A Qualitative Investigation into Dogs Serving on Animal Assisted Crisis Response (AACR) Teams: Advances in Crisis Counselling

Submitted by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Clinical Science, Counselling and Psychotherapy

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October 2013
**Glossary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAA</td>
<td>Animal Assisted Activity</td>
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<td>AACR</td>
<td>Animal Assisted Crisis Response</td>
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<td>AAT</td>
<td>Animal Assisted Therapy</td>
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<td>ACISA</td>
<td>Australasian Critical Incident Stress Association</td>
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<td>ADI</td>
<td>Assistance Dogs International</td>
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<td>APA</td>
<td>American Psychological Association</td>
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<td>CAM</td>
<td>Complementary Alternative Medicine</td>
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<td>CBT</td>
<td>Cognitive Behavioural Therapy</td>
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<td>CCCR</td>
<td>Cascade Canine Crisis Response</td>
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<td>CIMA</td>
<td>Crisis Intervention Management Australasia</td>
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<td>CISM</td>
<td>Critical Incident Stress Management</td>
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<td>CISMFA</td>
<td>Critical Incident Stress Management Foundation of Australia</td>
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<td>CPR</td>
<td>Cardiac Pulmonary Resuscitation</td>
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<td>CQR</td>
<td>Consensual Qualitative Research</td>
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<td>DAT</td>
<td>Disaster Action Team</td>
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<td>DSM</td>
<td>Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders</td>
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<td>FEMA</td>
<td>Federal Emergency Management Agency</td>
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<td>HOPE AACR</td>
<td>HOPE Animal Assisted Crisis Response</td>
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<td>ICISF</td>
<td>International Critical Incident Stress Foundation</td>
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<td>ICS</td>
<td>Incident Command System</td>
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<td>IPA</td>
<td>Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis</td>
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<td>K9</td>
<td>Canine</td>
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<td>NAACR</td>
<td>National Animal Assisted Crisis Response</td>
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<td>National Organisation for Victim Assistance</td>
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<td>National Voluntary Organisations Active in Disaster</td>
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<td>PIS</td>
<td>Participant Information Statement</td>
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<td>PTSD</td>
<td>Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder</td>
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<td>P2V</td>
<td>Pets 2 Vets</td>
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<td>SAR</td>
<td>Search and Rescue</td>
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<td>SHERP</td>
<td>State Health Emergency Response Plan</td>
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<td>STSD</td>
<td>Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder</td>
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<td>TDI</td>
<td>Therapy Dog International</td>
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<tr>
<td>VOAD</td>
<td>Voluntary Organisations Active in Disaster</td>
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Acknowledgments

In 2011, Alexina Baldini, my psychology practice supervisor, exercised her intuitive wisdom by giving me a copy of the AACR presentation given at the 11th ICISF world congress. That document ignited my passion and gave birth to this research topic.

Brian Killen encouraged me to peruse my interest in dogs, never doubted my academic ability and was my rock during the data collecting American field trip.

Dr. Robyn Robinson, clinical psychologist, Australian CISM pioneer, CISMFA founder and Order of Australia. Robyn was always ready to provide support and guidance. Her wisdom, generosity and shared passion in my research were great sources of strength for me.

Chris Long, President CIMA, listened to my ideas, remained interested in my progress and when necessary provided endorsements for my work. These gestures professionally legitimized my work and gave me confidence.

Professor Margot Schofield, Professor of Counselling and Psychotherapy, School of Public Health and Human Biosciences, La Trobe University, saw the academic potential in me and invited me to enroll. Her faith in my potential made this research possible.

Dr. Melissa Monfries, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Health Sciences, School of Public Health and Human Biosciences, Department of Counselling and Psychological Health, La Trobe University and Professor Pranee Liamputtong, Faculty of Health Sciences, School of Public Health and Human Biosciences, Department of Public Health, La Trobe University. These two wise women provided academic supervision, expertise and a genuine interest in my journey.

I wish to express a heartfelt thank you to the two experts who generously shared their time and expertise as members on my data analysis advisory panel.

- Alexina Baldini. Psychologist, Director Enable Workplace Consulting, ex-president Australasian Critical Incident Stress Association (ACISA) and approved CISM instructor with ICISF and CIMA.
Other key people who seemed to appear at specific times when I needed lifelines were: Dr. Debbie Kerr, Arzu Ulker, Tony Clark, Gail Taylor, Ethan Erickson, Brian Stitt, Western Health librarians, Sue Craven, Lillias Powell and Nikki Fortune.

Whilst the study was Australian based, the United States of America was the only country where AACR was practiced and where participants were located. I undertook a commitment to conduct my fieldwork and interviews in the USA, an endeavor that was made possible due to the support, generosity, hospitality, networking and co-coordinating efforts of the following American based kind souls:

- Yvonne Eaton-Stull, LCSW, HOPE AACR canine handler and former Regional Director Eastern US HOPE AACR
- Marcy Lowy, M.Ed. and Richard Lowy, M.D., D.M.R.T, founders and co-directors of Cascade Canine Crisis Response (CCCR) and former HOPE AACR Board members
- Psychotherapist Professor Lois Abrams, Ph.D. and Psychotherapist Professor Herb Abrams, PhD. Canine handlers HOPE AACR and former HOPE AACR Board members
- Mary Martin, B.S. Education, HOPE AACR canine handler, HOPE AACR team leader and former Montana Area Coordinator, Rocky Mountain Region, HOPE AACR

I also wish to acknowledge those who participated in the research interviews and when interviews were not possible, those who nonetheless found ways to meet with me and share their experience of working with AACR dogs. A very sincere and heartfelt thank you to you all, you were inspirational.

A tribute section has been dedicated at the end of this thesis to some AACR dogs, many of which I had the pleasure to visit with.
Dedication

I dedicate this project to my personal companion dog team, Sherman, Louie and Louise. They taught me some of the most powerful lessons about humanity. Their unconditional and honest ways during our twenty one years of living together taught me how to be a human. They shaped my life, the person I became, and left their paw prints forever in my heart.
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Abstract

Animal Assisted Crisis Response (AACR) is a new field that operates in collaboration with other crisis services to support people affected by a traumatic event. Essentially it consists of an animal and human handler team specifically trained in animal therapy, animal assisted crisis response and human crisis intervention. Animals, in particular dogs, have been used in the helping professions since the 19th century with research indicating that they are beneficial for human psycho-social conditions and bio-physical wellbeing.

The AACR teams work with crisis counsellors and other professionals during the recovery phase of a crisis in order to assist those affected. AACR is newly emerging in the USA, only uses dogs and as yet is uninitiated in Australia. Currently there is no known research in this field.

The present study interviewed AACR dog handlers and crisis counsellors who have worked with AACR teams in the field. The primary aim of the study was to investigate the parameters under which AACR is instigated, delivered and of benefit to the crisis counselling field. The secondary aim was to explore meanings that participants attribute to AACR dogs as a result of human-dog interactions in the field.

A qualitative research design was used with constructivism as its underlying paradigm and symbolic interactionism to inform its methodology. All data were collected in participant naturalistic settings and involved a multi-method approach that entailed semi structured interviews, observational field trips, visual data (photos) of AACR dogs, researcher reflexivity journal and a participant socio-demographic questionnaire. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used and resulted in a total sample size of thirty participants. Data analyses incorporated participant verification of interview transcripts, thematic analysis, QSR NVivo 10 and a data advisory panel.

Significant themes to emerge from the data were titled: The nature of crisis, symbolic meanings given to dogs, and working like a dog. Overall findings suggest that AACR dogs are seen and operate, as extensions of crisis counselling respondents. Further research is recommended into AACR as a potential modality for crisis response work. The development of AACR and implications within the Australian context are also discussed.
Statement of Authorship

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma.

No other person’s work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree of diploma in any other tertiary institution.

Signature:

Filomena Bua. 10 October 2013.
Chapter 1: Introduction – The fundamentals

There is not a single landmass that does not contain dogs, and dogs living, for the most part, with people. Our relationship with dogs is the single most important symbiotic relationship between humans and another species on the planet, the most delightful, and in many ways still the most mysterious (Masson & Wolfe, 2011, p. 1).

Animals, particularly dogs, have co-evolved with humans and currently occupy integral aspects of human community and functioning. They provide companionship and specific skilled labour for essential services or needs such as farming, seeing, hearing, search, rescue, detection and retrieval. Their mystics have had them assigned symbolic or ceremonial roles such as guides for humans in the afterlife (Walsh, 2009). They serve as protectors, mascots, our friends, and for many our best friend (Beck, 2013; Masson & Wolfe, 2011; Walsh, 2009; Wilson, 1984; Woloy, 1990). In the 18th century psychiatrist William Tuke introduced animals as a treatment aide for patients in the York Retreat mental asylum (Schaefer, 2002) followed by Freud in the 19th century who used his dog, Jofi, in therapeutic sessions with clients (Fine, 2010; O’Callaghan, 2008). Psychologist Boris Levinson in 1961 presented research findings suggesting success in the use of his dog with therapy clients and recommended ongoing examination of their use in therapy programs (O’Callaghan, 2008; Woloy, 1990). Currently there is a wealth of animal assisted services which predominately feature dogs (AACR, International Guide Dog Federation, Assistance Dogs Australia, AWARE dogs Australia) and a growing research base that supports their therapeutic benefits (Beck & Katcher, 2003; Fine, 2010; Odendaal, 2000; Woloy, 1990; Wilson, 1984). This investigation examines further the enigmatic human-dog bond.

1.1 Animal Assisted Crisis Response (AACR), crisis counselling and relevant definitions

AACR is a relatively new discipline, closely related to Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) but differs from it in that it specifically targets people directly affected by a crisis and front line respondents who may also be affected by the crisis. In the field AACR interacts and forms working alliances with other crisis services such as Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM), crisis counsellors, psychological first aide respondents, law enforcement personnel, Red Cross emergency respondents and incident command personnel who request AACR assistance. What makes AACR different and unique from these
services is that it is an animal-human team specifically trained to provide support for people in crisis (Greenbaum, 2006).

In essence, AACR is the collaboration between the Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) and Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) fields. AACR consists of an animal and human handler team specifically trained in animal therapy, animal assisted crisis response and human crisis interventions. The United States of America appears to be the only country that trains and deploys AACR teams and to date, dogs have been the only animal trained in AACR work. AACR teams are deployed during the recovery phase of a crisis and work with crisis counsellors or other professionals in the field by providing assistance and comfort to people affected by trauma. The 2010 AACR National Standards require that whilst in the field, AACR teams provide service as directed from crisis counsellors or crisis professionals (Eaton-Stull, Ehlers, Ganser, Lothrop, Rideout, & Levenson, 2010; Greenbaum, 2006).

Teams are deployed to the field under the leadership of an AACR team leader who will have responsibility for up to four AACR animal handler teams. The AACR team leaders do not have an animal during deployment because their primary roles are to liaise with crisis respondents, coordinate the provision of AACR services and attend to the needs of their AACR teams (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010; Greenbaum, 2006). Figure 1 provides an outline of AACR accountabilities and working relationships with regard to deployment and assistance at a critical incident.

The crisis counselling, emergency response and critical incident management fields are complex and diverse, as are the many specialist forms of animal assisted services. Consequently, terminology, models and practices within these fields vary greatly, even within the fields themselves. For the purpose of this study, the relevant and universally recognised definitions of services have been grouped into streams. Stream A applies to services essentially provided by animals whilst stream B refers to services provided by humans. Stream C outlines what constitutes a crisis for humans and a crisis event. Figure 2 provides a diagram showing how these streams connect with one another.
Figure 1

**AACR Deployment**

AACR National Organisation President → AACR State Organisation Regional Director → AACR Area Coordinator → Field Workers

AACR Team Leader ↔ Crisis Counsellor or Crisis Professional ↔ AACR Dog ↔ Individual affected

AACR Dog Handler → AACR Area Coordinator

AACR National Organisation President → AACR State Organisation Regional Director → AACR Area Coordinator → Field Workers

AACR Team Leader ↔ Crisis Counsellor or Crisis Professional ↔ AACR Dog ↔ Individual affected

AACR Dog Handler → AACR Area Coordinator

AACR National Organisation President → AACR State Organisation Regional Director → AACR Area Coordinator → Field Workers

AACR Team Leader ↔ Crisis Counsellor or Crisis Professional ↔ AACR Dog ↔ Individual affected

AACR Dog Handler → AACR Area Coordinator
Figure 2

Associations between animal assisted and human services

**Animal assisted services**

- **AAA**
  - Provide non-specific activity. E.g., Nursing home visits

- **AAT**
  - A professional team trained to provide specific services. E.g., assist clients develop social skills

- **AACR**
  - Must initially be AAT trained. Teams undergo further training in crisis response work. E.g., assisting personnel at evacuation shelters

**Human Services**

- **Crisis Intervention**
  - A response designed to assist people in crisis

**AACR teams work with**

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<td>Crisis Counsellors</td>
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**AACR and crisis intervention personnel work with**

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**People affected by crisis**

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**Crisis event**

Any event which elicits feelings of horror, helplessness or intense fear. E.g., 9/11 New York disaster
A: Definitions – Services provided by dogs

Animal Assisted Activity (AAA)

The Delta Society, in their handbook on animal assisted therapy interventions, defines AAA as a goal directed activity provided by an animal handler team that seeks to enhance the quality of life for humans (Gammonley, Howie, Kirwin, Zapf, Frye, Freeman, & Stuart-Russell, 1997). A typical example is that of a dog-human handler team that visits residents in nursing homes. AAA teams, like AACR personnel, are subjected to selection and training processes, however, the handlers are not required to have specialist professional backgrounds nor do these teams provide specialist tailored interventions as does AACR.

Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT)

AAT is a specific therapeutic intervention that involves the use of highly trained animal handler health service teams. These teams provide treatment that is solution focused and individually tailored. The treatment is tailored to meet the needs of the human beneficiary and seeks to improve the individual’s cognitive, physical or psychological function (Cavanaugh, Leonard, & Scammon, 2008; DeCourcey, Russell, & Keister, 2010). An example of AAT is a counselling therapist and dog team assisting a patient who lacks social skills or confidence to interact with the dog. Once the patient learns social skills and develops a greater sense of confidence these skills that were learned from the human-dog interaction can be transferred to humans (Gammonley et al., 1997).

Similarly with AAA and AACR, these teams undertake selection and training processes, however, are not subjected to unpredictable crisis environments as are AACR dogs. AAT and AACR are closely related because AACR dogs must initially be trained and experienced in AAT and are then selected for specialist training in AACR work (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010).

Animal Assisted Crisis Response (AACR)

AACR involves a highly trained dog handler team that can be used as a tool by specialist professional groups to assist with the management of people who have experienced a crisis (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010; Greenbaum, 2006). It differs from AAT in that it
is an intervention which specifically targets people who require crisis support (Greenbaum, 2006) and as such AACR teams are deployed to unpredictable crisis sites or disaster affected environments (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010).

**B: Definitions – Services provided by humans**

*Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)*

CISM is a multifaceted approach used to assist people affected by a crisis or disaster. The CISM model incorporates intervention stages from pre-incident education through post intervention follow up and referral. It is a comprehensive, integrated and systematic approach for psychological crisis management, is based on crisis intervention principles and is neither therapy nor treatment, but rather a support service for people in crisis (Mitchell, 2011). It was introduced in Australia throughout the late 1980s (Robinson, 2004).

*Crisis Intervention*

Crisis intervention is a response designed to assist and support people affected by a crisis or disaster. Its purpose is to assist individuals return to adaptive functioning and can also be referred to as psychological first aide, early psychological intervention or emotional first aide (Mitchell, 2011). Specific examples of psychological first aide include ensuring people’s safety, providing practical and emotional support, monitoring casualties, encouraging the use of social supports and providing information (Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, 2007).

*Crisis Counselling*

Crisis counselling refers to interventions focused on providing therapeutic assessment and assistance for individuals at periods of crisis in their lives (Nelson-Jones, 1983). Crisis counsellors employ various psychological models at times of crisis for clients, however, core Rogerian principles such as empathic listening, presence and unconditional positive regard can be useful to assist people accept help (Corey, 1986). Crisis counselling is fundamentally different from psychotherapy in that it is a short-term intervention that focuses specifically on the client’s immediate situation (Cherry, 2013).
C: Definitions – Crisis

Psychological Crisis

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) IV-TR states that not all people react or perceive trauma in the same way (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). However, those that are affected will experience an acute response. An acute response essentially occurs because as individuals interpret and experience an event as a crisis, their psychological homeostasis is disrupted. The disruption has characteristic symptoms that involve significant impairment, distress and dysfunction for the individual (Mitchell, 2011).

Crisis Event

A crisis is an actual, threatened or perceived event that results in feelings of intense fear, helplessness or horror (Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, 2007; American Psychiatric Association, 2000). A crisis elicits a crisis response in individuals that interrupts their usual coping devices (Mitchell, 2011; Mitchell & Everly, 2001).

D: Definitions – Effects of crisis on humans

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

PTSD is characterised by distinctive symptom features following exposure to a significant critical incident. The symptoms are characterised, by the DSM-IV-TR, as a re-experiencing of the event (dissociative flashbacks, recurrent and intrusive memories), avoidance behaviours (detachment, inability to recall) and arousal states (inability to sleep, hypervigilance). The duration of symptoms must be greater than one month and be affecting the person in other important areas of functionality (work, family). (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

Of note is that at the time of this research, DSM-5 was not published. Consequently I will be referring to DSM-IV-TR throughout this thesis.
Compassion fatigue/Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder (STSD)

Compassion fatigue is a condition that can occur when a health professional is exposed to the significant suffering of others (Ruysschaert, 2009; Yoder, 2010). Figley (1995) maintains that compassion fatigue and secondary trauma are the same concept, that is, Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder (STSD). Workers suffering from STSD have symptoms that parallel those of primary victims diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Symptoms are significant, pervasive and compromise the social, occupational and personal functioning of workers.

Compassion stress

Compassion stress is a crisis response that occurs in health professionals, emergency personnel and front line respondents. It differs from compassion fatigue in that it is not considered disordered behaviour nor does it require formal treatment.

Compassion stress is a natural response that health professionals experience when they know details about a traumatising event, assist a victim, or are exposed to the suffering of others (Figley, 1995).

Compassion satisfaction:

Compassion satisfaction is satisfaction derived from seeing the suffering of others alleviate (Ruysschaert, 2009). Health professionals associate compassion satisfaction with positive feelings about one’s ability to care or connect with others, positive growth, heightened resilience, increased spirituality, increased compassion, joy and gratitude from the experience of working with traumatised clients (Jacobson, 2004).

Posttraumatic growth:

Posttraumatic growth is the experience of a positive outcome from having coped with exposure to a traumatic event. Essentially, it is the benefit(s) acquired after coping with a life crisis (Putterman, 2005). Stress related growth, thriving and positive adaptation are concepts that also refer to posttraumatic growth (Putterman, 2005).
1.2 Purpose of the study and rationale

The AACR field is still in its infancy throughout the USA (Greenbaum, 2006) and apparently uninitiated here in Australia. There is no known empirical research on the American development and practice model of AACR, its potential benefits and in particular, the use of AACR in partnership with counsellors and crisis intervention teams (Greenbaum, 2006). This knowledge gap formed the basis for the current investigation which was exclusive to the USA field.

The present study sought to examine the nature of AACR so as to provide an initial contribution for its use as an evidence based practice.

The primary purpose of the investigation was to interview AACR dog handlers and crisis counsellors who had worked with AACR teams with the aim of understanding the intricacies of AACR and the benefits of its distinctive use.

As such, the following questions were addressed: Under what conditions do professionals use AACR? How does AACR provide services that are distinct from other crisis response services? and; What benefits does AACR have for the crisis response community?

A secondary aim was to explore social meanings and interpretations that workers attribute to AACR dogs as a result of human-dog interactions in the field.

Whilst AACR is currently not practised in Australia, there are many Australian based organisations that provide crisis intervention services and animal assisted services or a variation of both that is not specifically AACR work. CIMA (Crisis Intervention Management Australasia), Delta Society, Assistance Dogs Australia, Vision Australia, Red Cross, State Emergency Services, Australian defence services, Australian police departments, and the Victorian Government SHERP (State Health Emergency Response Plan) are some examples. It was envisaged that findings from this investigation could inform these Australian organisations by providing direction for future program development and AACR training within the Australian context.
Unfortunately natural and man-made disasters do occur. Many people as individuals, in work groups, as community members or as fellow human beings across the globe have or will experience some impact from large scale disasters. The reality for public health and emergency services workers is that they will either directly or indirectly be exposed to the impacts of crisis events or large scale disasters (McGibbon, Elizabeth, & Gallop, 2010) and therefore will be likely to experience compassion stress or compassion fatigue simply by virtue of their empathic engagement with trauma survivors (Figley, 1995). Professionals who are frequently exposed to trauma survivors may also experience a deeper impact on their wellbeing such that their beliefs, values, worldview, trust and perception of safety are compromised (Ruysschaert, 2009; Tehrani, 2007). There is a public need for crisis response workers and in turn these workers also need support. AACR is a newly developing crisis response tool that is currently used to provide support to primary survivors of a crisis, first line respondents and other crisis professionals deployed to disasters or smaller scale critical incidents (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010; Greenbaum, 2006). As a crisis intervention and potential tool in mitigating critical incident stress, AACR is worth further investigation.

1.3 Study aims

Overarching study aim

To examine the parameters under which AACR is initiated, delivered, and of potential benefit to crisis response services, in particular crisis counsellors.

Subset study aims

1. To investigate meanings that AACR dog handlers and crisis counsellors who have worked with AACR teams attribute to AACR dogs as a result of human-dog interactions in the field.
2. To explore how AACR dog handlers and crisis counsellor collaborators of AACR interact with AACR dogs as distinct from other forms of crisis interventions.
3. To identify future development options and recommendations for AACR.
1.4 Research questions

Overarching research question

Under what conditions is AACR pertinent to the crisis intervention community?

Subset research questions

1. What meaningful connections and interpretations do AACR dog handlers and crisis counsellor collaborators make from their interactions with AACR dogs in the USA field?
2. How is AACR different from other forms of crisis intervention?
3. What is the future development for AACR?

1.5 Caveats

Whilst the literature addressing animal assisted services discusses a variety of species, currently dogs are the only animal used in AACR work. As such, for the purpose of this investigation, the human-animal bond will be investigated exclusively to interactions between humans and dogs. Consequently the literature review predominately focuses on the human-canine bond.

Another necessary limitation is in regard to the many complex views and debates that concern themselves with the nature of crisis counselling, CISM and psychological first aid (Agorastos, Marmar, & Otte, 2011; Bledsoe, 2003; Emmerik, Kamphuis, Hulsbosh, & Emmelkam, 2002; Kaplan, Iancu, & Bodner, 2001; Mitchell, 2011; Robinson, 2004). Whilst the provision of crisis counselling, CISM and psychological first aid have their advantages, disadvantages and distinctiveness, rigorous debate continues around issues of timing, practice frameworks and effectiveness. These debates are long standing, characteristic of the dynamism expected from the health science disciplines, pursue evidenced based practice and continuously encourage further research into the issues. Debates are important forums that provide opportunity for refinement of approaches, facilitate ongoing enquiry and act as mechanisms for quality assurance or accountability, however, debates, particularly those concerned with debriefing (Bledsoe, 2003; Robinson, 2004) are not the
focus of this investigation. Rather, the understanding of AACR as a discipline and its interface with other crisis response services is.

1.6 Locating the researcher

As a newly registered psychologist in 1990, I attended a Melbourne-based conference which became the landmark event that formally introduced CISM to Australia. The CISM founders, Dr. Jeffery Mitchell and Dr. George Everly were keynote speakers. Their soon to be Australian counterpart and founder of CISMFA, Dr. Robyn Robinson, was the conference convenor. Twenty three years later, I find myself specialized in the CISM field and still very much committed to its ideology and practice. I am an approved CISM instructor with CIMA and ICISF and in the last eleven years have worked with staff in public health, supporting, treating and teaching them in psychological trauma recovery and self-care. Often, throughout my years in this work, I am reminded of the tolerance, fortitude, breadth of humanity and need for connection that occurs for humans in times of crisis.

Another strong and reoccurring theme in my life has been dogs. I have a deep respect, gratitude and fascination in the way companion or service dogs affect human life. Their generosity to coexist with us in our cultural landscape and in servitude providing key services for our existence is a constant source of inspiration for me. Again, this raises the notion of connectedness, this time between human and dog as a powerful a tool in recovery, particularly when human vulnerability is exposed.

In March 2011, my professional supervisor gave me a handout from one of the presentations given at the 11th ICISF World Congress. The paper was on the future potential for AACR to work with CISM, namely, dog crisis services working with human crisis services. I had been given this conference paper within a few weeks of having enrolled in the Doctor of Clinical Science (Counselling and Psychotherapy) and the synchronicity was palpable. What resulted was a remarkable journey, investigation and this dissertation.
1.7 Introducing the human-dog bond

Humans have a long standing, complex, multilayered and symbiotic history with animals, in particular, the dog (Beck, 2013; Walsh, 2009; Wilson, 1984; Woloy, 1990). Although the how and why of this relationship remains contentious (Walsh, 2009), there is little doubt that it is a relationship and that the research community has taken an interest (Schaefer, 2002). Archaeological evidence places dogs living with humans in settlements over 14,000 years ago (Walsh, 2009) and for centuries civilisations have kept them as pets for pleasure or companionship. For example, ancient Egyptians worshipped dogs and believed that they served as guides for humans in the afterlife. They mourned the death of their dogs by performing elaborate grief rituals and had their dogs embalmed, mummified and buried in animal necropolises (Walsh, 2009).

More specifically, the emergence of dogs used as assistants in the helping professions can be traced back to some of the most influential leading health figures of the 19th century. Florence Nightingale’s dream, which she believed was a calling from God to heal the sick, came to her after she had saved the neighbour’s dog from being killed (Coren, 2010). Years later when administering to the sick as a qualified nurse, she noted the benefit of animal companions on long term hospital patients (Matuszek, 2010). Sigmund Freud wrote of his extraordinary affection for his dog Jofi, and claimed that the human-animal bond produced feelings of intimate affinity, undisputed solidarity and friendship for the human partner (O’Callaghan, 2008). Freud also recognised the calming effect his dog Jofi had on his clients and inferred that the unconditional regard of a dog was healing (Salk, 2010). One of the earliest recorded cases that explicitly used dogs as assistants in the therapeutic treatment of patients was by the psychiatrist William Tuke in an 18th century retreat for the mentally ill. As founder and practising psychiatrist of the York Retreat, a Quaker asylum which sought more humane ways of treating people with mental illness, Tuke introduced the integration of animals into the treatment of residents to facilitate their recovery (Schaefer, 2002).
Boris Levinson, a psychologist, was one of the first noted mental health professionals to present the concept of AAT (Animal Assisted Therapy) to a forum of his peers at the American Psychological Association (APA) convention in 1961 (O’Callaghan, 2008; Woloy, 1990). Levinson found that when one of his young clients, who was generally resistant to therapy, accidently came upon Levinson’s dog, that the chance encounter appeared to assist the therapeutic relationship. Levinson subsequently had his dog in sessions with this client and noted that the dog’s presence seemed to facilitate the therapist-client rapport, and that a solid and trusting relationship between therapist and client developed. Although Levinson’s presentation received mixed reactions, he continued his research into the human-animal bond and became a leading figure in the AAT field (Schaefer, 2002).

Recently dog assisted services have become topical with media interest in the use of dogs across a broad spectrum of therapies and various media have featured dog assisted services articles that promote positive stories on the use of dogs in AAT. For example, on June 25th 2011, the Australian newspaper, The Age provided a depiction of a Sydney based psychiatrist who used her dog in counselling sessions to facilitate rapport with clients (Medew, 2011) (Appendix 1). Another news based article appeared in the science magazine Cosmos on June 23rd 2011 (Macdonald, 2011) (Appendix 2) and discussed the extraordinary ability that dogs have in detecting the most subtle cues in human behaviour, possibly more so than our primate relatives (Macdonald, 2011), a claim also echoed elsewhere in the research (Miklosi, Topal, & Csanyi, 2007; Walsh, 2009). In August 2011 CBS New York and The Age newspaper discussed another animal assisted service, namely that of the current trend to use therapy dogs to assist children or vulnerable witnesses give sensitive evidence in court. A golden retriever, Rosie, was featured as one of the first judicially approved courtroom dogs working in New York (Ferry, 2011; Glaberson, 2011) (Appendix 3). Again in 2011, on September 10th, commemorating the 10th anniversary of the World Trade Centre terrorist attacks, the New York Daily published an article acknowledging the work conducted by therapy dogs deployed to the disaster site to assist or provide comfort to people and families impacted by the September 11 tragedy. The article featured a photo of Tikva, a Keeshond dog and initial AAT respondent to the 9/11 site, riding in a car with other first line respondents from the September 11th rescue and recovery efforts (Sacks, 2011) (Appendix 4).
On December 14th, 2012, in Newtown, Connecticut, a school shooting occurred which resulted in twenty elementary level children and six adults killed. The NBC news described the event as the second deadliest school shooting in American history (Hurd, 2012) and whilst many media sources covered the story in considerable depth, a focus on therapy dogs deployed to assist people at the event were reported by many journalists. For example, the NBC (Hurd, 2012), the National Geographic Daily (Fiegl, 2012) (Appendix 5) and the New York Daily (Cunningham & Edelman, 2012) broadcasted footage during the days following the shootings which featured positively the work conducted by the therapy dog teams with those people affected by the trauma. A common theme throughout the broadcasts was the ability that the dogs had to connect with traumatized children and how these children tended to confide their story to the dogs. The National Geographic Daily further explored the human-dog bond by discussing its evolution and cited research that indicates positive effects from the human-animal interaction such as lowered blood pressure and the release of oxytocin in the human partner (Cunningham & Edelman, 2012). The dogs as assistant respondents in the Connecticut recovery effort were also promoted in a broadcast half way around the globe by the Australian based news group, The Sydney 7 News (Irwin, n.d.). Recently, in April 2013, the Bozeman daily chronicle published an article specifically on the use of AACR dogs and promoted them as a service within their local community (Walden, 2013) (Appendix 6).

Therefore it appears that dogs for use in therapy and crisis response have attracted attention and incited some contemporary research into establishing empirically their significance in the facilitation of the healing process. Indeed in 1988, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) landmark Technology Assessment Workshop on Health Benefits of Pets proposed that future studies investigating human health should consider the presence or absence of a pet in a human’s life and the nature of this relationship (Beck & Katcher, 2003). Apparently the human-animal bond is significant and needs to be factored into decision making on matters affecting people or society’s wellbeing.
To illustrate this point further, whilst Australian statistics indicate a decrease in pet ownership, Australia has one of the highest levels of pet ownership in the world with more pets than people living in this country (Australian Companion Animal Council, 2009). The Australian pet industry, in 2007 reported sales of $4.7 billion and contributed 44,7000 jobs to the employment sector. By way of comparison, the chocolate confectionary industry reported sales of $1.5 million and the meat for human consumption industry showed sales of $4.8 million in 2007 (Australian Companion Animal Council, 2009). The 2006 National People and Pet Survey stated that more than half of Australian households have a pet dog or cat (Headey, 2006) and although pet ownership seems to have declined over recent years, expenditure on pets has increased indicating greater quality of care for pets and their importance in society (Australian Companion Animal Council, 2009). Dogs enrich people’s lives by providing companionship, essential services as such vision or hearing, acting as social enablers and improving cardiovascular health (Australian Companion Animal Council, 2009). In many ways, dogs’ relationships with people parallel relationships that humans have with other humans. In effect, “Pets therefore could be said to deliver on some of the most fundamental human needs” (Petcare Information and Advisory Service, 1992, p.14).

1.8 Thesis structure

Chapter one provides an overview of the AACR, crisis response and crisis counselling fields. Key definitions of each field are provided as well as background information sufficient to understand how they relate to each other and the present investigation. The purpose, rationale, study aims and objectives are provided, and human-dog bond is contextualised.

Theoretical perspectives and studies relevant to the human-dog bond are outlined in chapter two. This chapter also provides an overview of the literature and research in the AACR and counselling fields in order to establish a theoretical base for the current investigation.

Chapter three discusses the paradigm, methodological position and methods used in the present investigation. A rationale and justification for the selection of these approaches is provided. Details regarding the collection of data, selection and recruitment of participants, and data analysis processes are also discussed.
Chapters four and five present key findings from the data. Characteristics and socio-demographic details of the participant groups are presented and discussed in chapter four as well as emergent themes from in-depth interview data from a sample size of thirty participants. The emphasis of chapter five is to present research findings from the observational field trips conducted in California, Montana and Oregon. Researcher reflexivity and participation in some field trip activities add further depth to the emergent themes as well as conceptualising AACR and its complexities.

Chapter six entails a detailed discussion of the findings presented in chapters four and five. The findings are discussed and contextualised within theoretical perspectives relevant to the AACR, crisis counselling and the human-dog relationship fields. A case for AACR as a new crisis response modality is presented and an evidence base for its practice developed.

Lastly chapter seven outlines methodological limitations of the study and recommendations for future studies. Implications for AACR development for the crisis counselling fields and animal assisted services within the Australian context are also explored.
Chapter 2: Literature review and theoretical perspectives

This chapter provides a theoretical and research base for the current investigation. Little theory or research exists with regard to AACR, however, AAT, the human-dog bond, social science, health and the counselling fields were explored and a base developed from these.

2.1 Animal Assisted Crisis Response: The search for research

Regular research and literature searches were conducted throughout the duration of this doctoral study, from 2011 to 2013, with more in-depth systematic searches performed on a yearly basis. Evidently minimal research has been conducted on AACR with only three articles located that were largely descriptive. Two articles provided an overview, introduction and operationalisation of AACR (Greenbaum, 2006; Shubert, 2012). The third was a document outlining the AACR National Standards for practice, training and regulatory requirements for AACR membership organisations throughout America (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010).

With regard to the searches conducted, Tables 1-3 provide an indication of keywords entered, databases or search engines used and results obtained in 2011, 2012 and 2013. Whilst no empirical based research was found on AACR, there was an abundance of literature on AAT. Given that AACR dogs must initially be AAT qualified and actively practicing before they can be considered for specialisation to AACR work, the AAT literature was therefore explored in order to establish a theoretical context for this investigation.
Table 1

*AACR research and literature searches - 2011*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Database</th>
<th>Keywords used</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anthropology Plus</td>
<td>animal assisted crisis response</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dog*crisis response</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dog*emotional support</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dog*crisis counselling</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google Scholar</td>
<td>crisis dogs Australia</td>
<td>many websites but not AACR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>allied dog services</td>
<td>many articles but no AACR data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>animal assisted crisis response</td>
<td>USA based AACR organisation websites and newspaper articles, no research data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Trobe University Library</td>
<td>animal assisted crisis response</td>
<td>Animal Assisted Therapy in Counselling (Chandler, 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>catalogue books</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ProQuest Central (PQ)</td>
<td>animal assisted crisis response</td>
<td>10 USA based newspaper articles, no research data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>psycARTICLES</td>
<td>animal assisted crisis response</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dog*crisis support</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dog*crisis counselling</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences – Proquest</td>
<td>animal assisted crisis response</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>military collection</td>
<td>dog*crisis support</td>
<td>5 articles – not relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dog*</td>
<td>10 articles – not relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>psycINFO</td>
<td>animal assisted crisis response</td>
<td>Greenbaum,(2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dog*crisis support</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dog*emotional support</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dog*crisis counselling</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

**AACR research and literature searches - 2012**

Regular searches conducted as outlined in 2011, however, Antrozoology.org was added as a database and public or victim impact statements were also explored as a source that could potentially yield data on the use of AACR services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Database</th>
<th>Keywords used</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anthrozoology.org (Petcare Information and Advisory Service)</td>
<td>animal assisted crisis response&lt;br&gt;crisis dogs&lt;br&gt;dog<em>disaster response&lt;br&gt;dog</em>September 11th</td>
<td>nil&lt;br&gt;3 articles - not relevant&lt;br&gt;nil&lt;br&gt;nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google Scholar</td>
<td>comfort dogs&lt;br&gt;public impact statements and comfort dogs&lt;br&gt;victim impact statements, comfort dogs</td>
<td>many articles but most were concerned with animal physiology and welfare – not relevant&lt;br&gt;nil&lt;br&gt;many articles – most concerned with use of AAT dogs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3

**AACR research and literature searches - 2013**

Ongoing searches conducted as outlined in the 2011, 2012 tables, however, in March, 2013 a search was also conducted by Western Health librarians in an effort to locate data on AACR.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Database</th>
<th>Keywords used</th>
<th>Results returned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>psycINFO</td>
<td>animal assisted crisis response</td>
<td>6 articles – only one was AACR specific (Greenbaum, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web of Knowledge</td>
<td>animal assisted crisis response</td>
<td>only one reference cited article by Greenbaum (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinahl indexes Anthrozoos (Medline and E-Journals)</td>
<td>animal assisted crisis response</td>
<td>7 articles – nil AACR data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Sciences of Human-Animal Interactions, 2012 July, Cambridge, UK Conference papers Australian Anthrozoology Research Foundation (AARF) anthrozoology.foundation.org</td>
<td>all papers were explored</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google Scholar</td>
<td>animal assisted crisis response, disaster response and dogs</td>
<td>Greenbaum, 2006, 6 articles – no AACR data Shubert, 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2 Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT): Theoretical perspectives in the health and social science fields

There are a number of theoretical perspectives which attempt to explain the importance or meaningfulness of the human-animal bond. The perspectives have been grouped into three broad areas and are discussed under the following headings. Bio-evolutionary-naturalistic, quality of life, and attachment-relationship.

Bio-evolutionary and Naturalistic

Wilson’s biophilia hypothesis proposes that humans have an innate attentiveness to the world around them, that this attentiveness enables them to detect and decipher environmental cues, and that human survival depends on this innate ability (Odendaal, 2000; Wilson, 1984). Consequently, humans will tend to bond with animals that are also particularly skilled in environmental attentiveness as this enhances human survival (Miklosi, Topal, & Csanyi, 2007; Odendaal, 2000; Schaefer, 2002). Accordingly, if an animal is at rest, this signals safety and security for the human. Relating this back to AAT, one could surmise that the presence of an animal at rest throughout the psychotherapeutic session might elicit calmness, reassurance or promote healing in clients (Schaefer, 2002). The biophilia hypothesis also suggests that humans favour certain animals on the basis of how these animals fulfil the role of “surrogate kin” (Wilson, 1984, p. 126). Dogs in particular make excellent surrogate kin because they readily accept humans as one of their pack, quickly endowing the alpha dog status to the bigger dog, the human (Ferreyra, 1999). Once the pack structure is established and the human has dominance, the dog thereafter is happy to co-exist in subservience to his/her human master and participate in human-like rituals (Wilson, 1984).

Also relevant within this theoretical perspective are studies that address whether dogs have “theory of mind” (Custance & Mayer, 2012; Siegel, 2004; Udell, Dorey, & Wynne, 2011). Essentially “theory of mind” is the human capacity to put ourselves in another person’s frame of reference (Siegel, 2004), psychologically speaking, the ability for empathy (Rogers, 1951, 1957, 1962, 1965). These internal structures enable humans to have cognitive representations of another person’s state of mind. Furthermore this mirror neuron
system has evolved in humans and links perceptions to behaviour. For example, observing an intentional act such as raising a cup to drink results in the same mirror neurons firing in the person observing the act (Siegel, 2004).

A body of research suggests that dogs may have “theory of mind”. There are seven “theory of mind” methodologies and dogs have repeatedly performed at high levels on five of these seven (Udell, Dorey, & Wynne, 2011). Specifically dogs have performed on imitation, deception, role taking, seeing and knowing (guesser-knower) and seeing and attending (begging) tests. Findings from Udell et al., (2011) also support the possibility of “theory of mind” in dogs, their study found that dogs (pet dogs, shelter dogs, wolf) are capable of performing perspective taking tasks as well as demonstrating a capacity to respond to human intentional states. This field, however, is controversial, particularly in regard to the empirical demonstration that dogs are aware of another’s knowledge states given the nonverbal limitation of the species. There were some dogs in the Udell et al., (2011) study that did not display this capacity with researchers stipulating that “it is not enough to ask whether a species demonstrates theory of mind or advanced social cognition; one has to specify the conditions under which this may occur” (Udell et al., 2011, p. 300).

Custance and Mayer (2012) investigated empathy and empathic type behaviours in domestic dogs. In their study they determined empathy to be a process where emotional distress perceived in others triggers similar emotions in the observer and results in “other” orientated behaviour rather than “self” orientated behaviours. The investigators proposed that empathic behaviour would be the offer of support in response to a distressed person’s behaviour (crying). They hypothesised that if dogs sought comfort for themselves they would approach their owners (self-orientated behaviour) as opposed to an empathic response where the dog would approach the crying person (other-orientated behaviour). They also proposed that an empathic approach was more likely to display behavioural characteristics and dog body language that was subdued and submissive rather than playful, alert or neutral. Their study involved 18 medium size domestic dogs, 12 of which were adopted from rescue centres. None of these dogs had any particular or specialised training. The human stranger in the experiment was unknown to the dogs and did not interact with them. The dogs were exposed to three experimental conditions. Their owner and the
stranger talking, humming and crying, each taking turns in the behaviours. Findings were significant for more dogs approaching during the crying compared to humming, with no dogs approaching during the talking condition. All dogs displayed no preference in responding to their owner over the stranger when these people engaged in crying behaviours with all approaching the person crying. Of the 15 dogs that approached during the crying, 13 met the criteria of having done so in a submissive manner together with nuzzling, licking and sniffing behaviours. Whilst the investigators acknowledged inherent limitations in the use of nonverbal subjects and speculation on their mental representations, nonetheless some interesting results were presented for future research this field.

Quality of life

Quality of life theories attempt to understand the human-dog bond by proposing that the human-animal interaction has a positive impact on the health of humans. Systematic reviews of the literature indicate that the human-animal bond and utilisation of human-dog interventions such as AAA or AAT are associated with improved physical health, self-esteem, attitudinal behaviours, and social connection (DeCourcey et al., 2010; Ferreyra, 1999; Matuszek, 2010; Odendaal, 2000). In a landmark study, Odendaal (2000) investigated the possibility of a physiological basis for the affiliation between humans and dogs. Neurochemical (B-endorphin, oxytocin, prolactin, phenylacetic acid, dopamine and cortisol) plasma levels and blood pressure were measured before and after human dog interaction in both control and experimental groups. Participants involved 18 healthy humans and 18 healthy dogs. Findings showed a significant decrease in blood pressure when participants had experienced between 5-24 minutes of positive human-dog interaction suggesting support for the use of dogs in therapy. Of note were that dogs from this study also showed similar positive physiological effects, namely the dogs’ blood pressures were also lowered emphasising the symbiotic nature, or biochemical exchange, of the human-dog bond. The Friedmann, Katcher, Thomas, Lynch, and Messent (1983) study similarly found a lowering of blood pressure in children when dogs were present during experimental conditions. Friedmann et al., (1983) hypothesized that the presence of a dog could reduce stress levels in children introduced to potentially stressful reading situations. Experimental conditions involved dogs present either at the beginning or in the latter half of the experimentation
phase during which children were required to read. The children did not touch, talk to, or engage with the animal. From 36 child participants, with an average age of 12, they found that a dog’s presence lowered blood pressure and that this effect was greater when the dog was present in the first half for both reading and resting blood pressures.

The other frequently cited landmark study indicating support to the quality of life theoretical position for human-animal intervention was conducted by Friedmann, Katcher, Lynch, and Thomas (1980). This investigation examined the effect that social supports or social isolation had on the survival of patients hospitalised with MI (myocardial infarction) or AP (angina pectoris). The measures used contained a variety of social, health and demographic variables however the researchers were also interested in the association between pet ownership and survival rates post hospitalisation.

Based on 92 participants, the findings revealed that the participant population had an 84% survival rate one year post hospitalisation. From the original 92 participants, 53 (58%) had one or more pets. Furthermore from the 39 (42%) that did not have pets, 11 (28%) had died during the year following hospitalisation compared to only 3 (6%) of the 53 participants who did have pets. The researchers presented a compelling case for the important health effects of companionship and social affiliation of pets. Whilst they stated that pet ownership could not substitute for the benefits of human relationships, they recommended the therapeutic use of pets for people with coronary heart disease.

Another study complementing the finding that pet companionship or affiliation provides health benefits to humans revealed that pet ownership among the elderly (i.e., 65 years or older) was associated with lower utilisation of visits to physicians (Siegel, 1990). In particular, Siegel’s (1990) study also indicated that pet owners, who had dogs as their pet, had a qualitatively different relationship with their dog that provided a stress buffer not evident in participants who had pets other than dogs. DeCourcey et al. (2010) reviewed AAT literature with a specific focus on its applicability in critical care health settings such as emergency departments and intensive care units. They concluded that overall, the literature supports the use of AAT in hospital settings. One of the studies reviewed by DeCourcey et al., (2010) was a study concerned with well-being, quality of care and satisfaction among children hospitalised with cancer, their parents and the nursing staff of a paediatric
A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION INTO DOGS SERVING ON AACR TEAMS: ADVANCES IN CRISIS COUNSELLING

oncology ward that implemented an animal assisted program (Gagnon, Bouchard, Landry, Belles-Isles, Fortier, & Fillion, 2004). The program enabled children to spend a whole day with a dog whilst hospitalised for cancer treatment. Findings showed that whilst participants were mixed in responses regarding how the animal therapy benefited them, 100% of them responded affirmatively to being visited again by an AAT dog.

Furthermore, the literature indicates that cancer patients tend to use Complementary-Alternative Medical (CAM) interventions for quality of life reasons such as the need to be treated holistically and as an opportunity to be active or make choices about the nature of their care (Johnson, Meadows, Haubner, & Sevedge, 2003). The National Institute of Health (NIH) has defined a CAM technique or intervention “as a process that may facilitate the mind’s capacity to affect bodily function and symptoms” (Johnson et al., 2003, p. 60). As such Johnson et al., (2003) proposed that human-animal interaction met that criteria and investigated it as well as two other CAM interventions with cancer inpatients. The other two interventions comprised of a visit from a friendly human and a quiet reading session. Participants were randomly assigned one of the three 15 minute interventions and results yielded a statistically significant difference between the dog visits and the reading interventions. No statistical significance was found between the dog or human visits, however, more participants from the dog visitation group reported that the dog visits gave them a greater sense of being comforted, feeling happier and having more energy as compared to participants from the human visitor group.

Attachment and relationship

These theoretical perspectives used to understand the human-animal bond are concerned with the attachment relationship between parties. Attachment theory conceptualises the affectional bonds that humans form and provides a basis for understanding personality development, emotional attachment or detachment and emotional distresses, examples being separation anxiety or bereavement (Bowlby, 1977). An essential tenet is that a child’s psychological health is a function of the mother-child relationship, for example a healthy psychological state develops in a child that experiences a nurturing mother-child relationship (Bretherton, 1992; Wallin, 2007) Attachment theory emphasises that the bond needs to satisfy both partners, that the mother can be a mother
figure or substitute, and that factors such as social networks, family environment, health, economic issues and trans-generational attachment issues from the mother’s childhood can also significantly influence the bond (Bretherton, 1992). As a theory it acknowledges the human need, propensity and behaviour to form strong bonds with others. Also worth noting is that it was informed by research conducted in the biological fields with animal attachment behaviours (Prato-Previde, Custance, Spiezio, & Sabatini, 2003; Bretherton, 1992). This theoretical perspective has further relevance to the present investigation because the human-dog relationship for humans tends to emotionally resemble the parent-child bond (Belk, 1996; Prato-Previde, Custance, Spiezio, & Sabatini, 2003) and in evolutionary terms, dogs have been modified to look and behave like tame affectionate children requiring care (Beck, 2013; Prato-Previde, Custance, Spiezio, & Sabatini, 2003).

Attunement is another aspect of attachment and refers to one’s perceptual awareness of self, other, and the connection between these entities, with regard to the human-dog bond, the connection between the species (Odendaal, 2000). The underlying assumption is that the stronger the connection, or attachment, the greater the impact on the relationship (Odendaal, 2000). Theoretically from an evolutionary point of view, social species have a need for attachment and it is this drive that enables them to form successful social interactions and connections (Odendaal, 2000; Schaefer, 2002). Accordingly, the greater the need for attachment and the more social behaviour a particular animal exhibits, the more success that species will have in bonding with humans (Odendaal, 2000; Wilson, 1984). Both humans and dogs display a strong need for connection and social adaptability, they behave in complementary social ways toward each other so that the two way fulfilment of need is met and successful attachment made. Furthermore humans who have dogs tend to be perceived more positively by other humans and hence experience more social interactions when they are with their dogs (Schneider & Harley, 2006).

Attachment theory is also relevant for this investigation because it is used as a framework for understanding and treating people affected by disasters (Kobak, Cassidy, & Zir, 2004; Sable, 1995). Using Bowlby’s attachment theory for adults diagnosed with PTSD, Sable (1995) conceptualises PTSD symptoms as a response related to the preservation, or loss of, attachments. For example anxiety and intrusive memories are seen as behavioural
responses to the actual or threatened loss of the attachment object. Numbing and avoidant behaviours are seen as behavioural responses aimed at conserving energy, promoting self-protection and enhancing survival. The more intense the actual or perceived loss, the more heightened the behavioural responses. Using the attachment framework, an essential aspect of treatment therefore becomes the provision of a secure base so survivors can process events and re-establish meanings (Bowlby, 1977; Sable, 1995; Wallin, 2007). Also worth considering as a treatment aspect is whether the survivor was alone at the time of impact. Sable (1995) spoke with survivors of the 1994 Los Angeles earthquake and found that being alone at times of crisis can increase the risk of harm and danger for survivors. Many survivors also expressed lingering fears of continuing to be alone.

Similarly Kobak, Cassidy, and Zir (2004) use Bowlby’s attachment theory for understanding and treating trauma survivors. They equally consider behavioural responses to trauma as attachment reactions, however, their “attachment-related trauma” (Kobak et al., 2004, p. 388) conceptualisation is broader and encompasses behavioural responses characteristic of PTSD, abandonment loss, rejection, and sexual assault perpetrated by caregivers. The severity of an “attachment-related trauma” is influenced by an individual’s developmental level at the time of impact, contextual factors (safety, social support, trust) and expectations that the individual has on attachment figures. Subsequently important implications for treatment are to provide contextual factors that facilitate recovery and attachment figures with ability to form working alliances.

“Social lubricants” is a term applied to dogs because of their ability to facilitate social interaction between humans (Schneider & Harley, 2006, p.130). Those humans who are accompanied by companion animals are additionally bestowed with a halo effect because they are perceived as having positive attributes (Schneider & Harley, 2006). In psychotherapy, an important aspect of its success centres upon the therapeutic relationship which in turn rests upon client perceptions of the therapist (Norcross, Beutler, & Levant, 2006; Rogers, 1951, 1957, 1962, 1965). Schneider and Harley (2006) explored how the presence of a companion dog influenced perceptions of psychotherapists. Their investigation exposed 85 university students to four video recorded scenarios of qualified therapists in counselling rooms with and without their real pet dogs. Measurements
administered included The Counsellor Rating Form – Short Version (CRF-S: Corrigan & Schmidt, 1983), Disclosure to Therapist Inventory – III (Farber & Hall, 2002), The Pet Attitude Scale (Templer, Salter, Dickey, Baldwin, & Veleber, 1981) and a background demographic questionnaire.

The results indicated that therapists accompanied by dogs were rated significantly higher on the CRF-S (i.e. they were perceived to be more effective therapists) and were also perceived as more trustworthy, reinforcing the halo effect of animals being present in therapy sessions. Of particular interest was that this effect was strongest for participants least positive towards therapists, which is consistent with the research indicating that AAT is most beneficial with resistant or difficult clients (Medew, 2011; O’Callaghan, 2008) and most often used in prisoner, disability, paediatric, psychiatric and geriatric communities (Matuszek, 2010). Another finding from the Schneider and Harley (2006) study was that attributes given to therapists were in regard to perceived personality factors and not their clinical competence, again echoing the halo effect that dogs are perceived to bestow onto the humans they are with. Recommendations were made for future studies to investigate what actually changes in human perceptions when dogs are present. This question was addressed by the present investigation’s exploration of AACR dogs and is discussed in this thesis.

2.3 Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT): Relevance to the counselling and psychotherapy fields

There is a growing research base that indicates AAT is beneficial and has diversity in application as part of the counselling process. The research indicates that it can assist with behavioural problems, social behaviours, self-esteem, anxiety, depression, counselling participation, and psychological wellbeing (Chandler, Portrie-Bethke, Barrio Minton, Fernando, & O'Callaghan, 2010; Imber-Black, 2009; O'Callaghan, 2008). In a review of the literature O'Callaghan (2008) identified 18 primary techniques and 10 primary intentions of AAT and used these to construct a survey which was administered to participants recruited from three American databases which identified them as mental health professionals who also provided AAT. The study explored animal assisted techniques and interventions used by mental health professionals and the therapeutic interactions between animal, mental health
professional and client. Therapy animals used by participants of the study were dogs, cats, horses, a mini donkey and a guinea pig. Findings suggested that an animal’s presence alone tended to provide therapeutic benefit, animals were frequently used as metaphors for therapeutic stories, that petting or touching was a frequent and distinct AAT technique used in therapy sessions and that a therapy animal assists in building rapport between the therapist and client. Table 4 represents a summary of the AAT techniques and intentions identified by O’Callaghan (2008) and as represented in the follow up study by Chandler, Portrie-Bethke, Barrio Minton, Fernando, and O’Callaghan (2010).

Table 4

AAT techniques and intentions: AAT techniques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>18 AAT techniques</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor reflects/comments on client’s relationship with therapy animal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor encourages client to interact with therapy animal by touching/patting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor encourages client to play with therapy animal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor encourages client to tell therapy animal about their distress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor and client engage therapy animal outside of traditional therapeutic environment. For example taking the animal for a walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor interacts with therapy animal to perform tricks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor encourages client to ask therapy animal to perform tricks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor encourages client to perform commands with therapy animal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor comments on spontaneous client-animal interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor shares information about animal’s history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor shares other history related to therapy animal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor shares animal stories and metaphors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor encourages clients to make up stories about the animal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor utilises client-therapy animal relationship. For example “if this were your best friend what would he know about you that no-one else would?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor asks client to recreate experience where the therapy animal plays a specific role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor has a therapy animal present without any direct interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor creates specific/unstructured activities with therapy animal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor allows therapy animal to engage with client in spontaneous actions that facilitate therapeutic discussion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION INTO DOGS SERVING ON AACR TEAMS: ADVANCES IN CRISIS COUNSELLING

AAT techniques and intentions: AAT intentions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10 AAT intentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building rapport in the therapeutic relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating insight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing client’s social skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing client’s relationship skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing client’s self confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modelling specific behaviours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging sharing of feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural reward for client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing trust within the therapeutic environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating feelings of safety in the therapeutic environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chandler et al. (2010) explored further the AAT techniques and intentions identified by O’Callaghan (2008). Essentially their exploration sought to identify how the AAT techniques and intentions were consistent with guiding principles of various counselling models. They outlined guiding principles from a variety of counselling models and provided convincing rationale for the compatibility of AAT techniques and intentions to these counselling principles. For example, Rogerian guiding principles of congruence, empathy and unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1957, 1962, 1965), underpinnings of the client centred counselling approach, were considered analogous to AAT intentions and techniques used to facilitate the therapeutic relationship. To elaborate further, by congruence Rogers (1965) meant that therapists were being genuine without facade and open in the relationship with their client. Empathy is a condition in the relationship where therapists are able to experience the private inner world of their client, accurately reflect this to the client and not lose their separateness or independence from the client (Rogers, 1962). By unconditional positive regard, Rogers (1965) describes a condition in the therapeutic relationship where therapists express warmth, positivity and unconditional acceptance of their client as a total human being with all their potentialities (Rogers, 1965). The fundamental hypothesis in Rogerian therapy is that all three conditions in a therapeutic relationship are sufficient and necessary for personality change to occur (Rogers, 1957).
Many counselling models were explored by Chandler et al. (2010), however, Table 5 provides a summation of compatibilities that they illustrated between AAT techniques, AAT intentions and the Rogerian, Adlerian, Freudian and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) counselling models.

Table 5

*Compatibility of AAT techniques and intentions to Rogerian, Adlerian, Freudian and Cognitive Behavioural counselling models*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counselling framework – Guiding principles</th>
<th>Compatibility with AAT technique and/or intention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rogerian Person Centred Counselling:</strong> A non-directive counselling approach using congruence, empathy and unconditional positive regard to assist clients achieve greater self-acceptance thereby facilitating fewer psychological distortions in the here and now. The counselling relationship is the primary medium for the healing process.</td>
<td>AAT intentions and techniques facilitate therapeutic rapport and relationship building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT):</strong> Challenges irrational beliefs, feelings and behaviours. CBT counsellors operate as teachers and work with clients to challenge maladaptive styles and assist them integrate new ways of being.</td>
<td>AAT techniques relevant under this framework are building relationships, enhancing trust, facilitating clients to share feelings, role play and skill practise. For example the use of AAT animals as a prop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adlerian Counselling.</strong> Human nature is motivated by social connectedness. Humans strive for social belonging, social achievement, social significance and social superiority. Human behaviours are primarily motivated by these needs and will be manifested in either functional or dysfunctional ways.</td>
<td>AAT assists clients to enhance social relationship behaviours, models social skills, and provides immediate feedback to assist clients identify, adapt and integrate new behaviours.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table 5 Compatibility of AAT techniques and intentions to Rogerian, Adlerian, Freudian and Cognitive Behavioural counselling models: continued**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Freudian Psychoanalytic Counselling:</strong></th>
<th>AAT animals provide additional opportunity for client exploration by operating as transitional objects for transference. For example, clients use the animal as an object to transfer and express feelings to. Both therapists and clients reflect on these transference behaviours thereby facilitating client self-awareness and insight.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freudian psychoanalytic counselling is concerned with unconscious biological and instinctual forces. These forces are often in conflict with one another, go through various developmental phases and provide the driving force for people’s psychological states. This counselling model seeks to make clients aware of these unconscious forces and struggles. The aim is to bring equilibrium to the client’s internal states. It is a long term process and clients are encouraged to talk undisrupted (free associate). Throughout the process clients shift emotions onto the psychotherapist, a process called transference. Transference is an essential component of psychoanalysis whereby therapists serve as transitional objects to facilitate the therapeutic process and healing for their clients.</td>
<td>AAT animals also provide counter transference data. For example an animal displaying skittish behaviour toward a client provides potential material for the client’s journey of self-discovery.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recommendations provided by Chandler et al., (2010) were that the application of AAT be given serious consideration by mental health professionals, with a stipulation that both animals and clients are screened and assessed as appropriate for AAT intervention. Regarding the appropriateness of AAT in counselling settings, O'Callaghan (2008) found that mental health professionals registered as AAT providers did not use animals for all clients. Some of the reasons practitioners reported for not using animals in therapy with certain clients were allergies or possibility of infection (Zoonosis), client preference and client appropriateness. These reasons are also reported elsewhere in the literature (Edney, 1995; Hooker, Freeman, & Stewart, 2002; Parshall, 2003).
Another counselling approach that tends to favour the use of AAT dogs is family therapy and in particular, therapy work with children. Limber-Black (2009) maintains that for many years her family therapy practice and animal co-therapist have transformed, soothed, coaxed and supported many people. Imber-Black (2009) believes that therapy animals facilitate difficult conversations for family members and that for many families, their memories and relationships are often contoured by memories of their pets. Abrams (n.d.) a former psychology professor, current practising psychotherapist, and AAT as well as AACR certified dog handler states that she treats her clients, in particular families and children, “using eight paws, two tails, two noses and four ears” (Abrams, n.d, p.3). Abrams (n.d.) outlines many first hand case studies where learning to read her AAT dog’s body language alerted her to therapeutic subtleties that she may otherwise have missed and subsequently treated differently in clients. She describes her AAT co-therapist dogs as “scent machines” and “seeing heart dogs” able to pick up on clients’ emotional states, at times long before she could (Abrams, n.d, p.7).

Belk (1996) explored the way pet owners talk about their pets, how they interact with their pets, and the effects that these pets have on their lives. Data from in-depth interviews and field studies of 40 pet owners were analysed and a number of predominant metaphoric themes emerged, one being the metaphor “pets as part of the self.” In this theme, participants saw their pet as an extension of themselves. For example, if an outside person criticised a pet owner’s animal, the owner reported becoming defensive, experienced self-criticism and personal shame. Conversely if an outside person commented positively and admired a pet owner’s animal, the owner experienced self-pride and joy. Another metaphoric theme that emerged was that of “pets as a family member.” In this theme, anthropomorphism (projecting human traits onto animals) was demonstrated by the extension of family rituals to include pets. These findings are particularly intriguing when considering the use of AAT animals in psychotherapeutic settings because if pets are considered extensions of self, or extensions of family members and significant others, can they also be seen as extensions of one’s therapist or crisis counsellor? This present research, that is, a qualitative investigation into dogs serving on AACR teams, explored whether dogs were perceived to be extensions of crisis workers.
Metaphors represent deeply embedded ways of viewing one’s world with the metaphorical themes from Belk’s (1996) data clearly illustrating that participants had a deep love, commitment and complex relationship with animals. Belk (1996) states that:

If pets act as part of our extended self, they represent a divided self that is both civilized and tame, well-behaved and animalistic, controlled and chaotic. If this is a mixed metaphor, it reflects the way we view ourselves in the contemporary world (p. 140).

The idea that pets hold symbolic and metaphoric meaning for people, cultures and communities (Belk, 1996; Walsh, 2009; Woloy, 1990) raises psychologically profound questions about the role that dogs can play, particularly AACR dogs, in times of trauma when people’s prevailing metaphors or assumptions about life, for example, that bad things do not happen to good people or that we have control over our lives, can be shattered (Gordon, 2004). Furthermore prevailing psychological assumptions for well-being are formed within social and community contexts (Bowlby, 1977; Gordon, 2004) and in times of crisis become fragmented, requiring re-formulation or re-creation for the recovery process to progress. Individuals that have access to supportive communities, and communities that actively communicate to reconstruct new social structures, do better in recovery than those where people are isolated, lack information or systems with which to form relational bonds (Gordon, 2004). The present investigation explored the actual, perceived, metaphoric and symbolic roles assigned to AACR dogs in assisting people affected by crisis re-formulate or create new prevailing assumptions about their world.

2.4. From Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) to Animal Assisted Crisis Response (AACR)

As a new discipline AACR targets causalities of disasters or critical incidents and first line respondents (Greenbaum, 2006). New to the crisis response field, AACR in principle is a support service to be requested and used by respondent organisations to assist people in crisis. The AACR philosophical foundation of support, comfort, crisis response and management aligns it as a collaborator to the early psychological intervention, psychological first aide and Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) fields. These fields, particularly the CISM approach, are interventions implemented shortly after a crisis and are based on psychological crisis management objectives (Mitchell, 2011). Furthermore, the CISM model
provides a multi-component approach with a series of intervention juncture points from pre-incident to post-incident support. For example, it provides pre-incident education, Rest Information and Transition Services (RITS), Immediate Small Group Support (ISGS), Crisis Management Briefings (CMB), Powerful Event Group Support (PEGS), follow up and referral (Mitchell, 2011). It is neither therapy nor treatment, but rather a support service for people in crisis (Robinson, 2004) where the primarily purpose is to assist individuals return to adaptive functioning (Mitchell, 2011).

AACR as a distinct service modality originated from the 9/11 response and support efforts (Greenbaum, 2006). Other sources, however, cite examples where AAT dogs were used in crisis response work prior to the 9/11 event (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010; Shubert, 2012). Incidents cited include the 1995 request from FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) for the deployment of AAT dog teams to assist recovery efforts following the Murrah Building bombing in Oklahoma City and the 1998 request from NOVA (National Organisation for Victim Assistance) for AAT assistance at the Thurston High School shooting in Oregon. AAT teams were requested in order to provide emotional support for first line respondents and primary causalities at the Oregon incident. What resulted was that counsellors at the scene reported an immediate sense of calm in people experiencing traumatic stress when the dogs were present (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010). Consequently, Ehlers, one of the initial AAT dog team respondents to the Thurston High School shooting, worked with NOVA to develop the AACR concept and specialised training required for AACR workers. In 1999, Ehlers founded the first AACR organisation, HOPE Pets, with its mission to ensure the safe, professional and effective deployment of animal assisted services to crisis events (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010). As the AACR concept developed and training modules became further specialised, Ehlers recognised the overlap with SAR (Search and Rescue) dogs so the word Pets was dropped thereby becoming HOPE AACR (HOPE AACR, n.d.).

In the aftermath of the September 11th twin tower disaster, 500 animal-handler response teams from a variety of AAT and AAA (Animal Assisted Activity) membership organisations were deployed to New Jersey, New York City and Virginia (Greenbaum 2006; Shubert, 2012). Furthermore Greenbaum (2006) maintains that for many of these teams, the AACR process and training began that day. Although the vast majority of animal handler teams in attendance were AAT and AAA affiliated and trained, even non-affiliated animal-
handler teams turned up to assist. The significant contributions provided by these teams placed national recognition on the value of animal assisted services within the American crisis response community.

Since 2001, AACR services have been used by American local and national emergency services with examples including teams deployed to high school shootings, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, train derailments, floods, fires, explosions, plane crashes, and tornados. Furthermore specialist services such as the police force, correctional jail facilities, FEMA, NOVA, Red Cross, and the military have recognised the value of these human-animal teams and have also requested their services in deployments to assist people in crisis. In 2010, as a response to the proliferation of use and the ongoing need for AACR deployments the National Standards Committee for Animal-Assisted Crisis Response developed the Animal-Assisted Crisis Response National Standards document (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010).

Briefly, the AACR National Standards document classifies AACR dogs as working dogs, and AACR as a specialist intervention. The document outlines training, evaluation and ongoing professional development requirements for the animal-handler teams, the AACR team leader, and certified AACR organisations. It discusses professionalism, ethics, conduct issues and expectations for the field. Training instructors are required to be appropriately qualified and experienced in fields such as the American Incident Command System (ICS), AACR and CISM. Training for AACR teams consist of core units that cover areas such as disaster and crisis concepts, CISM and crisis intervention concepts, care of the caregiver, canine handling, team leadership, simulated crisis exposure exercises and stress management for the AACR canine. The document further stipulates additional minimum training required within the 1st year of service, for example, Incident Command System (ICS), pet first aid and Cardiac Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), and human first aid and CPR (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010). Clearly the AACR National Standards document indicates the considerable development, responsibilities and accountabilities required of AACR as a new emergency service. Also evident is the complementarity between AACR and CISM services, namely the animal-assisted crisis intervention principles and human provision of psychological crisis management objectives. In regards to this complementarity Eaton-Stull, Hatherley and Brooks presented at the ICISF 11th World Congress in 2011 launching the first
A qualitative investigation into dogs serving on AACR teams: advances in crisis counselling

Although establishment and deployment of AACR is evident, there are no apparent empirical investigations into its use, effectiveness or future development. Another valuable research aspect would be in the use of AACR in partnership with counsellors and other crisis intervention teams (Greenbaum, 2006). Specific benefits of AACR and how appropriately qualified crisis professionals can make use of these animal-handler teams has been discussed by Greenbaum (2006). Table 6, adapted from Greenbaum (2006), provides a summary of AACR activities and benefits.

Table 6

**AACR activities and benefits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity/Role</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Establish rapport:</strong></td>
<td>Particularly where people are not responsive to other methods. People in crisis may experience detachment, isolation, withdrawal and as such may not accept contact from another human. In these instances they may warm to a dog by petting or stroking it. This physical contact can begin the healing process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Build bridges:</strong></td>
<td>AACR dogs can facilitate communication. They are similar enough to humans that people associate with them, yet are different enough, that other people will not be threatened by them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Animals used as symbols:</strong></td>
<td>An AACR dog can be used as the transference object thereby assuming the necessary trait required to assist the victim at the time of crisis. For example being strong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shift the focus off the individual:</strong></td>
<td>A useful technique found to assist first respondents in the 9/11 disaster. Respondents that found it difficult to talk to peers or professionals were able to talk to the dogs thereby making their feelings and needs apparent. For example asking the dog if it was sad because there was no one to help?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Normalise the experience:</strong></td>
<td>Feeding, patting and touching a dog is an aspect of normal life. The animal is something warm and alive and its normative aspect can assist the integration of the incident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Calming agent:</strong></td>
<td>Dogs have been found to lower blood pressure in humans, they have a calming effect.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6 AACR activities and benefits: continued

| **Animals as objects of attachment:** | An AACR dog can act as the constant element, thereby helping ground and accompany people through difficult procedures. For example lodging incident reports, death certificates or missing person’s reports. |
| **Serve as a catalyst for movement:** | AACR dogs can be used to physically move individuals. For example taking the dog for a walk away from a particular area or toward a confronting difficult sight and sound. |

Whilst no empirical research on AACR has been found, accounts of its perceived benefits are dispersed throughout the literature (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010; Grennbaum, 2006; Lovine, 2001). In a discussion on crisis dog interventions at 9/11, Lovine (2001) remarked on how in certain circumstances when humans were unable to find the words, where words seemed meaningless, or when human efforts appeared floundered, the dogs were able to stand steadfast and silently provide companionship unperturbed by pity or sorrow. In regard to the therapy dogs deployed to Pier 94, Lovine (2001) mentioned Margaret Pepe, the American Red Cross mental health officer responsible for 175 counsellors, psychologists and social workers during the 9/11 relief effort, and quoted her as having said:

> The dogs are incredibly effective. I’m jealous of the four-footed therapists and their ability to engage and relax people in a matter of minutes (Lovine, 2001, p. 1).

Currently AACR also lacks a theoretical base. Thus far I have borrowed from AAT research, psychological theories and AACR practice to establish a theoretical base from which to empirically explore the effectiveness of AACR as a new modality within the crisis counselling fields. The crisis counselling field equally lacks a theoretical base because the enormity of possible events likely to constitute trauma for people makes it impracticable to have a prevailing psychological model of crisis intervention (Hobfoll et al., 2007). However, Hobfoll et al., (2007) convened a panel of worldwide experts on trauma intervention to develop a consensus document stipulating principles of crisis intervention for people affected by disasters. They identified five empirically supported intervention principles for the early to mid-term stages of crisis intervention. These principles are concerned with the promotion of the following for both the individual and the communities affected; Increased sense of safety, reduction in tension, sense of self and collective efficacy, connectedness,
and hope. Given the heterogeneous nature of traumatic events and inability to provide specific treatment models, the authors recommended flexibility in the use of these intervention principles for informing policy and practice. These principles are used to inform the findings from this investigation with regard to the use of AACR dogs for people in crisis. Another principle, or a guiding notion, for crisis intervention work which particularly targets support for crisis workers is Radey and Figley’s (2007) positivity-negativity ratio model.

The positivity-negativity ratio, put simply, is a model suggesting that compassion stress is energy that potentially can convert to compassion satisfaction. The model advocates for the active realignment of compassion stress to a more positive energy such as compassion satisfaction, thereby promoting satisfaction in workers and assisting them flourish in their work fields (Radey & Figley, 2007). Trauma workers work toward a shift in paradigm where they reconceptualise negative work experiences by identifying the positive factors in these experiences. Worker affect, work resources and self-care are recognised as crucial elements within the model that can influence a worker’s positivity-negativity ratio. The use of empirically supported principles to inform, develop and refine crisis interventions so that they are relevant and appropriate for crisis workers and survivors is vital because research indicates that utilisation of Mental Health Services (MHS) following a disaster is generally low (Rodriguez & Kohn, 2008; Schwarz & Kowalski, 1992; Van der Velden, et al., 2006).

Furthermore, in regard to the benefits that dogs provide, specifically to people affected by traumatic events, Dave Sharpe, a veteran traumatized by deployments to Saudi Arabia and Uzbekistan, was diagnosed with PTSD. Sharpe noticed considerable improvement in his own symptoms when he adopted a shelter dog. His symptom relief was so dramatic he founded the non-profit organisation, P2V (Pets 2 Vets) in 2009; the mission is to assist first line responders by matching dogs to personnel ensuring that each vet is paired with their own support dog (Thompson, 2010). Jim Stanek, another veteran diagnosed with PTSD and deployed to Iraq, also experienced considerable support and symptom relief from his assigned dog. The experience was so profound for Stanek that he too founded an organisation, Paws and Stripes, which sought to train dogs in specific tasks aimed at assisting with PTSD symptoms, that is, generally to teach the dogs tasks so they act as part
body guard and part therapist (Thompson, 2010). Moreover, Minnesota Senator Al Franken’s 2009 bill authorised Veteran Affairs to investigate the benefits of service dogs paired to veterans with physical or psychological injuries and PTSD. The US government’s investigation sought to place service dogs, trained by Assistance Dogs International (ADI) with up to 200 vets suffering from service related disorders and seeks to investigate the benefits of service dogs to those suffering with psychological injuries (Thompson, 2010; Franken, n.d). These initiatives, whilst distinct from AACR, are relevant in that they acknowledge and explore the animal-assisted modality of supporting and providing comfort to people affected by a significant psychological or emotional crisis. They also illustrate the growing interest and resources dedicated to the potential use of dogs as trained workers assisting in the effective provision of emotional support to people psychologically impacted by a crisis.

2.5 AACR – Movement toward a new evidence based modality

AACR as a distinct service can be traced back to two landmark occasions, the New York 9/11 disaster (Greenbaum, 2006), and the Thurston High School shooting in Oregon (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010). Anecdotal evidence, via participants from this study (participant number 1 and participant number 30) provides accounts of canine response teams operating prior to these landmark events by a California based organisation called Create-a-Smile. However, the 9/11 and Thurston High School shooting are considered the milestone events that placed significant recognition on AACR work and facilitated the development of AACR in the USA as a specialised crisis response service (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010; Greenbaum, 2006). HOPE was the first national USA based AACR organisation, founded by Ehlers and since the 2001 incorporation of HOPE AACR, the organisation has developed over 100 certified teams in 5 regions that cover 34 American States (HOPE AACR, n.d.). Ehlers founded a second AACR organisation called National Animal Assisted Crisis Response (NAACR) which became incorporated in 2003. By 2009 NAACR had over 75 certified teams operating in the following American States: California, Connecticut, Florida, Kansas, Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, Oregon, Texas, Tennessee, Washington, Washington D.C. and Virginia (C. Ehlers, personal communication, March 27, 2013).
A third AACR organisation to emerge from Ehler’s initial vision, with two new co-founders, was Cascade Canine Crisis Response (CCCR) which was incorporated in 2008. The co-founders and board developed the CCCR mission “to provide hope and comfort in times of crisis through the healing benefits of the human-canine bond” (M. Lowy, personal communication, March 26, 2013). CCCR provide services throughout Oregon, however, have also deployed teams to crisis events in other USA states. In 2012 CCCR had 13 certified AACR teams, conducted weekly CCCR team visits to inmates of the Washington County Sherriff’s Office and responded to 6 requests for deployment of teams to assist in critical incidents (M. Lowy, personal communication, March 22, 2013). CCCR also operates with a particular emphasis on working in close collaboration with local community organisations as well as focusing on the wellbeing of their human-canine teams. These three organisations were the specific AACR service models and providers investigated by this research project.

AAT, AACR and animal assisted services in general lack an overriding framework or at least a group of primary competing theoretical frameworks. Models from the psychosocial domains tend to be drawn upon to provide some bases for animal assisted practice (Netting, Wilson, & New, 1987). Nevertheless, a plethora of conferences, organisations, books and investigations into the human-animal interaction exists, as does the extensive practice of dogs as co-therapists. It appears that science has simply not caught up with the impact this practice is already having (Abrams, n.d.). Man-made and natural disasters are unfortunately part of life on earth and AACR appears to have arisen as a support service currently in demand and frequently used as a response to crisis events. Consequently this research project sought to investigate this fact and explore an evidence base for its practice.

2.6 Conclusion

The research and theory presented in this chapter is based upon studies of human-dog interaction and the benefits or uses of dogs trained in AAT. Although no empirical studies have been conducted in AACR, the research and theory presented have been used to form a base for the current investigation. This chapter also provided a background, conceptualisation and development of AACR usage throughout the USA. Finally the research presented provides a convincing argument for the successful use of animal assisted services, primarily the dog, in the health, welfare, social and psychological counselling fields.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Qualitative research – An overview

This study primarily examined the parameters under which AACR is instigated and used by both AACR dog handlers and collaborating crisis counsellor professionals. The secondary focus of the study was to investigate the meanings and interpretations that these participants developed from their involvement in, or observation of, human-dog interactions in the field. Essentially the study was exploratory in nature and investigated a field not previously researched. Largely, data were derived from interviews with participants and observational field trips thereby necessitating qualitative methodology as the more appropriate approach (Aanstoos, Fischer, Giorgi, & Wertz, 1985; Carter & Little, 2007; Liamputtong, 2013a). A detailed schedule of participant interviews and observational field trips conducted is provided in Appendix 16.

Appropriate paradigms and theories that support this methodology are from the interpretative tradition (Broom, 2005) with fundamental premises that humans construct their own reality (Raskin, 2001), that humans exercise free will and create their own meaning from social circumstances (Frankl, 1959; Raskin, 2001), and that this constructed reality forms cognitive models from which individuals interpret their world (Blumer, 1969; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Liamputtong, 2013b). Therefore the frameworks that were selected as most appropriate to inform this study were constructivist and symbolic interactionism. Details and rationale for the research design selected is discussed in this chapter. A summary of core ontological, epistemological and methodological presuppositions from the constructivism and symbolic interactionism frameworks are provided in Table 7.
Table 7

Ontology, epistemology and methodological presuppositions used to inform the investigation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARADIGM</th>
<th>ONTOLOGY</th>
<th>EPISTEMOLOGY</th>
<th>METHODOLOGY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constructivist</td>
<td>Relativism</td>
<td>Transactional and subjective</td>
<td>Hermeneutic and dialectical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Denzin &amp; Lincoln, 2005)</td>
<td>There is no one true reality with regard to human</td>
<td>Researchers and participants co-create meanings,</td>
<td>The methodological procedures are applied in the natural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>experience. Individuals construct their own version</td>
<td>understandings and interpretations of the phenomena in</td>
<td>world where it has relevance to the participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of reality and collectively reconstruct.</td>
<td>question</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic interactionism</td>
<td>Reality is constructed as an interpretive, interactive and social process.</td>
<td>A human social interaction forms meaning and co-creates their reality. Participants of this interaction are ‘self’, inquirer (researcher) and known (research participants).</td>
<td>Hermeneutical, dialectical and phenomenological. Naturalistic injury is conducted within the social or cultural domain of the participants. It also builds in peer debriefers and “devil’s advocates” outside the field to capture reliability and biases (Lincoln &amp; Guba, 1985)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Blumer, 1969; Denzin &amp; Lincoln, 2005)</td>
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3.2 Constructivism

The ontological position in constructivism is that there is no one true reality, that knowledge is fluid (Liamputtong, 2013b) with no absolute truths in regard to human or social experiences, and that agreement about truth or reality is negotiated within subjective individual, social and cultural contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Constructivism is therefore concerned with the process of how humans make meaning from their experiences, that is, how they create their knowledge base which in turn informs their truth and reality (Raskin, 2001). A research study designed using constructivism as its paradigm is one that therefore
explores, reconstructs and interprets participants’ understandings and interpretations of their experiences in order to understand their world view and what is meaningful to them (Broom, 2005).

In an exploratory discussion on constructivism, Raskin (2001) stipulated the following as its fundamental principles. A person’s knowledge is created not discovered, humans participate in the construction of their knowledge, the creation of meaning is context based, the construction of knowledge and the meaning it holds is relative between the observer and the object, and that the value of knowledge is in regard to its viability for an individual or community system rather than the independent validity of that particular knowledge claim. As a paradigm, constructivism has many complex varied philosophical and theoretical positions. However, the key element shared by all is that knowledge is an interpretation, most of which is socially negotiated during the interpretative process as humans interact and communicate with one another (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

This investigation sought to probe deeply, via semi structured interviews with participants and observational field trips within AACR naturalistic settings, into the personal experiences of participants who had been active in AACR deployments and their interpretations or meanings created from these experiences. It further required that participants explore the cultural language, norms and affiliations of their AACR or crisis response communities. As the primary researcher, and a practising psychologist within the crisis management field, I was aware of the deeply personal nature of this inquiry and had some professional experience into the crisis field on which participant stories centred. Foremost my views in conducting this type of inquiry rested on respectfulness toward participants as experts with regard to the data, awareness that my interactions with participants could influence the shaping of data, and that investigative methods selected needed to reflect these considerations. My personal and professional values resonate with the presuppositions of constructivism, the research questions posed and the inherit values of the inquiry determined constructivism as the most suited paradigm to use (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).
3.3 Symbolic Interactionism

The central proposition in symbolic interactionism is that meaning is constructed within a social interactive context (Blumer, 1969). As a methodology, symbolic interactionism directly explores the experiential social world and group life of the participants. It supports investigative designs that are phenomenological, hermeneutic and naturalistic as its goals are to acquire comprehensive and accurate accounts of the phenomenon in question. Its three basic premises, as discussed by Blumer (1969) are:

**Meaning arises from the process of interaction between people and objects**

Humans interpret, define, assign meaning and behave toward objects and each other based on the meaning that these things have for them. This is not a cause and effect response. Rather, the response is based on the meaning that the object has in its own right for the person. Also, humans are conscious of their own existence and can therefore become the object of their own action, thereby also defining and attributing meaning to this.

**Meaning is formed in the context of social interaction**

A social context consists of people and objects in association with each other. Most of the interaction in this context occurs on a symbolic level where humans actively define and interpret the exchanges. Consequently the people in one’s environment and their reactions to objects or each other inform the interpretation of events.

**Meanings are handled and modified through an interpretative process**

An individual interacts with ‘self’ to create and interpret meaning from his/her experience. In this regard, ‘self’ is a process not a structure and interpretation operates as a dynamic method of actively formulating meanings.

These propositions and perspectives from symbolic interactionism provide an appropriate methodology for the current investigation, particularly when considering that dogs have many symbolic and social roles attributed to them by various human communities and cultures (Belk, 1996; Walsh, 2009; Woloy, 1990). For example, the research literature shows that dog owners consider their pets as extensions of self (Belk,
A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION INTO DOGS SERVING ON AACR TEAMS: ADVANCES IN CRISIS COUNSELLING

1996) and that the presence of dogs enhances social interaction between humans, possibly even how humans perceive one another (Schneider & Harley, 2006). Furthermore, Greenbaum (2006) maintains that people in crisis tend to use AACR dogs in symbolic and anthropomorphic ways that are reflective of their human recovery needs and illustrates by citing the case of a person at a disaster site requiring a ‘strong dog’ to lead him/her through potentially disturbing sights.

Lastly, symbolic interactionism is suitable because it provides a framework to assist understand the meanings and interpretations that people develop from complex social patterns, interactions and objects, which in this investigation are the AACR dogs. Whilst AACR is a distinct field, nevertheless its beginnings are embedded in AAT and crisis intervention practices. AACR operates within, and collaborates with, a multitude of other crisis response services including ICS (Eaton-Stull at al., 2010) and is therefore fertile ground for social meaning making.

3.4 Methodology

3.4.1 Research participants.

Two groups of participants were selected for this investigation, AACR dog handlers and crisis counselling professionals who work in collaboration with AACR teams. These two groups were selected because in the field they often form partnerships to provide emotional support to people affected by the crisis. Two groups were also selected as distinct participant groups in order to enrich the depth of data collected. A total of 30 participants, determined by saturation theory (Liamputtong, 2013a, 2013b) were interviewed. Data saturation is a concept used in qualitative research which assists researchers to determine and justify their sample size (Liamputtong, 2013a, 2013b). It considers a sample size sufficient when, during the data collection process, no new information is generated by the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Liamputtong, 2013a, 2013b).

The sampling of AACR personnel was purposeful and snow ball sampling was used to recruit the crisis counselling professionals. Participants were located in the USA so as the primary researcher, I travelled to their localities in the USA to interview participants in California, Montana and Oregon. Whilst a sample size of 30 could be considered small, it is
consistent with qualitative research in that it is the quality of in-depth analysis that is the focus of this approach, not the number of participants interviewed (Liamputtong, 2012a; Pyett, 2003; Smith & Osborn, 2007; Qu & Dumay, 2011).

Participants were recruited on the basis of their expertise, determined by AACR certification and because as practitioners they formed the functional units of AACR work when deployed in the field. Selection to either group was on the basis of the following criteria.

Inclusion criteria for AACR dog handlers

- Dog handlers were AACR trained and certified by an AACR organisation such as HOPE AACR or its equivalent, for example NAACR or CCCR.
- Dog handlers were currently active in the AACR field.
- Dog handlers were linked to or part of a wider supportive professional environment.

Inclusion criteria for crisis counselling professionals

- Crisis counselling professionals were trained in CISM, psychological first aide or crisis counselling and certified in one of these fields by a crisis response service such as ICISF (International Critical Incident Stress Foundation) or its equivalent, for example the Red Cross.
- Crisis counselling professionals were currently active as crisis responders and have worked in deployments with AACR teams.
- Crisis counselling professionals were linked to or part of a wider supportive professional environment.

Exclusion criteria: If an individual was suffering from a work related stress condition, he/she were excluded from the study. This was ascertained prior to the formal taping of each participant’s interview. Prior to recording each interview, individual participants met with me and were required to fill out their socio-demographic questionnaire, clarify any questions they had with regard to the investigation and ensure the selection criteria were met.
3.4.2 Recruitment of participants.

A purposive recruitment approach was used to recruit the first sample group, AACR dog handlers from AACR organisations. Subsequently a snowball recruitment approach was used requesting that the first sample group, that is, AACR dog handler participants, AACR organisations and members of the AACR community, invite crisis counselling professionals (second sample group) who had worked with AACR teams to also participate in the study.

Recruitment of AACR participants

Purposive sampling is a preferred method for research questions that are significant to participants (Smith & Osborn, 2007). It is also used where participants have expertise in the phenomena being investigated so that they bring rich and relevant lived experiences of text data to an investigation thereby providing greater opportunity for intensive analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Initially AACR organisations were sourced from USA based websites and were approached via an email letter sent on 1st February, 2012. That letter introduced me as the primary researcher, contextualised the study and aimed to assess the level of interest or support for the study (Appendix 15). Specifically the letter asked for expressions of interest to assist recruit AACR dog handler participants from respective AACR organisations and to assist me establish AACR field trips to America. The following organisations were contacted by email:

1. HOPE AACR, Oregon, Board of Directors.
2. HOPE AACR, Oregon, President.
3. HOPE AACR, Pacific North West, Regional Director.
4. HOPE AACR, Pacific Southwest, Regional Director.
5. HOPE AACR, Rocky Mountains, Regional Director.
6. HOPE AACR, Southeast, Regional Director.
7. HOPE AACR, US Eastern, Regional Director.
8. International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Baltimore, President.
9. NOAH. Assistance and canine crisis response dog teams, Nebraska.
11. North West Crisis Coalition AACR and Barking Hills, New Jersey.
14. Washington County Sheriff’s Office, Oregon, CCCR program.

The letter of introduction and request for support received responses from the founders of HOPE AACR, NAACR, CCCR, and two HOPE AACR Regional Directors. Responses indicated an interest in the research and an intention to assist where possible. Shortly after these initial responses, the HOPE AACR National Board provided permission for a former AACR Regional Director to act as the liaison contact and assist in the dissemination of information to recruit participants as well as coordinate the planning of AACR field visits to the USA. As the project planning unfolded, other key AACR personnel based in Montana and Oregon emerged as additional supports in field trip planning and dissemination of information for participant recruitment. These key people have been identified and thanked in the acknowledgment section of this dissertation.

Recruitment of crisis counsellor participants

Snowball sampling, a variation of purposive sampling, was also used as another common sense practical way of recruiting participants that met the objectives of the research study (Liamputtong, 2013a) but that may have otherwise been difficult to access (Noy, 2008). Essentially snowball sampling relies on participants of the study to use their knowledge of other contacts in the field and refer these people as additional participants for the study. As such, AACR dog handler participants, AACR personnel involved in field trip aspects of the study and general AACR personnel aware of the study used word of mouth to refer colleagues or acquaintances, in particular crisis counselling professionals who had worked with AACR teams to the study. Crisis counselling professionals who had experience working with AACR teams were not registered as a specific group and would have been difficult to access without the snowball technique. Noy (2008) maintains that snowball sampling is a unique method that accesses hidden populations. As a sampling method it “can generate a unique type of social knowledge” (Noy, 2008, p. 327) that may capture elusive social interactions, thereby also complimenting symbolic interactionism as the best fit methodological approach for this investigation.

Irrespective of the recruitment method, participants were recruited via a flyer (Appendix 7) and all participants who were interviewed self-selected to be involved in the
study. I personally provided each participant with information packs which included the Participant Information Statement (PIS) (Appendix 8), participant consent and withdrawal forms (Appendix 9) and the participant socio-demographic questionnaire (Appendix 10). The study had the approval of Latrobe University’s ethics committee.

Finally, a crucial factor, particularly in qualitative research, is the establishment of rapport and appropriate relationship building between the researcher and participants (Minichiello & Kottler, 2010) as the researcher-participant relationship can influence recruitment, participation and the quality of data collected (Allen, 2004; McLeod, 1996). Key people from USA based HOPE AACR, NAACR and CCCR organisations worked collaboratively with me to establish appropriate protocols, organisational permissions, field trip consents, ethics approval and generally satisfy requirements from both USA and Australian stakeholders in the study. Throughout that process a strong sense of collegiality developed and subsequently all data collection occurred in the USA. These key people have been thanked in the acknowledgement section of this thesis.

3.4.3 Multi-method approach.

An advantage of qualitative research is that it offers a flexibility to weave perspectives and borrow from other viewpoints, a mixing of genres (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) so that the most appropriate research approach and design can be developed. Furthermore it can be modified to accommodate new conditions or circumstances within the field as they arise (Liamputtong, 2013a). Accordingly a multi-method design was developed for data collection for this investigation. Semi-structured interviews, observational field trips, visual data (photos) of AACR dogs, a researcher reflexivity journal and a participant socio-demographic questionnaire were used to examine the research objectives.

Semi-structured interviews

Given the expertise of participants, semi-structured interviews offered adaptability in structure. It allowed participants to guide the sharing of information and facilitated greater rapport between parties (Smith & Osborn, 2007; Qu & Dumay, 2011). The schedule of interview questions (Appendix 11) involved questions designed to collect information about
AACR or crisis response community norms and participants’ personal experiences, observations, interpretations, reflections and meaning making from these experiences.

Interviews were scheduled for one hour and were conducted individually. The majority of interviews were located on premises during field trips. Others were organised at mutually agreed locations which resulted in two home office sites being used.

Observational field trips

Observational fieldtrips are a technique used within the ethnography qualitative approach which requires the researcher to collect data, primarily by observation (Mackenzie, 1994; Singer, 2009) whilst based in the natural community of the participants (Liamputtong, 2013a). Its epistemology is naturalistic and its underpinning assumptions are that a person’s behaviour is linked to the meaning held by his/her social situation, that behaviour and meaning change as people interact, and that behaviour or beliefs are considered within an environmental and cultural context (Mackenzie, 1994; Singer, 2009). This study also used observational field trips as a data collection tool to enhance and contextualise further the information participants provided in interviews.

The observational field trips comprised of invitations for me to attend the HOPE AACR 2012 national meeting in Montana, the Operation Purple Camp for military children, Tsuga Community Commission, held in Oregon 2012, and to visit with two CCCR human-dog teams to inmates of the Washington County Sherriff’s Office. Clearly crisis events are the work of AACR and crisis counselling professionals and as field trips were not possible. However an unfortunate critical event during the USA Independence day parade in Orange County, California, occurred and an AACR dog was in attendance. Observational field notes, visual data and use of the researcher reflexivity journal were used in this event. The details of these observations form part of the analysis.

Researcher reflexivity journal

The researcher reflexivity journal was selected as another data collection method and as a mechanism for researcher transparency and self-scrutiny (Pyett, 2003). This activity also operated as a device for reflecting on the non-verbal aspects of interviews and field
trips which could then be used to contextualise data during the analysis and interpretation process (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Britannica, 1927; Liamputtong, 2013a; Morgan, Dermot, Cohen, Joseph, 2012; Pyett, 2003).

The reflexivity journal is a method predominately borrowed from phenomenology (Britannica, 1927; Morgan et al., 2012) and ethnography where in principle, researchers immerse themselves into the world of the participants where the phenomenon under investigation is experienced (Britannica, 1927). The method is also used in other qualitative approaches such as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith & Osborn, 2007), participatory inquiry (Heron & Reason, 1997), co-operative inquiry (Heron, 1981) and ethnography (Mackenzie, 1994; Singer, 2009).

The researcher reflexivity method was also adopted because as researcher, I was immersed in the AACR community for a 5 week period, time line chart is attached as appendix 16. The immersion, albeit short, was intense and considerably consuming. In principle immersion of this nature requires that a researcher consider his or her role, influence and involvement in the investigation (Britannica, 1927). For these reasons, reflexivity as well as bracketing are practices used by researchers to keep the data authentic and trustworthy (Britannica, 1927; Liamputtong, 2013a).

I recorded journal notes on a daily basis during the data collection phase of the research study and employed reflexivity and bracketing methods. Reflexivity requires researchers to acknowledge and account for personal interests, views and biases toward the study and any interpretation generated from its data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Liamputtong, 2010). It also entails researchers not prejudicing their own experiences during immersion by recording and describing, initially without analysis, their own experiences and reflections during the investigation (Aanstoos, Fischer, Giorgi, & Wertz, 1985). Complimenting reflexivity, bracketing is the deliberate and mindful practice of suspending presumptions about a phenomenon. The researcher brackets in order to achieve direct contact with the experience of the participants, thereby ensuring that the participant’s raw descriptions remain free from researcher prejudices (Aanstoos et al., 1985).
Visual data (photos) of AACR dogs

Visual media, that is photos, drawings, art and videos, are a powerful form of data as they “provide unprecedented opportunities for social science research” (Heath, Hindmarsh, & Luff, 2010, p. 2). As a form of data they can capture unspoken and nonverbal aspects of a community’s culture, beliefs, norms and structure (Liamputtong, 2010). They provide the opportunity to record naturally or spontaneously occurring dynamics in the target population and provide an avenue to explore and scrutinise data repeatedly in fine detail (Heath et al., 2010).

I took photos of AACR dogs present during interviews or at observational field trips during this investigation to contextualise the data. Photos are elaborate stories where words seem insufficient, for example, in situations dealing with complex human emotions, attachments or dynamics such as the human-dog bond, during highly volatile events like the Operation Purple Camp for military children field trip or at crisis events. Indeed Masson, former Freudian psychoanalyst and prolific publisher on the human-animal bond, in an exploration of the integration of dogs into the human psyche, drew attention to a collection of photos taken across the globe depicting the human-dog connection (Masson & Wolfe, 2011).

Participant socio-demographic questionnaire

The questionnaire was concerned with socio-demographic variables such as participants’ age, experience, background qualifications, professional associations, professional supports, nature of deployments, length of time spent in field, projected length of time expected to stay in the field and whether AACR dog handlers used their own dogs in AACR deployments. The questionnaire is attached as Appendix 10.

3.5 Data analysis

Fundamentally the data analysis sought to convert raw text obtained from interviews into evidence based interpretations (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematising and meaning making from data applies to some extent in all qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). However this investigation used a variety of data analysis processes.
Approaches used were participant verification of interview transcripts, QSR Nvivo 10, thematic analysis, hermeneutic analysis and the appointment of a data analysis advisory panel.

All data analysis processes were conducted by the researcher so that I remained as close as possible to the data and its context at the time of collection and participants’ actual language. The data analysis processes required my continued immersion in the data, was exhaustive, meticulous, and involved revisiting steps numerous times until core meanings in the data were discovered (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The continuous immersion also facilitated more direct identification of the occurrence of meanings from the data and their implications for theory (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

**Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis is a useful tool that can be applied across many qualitative methodologies because it is flexible, recursive, not underpinned to any particular theoretical framework, deliberate and produces rich and detailed information from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Essentially it is a deliberate process that categorises the data into meaningful units, themes and patterns.

**Hermeneutic analysis**

Hermeneutics refers to in-depth analysis of text data. It takes the researcher’s prior understandings and prejudices into consideration and entails reading, interpreting, rewriting or refining field notes, text emersion and revisiting these steps numerous times until the core meanings in the data are discovered (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Specific steps taken in the thematic and hermeneutic analyses of the interview data were adapted from the Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis (IPA) approach (Smith & Osborn, 2007). These steps involved managing the data by actively generating codes and meaning units from the information, discovering or generating themes from these codes, identifying clusters and categories of themes, and finally integrating the insights acquired from the transformed meaning units back to the purpose of this study.
QSR Nvivo 10

Nvivo is a computer based program that assists one to organise, manage, collate and work with text, audio or visual data. It enables the user to generate reports and visual models as a means to explore his or her data as well as conduct text searches for particular words, phrases and concepts (QSR International, 2011). The text data entered for Nvivo analyses was exclusive to participant dialogue. The interviewer’s questions or words uttered during the course of the interview were not used in the analysis as it was the participant experiences and reality which was the focus of the interview aspect of this investigation.

Participant verification of interview transcript

In order to minimize interview interpretation bias, participants were sent confidential emails inviting them to personally verify the transcript from their interview. Of the thirty participants, 19 (63%) elected to review their transcript. No reports of misrepresented or inaccurate interview transcripts were received. In fact most participants were delighted and felt the transcripts characterised their positions accurately. Examples of written comments received from participants are:

- I am really impressed with the interview. You asked excellent questions and I was pleased with my answers (participant 1, personal communication, February 2, 2013).
- I really thought you captured the themes well. (participant 3, personal communication, February 5, 2013).
- It reflects my thoughts and intentions just fine (participant 11, personal communication, February 4, 2013).
- It does seem you caught the essence of my feelings about having an AACR dog (participant, 4 personal communication, February 2, 2013).

Data analysis advisory panel

An advisory group of two experts, one from the crisis counselling field and the other from the dog behavioural field was formed. Two meetings were conducted in Melbourne, Australia, with these group members where interpretations generated from the data were submitted and discussed for interpretation logic, construction plausibility, impartiality and theoretical accuracy. This mechanism was adapted from the Consensual Qualitative...
Research (CQR) approach (Hill, Knox, Thompson, Williams, & Hess 2005). The two group members have been identified and thanked in the acknowledgment section of this thesis. Appendix 18 provides an outline of the meeting dates, duration, content, context and data process decisions regarding analysis of data and emergent themes.

Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997) maintain that CQR is consistent with the underpinnings of qualitative research. CQR draws from the constructivist tradition and grounded theory in supporting the position that conceptual networks and constructs are developed from research data as opposed to being formulated from a pre-existing reality. The consensual element is central to the CQR approach in that it requires a team of researchers to consensually derive constructions about the data. All judgments and constructions are then submitted to auditors. The assumption is that multiple perspectives minimise researcher bias and will have greater potential at approximating intended meanings or truths from participants.

The CQR consensus principle with regard to the use of auditors was adopted by the current study with adaptations. Auditors were referred to as data analysis advisory panel members. Similar to CQR, their primarily role was to act as a checks and balance mechanism with regard to the data analysis. They checked thematic construction and wording of core ideas, changed domain (theme and sub-themes) names, recommended the rearrangement or combination of domains and endorsed or rejected the conceptualisation of findings (Hill et al., 1997). Unlike CQR, however, the two experts from the data analysis advisory panel used in this research project did not read through the raw data. Instead the researcher presented these members with the research process and rationale for the construction of themes and used excerpts from the raw data to illustrate. Panel meeting dates and discussions were logged (Appendix 18) so that data from these proceedings were available for review if necessary (Hill et al., 1997; Marshall, 1985).

The criteria used for the selection of the two experts to the data advisory panel were that the crisis counsellor expert was required to be a senior psychologist with specialist crisis management training and experience in CISM. The dog behavioural expert was required to be a senior practitioner in either the AAT field or dog behavioural field. It was
essential that both were Australian based, accessible and prepared to conduct the panel meetings in person.

3.6 Data trustworthiness, authenticity and ethical considerations

Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 191) write: “There can be no question that the legitimacy of postmodern paradigms is well established and at least equal to the legitimacy of received and conventional paradigms.” On that note, however, qualitative approaches do not lend themselves to traditional positivist criteria with regard to validity or reliability issues. Rather, more appropriate measures are those of trustworthiness and authenticity (Daly et al., 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Liamputtong, 2013a). Trustworthiness refers to the quality of the inquiry and its findings, for example a trustworthy study creates confidence in its reader so that its recommendations will be adopted. An authentic investigation shows a commitment to procedural integrity and rigor enabling the reader to clearly determine these factors throughout the study (Liamputtong, 2013a).

Other processes adopted, as well as many that emerged, which served to strengthen the quality, trustworthiness and authenticities of this investigation and data collected were:

- Participants were targeted on the basis of their expertise as AACR dog handlers or crisis counselling professionals who had worked with AACR teams. As a newly emerging field many AACR participants were pioneers and founding board members with exclusive history, knowledge and skills in AACR. Some participants were also exceptionally experienced professionals prior to their involvement with AACR and were peers with Carl Rogers, Fritz Pearls and supervised by men such as Victor Frankl and Joseph Campbell. Overall the quality of all participants both as professionals and people was exceptional.
- Written consent was required by all participants prior to their formal interview. Verbal consent was also sought throughout the interview by way of checking with each person that he/she was satisfied with the interview process and happy to continue.
- Participants were informed of all details of the investigation and had opportunity to comment or withdraw as desired without consequences (McLeod, 1996).
- A commitment to procedural transparency, inclusion and communication was made such that all participants received confidential quarterly email updates on the progress of the research and how the data were being used. Participants will also be sent a copy of the final dissertation.
- All participants were sent confidential emails with regard to their individual transcript and were invited to verify its content or representation of the interview.
- A data analysis panel was established to act as a check and balance mechanism with regard to interpretations generated from the data (Hill et al., 2005). Details of this panel and its rationale were provided in the data analysis section.
- Responses from AACR participants, the AACR community and crisis counselling respondent professionals involved in the research were overwhelming positive. They embraced the research and provided in-house material such as AACR membership newsletters, pamphlets and training manuals. I was welcomed as a peer and invited to participate in some AACR events. These shared experiences strengthen the methodology and is discuss further in Chapter Five.

3.7 Conclusion

The rationale and justification for the research design of the current study was provided in this chapter. The nature of the study required a qualitative approach where constructivism and symbolic interactionism were selected as the informing approaches. The data collection was conducted with multiple methods, each were outlined, and the data analysis processes for the current investigation were also outlined and justified. The integrity of the research design was further discussed and made apparent in the trustworthiness, authenticity and ethical considerations section of this chapter.
Chapter 4: Results – Population characteristics and key thematic trends

4.1 Chapter overview

This chapter is divided into section A and B. Results from the participant socio-demographic questionnaire are presented in section A and an overview regarding characteristics of the participant population is generated. Section B presents research findings in relation to the thirty individual in-depth interviews conducted. Thematic and hermeneutic analyses were conducted on the text data derived from participant interviews. The emergent themes and interpretations were further subjected to analysis via QSR Nvivo 10 (QSR International, 2011) and a data advisory panel comprising of an expert from the CISM field and another from the dog behavioural field. Three key themes emerged from the data, each with their own subset themes. The key themes are titled: The nature of crisis, Symbolic meanings given to dogs, and Working like a dog.

Section A: Participant socio-demographics

4.2 Population characteristics

Participants formed two groups, AACR dog handlers and crisis counsellor professionals who have worked with AACR teams in the USA field. The resultant total population size was 30 with all participants having completed the socio-demographic questionnaire which included questions relevant to the selection criteria and more specifically, questions that asked about participant age, gender, qualifications and deployment experience. AACR dog handlers were asked extra questions that were specifically about how long they had been working in the AACR field, how much longer they intended to stay in the field, if they currently had a dog and if they used their own dog in AACR work.

Immediately evident from the socio-demographic questionnaire and conversations with participants was the emergence of a third group of practitioners, that is, the individual who was trained as both an AACR dog handler and as a crisis counsellor respondent, moreover, trained as licenced mental health practitioners. Theoretically AACR dog handlers work in collaboration with crisis counsellors and mental health workers in the field (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010; Greenbaum, 2006). However, in practice this study found that certain
AACR teams were qualified to fulfil both roles. A participant who was certified as an AACR dog handler and a qualified psychologist, in regards to the dual role stated:

> We teach our non-mental health handlers ... what to say and what not to say and when to look for a mental health counsellor ... then someone, that victim breaks down ... they need to go find a mental health counsellor ... I can do both ... they may come and get me (participant 1 interview, June 21, 2012).

Another participant from a different state within the USA and also dual qualified as an AACR dog handler and psychologist commented:

> People can talk openly to the animal ... so our handlers need to have some mental health training ... I'm a psychologist and each of our regions have some mental health folks that sort of help guide what to say what not to say, not that all of our handlers have mental health background. They clearly do not ... but we don’t want to do harm and so they need some training (participant 8 interview, June 25, 2012).

Eleven participants had dual certification as an AACR dog handler and as a crisis counsellor which in effect resulted in 80% of the total participant population being trained as AACR handlers. The sample size for each of the sub-groups of service providers, including the emergent third group is provided in table 8. The total participant population comprised 24 females and 6 males. Table 8 provides the gender mix according to the sub-groups.

**Table 8**

*Practitioner subgroups – group population sizes and genders*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AACR dog handler</th>
<th>Crisis counsellor who has worked with AACR teams</th>
<th>AACR dog handler and crisis counsellor (dual role)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>males = 1</td>
<td>females = 12</td>
<td>males = 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>females = 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>males = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>females = 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 outlines the age range of the participant population and gender; 80% were over 50 years of age. Given the predominance of the older age groups, it is not surprising that 40% reported being retired. Retirees were nonetheless active volunteers in the AACR
field. Table 10 provides an overview of participant occupations. Of note are that most had been in, or are in, professional occupations.

Table 9

Participant age ranges and gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant age ranges (N=30)</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 - 30 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 40 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 50 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 - 60 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 - 70 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 +</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10

Participant occupations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant occupations (N=30)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retired university professors - psychology (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired physician (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired school psychologist (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired school teacher (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired – no previous occupation specified (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School psychologist (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical social worker (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School counsellor (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law enforcement chaplains (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red cross volunteer (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered nurse (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal behavioural specialist (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School aide (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10

*Participant occupations continued*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical technologist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental assistant</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law enforcement sergeant</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director, non-profit organisation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural program specialist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following were listed as examples of deployments where participants had been involved in AACR work. The September 11th New York terrorist attack, hurricane Katrina, tornados, Red Cross and FEMA evacuation shelters, floods, fires, shootings, school shootings, bank bombings, victims of crime, suicides, plane crash, bus crash, motor vehicle accidents, explosions and sudden deaths.

Regarding deployments, all AACR workers provide services on a volunteer basis. No AACR worker from HOPE AACR (M. Martin, personal correspondence, April 23, 2013), National AACR (C. Ehlers, personal correspondence, April 25, 2013) or CCCR (M. Lowy, personal correspondence, April 25, 2013) has been paid for any deployments, managerial or organisational appointments.

Table 11 and 12 refer to the socio-demographic questionnaire section specifically designed for AACR handlers and sought information on the duration of their AACR work and how much longer they intended to stay involved in the field. Of the 24 participants (80% of the total population) that were either trained only as AACR dog handlers, or trained as both AACR dog handlers and crisis counsellors, 100% answered this section of the questionnaire. Table 12 shows responses to the length of time AACR handlers had volunteered in the field whilst table 13 shows the amount of years they intend to continue working in the field.
A table detailing participant gender, years in service, study group represented and place of interview is provided in Appendix 17 to allow for comparative within and between participant analyses.

Table 11

**AACR dog handler years of involvement in the field**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years worked in the AACR field (N=25)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 3 years</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - 6 years</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 9 years</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 +</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clearly a considerable majority, (71%) indicated their intention to remain involved in the AACR field for at least another 6 years with 50% of these reporting that they intended to remain involved in the field for at least another 9 years. This finding illustrates a strong dedication to the field, a dedication that is even more impressive when considering that 80% of the total participant population are over 50 years of age and work on a voluntary basis.

Of the 24 participants who answered the specific socio-demographic section for AACR dog handlers, 100% responded affirmatively to being a dog owner and all of them, except one, reported that they currently use their own dog in deployments. Considerations on the finding of one participant who did not have a dog, or did not use their dog in deployments are outlined in chapter six.
Finally participants were interviewed and field trips conducted in the west coast states of California, Montana and Oregon. Table 13 indicates the number of participants interviewed in each location. Participants interviewed in California and Oregon resided in those states. However, not all participants interviewed in Montana resided in that state. The participants from other states, including east coast states are represented in the Montana group as a consequence of snowball sampling and because they were present at the 2012 HOPE AACR National meeting held in Bozeman, Montana, where interviews for this study were being conducted. Also, as is often the case in emergency service responders, including AACR teams, personnel tend to deploy across states or regions to where their assistance is required. For example AACR dog handler teams located in California and Oregon reported travelling to New York, that is, from the west of the USA to the east coast in response to requests for assistance during the 9/11 New York recovery effort. Other AACR handlers reported being invited to attend emergency shelters set up after Hurricane Katrina which again were not located in their states of residence. For example:

American Red Cross invited us to go to Brooklyn to the Family Assistance Centre ... the New York City Mayor’s office they called us and asked us to please come do the ferryboats (participant 23 interview, July 16, 2012).

I did have somebody in Katrina who just couldn’t believe that we drove down from Virginia all the way to Louisiana just to be there for them (participant 7 interview, June 24, 2012).

You’re bags have to be packed and you have to be ready ... you knew it was your day so your dog was bathed, you were clean, your bags were packed all you really had to do was go home get your uniform on and go (participant 30 interview, July 19, 2012).

Whilst AACR dog-handler teams are deployed to localities across states in the USA, there appeared issues with regard to transportation and housing of the dogs. These operational logistics and practice implications are discussed in Chapter Six.
Table 13

*Number of participants interviewed in each locality*

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>Oregon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Specific interview dates and time duration are provided in appendix 16.

**Section B: Key themes**

From participant interview transcripts, three key themes emerged, each theme representing a cluster of sub-set themes. Figures 3-5 (Figure 3, The nature of crisis, Figure 4, Symbolic meanings given to dogs, and Figure 5, Working like a dog) provide a visual presentation of each cluster of meaning units generated. The following provides a description of each key theme.

4.3 The nature of crisis

The nature of crisis emerged as a key theme which included three separate sub-themes entitled, “critical incident”, “psychotherapy crisis response” and “community crisis response”. This key theme addresses the types of service AACR teams are deployed to, and consequently promotes discussion on the conceptualisation of what constitutes crisis work. For example, participants frequently talked about deployments to crisis events, where the crises would range from an incident that was immediate, current, past, or even anticipated.

The AACR National Standards stipulate that AACR dogs are trained to assist people affected by crisis or disaster events (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010). AACR participants in their interviews specified that the distinctive element of AACR work is that AACR dogs respond to critical events where emotions are intense and environments unpredictable. A participant from the crisis counsellor group, who was also a Red Cross emergency responder, when considering the nature of AACR work, and whether to deploy AACR dogs, crystalised their role in crisis work as follows:
When I get on the scene it's chaotic and everybody handles crisis in a different way ... but for me now it's kind of a second sense, you know I can come up onto a scene, look at somebody, read the situation and say ok I'm gonna need some back up help. The reason I think of the dogs is because with animals there is a certain kind of a relationship between humans and animals ... animals can ... help calm and relax ... patting, touching, being around an animal ... they can get off the chaos of that moment ... then it helps me to go follow through on my interview with them and I have found in my experience is that it just works fantastic (participant 6 interview, June 23, 2012).

Mitchell and Everly (1996) describe a crisis as any event that is stressful enough to overwhelm the usual coping mechanisms of an individual or group of individuals. From this position, the nature of a crisis is therefore dependent upon the effect it has on a person or a group of persons and their recovery needs. Accordingly, crisis can be a highly personal and subjective experience. For example, consider the different viewpoints represented in the excerpts from the following two participants:

We use our dogs anywhere that we feel people are in crisis or in stressful situations ... dogs are so good at bringing us back to the moment and away from whatever trauma we've experienced that we bring them with us to those sorts of situations whether they're man-made disasters or natural disasters, fires, shootings, all kinds of situations like that in which we are invited to participate (participant 7 interview, June 24, 2012).

Also the dogs are used in a crisis situation in the psychotherapeutic process ... it’s a matter of degree ... it depends upon what the need is ... what is the crisis ... the oncology ward where little children are for example ... dying ... is that a crisis? You’re darn right it’s a crisis and we’re not talking about a fire or flood or some act that occurred where all the fire engines are going, where police go and all that other stuff. Basically we’re talking about kids who basically are limited in their life span and that to me is a crisis, that’s a terrible crisis (participant 14 interview, July 3, 2012).

In these excerpts, one of the statements was made by a highly skilled animal behavioural consultant, the other by a former psychology professor currently practising as a psychotherapist. Both exceptionally skilled clinicians indicated that the actual practice of crisis response by AACR dogs is conducted on a continuum. That is, a crisis continuum where AACR dogs are deployed reactively or proactively, events could include large scale disasters.
(e.g. bombings, fires, floods), small scale critical incidents (e.g. suicide, homicide, motor vehicle fatalities), planned crisis response events (memorials, vigils), or planned psychotherapeutic crisis responses (therapy for a child who has been sexually assaulted or physically abused).

Thus far, findings support the AACR theory and service model by indicating that the nature of crisis work for AACR dogs is predominately to respond to requests for assistance at critical incidents and disasters. However, sub-themes within the key theme, the “nature of crisis”, also suggest that the AACR dogs have considerable involvement and important roles in other crisis related events. Each of the sub-themes is discussed with the composite theme visually depicted in figure 3, the nature of crisis.

Figure 3

*The nature of crisis*
4.3.1 Critical incident.

All crisis counsellor participants, as part of their selection criteria for the study were required to have CISM training or equivalents that license them to practise with competency as a crisis interventionist that practises crisis principles within appropriate parameters (Mitchel, 2011; Robinson, 2004). What became evident from the data was that AACR dog handlers were also trained in basic level psychological first aid, albeit not to the same level as the crisis counsellor participants. For example an AACR dog handler explained the expertise of AACR handlers as follows:

For AACR I think the key is ... we are not trained to be first responders we are trained to come in during the recovery process ... so in terms of when to ring HOPE in it would be after the basic safety is established on a site and we are a component of that recovery process ... National Voluntary Organisations Active in Disaster ... to be a member of the National VOAD you have to have a lot of experience in responding and a lot of history established and documented history, you have to be a member of five State VOADs ... so overall being a member of the National VOAD group ... legitimises AACR work that we can contribute safely and effectively within the crisis situations (participant 10 interview, June 25, 2012).

Subsequently all participants involved in this investigation, regardless of which target group they represented, were conversant in crisis management principles, critical incident concepts and the impact that crisis can have on people. Consequently as workers they adhered closely to the psychological first aid principles of ensuring safety for people, providing emotional support and encouraging the use of social supports (Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, 2007). The following excerpt from an emergency respondent who is not trained in AACR however works in collaboration with the AACR teams in the field illustrates these points:

I look at these dogs as part of my team and they are team members just like I am and the dogs seem to know what they need to do, who they need to be with, whether it is with a
A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION INTO DOGS SERVING ON AACR TEAMS: ADVANCES IN CRISIS COUNSELLING

client and in some cases us as the emergency workers, they just know what they need to do and they do it ... I’m watching how the dogs are working the room or who they’re watching so I know that I can I need to focus on that person there’s something there that I need to focus (participant 6 interview, June 23, 2012).

4.3.2 Planned community crisis response.

Data contextualising this sub-theme was about participant experiences of using AACR dogs for planned events where high emotionality and unpredictable environments were anticipated. Examples included anniversaries of large scale disasters (September 11th terrorist attack), vigils held for deceased victims of crisis events (Farmer’s Market mass shooting, Orange County, California), memorials, vigils, funerals, the annual Veteran’s Memorial Day parade, Washington County Sheriff’s jailhouse staff briefings after critical incidents in the jail, Washington County Sheriff’s jail visits to inmates, and the Operation Purple camps. Operation Purple camps are state wide annual 5 day events for military children and are conducted by the National Military Family Association and Tsuga Community Commission. In particular the supports for military families focus on certain stages of military life, for example deployment, reintegration and following injury (National Military Family Association, 2013). I attended the Oregon Tsuga Community Commission 2012 Operation Purple camp and discuss observational field trip findings in chapter five.

Communities that pull together in supportive, structured and communicative methods are integral to recovery processes post crisis or emergency events (Gordon, 2004). The following excerpt illustrates the community integration aspect of AACR work:

They might go along with a chaplain or a law enforcement person or a fire-fighter who’s responsible for giving a death notification to ease the pain and help the person who is receiving the news, they’re also used for responders who might be traumatised by the incident that they are participating in or responding to (participant 26 interview, July 17, 2012).

4.3.3 Planned psychotherapy crisis response.

Mental health practitioners, those certified as AACR dog handlers as well as those not, were cognisant of the value that AACR dogs bring to psychotherapeutic sessions where
the client or group are working through traumatic experiences. Again, the notion of crisis response occurring on a continuum was an important factor in how these practitioners chose to use the dogs. Typically the dogs were used as “an assist” (participant 14, interview July 3, 2012) in the psychotherapeutic process which sought to facilitate client recovery and wellbeing. Abrams (n.d, p. 15) supports the use of AACR dogs in psychotherapy and states that “whilst most therapists do not work in a crisis clinic many therapeutic interactions are crisis motivated.”

A poignant example of how AACR dogs are used in this context was provided by a mental health practitioner who worked with a four year old child that was removed from her home on the suspicion that she was at risk of being abused:

She was placed in foster care, she did not speak plainly she had a stutter ... she noticed there were pictures of my dogs in my office and she was telling me that she really liked dogs and wanted to see them and when we were talking about ... good and bad secrets ... she was ignoring me and she looked over at one of the pictures and she said “if you bring your puppy I’ll tell your puppy a secret a bad secret” so ... the next time I brought my dog ... she was playing with her and she was putting off telling and I said “remember when you told me you were going to tell my dog a secret a bad secret” and she lifted up her ear (the dog’s ear) and said “ok” and she said “my dad’s friend who lived with us made me get in his bed and made me touch his privates and he touched mine” ... she jumped up then and said “all done now”... “I want to take your puppy for a walk” and I said “ok well I need to talk to the social worker” ... “oh my gosh” first of all my dog was walking slowly beside her, the little girl was skipping across the parking lot, they hadn’t seen that much lightness in that child since they had picked her up a week ago (participant 5 interview, June 23, 2012).

4.4 Symbolic meanings given to dogs

As a composite theme, symbolic meanings given to dogs yielded the largest set of thematic interpretations from the data. Participant professional experiences from their respective fields were extensive and as such their meanings and interpretations of what AACR dogs meant to people, (i.e. handlers, collaborators and recipients) were rich and laced
with many powerful vignettes, stories or case examples. From these accounts, five subthemes emerged, each specifically centred on a particular symbolic meaning attributed to the dogs. The meanings were essentially concerned with safety, normality, comfort and calming, attachment, and mystique. Consequently each sub-theme was named accordingly.

Figure 4 visually depicts the key theme, the symbolic meanings given to dogs and each of its sub-themes. The illustration depicted in figure 4 is intended as a visual aide only and does not suggest exclusivity between the sub-themes but rather it indicates the focus of each sub-theme. Excerpts and rationale that contextualise the emergence of each sub-theme follows.

Figure 4

*Symbolic meanings given to dogs*
4.4.1 Safety.

People affected by a crisis, traumatic event or disaster can experience an acute response where they feel intense fear, helplessness and horror (American Psychiatric Association, 2000; Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, 2007) to the extent that symptoms significantly impair their normal functioning (Mitchell, 2011). Conversely however, within the context of horrendous deployments and people severely impacted by trauma, it appeared from participant stories that the dogs brought an element of safety to the situation. For example:

A person who’s needing to connect but isn’t connecting with people, so you’ve got the mental health, you’ve got the chaplains, you’ve got extra uniforms in there, people in there are trying to “are you ok?’ … and you got the people who don’t want to connect … they’ve just been traumatized and they’re kind of standing back they don’t want to connect with people, they’re just waiting for all the chaos to be done with and then they’ll process quietly on their own or they’ll stuff it and not process, but when you bring in the dog you will see that person almost beeline to the dog like this is the safe place (participant 22 interview, July 16, 2012).

You look into those eyes, I think most people see just a being that wants to be greeted, I just think it’s a very safe way for people to make a connection and a safe connection at one of the worst moments in their life (participant 21 interview, July 16, 2012).

Data further contextualising this sub-theme were stories that described the dogs as providing unconditional love and being non-threatening, essentially elements perceived as making the dog a safe option for support. Many participants also spoke about emergency responders and their openness to receive respite from the dogs rather than services provided by mental health professionals. The fact that dogs were able to stand steadfast and hear stories that emergency respondents had to tell was a common experience told by the participants and was interpreted as the dogs being a safer option to speak to, over and above other professionals, even at times, professionals within the emergency responder’s own ranks.
And then we would ask if they would like to visit with the dogs and their whole face would change, it would just go from being in this role of duty first to “ah I can talk about your dog and my dog or my pets at home” and they would just sit and pat, sometimes they talked sometimes they didn’t (participant 2 interview, June 23, 2012).

They’ve seen the toughest things in the world happen and you watch the smile come on their face you see their eyes twinkle when they see the dog and the fire-fighters in general are one thousand per cent receptive ... I have fire-fighters drop on the ground ... rolling over with them playing (participant 1 interview, June 21, 2012).

4.4.2 Attachment.

I want the smell, I want it to stay, I want to take that dog away with me (participant 1 interview, June, 21, 2012).

Children in particular appeared to dominate the stories suggesting strong attachments to the AACR dogs. Participants often highlighted their experiences of client recovery with stories of children who had formed attachments with the dogs and whose family or community would invite the AACR dog-handler team or AACR service back at anniversaries or special events commemorating those lost during the tragedy. In fact, participants reported that two AACR dogs had been given the prestigious American Red Cross “Bravo for Bravery: Recognising extraordinary acts of courage” and “Spirit of the Red Cross Hero” awards for their exceptional services. Examples of work conducted by these two dogs were their deployment to a large scale disaster to assist evacuees of a wildfire in California. Each dog was able to form a meaningful and potentially lifesaving bond with a child significantly affected by the event. Duke, a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, was able to provide the necessary attachment figure for a young boy to enable the child to walk with the dog and access medical attention (L. Abrams, personal communication, May 1, 2013) (Appendix 12). Another child in the Red Cross shelter had not uttered a word nor was she bonding or playing with other children. Otis, a Portuguese water dog, provided the necessary attachment figure for this little girl to begin speaking again and bonding with others, an aspect essential to her recovery and wellbeing (M. Lowy, personal communication, May 2, 2013) (Appendix 13). Appendices 12 and 13 are excerpts from the
Red Cross awards presented to these two dogs (appendix 13 does not depict the little girl described, however, it does show Otis with another child from the same evacuation shelter).

Other typical references made by participants that supported this sub-theme were that people in crisis were quick to accept a dog into their personal space, were eager to cuddle the dogs, that dogs provided connection, and that people formed special attachments or surrogate kinships with certain dogs which served a person’s need to feel special. Consider the following excerpts:

Sometimes having to almost extract yourself and dog from them after a period of time ... they joke and say “I’d love to take him home with me” (participant 16 interview, July 15, 2010).

“Are you bringing them over around to be adopted?” ... there’s all kinds of questions ... “can you leave them? Can I keep them for a while? Can you stay here? Will you be back tomorrow?” ... (participant 7 interview, June 24, 2012).

4.4.3 Normality.

Inherent in any crisis is the experience of an extraordinary occurrence, an event so outside of one’s general reality, that an individual or group of individuals experience helplessness over their life or environment (American Psychiatric Association, 2000; Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, 2007). Consequently important aspects of recovery, and key elements of participant data, are the re-experiencing of being in control again and feelings of normality.

Data within the sub-theme of Normality discussed AACR dogs as representing normal, everyday, “life goes on” aspects of a reality interspersed amongst the chaos of a tragedy. Typically dogs were reported to represent a piece of home for people, an assurance that “all is well in the world”, and provided a familiar sight in a scenery that was otherwise fearfully unfamiliar. Words used for what the dogs represented were “hope”, “joy”, “play”, “humor”, “happiness” and “distraction”. They were “alive”, “warm”, “responsive”, “fury” and “tactile”, many aspects of everyday life that constitutes an individual's normalcy and sense of control.
We work the Red Cross shelters and we work the fire camps so the fire fighters can get respite from the dogs, I love one quote that a fire fighter gave me years ago and he said “they give us a home away from home feeling” (participant 1 interview, June 21, 2013).

For the folks that are experiencing, you know, have been impacted by the event they’re seeing dogs that are like everyday things not just first responders and not crisis workers and mental health folks but dogs that are just everyday (participant 29 interview, July 18, 2012).

4.4.4 Comfort and calming.

Participants were aware of the research literature that indicates dogs add to the quality of life for people (Johnson et al., 2003), assist in blood pressure and cardiovascular health (Friedmann et al., 1980; Odendaal, 2000) and improve people’s social circumstances (Ferreyra, 1999; Matuszek, 2010). Shared interpretations that all participants attributed to the work that AACR dogs do, is that they provide comfort and calming to people impacted by a crisis. In Montana, a crisis counsellor participant stated that within his local professional networks, the dogs were colloquially referred to as “the comfort dogs”.

Every participant had a story of how these dogs comforted and calmed distressed people. The participants’ stories centred on how the dogs appeared to ground, de-stress and re-group individuals by bringing a sense of the here and now to the crisis situation. Other typical language and notions used by participants within this sub-theme were that the dogs brought an honesty, solidity, sense of wellbeing, emotional support, relief, lightness, rest and respite to the people they assisted.

I’ve had every aspect where people are shut down and don’t want to talk … and it’s like their body’s there but their minds are somewhere else and then the dog comes up and then they’ll start patting the dog and they’ll spend time with the dog and then they’ll look up at you … I’ve had it from that extreme to other people that can’t sit still, their mind is all over the place, “I’ve gotta call the doctor, I’ve got to call this person, I’ve gotta” … and then the dogs come in and then they pat the dogs and then it just kind of puts a calming sense in the room and then they can focus in with you (participant 6 interview, June 23, 2012).
4.4.5 Mystique.

“Mystique” was a term used by one of the participants (participant 14, interview, July 3, 2012) and aptly describes the notion of this sub-theme:

When you’re dealing specifically with an animal you’re dealing with something that is alive and that is responsive and in some ways you don’t know what that animal is going to do. The kind considerate ways that the animal applies himself basically is something unusual and is a total mystique, but it works.

As a title, mystique captures the moments when participants were encouraged to delve deep into their interpretations, beliefs and experiences of what the dogs meant to people. In turn, each participant reached a point where they struggled and stated that words were inadequate, or that human comprehension could not fully capture their impressions. When urged to attempt to articulate their impressions or thoughts, participants described first hand observations of nonverbal exchanges between dogs and humans at crisis events. They appeared to be describing a mystique between humans and dogs and their stories involved descriptions the centred on the dog’s presence, moreover a presence that was described as honest, trustworthy, available and openly accepted by people in crisis. Participants discussed how dogs “engage without agendas” or biases, “listen without prejudice”, unequivocally keep confidences, “provide opportunity for unhampered communication” and give opportunity for uncomplicated taboo free touch, patting and physical embracing. Excerpts illustrating this sub theme are:

They bring a magic that is really difficult to explain and it’s almost like you have to see it before you get it (participant 8 interview, June 25, 2012).

She would not talk to her coach, she would not talk to her team mates, she would not talk to the staff that were in the room but she would talk to the dog (participant 3 interview, June 23, 2012).
4.5 Working like a dog

Figure 5 shows the key theme, working like a dog, with each of its sub-themes. This was the most distinctive composite theme to emerge from the data. Every participant spoke about peculiarities, uniqueness and inherent features of the dogs that enabled them to perform their AACR roles. Participants themselves had considerable expertise and represented a variety of exceptionally skilled trauma workers from various disciplines, however, each displayed an acknowledgment, humility and professional respect for the aspects of work these dogs were able to perform that humans could not.

Figure 5

*Working like a dog*
4.5.1 Training and role.

Given the highly specialised roles that AACR dogs perform (Greenbaum, 2006), plus the rigorous selection, training, certification and ongoing requirements for continual registration required of them (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010), it is not surprising that training was a sub-theme to emerge from the data. Whilst different perspectives on training techniques were detected between the AACR organisations represented in this study, nonetheless all parties agreed that specialist training is essential and a core responsibility of the AACR field and its workers.

Participants recognised the exclusivity of AACR dogs and were clear in pointing out that not all dogs can train for AACR work. Essentially training incorporates desensitization to the elements inherit in most crisis environments, for example, loud noises, intense emotions, body-touch sensitivities where dogs can be over handled (excessive patting or hugging) and developing a high tolerance for unpredictability. The following excerpt demonstrates these characteristics:

The dogs have to be therapy dogs first ... but we believe that to be a crisis response dog the dog has to be we call it ‘bomb proof’ that the dog has to be much more stable even than a therapy dog, has to be very calm, not reactive in really unpredictable situations because in our training we have ambulance and a fire truck come and the ambulance has its sirens going and the fire truck comes with its sirens and lights and the fire-fighters are in their full gear and they’re using their hoses and spraying them around and then when they turn off the hoses the dogs have to be willing to walk up to that fire-fighter who is covered head to toe in fireproof clothing and a helmet and giant boots and most therapy dogs wouldn’t do that (participant 11 interview, June 25, 2012).

Other aspects relevant to training are that these dogs are classified as working dogs. They have clear roles that they are required to perform when on duty, that is, when they have their vests on. Consider the following excerpts:

They can be in the backyard playing soccer with the boys one minute but when they’re working, you know when he has his vest on, he’s working (participant 3 interview, June 23, 2012).
That’s a dog being a dog, yeah you put the vest on and he knows he’s working and so he knows his job and part of that is probably his training ... he’s got his vest on so he’s looking for where he needs to go (participant 30 interview, July 19, 2012).

Another salient feature in this sub-theme was the inter-connectedness, working alliance and bond shared between the dogs and their human handlers. AACR participants spoke about the need to work as a unified team if their dog-handler team was to be effective. These highly skilled teams, in order to be operational, require that the dog and their handler are able to read each other’s body language and commands at instinctive and intuitive levels. This finding raises questions about the personality, innate temperament and abilities of both the dog and human handler:

I think part of it is the breed and I think part of it is ... the partner that they’re with ... and I think it’s part of us and I’ve had a lot of training and speaking with people and all that (participant 30 interview, July 19, 2012).

Handler abilities, temperament, personality factors and aptitude for empathy were referred to by participants, however, in a limited manner. The same subject matter with regard to dogs, however, was excessively discussed. Even participants who were non-dog owners or not AACR trained had interpretations on these matters that they wished to share.

4.5.2 Dog temperament and abilities.

You cannot train a dog to be an animal assisted therapy or a crisis response dog if they don’t come with that kind of heart and that kind of temperament (participant 26 interview, July 17, 2012).

The data clearly indicate that dogs required particular attributes in order to be considered for training as an AACR dog. These attributes centred on the dog’s ability to detect which people in crisis needed the most assistance. Each participant, irrespective of which professional group they represented, believed that AACR dogs have an innate ability to find the people in crisis who appear to need the most support. Participants who had the dual training, that is were trained as mental health professionals and AACR dog handlers, would also marvel at this ability in the dogs and claimed that in a crisis situation, they would often allow their dog to lead them to certain people. Furthermore, the data indicate that these dogs have an exceptionally greater predisposition toward people than toward other
dogs, that is, that they would rather be with people than other dogs or at play. Subsequently, when at work, their training and predisposition operated in ways that had AACR dogs become peoples’ best friend, not the owner’s best friend. Consider the following two excerpts where one is from an AACR dog handler-owner, the other from an emergency respondent without any AACR training:

My dog he has always from puppy days been more drawn toward humans than his own kind … the dogs have to be very oriented toward people and I think that the dogs that are oriented toward people have developed a sixth sense about if people are happy or unhappy, what they need … (participant 25 interview, July 17, 2012).

A dog reads you a dog connects to you … I’ve seen it … it’s almost like … they know who they’re supposed to be taking care of, if that makes any sense, it’s almost like they’re there sensing the wellbeing of the group but then they can kind of find that person … (participant 22 interview, July 16, 2012).

4.5.3 Dog empathy.

The dog temperament and abilities sub-theme suggests that dogs have a “knowing” about which people in crisis require the greater assistance. This particular sub-theme adds another dimension to that finding by suggesting that the dogs also have an ‘empathy’ with these people. Participants spoke about AACR dogs acting out of character, occasionally disobeying an order or breaking rules and how when the dogs chose to behave this way, it seemed to be precisely what was necessary for the client. Put another way, the dogs were able to discern subtleties in individuals, groups or the crisis environment that required them to act differently from their usual training or character, in order to achieve a more favourable outcome. Examples included dogs pulling on leads insisting they go in certain directions that lead to people who were out of view but clearly needed support, dogs refusing to leave certain individuals, and dogs uncharacteristically snuggling, licking or lap sitting with certain individuals. The following excerpt suggests empathy like behaviour in the AACR dogs:
She seems to pick up on what’s going on and who needs the most help, she’ll go to individual people and zero in on it seems like the most needy ... she goes to them and she’s not necessarily a lap dog but she will become a lap dog for certain people ... I can’t explain it there are some people that she will just go and lay down in their lap and stay there and that’s not normal behaviour for her (participant 18 interview, July 14, 2012).

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented findings from the participant socio-demographic questionnaire and data obtained from in-depth individual participant interviews. A significant socio-demographic to emerge was a group of workers not identified within the AACR model, namely workers who were certified as both AACR dog handlers and crisis counsellor respondents. Other predominant demographics were that participants were highly skilled and expert within their respective crisis response fields, all AACR personnel provide services on a volunteer basis and the majority are over the age of fifty.

Three key themes each with their own set of sub-themes emerged from the interview data. The themes were titled, The Nature of crisis, Symbolic meanings given to dogs and Working like a dog. These themes reflect interpretations given by participants on the work of AACR, meanings attributed to AACR dogs, and uniqueness of these dog teams. Theoretical and practice implications for each of the findings outlined in this chapter are discussed in depth in chapter six.
Chapter 5: Results – AACR Field trips and naturalistic observations

5.1 Overview

The primary aim of this investigation was to explore the parameters under which AACR is instigated, implemented and of benefit to people impacted by crisis including crisis response services. To this end, this chapter presents additional observational data from AACR field trips. The field trips consisted of observations of AACR dogs attending planned community events (for example Operation Purple camp, jail visit) and of AACR community culture (for example, HOPE AACR National meeting). There was, however, an immediate response critical incident that occurred during the American Independence Day parade, and by chance, an AACR dog was present to provide assistance. These observations stemmed from the researcher’s fieldwork reflexivity journal and are presented with visual (photo) data of AACR dogs. These findings are discussed in relation to the themes outlined in chapter four.

This chapter was added to this thesis because of the extra observational data made possible due to the support of the participants and the AACR community. Currently the field is in need of evidence based research and subsequently people were eager to provide me with more information than the study needed. Whilst in the field, I was given spontaneous invitations to formally contribute to an AACR panel discussion and documentary. These activities and their significance to the themes in chapter four are also outlined in this chapter.

5.2 Crisis work: Community crisis preparedness

The following observational field trips reinforce the sub-theme (discussed in section 4.3.2) of Planned Community Crisis response. Essentially these events illustrate how the AACR organisations involved in this investigation either prepare for, or provide, planned crisis interventions. These field trips equally illustrated AACR services networking with, and developing crisis preparedness within their local communities, and with other key community response services.
2012 HOPE AACR National meeting

The 2012 HOPE AACR National meeting was held in Montana and functions as an annual general meeting open to all HOPE AACR members and membership organisations across the United States. It was a two day event that provided the opportunity for the researcher to observe AACR community culture in its naturalistic setting and to contextualise data that were obtained during participant interviews. The meeting venue and accommodation were dog friendly environments and AACR dogs were present during the event. The AACR dog handlers and crisis interventionists appeared to have a strong sense of unity and displayed solidarity as peers. There was also a high level of familiarity between delegates and shared field work interventions with regard to AACR deployments.

Immediately evident was the professional integrity of the workers in this field. The delegates participated in discussions on the nature of their collaborative roles with other crisis response services, discussed the potential influence or appropriateness of AACR intervention on people affected by crisis, and reviewed the need for self (including dog) care. The following agenda items (selected from the two program) and excerpt from a participant interview who was also an attendee at the National meeting illustrate these points:

National meeting - Saturday June 23, 2012

1-5pm: American Red Cross pet first aid class

National meeting - Sunday June 24, 2012

10.30-12md: Cross cultural boundaries: Navigating tribal waters. Cr. Walter Fleming, Head of Native American Studies, Montana State University

1.15-2.45pm: The effects of immediate trauma experienced by the people we serve and our own K9 handlers and team leaders

Participant 8 interview, June 25, 2012

I’d like to see that when a disaster happens that we’re sitting at the table to make decisions about when it’s appropriate for us to be going, you know, and communicating with all of the
other relief and response agencies so that we can respond at the appropriate time and the appropriate places and that they will understand what it is that we’re doing.

Further evidence of community networking, community preparedness, and collaboration between crisis response services was also demonstrated in the president’s report where discussions involved relations with FEMA, Red Cross, Salvation Army and AACR’s recent membership status on the American National VOAD.

In the spirit of collaboration, members of the AACR board also asked me to contribute an article on this research project for publication in the HOPE AACR Highlights, July 2012, issue 4 (appendix 14). Photo 1 (HOPE AACR 2012 National Meeting) was also published in this issue.

Photo 1

*HOPE AACR 2012 National Meeting*

Photo has been used with permission from HOPE AACR

**CCCR visits to Operation Purple camp and the Washington County Sheriff’s jail**

Whilst in Portland, Oregon, two observational fieldtrips were conducted which entailed a visit the Tsuga Community Commission Operation Purple Camp for military
children and a visit to the inmates of the Washington County Sherriff’s jail. Both visits were conducted with the CCCR co-directors and various CCCR dog-handler teams. The visits involved observation of planned community events and yielded data that further demonstrate the sub-theme, 4.3.2 planned community crisis response.

CCCR was founded by two co-directors who were both initial founding board members of HOPE AACR. In 2008, CCCR incorporated and operated as an AACR service specifically providing regional responses for the Washington County area (M. Lowy, personal communication, August 23, 2012; M. Lowy, personal communication, March 26, 2013). Essentially, the ideology and service delivery model for CCCR are consistent with AACR figures 1 and 2 as described in this thesis. As a regionally focused organisation, CCCR has developed close links with its local community emergency response services. For example, in 2007 CCCR and the Tsuga Community Commission developed a working alliance which subsequently has had CCCR dog handler teams attend the annual Operation Purple camp for military kids. CCCR teams have also been sworn in as official volunteers for the Washington County Sheriff’s Office Canine Crisis Response Team which means that they have become part of the jail protocol for response services deployed when there are jail disasters (M. Lowy, personal communication, August 23, 2012). The significance of these working relationships between services, and observed in my field trips, is that CCCR practices the notion of community resilience and disaster preparedness, aspects considered essential for individual and community disaster recovery (Gordon, 2004; Hobfoll et al., 2007).

5.3 Dogs doing dog work: Observed AACR dog role and empathy

Each of the events in the following observational field trips reinforce the theme (discussed in section 4.5), Working like a dog. In particular the sub-themes of Training and role (see 4.5.1), and Dog Empathy (see 4.5.3) were illustrated. These themes were evident in the Operation Purple, HOPE AACR National meeting and American Independence Day fieldtrips.
Operation Purple

Operation Purple camps are five day annual USA state wide events where children from military families are provided with a variety of camp activities focused on assisting them deal with military life (National Military Family Association, 2013). The camp incorporates activities that foster resilience, team work, skill development, character building and community belonging for the children. I attended the July 2012, Tsuga Community Commission, Operation Purple held in Portland, Oregon.

In general the camp took place in a large faculty that housed many cabins, a mess hall, group rooms, and abundant parklands with a small waterfall. There were 81 children enrolled and at muster call I observed them line up according to their squadrons. Their ages were from six through to middle adolescence. Adult workers, volunteers, camp coaches and military personnel were also present at the camp. Considering the enormity and logistics of the event, the atmosphere was not chaotic. Rather the atmosphere was playful with activities appearing well organised and occurring systematically. I specifically attended the camp for one day with 3 CCCR teams comprising 4 AACR dogs and 5 handlers. I sat in on, and observed three group therapy sessions, one of which particularly demonstrates dog behaviour evident for the 4.5.3 dog empathy sub-theme.

All three group therapy sessions observed were conducted by the same licenced clinical social worker who had been working with children in the Operation Purple camps for many years, was known to the children, and had in recent years, conducted the group therapy sessions with AACR dogs present. The licenced clinical social worker was male, reported being in the 30-40 age range and resided in Oregon. Each group therapy session had 15-20 children present, contained mixed genders, and was grouped according to age cohorts. For example, 6-8 year olds, 9-11 years old, and so forth. Each group therapy session ran for one hour and the rules for engagement during the session were that, a) children were to remain seated, b) the dogs approach children, and c) if children wanted to speak they were to raise their hand to indicate this.

Two of the group therapy sessions were conducted according to the standard protocol, that is, with dogs off leads doing their work. Generally I noted that the dogs either sat by their handlers, or at times would select particular children to visit with and either sat
or laid by these children’s feet. This typical interaction between the AACR dogs and children was consistent throughout both these two group therapy sessions and is depicted in photo 2. The photo is sourced from my camera and taken at an angle to protect confidentiality while also capturing the flavour of the moment.

Photo 2

AACR dog in group therapy at Operation Purple

A misunderstanding by AACR dog handlers at the beginning of the third group therapy session for the youngest cohort group (6-8 years) resulted in the dogs being left on lead during this process. Mid way during the session, the therapist began discussing parent deployments and the possibility that parents may not return at which point one particular girl became extremely upset. She got up, crouched behind her chair and was then approached by her camp coach (an older child) who coaxed her back into her seat. The camp coach remained sitting behind this girl to provide support but shortly after resuming her seat, the girl ran out of the room. The camp coach followed her and within a 10 minute period they both returned. The girl resumed her seat again but remained withdrawn, shared no eye contact with anybody and sat hunched in her chair with her hands covering her face.
The group therapy session proceeded to the break time when the children were required to move to the back of the room to do art work. At this point the children got up and there was lots of noise, movement and general commotion. The dogs were simultaneously taken off lead and I saw all three dogs immediately cut through other children to approach the girl. Two of the dogs veered elsewhere but one went right up to her and stood squarely in front of her, looked intensely at her and seemed to be waiting for an order or sign of engagement from the girl. The dog’s head was at torso height to the girl and remained there as she cried, kept covering her face and shook her head, indicating she wanted to be left alone. However, while the girl was doing this, she also reached out to the dog and began patting it. At that point the group therapist approached and began speaking to the girl. I watched and during the entire time the therapist was with the girl, the girl kept her hand placed on the dog. The dog seemed to target this particular child and also appeared to offer her empathic type “other directed” behaviour (Custance & Mayer, 2012).

There were two participants interviewed for this investigation who were involved in this occurrence, the group therapist and the AACR dog handler-owner. The following are excerpts from their interview regarding the event:

**Participant 15 interview, July 14, 2012**
I knew I needed to go over there. I needed to do other stuff first and then I waited and saw the dog was there so I took advantage of the moment ... the clinical moment presented itself ... I noticed her but I purposely waited ... I couldn’t wait anymore because once the dog was in place, then I had to move in because it’s at that point, and then we work sort of in partnership.

**Participant 28 interview, July 17, 2012**
**Participant:** she has an emotional attraction I guess you’d call it to people who are in distress. She just seems to understand that this person, you know, for lack of a better term needs a hug and she’s not the least bit reticent to just go do that, and she doesn’t need a leash to work. You just turn her loose and she goes where she’s needed ... she’ll figure that out pretty fast ...

**Researcher:** I actually, I think it was with [dog’s name], you tell me, you correct me, but I think that’s what I saw at Operation Purple the other day where there ... was that group of children, where there was that misunderstanding that the dogs were supposed to stay on
the lead and there was that little girl in the group that was crying … none of the dogs could do anything but the minute that the dogs were off lead, was it Harlow that I saw go straight to this little one who had been crying? *Participant:* yeah that was Harlow … it’s kind of like “you need me,” you know, and she’ll go and try to help. The first time that we did Camp Purple they were doing the circle that they had up in the chapel … she squeezed inside that circle and she started working her way around with these different kids … and when that session finished (therapist’s name) that psychologist … he said “I’ve never seen anything like that” and you know he says “can she work the next session?”

**HOPE AACR National meeting – Panel discussion**

The following is another demonstration of dog behaviour that appears to support the sub-theme, dog empathy (4.5.3). In this occurrence, a separate AACR dog also independently sought out the person that seemed most in need of support and again displayed “other oriented behaviour” or empathy as suggested by Custance and Mayer (2012).

On day two of the HOPE AACR National meeting, a panel of mental health professionals were scheduled to facilitate a discussion titled “The effects of immediate trauma experienced by the people we serve and our own K9 handlers and team leaders”. The panel speakers consisted of a retired school psychologist, a licensed clinical counsellor and a licensed clinical social worker, experts in their respective fields, CISM and in AACR work. As the panel members convened for discussion one of them approached me and suggested I take a place on the panel with them.

Shortly after I took a seat on this panel, one of the AACR dogs approached me and placed his head on my lap (Photo 3). This dog stayed with me in that position for about fifteen minutes then quietly left. When he left, the AACR people in the room jokingly said that “he had done his job, got my anxiety about being on the panel down so there was no need for him to stay with me any longer.” In fact, I was anxious about being on the panel and the dog visiting with me was reassuring and comforting. This occurrence further demonstrates the sub-theme Comfort and Calming (4.4.4).
Whilst visiting one of the founding Board HOPE AACR members, I attended a local American Independence Day parade with her. As a guest from Australia, I was given a seat at the front so I could watch the procession. Also sitting with me at the front were other people who brought their AACR, AAT and general non-working dogs (family pet) along. This was opportune because I could observe the different dog groups and their behaviours during the chaotic festive environment. The festive event was extremely large, there were thousands of people, lots of parade floats, marching girls, brass bands, clowns that walked up to the crowds and a general commotion on a grand scale that lasted for hours. During this parade there were three significant observations relevant to this investigation’s findings.

The first salient observation was the behavioural differences between the groups of dogs present. For example, the dogs that were family pets (that is, non-vested or not identified as working dogs) were, in general, uncomfortable in the busy environment. These
dogs exhibited jitteriness, excessive panting, startled movements, guardedness and occasional barking at the horses in the parade. Conversely, the AACR and AAT trained dogs appeared at ease with the chaos and displayed skills required for work in unpredictable situations (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010). The AACR and AAT dogs sat or lay at the front and watched the parade at close range. These observations reinforce the “working like a dog” theme, in particular the sub-theme Training and Role (4.5.1).

The second observation resonates with the “social lubricant” effect that dogs have been suggested to have (Schneider & Harley, 2006). There was a group of people sitting in the front row who had family pets with them. As one of the military groups marching in the procession reached the vicinity of these dogs, I observed one of the men break away from his marching group to approach a dog. He patted this dog and greeted the people sitting with the dog. I had my camera and captured the before and after pictures of this occurrence. Refer to photos 4 and 5, dogs as social lubricants below. These photos have had human faces pixelated to protect confidentiality.

Photos 4 and 5

Dogs as social lubricants

The third observation was exceptionally fortuitous because it presented as an opportunity to observe an AACR dog respond to a critical incident. A young girl collapsed and hit her head close to where an AACR dog was sitting with his AACR handler who was
also a PhD psychologist trained in CISM response work. I did not see the critical event occur but I was alerted to the event and invited to observe by other members of our group. I arrived at the scene at the same time the paramedic team were approaching the child. I noticed that the AACR dog and handler-psychologist were already in place providing support to the girl and her parents. The AACR dog was sitting by the girl’s head in eye shot so she could look up at him from the ground where she was laying. The AACR dog was sitting to her right and the girl’s parents were kneeling close to her on her left. As the paramedics approached they were telling people to step back and make room, a directive also given to the dog. However, I noted a distinct shift in the paramedic’s attitude when the AACR dog handler told them the dog was a crisis response dog from HOPE. The paramedic chief was immediately satisfied to have the dog stay close by as girl was examined.

Features from this event that resonate with findings in chapter four were that the girl was comforted by having the dog close by (sub-theme 4.4.4 comfort and calming). The readiness with which the paramedics accepted and worked with the AACR dog, and the dog standing steadfast by the girl’s side throughout the entire ordeal, demonstrate the sub-theme 4.5.1 training and role. The AACR handler-psychologist obtained consent from the girl’s parents to use photo 6 (American Independence Day critical incident and AACR dog) in the report that was later sent to the HOPE AACR Regional Director. The report has not been included as an appendix for confidentiality reasons, however, the photo is sourced from my camera and shot at an angle which protects confidentiality.

Finally observations of this event and the way in which emergency response services collaborated are best described by the following statement obtained from one of the participants interviewed for data collection in this study. Participant 14, interview July 3, 2012 states:

the session changes with the animal in the session, the hospital ward changes when the dog goes in there, the situation changes when a dog moves into a crisis area.
5.4 Symbolic meanings: AACR dogs providing comfort, normality and a mystique

This section presents observations from field trips that further support the thematic analysis for the theme “symbolic meanings given to dogs”. In particular the sub-themes Normality (4.4.3), Comfort and Calming (4.4.4) and Mystique (4.4.5) are evident in the Washington County Sheriff Office and Operation Purple fieldtrips.

Washington County Sheriff’s Office – visit to inmates

The Washington County sheriff’s Office in Portland, Oregon had a large jail facility attached to it. This jail is considered a high risk facility because it is generally where prisoners are first incarcerated before assignment to longer term prisons. As an initial incarceration point, and particularly for first time inmates, there is an increased risk and occurrence of suicide at this facility (refer to participant interviews 20, 21 and 22). The jail encompasses a number of pods, each catering to particular prisoner populations. One of the pods (i.e. division) was designated for women prisoners and was the location for my field
trip. I visited this pod in the company of the women’s pod sargent, three CCCR dog handlers and two AACR dogs. There were forty inmates in this pod at the time of our visit.

The pod layout involved a ground and top floor each circling a large ground floor meeting space, or hub, with a sargent’s desk in the middle. At the time of our visit there was another sargent stationed at this desk overseeing the prisoners. The upstairs appeared to house the women’s cells and there was a small exercise yard visible from the sargent’s desk. Women prisoners were talking amongst themselves and were gathered around the hub and exercise yard. As our visiting party entered the pod, the two dog teams dispersed and I observed as women prisoners approached to engage the dogs. Prisoners who engaged with the dogs were clearly enjoying the opportunity. Other prisoners, however, were oblivious to the dogs, or if aware, were disinterested.

A particular prisoner began crying as the dogs walked into the pod. This prisoner remained where she stood and over a fifteen minute period, intently watched as other prisoners interacted with the dogs. During this time the prisoner kept crying as she kept watching the dogs. I approached one of the dog handlers and got some dog treats from his belt, walked over to the woman and asked her “if she wanted to visit with the dogs to give them some treats?” Schneider and Harley (2006) discuss the social lubricant effect that dogs have on people so I used the AACR dogs as an opportunity to engage with this prisoner. The prisoner began telling me her story which entailed her recent incarceration. She also told me that she was terrified of her jail situation and missed her dog terribly which she felt when the AACR dogs entered the room. After a short period, the prisoner and I approached one of the AACR dogs where the woman then gently began patting the dog and fed it treats. This behaviour was normal and familiar for the prisoner and indicative of the sub-theme, Normality (4.4.3). The prisoner began laughing, got down on her knees with the dog and spent time on the ground with it. As our visiting group left the pod that particular woman prisoner was smiling and waved goodbye to the dogs.
Operation Purple documentary

Further observational evidence for the 4.4.4 sub-theme, comfort and calming, is captured in a filmed documentary of the Tsuga Community Commission, 2012 Operation Purple camp in Portland, Oregon. The documentary demonstrates the working alliance that occurs between children and AACR dogs. It demonstrates the calming effect that dogs have on children (Friedmann et al., 1983; Odendaal, 2000), as well as presenting some of the mystique (sub-theme 4.4.5) inherit in this bond.

Furthermore, I was asked to give an interview on my research project in this documentary and a three minute vignette that involves part of my interview, as well as footage demonstrating the sub-themes 4.4.4 comfort and calming, and 4.4.5 mystique, can be viewed via the following link, http://vimeo.com/57238487. This documentary was commissioned by the Operation Purple camp director, has been posted on various American based websites and is authorized for use in this thesis.

5.5 Conclusion

To contextualise data from the participant interviews, a multi-method approach to the collection of data was incorporated in the research design of this investigation. This chapter presented findings from observational field trips that were conducted in naturalistic settings, from visual (photo) data, and from my reflexivity journal. These sources support and add further evidence for the thematic data analysis findings discussed in chapter four.
Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1 Overview

This chapter discusses the research findings as outlined in chapters four and five. The discussion in this chapter explores these findings within the context of AACR’s relevance to the crisis counselling fields and the research questions initially posed by the investigation. Previous research, presented in chapter 2, is revisited. The implications and possibilities of the research findings in relation to the Australian context and possible future AACR models for development in Australia are also discussed.

6.2 AACR: Key findings from the current study

The current study found three main themes to represent the understandings that participants had for the work AACR dogs perform when deployed in crisis response work. These themes are entitled, “The nature of crisis”, “symbolic meanings given to dogs” and “working like a dog”. Essentially each of these three themes is contextualised in the following manner.

The “nature of crisis” contained the sub themes “critical incident”, “community crisis response” and “psychotherapy crisis response”. This theme established that AACR teams are used to provide support services in events that can be conceptualised along a crisis continuum from planned to non-planned events. This is also an interesting finding because the literature on AACR conceptualises and discusses AACR intervention as a crisis response service (Greenbaum, 2006; Shubert, 2012) operating within an immediate response framework (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010).

“Symbolic meanings given to dogs” is another major theme from the current study which entails the five sub-themes, “safety”, “attachment”, “normality”, “mystique” and “comfort and calming”. These titles emerged from the data and essentially represent the meanings that participants of this study attribute to the work that AACR dogs do. Of note is that each of these meanings also represents key crisis intervention principles and factors necessary for the promotion of psychological recovery in people affected by disasters.
The third major finding from the current investigation is the theme titled “working like a dog.” This theme contains three sub themes, “dog temperament and abilities”, “dog empathy”, and “training and role.” Essentially this theme establishes that there is an element to AACR services, which due to the presence of the particular dogs in these teams, provides a uniqueness of support service, not otherwise provided, for people affected by crisis events.

Each of these three major themes, their significance to the research, and implications for the crisis counselling field are discussed in the following section.

6.3 AACR: Key findings and their significances

Briefly, findings from this study were largely based on participant interpretations as provided by their interview transcripts and subsequent thematic analysis. At this point, I wish to reiterate that the current study used a qualitative research design and symbolic interactionism to inform its methodology (chapter three). Subsequently as principal investigator, my beliefs and involvement in the data collection process factored in the co-construction of participant interpretations and conceptualisations of emergent themes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Hill et al., 1997; Liamputtong, 2013a). This process is considered natural and is an underpinning of the constructivist tradition (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) also used as a foundation for the current study and its use of research findings.

6.3.1 Symbolic meanings given to AACR dogs: Relevance for the crisis counselling fields.

AACR dogs: Safety, comfort and therapeutic alliance

A frightening aspect of any disaster or crisis is the element of danger inherent in the nature of such an event. Consequently people affected by disasters experience feeling unsafe, yet one of the most vivid interpretations provided by participants of the current study regarding the work that AACR dogs do, is that they bring a sense of safety to people in crisis. Safety is also one of the five identified empirically supported principles for crisis intervention (Hobfoll et al., 2007), and is a main consideration for interventions by counsellors trained in the crisis response fields (Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, 2007; Mitchell, 2011; Mitchell & Everly, 2001).
Furthermore, the experience of a significant disaster or crisis has the potential to shatter an individual’s beliefs, values, world view and assumptions about his or her prevailing sense of safety in the world (Hobfoll et al., 2007; Ruysschaert, 2009), (e.g. the belief that “my world is safe, bad things won’t happen to me”). Vital elements for any crisis counselling and intervention service is therefore to assist people re-establish their sense of safety (American Psychiatric Association, 2000; Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, 2007; Michell, 2011). Research shows that people whose sense of safety is re-established are at lower risk of developing PTSD after exposure to a crisis as opposed to individuals where safety was not re-established (Hobfoll et al., 2007). Additionally, Hobfoll et al., (2007) suggest that interventions which use social systems, grounding techniques, and connectedness to others assist people re-develop a balanced view or perspective of the world, (e.g. “the world and people around me have good bits so it’s not all bad”). In turn this balanced perspective promotes the re-establishment of safety (Hobfoll et al., 2007) for the individual. The finding that AACR dogs bring a sense safety to a crisis event compliments these research assertions by suggesting that these dogs can assist, even facilitate, crisis counsellors re-establish a sense of safety for an individual. For example, “dogs are safe and don’t hurt people so I will reach out to the dog for comfort”.

Social supports, grounding techniques and connectedness were additional elements suggested by Hobfoll et al., (2007) for crisis interventions to promote balance and thereby re-establish a sense of safety for individuals. These elements of crisis intervention were also found to be associated with the work that AACR dogs do. Specifically, this study found that AACR dogs symbolise connectedness by operating as an object to which people form short term attachments. This finding is discussed in detail later in this chapter. As a grounding technique, studies citied in chapter two indicate that dogs lower an individual’s stress levels by lowering blood pressure (Odendaal, 2000) and increase one’s general sense of wellbeing (Friedmann et al., 1980; 2000; Siegel, 1990). In regards to the “hands on” crisis work that AACR dogs provide in the field, the present study indicates that AACR dogs are used by people in crisis as mechanisms to lower their stress levels, provide comfort and generate a sense of safety. Social support was also found to be an aspect of AACR work and is evidenced by the variety of proactive planned community events AACR teams attend, outlined in the “nature of crisis” major theme.
Safety entailed and elicited the following understandings from participants regarding what AACR dogs bring to people requiring support in a crisis situation. AACR dogs bring unconditional acceptance, love, a non-threatening presence, honesty, genuineness, and a sense of non-judgement. These elements essentially echo the foundations of the Rogerian client centred approach to therapy (Rogers, 1957, 1962, 1965). This finding also supports the position taken by Chandler et al., (2010) that the intentions and techniques of AAT identified by O’Callaghan (2008) are compatible with the principles of various counselling models, particularly the Rogerian approach. The underpinnings of the Rogerian approach are congruence, unconditional positive regard and empathy, which are conditions essential in the therapeutic alliance between therapist and client for successful behavioural change. Furthermore central for successful therapeutic outcome is that the client perceives these conditions in the therapeutic relationship (Rogers, 1965).

Unconditional positive regard entails the expression of warmth, acceptance and positivity by a therapist toward the client. Congruence demonstrates that a therapist is genuine in the therapeutic alliance and empathy entails a therapist’s ability to detect and express the experience of his/her client without losing separateness from the client. Findings from the present study indicate that people, including emergency workers, in crisis situations perceive AACR dogs to possess Rogerian qualities. Moreover the dogs naturally bring these qualities to people in crisis to assist them in their recovery. These findings are based on field experiences of the dogs by AACR handlers, crisis counsellors and emergency responders, who themselves at times also become recipients in need of services from the AACR dogs. As such they became secondary survivors of trauma, a phenomenon also cited in the literature (Figley, 1995; McGibbon et al., 2010; Ruysschaert, 2009; Tehrani, 2007) and discussed in chapter two.

Three questions arise from my study’s finding that AACR dogs represent Rogerian conditions necessary for a therapeutic alliance, and that interactions with these dogs represent a potentially successful therapeutic intervention for people affected by crisis. The first logical question that arises is: what constitutes a therapeutic alliance within a crisis context where dogs provide support to humans affected by a disaster? The second question considers whether AACR dogs really have Rogerian qualities or whether this view is
anthropomorphic meaning making by the participants of this study? Finally, the third question is concerns empathy. Given that empathy is a condition which requires one person to experience the private inner world of another, can AACR dogs possess a quality that is so vital for human recovery yet is empirically virtually impossible to establish?

What constitutes a therapeutic alliance? Whilst an alliance is commonly recognised as a mutual and collaborative interaction between parties, translating this to a commonly recognised therapeutic effect is not straightforward. Meta-analyses across several hundred psychotherapy outcome studies estimate that the therapy relationship accounts for 10% of the variance, whilst the characteristics of the client accounts for 25-30% (Narcross, Beutler & Levant 2006). That is, successful outcomes in psychotherapy are attributed to a number of variables of which 10% centre on the relationship between therapist and client, and a further 20-30% on clients’ pre-existing characteristics (e.g. interpretations, perception). Other variables identified as contributing to the successful outcome of psychotherapy are therapist characteristics (8%), specific treatment methods used (5-8%), associations between client, treatment and relationship (5%), and other unspecified factors (39%) (Norcross, Beutler, & Levant, 2006). Clearly the client is the single greatest factor in outcome variance with evidence also supporting the power of the relationship. Furthermore Rogers (1965) claimed that:

Personality change in the client or patient in psychotherapy came about not because of the professional qualifications and training of the therapist, … not because of his ideological orientation, … not because of his techniques in the interview, not because of his skill in making interpretations, but primarily or solely because of certain attitudinal characteristics in the relationship” (p. 96).

Consider, if the research literature indicates that what constitutes a therapeutic alliance is largely determined by clients and their perception of the relationship, then it logically follows that clients will perceive the relationship with whom (human therapist) or what (dog) ever object best meets their therapeutic needs at the time. For example, a person in crisis may perceive that an AACR dog possess the necessary qualities for him/her to form a short term relationship. Subsequently this relationship anthropomorphism may be the predominant factor in assisting that the person shift paradigms (e.g. from hopelessness
to hope, or from unsafe to safe) and move toward recovery. Results from the current study found that AACR dogs indeed provided an opportunity for people to shift paradigms, a dynamic also considered important by the research for psychological recovery in people affected by crisis events (Radey & Figley, 2007).

Furthermore, the constructivist symbolic interactionist paradigm and methodology underpinning the current study presume that people have different realities, each legitimate in their own social structure. Hence if participants of this study and their associated crisis communities have constructed interpretations of AACR dogs that assume their interaction with people in crisis is therapeutic, then I suggest this holds therapeutic power for people. This notion is certainly an area for further research studies in this field.

The other question, regarding empathy, centres on whether AACR dogs actually possess abilities to detect a human’s need for emotional assistance, and if so, do they have the capacity to care, or respond accordingly? Custance and Mayer’s (2012) found that domestic dogs display “other” rather than “self” orientated behaviours in experimental conditions where people pretended to cry. They found that dogs from their study consistently approached the person crying and displayed empathic type behaviours towards that person irrespective of whether the person was the dogs’ owner or a stranger. This finding suggests that dogs have the capacity to differentiate between “self” and “other” and the respective needs of these orientations. For example, they hypothesised that dogs responding from a “self” orientated perspective would approach their owner for assurance when a person cried. However dogs responding from an “other” orientated perspective would approach the person crying and indicate behaviours orientated toward that person’s needs. This finding also raises the possibility that the domestication of dogs may have evolved socio-cognitive skills in dogs which predispose them to forming close bonds with humans and attunement to human emotions (Custance & Mayer, 2012). The research reinforces dogs’ attunement to humans (See chapter two: Belk, 1996; Odendaal, 2000; Schaefer, 2002; Wilson, 1984) and is supported by findings from this study discussed in chapter four under “dog empathy”.

Furthermore observational field trips from this study reported two important occasions that also support that AACR dogs possess empathy, or have capacity for empathic
behaviours which assist people in times of need. Briefly, chapter five presents the incident where an AACR dog independently approached me as I became anxious when joining a panel discussion as a guest speaker, and, the other incident describes my observation of an AACR dog that independently identified and approached a distressed child during an Operation Purple group therapy activity. In both instances the AACR dogs demonstrate “other” orientated behaviours by approaching the distressed humans with displays of empathic type behaviours and dog body language.

Attachment: AACR dogs as surrogate kin in times of crisis

In an attempt to understand the bond that humans have with dogs, Wilson’s (1984) biophilia hypothesis explains that dogs assist human survival needs because dogs have an innate attentiveness to the world around them which alerts humans to their environment. Dogs also have an ability to fulfil the human need for “surrogate kin”. Additionally dog breeds have been genetically manipulated, selectively evolved and domesticated to possess puppy or childlike features (floppy ears, big eyes) and to behave in ways that encourage attunement or attachment to human needs (Beck, 2013; Prato-Previde, Custance, Spiezio, & Sabatini, 2003).

Attachment Theory (Bowlby 1977), in brief, explains how the mother-child bond forms a blueprint for the development of a person’s psychological state. Essentially a healthy psychological state develops from a nurturing bond where both mother and child are satisfied, and where consideration is also given to the influence of extended family members or the wider social networks (Bretherton, 1992). Due to ongoing collaborative research efforts between Bowlby and Ainsworth, Attachment Theory evolved to incorporate the “secure base” concept, identified various “attachment styles”, and developed the notion that the ability to attach is an important aspect of wellbeing for humans at all life stages (Wallin, 2007). Essentially, attachment and its constructs are initially based on, and informed by, the communication style and character of a caregiver. The child incorporates these as an “internal working map” (Bowlby, 1977) which then manifests in that individual’s relationships throughout his/her life (Bowlby, 1977; Bretherton, 1992; Wallin, 2007).
The significance of attachment theory to the present study is that it suggests important intervention implications for people who experience disconnection or detachment, a particular effect that people affected by disasters tend to experience (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Furthermore, from an attachment theory perspective, post trauma stress can be conceptualised as an intense type of separation anxiety where the underlying need is for survivors to restore their need for attachment figures that in turn provide safety, care, protection and comfort (Sable, 1995). Findings from the present study indicate that AACR dogs are used as objects for people in crisis to form powerful and healing short term attachments. Notably, findings indicate that AACR dogs make exceptional short term attachment figures because they are warm, interactive and participants reported that humans in crisis perceive the dogs as safe, nurturing, unconditional, confronting and able to meet their need attachment need.

The current study also found that AACR dogs seek out people, are able to foster attachments quickly and maintain connections with people in need during crisis periods. These are important factors, particularly in large scale disasters where people tend to find they are alone or displaced from loved ones, either at the time of impact or later in evaluation shelters.

Furthermore being alone at times of crisis, or feeling isolated during the recovery period has been associated with increased risks for survivors (Sable, 1995). Hobfoll et al., (2007) identified connectedness as an empirically validated principle of crisis intervention and emphasise the importance of social supports and sustaining attachments to loved ones as crucial factors for recovery. However, connectedness has little experimental research with regard to ways that it can be used as a technique in crisis intervention, or ways that it can be promoted (Hobfoll et al., 2007). Findings from the current study suggest that perhaps AACR dogs present as a creative option for the transition from evidence to intervention based practice with regard to connectedness for people requiring crisis intervention. This is certainly another area for future research studies in this field.
AACR dogs as extensions of crisis counsellors

I have discussed findings from this study, and the research literature presented in chapter two, to contextualise AACR dogs as providing Rogerian elements and a therapeutic alliance for people in crisis. Empirically the findings also support the current AACR practice of dogs being used at crisis events as therapeutic assistants, and AACR teams as collaborators with other crisis counselling or support response services. Further evidence supporting this practice is Belk’s (1996) finding that pets are seen as extensions of oneself and significant others, and the Schneider and Harley (2006) finding where therapists who were associated with dogs were perceived more favourably to therapists not associated with dogs. This “halo” effect subsequently facilitates social interaction between people, and may also explain, in part, the increased utilisation and deployment of AACR services throughout America since their inception at the New York September 11th disaster site. Based on these findings and logic, I would suggest that AACR dogs are perceived by people in crisis, and those deployed to assist, as extensions of crisis counsellors.

The premise that AACR dogs are seen as extensions of how people feel about themselves, others and crisis counsellors has important implications in times of crisis when people’s metaphors and world view can be shattered (Ruysschaert, 2009; Tehrani, 2007) and individuals need something pure and uncomplicated with which to quickly identify. My study has found that AACR dogs provide and represent positive elements analogous to the five identified empirically supported principles for the early to mid-term stages of crisis intervention by Hobfoll et al., (2007). These principles are a sense of safety, calming, sense of self and collective efficacy, connectedness, and hope. As such, AACR dogs can assist re-build new, powerful and healing assumptions about the world after a crisis event such as “dogs are here for me”, “dogs are always there when I need them”, “dogs love me no matter what so I will get through this”, and “the world still has wonderful things to offer”. This need of shifting people’s paradigm is also supported by the positivity-negativity ratio (Radey & Figley, 2007) discussed in chapter two which is considered necessary for psychological wellbeing in trauma workers.
Hope is another crucial element in the re-formulation of healthy world views and is one of the empirically identified principles of crisis intervention (Hobfoll et al., 2007). Hope is a mysterious concept with psychological, religious and spiritual based perspectives on its meaning and relevance. It was reported in many ways and forms in the data from the current study and emerged as an element within the “mystique” sub-theme. Its significance is that AACR dogs represent hope for people in crisis situations. All participants of the current study shared many stories where hope was highlighted. From stories where children who had not laughed and played for days would immediately beam with joy when faced with an AACR dog, to stories of fireman who dropped to their knees to play with the dogs, and of occurrences when emergency service workers shared sombre meal breaks that transformed to contagious conversations of home and pets when AACR dogs joined them at their food stations. What these findings also illustrate is that AACR dogs, when operating as extensions of crisis counsellors, appear to have unspoken permission to go beyond the constraints of traditional crisis counselling personnel. As a technique for CISM and psychological first aid workers, these dogs are highly advantageous because they can be used to meet the demands for more flexible and creative approaches necessary for crisis work where traditional therapeutic alliances are not easily established and there is general ambivalence toward mental health professionals (Hobfoll et al., 2007; Rodriguez & Kohn, 2008; Schwarz & Kowalski, 1992).

Finally, development and utilisation of having AACR dogs perceived as extensions of crisis counsellors indicates that AACR dogs and teams can be, and are used, as conduits between the people who need help in a crisis, and the professionals who can provide help. This seems a vital role of AACR services and is worth further investigation.

AACR dogs: Enhancing efficacy for crisis workers and the crisis community

Socio-demographic findings from my study showed that AACR dog handlers reported considerable satisfaction in the work that they do with most indicating that they intend to continue working in the field for at least another 6 – 9 years. This signifies a substantial commitment to the field when results also showed that 80% of the total sample population is over the age of 50, and that AACR work is entirely voluntary. These demographics, combined with the finding that AACR services are closely networked at individual, local,
community and National organisational levels to other crisis response services suggest that there is an extensive sense of value associated to AACR services and their workers. This camaraderie, sense of worth, and, the finding that dogs positively affect how people are perceived (Schneider & Harley, 2006) may collectively enhance the sense of efficacy that workers from these communities feel when deployed. This is another likely explanation for the high levels of satisfaction and commitment to AACR work reported by participants from this study, and utilisation of AACR teams into the wider crisis response communities throughout America.

Self (individual) and community (collective) efficacy requires a belief in capacity to problem solve, face challenges, and trust that people from community systems (family, crisis response services, authorities) will overcome adversity (Hobfoll et al., 2007). Implications for crisis intervention personnel are that they need to foster these beliefs in survivors, as well as themselves. Findings from the current study show that AACR services, particularly the presence of AACR dogs, have the ability to bring these elements to people in crisis events. The dogs facilitate connections and act as conduits between people, transmitting important “feel good” factors (hope, possibility, trust) throughout individuals and the crisis community necessary for the process of psychological recovery to begin.

Crisis intervention is clearly high stress and emotionally demanding work for crisis workers. They are at risk of becoming casualties themselves when responding to a crisis, or of developing compassion fatigue, also referred to as Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder (STSD) (Figley, 1995; Ruysschaert, 2009; Yoder, 2010). My proposition, that AACR dogs enhance the sense of efficacy in AACR handlers and crisis workers who associate with these teams, also entails the notion that AACR dogs provide an emotional buffering factor for crisis workers at all stages throughout the deployment process (i.e. pre, during and post crisis intervention). Consequently, as psychological and emotional buffers, the AACR dogs also operate as a self-care mechanism (Johnson et al., 2003) for these workers: a self-care mechanism which is easily accepted in the guise of a dog that is deployed and operating as a non-threatening team member or assistant. Research shows that dogs are perceived as trustworthy and safe, and as such have been found to be of exceptional benefit to resistant populations (Medew, 2011; O’Callaghan, 2008). Therefore it follows that previously
resistant emergency services personnel, who may not have availed themselves to self-care options, may do so in the presence of AACR dogs.

Furthermore, given the anxiety based characteristic parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous system flight or fright response of those affected by trauma, calming survivors becomes an essential aspect of crisis intervention work (Hobfoll et al., 2007). This aspect is equally and exceptionally relevant for crisis responders, or any personnel exposed to the devastations of traumatic events and who must keep calm in order to assist survivors in their recovery process. Research shows that dogs can calm humans by lowering their anxiety responses (Friedmann et al., 1980; Odendaal, 2000) and by bringing a general “feel good” quality to a situation (Friedmann et al., 1983; Johnson et al., 2003). Hence it follows that AACR dogs, just by virtue of being dogs, automatically bring calming effects to a crisis situation, as well as the triggering of positive emotions such as joy, love, humour, acceptance, and hope. These were demonstrated in findings from the current study in the theme “symbolic meanings given to dogs” and have been shown to act as a transformative mechanism of the trauma experience for crisis workers (Radey & Figley, 2007).

6.3.2 AACR: Its uniqueness and significance for the crisis counselling fields.

This investigation has established that AACR is a valuable adjunct in promoting psychological recovery for public casualties of disasters, as well as emergency responders who require emotional support from their exposure or involvement in a crisis event. However, the specific feature distinguishing AACR teams from other crisis counselling, CISM, psychological first aid or crisis emotional support services is that these teams use dogs explicitly trained for crisis intervention and the provision of comfort for people affected by disasters, and that people in need respond to these dogs.

Findings from the present study indicate that the AACR human handler and dog units require more than the customary human-dog bond in order to successfully perform their roles when deployed to crisis events. For example, the expertise and qualities required by AACR dogs, presented in the theme “working like a dog” demonstrate that not all dogs have the temperament or are able to withstand the training required to qualify as an AACR dog. Presumably, the same may be true for the human handler which is an area that warrants
further research. Nevertheless, the qualified AACR team represents exceptional bonding, understanding, communication and an exchange of skills within, and between, the human handler and dog parties. In regard to the AACR dogs, findings from the current study indicate that they show superior skills in attunement to humans. This finding is also supported by previous studies discussed in chapter two (Custance & Mayer, 2012; Macdonald, 2011; Miklosi, Topal, & Csanyi, 2007).

Based on these findings AACR dogs appear to understand the language of humans and nuances required for crisis work. Equally, the AACR human handlers demonstrated superior attunement to the language of their dogs and needs of people affected by disasters. Accordingly the human handlers were apt in discerning moments when to allow the dogs to lead in AACR deployments and when opportunities for positive interactions presented between those people affected. This investigation did not focus on the character or qualities of the AACR dog handlers, nor the specific nature of the bond between the handlers and AACR dogs. These aspects and how they influence the outcome for recipients at times of crisis are worth considering for future investigations in this field.

### 6.3.3 AACR: The nature of crisis work and implications of this finding for the crisis counselling field.

**AACR: A principled approach and partner for the crisis counselling field**

Hobfoll et al., (2007) identified five principles for crisis intervention and recommended flexibility in their use due to the heterogenetic nature of traumatic events. “The nature of crisis” emerged as a major theme from results of the current study and identified that indeed, AACR services are used for crisis events that are either planned (e.g. memorials, death notifications) or unplanned (e.g. bombings, shootings) and are therefore available as a flexible service intervention along a continuum of crisis events for people.

The empirically supported intervention principles for early to mid-term crisis intervention are the promotion of safety, calming, sense of self and efficacy, connectedness, and hope (Hobfoll et al., 2007). These principles are clearly echoed in the AACR National Standards document (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010) with regard to AACR training, certification and
service delivery, and were further evidenced in findings from the current study. What this demonstrates is the close association between AACR work and best practice principles for short to medium term crisis intervention. In effect, AACR has important collaborative relevance for the crisis counselling field.

For example, “hope” has been identified as a principle of crisis intervention by Hobfoll et al., (2007), the AACR National Standards document (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010), in the literature (Greenbaum, 2006; Shubert, 2012) and emerged as a theme from the present study. Collaborative evidence between the work that AACR teams perform and the principles recommended for short to medium term crisis intervention has also been demonstrated by findings from this study for the other principles identified (safety, calming, sense of self and efficacy, connectedness) (Hobfoll et al., 2007). What this indicates is that AACR services, particularly the presence of AACR dogs, bring a “hands on” experience of the crisis intervention principles as experienced by the participants of the current study.

AACR as a mechanism for the mitigation of critical incident stress

It has been estimated that over 80% of Americans will experience a trauma and that up to 40-50% may develop significant impairments (Mitchell, 2011). Estimates for Australians are that over a quarter of a million will experience posttraumatic stress disorder in any given year (Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, 2007). These figures signify substantial potential psychological injury for individuals and communities. Therefore any crisis intervention service which is able to assist mitigate traumatic stress and provide comfort or support people affected by a crisis is certainly an important service. Findings from the current study have established that AACR services are compatible to partner with crisis counselling services, and that they also assist in the mitigation of traumatic stress for people who are either affected by a crisis or workers that are deployed to the event.
AACR service model: Implications for the crisis counselling field

In the counselling and psychotherapy field, best practice requires that workers are trained in, and use, empirically supported principles, therapeutic models and intervention techniques. The personality, integrity and relationship skills of workers are also essential ingredients in considering what facilitates best practice interventions to successful outcomes (Norcross, Beutler, & Levant, 2006).

The emergent theme, “the nature of crisis” from the present study found that 80% of the sample population possess dual certifications and are therefore qualified as an AACR dog handler and mental health professional. This indicates that majority of AACR workers, from this study, practise with added specialisation in counselling intervention. However, the present findings also show that AACR dog handlers, irrespective of their background qualifications or life experiences they may have, are trained in basic psychological first aid or CISM intervention as a requirement of their AACR certification (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010). Consequently all AACR dog handlers are trained, at a basic level, in matters such as psychological crisis principles, emotional and support crisis intervention techniques, role expectations and limitations, and ethical practice.

It was evident from the interviews, fieldtrips and conversations I conducted throughout this study, that the dog handlers who possessed dual qualifications maintained professional boundaries and only worked from the role for which they were deployed. For example, they were either deployed as a crisis counsellor, Red Cross emergency responder or as an AACR dog handler and therefore only work within that role, irrespective of their other qualifications.

A likely explanation for the occurrence of dual qualifications in participants from this study is that AACR dog handler work could be seen as attractive volunteer work for mental health professionals already involved in, or retired from, allied fields such as crisis response work or AAT work. Nevertheless the finding that the vast majority of AACR dog handlers from this study were also trained mental health professionals is interesting because it raises implications for the possible use of dual qualified AACR workers. For example, the current AACR service model as outlined in chapter one (Figure 1) indicates that interaction between
AACR teams and survivors of disasters is either directed by the team leader, who has consulted with a crisis counsellor, or is requested directly by crisis personnel in the field. Ideally, the AACR model requires that AACR teams partner with crisis counsellors, or mental health professionals, and under their direction engage with people requiring assistance. Figure 6 depicts this aspect of the AACR model.

Figure 6

*Current AACR handler-dog team interaction with individual affected by disaster*

Alternatively, figures 7a and 7b indicate possible AACR service models that could benefit from the utilisation of both skill bases in the AACR worker who has dual certification as an AACR dog handler and mental health professional. Specifically, figure 7a depicts a dual qualified AACR dog handler working directly with the affected individual. Both skill bases are utilised and recognised interventions in this model and its potential advantage is that it uses the “social lubricant” effect (Schneider & Harley, 2006) that dogs have, the skills of the AACR dog in approaching trauma affected people, and it simultaneously establishes contact with a mental health professional. The latter is particularly important given that research indicates the utilisation of MHS following disasters is found to be low (Rodriguez & Kohn, 2008).
Figure 7a

*Dual role - AACR dog handler and crisis mental health professional*

Figure 7b depicts the dual qualified worker in the team leader position. In this scenario, AACR handler dog teams that are in field working with survivors and who require intervention or guidance from a skilled mental health worker can defer the matter directly to their team leader. Under this model team leaders can continue to operate under current AACR service model stipulations, that is, that team leaders deploy with no more than four AACR dog-handler teams to supervise and with no dog whilst in that role (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010). However, figure 7b suggests that future AACR working units could deploy with their own specialist mental health worker in tow as a recognised aspect of AACR service delivery.

Figure 7b

*Dual role - Team leader certified in AACR and is a mental health professional*
Clearly these models are speculative discussion that arise from my study’s finding that the majority of AACR dog handlers are also mental health professionals. Perhaps the models suggested by figures 7a and 7b could positively influence intervention outcomes for recipients or enhance the utilisation of MHS by people impacted in disasters. However, further research is required.

Furthermore, whilst the current AACR model stipulates that AACR dog handler teams approach survivors either with other crisis counsellors or as directed by emergency services personnel (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010; Greenbaum, 2006), participant reports from my study indicate that what actually happens in situ is that survivors seek out the dogs, dogs seek out survivors, and even emergency services personnel seek out the support of the dogs for themselves. Essentially, at times of crisis, humans and dogs seek each other out and form their own connections independently of field directives or theoretical rules of engagement. This was particularly evidenced in the theme from the current study “dog empathy” where AACR dogs demonstrated actively selecting and approaching particular people in need of support. The themes “attachment” and “calming” illustrate the process where humans initiated the approach toward the dogs. The spontaneous connections between humans and dogs during a crisis event, irrespective of which party initiates the process, contributes positively to the psychological recovery for the human party. For example, humans approaching dogs display self-determining help seeking behaviour which assists to promote their sense of self, a factor necessary for crisis intervention and recovery (Hobfoll et al., 2007). Approaching dogs also signifies people’s desire to use them as a mechanism for the restoration of safety, protection, care, or comfort obtainable from an attachment figure. These are all elements identified in the themes from my study and the research literature regarding the needs of people affected by disasters (Sable, 1995).

Another important factor for crisis intervention work is the finding that individuals who are alone at the time of impact have an increased risk of harm or danger (Sable, 1995) and possible compromised psychological recovery. My study found that in some incidents, AACR dogs pulled against their handlers’ leads toward certain persons who were otherwise sitting or huddled alone in corners shortly after a crisis. Furthermore, Friedmann et al., (1983) found that the introduction of dogs during the earlier phase of a potentially threatening situation was more likely to lower blood pressure than introducing dogs in later
stages. Clearly the threatening situation in their study is not analogous to the stress induced by a critical incident. However, the finding that stress can be lowered more effectively if a dog is present in the early stages of a perceived threat may have implications for timing and initiation of AACR services. For example, it may be particularly beneficial to have AACR dogs already present in evaluation shelters or at registration and processing points as survivors arrive for assistance rather than once they have been there for hours or days.

Overall, it appears that the current AACR service model, and anomalies found between its theoretical perspectives and actual practice, is nonetheless a relevant practice approach for crisis intervention and psychological recovery.

Finally, an anomaly was found in the socio-demographic data which shows all dog handlers reporting use of their own AACR dog for deployments except one participant. Given the shorter life span and working years of dogs compared to humans, it is likely that this occurrence is because the participant’s dog at the time of interview was too old and retired from AACR deployments, or that his/her new dog was not yet certified as an AACR working dog.

6.4 AACR and the Australian context – Future possibilities

An aspect of the current study was to explore further development options for AACR and its applicability within the Australian context. Recommendations for further research and AACR development have been identified and discussed throughout this chapter. However, there are specific Australian factors which must be researched before its implementation can be considered here. The following section is discussion which is therefore based entirely upon speculation.

Culturally, Australia, like any other country, has its portion of natural and man-made disasters, emergency and crisis counselling response services, and hence potential for AACR service usage. Existing Australian based services that could work collaboratively with AACR teams, that is, that share analogous service principles, could be Assistance Dogs Australia, CIMA (Crisis Intervention Management Australasia), Delta Society, Salvation Army, Red Cross, State Emergency Services, Australian police services, Australian defence services, and the Victorian Government SHERP (State Health Emergency Response Plan). This list
identifies public and mainstream services however there are also numerous private organisations and AAT companies that could also potentially integrate AACR into an aspect of their core business.

Yet at a broader cultural level there are distinctions between Australia and America that appear to favour AACR’s viability to the American experience of life. For example, the first and most significant distinction is the occurrence of the September 11th terrorist attack on American soil. Essentially the enormity of 9/11 stretched its crisis intervention and response services to a point where the system was forced to seek assistance from other non-traditional support services (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010; Greenbaum, 2006; Shubert, 2012). For example, hundreds of AAA and AAT teams were deployed to the 9/11 relief effort. These responses subsequently paved the way for future development of AACR as well as initiate a cultural shift in the USA to embrace AACR as an ongoing aspect of crisis support work. Secondly America has considerably different guns laws to Australia and population per mass which consequently may result in more man-made disasters and fatalities. Culturally, these circumstances may influence the American people’s readiness to accept, and need for, AACR services. Finally, I found the USA localities that I travelled to for data collection to be exceptionally dog friendly and dog integrated places. For instance, virtually every business store and shop front along the main street of Bozeman, Montana, had water bowls inside (not outside) their premise for dogs, and there were dog friendly hotels located in main centres, not just in outer districts.

Nevertheless, regardless of these differences, and in the absence of a culturally shifting large scale man-made disaster in Australia, AACR can be implemented in Australia. It will however require extensive promotion and cultural awareness training for the Australian general population and relevant professional bodies. Once people and relevant bodies become interested in piloting or implementing AACR in Australia, further research is necessary for the development and adaptation of the AACR service model so it translates to the Australian context. Initial possible pilot models for the Australian context have been presented in figures 7a and 7b. These models are essentially more conservative than the current model investigated by my study and outlined in chapter one, figure one. The conservative options utilise the finding that many AACR dog handlers are also qualified
mental health professionals and proposes models whereby AACR Australian pilot teams can have mental health professionals in situ in their teams during deployments.

Other important and culturally specific considerations to the Australian context are Australian AACR registration requirements, licence to practice, insurance, public liability cover for AACR teams, regulations and requirements to work in partnership with other Australian crisis response services, and the Australian endorsement of working dog status for AACR dogs so they can gain access to public places or travel on planes in order to get to their deployment locations. As yet these are all uncharted terrains in Australia.

Resourcing is the other substantial factor to consider in regard to the use of AACR services in Australia. It has been noted that AACR qualification is sequential (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010; Shubert, 2012), that is, AACR dogs are firstly required to be AAT certified, then with adequate experience, screening and selection they can train to become an AACR dog. Hence a collaborative working relationship will be required by the Australian based Delta Society or equivalent bodies which train and certify dogs for AAT work. Essentially these bodies will become the “feeders”, or referring bodies for AAT dogs to train as AACR dogs. Furthermore, an AACR training facility, AACR registering body and AACR governing body is also required and funds must be sought to support their establishment, staffing, trainers, and ongoing operational resourcing needs. Other resource factors to consider are that AACR deployments require extensive collaboration and partnership with other emergency and crisis intervention networks because generally these are the services that will call upon AACR teams for assistance. Protocols, guidelines and contractual agreements are therefore required between these services. Regarding deployments, although AACR teams work on a voluntary bases, nevertheless they require general resourcing (food, accommodation, transport), which are factors that must also be negotiated in order to ensure AACR personnel wellbeing during deployments, and to ensure general resource availability so that the needs of others, particularly people and communities directed impacted by the disasters, are not compromised.
Clearly there are many cultural, resource and financial considerations, as well as further research required in order to facilitate the development of AACR services in Australia. What my study has accomplished is that these services are empirically compatible and complimentary to partner with other crisis counselling services. The other important contribution that my study provides is the international science based conversation and platform which raises the notion of AACR services for Australia.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the research aims and objectives, provided in chapter one, and the findings from the thematic analysis and observational fieldtrips of the current study which were presented in chapters four and five. These aspects were discussed within the context of the literature and research findings outlined in chapter two which were also used to form the theoretical and empirical base for my investigation.

Rationale and discussion were provided for the following positions: That AACR teams provide relevant services which function as collaborators in deployments with other crisis counselling and response services. That AACR can assist mitigate critical incident stress and that AACR dogs take on particular symbolic meanings which influence positively the psychological recovery for people affected by crisis events. Based on findings from the present study, it was proposed that AACR dogs contribute to the re-establishment of an individual’s and community’s sense of efficacy, function as short term attachment figures, provide Rogerian type alliances, and metaphorically, they are considered as extensions of crisis counsellors. These positions were presented as factors that distinguish AACR from other crisis counselling services, and as such, establish AACR services as a specific and beneficial new service modality for the crisis counselling fields. Finally, options for future development of AACR models and its applicability within the Australian context were discussed.
Chapter 7: Methodological considerations, future implications, summary and conclusion

7.1 Chapter overview

This chapter reviews the methodological considerations of the current investigation, future research implications, provides a summary of the material presented within this thesis and concluding comments.

7.2 Methodological limitations

Lack of theoretical bases and empirical research

AACR as a newly emerging field, currently of fourteen years standing, is underpinned by AAT practice models, crisis intervention principles and a National Standards document (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010). However it has no empirical research or a prevailing theoretical base.

The research base in AAT indicates it has applicability in the counselling process to assist clients in matters related to self-esteem, anxiety, depression, engaging in the counselling process, social behaviours, behavioural problems and general psychological wellbeing (Chandler et al., 2010; Imber-Black, 2009; O'Callaghan, 2008). However the field lacks empirical based research to indicate clinical significance, superiority or advantages of AAT interventions compared to other forms of counselling and psychotherapy involvements (Abrams, n.d.). Subsequently, Chandler et al., (2010) sought to identify intentions and techniques of AAT which are compatible with guiding principles of counselling and psychotherapy models. Whilst compatibilities were found, there is nonetheless a lack of theoretical base from which to apply AAT in a counselling or psychotherapeutic context.

Equally lacking is a prevailing psychological theory base for crisis intervention, albeit, there are empirically identified principles of short to medium term crisis intervention (Hobfoll et al., 2007) and principled techniques for assisting people impacted by crisis events (Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, 2007; Michell, 2011). Consequently as a landmark investigation into AACR, I embarked on this research with very little substantiated AACR specific theoretical or empirical foundation.
Study design

Snowball sampling was used as a recruitment method particularly for the crisis counsellor sub-set of the participant population required for this investigation. This was considered a potentially difficult group to access because they are personnel who coincidentally happen to find themselves working with AACR teams in the field. Subsequently these workers are not recognised or identified within those operational parameters. For example, a licenced clinical social worker who is a crisis mental health respondent, and who happened to attend a crisis event and worked with AACR teams, is not identifiable under that skill base. Rather, that professional is registered within his/her relevant social work governing body. Snowball sampling addresses these concerns by provided a practical common sense way, using word of mouth and referral, to access members of communities that could otherwise be elusive (Liamputtong, 2013a; Noy, 2008).

This approach is limited, however, to the crisis counselling professions known and contactable by the referral sources, in this case, the AACR dog handlers. This investigation had no obstacles in regard to accessing participants of the more elusive group. Fortunately crisis counselling professions who work with AACR teams were closely aligned with the AACR services that formed part of this investigation. In fact results showed that many of crisis counsellors were also AACR certified dog handlers. In retrospect, a wider recruitment approach than snowball sampling, for example recruitment via mental health worker governing bodies or advertisements in crisis counselling organisations may have resulted in more homogeneity amongst this sub-set. It may also have provided other relevant professionals, who did not maintain close connections with AACR services, yet worked with AACR teams in the field, an opportunity to participate.

Also, husband and wife teams, and close friendships between participants entailed a risk of contamination across participants in regard to aspects of the interview process by discussions of their experiences, before, during and after the process. However, the recruitment and data collection process was conducted with extreme professionalism and confidentiality so that this risk was minimised.
Characteristics of participants

Given the infancy of the AACR field, many participants were AACR organisational founders and AACR founding board members. Equally the crisis counsellors and professionals who had worked with AACR teams were also pioneers of this work in their respective fields. As such, data collected were exceptional in regard to historic information on AACR and its expertise. There was, however, very little negativity in regards to the use of AACR by these participants.

A greater variety of crisis interventionists (e.g. fireman, police, doctors, nurses, Salvation Army chaplains) and AACR teams that are not HOPE AACR affiliated (e.g. NOAH Assistance Dogs Crisis Team, K9 Comfort Dogs Lutheran Church Charities, Therapy Dogs International Disaster Stress Relief Dogs) may have yielded a greater variety of results, possibly with some divergent outcomes of AACR work. These sources were not investigated by this study because either they did not respond to invitations to participate, or they did not meet the selection criterion which aligned with the very specific aims of this study.

Resources: Time, funding and sole researcher constraints

In effect, this study was an extraordinary undertaking for an unfunded sole researcher. It required establishing relevant connections between Australian and American stakeholders, designing an acceptable schedule of data collection and observational fieldtrips within participant naturalistic settings that met principles of qualitative research design (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Liamputtong, 2013a) and meeting requirements of American and Australian authoritative bodies. It then required travel to three states within the USA to fulfil the undertaking.

Consequently a significant limitation of this investigation was that of resources. Essentially this investigation deserved more time spent in observational fieldwork, more time to access participants that were also themselves on time restraints, and more funds to acquire the time. Another resource factor limiting the investigation was the physical and emotional demands on the researcher. The work load was consistently around the clock for the entire five week period that I was in the USA and interviews entailed emotionally demanding, potentially vicariously traumatizing material. A research assistant or access to a
mentor once or twice a week and an extensive experience and ability to work with trauma material are factors worth considering for any future studies in this field.

Release of DSM 5

At the time of embarking upon this research, the DSM IV-TR (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) was in place and therefore incorporated into the study. However, after the thematic analysis had been conducted, findings discussed, and the thesis was in its final editing phase, the DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) was released. Consequently, this limits this investigation because definitions of trauma, its impact on people, and the diagnosis PTSD have been contextualised and discussed in relation to the DSM IV-TR.

The DSM-5 has introduced changes to the psychological trauma field. Briefly, trauma-related disorders are no longer conceptualised as anxiety-based disorders, rather they have been conceptualised within a separate category titled “Trauma-and Stressor-Related Disorders” (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. xix.) which comprises diagnostic criteria for the following grouped psychological states. Reactive Attachment Disorder (265), Disinhibited Social Engagement Disorder (268), Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (271), Acute Stress Disorder (280), Adjustment Disorders (286), Other Specified Trauma-and Stressor-Related Disorders (289), and Unspecified Trauma-and Stressor-Related Disorders (290).

Other significant changes centre on constrictions to the subjectivity of the witnessing of trauma (e.g. via media and electronic sources unless the exposure is work-related), and the addition of two new diagnosable posttraumatic stress disorders one of which relates to pre-school children and the other to psychological states which have dissociative symptoms as the predominate factor (Deacon, 2013). The implications of these changes are beyond the scope of this thesis. However, a possible consideration for a future study is to investigate how the changes in the DSM-5 affect the psychological trauma field and implications of this study.
Release of 2013 Australian Guidelines for the Treatment of Acute Stress Disorder (ASD) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Similarly to the DSM-5 occurrence, at the time of this research, the 2007 Australian Guidelines for the treatment of ASD and PTSD were in place (Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, 2007) and were used by the present study. However, after the findings from the current study had been discussed and the thesis was in its final editing phase, the 2013 Australian Guidelines for the Treatment of ASD and PTSD was released (Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, 2013).

Advancements in the new guidelines predominantly centre on the treatment of children and young adults affected by crisis. The guidelines also discuss treatment of adults affected by crisis. The full implications of these changes are beyond the scope of this thesis and it is recommended that future studies investigate the implications of the 2013 Australian Guidelines for the present study.

7.3 Future research implications

As the first empirical study on AACR services and their relevance to the crisis counselling fields, it is inevitable that the outcome will raise as many questions for future research implications as it has answered in regard to the present nature of AACR and its collaboration with other crisis counselling services. Future research implications and possible studies, from the premise of this investigation, are essentially to discover factors that encourage people impacted by disasters and crisis events to utilise mental health services, and to identify factors in recovery or support services that mitigate the effects of critical stress on people. With these in mind, recommendations and implications for future research are as follows.

Consolidation of current findings

Findings from this investigation indicate that AACR dogs have important symbolic meanings for people, that these meanings can assist in the psychological recovery process, and that essentially AACR dogs are used during the recovery phase of a disaster, as an extension of a crisis counselling or psychological first aide emotional support service. As the
only exploratory research into this notion, future research studies can seek to consolidate or explore further these findings.

Future research studies, using this investigation as a basis, could explore similar research questions with survivors of disasters who utilised AACR services as the research participant population. Further applications of this research could be to investigate survivors who did not use AACR teams or are not necessarily dog friendly people but who nevertheless witnessed AACR teams around other people during recovery efforts after a disaster. Similarly an investigation of emergency services personnel who used AACR dogs for their own recovery needs could also apply. Comparative findings amongst the different population groups could provide further information on the interpretations various populations have of AACR dogs and its implications for the process of psychological recovery.

Other comparative future research could investigate similarities and differences between the AACR groups across the United States who do not necessarily adhere to the 2010 AACR National Standards document (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010) yet nevertheless provide AACR services. Examples of these organisations include K9 Comfort Dogs Lutheran Church Charities, NOAH Assistance Dogs Crisis Team, and Therapy Dogs International Disaster Stress Relief Dogs. Other cultural nuances across the USA, local communities and AACR organisations could also be investigations with possible implications for the development of practice models arising.

Diversity

This investigation’s entire participant population, for both AACR dog handler and crisis counsellor groups, were all Caucasian and animal friendly people. As a new service system and given the limitations of the selection criterion, these participants were the necessary and only research population available particularly for the States of California, Montana and Oregon. Essentially these people were responsible for, and represented the genesis, development and current practice of AACR. However, as the field matures, it is anticipated that more diverse communities will embrace it, both as a service for their community and as a work field for other community members. In time, when this growth
had occurred, comparative studies on AACR practices, usage and outcome with ethnic and cultural factors as variables for investigation are recommended.

In the interim, future studies could consider investigating more diverse ethnic communities and the meanings or interpretations that members of these communities have on the concept of AACR dogs and the work that they do. In this regard, it could be particularly interesting to explore the cultural groups where dogs hold considerably different social positions, for example, from dirty and outcast to sacred. Worthwhile research questions could be; what insights do diverse ethnic communities provide on the place of dogs in the psychological recovery process? and; could such insights contribute to the future development of AACR services or the use of dogs for crisis intervention work?

**Dog breeds, needs and characteristics**

It has been stated that dogs have been breed and genetically designed to meet human attachment needs in regard to their appearance and behaviours (Beck, 2013; Prato-Previde, Custance, Spiezieo, & Sabatini, 2003). This predisposition in dogs, and fact that there are hundreds of dog breeds, is useful for AACR because it allows a wide variety of AAT dogs to seek potential access for AACR training, and allows recipients of the service a choice in the type of dog they want support from in times of crisis. The option of choice of AACR dogs by people in crisis and agencies requesting deployment was raised by some of the participants and is echoed in the literature by Greenbaum (2006). For example, some people impacted by a disaster require a strong large dog (e.g. German Shepard) compared to other survivors that specifically request a dog that is small and appears physically docile (e.g. Cavalier King Charles spaniel). Future research studies could investigate the influence that different breeds have on individual survivors, and different survivor cohort groups (e.g. emergency services workers, teachers, administrators). As well as dog breed and size, other relevant dog variables to consider would be gender, whether the dog was de-sexed and a dog’s colour. These factors may influence the perceptions and interpretations that people make of the dogs and in turn attachment processes and outcome. If certain characteristics were found to facilitate bonding to certain people, or community groups at time of crisis, then these factors could assist in future dog selection, planning, resourcing and development of AACR services.
Another important dog variable for future research is the dog’s ability to bear exposure to crisis situations. It has been noted that not all dogs can be AACR dogs, and that some dogs from the specialised AAA, AAT and AACR units deployed to September 11th displayed significant stress signs from their involvement (Eaton-Stull et al., 2010; Greenbaum, 2006; Shubert, 2012). Care of, and safety factors for the dog’s wellbeing, were considerations that many AACR dog handlers raised when asked if there were reasons why they would not deploy their dogs. These matters are addressed in a variety of ways by AACR service providers. For example, during AACR training, via the AACR service model (i.e. use of the team leader role) and as topics of discussion at meetings (HOPE AACR National meeting). Furthermore, findings from the Odendaal (2000) investigation showed that blood pressure levels altered for both humans and dogs pre and post human-dog experimental conditions. Dogs also showed similar positive physiological effects as humans when both species had experienced 5-24 minutes of positive human-dog interaction. Implications for future research could be to investigate this symbiotic aspect of the human-dog bond and how it impacts AACR dogs when they are exposed to high stress situations. This research could have important implications for AACR dog longevity to work in the field, canine needs in sustaining wellbeing whilst in this field of work, impact on the dog’s ability to bond with humans and considerations for future AACR training models.

Furthermore, Miklosi et al., (2007) suggested that whilst humans form attachments to dogs, that similarly dogs also form attachments to humans. They state:

Human-like attachment seems to be a species-specific feature in dogs which develops rapidly, can be expressed to various degrees towards many individuals of a group and is maintained life-long. (p. 468).

Consolidation of this statement was findings from this study noting how AACR dogs appear to have a preferred orientation toward people, rather than, for example an orientation or preference for play with other dogs or a ball (4.5.2 Dog temperament and abilities). Equally supporting this statement was findings from this investigation that indicate people in crisis appear to rapidly form short term important attachment with the AACR dogs (4.4.2 Attachment). A valuable future study would be to investigate further the nature of the attachment systems between these dogs and human survivors, attachment systems that
are facilitated by people orientated dogs, and the implications of these for psychological recovery in people affected by disasters or crisis events.

**Handler personalities and influence**

Section 6.5 (AACR: Specialised role and distinctiveness) noted the uniqueness and expertise required by AACR handlers, the AACR dogs, and the potential superiority of the human-dog bond that operated between these partners. These aspects, as well as AACR handler personalities, temperament, skills base and attunement with dogs were not the focus of the current investigation however all have potential future research implications. For example, Miklosi et al., (2007) claim that dogs and humans in their co-evolution and co-habitation have both adopted a shared communication system, conscious and unconscious. This exchange of information is socially observable and empirical research into the communication, attunement and attachment system between AACR dog handlers and AACR dogs may provide further insight into the benefits of the human-dog interaction during times of crisis. Other potential research implications are what characteristics do AACR dog handlers have in common? Are AACR dog handlers also interpreted as a form of crisis counsellors by survivors and if so, are these interpretations influenced by the presence of AACR dogs? Findings could inform selection and training of AACR dog handlers and the future development of their role in the mitigation of critical incident stress for people affected by disasters.

**7.4 Conclusion**

This was an exploratory and pioneering investigation into the AACR field. The aims were to investigate AACR practice by determining parameters for AACR deployment, explore what benefits it provides for recipients (i.e. people directly affected by disasters and those indirectly affected such as emergency responders) and clarify AACR potential for collaboration with other crisis response services. Other aims of the study were to explore interpretations that crisis responders and dog handlers have about AACR dogs based on their experiences of working with them in the USA field.
I travelled to the USA where I visited three states, conducted thirty individual interviews with participants, went on numerous fieldtrips to observe AACR activities in naturalistic settings, four of which yielded reportable results (chapter five), and took nine domestic airflights within the USA in order to meet the requirements of this data collection schedule. This data collection phase was both extremely challenging and delightfully rewarding for me. I meet wonderful people and dogs, and was generously given more data than necessary to fulfil the objectives of this investigation.

Findings from the data overall indicate that AACR services are specialised teams that operate from crisis intervention principles (Hobfoll et al., 2007) and use principled psychological recovery techniques for people affected by disasters (Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, 2007; Mitchell, 2011). The practice of AACR is congruent with CISM and psychological first aid, thereby making it a compatible crisis intervention service to work in partnership with other crisis counselling and intervention services. In particular findings indicate that AACR dogs are interpreted by participants of this investigation in ways that suggest they form healing short term attachments with survivors. They are also interpreted as objects that bring safety, normality, mystique, and comfort and calming to people at times of crisis. Essentially, AACR dogs are perceived symbolically to be extensions of crisis counsellors, which due to their expertise, particular dog abilities and versatility to act across events along the crisis continuum can assist in the mitigation of critical incident stress on people. Importantly AACR dogs provide a conduit connecting people who need help from mental health workers and crisis response services to the people who can provide the help.

This study established a case that indeed dogs do deliver on many of the fundamental human needs (Petcare Information and advisory Service, 1992) and that in particular, AACR dogs can deliver on the needs of people in crisis as identified by the principles for short to medium term crisis intervention (Hobfoll, et al., 2007). From a personal perspective, I observed this mystique and special offerings from these dogs, the benefit of which is best stated by one of the participants of this study:
They’re there to bring a moment of love and understanding. It’s an emotional benefit, they’re not there to change somebody’s life they’re there to change a moment, to change a time span (participant 20 interview, July 16, 2012).

Furthermore, Australia does not have an analogous service to AACR, yet we also have significant disasters. This investigation also sought to explore future develop options for AACR and implications within the Australian context. Relevant Victorian services from which partnerships with AACR services could be formed were identified and relevant practice models and considerations for Australia discussed. It is envisaged that I will pursue these partnerships and possibilities as a post-doctoral project.

Finally, on a personal note, this study has been an academic milestone for me, a coming of age. It has been an absolute labour of love and as a psychologist, researcher, dog lover and human being, I have learned the following to be true for me. If we remain open to the partnership of what dogs can offer in general, and particularly in crisis situations, there is benefit for all to be had as they are our natural mirrors and therefore life teachers. They have long been part of our human life on earth and consequently have taught us how to become human. Historically and currently, they are our constant and have therefore etched a place in our psyche. Their story is our story. We partner with them and unequivocally trust our deepest human needs to them. We walk side by side with them, carve foot and paw prints on earth with them, and share our silences and heart beats with them.
They are already helping the blind, deaf and elderly, and now they are healing the mentally ill.

Dr Anne-Marie Swan recently told a meeting of Australian psychiatrists that dogs were emerging as useful "co-therapists" in psychiatry because of their non-judgmental ways and ability to soothe. The Sydney-based specialist said her Italian Lagotto Romagnolo, Fabio, had assisted her with many patients in her private practice in recent years, especially those experiencing depression, bereavement and psychosis. He tended to give paranoid patients a wide berth, though, she said, probably because he picks up fear or a sense they feel threatened.

Dr Swan said Fabio was particularly good at helping her establish a therapeutic alliance with patients who can find it difficult to trust a stranger enough to divulge their innermost thoughts.

"No matter how hard I try, I can't communicate a warmth in the same uncomplicated, direct, unconditional way that he does. And, of course, the dog has absolute confidentiality, so they know he's not going to talk about what he's heard," she said.

Dr Swan said Fabio could also offer patients another ear to talk to when they were finding it hard to deal with her. He had also acted as mediator when there was tension in the room.
"Once when I was irritable with a patient, he sat up right beside her in a very protective way and positively glared at me. It was very funny, he caught me out and the patient felt totally validated," she said. "It allowed us to talk about it."

"Freud also thought that his dog reacted very well to people who were depressed, and I agree. Fabio will sometimes cross a room from a sleeping position and put a paw on a patient or lie down beside them if they are distressed."

Studies have shown that animal-assisted therapy can decrease anxiety, depression, anger and aggression and increase social interaction by reducing the threat of the treatment environment. However, few studies have examined dogs' apparent ability to empathise with humans.

A group of Portuguese researchers recently hypothesised a theory of convergent evolution between dogs and humans given that dogs possess some human-like social skills that apes do not. Writing in the journal *Biology Letters*, they said research had shown that dogs yawned when humans yawned, a trait that is linked to high levels of empathy when seen in humans.

Furthermore, the researchers said studies had found that some untrained dogs got upset when familiar humans faked distress. There were also reports of dogs summoning help in emergencies involving humans.

American psychiatrist Myron Glucksman recently wrote that while his dog, Joe, was an excellent co-therapist, he was also a wonderful comfort to him in what could be a tiring and thankless job at times.

"An idealising, loving dog is an additional bonus that makes up for the many hours that often go unrewarded during the therapeutic journey," he wrote in *The Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis and Dynamic Psychiatry*.

Dr Swan agreed wholeheartedly, but said she was very mindful of ensuring that Fabio was enjoying his work.

"He's a shockingly well looked-after dog ... If he wasn't enjoying it, I would let him retire immediately," she said.
Can dogs read our minds?

*Cosmos. The science of everything.*

**Cosmos Online**

June 23, 2011. Claire Macdonald

The ability of domestic dogs and wolves to read and respond to the level of people's attentiveness is based on a combination of specific cues, context and previous experience, U.S. researchers have shown.

A wolf begging for food in Monique Udell's experiment. Credit: Monique Udell

FLORIDA: The ability of domestic dogs and wolves to read and respond to the level of people's attentiveness is based on a combination of specific cues, context and previous experience, U.S. researchers have shown.

It's easy to marvel at dogs’ uncanny, seemingly ‘telepathic’ behaviour: how they appear to know who is most likely to give them food and can predict when they might get away with bad behaviour. A new study has now shed light on the way dogs think about and respond the behaviour of their human companions.

“Dogs don’t have to read our minds; they can read our behaviour,” said lead author and expert in canine cognition, Monique Udell, from the University of Florida.
“Even when we don’t intend to, we are giving off subtle cues about the way we feel and what we will do next, from the direction of our gaze to our body orientation, and even the way we smell. This may be one reason that pet dogs can coexist so closely with humans.”

**Human-like behavior:** Previous studies have shown that dogs are capable of a remarkable range of human-like behaviours; they have been shown to perform as well or even better than chimpanzees at responding to human body language, verbal commands and attention states.

This has led to debate as to whether dogs are aware of people’s behaviour and can predict how a person will act as a result of it, or whether they are simply responding to the presence or absence of certain stimuli.

Publishing in the journal *Learning & Behaviour*, Udell and colleagues carried out two experiments to test the ability of pet dogs, rescue shelter dogs and wolves, to successfully beg for food from an attentive individual, versus an inattentive individual.

**Choosing the best human for food:** In the first experiment, two people simultaneously offered food to the subject dog or wolf. One person was always attentive, giving the animal eye contact, while the other was unable to see the animal as they either had a camera or book obscuring their eyes, their back turned or a bucket over their head.

The researchers compared the success rate of the animals at choosing the attentive person as the best individual to beg from. They showed, for the first time, that wolves as well as domestic dogs tended to beg for food from an attentive individual rather someone who was not paying attention.

The animals were much better at choosing the attentive person when a familiar cue – such as a turned back as opposed to a bucket – was used to show inattentiveness.

**Drawing on past experience:** “Both dogs and wolves seem to be responding based on their past experiences,” said Udell. “A book is a familiar object for pet dogs, and reading a book likely predicts inattention. A person reading a book is not likely to be engaged in giving a dog treats. So pet dogs with exposure to humans reading books tend to avoid begging from them and prefer the person looking at them.”
Udell added, “Wolves, even captive and tame ones, and dogs living in a shelter have less opportunity to experience people reading books. This was reflected in the results, as the wolves tended to approach the book-reading individuals for food as much as the attentive person.

Likewise, since few dogs and wolves regularly see people walking around with their head covered by a bucket, they performed poorly at selecting the attentive person under this condition.

**Responding to human attention:** In the second experiment, the team tested how well the animals learned to associate the unfamiliar condition – such as the bucket – with inattentiveness. Dogs and wolves alike quickly learned to preferentially beg from an attentive person to get their food reward.

They also tested whether dogs could learn equally well to beg from the inattentive person. The dogs were much more successful at begging from the person looking at them than from the inattentive person.

“One of the most interesting features of this study is that the researchers attempted to train dogs to go against the grain by rewarding them for going to the person who did not appear to see them,” said Stanley Coren, a professor of psychology at the University of British Columbia.

“The fact that they found this more difficult suggests there may be something in the way the dog’s brain is wired that facilitates their abilities to respond to human attention and communication.”

**Environment plus experience:** “Some researchers feel that dogs were specifically bred to respond to human social cues, and their responses to humans paying attention or not paying attention are encoded in their genes. Others feel that this is a learned response. This research tries to tease apart the answer to that question. The results suggest that both theories may have a bit of truth,” said Coren.

“The logical conclusion of the study must be that both genetics and the environment can play a role in the dogs’ behaviour, but the fundamental aspect seems to be genetic with only fine tuning being done by the dogs’ experience in the human environment,” he added.

“We shouldn’t take dogs’ relationships with us for granted,” said Udell. “To give them the best chance of success we have to realise that environment and life experiences also play a key role in their behaviour.”
Appendix 3: Ferry, 2011, newspaper article

Use of golden retriever in rape case courts controversy in New York

CBS New York

August 10, 2011. Dobbs Ferry

Rosie The Comfort Dog (credit: CBS 2)

Man’s best friend is currently under a court challenge. Defense lawyers in an emotional rape case in New York said the state unfairly used a golden retriever to gain the jury’s sympathy.

Rosie, the professional comfort therapy dog, hardly seems controversial. The 11-year-old animal, trained to help traumatized children through the rough patches of life, knows her job and does it well.

The dog made a historic appearance as the first therapy dog in New York state allowed to comfort a testifying witness in a criminal court case. It happened in June at the Dutchess County courthouse as a 15-year-old girl testified against her own father for sexual abuse.

The animal accompanied the young rape victim to the stand and by all accounts did a wonderful job by sitting at the teen’s feet and gently nuzzling her when she became nervous and helping her find the courage to testify.
The defense said that Rosie’s presence in the courtroom prejudiced the jury against their client, the father, who was convicted and is now serving jail time.

“She’s a beautiful dog, but the fact is that...most important thing here is making sure that the defendant’s right to a fair trial is protected,” defense lawyer Steven Levine told CBS 2’s Lou Young.

The courthouse dog program has been tried in other states, but it is new in New York. Critics said the dog makes a witness automatically look sympathetic and could help some pull a fast one.

“I believe the dog could potentially help somebody lie,” Levine said

However, Majorie Smith, of the Dutchess County District Attorney’s office, described the appeal filed in the rape case as “smoke and mirrors.” The appeal is challenging the use of the dog, but the district attorney’s office insists the dogs are a help to young and traumatized victims.

“This dog is no different than the teddy bear that was allowed out in the previous New York case. Where they allowed a little girl to come in and hold a teddy bear in her lap when she testified,” Smith said.

The Dutchess District Attorney is so sure of the value of the dog, they are continuing to use Rosie in other cases even as the appeal is held. A check with other district attorney’s offices around the state indicate they will probably wait for a ruling before following suit.

The courthouse dog program started several years ago in Washington state and has since spread to Arizona, Hawaii, Idaho and Indiana.
Appendix 4: Sacks, 2011, newspaper article

Comfort amid the rubble: Therapy dogs that helped 9/11 workers to be recognized at ceremony

NY Daily

September 10, 2011. Amy Sacks

Crisis dog Tikva spent two weeks at Ground Zero comforting anxious rescue workers.

Tikva was only a year-old pup in 2001 when she helped comfort many bereft people after the attack on the World Trade Center.

While riding with victims' family members on the 20-minute ferry ride to Ground Zero for their final farewells, the gentle Keeshond would bury her face in a tense hand, or tap her nose against a tear-stained face to ease the pain.

At Ground Zero, Tikva's presence helped to ease the anxieties of the overwhelmed rescue workers. Many of them would pet her while on break from searching the rubble.

"Some of them never said a word all day, but would turn around at the end of the day and ask, 'Can you bring her again tomorrow?'" recalled Tikva's handler, Cindy Ehlers, who runs the K9 CRT disaster response team at Pawsitive Pet, in Eugene, Ore.

Tikva, now 11, is the only surviving dog among the four-member therapy dog team specially trained in crisis response that came to New York from an Oregon-based organization called Hope.
She was among the 318 therapy dogs and their handlers that worked seemingly endless days at Pier 94, and consoled brigades of police officers, firefighters and workers at Ground Zero.

"It's a beautiful little dance that goes on between a therapy dog and a person under stress," said Dr. Stephanie LaFarge, ASPCA's senior director of counseling, who coordinated the work of the therapy dog teams after the collapse of the twin towers.

Many of the teams came to New York from around the country, from pet therapy organizations that included the Delta Society, based outside Seattle; Therapy Dogs International of Flanders, N.J., and the Good Dog Foundation in Brooklyn.

LaFarge's own dog Sophie, who died this year, spent weeks at the football-size FAC, where those affected by the disaster could seek services and counseling.

Like Sophie, many of the other heroic dogs are with us today in spirit only, but their legacy lives on.

Their tireless work after 9/11 helped raise the bar on their therapeutic roles, opening a whole new realm of opportunities to comfort people affected by disaster.

"In 10 years, therapy dogs have gone from pets, to having the status of working dogs," LaFarge said, noting that many disaster relief organizations came to realize that dogs can help normalize a situation in times of crisis.

Today, therapy dogs are being used in courtrooms to ease jitters on the witness stand. And dogs and horses are increasingly being used in therapeutic programs for at-risk youth in detention centers.

In fact, the success of the 9/11 therapy dogs in disaster relief set the wheels in motion for the city's recent decision to allow pets in shelters during Hurricane Irene.

LaFarge hopes the next step is for the city to allow victims of domestic violence to enter the shelters with their pets.

Tomorrow, Tikva and Ehlers will take part in the Working Dog Recognition Ceremony at Liberty State Park in New Jersey for the 950 canine working dog teams that served in response to the 9/11 attacks. These teams were involved with search and rescue, recovery and security efforts at Ground Zero, the Pentagon, Shanksville, Pa., and the Fresh Kills Landfill recovery site.

The Recognition Ceremony begins at 12:45 p.m.
Appendix 5: Fiegl, 2012, broadcast and newspaper article

The healing power of dogs

Canines bring comfort to Newtown survivors and others in crisis

National Geographic News

December 21, 2012. Amanda Fiegl

Photograph by David Goldman, AP:

Libby, one of several golden retriever therapy dogs, visits with 2-year-old Lily Willinger of Newtown, Conn.

One boy confided in the gentle-faced golden retriever about exactly what happened in his classroom at Sandy Hook Elementary School that day—which his parents said was more than he’d been able to share with them. A little girl who hadn't spoken since the shootings finally started talking to her mother again after petting one of the "comfort dogs." Groups of teenagers began to open up and discuss their fear and grief with each other as they sat on the floor together, all stroking the same animal.

The dogs are therapy dogs—professional comforters that were brought to Newtown, Connecticut, almost immediately after the horrific shootings on December 14 that left 20 young children and 6 staff members dead.
Tim Hetzner, leader of the Lutheran Church Charities (LCC) K9 Comfort Dogs team, traveled to Newtown with nine specially trained golden retrievers and their volunteer handlers from the Addison, Illinois-based group.

Using a local Lutheran church as their base, the K9 teams have spent the past few days visiting schools, churches, activity centers, and private homes in the community. They only go where they're invited and are careful to let people approach the dogs instead of vice versa, in case anyone is afraid of or allergic to the animals.

**Counselors With Fur:** The response to the dogs has been overwhelmingly positive, according to Hetzner.

"A lot of times, kids talk directly to the dog," he said. "They're kind of like counselors with fur. They have excellent listening skills, and they demonstrate unconditional love. They don't judge you or talk back."

The dogs are also used to reassure victims of natural disasters—most recently, Superstorm Sandy—and to brighten the days of nursing home patients. Hetzner said he got the idea after seeing how well students responded to therapy dogs in the wake of a 2008 school shooting at Northern Illinois University. Now, in addition to the core of 15 that make up LCC's K9 Comfort Dogs team, the group has deployed about 20 other dogs to be based in schools and churches that apply for them.

The human volunteers' main job is to make sure the dogs don't get burned out, which means taking a break to play ball or nap after about two hours of work. Although some handlers have a background in counseling or pastoral care, "the biggest part of their training is just learning to be quiet," Hetzner said.

"I think that's a common mistake people make in crisis situations—feeling obligated to give some sort of answer or advice, when really, those who are hurting just need to express themselves."

**The Human-Canine Bond:** Why does petting a dog make us feel better? It's not just because they're cute, says Brian Hare, director of Duke University's Canine Cognition Center.

The human-canine bond goes back thousands of years. Dogs descend from wolves and have been attracted to humans ever since we began living in settlements—a source of tasty garbage. That created an advantage for wolves to live near humans, and since it tended to be the less aggressive wolves that could do this more effectively, they essentially self-domesticated over time, according to
Hare. (Read more about the evolutionary history of dogs in the February 2012 National Geographic magazine cover story, "How To Build a Dog.")

Part of what makes dogs special is that they are one of the only species that does not generally exhibit xenophobia, meaning fear of strangers, says Hare.

"We've done research on this, and what we've found is that not only are most dogs totally not xenophobic, they're actually xenophilic—they love strangers!" Hare said. "That's one way in which you could say dogs are 'better' than people. We're not always that welcoming."

People also benefit from interacting with canines. Simply petting a dog can decrease levels of stress hormones, regulate breathing, and lower blood pressure. Research also has shown that petting releases oxytocin, a hormone associated with bonding and affection, in both the dog and the human.

Do Dogs Have Empathy?: In situations like the Newtown shootings, it makes a lot of sense that dogs would be an effective form of comfort, says psychologist Debbie Custance of Goldsmiths College, University of London.

"Dogs are social creatures that respond to us quite sensitively, and they seem to respond to our emotions," she said.

Custance recently led a study to see whether dogs demonstrated empathy. She asked volunteers to either pretend to cry, or just "hum in a weird way." Would the dogs notice the difference?

"The response was extraordinary," she said. Nearly all of the dogs came over to nuzzle or lick the crying person, whether it was the owner or a stranger, while they paid little attention when people were merely humming.

"We're not saying this is definitive evidence that dogs have empathy—but I can certainly understand why people would think they do, at least," Custance said.

Other animals can also be useful in what's known as "animal-assisted therapy." The national organization Pet Partners has 11,000 registered teams of volunteer handlers and animals that visit nursing homes, hospitals, schools, and victims of tragedy and disaster. Although most of the teams use dogs, some involve horses, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, birds, and even barnyard animals like pigs and chickens.
The presence of an animal can help facilitate a discussion with human counselors or simply provide wordless emotional release, said Rachel Wright, director of Pet Partners' therapy animal program. The group plans to deploy several teams of therapy dogs to Newtown in the near future, working closely with agencies that are already present in the community, she said.

To some, the idea of sending a dog to a grieving person might seem too simplistic. But Custance says that very simplicity is part of what makes the connection between humans and canines so powerful.

"When humans show us affection, it's quite a complicated thing that involves expectations and judgments," she said. "But with a dog, it's a very uncomplicated, non-challenging interaction with no consequences. And if you've been through a hard time, it's lovely to have that."
Appendix 6: Walden, 2013, newspaper article

HOPE comfort dogs provide emotional relief in times of crisis

Bozeman Daily Chronicle

April 17, 2013. Kaylee Walden

Volunteers Mary Martin, Suzy Saltiel, Nancy Dodd and Roberta Ennis, left to right, of the Comfort Dogs CARE Program, have been using therapy dogs to help people throughout the community.

Sometimes, all a person needs in the aftermath of crisis is companionship, a sense of calm when everything seems to be falling apart.

HOPE Animal Assisted Crisis Response aims to do just that, with dogs especially trained to provide comfort to victims after a tragedy, said Mary Martin, regional director of HOPE. Mary said her family dog, Ellie, a golden retriever, goes with her everywhere and is always eager to help.

HOPE dogs help people cope with everything from the loss of a loved one to a fight with cancer to a natural disaster. HOPE often arrive to tragic events alongside first responders, helping to establish a sense of calm in a hectic environment.

In Bozeman, HOPE has four canine-volunteer teams, including Martin and Ellie. They have responded to the downtown explosion and to schools after the death of staff members or students.
Now, HOPE needs more volunteers. The organization will host a three-day training and certification session for new volunteers Aug. 9-11 in Bozeman. The session will be at Eagle Mount.

“We’re small, here in Bozeman, but I think local people would benefit from having more of these dogs to provide comfort for both personal and community-wide tragedies”, Martin said.

Martin said volunteers and dogs are trained to handle stress. Both volunteers and canines need to project a sense of calm in the face of disaster.

“Our dogs do work in nursing homes, hospitals and schools – environments that help them learn to be caring and perceptive of people”, she said. “But they also receive extensive training in high-pressure, intensely emotional situations”.

Martin said scientific evidence shows that furry companions can provide solace. According to HOPE, “interacting with calm, well-mannered dogs is known to help decrease heart rate, lower blood pressure, and allows people to de-stress in a simple, yet effective way.”

“They have a sense for what the victim needs,” Martin said.

The dogs identify people in need by detecting the increased pheromones given off under stress. They allow people to pet them, hug them, play with them or just lay with them.

It’s not just the victims that the dogs help. Sometimes, the emergency workers need comfort.

“They help the firefighters, ambulance workers. Those people have such stressful jobs and see horrible things as a part of their everyday work; being around death and tragedy takes a toll on someone emotionally,” Martin said

Kaylee Walden can be reached at kwalden@dailychronicle.com or at 582-2651
Appendix 7: Recruitment flyer

OUR BEST FRIENDS: CRISIS RESPONSE HEROES

**ARE YOU AN AACR DOG HANDLER?**

**OR**

**ARE YOU A CRISIS COUNSELOR WHO HAS WORKED WITH AN AACR DOG HANDLER TEAM?**

I am a professional doctoral student, a psychologist, and a (CISM) Critical Incident Stress Management worker in Australia. I am doing research to find out more about how American based AACR works in the field and to explore how dogs make a difference to the interactions between humans during a crisis.

If you are an AACR dog handler, or a crisis counselor who has worked with an AACR team, your experience and interpretations are important and worth researching. To be involved in this study:

1. For dog handlers, you need to:
   i. Be AACR trained and currently active in AACR work (paid or volunteer)
   ii. Be linked to a supportive professional environment and not suffering from a work related stress condition

2. For crisis counselors, you need to:
   i. Be trained in CISM, crisis counseling or psychological first aide and be active in this role
   ii. Be linked to a supportive professional environment and not suffering from a work related stress condition

Most interviews will be one hour and conducted via Skype so you will need access to this facility. Some interviews will be conducted in America, at your place of convenience, and will be organised between the researcher and participant. Your contribution is valuable and you are welcome to contact me.

CONTACT: Filomena Bua

menab@tpg.com.au

(Mobile) 0430006968
Appendix 8: Participant Information Statement

Participant Information Statement

Project Title:

Investigator:
Filomena Bua, Psychologist, member Australian Psychological Society, member and accredited CISM (Critical Incident Stress Management) trainer with CIMA (Critical Incident Management Australasia) and ICISF (International Critical Incident Stress Foundation) f.bua@latrobe.edu.au

This research project is being conducted as a requirement for the Doctor of Clinical Science (Counselling and Psychotherapy).

Principal Supervisor:
Dr. Melissa Monfries, M.Monfries@latrobe.edu.au

Co-Supervisor:
Professor Pranee Liamputtong, pranee@latrobe.edu.au

Aims of the Project:
The primary aim of this study is to understand the parameters under which AACR is instigated, delivered and of benefit to the crisis intervention community. The secondary aim is to explore the meanings that AACR dog handler and crisis counsellors who work with AACR teams attribute to AACR dogs as a result of interactions with them in the field.

There will be 2 groups of participants in the study. AACR dog handlers and crisis counsellors who have worked with AACR teams in the field. AACR dog handlers will be recruited from AACR organisations and crisis counsellors will be referred through the dog handler participants, associate organisations or contacts in the field.

You have been approached to participate in this study because you are either an AACR dog handler or a crisis counsellor who has worked with an AACR dog handler team.

As an Animal Assisted Crisis Response dog handler you will:

1. Be trained in AACR or a derivative of this working model.
2. Be certified by an AACR organisation as such HOPE (or an equivalent).
3. Have field experience in providing AACR or equivalent services.
4. Be either currently employed, an active volunteer, or professionally enrolled as a worker within the AACR or an equivalent field.
However if as an AACR dog handler you:

1. Are trained in a service model other than AACR dog work
2. Provide animal assisted services specifically to people who are diagnosed with a psychiatric or psychological disorder
3. Are currently in a non-supportive work or professional environment, or are yourself suffering from a work stress related psychological condition,

Then you are ineligible for this study.

As a crisis counsellor who has worked with an AACR team (or its equivalent) in the field you will:

1. Be trained in critical incident stress management or, crisis counselling, or, psychological first aide (or an equivalent)
2. Be certified by a crisis response service such as ICISF (International Critical Incident Stress Foundation), or its equivalent.
3. Have experience in the crisis field where you have worked in collaboration with an AACR dog and its handler (or an equivalent crisis dog-human handler team)
4. Be either currently employed, an active volunteer, or professionally enrolled within the crisis response community.

However, if as a crisis counsellor you:

1. Have worked with dogs in the field where their primary role is different from providing emotional support (e.g. a dog-handler team that provide search and rescue services).
2. Are currently in a non-supportive work or professional environment, or are yourself suffering from a work stress related psychological condition,

Then you are ineligible for this study

Commercial investments or interests:
No funding bodies or sponsorships are involved with this project.

Research Procedures:
Participants will be involved in a one hour semi-structured interview that will be audio recorded and conducted via Skype. Participants must therefore have access to Skype.

Some real time personal interviews may be organised during the time that the researcher is conducting observational field work in America (for example, around the time that a regional AACR meeting is taking place, or an AACR training course). Where real time personal interviews are organised, they will be held at your preferred location (for example, work place, community meeting place, or library). You will also be invited to complete a brief demographic questionnaire that will take 5 minutes to complete.
The researcher, with AACR approval, will also conduct fieldwork observation by attending an AACR regional meeting, or training session.

**Potential harms and risks**
There is no potential harm, risk or discomfort identified for you or any participants in this project.

**Use of data**
Data may entail:
- a) Excerpts from interview narratives
- b) Photos from observational visits (e.g. AACR regional meeting or training event)
- c) Responses to demographic questionnaire

All data obtained will be with consent from participants. Data will contain no names and will be de-identified. Only dog photos will be reproduced. Photos containing human participants will not be reproduced. Interview data and dog photos may be used for some or all of the following:

- a) Presentations at relevant conferences
- b) Presentations to relevant Australian based crisis and animal assisted services
- c) Education to relevant Australian based crisis and animal assisted services
- d) Publications in the forms of journal articles relevant to the field

There are no foreseeable circumstances under which the confidentiality of your data will be disclosed. Any future researchers requesting this information will need to obtain permission from the Human Ethics Committee. For this project, your data will only be seen by the investigator and two professionals appointed to assist with the data analysis. Confidentiality and security of data will be procured.

Your personal data in the course of the research will be available to you upon request. You will receive a draft copy of the analysis from your interview and will be asked to verify its representation and accuracy before it is incorporated into the final dissertation. You will receive a summary, or copy of the final dissertation when it has been approved for admission into the award.

**Benefits of the project**
AACR use since the September 11th twin tower attacks has flourished in America. There are AACR websites, AACR registered organisations, subsequent new developments and standards in crisis dog services, media coverage, and public interest in the field. There are however very few publications on AACR and no published research studies to date. Participants from this study form the actual working units of AACR in the field. Their experiences and interpretations of how AACR works and influences people are worth exploring and understanding. This study will add further support to the AACR field, provide an evidence base for its practice, illuminate future program development, and inform support services in the mitigation of critical stress incident stress in emergency services workers and people impacted by trauma.
Withdrawal from the project
Your participating in this project is completely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from active participation at any time without consequence, disadvantage or penalty. Further you can demand that data arising from your participation are not used provided you exercise this right within four weeks of the completion of your participation in the project. You are asked to complete the “Withdrawal of Consent Form” or to notify the investigator by e-mail or telephone that you wish to withdraw your consent for your data to be used in this research project.

For further information contact
If you wish to participate, you are welcome to contact the researcher, Filomena Bua. Any questions regarding this project may be directed to:

Filomena Bua: School of Public Health, Health Sciences Faculty
La Trobe University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, 3086

Email: f.bua@latrobe.edu.au
Phone: 011+61+430 006 968

Complaint process regarding this project
For UHEC applications:
If you have any complaints or queries that the investigator has not been able to answer to your satisfaction, you may contact the Secretary, Human Ethics Committee, Research Services, La Trobe University, Victoria, 3086, (phone: 011+61+03+94791443, e-mail: humanethics@latrobe.edu.au. Please quote UHEC application reference number 12-015
Appendix 9: Participant Consent and Withdrawal forms

Consent Form

Project Title: Animal Assisted Crisis Response (AACR): Its relevance for the crisis counselling fields.

Investigator: La Trobe University, Health Sciences, School of Public Health
Filomena Bua f.bua@latrobe.edu.au
Mobile phone 011+61+430 006 968

I _________________________ (the participant) have read and understood the participant information statement and consent form, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that even though I agree to be involved in this project, I can withdraw from the study at any time, up to four weeks following the completion of my participation in the research. Further, in withdrawing from the study, I can request that no information from my involvement be used. I agree that research data provided by me or with my permission during the project may be included in a dissertation, presented at conferences and published in journals on the condition that neither my name nor any other identifying information is used.

I consent to:

Being interviewed □ Yes □ No

Having my photo taken □ Yes □ No

Name of Participant (Block letters):
Signature: Date:

Name of investigator (Block letters):
Signature: Date:

Name of student supervisor (Block letters):
Signature: Date:
La Trobe University
University Human Ethics Committee

Withdrawal of Consent for Use of Data Form

Project Title:

Investigator: La Trobe University, Health Sciences, School of Public Health
Filomena Bua f.bua@latrobe.edu.au
Mobile phone 011+61+430 006 968

I, ____________________________, wish to WITHDRAW my consent to the use of data arising from my participation. Data arising from my participation must NOT be used in this research project as described in the Information and Consent Form. I understand that data arising from my participation will be destroyed provided this request is received within four weeks of the completion of my participation in this project. I understand that this notification will be retained together with my consent form as evidence of the withdrawal of my consent to use the data I have provided specifically for this research project.

Participant’s name (printed):

.................................................................

Signature:

.................................................................

Date:
Appendix 10: Socio-demographic questionnaire

Project Title: Animal Assisted Crisis Response (AACR): Its relevance for the crisis counselling fields.

Investigator: La Trobe University, Health Sciences, School of Public Health
Filomena Bua f.bua@latrobe.edu.au
Mobile phone 011+61430 006 968

Thank you for your valuable participation in this study.

This questionnaire will only take 5 minutes of your time and is simply to get some background information, your qualifications and experience in the AACR / or crisis counselling fields.

Today’s date: ______________________________________________________

Confidential email address for correspondence: ___________________________

1. Which group of participants do you represent in this study?
   - [ ] AACR dog handler  - [ ] Crisis counsellor who has used AACR dog team in the field

2. What is your current occupation? ______________________________

3. Are you an active volunteer in an AACR or crisis counselling service? (Cross out the one which is not applicable)
   - [ ] Yes  - [ ] No

   Name of service ______________________________

4. Are you currently affiliated with other relevant professional associations?
☐ Yes  ☐ No

Name of association(s)  ________________________________

5. What age group are you in?
   ☐ 20-30  ☐ 30-40  ☐ 40-50  ☐ 50-60  ☐ 60-70

6. Gender?
   ☐ Male  ☐ Female

7. What critical events have you used AACR services for?
   ________________________________

8. Are you paid for your AACR / Crisis counsellor (cross out the one that’s not applicable) work?
   ☐ Yes  ☐ No

The following questions are for AACR dog Handlers only:

9. How many years have you been involved in the AACR field?
   ☐ 0-3 years  ☐ 3-6 years  ☐ 6-9 years  ☐ over 9 years

10. How many more years do you intend to be involved in the AACR field?
    ☐ 1-3 years  ☐ 3-6 years  ☐ 6-9 years  ☐ over 9 years

11. Are you a dog owner?
    ☐ Yes  ☐ No

12. Do you use your own dog in your AACR work?
    ☐ Yes  ☐ No
Appendix 11: Schedule of interview questions

Project Title: Animal Assisted Crisis Response (AACR): Its relevance for the crisis counselling fields.

Investigator: La Trobe University, Health Sciences,
School of Public Health
Filomena Bua menab@tpg.com.au
Mobile phone 0430 006 968

1. The nature of AACR
   a) Under what circumstances would you use AACR dogs?
   b) Under what circumstances wouldn’t you use AACR dogs?
   c) Please discuss a case that illustrates how AACR services work.

2. AACR and its relevance to the crisis community
   a) How do AACR dogs contribute in a crisis response process?
   b) What makes AACR dogs different from other crisis response services?

3. Handler and crisis counsellor interactions with AACR dogs
   a) How do people react to the AACR dogs?
   b) Do AACR dogs affect interactions between professionals in the field? How?
   c) What, if any, meaning do AACR dogs have for people and professionals involved with them? Can you provide a case that illustrates this?

4. Future of AACR
   a) How do you see the future development of AACR?
Appendix 12: L. Abrams, personal communication, May 1, 2013

Furry friend indeed

Photo used with permission from HOPE AACR

Dustin Williams, 10, lay still and silent on a cot at a makeshift shelter inside San Bernardino International Airport. He didn't know whether the November wildfires had burned his home, and his tabby cat was missing. The sombre mood that cold day was prevalent among the 2,000 people in the air hangar and nobody could comfort Dustin. Except Duke.

The Cavalier King Charles Spaniel scampered past his handler Lois Abrams, jumped on Dustin's cot and snuggled up as the boy put his arm around the dog.

Abrams, 68, is a volunteer with HOPE, a non-profit organization that offers animal-assisted emotional support in crisis response.

"It's he who does the work," Abrams said. "I'm on the other end of the leash, but I really notice that it's Duke who moves toward the people in need."

The above was printed in the Bravo for Bravery Brochure Awards, April 24, 2004.
Day four or five of visiting the 2000 person shelter Duke and I were walking among the cots. I looked to my right and realized that Duke had jumped on a cot to my left where a blond-headed boy lay so still I was not sure if he was breathing. I knelt by the side of the cot seeing that he was breathing. Within five minutes his left arm came out and wrapped it around Duke who had been lying still by his side. I ask, “Do you like dogs?” He nodded yes but did not speak. Another five or ten minutes went by with Duke not moving and Dustin (I later found out his name) kept his arm around Duke. A woman came over and told me that Dustin was burning up with fever. He would not go to the infirmary that was at the other end of this huge airplane hanger. She said his Dad had been taken to the hospital about two hours ago with a presumed heart attack. She had met Dustin and his Dad when they came to the shelter together and were from the same church group. His mother abandoned Dustin at a young age and it was just Dustin and his father and the family cat. I asked Dustin if he would go see the doctor if Duke went with him. He reluctantly agreed. We walked with double leash and Dustin walking Duke to the infirmary that took us about five minutes to get there. As we approached the nurse looked up at Dustin, Duke and me and said “That’s Duke!” She recognized Duke from a previous call out visit. Dustin grinned for the first time. I am sure he felt safe with Duke. We checked in and went inside the infirmary. Dustin lay on a cot and Duke immediately jumped on Dustin and did not leave him for over two hours that we were in the infirmary. It took time as they had to take Dustin’s vitals and the doctor was attending to other patients. After over an hour and a half Dustin’s father appeared. He was dumbfounded that both of them would wind up in the infirmary within hours of one another. Needless to say Dustin was very happy to see his father. His father signed agreement to use photos and the story of Duke and Dustin. Dustin was treated and released to his Dad. We did get a message from Dustin’s Dad that their house had burned to the ground and their cat was found dead. They were grateful to have one another and his Dad thanked Duke and I for taking care of Dustin. It was really Duke who did the work (L. Abrams)
Appendix 13: M. Lowy, personal communication, May 2, 2013

Spirit of the Red Cross Hero - Otis

Photo used with permission CCCR

Otis, a Portuguese water dog, and his handlers, Dr. Richard and Mrs. Marcy Lowy have formed a strong animal-assisted therapy and canine crisis response team. In 2001 Otis obtained his registration as a "Pet Partner" with the Delta Society and began his official career of helping people. In January, 2002, Otis and the Lowys obtained their HOPE Animal-Assisted Crisis Response training and certifications. During this time the team had been working at Shriners Hospital for Children in Portland, making weekly visits to clinic and in-patients, from infants to adults. The Lowys also held leadership positions and worked diligently to build the HOPE organization in the Northwest Region.

In April of 2002, the team was deployed to the World Trade Center "pit" to work with firefighters and construction workers who were dealing with the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. In that same month, the team began volunteering at Providence St. Vincent Hospital, making weekly visits to radiation and chemo-therapy patients. Otis “sat vigil” with many patients and their families as patients experienced their last moments of life.

The team has deployed with the American Red Cross as well as responded to multiple traumatic
stress debriefing at schools, fire-stations, and community centers. The team has represented the Willamette Chapter locally on critical incident stress debriefing and continues to serve as a resource to our Disaster Services Department. Otis has served as a bridge to facilitate communication with people who are emotionally frail, tired, frightened and grieving. The Lowys say that Otis has an innate ability to walk into a room and know who needs him most.

One of the most inspiring accounts of his talent took place at a Red Cross shelter in San Bernardino, CA. The team had been called in to work with people who had experienced devastating losses in a wildfire that forced them to evacuate their homes. As flames closed in on both sides of her car, a mother drove her family to safety. The intense heat caused the mother’s face to blister. The woman’s little girl became so traumatized that she stopped speaking. After 24 hours of silence, Otis quietly approached the girl. The girl began to pet Otis, then he joined her on the cot and they snuggled. After about 15 minutes, the little girl began to talk to Marcy about her experience. The girl asked for Otis to return the following day. When the team arrived at her cot the next day, they found it empty. The little girl had joined the other children in the shelter in play.

American Red Cross volunteers are as diverse as America itself. This unique team delivers hope-in keeping with the Spirit of the Red Cross. We appreciate the valuable service they provide in our community!
Appendix 14: Article of this research project

HOPE AACR Highlights, July 2012, Issue 4

We were honoured to have Philomena Bau, from Australia, come to attend the HOPE AACR Annual Meeting. She is a Psychologist and is a member of the Australian Psychological Society, member of ICISF and is an accredited CISM trainer. She is a doctoral student in Counseling and Psychotherapy and is completing her dissertation. She is researching the parameters under which AACR is instigated, delivered and of benefit to the crisis intervention community. She is also exploring the meanings that AACR dog handlers and crisis counselors who work with AACR teams attribute to AACR dogs as a result of interactions with them in the field. She interviewed several HOPE AACR members before and after the annual meeting as part of her research study (HOPE AACR, 2012, p.15)
Appendix 15: Letter requesting USA AACR support for this research project

Dear ...

I am very inspired by the American innovation and development of AACR and wish to congratulate you on this field of work. Here in Australia we don’t have anything like an AACR model where assistance or therapy dogs are trained specifically for deployment to provide support in crisis situations. I have been so encouraged by the AACR movement in America that last year I began my professional doctorate in clinical science (Counselling and Psychotherapy) and have been working toward conducting my fieldwork research with AACR dog handlers in America later this year.

This letter is to briefly introduce myself and ask for your assistance in accessing AACR dog handlers for interviews. Your assistance would simply require:

a) Placing information about my study throughout your network so AACR dog handlers can volunteer to participate
b) Given your contacts and expertise in the field, to identify AACR dog handlers who would be interested in being interviewed about their AACR experience and put them in touch with this study.

The research study is essentially about AACR dog handler experiences in the field. It is also interested in the experiences of crisis counsellors or professionals who have worked with AACR dog handler teams in the field. From your contacts (AACR dog handlers), I will need at least 15 participants and am asking for one hour of their time for an interview. I am hoping to come to America in either July or November this year, whichever suits the majority of participants.

If you are interested in this research and are able to help me, I will provide you with a fuller brief regarding the research aims and objectives. Of course I will also provide information regarding my university details and approvals, my supervisors, contact details, and any other information you require. For the moment however, I’m just hoping to initially establish contact with you and get some understanding from your end regarding whether the help requested will be provided.

I will be submitting my ethics proposal (I think it’s similar to your IRB – Institutional Review Board) at the end of this month and will need to inform the committee on your response. The committee will want to see that I have your support in helping me gain access to participants before it will approve the next stage of my research. I will need this in written form (a response to this email will do), it must also contain your name, title and AACR organisation. I spent last year researching AACR, dog assistance work, dog therapy, service dogs and so on. This work resulted in a 45 page research proposal that was university approved. Obviously with this amount of effort, I am extremely committed to getting the next stage approved. Could you please consider my request and provide a response at your earliest convenience.

Regarding my personal details, I have attached my C.V for you. I believe the relevant bits are my long term commitment to the CISM (Critical Incident Stress Management) field. I am an accredited international CISM trainer with ICISF (International Critical Incident Stress Foundation) and CIMA (Critical Incident Management Australasia). I am a registered psychologist of 22 years (Registration
No. PSY0001119321), a full member of the Australian Psychological Society (APS), and of course, I have a profound respect and interest in service dogs, particularly AACR dogs.

Finally Dr. Robyn Robinson, founder CIMA, and Chris Long, President CIMA, have expressed interest in this study and will provide endorsement letters if you wish. Don Howell, president ICISF, has also spoken to me and expressed support for this research. I sincerely look forward to your response and hope we can support one another across the globe to develop some research on this exciting field of crisis work.

Yours sincerely, Filomena
Appendix 16: Schedule of participant interviews and observational field trips

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date of interview</th>
<th>Interview duration</th>
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Appendix 16: Schedule of participant interviews and observational field trips: continued

Participant Interviews

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<th>Interview duration</th>
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Observational field trips

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<th>Location</th>
<th>Time spent in observation</th>
<th>Observational Field trip event</th>
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<tr>
<td>23\textsuperscript{rd} – 25\textsuperscript{th} June 2012</td>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>2 days and 1 evening</td>
<td>Attendance at, and observation of, HOPE Animal Assisted Crisis Response National Meeting (23\textsuperscript{rd} &amp; 24\textsuperscript{th} June)</td>
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<tr>
<td>26\textsuperscript{th} June 2012</td>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Visit Eagle Mont Therapeutic Centre – site for AACR dog training</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Visit Bozeman fire stations (2) – sites for AACR dog training in emergency simulation exercises</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Visit Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) site for Bozeman, Rocky Mountain region</td>
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<td>4\textsuperscript{th} July 2012</td>
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<td>1 day</td>
<td>American Independence Day - critical incident event</td>
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<td>14\textsuperscript{th} July 2012</td>
<td>Oregon</td>
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<td>Observation day at Operation Purple camp</td>
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<td>16\textsuperscript{th} July 2012</td>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Attended Washington County Sheriff's office and visited jail inmates with 2 CCCR dog teams</td>
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</table>
Appendix 17: Table of participant gender, years in service, study group represented and place of interview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Study group</th>
<th>Years in service</th>
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<td>AACR dog handler and crisis counsellor</td>
<td>over 9 years</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>Montana</td>
<td>AACR dog handler</td>
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<td>AACR dog handler and crisis counsellor</td>
<td>over 9 years</td>
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Appendix 17: Table of participant gender, years in service, study group represented and place of interview: continued

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<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
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<th>Study group</th>
<th>Years in service</th>
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### Appendix 18: Data advisory panel log and emergence of themes

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<tr>
<th>Meeting date</th>
<th>Meeting Duration</th>
<th>Content, context and data process decisions</th>
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| 1\textsuperscript{st} April, 2013 | 2 hours          | - Researcher outlined the process of emergent themes. Namely, the categorisation of data into meaningful units, the grouping of unit clusters (sub themes) and the grouping of associated sub themes (themes)  
- Raw data examples were illustrated and discussed with regard to the researcher’s data analysis and categorization of data  
- Expert advisors reviewed the material presented and refined the content and titles of some sub themes and themes  
- Examples of refinements made were:  
  - The title for sub theme “calming” was changed to “comfort and calming”  
  - Meaning units from “comfort” were incorporated into the more logical sub themes of “normality” “comfort and calming” and “non-verbal” (the sub theme “non-verbal” was later renamed to “mystique”)
  - The theme “the nature of crisis” was developed further to reflect the proactive (planned) and reactive (immediate non-planned) crisis response narratives and nature of AACR work as provided in the participant interview data  
  - The theme “working like a dog” was developed further with sub themes “dog temperament and abilities” and “dog empathy” emerging from the data |
| 30\textsuperscript{th} May, 2013 | 1 hour, 15 minutes | - Researcher presented updated version of themes based on previous meeting and ongoing process of thematic analysis  
- Researcher also presented models that were generated from the emergent themes and their sets of sub themes  
- Updated themes and models were discussed with regard to their construction plausibility, relevance to theory, literature review (chapter 2) and implications to the respective practice fields (CISM and AACR)  
- Further research concepts and theory were suggested (e.g. attachment theory, posttraumatic growth) for the ongoing development of the study |
References


TRIBUTE TO AACR DOGS

Tikva

Breezy
A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION INTO DOGS SERVING ON AACR TEAMS: ADVANCES IN CRISIS COUNSELLING

Tucker

Ginnie
A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION INTO DOGS SERVING ON AACR TEAMS: ADVANCES IN CRISIS COUNSELLING

Janie

Eva
Sienna

Ellie
A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION INTO DOGS SERVING ON AACR TEAMS: ADVANCES IN CRISIS COUNSELLING

Crunch

Harlow
A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION INTO DOGS SERVING ON AACR TEAMS: ADVANCES IN CRISIS COUNSELLING

Duke

Romeo
Otis

Willy
A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION INTO DOGS SERVING ON AACR TEAMS: ADVANCES IN CRISIS COUNSELLING

Sasha

Sasha
Max

Loki
Maggie and Zeus

Sam

Chica Diva