

Families Interacting with Dogs (FIDO) and the Link

Andrea Breen & Lynda Ashbourne
Family Relations & Human
Development

The FIDO Team



- Research program that is unique in its “growing edges” and exploring new territory
- Mentorship for undergraduate and graduate students
- Research benefits from creativity and multiple perspectives

Families Interacting with Dogs (FIDO) Research Aims

- Focus on relationships between dogs and humans in family contexts in ways that foreground the experiences of humans AND dogs
- Contribute to making life better for humans and dogs

About Lynda

- MSc. (Couple & Family Therapy), PhD (Family Relations)
- 15 yrs community mental health & prof training; past 12 yrs academic teaching & research
- Research: effective supports for addressing family safety/risk for families across cultures and understanding family relationships and interactions.
- What is the effect on clients, dogs, and therapists when dogs support therapy interventions?

FIDO interests (Lynda):

Dogs in families and the therapy room:

- Expanding view of family systems to include dogs and human-canine relationships/interactions
- What is the effect on clients, dogs, and therapists when dogs assist therapy?

About Andrea

- Associate Professor, Family Relations and Human Development
- B.Ed. (McGill), Ed.M. in Risk and Prevention (Harvard Graduate School of Education), Ph.D. Developmental Psychology and Education (OISE/Toronto)
- Teaching/learning, Child/youth mental health, violence prevention, identity development, resilience, family relationships, research methodologies, program evaluation
- In progress: Advanced Diploma in Canine Psychology and Behaviour, Diploma in Dog Training (ISCP)

FIDO Interests (Andrea)

- Teaching and learning in the context of dog-human relationships
- Cultural conceptions of dogs and our relationships with them
- Underlying connections between human-human oppression and the spectrum of mistreatment/abuse of dogs
- Interconnectedness of risk and well-being in human-dog relationships

Why take the experiences of dogs seriously?

(Fraser & Taylor, 2019)



- Physical condition and behaviour can provide clues to human experience and family functioning
- Violence is interconnected
- Dogs are important in their own right

FIDO Research focusing on the Link:

Home visits: What are the experiences and perceptions of dog professionals and child welfare workers conducting home visits in the context of domestic violence and child abuse?

- Andrea: **Focus on dog professionals**
- Lynda: Focus on child welfare professionals

Future FIDO Intervention Research:

Dog-human relationships as contexts for learning and resilience in the wake of family violence:

1. Improve family functioning through targeted (dog) behaviour support

Future FIDO Intervention Research?

Dog-human relationships as contexts for learning and resilience in the wake of family violence:

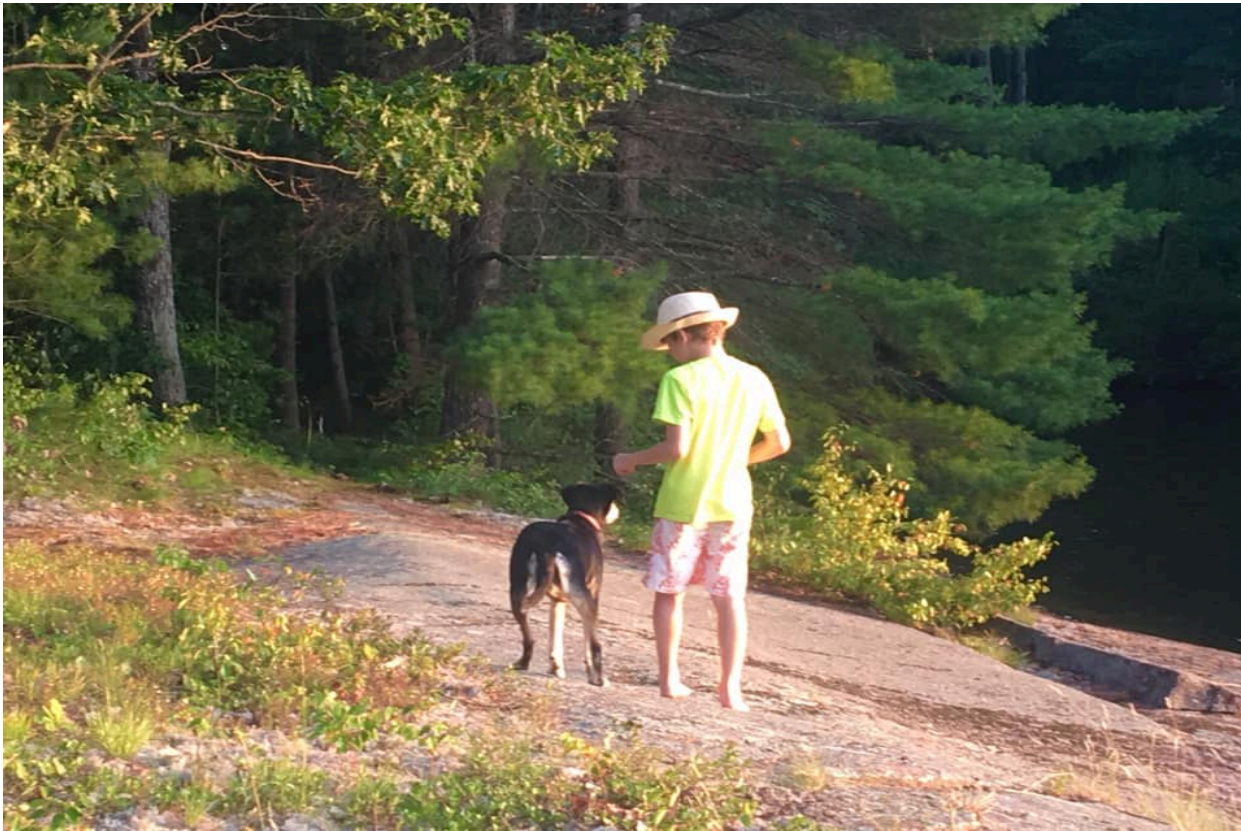
1. Improve family functioning through targeted (dog) behaviour support
2. Strengthen relationships to promote well-being

Future FIDO Intervention Research?

Dog-human relationships as contexts for learning and resilience in the wake of family violence:

1. Improve family functioning through targeted (dog) behaviour support
2. Strengthen relationships to promote well-being
3. Position dogs as teachers to help “break the cycle” of violence
 - communication, empathy, consent, self-awareness, positive parenting,

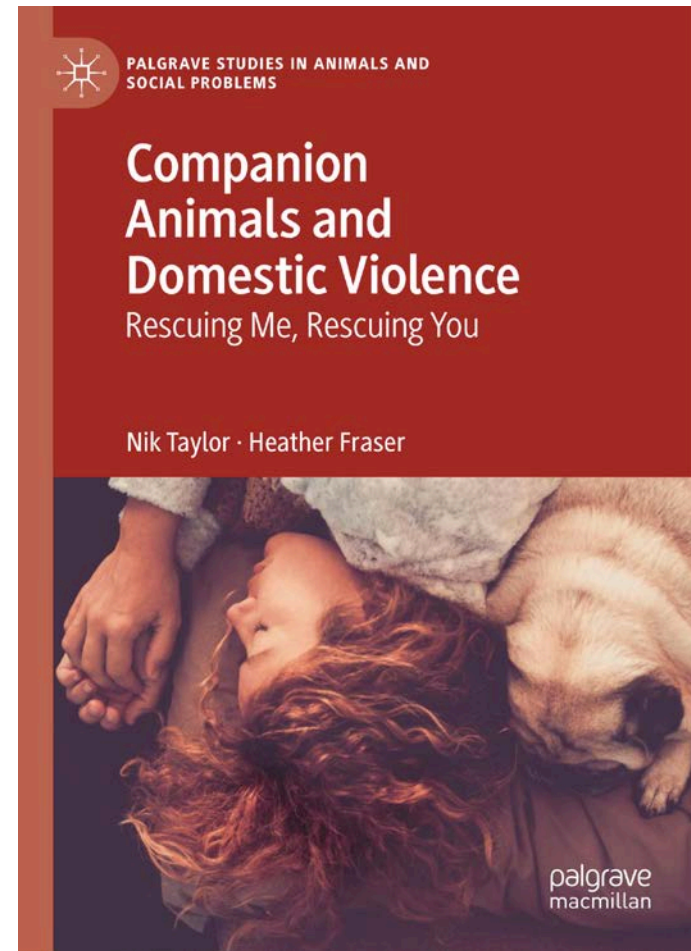
****The HOW is critical: anti-oppressive practice with humans AND dogs**



Resources



International School of Canine Psychology & Behaviour (ISCP)
Diploma in Animal Cruelty



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- Andrea: Focus on dog professionals
- Lynda: **Focus on child welfare professionals**

FIDO focusing on the LINK: Child Welfare Professionals

Proposed Research:

- What do professionals “see” when they are assessing for risk and safety in homes of families with canine and human members?
- What resources, training, and policies might strengthen this work?

What do they see?

Professionals trained to work with human families understand what signs of risk and safety look like.

- What else do they see?
- What do they overlook?
- What human-based assumptions might be made?

What do they see?

Implications:

- Attending to well-being and training of therapy dogs
- Recognizing risks/safety in families with dogs
- Understanding overlap and differences between canine and human well-being/ distress

Talking with Child Welfare & In-home Support Workers

Signs of Safety & Risk

- Linking risks of family violence for human and canine family members
- What do child protection workers and mental health workers who enter family homes where dogs reside look for and see with respect to dog well-being?
- What standards do you use to assess safety and risk for dogs?
- How do you “read” dog behaviour as signs of safety/risk for human family members?

Talking with Child Welfare & In-home Support Workers

Signs of Safety & Risk

- What training and/or resources would support more effective assessment and interventions?
- What policies could be developed to support improved interventions for enhancing safety and reducing risk?

Feedback? Ideas? We'd like to know
what you think...

