

‘Puppy and Up’: A study of temperament in puppies and human attachment and how this affects the human-dog bond.

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Background & Aims:

Thousands of dogs are relinquished to shelters or pounds every year, with the majority requiring euthanasia as insufficient replacement homes are available. This study will investigate factors relating to both the dog and the human to establish whether or not we can predict the health of the human-dog bond. These factors include:

1. **Puppy temperament:** the temperament is the more stable component of an individual animal’s behaviour. Dogs may display more or less fearfulness, aggression, fearfulness, social dominance and responsiveness to training (Jones & Gosling 2005). If temperament is measured in puppies it may predict the success of these dogs as companions in later life, for example if a puppy shows higher trainability it may go on to make a better pet.
2. **Human attachment:** no matter what the temperament of a new puppy, the success of their integration into a new home relies on human attachment. If attachment does not occur the dog is at high risk of relinquishment or re-homing.

The aim of this study is to test whether puppy temperament and human attachment can be used to predict whether or not the human-dog bond turns out to be a positive or a negative one.

Research Plan:

The study will be a longitudinal study beginning when puppies are 6-12 weeks of age when they are still with their breeder, and following the same puppies for approximately six months after they move to their new owners. Temperament tests will be performed in the puppies before re-homing, and then at follow-up at approximately three and six months. Questionnaires will be used to investigate the expectations of the new owner before the new puppy is brought home, and then the attachment to the new puppy over the following six month period.

This is a preliminary study and the plan is to expand it in the future to follow the human-dog bond over a longer time period.

Reference:

Jones AC & Gosling SD (2005) Temperament and personality in dogs (*Canis Familiaris*): A review and evaluation of past research. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* 95:1-53