Companion animal caregiving in Western society generates intense feelings and divided opinions (Serpell, 1986), sometimes evoking high emotion, cynicism, prejudice and ridicule. Despite these ambiguities companion animals are usually perceived and related to as legitimate and valued family members by their caregivers (Dawson, 2007; Carmack, 2003; Cohen, 2002; Harris, 1984; Katcher & Rossenberg, 1979; Lagoni, Morehead, Butler & Brannan, 1994; 2001).

Contradictory beliefs, attitudes and behaviours permeate boundaries of self and other within affectionate relationships between people and companion animals. Perhaps this is seen most poignantly in reactions to expressions of grief in relation to companion animal loss. Mourning the death of a human family member usually meets with compassionate understanding and sympathy, whereas open displays of distress arising from companion animal bereavement are frequently perceived as pathological or sources of amusement; even some companion animal caregiving communities appear anxious to seem unemotional and ‘in control.’ Ultimately such rejections render companion animal loss as disenfranchised (Dawson, 2007; Grey, 2006; Carmack, 2003) and force grievers underground, in attempts to keep this disallowed emotionality a secret from others.

Only relatively recently, have emotional attachments between people and non-human animals been recognised, as anthrozoology evolved. This recognition helps to legitimise non-human animals as potentially significant attachment figures in the life-worlds of people (also see Topál & Gácsi this volume). However, until human emotionality in these relationships is acknowledged, interspecies attachments will continue to meet suspicion and incredulity from a scientific community which believes, “that as long

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as they are not conscious of any bias or political agenda, they are neutral and objective, when in fact they are only unconscious,” (Namenwirth, 1989:29).

Such approaches to investigating human-animal relationships demand researchers adopt artificial objectivity and detachment from human emotions, dislocating the very heart of what is being researched—human feelings (Dawson, 2007). In this chapter, I introduce Organic Inquiry (OI) as a qualitative emotion-sensitive methodology, appropriate for use by researchers investigating human companion-animal relationships, and illustrate the compatibility of voice centered relational analysis (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, Lawthom, 2004, Dawson, 2007) within OI.

This work is informed by a feminist spirituality (Plaskow and Christ, 1989, Christ, 1997) and relational ontology. OI incorporates creative, expressive approaches to data gathering and representation; these generate the potential for personal transformation in participants, researchers, and those coming into contact with the research findings—a fundamental requirement of OI methodology.

In contrast to most approaches to research, OI takes as a starting point the lived personal experience of the researcher, viewing this as an interpretive lens through which data are analysed. The researcher’s own experiences of companion animal caregiving are not set aside but are incorporated, with the researcher’s own story forming the first case study within an inquiry. Here, I illustrate principles and procedures for conducting OI using examples from a study of lived human experiences of companion animal euthanasia (Dawson, 2007), which also highlights the requirement to connect with the sacred. Some of the inherent ambiguities and power differentials within human-companion relationships become visible within these examples, demonstrating the suitability of OI as a methodology for researching emotionally sensitive issues in anthrozoology.

**Human Emotions in Research: Introducing OI**

Societal ambivalence towards non-human animals is reflected in relationships between companion animals and their caregivers. The term ‘human-companion animal bond’, seems to dilute the integral emotional intensity, diminishing and dismissing it to a different status than human-human attachments. Perhaps this reflects a subconscious desire to delineate hu-