

ATTITUDES OF PARENTS TOWARD PET OWNERSHIP

By

PATRICIA LOIS SHELL

Bachelor of Science in Education

University of Tulsa

Tulsa, Oklahoma

1972

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate College
of the Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
July, 1974

Thesis
1974
S544a
cop. 2

NOV 25 1974

ATTITUDES OF PARENTS TOWARD PET OWNERSHIP

Thesis Approved:

Josephine Hoffer

Thesis Adviser

James Jackson

Rich Stinnett

N. N. Duke

Dean of the Graduate College

896873

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer expresses her appreciation to the faculty and staff of the Department of Family Relations and Child Development for their cooperation during the duration of this study.

Special gratitude is expressed to Dr. Josephine Hoffer, Associate Professor and Acting Head, Department of Family Relations and Child Development for her unending patience, encouragement, and compassion. Her genuine concern and support has made this study pleasant and its completion possible. The writer will always be grateful for her counsel and wisdom.

Appreciation is extended to Dr. Nick Stinnett, Associate Professor, Family Relations and Child Development, and Dr. James Walters, Professor, Family Relations and Child Development, for their reading of this manuscript, and to the teachers and staff of the Preschool Laboratories, Oklahoma State University, spring semester, 1974, who were willing to cooperate in this study.

The deepest appreciation is expressed to the writer's beautiful mother whose patience and love was a constant source of encouragement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. THE PROBLEM	1
The Need for the Study	1
The Purposes of the Study	2
II. RELATED LITERATURE	3
Pets Appropriate for Young Children	3
Age of the Child in Relation to Pet Ownership	6
Reasons for Pet Ownership	8
The Psychological Implications of Pets on Family Life	17
Summary	21
III. PROCEDURE	23
Selection of Subjects	23
Development of the Questionnaire	23
IV. ANALYSIS OF DATA	25
Major Findings and Discussion	31
Comments From Parents	36
V. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS	38
Findings	39
Recommendations for Further Research	39
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	40
APPENDIX	42

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
I. Children of Parents Classified by Sex and Age	26
II. Location and Type of Housing As Reported by Parents	26
III. Frequency and Percentage of Parents' Responses Reflecting Current Ownership of Pets	27
IV. Frequency and Percentage of Parents' Responses Reflecting Ownership of Pets During Childhood	28
V. Parents' Responses Reflecting the Age They Preferred a Child to Own a Pet	29
VI. Factors Influencing Parents' Choice of a Pet	30
VII. Parents' Preference for Pets	32
VIII. Parents' Responses Indicating Pets' Contribution to a Child's Growth and Happiness	34

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

The ownership of pets has potential for the general development and well-being of children. In the past, pet ownership has received little attention in scientific investigation, and its relationship to the development of children has been relatively unexplored. The present study was concerned with what parents believe pets contribute to the development of their children.

The Need for the Study

The beliefs and attitudes of parents influence those of their children. The role of pets in child development and family life has largely been overlooked in scientific study. There is a need for additional information and greater understanding of the way pets influence families and the maturation of children because of their obvious popularity in the United States. Literally, millions of dollars are spent annually to maintain pets.

Why should it be advantageous to the welfare and development of children to own a pet? What benefits can be derived from a relationship between children and animals? The function of pets as companion, teacher and guardian has been ignored by many people, probably because their contribution is not obvious and easily goes unnoticed--except to those directly affected.

The Purposes of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to ascertain pets' contribution to children's development as indicated by parents. Specifically, the purposes were:

1. To ascertain pets' contribution to the development of children
2. To determine parents' preferences for a specific pet, and
3. To determine influences on parents' selection of pets.

CHAPTER II

RELATED LITERATURE

To gain insight into the area of pets as related to child development, the literature was reviewed and categorized into the following sections: (1) The kinds of pets appropriate for young children, (2) Factors affecting pet selection, (3) Parents' reasons for owning pets, and (4) The psychological implications of pets on family life.

Pets Appropriate for Young Children

The literature concerning pets for children reveals a consensus that there is a large variety of suitable pets from which to choose; the important factor being that any particular pet chosen must be well suited to the personality of the individual child. For example, if a child needs a pet that is playful, affectionate and one that will be a companion, the pet chosen for him should not be a cat, whose aloofness and hostility is legendary (Rice, 1968). If the child is resentful toward a warm, loving relationship with a pet, that child does not need the close association of a dog (Rice, 1968). A cat, a reptile or fish would be more acceptable to him. This indicates the importance of the relationship for parents; since they are usually the ones responsible for the purchase and care for the pet. Every parent who provides a pet for his family wants his children to enjoy the pet. To insure a successful situation, care should be taken in selecting a pet that is

appropriate to the child and his personality.

There is no one pet that is best for children. Levinson, Yeshiva University psychotherapist and specialist in the study of people and pets, as quoted by Drissell (1972) reported:

I recommend all kinds of pets. But what is best depends on the family situation. The family should meet together and decide jointly which pet is to be chosen. If it's practical, let the child have what he wants (p. 162).

Allowing the child to make the selection could be a means of insuring the suitability of the pet, the theory being that the child would naturally select a pet appealing to him. Sullenger (1960), in discussing who should choose the pet, suggests that the family should vote for the pet most appealing to the individual family, and best suited to its particular way of life. When the family reaches a joint agreement there tends to be less rejection toward the pet and more acceptance. This is particularly true when there are several children in the family. It is important that all family members have a part in the decision-making process.

Sullenger (1960) reports that such factors as: size of house, number and ages of children, financial ability to feed pets and the decision as to who will assume care for the pets are other factors to consider in selecting pets. Piers (1966) stated: ". . . they, unlike their elders, have not yet drawn a clear line between the human race and all other creatures" (p. 126). A young child considers pets "his kind of people," sharing his likes and dislikes. When his "pal" does not enjoy chewing his gum, or riding in a doll's carriage, he does not easily understand.

Gruenberg (1958) suggests, it can be any "small, living animal that

a child can watch, care for, and love." A cat appeals to many children and their parents because of its independent personality, clean and quiet ways, and the fact that they require little care, except feeding and affection. Living in small areas sometimes makes it difficult to have a dog or cat. A canary is at home in a cage requiring little space. Even a cricket or katydid can live well in a box with air holes and can bring pleasure and relaxation to its owner with a cheerful song. The choice of pets can be fascinating. One can find a pet that would appeal to any child. Although fish are not as personable as dogs or other pets; they are interesting. When there is room for them, white mice, guinea pigs, hamsters, or rabbits can give children the experience of watching and caring for a living being.

Findings from research indicate that an older child does not enjoy pets that show no affection or attention. The older child is seeking a playmate and thus a dog or cat becomes his pet preference. Earlier studies revealed that a child's interest in dogs and cats increases rapidly from seven to fourteen years, with a peak at about age twelve. Also, interest in cats culminates sooner than a similar interest in dogs. Dogs are preferred to cats, most likely because of their open affectionate nature toward their master; whereas cats are generally recognized as "egocentric animals" who show little affection for anyone (Hurlock, 1972).

Teicher (1953) in Your Child and His Problems wrote that kittens are better suited for children under seven years of age than are dogs because younger children cannot assume responsibility for the care of a dog. Also, children are often unknowingly cruel. Cats will not tolerate such treatment, while a dog usually would not revolt against its

master. Kugelmass (1965) in Wisdom With Children agreed that for pre-schoolers a kitten is better than a dog because "a kitten will protect itself but a dog suffers cruelty" (p. 212).

There are several lists of recommended pets for children which include fish, turtles, snakes, rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters, gerbils, mice, rats, birds, cats, dogs, lambs, goats, pigs, ponies, horses, worms, ants, beetles, salamanders, chameleons, tadpoles, frogs, chickens, ducks and geese (Hein, 1971; Gruenberg, 1958; Teicher, 1953). Kugelmass (1965) suggested that parakeets be avoided because of the danger of chronic febrile illness from contact infection, since young children do not always wash their hands before putting them into their mouths. There have also been isolated cases of Salmonella infections from turtles. The turtle commonly eats hamburger meat or some other substance infected with bacteria and then transfers it to the child. In many areas of the country, the selling of turtles has been banned.

Kugelmass (1965) indicated that a boy, especially, needs an association with a dog. He states, "A dog is the only animal that loves you more than himself. In fact, he is the only animal that gives you nothing but love" (p. 212). This relationship between a boy and a dog is a very close one. When the boy is happy, so is the dog. When the boy is sad, the dog can comfort him. If a child feels lonely, and is starving for companionship and affection, a dog can do much to give him warmth, security and love.

Age of the Child in Relation to Pet Ownership

Literature indicates that the age of the pet owner varies

considerably. Every situation is different and the personality traits of each individual child should be taken into consideration. There can be no "iron-clad," hard-fast rule concerning a child's age and his capability for owning a pet. It must depend upon the situation, the purpose of the pet as understood by the parents and the needs of the individual child.

Taylor (1968) suggests, "Every child should have a pet of his own as soon as he is old enough to understand that animals have feelings and must be treated with kindness" (p. 85). There are different opinions as to which age is best for acquiring the role of pet owner. Kenyon (1943) suggests that even a child three years of age can be happy with a pet and will derive much benefit from it. She believes that even at an early age a child should be led to assume some responsibility for it. Hein (1971) in Entertaining Your Child reports that a child of five is not yet mature enough to care for a pet on a full-time basis. But a child at this age frequently wants a pet. Of course, at this early age a parent would need to assume responsibility for the pet's welfare. The responsibility for caring for a pet develops slowly. Piers (1966) recommends that a child is not old enough to care for a living animal until he or she is ten or twelve years of age.

Stewart (1955) reported in The Growing Family that seven is a good age for a child to own pets. At this age they are old enough to assume some of the responsibility for the animal. They are still uncertain of their self-concept and need to have someone who will love them for themselves alone. Pets fulfill this need. They give a seven year old a sense of security and well-being in his/her own position.

The literature, in general, indicates that age of the child is not

as important as the parent's attitude. If the parent expects to assume the ultimate care of the pet and does not feel resentful when the child forgets, then the ownership of the pet will not become a source of friction within the home. Close supervision by the parent insures the safety of both the animal and the child, regardless of age.

Reasons for Pet Ownership

Bossard (1953) reports in the publication, Mental Hygiene, a three year research project, involving thirty-seven case studies. Family members were carefully interviewed. Additional material was extended over several years. The results suggested that pets be taken seriously and considered objectively and not merely regarded as a trivial matter with sentimental overtones.

Bossard's (1944) article entitled "The Mental Hygiene of Owning a Dog" attracted more world-wide attention than any similar article published before that time in a modern journal. The article was written to support the statement that "domestic animals play an important role in family life and in the mental health of its members, particularly children" (p. 37). The article's primary concern was with the ownership of dogs. The dog serves us in the following ways, as cited by Bossard (1944):

(1) As an outlet for affection--its chief purpose, although some people refuse to admit or recognize any affection for their dog. "In most families, affection for the dog is open and frank . . . the dog receives more attention and affection than any other member of the family" (p. 37). With the hectic, tense, impersonal life of today, it is increasingly important that there be an outlet for feelings and

affections.

(2) The dog serves each of us according to our affectional needs. Comfort from loneliness, solace for hurt-feelings, attention from neglect, confidence from doubt, a certainty of the genuineness of affections, and hope from discouragement are accomplished through "a pair of adoring eyes and a wagging tail." A dog gives "all" to a person according to that person's individual needs--"asking nothing even when expecting much" (p. 37).

People are freed of their normal inhibitions or restraint toward dogs. Human relationships are seldom as free or impulsive as are actions toward a dog. Too many times the expression of love is left unsaid because of a fear of rejection or an uncertain association. This is not true with respect to dogs. Confidence in the relationship and trust in the honest and open acceptance of a dog for his owner allows love and affection to be expressed without fear of recrimination or hostility.

(3) The quality of relationship between human and dog is a deep and lasting one. The attachment is emotional, spanning the years through remembrance and tribute.

(4) The "challenge of continuing responsibility" is presented to the child. Responsibility is one of the major lessons in life. Some people may never learn it. This experience can be internalized within a child when a pet is placed in his care. This "personal responsibility" is presented to a child early in his life when he can understand it.

Walking the dog each morning and night, feeding him, finding him when lost, looking after his water supply, protecting him from his neighbors' bullying bigger dog, making his bed, if it is a female keeping dogs away when she is in season (p. 38).

In these ways the feeling of "personal responsibility" can be manifested.

(5) A dog is a valuable agent for the teaching of toilet habits. This is an aspect often overlooked. An entire family can become involved in housebreaking a pup. There is much conversation about the problems of the pup's elimination. The young children learn from the experience about their own toilet habits and thus have less difficulty in their performance. "Self-discipline evolves as an accessory before the fact of imposing a discipline upon someone else" (p. 39).

(6) Bossard notes the value of a dog in the sex education of children. An opportunity is given for parents and children to discuss the differences between male and female, physical and functional, and the pregnancy and birth of pups. This is demonstrated to the eye as well as the ear, so the child understands it better and remembers it longer. This also serves as a guarantee against the misinformation children many times acquire.

(7) The basic "desire for power" can be satisfied through using the dog as a vehicle for its release. Since "the will to dominate" is cited as a fundamental one, each member of the family can vent these feelings upon the dog. The mental hygiene of the child is said to be helped by "training the child in the art of command, satisfying the ego in the experience of control, and draining off a resentment at being controlled by some parent or other adult" (p. 40).

(8) A dog helps one realize that bodily functions are normal and natural processes, not to be confused as unusual or "taboo." If a child sees that even his dog does the same things he does he will accept such processes with no question or uncertainty.

(9) The dog can become an important social aid. Through the dog, a child can enlarge his scope of friends; for example, the pet can be shared with the neighborhood children. Through conversation, he learns who likes dogs, and through experience, he usually learns who does not. The child's point of view toward other people changes; he sees them in a new light--in relation to his own pet. Different attitudes toward the dog lend the child new insights about the thoughts and feelings of other people. This provides a better understanding of the complex subject-- "human nature."

(10) A dog serves as a vehicle for effective conversation in the family. If there is nothing to talk about and conversation is lacking, the amusing antics of the family dog can be very entertaining. As Bossard (1944) suggests, if husband-wife relations become less than desirable, the dog can become an excuse for renewed conversation.

(11) A dog is a willing companion. Bossard (1944) states:

A dog is a silent, yet responsive companion, a long-suffering patient, satisfying, uncritical, seemingly appreciative, constant, faithful companion more affectionate than is deserved and appreciative far beyond what anyone could expect from a human rival (p. 41).

Heffernan and Todd (1965) report that animals can teach some valuable concepts to a preschool child about himself and the world around him.

Pets need care everyday--just as we do.
 Pets are active for a while and then rest for a while.
 Pets bite when frightened or hurt.
 A daddy and a mother pet can have babies.
 Pets die when their bodies wear out or when an accident happens to them (p. 341).

An important purpose for pets reported by Taylor (1968) is the development of sympathy. When a new baby is expected in the family, giving a child a puppy or kitten to be his "baby" helps him to accept

the reality of the situation and comforts him in the knowledge that he, too, has a "baby" of his own.

Taking care of the pet is an experience which illustrates natural functions of animals and life. For example, watering the pet helps the child realize the importance of water to animals and people. If the pet eats vegetables or meat, the child will realize through experience that such food is good for both pets and people. "Getting a response is a thrilling experience for a child" (Heffernan and Todd, 1965, p. 341).

Caring for a pet can develop tenderness in a child (Taylor, 1968). Patri (1948) reported in How to Help Your Child Grow Up, a little child learns while playing with his dog that kindness pays off. When he is good to his pet, it will become a friendly, lively companion who will love him. That delights the little owner. Children can understand the meaning of love through the care, concern and responsibility for their pets.

Children can respect pets as living beings who can feel hurt, fright and happiness--all depending upon the treatment they receive. If one day a dog is pinched during play, the next time he may not come to his little master when called. The child then learns that it requires kindness to win him back. Thus, he learns respect for his dog's feelings through the realization that his animal cannot be treated like a stuffed toy and be expected to respond. A child learns that a pet can be "loved into gentleness, into loyalty that holds until death. And in the loving the child grows" (Patri, 1948, p. 19).

An important reason for pet ownership is the responsibility aspect. No matter how much a child thinks of his pet, he cannot be expected to always have complete care for it. The tasks will sometimes become

mother's (Gruenberg, 1958). A schedule can be useful in helping a child remember. For example, children can take turns caring for their pets and then become "checks" on each other to be sure the job is done. Gruenberg (1958) believes that the benefits of owning a pet far outweigh the troubles, muddy footprints, hair on furniture, etc., when one realizes the pet's contribution to a child's interest, enjoyment and emotional maturing. He finds that parents usually enjoy the pet as much as their children.

Wolf and Szasz (1954) agree that parents should expect to help with the care of the pet, since children sometimes forget or become careless. If the parent feels a genuine concern for the pet, then in time the child will also acquire the same positive attitude. The parent's attitude is the example that will be imitated by the child and finally internalized.

Stolz (1967) noted in Influences on Parent Behavior that some parents consider pets "a means to other ends; such as reducing fear of animals, or learning how to care for them." In a study, she found eight percent of the parents polled value pets for children just because "pets are good to have."

Langdon and Stout (1960) found that parents who had pets as children are more likely to want their own children to enjoy pets. To quote a mother of four: "Our whole family is living differently because of the pets; and in everything we do they have to be considered" (p. 233).

Pets perform certain functions. Sullenger (1960) notes that they are a cure for loneliness, a willing companion and a vehicle for socialization when there is a "give and take relationship"--especially

concerning dogs and cats. Dogs will react to family stimulus; for example, "A dog brought into a family conversation will be more alert and intelligent than one that is left out" (p. 134). Just as dogs can affect and influence human members of the family, so do the people affect dogs. Sullenger further stated that pets take on the characteristics of their owners--". . . they even draw inferences from human facial expressions and tone of voice."

Pets generate a variety of emotions in children, such as those noted by Wolf and Szasz (1954): joy, happiness, sorrow when they are sick or injured and tenderness because they are weak and helpless. Through interaction with their pets, children often become aware of their own cruel tendencies, and feel guilty about them. Parents can help their children understand such feelings of guilt. Coping mechanisms can be learned which will aid the child in later life.

A dog does many things for a child. Hurlock (1964) stated:

It serves as a source of ego-satisfaction and ego-gratification, satisfies the child's desire for power and most important, serves as an effective social aid . . . the give-and-take relationship that the child has with a pet does not foster the development of the unsocial traits so often found among children who have substituted imaginary playmates (p. 260).

Because of the dog's presence, the shy child is helped to reach other children and adults that normally he would not meet. Pets are most certainly preferred to imaginary playmates.

Pets are especially valuable to children who are uncertain of their self-concept. Stewart (1955) in The Growing Family indicates that such children need to have someone who will love them for themselves alone. Pets fulfill this need. They give the child a sense of security and well-being. Stewart calls it "exercise in love." Piers (1966) agrees.

She believes an important aspect is that a pet can supply a child with a sense of being "O.K." When the adults of his world disapprove or nag, he knows that his pet will love and accept him when no one else will.

A pet accepts the child as he is with all his faults and shortcomings. Thus, the pet becomes a vehicle through which a child can acquire a feeling of total acceptance and security. When parents and teachers criticize and find fault with him he will have a friend who will love and accept him and will let him know that he is an "O.K." person, worthy of being loved. This is especially helpful to a child whose home life is less than desirable. If the child is constantly ridiculed and made to feel inferior and ashamed, the presence of a friend such as a dog will help the child shoulder his troubles and confusion. Knowing there is at least one living being in the world that returns his love will give him a better, more positive outlook and perspective. Patri (1948) states:

When a child feels lonely, feels the need for affection, for companionship . . . when the puzzles of life bewilder him and he tries to find a way through them to understanding and peace, the family dog can be there to share his master's turmoil, and help realize that whatever befalls, he will be there for him to love (p. 184).

Gruenberg (1958) reported an important reason for pets is that pets teach children about birth and death. They learn important lessons about life through simple, natural ways about mating, birth and death. Children can learn about sex from pets in a natural, simple way. Through a mother dog or cat, birth can be illustrated so that the children can understand the process as a natural event without secrecy or worry. The spiritual side of sex can be shown through mother love and

parental care given the young (Mother's Encyclopedia, 1958).

The issue of dead pets and the questions involved have been controversial in nature. Gruenberg (1958) indicated that if the death of the pet is treated sensibly it should not cause too much anxiety. He suggests that "the burial ritual" can help children to accept the inevitable. The death of a pet helps the child to realize the inevitability of death through a lesser sorrow than would be experienced at a death of a relative or friend. Thus, he is helped to realize that everything and everyone must die.

Sometimes when a small pet such as a turtle, bird or hamster dies a child will feel a tremendous guilt through remembering instances when he was careless and perhaps forgot a feeding (Arnstein, 1962). Such a situation might be a temptation to the parents to make a "valuable lesson" from the experience and stress the end result of such irresponsibility. It is only natural for a child to make a mistake occasionally with a feeding. To make the child feel worse about it and deepen his guilt and sadness would be an act of cruelty. A child would need encouragement and the confidence that he can do better next time.

The contrasting schools of thought concerning the proper course of action after a pet's death are interesting. Hurlock (1943) recommends that a new pet be chosen to replace the old one. She feels that a puppy or kitten would be a source of cheer and thus would help the child to accept the death and transfer his affections to the new arrival. The editors of Mother's Encyclopedia for Care and Raising of Children (1958) agree that after the pet's death, getting a new one soon to replace it lessens the pain and loss. They feel that if the child says he would never feel the same about another, it is an indication he does

not know his capacity for love. More recent thought asserts that a child should be allowed to grieve over his pet; a pet--as a beloved companion--ought to be mourned. Understandably, a parent would want to comfort his child, but recent sources indicate it is better not to say, for example, "Cheer up, we will get you another dog" (p. 546). There is no other dog, and never will be for the child--or so he feels at the moment. Arnstein (1962) believes a parent should give sympathy and understanding, but let the child grieve. His sadness should be expressed. The witnessing of an accidental death can leave a child especially shaken and hurt, particularly if he has seen the torn body. It would help to tell him that death came quickly and pain was felt for only an instant; the animal did not know what happened. Arnstein believes the child should be encouraged to talk about his pet. "Only when he has overcome his sorrow can he be ready to accept a new pet. Maybe it is time then to suggest the possibility of finding another animal" (p. 237).

The Psychological Implications of Pets on Family Life

In the Children's Psychiatric Hospital at the University of Michigan's Medical Center in Ann Arbor, a mongrel dog of uncertain origin is teaching acceptance to a group of troubled, ill, emotionally disturbed youngsters (Yates, 1973). Treatment for the children who come to the Children's Psychiatric Hospital includes "Skeezzer"--a friendly, female dog whose job is to give the children love and acceptance, which they crave. Because the children cannot seem to share their troubles, Skeezzer acts as a means of communication, helping the

children to express their emotions in a manner in which they can relate. Smaller pets were used in the past, such as gerbils, hamsters, fish and birds. But the children were never really able to relate to them. Then, seven years ago, Skeezer became a part of the hospital medical team. The ability to "communicate without words"--so lacking in other pets and so unique to dogs--has allowed Skeezer to delve into the relationships with the children in a manner accessible only to her. There is general agreement that children who cannot get along with people often can with pets. Skeezer has been proof of that statement; she has been able to reach the children in a way no person could. "For the children, Skeezer becomes a link to a world they have left behind or to a world they have never known. Either way, comfort or adventure is promised by her presence" (p. 81). Skeezer will not ridicule or criticize them. She can be a source of confidence and trust. Where humans have failed in gaining this trust and love, a dog has succeeded.

Live animals in schools are increasingly becoming a part of the curriculum. A "live animal lending library" has been used at the Las Padres Elementary School in Salina, California. As described by its principal, animals such as a white rat, rabbit, turtle, duck, frog, parakeet and an Angora guinea pig were "checked out" or circulated among the children of the sixth grade. The idea expressed is that since many children "want" different pets at one time but later fail to give them the care and affection they deserve, it would be beneficial to become acquainted with different kinds of pets and at the same time gain an awareness of the work involved for their proper care. Parents were enthusiastic about the program because it quelled some of their children's demands for different pets. Many animals were renewed for a

second week but only one was requested for a third. There was more demand to check out newer, interesting animals. After the excitement and uniqueness had "worn off" the children were ready to return their animal and get a new one. At the conclusion of the program there was agreement that the children's desire to own these pets had been fulfilled; and that the experience had been enjoyable and educational (Langert, 1962).

Another "living library" at the Longdale Elementary School in Henrico County, Virginia (Holland, 1968), where with permission from parents, pupils can check out an animal such as mice, gerbils, rabbits, turtles, goldfish, chameleons and hamsters--accompanied by the appropriate book. Comments from parents have been favorable.

A very successful "Rent-A-Rat" program (Healer, 1972) is in use at the Hancock Elementary School in Lexington, Massachusetts, where Healer manages the lending of mice, gerbils, hamsters and guinea pigs to teachers and occasionally, with written consent of parents, to students. The animals are closely supervised and care is taken to insure the proper handling of the pets for the benefit of animals as well as child. This program has been successful, and greeted with enthusiasm.

Many benefits can be derived from pet ownership. Maunier (1958) reported that organizations and clubs such as the Boy and Girl Scouts and Campfire Girls give merit badges and awards for the care of pets. This encourages active participation. When a child becomes a pet owner he can be encouraged to find books and reading materials at the library pertaining to his particular pet. Different kinds of recreation and new friends can be enjoyed by the child who owns a pet. There are many pet clubs available for owners of different varieties of pets which welcome new members. Many children enjoy enrolling their dogs in

obedience classes. The advantages of owning a trained, well-behaved dog can be numerous. Children feel pride in owning an animal of accomplishment. Entering the animal in club competition fosters a sense of achievement and encourages care and responsibility for the pet.

More psychologists and psychiatrists are recognizing the therapeutic values of pets for people with emotional and mental problems or even for those just wanting companionship. Hartley (Rice, 1968) professor of psychology at the City College of New York, explored the area of dog ownership. Dogs were found to play a vital part in daily living --especially in today's "cold, impersonal cities."

Levinson, as quoted by Rice (1968) felt strongly about the therapeutic value of pets. He wrote:

. . . The importance of the house pet to man is psychological rather than practical. In many ways the relationship between man and dog, especially between child and dog, can be more salutary than one between two human beings. A faithful dog will satisfy his master's need for loyalty, trust, respectful obedience, as well as submission (p. 245).

Levinson further stressed the importance of pets for children. He cited a child's "fantasy world" as playing an active part. For example, a dog can perform fantasy roles. Sometimes the dog might be the father or the baby. The child imagines the pet has his same feelings of anger, sorrow, remorse and joy. Thus, the child acts out and resolves his problems. He also believed that pets teach children how to communicate and how to love. The child learns that to be loved, you must love.

. . . every pet in a sense is the mirror in which a child sees himself wanted and loved, not for what he should be but is not, or might be, or might have been, but for what he is. The pet and his master look at each other and understand each other (p. 245).

Heiman (Rice, 1968) agreed with Levinson on the social and

educational value of pets for children. A dog as an understanding companion serves as a step between an infant's toy and a child's playmate.

There is no better way for a child to learn about the so-called 'animal' nature of man than by growing up with pets and observing them in their grooming, their play and sexual activity, as well as watching them perform bodily functions (p. 246).

Heiman further compared a pet to a Seeing Eye dog for a child between four years of age and puberty in that a dog can "lead the child through the 'labryinth' of the oedipal phase and help him find a secure identity. This analogy of the Seeing Eye dog is even more accurate for the seriously disturbed. To the psychotic, a pet can represent a link to the world of reality, just as the Seeing Eye dog does for the blind.

. . . a psychotic individual is apt to engage in an intense relationship with a pet in which the pet is used to play a part in his owner's emotional life . . . this animal might be the only animate object with which his owner is able to establish and maintain contact (p. 246).

Rice (1968) stated that regardless of the child's age, sex, intelligence, or his position in life, "The love of a pet is better than no love at all" (p. 253). Everyone needs to feel accepted and loved. Thus, the value of pet ownership can be substantiated. Pets serve as an indicator of the condition of the inner self. Pets in their own way cultivate and encourage self-discovery and self-acceptance. The very essence of our being--love--is manifest and developed through pets. Pets offer practice in the "art of loving."

Summary

The review of literature revealed the following: (1) that there is a large variety of suitable pets from which to choose; the important factor being that any particular pet chosen must be well suited to the

personality of the individual child; (2) that there is no one pet that is best suited for children; (3) that an older child does not enjoy pets that show no affection or attention; (4) that dogs are generally preferred to cats; (5) that the age of the pet owner is not as important as the parents' attitude; (6) that pets play an important role in family life and in the mental health of its members, particularly children; (7) that parents who had pets as children are more likely to want their own children to enjoy pets; (8) that live animals in school are increasingly becoming a part of the curriculum; (9) that psychologists and psychiatrists are recognizing the therapeutic values of pets for people with emotional and mental problems; and (10) that there is a growing need for research projects to be formed to study and evaluate how pets influence the family.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

Selection of Subjects

The subjects for this study were the parents of the children attending the Child Development Laboratories at Oklahoma State University during the spring semester, 1974. The sample consisted of sixty families whose children's ages ranged from four months to 16 years.

Questionnaires, accompanied by a letter (Appendix A), were mailed to 72 parents. Parents were instructed to return the completed questionnaires to the head teacher of the laboratory in which their child was enrolled. Sixty parents returned the questionnaires which provided the data for this study.

Development of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study was developed for the purpose of examining the perceptions of parents concerning pets' contribution to their children. The questionnaire included parents' viewpoints on the following: (a) desired age of child as a pet owner, (b) criteria for the selection of pets, (c) individual pet preferences, (d) the contributions of pets toward the child's development, and (e) opportunity for parents to make additional comments.

The questionnaire was administered to five people prior to using it with parents, to judge it for accuracy of content, and clarity. On the

recommendation of these five judges, item 3, i.e., type of housing was rewritten to provide opportunity for respondents to check individual places of dwelling instead of writing in the answers.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purposes of this study were: (1) to ascertain a pet's contribution to a child's growth and development, (2) to determine parents' preferences for a specific pet, and (3) to determine factors which influence parents' pet selection.

Table I presents data which describe the 99 children of the 60 parents who responded to the questionnaire. Table II indicates that 81.66 percent of the families resided in a single home which was located in an urban area.

Table III presents data related to current ownership of pets. The largest number of parents, 37 (61.66%) currently owned a pet or pets. Those parents who did not own a pet of any kind composed 38.33 percent of the sample. The greatest proportion (72.9%) of respondents stated they owned dogs as pets. The next largest percentage (43.2%) owned cats. Fish were reported as pets by 10.8 percent of the parents.

In answer to the question "Did you own a pet as a child?" more than 98 percent of the respondents indicated they owned pets as children. As indicated in Table IV, the majority of parents (83.05%) owned a dog when they were children. The next largest percentage (42.3%) owned a cat. Parakeets composed 13.5 percent of the pets owned in childhood. The listing of pets in Table IV reflects the responses of the 59 parents who indicated pet ownership as a child. Only one respondent did not own a

pet as a child.

TABLE I
CHILDREN OF PARENTS CLASSIFIED BY SEX AND AGE
(N = 99)

Ages	Boys (N = 43)		Girls (N = 56)	
	N	%	N	%
Infants and Toddlers 0 - 2.11	4	9.3	4	7.1
Preschoolers 3.00 - 6.00	27	62.79	40	71.42
School Age 6.00 - 12.00	12	27.9	9	16.07
Teenagers 13.00 - 16.00	0	0	3	5.35
Total	43	43.4	56	56.5

TABLE II
LOCATION AND TYPE OF HOUSING AS REPORTED BY PARENTS
(N = 60)

Type of Residence	Rural		Urban	
	N	%	N	%
Apartment	0	0	3	5
Duplex	0	0	1	1.6
Single Home	7	11.66	49	81.66
Mobile Home	0	0	0	0

TABLE III
 FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS' RESPONSES
 REFLECTING CURRENT OWNERSHIP OF PETS
 (N = 37)

Kind of Pets	N	%
Dog	27	72.9
Cat	16	43.5
Fish	4	10.8
Horse	1	2.7
Chicken	1	2.7
Duck	1	2.7
Geese	1	2.7
Pony	1	2.7
Guinea Pig	2	5.4
Hamster	1	2.7
Cow	1	2.7
Parakeet	1	2.7

TABLE IV
 FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS' RESPONSES REFLECTING
 OWNERSHIP OF PETS DURING CHILDHOOD
 (N = 60)

Kind of Pets	N	%
Dog	49	81.6
Cat	25	41.6
Parakeet	8	13.3
Turtle	1	1.6
Horse	3	5.0
Rat	1	1.6
Hamster	2	3.3
Farm Animals	1	1.6
Fish	5	8.3
Duck	4	6.6
Rabbit	2	3.3
Frog	1	1.6
Skunk	1	1.6
Coyote	1	1.6
Squirrel	1	1.6
Lamb	2	3.3
Pony	1	1.6
Goat	1	1.6
Calf	1	1.6
Pig	2	3.3
No Pet	1	1.6

Table V presents the parents' responses concerning the age they consider best for a child to own a pet. The largest number (36%) of the respondents felt that 8-10 years of age was best to own a pet. The 6-7 year age group received 33 percent of the responses, while more than 28 percent of the parents felt that 4-5 years was the best age to own pets. More than 11 percent felt that a child could own a pet at any age.

TABLE V
PARENTS' RESPONSES REFLECTING THE AGE THEY
PREFERRED A CHILD TO OWN A PET
(N = 60)

Ages	N	%
0-3 years	3	5
4-5 years	17	28.3
6-7 years	20	33.3
8-10 years	22	36.6
10-12 years	11	18.3
More than 12 years	7	11.6
All ages	7	11.6
None of the above	2	3.3

Table VI concerns the factor that influenced the respondents in the selection of their pet. The "desires of the child" received the greatest percentage (68.1%). This was closely followed by "desires of you or

your spouse" receiving 65.9 percent. "Outdoor facilities" (61.7%) were cited as the third influencing factor. Only 2.1 percent of the respondents considered the "sex of their children" as a factor influencing pet selection. "Other" factors were chosen by 14 percent of the respondents, such as: "lack of playmates, against the leaser's policy, gentle nature of the dog chosen, and mouse and skunk population on farm."

TABLE VI
FACTORS INFLUENCING PARENTS' CHOICE OF A PET
(N = 47)

Factor	N	%
Number of children	7	14.08
Ages of children	22	46.08
Sex of children	1	2.1
Cost of food and care for the pet	12	25.5
Consideration for the person responsible for the pet	14	29.8
Desires of the child	32	68.1
Desires of you or your spouse	31	65.9
Outdoor facilities	29	61.7
Size and type of housing	23	48.7
Health of family members	8	17.0
Other	7	14.0

Table VII presents a list of pets preferred by the parents for their children. As in Tables III and IV, dogs received the greatest percentage (91.6%). Fish received the next largest percentage (66.6%) and cats were third (45%). Birds received 20 percent; canaries, parakeets and finches collectively totaled 31.2 percent. Rabbits and turtles were preferred by 23.3 percent of the parents. Ponies and horses received 28.3 percent. Worms were preferred as pets by 15 percent of the parents. Tadpoles and frogs were preferred by 16.6 percent of the respondents.

Table VIII concerns pets' contributions to children's development as indicated by the parents' responses. The majority (86.6%) believed that "pets generate a variety of emotions in children, such as joy, happiness, sorrow, tenderness and sympathy." The next greatest percentage (78.3%) perceived pets as "good companions." More than 68 percent felt that "pets teach the child how to love" and "teach respect and admiration for life in general." A contribution believed by 66.6 percent of the respondents was that "pets teach the child responsibility." Sex education was indicated as a contribution by 50 percent of the parents. Only 15 percent recognized the "child's 'desire for power'" as being satisfied through a pet.

Major Findings and Discussion

(1) More than 50 percent of the parents considered the "desires of the child" and their own preference when choosing a pet. The "sex of children, number of children and health of family members" were not considered important factors influencing pet selection. The greatest number of parents (68%) agreed with Levinson (Drissell, 1972) in

TABLE VII
 PARENTS' PREFERENCE FOR PETS
 (N = 60)

Preference	N	%
Cat	27	45
Dog	55	91.6
Bird	12	20.0
---Canary	2	3.3
---Parakeet	4	6.6
---Finches	1	1.3
Mice	3	5.0
Guinea Pig	11	18.3
Hamster	10	16.6
Rabbit	14	23.3
Turtle	14	23.3
Snake	5	8.3
Skunk	2	3.3
Squirrel	2	3.3
Gerbil	10	16.6
Rat	1	1.6
Lamb	8	13.3
Goat	5	8.3
Pig	5	8.3
Pony	17	28.3
Horse	17	28.3
Cricket or Katydid	5	8.3
Worms	9	15.0
Beetles	5	8.3

TABLE VII (Continued)

Preference	N	%
Salamanders	7	11.6
Chameleons	9	15.0
Tadpoles	10	16.6
Frogs	10	16.6
Chickens	9	15.0
Ducks	12	20.0
Geese	6	10.0
Ants	9	15.0
Other	4	6.6
None	1	1.6

TABLE VIII
 PARENTS' RESPONSES INDICATING PETS' CONTRIBUTION
 TO A CHILD'S GROWTH AND HAPPINESS
 (N = 60)

Contribution	N	%
Pets teach the child responsibility.	40	66.6
Pets satisfy the child's "desire for power."	9	15.0
Pets teach sex education through natural, simple ways.	30	50.0
Pets serve as an outlet for emotions.	32	53.3
Pets help the child realize the inevitability of death.	22	36.6
Pets teach toilet habits and bodily functions as natural processes.	18	30.0
Pets teach the preschool child important concepts about himself and the world around him.	23	38.3
Pets generate a variety of emotions in children, such as joy, happiness, sorrow, tenderness and sympathy.	52	86.6
Pets improve self-concept by giving the child a sense of security and acceptance.	20	33.3
Pets are good companions.	47	78.3
Pets serve as a vehicle for conversation in the family.	17	28.3
Pets teach the child how to communicate.	10	16.6
Pets help to reduce the child's fear of animals.	39	65.0
Pets teach the child how to love.	32	68.1
Pets teach children a respect and admiration for life in general.	32	68.1

permitting the child to make the pet selection--the theory being that the child would naturally select a pet appealing to him.

(2) Dogs were the parents' preferred pet by more than 91 percent. Fish, receiving 66.6 percent were the parents' second choice. Cats were third with 45 percent. Thus, both dogs and fish were preferred to cats. Hurlock's (1972) report that dogs are preferred to cats was substantiated in this study. It is interesting to note that the one respondent who neither currently owned a pet nor owned one during childhood preferred a cat or fish for a child's pet. In spite of the recent Salmonella scare involving turtles, 23.3 percent of the respondents preferred turtles as the pet preference for their children. Kugelmass (1965) suggested that parakeets be avoided because of the danger of chronic febrile illness from contact infection. Only 6.6 percent of the parents preferred parakeets. More than 13 percent of the parents owned pets during childhood.

(3) More than 50 percent of the parents indicated that school age children are better able to own a pet. The largest number of parents (36.6%) considered the best age for a child to own a pet to be 8-10 years. The next largest number (33.3%) was 6-7 years. A large number of parents (69.9%) agreed with Stewart (1955), Piers (1966) and Hein (1971) that school age children are old enough to assume responsibility in caring for a living animal. Only 5 percent of the respondents believed that a child 0-3 years of age should own a pet.

(4) The majority of parents (86.6%) indicated that "pets generate a variety of emotions in children, such as joy, happiness, sorrow, tenderness and sympathy." This finding was in agreement with Patri (1948), Wolf and Szasz (1954), and Taylor (1968). The next greatest

number of respondents (78.3%) indicated that "pets are good companions." The emotional aspect of pet ownership was emphasized by the parents in that 68 percent felt that "pets teach the child how to love." A large number (68.1%) of the respondents agreed with Bossard (1944) and Gruenberg (1958) in that "pets teach children a respect and admiration for life in general." A large number of parents (65%) believed that "pets help to reduce the child's fear of animals." Stolz's (1967) report that parents consider pets "a means to other ends, such as reducing fear of animals" was substantiated in this study. One half (50%) of the respondents recognized pets' contribution in teaching sex education. The least number of parents (15%) believed that "pets satisfy the child's 'desire for power'."

(5) The majority of parents (96.6%) who had pets as children wanted their children to own pets. Langdon and Stout (1960) found that parents who had pets as children are more likely to want their children to enjoy pets. This study substantiated Langdon and Stout's report.

Comments From Parents

Comments added to the questionnaire were varied. One parent opposed pet ownership; he stated, "No pet--out of humane consideration for the animal." The most frequent explanation for not owning a pet was "the difficulty in having it taken care of during frequent trips." The majority of comments were favorable toward pet ownership--such as the following:

. . . I feel having a dog has been a good experience for our daughter. They are great friends. Our dog is very protective of her and she really enjoys playing tag with our daughter.

I feel that pets are important in the child's world. In our family, a pet is one thing which can be shared (with the least amount of competition) or it can be the one thing which belongs exclusively to one person Pets are a bother, a mess, a nuisance at times--but so are people.

Other comments include:

On the farm we have had to make a definite distinction between 'pets' and 'animals' for food or food products. The child has learned to accept (through much experience and long, deep discussions) that some animals (cow, pig, rabbits, chickens, turkeys) must die so that we can eat. Pets, on the other hand, are seen as our friends that we take care of and are fun to have around.

The parents indicated that the questionnaire helped stimulate thought concerning the attributes of pets for children, as witnessed by the following comment: "Your questionnaire has helped me to realize some benefits of having a pet which were not evident to me previously."

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was concerned primarily with what parents indicate pets contribute to the overall development of their children. The specific purposes of this study were: (1) to ascertain pets' contributions to the development of children, (2) to determine parents' preferences for a specific pet, and (3) to determine influences on parents' selection of pets.

The subjects were 60 parents of the children attending the Child Development Laboratories at Oklahoma State University during the spring semester, 1974. Data obtained for this study included information about the ages and sex of their children, location of their home and the type of housing. Parents reported on 99 children, ranging in age from 4 months to 16 years, the majority being in the preschool group.

The questionnaire used in this study was developed for the purpose of examining the expressed opinions of parents concerning pets' contribution to their children. The questionnaire included parents' viewpoints on the following: (a) desired age of child as a pet owner, (b) criteria for the selection of pets, (c) individual pet preferences, (d) the contributions of pets toward child development, and provided an opportunity for parents to make comments.

Data were reported statistically by frequencies and percentages.

Findings

The percentage of parents' responses for each questionnaire item revealed that:

1. More than 50 percent of the parents considered the "desires of the child" and their own preference when choosing a pet.
2. Dogs were the parents' preferred pet (91%).
3. More than 50 percent of the parents indicated that school age children are able to own a pet.
4. The majority of parents (86.6%) indicated that "pets generate a variety of emotions in children, such as joy, happiness, sorrow, tenderness and sympathy."
5. The majority (96.6%) of parents who had pets as children wanted their own children to own pets.

Recommendations for Further Research

The following suggestions are made on the basis of the findings of this study:

1. The family's degree of satisfaction with the pet owned.
2. The influence of school experiences with pets on children three to five years of age.
3. The pet preference of children three to five years of age.
4. Why families do not own pets.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arnstein, Helene S. What to Tell Your Child. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1962.
- Bossard, James H. S. "The Mental Hygiene of Owning a Dog." Mental Hygiene, 28 (July, 1944), pp. 37-41.
- Bossard, James H. S. Parent and Child. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1953.
- Drissell, Jean. "Buy a Pet Instead of a Problem." Reader's Digest, Vol. 101 (September, 1972), pp. 161-164.
- Gruenberg, Sidonie Matsner. The Parents Guide to Everyday Problems of Boys and Girls. New York: Random House, 1958.
- Healer, C. P. "Rent-a-Rat." Science and Children (April, 1972), p. 6.
- Heffernan, Helen, and Vivian Todd. The Years Before School. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965.
- Hein, Lucille. Entertaining Your Child. New York: Harper and Row, 1971.
- Hurlock, Elizabeth. Modern Ways With Children. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1943.
- Hurlock, Elizabeth. Child Development. Fourth edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964.
- Hurlock, Elizabeth. Child Development. Fifth edition. St. Louis: McGraw-Hill, 1972.
- Kenyon, Josephine. Healthy Babies Are Happy Babies. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1943.
- Kugelmass, Newton. Wisdom With Children. New York: The John Day Company, 1965.
- Langdon, Grace, and Irving Stout. Bringing Up Children. New York: The John Day Company, 1960.
- Langert, Douglas. "Live Animal Lending Library." Grade Teacher, Vol. No. 88 (February, 1962), p. 24.

Maunier, Henri. "Not Mother's Job." Parents' Magazine (May, 1958), p. 48.

Mother's Encyclopedia for the Care and Raising of Children. New York: Book Enterprises, Inc., 1958.

Patri, Angelo. How to Help Your Child Grow Up. Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1948.

Piers, Maria. Growing Up With Children. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966.

Rice, Berkeley. The Other End of the Leash. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1968.

Stewart, Maxwell (editor). The Growing Family. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955.

Stolz, Lois. Influences on Parent Behavior. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1967.

Sullenger, Thomas. Neglected Areas in Family Living. Boston: The Christopher Publishing House, 1960.

Taylor, Katharine. Parents and Children Learn Together. New York: Teachers College, 1968.

Teicher, Joseph. Your Child and His Problems. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953.

Thesis Writing Manual. Stillwater: Oklahoma State University; Graduate College, 1972.

Wolf, Anna, and Suzanne Szasz. Helping Your Child's Emotional Growth. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1954.

Yates, Elizabeth. "Dog With a Mission." Good Housekeeping, Vol. No. 76 (April, 1973), pp. 80-81.

APPENDIX

Dear Parents,

As a student in Family Relations and Child Development at Oklahoma State University, I am studying about children's pets and their relationship to child development. Would you please complete the enclosed questionnaire? There are no right or wrong answers. Check as many items as you wish when indicated. You do not need to sign your name. Each questionnaire is kept in strictest confidence. Information asked about you is needed only to properly analyze the data. Return the checked questionnaire to your child's teacher.

Your participation and cooperation with this study is appreciated. The results of the study will be sent to the parents of the Child Development Laboratory during the summer, 1974.

Sincerely,

Patricia Lois Shell

Graduate Student in
Family Relations and
Child Development

Parent's Questionnaire

1. Age of child _____ Sex of child _____
(or children)
2. Location of home _____ (country or city)
3. Type of housing _____ apartment
duplex
single home dwelling
mobile home
other
4. Do you now own a pet? Yes or No
If so, what kind? _____
Is this the pet you actually preferred?
5. Did you own a pet as a child? Yes or No
If so, what kind? _____
6. Which age do you consider best for a child to own a pet?

_____ 0-3 years	_____ 8-10 years
_____ 4-5 years	_____ 10-12 years
_____ 6-7 years	_____ more than 12 years
7. Which of the following influenced you in the choice of your pet?
Check as many as apply to your family.
 - ___ number of children
 - ___ ages of children
 - ___ sex of children
 - ___ cost of food and care for the pet
 - ___ consideration for the person responsible for the pet
 - ___ desires of the child
 - ___ desires of you or your spouse
 - ___ outdoor facilities, such as size of yard, fence, etc.
 - ___ size and type of housing--apartment, duplex, single home

health of family members, allergies, etc.

other

8. Check the following pets you would prefer for your child.
Check as many as applies to your family.

cat

goat

dog

pig

bird

canary

pony

fish

parakeet

horse

mice

cricket or katydid

guinea pig

worms

hamster

beetles

rabbit

salamanders

turtle

chameleons

snake

tadpoles

skunk

frogs

squirrel

chickens

gerbil

ducks

rat

geese

lamb

ants

other

9. Which of the following statements do you feel reflects a pet's contributions to your child's growth and happiness? Check as many as you feel are contributions.

Pets teach the child responsibility.

Pets satisfy the child's "desire for power."

Pets teach sex education through natural, simple ways.

Pets serve as an outlet for emotions.

Pets help the child realize the inevitability of death.

- ___ Pets teach toilet habits and bodily functions as normal, natural processes.
- ___ Pets teach the preschool child important concepts about himself and the world around him.
- ___ Pets generate a variety of emotions in children, such as joy, happiness, sorrow, tenderness and sympathy.
- ___ Pets improve self-concept by giving the child a sense of security and acceptance--a sense of "O.K."
- ___ Pets are good companions.
- ___ Pets serve as a vehicle for conversation in the family.
- ___ Pets teach the child how to communicate.
- ___ Pets help to reduce the child's fear of animals.
- ___ Pets teach the child how to love.
- ___ Pets teach children a respect and admiration for life in general.

Comments:

VITA ²

Patricia Lois Shell

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: ATTITUDES OF PARENTS TOWARD PET OWNERSHIP

Major Field: Family Relations and Child Development

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Okmulgee, Oklahoma, December 29, 1949, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Roy Shell, Jr.; reared in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Education: Graduated from Thomas A. Edison High School, Tulsa, Oklahoma, in May, 1968; attended University of Tulsa, Tulsa, Oklahoma, from September, 1968, to May, 1972; received a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from University of Tulsa, Tulsa, Oklahoma, in May, 1972; completed the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Family Relations and Child Development in July, 1974.

Professional Experience: Elementary Music Teacher, Henryetta Elementary School, Henryetta, Oklahoma, 1972-1973.

Professional Organizations: Sigma Alpha Iota Honorary Fraternity, Music Educators National Conference, Oklahoma Educational Association, Southern Association on Children Under Six, Oklahoma Association on Children Under Six.