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Pet Ownership and Related Consumption Practices: The Role of Moralization

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INTRODUCTION

Insufficient attention has been given to moral issues surrounding consumption (Hilton 2004; Miller 2001). Moreover, in spite of the exhaustive empirical coverage of the moral status of animals, both from a philosophical and political perspective and the belief that “consumption is in essence a moral matter” (Wilk 2001, p.246), very little empirical consideration has been given to the moral issues relating to the consumption practices associated with pet ownership¹ (Kwak, Zinkhan and French 2001). In general, studies on morality consider the subject in terms of the rightness or wrongness of an individual’s behavior as guided by a societal code of conduct agreed to by the members of that particular society (Shaw 1991; Wallace and Walker 1970). However, in outlining a sociological view of morality, Caruana’s (2007a, p.295) constructivist perspective suggests a broader, more fluid and subjective interpretation of morality. As this perspective acknowledges the “dialectic relationship between society and the morality of those individuals who constitute it,” Caruana (2007a, p.299) argues further that a constructivist approach may be more “useful in a contemporary society no longer characterized by dominant institutions.”

Sometimes the terms “morality” and “ethics” are used interchangeably, (particularly within the consumer research literature), however we follow Caruana’s (2007a, p.288) distinction that while morality is concerned with defining right and wrong for an individual or community, ethics relates to “the formal rationalization of morality.” Thus, ethics pertains to one’s inner view of what is right and wrong *and* our mode of action. Morality on the other hand “serves to restrain our purely self-interested desires” so that we can co-operate together (Shaw 1991, p.19). However, since moral interpretations of right and wrong vary between individuals within a society and are moreover continually transforming (see also Luedicke, Thompson and Giesler 2010) we would agree with Caruana (2007a, p.300) that it is necessary to view “morality in consumption as a process of social construction [which] will allow interpretations to absorb the various alternative strands of social meaning that appear relevant in people’s consumption practices.” Therefore, a useful framework to help explore the “process through which individuals or cultures come to view issues or behavior as possessing moral properties” is Lovett and Jordan’s (2010, p.177) model of moralization. Building on Rozin’s (1997) conceptualization of moralization, Lovett and Jordan (2010) advocate a ‘graduation-based’ descriptive model which comprises of four levels of moralization that could take place in any given situation (i.e. Level 0—simple preferences with no moralization, Level 1—preferences moralized for the self, Level 2—preferences moralized for the self and others and Level 3—public expression of moralization). Consequently, we argue that their model offers a constructive and nuanced perspective of moral sensitivity which will help to enrich our understanding of the role of

moralization amongst pet owners and their consumption practices.

Although no single theory can “claim to have the dynamics of consumption entirely pinned down” (Caruana 2007b, p. 210), a comprehensive framework that seeks to illuminate consumption from a constructivist perspective is Holt’s (1995) Typology of Consumption Practices. However, comprehensive though the framework is, it does not unequivocally acknowledge the moral dimensions of consumption. We would argue that this may well be a reflection of the fact that few studies focusing on consumption actually consider moral issues unless their focus is disposal and/or ecological behaviors (Caruana 2007a; 2007b; Kwak et al. 2001; Luedicke et al. 2010). If we accept Wilk’s (2001) assertion that consumption is a moral matter, it follows perforce that in order to remain relevant to contemporary analyses of consumption Holt’s (1995) typology might be usefully extended so as to incorporate the moral dimensions of consumption.

Accordingly, this paper examines the social construction of morality in the context of consumption practices associated with pet ownership in the UK. Hence, the contribution of this article is twofold; first, we develop and propose extending Holt’s (1995) typology of consumption practices to help align the fields of morality and consumer behavior research so as to describe consumption practices more fully. Second, we contribute to current knowledge regarding the role of morality and socio-cultural influences in relation to owners and their pets.

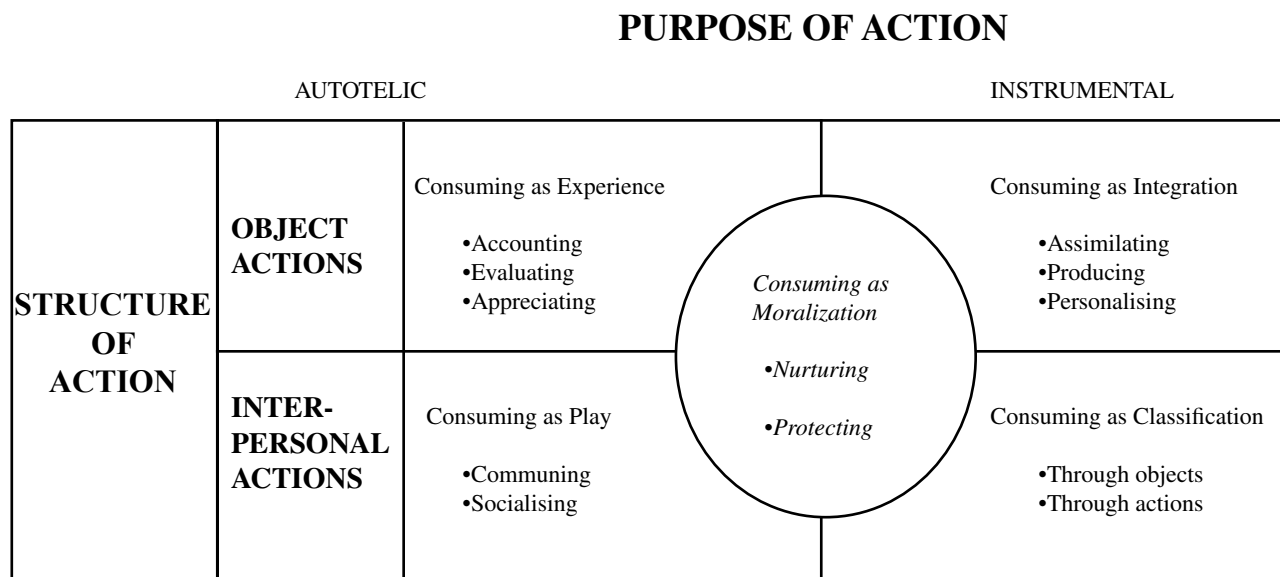
IDENTIFYING A PLACE FOR MORALITY IN HOLT’S (1995) TYPOLOGY OF CONSUMPTION PRACTICES

Rather than reiterate a description of Holt’s (1995) four metaphors and the consumption practices in which they are embedded, the following paragraphs focus on how his typology may be usefully extended so as to incorporate some of the moral dimensions of consumption.

Holt (1995) suggests that consumers’ autotelic subjective emotional experiences of consumption objects are embedded in accounting, evaluating and appreciating practices. He argues that consumers engage in accounting practices when they draw on an institutional framework in order to make sense of their consumption experience and that they engage in evaluating practices when they “apply this framework to pass judgment on the situations, people and actions they encounter” (Holt 1995, p.5). Whilst it would be impossible to list all of the institutional frameworks that pet owners may draw upon, if we take the example of those associated with the Kennel Club (est. 1873), the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy (est. 1910) as well as other registered breeding clubs, we would argue that certain evaluating practices may well encourage the treatment of animals as aesthetic objects and ignore the impact of this on animal health (Hirschman 1994). This has led to widespread discussion regarding the morality of humankind’s manipulation of certain pedigree breeds with correspondingly deep rooted divisions among pet owners (and others) regarding the ethics of purchasing certain types of pedigrees that are considered acceptable (e.g. Labrador) over others that are considered problematic (e.g. King Charles Spaniels and syringomyelia), the purchasing of mongrels rather than pedigrees and/or the purchase of animals from shelters and rescue homes versus purchasing from animal breeders. Holt

¹Note that the conversations surrounding whether or not animals have value, rights or interests are outwith the remit of this paper. However, it is fair to acknowledge at the outset that whilst accepting the blurring of the boundaries between humans and animals (see for example Holbrook et al. 2001), our starting point is that we [and our participants] perceive the keeping of pets as morally acceptable and therefore may be more inclined towards a welfarist view as opposed to an animal rights stance.

FIGURE 1
Metaphors for Consuming and Consumption Practices in the Context of Pet Ownership



Source: Adapted from Holt (1995, p.3). Extensions are highlighted in italics.

explains that “appreciating taps the full range of emotional responses” (1995, p.5). Indeed, the human-animal literature widely documents owners as having an emotional attachment to their pet (i.e. recognizing the pet as being a friend and/or part of the family). Whilst in itself this does not provoke moral concern it does raise moral questions when the love and attachment to that animal causes harm.

Holt suggests that integrating practices are instrumental bi-directional symbolic acts in that consumers both symbolically draw external objects into their self concept (via producing and personalizing practices) and “reorient their self concept so that it aligns with an institutionally defined identity” (1995, p.6) (via assimilating practices). With regard to pet owners, key facets of assimilation include being able to demonstrate a sufficient “degree of competence”—that is, “thinking like, feeling like...and looking like” a competent pet owner (Holt 1995, p.7). Manifestations of these practices might include owners’ efforts to develop their knowledge relating to their pets’ behavior and welfare, which raises all sorts of moral and ethical dilemmas regarding appropriate diets, grooming regimes (the clipping of cats’ claws) and whether or not to attend training/obedience classes (for dogs).

Classifying practices involve both classifying via an established association with the object itself (i.e. owning a pedigree/mongrel cat or dog) and classifying through actions, where “what matters is *how* one interacts with the object” (1995, p.11). In the context of pet ownership, examples of classifying practices might include using a dog as a weapon to communicate a masculine image or using a cat or dog as a fashion accessory to communicate status.

Finally, playing is an autotelic interaction and is embedded in both communing practices, which index the mutual experience of consuming and in socializing practices, where “playing often takes on a more performative, reciprocal style” in which consumers use their experiences to “entertain each other” (1995, p.9). There are clearly moral aspects to the socializing practices that revolve around the use of animals for human amusement. Certainly the competitive arena of the cat/dog show and other animal performances (e.g. circus animals) may be perceived by some as exploiting animals and/or treating them in a “grotesque and cruel fashion in order that humans

might be amused” (Belk 1996, p.121).

Identifying some of these moral issues within each of Holt’s (1995) metaphors strengthens our rationale for re-working Holt’s typology. Consequently, we propose that these areas may be addressed by adding a new dimension, namely *consuming as moralization*. As shown in Figure 1 above, we have placed this metaphor at the center of Holt’s (1995) typology, in order to demonstrate that consumer moralization embraces both autotelic and instrumental as well as object and interpersonal actions. This is discussed in more detail in our findings below, but prior to this discussion, the next section describes the methodological approach that we adopted to elicit stories from our participants concerning their cats and dogs.

A PHOTO-ELICITATION APPROACH

Our approach utilizes a technique known as autodiving (Heisley and Levy 1991) which describes a particular photo-elicitation technique whereby visual and/or audio recordings of informants are made by the researcher and then used as projective devices for interviewing (Prosser and Schwartz 1998). Following Zaltman and Coulter (1995) and Holbrook et al. (2001), our participants took their own photographs. We initially contacted four people known to us and via personal referrals, our initial convenience sample of four snowballed to a total of eighteen.² Our interviews followed what Thompson, Locander and Pollio (1989) call the phenomenological interview, with the aim of yielding a conversation. So, with the exception of the opening question, the interview had no *a priori* questions concerning the topic. With permission from the participants, interviews were audio-taped and lasted from one to three hours. The verbatim transcripts were then independently and collectively reviewed by the two authors to identify broad themes.

²Note that pseudonyms are adopted when referring to participants and their pets throughout the remainder of this paper.

THE MORAL DIMENSIONS OF PET OWNERS' CONSUMPTION PRACTICES

The photographs played a key role in stimulating participants to tell stories about their pet's character and behavior and the myriad ways in which their lives are intertwined. A total of fifteen pets (eight cats and seven dogs) were currently owned by participants. Their pets were acquired from public spaces (i.e. strays), rescue shelters, family relations (i.e. gifts) and pedigree breeders. Owner relationships with their pets also ranged from family pet or companion animal (i.e. partner/child substitute) to that of a working relationship (i.e. guide dog trainer/doggie daycare provider).

Moralization and Experiential Practices

Many of our participants own pedigree animals and the acquisition and subsequent sense-making of the role(s) of these animals in the lives of these owners are informed by a variety of values and beliefs. Helen recalls telling her late husband that she wanted "some nice pedigree kittens." In response he bought her "a little book with all pedigree cats in" and she decided that she liked the Abyssinians because of their pretty faces. Thus, Helen's evaluation regarding which cat to purchase was primarily aesthetic and indeed this was reinforced and clearly influenced by the fact that her late husband "really wanted to have a show animal." We will discuss the showing of her Abyssinian cat further in the section on moralization and classification practices; it suffices to say here that in terms of sense-making, Helen viewed Agatha as *both* a family pet and a show animal, at least for a short time, with no apparent moral concerns. Although Mandy has no inclination to show her English Cocker spaniel, she spoke of her concerns regarding the breeding of pedigrees for the purposes of money-making and therefore not buying her dog "from a puppy farm type place-you know where they just take your order-they are obviously just breeding bitches just to make money...and so we didn't want that." Alison is clearly much less interested in physical appearances and is rather more concerned in animals/dogs for their own sake (i.e. the autotelic aspects), thus her evaluation of the Labrador breed as "a good, honest, down to earth dog" is based on temperament and behavior rather than aesthetics and clearly reflects the culturally accepted interpretation of this breed as a good family pet. In comparison to Helen, Alison and Mandy are both rather contemptuous of those who show animals (see later section on moralizing and classification practices). Thus, when Alison discusses Patsy's role in her life she says "Patsy is just a pet...we've got no want or need to show her at all, she is just our family pet."

The most significant appreciating practices involve feeding, training and caring for their animals. Although these practices themselves do not raise moral questions, they do provoke moral concern if they cause harm to the animal. Notably, none of our participants were identified as overfeeding, spoiling or training their pets to the point of causing harm. In some cases, a sense of "tough love" was apparent when it came to training their pets, but this was to ensure the safety of the pet rather than for the kudos of owning or exhibiting a well-trained pet. The levels of moralization exhibited by our participants in relation to each of the three practices within which consuming as experience is embedded are identified as being mostly Level 1 preferences. That is, the participants moralize their preferences for themselves but not for others. However, some participants, including Helen, do not appear to moralize their preferences (i.e. Level 0) with regard to experiential practices at all, although as we shall see in later sections Helen does engage in various levels of moralization in relation to other consumption practices. The fact that none of our participants appear to engage in level 2 moralizing here is perhaps not surprising given that ex-

periential practices relate to their personal, subjective and autotelic experiences of living with their pets. We pick up on the feeding, training and caring practices again from an instrumental perspective in the next section on moralization and integration practices.

Moralization and Integration Practices

With regard to the producing and personalizing practices related to the identity of our participants as pet owners, by far the most common theme was that of the "rescuer." For example, Judith saw "an advert for a dog that a chap couldn't keep [and] went to see her...she wasn't exactly what I thought of as having as a dog. But then once I'd seen her, I felt like she'd kind of chosen me...I would have felt guilty if I hadn't had her." Alison rescued both her current dog and her first dog, recounting the story of the latter as follows: "she was an accident...they were going to put her in a bucket, so...I came home with her smuggled under my coat."

Similar to Holt's (1995) discussion of assimilating practices, our participants used a variety of techniques in order to become competent participants within the social world of pet ownership, especially with regard to training and feeding. While we recognize that consumers can communicate their identity as competent pet owners by having a well trained pet, we would argue that there may be moral issues associated with assimilating practices such as intensive training regimes. Perhaps given the more acquiescent nature of dogs compared to cats, training was discussed mainly by our dog owners/trainers. One mode of intensive training perceived to provide a valuable service to society but considered morally questionable as far as the quality of life of the dog is concerned is the training of guide-dogs for the blind. Speaking about her experience of training guide-dogs, Laura felt angered by the fact that some guide-dog owners "perhaps didn't love dogs quite as much as you wanted and were using it [i.e. the dog] as a tool" rather than a pet. Moreover, she felt that it was more natural for a dog to be used for police work as a police dog is "doing what their nose tells them and everything, whereas guiding...they are not allowed to scavenge and they are not allowed to chase other things and they are not allowed to play when they are in harness. It's really a lot of training against their instincts." For our participants, the primary motivation for training their dogs was mainly to protect the safety of their pet and other owner's pets rather than to produce a super-trained, obedient pet. Here, Claire "had to start from the basics...get him [Angus] to walk to heel...and it's just taken pretty much all that time to feel confident about going out and letting him be round other dogs." As indicated earlier, concerning the feeding of their pets, our participants did not spoil or over-feed their pets. Instead, dietary regimes were often seen as being instrumental in maintaining the health of their pet. For example, Millie states that she buys IAMS, which was "recommended to me by a vet because they said that the biscuits were good for getting rid of plaque on their teeth." Many of our participants further demonstrated their competence as pet owners by their ability to judge between good and bad kennel or cattery services. Here, Stewart explained that they "had to take them [Agatha and Brady] to another one [cattery] last year, because it was sort of last minute" but that Helen "wouldn't take them up there again." Helen elaborated further as to the reasons why: "the enclosures were closed in on all sides, so the cats couldn't see out...when I went, they looked frightened; they didn't look comfortable". Among our participants, we find no evidence of preferences that are not moralized at all (i.e. Level 0) in relation to integrating practices and though it is difficult to measure this as such, it seems that there are more preferences that are moralized for the self (i.e. Level 1) here than there are in relation to experiential practices. However, Laura's views regarding the use

of guide-dogs points to a higher level of moralizing, namely the moralization of preferences for herself and for others (i.e. Level 2). We would speculate that where consumption practices have an instrumental rather than an autotelic focus, moral issues are more likely to come to the fore.

Moralization and Playing Practices

Both our cat and dog owners engaged in socializing and communing practices although few moral issues arose concerning the practice of communing. One example however, concerns Sheila whose cats helped to facilitate the sharing of cat-owning experiences with her neighbors. Here she felt that it was morally objectionable that cat owners should opt to keep their cats inside—*“to me you can’t keep a cat indoors, a cat’s a free spirit you’ve got to let them go out.”*

Regarding socializing practices and moral issues, our participants held mixed views towards the competitive arena of pet shows for the purpose of human entertainment. Of those who expressed positive attitudes towards the competitive showing of pets, it was evident that the owners continued to view their animals as pets rather than as objects of avocation. Helen was informed by the breeder that Agatha would make a good show animal and although her and her husband did show Agatha, Helen went on to explain that they stopped attending shows after a while partly because she was not that interested but also because *“Agatha didn’t like going.”* Thus, in the interests of the cat, she considered it morally inappropriate to continue showing her. Similarly, Sheila felt that Marmelstein’s *“markings are perfect [and that] she would actually have done quite well but she’s a pet.”* Although not expressing either an anti-pet show or pro-pet show stance, some participants discussed the less serious aspects of pet showing. This was particularly evident amongst pet-owning households with children as they spoke of their experiences at fun dog shows. Here Michelle and Anne talked about Jake’s foray into the waggiest tail and cutest eye competitions and laughed as they recounted his fiasco as a performer in that *“when he was doing the waggiest tail—he sat down! And when he was doing the cutest eyes he wouldn’t sit.”* In comparison to the positive and more neutral views, other participants were rather contemptuous of those who show animals. Here Laura felt that organizers and judges of competitive pet shows exist *“in their own little bubble and they go, isn’t it beautiful and look at its head-look at the size of the head—fantastic.”* She then continues to criticize owners who partake in competitive showing by questioning the morality of certain breeders who manipulate certain breeds despite health problems (e.g. manipulating a larger head for the Bulldog breed despite being unable to give birth naturally as a result). This moral issue will be discussed again in the next section on moralizing and classification practices from an instrumental perspective.

None of our participants commented specifically on the morality of animals being utilized solely as performers (e.g. circus animals) but in contrast to the perhaps more exploitative nature of competitive pet shows, agility shows were seen more as playful experiences for both the owner and their pet. For example, Mandy feels that *“the agility’s just fun...it’s just like the egg and spoon race for dogs isn’t it?”* Laura used to take Fifi to a local dog agility club but despite her enjoyment of performing together as a team in an autotelic way (e.g. *“she’s looking at you and there is just the two of you in a partnership”*), she felt that after completing the training, the club organizers lay enormous pressure on members to participate in competitions and subsequently she stopped going. Various levels of moralization are exhibited by our participants in relation to playing practices. While Michelle and Anne do not appear to engage in moralizing their preferences at all (i.e. Level 0), a number of participants (e.g. Helen and Sheila) moralized their

preferences for themselves but not for others (i.e. Level 1). However, those participants who are strongly against the exploitative nature of both animal shows and agility competitions moralize their preferences both for themselves and others (i.e. Level 2). That we find more evidence of Level 2 moralizing here in comparison to experiential and integrating practices, is perhaps to be expected given that playing practices are interpersonally structured while the previous practices are structured around the relationship between consumers and consumption objects (Holt 1995); here between pet owners and their pets.

Moralization and Classification Practices

None of our participants engaged in classifying practices such as using a dog as a weapon or using a cat or dog as a fashion accessory to communicate status. However, many of our participants spoke of such classifying practices within their respective neighborhoods. Laura was concerned by the rising number of *“trophy dogs”* in her local area. Wilma also moralizes about this issue and believes it to be a problem with the owner rather than the dog—*“they are not exercised and they are stir crazy and then it gives that breed a bad name, when really, most of the time it’s the owner and that they are not exercised enough.”*

The classifying practice of using pets as a fashion statement is also considered as morally reprehensible. In particular, Alison questioned such owner’s motives for owning these animals by suggesting that they were not *“getting a dog for family reasons... they’re not getting it to enhance their lives in any way...they are just getting it as a fashion accessory.”* Also linked to the notion of animals serving as a fashion accessory is the dressing-up of pets. While some participants feel that dressing up pets is cruel and exploitative, others do not object to people who do this but emphasize that they would not do this themselves. For example, Sheila states *“no...you couldn’t do that to them—that’s cruel.”* Whereas Judith feels that she could *“never be someone that would put bows in their hair and put little coats and boots on [but] Poodles or Toy Poodles...these sort of people might put bows in their hair or carry them in shopping bags.”*

In relation to the moral issues surrounding breed manipulation but from an instrumental perspective, none of the participants own a designer breed or hybrid. Of the participants who own a pure-bred pet, animal breed selection tends to be based more on breed characteristics and personal preferences rather than an attempt to “enhance distinction” (Holt 1995, p.10). However, as hinted at above, some participants are clearly uneasy with regard to animal-breed manipulation. While Helen talked enthusiastically about her preference for the Abyssinian breed, she expressed disapproval of the growing intervention of breeders meddling to produce cats’ faces that were *“shoved out or pushed in.”* Commenting on the Munchkin cat, Sam and Wilma also feel that such practices are inappropriate—*“she [the breeder] deliberately bred cats so that they had little tiny like dwarf legs...for me, that’s wrong.”* For the most part, our participants moralized about classifying practices in relation to themselves and others (i.e. Level 2). However, with regard to the dressing-up of animals, some focused only on moral preferences for themselves (i.e. Level 1). Similar to our analysis of integrating practices, there was very little evidence of our participants displaying preferences that are not moralized in relation to classifying practices.

CONSUMING AS MORALIZATION

Various levels of moralization permeate the preferences of our participants in relation to each of Holt’s (1995) ten consumption practices in which the various metaphorical meanings of consump-

tion are embedded. However, in order to integrate the moral aspects of consumption more formally, we propose the addition of a fifth dimension *consuming as moralization* and that this should be placed at the centre of Holt's typology (see Figure 1). This central positioning represents the fact that moralization embraces both the autotelic and instrumental aspects of Holt's (1995) vertical axis (i.e. purpose of action) as well as the object and interpersonal aspects of his horizontal axis (i.e. structure of action). We suggest furthermore that moralization is embedded in two specific consumption practices, namely nurturing and protecting, which we will now discuss in turn.

Our research lends support to McKechnie and Tynan's (2006) suggestion that nurturing ought to be added to Holt's framework. While these authors do not address the issue of how nurturing might be incorporated into the typology, we suggest that nurturing is one of the consumption practices within which moralization is embedded. Nurturing practices embrace two aspects of the interrelationship between pet owners and (their) animals; namely taking responsibility and educating humans. Nurturing practices are particularly relevant in terms of pet owners taking responsibility for the wellbeing of their animals. For our participants, this aspect of nurturing is primarily autotelic, although for other pet owners it may well serve a more instrumental purpose (i.e. obeying the law on animal welfare; feeding and training in relation to identity, which clearly link with integrating practices). In terms of Holt's (1995) structure of action, taking responsibility for one's pet embraces both object actions (between owner and pet) and interpersonal actions (i.e. within the family and in relation to others in the neighborhood). Among our participants, many acknowledged the greater responsibility of looking after a dog compared to a cat and they went to some considerable lengths in order to meet this responsibility. For example Claire moved to the countryside so that her dog Angus would be away from busy roads and Judith identified suitable doggie day care services before she began to look for a dog. Many of our participants clearly construe the notion of taking responsibility not just in terms of their personal responsibility for their respective pets but also at a societal level (i.e. the responsibility of mankind in relation to the practices associated with keeping pets). Hence the level 2 moralizing that was exhibited among our participants in relation to the broader aspects of the pet industry, which they directed towards such practices as intense breeding, competitive showing and the use and treatment of animals as status objects (trophy dogs and fashion accessories).

With regard to the developmental and educational aspects of pet keeping and in support of Hirschman's (1994, p.623) findings, some families keep pets "to help teach children to be responsible and nurturant." Here, Sheila believes strongly that keeping pets is important in part "because it teaches them how to look after other things and it also teaches them about life and death." Similarly, Alison feels that it is "a key part of growing up to role play and take care of animals." To the extent that pets play an important role in the (moral) development and education of humans, this aspect of nurturing practices serves an instrumental purpose which is interpersonally structured.

Moralization is also embedded in a second set of practices, which we term protecting practices. Protecting practices embrace two aspects; safeguarding and insuring. In terms of safeguarding, our participants engage in a host of creative measures designed for the largely autotelic purpose of shielding their pets from harm. For example, the safeguarding of cats around main roads is an issue for Simon who discussed his exit route to prevent DJ from following him to the shops as follows: "what I've got to do is give him a fresh bowl of food, quickly put the alarm on and lock the door, run down the back pass and meet Chris, we both can't go out together because he will follow us." While these activities focus on

the interactions between our participants and their pets (i.e. object actions) for largely autotelic reasons, they could also be construed instrumentally in the sense that if their animals were to stray onto busy roads and cause a crash their owners would most likely be held accountable. This is mitigated to some extent by insuring practices, which we will discuss shortly. Micro-chipping is another safeguarding practice against pet loss, as Jane suggests; "if anything happened he can be scanned, he's on a register so they can scan him and find us." A final safeguarding practice was brought to our attention by Laura, who runs a doggie day care business with her husband. She informed us that she is keen to advise her customers of the benefits of castrating male dogs, as she explains; "if you get a van full of male dogs that are not castrated...we might have trouble. I don't think they [her customers] realize...but because he smells like an un-castrated dog, they [other dogs] will attack him for it." As indicated already, for the most part safeguarding practices serve an autotelic purpose, which is structured around the interaction between pet owners and their (precious) animals. However, as with nurturing practices, many of our participants also view protecting at a broader, societal level. In this regard, as discussed in the findings above, a good number of our participants rescued animals that had previously been abandoned. The belief that as a society we ought to protect abandoned animals, if not prevent this from occurring in the first instance, may well explain the Level 2 moralizing, which our participants directed towards those who engage in practices such as the treatment of animals as status objects and fashion accessories. For our participants, the underlying supposition of their moralization here, which was sometimes verbalised and at other times not, seems to be that such practices undermine the welfare of these animals.

In terms of insuring, this also appears to transcend Holt's (1995) distinction between the autotelic and instrumental purposes of action, as well as his view that actions are either object or interpersonally structured, as the following quotes suggest. For Sheila, a key advantage of having pet insurance for Bryan is simply to mitigate against the fear of losing him—"if it gets lost, they'll put a photo out and try and help you find your cat." Claire described her fear of Angus causing an accident and either hurting himself or hurting someone else and therefore she primarily purchased insurance in case of "some liability claim being made."

As seen above, for the most part our participants engage in moralizing their preferences in relation to nurturing and protecting practices at Levels 1 and 2. Only Laura engages in expressing her moral judgments publicly (i.e. Level 3).

MORALIZATION AND CONSUMPTION PRACTICES

The above findings demonstrate that Holt's (1995) four metaphors serve to obscure the fact that "consumption is in essence a moral matter" (Wilk 2001, p.246) and therefore, we propose extending Holt's (1995) framework to include the additional dimension *consuming as moralization*. As our analysis of the practices in which moralization is embedded demonstrates above, neither nurturing nor protecting practices divide easily into their autotelic and instrumental purposes. Similarly, these two practices often embrace both object actions and interpersonal actions. Therefore, we would argue that the *consuming-as-moralization* metaphor can *only* be positioned at the center of Holt's framework. We accept that no single theory can hope to attend to consumption in its entirety nonetheless we believe that our proposed extensions to Holt's (1995) typology of consumption practices (i.e. consuming as moralization—embedded in the practices of *nurturing* and *protecting*) help to describe consumption practices in the context of the everyday life experi-

ences of pet owners more fully. Moreover, it is anticipated that our proposed extensions will help to further align the fields of morality and consumer behavior.

In terms of the various levels of moralization identified by Lovett and Jordan (2010), in the context of pet ownership and related consumption practices, the majority of consumers (i.e. pet owners) in this study appear to moralize their preferences at Levels 1 and 2, with only a very small minority engaging in level 3 moralization. With regard to the implications of our findings in this context for future cultural studies of consumption, we would suggest that the *consuming-as-moralization* metaphor is undoubtedly applicable to other consumption contexts. In fact, given the current concern regarding the levels of alcohol consumption in the UK and in the aftermath of the controversy in global financial markets as well as more general debates on rising materialism within capitalist society, we would expect to see a greater prevalence of level 3 moralizing among consumers in regard to these contexts of consumption than we have seen in our study of pet ownership.

In terms of contributing to current knowledge on the role of morality and socio-cultural influences in relation to owners and their pets, overall, it is evident that our participants hold values with respect to the moral consequences of behavior in relation to pets, over and above simply adhering to the legislative requirements of pet-keeping. Consumer moralization seems to permeate the lived reality of pet ownership, with consumers in this study engaging in moralizing their preferences for themselves (i.e. Level 1) and others (i.e. Level 2). Although many of our participants appreciate that the UK has a more progressive stance towards the welfare of animals in comparison to many other countries there was still a sense for some participants that more needs to be done to protect animals from abandonment, exploitation and harm. If as Ghandi suggests our moral progress as a nation is to be judged by the way our animals are treated, then we clearly still have some way to go.

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