The importance of pets to FE / HE students in Northamptonshire.

McCormick, W & Preece, D.

Pets

- Pet ownership has changed in the last 40 - 50 years.
- Changes in family / social structure.
- Social roles of pets (companion animals more important).
- Kept for intrinsic appeal, rather than usefulness.
- Live as part of the family.

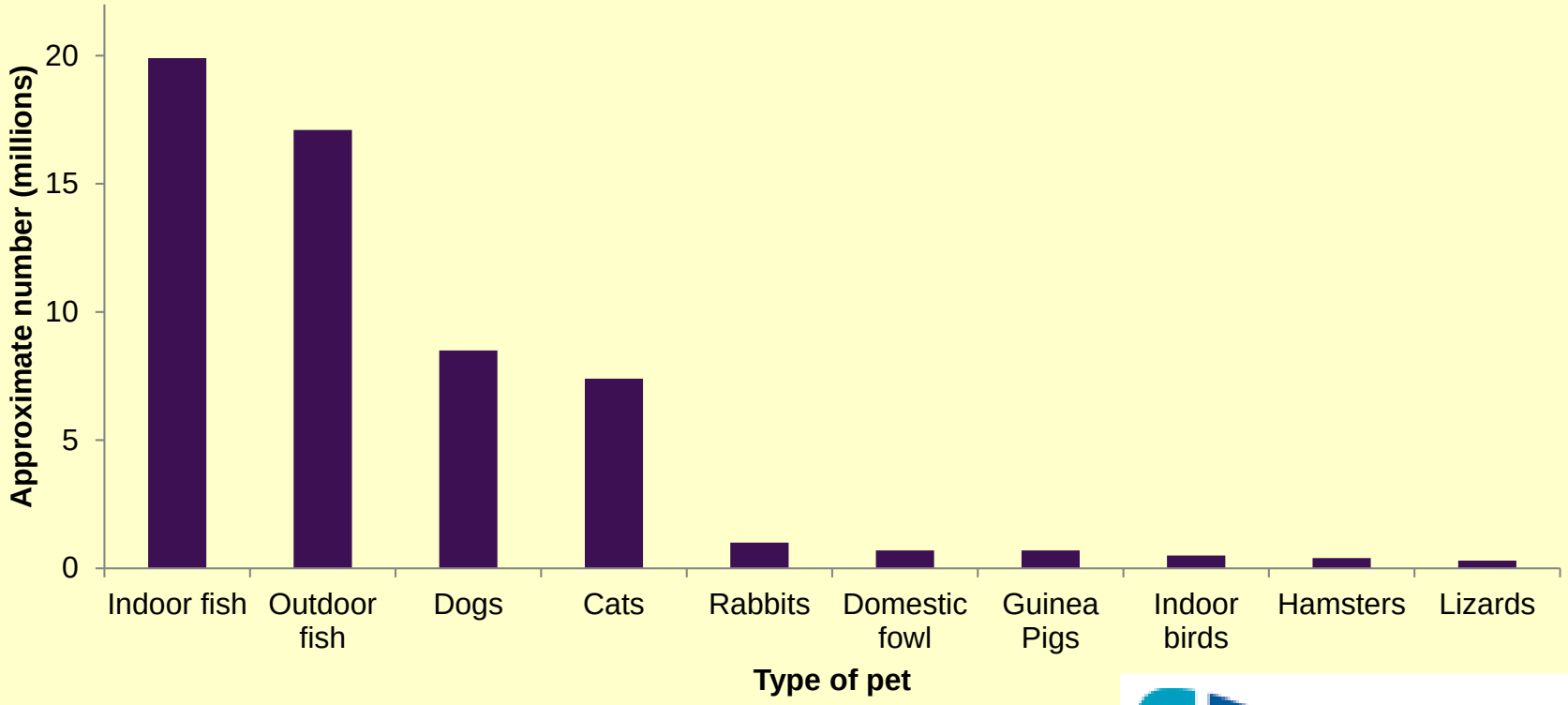
BUT

- May be regarded as subordinates and/or possessions.

PFMA Pet Population (2015)

Moulton COLLEGE

- ~12million (46% of) UK households own a pet.
- 58.4 million pets.



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PFMA Pet Ownership 2008

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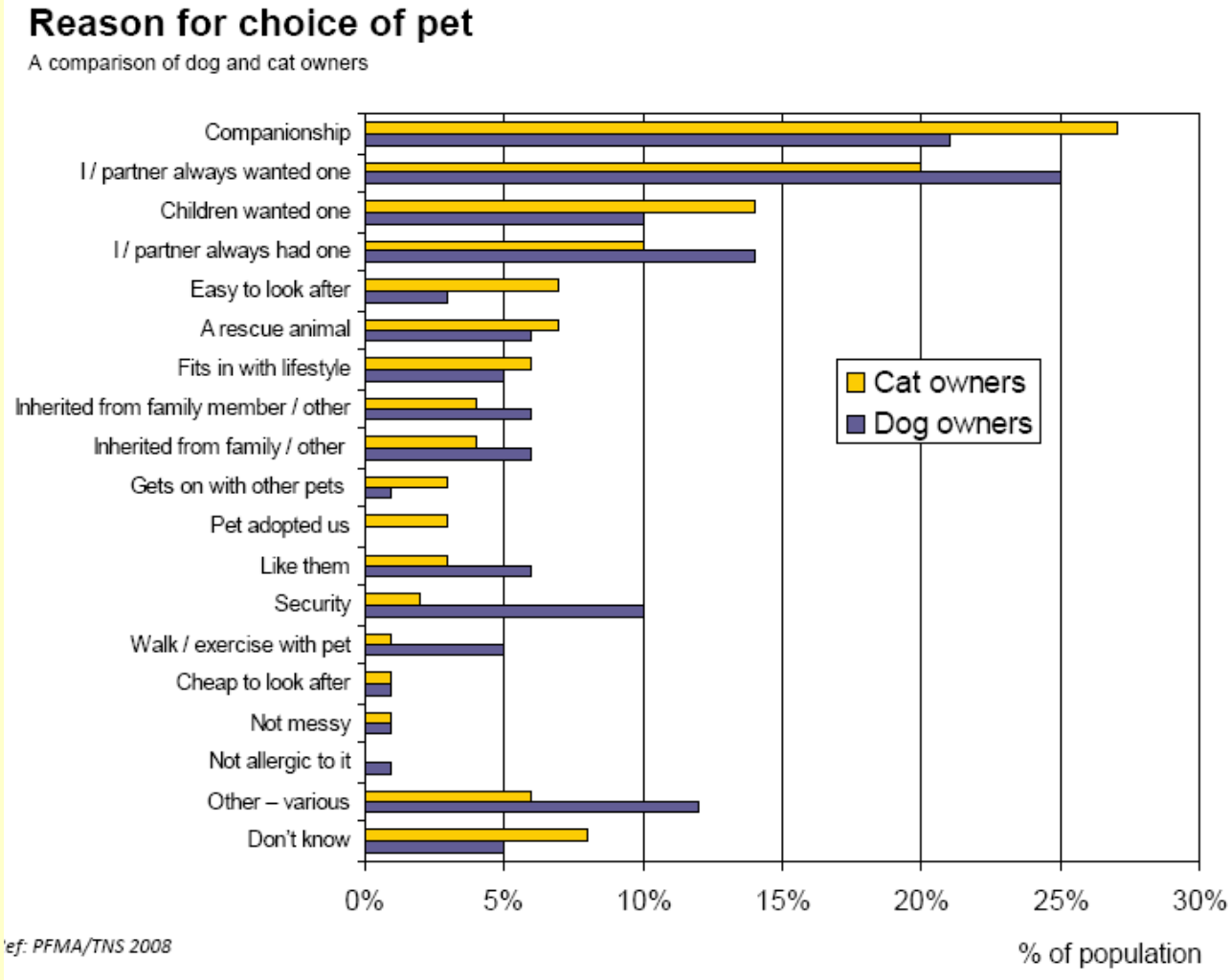

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Functions of Pet Ownership?

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- Veveers (1985) suggested three separate functions

1. Projective function

2. Sociability function

3. Surrogate function

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The Projective Function

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The extent to which the selection of a pet makes a statement about the owner.

- Personality
- Self-image, or status

(real or perceived)

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The Projective Function

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- Are pet owners different?
  - Personality differences in dominance, nurturance and autonomy between cat and dog owners (Kidd and Kidd, 1980).
  - Later found personality differences between horse, snake and bird owners.
- Are pet owners nicer?
  - Pet owners different from non-owners and somehow “nicer”.
  - Success in human-animal relationships predictive of success in human-human relationships?
  - Brown *et al*. (1972) - Low expressed affection for dogs = low expressed affection for other people.

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The Projective Function

Moulton COLLEGE

- Pets as status symbols.
  - Can say something about status - a symbolic extension of the owner?
  - Pets are expensive.
    - Large pets associated with large homes & incomes
    - Pet accessories - humanisation
  - Ownership of unusual pets e.g. large cats.
  - Cosmetic surgery for pets.

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Moulton COLLEGE

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The Sociability Function

Moulton COLLEGE

The extent to which having a pet acts as a social lubricant.

How does pet ownership affect the quantity and quality of interaction with others?

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The Sociability Function

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- Interaction with pets can change the nature of the interaction with others:
  - By attracting attention.
  - By having interpersonal appeal.
  - By stimulating conversation.
  - By being entertaining.

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The Sociability Function

Moulton COLLEGE

- Pets and self-disclosure:
  - Psychologists ask clients to describe other people - inadvertently this gives the therapist “clues” about the client.
  - Describing companion animals - less threatening; equally revealing.
  - Observations of interaction with pets.

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The Sociability Function

Moulton COLLEGE

- Pets as barriers
  - Pets can be used to inhibit social interaction.
  - Chosen for effectiveness at keeping others away.
  - An excuse for not dealing with other problems.
    - e.g. Animal hoarders

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The Surrogate Function

Moulton COLLEGE

The extent to which pet-human interaction supplements, or in extreme cases, replaces human-human interaction.

- Animals often anthropomorphised.
- If interaction replaces that with humans = surrogacy.
- A surrogate = someone (thing) who takes the place of another.
  - Associated with provision of nurturing or care behaviours.

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The Surrogate Function

Moulton COLLEGE

- Level of surrogacy gauged by:
  - Bereavement
  - Communication style
  - Social ceremonies
  - Activities with animals

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The Surrogate Function

Moulton COLLEGE

- Could be one of two roles:
  - Surrogate children
  - Surrogate parents

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Opinions to and roles of pets

Moulton COLLEGE

- Closely intertwined.
- Very little comprehensive research but growing in interest.
- Wide range of identified factors that could influence:
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Ethnic background
  - Area of residence
  - Knowledge of animals
  - Participation in animal-related activities
  - Instruction in animal-related courses
  - Television / movies
  - Parents

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Age

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- Most research focused on teenagers or very young – wide developmental age gap left out.
- Badaracco (1973):
  - Grades 1-12 (USA)
  - Preference in aspects of natural environment.
  - Reptiles & insects dropped significantly in preference for older children.
- Johnson (1974):
  - Attitudes towards wolves (USA).
  - Children <10 years most negative followed by over 30s.
  - Why?

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Age

- Attitudes to wildlife in 8th graders (USA):
  - Non-consumptive users were more knowledgeable than consumptive users.
  - LaHart, 1974; Pomerantz, 1977; Sanders, 1974.
  - Pomerantz (1977) - 7th-12th grade students = Majority valued aesthetic over utilitarian qualities of wildlife, were anxious to learn, and took part in animal-related activities.
  - Sanders (1974) - 8th graders cared more than 12th graders.
- Political learning takes place pre-high school (Hess, 1967), political interest peaks in 7th and 8th grade & becomes firmly established then (Easton, 1970), then attitudes remain constant from 14yrs to high school (Adelson, 1966).

Age

- Morris (1965) – 7 ages of inter-specific reactivity:
  - Infantile phase (4-6 yrs) – big animals represent parent substitutes.
  - Infantile-parental phase (9-14 yrs) – react more strongly to smaller animals which are symbolic of infant figures (i.e. pets).
  - Objective pre-adult phase – bug-hunting, microscopes, aquaria.
  - Young adult phase – interest in animals supplanted by human relations with opposite sex.
  - Adult parental phase – animals symbolic as pets for children.
  - Post-parental phase – lose children and use animals as child substitutes.
  - Senile phase – intense interest in species struggling for survival.

Age

- 3 key stages in development have been found for attitudes to animals (Kellert, 1984):
  - Age 6-9 years = major changes in **affective**, emotional relationships to animals.
  - Age 10-13 years = major increase in **cognitive**, factual understanding and knowledge of animals.
  - Age 13-16 years = dramatic broadening in **ethical** concern and ecological appreciation of animals and the natural environment.

Gender

- Young females more anti-hunting than young males (Pomerantz, 1977; Rohlfing, 1980; Shaw, 1974).
- Female children more sympathetic to animals, more concerned about their welfare, and more anthropomorphic and aesthetically oriented to them (Baird, 1982; Sanders, 1974; Pomerantz, 1977).
- Badaracco (1973) – mammals & birds popular with both sexes but girls in grades 1-12 ranked fish, reptiles and biting / stinging invertebrates lower than boys.
- Morris (1965) – age 4-10 yrs boys & girls had equal dislike of spiders but this increased dramatically in girls as they approached their teens.

CAHRU

Moulton COLLEGE

- DEFRA funded study with Child & Adolescent Health Research Unit (CAHRU) investigating concept of ‘duty of care’.
  - Initial study on young children.
  - Now focusing on 13-17yo – online survey.
- Aims to allow for development of evidence-based education materials to improve attitudes and behaviour.
- Due for completion Dec 2015.

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Children & pets

Moulton COLLEGE

- Williams *et al*. (2010)
- 57 9yo, 38 11yo, 26 13yo
- 79% children had a pet at home.
  - BUT 35% did not consider it to be their pet.
  - 22% who did not have a pet in their home did feel that they had their own pet (e.g. at grandparents).
- No age difference in attitudes, Pet Attachment Scale, Lexington Attachment Scale, or Affective Empathy Scale.
- No gender difference in attitudes, Pet Attachment Scale or Lexington Attachment Scale but girls scored higher for Affective Empathy Scale.
- No differences between children who had a pet in their home and those who didn't BUT if they had a pet of their own they had more positive attitudes.
- Pets important but not enough.

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Rationale

- No work to date on students in tertiary & higher education.
- Increasing concerns regarding mental health in students.
  - HEFCE report (Sep 2015): mental health problems rose from 8,000 in 2008-09 to 18,000 in 2012-15.
- Pets may provide important support mechanisms.

Aim & objectives

Moulton COLLEGE

- Aim: To investigate pet attachment in FE / HE students at two Northamptonshire institutions.
- Objectives:
  - Determine whether pet ownership was related to specific demographics.
  - Determine whether type of pet owned was related to demographics.
  - Compare pet attachment scores to human and pet factors.

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Methods

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- Ethical approval: MC & UoN.
- Online survey produced (via SurveyMonkey) and advertised via VLE (Moodle).
- Pet details recorded: if owned, what species.
- Modified version of CENSHARE Pet Attachment Scale – 4 point Likert Scale.
  - 1) Almost Always; 2) Often; 3) Sometimes; 4) Almost Never
- Basic demographic questions: gender, age group, ethnicity, disability, course area.

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Moulton Pet Attachment Scale

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1. Within your family, your pet likes you best.
2. You are too busy to spend time with your pet.
3. You spend time each day playing with or exercising your pet.
4. Your pet comes to greet you when you arrive.
5. You talk to your pet as a friend.
6. Your pet is aware of your different moods.

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Moulton Pet Attachment Scale

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7. Your pet pays attention and responds to you.
8. You confide in your pet.
9. You play with your pet when he/she approaches.
10. You show photos of your pet to your friends.
11. You involve your pet in your social media activity (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube).
12. You spend time each day caring for your pet.

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Moulton Pet Attachment Scale

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13. You ignore your pet when he/she approaches.
14. When you come home, your pet is the first one you greet.
15. Your pet tries to stay near you by following you.
16. You feel more anxious when your pet is near you.
17. You buy presents for your pet.
18. When you feel bad, you seek your pet for comfort.
19. You prefer to be with your pet more than with most people you know.

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Moulton Pet Attachment Scale

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20. Your pet is a nuisance and a bother to you.
21. You consider your pet to be a member of your family.
22. You like to handle your pet.
23. You feel sad when you are separated from your pet.
24. You have your pet near you when you study, read, or watch TV.
25. You feel calmer when your pet is near you.
26. You don’t like your pet to get too close to you.

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Analysis

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- 320 responses in total (after removing a T Rex and a dolphin!):
  - Chi square analysis to look at factors for pet ownership and type of pet (excluding those with no response).
  - Ranking scales inverted for those questions with reversed phrasing.
  - For missing fields within ranking scales:
    - >10% absent, data excluded from analysis.
    - <10% absent, mean score from other ranks applied.
- Analysis conducted using Excel and SPSS.

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Factors linked to pet ownership

- Respondents with no answer removed from analysis.
- Respondents simply stated ‘yes’ or ‘no’ – no further questioning into whether it was solely their pet or shared.
- No significant association between pet ownership and:
  - Study mode (FT, PT, WBL)
  - Age group

Pet ownership by course

Moulton COLLEGE

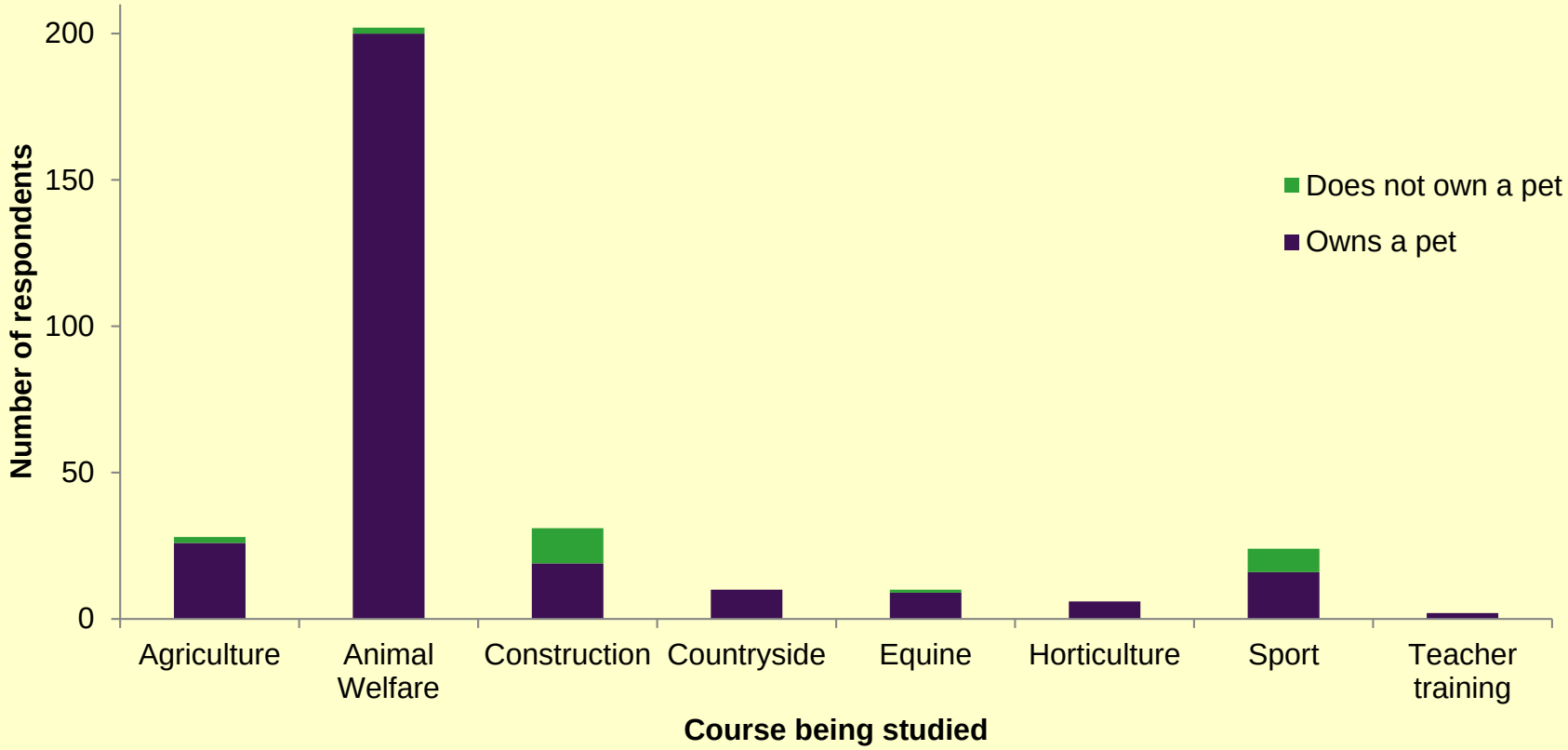

Figure 1. A highly significant association was seen between pet ownership of Moulton College students (n=313) and the area of the course being studied (X^2=75.894, df=7, P<0.001).

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Pet ownership by gender

Figure 2. A highly significant association was seen between pet ownership of Moulton College students (n=314) and gender (X^2=31.790, df=3, P<0.001).

Pet ownership by ethnicity

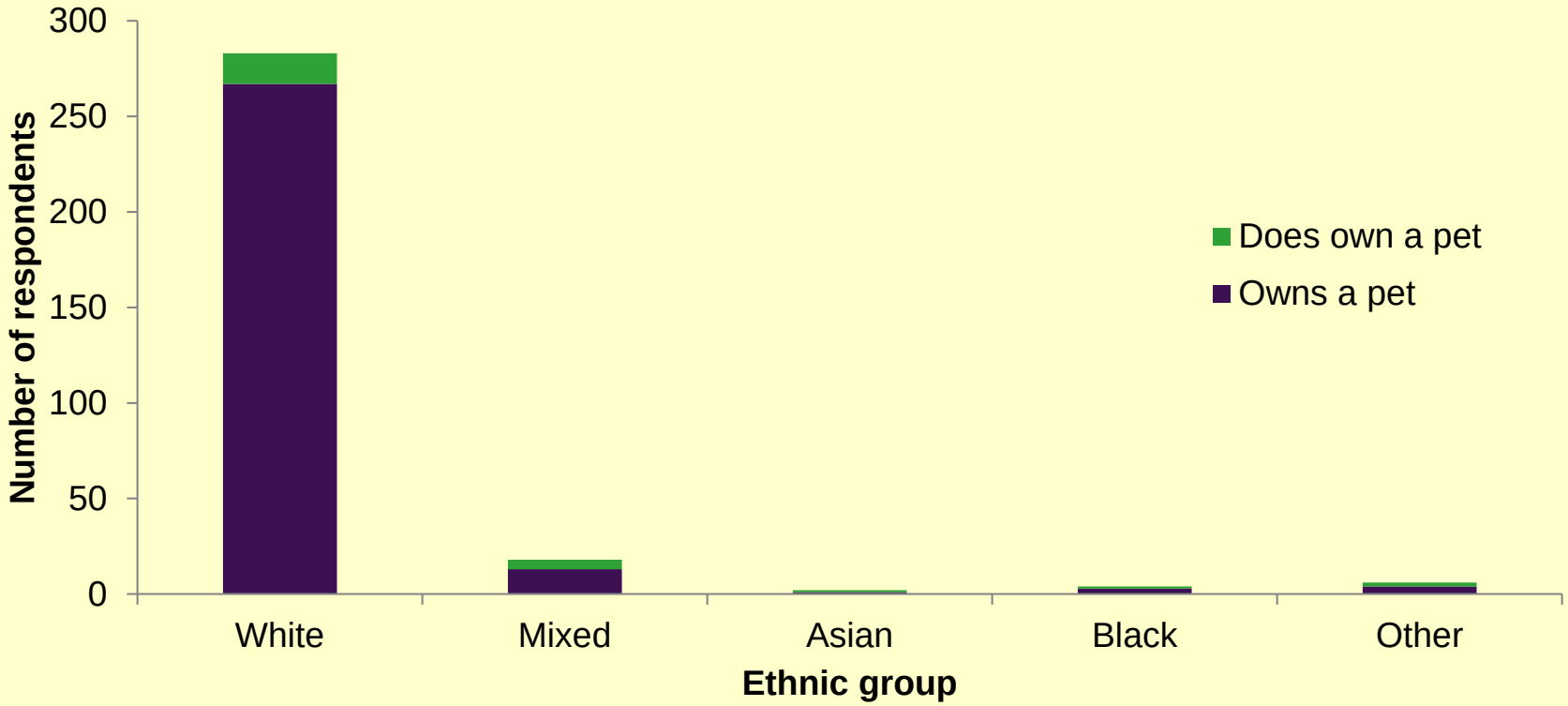

Figure 3. A highly significant association was seen between pet ownership of Moulton College students (n=313) and ethnicity (X^2=23.313, df=4, P<0.001).

Type of pet

Moulton COLLEGE

- Wide variety of species stated – grouped to allow analysis:
  - Dog
  - Cat
  - Horse
  - Reptile
  - Rabbit
  - ‘Small furry’ (e.g. guinea pig, hamster)
  - Exotic mammal (e.g. African pygmy hedgehog)
  - Ferret
  - Bird
  - Fish
  - Invertebrate
  - Cow

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Pet type total

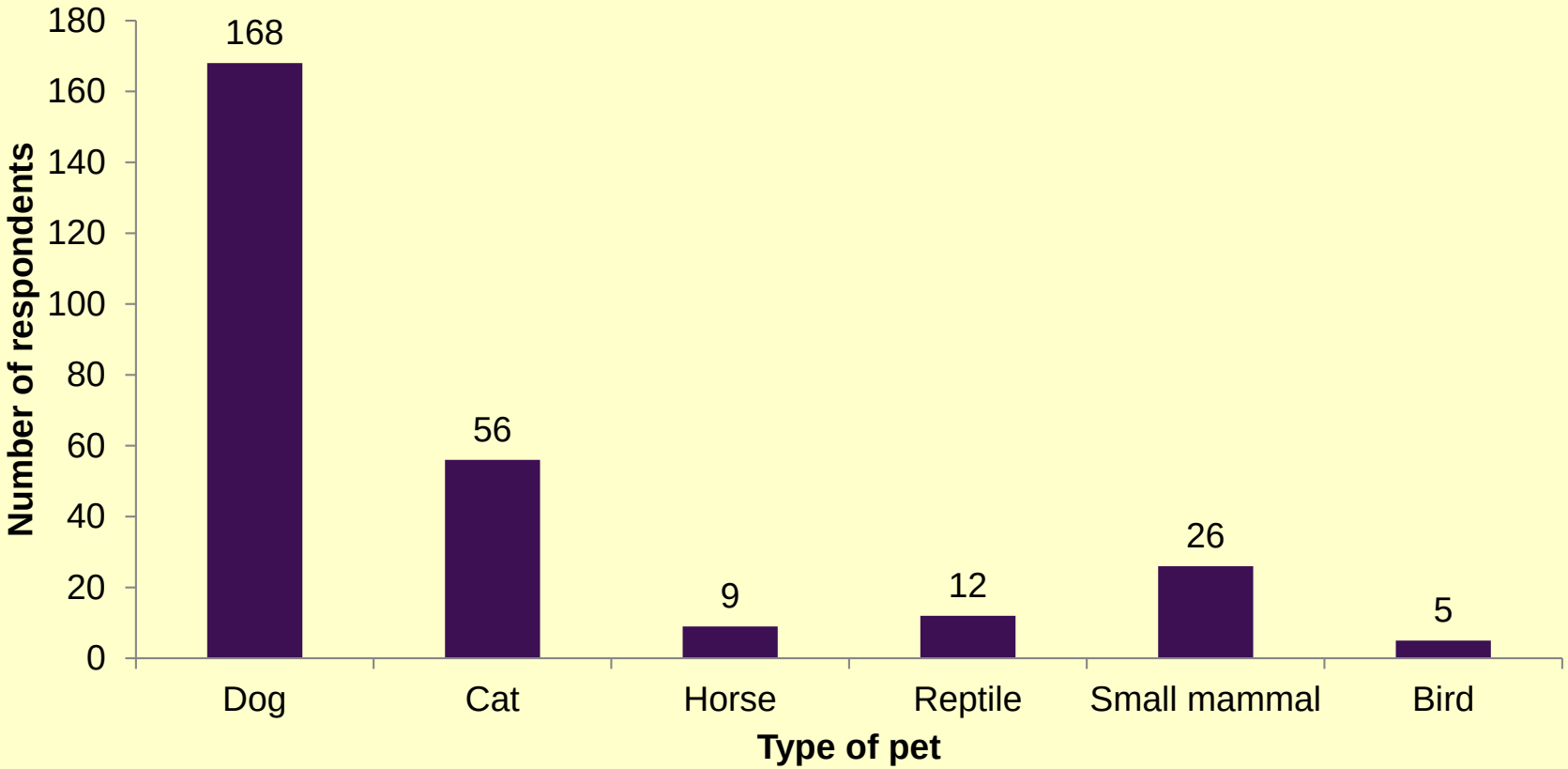

Figure 4. Number of respondents at Moulton College listing each pet type as their primary pet (n=276).

Pet type by course

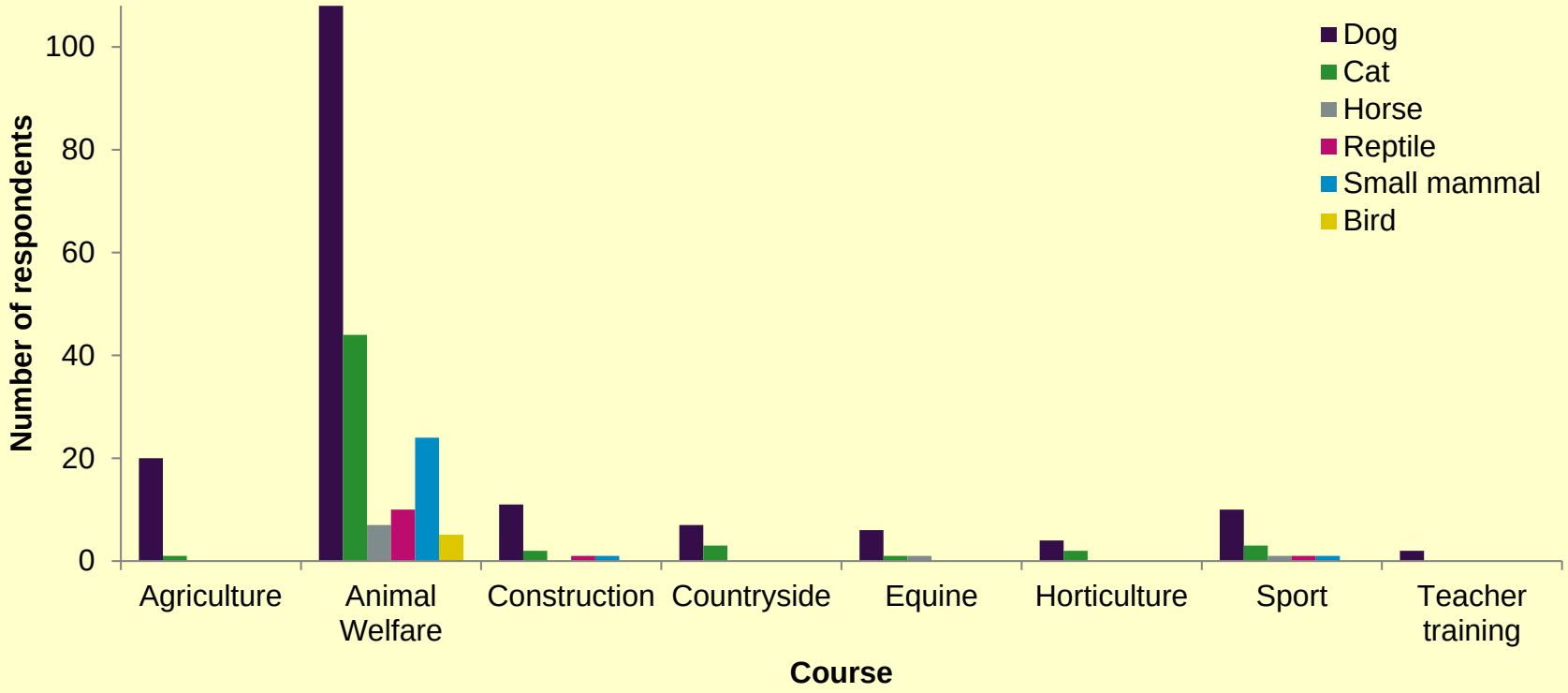

Figure 5. Number of respondents at Moulton College listing each pet type as their primary pet according to course studied (n=276).

Pet type by gender

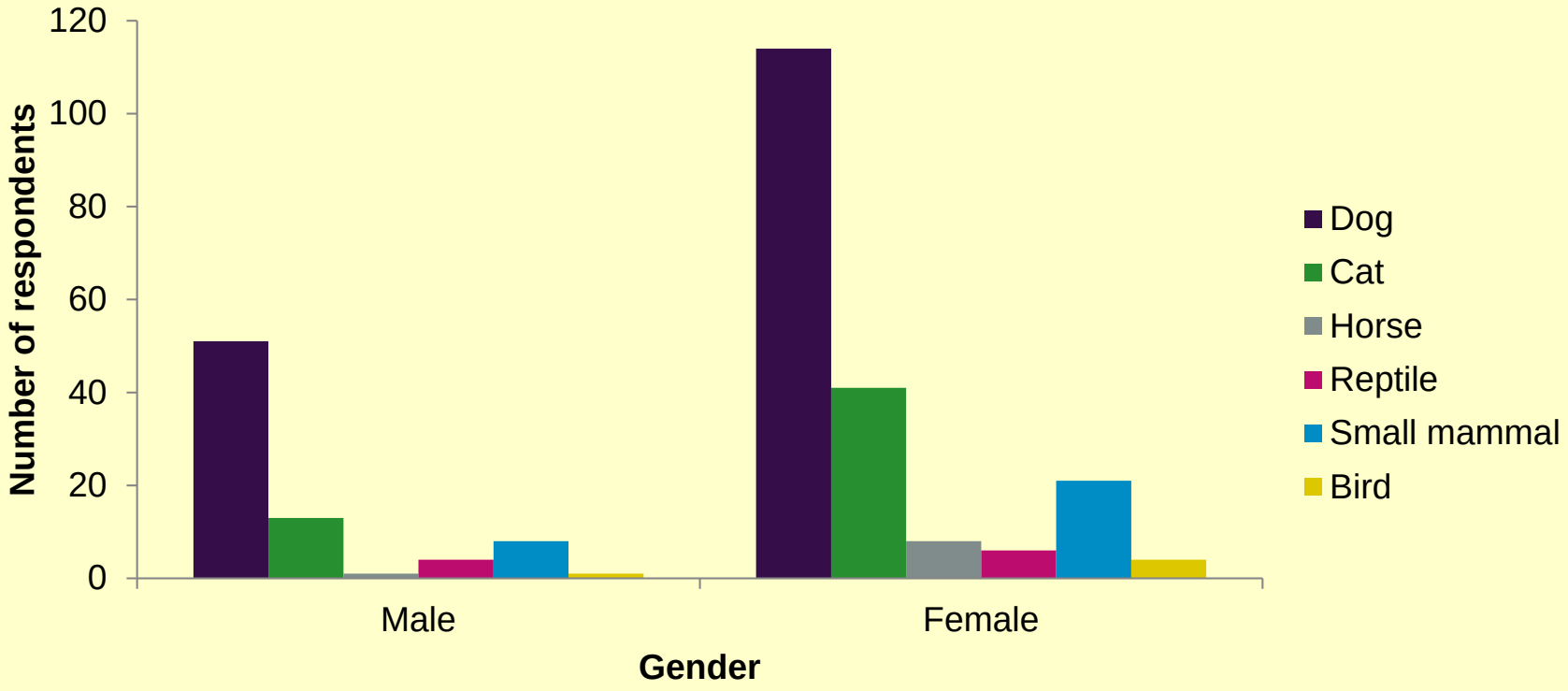

Figure 5. There was no significant association between primary pet type and gender (cis-gender respondents only) of respondents at Moulton College (n=272, X^2=3.147, df=5, P=0.677).

Attachment results

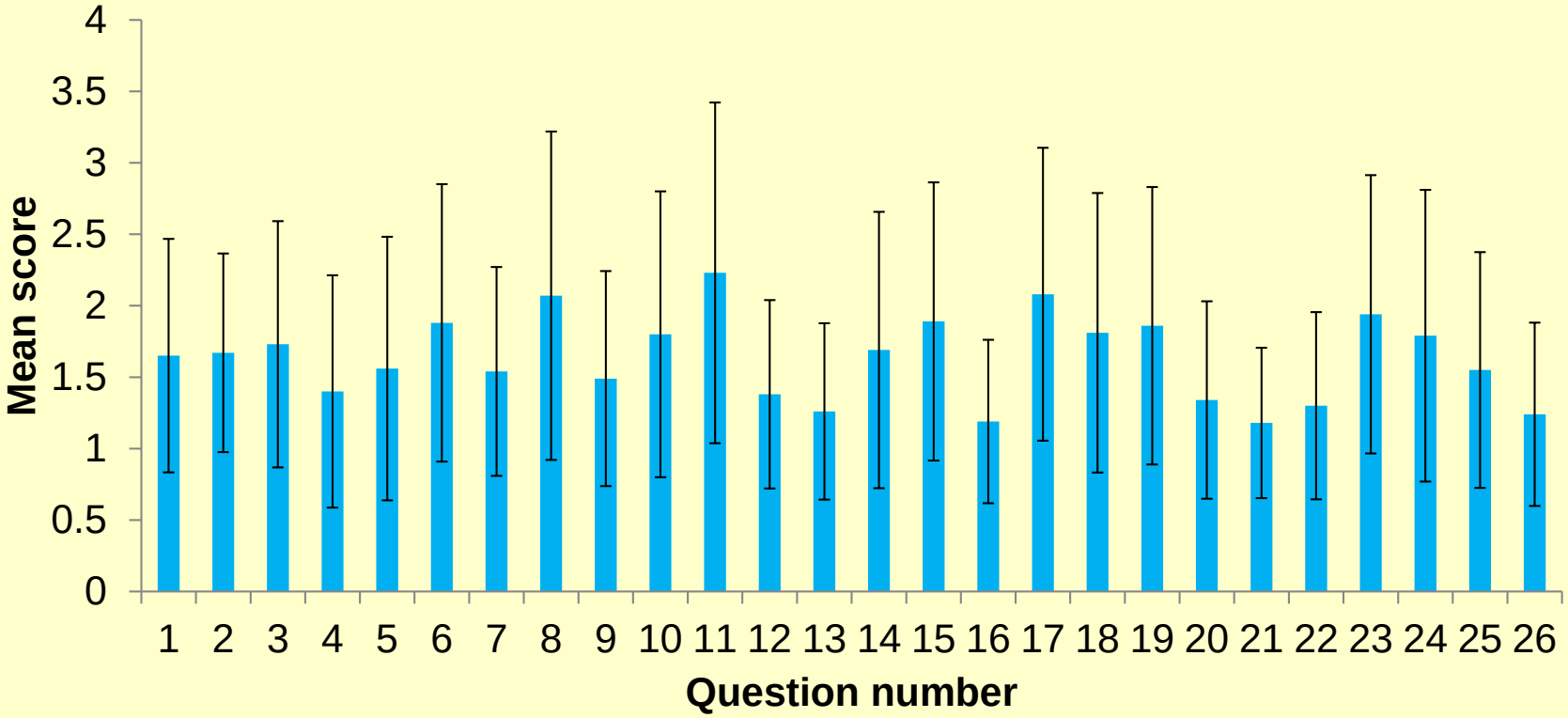

Figure 6. Mean score (+/- 1 SD) for attachment questions with pet-owning respondents from Moulton College (n=292).

Attachment survey

Moulton COLLEGE

- Modified survey had very high internal reliability (n=26, Cronbach's alpha=0.919).
- No significant difference in score according to age group.
- Highly significant difference between log transformed attachment score by gender (F=24.936, df=1, P<0.001).
  - Male mean = 0.2673, female mean = 0.1666.
- Highly significant difference between log transformed attachment score by pet type (F=3.171, df=5, P=0.008)…

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Attachment by pet type

Moulton COLLEGE

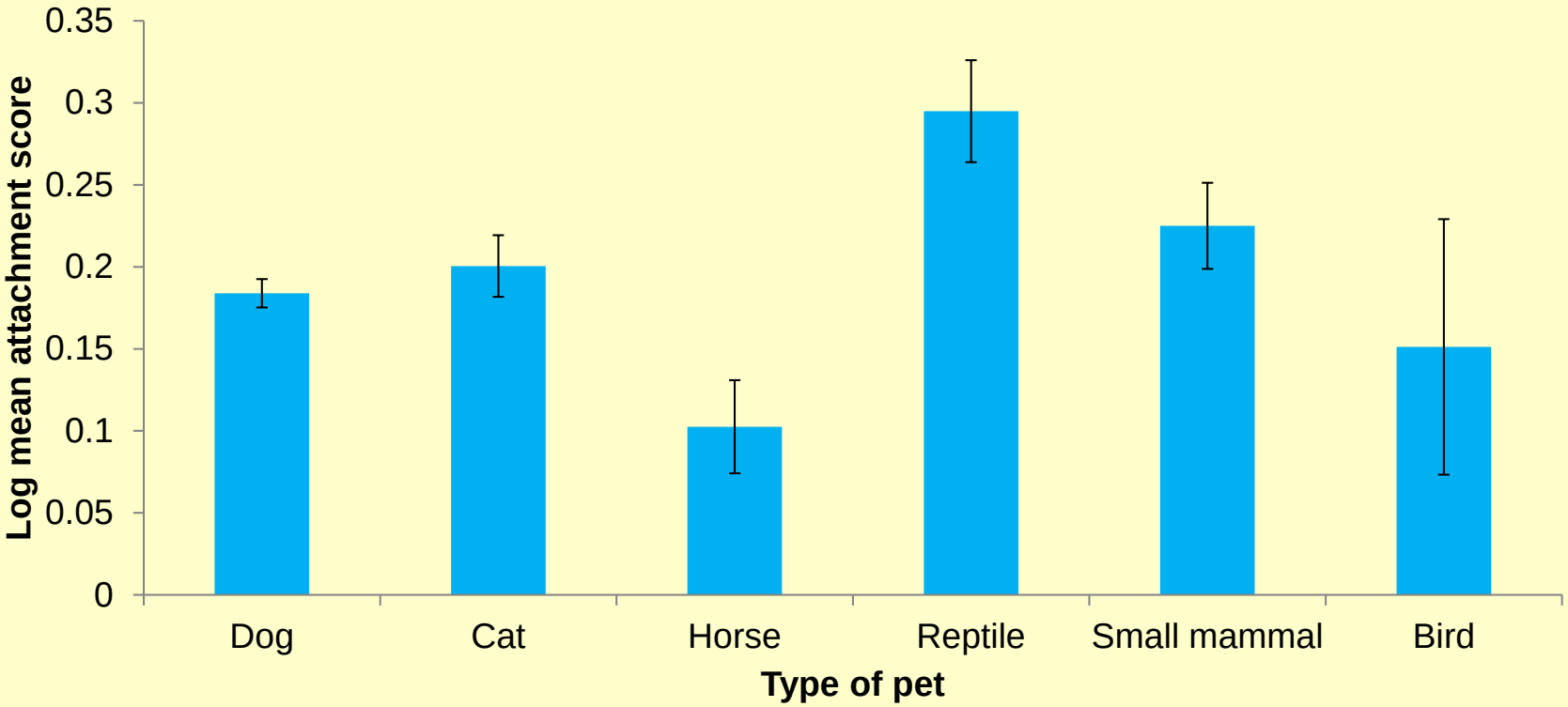

Figure 6. A highly significant difference was found between the mean log transformed attachment score (shown +/- 1 SE) for each type of pet (F=3.171, df=5, P=0.008, n=275).

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Attachment by pet type

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- Attachment runs on a scale:
- Horse > bird > dog > cat > sm. mam. > reptile
- Owners are likely expecting (and receiving) different things from each type of pet.

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Ongoing…

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- The survey is about to be opened online to University of Northampton students across all schools.

- Any questions?

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Quick plug…

Moulton COLLEGE

- Friday 3rd June
- Deadline for abstract submission is **23:59 (GMT) on 12/02/16**.
- Online registration is now open with an Early Bird price of **£55** per person if registered before **23:59 on 26/02/16**.

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Area of residence

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- People raised in rural areas have more utilitarian approaches than city raised (1 million+ residents).
- Pomerantz (1977) – for 7th-12th graders, as population size increased number of hunters decreased and number opposed to hunting increased.
- Sanders (1974) – inner city children expressed least concern for animal welfare, suburbs showed most concern.

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Ethnic background

- Washington (1976)
  - Young urban African Americans “noticeably absent” from resource-related activities (camping, hiking, hunting) except fishing.
- Knowledge of wildlife / environment found to be consistently lower in young AA than young white Americans (Giles, 1959; LaHart, 1978).

Knowledge of animals

Moulton COLLEGE

- Weak relationship but contradicting studies:
  - LaHart (1978) – knowledgeable 8th graders more likely to be opposed to hunting.
  - Pomerantz (1977) – in secondary school students hunters had highest knowledge followed by non-hunters then anti-hunters.
- LaHart (1978) – knowledge level did not affect opinion on emotional capacity of animals.
- Highest knowledge scores came from (Kress, 1975; Pomerantz, 1977; LaHart, 1978):
  - Males
  - White Americans
  - Children whose parents have a College education
  - Rural children

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Symbolic perception of animals

Moulton COLLEGE

- Badarracco (1973) – black & white line drawings of animals shown to 1st through 12th graders.
  - Mammals most popular, birds second, fish third.
  - Reptiles, harmless invertebrates, amphibians & biting insects all unpopular, more so with older children.
- Morris (1965) – snakes liked least of all creatures (25% children aged 4-14); most hated at age 6.
- Johnson (1974) – children <10 had most negative perceptions of wolves (dangerous, bad, destroyers of moose / deer, no value).
- Morris (1966) – identified 20 anthropomorphic characteristics to account for popularity of animals like the panda, e.g. size.

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Animal –oriented activities

- Similar importance to knowledge – encourages use of activities in education.
- Males more involved in hunting, fishing and insect catching; females more in horse-riding and visiting zoos.
- Rural children more engaged.
- George (1967, 1974) – membership in conservation clubs / nature camps strongly associated with conservation attitudes in high school students & owning a pet had a positive influence on animal welfare concerns.

Other influences

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- Hess (1967) – teacher opinion key to children's attitudes but impossible to quantify.
- Kress (1975) – direct instruction methods (e.g. studying live snakes & spiders) promoted positive attitudes to these animals in 9-12yrs.
  - Positive effects transferred to other species & stable after 6 months.
  - Indirect methods (slides / movies / lectures) not as effective.
- Pomerantz (1976) – 87% secondary school children felt TV influenced their attitude towards wildlife.
  - Parents and movies also identified as major influences in 75% children.

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