Animal behavior has been the subject of fascination since at least the time of Plato and Aristotle, and if human curiosity drives research, then animal behavior should be near the top of our list (Fogle vii). "We tend to study animals for what they can teach us about ourselves or for facts that we can turn to our advantage. But dogs? Dogs do involve us [because] they have shared our lives for twenty thousand years" (Thomas 1993: 3-4).

Humans tend to define their own lives in their own terms. That is, our species focuses on the world through human lenses with an anthropomorphic view which holds that "mental experiences are a unique attribute of a single species" - the human species (Griffin 1981: 170). However, putting aside our anthropomorphic opinions may not be entirely possible in this discussion because, to some degree, anthropomorphic thinking "is factored into it. I think it has to be ... or else I don't see how we can distill these discrete emotions in a pet. I don't think that we can really define them without ... injecting a little bit into it" (Winters). It is suggested that projecting meaning from one species to another can be misleading, particularly when making comparisons between animal and man (Hinde 201). Even so, our interactions with dogs can provide a rich source of insight into their behavior, and even ours, for there are over 50 million dogs in the United States ("Nature"). But, do dogs have a sense of humor? Are they capable of "doing" humor and "being done" by it? Do dogs have mental experiences? Do they possess a consciousness? Do they feel and think? These questions are germane in our look at humor in dogs even though we are "well advised to study the behaviour, rather than attempting to get at
any underlying emotion." However, this is not to say that "animal feelings do not exist and are not important" (Masson 9).

In a sociological exploration of humor in dogs, we do well to remember that all human experience is socially constructed. So, too, are dogs' experiences in their association with humans. In fact, both humans and their dogs "are continually engaged in giving meaning to the world around them, [for humor] occurs in a social environment in which participants act to make things humorous" (Mulkay 106). While dogs do not laugh in the sense that we understand laughter, the humor that humans see in their interactions with their pets is socially mediated by both parties to form a collective moment, one which has meaning to each of them.
References

[Note - the following is not quite accurate APA style but close!]


"Nature." 3/2/97, PBS (Channel 28, Los Angeles).


Winters, J. Personal Interview, 2/25/97.

Example of APA References In-text Citing – APA (PREFERRED FOR THE SOCIAL SCIENCES)

References


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