



Deisy Landeros
Dr. Shelly Volsche PhD
University of Nevada, Las Vegas



Abstract

This research study explores human and dog relationships through cultural perspectives. The purpose of this study is to evaluate whether there are more positive attitudes towards pet dogs within Mexican communities, or if negative attitudes are still present like they have been in past Mexican traditions. While previous studies have presented increasing dog attachment bonds within Americans, I will instead focus on Mexican minorities in the Las Vegas community. Bilingual self-report surveys were distributed in order to examine gender, age, ethnicity, number of pets, and dogs' living styles. In order to target the desired population, public venues such as dog parks, pet stores, and other cultural events within the Mexican community were examined. Using IBM SPSS v.24, the attitudes Mexican-Americans showed similarly positive attitudes toward pet dogs as American pet owners. The difference between Mexican and Mexican-Americans attitudes towards pet dogs was statistically significant ($p = 0.5$). Future research may focus on changing attitudes towards foster and assisted animal therapy dog programs within Mexican or Mexican-American communities.

Introduction

Anthrozoology is a growing area of research
Focus: Dog relationships within Mexican communities

Mexican Dog History

- Pre-colonial: Xolo's meat, sacrificial and medicinal value
 - This dog represented the deity Xolotl who guided souls into the underworld
- Colonial: 18th century dog wedding, baptisms and funerals
 - European dogs in Mexico paved the way for the timeless image of the street dog in an urban society (Sandoval-Cervantes, 2016)
 - Stray dogs received backlash from the Catholic community since they saw dog's behavior as indecent and sinful
- Modern: stray population and dog fighting
 - Dogfighting is banned but not a federal crime in Mexico
 - US citizens bring dogs to Mexico to fight (AngloInfo, 2016).

Study Objectives

- Advertise foster & adoption systems within Mexican-American communities
- Increase awareness for adoption, foster, and Animal Assisted Therapy

Gamboa



Depiction of Aztec Deity "Xolotl" origin for the Nahuatl name, "Xoloitzcuintli" meaning dog (Gamboa)



Methods

Design

- Bilingual, pen and paper survey compiled of 18 questions
 - Basic demographic questions such as, "What is your age?", "What is your gender?" and "How do you identify yourself?"
 - A 4-point Likert scale measured how the participant's attitudes towards dogs compared to the perceived attitudes of the participant's family members

TITLE OF STUDY: Investigation of Mexican-American Attitudes Toward Pet Dogs

15. How do your attitudes toward pet dogs compare to with your mother?

same/similar more positive more negative can't say

- In order to investigate the main purpose of having a dog participants were also asked to rank the following categories

11. In your opinion, what is the main purpose of having a pet dog?

Pet

Playmate

Companion

Family

Protector

Worker

Other (please explain) _____

Recruitment of Participants

- The surveys were collected data from diverse racial backgrounds
- Targeted Mexican-Americans at Petco, pet events such as Pet-A-Palooza, dog parks, Mexican supermarkets
- Using IBM v.24 SPSS, the data was analyzed in a comparative way. A Kruskal Wallis and a Chi-Square test were used to analyze the ranks and the three groups being compared

Data & Results

Demographic Data:

- 107 total surveys
- 91 respondents owned dogs (85%) (\bar{x} age 36.76 years)
- 36% Mexican-American & 15% Mexican (\bar{x} age 34.96 years)
- 29% 1st generation Latinos & 71% 2nd generation Latino

Mexican vs American "Purpose of a Dog" Question

- 67% of Mexicans & Mexican-Americans considered their dog as family
- 14% as a pet
- 2% as a playmate
- 8% as a protector

Mexican vs Mexican American "Purpose of a Dog" Question

- 80% of Mexican Americans considered their dogs as family
- 54% of Mexicans considered dogs as family
- 27% of Mexicans saw dogs as protectors
- 2% of Mexican-Americans saw dogs as protectors
- The way Mexicans & Mexican-Americans viewed the purpose of having a dog was statistically significant ($p = 0.5$)

Quotes from Mexican American Surveys

- "They are family and our children, more people should foster"
- "They are my children"
- "Dogs are sent from heaven to bring joy and make the world a better place"

Table 1

Test Statistics

| | Q13 |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| Mann-Whitney U | 139.5 |
| Wilcoxon W | 805.5 |
| Z | -1.924 |
| Asymp. Sig (2-tailed) | 0.054 |
| Exact Sig [2*(1-tailed Sig.)] | .143 ^{ab} |



Discussion

This study specifically highlighted the positive trends taking place within the Mexican community. For example, the trend seen with Mexican and Mexican-Americans stating they allow their dogs to sleep in their beds. This shows the juxtaposition of the traditional Mexican idea of dogs being strictly outdoor dogs. The similar bond between Mexican-Americans and Americans suggest the fluidity in dog attitudes and the enculturation into American society. Most Mexicans and Mexican-Americans answered "family" as their first option. This suggests the changing attitudes within this community since dogs are not only being used for utilitarian purposes but for emotional love and support. A generational shift in the attitudes are present due to the fact that most 2nd generation Mexican-Americans have a more positive attitude towards dogs than their 1st generation or native Mexican parents. The breed of the dog also played a role into the care and attitude owners paid to their pet dog. Purebred dogs in Mexican households was not as rare as originally hypothesized. Mexicans and Mexican-Americans were just as selective about their breeds as Americans would be.

Future Research

Future Goals:

- Animal Assisted Therapy as a resource for this community
- More advertisement or assistance with the language barrier Animal Assisted Therapy can become a more familiar topic within Mexican families

Future Survey Questions:

- "Are you willing to foster a pet?"
- "How likely are you to take in a stray dog?"
- "How often do you hear about pet adoptions?"
- "How did you get your last pet dog?"

Conclusion

Through survey collection an ethnic discrepancy was displayed among adoption, foster, and animal assisted programs. Mexicans and Mexican-Americans are not being asked these questions and therefore would have never considered the change they can make by fostering or adopting. This puts their changing positive attitudes into action and gives them a chance for them to make a difference in a stray's life.

References

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