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Student Research Excellence Award

Application Cover Sheet

Name  Misty Green

Title of Paper/Project  Examining the Relationship between Pet Ownership and Human Health

Class standing  Senior

Major  Psychology

Contact information for faculty member supporting this application

Faculty member’s name  Dr. Ramon Herrera

Faculty member’s department  McNair Scholar Program

Name of course for which work was completed  McNair Scholar Program

Department and course number  N/A

When course was taken  Summer 2008

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Signature  Misty Green  Date 3/5/09
Examining the Relationship between Pet Ownership and Human Health

By
Misty Green, Psychology
Mentor: Dr. Michael Steele, Department of Psychology

A final research paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the completion of the MCNAIR ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
The Graduate School

July 11, 2008
Abstract

Previous research has established that pet ownership is related to psychological (Parslow et. al, 2005) and physical health (Siegel, 1990) in adulthood. However, no research to date has examined the relationship between pet ownership in childhood and psychological and physical health later in life. This study examined the relationship between pet ownership in childhood and physical and psychological functioning in young adulthood. Fifty undergraduate students at Washington State University provided information related to demographics, pet attachment, pet anthropomorphism, and physical and psychological functioning. Regression analysis was used to determine if pet ownership (i.e. pet attachment, pet anthropomorphism) significantly predicted psychological and physical functioning. Results indicated that pet ownership was significantly related to physical functioning, but not psychological functioning. Although the results from the current investigation are promising, further research is necessary to better understand the relationship between pet ownership and human health.
Introduction

Pet ownership is a large part of American culture, and encompasses more than just the actual legal retention of an animal (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). For example, Sable (1995) describes how pet ownership includes both the physical and emotional care of an animal, and how this relationship requires commitment and attention by the owner. Albert and Bulcroft (1988) extend this definition to include the level of attachment an individual feels to their pet and how likely they are to attribute human characteristics to the animal (i.e., pet anthropomorphism). According to prior research, an owner may benefit psychologically and physically from the relationship with their pet (e.g., Sable, 1995; Siegel, 1990).

In fact, this area has received a great deal of attention in the literature, with numerous studies examining the relationship between pet ownership and human health. Human health can be defined as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well being, and not merely the absence of infirmity" (World Health Organization, 1948). Albert and colleagues (1988) examined the psychological and emotional roles of pets in urban areas, and found evidence that pets are often seen as family members who are capable of providing affection and attachment. Albert and Bulcroft (1988) also found that separation or death of a pet can lead to separation anxiety, grief, and mourning. Further results indicated that owning a pet after a divorce or after the death of a spouse can help individuals form a sense of attachment that improved their psychological health (Albert & Bulcroft, 1988). In a similar study, Sable (1995) conducted a face-to-face interview with eighty-one women who had been widows for one to three years. The interview included questions related to the different adjustments participants had made in their lives after loosing their husbands. Results showed that women who owned animals reported less loneliness than women who didn’t own pets. Qualitative results described how women who
owned pets benefited from having someone to come home and talk to and how their pets "knew" about their sadness and what they needed to feel better.

Although more attention in the literature has been paid to the relationship between pet ownership and an individual’s psychological well being, there are studies that have also examined the impact this relationship can have on one’s physical health. One of the few studies focusing on this area found that elderly pet owners reported fewer visits to a physician over a one-year period than respondents who did not own pets (Siegel, 1990). Similarly, it has been found that children who lived with pets evidence less absenteeism from school due to sickness than children who do not own pets (McNicholas et al, 2005).

Although the exact mechanism for this relationship has not been established, there are a number of possible explanations for this relationship. Because, pet ownership improves well being, it may be that individuals with higher levels of well being experience better physical health. In fact research exists that supports this relationship. For, example, results from a recent study indicated that higher perceived psychological well being was positively related to positive perception about general health (Hamdan-Mansour & Marmash, 2007).

Although the relationship between human health and pet ownership has been previously studied, important questions remain unanswered. For example, will owning a pet during one stage of life have a positive effect on a later stage? Specifically, does pet ownership in childhood predict an individual’s psychological and physical functioning in adulthood?

Method

Participants included 50 undergraduate students from the Psychology Department research pool at Washington State University. Each undergraduate student enrolled in courses within the Psychology department at Washington State University had access to an online
research database that allowed them to sign up for participation in psychology-related research experiments. Participation was voluntary and not required for any course. Participants chose from a list of sessions online, registered for a specific session, and met a trained research assistant at the research lab. After informed consent was obtained, each participant was given a questionnaire packet and then instructed by the researcher to answer the pet questionnaire based on one pet they owned in childhood and/or adolescence. Participants then completed the research packet in the research lab on the university campus. The participants were given as much time as they needed to fill out the questionnaires; the average amount of time was 40-50 minutes to complete the packet.

Measures

Demographics: Participants completed a demographic questionnaire asking about their sex, age, marital status, year in school, nationality/ethnicity, and academic major/minor (see Appendix A).

Pet Ownership: To assess variables related to pet ownership, participants completed three separate measures. These measures included a nine-item questionnaire used by Albert & Bulcroft (1988) that assesses pet attachment (level of closeness the owner feels to their pet). To further assess pet ownership, participants completed a ten-item questionnaire that assesses the degree to which an individual attributes human characteristics to their pet, or pet anthropomorphism (Albert & Bulcroft, 1988; e.g., “Should animals have the same rights as humans?”). Participants completed an additional questionnaire developed by the researcher to obtain information related to length of pet ownership, type of pet, who had the majority of responsibility for the pet and what those responsibilities were. Finally, participants were asked to provide any additional
information they wanted to share related to their pet on a blank sheet of paper. All pet ownership questionnaires can be found in Appendix B.

**Human Health:** The SF-36 health survey was used to assess both psychological and physical functioning for this investigation (Appendix C; Hays, Sherbourne, & Mazel, 1993). The SF-36 is a thirty-six item measure designed to assess eight health concepts: including physical functioning, bodily pain, role limitations due to physical health problems, role limitations due to personal or emotional problems, general mental health, social functioning, energy/fatigue, and general health perceptions. The SF-36 also includes a single item that provides an indication of perceived change in health.

**Results**

*Preliminary Transformations/Analyses*

Based on scoring instructions provided by the authors of the measures (i.e., Albert & Bulcroft), items from each pet ownership measure were summed to generate separate total scores for pet attachment and pet anthropomorphism. These two summary scores were then added to create a single score of pet ownership. Similarly, the SF-36 scoring instruction were followed to generate eight separate subscale scores (i.e., physical functioning, bodily pain, role limitation due to physical health problems, role limitations due to personal or emotional problems, emotional well being, social functioning, energy fatigue, and general health perceptions). However, for the current investigation, only the physical functioning and emotional well being (psychological functioning) subscales were used in the analyses. Descriptive statistics related to pet ownership and human health variables can be found in Table 2.

To determine if participant demographic variables were significantly related to primary variables of interest (i.e., physical functioning, psychological functioning, pet attachment, pet
anthropomorphism), Pearson correlations were conducted. Results indicated that participant age was significantly correlated with physical functioning. Therefore, participant age was controlled for in subsequent analyses that included physical functioning.

Demographic variables (participant age, gender, and ethnicity, year in school and marital status) were examined for descriptive purposes (see Table 1). Results from these analyses, indicated that seventy-four percent of the participants were female and the average participant was 23.04 years old. Participants described their ethnicity as Caucasian (62%), African American (8%), Asian/Pacific Islander (14%), Hispanic (12%), and other (4%). The majority (64%) of participants indicated they were in their senior year of school and most were single (90%). Pet ownership variables showed that seventy percent of the participants surveyed owned a dog, eighteen percent owned cats and the other participants owned various smaller animals such as guinea pigs, rabbits, fish and hamsters (see Figure 1).

**Primary Analyses**

To assess the relationship between pet ownership and human health, two separate regression analyses were conducted. For the first regression analysis, the level of pet ownership was entered as the independent variable and the level of psychological functioning was entered as the dependent variable. Results indicated that pet ownership was not a significant predictor of psychological functioning \( F(1, 48) = -0.045, p > .05 \). For the second regression analysis, the level of pet ownership was entered as the independent variable and the level of physical functioning as the dependent variable. It should be noted that participant age was controlled for during this analysis. Results indicated that pet ownership significantly predicted physical functioning \( F(1, 48) = -6.79, p < .01 \).
Discussion

The present study examined the relationship between pet ownership and human health. Specifically, regression analyses were conducted to examine associations between pet ownership variables (i.e., pet attachment, pet anthropomorphism), psychological functioning, and physical functioning. Results indicated that pet ownership was a significant predictor of physical functioning, but not psychological functioning.

The lack of relationship between pet ownership and psychological functioning was unexpected and is inconsistent with previous research (e.g., Sable, 1995). It may be that the small sample size reduced statistical power to the point where this relationship was undetectable. Additionally, descriptive statistics suggest a very narrow range of pet ownership scores (i.e., participants were high on pet ownership variables), which may have reduced variability to the point of nonsignificance. Additional research with a larger sample size that includes individuals who have lower levels of pet attachment and/or pet anthropomorphism may provide important information related to this relationship.

The finding that pet ownership predicted physical functioning is a promising one and is consistent with the hypothesis from the study and previous research (Siegel, 1990). These finding suggest that individuals who are more attached to a pet can experience greater physical functioning. However, future research is necessary to determine the exact mechanism that explains this relationship (e.g., psychological functioning).

This study is not without limitations. As previously mentioned, the relatively small sample size may have resulted in low statistical power, which could have affected the findings related to pet ownership and psychological functioning. Similarly, the lack of diversity in the sample may limit generalizability of the findings. Specifically, the current sample consisted of
predominately Caucasian, young, female participants. Again, future studies that utilize a larger sample size could provide adequate statistical power to confirm the relationship between pet ownership and psychological functioning and may enhance the external validity in this line of research.

In summary, this study is one of the first to ask important questions about pet ownership in childhood and human health later in life. Ultimately, a better understanding of this relationship may enhance human health during the lifespan through relatively cost effective means (i.e., through owning a pet). Additionally, certain populations may experience an improvement in health through pet-based therapies such as animal assisted therapy.
References


Table 1:
Demographic Information for the Sample

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Figure 1:

*Descriptive Statistics: Type of Pets Owned*

Types of Pets Owned

- Dog
- Cat
- Hamster
- Fish
- Guinea Pig
- Rabbit
Table 2:
*Descriptive Statistics: Pet Ownership and Human Health Variables*

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Appendix A

Demographic Questionnaire

Please answer each question by checking the appropriate box or listing the answer to the question.

Sex:
☐ Male
☐ Female

Date of Birth: ____/____/____

Marital Status
☐ Single
☐ Married
☐ Divorced
☐ Widowed

Year in School
☐ Freshman
☐ Sophomore
☐ Junior
☐ Senior

Living at home
☐ Yes
☐ No

Ethnicity
☐ Caucasian
☐ African American
☐ Native American
☐ Asian/Pacific Islander
☐ Hispanic
☐ Other

Academic Major: ______________________

Academic Minor (if applicable): ______________________
Appendix B
Pet Questionnaire

*Please answer each question by checking the appropriate box or listing the answer to the question.*

What type of pet did you own as a child/adolescent?

- [ ] Dog
- [ ] Cat
- [ ] Other (please name type of pet) ________________

How old were you when you owned a pet? ________________

Did you have primary responsibility for the pet?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

Was it a family owned pet?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

Did you consider your pet to be a member of your family?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

As a child/adolescent, what responsibilities were you required to do for your pet?

__________________________

__________________________

__________________________

What was the name of your pet? ________________________

Who came up with your pet’s name?

- [ ] You
- [ ] Mother/Father
- [ ] Family

Was your pet spade or neutered?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

Did your pet visit the veterinarian often (for checkups, shots, etc)

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
Do you currently own a different pet from the one you just described?

☐ Yes
☐ No

I felt closer to (pet's name) than to many of my friends?

☐ Strongly disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Agree
☐ Strongly agree

I liked (pet's name) because he/she accepted me no matter what I did.

☐ Strongly disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Agree
☐ Strongly agree

(Pet's name) made me feel loved

☐ Strongly disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Agree
☐ Strongly agree

(Pet's name) gave me something to talk about with others

☐ Always
☐ Often
☐ Occasionally
☐ Seldom
☐ Never

I felt closer to (pet's name) than to other family members

☐ Strongly disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Agree
☐ Strongly agree

(Pet's name) kept me from being lonely

☐ Strongly disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Agree
☐ Strongly agree
I liked (pet’s name) because he/she was more loyal than other people in my life

- [ ] Strongly disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Strongly agree

(Pet’s name) gave me something to take care of

- [ ] Strongly disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Strongly agree

There were times when (pet’s name) was my closest companion

- [ ] Strongly disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Strongly agree

Sometimes pets become seriously ill and need extensive medical treatment. Decisions concerning medical treatment may come hard to families due to their attachments to their pets, coupled with the financial reality of large veterinary bills. If one of your pets became seriously ill and required extensive medical care, at which point do you think you would decide to have the pet put to sleep rather than seek medical attention? When the bill was approximately...

- [ ] $ 50.00
- [ ] $100.00
- [ ] $200.00
- [ ] $300.00
- [ ] $400.00
- [ ] $500.00
- [ ] More than $500.00
- [ ] There is no amount of money which would keep me from giving the required medical care to my pets if there was a chance it might help.

No family is complete until there is a pet in the home

- [ ] Strongly disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Strongly agree
Have your feelings toward people ever been affected by the way that they have reacted to your pet?
☐ Always
☐ Often
☐ Occasionally
☐ Seldom
☐ Never

How often did you take pets along when visiting?
☐ Always
☐ Often
☐ Occasionally
☐ Seldom
☐ Never

Pets should have the same rights as people
☐ Strongly disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Agree
☐ Strongly agree

Did you celebrate your pet’s birthday?
☐ Yes
☐ No

Did you have a picture of your pet(s) in your wallet or on display at your home or office?
☐ Yes
☐ No

I liked (pet’s name) because he/she was more loyal than other people in my life.
☐ Strongly disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Agree
☐ Strongly agree

To what extent do you feel that (pet’s name) was a part of your family? Would you say…
☐ Not at all
☐ Not much
☐ A little
☐ Quite a lot
☐ Very much
Did (pet's name) have access to all parts of your home?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Please make any additional comments about your pet:
Appendix C

SF-36(tm) Health Survey

Instructions for completing the questionnaire: Please answer every question. Some questions may look like others, but each one is different. Please take the time to read and answer each question carefully by filling in the bubble that best represents your response.

1. In general, would you say your health is:
   - [ ] Excellent
   - [ ] Very good
   - [ ] Good
   - [ ] Fair
   - [ ] Poor

2. Compared to one year ago, how would you rate your health in general now?
   - [ ] Much better now than a year ago
   - [ ] Somewhat better now than a year ago
   - [ ] About the same as one year ago
   - [ ] Somewhat worse now than one year ago
   - [ ] Much worse now than one year ago

3. The following items are about activities you might do during a typical day. Does your health now limit you in these activities? If so, how much?
   a. Vigorous activities, such as running, lifting heavy objects, participating in strenuous sports.
      - [ ] Yes, limited a lot.
      - [ ] Yes, limited a little.
      - [ ] No, not limited at all.
   b. Moderate activities, such as moving a table, pushing a vacuum cleaner, bowling, or playing golf?
      - [ ] Yes, limited a lot.
      - [ ] Yes, limited a little.
      - [ ] No, not limited at all.
   c. Lifting or carrying groceries.
      - [ ] Yes, limited a lot.
      - [ ] Yes, limited a little.
      - [ ] No, not limited at all.
   d. Climbing several flights of stairs.
      - [ ] Yes, limited a lot.
      - [ ] Yes, limited a little.
      - [ ] No, not limited at all.
   e. Climbing one flight of stairs.
      - [ ] Yes, limited a lot.
      - [ ] Yes, limited a little.
      - [ ] No, not limited at all.
   f. Bending, kneeling or stooping.
      - [ ] Yes, limited a lot.
      - [ ] Yes, limited a little.
      - [ ] No, not limited at all.
g. Walking more than one mile.
   □ Yes, limited a lot.
   □ Yes, limited a little.
   □ No, not limited at all.

h. Walking several blocks.
   □ Yes, limited a lot.
   □ Yes, limited a little.
   □ No, not limited at all.

i. Walking one block.
   □ Yes, limited a lot.
   □ Yes, limited a little.
   □ No, not limited at all.

j. Bathing or dressing yourself.
   □ Yes, limited a lot.
   □ Yes, limited a little.
   □ No, not limited at all.

4. During the past 4 weeks, have you had any of the following problems with your work or other regular daily activities as a result of your physical health?

   a. Cut down the amount of time you spent on work or other activities?
      □ Yes □ No

   b. Accomplished less than you would like?
      □ Yes □ No

   c. Were limited in the kind of work or other activities
      □ Yes □ No

   d. Had difficulty performing the work or other activities (for example, it took extra time)
      □ Yes □ No

5. During the past 4 weeks, have you had any of the following problems with your work or other regular daily activities as a result of any emotional problems (such as feeling depressed or anxious)?

   a. Cut down the amount of time you spent on work or other activities?
      □ Yes □ No

   b. Accomplished less than you would like
      □ Yes □ No

   c. Didn't do work or other activities as carefully as usual
      □ Yes □ No

6. During the past 4 weeks, to what extent has your physical health or emotional problems interfered with your normal social activities with family, friends, neighbors, or groups?
   □ Not at all
   □ Slightly
   □ Moderately
   □ Quite a bit
   □ Extremely
7. How much bodily pain have you had during the past 4 weeks?
   - Not at all
   - Slightly
   - Moderately
   - Quite a bit
   - Extremely

8. During the past 4 weeks, how much did pain interfere with your normal work (including both work outside the home and housework)?
   - Not at all
   - Slightly
   - Moderately
   - Quite a bit
   - Extremely

9. These questions are about how you feel and how things have been with you during the past 4 weeks. For each question, please give the one answer that comes closest to the way you have been feeling. How much of the time during the past 4 weeks.
   a. did you feel full of pep?
      - All of the time
      - Most of the time
      - A good bit of the time
      - Some of the time
      - A little of the time
      - None of the time
   b. have you been a very nervous person?
      - All of the time
      - Most of the time
      - A good bit of the time
      - Some of the time
      - A little of the time
      - None of the time
   c. have you felt so down in the dumps nothing could cheer you up?
      - All of the time
      - Most of the time
      - A good bit of the time
      - Some of the time
      - A little of the time
      - None of the time
   d. have you felt calm and peaceful?
      - All of the time
      - Most of the time
      - A good bit of the time
      - Some of the time
      - A little of the time
      - None of the time
e. did you have a lot of energy?
   [ ] All of the time
   [ ] Most of the time
   [ ] A good bit of the time
   [ ] Some of the time
   [ ] A little of the time
   [ ] None of the time

f. have you felt downhearted and blue?
   [ ] All of the time
   [ ] Most of the time
   [ ] A good bit of the time
   [ ] Some of the time
   [ ] A little of the time
   [ ] None of the time

g. did you feel worn out?
   [ ] All of the time
   [ ] Most of the time
   [ ] A good bit of the time
   [ ] Some of the time
   [ ] A little of the time
   [ ] None of the time

h. have you been a happy person?
   [ ] All of the time
   [ ] Most of the time
   [ ] A good bit of the time
   [ ] Some of the time
   [ ] A little of the time
   [ ] None of the time

i. did you feel tired?
   [ ] All of the time
   [ ] Most of the time
   [ ] A good bit of the time
   [ ] Some of the time
   [ ] A little of the time
   [ ] None of the time

10. During the past 4 weeks, how much of the time has your physical health or emotional problems interfered with your social activities (like visiting friends, relatives, etc.)?
   [ ] All of the time
   [ ] Most of the time
   [ ] Some of the time
   [ ] A little of the time
   [ ] None of the time

11. How TRUE or FALSE is each of the following statements for you?

   a. I seem to get sick a little easier than other people
      [ ] Definitely true
      [ ] Mostly true
      [ ] Don't know
      [ ] Mostly false
      [ ] Definitely false
b. I am as healthy as anybody I know
   - Definitely true
   - Mostly true
   - Don't know
   - Mostly false
   - Definitely false

c. I expect my health to get worse
   - Definitely true
   - Mostly true
   - Don't know
   - Mostly false
   - Definitely false

d. My health is excellent
   - Definitely true
   - Mostly true
   - Don't know
   - Mostly false
   - Definitely false
Examining the Relationship between Pet Ownership and Human Health: A Meditational Model

Misty Green, Washington State University
Michael Steele, PhD, Washington State University

INTRODUCTION

• Pet ownership is a large part of American culture, and encompasses more than just the actual legal retention of an animal (Ryff & Keyes, 1993).

• According to prior research, an owner may benefit psychologically and physically from the relationship with their pet (Sable, 1995; Siegel, 1990).

• Human health can be defined as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well being, and not merely the absence of infirmity" (World Health Organization, 1948).

• This study was designed to examine the relationship between pet ownership in childhood and psychological and physical functioning in adulthood.

METHODS

Participants & Procedures:

• Fifty undergraduate students from the Psychology Department research pool at Washington State University were recruited to participate in this study.

• Participants were given a questionnaire packet to complete containing three different questionnaires: demographics measure, SF-36, and Pet Ownership.

• Each participant was given a questionnaire packet to complete containing three different questionnaires: demographics measure, SF-36, and Pet Ownership.

• Participants chose from a list of sessions online, registered for a specific session, and met a trained research assistant at the research lab.

Table 1: Demographic Information for the Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
<th>M (SD)</th>
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<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Primary Variables of Interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Functioning</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>95.70</td>
<td>7.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Functioning</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>96.00</td>
<td>15.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pet Attachment</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>33.00</td>
<td>26.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pet Anthropomorphism</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>22.00</td>
<td>37.00</td>
<td>29.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RESULTS

• Preliminary analyses indicated that participant age was significantly correlated with physical functioning. Therefore, participant age was controlled for in subsequent analyses that included physical functioning.

• Next, a method described by Baron and Kenny (1986) was used to test the proposed meditational model. This method includes conducting regression analysis to examine the relationships between pet ownership, psychological functioning, and physical functioning (see Figure 2).

• Results from the 1st regression analysis indicated that pet ownership significantly predicted physical functioning $F(1, 48) = 5.069, p < .05$.

• However, results from the 2nd regression analysis indicated that pet ownership was not a significant predictor of psychological functioning $F(1, 48) = .045, p > .05$.

• Because these findings were not significant for the 2nd regression analysis, the next steps of Baron and Kenny's (1986) method of evaluating mediation were not warranted.

CONCLUSIONS

• Results indicated that pet ownership was a significant predictor of psychological functioning, but not physical functioning.

• The lack of relationship between pet ownership and psychological functioning was unexpected and inconsistent with previous research (Sable, 1995).

• It may be that the small sample size reduced statistical power to the point where this relationship was undetectable.

• Additionally, descriptive statistics suggest a very narrow range of pet ownership scores (i.e., most participants were high on pet ownership variables), which may have reduced variability to the point of non-significance.

• Additional research with a larger sample size that includes individuals who have lower levels of pet attachment and/or pet anthropomorphism may provide important information related to this relationship.

SELECTED REFERENCES


As a McNair scholar I have been lucky enough to complete my own research project, paper and poster: Examining the Relationship between Pet Ownership & Human Health: A meditational model. I was able to present my poster at an APA conference at the University of Kansas, the National McNair conference in Wisconsin and later this month at the WSU Academic Showcase.

I began my project brainstorming ideas and topics that interest me. I'm a Psychology major with an interest in getting my PhD in Child Psychology. I would like to have a private practice where I use therapy animals as tools to help children who have been through traumatic events. After meeting with my mentor, Dr. Michael Steele, we felt that staying within the topic of animals would be a good first research project. Due to the time and resource limits, I decided to start at the beginning, simply seeing how much an animal was able to impact a human's life.

I've never taken a psychology class that had in-depth coverage on the topic of therapy animals. The only first hand experience I had was my father's service/therapy animal, Sally. I've seen her improve his life for the better as well as everyday strangers that she meets. I've seen her transform people's moods in a matter of minutes. This type of observation made me sure I could find researchers who could back up what I had seen with my own eyes.

I started at Holland/Terrell library at the reference desk. There was a nice older woman who walked me through the online article search process. I then spent numerous hours finding and reading articles through the WSU library website. After a few successful days, I expanded my research to include journals and books located in Holland/Terrell Library. Most of my sources came from online peer-reviewed, scholarly articles. The library website was great. I was able to pull full-text articles from the site and print them. The few articles that weren't available as full-text, the website gave me links to places where I could receive the full-text. I saved many hours by quickly scanning articles online and easily deciding what would and would not work for my project. I'm not sure how long the research portion of my project would have taken if I didn't have the library website to help.

Once I had articles in hand. I was able to thoroughly read what other researchers had learned about animals and their interactions with humans. I was then able to come up with my own hypothesis. I looked at how other researchers had conducted their experiments and from that I learned how to put my own research project together. A couple of the questionnaires I used for my experiment were the same ones used by other researchers I had read about in those articles. I also came up with a few of my own.

Once the experiment was complete, it was time to pull the scholarly articles and books out to write the literature review portion of my paper where I talked about what research had already been done and what the findings of that research were. Thanks to the vast
amount of research articles I had complied, I was able to write a thorough literature review as well as link my research with these other researchers throughout the rest of my paper.

The Holland/Terrell Library and the WSU library website were instrumental tools in the ability to complete my first research project.