# Pet Parenting:
## Not So WEIRD After All

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APA Webinar | July 10, 2024

# Who am I?

- Applied Ethologist/Anthrozoologist
  - CPDT-KA
  - Fear Free Certified
- Shelter and Companion Animal Behavior
- Pet Parenting and the Familial Bond
- Anthropologically Trained
- ECHOS Lab

# What does parenting look like?

# What does parenting look like?

# Different Types of Parental Care

*Kleiman & Malcolm, 1981*

**Direct Care:** immediate, physical influence on survivorship of child/offspring.

- Bathing
- Feeding
- Soothing

**Indirect Care:** acts in the absence of child/offspring that influence long-term survivorship and success.

- Resource Acquisition
- Protection

# The Weirdest People in the World?

*Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010*

**Western**

**Educated**

**Industrial**

**Rich**

**Democratic**

# Alloparenting → Cooperative Care

**It takes a village to raise a child.**

~ indigenous proverb

# Allomaternal Care Among the Hadza of Tanzania

*Crittenden & Marlowe, 2008*

- Allomothers spent most time holding children
- Higher degree of relatedness = more investment
- Unrelated helpers of all ages also provide substantial investment

# Do humans “parent” their pets?

Is this a WEIRD phenomenon or a broader, cross-cultural trends?

What other variables influence the emergence and/or practice of pet parenting?

# Second Demographic Transition

*Lesthaeghe, 2014*

Increases in:

- Urbanization
- Reproductive Choice
- Education

Focus on Self-Actualization/Maslow

Subreplacement Fertility

New Life Orientation

# Methods

Online Survey(s)*

Translation of Survey(s)

- Native Speakers
- One colleague translates to target language
- Different colleague translates back to English
- Sentiment vs. Exact Wording
- Impact on Coding Data

Cultural Sensitivity

# Demographics

- Sex
- Age
- Education
- Parental Status
- # of Dogs/Cats/Other in Home
- Language used to refer to self/pet

# Lexington Attachment to Pets Scale (LAPS)

- Translated with Johnson's Permission
- Used Total Score *and* Subscale Scores

**Table 1. Wording of LAPS Items**

| | |
|---|---|
| **a.** | My pet means more to me than *any* of my friends. |
| **b.** | Quite often I confide in my pet. |
| **c.** | I believe that pets should have the same rights and privileges as family members. |
| **d.** | I believe my pet is my best friend. |
| **e.** | Quite often, my feelings toward people are affected by the way they react to my pet. |
| **f.** | I love my pet because he/she is more loyal to me than most of the people in my life. |
| **g.** | I enjoy showing other people pictures of my pet. |
| **h.** | I think my pet is just a pet. |
| **i.** | I love my pet because it never judges me. |
| **j.** | My pet knows when I'm feeling bad. |
| **k.** | I often talk to other people about my pet. |
| **l.** | My pet understands me. |
| **m.** | I believe that loving my pet helps me stay healthy. |
| **n.** | Pets deserve as much respect as humans do. |
| **o.** | My pet and I have a very close relationship. |
| **p.** | I would do almost anything to take care of my pet. |
| **q.** | I play with my pet quite often. |
| **r.** | I consider my pet to be a great companion. |
| **s.** | My pet makes me feel happy. |

# Companion Animal RElationships Scale (CARES)

- Initially Written for Volsche (2021) – U.S. Sample
- Three Subscales
  - Affective Responsiveness
  - Training and Play
  - General Care
- Valid in All Samples to Date

# Companion Animal RElationships Scale (CARES)

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# Companion Animal RElationships Scale (CARES)

**Table 4.** Companion Animal RElationshipS (CARES) Items by Scale with Loading Scores.

| Scale 1: Affective responsiveness ($\alpha = 0.810$) | Loading |
|---|---|
| I am protective of my pet. | 0.694 |
| I hug/cuddle my pet. | 0.679 |
| I consider my pet's preferences when interacting with them. | 0.658 |
| I kiss my pet. | 0.649 |
| I console my pet when they are upset/nervous/scared. | 0.638 |
| I worry about my pet when we are not together. | 0.610 |
| I let my pet request play/walks from me. | 0.599 |
| I leave work/stay home if my pet is sick. | 0.565 |
| I consider my pet when paying bills/making a budget. | 0.545 |
| I allow my pet to make decisions when on walks or playing. | 0.528 |

| Scale 2: Training and Play ($\alpha = 0.780$) | Loading |
|---|---|
| I engage in training activities with my pet. | 0.773 |
| I take my pet to socialize with others of their species. | 0.733 |
| I walk/exercise my pet. | 0.718 |
| I engage in pet related sports with my pet. | 0.686 |
| I take my pet to training classes. | 0.561 |
| I play games with my pet. | 0.538 |
| I engage in rough and tumble play with my pet. | 0.460 |

| Scale 3: General Care ($\alpha = 0.707$) | Loading |
|---|---|
| Someone else feeds my pet.[a] | 0.803 |
| I am the person who feeds my pet. | 0.755 |
| Someone else plays with my pet.[a] | 0.629 |
| If my pet needs to go to the veterinarian, I am the person who takes them. | 0.607 |
| Some else walks/exercises my pet.[a] | 0.584 |
| I am the person who grooms my pet. | 0.404 |

# Scale Reliability

| | U.S. | India | Japan | Finland | Hungary* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **LAPS:** | | | | | |
| Gen. Attach. | α = .837 | α = .868 | α = .794 | α = .862 | α = .828 |
| People Sub. | α = .783 | α = .762 | α = .732 | α = .816 | α = .805 |
| Welfare/Rights | α = .763 | α = .766 | α = .818 | α = .760 | α = .735 |
| | | | | | |
| **CARES:** | | | | | |
| Affect. Resp. | α = .811 | α = .840 | α = .836 | α = .829 | α = .829 |
| Training/Play | α = .782 | α = .778 | α = .758 | α = .806 | α = .677 |
| Gen. Care | α = .709 | α = .756 | α = .725 | α = .701 | α = .737 |

*Hungary data are preliminary.

# LAPS

| | U.S. | Japan | Finland | Hungary* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **General Attach.** | p = .056<br>1=SA/4=SD | p = .273<br>0=SD/3=SA | p < .001<br>1=SA/4=SD | p < .001<br>1=SA/4=SD |
| Parents | 469.25<br>(n=663) | 293.63<br>(n=240) | 478.32<br>(n=438) | 517.39<br>(n=461) |
| Nonparents | 432.24<br>(n=254) | 318.10<br>(n=220) | 404.41<br>(n=229) | 608.45<br>(n=305) |
| Future Parents | --- | 315.91<br>(n=155) | 344.93<br>(n=190) | 590.45<br>(n=364) |
| **People Sub.** | p = .019 | p = .009 | p < .001 | p < .001 |
| Parents | 471.71 | 280.57 | 494.86 | 489.26 |
| Nonparents | 425.83 | 325.19 | 373.40 | 634.90 |
| Future Parents | --- | 326.08 | 344.19 | 603.91 |
| **Welfare/Rights** | p = .001 | p = .124 | p < .001 | p < .001 |
| Parents | 483.51 | 290.21 | 499.01 | 489.99 |
| Nonparents | 395.02 | 316.31 | 369.97 | 640.00 |
| Future Parents | --- | 324.05 | 338.76 | 598.71 |

*Hungary data are preliminary.

# CARES

| | U.S. | Japan | Finland | Hungary* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Affect. Respon.** | p = .001<br>1=never/5=always | p = .053<br>1=never/5=always | p < .001<br>1=never/5=always | p < .001<br>1=never/5=always |
| Parents | 427.34<br>(n=663) | 288.78<br>(n=240) | 359.80<br>(n=438) | 512.63<br>(n=461) |
| Nonparents | 541.65<br>(n=254) | 328.95<br>(n=220) | 486.06<br>(n=229) | 617.08<br>(n=305) |
| Future Parents | --- | 308.03<br>(n=155) | 519.76<br>(n=190) | 589.24<br>(n=364) |
| **Training/Play** | p = .710 | p = .229 | p = .025 | p < .001 |
| Parents | 461.01 | 301.10 | 406.80 | 505.89 |
| Nonparents | 453.76 | 300.62 | 456.27 | 618.24 |
| Future Parents | --- | 329.16 | 447.31 | 595.33 |
| **Gen. Care** | p = .001 | p = .017 | p < .001 | p < .001 |
| Parents | 438.55 | 289.51 | 396.36 | 573.80 |
| Nonparents | 512.37 | 334.89 | 501.10 | 621.54 |
| Future Parents | --- | 298.46 | 417.36 | 508.03 |

*Hungary data are preliminary.

# US & India (LAPS)

**Table 3.** Sample descriptives for the Lexington Attachment to Pets Scale by scale.

| | United States | | India | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *n* | Mean Rank | *n* | Mean Rank | *U* | *p* | Cohen's *d* |
| Scale 1 | 976 | 716.58 | 422 | 660.00 | 189,268.50 | 0.015 | 0.129 |
| Scale 2 | 985 | 743.29 | 417 | 602.78 | 164,204.50 | 0.001 | 0.321 |
| Scale 3 | 986 | 784.79 | 422 | 516.91 | 128,883.00 | 0.001 | 0.633 |

Note: Lower mean rank signifies more agreement with statements from the scale. Scale 1 = General Attachment; Scale 2 = People Substituting; Scale 3 = Animal Rights/Animal Welfare (Johnson et al., 1992).

# US & India (CARES)

**Table 5.** Sample descriptives for caretaking behaviors (CARES) by scale.

| | United States | | India | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *n* | Mean Rank | *n* | Mean Rank | *U* | *p* | Cohen's *d* |
| Scale 1 | 952 | 622.96 | 397 | 799.79 | 139,431.00 | 0.001 | 0.423 |
| Scale 2 | 952 | 663.60 | 397 | 702.35 | 178,115.00 | 0.096 | 0.091 |
| Scale 3 | 952 | 725.41 | 397 | 554.13 | 140,986.00 | 0.001 | 0.409 |

Note: Higher mean rank signifies a higher frequency of engaging in the items from the scale. Scale 1 = Affective Responsiveness; Scale 2 = Training and Play; Scale 3 = General Care.

# Japan: Sex Differences (LAPS)

**Table 5.** Sample descriptives for sex differences on the Lexington Attachment to Pets Scale (LAPS) by scale.

| | Male | | Female | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| LAPS | *n* | Mean rank | *n* | Mean rank | *U* | *p* | *d*[a] |
| Scale 1 | 296 | 262.46 | 319 | 350.26 | 33,731.0 | < 0.001 | 0.510 |
| Scale 2 | 296 | 283.73 | 319 | 330.52 | 40,028.0 | 0.001 | 0.265 |
| Scale 3 | 296 | 264.01 | 319 | 348.82 | 34,192.0 | < 0.001 | 0.491 |
| Total score | 296 | 266.02 | 319 | 346.96 | 34,784.5 | < 0.001 | 0.469 |

Notes: Higher mean rank signifies more agreement with statements from the scale. Scale 1 = General Attachment; Scale 2 = People Substituting; Scale 3 = Animal Rights/Welfare (Johnson et al., 1992).

[a]Calculated per Lenhard and Lenhard (2016).

# Japan: Sex Differences (CARES)

**Table 7.** Sample descriptives for sex differences on the Companion Animal Relationships Scale (CARES) by scale.

| | Male | | Female | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CARES | *n* | Mean rank | *n* | Mean rank | *U* | *p* | *d*[a] |
| Scale 1 | 296 | 253.31 | 319 | 358.75 | 31,024.0 | < 0.001 | 0.621 |
| Scale 2 | 296 | 304.06 | 319 | 311.66 | 46,045.5 | 0.595 | 0.043 |
| Scale 3 | 296 | 285.68 | 319 | 328.71 | 40,606.5 | 0.003 | 0.244 |

Notes: Higher mean rank signifies reporting more frequency of related behaviors. Scale 1 = Affective Responsiveness; Scale 2 = Training and Play; Scale 3 = General Care.

[a]Calculated per Lenhard and Lenhard (2016).

# Hungary*: Cephalic Index (CI) Impact

| | Brach. | Meso. | Dolico. | Mixed | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **LAPS:** 1=SA/4=SD | | | | | |
| Gen. Attach. | 609.46 (n=190) | 572.32 (n=283) | 578.51 (n=212) | 536.20 (n=445) | .056 |
| People Sub. | 641.63 | 551.09 | 567.50 | 541.20 | .004 |
| Welfare/Rights | 577.46 | 544.19 | 593.56 | 560.58 | .358 |
| | | | | | |
| **CARES:** 1=never/5=always | | | | | |
| Affect. Resp. | 613.14 | 533.60 | 575.88 | 560.50 | .069 |
| Training/Play | 550.68 | 652.94 | 595.51 | 500.85 | <.001 |
| Gen. Care | 574.33 | 588.78 | 539.96 | 559.09 | .381 |

*Hungary data are preliminary.

# Discussion

**pet parenting** (*v.*):

investing time, emotion, and money into a companion animal that mirrors parental investment in children.

# Second Demographic Transition

Specialization

+

Self-Investment

+

Alternative Life Orientations

=

Emergence of Pet Parenting

# Cultural Variation Matters

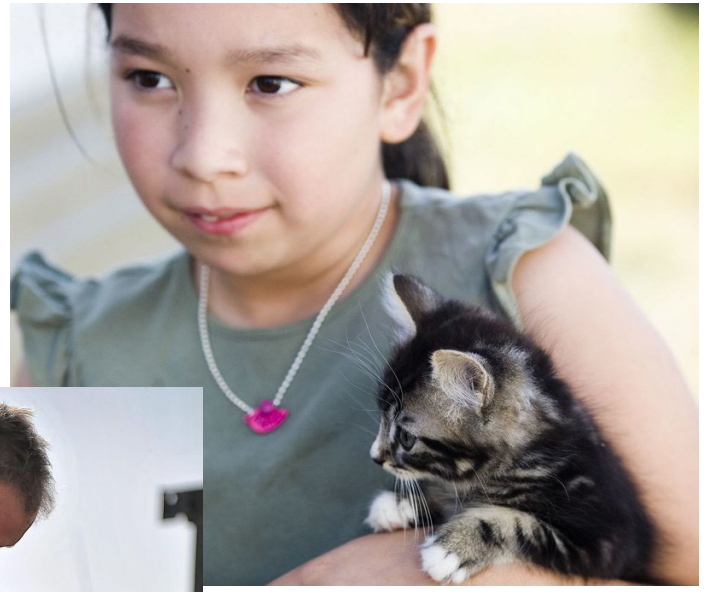
- Norms about other species
- Fertility expectations/pressures
- Marriage expectations/norms
- Pet characteristics (?)

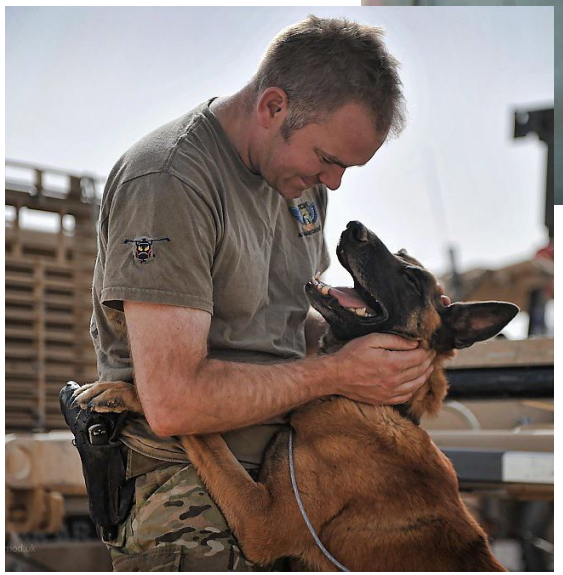
# Continued Work

- Hungary → *in prep.,* consistent findings
- South America → *analysis,* seems consistent (LAPS)
- Spain → ethical review
- Full cross-cultural comparison

# Points for the Clinician

- Not every client views their pets the same
- Many variables → need to ask!
  - What does the pet “mean”?
  - What is the client’s goal?
- Can we personalize approach?





# Points for the Clinician

- Loss is loss → can we get past the word “just”?


Calvin's memorial.

**A Love Letter to Loss: Missing Calvin in the Middle of Covid**

- January 24, 2021

Losing a pet at this time simply adds to the difficulties of the pandemic, says Dr. Shelly Volsche.

# Clinicians and Companion Animal Professionals

Variations in attachment and relationship can translate to variations in spending, compliance, consistency, etc. impacting companion animal outcomes.

**There's no "right" answer…keep an open mind.**

# Thank you.

- Questions?

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Evolutionary Connections
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