

ATTITUDES TO PETS

Can Attitudes toward Pets Predict Self-compassion?

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Abstract

The relationship between attitudes to pets and self-compassion have not been examined psychologically in relation to each other. This research examined pet and non-pet owners' attitudes (positive and negative) regarding pets, their levels of perceived stress and levels of self-compassion. No significant values were found in relation to attitude to pets and self-compassion. A significant finding was found supporting the evidence that self-compassion is negatively correlated to perceived stress. Significant findings were found supporting the evidence that pet owners report lower levels of perceived stress than non-pet owners. Age was found to be positively correlated to self-compassion: self compassion increases with age. Gender differences indicate that women's levels of self-compassion are significantly stronger than men's levels over time.

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Can Attitudes toward Pets Predict Self-compassion?

Introduction

The purpose of the current study is to see if attitudes toward pets, in pet ownership, are associated with higher levels of self-compassion and lower levels of perceived stress in comparison to non pet owners. A study by Crocker & Canevello (2008) suggested self-compassionate people show compassion for others and have different goals in their friendship, based on helping and encouragement. A Horn & Meer (1984) study on pet ownership ($N = 13,000$) reported that pet owners have more humanistic orientations than non pet owners that is expressed in compassion for others. Neff (2003a) argued that self-compassion is broader than Western humanistic concepts. This indicates that there may be a possible link between pet ownership and self-compassion. The current study is interested in the affect (attachment and social support), behavioural (anthromorphic) and cognition component (pets are part of the family) of attitudes regarding pet ownership. Brown's (2007) study identified that animals (horses, rabbits, cats, and dogs) can be self-objects that provide self-cohesion (self-esteem, calmness and self soothing attributes). According to Belk's (1988) theory of the extended self, possessions contribute to and are a reflection of human identity. Belk' view is that possessions become a part of the self, and argued special categories of possessions: money, pets, other people and body parts. He further argued that in the case of a deep emotional bond between owner and pet, the pet is seen to be a part of the extended self. Belk (1996) suggested that pets are not merely an expression of our identity, but appendages of the self.

Statistics

In an extensive search, no statistics for Irish pet ownership was found. However, a study on the spatial distribution of pet dogs, and pet cats on the island of Ireland, there is a reported estimate of 640,620 pet dog-owning households and 215,542 pet cat-owning households (Downes, Clegg, Collins, McGrath, & More, 2011).

Attitudes Toward Pets

Haddock & Maio (2008,) defined attitudes as “an overall evaluation of a stimulus object” (p. 114). Brehn et al (2002,) define attitudes as “...a positive, negative, or mixed reaction to a person, object, or idea”(p. 179). Attitudes have three components; affect, behaviour, and cognition, known as the ABC model (Ellis, 1962; DeSylvestri, 1989). Affect is the emotional component. Behaviour, is the intention to do something regarding the attitude object. Cognition is the beliefs about the attitude object. Intergenerational research (Gage & Magnuson-Martinson, 1988) regarding attitudes to dogs has indicated that the family is an important base for the development of values and attitudes. Gage and Magnuson-Martinson found that in single-child families, the attitude of the parents is the strongest predictor of values and attitudes regarding the family dog. Research has reported that women, in particular, show a more positive attitude to pets than men (Kidd, 1980; Brown, 2002).

A Northern Ireland study found women were more concerned than men regarding the use of animals: dog fighting, hare coursing, and so on (Wells & Hepper, 1997). Not all pet owners grew up with a pet in the family. Studies have shown that if the parents have a strong attachment to the family pet, the children show greater interest in pets and report higher pet-related activity than non pet owning homes (Kidd & Kidd, 1989; Serpell, 1981). However, a later study by Kidd

& Kidd (1997) found no differences towards attitudes to pets between adults who had owned pets all their lives and adults who had only owned pets as adults. The current study is interested in the question whether pets are beneficial to the health and well-being of the owners. This is important as research in self-compassion show that well-being and positive psychological health are related to higher levels of self-compassion (Neff, 2009; Neff, Rude & Kirkpatrick, 2006).

Health Benefits of Pet Ownership

German and Australian longitudinal studies (Headey & Grabka, 2007) found that lower stress and better health are associated with the presence of a pet. Headey & Grabka reported people who continuously owned a pet are the healthiest in comparison to people who previously owned a pet or never owned a pet. The study reported that pet owners make about 15% fewer visits to the doctor every year than non pet owners. Siegel (1990) monitored 938 Medicare enrollees over the course of a year. The study showed that pet owners had less contact with doctors compared to non-pet owners. Siegel found increased stressful events associated with more doctors' visits for non-pet owners. In China, where dogs were banned in urban areas until 1992, Headey, Na & Zeng (2008) looked at the health outcomes of dog ownership in younger women. They found that women dog owners self-reported better health, better sleep, more exercise, fewer days off work, and made fewer doctors visits. Siegel, Angulo, Detels, Wesch, & Mullen (1999) found gay or bisexual men AIDS sufferers who owned pets reported less depression than AIDS sufferers who did not own pets. Siegel et al argued that the companionship provided by pets may buffer the stressful impact of AIDS. Allen, Shykoff, and Izzo, (2001) found pet-owning male and female stockbrokers with high blood pressure who were issued with a house pet (cat or dog) at the start of stress trials, fared better than the medication only group.

Tests were carried out after 6 months of living with the new house pet. The tests revealed that when the stress testing was at its highest point, the stockbrokers who owned the pets remained stable: heart rates, blood pressure and key enzymes remained within the acceptable range. In contrast, the non-pet owning stockbrokers indicators climbed nearly as high as when they first entered treatment. The evidence is strong for the benefits of pets as stress buffers. However, Allen (2003) suggested not substituting a pet for blood pressure medication, but points to the evidence that pets can be a healthy pleasure, especially for those with few social supports.

Wells (2009) highlighted the important role companion animals may play in the well-being and health of the owner by providing companionship, support and entertainment. This is especially true of those living alone (Antonacopoulos & Pychyl, 2010). Of all the type of pets, dogs appear to motivate the owner to a healthier lifestyle. Cutt, Giles-Corti, Knuiman, Timperio, & Bull (2008) reported that increased exercise in comparison to non-dog owners is a by-product of responsible dog ownership. Lail, McCormack, and Rock's (2011) study reported that pet ownership contributes to keeping active across all seasons. Cutt, Knuiman, and Giles-Corti (2008) found in new dog owners that the dogs had a positive effect on the owner's cognitive belief about walking and that their dogs may significantly influence the maintenance of their walking behaviour. Gender differences were reported by Staats, Wallace, and Anderson (2008), who found older women believed more in the health-giving benefits of pet ownership than young people or men.

Besides the health benefit of walking, taking a dog for a walk can act as a social lubricant to bring people together from a diverse background that normally would not have any sort of personal relationship (McNicholas & Collis, 2000). Owen et al.'s (2010) research indicated dog ownership can show increased levels of activity even from childhood. Research from the Child

Heart and Health Study in England reported activity levels in 9 to 10 year olds who had dogs to be higher than that of children without dogs. The study also found that adult dog owners take approximately 25% more steps per day than non-dog owners. Besides the health related benefits of increased exercise and possible social benefits, companion animals appear to act as stress buffers. Collis & McNicholas (1998) suggest that social support may explain the health benefits of pets. The stress buffering effect of the animal may be related to the perception of the animal as non-judgemental and uncritical.

Havener et al. (2001) found pets, especially dogs, can diminish the stress experience for routine stress and high stress situations. Havener et al. reported that companion animals acted as a distracter for children undergoing dental procedures. This had the effect of diminishing their stress in that stressful situation. Hansen, Messinger, Mara, & Megel (1999) reported children being physically examined in the presence of a dog to be less distressed than those examined without a dog present.

Pets can even reduce stress at the workplace. Some companies utilise the benefits of having employee pets in the workplace. Wells & Perrine (2001) reported that employees with pets in the workplace (cats and dogs) had lower levels of work related stress than employees without a pet. Perrine & Wells (2006) found that pets in the workplace improved the mood of both employees and customers. It is interesting to note that psychological well-being was found to be the strongest predictor of productivity in the workplace (Donald et al. 2005), possibly indicating that the presence of pets indirectly impacts productivity. According to Wells (2009) the mere presence of an animal can have short-term benefits (transient reductions in heart rate and blood pressure) on moderate stress. Barker, Knisely, McCain, Schubert, & Pandurangi (2010) found positive attitudes to pets were reported with decreasing levels of stress. In older

people with hypertension, the presence of a dog elicited a decrease in hypertension during stressful speaking activities (Friedman et al, 2007).

People seem to relax more when stroking an animal. The effect of stroking an animal consistently reported a significantly lower resting pulse rates, lower systolic and diastolic blood pressure (Barker et al., 2010; Grossberg & Alf, 1985; Jenkins, 1986; Somerville, Kruglikova, Robertson, Hanson, & MacLin, 2008). This is important point because evidence (e.g., Glaser et al., 1993) has shown that stress modulates the immune system and can have a direct effect on health. In their study on the cardiovascular benefits of pets; Vormbrock & Grossberg (1988) argued that touch seems to be the main part of the pet effect and cognitive factors were not as important. Though the evidence (Charnetsky, Riggers & Brennan, 2004; Hama, Yoga & Matsuyama, 1996) has shown that the benefit of stroking an animal can elicit a reduction in moderate stress, independent of attitudes and pet ownership, suggesting that tactile contact is the effect. In contrast to non-pet owners, the pet owner has the constant presence of the pet and, therefore, the opportunity to benefit. This is a point the current study is interested in. Whether stress reduction is related to positive pet attitudes in pet ownership or any of the subscales of the attitude to pets scale. However, not all the research regarding the benefits of pets on health and wellbeing are positive.

As the benefits of the pet effect (psychological and health benefits attributed to pet ownership) are under question (Herzog, 2011). It is of interest to psychology that pet ownership is associated with stress reduction. Parslow and Jorm (2003) in their Australian study found pet owners were worse off than non-owners. Their findings show that pet owners had significantly higher diastolic blood pressure in comparison to non-owners (this is the opposite of what would normally be found) While systolic blood pressure was the same in both pet and non-pet owners,

the study also reported pet owners had less education, were more likely to smoke and tended to only do mild exercise. Parslow & Jorm pointed to other Australian research (Anderson, Reid & Jennings 1992), which found positive findings regarding pets. Their study reported only 13.7% pet ownership in a sample of 784. A national Australian study in 1995 reported 60% pet ownership in the Australian population. Parslow and Jorm argued this is significantly larger than the 13.7% found by Anderson and colleagues and puts doubt on the accuracy of the Anderson et al. research.

Pet Effect Controversy

Past studies according to Herzog (2011) of the human animal relationship have produced conflicting results. Herzog argued that the pet effect remained as uncorroborated hypothesis and not a fact. He argued substantial research regarding the pet effect have not been published and points to the *file drawer effect* (studies not published due to negative or non significant findings). Herzog further argued methodological problems in human/animal research. These include studies characterised by small and homogeneous samples and studies using a wide diverse range of research designs and small effect sizes studies. Most research use in the current study were adequate to large samples except qualitative studies (e.g., Gallagher, Allen & Jones, 2008). Herzog's review highlighted negative findings for the claim that pets alleviated loneliness (Gilbey, McNicholas, & Collis, 2007) and that a Pew Research Center survey of 3000 Americans found pet owners were not happier than non-owners. That pet owners were more depressed (Koivusilta & Ojanlatva, 2006) than people who were less attached to their pet and suffered more psychological problems than non-owners (Parslow, Jorm, Christensen Rodgers, & Jacomb,

2005). An example of the conflicting evidence regarding the pet effect is outlined in the following studies.

Friedmann et al. (1980) found the survival and admission rates for angina after 1 year in non-pet owners to be lower than that of pet owners. Non-pet owners had lower survival rates. Friedmann et al. reported pet ownership and social support were significant predictors of survival after an episode of angina. They further argued the effect of pets on survival may depend more on personality differences and social conditions. Friedmann & Thomas (1995) replicated the findings of the Friedmann et al. (1980) study in patients who developed ventricular arrhythmia (irregular heartbeat) following a myocardial infarction. Friedmann & Thomas did report that dog ownership, in contrast, to cat ownership was associated with a higher chance of being alive a year later.

However, a longitudinal study by Parker et al (2010) failed to replicate the Friedmann et al. (1980) studies. Parker et al. argued their study was not an exact replication of either of the Friedmann et al. studies. The Parker et al. study “utilized a combined endpoint of cardiac-related death, and readmission in order to increase the power to detect an effect”(p.), whereas the Friedmann et al. studies looked at just mortality. Parker et al. reasoned that this could account for the difference in results if the protective effect reported by Friedmann et al, applied only to fatal cardiac events. or cardiac events that occurred in the first month after a heart attack. Parker et al. further argued that confounding variable such as age and weight may also account for the failure to replicate the Friedmann et al, findings in patients who owned pets.

Herzog (2011) in his critique of these studies said there was a problem with cats. A study by Arhant-Sudhir, Arhant-Sudhir & Sudhir (2010) reviewing previous studies on cardiovascular risk (including the Friedmann et al., 1980 studies, and the Parker et al., 2010 study), argued that,

overall, the ownership of pets, and especially dogs is associated with positive health benefits, lower blood pressure, plasma cholesterol and triglycerides. Arhant-Sudhir et al. pointed out that when considered separately, it was cat owners and not dog owners that were associated with a higher risk of death or readmission. However, evidence can appear contradictory, for example, a study reported in *Good Housekeeping* (“Kitty Rx”, 2008) reported a study by Qureishi, a neurological researcher who tracked cat owners over a 20 year period. The study reported that cat owners (aged 30 to 75) were 40% less likely to die of a heart attack than cat free households.

Attachment and Anthropomorphism

It is common to see pet owners behave, interact and communicate as if their pets have human attributes. Research on people’s perceptions of the cognitive ability of cats and dogs and other animal’s report that people tend to attribute complex cognitive characteristics to their pets (Eddy, Gallup & Povenelli 1993). Greenebaum (2004) noted “The technological and market economy has anthropomorphized dogs to human-like behavior, particularly to status of family member or child.” Fox’s (2006) view is that owners see their pets as persons. They observe the pet’s preferences (likes and dislikes) their individual personality and recognition of subjective thought. They view the pet as emotional and capable of reciprocal social relationships.

According to Fox (2006) gives the animal a social place as a family member. This is supported by the number of pet owners who consider their pet to be part of the family (Carlisle-Frank & Frank, 2006; Walsh, 2009). Albert & Bulcroft (1988) found that 87% of 320 urban pet owners scored their pet 5 or 4 in a scale of 1 to 5 as to whether their pet is a member of the family. In the family situation pets are often referred to as if human children: who’s a good boy

or girl, and the person themselves as mommy or daddy in relation to the pet (Greenebaum, 2004).

According to Mithen (as cited in Serpell, 2003) anthropomorphized behaviour was the gateway to domesticating animals (possibly as far back as 40,000 years ago). Mithen argued that anthropomorphism is a defining characteristic of *Homo sapiens*. If Mithen is correct, then historically children have been growing up with dogs for many thousands of years. Growing up with a pet appears to be one of the dominant variables in human-pet attachment. This is when the child develops their attitude and behaviour towards the family pet. According to Sussman (1985, p. 38) observational learning occurs in relation to the care of animals when members of the same family integrate the care of the family pet into their behaviour and attitudinal repertoire. According to Sussman attitude and behaviour are further reinforced when positive and significant emotional value is placed on pets through advertising and the media.

Many pet owners have a strong emotional attachment to their pet. According to Ainsworth (1989) attachment has four features: proximity maintenance, separation distress, secure base and safe haven. Research by Sable (1995) concluded that pets can be substitutes for human attachment figures, especially in the elderly. According to Sable, pets facilitate an understanding of people's intimate attachments and attachment behaviour. In her review of studies Turner (2005) pointed to the reduction in loneliness and isolation of elderly pet owners. A pet in an elderly persons life helps promote relaxation, enhances motivation to stick to a daily schedule, increases mobility and enhances wellbeing. This supports other evidence (e.g., Wells, 2009) that reveals the social support value of pets.

Sable (1989) interviewed 81 women, 1 to 3 years widowed and found that their pets gave them the support to carry on. The simple presence of the animal helped as one woman said

regarding her animal “(they’re) just being there”. Antonacopoulos & Pychyl (2010) suggested that high attachment to a pet is correlated with lower levels of loneliness. A study by Power (2008) on pet owners who had recently acquired a new pet, suggested the animal’s (dogs) otherness (dogginess) and an introduction to doggie way of living, along with other household inhabitants shape the household. Power’s study highlighted the primary care that women give to pets and she points to previous research (Fifield & Forsyth, 1999) that showed that women are the primary caregivers of dogs. Research indicates the larger the family the less the attachment. In contrast, families without children show an increased attachment to pets (Wrobel & Dye, 2003). Albert & Bulcroft (1988) identified pets as an important source of affection and attachment among divorced, never married, widowed people, childless couples, newlyweds, and empty nesters.

According to Albert & Bulcroft (1988) evidence indicated that that the attachment bond between cats and their owners is not as strong as between dogs and their owners. Zasloff and Kidd (1994) reported that cat owners preferred cats because of ease of care, affection, companionship and the feline personality. Ease of care as the strongest factor indicates the relationship between the owner and their cat is not as deep as that between dog owners and their dogs. This may be due to lifestyle changes. Cutt, Giles-Corti, et al. (2008) reported that lifestyle changes resulting from dog ownership demands more physical response to the needs of the pet. Evidence suggests that the more attached the owner becomes to their dog the more benefit; increased exercise, and so on (Beck & Madresh, 2008).

Sometimes a pet may be the major source of support for its owner and is closely identified with the owner. This seems particularly true for battered women. Flynn’s (2000) study suggested that individuals actively and symbolically construct their reality through their

interactions. From this perspective of symbolic interaction pets must be able to take the role of someone else. Flynn found in the case of battered women, the batterer may try to control his partner through abusing her pet. The women in the study reported feeling comfort from the presence of their pet after violence from their partner. The women also reported the pet seeking comfort after being abused.

Five women in a recent Irish study (Gallagher et al., 2008) reported the death of their pet due to violence. One of the participants related a graphic description of her 5-year-old daughter witnessing her father put his hand into the goldfish bowl and squash the goldfish. Some of the women felt compelled to remain in the abusive relationship until they could facilitate the care of their pet. This indicates that for the women the pet was part of the family. Oniskivi (2007, p. 13) argued that the battered women's pets in these scenarios are targeted because of the emotional attachment they have to these pets. The stronger the emotional attachment the battered woman has to her pet the more likely the threat of abuse to the animal. Kobak (2009) indicates that dangerous situations test the attachment bond and is by many seen as a point of consensus.

For some family members the level of attachment to their pet is seemingly stronger than their attachment to other family members. Research by Kurdek (2009) reported that dedicated dog owners (adults) turn to their pet before their mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, best friends or children; romantic partners were the only exception. Ryan et al. (2005) suggested that individuals who satisfy the need for relatedness in most cases are relied upon for emotional support. Kurdek found these findings can be generalized to include pet dogs. The area of pet loss demonstrates how attached individuals can be to their pets.

Pet Loss

Pet loss is recognised as a significant event in the life of pet owners. Sharkin & Knox (2003) recommended psychologists use clinical intervention to help people who are grieving over the loss of a pet. A study on predominantly white, female, middle aged pet owners (Hunt, Al-Awadi, & Johnson, 2008) in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, reported that the loss of their companion animals were strongly associated with psychopathology. The evidence suggested that forced abandonment of the animals added considerably to the trauma felt, thus increasing the risk of long term posttraumatic stress disorder. This is supported by research from Planchon, Templer, Stokes & Keller, (2002) who reported that general depression, death depression; positive attitudes and attachment to companion animals were strongly associated with increased grief due to the death of a companion animal. Duffey (2005) found grief at the loss of a pet can be felt harder by childless couples than couples with children. Research by the Co-operative Pet Insurance (2011) reported that nearly one third of animal lovers felt the loss of their pet was as traumatic as the death of a friend. Brown, Wilson, & Richards (1996) found that adolescent girls express more grief at the loss of a pet than adolescent boys, and supports the findings that women have a deeper attachment to companion animals than men.

The current study attempted to show the strong bond that can exist between owners and their pets and how that may impact on the health and psychology of the owner. Self-compassion as envisioned by Neff (2003a) is a relatively new area of research that has not been researched in terms of the pet-person relationship, so any view of this research regarding pets and self-compassion is speculative.

Self-Compassion,

Theoretically a possible link between self-compassion and pet ownership may be related to the strong bond between pets and their owners. This can be a very loving, compassionate relationship that encompasses qualities inherent in self-compassion. Dromgoole (2004,) referring to dogs put it succinctly. “We teach them to beg, roll over, and fetch. They teach us about loyalty, friendship, enthusiasm, joy, patience, forgiveness, and unconditional love” (p. 1).

Neff’s (2003a) conceptualisation of self-compassion is a relatively new construct which appears to be a good predictor of psychological health and wellness. According to Neff, being self-compassionate helps develop a positive self-image. Neff defined self-compassion as an emotionally positive self-attitude with three components: self kindness, common humanity and mindfulness. Self-kindness is being kind to oneself rather than being harsh and critical. The definition of common humanity refers to the idea that people are not alone in life’s situations in comparison to feeling separated and isolated. Mindfulness is being aware of painful thoughts and feelings by holding them in balanced awareness and not over identifying with them, as is the case with self-pity (Neff, 2003a).

Self-compassion as a Buddhist teaching regarding suffering is closely related to mindfulness and is part of compassion for all beings, including the self and animals and is inherent in the teachings of Buddhism. Neuropsychologist Hanson (blog, see reference section), a practicing Buddhist, related a Native American Indian teaching to give the feel of an attitudinal stance based on self-compassionate thinking. An American Indian elder grandmother was asked what she had done to always be so happy, wise respected and loved. She replied that she knows there are two wolves in the heart; one wolf is love and the other wolf is hate. That everything depends on which one she will feed today.

This fits in with Kabat-Zinn's (2005, p. 103) observation about the importance of mindfulness to self-compassion. If a degree of peace is sought in the mind and heart, it will benefit the individual to no longer feed those harmful tendencies and behaviours. Martin (1997) described mindfulness as a form of attention. Neff (2011a,) stated "mindfulness refers to the clear seeing and nonjudgmental acceptance of what's occurring in the present moment" (p. 80). Pragmatically speaking the act of being mindful may be just paying attention to making the tea instead of ruminating over perceived problems. It could be argued that a pet owner is more mindful when attending to the needs of a pet and the pet encourages its owner to be more mindful. Barnard & Curry (2011) suggest self-compassion is a broader aspect of the self than previously researched.

Neff (2003a) argued that self-compassion is broader than Western humanistic concepts including Rogers' (1961) "unconditional self regard", Maslow's (1968) "B-perception" and Ellis' (1973) "unconditional self-acceptance." According to Neff, despite humanistic concepts being related to self-compassion, they focus on the individual self, so they are not as broad. In contrast, self-compassion does not separate the self from others (including animals), thus making the concept more encompassing. It is also important to define the difference between other concepts such as self-pity and self-criticism. Neff argued that self-pity tends to overstate egocentric feelings of separation, In contrast to self-compassion, self-pity identifies with the painful feelings. Neff broadly argued that over-identification leads to a more isolated self, which lead to self-criticism and possible depression. Neff's (2003b) study also reported the confirmation that women, in contrast to men, have lower levels of self-compassion in terms of self-judgement, isolation, and mindfulness.

Another definition of self-compassion comes from McKay & Fanning (2002) who suggested that “the essence of self-esteem is compassion for yourself” (p. 89-92). McKay & Fanning proposed that compassion in general, and self-compassion in particular, combines three skills: understanding, acceptance and forgiveness. Understanding is realising that thoughts, feelings, experiences and behaviours influence each other in ways that can be understood even if the results are undesirable. Acceptance happens when there is no judgement or evaluation, which then gives rise to self-forgiveness.

Barnard & Curry (2011) suggested that prior to developing self-compassion, past studies using self-esteem sometimes may have been referring to things that may have been more like self-compassion than self-esteem. Self-compassion and self-esteem have associations that somewhat overlap. Researchers such as Neff (2011a) have pointed out the significant value of using self-compassion in contrast to self-esteem as a predictor and possible strategic regulator of emotional health and also as an outcome of self-compassion training that helps develop a positive conceptualisation of the self. Neff (2011b) argued that self-esteem and the pursuit to be above average, promotes the view that inflate self-evaluations. Neff’s (2003b) research reported that participants who demonstrated self-compassion were more likely to have high self-esteem than those who lacked self-compassion. A point of interest to the current study is the nexus that higher self-esteem is also related to pet ownership (McConnell, Brown, Shoda, Stayton, & Martin. 2011; de Guzman et al., 2009).

Self-compassion appears to explain the variance beyond self-esteem. For example, Magnus, Kowalski & McHugh (2010) found that self-compassion helped explain the variance beyond self-esteem in an exercise-related content. Neely, Schallert, Mohammed, Roberts, & Chen (2009) found that goal management, and stress and social support were important

predictors of well-being in students and that students' self-compassion accounted for a significant amount of variance in well-being. Forgiveness as the active part in self-compassion has strong correlations with positive psychological processes and has a stronger relationship to well-being than gratitude (Breen, Kashdan, Lenser & Fincham, 2010).

Neff and Vonk (2009) found self-compassion was positively associated with age and not significantly correlated with income. In contrast, global self-esteem was negatively correlated with age and significantly correlated with income. Neff & Roos Vonk found self-compassionate participants were less reactive or had a "stronger negative association with ego-focused reactivity in contrast to global self-esteem" (p. 37). This supports research that shows that self-compassionate participants recognise that both good and bad can happen and subsequently reduce reactions to both positive and negative events resulting in a more accurate self-concept and greater emotional resilience (Leary, Tate, Adams, Allen, & Hancock, 2007).

According to Neff (2003b) self-compassion can be a powerful predictor of mental health and is negatively associated with narcissism, self-criticism, depression, anxiety, rumination and thought suppression. It is also positively associated with life satisfaction and social cohesion. Rockliff, Karl, McEwan, Gilbert, Matos, & Gilbert's (2011) research on found that cortisol levels of people trained in self-compassion were lower under duress and their heart variability was higher. This is similar to the effect animals had on people undergoing stressful events. For example, Havener et al. (2001) found pets, especially dogs, can diminish the stress experience for routine stress and high stress situations. Neff (2011b, p. 123) suggested that people with self-compassion have better emotional coping skills. However, Neff (2003b) does point out that self-compassion may not be properly understood.

In their study, Pauley & McPherson (2010) reported an important point regarding self-compassion in participants who were diagnosed as being either depressed or anxious. The participants in the study before being introduced to self-compassion (Neff 2003a), reported never having a sense of self-compassion. They saw the construct as being a possible useful way to handle depression and anxiety. Furthermore, it helped give them an insight to forgiving oneself for past things. However, participants also reported that self-compassion was difficult and they perceived difficulty in being self-compassionate. Self-compassion diminished when they were depressed or anxious and was replaced with levels of self-criticism and an unforgiving nature towards the self. The authors suggested the nuances in language may cause confusion in the understanding of kindness and compassion. Pauley & McPherson also found difficulty regarding people's understanding of mindfulness and reported "Individuals without an experience of mindfulness may not entirely understand the actual meaning of the concept" (p.). The participants also thought that mindfulness was another difficult concept. However, the relationship between mindfulness and self-compassion is apparently clear. For example, studies (Birnie, Spela & Carlson, 2010; Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, & Toney, 2006) found that changes in levels of compassion were predicted by changes in mindfulness. Shapiro, Brown, & Biegel (2007) found that increases in mindfulness predicted increases in self-compassion.

The current study is interested in the questions that are related to attitude and pet ownership and how they may or may not be related to self-compassion and perceived stress. Because pet ownership is associated with higher life satisfaction, and increased psychological wellbeing and support (McConnell et al., 2011), it is reasonable to predict if there are increased levels of life satisfaction and psychological wellbeing in pet owners, there may be increased levels of self-compassion in owners with a positive attitude to their pet.

The questionnaires used in the study are the Pet Attitude Scale (Templer et al. 1981). The Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, Kamark, & Mermelstein, 1983; Cohen & Williamson, 1988). The Self-compassion Scale (Neff, 2003a).

Main Hypotheses

1. There will be a significant difference in self-compassion between participants who have a positive attitude toward pets and participants who do not have a positive attitude toward pets.
2. There will be a significant difference in self-compassion between pet owners and non-pet owners.
3. There will be a significant difference in self-compassion between participants who grew up with a pet and participants who did not grow up with a pet.
4. There will be a significant difference in perceived stress between participants who grew up with a pet and participants who did not grow up with a pet.
5. There will be a significant difference in perceived stress between pet owners and non pet owners.
6. There will be a significant correlation between attitudes to pets, perceived stress, and self-compassion.
7. There will be a significant gender difference in levels of self-compassion.

Method

Materials

This study used three existing psychological measures and collected demographic information. The 18 item Pet Attitude Scale (PAS) (Templer et al., 1981) measures attitudes toward pets. The PAS is a 1–7 Likert-type scale containing items related to three factors: (a) love and interaction, (b) pets in the home, and (c) joy of pet ownership. The scale range is from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Seven items were worded in a negatively and were reversed scored. Scores were summed up to give an overall score for attitude to pets, with high scores denoting higher levels of positive attitude to pets.

The scale has an acceptable level of reliability with $\alpha = .87$. This is slightly lower than what Templer et al reported at $\alpha = .93$. Templer et al found significantly higher scores were found for kennel workers than social work students indicating criterion-oriented validity as well as face validity. A further validation of the PAS revealed a $\alpha = .94$ (Morovati, Steinberg, Taylor & Lee, 2008). A subscale was constructed for the factor pets in the family and composed of questions: (3) “I would like a pet in my home”. (6) “I feel pets should be always kept outside”. (12) “Animals belong in the wild or in zoos, but not in the home”. (13) “If you keep pets in the house you can expect a lot of damage to furniture”. (14) “I like house pets”, and (18) “You should treat your house pets with as much respect as you would a member of your family”.

The 10 item Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983; Cohen & Williamson, 1988) measures the perception of stress. The PSS is a 0–4-item Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 4 (*very often*). Four items worded in a positive direction were reversed scored and scores were summed up to give an overall score of perceived stress, with high scores denoting higher levels of perceived stress. The scale was found to have an acceptable level of reliability $\alpha = .69$. This is lower than what was reported in the Harris Poll

sample with $\alpha = .78$ and the 2006 and 2009 eNation samples ($\alpha = .91$). Validity correlates in a predicted way with other scales (Job Responsibility Scale, life event scales).

The 26 item Self-Compassion Scale (SCC) (Neff, 2003) measures levels of self-compassion. The SCC is a 1–5-item Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*almost never*) to 5 (*almost always*). Thirteen Items that were worded negatively and were reversed scored; scores were summed up to give an overall score self-compassion, with high scores denoting higher levels of self-compassion. The SCC is composed of six subscales: (1) Self-Kindness Items. (2) Self-Judgement items. (3) Common Humanity Items. (4) Isolation Items. (5) Mindfulness Items, and (6) Over-identified Items. The scale was found to have an acceptable level of reliability ($\alpha = .81$); this was lower than what Neff reported ($\alpha = .92$). Construct validity was found to be good: Self-compassion Scale did not significantly correlate with the social desirability measure.

The fourth section of the questionnaire collected the demographic details of the participants' gender and age and includes the questions: are you a currently a pet owner, what type of pet and the number of pets owned. This section asked: did you grow up with a cat or dog or other pet in the family and the type of pet. The questionnaires were administered along with a cover note explaining the purpose of the research. A copy of the questionnaire and the cover letter can be found in the appendix.

Participants

Two hundred thirty participants took part in this study (76 male and 154 female). Participation was voluntary and no incentives were offered. Participants were sourced from a Dublin City College and from a Dublin City stockbrokers and a snowball sample of interested participants.

Design

A cross-sectional, correlational, quantitative design. The predictor variables are attitude to pets and perceived stress. The criterion variables measured in this study were participants' self-compassion and participants' perceived stress.

Procedure

The researcher obtained permission from lecturers of a Dublin College School to hand out questionnaires. The researcher remained on hand to answer any queries while the questionnaires were filled out. Participants were thanked individually when handing back the survey. The researcher was given a letter of consent by a Dublin City stockbrokers to hand out questionnaires in the premises and remained on hand to answer any queries while the questionnaires were filled out. Participants were thanked individually when handing back the survey. A snowball sample was distributed among interested participants and returned to the researcher via participants, by mail or by email.

Results

The data was analysed using SPSS to investigate the relationship between pet ownership, self-compassion and perceived stress. The aim was to see if pet ownership attitudes and attitudes to pets in general, was significantly related to higher levels of self compassion and lower levels of perceived stress. Table 1 lists the number and type of pets to pet owners.

Table 1: *Number of Cats and Dogs Owned by Gender*

	Frequency (<i>n</i>)	%
	<u>Number of dogs owned</u>	
	<u>Women</u>	
one dog	33	58.9
two dogs	18	32.1
three dogs	5	8.9
	<u>Men</u>	
one dog	24	80
two dogs	6	20
	<u>Number of cats owned</u>	
	<u>Women</u>	
one cat	23	54.8
two cats	15	35.7
three cats	2	4.8
four cats	2	4.8
	<u>Men</u>	
one cat	24	55.6
two cats	6	44.4

Table 1 shows that there were more dogs ($n = 120$) than cats ($n = 103$). The majority of pet owners owned one pet ($n = 104$).

There were 230 participants in the current study aged between 18 years to 80 years ($M = 16.51$, $SD = .501$). Of the 230, 154 (66.9%) were female and 76 (33.1%) were male. Of the 230 there were 113 (49.1%) non-pet owners; 73 (47.4%) were female and 40 (52.6%) were male.

Table 2 shows the attitude toward pets.

Table 2: *Attitudes Toward Pets*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Minimum	Maximum
PAS total score	101.01	18.487	29	126
Female	102.90	17.439	30	126
Male	97.18	20.026	49	125

Table 2 shows the means of the total pet attitude score are high revealing that there was a very high level of positive attitudes to pets. Women had a higher mean (more positive) than men. This supports research from Power (2006) suggesting that women are the primary caregiver of pets.

Table 3 lists the statistics for self-compassion. Showing women had slightly lower means of self-compassion than men.

Table 3: Self-compassion Scores

	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Self-compassion total score	88.59	18.784	30	127
Female	88.09	19.636	30	127
Male	89.59	17.008	49	125

This supports Neff (2003b) findings that women have slightly lower levels of self-compassion compared to men. According to Neff women have lower levels of self-compassion in terms of self-judgment, isolation and mindfulness.

Table 4 lists the results for perceived stress.

Table 4: *Statistics for Perceived Stress*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Minimum	Maximum
Perceived stress total score	20.03	6.898	2	37
Female	20.90	6.446	3	37
Male	18.25	7.446	2	35

Table 4 shows the means for women are higher than men indicating higher levels of perceived stress among women.

A *t* test was used to analyse differences in the attitudes of pet owners toward their pet. Hypothesis 1 predicted that there would be a significant difference in self-compassion between pet owners with a positive attitude toward their pets and pet owners with a non-positive attitudes toward their pets. An independent *t*-test found no differences among pet owners in levels of self-compassion scores. The result of the *t*-test revealed a non-significant relationship between attitudes of pet owners to their pet and their levels of self-compassion ($t(115) = -560, p = .577$).

A *t* test was used to analyse differences in self-compassion between pet and non-pet owners. Hypothesis 2 predicted that there would be a significant difference in self-compassion between pet and non-pet owners. An independent *t*-test found no differences between pet and

non-owners in levels of self-compassion scores. The result of the *t*-test reveal a non-significant relationship between pet and non-pet owners and their levels of self-compassion ($t(228) = -.303, p = .194$).

A *t* test was used to analyse differences in (hypothesis 3) in self-compassion between participants in the study who grew up with a pet in the family home and participants who did not grow up with a pet in the home. The result of the *t*-test reveal a non-significant relationship between participants in the study who grew up with a pet in the family home and participants who did not grow up with a pet in the home ($t(228) = -1.692, p = .092$).

A *t* test was used to analyse differences in (hypothesis 4) perceived stress between participants who grew up with a pet in the family and participants who did not grow up with a pet in the family. The result of the *t*-test reveal a non-significant relationship between participants in the study who grew up with a pet in the family home and participants who did not grow up with a pet in the home ($t(228) = 1.299, p = .195$).

A *t* test was used to analyse differences in (hypothesis 5) perceived stress between pet and non-pet owners. The result of the *t*-test revealed a significant difference in levels of perceived stress between pet and non-pet owners ($t(228) = 2.635, p = .009$). This indicates that pet owners in the study have lower levels of perceived stress than non-pet owners. This supports research that show pet ownership is associated with less stress (Barker et al., 2010; Havener et al. 2001; Headey & Grabka, 2007; Wells 2009). The current studies finding that pet owners have lower levels of stress than non-pet owners is also supported by research from Wells and Perrine (2001) on the benefits of pets in the workplace. Wells and Perrine reported that employees with pets in the workplace reported lower levels of stress than employees with without a pet. Evidence that pet ownership of dogs is associated with positive benefits, lower blood pressure, plasma

cholesterol and triglycerides, all indicators of good health (Arhant-Sudhir, Arant Sudhir & Sudhir, 2010) and indicators of less stress in the person, support the current studies findings regarding pet ownership and stress.

A Pearson's correlation revealed a weak significant negative relationship between 'pets in the home' and perceived stress, ($r = -.130, p = .05$). Positive attitudes toward pets in the family home are associated with lower levels of perceived stress. This broadly supports the findings that pet ownership is associated with lower levels of perceived stress (Havener et al. 2001; Wells 2009). This also supports Power's (2008) view that the dog, along with other members of the household, shape the home. No specific research was found looking at the difference in stress between pet and non-pet owning families.

Table 5 shows the values of a Pearson's correlation between attitudes to pets, perceived stress and self-compassion. A Pearson's correlation was used to test the relationship between attitudes to pets, self-compassion and perceived stress. Hypothesis 6 predicted that there would be a significant correlation between attitudes toward pets, self-compassion, and perceived stress.

Table 5: *Correlation for Self-compassion, Perceived Stress and Attitude to Pets*

	1	2	3
1 - Attitude to pets	-	-.182**	
2 - Perceived stress		-	-
3 - Self-compassion			-

** p significant at .01 level.

A Pearson's correlation found a weak negative significant relationship between self-compassion and perceived stress ($r = -.182, p = .01$). This indicates that higher levels of self-

compassion are associated with lower levels of perceived stress. This supports research by (Leary et al, 2007; Neff, 2003b; Neff 2011; Rockliff et al., 2011). Showing self-compassion is associated with less stress for the pet owner. This supports Neff's (2003) finding that self-compassion is negatively associated with narcissism, self-criticism, depression, anxiety, rumination and thought suppression which are indicators of stress.

A *t* test was used to analyse gender differences for self-compassion. Hypothesis 7 predicted that there would be a significant difference between men and women in levels of self-compassion. The result of the *t*-test reveal a non significant difference between men and women in levels of self-compassion ($t(228) = -.569, p = .570$). According to Neff (2003b) women have lower levels of self-compassion in terms of self-judgement, isolation and mindfulness. Table 5 shows statistics for gender differences in mindfulness.

Table 6: *Statistics for Gender Differences in Subscale Mindfulness*

Variable	Frequency	Mean	SD
Women	154	14.62	3.625
Men	76	14.33	3.523

In contrast to Neff's findings that women have lower levels of self-compassion in terms of the subscale mindfulness, the results in Table 3 reveal the means are almost identical showing women have slightly higher means of self-compassion compared to men in the subscale mindfulness.

A Pearson's correlation was used to test the relationship between age and self-compassion and found a medium significant relationship between age and self-compassion. ($r = .372, p = .01$). This indicates that self-compassion levels increase with age. A split file revealed significant gender differences in the correlation between age and self-compassion. Table 7 illustrates this difference.

Table 7. *Gender Differences in Correlation Between Age and Self-Compassion.*

Gender	Significance	Significance
Female	.432**	
Male	--	.235*

* p significant at .05 level.

** p significant at .01 level.

A Pearson's correlation found a significant medium relationship between gender, age and self-compassion. ($r = .432, p = .01$). A Pearson's correlation found a significant weak relationship between men, age and self-compassion. ($r = .235, p = .01$). Both men's and women's values are significant: self-compassion increases with age with women increasing more than men. There is no research in the self-compassion domain to support these findings.

Discussion

The aim of the current study was to see if positive attitudes toward pets, in pet ownership, are associated with higher levels of self-compassion and lower levels of perceived stress. A further aim of the study also looked at the differences between pet and non-pet owners levels of self-compassion and perceived stress, in comparison, to non pet owners. The study focused from the ABC model: the affect (attachment and social support), behavioural (anthromorphic behaviour regarding pets) and cognition component (pets are part of the family) of attitudes regarding pet ownership.

Hypotheses 1 to 3, looking for differences in self-compassion between pet owners, pet and non-pet owners and participants who grew up with a pet and those that did not, were not supported. Attachment as a possible extra variable in the study design may have given clearer results.

No significant differences was found in hypothesis 4 regarding levels of perceived stress in participants who grew up with a pet and those who did not grow up with a pet. This possibly indicates the stress buffering effect of the pet is dependent on the presence of the pet and not just a history with a pet.

Hypothesis 5 was supported; the findings for positive attitudes toward pets revealed lower levels of perceived stress in pet owners compared to non-pet owners. This fits in with the findings that the presence of a pet and pet ownership are associated with less stress than not having a pet (Havener et al. 2001; Allen, 2003). In addition, in the subscale *pets in the home* of the PAS (Templer et al., 1981) showed that having positive attitudes toward pets indicated lower levels of perceived stress in the home.

A significant difference was found in hypothesis 6 showing that self-compassion is negatively correlated with perceived stress. This fits in with current research (Leary et al, 2007; Neff, 2003b; Neff 2011; Rockliff et al., 2011).

No significant gender difference was found in hypothesis 7 relating to levels of self-compassion. Because the current study's statistics found no gender differences, correlations were carried out on the subscales of self-compassion for clarification. Men and women were similar for mindfulness, contrary to Neff's (2003b) findings.

A correlation was carried out for age and self-compassion. Self-compassion was found to increase with age. This fits in with Neff & Vonk's (2009) research that self-compassion showed a weak significant positive association with age. A split file revealed significant gender differences in the correlation between age and self-compassion. Both men's and women's values are significant: self-compassion increases with age with women increasing significantly more than men. This supports the view that a stronger attachment to pets shows increased benefits to the pet owner (Beck & Madresh, 2008) and that women have better attitudes to pets than men (Wells and Hepper, 1997).

No available research was found regarding pets and self-compassion. The anecdotal evidence suggests a possible link (Crocker & Canevello, 2008; Horn & Meer, 1984) between pet owner's attitudes and self-compassion. Humanistic orientation (interested in the welfare of others) expressed in compassion for others and self-compassionate people who also display compassion for others was not supported. The current study speculates that an individual's level of self-compassion may be dependent on many variables, for example, religious beliefs, personal philosophies, family structure and levels of stress,. In the case of pet-owners and self-compassion, their attitude to their pet may be only one possible variable of many. The finding

that pets have no significant association with self-compassion in the current study may also be due to the difficult economic situation. Irish society after the demise of the Celtic Tiger is going through a difficult time on many levels and self-compassion may be a difficult state to maintain or understand in stressful times. Socioeconomic pressures according to Neff and Vonk (2009) show that self-compassion is not significantly correlated with income. However, Irish people are struggling economically. Pet owners who are struggling may to some degree have a buffer with their companion animal. Neff (2003b) reported self-compassionate people are more emotionally resilient; have lower levels of cortisol under duress. This shows a connection between self-compassion (less stress) and pet owners (less stress). The current studies findings that attitude to pets are not significantly related to self-compassion does not necessarily mean that there is no relationship between pets and their owners levels of self-compassion.

The evidence suggests that self-compassion regarding pets and their owners may have more to do with how attached the owners are to their pet than whether they have a positive or negative attitude to their pet. The reviewed literature regarding attachment and pet ownership highlights the deep relationship between owners and their pets. Self-compassion as conceptualized by Neff (2003a) reports self-compassion as an attitudinal stance that is negatively related to any self-critic. The level of mindfulness (an important aspect of self-compassion) in caring for a pet may be also negatively related to self-critical thought. Future research could look at this and other areas. The relationship between pets and their owners may still have significance but from different perspectives not measured by this study.

Brown's (2007) study found that animals including cats and dogs can provide self-cohesion. The animals are seen as self-objects and Brown identified them as a source of self-esteem, calmness and self soothing attributes. This shows a relationship between Browns view of

the animal as a source of self-cohesion and Neff' (2003a) view of self-compassion. Research looking at the area of identity and pet ownership in terms of self-compassion is also suggested for future research. A study that looks at whether pets are considered part of the family or a possession is also suggested. Belk's (1988) theory of the self argues that possessions can be a part of an extended self. It might be interesting to test Belk's theory in relation to self-compassion and pets.

The evidence that pets have a stress buffering benefit (Collis & McNicholas., 1989; Allen, 2003) and the evidence showing the stronger the attachment the more the benefit to the pet owner (Madresh & Beck, 2008), supports the view that a pet may indirectly affect its owner in ways that make them more self compassionate. The pet is always on hand, it doesn't have mood changes and it acts non-judgmentally. As one widow Sable (1989) study remarked: they (the pets) are there when you need them.

The findings of this study certainly call for future research to expand on the present work. For example, self-compassion hypotheses that include attachment as a variable regarding pet ownership may give a much clearer picture regarding any relationship between pet ownership and self-compassion. Another related interest is the finding that the *pets in the home* subscale revealed an association with lower perceived stress. Studies that looked singularly at pets in the family home and stress was not found although pets are associated with stress reduction (Friedmann et al, 2007; Allen, 2003; Hansen et al., 1999). Research regarding lower levels of stress between pet owning households and non-pet owning households was not found. Either of these suggestions would make a suitable candidate for future research in the pet-person relationship regarding self-compassion and perceived stress.

A limitation of the study was obtaining the appropriate sample to test differences in self-compassion between pet owners and between pet and non-pet owners. The research used a large sample ($N = 230$) but still found it difficult to get an adequate sample of participants with a non-positive attitude to pets. Levels (means) of positive attitudes to pets were very high revealing a difficulty in finding participants with a non-positive attitude to pets. In this context, positive attitudes to pets appeared ubiquitous even among non-pet owners. A sample of participants with a non-positive attitude to pets would need to be specifically targeted to get a clearer picture of any possible relationship between pets and self-compassion.

A criticism of the study and one of its weaknesses appear to be how participants understood the concept of self-compassion. Neff (2003b) acknowledged that not all people understand the concept. The researcher certainly found an amount of confusion regarding self-compassion when talking with participants. This supports findings by Pauley & McPherson (2010) who found difficulty with participant's initial understanding of self-compassion and mindfulness. The researcher in the current study found it was necessary to highlight the difference between self-compassion and self-pity. Because the researcher could not communicate directly with every participant, it seemed that some explanation of the concept of self-compassion should have been included with the initial set of questionnaires. However, that may have posed another problem if a participant used the description of self-compassion as a way to enhance social desirability bias in completing the questionnaire. Some participants, in discussing their feelings after completing the survey, expressed some misunderstanding regards self-compassion. Some thought that self-compassion was the same as saying "don't worry about it", more of a throwaway statement than a philosophically informed stance as it is in Buddhist practice. Others expressed the view that it was good to not accept one's "failings in difficult

times” or that it was good to be “hard on oneself”, yet indicate that they were in a loving kindness relationship to themselves.

The final conclusion reached in the current study is that pet ownership is associated with lower levels of perceived stress. In addition, positive attitudes to pets may regulate the amount of benefit from ownership. Women demonstrated more positive attitudes to pets than men. A positive attitude to pets in the home is also associated with lower stress. Higher levels of self-compassion are associated with lower levels of perceived stress. Age is positively correlated with self-compassion with women showing higher levels of self-compassion over time than men.

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Appendix A

Cover Letter

Dear Participant,

I am a final year psychology student in Dublin Business School. I would like to invite you to take part in a study on pets (cats and dogs) and the relationship between pets and people. The questionnaire should take approximately 5 -10 minutes to fill out but you can take as long as is necessary.

This is an anonymous survey so strictest confidence is assured. Please answer each question with honesty. There is no right or wrong answer and your name is not required Your participation is purely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw your consent at any time.

The first part of the questionnaire records demographical information, such as age, gender and some questions about your history of pet ownership. If however you have never had ownership of a pet you are still able to take part.

Thank you in advance for your time and honesty.

With kind regards,

Brendan Kilty.

Project supervisors: Margaret Quinn Walsh at 

Appendix B

Survey

Please fill in the blanks below

Male ____ Female ____ (Please X)

Age. ____

Are you a currently a pet owner/ Yes ____ No ____ (Please X)

What type of pet _____

How many pets do you own/ Dogs ____ Cats ____ Other _____

Did you grow up with a cat or dog or other pet in the family/ Yes ____ No ____

Was it a cat or dog or other type of pet/ Dog ____ Cat ____ Other _____

Please answer each of the following questions as honestly as you can, in terms of how you feel right now. So, don't worry about how you think others might answer these questions. There aren't any right or wrong answers. All that matters is that you express your true thoughts on the subject.

Please answer by circling one of the following seven numbers for each question:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	unsure	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

For example, if you slightly disagree with the first item, you would circle 3.

If you don't own a pet and are confused how to answer some questions you can use the unsure option.

Thank you for your assistance.

1. I really like seeing pets enjoy their food.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	unsure	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

2. My pet means more to me than any of my friends

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	unsure	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

3. I would like a pet in my home.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	unsure	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

4. Having pets is a waste of money

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	unsure	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

5. Housepets add happiness to my life (or would if I had one).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	unsure	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

6. I feel that pets should always be kept outside.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	unsure	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

7. I spend time every day playing with my pet (or I would if I had one).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	unsure	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

8. I have occasionally communicated with my pet and understood what it was trying to express.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	unsure	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

9. The world would be a better place if people would stop spending so much time caring for their pets and started caring more for other humans instead.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	unsure	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

10. I like to feed animals out of my hand.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	unsure	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

11. I love pets.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	unsure	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

12. Animals belong in the wild or in Zoos, but not in the home.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	unsure	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

13. If you keep pets in the house you can expect a lot of damage.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	unsure	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

14. I like housepets.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	unsure	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

15. Pets are fun but it's not worth the trouble of owning one.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	unsure	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

16. I frequently talk to my pet.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	unsure	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

17. I hate animals.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	unsure	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

18. You should treat your housepets with as much respect as you would a human member of your family.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	unsure	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts **during the last month**. In each case, you will be asked to indicate by circling *how often* you felt or thought a certain way.

(0 = Never) (1 = Almost Never) (2 = Sometimes) (3 = Fairly Often) (4 = Very Often)

For example, In question 1 if you feel that **sometimes** you have been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly, **circle number 2**.

1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?..... 0 1 2 3 4

2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life? 0 1 2 3 4

3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and “stressed”? 0 1 2 3 4

4. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems? 0 1 2 3 4

5. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?..... 0 1 2 3 4

6. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do? 0 1 2 3 4

7. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?..... 0 1 2 3 4

8. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?... 0 1 2 3 4

9. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control?..... 0 1 2 3 4

10. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them? 0 1 2 3 4

Please read each statement carefully before answering. To the left of each item, indicate how often you behave in the stated manner, using the following scale:

Almost never					Almost always
1	2	3	4		5

For example, in question one if you feel that you are never judgemental about personal flaws and inadequacies choose 1. Or if you are sometimes judgemental about personal flaws and inadequacies you could choose 3

- _____ 1. I'm disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.
- _____ 2. When I'm feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong.
- _____ 3. When things are going badly for me, I see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through.
- _____ 4. When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world.
- _____ 5. I try to be loving towards myself when I'm feeling emotional pain.
- _____ 6. When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.

- _____ 7. When I'm down and out, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like I am.
- _____ 8. When times are really difficult, I tend to be tough on myself.
- _____ 9. When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance.
- _____ 10. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.

**Almost
never**

1

2

3

4

**Almost
always**

5

- _____ 11. I'm intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.
- _____ 12. When I'm going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.
- _____ 13. When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.
- _____ 14. When something painful happens I try to take a balanced view of the situation.
- _____ 15. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.
- _____ 16. When I see aspects of myself that I don't like, I get down on myself.
- _____ 17. When I fail at something important to me I try to keep things in perspective.
- _____ 18. When I'm really struggling, I tend to feel like other people must be having an easier time of it.
- _____ 19. I'm kind to myself when I'm experiencing suffering.
- _____ 20. When something upsets me I get carried away with my feelings.
- _____ 21. I can be a bit cold-hearted towards myself when I'm experiencing suffering.
- _____ 22. When I'm feeling down I try to approach my feelings with curiosity and openness.
- _____ 23. I'm tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies.
- _____ 24. When something painful happens I tend to blow the incident out of proportion.
- _____ 25. When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.
- _____ 26. I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.

If you require support on any of these issues some of the following may be of assistance.

Console

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