THE HEALTH IMPLICATIONS OF EMPLOYMENT IN NON-PROFIT ANIMAL CARE IN EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION

By

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Given a dearth of literature regarding animal care workers in non-profit settings, all of whom potentially face health-related risks, a need existed to explore these individuals' collective lived experiences and perceptions. The purpose of this study was to describe non-profit animal care workers' lived experiences of and meanings associated with animal care work. The researcher employed a qualitative phenomenological approach that was guided by Moustakas (1994). The researcher used maximum variation purposive sampling to identify ten study participants who had at least one year of employment experience in a non-profit animal care facility located in one of two eastern North Carolina counties. Participants were recruited from non-profit animal care shelters and non-profit spay/neuter clinics.

Qualitative data were collected by means of participant drawings of the meaning of animal care followed by in-depth, open-ended interviews that the researcher facilitated using an interview guide. She addressed study rigor by maintaining an audit trail, triangulation, saturation, member checks, and on-going engagement in reflexivity. Data analysis of transcribed interviews revealed the themes of “Making a Difference,” “A Passion for Animals,” Animal Care as “All Consuming,” and “Stress, Burnout, and Coping”.

Participants’ valued “Making a Difference” in their own lives as well as the lives of animals and communities. Participants perceived their work in animal care as contributing to their personal well-being, in part because they had a “passion” for the work and a love of animals. They viewed their work as both “rewarding” and meaningful but juxtaposed the positive attributes of animal care with emotional and physical “stress” or trauma, primarily due to euthanasia as a possible outcome for animals or witnessing animal suffering, sometimes due to inhumane treatment.

Participants described their work in non-profit animal care as highly variable, fast paced, and unpredictable in nature coupled with and sometimes overshadowing routine caretaking duties. Although participants said that the work they performed was immensely rewarding, their work-related responsibilities were described as unrelenting and “all consuming” and, as such, could negatively impact their personal relationships and behaviors. Particularly for those who worked in animal shelters, employment in a low-wage, under-resourced environment resulted in physical, emotional, and self-described mental “burnout.” They used various “coping” strategies including supportive interactions, compartmentalizing, physical activity, leave-taking, and spirituality. Findings revealed implications for health education, particularly in the area of stress management and professional development opportunities.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my dearest Nicholas Ray. You are the love of my life and I am blessed to watch you grow into the handsome, smart, funny, kind, young man that you are becoming. Nicholas, you are my son in every way that counts and my greatest role will always be “Aunt CiCi”. Let this manuscript be a testament of what you can achieve through hard work and dedication. Never lose your spark and never, ever, let anyone tell you that you can’t accomplish your dreams. I believe that you were put here to do something exceptional with your life and I can’t wait to see how you will change the world. Until then, have fun, be brave and know that you have a secret weapon no one else on this planet has: an Aunt CiCi who loves you unconditionally and with all of her heart. May God guide your steps and never let you lose sight of the bright, beautiful, future that lay out in front of you. And remember, the sky is not the limit… There are footprints on the moon.

P.S. I learn from you too! Life isn’t about sitting on the sidelines and watching someone else’s movie. Life is about PLAYING. Continue to have fun, Nicholas. And always keep playing!

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE i

COPYRIGHT PAGE ii

SIGNATURE PAGE iii

DEDICATION PAGE iv

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS PAGE v

TABLE OF CONTENTS vi

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION 1

- Purpose of the Study 2
- Statement of the Problem 2
- Significance of the Study 4
- Research Question 5
- Research Design 5
- Researcher’s Capabilities and Assumptions 8
- Study Delimitations 9
- Study Limitations 10
- Definition of Terms 11

Summary 12

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE 13

Background 15

Physical Demands 16

Emotional Concerns 20

Animal Activism 22

Compassion Fatigue 23

Intrusive Symptoms 24

Avoidance Symptoms 24

Arousal Symptoms 24

Volunteer Interactions 25

Job Satisfaction 27

Worker Motivations 32

Summary 33

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN 36

Rationale for Selecting Qualitative Methods 36

Researcher’s Qualifications 38

Researcher’s Expectations, Assumptions and Biases 38

Participant Recruitment and Selection 39

Ethical Issues 41

Data Collection Methods 43

- Participant Drawings 44
- In-Depth Interview 45
- Member Checks 47

Study Credibility 48

- Triangulation 49
- Expert Review and Debriefing 49
- Reflexivity and Bracketing 50
- Rich and Thick Description 50
- Member Checks 51
- Continuing Search for Disconfirming Evidence 51
- Audit Trail 52

Data Analysis 54

Summary 56

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS 58

Study Participants' Characteristics 59

Rewards and Risks of Non-Profit Animal Care 60

Making a Difference 60

A Passion for Animals 66

Animal Affection 66

Interactions with Volunteers 67

Personal Development 68

Animal Care as "All Consuming" 70

Physical Demands 73

Emotional Demands 75

Stress, Burnout, and Coping 78

Sources of Stress 79

Stressful Interactions 81

Physical Consequences of Stress 84

Emotional Consequences of Stress 85

Mental Consequences of Stress 86

External Coping Strategies 88

Internal Coping Strategies 90

Member Check Findings 92

Summary 94

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION 96

Summary of Study Findings 96

Discussion 97

Implications for Health Education and Promotion 101

Recommendations for Future Studies 106

Conclusion 109

REFERENCES 110

APPENDIX A: ECU UMCIRB NOTICE OF INITIAL APPROVAL: EXPEDITED 118

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH 119

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE 122

APPENDIX D: RECRUITMENT FLYER 123

APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS 124

APPENDIX F: PARTICIPANT DRAWINGS 126

Chapter I: Introduction

The objective of this study was to explore the meaning and lived experiences of animal care workers employed in non-profit animal care facilities in eastern North Carolina. Animal care workers perform physically demanding and sometimes dangerous work. These workers experience a higher rate of work-related injuries and illnesses and are at an increased risk for multiple health issues when compared to the national average of work-related injuries and illnesses. Animal care workers are also at an increased risk for emotional and mental health issues that can lead to a disruption in the daily life activities of these individuals (Chang & Hart, 2002; Chur-Hansen, 2010; Hamann & Foster, 2014; Hart & Mader, 1995; Jacobsson & Lindblom, 2013; Rank, Zaparanick, & Gentry, 2009; Reeve, Rogelberg, Spitzmuller, & Digiacomo, 2005; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005; Themens, 2008; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014a & b).

At the time of this study, few qualitative or quantitative studies had been conducted with the objective of gaining insight into the perspectives and meanings that non-profit animal care workers held about the work in which they were engaged. Moreover, the researcher identified no qualitative phenomenological studies that examined the lived experience of animal care workers, including those who worked in eastern North Carolina and who had at least one year of experience working in a non-profit animal care facility.

The researcher selected a qualitative approach in this study as a means of exploring and discovering, in depth and detail, the lived experiences of non-profit animal care workers and the meanings they derived from their work. The use of a qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for topics or research questions about which little is known. In addition, quantitative approaches disallow a process of gaining insights from study participants through the telling of stories (Patton, 2002) and sharing of their personal experiences and perspectives. The researcher thus used a qualitative phenomenological approach in conducting this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into how experienced animal care employees of non-profit animal care facilities perceived, experienced, and drew meaning from their work. The researcher focused on animal care workers' perceived biopsychosocial health, the work-related benefits and challenges they experienced, and the coping strategies they used in the context of their work.

The researcher anticipated that information-rich findings associated with this study would enable health educators and other health professionals to gain insight into the health education-related needs of animal care workers. Health education professionals and researchers who gain an increased awareness of the challenges and benefits associated with animal care in non-profit facilities will be better prepared to provide education and support appropriately tailored to animal care workers in eastern North Carolina.

Statement of the Problem

Few research studies have explored the experiences of animal care workers employed in non-profit facilities. The researcher's review of the research literature at the time of the study yielded several quantitative and qualitative studies related to non-profit organizations, animal care in general, and non-profit animal care agencies or organizations in particular. There were, however, no phenomenological studies offering insight into the experiences and perspectives of employees of non-profit animal care facilities, particularly those who worked in such facilities located in eastern North Carolina.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014b), in 2013 the overall incidence rate of work-related injuries and illnesses was 109.4 cases per 10,000 full-time workers. The incidence rate of work-related injuries and illnesses for nonfarm animal caretakers was 201.1 cases per 10,000 full-time workers. The incidence rate for violence and other injuries that were animal and insect related for non- farm animal caretakers was 63.2 cases per 10,000 full-time workers. Studies have concluded that, compared to the national average of workers in general, animal care workers experienced a higher rate of work-related injuries and illnesses. They were also at an increased risk for hypertension, the development of severe allergies, sleep disruption, irritability, trouble concentrating, substance abuse, alcohol abuse, and suicide (Chang & Hart, 2002; Chur-Hansen, 2010; Rank et al., 2009; Reeve et al., 2005; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014a).

When working with animals sheltered in non-profit facilities, employees in those facilities must remain aware of frightened or aggressive animals as they may be bitten, scratched, attacked or kicked by the animals in their care (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014a; Chang & Hart, 2002; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005). Their work may lead them to be exposed to zoonotic disease (Rohlf & Bennett, 2005; Steneroden, Hill, & Salman, 2011; Themens, 2008). In addition to physical health risks, workers who provide care for animals in non-profit facilities such as animal shelters often observe and empathize with unwanted, soon-to-be euthanized, abused, sick, or injured animals. Their work can lead to them feeling emotional distress or numbing (Chang & Hart, 2002; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005; Taylor, 2010; Turner, Berry, & MacDonald, 2012; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014a). Previous studies have found that animal care workers, activists, and other individuals responsible for euthanizing animals were at greater risk for emotional mismanagement, anxiety (Reeve et al., 2005), irritability, recurrent thoughts, nightmares (Rohlf & Bennett, 2005), guilt (Chang & Hart, 2002; Hart & Mader, 1995; Jacobsson & Lindblom, 2013; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005), sadness (Chang & Hart, 2002; Hart & Mader, 1995), unresolved grief (Chur-Hansen, 2010; Reeve et. al, 2005; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005), stress (Chang & Hart, 2002; Hamann & Foster, 2014; Hart & Mader, 1995; Rank et al., 2009; Themens, 2008) and depression (Reeve et al, 2005; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005). These physical, mental and emotional issues can culminate in the disruption of affected employees' typical daily life activities (Reeve et al., 2005).

Significance of the Study

Understanding how employees in non-profit animal care facilities perceived and derived meaning from their work was important for several reasons. Uncovering these workers' perceptions was anticipated to enable health educators to assist such workers in risk reduction efforts for the biopsychosocial issues that they indicated affected them. Health education efforts specifically designed to reduce risks for health problems ranging from zoonotic diseases to emotional health and other workplace-related issues may result in reduced employee injuries and illness. By further understanding how non-profit animal care workers perceived and experienced their work, health educators could potentially plan and design interventions that optimize the health status, including emotional health status, of these at-risk employees.

This study is significant, in part, because few studies have addressed work-related issues that have affected animal care workers employed by non-profit facilities or organizations. Of the few studies that have been conducted, none have examined workers who were employed for a year or longer in non-profit animal care facilities located in eastern North Carolina. The researcher anticipated that animal care employees with at least one year of experience in the field would be knowledgeable about the barriers and benefits of non-profit animal care work. The in-depth knowledge gained by means of this qualitative study would enable health educators to better understand and plan programs or interventions to meet the health needs and concerns of non-profit animal care workers. This research was also anticipated to shed light on needed future research endeavors regarding a population considered to be at risk for illness, injury, and biopsychosocial issues.

Research Question

The researcher used a qualitative phenomenological approach in addressing the following question, "What is the meaning and lived experience of animal care work from the perspective of employees of non-profit animal care facilities in eastern North Carolina?"

Research Design

The researcher used a qualitative study design informed by a phenomenological approach to address the research question. The purpose of selecting a qualitative research design was the researchers' aim to understand the lived experience of non-profit animal care work (van Manen, 2014) from the perspective of individuals who had direct experience providing such care. Consistent with a phenomenological study design, the researcher served as the main data collection instrument (Schulz & Rubel, 2011) in facilitating two data collection strategies: an audio-recorded face-to-face, in-depth interview (primary) and participant drawings (secondary) in response to the question, "What does animal care work mean to you?"

The researcher used purposive sampling to identify participants for this study. Maximum variation purposive sampling involved the identification of willing, non-randomly selected participants who had direct experience with animal care, fulfilled a variety of roles as employees in non-profit animal care, and voluntarily agreed to share their perceptions regarding the phenomenon of interest (Bagnasco, Ghirotto & Sasso, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002; Robinson, 2014). All participants in this study had been employed for at least one year in an eastern North Carolina-based non-profit animal care facility. The employee roles played by participants in this study included current and former employees who provided direct animal care and facility managers and directors, as well as a veterinarian, director, and surgical technician employed in a non-profit spay/neuter program.

The researcher addressed study credibility by using several strategies: purposive sampling of participants who had direct experience with animal care in a non-profit facility for at least one year; thick description; methodological congruence; data saturation; triangulation of data sources by involving 12 participants in the study and triangulation of data types by incorporating in-depth interviews and drawings as two data collection strategies. The researcher maintained an audit trail during the course of the study, engaged in reflexivity and bracketing, and incorporated member checks of findings at the conclusion of the study. In addition, the researcher participated in expert review and mentoring through the study process.

Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological approach provided the researcher guidance in discovering the lived experience of study participants and the meanings they derived from their experiences. The researcher developed a comprehensive description of the participants' particular lived experiences and perceptions. In accordance with Moustakas' phenomenological process, she explored noemata (perceived meanings), noematic (textural meanings) and noetic (structural meanings) dimensions of non-profit animal care work from the perspective of participants in the study.

In accordance with Moustakas' (1994), the researcher engaged in an ongoing process of epoche, of which bracketing was a part, and reflexivity throughout the study. Epoche allowed the researcher to place aside her assumptions, prejudgments, and prior knowledge. According to Moustakas (1994), the world is disengaged yet bracketed. The bracketed world allowed the researcher to have an increased focus on individual participants and presented to the researcher the ability to look upon the phenomenon of interest naively (Moustakas, 1994). As a part of a process of becoming more self-aware of her values, beliefs, biases and assumptions, the researcher continually engaged in reflexivity by maintaining a reflexivity journal throughout the study. The researcher engaged in epoche or bracketing by striving to set aside her presuppositions in order to minimize her impact on researcher-participant interactions and to enable the process of data collection and interpretation to be as free as possible from her personal preconceptions, beliefs, and knowledge. Such efforts enabled her to be more fully present to participants' perspectives. Due to engaging in epoche, the researcher strived to become a blank slate, open and receptive to all possible understandings on the part of participants.

The researcher employed Moustakas' (1994) approach to data analysis that involved a systematic process of reduction, imaginative variation, structural description, and the identification of the core meanings of participants' experiences and perspectives. She used a horizonalizing approach in which every statement gathered during data collection was given equal weight. Consistent with Moustakas' process of imaginative variation during the analysis of data, she came to recognize underlying themes and consider the universal structures involved in participants' experiences. The researcher was cognizant that there were numerous possibilities that could emerge during data collection and analysis, but sought to identify the participants' core meanings that emerged from the data rather than applied to the data from an external source.

Researcher's Capabilities and Assumptions

The researcher developed the capability to conduct this study due to her graduate-level coursework in Health Education at East Carolina University. She had recently completed an academic course that focused exclusively on qualitative research methods. The researcher had previous experience conducting a one-to-one, in-depth qualitative interview with the aid of an interview guide. The researcher also holds an undergraduate degree (Bachelor of Arts) in Psychology from East Carolina University.

The researcher had direct experience with non-profit animal care work as she had served as a volunteer for two years at a non-profit animal care facility prior to this study. Her work as a volunteer aided in rapport and trust building with the target population. Prior to initiating this study, the researcher held assumptions as follows:

- Animal care workers in non-profit settings would be willing to participate in this study without financial incentives.
- Animal care work in non-profit settings was physically, emotionally and mentally demanding.
- Participants would value sharing their insights and perceptions about their work, in part because they wanted to heighten awareness about the needs of the animals in their care.
- Non-profit animal care workers would be enthusiastic about their work and express a concern about or love of animals. The researcher anticipated that such feelings would contribute to personal motivation regarding their work.

Study Delimitations

This study was delimited to individuals aged 18 years and older who were employed with a non-profit animal care facility or organization in eastern North Carolina for at least one year. All individuals who met the aforementioned employment criteria and were willing to voluntarily participate in the study were eligible for study participation. Study participation also was delimited to individuals who were able to read and comprehend the English language.

Study Limitations

- Consistent with qualitative research, sampling was purposeful and sample size was small. Findings could thus not be statistically generalized to other non-profit animal care workers in other geographical areas. The participants' experiences in non-profit animal care work provided subjective insights into the intricacies, benefits, and risks of non-profit animal care work. Finally, "by gaining insight into the individual, insight into the whole can also be achieved" (Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty, & Hendry, 2011, p.21). This may allow for transferability in comparable circumstances based on readers' assessment of the context of this study.
- Even with triangulation incorporated into the study design, the results may have only portrayed the lived experiences of participants with highly positive or negative experiences with animal care in non-profit settings, as they would be more likely to volunteer to participate in a study (Patton, 2002). Qualitative researchers collect data from participants about their lived experiences and perceptions, the dimensions of which can be understood in various ways. Collecting more than one type of data informed study findings (Dukes, 1984; Pringle et al., 2011; Sohier, 1988). In this study, the researcher collected both participant's drawings and the perspectives they shared during in-depth, one-to-one interviews. The researcher also utilized member checks of findings and involved three expert reviewers in the study design and analysis of data.
- Qualitative researchers do not discover facts but, as in the case of this study, discover the meanings, perceptions and lived experiences of a purposeful sample of individuals. These findings can aid the researcher in understanding the lived

experiences of participants (Dukes, 1984; Pringle et al., 2011). However, findings may apply only to non-profit animal care workers in the eastern North Carolina facilities whose employees were involved in the study. The meanings, perceptions and lived experiences of a purposeful sample of non-profit animal care workers in another area of North Carolina, another state or another regions of the country may yield different results.

Definition of Terms

Animal care directors – These individuals are responsible for the management of the staff and operations outside of direct animal care and also may or may not be involved in the direct care of animals.

Board of Directors – A group of individuals who are appointed officials that oversee the activities of a non-profit organization, including a non-profit animal care facility or organization.

Direct animal care workers – Employees whose duties included providing care for animals (i.e. feeding, grooming, bathing, exercising, medicating, spaying/neutering) and, potentially, re-homing, rehabilitating or euthanizing the animals. These include animal care technicians, veterinary technicians, veterinary surgical technicians, and veterinarians.

Eastern North Carolina – The eastern region of North Carolina encompassing the counties of Beaufort, Carteret, Craven, Edgecombe, Greene, Halifax, Hyde, Jones, Lenoir, Martin, Pamlico and Pitt (Eastern District of North Carolina: United States District Court, 2015).

Non-profit – A charitable organization that uses profits to further their mission (i.e. it is not established strictly for the purpose of profiting financially). Such organizations are typically led by a Board of Directors and survive on donations and fundraising.

Summary

The researcher used a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore and gain insight into the meaning and lived experience of animal care workers employed in non-profit settings. Consistent with this approach, the researcher collected data via participant drawings, face-to-face in-depth interviews and involved participants in member checks of summarized findings. Expert reviewers provided a fresh viewpoint and guidance for the researcher. The perceptions of non-profit animal care workers provided valuable insight into the health needs of this target population.

In the following chapters, the researcher provided a detailed description of the study and the findings associated with it, beginning with a comprehensive review of the literature in Chapter II. In Chapter III, she described the qualitative research design as well as methods used to conduct the study and analyze findings. In Chapter IV, she presented study findings and, in Chapter V, discussed the findings in light of the current research literature and offered study conclusions. In Chapter V she also addressed the implications of the study findings for health education and for future research.

CHAPTER II: Review of the Literature

Approximately six to eight million new cats and dogs enter a non-profit facility such as an animal shelter in any given year in the U.S. (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, 2015; The Humane Society of the United States, 2014; Turner et al., 2012). Of these animals entering such facilities, 2.7 million of them will be euthanized (ASPCA, 2015; The Humane Society of the United States, 2014). The purpose of this study was to explore the meanings and lived experiences of animal care workers in eastern North Carolina who were employed in non-profit animal care shelters or other non-clinical facilities.

Due to limited research in the area of employees' work in non-profit animal care, the researcher used a general publications search tool at East Carolina University called "One Search" to conduct the literature search for this study. She used key terms that included, "non-profit animal care," "cat bites," "dog bites," "animal care workers," "animal care work," "non-profit animal shelter funding," and "non-profit organizations." Other terms she used to search peer-reviewed journals and trade publications included, "disease in animal care workers," "animal care injury," "humane society stress," "animal shelters," and "animal shelter medicine." The researcher also identified sources of statistical data from reputable animal care and U.S. Government organizations.

At the time of the study, the researcher had identified a lack of phenomenological research that explored individuals' meaning and lived experiences associated with the provision of animal care at non-profit facilities. She identified qualitative and quantitative studies that examined animal care work focused on the physical (Chang & Hart, 2002;

Reeve et al., 2005; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005; Steneroden et al., 2011) or emotional (Baines, 2011; Chang & Hart, 2002; Chur-Hansen, 2010; Mitchener & Ogilvie, 2002; Rank et al., 2009; Reeve et al., 2005; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005; Taylor, 2010; Taylor, 2007; Taylor, 2004; Themens, 2008; Turner et al., 2012) impact of animal care work on employees in both for profit and non-profit facilities, the roles and experiences of animal care facility volunteers (Eng, Liu, & Sekhon, 2012; Rogelberg et al., 2010), and employee-volunteer relationships (Liu, 2012; Rogelberg et al., 2010). In addition, several studies examined employees' job satisfaction and motivation in non-profit facilities (Beynon, Heffernan & McDermott, 2012; Borzaga & Tortia, 2006; Brown & Yoshioka, 2003; Edwards, 2014; Hamann & Foster, 2014; Jaskyte, 2008; Liu, 2012; Ohana, 2012; Stride & Higgs, 2014).

This review of the research literature focused specifically on work in non-profit animal care facilities in the United States. The researcher examined the characteristics of animal care workers, the physical and emotional demands they faced, and their generally positive, yet highly variable experiences with volunteers who tend to have a high turnover rate (Borzaga & Tortia, 2006; Liu, 2012; Rogelberg et al., 2010). The researcher also reviewed animal care workers' reported job satisfaction and work-related motivations. Due to the limited research currently available on the target population, the researcher included in this review several studies pertaining to employees in non-profit settings in general and some specifically related to animal care workers employed in non-profit settings.

Background

In 2012, there were 232,100 animal care and service worker jobs according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014a). Women were identified as more likely to be involved in animal care, since roughly 85% of all first-year veterinary students located in the United States in 2002 were female and approximately 75% of those involved in animal protectionism were female (Herzog, 2007; Taylor, 2010). At the time of this study, the job outlook for work in non-profit animal care settings was expected to grow 15% during the years 2012 to 2022, yet high job turnover and employee burnout rates have characterized employment in the field (Chur-Hansen, 2010; Taylor, 2004; Themens, 2008; Turner et al., 2012; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014a). In 2012, one third of animal caretakers worked part time and often experienced irregular working hours (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014a).

Animal care and service workers' typically earn relatively low wages. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014a), as of May 2012, animal care and service workers received a median wage of $19,690 per year. Based on the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services 2014 Poverty Guidelines (2014), their median pay fell below the $19,790 poverty level for a three-person family.

Of the 1.5 million non-profit organizations located in the United States, approximately 13,600 were non-profit, independent community animal shelters (ASPCA, 2015; Liu, 2012). The data on both animal care non-profit organizations and general non-profit organizations showed that such organizations lacked recognition and consistent funding and often experienced shortages of staff and resources while maintaining high workloads (Borzaga & Tortia, 2006; Weiss, Patronek, Slater, Garrison & Medicus, 2013).

Non-profit organizations rely on multiple stakeholders, community partnerships and charitable activities for funding and support to survive. Strong networking ties tend to be vital to their survival (Eng et al., 2012; Weiss et al., 2013). Non-profit animal care shelters receive no government funding and, like non-profit organizations in general, rely on donations, community partnerships, and grants for funding (Anonymous, 2012; Elmer, 2005).

This literature review focused on the physical demands and emotional concerns of non-profit animal care workers. Animal activism and compassion fatigue were also explored. Intrusive symptoms, avoidance symptoms, and arousal symptoms were described in-depth. Finally, volunteer interactions, job satisfaction, and worker motivations were examined.

Physical Demands

Animal care workers in all settings typically are responsible for feeding, grooming, bathing, and exercising the animals in their care. Some workers may also administer medications or perform euthanasia (Reeve et al., 2005; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014a). In order to meet their animal care responsibilities, workers engage in strenuous tasks such as moving and sanitizing cages and lifting heavy food bags. Injuries may occur when completing these physical tasks or when working directly with animals (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014a & b). The animals sheltered at non-profit animal care facilities are primarily cats and dogs, but animal care facilities may also care for smaller animals such as rabbits, rats and gerbils (Taylor, 2010; Taylor, 2007; Taylor, 2004).

Compared to the national average, animal care workers experience a higher rate of work-related injuries and illnesses and are at an increased risk for hypertension, the development of severe allergies, alcohol and other substance use disorders, and suicide (Chang & Hart, 2002; Chur-Hansen, 2010; Rank et al., 2009; Reeve et al., 2005; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014a). They may also experience sleep disruption, irritability, and trouble concentrating due to physical or psychological difficulties associated with euthanizing animals (Reeve et al., 2005; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005). Physically, animal care workers must kneel, crawl, bend and lift heavy objects while on the job. They are responsible for cleaning equipment and animal cages. They also must feed, provide water for, and exercise the animals (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014a). Finally, animal care workers and veterinarians conduct physical examinations that are necessary to uncover injuries, illness, and the need for euthanasia (Rank et al., 2009; Reeve et al., 2005; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005; Themens, 2008; Top myths private veterinary practitioners have about shelters, 2014).

When working with shelter animals, employees come into contact with frightened or aggressive animals. When exercising or working with animals in other ways, employees may be bitten, scratched, attacked, or kicked (Chang & Hart, 2002; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014a). Each year, dogs bite 4.5 million individuals in the United States. Of those bitten, roughly 885,000 seek medical attention, 30,000 undergo reconstructive surgeries, 3-18% will develop infection and 10-20 deaths occur (World

Health Organization, 2013). In Pitt County, eastern North Carolina, there were 214 documented dog bites for the 2014 calendar year (Pitt County Animal Control, 2014) and Lenoir County, eastern North Carolina had a total of 315 bite investigations. The investigations in Lenoir County have risen each year since 2008 (Lenoir County Animal Control, 2014). In regard to cat bites, there were roughly 400,000 bites yearly in the U.S., which accounted for 66,000 hospital emergency department visits (World Health Organization, 2013). An unknown number of annual animal bites have specifically occurred among workers who were directly involved in animal care, regardless of type of facility.

Animal bites are recommended to be treated with wound cleansing and possibly an antibiotic prophylaxis, particularly when the individual has experienced a cat puncture bite, hand wounds, or is immunosuppressed (Ellis & Ellis, 2014; Oksi, Ahlmen-Laiho & Laine, 2014; Talan, Citron, Abrahamian, Moran, & Goldstein, 1999). Over 50% of cat bites (Alpay, Korkmaz, Cevik & Aykin, 2014; Oksi, Ahlmen-Laiho & Laine, 2014) become infected, due to microorganisms such as *Pasteurella multocida* (Alpay, Korkmaz, Cevik & Aykin, 2014; Blackburn, Tremblay, Tsimiklis, Thivierge, & Lavergne, 2013; Talan et al., 1999) and *Francisella tularensis* (Blackburn et al., 2013; Larson, Fey, Hinrichs, & Iwen, 2014), which can lead to complications including cellulitis (Alpay et al., 2014; Blackburn et al., 2013; Oksi et al., 2014; Talan et al., 1999), bacteremia (Alpay, Korkmaz, Cevik & Aykin, 2014), meningitis (Alpay et al., 2014; Talan et al., 1999), pneumonia (Alpay et al., 2014), sepsis (Blackburn et al., 2013), and brain abscesses (Alpay et al., 2014). It is not known how or how frequently animal care workers working in non-profit settings experience animal bites, or receive care after being bitten by an animal as part of working within a sheltered environment.

In two British hospitals, 399 cases of dog bites to the face were reported for the 2011-2012 calendar year (Mannion & Mills, 2013). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2003), there were approximately 368,245 patients in the United States treated for dog bite injuries in 2001. This resulted in an incidence rate of 129.3 cases per 100,000 population. Dog bite injuries related to work accounted for 16,526 patients (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2003). Also in the United States, a retrospective review of precipitating events for hospitalization at one Midwestern health care facility reported 371 admissions for dog bites from July 1997 to June 2012. Twenty of those cases involved vascular injuries, including arterial-only, venous-only, and combination injuries that required surgery (Akingba, Robinson, Jester, Rapp, Tsai, Motaganahalli, Dalsing, & Murphy, 2013). Such injuries can also potentially affect animal care workers, though specific data is lacking.

Exposure to zoonoses is also an area of concern for animal care workers (Rohlf & Bennett, 2005; Steneroden et al., 2011; Themens, 2008). They may be exposed to such zoonotic diseases as rabies, plague, leptospirosis, internal parasites, methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus (*MRSA), and salmonella. Some of these diseases, including leptospirosis, MRSA, plague and rabies, are on the rise and can have detrimental outcomes for workers exposed to them (Steneroden et al., 2011).

Animal care workers face significant morbidity and mortality if exposed to rabies. In 2014, there were fifteen reported cats and four reported dogs afflicted with rabies in North Carolina (North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, 2014). According to the research literature, animal care workers and individuals, in general, may not expediently receive post-exposure rabies prophylaxis (Friis & Sellers, 2014; Steneroden et al., 2011). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2011), recommends that the rabies post-exposure vaccinations be comprised of one dose of human rabies immune globulin and vaccine on the day of exposure followed by three doses of the rabies vaccine according to a specific schedule of administration (CDC, 2011).

According to Steneroden et al., (2011), from 1977 through 1998, eight states documented twenty-three cases of cat-associated plague (Y. pestis) typically transmitted via flea bites or contact with respiratory or oral secretions or infectious exudates from infected animals. Of those cases, six were experienced by either veterinarians or veterinary support staff that came into close contact with an infected animal (Steneroden et al., 2011). No literature was identified that explored how many animal care workers were exposed to plague or other diseases, including whether they closely monitored themselves for fever and general health status for two weeks after potential exposure or discussed post-exposure prophylaxis with their physician as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2012).

Emotional Concerns

Animal care workers interact with and care for unwanted, sometimes soon-to-be euthanized, abused, sick, or injured animals. Researchers have suggested that the empathy they feel for the animals can lead them to ultimately experience emotional numbing, discomfort or distress (Chang & Hart, 2002; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005; Taylor, 2010; Turner et al., 2012; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014a). Previous studies have documented that animal care workers and other individuals responsible for the euthanasia of animals are at greater risk for emotional mismanagement, anxiety, irritability, recurrent thoughts about euthanizing animals, nightmares, guilt, sadness, unresolved grief, stress and depression (Chang & Hart, 2002; Chur-Hansen, 2010; Hamann & Foster, 2014; Hart & Mader, 1995; Jacobsson & Lindblom, 2013; Rank et al., 2009; Reeve et al., 2005; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005; Themens, 2008). The severity of such symptoms can result in them experiencing a disruption of or inability to carry on normal daily activities (Reeve et al., 2005).

In the course of their daily work, animal shelter staff have been reported to demonstrate negative attitudes toward the public as a blame-displacing strategy, particularly when dealing with owners who surrender their animals to a shelter (Taylor, 2004). Studies, including methods such as participant observation, descriptions, and interviews, have shown that shelter staff believe the reasons given by the public regarding animal surrender are trivial in nature and such beliefs may precipitate feelings of disgust and anger on the part of the animal care workers toward those who surrender their animals (Hart & Mader, 1995; Taylor, 2004; 2010).

Negative attitudes towards the public were found in other studies as well. For instance, Taylor (2004) conducted a three-year qualitative study that involved ethnographic data collection at two animal sanctuaries and interviews with numerous staff at five other animal sanctuaries/welfare organizations located in the United Kingdom. Findings from their study revealed that animal care workers tended to view the world based on what was good or bad for animal welfare. They found that animal care workers were devoted to animal welfare and many, if not all, were described as fanatical about their occupation and the animals that they cared for (Taylor, 2004). Furthermore, Hart & Mader

(1995) recruited 45 humane society staff members who took part in three stress workshops and described their feelings. Many individuals (58%) noted that they took on the appearance of being happy and were helpful to the public despite their feelings of anger, guilt, and sadness. About one third (35%) of respondents also maintained a pretense of being strong (Hart & Mader, 1995). Taylor affirmed that perpetrators of mistreatment or abuse themselves or the consequences of animal abuse for the animal also evoked feelings of anger and frustration among employees. Staff members reported feelings of bitterness, anger, and skepticism toward people who applied for but were not approved for animal adoption as such people were assessed as having an unfit home for an animal (Taylor, 2010).

Animal Activism

Social exchanges build a moral community among animal care activists as they share a mutual focal point (Jacobsson & Lindblom, 2013) of the humane treatment of animals. Animal rights activists differ from animal care workers in that activists focus mainly on awareness campaigns, lobbying of legislators, and undercover filming to show the living conditions of animals. Both animal rights activists and animal care workers share the common goal of animal welfare (Chur-Hansen, 2010; Jacobsson & Lindblom, 2013; Rank et al., 2009; Taylor, 2004; 2007; Turner et al., 2012; Weiss et al., 2013).

Jacobsson & Lindblom (2013) conducted 18 in-depth interviews with animal rights activists from three groups in Sweden: Animal Rights Sweden, Animal Rights Alliance, and Gothenburg's Animal Rights Activists. The researchers identified five different types of emotional work from the activists: containing, ventilation, ritualization, micro-shocking and normalization of guilt. Containing occurred when activists did not act impulsively and had a high tolerance for hostility shown by others. Ventilation allowed for the activists to express their emotions and release built-up tension and irritation. Ritualization generated the emotional energy required to build and maintain bonds in the activist group. Micro-shocking occurred when activists sought graphic pictures or film that provoked their internal feelings of outrage. Normalization of guilt allowed activists to feel guilt that would motivate that actions they took. Activists sought to alleviate perceived guilt by protesting and taking action (Jacobsson & Lindblom, 2013).

Compassion Fatigue

Non-profit workers in general and animal care workers in particular have reportedly used their passion for a cause to accomplish their work, sometimes serving as a voice for voiceless victims (Baines, 2011; Taylor, 2007). Their passion has led to compassion fatigue for some, as their daily work tended to involve the care and treatment of suffering animals that were unable to communicate their needs. Compassion fatigue resulted in a depletion of the animal care worker's internal emotional resources. These individuals can be traumatized from constant exposure (Chur-Hansen, 2010; Mitchener & Ogilvie, 2002; Rank et al., 2009) to suffering animals with which they empathize. Compassion fatigue in these individuals is marked by intrusive symptoms, avoidance symptoms, arousal symptoms, and burnout symptoms (Mitchener & Ogilvie, 2002; Rank et al., 2009), each of which will be discussed in the following section.

Intrusive Symptoms

Intrusive symptoms consist of distressing, unwanted, impulsive and overwhelming thoughts that repetitively occur and are hard to control. Affected individuals may experience an inability to effectively suppress recurrent thoughts. Intrusive thoughts are linked with the stress response and possibly linked to anxiety, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Asmundson, Stapleton, & Taylor, 2004; Barnes, Klein-Sosa, Renk, & Tantleff-Dunn, 2010; Fossion, Leys, Kempenaers, Braun, Verbanck, & Linkowski, 2015; Maes et al., 1998; Peirce, 2007).

Avoidance Symptoms

Avoidance symptoms occur when the affected individual avoids or tries to escape people, places, or thoughts that remind them of certain traumatic events. They may also experience a notably diminished interest in an activity or feelings of detachment (Asmundson et al., 2004; Fossion et al., 2015; Maes et al., 1998; Thompson & Waltz, 2010; Wetterneck, Steinberg, & Hart, 2014). Avoidance strategies are believed to underlie the anxiety, depression, substance abuse, OCD, and PTSD (Thompson & Waltz, 2010; Wetterneck et al., 2014) that animal workers may experience.

Arousal Symptoms

Arousal symptoms include hyper-vigilance, exaggerated startle responses, sleep difficulties, and impaired concentration (Asmundson et al., 2004; Fossion et al., 2015; Maes et al., 1998). Burnout manifests slowly due to the overall effects of stress at the workplace and consists of physical exhaustion, emotional exhaustion, and cognitive exhaustion

(Marchand, Juster, Durand, & Lupien, 2014; Melamed, Ugarten, Shiromi, Kahana, Lerman, & Froom, 1999; Moss, 1989). Those individuals considered vulnerable to burnout have included individuals whose work is emotionally demanding and highly stressful. Overachievers, overcommitted workers, and women are considered to be at higher risk for experiencing burnout (Marchand et al., 2014; Melamed et al., 1999; Moss, 1989). In previous studies, burnout has been associated with cardiovascular disease risk factors (Melamed et al., 1999).

Hatch, Winefield, Christie, and Lievaart (2011), mailed questionnaire surveys to 6991 veterinarians located in the 2006 database of Australian veterinarians. Anonymous responses from 1947 veterinarians in Australia were compared to baseline data from a 2001 Australian Health Survey. The researchers found that veterinarians noted greater levels of depression, anxiety, stress and burnout when compared to the general population. The Kessler K10 scores showed that the participants described moderate, high and very high levels of psychological distress while the depression scores were greater in the moderate, severe and extremely severe categories. Regarding burnout, the percentage of female participants suffering burnout was twice as high as that found in the general population.

Volunteer Interactions

Non-profit animal care organizations often struggle with volunteer retention, yet many rely on volunteers to assist with fundraising, dog walking, animal care, and office duties (Liu, 2012; Rogelberg et al., 2010). Volunteers can have an effect on animal care employee satisfaction as a consequence of the interactions they have with employees and the relationships they form with them (Borzaga & Tortia, 2006; Rogelberg et al., 2010). Rogelberg et al. (2010) administered a questionnaire to 194 participants attending either the national Humane Society of the United States Expo or the regional Michigan Partnership for Animal Welfare Conference and 76 members of a listserve developed by the Humane Society of the United States. All participants were employed by an animal welfare agency that involved volunteers. Findings showed that employees associated negative experiences with volunteers with higher personal stress levels and a perceived increased workload. Employees' experiences with volunteers also affected their organizational commitment and intention to quit their jobs. For instance, respondents associated positive volunteer interactions with a greater commitment to the animal care organization and a lower intention to leave the job (Rogelberg et al, 2010).

Key issues in volunteer retention included an inability to financially compensate the volunteers, as well as an inability to keep them actively engaged during their time on-site at an animal care facility. Some volunteers do not have sufficient time to commit to an organization, while others lose their excitement about or interest in volunteering as time passes (Liu, 2012). Retention of volunteers by non-profit organizations, in general, entails showing volunteers that they are capable of making a change in the world and instilling social trust in them during the recruitment process (Eng et al., 2012). Social trust is achieved when a non-profit organization holds social events to bring in potential volunteers who have coinciding social goals. By having this social trust in place, potential volunteers will have stronger ties with the mission of the organization (Eng et al., 2012).

Job Satisfaction

Research in the area of job satisfaction among workers engaged in non-profit animal care has indicated that job satisfaction was influenced by intrinsic motivation. Intrinsically motivated employees sought enjoyment and a personal challenge in their work (Beynon et al., 2012; Eng et al., 2012; Hamann & Foster, 2014; Jaskyte, 2008). They were less motivated by personal recognition, competition, and rewards.

The importance of intrinsic factors in job satisfaction was supported by an Italian study of employees of public organizations in general. Borzaga & Tortia (2006) reported findings from a 1999 study that involved 228 Italian public, non-profit and for-profit organizations in general with no specified focus on non-profit animal care organizations. Over 2,000 workers from these organizations completed questionnaires regarding organizational characteristics. The questionnaire also included items related to workers' wellbeing as well as occupational and sociodemographic information. Study findings revealed that intrinsic and relational attitudes had the greatest effect on job satisfaction within public organizations. The researchers also found that employees who were financially motivated were least satisfied with their work. Non-profit organizations held the highest levels of worker satisfaction on many of the measures that included satisfaction with the job as a whole and satisfaction with volunteer, colleague, and superior relationships. Non-profit organizations also scored highest among levels of professional development, decision-making autonomy, and the social usefulness of the job. Workers in for-profit organizations were least satisfied even though they had higher financial incentives (Borzaga & Tortia, 2006). The salary among non-profit workers, in general, was typically less than those employed in the commercial or for-profit sectors, yet the work was highly demanding (Baines, 2011; Beynon et al., 2012; Borzaga & Tortia, 2006; Chang & Hart, 2002; Chur-Hansen, 2010; Eng et al., 2012; Jaskyte, 2008; Rank et al., 2009; Themens, 2008).

Research has revealed that, in general, employees who had strong bonds and social relationships within an organization regardless of its financial status were less likely to request time away from work (Baines, 2011; Edwards, 2014). For instance, Edwards (2014) randomly surveyed managers from 790 public and 430 non-profit organizations to examine absenteeism. She found significant attitudinal variables that precluded absenteeism. These variables included placing a high importance on one's work and willingly doing extra work (Edwards, 2014).

According to researchers, non-profit workers and animal care workers, in general, relied on mutual trust and respect to create a willing, effective, creative, and open environment in which to share concerns and information and allow for venting and debriefing (Chur-Hansen, 2010; Eng et al, 2012; Jaskyte, 2008). Furthermore, a positive workgroup environment was found to negate the effects of a low salary in non-profit organizations in general, as observed in a study by Ohana (2012). Following initial telephone contact with potential study participants, Ohana (2012) mailed survey questionnaires to directors of non-profit organizations with more than five salaried workers. In all, 27 non-profit organizations with a total of 261 employees were contacted and 101 employees responded. Analysis of the responses completed by the 101 employees in non-profit organizations, led the researcher to conclude that in order to build commitment, the non-profit organization must foster a team spirit among employees, share a common vision and clear goals, and allow employees to participate in decision-making (Ohana, 2012).

Rank et al. (2009) conducted a study of fifty-seven animal care professionals, employed in profit and non-profit facilities, who took part in a three-part training series offered in 15 States and U.S. territories. The goal was to observe what, if any, effect animal care compassion fatigue trainings had on symptoms of compassion fatigue. Symptoms were measured by three distinct pre-post intervention instruments that took respondents about 30 to 45 minutes to complete. Participants identified themselves as working in a shelter (over 60%), veterinary medicine, or other animal care site. The intervention series involved a three-month accelerated compassion fatigue recovery program, interactive resiliency-education and planning web-based project, and a peer-to-peer accelerated recovery techniques training course. A total of 57 participants attended one of three training sites in Ohio (11 participants), Arizona (9 participants) or Oregon (37 participants). One or more representatives of 15 states or U.S. territories participated in the program. Only those participants who completed Part 1 were eligible to complete the Part 2 online course and the following final course. The final course took place at the Humane Society of the United States' 2004 Animal Care Expo in Dallas, Texas. The instruments used for data collection included a Professional Quality of Life: Animal Care Provider; State-Trait Anxiety Inventory Form Y-1 and Y-2; and the Trauma Recovery Scale. A separate, 17-item demographic survey offered two open-ended questions that invited a written response from participants. Based on the subjective experiences reported by participants, the researchers determined that the training intervention was effective in minimizing the symptoms of animal care compassion fatigue while also enhancing resiliency as measured by ameliorative effects. The benefits of the training intervention were present during a six-month follow-up (Rank et al., 2009).

Rohlf & Bennett (2005) assessed 148 animal care workers, from metropolitan veterinary practices, animal welfare facilities, and university laboratories, using the Impact of Event Scale-Revised to measure traumatic stress among workers who were actively involved in euthanizing animals. The Impact of Event Scale-Revised had acceptable predictive ability as well as acceptable predictive and construct validity in regard to trauma. All participants were recruited from veterinary offices (57.5%), animal welfare shelters (25%), and university animal laboratories (17.6%) in Melbourne, Australia. The researchers developed additional tools to measure satisfaction with social supports, participation in trainings, and concerns over animal death. These additional tools were in the form of open-ended questions and Likert scales. No information was provided on the validity and reliability of the researcher-developed scale.

Rohlf & Bennett (2005) found three common factors that arose for employees regarding the most satisfying aspects of working with animals. Over half of the sample (66.2%) stated that they received satisfaction from being around animals or from assisting animals in some way. About 65% of the sample indicated satisfaction from addressing personal goals at work. Finally, 41.2% of respondents indicated satisfaction by achieving work-related goals such as adopting out animals and treating ill animals. Participants were also asked to identify how satisfied they were with social supports from co-workers, friends, employers, families, pets and animals at the workplace based on a five-point Likert scale. Workers were significantly more satisfied with the social support they received from pets (Mean score of 4.50), co-workers (3.94), family (3.93), and animals at that workplace (3.86) than with social supports received from friends (3.78) and employers (3.55). Findings also showed that 11% of participants reported moderate levels of traumatic symptoms, including intrusive and avoidance symptoms associated with burnout. Finally, participants who had higher levels of satisfaction from reported social supports, experienced less stress than respondents who noted that they were less satisfied with their social supports (Rohlf & Bennett, 2005).

Chang & Hart (2002) administered a detailed, five-page, anonymous, open-ended survey to 16 research animal caregivers in University animal laboratories at seven University of California campuses. Five additional participants, who were University veterinarians at these campuses, provided their written administrative perspectives on working with animals. In addition, the researchers conducted six qualitative interviews with animal caregivers and veterinarians. Based on a 7-point scale, respondents reported a high median rating of 6 regarding job satisfaction. The majority of participants described their primary reason for working with research animals as having an interest in animals. The participants also found it rewarding when they provided enjoyable environmental enrichment to the animals and were recognized by the animals that they cared for. Half of the participants described opportunities to adopt out the research animals that they cared for facilitated their coping with euthanasia and afforded a sense of relief by offering some animals a second chance at life (Chang & Hart, 2002).

Worker Motivations

Workers in non-profit organizations have noted a stronger fit between their personal values and their organization’s values when compared to for-profit workers and their organizations (Baines, 2011; Edwards, 2014; Hamann & Foster, 2014; Stride & Higgs, 2014). This match of values has been found to predict non-profit worker commitment and satisfaction (Brown & Yoshioka, 2003). Non-profit workers tended to be intrinsically and self-motivated and placed little emphasis on economic motivators (Borzaga & Tortia, 2006; Hamann & Foster, 2014). Stride & Higgs (2014) examined two non-profit animal care facilities in the United Kingdom to assess the alignment between the values of the staff and the organization in which they were employed. One non-profit facility provided animal rehabilitation and was dedicated to improving animal welfare. The other non-profit facility provided training and work opportunities to the disadvantaged. The researchers mailed questionnaires to all staff members at the animal welfare non-profit organization and randomly selected half of the staff from the other non-profit to receive questionnaires. The questionnaire was developed to measure staff values, perceptions, and commitment. It was based on a 7-point Likert scale to ascertain how important staff deemed their values to be to their organization. Findings showed that the worker’s perceptions of organizational values affected worker commitment (Stride & Higgs, 2014). Staff indicated that a motivating factor for them in seeking work with a non-profit organization was their ability to promote social justice. Believing in the mission of the non-profit organization and personally contributing to that mission fostered devotion to and satisfaction with the organization (Baines, 2011; Brown & Yoshioka, 2003; Taylor, 2004).

Researchers have also noted the opportunity to work with caring, mission-oriented individuals, such as fellow staff, service users, and volunteers who shared a common vision, as motivating for non-profit workers in general (Baines, 2011; Ohana, 2012; Rogelberg et al., 2010; Taylor, 2007). Strong social relationships at work provided workers with self-fulfillment and a chance to relate with others (Borzaga & Tortia, 2006). Workers have been found to be more committed to an organization in which strong social bonds consisting of mutual trust and respect had been created (Edwards, 2014; Eng, Liu & Sekhon, 2012).

Animal care workers often feel rewarded when working with animals that have grown to recognize and enjoy their company (Chang & Hart, 2002). Taylor contends that animal care workers approach their work with enthusiasm and hold the belief that only individuals who are committed to animal welfare should enter the facility. Animal care workers see themselves as a voice for the animals in their care and often attach personalities, motives, and mindedness to the animals. It is not uncommon for animal care workers to view the animals as unique, emotional, thoughtful, and reciprocating of their care and attention (Taylor, 2007; 2010).

Summary

The current literature has highlighted the physical demands and emotional concerns of these employees. Animal activism, compassion fatigue and the resulting intrusive symptoms, avoidance symptoms, and arousal symptoms were discussed. The importance of volunteer interactions, job satisfaction, and worker motivations were also examined. This current study seeks to give voices to non-profit animal care workers in eastern North Carolina, a subgroup that has previously been unexplored.

Although it is recognized that animal care work is physically and emotionally demanding, a gap in the research exists regarding the particular biopsychosocial impact that non-profit animal care work has on individuals, in particular, employees of non-profit facilities located in eastern North Carolina. Animal care workers in non-profit settings receive a median salary that, on average, meets 2014 poverty levels for a three-person family (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014a ; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014). The job outlook for this field, however, is expected to grow 15% from 2012-2022 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014a).

Animal care workers in general perform strenuous, emotionally challenging, and sometimes dangerous work in the context of animal care. Employees in this field are susceptible to animal bites, scratches, attacks, and zoonotic disease exposure (Chang & Hart, 2002; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005; Sterneroden et al, 2011; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014a). They have a higher rate of work-related injuries and illnesses and are at an increased risk for multiple health issues when compared to the national average of employee job-related morbidity (Chang & Hart, 2002; Chur-Hansen, 2010; Rank et al., 2009; Reeve et al., 2005; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014a). Animal care workers are also at an increased risk for emotional and mental issues, including compassion fatigue, which can lead to a disruption in daily life activities for affected workers (Chang & Hart, 2002; Chur-Hansen, 2010; Hamann & Foster, 2014; Hart & Mader, 1995; Jacobsson & Lindblom, 2013; Rank et al., 2009, Reeve et al., 2005; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005; Themens, 2008).

Non-profit organizations rely on volunteers to assist with the day-to-day activities of the organization. The positive, social interactions that animal care workers have with volunteers in the workplace can increase employee satisfaction, strengthen commitment to the organization, lower stress levels, and cause a perceived lower workload (Borzaga & Tortia, 2006; Rogelberg et al., 2010).

With these findings in mind, the researcher sought to discover the meaning and lived experience of animal care workers employed in non-profit animal care settings in eastern North Carolina. No prior research specifically examining the lived experiences of non-profit animal care workers in eastern North Carolina had been conducted. She aimed to discover an in-depth understanding of these worker's perceptions about their work and quality of life. She focused the study on discovering non-profit animal care workers' daily life experiences, including the positive and challenging situations they faced. She aimed to uncover, through data collected by means of in-depth interviews, participants' drawings, and member checks, how animal work that occurred in non-profit animal care facilities affected the lives and health of employees. In the following chapter, she will present a detailed description of the research methods used in this study.

CHAPTER III: Research Methods and Design

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe animal care workers' lived experiences of and meanings they derived from their work with animals in non-profit shelter-based animal care facilities. A review of the literature regarding non-profit and animal care workers' experiences and perspectives revealed limited research that focused on this population. Research that has been conducted revealed that typically low paid animal care workers experienced a higher risk of injury, illness, and psychosocial consequences compared to other service workers (Baines, 2011; Chang & Hart, 2002; Chur-Hansen, 2010; Mitchener & Ogilvie, 2002; Rank et al., 2009; Reeve et al., 2005; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005; Steneroden et al., 2011; Taylor, 2004; 2007; 2010; Themens, 2008; Turner et al., 2012; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014a & b). In addition, the particular geographical area from which participants were drawn was anticipated to reveal insights that may be unique to animal care workers in this area of the country. In an effort to gain insight into the lives of animal care workers employed in non-profit settings and to give voice to this population, the researcher used a qualitative phenomenological design to address the question, "What is the meaning and lived experience of animal care work from the perspective of employees of non-profit animal care facilities in eastern North Carolina?"

Rationale for Selecting Qualitative Methods

The researcher used a phenomenological approach as it, "is the first method of knowledge because it begins with 'things themselves'"(Moustakas, 1994, p. 41). A phenomenology focuses on meanings (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002; van Manen, 1990) as perceived by, in this case, animal care workers employed in non-profit animal care facilities in eastern North Carolina. These meanings provided descriptive insights into how participants thought about their work and the significance that work held for them. The researcher sought to discover the behaviors, beliefs, and emotions experienced by participants in relation to their work (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002; van Manen, 1990), including their perspectives about their quality of life.

Research focused on the meaning and lived experience of animal care workers in eastern North Carolina non-profit animal care facilities has not been previously reported in the literature. While quantitative and qualitative studies have investigated job satisfaction and stress in non-profit animal shelter workers and education about zoonotic diseases among animal shelter workers in general, the researcher identified no studies that addressed the experiences of and issues affecting non-profit animal care workers who were employed in eastern North Carolina for one year or more (Borzaga & Tortia, 2006; Chang & Hart, 2002; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005; Steneroden et al., 2011). Phenomenology seeks to discover new knowledge (Moustakas, 1994); new knowledge is needed regarding animal care workers' perspectives and experiences.

A need existed to gain insight into the lived experiences of non-profit animal shelter employees since they earned minimum wages that met poverty levels and animal care employees in general have been documented to experience a higher incidence of work-related injuries or illnesses as compared to the national average of individuals employed in all fields (Sterneroden et al., 2011; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014a & b; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2014). No qualitative or quantitative research studies have specifically examined the lived experiences of non-profit animal care workers.

The health issues faced by these workers have not been thoroughly assessed nor have their societal supports been examined.

Researcher’s Qualifications

The researcher is qualified to conduct this qualitative study due to successfully completing extensive academic coursework as part of the East Carolina University (ECU) Master of Arts (MA) degree in Health Education in which she was enrolled at the time of the study. As part of her coursework for that degree, she successfully completed a course focused exclusively on qualitative research methods and gained hands-on experience with qualitative data collection and analysis, including an in-depth interview, focus group interview, and qualitative observation. The researcher has successfully completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) for biomedical investigators and social behavioral research investigators and key personnel as required by the University Institutional Review Board. She also holds a BA in Psychology degree from ECU.

Researcher’s Expectations, Assumptions and Biases

Moustakas (1994, p. 95) stated, “We experience things that exist in the world from the vantage point of self-awareness, self-reflection, and self-knowledge.” The researcher began the research process by reflecting on and becoming aware of her expectations, assumptions, biases, beliefs and values about animal shelters and those who work in them. In addition, she continued a process of reflexivity by maintaining a researcher’s reflexivity journal during the course of the study in which she regularly noted her awareness of her assumptions, biases, beliefs and values during the course of the study. In this way she sought to decrease her influence on study participants and the research environment.

As an avid volunteer with a local non-profit animal shelter, the researcher realized that she tended to have a positive bias towards employees in animal shelter settings. She viewed these workers as trustworthy and kindhearted. She assumed that work associated with animal care was rewarding for these individuals, yet also physically and emotionally demanding. She expected animal care employees to be overworked and underpaid. She also anticipated that the employees would welcome her and would openly and honestly share their perspectives and experiences with her. The researcher realized that she might have held a positive bias toward study participants as she personally valued the lives of animals and had been a practicing vegetarian for three years prior to the initiation of the study. The researcher made every effort to bracket her feelings, assumptions, biases, and expectations throughout the research process. She remained vigilant about monitoring her expectations, beliefs, values, assumptions and biases by writing at least weekly in her reflexivity journal.

Participant Recruitment and Selection

According to Moustakas (1994), essential criteria for participant recruitment and selection in a phenomenological study included that the participants had directly experienced the area of interest, were strongly interested in understanding underlying meanings, and were willing to engage in an audio-recorded in-depth interview with publishable findings. Consistent with Moustakas' (1994) guidance, the researcher narrowed her selection of potential participants by using purposive sampling.

Purposive sampling strategies consisted of seeking willing participants who had a direct experience with and a vital, knowledgeable perspective of the phenomenon of interest (Bagnasco et al., 2014; Patton, 2002; Robinson, 2014). In the case of this early, exploratory study of individuals employed in non-profit animal care, the researcher sought individuals who met the criteria for participation and who afforded maximum variation in their primary roles in the animal care facilities in which they were employed.

Criteria for participant selection for this study were that participants had a) directly experienced being an employee of a non-profit animal care shelter or other animal care facility in eastern North Carolina, b) had been employed in the facility for a period of one or more years, c) were voluntarily willing to participate in the study by engaging in an audio-recorded, open-ended, in-depth interview and a drawing, and d) were willing to share their perspectives and experiences about working in a non-profit animal shelter or spay/neuter clinic. The researcher sought individuals who filled a variety of roles at non-profit animal care facilities and had been employed at a facility for at least one year. All participants agreed to have their anonymized data published or presented as part of findings associated with the study.

Study participant recruitment involved an advertisement in the form of a flyer. The flyer was emailed and hand-delivered to the respective gatekeepers or directors of all non-profit animal care facilities with paid staff in eastern North Carolina for posting at the centers (Appendix D). The researcher composed a list of over twenty eastern North Carolina animal rescues or shelters. Most of these locations responded that they were a volunteer-only organization. Five locations noted that they had paid staff and three of these facilities agreed to participate. In addition, local veterinary hospitals agreed to post the flyer as non-profit animal care workers may visit these facilities for professional or personal animal care. The researcher also electronically distributed the flyer to individual staff members of facilities in which she had established rapport as a volunteer.

The flyer (Appendix D) provided a basic overview of the study and participant inclusion criteria. Those who were interested were invited to email or call the researcher at a time that was convenient for them. The researcher enrolled in the study those individuals who indicated interest in the study and met eligibility criteria on a first come, first served basis. In order to make data collection as convenient as possible, participants were invited to select the site for the interview as long as the interview could be conducted in a public, quiet place. In the interest of assuring the confidentiality and safety of participants and the safety of the researcher, home-based interviews were excluded as an option.

The researcher aimed to recruit twelve to fourteen participants (Francis, Johnston, Robertson, Glidewell, Entwistle, Eccles & Grimshaw, 2010; Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). She used data saturation as the basis for determining the total number of participants. Once she identified data saturation based on data redundancy after eight participants, she recruited and interviewed two additional participants to affirm saturation (Bagnasco et al., 2014; Francis et al., 2010; Guest et al., 2006; Patton, 2002).

Ethical Issues

The researcher maintained high ethical standards at all times during the process of conducting the study. The researcher shared information with the research participants through initial telephone conversations to determine participant interest and eligibility and to schedule an initial interview. The researcher disclosed to participants the purpose and requirements associated with the study (Moustakas, 1994).

This study received approval from the East Carolina University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix A). At the time the researcher met the participants for the initially scheduled interview, she provided an IRB-approved informed consent form (Appendix B). Participants were given ample private time to review the document, address their questions, and sign the document prior to initiating data collection. The informed consent document addressed topics such as the purpose of the study, participant inclusion criteria, how to withdraw from the study, means of data collection, and the voluntary nature of study participation. The consent document also increased participants' awareness of potential harms, discomforts, and anticipated benefits associated with engaging in the study. The document included the researcher's contact information and the contact information for the Office for Human Research Integrity. Once reviewed, initialed and signed by the participant, the researcher provided him or her with a copy of the form.

The researcher made every effort to protect the anonymity of study participants and assured complete confidentiality to all participants. She transcribed the audio-recordings and removed or changed all identifiers during the transcription process, including replacing participant names with pseudonyms. The researcher kept the audio-recording device secure at all times by placing it in a lockbox located in her locked home. Only the researcher had access to the recordings (Hennink et al., 2011). All electronic files were secured on the researcher's password protected personal laptop. Consistent with ECU guidelines, after a period of three years has elapsed from the initiation of data collection, all recordings and electronic files will be appropriately deleted and all paper documents will be shredded.

The researcher aimed to follow the principles set forth by the 1979 *Belmont Report* in the conduct of this study. Drafted by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Behavioral Research, the *Belmont Report* outlined core principles that all ethical researchers should follow. She maintained an awareness of these principles during the course of the study and remained vigilant throughout the study for adherence to respect of persons, benefice and justice. The researcher placed the participant's emotions and wellbeing above achieving the goals of her research study (respect of persons). She sought to increase the potential benefits and decrease potential harm to the participants (benefice) during the study. Finally, she treated all participants equally (justice) and with respect (Hennink et al., 2011).

Data Collection Methods

In an effort to address the research question, "What is the meaning and lived experience of animal care work from the perspective of non-profit animal care workers, employed for a year or more, in eastern North Carolina," the researcher used the phenomenological approach described by Moustakas (1994). She employed three separate forms of data collection. Participant drawings preceded the primary data collection strategy of in-depth, open-ended interviews. The rationale behind this lies with Moustakas' (1994) belief that, in his words, a "brief meditative activity (p. 114)," at the beginning of an interview, may aid in the creation of a relaxed and trusting atmosphere, thus facilitating participant reflection and rapport. Also, art gave the participant the ability to give shape to his/her perceptions and acted as a visual layout of his/her personal lived experiences (van Manen, 1990). The drawings and the one-on-one interviews were consistent with the phenomenological approach as they both provided the researcher with a way to look at the diverse, individual and embodied experiences of the participants.

In-depth interviews are a widely used and important method of qualitative data collection. An in-depth, open-ended interview was the primary data collection strategy in this phenomenological study, as interviews often serve as a main source of rich and diverse knowledge that is gathered on the lived experiences of participants (Abawi, 2012; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Donalek, 2005; Flood, 2010; Moustakas, 1994; Qu & Dumay, 2011; Starks & Trinidad, 2007; van Manen, 1990; 2014). The in-depth interview process provided participants with an opportunity to explore and focus on their perceptions. It also gave participants a chance to actively reflect on and illuminate their lived experiences (Abawi, 2012; Flood 2010; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). The researcher provided participants an opportunity to review the actual findings (member check) in order for them to assure that the researcher had heard their voices correctly and accurately represented their experiences and perspectives in the presentation of findings.

Participant Drawings

By enabling the participants to create a drawing depicting what animal care work meant to them, the researcher aimed to evoke an informal, comprehensive, and interactive account of her participants' views. The participants were given a blank white 9" X 12" sheet of paper and a set of colored pencils. The researcher supplied participants with a typed hard copy of the question “What does animal care work mean to you?” for reference. The researcher, who was present at the time participants were drawing, assured the participants that stick figures were acceptable and that there were no “right or wrong” answers. This enabled the participants to draw what they experienced and perceived without feeling intimidated by a potential lack of artistic skill. As an alternative, the researcher invited participants who resisted drawing to verbalize what they would have drawn if they had been comfortable doing so.

The process of drawing invited the participants to use their personal creativity while reflecting on their lived experiences as an employee at a non-profit animal care facility. The drawing was also intended as a meditative or reflective activity that ultimately would serve as a catalyst for conversation during the interview. By capturing the participants’ experiences on paper and listening to their explanation of their drawings or verbal descriptions, the researcher was able to gain additional insight into their viewpoints.

On average, eight participants spent about four minutes on the drawing with times ranging from one minute to ten minutes. Two participants opted to verbally describe what they would have drawn.

In-Depth Interview

After completing an informed consent process, the researcher initiated the interview by referring to the drawing and asking the participant to talk about it with her. Beginning the interview by inviting the participants to talk about their drawings helped in establishing rapport between the researcher and the participant. The researcher then proceeded with the interview by following up on comments made by participants about the drawing and using the interview guide as a memory trigger for the questions she posed to participants. The researcher aimed to keep the discussion conversational, flowing, and on-track yet welcomed silences and pauses in the conversation to allow the participant to reflect on and gather her or his thoughts. The researcher remained open to the participants' viewpoints and practiced empathetic neutrality throughout the interview so as not to influence participants' views and to create a supportive, non-judgmental environment (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Donalek, 2005; Patton, 2002; Qu & Dumay, 2011).

After each participant completed her or his drawing, the researcher, with approval from the participant, turned on the audio recorder. The researcher had carefully planned, in close consultation with three expert reviewers, the semi-structured interview guide with ten predetermined, open-ended questions and multiple anticipated probes (Appendix C). The questions were designed to focus on different aspects of the participants' lived experiences. For instance, the question, "What has your experience been like as a non-profit animal care worker?" was intended to be thought-provoking, broad, and open-ended. The researcher facilitated a more detailed response from participants by using probes such as, "Can you give me an example of that?"

The focus of the interview guide was consistent with phenomenology as the questions examined meanings and lived experiences. The question "Can you give me an example of what a typical day at work is like for you?" enabled participants to reflect on their previous lived experiences in caring for animals in a non-profit animal care facility.

She used the interview guide flexibly as a tool to encourage the participants to share rich and thick descriptions of and focus on their role in animal care provision in non-profit settings. The guide also enabled her to ask similar questions of all participants and served as a vital tool in ultimately uncovering the central themes of non-profit animal care work (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Donalek, 2005; Qu & Dumay, 2011).

The researcher also employed the use of hand-written field notes during the audio-recorded interview. She used the field notes to document both interview content and participant actions during the interview. Immediately following the interview, the researcher expanded on these notes in a different ink color in order to differentiate notes taken in the moment and notes that reflected her memory of the interview data.

At the conclusion of the interview, the researcher asked participants if there was anything else that they would like to add. She summarized the key points from the interview as a means of checking with each participant that she had identified the issues or points of importance. The researcher then thanked participants for their time and switched the audio recording device off. The one-to-one, in-depth interviews lasted an average of thirty-two minutes with a range of fifteen to forty-five minutes.

Member Checks

To enhance the credibility of the study findings, the researcher sought participant input on written interview findings by conducting member checks. Member checks enabled participants to scrutinize the findings and provide feedback (Buchbinder, 2010; Koelsch, 2013) regarding the degree to which their perspectives and experiences were represented in the findings. Prior to concluding the interview, the researcher asked participants if they would be willing to review the study findings that would be e-mailed to them, as previously mentioned during the informed consent process. All participants agreed to participate in the member check. The researcher asked each participant for the best e-mail address for contact and distribution of the findings, recorded the contact information provided by the participant, and agreed to e-mail a summary the study findings as soon as findings were available. The participants were made aware that their insights in response to the findings would be appreciated, though not required. Some participants acknowledged feeling excitement in regards to an opportunity to review study findings.

Study Credibility

Study credibility is strengthened when thorough and rigorous methods are used in the study design, data collection, and analysis. In addition to the use of purposive sampling, the researcher used several strategies to enhance study credibility, including a) triangulation of data types, sources, and researchers, b) saturation of data, c) expert review and debriefing, d) engagement in reflexivity, e) empathetic neutrality and epoche, f) rich, thick description, g) member checks of findings, h) continuing search for disconfirming evidence, i) maintaining an audit trail, j) purposive sampling, and k) methodological congruence.

Triangulation

Data triangulation provided the researcher with a multidimensional view of the meaning and lived experience of animal care workers employed in non-profit settings. In this study, several means of triangulation were employed including, a) the involvement of multiple study participants; b) multiple data collection strategies in the form of the use of in-depth interviews, participant drawings, and member checks; and c) expert review and debriefing through the involvement of multiple researchers in the form of three thesis committee members (Crosby, DiClemente & Salazar, 2006). These forms of triangulation increased the credibility of the researcher's study and aided in addressing the researcher's assumptions and biases during the data collection and analysis process. Triangulation also increased both the richness of the data and the researcher's confidence in the findings (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009). The researcher recruited multiple participants in order to achieve maximum variation sampling. Such sampling provided a diversity of work experiences in non-profit animal care facilities.

Expert Review and Debriefing

The researcher benefitted from the assistance of three experienced experts in research, two of whom had expertise and extensive experience in qualitative research. The insights provided by committee members afforded the researcher invaluable input, recommendations, and challenges to her interpretations of data. The expert reviewers ensured that all study protocols and processes were followed. The thesis committee chair provided ample one-on-one time with the researcher to build skill sets and confidence. Confirmation of codes and study findings was ensured initially by the committee chair and then by committee members.

The thesis chair was available to the researcher for debriefing, as needed. This aided in supporting the credibility of the study findings and allowed the researcher to view the findings in a different light. These extensive discussions facilitated the researcher's reflections on the data and helped to minimize potential biases (Spall, 1998).

Reflexivity and Bracketing

The researcher engaged in conscious, continuing, self-reflection from the beginning of the study (Hennink et al., 2011) in an effort to consider each individual's first-person lived experience as it occurred and became defined in its totality (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher reflected on her background, and engaged in reflexivity which included the continuing identification of possible biases, influences, beliefs, values and assumptions. She was aware that her assumptions, biases, beliefs, and values may affect rapport building with participants during data collection, and could affect the kind and quality of data provided by participants. She remained vigilant to such concerns during the course of the study. For example, the researcher recognized that the interview atmosphere and the interpersonal dynamics between her and the participants could have an effect on the knowledge created during the course of the interview. The researcher engaged in a continuing process of reflexivity and efforts to set aside her personal perspectives (epoche/bracketing) in order to ensure methodological and theoretical openness (Hennink et al., 2011; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002; van Manen, 2014).

Rich and Thick Description

The researcher used rich and thick descriptions that comprised study findings. She sought to retain the original essence of participant's voices. The researcher strived to illuminate the meaning and lived experience of non-profit animal care work by unearthing the participants' elusive underlying messages (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2014). She sought to enable readers of the study to actually "be" in the study by providing the material and textual qualities of the participant's experiences. She aimed to paint a verbal picture and breathe life into the experiences of non-profit animal care workers (Moustakas, 1994).

Member Checks

The researcher wanted to insure that descriptions and perspectives gleaned from interviews would accurately reflect and represent participants' perspectives and experiences in the findings. To achieve this, she provided all interview participants with the research findings for their review. She requested that they evaluate the accuracy with which she grasped their meanings and lived experiences as animal care workers and sought their assessment of her efforts to represent their experiences and perspectives in the findings. The researcher included their feedback in a separate segment, directly following the findings. The strategy of member checks aided the researcher in affirming study credibility as participants themselves indicated that their authentic views were represented in the findings and were accurately documented and free from the researcher's bias or misinterpretation (Buchbinder, 2010; Koelsch, 2013).

Continuing Search for Disconfirming Evidence

The researcher viewed each participant's experience with fresh eyes and with no expectations of similarity among participant perspectives or experiences. She remained vigilant in searching for and identifying disconfirming evidence throughout the data analysis process in an effort to contribute to study credibility and trustworthiness. By searching for cases that didn't fit, the researcher was able to identify the boundaries around confirmatory cases (Patton, 2002). She further explored and made an effort to explain negative cases in order to gain insight into information that differed from that provided by other participants. This occurred, for example, when three of ten study participants did not perceive or describe any feelings of burnout. The researcher explained the absence of talk about burnout by some participants by recognizing that, in this study, the particular participants who did not perceive burnout were engaged in work with non-profit spay/neuter surgical programs and thus were not subjected to the work-related challenges that were commonly perceived by other participants in the study. A search for disconfirming evidence allowed for a rich and diverse description of the meaning and lived experience of animal care work in this study (Booth, Carroll, Ilott, Low, & Cooper, 2013).

Audit Trail

The researcher maintained an audit trail throughout the research process for the purpose of enabling a full audit of the study (Patton, 2002). The audit trail included the following documents that were continuously added to and maintained during the course of the study: a) an electronic researcher's log, b) an electronic researcher's reflexivity journal, c) an electronic researcher's analysis and interpretation memos, d) hard copies of field notes, and e) an electronic data codebook. Additional files associated with the study included a) electronic verbatim, de-identified transcriptions of interview data, b) hard copies of signed informed consent documents, c) hard copies of the participants' drawings, d) electronic drafts of the written findings, and e) digital audio-recordings.

Research Log. The researcher recorded every decision, action, and participant contact and follow-up, along with coinciding dates and times, in the researcher's log. The log was maintained as an electronic spreadsheet and updates were added to the log weekly. Previous actions and decisions were periodically reviewed.

Reflexivity Journal. The researcher maintained a dated and timed record of her personal responses, reactions, and reflexivity and bracketing efforts. Personal reflections, reactions, and reflexivity outcomes were recorded so that the researcher could learn more about what she needed to bracket. By reviewing her beliefs, views and feelings, the researcher was able to bracket them so as not to corrupt or influence the research. The journal was maintained electronically through Microsoft Word and prior entries were periodically reviewed. The researcher made a point of writing in the journal, at a minimum, weekly.

Field notes. The researcher wrote field notes during each interview to further document the contextual setting of the interview and participant behaviors and characteristics. Such field notes, initially jotted during the interview, included the interview content (what the participant said) as well as what the participant did (actions, gestures, evidence of emotions, and other observations made during the interview). As soon as possible after each interview, the researcher expanded the jotted notes by using a different ink color to add remembered information. The different ink colors were used to ensure that the researcher could differentiate between initially jotted, real-time notes and notes added following the interview that were based on memory. The field notes served as a critical adjunct to the audio-recorded interview transcriptions.

Analysis and Interpretation Memos. The researcher wrote data analysis and interpretation memos during the ongoing data analysis process through the course of the study. Such memos aided her in the process of analysis, including facilitating the coding of both implicit and explicit data and considering data connections as well as larger categories and themes.

Codebook. The codebook (Appendix G) consisted of meaningful, inductively derived, data-driven codes. For each code, the researcher identified a code name, date created, definition, and inclusion/exclusion criteria for the study findings. The researcher read, reread, and labeled meaningful sections of the verbatim transcript to begin the initial coding process. These codes were revised as needed throughout the analysis process. As new findings emerged, revisions became necessary to expand and transform codes. Code development was initiated upon the onset of data collection and ceased once data analysis was completed. The researcher used the codebook as a guide to aid her in the analysis of findings by applying codes consistently and accurately to segments of data (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloch, 2011; Fonteyn, Vettese, Lancaster, & Bauer-Wu, 2008; Hennink et al., 2011).

The researcher thus maintained a comprehensive audit trail associated with this study. The audit trail further added to the credibility and trustworthiness of study findings (Rodgers & Cowles, 1993; Wolf, 2003) and enabled individuals both internal and external to the study to revisit decisions made and actions taken during the study.

Data Analysis

The researcher began data analysis during the one-to-one interview sessions with participants by writing field notes that documented interview data, observations made during the interviews, and participant actions. She used this information to inform the findings and place the findings in context. Following the interviews, the researcher transcribed the audio recordings verbatim and repeatedly read the transcriptions as a part of initial and on-going data analysis.

Consistent with a process of phenomenological data analysis articulated by Moustakas (1994), the researcher conducted data analysis by focusing on the research question and setting aside topics that participants addressed that were unrelated to the research question. She employed a process of horizonalizing in which she weighed each experience and statement as having equal value. She listed all relevant information that was recorded and invariant horizons, or non-overlapping statements that stood out. The invariant horizons and imaginative variations, or structural essences of the experience, led to the identification of similar clusters of data in the process of ultimately creating themes. The analysis of findings was finalized by crosschecking validity with participants' drawings and member checks.

During the process of data analysis, the researcher constructed a) individual textural descriptions (perceptions, feelings of participants), b) individual structural descriptions (vivid participant accounts of the underlying factors of the participants' experiences with non-profit animal care work), c) composite textural descriptions (all participants' individual textural descriptions were grouped), d) composite structural descriptions (comprehending how the participants experienced, as a group, the phenomenon as they experienced it), and e) textural-structural synthesis (a synthesis of meanings, perceptions, and universal essences of the entire group) (Moustakas, 1994). From these findings, a composite description of the meanings and lived experiences of non-profit animal care workers was established for this group of participants as a whole (Moustakas, 1994).

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher presented the processes the researcher employed during this qualitative investigation of animal care workers in non-profit animal care facilities in eastern North Carolina. In this chapter, she provided a rationale for selecting a qualitative research approach in general and a phenomenological approach in particular in order to discover the meaning and lived experiences of a purposive sample of animal care workers and documented her qualifications to conduct the study.

The researcher employed several strategies to ensure a credible study including purposive sampling, expert review, debriefing, reflexivity, bracketing, triangulation, rich and thick description, and member checks throughout the study. The researcher also continually searched for disconfirming evidence to facilitate study credibility. The researcher maintained an audit trail, for further credibility, and adhered to recognized ethical standards during the study. Items that were continuously maintained in the audit trail included: a) an electronic researcher's log, b) an electronic researcher's reflexivity journal, c) an electronic researcher's analysis and interpretation memos, d) hard copies of field notes, and e) an electronic data codebook.

In Chapter IV, the researcher presented study findings. These findings were based on the researcher repeatedly reading the verbatim, de-identified transcripts of the one-on-one, in-depth interviews. Findings were also informed by participants' narrative explanations of their drawings, the drawings themselves, and by data associated with their member checks of Chapter IV. The researcher included the participants' voices in the form of direct quotations as supportive evidence of her interpretation of the data.

CHAPTER IV: Findings

A purposive sample of ten adult participants from two eastern North Carolina counties voluntarily agreed to participate in this phenomenological study that addressed the research question, “What is the meaning and lived experience of animal care work from the perspective of employees of non-profit animal care facilities in eastern North Carolina?” All participants had at least one-year of experience in a non-profit animal care facility and had provided direct care for animals or supervised the provision of such care. All individuals, both former and current employees, with at least one year of employment experience at a non-profit animal care facility in eastern North Carolina were invited to participate in the study. The researcher used maximum variation purposive sampling to identify the ten individuals who participated in the study.

The researcher collected data by means of in-depth, open-ended interviews. The interviews were preceded by each participant creating a drawing that reflected what animal care meant to them. Alternatively, two participants provided a verbal description of an image that they envisioned they would have drawn had they been comfortable doing so. All participants engaged in the actual or envisioned drawing process. In addition, all participants engaged in the interview that the researcher facilitated by using an interview guide (Appendix C). The interviews lasted between fifteen and forty-five minutes.

Data collected from the interviews and drawings provided a rich description of the meanings and lived experiences of animal care workers employed in non-profit animal care facilities. The researcher’s analysis of data, guided by Moustakas (1994), revealed four main themes regarding non-profit animal care work. These themes included “A Passion for

Animals," "Making a Difference," "Animal Care as All Consuming," and "Stress, Burnout, and Coping." This chapter will address study findings organized by themes. The researcher will describe participants' perceptions of non-profit animal care work and the meanings they derived from their work.

Study Participants' Characteristics

Maximum variation purposive sampling yielded ten study participants from two eastern North Carolina counties. Participants were recruited from non-profit animal care shelters and non-profit spay/neuter clinics. All participants who contacted the researcher and met inclusion criteria were included in the study. All but one participant was female. Participants' length of employment in a non-profit animal care facility ranged between one and eleven years, with an average length of employment of about four years.

In order to gain insight from individuals who served in a diversity of employee roles in non-profit animal care, maximum variation purposive sampling yielded participants who served primarily in three roles in the non-profit facilities: facility managers or directors, individuals who provided direct animal care, and former employees of a non-profit animal care facility. The extent and type of direct animal care provision varied among the participants. Four participants were responsible for animal care as facility directors and employee managers, with one of the four having no direct animal contact. Two participants were formerly involved in providing animal care in a non-profit animal care facility, one participant had no direct animal contact due to her role as director of a spay/neuter clinic, and seven participants were actively engaged in the provision of direct animal care, two of whom were associated with a non-profit spay/neuter program. The type of direct animal care differed between those involved in a spay/neuter program, where care occurred in the context of surgery, and those involved in an animal care facility (Appendix E). A total of three participants were associated with a non-profit spay/neuter clinic and seven were employed in a non-profit animal shelter.

Rewards and Risks of Non-Profit Animal Care

The researcher identified four main themes that emerged from the data in relation to non-profit animal care work. Participants described their perspective of “Making a Difference” in the lives of the animals they helped and the community they served. They described having “A Passion for Animals” that contributed to feelings of personal well-being and reward that they derived from their work. They described animal care work as “All Consuming.” It was challenging work that tended to take a physical and emotional toll on them. Finally, participants’ described the resulting feelings of physical, mental, and emotional “Stress and Burnout,” which led them to describe the struggles or challenges they faced in their work and the strategies they used to cope.

Making a Difference

Participants perceived non-profit animal care to be rewarding in ways that included making a positive difference in the lives of animals and within the life of the community. They derived reward from their collaboration with and being supported by members of the community. Most of all they derived pleasure and satisfaction from their interactions with the animals in their care and the knowledge that they contributed to the wellbeing of the animals during an ongoing quest for adoption. Gabby, a Veterinarian affiliated with a non-profit spay-neuter clinic, summarized her views about her work:

> *I feel really good about what I'm doing and where I am and . . . the difference that I'm making.*

Participants found reward in making a positive difference in the lives of animals, whether it was through contributions to successful adoptions, involvement in spay/neuter programs, seeing reduced numbers of animals admitted to a shelter, or reuniting lost pets with their families. As Gabby described her experience with the spay/neuter program,

> *The rewarding aspects are seeing . . . these animals that are no longer having to be in the breeding cycle. And especially the ones that, to be adopted, they have to be spayed or neutered. So this is their chance to get out of a shelter situation and into somebody's home.*

Participants involved in direct animal care described feeling rewarded when interacting with the animals through the enrichment activities they provided and showing the animals attention, love, and compassion. They perceived the interactions with animals as fun, satisfying, and exciting. Christian, a former animal care technician, described observing animal play:

> *The best part of my day, I'd say was . . . seeing the animals in the open-play area. Off the leash and having them run . . . free and-and play.*

Participant drawings (Appendix F) supported the theme of making a difference by depicting hearts, happy animals at home, and animal protection. Kennedy, an animal care technician, drew a heart with wings bursting through a fence with the words, "Letting Love Break Free" centered on the page. Bella, a former animal care technician and non-profit animal care facility director, drew herself with her arms surrounding a cat and dog. Underneath the drawing she included the words "Safety/Protection," as she said she believed that she provided animals with safety and protective care. Finally, Gabby and Francis, a Veterinarian and a Veterinary technician assistant, respectively, both drew happy animals at home.

In addition to making a difference in animals' lives, participants said that they felt rewarded when making a difference in their community through their contributions to animal sterilization, animal care-related community legislation, community collaboration on behalf of animals, and animal adoptions. Participants, for example, described collaborating with other animal rescue facilities to offset costs, save animals' lives, or to work for legislation on behalf of animals. In regard to the positive consequences of collaborating with people who, *"share the same goals as you,"* veterinary technician assistant Francis stated,

> *We work with a lot of organizations like [name of rescue organization]. I think those are some of the best days . . . . We had that today. Where all they did was bring in like a bunch of puppies and some adult dogs and we will just spay/neuter a bunch of their animals so that they can get adopted. I think that's one of the most rewarding, is working with other non-profit organizations and helping them with low-cost surgeries.*

Participants contended that community collaborations were productive and rewarding for both the community and the animal care organization. They believed that the community benefited from the animal-related legislation they had helped to enact, the spay/neuter programs that decreased the numbers of stray animals in the community, and the positive impact that animals could have on the individuals who adopted them. The participants experienced satisfaction through their efforts to contribute to community well-being that ultimately proved to be successful. Danielle, a non-profit facility director whose role included no direct animal care, described a recent collaboration with animal agencies and community leaders to establish animal-related legislation:

> *I think the best one here lately, was just about a year ago. Where all of the animal advocacy agencies in the county became very very active with the county counsel and the county government to try and enact a canine control ordinance. And it was presenting to the commissioners, several times . . . . Trying to get the dog licensing passed. Working very closely with the shelter to do all of these things and to present properly. We did citizen forums to try and educate the citizens as to why these sorts of laws are necessary . . . . And it all passed.*

Participants also described the importance of community members who fostered animals and those who volunteered for or sponsored non-profit animal care organizations. Participants often became overwhelmed with emotion when speaking of the impact that community members had on the organization. Evelyn, a non-profit facility director, recounted an experience with the community in response to preparing for a natural disaster:

> *And as it looked like Hurricane Irene was indeed going to hit us, we sent out an emergency plea for volunteers to foster animals. . . . I mean, there was a line of cars down the road [starts crying] . . . within, I think within like four hours . . . . not only*

> *were all the dogs gone but all the cats, including two kittens with ringworm. . . . And, I mean that was incredible. The community response. Like I said, you see so, so many tough things, but you know people came over and were like, 'Alright, I'll take a dog' and it didn't matter. . . .* [They] *just loaded them up and left. It was amazing.*

Participants also felt rewarded when making a difference in the lives of individuals in the community. Anastasia, a non-profit facility director, shared the following experience.

> *I don't think I realized the impact that we have on humans until recently. And, a man came to the door . . . He was an older gentleman . . . . And he just looked pale and sad and weak and just lonely . . . . And he looked at a few cats and then he told me that his wife just died . . . . And he just cried and he said he just missed her and he was alone and they had been married for thirty years and he didn't know what to do without her and he just thought that a cat would help him to feel less lonely. . . . So he fell in love with a cat . . . and he adopted her and . . . my friend's mother runs a grief share here. And she called me one afternoon and said that, 'A man in my grief share spoke for the very first time the other day and he said he adopted one of your cats. And he said that it just changed him and it saved his life'. . . . And so, for the first time ever, I think I felt like, 'Oh like I'm not just saving pets here, you know, like, we're rescuing people too.'*

Positive community collaboration and involvement were so important to participants that they were described as integral to the success of non-profit facilities. Participants viewed working with other rescue operations as a key contributor to saving the lives of animals, while fundraising provided a basic source of revenue that enabled non-profit facilities to assist animals. They noted that customer service was an important aspect of a non-profit animal workers' job. As Evelyn, a non-profit facility director, described it:

> *This is a huge customer service job. . . . [Job applicants need to indicate that], 'I like people' [laughs]. I like making matches, you know. Talking with people and making a good match with them on this cat that I know would be good in their home and. So I think about that in terms of people who work in the animal welfare field, have to be people people. . . . There's just a lot of the good and the bad and, you know, of someone surrendering an animal and, you know, I mean, sometimes they're like, you know, 'Take this damn dog,' and sometimes they're like, 'Oh my gosh, this was my mother's cat and it just doesn't get along with mine and she died. And I already have four cats,' you know. Like there's just a lot of so much people customer service skills.*

In summary, participants perceived non-profit animal care to be personally rewarding, particularly in terms of making a positive difference in the lives of animals and in the lives of community members. Participants described productive and rewarding community collaborations through successfully enacted animal-related legislation, community-assistance through fostering and adopting animals, sponsors as funders for the efforts of the non-profit facility, and positively impacting individuals in the community. Finally, they described fun, exciting, and rewarding interactions with animals and sought to make a difference in animals' lives through the enrichment activities and care they provided.

A Passion for Animals

Participants perceived their work in animal care as contributing to their personal wellbeing, in part because they had a passion for the work and a love of animals. Their drawings conveyed this love through depictions of hearts and the inclusion of the written word “love”. They found it personally “rewarding” to work in their field, with some also enjoying interacting or working with volunteers in their facility or community members in general. Some participants left other fields of work to pursue their passion for animals and animal care, while others viewed their current position as a stepping stone to other career options. As Kennedy noted:

> *It* [work in animal care] *has allowed the animal lover in me, that has always been in me, to actually really come out and be, ‘Okay, this is my job now.’*

Animal Affection

Participants described animal-related rewards from receiving love from animals, especially puppies. Some participants likened their experiences with animals to a type of therapy. In fact, one participant wrote the words “Mental Therapy” on her drawing to depict the intrinsic rewards offered by working with animals. She felt that the animals provided her with “Mental Therapy” in return for the “Safety/Protection” that she offered them. As Bella described her experience with puppies,

> *All they [puppies] do is say, ‘I love you I love you I love you I love you. Let me lick you and kiss you and, you know, there’s-you can do no wrong.’ And so that’s just really made you feel better. And it reminded me why I was doing what I was doing.*

Participants also felt personally rewarded when the animals were responsive or affectionate toward them and when they engaged in personally affirming interactions with the animals in their care. As Jack, an animal care technician, stated:

> *When you walk by 'em, you know, just seeing their response to you. You know, knowing that you're caring for them . . . . that you're their caretaker and that, you know, that you've rescued 'em. You know, it's just--that's definitely the most rewarding part. Just seeing the animals' reaction to loving you, you know.*

Interactions with Volunteers

Participants, who often saw animals being brought to the facility as a consequence of harsh or distressing circumstances, found rewards and redemption from their positive interactions with volunteers. As Helena, a veterinary technician, stated about the animal abuse and cruelty she observed:

> *The things that they do to animals is just--It makes you really question the group of people you're around everyday, you know, the general public.*

In contrast with people who perpetrated the unkind or inhumane treatment of animals, the participants found that volunteers were able to show them positive aspects of humanity. Volunteers also positively impacted the limited-resourced facilities where they contributed their time and effort. As Evelyn described their impact:

> *The volunteers . . . that come in and are so freely giving of their time. Donors who are so freely giving of their money. Fosters [LAUGHS] that open up their home to pets . . . The highs* [associated with non-profit animal care] *are really high.*

Personal Development

In addition to positive volunteer interactions they experienced and the affection they received from animals, participants felt rewarded on a more personal level. They said they experienced personal growth and acquired knowledge and skills in a variety of areas while engaged in their work. Most participants described learning a great deal about animals, animal medicine, people in general, and themselves. As facility director, Danielle, described her learning experience working at the non-profit facility:

> *I've learned, oh my God, so much. So much about animals. So much about veterinary medicine. So much about people. So much about management. I mean, it's just been an amazing education for me. No regrets whatsoever.*

Some participants experienced their work as caregivers in non-profit animal facilities as a freeing experience that helped them find themselves and their future careers. As Christian described her future plans:

> *I knew I wanted to work with animals but I didn't know what. Now I know more- I have more directed goals.*

Three participants described working in the corporate world, a school system, and a preschool prior to working in the non-profit animal field. Their change in profession was brought about by personal life changes, such as relocating following retirement from an outside field of work, or deciding to work in an animal shelter after discovering their passion for animal care through volunteering. Kennedy, an animal care technician, described her professional life change:

> *I mean I thought I knew what I wanted to do with my life until I started volunteering there. . . . In fact, I just switched over cause I was working two jobs. I was working at a preschool, which I've been doing for sixteen years. And working at the shelter and so I just transitioned over to a full-time role at the shelter.*

Other participants did not foresee a long-term potential in their current positions at a non-profit animal care facility. They described using their current position as a stepping stone for other positions in the non-profit animal care field or applying their skills and experiences to other professions outside of non-profit animal care. As Francis, a Veterinary Technician, described her journey in the non-profit animal care field:

> *I mean, I started working at* [The spay-neuter clinic] *because I was referred from the* [animal care facility]. *And since I work with so many organizations, I feel like since they work so closely together, you're more likely to find another step up from where you were.*

In summary, participants perceived that their passion for animals and animal care work contributed to their personal well-being. They said it was rewarding to have positive and loving interactions with the animals in their care. They were also able to see the good in the world through interactions with their volunteers and found personal growth in acquiring on-the-job skills and experiences. Finally, some participants described leaving unrelated professions to pursue a passion for non-profit animal care, while others viewed their current position in animal care as a stepping stone both within and outside of the field.

Animal Care as "All Consuming"

Participants described their work in non-profit animal care as highly variable, fast paced, and unpredictable in nature coupled with and sometimes overshadowing routine duties. They described their work as autonomous, sometimes lonely work. Although participants said that the work they performed in non-profit facilities was immensely rewarding, their work also took a physical and emotional toll on them. Participants perceived their work-related responsibilities as unrelenting and, as such, could negatively impact their personal relationships and behaviors. As Evelyn, a facility director, noted:

> *But it's hard, I mean, like I said, . . . it never stops.*

Participants described the nature of work responsibilities in non-profit animal care in three main ways: highly variable and fast-paced, autonomous, and routine. The work involved routine tasks, particularly in terms of daily animal care, that existed within an unpredictable and ever-changing environment. As Helena commented about her work at an animal shelter,

> *It's never the same.*

Part of the variability associated with the work was related to unanticipated interactions with both people and animals. They observed that animals in a shelter or clinic environment could behave in unpredictable ways. In addition, participants were never sure how the public would react to difficult or emotionally distressing situations. Also, participants in general perceived that they could not predict what would transpire on any given day and thus were never sure all tasks for the day could be accomplished. The unpredictability associated with non-profit-based animal care could be stimulating and, for some participants, contributed to their longevity in and reported enjoyment of their role in non-profit animal care. As Evelyn, a facility director, stated:

> *And so there is no typical day. I think a lot of that is why I still work here, though. . . . For better or worse, it's never boring. But it is different each day. There are new challenges to face and things to figure out. . . . It's not the same thing every day. And you know, sometimes you just want [LAUGHS] like a normal day. I think there's also a certain amount of job satisfaction that comes from that as well.*

At the same time, some participants described the lonely and autonomous nature of their work. Evelyn described being the only staff member on the schedule for the current shift:

> *Like right now, I'm the only staff person here, right. And so a lot of it is very lonely work, in terms of a staff member that you're not often working with other staff.*

One participant raised the issue of autonomy as potentially problematic in the administrative role she played at a facility. Facility director, Danielle, believed that greater oversight of the facility by the Board of Directors would be beneficial. She described her situation in the following way:

> *And I work very autonomously. . . . There's not a lot of oversight for this position and I don't know if that's a good or bad thing. . . . I wish the board of directors was more active. . . . I'm an extremely honest individual. What if I wasn't? I have-I-I have the fidu-daily fiduciary responsibilities. I sign all the checks. I-there is a lot of*

> *independence here. . . . A little bit more oversight-I'm not going to be here forever-A little bit more oversight's not bad.*

While participants described the fast-paced, highly-variable, demanding, and autonomous nature of their work, they also noted that some aspects of non-profit animal work involved routine, with routine tasks specifically associated with direct animal care. Employees whose responsibilities included providing direct animal care were involved in cleaning kennels, feeding the animals, providing them with clean, fresh water, and administering medication as ordered by a veterinarian. In addition to attending to these basic necessities, they described exercising and interacting and playing with the animals as a means of socializing them, which ultimately aided in the adoptability of the animals. Those participants who served in the role of facility directors perceived a daily routine that involved interacting with the public about a possible adoption and fundraising. Some participants, particularly animal care and veterinary technicians, monitored animal records to ensure the maintenance of veterinarian-provided assessments and the provision of vaccinations. Christian, a former animal care technician, described the following routine aspects of non-profit animal care work:

> *We did cleaning in the mornings. Sanita-Sanitizing the kennels and cages. Feeding the animals. Giving 'em medications if they needed them. We also did any intake processes of new animals if they needed to have updates on their vaccines or heartworm and flea. . . . We would make sure they had playtime. Exercise them. Let them out for potty time. Or just give' em cuddles. . . . TLC time. . . . When we were open, we would try to*

> *match the public. . . . assist them in finding which ones would be a better match for them-dogs or cats.*

Physical Demands

Participants perceived a physical toll that their work had taken on them in the form of the physically demanding aspects of the job and the risk of consequences in the form of injury associated with animal fear or aggression. The physically demanding nature of the job came in the form of direct animal care and facility maintenance. Participants described facility maintenance, including facility upkeep, as an integral part of their work. This included cleaning the surrounding grounds of the facility that were used for dog walks and bathroom breaks, regardless of the weather. As Bella, a former facility director, noted:

> *When staff morale is low, it's really low and when you're asking to get out there in thirty-two de-thirty-two degree weather to scoop poop [laughs] if morale is low [laughing]. And so that was hard.*

Participants in both management and direct animal care roles were also expected to assist in additions or modifications to the facility itself. As Kennedy, an animal care technician, described a recent event:

> *This weekend it was putting in a new air conditioner in the back office. I mean, it was super heavy and involved a lot of heavy lifting.*

Direct animal care, an integral part of non-profit animal care work, posed its own risks to employees. Bending to clean animal cages and working with a large volume of animals took a physical toll on participants, while interactions with fearful or aggressive animals concerned them and could lead to professional and personal consequences. Former animal care technician, Christian, described her experiences with dog bites:

> *I had a couple of dog bites, few times. Some pretty bad ones. . . . I was bit about three times in that-in my work career. . . Because I had never been bitten severely until I started working there.*

Participants reported that the consequences of injury from animals that they attributed to fear or aggression included pain, bruising, stitches, emergency room and urgent care visits, and antibiotic treatment. Bites were a shared issue of concern among participants and all had described either being bitten or working with someone who had been bitten. Gabby, a Veterinarian affiliated with a non-profit spay-neuter clinic, described her concern about animal bites:

> *And it can be concerning that somebody's going to get bitten and, unfortunately, we've had-we have had staff get bitten. And, it's-it's a concern. It's scary.*

The reported personal effects of animal bites were mainly described in terms of pain and bruising. Kennedy summarized her experience as:

> *A challenge in the effect that it-it leaves bruises. And it can hurt.*

Anastasia described an event where a teenage volunteer was bitten:

> *She had to leave in an ambulance and get stitches and it was her face.*

Francis recounted her ordeal following a feral cat bite to her wrist:

> *I recently had the cat bite, which, I had to go to urgent care for because it was feral. So, there could've been possibility of, you know, rabies or some kind of other disease that could've happened from it. . . . I'm currently on antibiotics for it. . . . I had to go to urgent care to make I sure. . . I wouldn't get infected, you know.*

Following that event, Francis described decreased work efficiency due to swelling of her wrist:

> *So it was really difficult to do work since it* [the wrist] *swelled up.*

In regard to animal bites, the participants never blamed the animal. They reported triggers for animal bites that included the environment, poor handling procedures, stress on the animal, or misreading the animal. Francis contended that a contributing factor in her bite experience was a lack of training.

> *Since we are constantly doing animals, we don't have much time to progress in skills at the moment. So, I feel like that's a negative part is in the place I'm at… is the lack of time to properly train employees. . . .* [In regard to needed training], *definitely restraining. If you don't hold the animal properly, it could bite somebody. And, that is definitely not good because it could end up getting to the animal shelter, and like I said, being-it possible-investigation. Possible euthanization of an animal. It could definitely get bad if you don't have proper restraint of an animal.*

Emotional demands

In additional to physical consequences, the study participants also perceived negative emotional consequences associated with non-profit animal care work. They described their inability to "unsee" animals that have been hurt by inhumane people and felt "emotionally scarred" by particularly traumatic situations. Evelyn believed that it may be unfair to share her negative experiences with individuals outside of the non-profit animal care work field:

> *You know, if I'm kinda so emotionally scarred by it, it's not fair to share that with other people. I think in a lot of ways, it's you know, similar to, like, first responders.*

Participants also expressed serious concern about adopting out animals with behavioral issues and felt a personal commitment to animal well-being to prevent the consequences of non-adoption that included long-term shelter stays and euthanasia. Finally, participants perceived a build-up of emotion related to their work, yet also noted that positive experiences outweighed their negative experiences. As Christian summarized:

> *But, I can tell you that. . .all the positive ones outweighed the negative ones. They* [the positive experiences] *are what we, what, like I said, what we worked for. So they outweighed any negative emotions we had in the past.*

Participants perceived a toll on their personal relationships occurred due to their employment in non-profit animal care. They believed that it was difficult to leave work at work and felt unable to, as described by Evelyn, fully "punch out." Participants described missing family sports events and birthday parties due to work-related responsibilities. They also believed that they were not paying adequate attention to conversations in their personal lives due to being preoccupied with situations at work. Participants described the toll their work took on their partners and spouses due to their propensity to bring various animals home to foster. As Helena, a Veterinary technician, described her relationship with her mother:

> *I used to talk to my mom a lot more often than I do now. When I get home and I'm off the phone, I just don't want to pick up the phone [LAUGHS] or talk. I've talked all day long, you know, I just don't wanna talk.*

Participants sometimes sacrificed their own well-being in response to work-related demands. Their work responsibilities could interfere with their former personal lifestyles. They found themselves neglecting former hobbies, engagement in exercise, and healthful eating. Some participants described having a greater number of personal pets in their homes due to their profession. This necessitated animal support and care at home as well as work. Their eating habits were impacted by their work since some participants chose to eat lunch with other coworkers at fast food restaurants, particularly since they were time-constrained. Participants were so busy that they were sometimes uncertain of when or if they would have time for lunch during the work day. As Kennedy described her recent weight gain:

> *I do not eat as healthy as I used to. . . . And that is only because we are there so much. . . I'm not disciplined about packing my lunches with me yet and so all-a lot of us just take a break in the middle of the day and just go somewhere and get something to eat. I was just [INAUDIBLE] about some pajamas that fit me fine at Christmas, don't fit me as well. . . . And I was jokingly, I told them [Coworkers] I blame it on you because you guys got me eating out so much. . . Because it's just quick and then we get, you know, hurry up and gotta' get back to the shelter to finish doing what we're doing.*

In summary, participants described non-profit animal care work as unpredictable, but with some routine aspects specific to direct animal care such as cleaning, feeding, socializing, exercising, providing prescribed medication, and generally maintaining the health of the animals. Facility directors or managers contended that interactions with the public who were potential animal adopters and efforts to raise funds for the facility comprised the "routine" elements of their work. Some participants, particularly facility directors, perceived themselves as relatively autonomous in the work they performed.

All participants described negative physical and emotional consequences associated with non-profit animal care work, such as risks from animal bites and the negative emotional impact of distressing situations related to inhumane animal treatment and animal morbidity and mortality. Participants described the toll that their work took on personal relationships and lifestyle habits, including their own exercise and diet.

Stress, Burnout, and Coping

All participants described stress and those who worked in a shelter self-described burnout as a significant part of non-profit animal care work. Participants perceived stress when dealing with community members in regard to animal adoption issues, euthanasia, public issues related to animal control and care, interactions with agency or organization Advisory Board members, and staff interactions. They described personal and physical manifestations of stress that they experienced in response to specific aspects of their work. All participants, with the exception of the three employees from a spay/neuter clinic, perceived what they termed, "burnout," as a personal consequence of non-profit animal care work. Finally, participants coped with stress and burnout by having supportive interactions, compartmentalizing, engaging in physical activity, leave-taking, and spirituality. As Anastasia, a facility director, summarized:

> *I'm always stressed.*

Sources of Stress

Regarding sources of stress in non-profit animal care work, participants perceived stress associated with general day-to-day operations due to a lack of financial resources. As Evelyn noted:

> *A lot of frustration, particularly, just lack of resources. . . . I'm constantly being told to do more with less and . . . expected to function at a much higher level than I have the resources to do.*

Participants also described the discrepancy between their demanding job responsibilities and their disproportionately low pay. As Danielle, a facility director, described the low pay and benefits associated with non-profit animal care.

> *If you're working for money, don't do it. I mean, if you're the primary breadwinner and you need to feed a family. You need healthcare for your family. You wanna 401k* [retirement plan]. *Go find a major corporation to work for.*

A major work-related source of stress in relation to work was negative interactions with animals. For those directly involved in animal spay-neuter surgeries, administering anesthesia to animals could be stressful due to the potential for unanticipated reactions, including animal death. For all participants, sources of stress included adverse medication reactions, unanticipated aggression, the volume of animals that they cared for, and euthanizing animals.

Euthanasia was a source of stress for all participants, though it was not a common occurrence at all facilities. For instance, the spay/neuter clinic was responsible for spaying pregnant females, resulting in the death of the unborn kittens and puppies. One of the non-profit animal care facilities euthanized only for behavior or health issues, while the other euthanized regularly for space limitations. Participants who were responsible for decisions on animal intake struggled with feeling responsible for deciding the fate of an animal. As Anastasia, a facility director, noted:

> *We see dogs that we know we can't adopt out. We have to leave them behind and ultimately we're deciding the fate of that animal. So we feel a lot of responsibility for that.*

Helena described how her coworkers were "quicker to complain" and in a "bad mood" on euthanasia days. Evelyn, a facility director, described why she chose to be present for all but one animal's euthanasia during her time working at a non-profit animal care facility:

> *I very strongly believe, you know, that with an owner that you would be* [there] *and it's-they* [the animals] *should have someone that they know.*

Participants said that they felt stress regarding issues such as misconceptions held by the public. Some participants, for example, described feeling stress associated with public misconceptions about non-profit animal care workers' job responsibilities. As Jack, an animal care technician, noted:

> *And a lot people . . . they may look at it from the outside . . . and think, 'Oh, you know, I bet that's fun. Playing with dogs-' a lot of times not even really spent playing with dogs . . . I'm playing with dogs in between what I'm doing . . . I'm doing a lot of cleaning . . . I'm dealing with people . . . You never know what you're going to do.*

Public misconceptions about non-profit animal care workers' skill set was also a source of stress. Finally, interacting with individuals who had uncaring views of animals was stressful as it clashed with the passionate views held by participants about animals. As Gabby stated:

> *A lot of times, it's the unrealistic demands and expectations. A lack of understanding . . . just the abject cruelty and ignorance sometimes that you have to encounter. . . . People don't always believe we are qualified to be doing what we are. That we have lesser skills. [PAUSE] That-well, that's probably the one that comes up the most and not just with the public but with peer professionals.*

Stressful Interactions

Participants noted feelings of stress when dealing with people related to animals and animal care. This included issues with adopters, the community, and staff members for all employees and, for facility directors, further included issues with facility advisory board members. They also described feeling stress in relation to volunteer retention, as many non-profits rely on volunteers to assist with animal socialization, care, and facility fundraising. Participants experienced stress with adopters when animals were returned to the facility or when adopters discovered an underlying, previously undetected health issue with an animal. As a facility manager Bella described a particularly stressful event related to an unanticipated health problem in an adopted animal:

> *The dog was adopted [LAUGHS] and the dog had something wrong with it . . . . like, crystals in its bladder. It had to have surgery and when they called us asking to help with the surgery and we, of course, couldn't . . . . When they had the surgery they discovered the dog wasn't spayed. And that was big deal for me because we prom-we guarantee they are spayed or neutered. And, I offered to, not cover the surgery but cover the part of the surgery that was the hysterectomy, basically . . . . I think they were happy with that but, they had like, blasted us all over Facebook, and like, bad mouthed us . . . . Talk about a stressful moment, when like no one was happy with anything I was doing.*

For participants who were involved in management, Advisory Board member interactions could be stressful for participants. Facility directors described the challenges of acting as a liaison to the board on behalf of staff members. As Bella described it:

> *I would probably say that most people working with a Board of Directors is challenging . . . Being the liaison between the paid staff who see the day-to-day operations and the volunteer Board, who meet once a month, was very hard to effectively communicate what I wanted them to see without them coming out and seeing it.*

Participants who served in the role of facility director described having to address Advisory Board members' concerns during their personal time off, including evenings and weekends, as that may have been one of the only times that a Board member had available to communicate with them about a problem or concern. Advisory Board members' unrealistic expectations of staff members led to stress, particularly since participants in managerial roles perceived that the board did not adequately listen to their concerns. As Bella, a former facility director, noted:

> *In the end, most of the stress came from a Board that was not listening to me. . . . And they wouldn't do what they knew they needed to do. . . . And so, when they're looking at the budget and like, 'Oh, we have no money,' and they, you know, in front of me talk about cutting staff pay. And it's like my staff makes fifty cents over minimum wage and now you're putting them back to minimum wage. And they're the ones that are running this place. . . . So that, that type of stuff was very stressful.*

Participants, in general, also described staff interactions as potentially stressful. This came in the form of what one participant called, "typical workplace drama," and from the ripple effect of co-workers' stress. As Francis, a Veterinary technician, summarized:

> *Since we're working directly with each other, if a person's stressed, it obviously rubs off on you. And then once, you know, one person gets stressed, it kinda just trickles and- and then everyone gets upset.*

Physical Consequences of Stress

Participants described experiencing physical, emotional, and mental consequences of stress or self-described "burnout" in regard to their work. Physically, participants described feelings of exhaustion, lethargy, and fatigue. Christian described feeling the physical outcomes of working in animal care even after leaving the field:

> *I still feel tired and-and sometimes even physically fatigued. I still feel a lack of energy.*

Helena also noted increased episodes of illness that she attributed to physical burnout:

> *People here get sick a lot more often than people that I work with outside of this job . . . . So I think, you even see physical symptoms . . . . like people getting sick more often.*

The physical demands of non-profit animal care work contributed to the physical manifestation of stress. As Jack described it:

> *I mean, physically, yeah, it is a physically demanding job.*

Participants perceived that they frequently experienced both personal and physical manifestations of stress. In fact, all participants reported feeling personal stress and the physical consequences of stress. Helena, for example, described how her work at the animal care facility affected her heart rate:

> *I just bought this . . . pedometer and it has a heart rate monitor. . . . And I took my heart rate when I was at home. . . . And I was seventy-seven. Got here, walked in the door Sunday morning, caretaker told me there's a cat down there having problems having*

> *kittens . . . So, it's a breach kitten. Got that fixed. I'd been in here four minutes and took my heart rate and it was at ninety-two. So, that quickly, the stresses on your body just from being completely relaxed at home to being in here . . . That quickly things change.*

Emotional Consequences of Stress

Participants described feeling emotionally drained and fatigued. The constant needs related to animal care provided by participants was a contributor to these feelings. Kennedy described her experience with emotional fatigue:

> *It's a very draining job . . . emotionally because you're on all the time . . . and you're giving and giving and giving all day . . . emotionally. And so by the time you get home, five or six o'clock at night [PAUSE], I-I'm drained. And I just feel like a zombie for about an hour.*

Some participants noted feeling overwhelmed with their work, responsibilities, and sad or distressing animal cases. Kennedy described the origin of what she called, "emotional burnout":

> *But the emotional burnout to me has come where there's just so many . . . sad stories. That it's just, and then you know, you hear it. One more and it's just like that* [previously shared sad story].

Participants also described the emotional consequences of animal care in the form of feeling emotionally numb. Participants attributed feeling numb to their previous exposure to distressing situations. As Jack summarized:

> *I think it's definitely like numbed me to a lot. You know, to see like so many kinda harsh situations. You know, and it's not like I'm saying, you know, I was a New York police officer, you know, on the beat for, you know, twenty years, you know, seeing this and seeing that . . . . I will say that working out there has kinda numbed me emotionally to, you know, some things . . . . Where there's one dog that comes in half dead, there's gonna' be probably five more in the same exact day, you know.*

Other participants described their own lack of caring to the emotional stress they experienced in their work. This included becoming complacent about euthanasia. Some participants also described other non-profit animal care workers whose attentiveness to animals' needs was less than optimal. As Bella, a former facility director, described her exit from non-profit animal care:

> *I used to tell myself that if I ever got to a point where it's easy to euthanize an animal, I needed to get out. And I remember one day walking in and looking at the dogs. And there was one dog that had been there for a while. And I just felt so sorry for him. . . . I was like, maybe it would just be easier to euthanize all of you guys. . . . And I was like, whoa, can't think like that. . . So then I was like, I need to make this my hobby and not my career.*

Mental Consequences of Stress

Participants described emotional stress in terms of mentally shutting-down. This occurred when individuals were mentally "done" with non-profit animal care work but had not found other employment. One participant also noted mentally shutting down after a major fundraising or adoption event has occurred. As Anastasia, a facility director, described it:

> *I mean everybody here will tell you they are burnt out. But, you can't be . . . . Like, after a big event, I just shut down. Like, and, you know, I do my work and I get done what I, you know, get done that week. But I'm definitely not a hundred percent. Definitely not. My work is not great those two weeks. And I just shut down. And we do-I tend to do that after events always.*

Participants also described mental stress in terms of feeling drained. Christian had to take leave from her job due to feeling as though she was going to "breakdown." As Jack summarized his experiences:

> *When you sit there and just recant everything that happened in a day . . . You're just like, 'I don't know how I'm not crazy.'*

Coping Strategies

Participants used multidimensional internal and external coping aspects regarding their jobs. They spoke about external coping strategies in regard to supportive familial, coworker, animal, and public interactions, taking leave, and engaging in physical activity. Internal coping strategies were described in terms of compartmentalizing and spirituality. Some participants found that compartmentalizing their professional and personal relationships was beneficial. Some participants also benefited from focusing on a particular aspect of their profession, such as the mission. As Francis, a Veterinary technician, noted:

> *I try to think about the overall mission . . . . So, that's what keeps me going is knowing that that's the end goal.*

External Coping Strategies

Supportive interactions consisted of familial, coworker, animal, and public interactions. Participants described familial supports as supportive family members that listened to them and, for some, assisted with fundraisers, fostering animals, and dog field trips. As Kennedy noted, her family support allowed her to decompress and "switch" her frame of mind:

> *It's almost as if, as soon as I get home, I'll talk about my work day and then it's kind of done. And I-it just switches off and I'm into whatever it is they are at home.*

Supportive interactions with coworkers served to assist participants in coping with the challenges of animal care. Participants relied on other coworkers and management to lean on and vent. As Anastasia, a facility director, noted:

> *I think that we all feel that way. We've talked about it a lot, you know, the staff meetings we try to talk to staff about how they are feeling. How their emotions are. You know, wha-what we can do. And unfortunately, there's really not a lot that-that you can do about it besides talk about it.*

Interactions with animals were perceived to be highly rewarding and effective in helping participants cope. Some participants described their animal interactions as therapy. As Helena, a Veterinary technician, summarized:

> *If it's a really bad day, you can go in there and pick up a puppy and they lick you all over the face and then how-how bad a day can it really be?*

Interactions with the public, including facility volunteers, helped participants cope with the stressors of animal care by focusing on the good that existed in society. Anastasia described that coping strategy as follows:

> *Realize that not everybody is bad. You know, I see my volunteers and they're very good--proof of the fact that there are just as many good people as there are bad people.*

Some participants mentioned engaging in physical activity as an effective coping strategy, while other participants struggled to find time to devote to this means of coping. For example, Anastasia mentioned that she ran in order to cope with the feelings she had for the animals she cared for. On the other hand, Danielle, a non-profit facility director with no direct animal care responsibilities, believed that she no longer had adequate time to devote to going to the gym. As Danielle noted:

> *I used to be a gym rat. I don't have time for that anymore.*

There were two leave-taking strategies employed by non-profit animal care workers who needed to take a break from animal care. They were employee-elected leave and management-directed leave. Christian, for example, chose employee-elected leave in response to her struggle with what she assessed as burnout:

> *There was one time that I had to-I had to take a month leave. . . I was, I guess what you call burned out. . . . It was just a buildup of emotional, 'I need a break'.*

Employee supervisors used management-directed leave as a strategy to prevent increasing emotional stress that was noted in some employees. As Bella noted:

> *Sometimes I would cut their hours and be like, I can't-I know I'd rather you only work ten hours in a week than quit [LAUGHING]. So when you're, you know, feeling back to it then you could go back up to your twenty or whatever they were working at.*

Internal Coping Strategies

Internal coping strategies were personal steps that participants took to cope with feelings of self-described stress and burnout. These coping strategies included spirituality and compartmentalizing. Some participants described the importance of relying on a higher power for relief and guidance. Other participants described the importance of compartmentalizing emotions and relationships, and establishing boundaries between ones' personal and professional lives.

In regard to spirituality, some participants believed that internal coping strategies such as releasing responsibility to a greater power was a relief. As Jack noted:

> *I pray about it a-a great deal, you know . . . that God's will is done and, you know, that God's hand is in it. You know, just the-just for general consensus prayer to wrap everybody, you know, when it comes to everybody, you know, and just to work through everybody's hands and make sure everything's being done properly. You know, because if something's being done, you know, through God then I mean, it can't be done the wrong way.*

Compartmentalizing, described as an effective coping strategy among participants, consisted of separating employee relationships from friendship relationships, having a sharp divide between one's personal and professional life, and managing one's emotions. Participants noted that it was important to be able to separate friendship relationships from coworker relationships. Evelyn, however, believed she might compartmentalize too much and that it was necessary to have a little fun at work. Kennedy summarized her views about compartmentalizing her relationship with individuals who serve dual roles as facility directors as well as friends in the following statement:

> *Being able to switch between what I call worker mode and friend mode while at work has really helped a whole lot. Because I'm able to take instruction from my bosses and understand that, yeah, they're my boss and so when they come to-to me with a correction or something like that, I don't take it personally. . . . But being able to compartmentalize those two relationships, when to turn it on and when to turn it off, really helps too.*

Maintaining boundaries between one's personal and professional life was a successful coping strategy among some participants. Some participants, for example, who were not fully responsible for direct animal care found that deciding on a specific site to engage in employment-related work was helpful. Such participants could choose to do some work at home, but as Kennedy revealed, chose not to do that due to the potentially negative impact working at home could have on her personal life.

> *I think if I worked at home, because there are-there are some things that I could be doing at home on the computer for work. And if I allowed myself to do that, then I*

> *think it would only do damage. It wouldn't really help. . . . It would hurt my home life. So, being able to compartmentalize that.*

Compartmentalizing emotions was important for some participants in coping with their work. Some participants noted that it was important to keep themselves busy in order to avoid dwelling on a particular event or emotion. As Jack stated:

> *You can't just sit there, you know, I mean, wiping tears from your face or moping or you know, becoming chronically depressed for a few hours. You know, you got to fake it to make it, you know, and just get through the day.*

Participants perceived physical, mental, and emotional stress and what some labeled as "burnout" as significant outcomes of non-profit animal care work. Participants described stress when dealing with the adopters of animals, the public in general, Advisory Board members, and fellow staff. They noted personal and physical manifestations of stress and felt stress in regard to specific aspects of their work. Finally, participants coped with these emotions by having supportive interactions, spirituality, engaging in physical activity, compartmentalizing, leave-taking, and mental-framing.

Member Check Findings

The researcher offered all participants the opportunity to review a draft copy of the findings from this study. This was done to address an interest in study findings that some participants voiced and so that the researcher could ensure that the findings accurately reflected the perceptions and lived experiences of the participants. All participants agreed to participate in this part of the study and all participants received a copy of the findings through email. This aspect of the study contributed to the credibility of the study findings and helped to avoid any unintentional misrepresentations of participants' experiences or perceptions. According to Anastasia:

> *While these findings make me realize I'm crazy for choosing this profession, I find it to be pretty accurate! :-)*

Christian concurred with:

> *I believe that your findings do indeed accurately represent my experiences that I shared with you.*

Danielle agreed with the findings by stating:

> *I read your thesis and found it to be an honest assessment of what we do.*

Finally, Helena noted:

> *Yes, that matches my thoughts in the interview.*

Two of the ten participants provided feedback within two days of being contacted by the researcher. The researcher sent a follow-up e-mail to participants who had not yet responded ten days after the initial message had been forwarded to study participants.. Two additional participants responded within the following six days. All four respondents provided the above responses via an email message; none identified problems, issues, or concerns with the findings.

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the four main themes related to non-profit animal care work associated with the data collected by means of in-depth interviews and participants' drawings. The themes included participants' feelings of "Making a Difference", participants' having "A Passion for Animals", animal care as "All Consuming", and participants' experience of "Stress, Burnout, and Coping." Participants' feelings of, "Making a Difference," contributed to both personal and professional rewards while their, "Passion for Animals," contributed to feelings of personal well-being. The "all consuming" nature of non-profit animal care took both a physical and emotional toll on participants, including a perceived impact of their work on personal relationships and health-related activities such as exercise and diet, and hobbies. Finally, participants reported physical, mental, and emotional "Stress and Burnout" in response to which they described their coping strategies.

Using a process described by Moustakas (1994), the researcher derived a composite description of participants' experiences from the data she collected. The participants experienced, as a group, work in non-profit animal care facilities as rewarding yet challenging. It was work associated with numerous potential health consequences but also work that was personally rewarding and fulfilling. The universal essence of the entire group included a passion for work on behalf of animals that is rewarding despite ever-present physical and emotional risks. Employees in non-profit animal care are an unrecognized population at risk for health issues, with need for health education and promotion. The participants' ultimate goal in their work with animals was to offer quality multidimensional care leading to adoptability or a continuing home at the shelter.

In Chapter V, the researcher has presented a review of the findings and the implications for non-profit animal care workers and health educators. She discussed the findings in the context of the current literature. The findings were also examined in relation to Moustakas' (1994) qualitative approach by focusing on the descriptive meanings and perceptions of participants. The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991; 2002) informed findings associated with this study. The chapter concluded with future research needs and implications for health education.

CHAPTER V: Discussion and Conclusions

In Chapter IV, the researcher described the four themes that emerged from the data in response to her qualitative approach to the research question, “What is the meaning and lived experience of animal care work from the perspective of employees of non-profit animal care facilities in eastern North Carolina?” These themes included participants’ feelings of “Making a Difference”, participants’ having “A Passion for Animals”, animal care as “All Consuming”, and participants’ perceptions of “Stress, Burnout, and Coping.” In this chapter, the researcher will provide a summary of the study findings, offer a discussion of the findings in the context of the research literature, describe the study limitations, address implications for Health Education and Promotion, offer recommendations for future research, and provide final thoughts in the conclusion.

Summary of Study Findings

A maximum variation purposive sample of ten adult participants from eastern North Carolina voluntarily agreed to participate in this phenomenological study. Consistent with Moustakas’ (1994) recruitment criteria, only those individuals who had direct experience with non-profit animal care work met the criteria for inclusion in the study. In the case of this study, the participants’ experience working in non-profit animal care facilities ranged from one to eleven years, with an average of four years. Qualitative data were collected by means of participant drawings, in-depth, open-ended interviews, and member checks. Data analysis of transcribed interviews followed a process described by Moustakas (1994) and revealed the themes of “Making a Difference”, animal care as “All Consuming”, participants’ having “A Passion for Animals”, and resulting feelings of “Stress and Burnout,” with consequent “coping” strategies.

Discussion

According to existing data, women are more likely than men to be involved in animal care work in general (Herzog, 2007; Taylor, 2010). The demographic characteristics of the participants in this study reflected that observation, with nine female participants and one male participant. Animal care and service workers have been documented to earn generally low wages, with a median wage of $19, 690 per year (The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014a). The participants in this study also shared personal accounts of low pay and poor benefits.

Based on previous research, job satisfaction among non-profit workers was intrinsically influenced. Prior research found that these individuals found enjoyment and a personal challenge in their work (Beynon et al., 2012; Eng et al., 2012; Hamann & Foster, 2014; Jasktye, 2008). Participants in this study supported previous research findings in regards to intrinsic motivations while faced with no extrinsic motivations. For instance, participants’ described the enjoyment and satisfaction that they felt when working with animals and placing them into homes.

Chang & Hart (2002) discovered intrinsic motivations in their participants from positive animal interactions and animal affection, much like the participants in the current study. Chang & Hart (2002) also found that a majority of their participants described that the primary reason they chose to work with animals was due to their interest in animals.

This was supported by current study findings in which participants described working in a field that they were passionate about.

Taylor (2007; 2010) discovered that animal care workers view themselves as the voice for the animals in their care. This was supported by participants' accounts of acting as an advocate or protector for animals in their care. Taylor (2007; 2010) also found that these workers attach personalities, motives, and mindedness to animals. This was supported by current participants' accounts of animals being unique and reciprocating of their care and attention.

Previous data discovered the presence of a stronger fit between non-profit workers' personal values and their organizations' values when compared to their for-profit peers and organizations (Baines, 2011; Edwards, 2014; Hamann & Foster, 2014; Stride & Higgs, 2014). Findings in the current study support previous data as this study's participants described having a strong passion for their work and a love for animals. As discovered in prior research, this match in values may explain the employment longevity of current participants involved in this study (Brown & Yoshioka, 2003).

Facility directors or managers in this study perceived fundraising as a routine part of their job responsibilities. Non-profit animal care organizations and general non-profit organizations, have reportedly lacked consistent funding and resources and experienced staff shortages while maintaining heavy workloads (Borzaga & Tortia, 2006; Weiss, Patronek, Slater, Garrison & Medicus, 2013). Participants shared challenges associated with working in a low resourced facility, including expectations that employees expand their roles to include tasks related to facility maintenance and upgrades such as installing a window air conditioner.

Study findings regarding the need for volunteers and community partnerships for facility support and funding were consistent with findings in the literature (Anonymous, 2012; Elmer, 2005; Eng et al., 2012; Weiss et al., 2013). Data from participants in this study, however, yielded information about an unanticipated balancing or healing influence of volunteers on employees due to personal and direct exposure to volunteers' kindness and generosity. For employees, the positive impact of interactions with volunteers aided in offsetting the impact of having to be present to evidence of the inhumane treatment of animals.

Few studies have been conducted about the experiences and perspectives of employees involved in non-profit animal care work. The researcher identified no phenomenological studies offering insight into the experiences and perspectives of employees in non-profit animal care facilities, particularly those who worked in such facilities located in eastern North Carolina, or the implications for employee health derived from such studies.

In terms of health concerns, participants in this study described both physical and mental health work-related risks that directly affected them. Physically, participants who were direct animal care providers identified animal bites and strenuous labor as two major health-related issues. As affirmed by the literature, study participants' reported susceptibility to emotional and mental health issues that could disrupt their daily lives (Chang & Hart, 2002; Chur-Hansen, 2010; Hamann & Foster, 2014; Hart & Mader, 1995;

Jacobsson & Lindblom, 2013; Rank et al., 2009; Reeve et al., 2005; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005; Themens, 2008). The participants involved in this study described the physical, emotional, and mental consequences of stress.

Prior studies have not examined the particular biopsychosocial impact of non-profit animal care work on individuals employed at facilities located in eastern North Carolina. This study found that participants experienced strained familial and peer relationships that they attributed to their work and felt unable to leave work at work. Some participants perceived that they no longer had sufficient time to devote to self-care, including hobbies, physical exercise, or healthy eating habits. Other participants described physical manifestations of stress such as an increased heart rate and more frequently experienced physical illness.

While participants described the rewarding and positive aspects of following their passion for animals, they also described several physical, emotional, and mental issues that arose from their employment. Non-profit animal care workers described the positive aspects of their work such as making a difference both in the lives of animals and in their communities. They felt rewarded by following their passion, being the recipient of animals' affection, and the positive relationships they had with volunteers. Their work with volunteers helped them to affirm their belief in humanity. Participants also described the personal development and growth they had achieved while working in non-profit animal care.

In addition to the positive outcomes of employment in non-profit animal care, the participants also described physical, emotional, and mental stress and burnout. They described their work as “all consuming” and consisting of both physical and emotional demands. Two participants had left the field, contending that their departure was due to these strains as well as the poor financial incentives to continue work in the field. Participants described the interdependence of their work by relying on volunteers to assist with the care of animals and by relying on their fellow co-workers to vent and provide work coverage when they needed to take a leave of absence from work due to stress or self-described burnout. They also described the interconnectedness of their work in that most participants juggled numerous responsibilities in different areas of non-profit animal care work. Their work collectively included rescuing animals, providing animals with socialization, cleaning and feeding animals, conducting fundraisers, working with community members to establish ordinances, and facilitating adoption matches with the public. Participants also voiced feeling a lack of control due to unpredictable animal behaviors, a lack of facility resources and community support. Participants struggled with making time for lunch, personal care, hobbies, and relationships. This was due to the all-consuming nature of the work that did not allow for participants ever truly leave their work at work.

Implications for Health Education and Promotion

Study findings indicated implications for the field of Health Education and Promotion. In this study, participants involved in working at non-profit animal care facilities provided subjective insights into health-related issues they experienced in such settings. By shedding light on the issues they revealed, health educators are better equipped to facilitate physical, mental and emotional health interventions for individuals working in non-profit animal care. Health educators may gain awareness in regards to the potential physical, mental, and emotional health issues of these workers. They may be more cognizant of work-related injuries including dog and cat bites and the importance of continuing training of these workers. Health educators may become more aware of the stresses and “burnout” that accompanies non-profit animal care work. Health educators may also gain insight into the time constraints of these workers and the resulting effects of their work on their personal lives.

By remaining cognizant of the emotional, mental, and physical issues voiced by these employees, health educators are more likely to effectively approach these individuals with effective health-related interventions. Health educators, for example, could consider nutritional, physical exercise, and stress management programming and support for these individuals within the context of how employees viewed their work.

In this study, for example, participants described their work as strenuous, autonomous, sometimes lonely work, yet emphasized experiencing immense, intangible rewards and meaningful consequences that arose from their “Passion for Animals.” Loving animals and feeling a passion for them contributed to their immersion in work that was congruent with the focus of their personal passion. They juxtaposed the positive consequences of having a passion for animals, however, with feelings of emotional and physical “stress” associated with work they described as “all consuming.” They related the stress they experienced to witnessing animal suffering, particularly at the hands of former owners or other inhumane people. They also experienced stress associated with the time constraints in their work that hindered the level of care that they believed the animals deserved and that they sought to provide. They reported the stress they felt as they faced the possible or real outcome of euthanasia of animals that were too behaviorally challenged, old, or ill to be eligible for adoption. The time constraints they faced interfered with their ability to work directly with animals on behavioral modification training and may have contributed to their level of perceived stress. Thus one contribution that health educators who partner with non-profit animal care facilities could contribute to employee wellbeing would be stress management programming that is tailored to employees in non-profit animal care settings.

Given an awareness of the context of animal care in non-profit facilities revealed in part by this study, especially the likelihood of committed employees engaged in fast-paced, intensive physical work, short program length would be advised. When assessing the health histories of these workers in preparing for some programs, a need may exist to investigate personal histories of animal bites, scratches, and potential disease exposures. The researcher anticipates that staff in non-profit facilities would welcome professional development opportunities in areas such as effective animal restraint strategies and animal behavior modification, but consideration should be given to making arrangements to cover the daily physical care needs of the animals, perhaps by volunteers, during the time of the program. Health educators could identify appropriate resources for such staff development. They may also serve as grant writers and advocates for such efforts in an attempt to prevent animal-related injury and illness.

Health educators may consider approaching non-profit animal care facility employees as partners in workplace wellness efforts. They may work with facility directors in encouraging stress-relief measures, healthy eating, and the importance of engaging in personal self-care strategies by prioritizing personal time, connections and hobbies, and increased involvement of volunteers. When facilities can arrange to have ample volunteers in the facility, for example, some employees may be relieved of duty in order to take a brisk fifteen minute walk during their break.

Theoretical explanation of findings

The theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991; 2002) may contribute to an explanation of the passionate work of the participants in this study despite the many challenges they faced. This theory links individual's beliefs with their personal behaviors. Ajzen (1991; 2002) notes that attitudes toward behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, when taken together, mold an individual's behavioral intentions and behaviors.

The participants described the behavioral belief of the importance of giving one hundred percent to their jobs. If they did not do this, they believed that they would fail the animals. Participants had strong attitudes toward human behaviors in that they viewed animal cruelty and the surrender of animals to a facility as negative human behavior. On the other hand, they generally viewed volunteers and donors positively. They blamed the person, not the animal, for the negative circumstances that resulted in their arrival at a shelter or other facility. They viewed their work as making a difference in both the lives of animals and the community.

Normative behaviors, or perceived norms, were felt from the public and facility Advisory Board. For instance, some participants felt pressure to do certain things such as covering unanticipated medical costs after an animal has been adopted out of the facility or being available to the Board at all hours. The subjective beliefs of participants included feelings of guilt when having to leave unadoptable animals behind in another facility knowing that they faced euthanasia or when working with animals that could not be saved. They also did not understand the sometimes irrational behavior of the public or advisory board members regarding holding certain views about animals or facility personnel. A board member's threat to cut employees' pay and the inhumane treatment of an animal served as examples the participants provided of people's irrational behavior.

Participants' perceived behavioral control beliefs included their acknowledgement of the difficulties they faced in accomplishing their goals for the animals in their care. Their control beliefs, described in the context of a lack of resources and a lack of public support, hindered their perceived behavioral control. The participants' behavioral intentions, however, included a readiness and willingness to help animals, even at the cost of personal risk and the neglect of personal relationships and self-care efforts such as good nutrition, regular physical exercise, and hobbies. Participants' behaviors included doing everything they could to aid animals, both during and after work hours, while animals were in their direct care and afterward in the community by engaging in such activities as advocating for community animal-related ordinances.

The theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991; 2002) may facilitate an understanding of the passionate work of the participants in this study despite the numerous challenges they faced. The beliefs of these participants, in regards to their commitment to non-profit animal care work and personal beliefs held, were linked to their personal behaviors. As

Ajzen (1991; 2002) previously noted, participants' attitudes toward human and animal behaviors, subjective norms, and perceived lack of behavioral control, together molded their passionate and "all-consuming" behavioral intentions and behaviors.

Recommendations for future studies

This study examined the perceptions and lived experiences of non-profit animal care workers in eastern North Carolina. Consistent with qualitative research, sampling was purposeful and the sample size was small. The description of methods may allow for transferability in comparable circumstances based on readers' assessment, however, these findings may not be applicable to metropolitan areas or other sections of the country. The researcher was able to recruit one male participant for this study, which did not allow for a thorough examination of the experiences and perceptions of male non-profit animal care workers. Future researchers might consider focusing on male non-profit animal care workers, though this may prove challenging as females tend to predominate the animal care work field (Herzog, 2007; Taylor, 2010).

Future researchers should remain cognizant of recruitment issues this researcher faced in conducting this study. With that in mind, they should also strive to include a large, diverse sample in future studies. Quantitative and mixed-methods studies could provide additional data about this population believed to be at risk for injury and illness. Due to potential recruitment challenges and the reported time constraints of employees, online questionnaire surveys may be acceptable to this population but only if potential participants have computer access. Future researchers may also choose to examine employees in particular work positions such as management versus workers.

One source of stress for employees was animal euthanasia. Consistent euthanasia of animals due to space constraints and length of time held was described by participants from one facility involved this study. Participant from other facilities euthanized animals only for behavioral or health issues or during spay/neuter surgeries in the form of euthanasia of unborn animals. Due to this circumstance, a more comprehensive view of death and euthanasia was not explored in this study. Future researchers may choose to examine the different effects of euthanasia on kill versus no-kill facilities. Participants described themselves as being protectors and advocates for the animals, so future researchers may choose to examine animal activism among these employees. The researcher was unable to locate any research studies regarding the likelihood of animal care workers also serving as activists, hence, future researchers may choose to examine this aspect.

Future studies may benefit from using a qualitative approach and building upon current findings. They may also benefit from having a quantitative or mixed-methods approach using surveys or scales to determine the effects of non-profit animal care on employees. This research data suggests that a quantitative study of non-profit animal care workers is needed in an effort to document the incidence and prevalence of work-related physical, mental, and emotional issues. The incidence of dog and cat bites is also currently unknown for this particular population.

Prior studies have described how animal care workers in general experienced a higher rate of work-related injuries and illnesses and were at a greater risk for numerous health issues, including sleep disruption, irritability, trouble concentrating, hypertension, the development of severe allergies, substance abuse, and suicide, when compared to the national average (Chang & Hart, 2002; Chur-Hansen, 2010; Rank et al., 2009; Reeve et al., 2005; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014a). Further epidemiological research is needed to document animal care employees' injuries and illnesses as well as other work-related health outcomes associated with work in non-profit animal care.

This study did not examine what, if any, specific trainings were provided and how such training may have influenced the aggressive behaviors of animals described by participants. Lack of training was a concern for one participant, as it was perceived to increase the risks for animal bites. Future researchers should consider examining employee safety, stress management, and wellbeing. Regardless of the methods, future studies should examine what these facilities are doing in regards to continuous training. They should also examine how these employees view themselves and their intermingling and interdependent responsibilities.

The employment experiences of these study participants represented a variety of roles in animal care. Their work necessitated various internal and external coping strategies that, for the participants in this study, included supportive interactions, compartmentalizing, physical activity, leave-taking, and spirituality. Further research is needed to explore coping strategies in animal care employees, a group who in this study collectively voiced a great commitment and passion for their work, but who also voiced significant health-related consequences as a consequence of their work.

Conclusion

This qualitative study sought to understand the meaning and lived experiences of non-profit animal care workers in eastern North Carolina. Findings revealed that these workers entered the field due to a strong love and passion for animals. Once in the field, these workers faced a lack of resources, including time and pay, and support. They experienced numerous physical, mental, and emotional health issues and may lack the knowledge or financial ability to seek help. This can contribute to the health risks that employees face, the high turnover in the field of non-profit animal care work that has been observed, and may explain the difficulty in recruiting long-term workers. The essence of this study underscores that non-profit animal care workers are an unrecognized population at risk for numerous health issues and in need of health education and promotion.

This chapter briefly summarized the four themes described by participants: participants' feelings of "Making a Difference", participants' having "A Passion for Animals", animal care as "All Consuming", and participants' perceptions of "Stress and Burnout" and their resulting "coping" strategies. The researcher provided a summary of the study findings, offered a discussion of the findings, described the implications for further research, provided implications for Health Education and Promotion, and offered recommendations for future studies.

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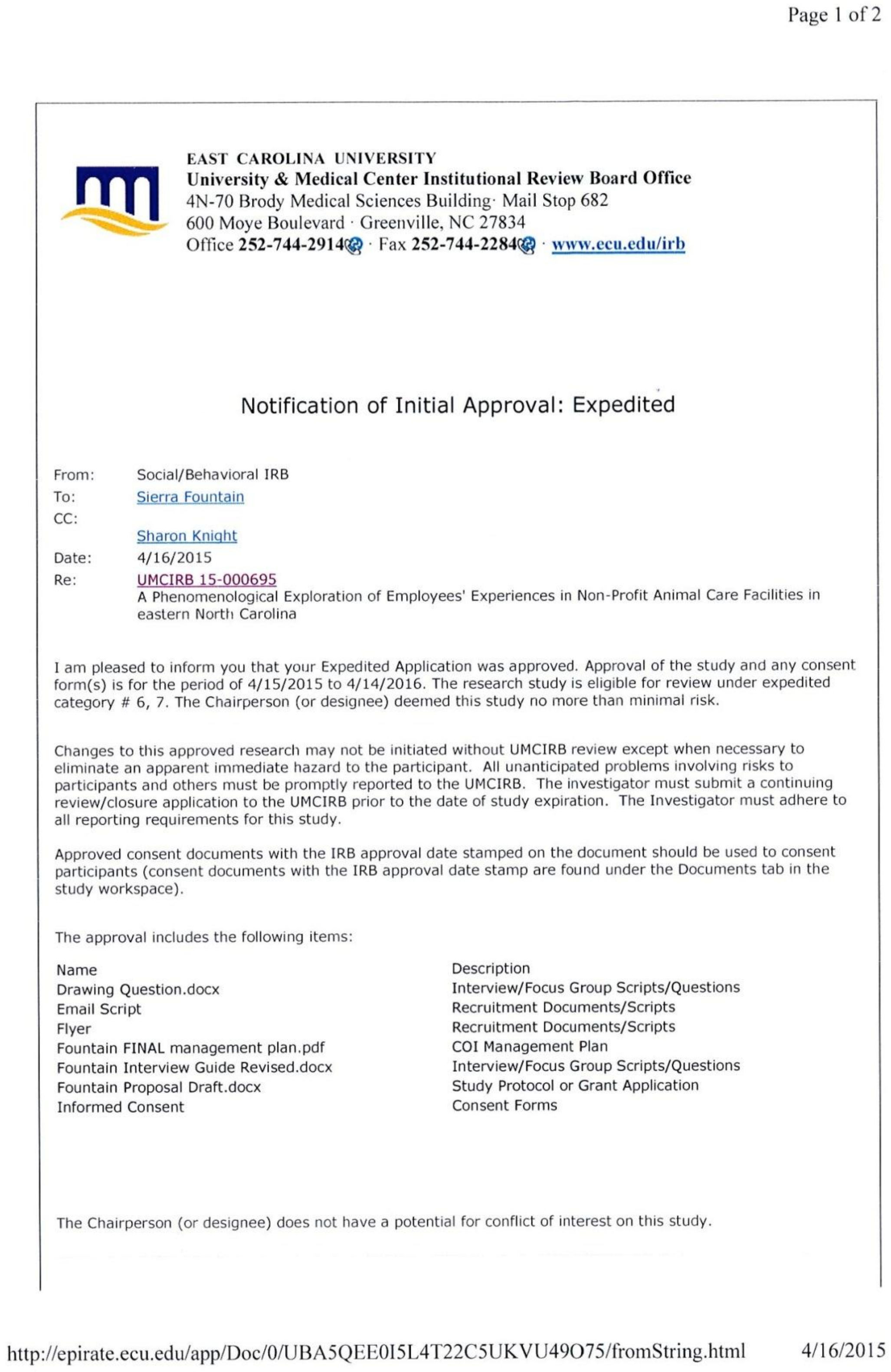
Appendix A



EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board Office
4N-70 Brody Medical Sciences Building· Mail Stop 682
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
Office **252-744-2914** · Fax **252-744-2284** · **www.ecu.edu/irb**

Notification of Initial Approval: Expedited

From:	Social/Behavioral IRB
To:	Sierra Fountain
CC:	
	Sharon Knight
Date:	4/16/2015
Re:	UMCIRB 15-000695 A Phenomenological Exploration of Employees' Experiences in Non-Profit Animal Care Facilities in eastern North Carolina

I am pleased to inform you that your Expedited Application was approved. Approval of the study and any consent form(s) is for the period of 4/15/2015 to 4/14/2016. The research study is eligible for review under expedited category # 6, 7. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this study no more than minimal risk.

Changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. The investigator must submit a continuing review/closure application to the UMCIRB prior to the date of study expiration. The Investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

Approved consent documents with the IRB approval date stamped on the document should be used to consent participants (consent documents with the IRB approval date stamp are found under the Documents tab in the study workspace).

The approval includes the following items:

Name	Description
Drawing Question.docx	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Email Script	Recruitment Documents/Scripts
Flyer	Recruitment Documents/Scripts
Fountain FINAL management plan.pdf	COI Management Plan
Fountain Interview Guide Revised.docx	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Fountain Proposal Draft.docx	Study Protocol or Grant Application
Informed Consent	Consent Forms

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

Appendix B

East Carolina University

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Information to consider before taking part in research that has no more than minimal risk.

Title of Research Study: A phenomenological exploration of employees' experiences in non-profit animal care facilities in eastern North Carolina

Principal Investigator: Sierra Fountain
Institution, Department or Division: Department of Health Education & Promotion
Telephone #: 252-414-0418

Researchers at East Carolina University (ECU) study issues related to society, health problems, environmental problems, behavior problems and the human condition. To do this, we need the help of volunteers who are willing to take part in research.

Why am I being invited to take part in this research?

The purpose of this research is to discover the lived experience of non-profit animal care work. You are being invited to take part in this research because you have been employed with a non-profit animal care facility, for a year or longer, in Eastern North Carolina. The decision to take part in this research is yours to make. By doing this research, we hope to learn about your perceptions regarding animal care work.

If you volunteer to take part in this research, you will be one of about __14__ people to do so.

Are there reasons I should not take part in this research?

You should not volunteer for this study if you under 18 years of age or if you have not been employed with a non-profit animal care facility in Eastern North Carolina for at least the past 12 months.

What other choices do I have if I do not take part in this research?

You can choose not to participate.

Where is the research going to take place and how long will it last?

The research will be conducted at a safe location of your choosing. You will need to come to the designated location one time during the study. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes over the next meeting plus an optional review of a summary of study findings and providing feedback on the findings by email or phone call.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to do the following:

- ☐ Attend one meeting consisting of a 1 hour individual interview and 20 minute participant drawing.
- ☐ The interview will be audio recorded and only the PI will have access to the recording. The recording device will be kept in a locked safe, located in the PI's secured home. The recording will be transcribed and all identifying information will be removed prior to analysis of the information (i.e. you will have a pseudonym). The recording will be erased from the device three years after the close of the study (approximately August 2018).

- You will be asked to draw a picture (coloring pencils and paper provided) depicting what animal care work means to you. Stick figures are welcome!
- Following the drawing, you will be asked several open-ended questions regarding your work and life as an animal care provider.
- At the end of the interview, you will be given information regarding participating in a review of study findings. If you so choose, the PI will provide you an opportunity to review a summary of the research study findings by email or in-person. After reviewing the information, you may email or call the PI and give input on the summary of findings. This should take no longer than 25 minutes.

What might I experience if I take part in the research?
We don't know of any risks (the chance of harm) associated with this research. Any risks that may occur with this research are no more than what you would experience in everyday life. We don't know if you will benefit from taking part in this study. There may not be any personal benefit to you but the information gained by doing this research may help others in the future.

Will I be paid for taking part in this research?
We will not be able to pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study.

Will it cost me to take part in this research?
It will not cost you any money to be part of the research.

Who will know that I took part in this research and learn personal information about me?
ECU and the people and organizations listed below may know that you took part in this research and may see information about you that is normally kept private. With your permission, these people may use your private information to do this research:

- Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates human research. This includes the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the North Carolina Department of Health, and the Office for Human Research Protections.
- The University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) and its staff have responsibility for overseeing your welfare during this research and may need to see research records that identify you.
- Dr. Sharon Knight, the Thesis Committee Chair for this study, may review your transcript records.

How will you keep the information you collect about me secure? How long will you keep it?
All data will be kept for a minimum of 3 years after the close of the study, at which point the information will be properly destroyed by either a crosscut shredder and deletion from the recording device (as applicable). All physical documents and audio recordings will be kept in a locked safe, located in the PI's secured home. All electronic files will be secured on the password-protected personal laptop of the PI which is located, at all times, in her secured home. Findings will be submitted for journal publication but no identifying information will be released. Audio recordings will be transcribed prior to analysis, at which point all identifying information will be replaced with a pseudonym or the information changed or removed.

What if I decide I don't want to continue in this research?
You can stop participating in this study at any time after it has already started. There will be no consequences if you stop and you will not be criticized. You will not lose any benefits that you normally receive.

Who should I contact if I have questions?
The people conducting this study will be able to answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. You may contact the Principal Investigator, Sierra Fountain, at 252-414-0418 (days, between 5-8PM).

Title of Study: A phenomenological exploration of employees' experiences in non-profit animal care facilities in eastern North Carolina

If you have questions about your rights as someone taking part in research, you may call the Office of Research Integrity & Compliance (ORIC) at phone number 252-744-2914 (days, 8:00 am-5:00 pm). If you would like to report a complaint or concern about this research study, you may call the Director of the ORIC, at 252-744-1971.

Are there any Conflicts of Interest I should know about?

The Principal Investigator has a potential conflict of interest that involves her employment as an Administrative Support Specialist with the Office of Research Integrity & Compliance at ECU. The Office of Research Integrity & Compliance at ECU and Hiromi Sanders, Assistant Director of ORIC, has developed a management plan to minimize any negative impact that would otherwise occur from the potential conflict of interest. This plan has been reviewed by the University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board and found to be adequate to protect your rights.

I have decided I want to take part in this research. What should I do now?

The person obtaining informed consent will ask you to read the following and if you agree, you should sign this form:

- ☐ I have read (or had read to me) all of the above information.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions about things in this research I did not understand and have received satisfactory answers.
- ☐ I know that I can stop taking part in this study at any time.
- ☐ By signing this informed consent form, I am not giving up any of my rights.
- ☐ I have been given a copy of this consent document, and it is mine to keep.

____

Participant's Name (PRINT) **Signature** **Date**

Person Obtaining Informed Consent: I have conducted the initial informed consent process. I have orally reviewed the contents of the consent document with the person who has signed above, and answered all of the person's questions about the research.

____

Person Obtaining Consent (PRINT) **Signature** **Date**

Consent Version # or Date:_____________

____
Participant's Initials

Appendix C

Interview Guide

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study!

Could you tell me how long you've been with this non-profit?

Could you explain to me what you have drawn?

What has your experience been like as a non-profit animal care worker?

> Probe: What is it like to work in the area of animal care?

Can you give me an example of what a typical day at work is like for you?

> Probe: Please describe the best part of your day. Your least favorite part?

In thinking about your work, could you share with me situations or issues that you have personally experienced that stand out for you?

> Probe: What challenging situations have you experienced? How did you cope?

> Probe: What particularly positive experiences have you had?

Over time, how has this work affected you?

> Probe: Personal changes you have made?

What does animal care work mean to you?

Can you describe how your life now is different compared to your life prior to working in this area?

What advice would you give to other individuals who want to work in a non-profit animal care facility?

Is there anything further you would like to add?

Appendix D

Calling all willing and interested volunteers!

If#you#are#employed#in#non0profit#animal#care,#I#would#like# to#hear#about#your#work.#

Who: ***Hi, my name is Sierra Fountain and I am a student in Health Education at East Carolina University. You are receiving this invite as you are a non-profit animal care worker in Eastern North Carolina. I would like to learn more about your experiences and thoughts about working in non-profit animal care. If you have been employed with a non-profit animal care facility for at least a year, please consider sharing your experiences as part of this research study! Your identity will be protected. I will not use your real name or information that could be used to identify you.***

When: ***All interviews will begin in April, 2015. Interviews will consist of a drawing (stick figures welcome!) (approx. 20 minutes) followed by one audio-recorded one-to-one interview (approx. 1 hour). Participants will also be given an opportunity to review, and provide input on, a summary of the study findings.***

Why: ***It is my hope that your and other people's insights will contribute to an understanding about what it is like to work in non-profit animal care.***

Where: ***Interviews will be held at a safe location that will be convenient for you.***

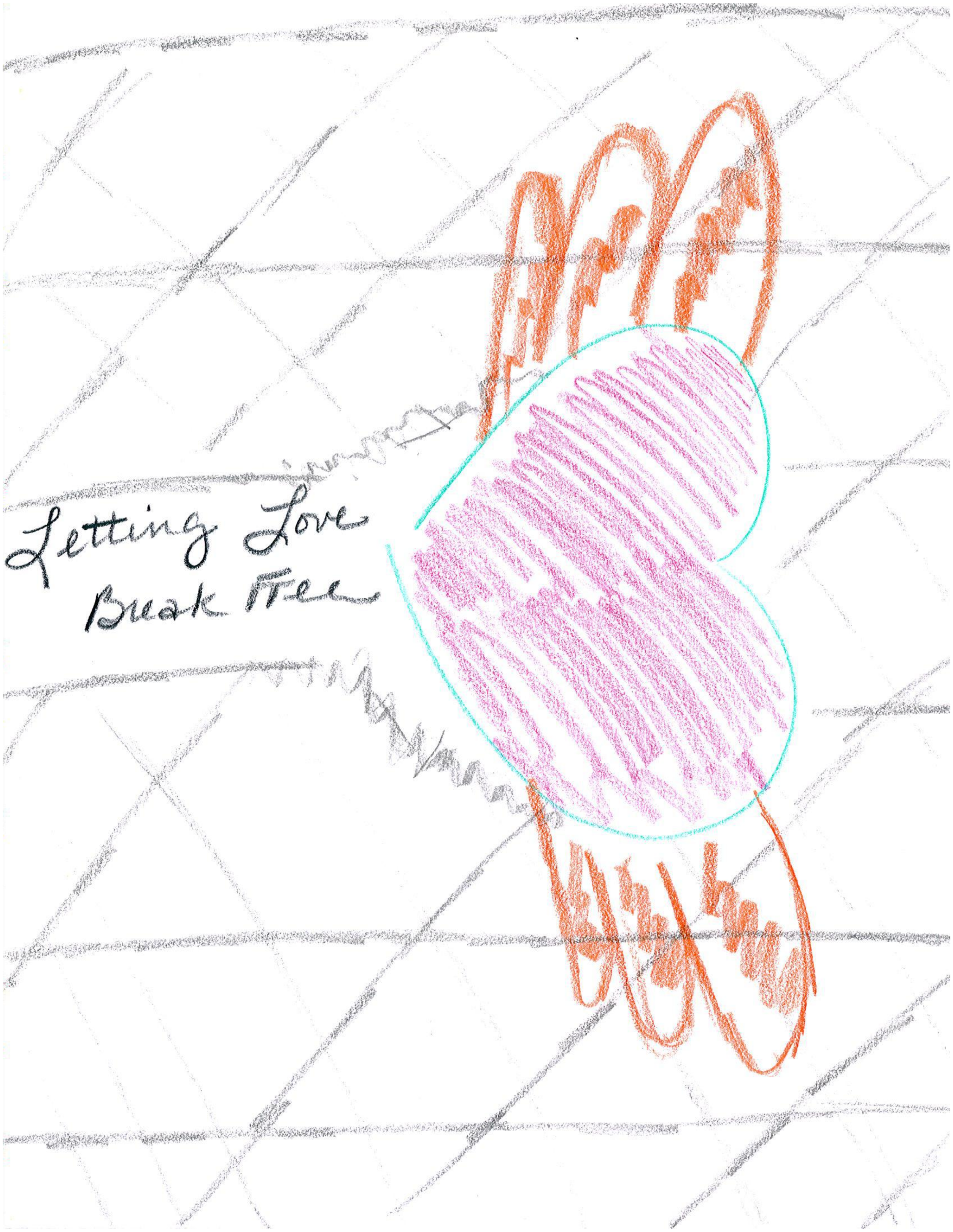
How: ***If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact Sierra Fountain at 252-414-0418 or fountains07@students.ecu.edu at your earliest convenience!***

Appendix E

Anastasia	Length of Employment: 1 year, 7 months Sex: Female Role: Director at a non-profit animal shelter Euthanasia: Only occurred with behavior or health issues
Bella	Length of Employment: 10 years Sex: Female Role: Former animal care technician and former director at a non-profit animal shelter Euthanasia: Only occurred with behavior or health issues
Christian	Length of Employment: 3 years, 6 months Sex: Female Role: Former animal care technician at a non-profit animal shelter Euthanasia: Only occurred with behavior or health issues
Danielle	Length of Employment: 2 years, 8 months Sex: Female Role: Director at a non-profit spay and neuter clinic with no direct animal contact Euthanasia: Of unborn puppies and kittens during spay surgeries of pregnant females
Evelyn	Length of Employment: 7 years Sex: Female Role: Director at a non-profit animal shelter Euthanasia: Only occurred with behavior or health issues
Francis	Length of Employment: 3 years Sex: Female Role: Veterinary technician assistant at a non-profit spay and neuter clinic Euthanasia: Of unborn puppies and kittens during spay surgeries of pregnant females
Gabby	Length of Employment: 2 years, 11 months Sex: Female Role: Veterinarian at a non-profit spay and neuter clinic Euthanasia: Of unborn puppies and kittens during spay surgeries of pregnant females
Helena	Length of Employment: 11 years Sex: Female Role: Veterinary technician at a non-profit animal shelter Euthanasia: Due to space limitations
Jack	Length of Employment: 1 year Sex: Male Role: Animal care technician at a non-profit animal shelter

	Euthanasia: Due to space limitations
Kennedy	Length of Employment: 1 year Sex: Female Role: Animal care technician at a non-profit animal shelter. In process of transitioning to Volunteer Liaison at time of interview Euthanasia: Only occurred with behavior or health issues

Appendix F


Letting Love
Break Free

sion

Commitment

Neglect

Constant Flow

Love

warm hugs

Purring kittens/ cats

Abuse

Tears

Laughter

Teamwork

Sacrifice

ving | at a time

" Love the unloved"

24/7

Smiling Dog

Needs

Fulfillment

Adoption

t

Revolving Door

Suffering beings

Dedication

Group effort

ssion

Education

Meaningful

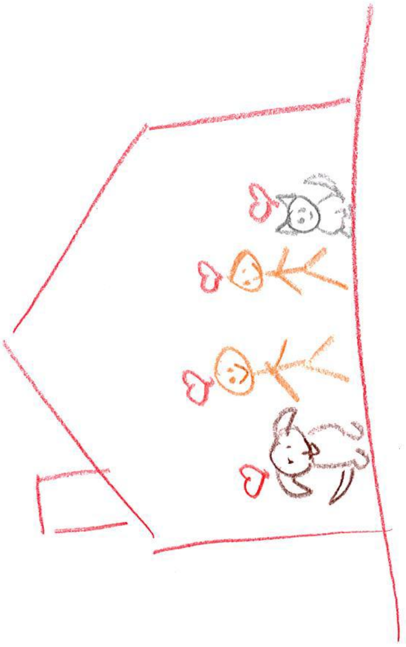
Happy faces

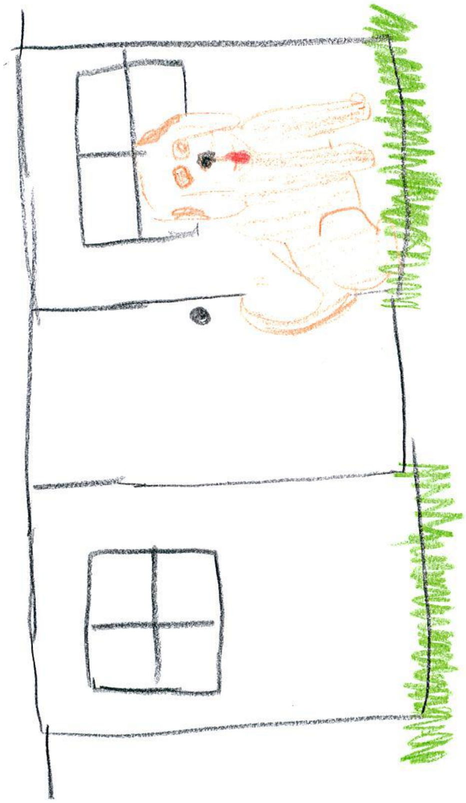
Life's work

Caring

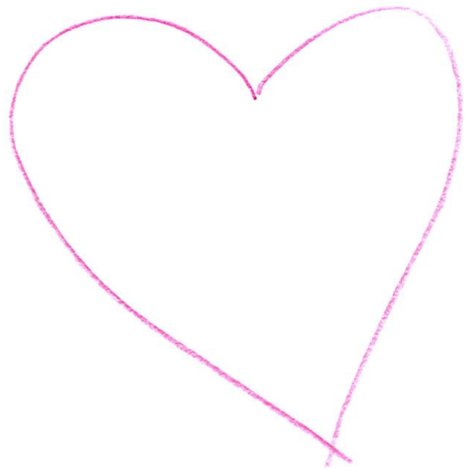
Go the extra mile

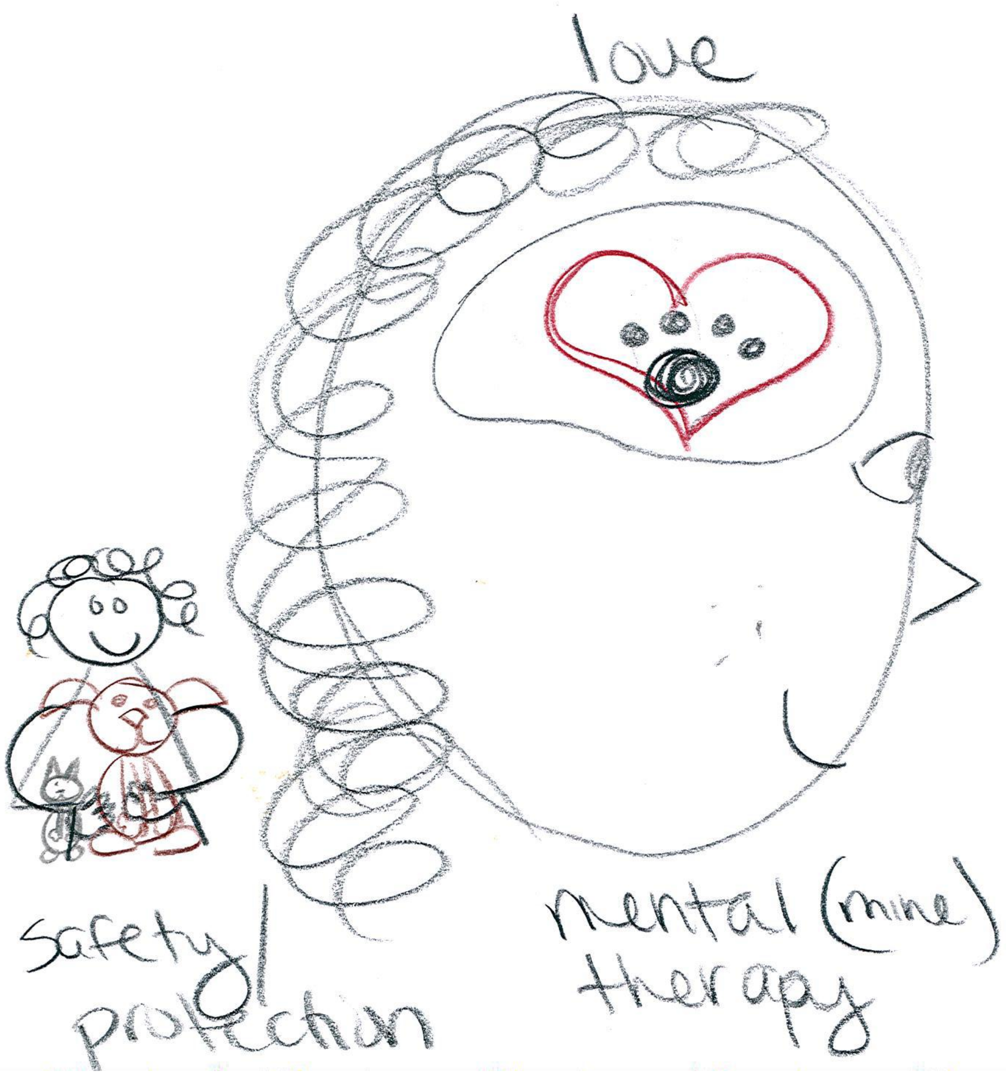
3600

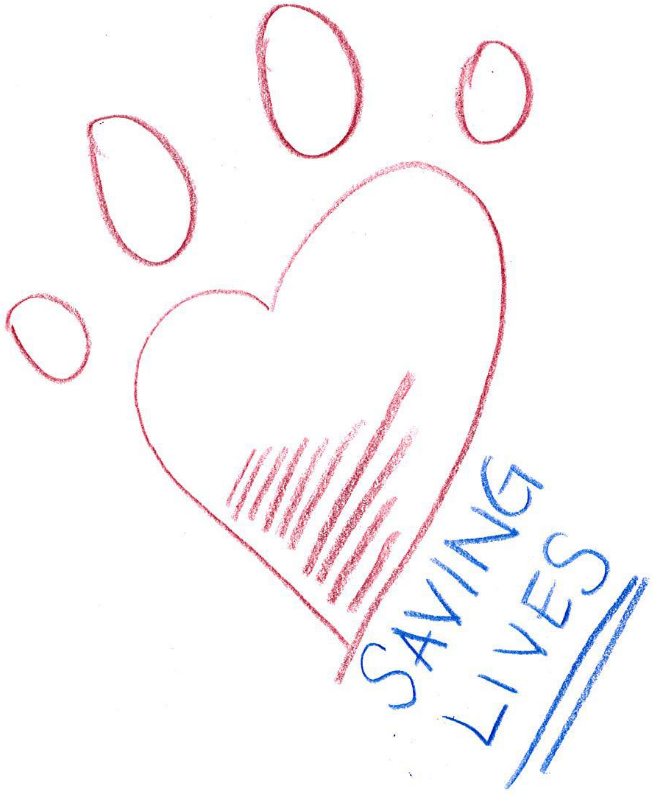




What does animal care work mean to you?




love
Safety/protection
mental (mine) therapy


SAVING
LIVES

Appendix G

Date	Code	Code Description	Example	Non-Example
6/19/2015	**COPE**	Coping strategies.	A: lines 211-235; B: lines 23-24, 179-189, 377-391, 566-571, 626-638; C: lines 197-198, 205-207, 212-213, 220-222, 268; D: lines 202-203, 464-479, 502-504, 515-516, 626-627; E: lines 79-89, 163-194, 217-220, 690-736; F: 138-147, 216-222, 274-276; G: lines 140-144; H: lines 122, 271-275, 302-334, 446-448; J: lines 79-84, 236-252, 313-332; K: lines 126-132, 264-276, 335-340, 388-390, 399-419	Not managing. Not dealing with.
6/19/2015	**DEMO-LEEM**	Demographics. Length of Employment.	A: 1.7 years (line 13); B: 10 years (line 14); C: 3.5 years (line 12); D: 2.8 years (line 30); E: 7 years (line 12-13); F: 3 years (line 11-12); G: 3 years (line 11-12); H: 11 years (line 11); J: 1 year (line 36); K: 1 year (line 11-12)	Volunteer time. Prior employment outside of non-profit animal care.
6/19/2015	**DEMO-SALA**	Demographics. Income related to Animal Care. Salary. Money. Income.	A: lines 289-298; B: lines 206-212, 231-232, 286-288, 498-503, 591-598, 617-621, 641-642; D: lines 23, 68-71, 140-143, 187, 195-198, 400-404, 524-532; E: lines 361-364, 674-678; F: lines 233, 254-259; G: lines 209-210, 244-251; H: lines 174-180, 449-450	Non-tangible rewards.
6/19/2015	**DESC**	Description of typical day in animal care.	A: lines 59-60; B: lines 128-149; C: lines 96-121; D: lines 151-152, 345, 349-350; E: lines 105-125, 139, 668-686; F: lines 51-68, 297-300; H: lines 35, 106-108, 112-114; J: lines 118-138, 456-457; K: lines 61-65, 73, 85, 90, 365-368	Description of a typical day outside of animal care.

6/19/2015	**EMO-NEG**	Negative emotions specifically related to animal care. Frustration. Anger. Mad. Heartache. Sadness. Emotional. Breakable. Fear. Furious. Upsetting. Bothersome. Emotional toll. Anxious. On edge.	A: lines 28-29, 48-49, 97, 101, 216-218, 224-228, 237-285, 300, 472-473, 476-477; B: lines 45-47, 201-205, 344, 527-530, 539-540, 555-559, 741-743, 839-840; C: lines 78-79, 85, 133-135, 151-153, 207, 211-212, 228-229, 241-242, 258, 272-317; D: lines 435, 445-459; E: lines 31, 62-65, 239-241, 444-446, 453-454, 469-536, 671-672, 674-685, 706-709; F: lines 206-207, 302-303, 432; G: lines 31-32, 37-40, 71-72, 156, 236-237; H: lines 51-69, 140-143, 149-150; J: lines 68-69, 180-185, 287-291, 427-432; K: lines 180-181	Pleasing. Happy. Joyful. Calm.
6/19/2015	**EMO-NEG-STRES**	Negative emotions specific to stress in animal care. Stress.	A: lines 46, 289-300, 378-382; B: lines 48, 179-182, 196-219, 293-294, 341-343, 377-380; D: lines 163-175, 269; E: lines 428-429; F: lines 194-212, 233-235, 294-297; H: 174-176, 192-194, 208-209, 376-380; K: lines 55-68	Stress-free.
6/19/2015	**EMO-POS**	Positive emotions specifically related to animal care. Love. Heart. Happy. Passion. Desire. Empathy. Enjoyment.	A: lines 17-19, 47, 297, 556-557; B: lines 18-19, 98, 105, 416-418, 486-487, 563-565, 599-602, 614; C: lines 16-24, 84, 86-89, 221, 243-244; D: lines 13, 17, 19-20, 25, 45, 65, 77, 99, 190, 268; E: lines 20-23, 30-31, 134, 462-463; F: lines 368; G: lines 174-178, 210, 214-220; H: lines 137-140; J: lines 18-20, 457-459; K: lines 30-33, 46-51, 64, 96-97, 206-207, 214	Hate. Dread. Mechanical. Sad. Any positive experiences not related to work.
6/19/2015	**EPERC**	Employees' perceptions of animal care work. Consuming. All-encompassing. Personally attached. Dedication. Constant.	A: lines 311-316; B: lines 48-53, 74-81, 277-282, 395-404, 408-410, 420-421, 563; C: lines 144-146, 149-151, 341-345; D: lines 64, 515; E: lines 31-33, 145-159, 213-214; H: lines 100-106, 201-202, 209-212, 384-386, 402-403, 430-434, 439-440	Freedom. Free time. Removed.
6/19/2015	**IMPW**	Impact of work in animal care.	A: lines 217, 300; C: 228-229, 240-242; F: lines 170-171, 414-415; H: lines 191-199, 342-380; J: lines 198-199, 279; K: lines 308-311	Non-impact

6/29/2015	**IMPW-PERL**	Personal life interactions. Intersection of work-personal life. Includes personal habits and personal relationships of non-profit animal care workers. Eating habits. Physical activity. Family Life.	A: lines 211-215, 305-316, 564-610; B: lines 410-415, 425-446; D: lines 265, 269-271, 276-291, 319-320, 329-337, 591-636; E: lines 58-62, 153-158, 185-187, 357-360; F: lines 297-301; H: lines 338-342, 417-427; K: lines 235-250, 281-298, 399-408	All other interactions outside of the family unit. All other habits not involving the consumption of food or involvement of physical activity.
6/19/2015	**IMPW-PERS**	Impact of work in animal care-Personal sense of responsibility related to work.	A: lines 105-107, 129-132, 197-199, 258-263, 309-312, 328-334, 477-479, 582-585; C: lines 218-219; E: lines 397-400, 600-613, 742-747; F: lines 326-330; H: lines 22-30, 325-327, 433-435; J: lines 103-106; K: lines 81-84, 106-118	Assigned duties.
6/19/2015	**IMPW-PHY-DEM**	Physical demands at work.	B: lines 66-70, 536-537; J: lines 195-196; K: lines 252, 303-311	Physical demands outside of work hours.
6/19/2015	**IMPW-PHY-DEM-CON**	Physical Demands at work---consequences. Tired. Exhausted. Drained. Fatiguing. Worn out. Numb. Burnout. Shut down.	A: lines 46, 225-226, 446-461, 616-630; B: lines 73-74, 571-670; C: lines 197-268, 429-430; D: lines 483-488, 642-658; E: lines 199, 204-220, 234-256; G: lines 178-179, 263-272; H: lines 174-205, 354-373; J: lines 194-202, 279-332; K: lines 250-260, 282-287, 317-334	Awake. Full of energy. Physical demands outside of work.
6/19/2015	**IMPW-PHY-RIS**	Work-related physical risks.	A: lines 466-468, 474, 492-501, 503-526; B: lines 139-141, 151-175; C: lines 297-312, 319-325; D: 539-563, 574-585; E: lines 439-454, 498-515; F: lines 63, 67, 76-77, 81-88, 159-175, 412-460; G: lines 154-169; J: lines 503-506; K: lines 175-179	Non-work-related physical risks.
6/19/2015	**INTER-STA**	Kinds of staff interactions (pos and neg) at animal care facility.	A: lines 230-235, 672-707; B: lines 232-238, 624-638; C: lines 56-57, 146-148, 213-217, 219-220, 230-232, 265-268, 356; D: lines 116-126; E: lines 66-89, 168-194; F: lines 37-40, 185-198, 368-369, 440-446; H: lines 178-183; K: lines 160-162, 167, 381-387, 408-419	All other interactions.

6/19/2015	**INTER-VOL-BOA**	Interactions with volunteers and board members.	A: lines 48-54, 358-365, 367-395, 400-441, 589-610; B: lines 93-94, 100-124, 197-219, 291-293, 336-341, 497-521, 784-830; C: lines 154-155, 401-408; D: lines 357-365, 377-395, 566-568; E: lines 45-49, 271-300; F: lines 381-388; G: 255-258	All other interactions.
6/19/2015	**JORE**	Assigned job responsibilities.	A: lines 60-77, 545-551, 685-687; B: lines 85-94, 129-132, 288-293, 463-468; C: lines 96-121; D: lines 66-75, 82-83, 97-155, 350-357, 388-389; E: lines 146-148, 153-155, 346-352, 369-400, 544, 639-660; F: lines 94-105; G: lines 77-82; H: lines 42-44, 73-107; J: lines 106-113, 118-138, 452-456; K: lines 73-81, 85-92	Volunteer duties. Hobbies.
6/19/2015	**NEG**	Negative experiences specifically related to animal care. Bad stories. Misconceptions. Lack of understanding. Unrealistic expectations. Challenging situations. Hard to shake. Euthanasia decisions. Difficult circumstances. Misplaced blame.	A: lines 91-133, 470-472, 478-501; B: lines 48-53, 64-66, 100-104, 141-147, 232-276, 314-349, 369-373, 405-407, 487-496, 545-555, 744-782; C: lines 58, 67-78; D: lines 63, 71-76, 115-127, 175-181, 212, 259-261, 277-280, 323-340, 417-439, 489-502; E: lines 41-45, 55-68, 143-159, 318-338, 406-435, 541-596, 638-639, 653-658; F: lines 31, 44-47, 120, 131-137, 151-153, 231-235, 264-270, 302-305, 377, 379; G: lines 45-58, 93-103, 133-136, 149-156, 233-236; H: lines 38-42, 116-143, 226-231, 244-275, 292-294, 444-446; J: lines 69-79, 84-89, 167-186, 222-227, 283-284, 420-432, 445-452, 466-499; K: lines 160-162, 167	Positive experiences.

6/19/2015	**POS**	Positive experiences related to animal care. Personal Growth. Impactful. Liberating. Rewarding. Fufilling. Non-monetary. Satisfaction. Make a difference. Beneficial. Worthwhile.	A: lines 27, 39, 46-54, 81-89, 392-395, 556, 558-561; B: lines 44-45, 54-60, 179-189, 350-368, 452-457, 468-471, 476-487, 836; C: lines 29-51, 58-67, 78-80, 125-129, 135-138, 166-192, 244-250, 378, 417-422, 448-451; D: lines 14-17, 20-21, 40-42, 47-52, 62, 76, 207-208, 228-249, 406-407, 411, 641-642, 659-666; E: lines 39, 45-50, 93-100, 123-125, 129-139, 269-312, 339-352, 653, 668-670, 673; F: lines 23-25, 30, 37-40, 89, 120, 124-126, 240-259, 280-288, 310-318, 369-372, 380; G: lines 31-33, 62-71, 86-89, 113-129, 184-186, 225-228; H: lines 35-38, 145-159, 209-222, 275-291, 302-304, 438-444; J: lines 20-29, 67, 142-163, 204-206, 212-231, 257-275, 363-365, 379-398; K: lines 37-42, 67, 97-102, 148-159, 204-206, 207-213	Negative experiences. Monetary rewards. Positive experiences not related to animal care.