

Design Research Check-In

Information from the First Participant

We interviewed a dog owner of 16 years and a dog trainer of 14 years on Wednesday, January 23 at Cafe Solstice. She practices positive dog training, such as clicker training, to care for both the physical health and happiness of her dogs.

Through this interview, we were able to gain a brief understanding of signs of dog stress, the behaviors that could cause harm to a dog, and dog services and training. Some signs of stressed dogs can be sweating to the paw, shaking, spontaneous shedding, and yawning. Without understanding these signs, many dog owners may yell at their dogs or use physical punishments for “improper behaviors.” Compared to punishment training, positive training can decrease aggression and increase desirable behavior. Thus, we identified that positive reinforcement to be a theme throughout.

Besides physical punishment, things that could cause harms to a dog also include feeding dogs unhealthy foods, walking them on collars (due to the risk of choking), etc. There are also different types of dog services such as dog daycare, groomers, training classes, and DNA tests. However, dog owners need to pay attention when they select these services since some of the services might utilize punishment training.

Tasks, Problems, and Opportunities

Our interviewee mentioned several daily tasks such as feeding, walking, and training. Some of her dogs have dietary and health needs, requiring special food preparation and medication. We also discussed tasks that occur less frequently, such as veterinarian visits, dog park trips, and grooming. Therefore, simply staying up to date with the dogs' needs is a continuous task that may be addressed.

By conducting this interview, we have found some problems with existing interactions between dog owners and dogs. The participant mentioned the importance of choosing healthy dog food, but as many dog owners often cannot afford raw food, she proposed that human food is given to dogs as a supplement. Such information about

dog food seems to be unknown by many dog owners. In addition, the over-vaccination of dogs can lead to long-term health problems. Thus, educating/connecting dog owners to resources is a potential task as well.

We saw several opportunities through our interview. For instance, two of the interviewee's dogs have poor bowel movements. She currently is involved in two Facebook groups documenting dog poop. This process could easily be improved by tracking dog diet and medications in combination documenting the excretory system.

Another opportunity is found in clicker training. Since it is so time-intensive, it would be beneficial to have an automatic, remote clicker trainer. For instance, a dog could remotely receive treats throughout the day for good behavior, such as not jumping on the couch or not barking.

We did not have any difficulties establishing rapport, our interviewee was very open about her experiences as an owner and her dogs' health conditions.

Plan for Remaining Participants

For our next experience, we will visit two participants at their homes and complete personal inventory (paired with a guided tour) by probing for the purpose of different objects in each dog's life, such as toys, feeding devices, and crates. We may also ask for a demonstration of a daily task such as a walk or training session and take a video recording of the dog and owner interactions. Both of these participants may give us insight into problem spaces of our target participant since they represent the everyday dog owner as opposed to a professional.

After this interview, we discovered several topics worth exploring, such as choosing dog food, tracking excrements, walking dogs with collars, and positive training. We plan to add follow-up questions to future interviews about these specific experiences.

We also realized that we initially disregarded physical artifacts as an area of study. We decided that we would need to document any artifacts used by future participants during tours to better explore possible interactions between dog and owner. While hearing about our interviewee's experience was very educational, it will be beneficial to see the everyday experiences of dog and owner first-hand and draw inferences.