

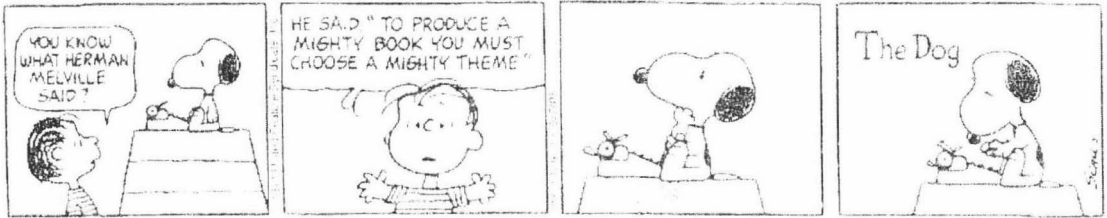
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# **Behavioural Therapy Success and the Effect of Socialisation on Subsequent Behaviour in Dogs.**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Veterinary Studies  
at Massey University, Palmerston North  
New Zealand**

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PEANUTS



## **Recommended amendments**

The following amendments were suggested by the examiners of the thesis and accepted as being well advised. As they were minor amendments the thesis was not modified.

In the section Aims of the Thesis (page 35-36) the word 'investigate' should be replaced by either 'assess' or 'report'.

The term 'report' should be used rather than 'assess' in the first aim of the Socialisation Study (page 35).

Mat Ward  
29-9-2003

## Abstract

The success of a three-week “in-clinic” behaviour modification program for the treatment of behaviour problems in dogs was investigated. This form of therapy was found to be an effective treatment for a variety of canine behaviour problems. The practicality of the consultant’s recommendations for continuing therapy at home was the factor most closely associated with therapy success. Improvement in obedience was linked with therapy success for dogs that attended the clinic for problems other than obedience. The use of a remote-activated electronic collar was found to be very effective for the treatment of undesirable behaviour. There was some regression to pre-therapy behaviour once use of the collars was discontinued. Use of electronic collars did not result in any negative changes to behaviour or personality for most dogs, although negative effects were reported in some dogs. Use of electronic collars was found to be very effective in stopping inappropriate predatory behaviour towards sheep in the long term; this was not the case for predatory behaviour towards cats.

The early socialisation experience of dogs was compared with their adult behaviour. The mean level of socialisation before 12 weeks of age was found to be 3 to 4 new people a week, 1 new dog a week, and 2 to 3 new environments a week. The amount of social and environmental exposure a puppy receives was found to be positively correlated with measures of sociability, and negatively correlated with measures of fear and aggression. The amount of socialisation “in general” was the measure of early experience found to be most closely associated with desirable behaviour in adulthood. Socialisation with other species was negatively correlated with inappropriate predatory behaviour. Dogs that attended puppy socialisation class were found to be less fearful, less aggressive, and more social. No differences were found between attendees and non-attendees of socialisation classes in measures of obedience, or fear of novel stimuli, novel environments or veterinary clinics. Dogs that attended puppy socialisation classes before 10 weeks of age were less fearful of strange dogs than dogs that attended after 10 weeks. Female dogs were more aggressive and less sociable. Spayed female dogs were more likely than entire females to snap at familiar dogs. The data highlights the importance of early socialisation in the development of a well-adjusted dog.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	IV
LIST OF FIGURES .....	X
LIST OF TABLES .....	XI
CHAPTER 1 .....	1
A Literature Review of Canine Behavioural Therapy and the Effect of Socialisation on Subsequent Behaviour in Dogs.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	2
1.1.1 Dogs and humans.....	2
1.1.2 Thesis summary .....	2
1.2 The pet behaviour therapy field .....	4
1.2.1 Impact of canine behaviour problems.....	4
1.2.2 Pet behaviour consultants .....	6
1.2.3 The veterinary behavioural specialty.....	7
1.3 Canine Behavioural Consultation and Therapy Techniques.....	8
1.3.1 The behaviour consultation process.....	8
1.3.2 Etiology of the behaviour problem & therapy recommendations .....	10
1.3.3 Learning-mediated factors .....	11
1.3.4 Physiological factors.....	13
1.3.5 Stimulus factors .....	14
1.3.6 Therapy success .....	15
1.3.7 Remote-activated electronic collars.....	17
1.4 Early Socialisation of the Dog and its Effect on the Development of Behaviour.....	21
1.4.1 The timing of socialisation .....	22
1.4.2 The process of socialisation.....	27
1.4.3 Socialising a young dog.....	29
1.4.4 Socialisation and puppy health .....	29
1.4.5 Rehoming the puppy.....	31
1.4.6 Puppy socialisation classes .....	32

1.5	Aims of Thesis .....	35
	Therapy success study (Chapter 2): .....	35
	Socialisation study (Chapter 3): .....	35
CHAPTER 2	.....	37
	The Success of In-Clinic Canine Behavioural Therapy.....	37
2.1	Introduction.....	39
	2.1.1 Quantifying success .....	39
	2.1.2 In-clinic behavioural therapy .....	40
	2.1.3 Reasons for recommending in-clinic therapy .....	41
	2.1.4 Disadvantages of in-clinic therapy .....	42
	2.1.5 Remote-activated electronic collars.....	43
	2.1.6 Aims.....	44
2.2	Materials and Methods.....	44
	2.2.1 The questionnaire.....	45
	2.2.2 Statistical analysis.....	46
2.3	Results.....	46
	2.3.1 General results .....	46
	2.3.2 Responses to survey questions.....	51
	2.3.3 Comparison of dogs' response to obedience commands before and after in-clinic therapy.....	58
	2.3.4 Aspects of the in-clinic process and their effect on overall success and improvement in behaviour .....	60
	2.3.5 Dogs with inter-dog aggression (non-household) as their primary problem .....	64
	2.3.6 Therapy success for sheep-chasing therapy compared with cat-chasing therapy .....	66
	2.3.7 Dogs with control issues as their primary problem .....	67
	2.3.8 Comparison of reduction in frequency and intensity after in-clinic therapy for the four most common behaviour problem types.....	67
2.4	Discussion.....	70
	2.4.1 Major findings of this study.....	70
	2.4.2 Overall success of therapy .....	70

2.4.3	Success of in-clinic therapy for dogs displaying aggression towards non-household dogs as their primary problem .....	73
2.4.4	Was in-clinic therapy value for money? .....	75
2.4.5	Aspects of therapy which contributed to success .....	76
2.4.6	Improvement in response to owner command and overall success (Q1) for dogs that did not present with disobedience as their primary problem .....	79
2.4.7	Improvement in response to owner command and its effect on inter-dog aggression (non-household).....	81
2.4.8	Electronic collars: Are they effective, and does their use impact negatively on a dog's behaviour or personality .....	82
2.4.9	Sheep and cat avoidance conditioning with electronic collars .....	89
2.4.10	Limitations of this study .....	91
2.5	Conclusions.....	91
CHAPTER 3 .....		93
The Effect of Socialisation on Subsequent Behaviour in Dogs.....		93
3.1	Introduction.....	94
3.1.1	Socialisation.....	95
3.1.2	Puppy socialisation classes (PSCs).....	95
3.1.3	Aims.....	97
3.2	Materials and Methods .....	97
3.2.1	The questionnaire.....	98
3.2.2	Statistics .....	99
3.3	Results.....	100
3.3.1	General results .....	100
3.3.2	Socialisation levels of dogs in the study.....	104
3.3.3	Gender differences.....	106
3.3.4	Stepwise regression analysis of early experience and adult behaviour .....	108
	General socialisation (Q18) and adult behaviour.....	108
	Predatory behaviour and socialisation .....	114
	Age separated from litter and separation anxiety .....	115
3.3.5	Behavioural effects of attendance and non-attendance at PSCs.....	115

3.3.6	Attendance at PSCs before and after 10 weeks of age .....	120
3.4	Discussion .....	122
3.4.1	Major findings of this study.....	122
3.4.2	Level of socialisation of New Zealand dogs.....	122
3.4.3	Gender differences .....	124
3.4.4	Early socialisation and adult behaviour .....	125
3.4.5	Behavioural effects of attendance and non-attendance at PSCs.....	129
3.4.6	Comparison of behavioural effects of attendance at PSCs before and after 10 weeks of age .....	133
3.4.7	Limitations of this study .....	135
3.5	Conclusions.....	137
CHAPTER 4 - GENERAL DISCUSSION .....		139
General Discussion.....		140
In-Clinic Therapy.....		140
Socialisation and Adult Behaviour .....		143
REFERENCES .....		147
APPENDIX 1 .....		161
APPENDIX 2 .....		162
APPENDIX 3 .....		163

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2-1 Regression Plot of “Improvement in Obedience” and Overall Success (Q1).....	60
Figure 2-2 Regression Plot of Overall Success (Q1) versus Practicality of Recommendations (Q13).....	61
Figure 2-3 Regression Plot of Improvement in Behaviour (Q3) versus Practicality of Recommendations (Q13).....	62
Figure 2-4 Regression Plot of Improvement in Behaviour (Q3) versus Improvement in Owner Knowledge of Dog Behaviour and Learning (Q6) .....	63
Figure 3-1 Levels of Socialisation Towards People Before 12 Weeks of Age.....	105
Figure 3-2 Levels of Socialisation Towards Dogs Before 12 Weeks of Age.....	105
Figure 3-3 Levels of Exposure Towards Novel Environments Before 12 Weeks of Age ....	106
Figure 3-4 Regression Plot of General Socialisation Before 12 Weeks of Age Against Fearfulness as an Adult .....	109
Figure 3-5 Regression Plot of General Socialisation Before 12 Weeks of Age Against Friendliness with Strangers as an Adult .....	110
Figure 3-6 Regression Plot of General Socialisation Before 12 Weeks of Age Against Playfulness With Familiar Dogs as an Adult .....	110
Figure 3-7 Regression Plot of General Socialisation Before 12 Weeks of Age Against Sociability with Familiar Dogs as an Adult .....	111
Figure 3-8 Regression Plot of General Socialisation Before 12 Weeks of Age Against Playfulness with Strange Dogs as an Adult.....	111
Figure 3-9 Regression Plot of General Socialisation Before 12 Weeks of Age Against Sociability with Strange Dogs as an Adult.....	112
Figure 3-10 Regression Plot of General Socialisation Before 12 Weeks of Age Against Growling at Strange Dogs as an Adult.....	112
Figure 3-11 Regression Plot of General Socialisation Before 12 Weeks of Age Against Fear at the Veterinary Clinic as an Adult .....	113
Figure 3-12 Regression Plot of Level of Socialisation With Other Species Against Propensity to Chase Other Species.....	114
Figure 3-13 Regression Plot of Age Separated From Litter Against Destructiveness When Left Alone.....	115

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 2-1 Summary results for each dog including type of presenting behavioural problems and answers to core questions of the survey. ....	48
Table 2-2 Summary of client responses to questions 1 to 28 .....	54
Table 2-3 Comparison of Dog's Response to Obedience Commands Before In-Clinic Therapy to that at the Time of Questionnaire Completion .....	58
Table 2-4 Comparison of Dog's Response to Obedience Commands Immediately After In-Clinic Therapy to that at the Time of Questionnaire Completion.....	59
Table 2-5 Regression Analysis: Overall Success (Q1) versus Practicality of Recommendations (Q13).....	61
Table 2-6 Regression Analysis: Improvement in Behaviour (Q3) versus Practicality of Recommendations (Q13) .....	62
Table 2-7 Regression Analysis: Improvement in Behaviour (Q3) versus Improvement in Knowledge of Dog Behaviour and Learning (Q6) .....	63
Table 2-8 Practicality of Recommendations, Adequacy of Explanation of Causes and Treatment of the Behaviour Problem, Improvement in Client Knowledge and their Correlations with Compliance, and Therapy Success .....	64
Table 2-9 Decrease in Frequency of Aggression.....	65
Table 2-10 Decrease in Intensity of Aggression .....	65
Table 2-11 Response frequencies for reduction in frequency and intensity of aggression .....	65
Table 2-12 Correlations between obedience improvement, overall success (Q1), decrease in frequency of aggression, and decrease in intensity of aggression.....	65
Table 2-13 Decrease in Frequency of Sheep and Cat Chasing.....	66
Table 2-14 Decrease in Intensity of Sheep and Cat Chasing .....	66
Table 2-15 Decrease in Frequency of Disobedience .....	67
Table 2-16 Decrease in Intensity of Disobedience .....	67
Table 2-17 One-way ANOVA: Decrease in Frequency of Problem After In-Clinic Therapy Versus Problem Type .....	68
Table 2-18 One-way ANOVA: Decrease in Intensity of Problem After In-Clinic Therapy Versus Problem Type .....	69
Table 3-1 Means and Standard Deviations for the Respondent's Answers to the Survey Questions .....	101

Table 3-2: Mean Level of Socialisation to People, Dogs, and Environments Before 12 Weeks of Age .....	104
Table 3-3 Differences in Behaviour Between Male and Female Dogs .....	107
Table 3-4 One-Way ANOVA Analysis of Snapping at Familiar Dogs for Gender and Neuter Status .....	108
Table 3-5 Measures of Socialisation Between Dogs that Attended PSCs and Those That Did Not .....	116
Table 3-6 Statistically Significant Differences in Adult Behaviour Between Dogs That Attended PSCs and Those That Did Not .....	117
Table 3-7 Statistically Non-Significant Differences in Adult Behaviour Between Dogs That Attended PSCs and Those That Did Not .....	118
Table 3-8 Obedience and PSC Attendance.....	119
Table 3-9 Fear of Novel Stimuli and PSC Attendance.....	120
Table 3-10 Significant Differences in Socialisation Between Dogs That Attended PSCs Before 10 Weeks of Age and those that Attended After 10 Weeks of Age .....	121
Table 3-11 Significant Differences in Behaviour Between Dogs That Attended PSCs Before 10 Weeks of Age and those that Attended After 10 Weeks of Age .....	121