

Abstract

Back to Basics: the formation of a new bond

Social bonding is an important way to ensure survival of social species and has several positive effects on the wellbeing of the individual. This social bonding is however not only restricted between individuals of the same species but also between species. In case of the human and the dog, co-evolution and domestication ensured that communication (a prerequisite of bonding) could exist between them. Nowadays the human-dog bond is clearly visible during daily life and in therapeutic settings. However it is not understood how this bond develops. Is it comparable to the development of bonds between humans or does it involve different processes? Within this research the development of a bond between an owner and it's new dog will be investigated to construct a theoretical understanding of the formation of bonds between the human-animal dyad. Behavioral and physiological measurements will be used to see if the process of social bonding is comparable to the human-human bonding. Before the bonding, the individuals first need to be engaged. Activation of the myelinated vagus ensures that an individual engages in social interaction. This is only done, once the context is considered safe (Polyvagal theory: Porges, 2003). Once two individuals positively engage, the process of bonding can start. Fogel (1993) argues that this relationship is formed by a dynamic process of co-regulation. The constructs of Porges and Fogel are used to test the hypothesis. The results of this research could be used to further develop the knowledge base of anthrozoology and the use of animals within therapeutic settings.