



8-1-2004

## Love, Laughter, and Lessons: What a Canine Brought to a Classroom for Students with Severe Emotional Disorders

Katherine L. Anderson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.und.edu/theses>

---

### Recommended Citation

Anderson, Katherine L., "Love, Laughter, and Lessons: What a Canine Brought to a Classroom for Students with Severe Emotional Disorders" (2004). *Theses and Dissertations*. 3081.  
<https://commons.und.edu/theses/3081>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, and Senior Projects at UND Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of UND Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact [und.common@library.und.edu](mailto:und.common@library.und.edu).

LOVE, LAUGHTER, AND LESSONS:  
WHAT A CANINE BROUGHT TO A CLASSROOM FOR STUDENTS WITH  
SEVERE EMOTIONAL DISORDERS

by

Katherine L. Anderson  
Bachelor of Science, University of North Dakota, 1997  
Master of Education, University of North Dakota, 1999

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Education

Grand Forks, North Dakota

August  
2004

The micrographic images on this film are accurate reproductions of records delivered to Modern Information Systems for microfilming and were filmed in the regular course of business. The photographic process meets standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for archival microfilm. NOTICE: If the filmed image above is less legible than this Notice, it is due to the quality of the document being filmed.

*Maria Olsen*  
Operator's Signature

12/06/04  
Date



This dissertation, submitted by Katherine L. Anderson in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whose the work has been done and is hereby approved.

Meyna L. Olson  
Chairperson

[Signature]

Gene Chalgren

Clayton Moberg

This dissertation meets the standards for appearance, conforms to the style and format requirements of the Graduate School of the University of North Dakota, and is hereby approved.

David D. Bond  
Dean of the Graduate School  
July 21, 2007  
Date

The micrographic images on this film are accurate reproductions of originals delivered to Modern Information Systems for microfilming and were filmed in the regular course of business. The photographic process meets standards of the American National Standards Institute for archival reproduction. NOTICE: If the filmed image above is less legible than the original, it is due to the quality of the document being filmed.

M. L. Olson  
Chairperson

PERMISSION

Title Love, Laughter, and Lessons: What a Canine Brought to a Classroom for Students with Severe Emotional Disorders

Department Teaching and Learning

Degree Doctor of Education

In presenting this dissertation in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a graduate degree from the University of North Dakota, I agree that the library of this University shall make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for extensive copying for scholarly purposes may be granted by the professor who supervised my dissertation work or, in her absence, by the chairperson of the department or the dean of the Graduate School. It is understood that any copying or publication or other use of this dissertation or part thereof for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and to the University of North Dakota in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in my dissertation.

Signature *John James O'Connor*

Date 7-19-04

iii

The micrographic images on this title are accurate reproductions of records delivered to Modern Information Systems for microfilming and were filmed in the regular course of business. The micrographic process meets standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for archival microfilm. NOTICE: If the filmed image above is less legible than this notice, it is due to the quality of the document being filmed.

*John James O'Connor*  
Operator's Signature

*12/6/04*  
Date

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES .....	ix
LIST OF TABLES .....	x
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	xi
ABSTRACT .....	xiii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION .....	I
Researcher's Interest in the Study.....	1
Need for the Study .....	3
Purpose of the Study .....	4
Guiding Research Questions .....	5
Delimitations of the Study .....	5
Bias of the Researcher .....	6
Definitions of the Terminology .....	6
Organization of the Study .....	8
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....	10
Historical Perspective on the Utilization of Animals as Therapeutic Tools .....	10
Domestication of Animals as Pets .....	10
First Reports of Animals as Therapeutic Tools .....	12



Work of Boris Levinson, The Pioneer of Pet Therapy .....	13
Child-Animal Relationships.....	16
Childhood Development .....	16
Value of Animal: .....	19
Animals as Family Members .....	22
Animals in the Consumer Market .....	24
Published Research on Child-Animal Relationships.....	26
Animals and Childhood Emotional Disorders .....	28
Educational Definition of an Emotional Disorder.....	28
Emotional Instabilities of Children.....	29
Child and Animal Abuse.....	30
Types and Goals of Animal Assisted Programs .....	33
Animal-Assisted Therapy .....	34
Animal-Assisted Activities .....	34
Animal-Assisted Counseling .....	34
Goals of Animal-Assisted Therapy.....	35
Benefits of Animal-Assisted Programs for Children with Emotional Disorders .....	36
Examples of Animal-Assisted Therapy Programs.....	38
Animals in Educational Settings.....	38
Value of Animals in Classrooms .....	39

v

The micrographic images on this film are accurate reproductions of records delivered to Modern Information Systems for microfilming and were filmed in the regular course of business. The photographic process meets standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for archival microfilm. NOTICE: If the filmed image above is less legible than this Notice, it is due to the quality of the document being filmed.

*Maria Olsen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date

Limitations of Animals in Classrooms .....	42
Examples of Programs Incorporating Animals.....	44
Summary .....	47
III.    METHODS AND PROCEDURES.....	49
Description of the Setting .....	49
Description of the Participants.....	51
Protecting Anonymity.....	52
Procedures for Reducing Risks in the Study.....	53
Design of the Study.....	56
Data Collection .....	56
Classroom Observations .....	56
Interviews.....	57
Social Skills Instruction.....	58
Problem Solving Sheets .....	58
ABC Analysis .....	59
Data Analysis .....	59
Classifying the Data.....	60
Validity of Data Analysis.....	61
IV.    PRESENTATION OF THE DATA.....	62
Context of the Study .....	62
Narrative Descriptions of the Students .....	63
Jake .....	64

The micrographic images on this film are accurate reproductions of records delivered to Modern Information Systems for microfilming and were filmed in the regular course of business. The photographic process meets standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for archival microfilm. NOTICE: If the filmed image above is less legible than this Notice, it is due to the quality of the document being filmed.

*Michele Olsen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date

Data.....	65
Ben.....	70
Data.....	71
Emma.....	75
Data.....	76
Abby.....	82
Data.....	83
Matt.....	88
Data.....	90
Molly.....	97
Data.....	98
V. <b>INTERPRETATIVE COMMENTARY: CATEGORIES, THEMES, AND ASSERTIONS.....</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>Foundations for Emotional Stability.....</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>Theme One: Students had Positive Attitudes Toward School and J.D.....</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>Theme Two: Students Found Companionship With J.D.....</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>Tools for Behavior Management.....</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>Theme One: Students Used J.D. to Remain in Control of Their Emotions and Behaviors and to Prevent Themselves from Entering into Emotional Crisis.....</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>Theme Two: Students Used J.D. as a De-escalation Tool to Calm Their Minds and Bodies When They Did Enter Into Emotional Crisis.....</b>	<b>117</b>

The micrographic images on this film are accurate reproductions of records delivered to Modern Information Systems for microfilming and were filmed in the regular course of business. The photographic process meets standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for archival microfilm. NOTICE: If the filmed image above is less legible than this Notice, it is due to the quality of the document being filmed.

*Mattie Olsen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date



Opportunities for Learning .....	121
Theme: J.D. Extended Students' Learning by Fostering Growth in Respect, Responsibility, and Empathy .....	122
Summary .....	126
VI. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND REFLECTIONS .....	128
Summary .....	128
Methodology .....	128
Setting .....	129
Participants .....	129
Findings .....	129
Question 1a .....	130
Question 1b .....	132
Question 2 .....	132
Conclusions .....	133
Conclusion One: Emotional Well-Being .....	133
Conclusion Two: Character Development .....	135
Recommendations .....	137
Recommendations for Educators of Children with Special Needs .....	137
Recommendations for Researchers .....	138
Reflections .....	139
APPENDICES .....	141
REFERENCES .....	152

The micrographic images on this film are accurate reproductions of records delivered to Modern Information Systems for microfilming and were filmed in the regular course of business. The photographic process meets standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for archival microfilm. NOTICE: If the filmed image above is less legible than this Notice, it is due to the quality of the document being filmed.

*Walter Almen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Interpretative Commentary .....	127

The micrographic images on this film are accurate reproductions of records delivered to Modern Information Systems for microfilming and were filmed in the regular course of business. The photographic process meets standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for archival microfilm. NOTICE: If the filmed image above is less legible than this Notice, it is due to the quality of the document being filmed.

Martin Abmen  
Operator's Signature

12/06/04  
Date

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. A Conceptual Framework for Examining Companion Animals in Relation to Children's Development .....	18
2. Research Studies Conducted in the 1980s and 1990s.....	26
3. Data Analysis Strategies.....	60

x

The micrographic images on this film are accurate reproductions of records delivered to Modern Information Systems for microfilming and were filmed in the regular course of business. The photographic process meets standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for archival microfilm. NOTICE: If the filmed image above is less legible than this Notice, it is due to the quality of the document being filmed.

Maria Olm  
Operator's Signature

12/06/04  
Date

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Throughout my journey in writing this dissertation, I have been supported by many individuals along the way. I will always remember how instrumental they were in encouraging me to keep reaching for my goal.

Dr. Myrna Olson, my doctoral advisor, has inspired me since I was an undergraduate student. Myrna, thank you for the *love, laughter, and lessons* that you have brought into my life, both as a mentor and as a friend. I feel so privileged to have worked with you, because I value your knowledge and respect your character. You will always be my role-model, both personally and professionally.

Dr. Lynne Chalmers, Dr. Shirley Greves, and Dr. Peggy Mohr also served on my doctoral committee, and I am so appreciative of the commitment that each one of them made to me. Lynne, Shirley, and Peggy, thank you for your wisdom, time, and flexibility. Collaborating with each of you has been a rewarding experience, and I feel so blessed to have had such an outstanding committee.

Chad, my husband, has stood beside me through all of my educational endeavors. Chad, thank you for supporting my desire to fulfill my dream of obtaining my doctorate degree and for all of your patience. I love you!

Wanda Holter, J.D.'s owner, played an integral role in my dissertation. Wanda, I am so grateful to have you as a friend and a colleague. Your dedication to me, by

bringing J.D. to our classroom each day and helping me as I collected my data, will never be forgotten. Because of J.D., our students' hearts and minds were touched forever!

Finally, a special thank you to my beloved students and their parents who participated in my study. The contributions they made to my dissertation are truly remarkable, and I will always treasure how rewarding each one of them made my career as a special education teacher.

The micrographic images on this film are accurate reproductions of records delivered to Modern Information Systems for microfilming and were filmed in the regular course of business. The photographic process meets standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for archival microfilm. NOTICE: If the filmed image above is less legible than this Notice, it is due to the quality of the document being filmed.

*Michele Almen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date

I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved students. You were my inspiration.

The micrographic images on this film are accurate reproductions of records delivered to Modern Information Systems for microfilming and were filmed in the regular course of business. The photographic process meets standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for archival microfilm. NOTICE: If the filmed image above is less legible than this Notice, it is due to the quality of the document being filmed.

*Maria Olsen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date



## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine whether having a dog as a member of a self-contained classroom for students diagnosed with severe emotional disorders held benefits for these students. This study provided an opportunity to explain or predict the effects that a dog had on students' emotional well-being and learning in the school setting.

The methods and procedures for this study were qualitatively collected and analyzed. This study was considered a case study, because it explored a bounded system over time through detailed, in-depth data collection, which involved observations, student interviews, and parent interviews. The broad research question that guided this qualitative study was as follows: What happens when a dog becomes a member of a self-contained classroom for students diagnosed with severe emotional disorders? As the study progressed, more specific questions emerged from the data that narrowed the scope of the investigation. The first research question related to how the dog's presence affected students' emotional stability with regard to the prevention and de-escalation of emotional crisis, while the second question related to how the dog affected students' learning.

The participants in this study included six students who were placed in a self-contained special education classroom because of the severity of their emotional

disorders. In addition, all six of the students' mothers, or foster mothers, were selected for this study.

Based on the findings of this study, four assertions were drawn:

1. The dog's placement into the self-contained special education classroom provided students with a foundation for emotional stability through his ongoing companionship.
2. Students' attitudes toward school became more positive when the dog became a member of their classroom community.
3. The dog had a calming effect on students, which was influential in preventing and de-escalating episodes of emotional crisis.
4. With the presence of the dog, students' learning became more broad-based to encompass lessons in responsibility, respect, and empathy.

Recommendations were made for educators, in the field of special education, who work with students diagnosed with emotional disorders, as well as for future researchers.



CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

Researcher's Interest in the Study

Have you ever experienced the unconditional love of a pet either in your years as a child or as an adult? If so, have you embraced your pet as a source of comfort during times in your life when you were overtaken with feelings of sadness, fearfulness, or anger? As a child, I was privileged to grow up in the company of farm animals, several of which were elevated to the status of "pets" and given names. My pets included two dogs, several cats, and two calves. The dogs were my most treasured pets, placing them at the top of my pet hierarchy. When the opportunities became available, which were when my brothers and I were left home alone, my "farm pets" (excluding the calves) became "house pets" where none of them could escape the devastation of being dressed up in my doll clothes and pushed around in my doll buggy!

During childhood, my pets were more than just playmates; they were also my companions. Growing up on a farm left me isolated from playing with neighborhood friends, so I grew accustomed to playing with my pets as replacements for my friends. My dogs were my most faithful companions. They ran beside me as I rode my bike down the gravel road, they climbed up the snowhill with me to claim their spots beside me in my sled, and they were participants in any outdoor game my brothers and I played. But most of all, my dogs were my confidants. They were available every time I needed to

express my innermost thoughts and feelings. My dogs allowed me to cry loudly and embrace them in my arms until I had reached a level of comfort that allowed me to let go. As a child and as a teenager, I found my dogs to be therapeutic. They provided me with an endless supply of love, joy, and comfort that was unlike what any human companion brought into my life.

Now that I have grown into an adult, and my childhood pets have passed away, there is a new dog in my life whose name is Reese. Reese is a house dog that has assumed the role of a child. The therapeutic effects that Reese has on my life are parallel to those I received from my dogs when I was a child. The joy Reese brings into my life is immeasurable, and the comfort she provides to me is indescribable.

A few years back, I read an article about research that had been conducted on the therapeutic effects that dogs have on the elderly. Following the reading of this article, I began to have Reese accompany me on my visits to the nursing home where my great-aunt resides. I wanted to share Reese with the residents with the hope of her bringing as much joy to them as she brings to me. Although the residents responded to Reese differently, they all responded to her to some degree. Some residents would point to her and smile, some wanted to pet her, while others wanted to hold her in their laps and reciprocate acts of affection (i.e., kisses in exchange for licks).

Following my second visit to the nursing home with Reese, I began to reflect upon Reese's impact on the emotional well-being of the residents. According to my informal observations of the interactions between Reese and the residents, she appeared to stimulate feelings of happiness in them that were not observed on my prior visits to the nursing home when Reese was not present. I began to wonder if my dog might have the

*Maria Olmen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date

same positive effects on the students whom I teach in my self-contained special education classroom for students diagnosed with severe emotional disorders.

On a few occasions, Reese had visited my classroom in order for my students to interact with her. They responded to her with both verbal and physical interest and would talk about her for weeks following her visits. My students have also responded positively when their classmates brought in dogs for show and tell. Following these interactions, I once again began to wonder what value a dog would have on the emotional well-being of each of my students. I began to seriously examine whether or not having a dog in my classroom would be helpful in preventing students from entering emotional crisis and/or be useful in de-escalating students' behaviors when they did enter emotional crisis.

Levinson and Mallon (1997) stated that pets represent a half-way station on the road back to emotional well-being, and this is why the possession of a pet is so important for the alienated and why pets are so helpful in handling childhood behavior problems.

#### Need for the Study

The number of students being referred to and qualifying for special education is increasing with each academic school year, especially in the category of emotional disorders. The needs of students diagnosed with emotional disorders are becoming more complex and are requiring heightened levels of special education services.

Based on my extensive review of the literature, research on the effects of dogs in classroom settings for students diagnosed with emotional disorders is limited. There are numerous research studies on the utilization of dogs in therapy, hospital, residential, and home settings for these children but not in the classroom setting. However, I did review literature describing how two teachers had incorporated dogs into their classroom

*Maria Almen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date



communities. One of these teachers had taught middle school students for 30-years and was looking for an innovative way of teaching to reignite her spark for the field, so she began to bring her West Highland terrier to school with her each day (Arce, 2002). The second teacher taught in the area of special education for elementary students diagnosed with cognitive and neurological disorders (Ruth, 1992). This teacher had two Labradors that she alternated bringing to school with her each day to serve as her teaching assistants. Although both of these articles were focused on dogs in the classroom setting, neither of them were formalized research studies on the effects that the dogs had on the students, nor were the students in these classrooms diagnosed with emotional disorders.

Researching the effects of dogs on students with emotional disorders in the educational setting could be vitally important. If the presence of dogs could positively influence the emotional well-being of students, then their academic success might be accelerated. Because children with emotional disorders have so many hurdles to overcome, both academically and emotionally, anything that would aid the students in overcoming these hurdles would be a relief. Rud and Beck (2000) determined that "the interaction of special education students and classroom animals is an area that merits systematic research" (p. 314).

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to determine whether having a dog as a member of a self-contained classroom for students diagnosed with severe emotional disorders held benefits for these students. In addition to being the researcher in this study, I was also the classroom teacher and special education case manager for the students participating in the study.

The students who were placed in my self-contained classroom had the capabilities of exhibiting aggressive behaviors, both verbal and physical. The displaying of such aggressive behaviors was referred to as episodes of "emotional crisis." As their classroom teacher, it was my responsibility, along with the support from my two paraeducators, to teach these students strategies for preventing emotional crisis and to teach them de-escalation strategies if they did enter into emotional crisis.

#### Guiding Research Questions

Creswell (1998) recommends "that a researcher reduce her or his entire study to a single, overarching question and several subquestions" (p. 99). The broad question that guided my qualitative research study was as follows: What happens when a dog becomes a member of a self-contained classroom for students diagnosed with severe emotional disorders? As the study progressed, more specific questions emerged from the data that narrowed the scope of the investigation. These questions were:

1. What effect did the dog's presence have on students' emotional stability?
  - a. In the prevention of emotional crisis?
  - b. In the de-escalation of emotional crisis?
2. What effect did the dog have on students' learning?

#### Delimitations of the Study

1. The study took place in a public elementary school in urban North Dakota.
2. The number of students participating in the study was six.
3. The study incorporated one dog.
4. The number of parents participating in the study was six.

*Maria Olsen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date

5. The students were observed in one self-contained classroom.
6. The study period was 8 weeks.

#### Bias of the Researcher

According to Gay and Airasian (2003), researcher bias occurs when the researcher affects participants' behavior because of previous knowledge of the participants. Because of my role as their special education case manager, my background knowledge on all six of the students who participated in my study was extensive, and I was cognizant of not imposing my views and perspectives onto the students. To reduce the threat of negatively impacting the validity of my study, I collaborated extensively with my two paraeducators to conduct a "research audit." As defined by Stainback and Stainback (1988), a research audit occurs to "examine the fairness of the research process employed in an investigation and the accuracy of the product in terms of the coherence and support by the data" (p.73).

#### Definitions of the Terminology

The following terms are unique to the field of special education and are embedded throughout this study. They are defined to assist in the understanding of the content, and they are as follows:

1. *Behavior management* is the various strategies and techniques used to manage students' behaviors (e.g., level system).
2. *Case manager* is a special education teacher who manages the service and compliance issues for students receiving special education.
3. *Emotional crisis* occurs when students enter into an episode in which they can no longer reason or rationalize situations, and they become physically and/or



verbally aggressive. The following behaviors are characteristic of students who enter into crisis: kicking, hitting, biting, scratching, pinching, spitting, screaming, and/or swearing.

4. *Emotional disorder* is a chronic condition that is characterized by emotional or behavioral problems that cannot be explained by age, culture, or ethnic norms; the problems adversely affect educational performance.
5. *Level system* is a behavior management program that consists of students progressing through five levels of increased privileges by earning a predetermined number of points.
6. *Paraeducator* is a teaching assistant or aid to the special education teacher.
7. *Quiet room* is a room located within the self-contained classroom where children are secluded from peers and teachers when they enter into emotional crisis. This room is often times referred to as a "padded room."
8. *Self-contained* is a special education placement in which students are no longer educated with their non-disabled peers in the general education setting.
9. *Social skills instruction* is the direct teaching of skills necessary to appropriately interact with adults and peers and to appropriately cope with difficult situations.
10. *Time-out* is when students are removed from a negative situation and placed in a designated spot within the confines of the classroom. During this time, students are required to think of a plan or strategy that will allow them to make better choices.



## Organization of the Study

Chapter I was an introduction to my research that provided background information related to my interest in conducting this study. It also included a discussion about the study in the following areas: the need and purpose for the study, the limitations of the study, researcher's bias, and the organization of the study.

Chapter II is a compilation of the professional literature that I reviewed on child-animal relationships and the ways in which these relationships affect children's emotional well-being. The chapter begins with a historical perspective on the utilization of animals as therapeutic tools, followed by a description of child-animal relationships. The concluding section of this chapter contains a discussion on the utilization of animals in programs for children with emotional disorders and the value of animals in educational settings.

Chapter III contains a description of the methods and procedures that I utilized in conducting this study. Included in this chapter are descriptions of the research setting and participants and the protection of their anonymity, procedures for reducing risks in the study, methods for data collection and analysis, and procedures for ensuring validity in the conclusions I drew from my research.

Chapter IV is a presentation of the data through narrative vignettes on each of the six students who participated in the study. In addition to the vignettes, I provided brief overviews of the emotional and academic backgrounds of the students to create a more holistic understanding of their unique needs and individuality.

Chapter V is an interpretative commentary on the categories, themes, and assertions that emerged from my data. Included in this chapter are three major categories

and five themes, as well as a discussion for each theme. To conclude Chapter V, I reveal the four assertions that I drew from the data.

Chapter VI is a solidification to the entire study. Included is a summary of the research study, conclusions with reference to the literature, recommendations for both educators and researchers, and my personal reflections on the study.

The micrographic images on this film are accurate reproductions of records delivered to Modern Information Systems for microfilming and were filmed in the regular course of business. The photographic process meets standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for archival microfilm. NOTICE: If the filmed image above is less legible than this Notice, it is due to the quality of the document being filmed.

Maclis Almen  
Operator's Signature

12/06/04  
Date

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, the professional literature that I reviewed on child-animal relationships is intertwined with the ways in which these relationships affect children's emotional well-being. The content of this chapter is divided into the following four sections: (a) Historical Perspective on the Utilization of Animals as Therapeutic Tools, (b) Child-Animal Relationships, (c) Animals and Childhood Emotional Disorders, and (d) Animals in Educational Settings.

#### Historical Perspective on the Utilization of Animals as Therapeutic Tools

The profound connection between humans and animals has occurred through the centuries among people in countries all over the world. The earliest paintings, myths, legends, stories, and songs capture this universal relationship. People of all nations and cultures have the capacity to connect so strongly with an animal that it is as though they become that animal, at least for the moment. (Raphael, 1999, p. 2)

#### *Domestication of Animals as Pets*

Humans and animals have co-existed since the creation of organisms, and animals have played a significant role in the development and psychological economy of human organisms (Levinson & Mallon, 1997). Throughout history, animals have been portrayed in human customs, legends, and religions. Primitive people found that human-animal relationships were important to their very survival, and the keeping of pets was common in hunter-gatherer societies (National Institutes of Health, 1987).



Melson (2001) reported that the domestication of species, other than dogs, apparently began only around 10,000 years ago when animal husbandry and agriculture slowly began to replace hunting. Sheep and goats were domesticated around 9,000 years ago, followed by cattle, pigs, horses, asses, camels, water buffalo, and domestic fowl around 5,000 before that.

The exact date when man began to domesticate animals and use them as pets is not known. The relationships between humans and animals have grown in complexity with the expansion of domestication. Initially, humans were primarily dependent upon animals as products for human consumption through the means of hunting and raising. Humans then began to serve as caretakers for animals who performed acts of service, primarily in the field of agriculture. Eventually, humans extended their relationships with animals as sources for companionship, amusement, and love, which resulted in these animals being elevated to the status of "pets." Levinson and Mallon (1997) stated:

Animals have generally played a great role in human ecological adjustments. Just as credible a reason as any for the domestication of animals is their use as pets. In other words, there is as much reason to believe that man's psychological needs were the primary cause for the domestication of animals as that man needed to use animals for such material purposes as the having of human labor and the satisfaction of a hunger for food. (p. 5)

"The term 'pet' (from 'petty' or small) would not appear until the late 1500s, but thousands of years earlier, well before animal husbandry and widespread domestication of species, children as well as adults began to develop affectionate bonds with those animals who joined the human community" (Melson, 2001, p. 25). The keeping of pets has progressed across time and cultures. "Anthropologists find petkeeping entrenched in nearly every nonindustrial culture" (Melson, 2001, p. 26).

Melson (2001) reported that in the United States, the keeping of pets was a marker of middle-class family life as early as the 1820s. For most children, animals were agricultural products and farm workers, as well as companions. Today, pets remain the primary mode of intense, sustained involvement with animals for most children. "In the last half of the twentieth century the forms and functions of children's ties to animals have narrowed until a single role predominates, 'dearly beloved'" (Melson, 2001, p. 27-28).

#### *First Reports of Animals as Therapeutic Tools*

According to Fine and Fine (1996), the first contemporary therapeutic use of animals occurred at the York Retreat in England. It was founded in 1792 by the Quakers for the humane treatment of individuals with mental illness. The patients helped care for the animals on the grounds, which influenced improvements in their behaviors. Fine and Fine also reported that in 1867 Bethel was founded in West Germany as a home for persons with epilepsy. Patients had birds, cats, dogs, horses, and a wild game park. Bethel operates today as a 5,000 patient facility for the treatment of physical and mental disorders, and it has two farms, horseback riding, and many companion animals.

Using animals as therapeutic tools in the United States was first proposed in 1919 at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, D.C. Superintendent Dr. W.A. White received a letter from Secretary of the Interior, F.K. Lane, suggesting the use of dogs as companions for the psychiatric hospital's resident patients (National Institutes of Health, 1987). However, Trivedi and Peri (1995) stated that the first recorded use of animal-facilitated counseling in the United States was in 1942. At an Army Air Force convalescent hospital at Pawling, New York, a soldier requested that a dog keep him



company while he recuperated from battle wounds. Subsequently, other patients with physical wounds and emotional traumas asked for dog companions. Unfortunately, there is minimal documentation about these programs as Serpell (2000) explained:

Despite the apparent success of 19<sup>th</sup> century experiments in animal-facilitated institutional care, the advancement of scientific medicine virtually eliminated animals from hospital settings by the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For the following 50 years, virtually the only medical contexts in which animals are mentioned are those concerned with zoonotic disease and public health, or as symbolic referents in psychoanalytic theories concerning the origins of mental illness. (p. 13)

*Work of Boris Levinson, The Pioneer of Pet Therapy*

In Mallon's 1997 updated version of Levinson's 1969 *Pet-Orientated Child Psychotherapy*, a brief history of Dr. Boris Levinson is found in the opening pages. Levinson was a psychotherapist and a professor of psychology at Yeshiva University in New York. In addition, he was a Diplomat in Clinical Psychology and a member of the American Board of Examiners in Professional Psychology. Following his retirement in 1972 from Yeshiva University, Levinson was appointed Professor Emeritus, and he also accepted a position as Director of the Human/Companion Therapy program at the Blueberry Treatment Center for Children in Brooklyn, New York (a center for children with autism).

"In 1953, Levinson serendipitously discovered the usefulness of his pet dog, Jingles, as an adjunct to child psychotherapy" (Trivedi & Peri, 1995, p. 224). Melson (2001) explained how Levinson's passionate crusade for the use of animals to unlock children's troubles and stimulate positive change was stumbled upon accidentally. One afternoon, Levinson was in his office (which was located in the confines of his home) typing case notes while his dog, Jingles, was at his customary spot, curled up by

Levinson's feet while he was working. Several hours early for her appointment, a distraught mother appeared at Levinson's office door with her severely withdrawn son. The boy had received an abundance of therapy that had been unsuccessful, and the doctors were urging the mother to hospitalize her son. When Levinson opened the door to greet this anxious mother and her son, Jingles excitedly jumped up and licked the boy. Levinson's initial instinct was to retract Jingles and banish him from the boy, but he refrained because of the boy's startling response. The boy affectionately petted and embraced Jingles. Levinson impulsively decided to let Jingles stay with the boy while he visited with the child's mother. Prior to this visit with the boy, Jingles had always been removed to the outer perimeter of Levinson's office before patient sessions began. At the end of this session, the boy verbalized his desire to come back and play with Jingles. As the boy progressed through his next few therapy sessions, his attention was engrossed with Jingles, ignoring Levinson and only talking to the dog; Levinson, too, began talking to Jingles. The dog became the medium through which he and the boy started to converse. From this remarkable experience, Levinson began his famous and pioneering efforts in "pet therapy."

Levinson, along with his co-therapist Jingles, began to test a variety of therapeutic techniques (Melson, 2001). First, the dog's presence appeared to have a calming effect for children who were threatened by their first visit to the therapy room. Jingles provided the therapy room with a more "homey" feel, along with the dog food, water dish, and doggy toys that were scattered all over. Second, Levinson analyzed each child's responses toward Jingles for diagnostic insights. In pet therapy, Jingles was playing much the same role as toys did in conventional play therapy. However, Jingles



demanded instant attention, responded positively to affection, and waited eagerly for overtures to play, which captured the children's interests more effectively and elicited a wider range of responses than playing with toys. The ways children played with Jingles revealed for Levinson the interplay of aggression and passivity. Third, Levinson also used Jingles' "dogginess" of shedding fur, taking a nap, licking his genitals, and slopping up his water, to observe how the children responded to this typical dog behavior, in order to establish insight into the reasons for their hidden, internalizing behaviors. Fourth, he developed the term, ambulatory therapy, which is defined as "taking the dog for a walk." Levinson found this to be the most ideal opportunity for revealing the innumerable aspects of children's personalities.

In 1961, Levinson presented a paper to his colleagues at the Annual American Psychological Association Conference in New York City, officially describing pet therapy and specifically reporting on cases where the success of the treatment "was attributed largely to the function of a dog featured in the therapy constellation" (Levinson & Mellon, 1997, p. x). Levinson's research on pet therapy was received with skepticism and ridicule from many professionals, yet others were intrigued and began to examine the impact of animals on humans. In 1962, Levinson wrote his first article, *The Dog as a Co-Therapist*, published in the *Mental Hygiene* journal and the prelude to many successful publications on pet therapy. In 1969, Levinson wrote the first of three books called, *Pet-Oriented Child Psychotherapy* for his growing band of followers (Melson, 2001).

Levinson and Mallon (1997) described how Boris Levinson gained international recognition for his work. He was asked to speak at a conference in London, England where he was held in the highest regard and called, "The Freud of Dog Therapy" by the

British Press. Levinson was honored with The Delta Distinguished Service Award to recognize his outstanding contributions to the human-animal field.

On April 2, 1984, while working with one of his beloved children at the Blueberry Treatment Center for Children, Boris Mayer Levinson suffered a fatal heart attack. "If it was possible for one to choose where they would spend their last moments on this earth, Levinson would probably have chosen to be with 'his children'" (Levinson & Mellon, 1997, p. xiv).

#### Child-Animal Relationships

The intimate expression of a profound relationship between child and animal is a fundamental part of human development and world development. . . . Today, as we seek to reintegrate human endeavor with the natural by means both sustainable and human, we are not alone--the animals are here, too, and clearly, they have much to teach us. (Huddart & Naherniak, 1996, p. 4)

#### *Childhood Development*

Black and Pucket (1996) defined childhood development as how children grow and develop in the physical/motor, psychosocial, cognitive, language, and literacy domains. Black and Pucket also stated that there are four theories that have been researched to explain the development of children. These theories include: psychoanalytic theory developed by Sigmund Freud and Erik Erickson, behaviorist theory developed by Ivan Pavlov and B. F. Skinner, cognitive theory developed by Jean Piaget, and ecological systems theory developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner. The psychoanalytic and ecological systems theories best provide a foundational understanding for the effects that child-animal relationships have on childhood development. The psychoanalytic theory attempts to explain the inner thoughts and feelings, at both the conscious and subconscious levels, that influence behavior. The ecological systems

*Maria Olsen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date



theory argues that a variety of social systems influence the development of children (e.g., pets, parents, teachers, peers). Recent perspectives recommend that these various theories of development be viewed as complementary rather than competing.

In articulating the ecological systems perspective, Melson (1998) reported that Urie Bronfenbrenner first emphasized that the development of children is profoundly affected by what he called the "microsystems" of their environments. Those are the face-to-face settings in which children develop, most typically homes, schools, and peer groups. Not surprisingly, this is where most research on children and animals has focused, in the realm of direct encounters between children and their pets. Second, Bronfenbrenner referred to the "mesosystems," which pertain to the interrelationships among various microsystems that exert influence on their developments. To apply this mesosystem construct to the study of children and animals, one might examine how interactions with animals in one setting are related to such interactions in another setting, or more broadly, how children's attachments to their pets at home affect their functioning in school or in their peer interactions. Third, Bronfenbrenner stated that environmental influences may affect children indirectly through their effects on parents, peers, and teachers. This is called the "exosystems." For example, a parent's attachment to an animal may indirectly affect the child through the animal's impact on the parent. Finally, Bronfenbrenner suggested that overarching environmental influences such as cultural values, called the "macrosystems," permeate all aspects of the environment.

According to the psychoanalytic theory, pioneered by Freud and extended by Erikson to include social influences, Melson (1998) explained that there are four central emotional, intrapsychic developmental challenges encountered by children: trust,

autonomy, industry, and identity. Each challenge lays the foundation for the next, although all may remain active throughout childhood. Trust refers to infants' reassurance that the world is a welcoming, rather than a hostile, place. Autonomy refers to preschoolers' needs to move out from the cocoons of trusting relationships to explore independently. Industry refers to school-age children's drive to master skills. Identify refers to adolescents' search for independent adult selves.

The integration of the ecological systems theory and the psychoanalytical theory is applied to the role of "companion" animals in children's development in Table 1. "The proposed framework suggests potential companion animal influences at each of the four environmental levels on children's ability to meet developmental challenges" (Melson, 1998, p. 225).

Table 1. A Conceptual Framework for Examining Companion Animals in Relation to Children's Development.

<i>Developmental Challenges</i>	<i>Microsystems</i>	<i>Mesosystems</i>	<i>Exosystems</i>	<i>Macrosystems</i>
<i>Trust</i>	CA as secure base	CA attachment in relation to human attachments	CA as support for parent to provide responsivity	Cultural value of animal as attachment figure
<i>Autonomy</i>	CA as playmate	CA playmate in relation to human playmates	Neighborhood or community influence on CA availability	Cultural value of animals as play partners

The micrographic images on this film are accurate reproductions of records delivered to Modern Information Systems for microfilming and were filmed in the regular course of business. The photographic process meets standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for archival microfilm. NOTICE: If the filmed image above is less legible than this Notice, it is due to the quality of the document being filmed.

*Marta Olmen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date

Table 1. Continued.

<i>Developmental Challenges</i>	<i>Microsystems</i>	<i>Mesosystems</i>	<i>Exosystems</i>	<i>Macrosystems</i>
<i>Industry</i>	CA as learning aid	Relation between CA and other learning aids	CA effects on learning environments (e.g., teacher morale)	Cultural value of CA as learning opportunity
<i>Identity</i>	CA as support	Relation between CA and other supports for identity exploration	CA as support for parents, peers	Cultural value of CA as part of adolescent identity exploration

Note. CA = companion animal. From "The Role of Companion Animals in Human Development," by Gail F. Melson (1998). In C.C. Wilson & D.C. Turner (Eds.), *Companion Animals in Human Health* (pp. 219-236). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

*Value of Animals*

I love me pets very much and I couldn't live without them.  
 When I'm sad they always make me glad that I have them.  
 My pets don't put me down and they're always by my side.  
 They always love me. Why can't some people return their love?  
 They always return ours.  
 Williams, Grade 4 (Raphael, Colman, & Loar, 1999, p. 6)

Children and animals seem to naturally belong together. Gardner (2001) stated that the average child will naturally gravitate toward animals unless taught to fear or dislike them. Gardner felt that the bond between children and animals (especially their pets) can be a wonderful thing, since the emotional benefits derived from their pets can be extremely beneficial. Becker (2002) wrote about his observation of a little girl, who

The micrographic images on this film are accurate reproductions of records delivered to Modern Information Systems for microfilming and were filmed in the regular course of business. The photographic process meets standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for archival microfilm. NOTICE: If the filmed image above is less legible than this Notice, it is due to the quality of the document being filmed.

*Nancy Colman*  
 Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
 Date



had just started to walk, and of a therapy dog in a hospital waiting room. The little girl was walking hand-over-hand against the furniture, babbling to her mother until her eyes became locked on the dog. Becker continued:

Then she got that look that kids of all ages get when they see an animal: the jaw drops down, and they emit a sharp noise as they move toward their object of desire. In this case, the little girl walked like Frankenstein leaving the lab. Her legs thrust out stiffly and her footing was wobbly. Her arms stretched straight out in front . . . this little girl's hands were palms up and open, and she was grinning as hard as she could grin, hoping for the chance to touch the incredible creature that had just passed. (p. 28)

To conclude this story, when the little girl finally made her well deserved contact with this magnificent creature, she buried her face in the dog's long, buoyant fur and eventually found herself nose-to-nose, enduring a friendly sniff from the dog.

Levinson believed that pets are influential factors in the lives of children, 6-months-old and older, because this is the time when children begin to differentiate themselves from the external world. Levinson also found that pets influence children's learning processes, emotional developments, and interpersonal relationships (Fine & Fine, 1996). In a research study conducted by Kidd and Kidd (1987a), it was observed that when 6 to 30-month-old children interacted with battery-operated dogs and cats, as well as live dogs and cats, the children made more noises, held, and followed the live animals a significant amount more than they did the toys.

Triebenbacher (1998) reported that the contributions animals make to the emotional well-being of children have been well documented and include: (a) providing unconditional love that is noncontingent and opportunities for love and affection; (b) functioning as friends, confidants, playmates, and companions; (c) serving as living transitional objects; (d) assisting in the achievement of trust, autonomy, responsibility,

competence, and empathy toward others, and (e) enhancing self-esteems by the presence of attachments to animals. Likewise, animals bring children a comforting sense of security that they will always be loved and valued (Becker, 2002). As stated by Melson (2001):

One of the most important yet unrecognized functions of pets, from dogs to goldfish, for children may be their 'thereness.' This constant availability may be a major reason why many children bestow the honorific "my best friend" on their pets. Their animate, responsive proximity makes children feel less alone in a way that toys, games, television or video, even interactive media, cannot. Pets, like all living things, situate a child in a give-and-take universe of fellow beings. (p. 59)

It is the belief of many children that their pets possess human-like capabilities of expressing emotion and communicating with them. Raphael et al. (1999) stated that children have told her they converse with animals and confide in them to express their inner most thoughts and feelings, and many children have said that animals talk to them at night in their dreams. "Many children report confiding in their pets, who serve as audiences for secrets, fears, and angers. . . . Pets become the uncritical, accepting audience that invites disclosure. The responsiveness of some species of pets, especially dogs, to the human emotional climate reinforces this sense of understanding" (Melson, 2001, p. 48). Raphael et al., (1999) explained:

The unique ways in which animals communicate with people are the reasons we are attracted to them, treasure and honor them. Through body language and facial expressions, an animal's feelings are always genuine and clear. Animals never lecture or explain. No wonder we are intrigued by them, and no wonder children, who are still trying to figure out what is appropriate to say and what isn't, feel safe with them. (p. 6)

According to Becker (2002), pets help children become better at decoding body language and understanding others' feelings and motives, also known as empathy; therefore, they are more nurturing. In a study conducted by Poresky (1990) of preschool



children, the higher the child scored on the Companion Animal Bonding scale that he designed, the higher their scores were in all measures of development and empathy. To expand on the area of decoding body language, Melson (2001) stated:

In describing their dialogue with pets, elementary school children explain how their own verbal contributions differ from the animals' body gestures, barks, growls, whines, purrs, and meows. Even as pets are enlisted as linguistic partners, children reveal a growing understanding of the pretend aspects of the interchange. "Conversing" with pets may help children learn about the distinct communicative abilities of different interactive partners. (p. 47-48)

When children are asked to describe their relationships with pets, they make references to how they care for their animals (Becker, 2002). Levinson (1972) concluded that this closeness to animals promotes self-esteem, self-control, and autonomy, since acts of nurturing require children to read nonverbal signals and attend to them in a consistent manner which encourages children to feel competent.

#### *Animals as Family Members*

Surveys have reported that somewhere around 80 percent of families acquire some kind of pet during their children's "tender" years, occurring mostly between the ages of 5 and 12 (Becker, 2002). In 1997, the American Veterinary Medical Association reported that in the United States there were an estimated 53 million dogs, 59 million cats, 13 million caged birds, 4 million horses, 7.3 million reptiles and amphibians, 12 million small animals such as hamsters and guinea pigs, and 12 million fish tanks (Melson, 2001). Kidd and Kidd (1990) reported that children who do not share their homes with a family pet will seek out animal companionship, usually through the means of sharing other people's pets, nurturing stray animals, or developing imaginary pets.

Melson, Beck, and Schwartz (1997) reported that research on the role of pets in

childhood development suggested that children develop strong emotional attachments to their pets, which resulted in children feeling a sense security, protection, soothing, comfort, and help. Their research findings concluded that there are three distinct, but interrelated, dimensions of children's attachments to their pets. First, a behavioral attachment consists of the amount of time and kinds of activities engaged in with the pets. Second, an affective attachment consists of interest in and emotional closeness to the pets. Third, a cognitive attachment consists of the children's ideas about their pets and their relationships to them.

Becker (2002) explained how the powerful attachments children have to their pets can be as strong as the attachments they feel toward their parents and how they consider them members of their families. In families, pets serve as strong support systems that can be counted on at any time of day or night and for any possible reason as sources of comfort for children (Hart, 2000). In fact, the words "dog" and "cat" rank as high as "mommy" and "daddy" in children's first spoken words. Kidd and Kidd (1987a) found that children's attachments to their animals can begin as early as 18 months. Becker (2002) also stated that in one study, elementary school-aged children ranked their relationships with their pets to be the most significant. In an additional study, third- graders were asked to name their top five relationships, and the students named their dogs as often as they did their mothers and fathers. "A primary function of human social support is to communicate a sense that others love, value, and care about you. Pets, perhaps especially highly interactive ones like dogs, clearly fulfill that role for many children" (Melson, 2001, p. 61).

"Children are the recipients of care, guidance, and protection but rarely have a



chance to provide it, unless they have an animal for which they are responsible" (Becker, 2002, p. 31). Pets challenge children to portray the role of master with kindness and to blend domination with respect, which can foster more nurturing characteristics in children as they mature (Melson, 2001).

The benefits of pets are not only received or experienced by children but by parents as well. Becker (2002) stated that pets offer parents "teachable moments" about respect, responsibility, and consequences. Parents' lessons on using proper behavior and making good judgments can be embedded in the context of their children's cause and effect relationships with family pets. Results of surveys have indicated that parents add pets to their family structure for purposes of imparting lessons on responsibility and caregiving, having living examples of mating and birth, and providing companionship (Melson, et al., 1997).

#### *Animals in the Consumer Market*

The natural attraction that children possess for animals may be an innate characteristic, but our culture also programs this reaction (Becker, 2002). The consumer market capitalizes on the attraction that children have to animals by portraying them as characters in movies, books, cartoons, and video games. Melson (2001) wrote:

Big Bird, Barney, Ninja Turtles, Carebears, and stuffed animals of every sort, populate the toy shelf and decorate playrooms. Their images saturate the huge market of children's gear, from training mugs, to backpacks, lunchboxes, and funmeals. Animals real, fanciful, and long gone from the earth, become a child's "significant other" for a time. (p. 3)

According to Melson (2001), zoos, aquariums, and nature parks draw millions of children and their families annually, more than to any professional sports event. Over

135 million Americans visit over a hundred United States zoos, and 10 million more visit the 35 most popular aquariums each year.

When decoding the symbolic roles that animal characters play, a new evaluative examination of children's literature is required, since many tales are told by and about animal characters (Melson, 2001). "Folklorists have long viewed animal tales as vehicles to convey a culture's ideas about relationships, both among humans and between human animals" (p.15). McCrindle and Odendaal (1994) suggested that children's literature, since its emergence in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, has been considered a tool for socialization, because the ways in which animal protagonists portray themselves can be influential in later attitudes of children. The meanings that young children derive from the animals they find in fairy tales are used to sort out problems during growth and maturation (Cusack, 1988).

"Children age three to six report that 61 percent of their dreams feature animals, a percentage that drops dramatically as they age. By nine the figure is 36 percent, by fourteen the percentage has dropped to 20, and finally stabilizes at 7 percent" (Becker, 2002, p. 28-29). Melon (2001) suggested that animals dominate children's dreams and fantasies because "animals are a ready cast of characters through which children explore facets of themselves—the wild beast, the cunning fox, the faithful dog, the huge and toothsome dinosaur. Because adults create them, these symbolic images are also a window into a culture's ideas about children and animals and how they are related" (p. 18).



*Published Research on Child-Animal Relationships*

Research over the past two decades has proven that pets can actually protect children's emotional balance and physical health (Bayer, 2000). There are two types of studies that appear in the literature: (a) descriptive or hypothesis-generating studies, and (b) studies designed to test a hypothesis (Mallon, 1992). However, Rowan and Beck (1994) stated how "large-scale scholarship on human-animal interactions still languishes, mainly because of a lack of funds" (p. 87). Although research is still needed to identify the scope of influence on child-animal interactions, as well as how to better the focus for children at risk, there is still solid evidence that shows animal contact has significant benefits (Rowan & Beck, 1994). Table 2 summarizes only a small number of research studies that were conducted in the 1980s and 1990s.

Table 2. Research Studies Conducted in the 1980s and 1990s.

<i>Researcher(s) &amp; Year of Publication</i>	<i>Findings</i>
A.J. MacDonald, 1981	In a survey conducted with 31 10-year-olds, the most common child-pet interactions with dogs were talking, playing, and exercising.
Brenda K. Bryant, 1982	In a group of 7 to 10-year-olds, 83% of the children considered the family pet to be a special friend. The children who reported having intimate talks with their pets had lower competitive attitudes.
Vicoria Voith, 1983	Out of 500 pet owners, 99% of them considered dogs as family members.
Aline H. Kidd & Robert M. Kidd, 1985	A group of 300 boys and girls between the ages 3 and 13 were interviewed; 35% in all age groups reported using physical punishment to correct dog and cat misbehaviors.



Table 2. Continued.

<i>Researcher(s) &amp; Year of Publication</i>	<i>Findings</i>
Gail F. Melson, 1988	A survey given to 337 parents of students in preschool, second-grade, and fifth-grade, concluded that children's interest in pets is the one strong element that survives as they mature.
Aline H. Kidd & Robert M. Kidd, 1989	Determined that children's attitudes toward pets developed during childhood and pet ownership during the period of development were extremely important influences for favorable adult attitudes toward pets.
Aline H. Kidd & Robert M. Kidd, 1990	Found the most widespread and, at the same time, the most popular animal to be the dog.
Brenda K. Bryant, 1990	In a study of 213 children in grades 3 through 7 who had pets, and 44 who did not, identified the benefits of having pets to be mutuality, enduring affection, self-enhancing affection, and exclusivity of relationships. The costs of having pets were death, rejection, dissatisfaction with pets' needs, concerns for safety, "getting into trouble," and distress at not being allowed to care for their pets' needs.
Frank R. Ascione, 1991	Children exposed to humane education programs displayed enhanced empathy for humans.
Kristine M. Hansen, Cathy J. Messinger, Mara M. Baun, and Mary Megel, 1999	Found the presence of a companion dog lowered the behavioral distress of children during a laboratory simulated physical examination and suggested that companion animals may be useful in a variety of health care settings to decrease procedure-induced distress in children.

The micrographic images on this film are accurate reproductions of records delivered to Modern Information Systems for microfilming and were filmed in the regular course of business. The photographic process meets standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for archival microfilm. NOTICE: If the filmed image above is less legible than this Notice, it is due to the quality of the document being filmed.

*Maria Olsen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date

## Animals and Childhood Emotional Disorders

The act of feeding and caring for a pet, putting another's needs before yourself, is a lesson that should be learned early on. Such vital childhood competence deepens their Bond and, as a result their emotional interdependence. The child and the pet form their own world of secrets that will never be betrayed, and long sessions of play where no one has something else on their minds. When it works, it can be a huge source of children's emotional stability and self-confidence, and the foundation of a more mature character. (Becker, 2002, p. 33)

### *Educational Definition of an Emotional Disorder*

According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the educational definition of an emotional disorder, also referred to as an emotional disturbance, is as follows: The term means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long time and to a marked degree, that adversely affects a student's educational performance:

1. An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or other health factors.
2. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
3. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
4. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
5. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school performance.

The term includes schizophrenia but does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disorder (Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank, & Leal, 1999).

The emotional disorders that are the most prevalent in children are depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorder, intermittent explosive disorder, and reactive attachment disorder. The identified causes of emotional disorders can be explained by biological or environmental factors. Turnbull et al. (1999) identified the biological causes to be genetics and biological insults (i.e., difficult births, traumatic brain injuries, childhood illnesses). The environmental factors of poor living conditions and child abuse can inflict stress on children that can increase the likelihood of developing emotional disorders (Turnball et al.).

*Emotional Instabilities of Children*

“Childhood should be a time for healthy growth, establishing warm relationships, exploring the world, and developing confidence in self and significant others. It should contain fun and carefree times, as well as provide a foundation for the growing child” (George, 1999, p. 382). Unfortunately, George’s description of what childhood should be like does not accurately portray the experiences of some children diagnosed with severe emotional disorders. Children with these disorders encounter emotional challenges almost daily, which is primarily a result of their deficits in the following areas: compassion and empathy, anger management and problem solving skills, impulse control, and interpersonal and intrapersonal skills.

Children with severe emotional disorders tend to have low self-esteem and encounter negative, intrusive thoughts about their self-worth. A considerable number of these children feel they are unworthy of love or forgiveness which can often result in suicidal thoughts or actions.



Many of these children have been, or continue to be, victims of abuse, neglect, poverty, or drug/alcohol addictions. As a result of such corruption in their personal lives, children with severe emotional disorders construct barriers around themselves that serve as protection mechanisms against establishing trusting relationships with adults and peers because of their past experiences of rejection or betrayal. The behaviors demonstrated by these children, to prevent the creation of such relationships, involve the following: using physical and verbal aggression as scare tactics, withdrawing from verbal and physical interactions, and exhibiting bizarre behaviors to shock or scare others (e.g., making a wound in the skin to taste the blood).

Children with severe emotional disorders, who display frequent and intense episodes of externalizing behaviors or whose internalizing behaviors result in severe depression, have an increased likelihood of being removed from their homes into foster care or removed from their neighborhood schools into more restrictive settings, such as self-contained classrooms or day treatment programs. Placements into residential settings may also transpire for children who need intense therapy and constant supervision.

#### *Child and Animal Abuse*

Childhood is not the carefree, lighthearted playful time remembered nostalgically by many adults. It involves a series of physical, emotional, cognitive, and social changes that most normal children will, at least once in their development, experience as difficult. The accompanying stress or conflicts can possibly lead to behavior or learning problems. (George, 1999, p. 380)

"Gandhi once wrote that the greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated. It can also be judged by the way its children are treated" (George, 1999, p. 380). George (1999) explained that abused children may display a

wide range of characteristics such as low self-esteem, stubbornness, unresponsiveness, negativism, depression, fear, apathy, physical aggression, and self-destructive behaviors.

Animals can play a role in cases of child abuse, because an abuser can threaten to abuse animals in order to control children (Loar, 1999). For example, the abuser enforces compliance of rules or goals by maltreating or threatening the welfare of an animal. Children would rather endure the abuse, in order to protect their beloved pets. Loar also reported that children may be forced to watch while animals are being harmed, or even be forced to participate.

Children who witness abuse in their homes, or who are victims of abuse, routinely become part of the deadly mix of animal abusers. Abused children may redirect their anger felt toward their abusers to safer outlets such as their pets (Melson, 2001). "Violent adults infect children by multiple routes. When parents settle conflicts with force, children tend to learn that might is the only way to change someone's, including an animal's, behavior" (Melson, 2001, p. 175). It is important to mention that not all children who are abused repeat the vicious cycle of abuse toward their pets. Many children seek solace in their pets and use them as sources for healing.

Boat (1999) suggested other possible reasons for children's cruel behaviors toward animals, and they include: (a) children's lack of modeling and monitoring of appropriate behaviors with animals can lead to cruel interactions; (b) children's desire for peer reinforcement by "showing off" or "daring" can result in collective cruel acts toward animals that would not occur if children were alone; (c) children's cruelty can reflect their desires to control and inflict pain; and (d) children's killing of animals can signal great distress on the part of children and possible wishes to die.



Serious, intentional harm to animals is one of the earliest appearing signs of a conduct disorder, which is a complex behavioral and psychological problem; this conduct should serve as a red flag for children in need of mental health attention, since a conduct disorder itself puts children at risk for delinquency and crime (Ascione, 1999). In 1987, the American Psychiatric Association added the phrase, "physically cruel to animals," to the description of a conduct disorder (Melson, 2001).

There appears to be a lower tolerance for cruelty and damage to animals than for cruelty and damage to children, since the public seems to identify with an increased vulnerability of animals (Boat, 1999). Boat proceeded to support this statement through the telling of a story about a woman who had been jogging and was killed by a mountain lion, which resulted in the lion leaving behind one cub and the woman two young children. The sum of \$22,000 was donated to support the orphaned cub residing in a zoo, and only \$9,000 was donated to the grieving family. "Frequently, cases protecting animals move through the legal system more quickly than do those protecting humans" (Loar, 1999, p. 130).

Regardless of the age or number of legs of the potential victim of abuse, the same behaviors put children and animals at risk for abuse. These behaviors include the following: their need for constant supervision, their level of activity, their noise volumes, their resistant or destructive behaviors, and their toileting accidents (Loar, 1999). Loar also stated that the physical, behavioral, and emotional indicators of physical abuse tend to be the same for children as they are for animals, and these indicators are as follows: inadequately explained injuries, withdrawn or aggressive behaviors, self-destructive behaviors, hypervigilance, extreme fear or anxiety, toileting accidents, wariness of

*Melvin Almen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date



physical contacts, antisocial behaviors, and drastic behavioral changes in the presence of caregivers.

Efforts have been put forth to promote positive attitudes about the humane treatment of animals. One approach taken is through the development of humane education programs. These are formally designed educational programs to foster children's compassion and respect toward animals, which will hopefully be generalized toward humans. "Humane education is a relatively recent front opened in the battle for the hearts and minds of children" (Melson, 2001, p. 179).

Because of the correlation between child and animal abuse, coalitions of humane officers, social workers, and law enforcement officers are forming around the country (Melson, 2001). There also has been nationwide efforts put forth to legally require veterinarians to report suspected child abuse and for social workers to report suspected animal abuse.

#### *Types and Goals of Animal-Assisted Programs*

"Animals can often succeed in reaching troubled children and youth where adults have failed" (Kaufmann, 1997, p. 27). Animal-assisted programs can have significant therapeutic effects on emotionally disturbed children (Kaufmann, 1997). There are three major categories of animal-assisted programs: animal-assisted therapy (also called "pet therapy"), animal-assisted activities, and animal-assisted counseling. In all three categories, the animals are not objects or tools to be used but rather active partners in the programs. Dogs account for the overwhelming percentage of animals used in animal-assisted programs (Hart, 2000). In the 1990s, the first comprehensive standards of

practice were developed to address the issues of professionalism and creditability (Hines & Fredrickson, 1998).

*Animal-Assisted Therapy*

Defined by the standards of practice, animal-assisted therapy (AAT) is a goal-directed intervention in which an animal meeting specific criteria is an integral part of the treatment process. AAT is delivered and/or directed by a health or human service provider working within the scope of his/her profession. AAT is designed to promote improvement in human physical, social, emotional and/or cognitive functioning. AAT is provided in a variety of settings and may be group or individual in nature. The process is documented and evaluated. AAT is provided by a health or human service professional who includes an animal as part of his/her practice. Specific goals for each client have been identified by the professional, and progress is measured and recorded. (Hines & Fredrickson, 1998, p. 23)

*Animal-Assisted Activities*

Defined by the standards of practice, animal-assisted activities (AAA) provide opportunities for motivational, informational, and/or recreational benefits to enhance quality of life. AAA is delivered in a variety of environments by specifically trained professionals, paraprofessionals, and/or volunteers in association with animals that meet specific criteria. AAA involve animals visiting people. The same activity can be repeated with different people, unlike therapy that is tailored to a particular person or medical condition. (Hines & Fredrickson, 1998, p. 26)

*Animal-Assisted Counseling*

Animal-assisted counseling (AAC) functions in the same manner as animal-assisted therapy. However, the primary difference is that AAC is usually implemented in the school setting by certified school counselors. According to Chandler (2001), "Animals in counseling sessions . . . facilitate an atmosphere of trust, nurturance, and relationship building. Animals actually help a person to focus on a task because of an interest in interacting with the pet" (p. 4).

*Goals of Animal-Assisted Therapy*

Animals present themselves as psychologically "safe zones" that are nonthreatening and nonjudgmental (Lee et al., 1996). Children's exposure to animals can result in the following short-term gains as reported by Holcomb and Meacham (1989):

(a) higher social interactions, higher verbalizations and interactions, and greater abilities to establish human relationships; (b) stronger and more positive affects; (c) opportunities to receive unconditional acceptance; (d) opportunities to express feelings; (e) greater sensory stimulation; (f) greater sense of normalcy and belonging; and (g) increased relaxed states.

Animal-assisted therapy programs are being used in clinical, community, educational, and residential settings (Lee et al., 1996). AAT can be an effective approach to meeting the diverse goals of children. The following is a list of psycho-social and cognitive goals used in treatment (Lee et al.):

1. Improve body awareness
2. Improve interaction styles/peer relationships
3. Improve socialization through human-animal bonding
4. Increase expression of feelings, experience joy
5. Decrease focus on pain (or injury)
6. Increase self-esteem evidenced by stating positive affirmations of one's self
7. Improve attention on task
8. Improve reality orientation
9. Improve sensory awareness
10. Improve awareness of environment



*Benefits of Animal-Assisted Programs for Children with Emotional Disorders*

"Pets represent a half-way station on the road back to emotional well-being" (Levinson & Mallon, 1997, p. xviii). Children with emotional disorders can benefit from programs that incorporate animals, because "pets of all kinds can play an important role in helping to maintain emotional stability. Frequently, a pet is the only remaining link with reality . . ." (Levinson & Mallon, 1997, p. 27).

Animals can serve as diagnostic tools for childhood emotional disorders (Kidd & Kidd, 1987b). Clinical assessments of children are much more complex when compared to adults, because children "lack a stable personality structure of which there is neither explicit or implicit normative data" (Levinson & Mallon, 1997, p. 44). In animal-assisted therapy, children's attentions are usually captured by the animals, which can distract the children away from their fears of the therapists; therefore, they are less likely to censor their replies or disguise their feelings (Levinson & Mallon, 1997). "As a confidential partner and source of unconditional love and loyalty, pets may provide a safe outlet for expressions of feelings. The security of a pet may encourage exploratory behaviors, particularly for timid children in unfamiliar situations" (Melson, Schwartz, & Beck, 1997, p. 1515).

Animal-assisted therapy can help children with emotional disorders who have experienced difficulties relating to and interacting with people, because a large number of these children relate more easily or quickly to animals (Levinson & Mallon, 1997). AAT can assist these children in the following ways: (a) For children who lack impulse control and fear their own impulses, AAT establishes boundaries and rules with the animals, which provide limits against their impulses; (b) for children who are submissive,

withdrawn, or fearful, the association with animals, who accept everything they do, can help these children gain confidence; (c) for children who find it difficult to verbalize and tell how they feel about things, animals help the children break down barriers and can "find their tongues" in the presence of animals; and (d) for children who have strong needs for physical contact, but are afraid of human contact because of their hurt experienced in the past, animals can make physical contact with the animals, since the hurt is not associated with them (Levinson & Mallon, 1997). The following is an example of the impact that one dog had on a little boy named Rodney:

Rodney, a second grader, would go into a closed world of his own. Without warning, he would refuse to speak to anybody, to do anything, or to move. When this behavior occurred, Rodney was removed from the classroom and would remain unresponsive for hours. One day when Rodney had one of his episodes, there was a dog in the school. The dog went up to Rodney and sniffed his elbow. Rodney soon slid off of his chair onto the floor beside the dog. Then Rodney's folded arms slid around the dog's neck, and he buried his face in the dog's fur and sobbed. The dog let Rodney cry in his fur and would occasionally give him an accepting lick. Rodney was able to successfully return to his classroom. (Kaufmann, 1997, p. 30)

Evidence is growing that groups of children with emotional, physical, and mental disabilities who get animal-assisted therapy, on average, improve and function better than other, similar children who do not" (Melson, 2001, p. 123). Programs incorporating animals can create environments where emotionally disturbed children can discover parts of themselves that were lost, or never discovered, in the corrupt environments from which they come (George, 1999). Animals may be incorporated into these therapy sessions for children to serve as social lubricants, to build rapport, and to be catalysts for emotion, or to be role models (Fine, 2000).



According to Hines and Fredrickson (1998), records of animal-assisted activities, which are primarily anecdotal, describe a variety of benefits to children. The benefits include the following: increased empathy, outward focus, nurturing, rapport, entertainment, socialization, mental stimulation, physical contact, relaxation, and a sense of fulfillment.

#### *Examples of Animal-Assisted Therapy Programs*

The Delta Society, a nonprofit human health organization that specializes in human-animal relationships, estimated that there are about 200 AAT programs in the United States (Fine, 2000). The following are two examples of professionals incorporating animals into their AAT programs:

Aaron Katcher, M.D., works with students who have been diagnosed as having Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), often with Conduct Disorder (CD), at the Brandywine Treatment Center in Pennsylvania. In clinical trials, he has demonstrated that animal-assisted therapy has a significant, lasting therapeutic effect on highly aggressive, emotionally disturbed children and adolescents with severe learning difficulties. (Kauffman, 1997, p. 30)

Linda Lloyd Nebbe, M.A., L.M.H.C., a therapist and former guidance counselor from Cedar Falls, Iowa, has incorporated pets and wildlife into her practice for many years. She continues to rely on animals to help reach children experiencing adjustment difficulties and other life crises. (Kauffman, 1997, p. 30)

#### *Animals in Educational Settings*

Animals brought into educational settings, to assume the roles of classroom pets, "are at the heart of education, because when hearts change the effects are felt nearby and at a distance" (Huddart & Naherniak, 1996, p. 3). The most profound lesson that animals can teach children is for them to realize that they share a world with other beings who have needs similar and different than their own, and they need to respect the animals' sense of purpose and inclination (Naherniak, 1995).



The inclusion or omission of live animals, as part of the learning environment, is noticeably lacking in research literature (Melson, 2001). Few research studies or actual experiences by teachers have been documented about the benefits and limitations of animals as members of classroom communities, especially in the area of long-term emotional effects.

#### *Value of Animals in Classrooms*

Pets do not react to the color of a child's skin, his uncombed hair, dirty clothes, bad report card, or substandard speech. The pet's approach to life is elemental. Basically, the pet cares nothing at all for societal values, but responds primarily to love and kindness. Therefore, there is generally an immediate affinity between child and pet. (Levinson & Mallon, 1997, p. 58)

Dillman (1999) wrote that too often what children hear at home or in school is either correcting or instructing, but the messages received from animals, through the simple wagging of their tails or the resting of their heads on children laps, are messages of unconditional acceptance. Dillman also mentioned that from the onset of children's years in school, they are tested, evaluated, and graded, which unfortunately results in them being labeled as smart, average, dumb, nice, bad, or disturbed (to name only a select few). Animals do not evaluate or label, they positively reinforce children with their love and loyalty.

Integrating animals into learning situations has been shown to teach the vital concepts of love, compassion, and empathy, since animals bring these concepts into reality in an engaging manner that enhances learning by utilizing the natural responses inherent in child-animal relationships (Bayer, 2000). The relationships between children and animals become intimate and therapeutic in quality because of the accepting and

nonjudgmental behaviors of animals. They offer no opinions or criticisms, but rather listen silently while offering empathetic gazes (Jerome, n.d.).

Over the past decade, researchers working in educational and therapeutic settings have linked learning and healing with animals, because caring for animals can improve self-esteem, alleviate anxiety and depression, improve social skills, and foster verbal and nonverbal communication (Huddart & Naherniak, 1996). Teachers, who have had animals as part of their classroom communities, reported the animals helped children with problems ranging from shyness to aggression and with difficulties in expressing emotion appropriately (Huddart & Naherniak, 1996). It is important to mention that teachers also use animals in their classrooms to motivate children toward greater scholastic growth; however, for teachers of emotionally disturbed children, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the role of teacher or therapist (Levinson & Mallon, 1997).

Chandler (2001) concluded that there are many benefits of integrating animals into classrooms, especially through AAT and AAA. Animals can enhance students' learning in the following ways: (a) gaining knowledge about animals, (b) learning humane animal care, (c) training animals, (d) practicing discipline, (e) incorporating an attitude of kindness and compassion, (f) learning about nurturance, (g) practicing loyalty and responsibility, and (h) experiencing human-animal bonding.

Another notable benefit of animals is their gift for inspiring humor and improving morale in children (Mallon, 1992). Animals have the capabilities of bringing out personalities in children and teaching them how to relax and just have fun (George, 1999). The average child laughs about 300 times a day compared to adults who only



laugh approximately 15 times a day, but unfortunately, the adults in our society try to accelerate children into adulthood at the fastest rate possible (Dillman, 1999). Dogs let children be children, with only one item on their agendas, having fun!

For students who are receiving special education for their emotional disorders, animals can be used as sources of motivation and behavior management (Zasloff, Hart, & DeArmond, 1999). Animals can assist in behavior management for these children by teaching them behaviors that have not been acquired through the teachings of adults (George, 1999) and by providing them with opportunities for being in control and assuming responsibility (Lee et al., 1996). For emotionally disturbed children who are highly aggressive, Katcher and Wilkins (1994) concluded that animal-assisted therapy and education can have large, lasting, and broadly distributed therapeutic effects. These effects may include a decrease in agitated and aggressive behaviors, an enthusiastic interest in learning, and an improvement in behavioral control in their regular school classes. In addition, Bayer (2000) mentioned that these innovative programs of incorporating animals also build patience in these children.

Students diagnosed with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (a biological and developmental disorder), who are challenged by poor attention spans, impulsive behaviors, and hyperactivity, can benefit from animals placed in educational settings (Katcher & Wilkins, 1994). For children with this disorder, animals can captivate their attention, calm their physical arousal, and reduce their irritable impulsive behaviors.

Of all the challenges faced by students with emotional, learning, cognitive, and physical disabilities, the avoidance of peers and adults is the most devastating. "Even in 'inclusive' classrooms where children are 'mainstreamed' with typically developing



children, inclusion is only name-deep" (Melson, 2001, p. 125). Animals in educational settings can serve as catalysts for social interactions for students with disabilities. These students can be given special roles in caring for the animals, which can attract the attention of others because of animals' natural appeal. Hopefully through these efforts "the handicap recedes into the background, while the person comes to the foreground as more attractive, approachable, and pleasant" (Melson, 2001, p. 126).

It was concluded, in a study conducted by Zasloff, Hart, and DeArmond (1999) of elementary school teachers in California who integrated animals into their curriculum, that the animals were popular and effective foci of instruction. "The pet is a powerful tool for more fruitful teaching. When a child is confronted with a living object, his interest and attention are captured. Learning becomes reality-oriented, giving the child emotionally satisfying experiences" (Levinson & Mallon, 1997, p. 110). Melson (2001) also indicated that animals help children develop logical reasoning skills, understand biological principles, and make abstract concepts concrete. For the teachers of students with emotional disorders, it can be extremely challenging to motivate them to learn because of their lack of interest in the subject matter, but animals who make learning interesting can motivate them to learn (Levinson & Mallon, 1997).

#### *Limitations of Animals in Classrooms*

Although the benefits of having animals in classrooms are significantly greater than the limitations, the limitations still need to be addressed. The limitations of classroom animals for students and teachers include:

1. Students who have or develop allergic reactions from the animals. Although it is best practice to learn of any possible allergic reactions prior to the inclusion of animals, children may develop symptoms later.
2. Students who fear the animals. Past experiences with animals that have been negative can be generalized to classroom animals. Animals' sudden movements, loud noises, or unexpected behaviors may leave children feeling wary, afraid, or startled, especially for younger children (Melson, 2001).
3. Students who physically or verbally abuse the animals. "In the various programs that I have encountered, animals are rarely hurt deliberately" (George, 1999, p. 390). However, for students with emotional disorders, who enter emotional crisis, physical or verbal aggression may result. Also, students who are in desperate need of peer attention may abuse the animals to achieve peer recognition.
4. Students who are bitten by the animals. The unpredictability of animals may result in students being bitten because of animals' need to protect themselves because of fear or aggression (Bodewes, n.d.).
5. Students who grieve if the animals die. Trivedi and Peri (1995) mentioned that many students and staff members become emotionally attached to the animals, so it is important to address grief-related issues if the animals die. Cusack (1988) reported that the way people grieve for pets is similar to the grieving process for humans: denial, depression, anger, guilt, and acceptance.
6. Teachers with long-term commitments. The commitments made to the students and the animals are permanent, demanding, and time consuming

("Animals in the Classroom," 1996). The proper care for animals demands a great deal of time, which also includes holidays and weekends, and financial commitments.

*Examples of Programs Incorporating Animals*

Ruth (1992) reported on a teacher (named Amy Fristoe) in Fort Collins, Colorado at Moore Elementary School, who has incorporated her Labradors (named Brooksie and Ashleigh) as part of her classroom community. Fristoe teaches special education students who have developmental, neurological, and physical disabilities. Parents of Fristoe's students have noted improvements in their children's social skills. One father spoke of his daughter, who is autistic, and how she learned to accept human touch through the non-threatening touch of the dogs. Students with serious behavior problems have learned to respond appropriately in order to receive the rewards of feeding or caring for the dogs. Fristoe developed a behavior reward system (called Brooksie Bucks) so students can earn play money to purchase interaction time with the dogs. She said that her dogs also serve as "social bridges" for her students with special needs to develop friendships. Fristoe and her dogs also work at a residential program for special needs students in Colorado. In 1991, Ashleigh and Brooksie received two special awards: Delta Society's Therapy Animals of the Year and the Delta Society/American Animal Hospital Association Jingles Award for Assistance Animals (an award named after Boris Levinson and his dog Jingles). Linda Hines, the Delta Society executive director remarked, "Animals have a way of assuring children that they are people worthy of friendship and love. This positive view of self goes a long way towards helping children surmount whatever obstacles life may thrust in their path" (Ruth, 1992, p. 18).



Rud and Beck (2000) explained about a principal of an elementary school in northern Indiana who encourages a pet-friendly building. In this school, Rud and Beck observed interactions among special education students and the animals. They felt this was an area "that merits systematic research" (p. 314). In their observations, they noted the interactions with the animals as "calming and engaging for cognitive and social activities" (p. 314).

Huddart and Naherniak (1996) wrote about Aaron Espley, a fourth-grade teacher at Queen Alexander School in Vancouver, who has two guinea pigs in her classroom named Mario and Luigi. One of the ways Espley uses the guinea pigs is to talk to them directly, while indirectly trying to reach students who may be troubled. She also encourages students, who may be having difficulties coping, to hold Mario or Luigi to help them relax. For new students entering her classroom, Espley feels the guinea pigs help them adjust better because students usually find them comforting.

Owens and Williams (1995) told of Jerry Nihill, a fourth-grade teacher in a Chicago public school, who brings his Golden Retriever, Augie, to be in the company of his students. Nihill first brought Augie to school to assist in his 2 week unit about dogs. Nihill found Augie to have such a positive effect on his students and the learning environment, that he persuaded parents and the principal to let Augie be a permanent member of his classroom. Nihill reported on the enthusiasm that his students had for Augie being in school; as a result, there were fewer absences among students, and they seemed to monitor their behavior better. The students also learned responsibility in caring for Augie.

*Michele Owen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date

Melson (2001) explained about Linda Stillabower, a first-grade teacher at Pine Village Elementary School, who has many "classroom critters," that she incorporates into virtually all of her teaching. In her classroom, Stillabower has two guinea pigs, a turtle, a pair of hamsters, a rabbit, two goldfish, and a cat. All the animals are caged except for the cat, who wanders in and out and all around the students. Stillabower is convinced that the animals enrich students learning both directly and indirectly, teach them about the natural world, and create a homey atmosphere.

De Grave (1999) reported on the PAL program, People and Animals Learning, that began in 1993 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The PAL program was developed to build self-esteem in young people and to provide well-behaved, highly adoptable dogs with caring homes. The program pairs hard-to-adopt shelter dogs (who are in urgent need of obedience training) with troubled children (who need to learn new, nonviolent ways of behaving). The PAL program brings fourth and sixth-grade students, who are nominated by their teachers because they are failing in school or are at risk for violence, to the Wisconsin Humane Society for a 3 week summer session. Under the guidance of a professional trainer, the children train the dogs to respond to their basic obedience commands. The children are also responsible for feeding and caring for the orphaned and injured wildlife. Most importantly, they are taught to be neighborhood ambassadors of kindness toward animals.

Ross (1999) reported on the Green Chimneys Children's Service. This is a residential facility located on the outside perimeter of New York City that utilizes human-animal interactions to help severely emotionally disturbed children heal and blossom. Green Chimneys is a 150-acre farm that is like the "Old MacDonald song

The micrographic images on this film are accurate reproductions of records delivered to Modern Information Systems for microfilming and were filmed in the regular course of business. The photographic process meets standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for archival microfilm. NOTICE: If the filmed image above is less legible than this Notice, it is due to the quality of the document being filmed.

Marta Almen  
Operator's Signature

12/06/04  
Date



coming to life" (Melson, 2001, p.100). They have small animals (e.g., rabbits, guinea pigs) that are found in every classroom, disabled wildlife that need rehabilitation, and cats and dogs that live in the residence halls with the children. Children's education and therapy are rooted in the caring for the animals. Gerald P. Mallon (1994), a former associate executive director of Green Chimneys, wrote extensively about his research on the therapeutic value that the dogs have on the treatment of children at Green Chimneys. In his research, Mallon concluded the following: (a) The dogs provide children with opportunities for love, companionship, and affection; (b) the dogs provide children with acceptance and non-judgmental love; (c) the dogs serve as confidants for children's inner most thoughts and feelings; (d) the dogs offer children therapeutic relationships that allow them opportunities to relate to others; and (e) the dogs provide children with nurturing opportunities. Green Chimneys gives children the gift of giving in hopes of creating better humans and better caregivers for the world of tomorrow.

#### Summary

The utilization of animals has existed since the creation of organisms. The use of animals has followed this progression: hunting, raising, and domesticating. Eventually, humans extended their relationships with animals as sources for companionship, amusement, and love.

Children's relationships with animals have played an instrumental role in their development. Interactions with animals can influence children's learning processes, emotional developments, and interpersonal relationships.

For children who are diagnosed with emotional disorders, pets can be influential in helping them to maintain emotional stability. Programs that incorporate animals (e.g.,



animal-assisted therapy) are often successful at reaching emotionally troubled children, and they can have lasting therapeutic effects on them.

Animals in educational settings are mentioned very little in the research literature; as a result, the long-term emotional effects are not well documented. However, teachers who have incorporated animals as part of their classroom communities have reported that the animals helped children with problems ranging from shyness to aggression and with difficulties in expressing emotion appropriately.

The micrographic images on this film are accurate reproductions of records delivered to Modern Information Systems for microfilming and were filmed in the regular course of business. The photographic process meets standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for archival microfilm. NOTICE: If the filmed image above is less legible than this Notice, it is due to the quality of the document being filmed.

*Maria Olsen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This qualitative research study describes what happened when a dog became a full-time member of a classroom community for students diagnosed with severe emotional disorders. The purpose of this study was to determine whether the dog's presence in this self-contained classroom was beneficial for the students enrolled. More specifically, it was of interest to discover what effects the dog's presence had on students' emotional stability and on their learning.

This chapter contains a description of the qualitative methods and procedures that I used to conduct this study, and they include: (a) descriptions of the setting and participants as well how their anonymity was protected, (b) procedures for reducing risks in the study, (c) methods for data collection and analysis, and (d) procedures for ensuring validity in the data analysis process.

#### Description of the Setting

This research study was conducted at an elementary school in urban North Dakota where I was employed as a special education teacher. This elementary school had a population of approximately 400 students and was considered a low socio-economic school, since a large percentage of its students qualified for free or reduced meals. The student body of this school consisted primarily of Caucasian and Native American students.

*Maria Olsen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date

The actual study took place in my self-contained special education classroom for students diagnosed with severe emotional disorders for a duration of 8 weeks. The self-contained classroom was for students in kindergarten through third grade; however, for the 2002-2003 school year I did have one fifth-grader on my caseload. Half of the students, who were placed in my self-contained classroom, transferred to this elementary school from their neighborhood schools because their educational teams had exhausted all efforts, and the students continued to be unsuccessful either academically, behaviorally, or both. In summary, this elementary school was considered the magnet school for severely emotionally disturbed students who were unable to be managed in their neighborhood schools.

The self-contained classroom was similar to the physical elements of other classroom settings, except for the structural inclusion of the quiet room. The quiet room was a secluded area that contained padded walls, special lights, a light switch that could only be accessed with a special device, and a door with a Plexiglas window. The quiet room was utilized when students entered into episodes of emotional crisis. They were placed in this room in order for them to release their emotions and behaviors in a manner in which their safety and the safety of others were not being jeopardized. Although this room was never locked, students were not permitted to leave this room until they were instructed by a teacher.

Prior to submitting my proposal for this study to the University of North Dakota, I conducted informal meetings with the school's elementary superintendent, building principal, and special education director to discuss my research topic. After providing each of them with a copy of my Institutional Review Board (IRB) proposal as a

*Maria Olsen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date



framework for my research, each of these administrators then wrote a letter to the IRB stating his/her approval to conduct my research project.

#### Description of the Participants

The participants in this study were the six students, three boys and three girls, who were on my special education caseload because of their emotional disorders. All six students were included in this study because they each possessed unique emotional needs. The students' ages ranged from 6 to 11-years and were representative of the following racial groups: African-American, Native- American, Asian-American, Hispanic, and Caucasian. Approximately two of the six students were considered self-contained and in my classroom for most of the school day, and the remaining four were placed in general education classrooms and received varying degrees of special education services for their unique emotional and/or academic needs. It is important to mention that none of my students had cognitive impairments. A detailed description of each of the six students will be provided in Chapter IV.

I chose to use the students in my study as my research participants because of the existing relationships that I had already established with them. For teachers to successfully de-escalate students in crisis, I believe they must first have developed trusting relationships with them. As I studied the potential educational benefits of having a dog as a member of a classroom community, it was important that the focus of the study be on the relationships formed between the students and the dog, rather than on the students forming a relationship with me as the researcher.

The dog used in this study was a 2-year-old toy poodle named J.D. He was owned by one of the paraeducators who worked with me in my classroom. J.D. was a

member of our classroom Monday through Friday from 8:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M., and the classroom environment was well-suited for his presence. He had a glorified dog bed, bowls for food and water, and a variety of toys that were continuously scattered around the classroom. Because J.D. was a very social dog who felt compelled to visit the principal in his office and the students in the lunchroom, he was attached to a leash that extended throughout the entire area of my classroom.

Consent was obtained from my students' parents by conducting individual meetings with them and their children to discuss my research study, to meet the dog, and to provide them with the opportunity to ask questions. Parents were asked to sign a consent form permitting their children to be participants in my study and to take part in two parent interviews. Students were also asked to sign the form giving their assent to the study (see Appendix A).

Since I was the researcher and the teacher of the self-contained classroom, I was the primary person responsible for implementing the research methods and procedures. Because my two paraeducators had a high degree of involvement with all six of the students, they, too, implemented the research procedures to a small degree.

Prior to beginning my research, this study underwent a full-board review by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) because of the vulnerability of its participants. Additionally, this study was approved by the Animal Rights Board because of its inclusion of an animal.

#### *Protecting Anonymity*

Significant efforts were put forth to ensure the confidentiality of the participants in my study. The following procedures were implemented:

1. The actual names of the participants in my study, and the elementary school where it was conducted, were not used to protect their identities and to ensure confidentiality from disclosure in any written reports, this dissertation, or journal articles. The actual names of the study participants and setting are known only to me, the principal investigator, and are identified by using fictitious names.
2. All records, including the tape recordings, are safely locked in a file cabinet for my viewing, as well as for the IRB to view for auditing purposes.
3. Participant consent forms were signed prior to conducting the research and are locked safely in a file cabinet separate from all identifiable records. The IRB and I are the only ones permitted to access these forms.

#### Procedures for Reducing Risks in the Study

This qualitative study was not exempt from possible risks because of the participants involved, children who were emotionally disturbed and an animal. The following were the possible risks and the precautions that were taken to minimize these risks:

1. Physical harm to the students and/or dog. For some of the students who entered emotional crisis, physical aggression was used to cope with their negative emotions. To prevent the dog from enduring any physical harm, it was standard procedure for one of my paraprofessionals to contain the dog in his locked kennel. This procedure also helped ensure that the dog would not harm the students should he have felt threatened and needed to use his defense mechanisms (e.g., biting, scratching). Also during these times of physical

*Maria Olsen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date



aggression, students were placed in an unlocked, padded room (called the quiet room) to ensure their safety and the safety of all others involved; therefore, the students did not have contact with the dog until they demonstrated self-control and followed the established rules of the quiet room. In addition, the dog was current on his vaccinations and was professionally groomed monthly.

2. Allergic reaction(s) to the dog. I spoke to all of my students' parents prior to conducting this study to gain an awareness of any allergies that my students may have had from being exposed to a dog. All the students' parents indicated, that to their knowledge, their children did not have any allergies to the dog. In the event that a student did develop an unknown allergic reaction that was caused by his or her exposure to the dog, the dog would have been removed from the classroom and the study discontinued in the self-contained setting.
3. Lack of bonding from the dog. The dog may have bonded with certain students and not others. For the students who did not have a bond with the dog, they may have experienced feelings of rejection, which could have evolved into feelings of sadness or anger and negatively impacted their self-esteem. Should this bonding issue have occurred in my study, I would have increased the dog's one-on-one time with the student experiencing these negative feelings, to help foster a stronger bond between him/her and the dog. I would have also had a conversation with the student to explain how dogs have similar characteristics to those of humans. Like humans, dogs are

*Maisha Almen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date

attracted to certain characteristics in people which lead them to pledge their loyalty to a select few, and it was not a reflection of the student being an unlikable child but rather having a different personality than the dog's.

4. Sanitary issues when bathrooming the dog. When the dog was taken outside to go to the bathroom, I always accompanied the students. They were never permitted to remove feces from the school's lawn, in order to avoid any unforeseen health issues.
5. Lack of respect for the dog's needs and personal boundaries. On the first day of the dog's arrival into my classroom, the dog's owner (who was one of my paraeducators) and I conducted an informational session with the students to introduce the dog as a new member of our classroom. This session was also used to generate a written list of "dos and don'ts" to keep everyone in the classroom safe. This list was posted in our classroom so students would have visual access to the list throughout the entire duration of the study. They were also informed by the dog's owner about what the dog liked and disliked. Students were never permitted to touch or sit next to the dog when he was eating, approach him while he was sleeping, or remove toys from his mouth (other than when playing fetch).
6. Lack of cooperation from the dog. In the occurrence that the dog exhibited behaviors that indicated discontent with being placed in a classroom setting with children, he would have been removed from the setting and replaced with another dog.

*Maria Almen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date

## Design of the Study

Because the study took place in a classroom and focused on social interactions, I felt that a qualitative design was appropriate. Qualitative methods are generally more suited to the study of relatively uncharted social circumstances and lend themselves to descriptions of complex social realities (Mallon, 1994). The type of qualitative study that I conducted was a case study, which is "an exploration of a 'bounded system' or a case over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context" (Creswell, 1998, p. 61). Since my research was conducted in a single program, Creswell considered it a "within-site" case study.

## Data Collection

As Creswell (1998) explained, "Good qualitative studies employ rigorous data collection procedures which mean that the researcher collects multiple forms of data, adequately summarizes the forms of data and detail about them, and spends adequate time in the field" (p. 20). The data in my study was collected using the following methods: (a) reviews of the literature; (b) classroom observations of student-dog interactions and social skills instruction; (c) interviews with students and parents; (d) problem solving sheets completed by students who went into emotional crisis; and (e) ABC analysis sheets (see description on page 58) completed by teachers when students went into emotional crisis.

## *Classroom Observations*

I conducted participant observations since I was a natural, integral part of the classroom setting. My degree of involvement in the observations ranged from moderate participation to complete participation. "In participant observation, the researcher can

*Maria Olsen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date



gather information and data generally unavailable using other data collection procedures” (Stainback & Stainback, 1988, p. 49). Each day I observed and recorded the following student-dog interactions: (a) the students’ one-on-one sessions with the dog, (b) the students’ unstructured play with the dog at recess, (c) the students reading books to the dog during reading class, (d) the students’ comments about and interactions with dog during social skills instruction, and (e) the students’ spontaneous interactions with the dog. During my observations, I wrote memos to myself to capture my analytical thoughts, and at the end of each day, I also wrote a paragraph or two analyzing what was happening during the observational times.

The one-on-one sessions with the dog were scheduled blocks of time each day, for approximately 30 minutes, when students could interact with the dog in private. Students were given the freedom to engage the dog in activities of their choice.

#### *Interviews*

“Interviewing provides the researcher a means to gain a deeper understanding of how the participants interpret a situation or phenomenon than can be gained through observation alone” (Stainback & Stainback, 1988, p. 52). First, I conducted six formal interviews with all six of the students. I also interviewed any student who entered into emotional crisis when the dog was used as a de-escalation tool. Each student interview was approximately 20 to 30 minutes in length. Second, I conducted two interviews with each parent to gain knowledge of the thoughts and feelings their child had expressed about the dog in the home setting. The first set of parent interviews were held after the 4<sup>th</sup> week of the study, and the second set after the 8<sup>th</sup> week. Each parent interview was

approximately 1 hour in length. All interviews were recorded using audio cassette tapes for the purpose of transcription. Interview questions can be found in Appendix B.

#### *Social Skills Instruction*

At the start of each school day, students received direct social skills instruction for approximately 30 minutes. This was an integral component of the self-contained classroom, because it provided students with instruction on the social skills necessary to interact appropriately with adults and peers, and to maintain emotional stability. During this time, a majority of the lessons were spent teaching students problem solving strategies to use when they encountered difficult situations, in order to prevent themselves from entering into emotional crisis.

When J.D. became a member of our classroom, he was incorporated into the social skills instruction. The following were the topics of the lessons that utilized J.D.'s classroom presence: (a) how to be respectful of J.D., (b) how to be responsible at meeting J.D.'s needs, (c) how to use J.D. as a calming tool, and (d) how to use J.D. to socialize with others. The methods of instruction that were used to teach these lessons were discussions (with the use of books on how dogs help people), teacher-modeling, and role-playing. Role-playing was a very valuable component since it provided students with the opportunity to apply their newly acquired skills with the hopes of having them generalize these skills into real-life situations.

#### *Problem Solving Sheets*

Every time students used the dog as a tool for de-escalation, a problem solving sheet was completed by the students (see Appendix C). The problem solving sheets allowed the students to reflect on how they managed their behaviors using the dog, what

problem solving strategies they were successful at applying with the dog, and what they wanted to do differently in order to remain in control of their behaviors.

#### *ABC Analysis*

An ABC analysis is a data collection procedure that is unique to the field of special education; it is used to analyze and determine possible reasons for students' behaviors. The A (antecedents) are the events that precede the behaviors, the B (behaviors) are the words and actions of the students being observed, and the C (consequences) are the events that follow the behaviors. The antecedents may actually cause the behaviors, whereas the consequences are thought to maintain or reinforce the behaviors.

In my study, an ABC analysis form was completed by a paraeducator or I each time students used the dog as a de-escalation tool (see Appendix D). It was used to document the Antecedents, Behaviors, and Consequences of the students' behaviors. This form also provided documentation for the times of day, class periods, and durations the behaviors were displayed.

#### Data Analysis

"Analyzing text and multiple forms of data presents a formidable task for qualitative researchers" (Creswell, 1998, p. 139). Table 3. provides an overview of the procedures that I implemented for my data analysis.

*Maria Almen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date



Table 3. Data Analysis Strategies.

Reviewing the Data	I systematically reviewed all of the data that I had collected to obtain a sense of the overall data.
Writing Reflectively	I wrote reflective notes at the end of each observation and interview.
Methodological Triangulation	I employed a variety of data collection procedures: participant observations, interviews, recordings on problem solving sheets, and recordings on ABC analysis forms.
Classifying the Data	I used a systematic approach to sort the data into <i>codes</i> which were then placed into <i>categories</i> , which eventually lead to the development of <i>assertions</i> . This also assisted in the reduction of data.
Organizing/Displaying the Data	Once my data was organized into codes and categories, it was placed into electronic files, as well as cut and taped onto large sheets of tag board for quick visual access.
Interpreting the Data	To assist in making sense of the data, I continually had discussions with the two paraeducators (who were present during the research study), along with my doctoral committee, to look for disconfirming evidence.

*Classifying the Data*

As data was collected, I began to classify it through a procedure known as coding. Stainback and Stainback (1988) referred to coding as a process of segmenting the data within running records. Upon the completion of data collection, I had segmented my data into 20 codes. Next, I analyzed the codes to find issue-relevant meanings among them, which according to Creswell (1998) is called categorical aggregation. Through this process, the codes were then classified into three categories. Next, each category was analyzed to determine possible themes or patterns embedded in them. Five themes emerged from the data. Finally, the relationships that bound the themes together were

identified and labeled as assertions. Four assertions emerged from the data.

#### *Validity of Data Analysis*

Maxwell (1996) reported that, "Validity refers to the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account" (p. 87).

To ensure validity in the conclusions that I derived from my research, I employed the following strategies:

1. I conducted an extensive review of the professional literature.
2. I collected an abundance of data that was detailed to provide a full and revealing picture of what was transpiring in my study. My observations and interviews were transcribed promptly to ensure my records accurately described the events I saw and heard.
3. I was cautious about imposing my own meaning (i.e., research bias) rather than understanding the perspectives of the participants in the study and the meanings attached to their words and actions.
4. I collaborated with my two paraeducators, who had also observed and interacted with all six of the students in the study, to conduct an audit of my research. The audit consisted of a discussion about my alleged explanations and interpretations of the collected data in order to verify my findings.
5. I identified and analyzed discrepant data and negative cases to assess whether it was more plausible to retain or modify my conclusions.

In Chapter IV, I will present the data that was derived from the methods and procedures employed in this study. The data is presented through narrative vignettes on each of the six students in my study that describe their behaviors and comments.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

The purpose of my qualitative study was to determine whether having a log as a member in a self-contained classroom for students diagnosed with severe emotional disorder held benefits for these students. In Chapter IV, I describe the context in which this study was conducted and provide a vivid portrayal of each of the six students who participated in my study through narrative vignettes that describe their behaviors and report their comments.

#### Context of the Study

This qualitative research study was conducted at an elementary school in urban North Dakota where I was employed as a special education teacher. This elementary school had a population of approximately 400 students and was considered a low socio-economic school since a large percentage of its students qualified for free or reduced meals. The student body of this school consisted primarily of Caucasian and Native American students.

The actual study took place in my self-contained classroom for students diagnosed with severe emotional disorders and lasted 8 weeks. The self-contained classroom was for students in kindergarten through third grade; however, for the 2002-2003 school year, I did have one fifth-grader on my caseload. Half of the students who were placed in my self-contained classroom for their emotional disorders transferred to



this elementary school from their neighborhood schools, because their educational teams had exhausted all efforts, and the students continued to be unsuccessful either academically, behaviorally, or both. In summary, this elementary school was considered the magnet school for severely emotionally disturbed students who were unable to be managed in their neighborhood schools.

The self-contained classroom was structured around a level system, which was a behavior management program designed to manage severe behaviors displayed by students. The level system consisted of five levels, and students could progress up the levels by earning points. As students progressed through the level, they were granted additional privileges in exchange for increased self-management of their behaviors.

The students in the self-contained classroom received social skills instruction daily. This instruction lasted for approximately 30 minutes and was focused on providing students with direct instruction on how to act appropriately in the presence of others and how to cope appropriately with difficult situations.

#### Narrative Descriptions of the Students

Each of the six students who participated in this research study possessed unique cultural, emotional, and academic backgrounds. Although these students represented a heterogeneous school community, their emotional needs were quite comparable. The names of my students have been altered to protect their anonymity. For the purposes of this paper, I have referred to my students by the following names: Jake, Ben, Emma, Abby, Matt, and Molly.

Prior to presenting the collected data on each of these students, brief overviews of their emotional and academic backgrounds have been provided so that the reader may

*Maria Olsen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date

gain a more global understanding of each student's individuality. The background information on each of these students was collected through the ongoing communication (e.g., meetings, phone conversations) that I, as the children's special education case manager, had with each of the student's parents. In addition, my daily interactions with each of these students were extensive. I provided them with ongoing academic and emotional support in my role as case manager. Because I had worked with them for some time before implementing this study, I possessed considerable knowledge about each of these students.

*Jake*

Jake was a first-grade boy who was ecstatic about a dog being in school! Each time he came into my classroom and saw J.D., a huge smile would spread rapidly across his little round face to expose his beautiful white teeth that were so eye-catching against his darkened skin color (a characteristic of his Hispanic culture). Jake's radiant smile seemed to represent not only his outer beauty but also his inner feelings of peace and happiness, which were not evident during his year in kindergarten. When Jake was in kindergarten, he lived with his biological mother and three younger sisters where he was a victim of physical and domestic violence. These acts of violence appeared to have negatively influenced Jake in that he reacted to situations and people with physical force. Along with Jake's externalizing behaviors, he was also very withdrawn from peers and students, which severely impeded his ability to build relationships.

At the beginning of his first-grade year, Jake was removed from his mother's care and placed into a therapeutic foster home. Following Jake's placement into a new home,

*Maria Almen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date

his acts of physical aggression completely disappeared, and his relationships with students and teachers began to evolve.

Academically, Jake was functioning in the mild range of mental retardation as reported by his most recent cognitive evaluation; however, Jake's scores did not appear to be true estimates of his ability since his behaviors negatively affected the testing process. In addition, Jake repeated kindergarten but was still performing significantly below grade level. After Jake was placed into his therapeutic foster home, he began to make remarkable academic progress and appeared to have an inner drive to learn, in order to make up for the time he lost at the onset of his school career.

#### *Data*

When Jake entered the classroom he would immediately say, "Hi J.D.!" and would engage J.D. in a game of fetch. He then devoted all of his time and attention to his furry friend until he was called to class, which was usually accompanied with the response of, "Oh man!" When J.D. set eyes on Jake entering the classroom, he would instantly run to greet him with his tail excitedly wagging back and forth and always ready to be a participant in a frolicsome game of fetch.

During Jake's one-on-one time with J.D., he usually chose to take him outside on a walk. They spent their time together running up and down the sidewalks with Jake's little legs trying laboriously to keep up with J.D.'s fast pace, and J.D.'s ears stretched far behind his head. While in each other's company, they would also stroll down the sidewalks leisurely while Jake looked at the passing vehicles and J.D. sniffed all of the trees trying to decide on the perfect ones to leave his scent! Jake found the way J.D. walked to be humorous; laughing out loud he would say, "J.D. is shaking his booty!" In

*Marcia Almen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date



addition, Jake would laugh hysterically when J.D. would suddenly grab the leash or Jake's coat and initiate a game of tug-o-war, which he was determined to win. When Jake was asked if he liked having J.D. in the classroom, he said he did because of playing and going on walks with him, and he verbalized how J.D. liked him, too, since "he plays with me." In fact, when J.D. was absent from our classroom for 3 days, Jake said that he missed J.D. and felt sad, because he wanted to play with him and that J.D. probably wanted to play with him, too! Jake's foster mother stated that, "Jake does not resist coming to school. He talks about being able to walk J.D. and doing stuff for J.D. a lot."

When J.D. first became a member of our classroom community, he would go to the door and cry when his owner would leave the classroom. Jake would go comfort him by petting him and saying, "You're okay J.D." I asked Jake how he felt when J.D. cried, and he said, "Sad. He misses his mom." I asked Jake if he cried like J.D. when he missed his mom (who he no longer lived with because of being placed in foster care); he admitted that he did, but petting J.D. made him feel better. When J.D. displayed behaviors that were indicators of his missing his owner, Jake and I engaged in numerous conversations about how J.D.'s feelings of missing his mom were similar to his own feelings of sadness for not being permitted to live with his mom. Jake said that J.D. helped him solve his problem of missing his own mom by having J.D. play with him. During our conversations, we were usually sitting around J.D. petting him, since Jake felt this helped J.D. feel better.

Jake would socialize with other students by using J.D. as a medium for interaction. He would interact with other students in the classroom by playing various games with J.D. Jake also spent time with a fifth-grade boy twice a week for a positive

*Maria Almen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date

male role-model. They would take J.D. on walks, and Jake would share J.D. by letting the other boy have a turn at controlling the leash. In addition, one of Jake's younger sisters attended the same school as he did; they began spending time together during the school day since they were placed in separate foster care homes. Both of their educational teams felt it would be beneficial for their emotional well-being if they could interact and play together as brother and sister for a duration each day. Both of them were consumed with caring for J.D., having him do tricks, and taking him on walks. These interactions between brother and sister resulted in them being engaged in conversation and laughter that was centered on J.D. Jake verbalized on more than one occasion that he liked spending time with his sister and J.D.

In the time that J.D. was placed in our classroom, Jake's behavior did not escalate to a level that would have made it necessary to remove him from our classroom community by placing him either in time-out or in a separate room we called "the quiet room." Jake was asked if J.D. helped him make better choices while he was in school, and he answered, "Like he can make me have better choices, not hitting my friends." Jake stated in an interview that making better choices made him feel happy. Jake's foster mother reported that having J.D. in our classroom "is a good sidetrack for when he [Jake] gets angry . . . puts his mind in a better spot." His foster mother also said that Jake probably talked to J.D. when nobody else knew what he was saying. When Jake was asked if J.D. would forgive students who yelled at or hurt him, he said, "No, because J.D. won't be by someone who be bad to him. If someone hits him, he will go away from people [who are] not nice." During an interview session, Jake did admit that he had

*Maria Olsen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date



thought about hurting J.D., but he used self-control because he did not want to get into trouble.

When Jake would sit down on the beanbag or on the floor to read a book or complete a paper pencil task, J.D. would either cuddle against Jake's leg or position himself right on top of Jake's work; if Jake was sitting at the table working, J.D. was usually sitting on the table sleeping or chewing his bone! Jake appeared to really enjoy J.D.'s presence, since he would acknowledge the situation by planting a huge smile on his face and then say to a teacher, "Look at J.D.!"

Jake was very gentle and patient with J.D. Often, when Jake was working hard on academic tasks, J.D. would want his attention and would give Jake kisses (i.e., licks) on his face, sit on top of his work, or push his head up against the book that Jake was reading. Jake would acknowledge J.D. with a pat on the head or a simple verbal comment and then return to his tasks. While Jake was reading books, he would usually read them to J.D., showing him the pictures and by using the name, "J.D.," as a replacement name for the main characters. During the time that J.D. was in our classroom, Jake was motivated to read books about dogs, because he thought that J.D. would enjoy them. When Jake was asked what he thought about reading to J.D., he replied, "Fun sitting by him." Jake's foster mother said that J.D. did not interrupt Jake's learning but rather made it better, because it was not just from a book.

Jake's learning extended beyond the typical academic areas. It was a classroom expectation that Jake share in the responsibility of caring for J.D.'s needs by managing his behaviors through praise and discipline, providing him with food and water, keeping him attached to his different leashes at all times, and cleaning up after him. Jake



diligently assumed the role of surrogate owner for J.D. He was very responsible in performing the above tasks with minimal teacher direction. It was also expected of Jake that he be respectful of J.D.'s needs and other students' time with him. When J.D. was eating or sleeping, he was mindful of J.D.'s time alone, and when J.D. was interacting with other students, he was respectful of their time together by occupying his time with other activities. When Jake was asked how he liked sharing J.D. with other students, he simply said, "Good."

Several teachable moments arose during times of play with J.D. On one occasion, Jake was alone in the classroom with J.D. for a few minutes while I was assisting with another student; and when I returned, I heard J.D. barking from inside the quiet room while Jake was on the other side of the door laughing. He then said to me, "J.D. was bad!" I explained to Jake that his action, even though it was meant as a joke, was not funny to J.D.; it scared him, and he wanted out of the quiet room. I proceeded to explain to Jake that his job was to make J.D. feel safe in our classroom rather than to feel afraid. Jake then went up to J.D. and apologized while petting him on his back. On another occasion, while Jake was petting J.D., J.D. rolled onto his back with the hope of having Jake rub his belly. Jake willingly accepted this offer and began rubbing J.D.'s belly; soon after, he stopped and said, "That's nasty," while pointing to J.D.'s penis. Jake and I had a discussion about how all male dogs and male humans have a penis and how it is a very natural process for all living things to go to the bathroom.

In the last interview that I had with Jake's foster mother, which was in the summer, she reported that Jake would occasionally say that he missed seeing and playing with J.D. His foster mother also said that Jake would ask her if J.D. was going to be back

in school with him. In an interview session with Jake, he said that school would be better if "he [J.D.] stays here."

*Ben*

Ben was in the first-grade and appeared to have a real keenness for working with dogs. From the moment that J.D. became a member of our classroom community, Ben had a natural way of interacting with him, which included praising J.D. when he did something right and disciplining J.D. when he did something wrong. J.D. seemed to take Ben to a place where he could be free from his past experiences, experiences that left him untrusting and guarded. During their times together, Ben engaged in laughter that was genuine rather than forced; and in play, the play was representative of a child's rather than that of a young adult's. Ben was an Asian-American child whose eyes appeared to twinkle when in the company of J.D.!

This was Ben's first year in my class. Prior to joining my classroom, Ben had been placed in a new therapeutic foster home following an extensive stay in a psychiatric hospital. Ben's past consisted of a substantial amount of physical and domestic violence. His past had resulted in severe emotional and behavioral problems (e.g., Intermittent Explosive Disorder, Reactive Attachment Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder) that were apparent by his display of violent, explosive behaviors that severely threatened Ben's safety and the safety of others around him.

Ben's academic performance was on grade level, and his enthusiasm for learning was evident in his participation. At times, this enthusiasm impacted him negatively, since he felt compelled to always be right and answer all of the questions asked in class



(even the ones intended for his classmates); as a result, Ben needed to be redirected, which caused him to become both verbally and physically defiant at times.

*Data*

When Ben would walk into the classroom, J.D. would immediately try to devour all of Ben's attention by jumping on Ben's legs or falling onto his back with the hope of getting a belly rub! Luckily for J.D., Ben was an easy target; he would say, "J.D." and instantly succumb to J.D.'s outward demand for affection by rubbing his belly. One day when Ben walked into the classroom, he was concerned about J.D.'s safety; J.D. had his indoor leash extended all the way, and Ben thought the leash was hurting his neck. J.D. was kept on an indoor leash in our classroom because he had a habit of leaving our classroom to visit the principal in his office or the kids who were playing in the gymnasium!

During Ben's one-on-one sessions with J.D., he usually chose to take him on leisurely walks or have him do tricks. When Ben would have J.D. do tricks, he would laugh continuously and say, "J.D. you are a smart dog!" These episodes of laughter for Ben were not evident in his daily interactions with other students or teachers. Ben's foster mother stated that J.D. taught Ben how to let loose and just be himself, which, she added, was very difficult for him to do. One particular trick that Ben liked was called "find the treat." He would have J.D. find the dog treat that he had hidden under one of three styrofoam cups. J.D. would almost always locate the treat on his first attempt, and on one occasion, he even got a cup stuck around his snout; making Ben laugh hysterically! Ben's foster mother explained how he would tell everybody about the "find the treat" trick and then brag about J.D.'s smartness! When Ben was asked if J.D. made

The micrographic images on this film are accurate reproductions of records delivered to Modern Information Systems for microfilming and were filmed in the regular course of business. The photographic process meets standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for archival microfilm. NOTICE: If the filmed image above is less legible than this Notice, it is due to the quality of the document being filmed.

*Maria Olsen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date



him laugh, he said, "Yes, when he chews on the cups and pushes them around, and when he is lying upside down chewing on his bone."

Ben's relationship with J.D. consisted of more than just playful games and activities; it also provided opportunities for him to make personal connections to his own life. When Ben first began interacting with J.D., he put forth effort to make J.D. feel safe in his new environment. Ben and I had discussions about the feelings that he encountered when he first went to live with his foster parents, and he admitted to being scared of his new surroundings, just like J.D. Another instance was when Ben and I were on a walk with J.D., and he began to talk about all of the bad choices that he made while he was on a home visit at his biological mother's house. I was very surprised at the detailed explanation that Ben provided to me, because up to this point in our relationship, sustaining a conversation with him for any length of time had been a very challenging task; he typically guarded his thoughts and emotions quite well. Ben's foster mother said, "It's a very intimate thing between him and the dog. It is very, very special what he has with J.D."

Ben was always willing to share J.D. with other students. His foster mother noticed how he became more caring and not as competitive as he used to be with his peers. There was a student from another classroom who would often request to spend his earned free time with J.D. This student's free time was at the same time Ben had his one-on-one session with J.D.; as a result of Ben's willingness to share, the two boys took J.D. on walks while taking turns holding the leash. One day, Ben and his classmates took J.D. outside to the playground. Ben was going down the slide with J.D. sitting on his lap; he climbed up and down the jungle gym while assisting his four-legged little companion

up the levels that were too steep. J.D.'s tail was in constant motion during this new and exciting adventure with Ben. The other students were entertained by these spectacular activities, so they asked Ben if they could also partake in the fun, and he generously let them all have a turn.

Ben's foster mother reported that she noticed an improvement in his self-esteem. She said, "J.D. gave Ben a way to express himself. He's not very affectionate to people but [it's] a different story with dogs." His foster mother also stated how she felt dogs were good for kids because "they are playful and dogs don't judge. All they want to do is play and be their friend. Kids love that. That is what being a kid is all about!" When Ben was asked if J.D. liked him, he said, "Yeah, because I tell him to "sit" and he does." He also commented on how J.D. made a better friend than humans did.

Ben said that he liked coming to school each day, because it was fun being with J.D. and going to gym class. He also thought that J.D. liked coming to school each day, because then he was able to be around people. Ben's foster mother stated how he had a much better attitude about coming to school since J.D. started coming to school, which was a significant change for Ben. During an interview session, Ben was asked whether having J.D. in school made it easier or harder, and he replied, "Easier, because J.D. helps me a lot by calming me down and letting me pet him." When Ben was asked if he felt he could talk to J.D., he said he could because he knew J.D. was listening (since J.D. stayed right by him when he talked). Ben said that J.D. knew when he was feeling happy, sad, and mad, especially when he was crying or hitting.

Throughout the 8 weeks that J.D. was placed in our classroom setting, Ben entered emotional crisis on only one occasion, which he needed to be placed in our quiet



room. Prior to J.D. joining our classroom, Ben's inappropriate behaviors escalated approximately every 2 weeks to a level where he needed to be physically removed into the quiet room because his behaviors were so violent. He was unable to remove himself for a short time-out to gain control of his behaviors and to give thought to developing a solution to his problems.

Ben displayed inappropriate behaviors on four occasions while J.D. was placed in our classroom. During three of these times, Ben did not need to be removed into the quiet room. He said that J.D. helped prevent him from going into the quiet room because J.D. was able to help calm him down; he especially remembered the time when J.D. jumped up on his knee so he could pet him while he was sitting in the time-out chair. His foster mother stated how having J.D. in our classroom made Ben more relaxed so he could be himself, and how J.D. was a motivational tool for Ben. She also reported on the time when she had asked Ben how he felt when he got angry and talked to J.D., and he answered, "It makes me forget about being angry."

On the one occasion that Ben did enter emotional crisis, he needed to be physically removed from gym class and placed into the quiet room; however, Ben's crisis was less intense than on previous occasions as evidenced by the absence of biting, scratching, or kicking. On previous occasions, Ben had attempted to bite, kick, or scratch me or other teachers close to him.

When I initially entered the gymnasium, I found Ben's behaviors escalated past his ability to reason and problem solve his way through the situation. I began trying to de-escalate Ben's behaviors by extending an invitation for him to walk to our classroom to sit with J.D. and pet him while telling J.D. his problem. This attempt was



unsuccessful. All Ben would do was to repeatedly say, "No" and to attempt to leave the area. When Ben was physically brought into our classroom, J.D. instantly began to bark at him, and I said, "Oh Ben, you are scaring J.D. with your behaviors." Ben's behaviors began to de-escalate within 5 minutes after another teacher and I sat with him on the floor (holding him and telling him that he was safe).

When Ben was able to join our classroom community, we went to a table and sat down, and I explained to him how he scared J.D. with his behaviors and how important it was for him to let J.D. know that he could trust him (Ben) again. Next, I placed J.D. onto the table; Ben began to gently pet him, and J.D. slowly rolled onto his back for Ben to pet him on his stomach. Ben remained silent. I said to him, "J.D. must be able to trust you again since he is letting you pet him, especially on his belly." During a separate interview session with Ben, I asked him why he did not accept my offer of talking to J.D. about the problem that he had in gym, and he answered, "I didn't want to, because I thought I could do it [calm down] by myself." Ben said that he should have petted J.D. because it relaxed him.

*Emma*

Emma, an African-American girl, was a vivacious second-grader who indulged herself in playing with J.D. every moment she was allotted free time! Her play with J.D. was very innovative, and she would continually explore new ways in which to engage him in activities that required high energy and were humorous. Emma's play with J.D. was always at an appropriate level, which was different from her treatment of her dog at home. Emma's mother verified her daughter's report that she had inflicted both physical

*Maria Abmen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date

and sexual abuse on her family dog. Emma's behaviors resulted in the dog being removed from the home in order to protect the dog from further acts of abuse.

Emma's first few years of life left her a victim of abuse and neglect, resulting in her being placed into the foster care system until her adoption at the age of 3. Her past experiences had severely impacted her emotional well-being which have led to multiple diagnoses from psychologists and psychiatrists. Emma's condition, most accurately described by her diagnosis of Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD), had impeded her social relationships most significantly. She was very egocentric in her thought processes and actions, and Emma had considerable difficulty connecting her demonstrations of inappropriate behaviors with negative outcomes.

Academically, Emma was performing well below grade level but continually put forth a great deal of effort on academic tasks. She was a very literal thinker who was extremely successful at memorizing procedures and processes used to derive answers, but she could not verbalize a foundational understanding of the overall concepts and relationships that were associated with the answers she derived.

*Data*

"Did somebody miss me?" was the typical morning greeting for J.D. when Emma walked through the classroom door and found J.D. exploding with excitement at her very presence. Emma would gravitate towards J.D. to display her affection for him by petting and kissing him. J.D. usually reciprocated these affectionate acts by licking Emma's face or hands, which caused her to release a clamorous giggle. One day, while I was working on the computer, Emma walked up to me and said, "I like J.D. being here!" I proceeded to ask her what she liked about him, and she answered, "Him licking us. His cute little

The micrographic images on this film are accurate reproductions of records delivered to Modern Information Systems for microfilming and were filmed in the regular course of business. The photographic process meets standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for archival microfilm. NOTICE: If the filmed image above is less legible than this Notice, it is due to the quality of the document being filmed.

*Maria Olsen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date



face!" Emma also explained to me how school was better with J.D., because she had always wanted a dog in the classroom.

Emma engrossed herself in playing with J.D. whenever she had a minute or two to spare. She continually utilized her creativity by developing innovative ways to engage J.D. in play. Her most famous innovation was called "hide the bone," in which she would hide his beloved bone in her pocket, in her shoe, or underneath her legs, and it was his job to locate the bone if he was going to indulge himself in chewing it. This particular game extended across several minutes; he would locate his bone, but he had to work diligently to free it from Emma's possession by using his front paws to dig the bone out of its hiding spot. Emma would laugh so loudly and infectiously that it spread like wildfire across the faces of all individuals watching J.D. strive to earn back his rightful belonging!

Emma displayed a substantial<sup>1</sup> amount of egocentricity in her play with J.D. When other students joined spontaneously into play with J.D. while Emma was playing with him, she typically became aggravated by these students. She would walk away with her arms crossed in front of her, overly exaggerate her walking movements by stomping her feet on the floor, and angrily sit down at her desk. These behaviors resulted in situational social skills instructions (i.e., teachable moments) for Emma and the other students. Emma made the comments, "I like sharing J.D." and "I've always been better with my classmates." Her comments, however, did not correspond to her actions. These same behaviors were demonstrated in the home setting with the family pet, which created a severe rivalry between Emma and her brothers. She often mentioned to teachers how she wished she could take J.D. home to be her dog, but her brothers could not have any



access to him. Emma's mother explained how Emma's difficulties at sharing J.D. were a result of her Reactive Attachment Disorder.

Although Emma was not good at sharing J.D. with her classmates, she was more than willing to share him with students from the autism program (who were frequent visitors to our classroom). Emma did not participate in parallel play with these students but rather assumed a teaching role by instructing them on what to say and do with J.D. Emma's composure remained intact even when one student tried to kick J.D. Following the departure of these students, it was customary for Emma to comment on how well the students with autism did with J.D.

During an interview with Emma's mother, I asked her what she thought J.D. taught her daughter that I was unable to teach her, and she replied, "Cause and effect relationships. He is not threatening, does not use big words, or the social conventions that pass her by. She could understand him." Emma stated how she felt she could talk to J.D. because he listened ("his ears would go up"); he understood her feelings since he would lick her. She also mentioned how J.D. made a good friend, because she could tell he liked her by his cute looks and licks. Emma would often request to take J.D. to the occupational therapy room where there was a swing anchored from the ceiling. It was during this time when she liked to cradle him in her arms while gently gliding the swing in a rhythmic motion.

With J.D. in our classroom, Emma's mother felt that Emma was able to have a relationship with another living being (a very difficult thing for her to be able to do with people). In addition, her mother stated that Emma probably really liked the

companionship and attention that J.D. provided to her, since she was always trying to seek attention.

Emma said that J.D. helped keep her "engine running just right," which I interpreted to mean, he helped her act appropriately. Emma said that there were times when she felt like fighting; to control her impulses, she would walk up to J.D. and pet him until those negative feelings disappeared. Emma also said that J.D. helped her make better choices even when she was not with him by thinking about playing with him, which made her feel happy.

During an interview session, Emma explained how dogs were good for kids. She said, "They let you pet them; they lick you, and they help kids get out of trouble." In addition, when J.D. and I were absent from our classroom for 3 days, Emma informed me that she was not very happy that he was gone, because she missed him; she also had some "bad days" without him in school. I asked her why, and she answered, "It's harder to do things without him." Emma's mother was asked why she permitted her daughter to take part in my study, and she answered, "I love animals and I think they are so useful for all of us, including kids with troubles. Especially when they [the kids] can find some kind of motivation of any kind and not hurt it [the animal]."

Emma demonstrated self-control in the presence of J.D. by refraining from inflicting any form of abuse on him. She said she would never hurt J.D., because "if I do that, I won't get to be with him." Emma's mother followed up on this comment by stating, "That's hard for her to do. She just must be on the edge sometimes." As a result of Emma's past history of abusing dogs, it was standard procedure to only permit her to interact with J.D. in the presence of teachers. One day, I was alone in the classroom with



Emma when I received a phone call. While I was conversing with the caller, I moved out of Emma's field of vision and watched her interactions with J.D. from a distance. Her comments and gestures toward J.D. remained at a level of appropriateness throughout the entire length of my absence. On a separate occasion, Emma was lying on the floor playing tug-o-war with J.D. when he seemed to become overwhelmed with excitement and began playing tug-o-war with one of her pigtailed! Emma just laughed and said, "J.D. you can't pull my hair." as she gently released her hair from his mouth.

During a discussion with Emma, she explained how J.D. had helped her learn her lesson on not hurting dogs, because "we don't hurt animals." She proceeded to explain how she wanted to have another chance with her dog in the home setting. Emma's mother followed up on this comment by stating that she did want to give Emma another chance with the family dog in order to utilize what she had learned in the school setting. Her mother made the following statement, "I think she has learned that it matters what she does, if she is kind or unkind. That she gets a response back right away. I don't know if she knew that before. She may have, but it was so clouded by everything else."

"When I am mad he brings one of his toys. He helps me slow down and keep my engine right." Emma shared this statement one day during social skills instruction. Emma's behaviors escalated to a level of inappropriateness on three occasions, in which teachers and I used J.D. to assist in the de-escalation process. In all three instances, Emma was provided with the opportunity to pet J.D. while he was being held by a teacher. As her behaviors began to de-escalate, J.D. was placed in her arms to hold and pet. Emma would continually pet him until J.D. did something silly that solicited a surge of laughter from her (e.g., licking her hands or face, rolling around on the floor with a



toy, yawning). This laughter was usually preceded by general comments about J.D., which eventually evolved into problem solving discussions with teachers. When Emma was asked if J.D. helped her make better choices, she explained, "Yes, calming me down by licking me and letting me pet him." She explained how petting him made her feel happy and how getting licked by him felt cool. Emma was asked during an interview session what she would tell a new student about J.D.; she replied, "...J.D. can help you calm down. He's a real good dog. He doesn't bite. He doesn't hurt. He's just a real good dog that can help people."

Emma's mother thought that there was educational value in having J.D. as a member of our classroom community. She felt that the social relationship information that Emma had received from her interactions with J.D. was very valuable; without that information, Emma could not maintain her behaviors in order to learn. In addition, Emma's mother pointed out that the non-threatening relationship that was developed between her daughter and J.D. helped Emma think straighter; she did not feel threatened, which had the potential of being a model for how she could interact with other children. When Emma was asked what she learned from J.D., she remarked, "To be more friendly to other kids and more nice. Not to get mad at them."

Emma demonstrated responsible and respectful behaviors toward J.D.'s unique needs. She assisted in creating a safe environment for him by vigilantly working to keep his indoor leash free from obstacles. Additionally, J.D. had a habit of chewing on his front paws until they were of a bright red color. Each time Emma witnessed such behavior from J.D., she would remove his paws from his mouth and say, "I'm not going to let you do that buddy." When J.D. needed to have time to himself, which was usually

verbalized by teachers, Emma was respectful of leaving him alone until instructed otherwise. One day while Emma and I were walking with J.D., he went to the bathroom in front of us. I asked her if it was okay for him to go in front of people, and she replied, "Yeah, because he's going. He's not embarrassed. If he has to go, he has to go. I don't think it is bad. No one should think it is bad."

The very last question I asked Emma was if she would always remember J.D., even when she got to be the age of her grandma. Her answer back to me was, "Yeah. I will probably get a dog like him for the kids." I pursued this further by asking what she would tell her own kids about J.D. Her final statement was as follows: "That he is a really good dog!"

#### *Abby*

Abby was a third-grade girl who was generally a quiet, soft spoken student in the classroom setting; this may have been a social characteristic unique to her Native American culture. During the school year, she lived with her mother, and during the summer months, she lived with her father in another town. Abby was placed in the self-contained classroom at the start of her second-grade year because of the disruptive and physical behaviors she displayed when she was in first-grade. As a second-grader, Abby did well both academically and behaviorally. Academically, Abby's skills increased in all areas; however, her academic achievement was still lower than her same grade peers, which was commensurate with her low cognitive performance on standard cognitive tests. Behaviorally, Abby appeared to be motivated by the behavior management plans (e.g., level system, contingency contract) implemented in the self-contained classroom. Abby was able to reach and maintain the highest level of privileges allowed by the level

*Maria Olsen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date



system, where self-management skills were required in order to continue receiving rewards.

In social situations with peers, Abby was not as successful. She did not appear to have a strong sense of self since her interactions with boys and girls were very different. In the presence of boys, Abby's demeanor was very quiet and passive. I often observed her obeying the directions given to her by boys, and she even smiled at them when they made comments that I considered to be rude and inappropriate. However, in the presence of girls, Abby was very assertive with her words and actions. She frequently engaged in power struggles and verbal disagreements with them, which usually resulted in teacher intervention to diffuse the situation.

Abby was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Central Auditory Processing Disorder (CAPD). In conversations with Abby's mother, she felt that Abby's social problems were attributed largely to her CAPD, which caused her to misunderstand the verbal exchanges with peers; generally, she auditorily processed them incorrectly.

#### *Data*

Abby was very tender with her words and actions toward J.D. When she said his name or talked to him, she used a high voice tone and spoke as if she was singing to him. Her verbal interactions with J.D. were similar to how one might communicate with a baby or a small child. Abby liked to hold J.D. in her arms while moving her body in a rocking position, awaiting the moment that he would fall asleep. When Abby would transition with J.D. to a new room within the confines of the school, she insisted upon carrying him in her arms. Abby's mother reported how when Abby was at home, she would talk about how much she liked to hug J.D. and kiss his back.



During Abby's one-on-one sessions with J.D., she did not establish agendas for him to follow. If he wanted to play, she played; if he wanted to just lie and sleep or chew his bone, she did not object. However, Abby did say that her favorite thing to do with him was to take him outside on walks.

Abby seemed quite comfortable in her physical interactions with J.D., but interacting with him verbally took time to develop. Initially, she would direct all of her verbal statements or personal stories to me rather than to J.D. During these times, I encouraged her to talk to J.D. so she could establish a relationship with him. As time passed, Abby began to talk to J.D. as if they were alone in each other's company; she even began to share intimate stories with him about difficulties in her home life. One day, I observed Abby telling J.D. how her mother and her mother's boyfriend had gotten into a fight at her house and how they then got back together. As the day progressed, Abby seemed very distraught; we took J.D. for a walk, and I talked to her about the problem in her home life. She admitted to being upset about the situation between her mother and her mother's boyfriend. Abby said that she felt better when she talked to J.D. about it, so I told her she could talk to J.D. anytime she needed to throughout the day as a source of comfort. In an interview session, I asked Abby if she felt she could talk to J.D., and she replied, "Yes. Well, he can't understand, but it feels like it. . . ." She also said that J.D. made a good friend, because he listened when she spoke by looking at her and perking up his ears. When I questioned Abby's mother about what she thought Abby liked the most about J.D., she answered, "The companionship. He is there and she can reach over and just pet him or hug him. . . ."

Abby verbalized how she felt J.D. had feelings that were comparable to humans, because she said, "Everybody has feelings." When J.D. would make noises that seemed as if he was crying, Abby would take the responsibility of soothing him by petting him and saying, "You're okay J.D." or "You're fine J.D. Your mommy is teaching class." Abby explained to me how she felt sad when J.D. cried; she thought he was feeling sad, and if J.D. could have talked, he would have told her about his feelings.

When J.D. and I were absent from our classroom for 3 consecutive days, Abby seemed quite affected by J.D.'s absence. Abby's mother reported, "Last week she missed him. Everyday she said, 'J.D. is not there because Mrs. Anderson is not there, and it is her school work.' She was complaining every day. 'Two more days until J.D. comes back. One more day until J.D. comes back.'" Her mother also mentioned how when J.D. joined our classroom, Abby was excited to come to school, but when J.D. was absent, she went back to her old ways of not wanting to get out of bed and just being "real crabby." When I asked Abby how she felt when J.D. was gone from our classroom, she answered, "Kinda sad. I didn't get to play with him." During a separate interview, Abby said that she was very happy the time that J.D. came to our classroom, and she sometimes wondered if J.D. would be coming back to school the following year.

When Abby took J.D. outside of our classroom setting, students and staff in other areas of the school would gravitate toward her. Abby would let them indulge in petting and talking to J.D., but when they would seek information from her about J.D., she would simply answer their questions and smile rather than use J.D. as a catalyst for continued conversation. She seemed to be quite timid in her interactions. Abby's mother thought that Abby's introverted behaviors may have been a result of her (Abby's mother) telling

*Maria Almen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date



Abby not to talk to anyone she does not know. When I asked Abby how she felt when others asked her about J.D., her comment was, "Good, so they know about him." In regard to conversing with her classroom peers about J.D., Abby was more of an extrovert. She would participate in discussions about J.D. and engage in laughter that resulted from J.D.'s silly dog behaviors. At times, however, Abby seemed to become competitive and defensive toward another female student, named Emma. There were times when Abby became angry if Emma tried to interact with J.D. when she was already playing with him. Abby also questioned whether or not Emma's play with J.D. was appropriate, since she would ask teachers if Emma was being mean to J.D. by teasing him.

I asked Abby whether or not she considered dogs to be good for kids; she nodded her head indicating a "yes" answer and made the following statement: "Because they, well, you have to be good for them, to be good for you." Abby revealed how J.D. was good for her by being able to pet and hold him. She said he assisted her in making better choices that prevented her from needing to be removed into the quiet room. She explained how on one day, she thought she was going to have a bad day, so she spent a few minutes with J.D. to try and turn her day around. Abby even disclosed how J.D. helped her when he was not in her presence by thinking about playing with him and having her friends meet him. She said she thought about him at home when she had difficulties taking her pills and when she was unable to fall asleep at night. Abby's mother expounded on this further by saying, "She says that he makes her happy that he is here. It makes her feel good. She goes on and on about it!"

Throughout the span of time that J.D. was in our classroom, Abby did not enter into an emotional crisis (this would have resulted in her being secluded from her peers



and placed in the quiet room). However, she was removed for a time-out on four occasions when she needed to calm her mind and body and develop a fix-it plan that would allow her to be re-integrated with her peers. One of these time-outs occurred during gym class when Abby refused to do exercises after she was hit with a ball that resulted in her being *out* of the game. She threw the ball, complained, crossed her arms in front of her body, and cried all the way back to our classroom. As she entered the classroom, she found J.D. lying on the floor sleeping near the doorway. His presence seemed to interrupt her display of inappropriate behaviors because she knelt down beside J.D. and gently petted him. As soon as Abby was done petting him, she stood up and resumed her inappropriate behaviors until she reached the time-out chair. During all four instances when Abby was removed for a time-out, she was asked if J.D. helped her calm down; she said he did help her by being able to pet and talk to him. Her mother made the following statement about J.D. having a calming effect on her daughter: "Abby talked about being upset about something, and she gave him a hug and sat with him and was petting him, and she felt better."

Several teachable moments arose through Abby's and J.D.'s interactions. On two separate occurrences, Abby made the following comments to J.D. while they were playing: "Chop, chop, chop the dog's ear right off, now he is dead." and "Do I need to grab your arm to drop it?" We had a discussion about how the comments she made to J.D. were threatening and how they could negatively impact others' perceptions of her. Another teachable moment was when Abby and I were walking J.D. and he defecated in the grass. I asked Abby if she was a good citizen by cleaning up after her mother's boyfriend's dog when she took him on walks. She said that she did not clean up after the

dog; therefore, we had a discussion about being a responsible pet owner and a good citizen.

In regard to J.D.'s placement in the school setting, Abby stated that he made school easier; he helped her concentrate by calming her down if she had problems and how being able to pet J.D. helped her pay closer attention to the teachers. When I asked Abby if she would change anything about J.D. being in our classroom, she said that she wanted to be able to hold him in her arms during class time.

At the end of each school day, I had a special way of saying good-bye to my students. I would stand in the doorway and ask each student, "Hug, high-five, handshake, or pass?" When J.D. became part of our classroom, I continued with the same procedure but incorporated J.D.; I held him and asked the students, "Hug, high-five, pet, or pass?" Each day, Abby would say good-bye to J.D. by giving him a hug, high-five, pet, and a kiss!

*Matt*

Matt was a third-grade Caucasian boy with a round little face who was often seen in the hallways walking with a slight skip, as he extended greetings to the people he encountered. He had a high interest in learning about animals and was always willing to share facts that he had learned about various animals from watching *Animal Planet* on television. Matt interacted well with teachers. He often positioned himself by teachers' desks during his free time to tell them stories or engage in conversations that displayed his sense of humor. Matt's mother said that he would talk the entire day if teachers would let him!



Emotionally and behaviorally, Matt encountered numerous obstacles in the school setting. He was diagnosed with a Mood Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. In the school setting, Matt had historically done well during the months of August through February, but beginning in March until the end of May, his moods cycled; he would become extremely difficult to manage as a result of explosive, often physical, behaviors. The onset of Matt's explosive behaviors was sporadic and unpredictable. On more than one occasion, he explained how his body suddenly felt angry, and he could not understand why he displayed certain behaviors. Developing effective behavioral interventions, to help Matt be successful in the school setting, was an ongoing process, and it was one of my greatest challenges as a special education teacher.

Socially, Matt had the skills to develop new friendships but was unable to maintain them because of his unpredictable and inappropriate behaviors. The friends Matt had made at home or in school often became fearful of him when he entered emotional crisis, which usually resulted in them terminating their relationships with Matt.

Matt was performing on grade level in all academic areas except for writing. His reading skills were strong, and his higher level thinking skills provided him with the ability to apply, synthesize, and evaluate new information. Matt's daily performance in writing was very inconsistent and seemed to be affected by his emotional state or mood. There were days when he would write numerous sentences of high quality, and on other days, he would refuse to even write individual words.

*Maria Olsen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date



*Data*

When Matt arrived at school each morning, he would come to our classroom to hang up his coat and backpack before transitioning to the lunchroom for breakfast. After J.D. became a part of our classroom, J.D. grew accustomed to lying in the doorway to await Matt's morning arrivals. The moment J.D. heard Matt's voice coming from the hallway, he instantly stood up to begin his intense tail wagging, which was an indicator of his excitement over seeing Matt! The instant that Matt entered his field of vision, J.D. would begin his vivacious performance of jumping up and down and making attention-seeking noises to captivate Matt's attention. J.D.'s daily performance only had to last for a minimal amount of time, since Matt would devote his entire attention to him by talking to him and petting him. When Matt would tell J.D. good-bye to leave for the lunchroom, J.D. would stare at him and begin to whine. Matt would try to comfort him by saying, "J.D. I have to go eat breakfast. I'll come back." Throughout an entire school day, each time Matt left the classroom, he would tell J.D. good-bye and then greet him each time he returned.

Matt seemed to find J.D. quite amusing, since he was observed laughing over J.D.'s silly behaviors several times each day. He even said that J.D.'s name should be changed to "Funny Dog" because he made people laugh! One day, Matt and J.D. went outside to lie in the grass; Matt did his schoolwork and J.D. chewed on his bone. Matt was lying in the grass working diligently when J.D. decided he no longer wanted to chew on his bone but rather Matt's pencil! So, J.D. took Matt's pencil in his mouth, ran away with it, and then found a safe spot and began chewing on it! Matt instantly began to laugh at J.D.'s rudeness and said, "J.D. give me back my pencil!" Other behaviors

displayed by J.D. that provoked laughter from Matt occurred: when he would be lying on top of Matt's desk sleeping; when he would roll around on the floor with his toys; when he would become extremely excited over a game called Shark Bowling (in which J.D. would try to attack the shark while it was moving); and when Matt would pretend to be in time-out, and J.D. would come running over to him, and Matt would laugh and say, "J.D. thinks I'm in time-out!" His mother felt that dogs, in general, are very good for kids for the following reasons:

They are fun. They are exciting. I think a dog can be their best friend. Dogs don't care. They tag along with you no matter where you go or what you are doing. They are just there. I think it would be good for any child.

Throughout the time that J.D. was in our classroom, Matt had days in which he did not feel well from tonsillitis. On these days, Matt would need to take breaks to lie down inside the quiet room. During these times, J.D. would follow Matt directly into the quiet room, position himself right next to Matt, and lie with him until Matt was feeling well enough to resume his academic work. Matt said that J.D.'s presence helped him feel better. Matt was also there to help J.D. when he did not feel well one morning (J.D. had vomited on the floor). Matt had a very concerned look on his face and said, "I wish he could talk to us and tell us what's the matter." J.D.'s attachment to Matt seemed to be quite strong, since J.D. would gravitate to him more than to any other student.

Matt seemed to also have a strong attachment to J.D. When he was asked if he thought J.D. made a good friend, he answered, "Yeah, because he wants to play with me. Dog friends are nicer than human friends, because they play with me more." Matt also said during a separate interview that "J.D. accepts me no matter what." He reported how he thought J.D. also liked him, because J.D. always wanted to be near him. One day

*Maria Olsen*  
Operator's Signature

12/06/04  
Date



when Matt's mother came to school to get him (because he did not feel well), J.D. was lying under his desk, and Matt said to her, "He likes, me mom, because he was lying underneath my desk when I was working!" Matt's mother felt that J.D. was able to teach him acceptance and how to be able to bond with another living being, which was something that was difficult for Matt to do. She also said that Matt had had some "hard lessons to learn" about friendships in their neighborhood, and the outcomes of the situations would have been a lot worse if he had not had the security of J.D.'s companionship to fall back on.

Matt's mother felt that the strong bond between her son and J.D. increased Matt's self-esteem significantly, which had an impact on his ability to socialize and maintain friendships. She made the following statement:

I think J.D. made him feel that somebody does love him and wants to be with him, that he was [is] important. Even though it was an animal [making him feel special], he [Matt] was important. I think that helped him now [during summer] with his [new] friendships with Isaac and Adam. I think it gave him the confidence to be okay as a friend and not to have to feel he has to fight for his position. That is where he has been with other friendships. He doesn't know. He thinks he has to have control and things need to go his way, but I don't see that [in his friendships] with Isaac and Adam. . . .

I asked Matt if J.D. helped him get along better with his classmates, and he answered, "Yeah, by sharing, sharing him with other people and that's helping me get along." On numerous occasions, Matt and other students were observed playing together with J.D. while engaged in laughter. At times, another student (named Emma) overstepped her boundaries by becoming possessive with J.D., and Matt calmly and politely said, "Emma, we were playing with him first." He was also gentle with his words when his classmates said or did something to J.D. that he did not like. For



example, one afternoon when J.D. was chewing on his leash, Jake called him a "bad boy." Matt said to Jake, "Don't call him a bad boy, because he is not." In addition, Matt encouraged his classmates to be respectful of J.D.'s needs when J.D. did not want to play the games they had selected for him; he said to them, "You should think about what the other person [J.D.] wants to do, not just you. Let the person [J.D.] choose."

In the summer when I interviewed Matt, he said that he missed J.D. a lot. Matt said he missed playing with him, taking him for walks, and J.D.'s constant following him. Matt thought that J.D. missed him, too. Matt also expressed his desire to have J.D. return to our classroom in the fall. I asked Matt if he would always remember J.D., and he said he would (especially with the pictures of them together that he had placed in his scrapbook). Matt's mother stated, "He will remember J.D. for the rest of his life. . . . He will remember every detail!"

J.D. was integrated into our classroom community at approximately the same time Matt was set to enter into his yearly emotional cycle, which was when Matt became very difficult to manage behaviorally. Matt's mother felt that while J.D. was in school, Matt's yearly cycle was not as intense as it had been in past years. She made the following comment:

A year ago at this time, I would have said that he is going to jail! ["This April and May have been better?" I asked] Oh by far! I'm very happy with where he is at. I just never thought he could get this far. It's been so much better this year. Maybe J.D. is helping. He is here at the prime time for Matt's needs. I think he has helped Matt more than what he will admit to us.

Matt's mother also stated that Matt had become more aware of his behaviors and how his behavior is the reason that he does not have any friends. She said, that as a mother, it

*Mavis Olsen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date

hurt her to see her child go through this but felt it was a good learning experience for him.

Matt said that managing his anger in school had been easier with J.D.'s help. He explained, "He comes up to me. He doesn't want me to get mad, so he helps me with my problems." On numerous occasions, I observed Matt using his coping strategies of self time-outs and self-talk, to try to prevent himself from entering into emotional crisis when he became angry or frustrated. During these times, Matt would sit and stare at J.D.; he said watching J.D. move, especially watching his tail move, helped calm him. The other teachers and I encouraged Matt to use J.D. as a calming tool whenever he felt his body becoming angry.

There were times when Matt needed to be excluded from classroom interactions for a time-out, because his behaviors were escalating to an inappropriate level. Matt said that when he was sitting in time-out, J.D. helped him calm down because J.D. would come over to him with his toys. Matt was allowed to play fetch with J.D., while sitting in time-out, because of his report on how watching J.D. move had a calming effect on his body. During an interview session with Matt, J.D. was cuddled up against his body sleeping, and then Matt looked at me with a smile on his face and said, "J.D. makes me feel good!"

Even though Matt and his mother spoke of the positive effects that J.D. had on helping Matt solve his problems, Matt still encountered situations and emotions that resulted in his entering emotional crisis; when these situations arose, Matt was placed in the quiet room. When Matt entered into crisis, he initially wanted (and needed) to be left alone to release his emotions in private. If teachers tried to begin the de-escalation



process, through the utilization of J.D., too early, Matt became quite defiant and made comments such as, "Dogs aren't suppose to be in school!" and "God that dog annoys me! Don't bring him back on Monday!" It is important to mention that after Matt regained emotional stability, he was asked if he meant the negative comments he had made about J.D., and he admitted that he had not meant them. Once Matt had enough time to release his emotions, the quiet room door would be opened, and J.D. would instantly run inside to him. Matt did not interact with J.D. verbally but rather nonverbally. He would let J.D. sniff or lick him; he would reach out and pet J.D., because he said he liked feeling J.D.'s curly fur, or he would just follow J.D.'s movements with his eyes. After Matt had some time with J.D., I would then begin to try and engage him in verbal exchanges by utilizing J.D. to make Matt laugh (with the intent of distracting him from his negative emotions and thoughts for a minimal amount of time). This strategy was a good precursor to an effective problem solving discussion, since Matt seemed to release his negative emotions through laughter. One example of how this strategy worked was on a day when I had walked into the quiet room to talk to Matt, and he turned his back on me and plugged his ears. I left the quiet room and returned with J.D. wrapped up in his blanket like a baby; I said, "Matt, look at my baby." He turned his head slightly to look at me out of the corner of his eye and instantly began to laugh when he saw how funny J.D. looked. Soon after, we were engaged in a problem solving discussion.

Each time Matt regained emotional stability and was able to reason and rationalize more clearly, he and I collaboratively completed a problem solving sheet that explained his problem, how he used J.D. to calm down and solve his problem, and his plan for dealing with the same problem in the future. Matt's problem solving sheets



stated that J.D. helped calm him down by watching him move, petting him, and laughing at him. I asked Matt during an interview session exactly what J.D. did that helped him calm down, and his answer was as follows:

He helps me by coming to me. He wants me to pet him. He knows when we are feeling mad and sad, so we can calm down. Hmmm, when I was out of the quiet room or time-out, he brings the ball to me to play fetch. He can sense if I'm still mad, and he wants me to get calmed down. Dogs just know when we're happy, sad, or mad. They just look at you.

Prior to J.D. entering the classroom, Matt had demonstrated physical aggression when in crisis. However, during the time that J.D. was in our classroom, Matt's physical encounters with J.D., during his times of emotional crisis, were always gentle and appropriate. Matt said that something inside his body held him back from hurting J.D., because he liked him and did not want to lose his time with him. In addition, Matt was physically aggressive toward teachers on only one occasion during the time that J.D. was a member of our classroom. In previous years, during the months of March through May when Matt entered into his emotional cycle, he had been physically aggressive toward the teachers daily.

Matt said, "I'm learning to control it [anger] by my mistakes." I asked him if J.D. was helping him, and he answered, "Yup!" He said that he wanted J.D. to return to our classroom the following year, because he felt that there were other students in the school district with emotional problems who J.D. could also help. Matt explained, "He could like teach them to be good like he is teaching me, because I would just tell them that, 'He knows when you are mad or sad or something and brings us toys. He teaches us how to control our anger.'"

## Molly

Molly was a Caucasian fifth-grade girl who had grown into a beautiful young lady with long brown hair, delicate skin, and an eye-catching smile. When she first transitioned into my classroom as a kindergartner, she was short in stature and slightly overweight. When Molly was younger, communicating with her was a very difficult task, because her expressive language skills were delayed. She articulated individual sounds correctly, but her speech was repetitive and fragmented. When Molly spoke to teachers and peers, she called them "honey" rather than using their names; she used a very rapid rate of speech, and she had a very distinctive voice tone. Her language delay, along with her demonstration of unappealing behaviors, impeded her socialization with peers; however, Molly did not seem bothered by her lack of peer interaction, since she would isolate herself from them by entering her own world of play.

As a fifth-grader, Molly's diagnoses included Asperger's Syndrome and Bipolar Disorder. Molly's expressive language skills had improved significantly; as a result, teachers were able to engage in conversations with her. Her rate of speech was still rapid, and she had a tendency to turn her declarative sentences into questions by ending them with the word "right?" She seemed more comfortable conversing with teachers than with other students. Molly continued to isolate herself from her same-age peers but engaged in play with younger students who would play dolls with her. Her mother stated that Molly was very immature for her age.

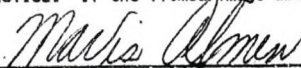
Overall, the behaviors that Molly displayed in the school setting were appropriate. She appeared able to monitor her emotions and implement self-management strategies when she felt her behaviors were escalating. However, when Molly would enter into a

manic or depressive cycle, attributable to her Bipolar Disorder, her abilities to clearly reason and rationalize the outcomes of situations became skewed. When she was in depressive cycles, she admitted to having suicidal thoughts; when she was in manic cycles, she had a tremendous amount of negative energy that disrupted her learning, as well as others' learning, by her excessive moving, talking, and laughing.

Academically, Molly was performing on grade level. She was a very concrete thinker; figurative language was beyond her comprehension. Science and math were more of a challenge for her because of the abstract concepts associated with these subjects. Molly was hesitant to read chapter books, even though she possessed the reading skills, because they did not contain the colorful illustrations of lower level books. Molly was very procedural and had strong organizational skills; she put forth effort and worked toward completing all of her assignments.

#### *Data*

When Molly arrived at school each morning, she walked directly to our classroom to see J.D. When she entered our classroom, Molly would position herself on the floor right next to J.D. and begin to pet him. After she had ample time with him, I would direct her to the two places (the library or outside) where fifth-graders were permitted to be in the mornings until the first bell rang. Molly would exhaust herself in trying to convince me to let her stay with J.D. Toward the end of the 8 weeks that J.D. was in our classroom, I did permit Molly to interact with J.D. until the bell rang. She was very appreciative of this; when told for the first time she could stay until the bell rang, she embraced J.D. and me in a big hug!

  
Operator's Signature

12/06/04  
Date



Molly liked to spend her one-on-one sessions with J.D. taking him on walks. She said taking him on walks was fun, especially when J.D. walked in puddles and left paw prints on the sidewalks; she thought they looked very cute! Another thing that Molly liked to do on her walks with J.D. was to invite a certain fifth-grade boy to join her. Luckily for her, this boy always accepted her offer! What was interesting about Molly and this boy was that they both were diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome and had difficulties socializing with their same-age peers. However, during their walks, they were observed smiling and engaging in small talk about J.D. One day while they were walking, J.D. lifted his leg and went to the bathroom. The boy said, "He's a *male!*" and Molly said, "Where's the *mail?*" The boy just laughed and replied, "Ah, never mind!"

Molly said she also liked to play with J.D. during her sessions with him. She said the best time of the day for her was when she was able to play with J.D. While Molly was engaged in play with J.D., she did not talk to him but rather about him. She would laugh continuously at J.D.'s actions and say, "J.D. is funny, right?" When Molly was asked what she found to be the funniest thing about J.D., she answered, "When he wags his tail and shakes his booty!" Molly would also ask a variety of questions about J.D., such as, "Does J.D. have tonsils?" and "Would J.D. fight another dog?"

Molly was very protective of J.D., in fact, she called herself J.D.'s "fake mother." When he was born, J.D. had an abnormal hip, and he needed to have surgery to remove the hip bone. He recovered fully from the surgery and had no barriers to his physical movement. Molly was quite concerned about his hip and was even reluctant to hold him at first, for fear of causing him pain. She even told others that they needed to be careful when holding him because he had a painful hip. Molly also did not like it when other

students yelled, because she thought that loud noises hurt J.D.'s ears and scared him; therefore, she would cover his ears when she thought someone was being too loud. However, on the first day that J.D. was in our classroom, I accidentally stepped on his paw; this caused him to cry loudly and run to Mrs. H. (his owner). Molly laughed and said, "That noise was funny!" Another student said, "I don't think it is funny." and the other students agreed. During an interview, I asked Molly how she felt when J.D. cried; she said she felt sad but found his crying noise to be annoying, since she thought it sounded weird.

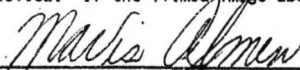
Throughout the duration of time that J.D. was a member of our classroom community, Molly's opportunities for socializing with other students increased. She would engage with other students in acts of play with J.D. and was respectful of other students' turns. Molly even took J.D. into the kindergarten classroom and spoke to the entire class about what it was like to have a dog in school. Public speaking was very difficult for her, but with several rehearsals and an abundance of encouragement, Molly succeeded. Later, she expressed how pleased she was with her performance!

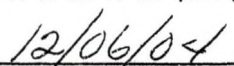
Molly seemed to have grown attached to J.D. during the 8 weeks that he was in our classroom. When he was gone from our classroom for 3 days, she said that she felt mad and disappointed, because she did not get to spend time with him. When Molly and I discussed her transition into middle school, she said, "I don't want to leave J.D. I want to stay with him. It's fun." Her mother reported that Molly had told her that she did not want to go to her new school if J.D. was not going to be there. When I asked Molly if she thought J.D. would miss her, her response to me was, "Yeah. He'll miss his fake

mother." Additionally, Molly felt that J.D. also liked her, because he would go in front of her and stare at her and would wiggle his head on her.

Molly's mother thought that J.D. and her daughter made good companions. She felt that J.D.'s love for her daughter was unconditional and that Molly knew she could count on him for emotional support. Her mother also stated that she felt J.D. taught Molly how to be openly affectionate toward another living thing, because she liked to take care of him. In conjunction with Molly's affection toward J.D., her mother explained how Molly became more affectionate in the home setting (e.g., hugging her parents, cuddling with her parents). Molly's mother said, "For 9 years I did not see a lot of affection. She would not give it out. She still won't say, 'I love you,' but you know, to see her be affectionate with J.D. . . ."

Molly said that J.D. helped her make better choices, which helped keep her body calm and prevented her from having to go into the quiet room. She explained, "I don't want to scare him. . . . he's scared, because he doesn't like yelling and kicking. There is no way I ever will . . . because I don't go into the quiet room." Molly added that she never wanted J.D. to see her in the quiet room, because then he would be scared of her and not forgive her. Molly described how J.D. helped her solve her problems by the way he looked, felt, and acted. She also said that when she made good choices, it made J.D. feel better. Molly's mother stated that one advantage of having J.D. in our classroom was the calming effect that he had on her daughter. She said Molly was motivated to earn her time with J.D. and how she was going to have a discussion with her husband about getting a dog for the home setting!

  
Operator's Signature

  
Date



One day, Molly was in the general education classroom and needed to be removed for a time-out, since she had made comments that were quite bizarre and inappropriate. She walked into our classroom and did her 5 minute time-out appropriately. Next, Molly and I engaged in a discussion about the problem in her general education classroom, but she could not think of a plan to fix the problem. I asked her if she thought that J.D. could help her solve her problem by taking him into the quiet room and talking to him. She answered, "No, because I'm scared I'll hurt him. I might get frustrated and just hurt him." I told Molly how impressed I was with her honesty and self-control. She then broke into tears, and said she could not understand why she found "saying stupid things kinda fun." I knew there was more to Molly's tears than just the inappropriate comments that she made, so I gave her a hug and asked her to tell me what else was bothering her. Molly continued to cry and explained how she had watched a television program about war and was concerned about babies and animals dying in the current war over in Iraq. While we were discussing war, J.D. had come over to Molly. I once again asked her if she thought J.D. could help her, and she said, "Yeah, by laughing and looking at his cute face." It is important to mention that Molly had a history of hurting only herself when she became frustrated, not people or animals.

On another day, Molly entered emotional crisis after cycling into a manic mood (characteristic of her diagnosed Bipolar Disorder). During this time, she refused to complete her work, wrote mean things about herself on her papers, and bit her pencil into two pieces. Molly's behaviors continued to escalate until she needed to be removed to the quiet room. J.D. followed her into the quiet room, and she petted him and then began

to play with him until he stopped and began chewing on his paw. Molly and I engaged in the following conversation:

"Why does J.D. hurt himself?" Molly asked.

"Why do you?" I replied.

"Because I don't like myself. J.D. should like himself. I don't care about myself. I only care about J.D. and my family. Do you think J.D. hurt himself because he saw me?" asked Molly.

"Maybe." I answered.

As Molly and I were completing her problem solving sheet, she said that J.D. had helped her calm down by being able to play with him, because it was funny. She did say that the next time she had a problem, she should just play with J.D. to be more successful.

Molly said that J.D. just made her feel happier inside, and if new students came into our classroom, she would tell them that J.D. could help make them feel good; he can help them make better choices. Molly's mother reported that Molly had commented on how school was so much better with J.D. being there and how she enjoyed going each day. Her mother also stated that Molly would come home and talk about J.D., whereas before, she would not talk about her time in school. I asked Molly if she thought dogs were good for kids, and she said, "Yeah, because they are smart and stuff. They know how to take care of them [kids]. He's funny, too, makes kids laugh!"

## CHAPTER V

### INTERPRETATIVE COMMENTARY: CATEGORIES, THEMES, AND ASSERTIONS

According to Stainback and Stainback (1988), interpretative commentary involves reporting the meaning of the data through the researcher's analyses and interpretations. In Chapter V, I present the categories, themes, and assertions that emerged from my data. Included in this chapter are three major categories and five themes, as well as a discussion for each theme. To conclude the chapter, I report my four assertions.

The data that is reported in this chapter is based on student and parent interviews with reference to observational data. As I report on each of the five themes, supporting data (which consists primarily of transcriptions from the interviews) are provided for all six of the students who participated in the study.

During the open coding process, three major categories emerged from the data. I have labeled these categories: (a) Foundations for Emotional Stability, (b) Tools for Behavior Management, and (c) Opportunities for Learning. I discuss the three categories and the subsequent themes that developed within each category in this chapter.

#### Foundations for Emotional Stability

The first category is J.D.'s contribution to the creation of a classroom environment that appeared to have affected students' attitudes and fulfilled their need for companionship. Under this category, two themes developed:



1. Students had positive attitudes toward school and J.D.
2. Students found companionship with J.D.

*Theme One:  
Students had Positive Attitudes Toward School and J.D.*

The research data revealed that students' attitudes toward school were positive during the 8 weeks that J.D. was a member of our classroom community. The data also indicated that students liked having J.D. in our classroom.

When Jake was asked if he liked coming to school each day, he answered, "Yeah, because then I can play with J.D." When asked if he liked having J.D. in our classroom, he said, "Yeah, playing with him. Play fetch. Play with his string. Petting him." Jake's foster mother said, "Jake did not resist coming to school. He would talk about being able to walk J.D. He talked about doing stuff with J.D. a lot." His foster mother also said that having J.D. in our classroom was a very good idea, because it was something that Jake looked forward to and made him want to go to school.

Ben admitted that he liked coming to school each day "because it's fun," and the best time for him was when J.D. played with him. He said that he wanted J.D. to be in our classroom the following year because he was fun. He also said that he felt J.D. liked being in our classroom, stating, "He likes being around people." Ben's foster mother was asked if she observed changes in Ben's attitude toward school, and she explained:

Well, we have noticed that, too, and we think maybe this is a time thing that he is finally just accepting. We never really considered that [J.D. being in school]. We thought it was something that he was getting used to finally. Remember at the beginning how he would say he hated school. We have not heard that out of his mouth for so long. The other thing we have noticed, too, is on Sunday nights he would be like, "Oh, tomorrow is school," and now he is like, "Yay, tomorrow is school!" He is more positive, and we tell him that. . . .

His foster mother also mentioned the following: "He usually always mentions the dog. When we talk about school, he always talks about J.D."

Emma made the following comment about J.D. being in school: "It's better, because I always wanted a dog in the classroom. Pretty fun!" She said that she did not like her previous school, because they did not have a dog for a pet, but if they would have had a dog, she would have liked it better! When I asked her what she liked about J.D., she said, "That he loves playing fetch with us. . . . He is a really cute dog. I think he likes to be in our classroom. . . . Emma stated that she wanted J.D. to stay in her classroom until she went to a new classroom when she got to be in fourth-grade. When I asked her if she would change anything about J.D. being in our classroom, she replied, "Have him for the rest of the months instead of going home." I questioned Emma's mother about her attitude toward school, and she answered, "She has never resisted coming to school. This school has always been a good experience for her, so she has been happy."

Abby said, "It's cool that we could have J.D. in our classroom. . . ." She said that she liked how J.D. played fetch with her and the other kids. During one interview session with Abby, I asked her if she liked coming to school each day, and she answered, "No, school is boring. It's still boring [with J.D.], because you still have to do your work." It is important to mention that during this interview, Abby was sick and left school early. However, when I asked her if she wanted J.D. to be part of our classroom again the following year, she replied, "Yes. It would be a long break for him, and we would probably miss him." Abby's mother made the following comment about Abby's attitude toward school:

*Maria [Signature]*

*12/16/12*

She is excited to come to school. Where before, she was kinda crabby to come to school. I don't really get that crabbiness anymore. . . . She's been excited to get up and go now. Before we were always crabbing and grumbling at each other. I think it has made a difference.

Abby's mother also stated how Abby had been sick on one of the days when J.D. had been in our classroom, but she had refused to stay home; she wanted to go to school and see J.D.

Matt said that he liked having J.D. in our classroom, stating, "I like playing with him in the class. I like tug-o-war the most. I like pulling on the string a lot." He said his best experience with J.D. was when he came to our classroom. Matt's mother made the following comment about Matt's attitude toward coming to school: "I don't know if it changed for him, but it made it more exciting for him. . . . I think J.D. made a difference." His mother explained how before J.D. came to our classroom, she never had a problem with Matt not wanting to come to school, but she had a problem with him not wanting to get on the bus. She said that once J.D. started coming to school, she did not have the battle of trying to get him on the bus each morning. In addition, Matt's mother stated, "I think he really likes J.D. He loves animals! I think he really likes having him in the classroom for him to pet."

When Molly was asked if she liked coming to school each day, she made the following statement: "Yeah, because of J.D. Because school is better. Because it is away from my brother and with J.D." When I questioned her about what she liked about J.D., she replied, "He plays with me. He barks, and I like it. He is fun to play with, and I get to take him out for walks." Molly also said that dogs were good for kids for the following reasons: "They are smart and stuff. . . . He's [J.D.] funny, too, makes kids



laugh." In response to a questions about Molly's attitude, her mother reported, "She came home and said, 'He [J.D.] makes school so much better. And I like going because J.D. is there.'" Her mother also stated, "I'm for it [having J.D. in the classroom] because of the effects it has on Molly you know. She enjoyed coming to school. She looked forward to her one-on-one time with J.D. She seemed to be calmer. It was just so motivating for her." Additionally, Molly's mother explained how Molly came home happier when J.D. was in school, and when she was asked how school went, Molly would say, "Great!"

The first theme that emerged from the data, suggested that all the students' attitudes toward school and J.D. were positive, which is an area that may significantly impact students' emotional stability in the school setting. Embedded throughout the data were statements made by the students, and their parents, expressing how excited they were to come to school each day to see J.D., as well as how "happy" they all felt when they saw how excited J.D. was when he saw each of them every morning. Every student reported how J.D. made them laugh and how he was a lot of fun to have in the classroom! As stated in their interviews, the students were all very happy when J.D. came to their classroom, and they felt that school would be better if J.D. could return the following school year.

*Theme Two:  
Students Found Companionship with J.D.*

The data from the study revealed that the students found companionship with J.D. The students formed apparent friendships with J.D. that evolved from their daily interactions with each other, which encompassed a great deal of play and laughter. These

*Maria Olsen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date

interactions appeared to create bonds between the students and J.D. that were seemingly built on a foundation of acceptance and love for each other.

Jake thought that J.D. made a good friend, because J.D. played with him. He also stated, "He be nice. Being a nice friend." He said that he could tell J.D. liked him, too, because J.D. played with him, and if J.D. could talk, he would say, "Hi! I want to play with you." Jake's foster mother noticed an increase in Jake's ability to bond, which she felt was a combination of J.D. being in the classroom and of his being placed into foster care. When I asked his foster mother what she thought when she heard the words, "Jake, J.D., and emotions," she answered with the word, "love."

Ben said that J.D. made a good friend, and he thought dogs made better friends than humans. When he was asked if he thought J.D. liked him, he answered, "Yes, um, I tell him "sit" sometimes and he does." When Ben was asked if he thought J.D. was able to forgive students who yelled at or hurt him, he replied, "I think he would still be their friend." Ben also said that he felt J.D. listened to him when he talked, because J.D. stayed right by him. Ben's foster mother said that she had noticed changes in Ben's ability to bond, which was significant with his Reactive Attachment Disorder. She explained how Ben used to just "cringe" if you touched him, but after getting to know J.D., Ben began to sit next to them [Ben's foster family] and to accept their hugs. Ben's foster mother also noticed an increase in his self-esteem. She made the following statement:

J.D. is somebody he can talk to. He says, "I can talk to him. I can read to him. I've never read to him, but if I want to I can." It's almost like it is a very intimate thing between him and the dog. It is very, very special what he has with J.D.

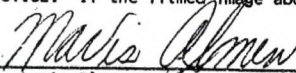
Emma said that J.D. made a good friend because he was fun to play with in school, and she felt he listened to her when she talked to him because "his ears go up." Emma explained how J.D. knew what she was feeling, because he would come toward her and let her pet him. I asked her if she thought J.D. liked her, too, and she said, "Yes, by the looks, his cute smile, and the cute licks he has." Emma said that she felt safe in our classroom because "he [J.D.] keeps us company." When I asked Emma's mother what she thought Emma liked the most about J.D., she stated, "I am suspecting that she likes the companionship and the attention. She is always seeking attention and wants attention." Her mother was asked if she felt Emma had made any gains while J.D. was in our classroom, and she made the following statement: "She is able to have a relationship. Period. And that is not easy for her to do." Because Emma was diagnosed with Reactive Attachment Disorder, I asked her mother if she noticed any change with regard to Emma being able to bond, and she stated:

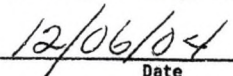
She has been much sweeter to me, which is a lot. She will hold my hand voluntarily. Those are firsts, and they are big, a big change. I like how things are going between us.

The final interview question I asked Emma's mother was what her overall thoughts were about J.D. being placed in her daughter's classroom, and she gave the following response:

I think it is useful. I think it provides something for kids, for Emma. It is a different way to interact. It is not just papers, not just authority figures; it is something she can relate to. A living thing that is not threatening to her. I am guessing that most of the kids are threatening to her in a way. So that is about the only living thing in that environment that isn't.

I asked Abby if she thought that J.D. made a good friend, and she said, "Yes, because he listens when you talk. He looks at you or his ears go up a little." When asked

  
Operator's Signature

  
Date



if she felt she could talk to J.D., she replied, "Yes. Well, he can't understand, but it feels like it." On one occasion, Abby was observed telling J.D. about a fight that her mother and her mother's boyfriend had one night, and she later explained to me how telling J.D. about her problem made her feel better. Abby said that J.D. knew what she was feeling, because he would come running up to her to let her pet him, and she stated that if J.D. could talk, he would tell her about his feelings. Abby said that she wanted to take J.D. home and do the following with him: "I would feed him, play with him, and show him to my friends. I would watch T.V. with him and sleep with him. . . ." She commented on how she wished J.D. could live with her. When I asked Abby's mother what she thought her daughter liked the most about J.D., she replied, "The companionship. He is there, and she can reach over and just pet him or hug him. . . ." Her mother explained how when J.D. was not in school, Abby really missed him and complained everyday when he was not there.

The following was a statement that Matt made about why he thought J.D. made a good friend: ". . . because he wants to play with me. Dog friends are nicer than human friends, because they play with me more." During an interview session, J.D. was cuddled up to Matt's leg sleeping, and Matt said, "J.D. makes me feel good. I'm his friend." Since Matt had displayed inappropriate behaviors (e.g., yelling) in the presence of J.D., I asked him if he thought J.D. was able to forgive students who yelled at him, and he stated, "Yeah, because whenever I yell in the quiet room, he still plays with me at my time with him. So I know he forgives me. . . . Dog friends forgive better, because humans don't really like forgiving people." Matt said that when he was not around J.D., he still thought about him; and when J.D. was not in school, Matt felt sorry for J.D.,

because J.D. did not have anyone to play with him. When I asked Matt's mother what she thought J.D. had taught her son, she simply answered, "Acceptance." Matt had made a similar comment about J.D. when he said, "He accepts me no matter what." His mother also said that J.D. gave Matt a "big boost in his self esteem." She explained:

. . . I think J.D. made him feel that, "Somebody does love me," and wants him, that he was important. Even though it was an animal, he was important. . . . I think it gave him the confidence to be okay as a friend, and not to feel he has to fight for his position. . . .

I asked Matt's mother what her comment would be to school administrators if they asked her to express her opinion about having J.D. in the school setting. She gave the following comment:

. . . I think he [J.D.] is somebody that the students love and can show affection to. I know for Matt that it is hard for him, a lot of the times, to be able to bond with somebody. . . . I think at times, he just really needs to get that out, and I think J.D. let him.

Molly thought that if J.D. could have talked to her, he would have said, "Hello. I want to play with you!" She stated that J.D. was a good friend to her because "he's fun to play with; he doesn't bite anybody." Molly felt that J.D. liked her as well since "he comes in front of me and stares at me and wiggles his head on me." Molly explained how she wished she could keep J.D. in her classroom for the rest of her life, because she was really going to miss J.D. when she left to go to her new school; she explained how J.D. was going to miss her, too, because she was his "fake mother." She asked to have J.D.'s paw prints set in a mold so she could "set it in a glass shelf with a glass door" and keep them forever. Molly's mother stated how Molly would always remember how much she loved J.D., because J.D.'s love for her daughter was unconditional.

According to the interviews, each of the six students felt that J.D. was a good friend to them, and their favorite part of the school day was when they got to play with him. All the students thought that J.D. liked them as much as they did him, and three of the students even stated that J.D. made a better friend than human friends. All six students felt that J.D. could recognize and understand their feelings, and they all stated that J.D. had feelings, too. When J.D. was gone from our classroom for 3 days, all of the students reported that they missed him, and they felt that J.D. missed them as well. I gave each of the students this sentence starter, "I would hate to lose . . .," and they all finished the sentence with the word, "J.D."

#### Tools for Behavior Management

Category two is related to students use of J.D. as a tool to assist in the management of their behaviors. Two themes emerged from this category:

1. Students used J.D. to remain in control of their emotions and behaviors and to prevent themselves from entering into emotional crisis.
2. Students used J.D. as a de-escalation tool to calm their minds and bodies when they did enter into emotional crisis.

#### *Theme One:*

#### *Students Used J.D. to Remain in Control of Their Emotions and Behaviors and to Prevent Themselves from Entering into Emotional Crisis*

Data from the study revealed that students used J.D. as a coping tool to assist them in controlling their emotions and behaviors; therefore, he prevented them from entering into emotional crisis. Data also indicated, that J.D. had a calming effect on all of the students but in very diverse ways.



Jake and I were reading a book about how dogs help kids, and I asked Jake if J.D. helped him. He replied, "Like he can make me have better choices. Not hitting my friends." When I asked Jake how J.D. helped him make better choices, he answered, "Playing with him. Makes me happy. Makes me feel better." In a separate interview, he said that he always felt good when J.D. helped him not make bad choices. Jake's foster mother made the following statement about the advantages of J.D. being in our classroom: "A good sidetrack from when he gets angry and stuff like that. It puts his mind in a better spot than the anger, on the dog instead." Jake never went into emotional crisis throughout the entire time that J.D. was in our classroom.

Ben said that J.D. helped calm him down, which "helped me not go in the quiet room." When I asked Ben what J.D. did that prevented him from having to go into the quiet room, he answered, "Jumping on my knee and petting him." Ben's foster mother made the following comment about J.D. being a preventative tool for Ben: "It took Ben away from the homework and studying thing. It was more relaxing for him; he was able to be himself more. Being with J.D. was a motivator for Ben." His foster mother also stated how she thought J.D. was very therapeutic for Ben because of the calming effect that he had on Ben.

Emma said, "J.D. helps me keep my engine running just right." which I interpreted to mean that J.D. helped her stay calm and make good choices. Emma stated how J.D. even helped her make good choices when he was not with her, because she would think about playing with him; this made her feel happy. When I asked Emma what it was about J.D. that helped keep her "engine running just right," she explained, "He licks me." She said that when J.D. would lick her, she knew that he understood her

feelings. Emma also said that J.D. was very good at "getting people out of trouble," because he would go up to them to calm them down. Emma's mother made the following comment on why she thought J.D. was good for her daughter and why dogs are good for kids in general:

I think pets are good for kids, whatever pet they most gravitate to. They just need an ear to listen to them when they are upset, mad, and angry. It doesn't have to be an authority figure or a competitive sibling; it can just be an animal that loves them.

Her mother also said that the violent behaviors Emma displayed in the home setting were not seen in the school setting.

Abby said that she really liked having J.D. in school, because when she was about to have a bad day, she would spend a few minutes with him to help calm her down by petting him and holding him. Abby also said that when she had to go to time-out, J.D. prevented her from having to go into the quiet room because she was able to pet him. Abby's mother said, "He makes her feel good. He makes her happy." Her mother believed that dogs do a lot for people's social and emotional feelings. Abby remained in control of her emotions and behaviors during the entire time that J.D. was part of our classroom; as a result, she never entered into an emotional crisis.

Matt stated how school had been easier since J.D. started coming to school, he explained, "He comes up to me. He doesn't want me to get mad, so he helps me with my problems." I asked Matt how J.D. helped him with his problems, and he said, "When J.D. brings his toys to me in time-out." He also said that watching J.D. move (especially when J.D. threw his toys in the air) made him feel happy, which calmed him down and prevented him from having to go into the quiet room. Matt's mother said that Matt



became more aware of his behaviors and the impact that they had on others. She made the following comment about Matt's disorder that caused him to enter into a cycle of violent behaviors at the end of each school year:

A year ago at this time, I would have said that he is going to jail! ["This April and May have been better?" I asked.] Oh by far! I'm very happy with where he is at. I just never thought he could get this far. It's been so much better this year. Maybe J.D. is helping. He is here at the prime time for Matt's needs. I think he has helped Matt more than what he will admit to us.

Molly stated that J.D. made her feel happier inside because "J.D.'s funny and fun to play with." Molly's mother said that she noticed a reduction in her daughter's anxiety level toward school. Molly said that she had to make good choices in school, because she never wanted J.D. to see her make bad choices, since her bad choices would make him scared of her. She explained, "I don't want to scare him. . . . He's scared, because he doesn't like yelling or kicking. There is no way I ever will, because I don't go into the quiet room." I asked Molly how J.D. helped her solve her problems, and she replied, "He just does. The way he looks and feels. I don't want to make him scared of anything." Molly also said that J.D. prevented her from having to go into the quiet room, because then she would miss her one-on-one time with him. Molly's mother made the following comment about how J.D. was a preventative tool for Molly: "She seemed to be calmer. He was just so motivating for her."

Based on their interviews, all of the students said that J.D. made them feel good, and that he helped them with their problems; he helped them to avoid making bad choices. Students also reported that when they were able to play with J.D., watch J.D.'s movements, or have physical contact with him (e.g., petting, holding), they entered into a calmer state of mind and body, especially when they were sitting in time-out. In addition,



three of the students explained how J.D. also helped them make better choices when they were not in his company. These three students said that when they were having difficulties, usually in the home and general education settings, they thought about playing with J.D. and began to feel better

*Theme Two:  
Students Used J.D. as a De-escalation Tool to Calm Their Minds and Bodies  
When They Did Enter Into Emotional Crisis*

The research data revealed that students used J.D.'s companionship as a tool for de-escalation when they entered into emotional crisis. The students used J.D. in a variety of ways to calm their minds and bodies.

Ben entered into emotional crisis on only one occasion throughout the entire 8 weeks that J.D. was in our classroom. According to Ben's foster mother, this was a significant change from the number of times Ben would enter emotional crisis before J.D. joined our classroom. On the one occasion when Ben did enter an emotional crisis, as explained in Chapter IV, he entered his crisis during gym class. Ben initially refused to talk to J.D. about his problem. He had escalated to a level in which he was unable to express himself verbally; instead, Ben expressed himself in a physical manner. As another teacher and I began to de-escalate Ben's behaviors, by simply holding him and telling him he was safe, J.D. also joined us in this process. Ben began to visually track J.D.'s movements and eventually began to pet him; no words were spoken. J.D. rolled onto his back, and Ben then petted his stomach. Once Ben had regained control of his emotions and behaviors, I asked him if petting J.D. helped him, and he answered, "By relaxing me." During an interview, Ben said that when people get angry, they should just let J.D. calm them down. Ben's foster mother asked him how he felt when he got angry

and talked to J.D., and his answer to her was as follows: "It makes me forget about being angry." His foster mother also said that Ben had told her how he can go and talk to J.D. when there is something bothering him at school. "There is something about pets that just calms people I think." she stated.

Emma entered into emotional crisis on two occasions while J.D. was a member of our classroom community. One time was during writing class when she had major difficulties following directions; the other time was during Emma's free time when another student had told her that she was being selfish with J.D., so she got mad and kicked this other student. During both episodes of emotional crisis, Emma was crying, yelling, and kicking at the quiet room door; however, these behaviors stopped the moment that J.D. was brought into the quiet room to assist in Emma's de-escalation. She immediately gravitated towards him and began to pet him. As she petted him, she did not speak, but the hardened, angry look on her face appeared to soften; eventually, J.D. was placed into her arms for her to hold. Emma continued to pet him until he began to give her "puppy kisses" (i.e., licks), which seemed to offer her a release of emotion through laughter. It was at that moment that teachers engaged Emma in a discussion about her crisis. When Emma was asked if J.D. helped calm her down while she was in the quiet room, she said that J.D. had helped her by being able to pet him and by his licking her; she explained, "My body feels more happy." Emma's mother made the following statement about Emma and her emotions:

. . . I think she got some really good emotional practice. . . . I am grateful, because she learned something she couldn't have in another situation had she not had the opportunity.



Both Matt and his mother spoke of the positive effects that J.D. had on helping him solve his problems; however, in spite of J.D.'s presence, Matt still encountered situations or emotions that resulted in his entering emotional crisis and needing to be placed into the quiet room. When Matt entered into a crisis, he initially wanted and needed to be left alone to release his emotions in private. If teachers tried to begin the de-escalation process too early, even when J.D. was present, Matt became quite defiant. If J.D. was present, Matt would make comments such as, "Dogs aren't suppose to be in school!" and "God, that dog annoys me! Don't bring him back on Monday!" It is important to mention that after Matt had recovered from an emotional crisis and was asked if he meant the negative comments that he had made about J.D., he would admit that he had not meant them, because he was letting his anger control him.

As described in Chapter IV, once Matt had some time alone, a teacher would open the quiet room door, and J.D. would run inside. Matt would not interact with J.D. verbally, but he would let J.D. sniff or lick him and would then reach out and pet J.D.; Matt would also follow J.D.'s movements with his eyes. After allowing Matt and J.D. some time together, I would try to engage Matt in conversation while using J.D. to distract Matt and to make him laugh. I found this approach to be a good method of helping Matt release some of his negative emotions, since Matt often appeared to release negative emotions through laughter. As mentioned previously, one example of how I used this strategy is when I walked into the quiet room to talk to Matt, and he turned his back on me and plugged his ears. I took J.D. and left, only to return with J.D. wrapped up in his blanket like a baby. I said, "Matt, look at my baby." He turned his head slightly



to look at me out of the corner of his eye and instantly began to laugh when he saw how funny J.D. looked. Soon after, we were engaged in a problem solving discussion.

Each time Matt regained enough emotional stability to think and reason more clearly, he and I collaboratively completed a problem solving sheet that explained his problem; how he used J.D. to calm down and solve his problem, and his plan for dealing with the same problem in the future. Matt's problem solving sheets stated that J.D. helped calm him down by watching J.D.'s movements, by petting J.D., and by laughing at J.D. I asked Matt during an interview session exactly what J.D. did that helped him calm down, and his answer was as follows:

He helps me by coming to me. He wants me to pet him. He knows when we are feeling mad and sad, so we can calm down. Hmm, when I was out of the quiet room or time-out, he brings his ball to me to play fetch. He can sense if I'm still mad, and he wants me to get calmed down. Dogs just know when we're happy, sad, or mad. They just look at you.

Matt's mother made the following comment on why she thought Matt responded to J.D. in the manner in which he did:

I think it is the contact. Since he has been small, he responds to me rubbing his back. If I massage his shoulders a little bit, he will instantly relax. I think that comes with J.D., too. That when he feels that touch, he relaxes.

As described in Chapter IV, Molly entered into emotional crisis once while in a manic mood, best explained by her diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder. At this time, she refused to work; she wrote mean things about herself; and she bit her pencil in two. Molly's behaviors resulted in her removal to the quiet room. J.D. followed her into the quiet room, and Molly petted him and then began to play with him until he stopped and began to chew on his paw. Molly seemed be bothered by J.D. chewing on his paw and asked me the following questions:

Why does J.D. hurt himself? ["Why do you?"] Because I don't like myself. J.D. should like himself. I don't care about myself. I only care about J.D. and my family. Do you think J.D. hurt himself because he saw me? ["Maybe."]

In a minimal amount of time, Molly had regained control of her mind and body and was reintegrated into our classroom community. When Molly and I were completing her problem solving sheet, she said that J.D. had helped her calm down by being able to play with him, because he was funny. She did say that the next time she had a problem, she should just play with J.D. so she did not have to go into the quiet room. When I asked Molly's mother if she thought there were any advantages of having J.D. in our classroom, she replied, "For his calming effect on her."

According to the four students who entered into emotional crisis, they all found J.D. helpful as they worked through their anger and frustration. Three of the students reported how being able to laugh at J.D.'s silly dog behaviors made them feel better and were better able to open up to a teacher about their problems. Based on the data, all four students stated that petting and playing with J.D. was useful in helping them regain control of their minds and bodies; therefore, they were able to exit the quiet room and once again be included in their classroom community.

#### Opportunities for Learning

Category three is related to the learning opportunities J.D. provided to the students that were beyond their formal academic instruction. The lessons that J.D. taught the students appeared to be more social in nature; they were character building lessons that fostered growth in the areas of respect, responsibility, and empathy. The following theme emerged from the data: J.D. extended students' learning by fostering growth in respect, responsibility, and empathy.

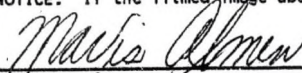


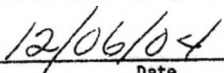
*Theme:*  
*J.D. Extended Students' Learning by Fostering Growth in Respect,  
Responsibility, and Empathy*

When I asked Jake what he learned from J.D., he said, "Nice to friends. Not hurt them." In a separate interview, he also said that he had learned how to "listen better." Jake frequently verbalized how much he missed his own mother. He was often seen sitting by J.D. and petting him when J.D. was at the door crying because his owner left the classroom. He would say, "He misses his mom." Jake admitted that petting J.D. made him feel better about missing his own mother. I asked Jake if he would take J.D. home if he was given the opportunity, and he answered, "No, because he's not my dog. Then he would miss his mom." A teachable moment arose when Jake was petting J.D. on his stomach and said, "That's nasty!" while pointing to J.D.'s penis. We had a discussion about how all male dogs and humans have a penis and how it is an important part of J.D.'s body.

When I asked Ben what he had learned from J.D., he replied, "To listen to the teachers." Ben also appeared to listen to J.D.'s body language when he did not want to participate in one of Ben's activities. He said, "I like J.D. I think he is a really smart dog. When J.D. does not want to play anymore, that is okay. He must be tired." Ben's foster mother made the following comment about the changes that she observed in her foster son:

I noticed that Ben is becoming more sensitive. He cries and is more remorseful about things he has done. Whereas before, he would say he did things because he felt like it. Now he will cry and say, "I know it was wrong." It seems like he is just so caring and more sensitive.

  
Operator's Signature

  
Date



Emma made the following statement about J.D. helping her: "I'm learning my lesson, by how to treat J.D., not to hurt dogs. He's a dog of ours, and we don't hurt animals." Although she had a past history of abusing her dog in the home setting, she was always observed interacting with J.D. in an appropriate manner. Emma also said that J.D. taught her how "to be more friendly to other kids and more nice and to not get mad at them." As recorded in the data, there was an observable change in Emma's willingness to share J.D. with her classmates. Emma's mother commented on how the social relationship information that Emma received from J.D. was of educational value, because "it matters what she did, if she was kind or unkind; she got a response back right away." Her mother also made the following statement:

Well they [dogs] react, interact, but they don't discipline. I think that is a good teaching tool, because you have to be kind or they will leave and they might not come back, and then you hear, "They don't like me anymore, because they won't come sit on my lap." It's the learning thing on how to accommodate another's needs, issues, desires, and that is a beginning point, I think, for empathy.

On numerous occasions, when students with autism visited our classroom to see J.D., Emma would assume the role of peer teacher. She would assist them in playing fetch and tug-o-war with J.D. and would encourage them to verbalize the word, "puppy." When I asked her what her thoughts were about helping the students with autism, she said, "Good!" and a big smile spread across her face.

Abby said she learned the following from J.D.: "Pay attention to the teachers and him. If you pay attention, you don't have to worry about getting frustrated with others." Based on the observational data, she also learned how to discipline J.D. effectively with the assistance of teachers. Initially, Abby did not appear to have control over J.D.'s behaviors while she was engaged with him in play. When J.D. began to chew and pull on

*Maria Olsen*  
Operator's Signature

12/06/04  
Date

items that were not his toys, she would simply say, "J.D.," rather than to firmly say, "No." As time progressed, Abby seemed to gain more confidence and offered J.D. praise when appropriate and discipline when necessary.

Matt made the following comment: "I'm learning to control my anger by my mistakes, and J.D. is helping me." He also said in a later interview that J.D. taught him how to share. Matt gave the following explanation on how J.D. taught him to share: "He taught me how to do what HE wants to do, not what I want to do." Matt's mother said that "education is more broad-based than just academics." His mother made the following statement about the advantages of J.D. being in our classroom: "The advantages, for all of the kids that were there, were having the contact with an animal to learn responsibility and respect for the animal."

When I asked Molly what she learned from J.D., she said, "How mean I was being in my first quiet room." She was referring to the time when she went into emotional crisis and needed to be placed into the quiet room. Molly appeared to be very concerned about J.D.'s needs. Since J.D. had a weakened hip bone, she was frequently observed reminding other students to be "careful of his hip." Molly also reminded students about J.D. not liking yelling or screaming when she thought their voice volumes needed to be lowered. Molly's mother thought that the most significant thing Molly learned from J.D. was how to be affectionate. Her mother stated, "Her seeing me come down the hallway [in school], and her saying, 'Hi mommy!' Little things like that I haven't gotten in years." Molly seemed to also become more affectionate toward her teachers, since she was often observed embracing them in hugs. In addition, she continuously requested to be in the company of another fifth-grade student when she took

Mattie Olsen  
Operator's Signature

12/06/04  
Date

J.D. on his afternoon walk. Prior to J.D. joining our classroom community, Molly's interactions with her same-age peers were minimal.

Observational and interview data, for all six of the students, documented how they learned respect, responsibility, and empathy through their relationships with J.D. The data includes:

1. Students' demonstrated responsibility by ensuring that J.D. was either hooked to his indoor or outdoor leash at all times to protect his safety.
2. Students were responsible at providing J.D. with fresh food and water each day.
3. Students were responsible at disciplining and praising J.D.'s behaviors.
4. Students were respectful of J.D. when they accidentally hurt him (e.g., bumping him, stepping on him) by telling him that they were sorry.
5. Students felt it was wrong to spank J.D. if he did something inappropriate.
6. Students felt it was acceptable for him to urinate and defecate in their presence.
7. Students acknowledged that J.D. had feelings similar to their own.
8. Students felt that J.D. helped them get along better with each other since they had to share him.

According to parent interviews, all six parents felt that the inclusion of J.D. into their children's classroom community was of educational value.



## Summary

Chapter V was an interpretative commentary of the findings from my study. Figure 1 (see page 127) is a visual representation of the three major categories, five themes, and four assertions that emerged from the data. In Chapter VI, I provide the reader a summary, conclusions, recommendations, and reflections related to this study

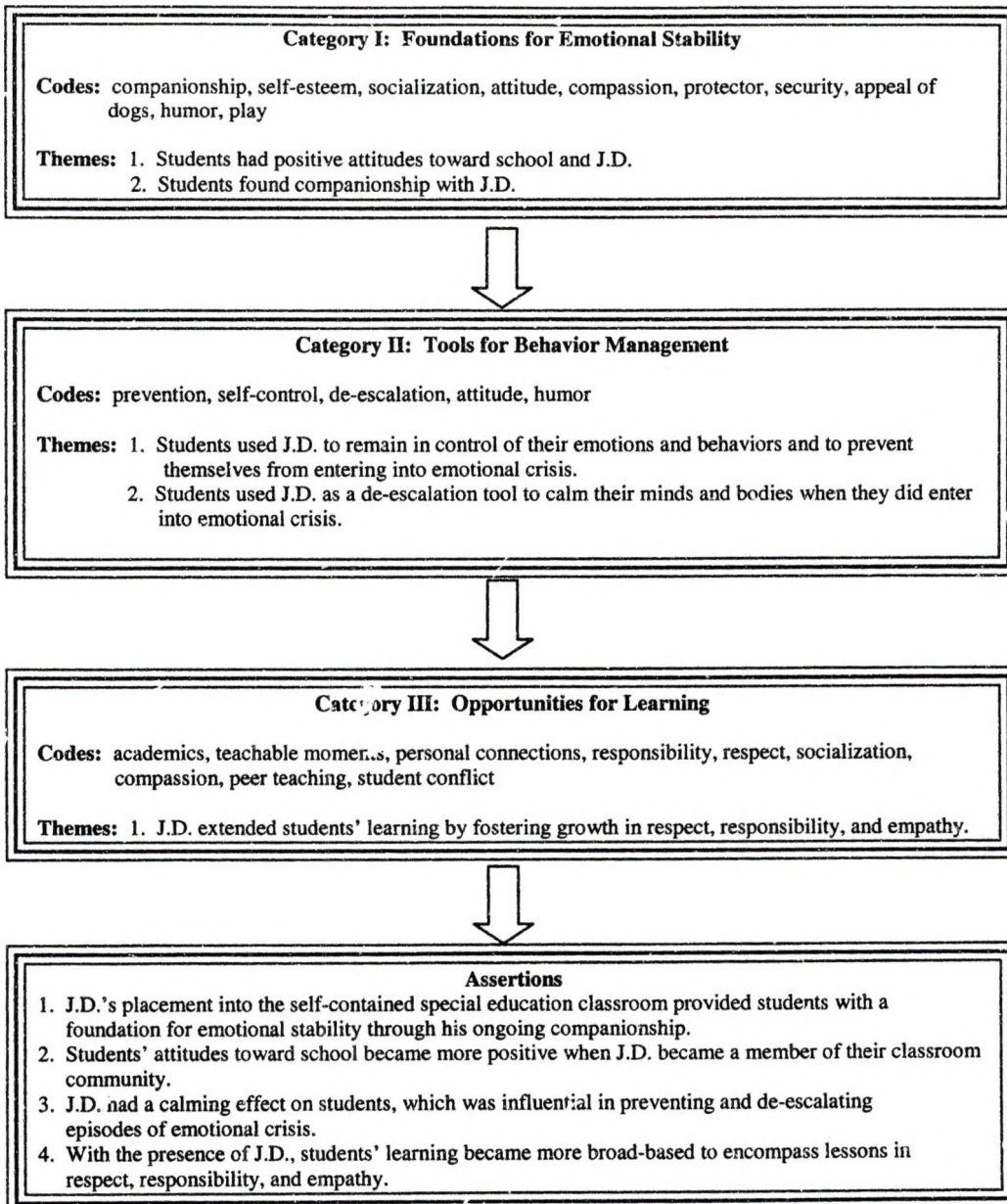


Figure 1. Interpretative Commentary.

*Maria Olsen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND REFLECTIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine whether having a dog as a member of a self-contained classroom for students diagnosed with severe emotional disorders held benefits for these students. This chapter includes a brief summary of the study, as well as conclusions and recommendations that I made based on my research findings and the research findings of others found in the literature. I conclude this chapter with a personal reflection that ties together my experiences as a teacher with my experiences as the researcher in this study.

#### Summary

#### *Methodology*

Because the study took place in a classroom and focused on social interactions, I felt that a qualitative design was appropriate. Qualitative methods were more suited for this study because of the relatively uncharted social circumstance, and these methods also provided descriptions of complex social realities (Mallon, 1994). The type of qualitative study that I conducted was a case study which is "an exploration of a 'bounded system' or a case over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context" (Creswell, 1998, p. 61). Since my research was conducted in a single program, Creswell would consider it a "within-site" case study.



### *Setting*

The actual study took place in a self-contained special education classroom for students diagnosed with severe emotional disorders for a duration of 8 weeks. Half of the students who were placed in the self-contained classroom transferred to this elementary school from their neighborhood schools, because their educational teams had exhausted all efforts to help them be successful academically, behaviorally, or both. In summary, this elementary school was considered a magnet school for severely emotionally disturbed students who were unable to be managed in their neighborhood schools and required a self-contained placement.

### *Participants*

The participants in this study were six students, three boys and three girls. All six students in the self-contained classroom were included in this study, because they each possessed unique emotional needs. The students' ages ranged from 6 to 11-years and were representative of the following racial groups: African-American, Native-American, Asian-American, Hispanic, and Caucasian. In addition, all of the students' mothers, or foster mothers, participated in the study by individually partaking in two interviews. The dog used in this study was a 2-year-old toy poodle named J.D.

### *Findings*

The broad question that guided my qualitative research study was as follows: What happens when a dog becomes a member of a self-contained classroom for students diagnosed with severe emotional disorders? As the study progressed, more specific questions emerged from the data that narrowed the scope of the investigation. These questions were as follows:

1. What effect did the dog's presence have on students' emotional stability?
  - a. In the prevention of emotional crisis?
  - b. In the de-escalation of emotional crisis?
2. What effect did the dog have on students' learning?

In Chapter IV, narrative descriptions were provided on each of the six students who participated in this study that described their interactions with the dog and reported their comments about the dog. In Chapter V, the observational and interview data was categorized and analyzed for patterns, which resulted in the emergence of three categories (foundations for emotional stability, tools for behavior management, and opportunities for learning) and five themes that developed within the categories (see page 127). In the next section of this chapter, I will present and discuss the findings (i.e., themes) of this study in relation to each of the research questions.

#### *Question 1a*

The first theme that emerged from the data suggested that students' attitudes toward school and J.D. were positive, which is an area that could significantly impact students' emotional stability in the school setting. Embedded throughout the data were statements made by students and their parents expressing how excited they were to come to school each day to see J.D. and how "happy" they all felt when they saw how excited J.D. became when he saw them each morning. All six students reported how J.D. made them laugh and how he was a lot of fun to have in the classroom. As expressed in their interviews, all six students were very happy when J.D. came to their classroom, and they all felt that school would be better if J.D. could return the following school year.

The second theme that was revealed from the data addressed another area of emotional stability for students, which was companionship. According to the interviews, all six students felt that J.D. was a good friend to them, and their favorite part of the school day was when they got to play with him. All of the students thought that J.D. liked them as much as they did him, and three of the students even stated that J.D. made a better friend than humans. All six students felt that J.D. could recognize and understand their feelings, and they also stated how J.D. had feelings similar to their own. When J.D. was gone from our classroom for 3 days, all of the students reported how they missed him and felt that J.D. missed them as well. I gave each of the students this sentence starter, "I would hate to lose . . .," and they all finished the sentence with the word, "J.D."

The third theme that emerged from the data suggested that students used J.D. to remain in control of their emotions and behaviors to prevent themselves from entering into emotional crisis. Based on their interviews, all of the students said that J.D. made them feel good, and that he helped them with their problems. As a result, he helped them to avoid making bad choices. Students also reported how when they were able to play with J.D., watch J.D.'s movements, or have physical contact with him, they entered into a calmer state of mind and body (especially when they were sitting in time-out). In addition, three of the students explained how J.D. helped them make better choices even when they were not in his company. These three students said that when they were having difficulties, usually in the home and general education settings, they thought about playing with J.D. and began to feel better.



*Question 1b*

The fourth theme that emerged from the data indicated that students used J.D. as a de-escalation tool to calm their minds and bodies when they did enter into emotional crisis. According to the four students who entered into emotional crisis, they all found J.D. helpful as they worked through their anger and frustration. Three of the students reported how being able to laugh at J.D.'s silly dog behaviors made them feel better and how they were then able open up to teachers about their problems. All four students stated that petting and playing with J.D. was useful in helping them regain control of their minds and bodies, which resulted in them being able to exit the quiet room and once again be included in their classroom community.

*Question 2*

The fifth theme that emerged from the data was one that suggested that J.D. extended students' learning by fostering growth in respect, responsibility, and empathy. According to the data, the presence of J.D. in the classroom setting seemed to enrich the students' character development by providing them with real-life learning opportunities; this resulted in education beyond academic learning. Observational and interview data for all six of the students documented how they learned respect, responsibility, and empathy through their relationships with J.D. The data includes:

1. Students' demonstrated responsibility by ensuring that J.D. was either hooked to his indoor or outdoor leash at all times to protect his safety.
2. Students were responsible at providing J.D. with fresh food and water each day.

3. Students were responsible at appropriately disciplining and praising J.D.'s behaviors.
4. Students were respectful of J.D. when they accidentally hurt him (e.g., bumping him, stepping on him) by telling him that they were sorry.
5. Students felt it was wrong to spank J.D. if he did something inappropriate.
6. Students felt it was acceptable for him to urinate and defecate in their presence.
7. Students felt that J.D. had feelings similar to their own.
8. Students felt that J.D. helped them get along better with each other since they had to share him.

According to the parent interviews, all six parents felt that the inclusion of J.D. into their children's classroom community was of educational value.

#### Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, two broad-based conclusions are offered with reference to the literature from Chapter II.

##### *Conclusion One: Emotional Well-Being*

A dog, placed in an educational setting, has the potential to affect the emotional well-being of students with severe emotional disorders positively. This conclusion is based on the positive emotional effects that J.D. had on the students in the self-contained setting.

Each of the six students formed a strong bond with J.D. that was based upon a foundation of unconditional love and acceptance. Gardner (2001) contends that the bond between children and their pets is especially powerful because of the emotional benefits

derived from these relationships. The strong bond between each of the students and J.D. contributed to the stabilizing of the students' emotions, largely because of the ongoing, nonjudgmental companionship that J.D. provided to them. As supported in the literature, pets bring children a comforting sense of security that they will always be loved and valued (Becker, 2002); the relationship between children and their pets becomes intimate and therapeutic in quality because of the accepting and nonjudgmental behaviors of pets (Jerome, n.d.).

Throughout my years of working with students who have emotional disorders, I have observed students struggle immensely with the emotional difficulties they encountered from the lack of companionship provided to them by their peers. Their peers did not understand or accept their emotional disabilities, causing these students to feel isolated and lonely. Triebenbacher (1998) concluded that the contributions animals make to the emotional well-being of children have been well documented and include the following: (a) providing unconditional love that is noncontingent and opportunities for love and affection; (b) functioning as friends, confidants, playmates, and companions; (c) serving as living transitional objects; (d) assisting in the achievement of trust, autonomy, responsibility, competence, and empathy toward others, and (e) enhancing self-esteem by the presence of attachments to animals.

The students' relationships with J.D. were instrumental in effectively managing their behaviors. As a result of these relationships with J.D., students seemed to have a greater sense of self that provided them with an increased understanding of their emotional triggers and ways in which to solve their emotional difficulties. Similarly, Zasloff, Hart, and DeArmond (1999) contend that students who are receiving special



education for their emotional disorders use animals as sources of motivation and behavior management. Students were motivated to use J.D. to help them keep their minds and bodies in a calm state; it was common for them to say, "He just makes me feel good."

J.D. was also utilized as a behavior management tool for students to cope with their negative emotions (to avoid crisis or to release emotions when they did enter into crisis).

Based on the literature, animals can assist in behavior management for these children by teaching them behaviors that have not been acquired through the teachings of adults (George, 1999) and by providing them with opportunities for being in control and assuming responsibility (Lee et al., 1996).

#### *Conclusion Two: Character Development*

Integrating a dog into a classroom setting for students with severe emotional disorders has the potential for providing students with lessons in respect, responsibility, and empathy; as a result, these lessons can foster growth in character development. This conclusion is based on the students' real-life lessons of respect, responsibility, and empathy that J.D. provided them on a daily basis. There is support in the literature for the notion that integrating animals into learning situations has taught children the vital concepts of love, compassion, and empathy; animals bring these concepts into reality, in an engaging manner, which enhances learning by utilizing the natural responses inherent in child-animal relationships (Bayer, 2000).

Students' interactions with J.D. demonstrated that they had learned lessons about showing respect, responsibility, and empathy. Students demonstrated responsibility by ensuring that J.D.'s needs were met and that his behaviors were managed through appropriate discipline and praise. Melson (2001) contends that pets challenge children to

portray the role of master with kindness and to blend domination with respect (which can foster more nurturing characteristics in children as they mature). Students were respectful of J.D.'s daily presence in the classroom and were accepting of his inherent dog behaviors (e.g., licking his genitals). The students were also empathetic to J.D.'s feelings and how his feelings paralleled theirs. Naherniak (1995) believes that the most profound lesson that pets can teach children is for them to realize that they share a world with other beings who have needs similar to their own; they learn to respect the pets' sense of purpose and inclination.

Throughout the literature, there is support for the notion that pets, in general, have been successful in teaching children valuable lessons.

The act of feeding and caring for a pet, putting another's needs before yourself, is a lesson that should be learned early on. Such vital childhood competence deepens their Bond and, as a result their emotional interdependence. The child and the pet form their own world of secrets that will never be betrayed, and long sessions of play where no one has something else on their minds. When it works, it can be a huge source of children's emotional stability and self-confidence, and the foundation of a more mature character. (Becker, 2002, p. 33)

Becker further points out that pets offer "teachable moments" about respect, responsibility, and consequences. He explained how lessons on using proper behavior and making good judgments can be embedded in the context of children's cause and effect relationships with pets.

The six students in this study generalized their lessons on respect, responsibility, and empathy to their relationships with their classroom peers. They all stated how J.D. had helped them get along better with each other, because they had learned how to share him. Levinson, the pioneer of pet-oriented psychotherapy, found that pets influence



interpersonal relationships, as well as learning processes and emotional development (Levinson & Mallon, 1997).

### *Recommendations*

Based upon the findings of this study, I offer recommendations for educators of children with special needs and for those who are interested in conducting further research relating to the effects dogs have on students with special needs in the school setting.

#### *Recommendations for Educators of Children with Special Needs*

1. I recommend the placement of a therapy dog in classrooms with students who are diagnosed with emotional disorders. The dog has the potential of providing students with the emotional stability necessary to help them successfully manage their emotions and behaviors throughout the school day. In addition, the placement of a therapy dog can expand students' learning to include lessons that enhance the development of their character. In order for the incorporation of a therapy dog to be successful in the school setting, I recommend the following:
  - a. For legal reasons, written consent should be obtained from school administrators, parents, and students prior to the placement of the dog.
  - b. Rules and procedures need to be established prior to the placement of the dog to ensure that the dog is being utilized in the most effective manner and that the safety of all involved is not at risk.
  - c. Thoughtful consideration needs to be given to the type of dog that is placed in the school setting. I recommend that the dog hold certification



as a therapy dog from a notable organization that certifies dogs based on their obedience training and temperament.

- d. Direct instruction on how to care for the dog, interact with the dog, and use the dog as a calming tool needs to be embedded into the daily teaching schedule.
2. If incorporating a therapy dog into the school community is not a possibility, I recommend pursuing other alternatives that provide students with emotional disorders opportunities to physically interact with dogs. For example, students could participate in a service-learning project at a local animal shelter, which may involve students in walking and playing with the shelter dogs.

*Recommendations for Researchers*

1. This qualitative study should be duplicated at the elementary level to determine if similar findings exist. Since this was a with-in site case study (studying a single program), it would be of value to conduct a multi-site case study (studying several programs) for the purpose of research reliability.
2. Since this study was a holistic analysis of the entire case, an embedded analysis should be conducted to specifically study the following areas:
  - a. How a dog affects students' episodes of emotional crisis in regard to the duration and intensity of the crisis.
  - b. How a dog affects students' sense of self with emphasis on their self-esteem, self-awareness, and sense of belonging.
  - c. How a dog affects students' socialization with peers and teachers.

*Mavis Allen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date

- d. How a dog affects students' academic performance, especially in the area of reading.

#### Reflections

Since I am a teacher for students with severe emotional disorders and an animal lover, I am very passionate about the healing power that animals (particularly dogs) can have on children. Helping students with emotional disorders succeed both academically and emotionally is one of the greatest challenges in special education. The findings from my study conclude that the placement of a dog in a classroom can provide students with love, laughter, and lessons that the adults in their lives cannot provide.

Throughout the duration of this study, the support and encouragement that I received from school administrators, parents, and colleagues for my scholarly pursuit were tremendous. The only real obstacle that I encountered was at the beginning of the study when J.D. felt compelled to continuously leave our classroom to either visit the principal in his office or the students in the lunchroom!

The students' participation in my study was phenomenal. They delivered more to me than I ever thought was possible. Not only did each of these six students bring something special and valuable to this study, but also to me as their teacher. I will forever cherish my memories of them loving and laughing with our classroom pet, J.D. The actual number of lessons that we learned together as a school family were beyond measurement and description.

In closing, I wish to share with you a quotation that captures the essence of what, I felt, happened in this study. Animals brought into educational settings to assume the

roles of classroom pets "are at the heart of education, because when hearts change, the effects are felt nearby and at a distance" (Huddart & Naherniak, 1996, p. 3).

140

The micrographic images on this film are accurate reproductions of records delivered to Modern Information Systems for microfilming and were filmed in the regular course of business. The photographic process meets standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for archival microfilm. NOTICE: If the filmed image above is less legible than this Notice, it is due to the quality of the document being filmed.

*Marcus Olsen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date



APPENDICES

The micrographic images on this film are accurate reproductions of records delivered to Modern Information Systems for microfilming and were filmed in the regular course of business. The photographic process meets standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for archival microfilm. NOTICE: If the filmed image above is less legible than this Notice, it is due to the quality of the document being filmed.

Mavis Almen  
Operator's Signature

12/06/04  
Date

**Research Consent Form: Parent/Student Participants**

My name is Katherine L. Anderson, your child's special education teacher. I am currently a doctoral student at the University of North Dakota, and I would like to invite you and your child to participate in a study that I will be conducting for my dissertation. The information that I hope to obtain from this study are the possible effects that a classroom pet, which would be a small dog, will have on your child's emotional well-being. The possible effects of a classroom pet on students with emotional disorders that I will be studying, are as follows: (a) decreased calming time when students enter emotional crisis, (b) lessened severity of physical and verbal aggression, (c) increased feeling of security and safety, and (d) increased bonding and/or interaction with others. The benefit of this study is to gain an understanding if the presence of a dog, as a member of our classroom community, is beneficial to your child's emotional well-being.

The first procedure in this study will be to provide your child with opportunities to form a relationship with our classroom dog. Each day, your child will have the opportunity to spend one-on-one time with the dog. This time can be used holding the dog, talking to the dog, reading to the dog, etc. It is extremely important for your child to bond with the dog so the dog can be used as a calming tool should your child become angry and/or frustrated and enter emotional crisis. The remaining procedures in this study will include student/dog observations, student interviews, two parent interviews, completion of Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence forms and problem solving sheets when the dog is used as a calming tool, and possible interviews from professionals outside the school district who have had dogs as classroom pets and from a certified pet therapist. The interviews will be audio taped for transcribing purposes. The duration of time that the dog will be a member of our classroom community will be 8 weeks, during the months of March, April, and May. All student interviews will be conducted in the school setting. Your first parent interview will be after the 4th week of the study, and your second parent interview will be after the 8th week of the study. The interviews will be held at a location of your choice.

The following are possible risks to your child with the dog being an active member of our classroom: (a) physical harm to your child should the dog unexpectedly become aggressive or become threatened and need to use its defense mechanisms, (b) an undiagnosed allergic reaction, or (c) lack of bonding from the dog which could result in emotional stress. In the event that medical treatment should be needed, our school nurse will be called upon to assess the situation. Should medical treatment exceed the care provided by our school nurse, you will be contacted immediately to determine the best medical option for your child. The ambulance will be called, prior to calling you, when your child's medical condition is life threatening. You, as well as school administration, will be informed of all types of injuries that occur as a result of the dog being placed in your child's classroom for research purposes. An incident report will also be completed. It is standard district procedure, that if medical care is necessary for your child, the



school district will first request that you to file a claim with your healthcare provider, and the remaining medical fees will be paid for by the school district.

To protect your confidentiality, as well as the confidentiality of your child, fictitious names will be used when reporting the data. Fictitious names will also be used to represent the school and school district where this study took place. Your signed consent form and data collected from this study will be kept in separate, locked files in my home and be kept for a minimum of 3 years upon the completion of my study. When the data and consent documents are no longer needed, they will be shredded. The audio tapes will also be destroyed. I will be the only person who will have access to the data and consent forms.

Your participation, as well as the participation of your child in this study, is voluntary and no penalties or loss of benefits will result from refusal to participate. You may stop participation in this study at any time throughout the study without penalty. Should you choose to stop participation, please write me a letter stating that you discontinue your participation in the study and, if possible, your reason(s) why you are withdrawing from the study.

If you are interested in the findings of my study, I will provide you with a copy of my dissertation submitted to the University of North Dakota. It will be your responsibility to request this copy. You will automatically be provided with a copy of your signed Consent Form.

If you have any questions about the research project, please feel free to contact me at 701-599-9057 or Dr. Myrna Olson, my adviser at the University of North Dakota, at 701-777-3188. If you have any other questions or concerns, please call the Office of Research and Program Development at 701-777-4279.

Thank you for your participation and cooperation in this research project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\*\*\*\*\*

**I have read this Consent Form in its entirety, and I agree to allow my child to take part in this study. I also agree to be interviewed on two separate occasions.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parental Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

     **YES**         **NO**    *My child's picture may be taken with the dog. I understand that the pictures may be used for presentations and publications, but my child's identity will not be disclosed.*

*Maisha Akmen*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



I understand that there will be a dog in my classroom for me to spend time with each day until the end of the school year. I know Mrs. Anderson will allow me to talk to and hold the dog when I become angry or frustrated, so I can calm down and make better choices as long as I do not hurt the dog.

I agree to let the dog be a member of my classroom to help Mrs. Anderson do her schoolwork for UND. I also agree to let Mrs. Anderson ask me questions about the dog and to watch me when I am spending time with the dog. I understand that Mrs. Anderson will not tell other students or adults what I tell her when she asks me questions. I also agree to be respectful to the dog as a living thing.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Child Assent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*Maria Olsen*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX B  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

*Students*

1. What do you like about having J.D. in our classroom? What do you like the most?
2. Is there anything you do not like about having J.D. in our classroom?
3. Do you feel safe with J.D. in our classroom?
4. Does J.D. help you make better choices? If so, how does he help you?
5. Does J.D. help you calm your body down when you are angry or frustrated?
6. What does J.D. do that helps you calm down?
7. Would you change anything about having J.D. in our classroom?
8. During your one-on-one time with J.D., what do you do?
9. What do you like about spending time alone with J.D.?
10. Do you feel you can talk to J.D., and he understands what you are telling him?
11. Do you think J.D. knows when you are feeling happy, sad, and mad?
12. What does J.D. do that makes you think he understands your feelings?
13. What are your thoughts about reading to J.D.?
14. How is J.D. like you?
15. How do you feel when J.D. cries?
16. How are you able to do your schoolwork when J.D. is around?
17. What do you say when people ask about J.D.? How does that make you feel?
18. How do you like having to share J.D. with other kids?
19. When you are sitting in time-out, how does J.D. prevent you from going into the quiet room?

20. Does J.D.'s crying or barking bother you?
21. Have you ever thought about hurting J.D. when you have been mad?
22. Do you think J.D. likes you? How do you know?
23. Have you missed any of your sessions with J.D.? If so, how did that make you feel?
24. What do you want to do with J.D. during your sessions?
25. Do you like playing fetch with J.D.? Why?
26. How do you think J.D. feels when kids are in the quiet room yelling and kicking?
27. How did you feel yesterday when J.D. was not in our classroom?
28. How is our classroom different now that J.D. is here?
29. Do you think J.D. likes being in our classroom?
30. If J.D. could talk, what do you think he would say to you?
31. Does anything scare you about J.D.?
32. Do you think J.D. has feelings? How do you know?
33. Does J.D. make you laugh? What does he do?
34. If you could change J.D.'s name, what would it be?
35. Do you think any students have too much time with J.D.?
36. Do you think it is okay when J.D. goes to the bathroom in front of people?
37. How are you and J.D. different?
38. Do you talk about J.D. at home? What do you say?
39. Do you think it would be okay to spank J.D. if he did something bad?
40. Do you think J.D. makes a good friend? Why?
41. If you could take J.D. home, would you? What would you do with him?

146

The micrographic images on this film are accurate reproductions of records delivered to Modern Information Systems for microfilming and were filmed in the regular course of business. The photographic process meets standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for archival microfilm. NOTICE: If the filmed image above is less legible than this Notice, it is due to the quality of the document being filmed.

*Maria Almira*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date



42. Do you think J.D. is able to forgive people who yell at him or hurt him?
43. Has J.D. helped you to *not* make bad choices?
44. Have you ever made bad choices on purpose, because you thought you would get to spend more time with him?
45. How do you feel in the morning when you see J.D., and he gets all excited?
46. How did you feel when J.D. was gone from our classroom for 3 days?
47. Do you want J.D. to be in our classroom next year?
48. Do you think J.D. ever feels mad like you ?
49. What is your favorite part of the school day?
50. Are dogs good for kids? Why?
51. Do you like coming to school each day? Why?
52. Do you think J.D. likes being in our classroom?
53. Do you think about J.D. when you are not with him?
54. How is your classroom job of feeding J.D. in the morning?
55. What would you do if you saw someone hurting J.D.?
56. Do you think J.D. misses his mom when she is not in the classroom?
57. Do you think J.D. helps you get along better with your classmates?
58. Does J.D. help you solve your problems? How?
59. If a new student came into our classroom, what would you tell him/her about J.D.?
60. How do you feel when J.D. does not want to play what you want him to play?
61. How did you feel when J.D. got sick and vomited?
62. What did you think about playing with J.D. at my house?
63. What was your best experience with J.D.?

*Maria Jensen*

*12/06/04*

64. Is school easier, harder, or the same with J.D. in our classroom?
65. What have you learned from J.D.?
66. Is there anything you would have done differently with J.D.?
67. Does J.D. help you make better choices even when you are not with him?

*Parents*

1. What has \_\_\_\_\_ said about J.D. being in our classroom?
2. What do you think your child likes the most about J.D.? How about the least?
3. Have you noticed changes in \_\_\_\_\_ self-control or anger management?
4. Does \_\_\_\_\_ talk about having a dog in the home setting? What do you think the effects of having a dog would be?
5. Have you noticed a change in \_\_\_\_\_ ability to bond?  
Have you observed a change in \_\_\_\_\_ anxiety or sense of security in school?
6. Has there been a change in attitude about coming to school each day since J.D. has come to our classroom?
7. Has \_\_\_\_\_ commented on his/her one-on-one sessions with J.D.? If so, what has been said?
8. Has \_\_\_\_\_ mentioned if having J.D. in our classroom helps him/her make better choices?
9. Has \_\_\_\_\_ commented on using J.D. as a tool to help his/her mind and body calm down when angry/frustrated? If so, what was said?
10. What has \_\_\_\_\_ said about J.D. since our last interview?
11. Has \_\_\_\_\_ said that he/she misses J.D. since school has gotten out?
12. Did you observe a change in your child's attitude about coming to school when J.D. was in our classroom? Has anything been said about returning to school in the fall?

*Maecia Almen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date

13. Have you noticed changes in \_\_\_\_\_ from spring to summer, in regard to emotion, behavior, or socialization?
14. Has \_\_\_\_\_ mentioned using J.D. as a de-escalation tool, such as thinking about him while at home when he/she becomes upset?
15. When \_\_\_\_\_ sees other dogs, does it prompt thoughts or responses about J.D.?
16. Why did you let \_\_\_\_\_ take part in this study?
17. What are your overall thoughts of J.D. being in our classroom?
18. What were the advantages and disadvantages of J.D. being in our classroom?
19. Do you think there were gains made with your child? If so, what gains?
20. Would you like to see J.D. be a permanent member of our classroom? Why?
21. If our principal interviewed you about J.D. being in our classroom, what would you tell him?
22. Do you think dogs are good for kids? Why?
23. What do you think your child has learned about dogs and his/her emotions?
24. Would you advocate for dogs in more classrooms? Why?
25. Do you think J.D. will always be remembered? If so, what will be remembered?
26. What do you think J.D. taught \_\_\_\_\_ that I could not? How about his/her peers?
27. When you hear the words "\_\_\_\_\_, J.D., and emotion," what do you think of?
28. The goal of this study was to determine if there was an educational value of having a dog in a classroom for students with emotional disorders, do you think there was an educational value?

*Maria Olsen*  
 Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
 Date



## *How did I solve my problem?*

---

What was the problem?

Did J.D. help you calm down?                      Yes                      No

If so, how did J.D. help you calm down?

What do you think you would have done to calm down if J.D. was not a member of our classroom?

Did you have to go to *time-out* or the *quiet room*?

How could you have used J.D. to prevent yourself from being removed to a time-out or to the quiet room?

The next time you have a problem, what will you do differently to be even more successful?

Additional Comments:

---

Student Signature

---

Teacher Signature

---

Parent Signature

*Maria Almen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date

APPENDIX D  
ABC ANALYSIS

***ABC Observation Form***

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Observation Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Observer: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Activity: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence
------------	----------	-------------

--	--	--

The micrographic images on this film are accurate reproductions of records delivered to Modern Information Systems for microfilming and were filmed in the regular course of business. The photographic process meets standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for archival microfilm. NOTICE: If the filmed image above is less legible than this Notice, it is due to the quality of the document being filmed.

*Maria Ohmen*  
Operator's Signature

*12/06/04*  
Date

## REFERENCES

- Animals in the classroom. (1996, Spring). Animal Protection Education News,(10), 1.
- Arce, J. (1992, September). Teacher's pet. NEA Today, 22,(1).
- Ascione, F.R. (1991). Enhancing children's attitudes about the humane treatment of animals: Generalization to human-directed empathy. Anthrozoos, 5, 176-191.
- Ascione, F.R. (1999). The abuse of animals and human interpersonal violence: Making the connection. In F.R. Ascione & P. Arkow (Eds.), Child abuse, domestic violence, and animal abuse: Linking the circles of compassion for prevention and intervention. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press.
- Bayer, (2000, Spring). A bond with a pet is one of the healthiest relationships a child can enjoy. The Companion, 1(2).
- Becker, M. (2002). The healing power of pets: Harnessing the amazing ability of pets to make and keep people happy and healthy. New York: Hyperion.
- Black, J.K. & Pucket, M.B. (1996). The young child: Development from prebirth through age eight (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Englewood Cliffs: Merrill.
- Boat, B.W. (1999). Abuse of children and abuse of animals: Using the links to inform child assessment and protection. In F.R. Ascione & P. Arkow (Eds.), Child abuse, domestic violence, and animal abuse: Linking the circles of compassion for prevention and intervention. (pp. 83-100). West Lafayette: Purdue University Press.



- Bodewes, J. (n.d.). Children and dogs. Drs. Foster and Smith, Inc.
- Bryant, B. K. (1982). Sibling relationships in middle childhood. In Lamb & Sutton-Smith (Eds.), Sibling relationships: Their nature and significance across the lifespan (pp. 87-122). Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Bryant, B.K. (1990). The richness of child-pet relationships: A consideration of both benefits and cost of pet. Anthrozoos, 3, 253-261.
- Chandler, C. (2001). Animal-assisted therapy in counseling and school settings. ERIC/CASS Digest. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 459404).
- Creswell, J.W. (1998). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Cusack, O. (1988). Pets and mental health. New York: The Haworth Press.
- Davis, K. (1992). Therapy dogs: Training your dog to reach others. New York: Howell Book House.
- De Grave, J. (1999). People and animals learning: The PAL program. In F.R. Ascione & P. Arkow (Eds.), Child abuse, domestic violence, and animal abuse: Linking the circles of compassion for prevention and intervention (pp. 410-423). West Lafayette: Purdue University Press.
- Dillman, D. (1999). Kids and critters: An intervention to violence. In F.R. Ascione & P. Arkow (Eds.), Child abuse, domestic violence, and animal abuse: Linking the circles of compassion for prevention and intervention (pp. 424-432). West Lafayette: Purdue University Press.
- Esordi, R.L. & Beck, A.M. (2000). You have a visitor: Observations on pet visitation and therapy. San Diego: Blue Lamm Publishing.

- Fine, A. H. (2000). Animals and therapists: Incorporating animals in outpatient psychotherapy. In A.H. Fine (Ed.), Handbook on animal assisted therapy: Theoretical foundations and guidelines for practice (pp. 179-211). San Diego: Academic Press.
- Fine, A.H. (Ed.) (2000). Handbook on animal-assisted therapy: Theoretical foundations and guidelines for practice. San Diego: Academic Press.
- Fine, A.H. & Fine, N.M. (Eds.) (1996). Therapeutic recreation for exceptional children: Let me in, I want to play (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Springfield: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, LTD.
- Gardner, J.S. (2001, March). All in the family: Bringing up kids and pets. DogWorld.
- Gay, L.R. & Airasian, P. (2003). Educational research: Competencies for analysis and application (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- George, M.H. (1999). The role of animals in the emotional and moral development of children. In F.R. Ascione & P. Arkow, (Eds.), Child abuse, domestic abuse, and animal abuse: Linking the circles of compassion for prevention and intervention. (pp. 380-392). West Lafayette: Purdue University Press.
- Hansen, M.K., Messinger, C.J., Ban, M.M., & Megel, M. (1999). Companion animals alleviating distress in children. Anthrozoos, 12, (3), 142-148.
- Hart, L. (2000). Methods, standards, guidelines, and considerations in selecting animals for animal-assisted therapy. In A.H. Fine (Ed.), Handbook on animal-assisted therapy: Theoretical foundations and guidelines for practice (pp. 81-97). San Diego: Academic Press

- Hart, L. (2000). Psychosocial benefits of animal companionship. In A.H. Fine (Ed.), Handbook on animal-assisted therapy: Theoretical foundations and guidelines for practice (pp. 59-78). San Diego: Academic Press.
- Hines, L. & Fredrickson, M. (1998). Perspectives on animal-assisted activities and health. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Huddart, S. & Nahernaik, C. (1996, Fall). Shifting paradigms: A new look at animals in the classroom. Taproot, 3-9.
- Jerome, J.K. (n.d.). A history of pet therapy and the value of animal companionship. January 15, 2003, from <http://www.starlifeservices.com/pettherapy.htm>
- Kahn, P.H. & Kellert, S.R. (Eds.)(2002). Children and nature: Psychological, sociocultural, and evolutionary investigations. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Katcher, A. & Wilkins, G.G. (1994). Helping children with attention-deficit hyperactive and conduct disorders through animal-assisted therapy and education. InterActions, 12,(4), 5-9.
- Kidd, A. & Kidd, R. (1985). Children's attitudes toward their pets. Psychological Reports, 57, 15-31.
- Kidd, A. & Kidd, R. (1987a). Reactions of infants and toddlers to live and toy animals. Psychological Reports, 61, 455-464.
- Kidd, A. & Kidd, R. (1987b). Seeking a theory of the human-companion animal bond. Anthrozoos, 1,(3), 140-157.
- Kidd, A. & Kidd, R. (1989). Factors in adults' attitudes toward pets. Psychological Reports, 65, 903-910.



Kidd, A. & Kidd, R. (1990). Factors in children's attitude toward their pets.

Psychological Reports, 66, 775-786.

Lee, J., Zapf, S., Kriwin, S., Henderson, K., Gibbons, F., & Fine, A.H. (1996).

Broadening the impact of services and recreational therapies. In A. H. Fine & N.M. Fine (Eds.), Therapeutic recreation for exceptional children: Let me in, I want to play (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Springfield: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, LTD.

Levinson, B.M. (1972, October). Pets and modern family life. D.V.M. News: Magazine of Veterinary Medicine, 4,(10), 5-6.

Levinson, B.M. & Mallon, G.P. (1997). Pet-oriented child psychotherapy (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).

Springfield: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, LTD.

Loar, L. (1999). "I'll only help you if you have two legs" or why human service professionals should pay attention to cases involving cruelty to animals. In F.R. Ascione & P. Arkow (Eds.), Child abuse, domestic violence, and animal abuse: Linking the circles of compassion for prevention and intervention. (pp. 120-136). West Lafayette: Purdue University Press.

MacDonald, A. J. (1981). The pet dog in the home: A study of interactions. In B. Fogle (Ed.), Interrelationships between people and pets (pp. 101-123). Springfield: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, LTD.

Mallon, G.P. (1992). Utilization of animals as therapeutic adjuncts with children and youth: A review of the literature. Child & Youth Care Forum, 21, 53-65.

Mallon, G.P. (1994). Some of our best therapists are dogs. Child & Youth Care Forum, 23(2), 89-102.

- Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. (1995). Designing qualitative research (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).  
Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Maxwell, J.A. (1996). Qualitative research design: An interactive approach.  
Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- McCrinkle, C.M.E. & Odendaal, J.S.J. (1994). Animals in books used for preschool  
children. Anthrozoos, 7(2), 135-146.
- Melson, G.F. (1988). Availability of and involvement with pets by children.  
Anthrozoos, 2, 45-52.
- Melson, G.F. (1998). The role of companion animals in human development. In C.C  
Wilson & D.C. Turner (Eds.), Companion animals in human health (pp. 219-  
236). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Melson, G.F. (2001). Why the wild things are: Animals in the lives of children.  
Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Melson, G.F., Schwartz, R., and Beck, A.M. (1991). Children's attachment to their pets:  
Links to socio-emotional development. Children's Environments Quarterly, 8,  
55-65.
- Myers, G. (1998). Children and animals: Social development and our connections to  
other species. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Myers, O.E. (n.d.). Child-animal interactions: Nonverbal dimensions. Western  
Washington University.
- Naherniak, C. (1995). Profound encounters: Classroom animals-more than responsible  
pet care. Clearing, (91), 12-15.

- National Institutes of Health (1987). NIH technology assessments-pets. Presented at the National Institutes of Health OMAR Workshop held September 10-11.
- Nielsen, J.A. & Delude, L.A. (1989). Behavior of young children in the presence of different kinds of animals. Anthrozoos, 3(2), 119-129.
- Poresky, R. H. (1990). The young children's empathy measure: Reliability, validity, and effects of companion animal bonding. Psychological Reports (66), 931-936.
- Raphael, P., Colman, L., & Loar, L. (1999). Teaching compassion: A guide for humane educators, teachers, and parents. Alameda: The Latham Foundation for the Promotion of Human Education.
- Ross, S.B. (1999). Green Chimneys: We give troubled children the gift of giving. In F.R. Ascione & P. Arkow (Eds.), Child abuse, domestic abuse, and animal abuse: Linking the circles of compassion for prevention and intervention (pp. 367-379). West Lafayette: Purdue University Press.
- Rowan, A.N. & Beck, A.M. (1994). The health benefits of human-animal interactions. Anthrozoos, 7, 85-89.
- Rud, A.G. & Beck, A.M. (2000, December). Kids and critters in class together. Phi Delta Kappan, 82,(4), 313-315.
- Ruth, R. (1992). Animals helping children overcome physical and emotional challenges. InterActions, 10,(1), 16-18.
- Serpell, J.A. (2000). Animal companions and human well-being: A historical exploration of the value of human-animal relationships. In A. H. Fine (Ed.), Handbook on animal-assisted therapy: Theoretical foundations and guidelines for practice (pp. 3-19). San Diego: Academic Press.



- Triebenbacher, S.L. (1998). The relationship between attachment to companion animals and self-esteem: A developmental perspective. In C.C. Wilson & D.C. Turner (Eds.), Companion animals in human health (pp. 135-148). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Trivedi, L. & Peri, J. (1995). Animal facilitated counseling in the elementary school: A literature review and practical considerations. Elementary School Guidance and Counselor, 29, 223-234.
- Stainback, S. & Stainback, W. (1988). Understanding and conducting qualitative research. Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.
- Turnball, A., Turnball, R., Shank, M., & Leal, D. (1999). Exceptional lives: Special education in today's schools (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River: Merrill.
- Vidovic, V.V., Stectic, V.V., & Bratko, D. (1999). Pet ownership, type of pet and socio-economic development of school children. Anthrozoos 12(4), 211-217.
- Voith, V. L. (1983, June). Behavior, attitudes and interactions with families with their dogs. Paper presented at the Conference on the Human-Animal Bond, Irvine, CA and Minneapolis, MN.
- Wilson, C.C. & Turner, D.C. (Eds.) (1998). Companion animals in human health. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Zasloff, R.L., Hart, L.A., & DeArmond, H. (1999). Animals in elementary school in education in California. Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science, 2(4), 347-357.