights as children. (Woodhouse, 1954: 110)

This marks a significant difference from the early gundog training manuals where reason, on the part of trainer and dog, shapes the training relationship not emotion.

Kindness and firmness were central to Woodhouse's training philosophy. Firmness was seen as necessary to gain love and respect, with Woodhouse advocating the use of choke chains, smacking and other physical corrections as well as praise (but not food rewards) for good behaviour. Kindness had a specific meaning for Woodhouse which was different from that found in the gundog training manuals of the 19th century. There it was opposed to cruelty, here it is associated with what could be seen as cruelty, as in the adage that you have to 'be cruel to be kind'.

Many owners mix up in their minds the meaning of the word kindness. Is it kinder to allow a dog to make human lives and its own a misery, rather than correct it firmly on a choke chain for a few minutes, thereby making it understand clearly who is boss? I would say correct the dog quickly and firmly and then love it with everything you possess and the dog will worship you in return. (Woodhouse, 1954: 72)

For Woodhouse, as in the earlier gundog manuals, correction should be administered without emotion and praise was an important element in training.

What emerges from this analysis is that there was a mixture of approaches towards training and the understanding of dogs in the dog training literature in the post-war years but that human authority and canine obedience were central to them all. Ideas about kindness, dogs' ability to reason and the necessity of correction and 'firmness' existed alongside ideas about dogs being driven by instinct and needing dominating or being like children who should be loved as members of the family. The emergence of the view that dogs are family members is associated with the increase in the number of households including companion dogs and the emergence of women as an influence, at least in companion dog training, in place of 'men with experience in the army, the police, or hunting' (Gabrielsen, 2017: 9). This change took place in different societies and training cultures at varying times and is associated with the training of dogs who are primarily companions and located in the domestic sphere. Companion dog training began to be about relationship building in mid-20th century Britain while other training cultures, especially of working dogs, remained functional and instrumental.

## Incorporating science: ethology and behaviourism

Unlike earlier training manuals, those published in the last few decades of the 20th century began explicitly to reflect different scientific theories about dog behaviour and animal learning. Two trends emerged: the first related to the idea that dogs are pack animals and thrive in a social context where they know 'who's boss', the second, which emerged later, is linked to Karen Pryor's popularisation of behaviourism (Skinner, 1938) and its application to shaping animal (including human) behaviour. Both strands of thinking remain influential in the world of dog training and can be discerned in training materials aimed at both companion and gundogs. They are, however, characterised by different modalities of power, the communities within which they are practised are differently gendered and there are contrasting views on physical correction. We look at these trends beginning with the idea that dogs, like their wolf ancestors, are pack animals.

Dominance theory and the idea that dog behaviour relates to the legacy of their wolf ancestry became influential in the world of dog training in the 1960s and 1970s, but the idea that dogs were pack animals in need of a leader is associated with Most and had been popularised earlier in the century (Despret, 2016). In dog training manuals the heteronormative family is analogous to the wolf pack and is characterised by hierarchical relations based not only on species difference, but also on gender and age. This is clear in Pettitt's training advice which is couched in explicitly gendered notions of power.

As the family is a substitute for the pack, the dog will soon accept the man of the house, providing that he is a reasonable, well-balanced fellow, as the pack leader who is in charge and must be obeyed. The woman will automatically become the bitch who is there for the dog's comfort and benefit, who may feed it, look after it and take it for walks - but never dominate it. In this family pattern it is always the husband, not the wife who can make the dog do things on command. (Pettitt, 1967: 18)

These comments echo those of Hutchinson about women being unable to enforce obedience and point to the assumptions of masculine authority present in dog training manuals. They also echo Talcott Parsons' analysis of men's instrumental role in 'the family' subsequently shown to be specific to the white middle class in North America at a particular historical period (McKie and Callan, 2012).

The increasing focus on the dog-human relationship in training, together with changes in wider society such as the reduced use of corporal punishment and an emerging concern for animal rights (Pregowski, 2015), led to a questioning of the use of physical force and the emergence of methods based on theories of behaviourism. 'Positive training' positioned itself as scientifically proven and, because it advocated neither punishment nor physical manipulation of the dog, was more in line with the emotional connection that many trainers and owners felt with their animals. Moreover, it was about inter-species communication.

Out of real science we've developed a training technology. Like any good technology it's a system that anyone can use. The basics are easy to learn. It works with all animals (and that includes people). It's fast. What used to take months, the traditional way, can now happen in minutes. It's completely benign; punishment and force are never part of the learning system. *And it produces real communication between two species.* (Pryor, 1984: 2 – our emphasis).

According to Pryor, positive reinforcement presents an opportunity to communicate with the animal and, at the same time, for them to communicate with the trainer (Pryor, 1985: 13). In this way the animal is given an active role in the learning process. It has been described as a ‘technology of love’ that, within a Foucauldian framework, can be read as a switch from governmentality to self-governmentality, from discipline to ‘affective control’ (Włodarczyk, 2018).

These two influences on dog training – ethological ideas about wolf packs, dominance and the need to ‘show the dog who’s boss’, often through physical coercion, and behaviourism which emphasises two-way communication between trainer and dog – are associated with different modalities of power. The former relies on ideas of human dominance and the dog as a potential challenger to the trainer’s authority, while the latter opens up a space for dogs to engage with their trainers and recognises the animal’s agency. However, the explicit influence of animal science in dog training can be seen as ushering in a form of power which, through recognising a dog’s subjectivity and autonomy, is a more effective means of ‘biopolitical management’ (Chrulew, 2017).

Dog training advice in the 1990s combined ideas from both ethology and behaviourism in order to manage dogs’ behaviour so that it was acceptable to their human companions. Scientific ideas were incorporated into dog training manuals with trainers, such as John Fisher and Jan Fennell, eschewing physical correction and adopting ‘positive’ training methods while retaining ideas about pack hierarchy and dominance. The goal of training was becoming the establishment and fostering of a relationship between human and dog which was mutually beneficial but was often based on ideas of hierarchy and human dominance.

John Fisher, for instance, argued that the key to peaceful human-canine co-existence was for the human to adopt the position of ‘alpha dog’ through non-aggressive means by following a simple set of rules to lower the dog’s position in the family pack (Fisher, 1990, 1991, 1992; Orłowska, 2016). Jan Fennell (2000) also combined the use of positive methods with notions of pack hierarchy (Browne et al, 2017). Fennell emphasizes learning the signals by which dogs recognise leadership and using them consistently so that the dog perceives the owner as ‘alpha’ and themselves as subordinate. Neither Fisher nor Fennell advocate the use of physical correction and both can be seen as attempting to understand training from ‘the animal’s point of view’; but underpinning this is their assumption that the dog is a pack animal in need of a (human) leader.

If we can understand more about dogs, what motivates them, what their values are, how they learn and why they do what they do, then this greater understanding will help us to form a more enjoyable relationship with them. (Fisher, 1991, 2)

By the end of the 1990s the idea that wolf packs were hierarchical had been shown to be erroneous (Despret, 2016: 58-9) and dominance theory had been widely discredited (Miklosi, 2009). Although there are some, such as Cesar Millan in the US, who continue to advocate methods based on ideas of hierarchy and dominance and belittle the more affective approach towards dogs associated with positive training methods (and women) (Millan, 2007; see also Włodarczyk, 2018; Browne et al, 2017), this change was reflected in the world of companion dog training.

## Gendered training cultures and ‘positive’ training

The rise in popularity of ‘positive’ training<sup>3</sup> has been associated with the feminisation of companion dog training and the training of dogs engaged in sports such as agility (Wlodarczyk, 2016). In the UK, for instance, the majority of companion dog trainers are women (over 90% of those currently listed on the Kennel Club Approved Instructors or Association of Pet Dog Trainers website) (APDT, 2020, KCAI, 2020); similar trends have been noted in other European countries and in the US (Wlodarczyk, 2016, 2018; Gabrielsen, 2017; Haraway, 2008). This feminisation can be seen as part of the shift in dogs’ primary functions which has been taking place throughout the 20th century, from work to leisure and from ‘man’s best friend’ to family member (Gabrielsen, 2017:9; Katz, 2003). These changes are reflected in training.

It's a whole new world for dog training. The days of people thinking about training their dog as simply teaching them to sit, stay or down are thankfully fading. Instead, we're using the power of the ever-evolving world of behavioural science to change not only how we teach our dogs, but also how we understand and communicate with them, building lasting bonds based on mutual trust, respect and love instead of pain, fear and intimidation. (Stilwell, 2017)

As we have seen, reliance on ‘traditional’ training methods based on ideas of dominance and involving physical force is linked with masculinist discourses of alpha (male) leadership. It is also associated with communities of practice where training is passed down through generations, as in the traditional hunting and dog sledding cultures in Norway where men are the trainers (Gabrielsen, 2017; see also Bradshaw, 2012; and, for sheepdogs, McCaig, 2014). Many of those involved in the training of working dogs tend to be critical of what they refer to as ‘the more airy-fairy dog training systems that have gained popularity over recent years’ (Bulled, 2018) or ‘the fluffy brigade’ who eschew ‘correction’ (Upton, 2019). Positive or ‘force-free’ training, is seen as ‘feminine’, ‘soft’ and engaged in by ‘naïve young girls’ rather than ‘bearded men in army uniform’ (Gabrielsen, 2017: 6). The criticism is not all one way. In Norway, the positive training movement distances itself from notions of ‘alpha masculinity’ and seeks to appeal to ‘educated people who like to read about theory’ rather than relying on practical skill and tacit knowledge (Gabrielsen, 2017: 11; see also Pregowski, 2015). This conflict and the contrast between training cultures suggest that different training cultures are marked by different forms of power and inter-species relationships. Those espousing positive training recognise dogs as ethical subjects rather than as creatures that need to be dominated so that they can be useful for humankind. This is the shift in use-value noted by Wlodarczyk (2018) such that the relationship with companion dogs is primarily affective rather than instrumental.

Whilst historically dog training has been concerned with ‘humanising’ or ‘civilising’ dogs so that their behaviour was acceptable in an anthropocentric world, or with channelling their instincts so that they would work for their human ‘masters’, companion dog training has come to be seen primarily as a way of strengthening the relationship between dog and human. Trainers are concerned with canine body language and communication between the species

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<sup>3</sup> Positive training is an imprecise term that refers to training that is reward rather than punishment based. It is often juxtaposed to dominance training and should not be confused with positive reinforcement. Positive reinforcement is a much more precise term derived from the principles of behaviourism. We use the term positive training as it is widely used in the UK and its use tells us something about different training cultures.

(Whitehead, 2012) and, some argue that positive training, rather than imposing ‘human-centric’ rules and behaviour, has come to be associated with a ‘dog-centric approach’ that celebrates the dog’s ‘animality’ and ‘dogness’ (Greenebaum, 2010, Pregowski, 2015, Włodarczyk, 2018). Dogs are now seen as playful creatures who humans would do well to emulate rather than being innately aggressive and therefore needing to be dominated or civilised (Włodarczyk, 2018:24); they are recognised as individuals and their ‘significant otherness’ is respected (Haraway, 2003, 2008).

There are many proponents of such ‘progressive’ training methods and their training philosophies are ‘dedicated to training that is based on science and ruled by ethics’ (Larham, 2018). Humans are seen as benevolent ‘leaders’ or ‘guides’ for dogs, rather than their masters or owners, and physical or psychological intimidation has no part in training. It is important to communicate with and understand your dog and to take into account the dog’s individual preferences and emotions (Larham, 2018; Stilwell, 2005). There is also an emphasis on understanding the world through the eyes (and nose) of the dog, learning to ‘talk dog’ (Whitehead, 2012) and becoming familiar with their embodied methods of communicating (Rugaas, 2013; Shelbourne, 2012). This echoes the injunction to ‘speak horse’ associated with ‘natural horsemanship’ (Latimer and Birke, 2009).

You cannot build a strong bond with your dog unless you truly understand how he perceives the world around him, but to do this effectively you must first learn his language and appreciate his sensory experience. It is up to us to learn to ‘talk dog’ rather than expect our four-legged friends to learn English (or any other language). Doing so will give you the foundation to build a stronger relationship. (Stilwell, 2018)

Such attention to the minute details of canine body language requires an ‘availability’ to the other (Despret, 2004) and challenges the human in unexpected ways, requiring an engagement with non-human subjectivity (Włodarczyk, 2018). These relationships can be understood in terms of ‘becoming with’ (Despret, 2004; Haraway, 2008) or ‘being more dog’ (Włodarczyk, 2018) where both human and dog are shaped through the embodied materiality of the relationship.

Partners do not pre-exist their relating; the partners are precisely what comes out of the inter and intra-relating of fleshy, significant, material semiotic being (Haraway, 2008, 165).

This language, however, belies the power relations which underpin these more feminised, caring and responsive (to the dog) training relationships. The goal of training may no longer be explicitly to dominate dogs, and people may choose to engage in activities that their dogs are enthusiastic about but, as Haraway observes, this engagement remains within a human-designed structure and it is the humans (of a certain gender, class and ethnicity) who decide on the rules of the game; this notwithstanding, within this structure the dog has some authority when playing the game (Haraway, 2008: 220-1).

While positive training may predominate in advice aimed at companion dog keepers, it has not caught on in all training cultures and, in some, there is considerable resistance to it. And even amongst companion dog trainers there are those who point out that there is no such thing as ‘force free’ training and that dogs, like children, need boundaries (see for e.g. Mugford, 2014). Resistance is, however, more widespread in gundog training cultures and, while there is some acknowledgment that positive methods may work for some dogs, the superiority of training grounded in hands-on experience and practical knowledge is frequently asserted. It is argued that, ‘motivational training can struggle to alter certain behaviours as they are self-

rewarding above the scale of anything they [the trainers] have to offer in their repertoire' (Bulled, 2018). This resistance appears to be gendered. In the masculine world of gundog training, many trainers continue to rely on the tried and tested methods which they regard as necessary for the skilled behaviours and high level of control required for working dogs - this is evident in the continuing popularity of Moxon's training manual -- but at the same time positive methods are being incorporated into the repertoire of training practices, often by women. Pippa Mattison, for instance, has published several training manuals (2012, 2014) and, in 2006, established the Gundog Club to promote 'modern reward-based training methods and the humane treatment and welfare of gundog breeds' (Gundog Club, 2018). But even for those advocating positive training, elements of dominance theory remain influential. Margaret Allen, for instance, talks in terms of domination and control arguing that the dog needs to be guided by a pack leader who is 'top dog' (2013: 51-2). She explains that the hierarchical relationship between trainer and dog must be established when the dog is a puppy and bases her training advice on ideas of instincts combined with principles derived from behaviourism.

What this shows is that while dominance theory may have been discredited, it is still influential in contemporary gundog training cultures though companion dog training cultures have moved much more radically away from dominance theory to embrace positive methods. These cultures are based on different assumptions about dogs. In contemporary gundog training breed is central; it is assumed that different breeds of gundog are innately suited to different tasks while in companion dog training, dogs of every breed and none are seen as capable of learning a whole range of activities. The different cultures are also based on different assumptions about the dog-human relationship. Positive training, which is widespread in companion dog training cultures, sees the relationship as one of affect and values two-way communication between dog and human, training based on ideas of human dominance, which is commonly found in gundog training cultures, sees it in instrumental terms and as based on human control and the dog's obedience. It is tempting to conclude that these differences are due to the different training requirements of working and companion dogs. This is not, however, supported by the evidence, particularly if a wider range of working dogs and their training are taken into account. In our view these differences arise from the long-established and still very traditional culture of gundog training which is embedded in rural gender and class hierarchies and ways of life. This culture contrasts with that of companion dog training which is associated with the urban middle classes and is feminised (Pregowski, 2015). Similar contrasts have been observed in horse training and are understood in terms of a cultural distinction between "'traditional" methods of managing horses' associated with 'traditional rural communities' and 'natural horsemanship' which is overwhelmingly associated with women (Latimer and Birke, 2009:4). It is important to note, however, that neither culture is monolithic; within each there are those who are critical of the dominant training methods and the assumptions on which they are based.

## **Discussion and conclusions**

In this concluding discussion we reflect on the light our analysis sheds on the workings of power in inter-species relationships. We have identified three ways of understanding dogs associated with training cultures located in specific historical periods and social contexts. The understanding of dogs as rational, thinking beings who can rise above their animal instincts through training is associated with 19th century, upper-class, white masculine authority characterised by rational and civilised behaviour. This is contrasted with the 'animality' of the working classes and the undesirable emotional attachment of women to their pet dogs. In some



senses, although dogs were obedient to their masters, their potential for reason elevated them above other sections of the human population and other animals (Menache, 2000; Ritvo, 1987).

A more violent human domination is associated with the understanding of dogs as instinctive creatures that need to be subdued through the use of physical force which is found in both gundog and companion dog training literature in the second part of the 20th century. Dogs were understood as pack animals in need of leadership and domination or, in another variant, as family members akin to young children. These two variants of the dominance theme were not incompatible as the hierarchy of the heteronormative family was reflected in the alleged hierarchy of the wolf pack under the control of masculine authority. In the family hierarchy dogs were defined as domestic creatures, akin to children, who should be loved; their lowly position in the hierarchy reflects Tuan's understanding of the link between dominance and affection (Tuan, 1984). More recently, in the context of feminised companion dog training, dogs have been understood as autonomous, active agents from whom their human trainers can learn and with whom they can have fun. This understanding puts inter-species communication at the forefront of training and pays attention to dogs' subjectivity and agency in the training process. There is a critique of exploitative and instrumental relations between humans and animals, a recognition of dogs as ethical subjects and the encouragement of an affective, two-way relationship which is seen in terms of partnership rather than hierarchy. Power relations are subtly changed with masculinised forms of authority being questioned and more feminised forms of power predominating. Power operates in a way which responds to the dog's needs and desires; it reflects an affective relationship of care rooted in the recognition of the dog as an ethical subject and is based on persuasion rather than (physical) coercion. It can be conceptualised as a 'productive biopower' operating at the micro-level of everyday interaction with both dogs and trainers as its 'subjects' (Chrulew, 2017:231). Moreover, the mobilisation of scientific knowledge about dogs enables this power to be wielded more effectively (Chrulew, 2017).

The shift from instrumental to affective human-animal relations noted by Franklin can therefore be understood in terms of different modalities of power, the former reflecting ideas of human dominance and canine obedience and usefulness, the latter ideas about human care for their canine companions and canine capacity for affective inter-species engagement and mutual enjoyment. These different modalities of power are not, however, mutually exclusive and different understandings of dog-human relationships, the training methodologies associated with them and the different forms of power they assume co-exist in much dog training literature. Thus, a commitment to kindness or positive training co-exists with ideas about the need for human domination, and the understanding of dogs as able to reason is found in both companion and gundog training literature. These findings point to the 'messiness' of different training cultures and questions the claim that the development of dog training can be grasped either in terms of Foucauldian training regimes (Włodarczyk, 2018) or as epitomising a shift from instrumental to affective dog-human relations. The concept of a training regime, while useful for delineating a coherent system, the operations of power within it and the assumptions about dog-human relations on which it is based, glosses over the way elements from different training regimes come together in different training cultures. Looking across training cultures also reveals that they are marked by different temporalities and that they influence each other. Thus while positive training methods were advocated in the companion dog literature in the 1990s, it is only recently that they have begun to appear in the gundog literature. And ideas of kindness, associated with 19th century gundog training, and those of dominance and hierarchy, emanating from the armed forces, influenced companion dog training in the middle of the 20th century.

These differences, both in the temporality of different training cultures and in the messy way power operates within them, raise questions about the claim of a cultural shift towards

affect and away from instrumentality (Franklin, 1999). We have shown that different training cultures are associated with differences in the ways dogs are understood and the extent to which their needs and interests are respected. But while in contemporary companion dog training literature the affective quality of the dog-human relationship is foregrounded, in gundog training manuals the relationship is viewed in more instrumental terms. Contemporary dog training literatures therefore assumes different dog-human relations and ways of understanding dogs: human dominance continues to have a place in gundog training where dogs are expected to perform certain tasks on command in order to do a job of work, while in companion dog training there is an emphasis on dogs' choosing to learn. While a move from dominance to positive training, or from disciplinary to biopower, is clear in companion dog training, gundog training remains rooted in ideas of human dominance and docile canine bodies. This points to the problems associated with universalising claims and suggests that attending to written accounts of the messy practices of dog training, as we have done here, provides a more nuanced understanding of the workings of power in human-animal relations and the contradictory ways in which they are changing.

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