**UQ Winter Research Project Description**

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| **Project title:** | **Understanding the human-animal bond between pet dogs and their owners through the lens of attachment theory: A national survey study.** |
| **Project duration, hours of engagement & delivery mode** | This project will expand over a four-week period, consisting of 36hours per week. This project can be completed remotely. |
| **Description:** | **Background**  The importance of dogs in the lives of humans has been increasingly acknowledged within the literature (Chan et al., 2021; Hill et al., 2019). Human-canine interaction has been linked to several physical and psychological benefits (Knight & Edwards, 2008); however, these benefits are not guaranteed, with some studies showing no benefit (Schofield et al., 2005). Further, pet ownership can be challenging, as evidenced by the number of pets surrendered each year, with an Australian report revealing that 233,917 dogs were either rescued or surrendered between 2013-2015 (Chua et al., 2017).  Although there is currently no single, or unified, theory to describe the effects seen through owner-dog interaction, attachment theory has been suggested to provide some guidance (Hill 2020; Meredith et al., 2022). It has been acknowledged, for example, that owners develop attachments to their dogs, which they often describe as family members, sources of security, and friends (Cohen, 2022; Triebenbacher, 1998). However, limited information is available regarding what factors might facilitate the development of a secure attachment between owners and their pet dog. The aim of this study is to address this gap, with a view to improving the relationships between owners and dogs, possibly improving health outcomes for both.  **Aim**  Through the lens of attachment theory study aims to investigate perceptions of dog owners, who perceive themselves to have a secure relationship with their dog/s, regarding what factors have influenced the development of this relationship.  **Methodology**  This online, mixed methods survey study was completed by adult, dog owners living in Australia, who currently, or previously have owned a dog with whom they perceive they have formed a secure attachment relationship. Data collection is now complete and therefore the Scholar will assist with the data analysis process. Frequency data and descriptive statistics, along with correlational analyses, will be conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics. Text-based descriptive responses will be extracted to analyse through content analysis. |
| **Expected outcomes and deliverables:** | The Scholar will gain skills in quantitative data analysis, and manuscript write up. With the support of the primary and co-supervisors this scholar will learn to use SPSS and lead the data-analysis process. The Scholar will also contribute to the preparation of a manuscript for publication. The Scholar may also be asked to produce an oral presentation at the end of their project. |
| **Suitable for:** | This project is suitable for students with knowledge in, or interest in gaining knowledge and understanding of attachment theory, and the influence of relationship to human health and wellbeing (e.g., occupational therapy students, psychology students). |
| **Primary Supervisor:** | Primary Supervisor: Dr Jess Hill  Co-Supervisors: Professor Pamela Meredith & Associate Professor Carlie Driscoll |
| **Further info:** | For further information regarding the project please contact [jessica.hill@uq.edu.au](mailto:jessica.hill@uq.edu.au) |