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The Myth of the Solitary Cat

"CATS . . . LIVE in our homes without any attempt to conform to our standards; they pursue their own agenda, they cannot be relied upon to share our feelings, their minds are less open to us, and they seem quite immune to human or canine guilt."[1] Here, Katharine Rogers captures the most common understanding of the domestic cat in our culture. As sociologists, we would call her statement a social construction; that is, humans in our culture view cats as having these characteristics quite apart from any knowledge of their innate capacities and regardless of contrary evidence and personal experience. The power of such constructions lies not in their accuracy but in their ability to give meaning to our own collective lives in a particular period. Thus, in our culture, cats are mysterious creatures whose motivation comes from within. Aloof, independent, and solitary, they lack a strong interest in human affairs and cannot be counted on to share our feelings or give solace. Their own lives tend to be centered on instrumental activities such as hunting and eating. They are never fully tame or fully committed. The unspoken contrast here is always to our other popular animal companion,

the socially constructed dog, who lives largely for us and willingly conforms to our standards.

In Western culture we have made a place for companion animals since the eighteenth century. In the seventeenth century, the philosopher Rene Descartes declared all animals to be soulless and unworthy of concern. In reaction, the French upper classes of the eighteenth century developed an alternative, humane perspective on animals from which cats benefited. The cat came to be included with dogs as a companion animal and the literate began writing about and expressing their feelings toward their animals. Enlightenment philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau was fond of cats and noted that domineering men did not like cats "because the cat is free and will never consent to become a slave. He will do nothing to your order, as the other animals do."[2] This was clearly intended as a criticism of domineering men and a compliment to the domestic cat, who symbolized the new emphasis on liberty and independence. The French influenced the English in this new humane sensibility toward animals. The famous eighteenth-century man of letters, Horace Walpole, wrote frequently about his own animals and those of his friends. One of his cats, Selima, was immortalized in an ode written by his friend, the poet Thomas Gray.[3]

The eighteenth century is clearly a time of transition in the stature of animals. In writing about one's feelings for animals one had to be humorous, mocking, or at least apologetic to save one's reputation. By the nineteenth century, writers were no longer discouraged from discussing the cat and other companion animals as worthy friends with their own personalities and endearing traits. Writers downplayed their wildness and independence and emphasized their sweetness, fastidiousness, and domesticity.[4] Mark Twain, in *Pudd'nhead*

Wilson, describes the houses of Dawson's Landing as having window ledges often adorned with a cat "stretched at full length, asleep and blissful, with her furry belly to the sun and a paw curved over her nose. Then that house was complete, and its contentment and peace were made manifest to the world by this symbol, whose testimony is infallible."[5] Cats frequently were also included in paintings of domestic scenes in the United States, Great Britain, and France.

In the industrialized twentieth century, with its unending restraints on our freedom, writers again emphasized the wildness and independence of cats as positive and laudable characteristics. The cat in Leila Usher's poem, "I Am the Cat," written in the early 1900s, speaks to us:

> Could they but see themselves
> As I, the Cat, see them,
> These human creatures, bereft of all freedom,
> Who follow in the ruts others made
> Long ages gone!
> Who have rings in their noses,
> Yet know it not.
> They hate me, the Cat,
> Because, forsooth, I do not love them.[6]

Rogers, who has studied historical changes in feline imagery, notes that later twentieth-century writers have been successful in taking on the perspective of cats: "To do so requires not only sensitive interpretation of observed feline behavior . . . but an acceptance of the animal as a quasi-equal being whose feelings and claims can be presented as important without being falsely inflated into human ones. Twentieth-century writers are more ready to recognize that cats and other animals are individuals with lives of their own, and

thus can create a cat's consciousness, seemingly free of projected human values."[7] Equality, then, is a significant addition to the contemporary social construction of the cat. To what extent can we say this greater openness to interspecies communication has led to a more "objective" view of the cat?

Rogers sees this intersubjectivity as affirming and accepting the traditional social construction of cats as aloof and solitary. Cleveland Amory's popular books about his famous cat Polar Bear are typical of current attitudes, she argues, "in celebrating their subject's amusing perversity rather than his sweet affection or refined ways. We now admire in cats the very qualities for which they were censured in the past–their refusal to comply with human wishes and standards, as well as their emotional independence and their cool pursuit of self-interest."[8] On the other hand, Rogers gives many other examples that indicate quite different feline characteristics, which she either ignores or discredits as too dog-like. For instance, she accuses an author of a cat autobiography of making the cat into a dog by giving it a name so the cat can have self-respect and be able to come when called![9] In another instance, she speaks of altruism as unfeline.[10] In short, Rogers discounts as sentimentalizing any instance in which cats are described as more affectionate, committed, or obedient than the accepted dominant social construction. Accounts like those of Rogers cause us to wonder whether there are alternative perspectives on cats. The cat portrayal in more popular works or in the minds of cat owners is an altogether different cat.

The Unsung Cat

Let us begin with the subject of cat heroes. The very idea of cat heroes seems remarkable because it contradicts the

common perception of cats. Swanson, the author of a book on cat heroes, notes, "The qualities most commonly associated with the feline species include selfishness, indolence, cunning, and a tendency toward pique. According to popular opinion, cats extend themselves only insofar as they see an opportunity for a meal or fear the loss thereof."[11] Nevertheless, there are many documented cases of cats who risked their lives or who took extraordinary steps to save a member of their own or other species. Among the many instances of mother cats who have risked their lives to save their kittens is the story of Scarlett in New York City. Scarlett returned five times to an abandoned auto shop engulfed in flames to save each of her kittens. A firefighter found her badly burned and brought her and her kittens to the North Shore Animal League, where all but one of the kittens survived. The mother's recovery was lengthy, and she will require lifelong medical attention. Sociobiologists would regard Scarlett's behavior as neither loving nor altruistic; it is merely the action of the selfish gene clamoring to live on in the next generation. The selfish gene evidently is not very intelligent; Scarlett was too badly burned to have cared for her four-week-old kittens who were too young to survive without her. It would have made much more sense genetically for her to have saved, say, two kittens and written the others off so she could have continued to care for the ones she saved. But firefighter Giannelli noted, "Though her eyes were swollen shut and her paws burned the cat made a head count of her young ones, touching each kitten with her nose to make sure they were all there."[12]

The numerous instances in which cats have saved children are even more difficult to explain in genetic terms. Mr. Meow was five years old when the Peckroads brought their

first child home from the hospital. They had prepared the cat for the big event in a variety of ways, including allowing him to visit the baby's room as they decorated and stay close by as they changed or rocked the baby when she came home. Several months after the baby's arrival, Mrs. Peckroad heard Mr. Meow yowling frantically. She began to search for him and realized that the cat's cries were coming from the baby's room. She ran into the room to find Mr. Meow on a dresser looking into the crib. "He turned and uttered a piercing cry that brought her rushing to the side of the crib–where she saw, to her horror, that the mobile [she had recently placed over the crib] had fallen into the crib, and baby Sam had gotten tangled up in the cords."[15] Sam was already blue and had to be rushed to the hospital for treatment. Had it not been for Mr. Meow, the baby might have died.

Cats have also saved dogs. About a year after Surya and Matt Drummond took in Tramp, a stray cat, they brought home a golden retriever puppy they called Lady. When Lady was barely grown, she slipped out of her collar and disappeared. The Drummonds searched the woods and fields around their home until dusk with no success. When they returned home, to their dismay they could not find Tramp either though they normally kept him in at night. To try to attract both animals, they put food on the porch and, as they scanned the area, they noticed two glowing eyes at the edge of their property. Matt went to investigate and saw that the eyes belonged to Tramp, but no amount of coaxing would get him to come home. Surya, then, brought the food to him to entice him, but, upon seeing her, Tramp headed into the woods. The Drummonds followed him and finally heard the whimpers of Lady, caught in a fox trap. Tramp took a strong interest in the rescue, even jumping into the car and accom-

panying them to the vet to treat Lady's broken leg.[14] Anyone who has tried to take a cat to the vet will know that this is, indeed, extraordinary.

These examples of feline heroism should at least raise questions about the social construction of cats as uncommitted and lacking in empathy for their significant others. The story about the dog rescue is particularly interesting because the owners indicated that Tramp and Lady were not close. They pretty much went their own way under normal circumstances. But, in an emergency, Tramp acted toward Lady as if he recognized Lady as a member of his group to whom *he had a duty*.

Our own experience with cats has also been quite at odds with common cultural perceptions. We have lived with 15 cats over the last 34 years and have kept notes on their behavior during various periods. Only one of our cats (Calvin) clearly demonstrated unaltruistic behavior. When he first came to live with us, he was disinterested in us, had his own agenda, and lacked empathy for us and our other cats, but he has moved away from this behavior over time. The other 14 have differed from this social construction in key respects. In particular, our cats have been quite sociable and involved in human activities. Although the houses we have lived in have been spacious, the cats have all wanted to sit in whatever room we occupied, often on our laps. Frequently they try to sit on the work in which we are engaged. Several have insisted on sleeping with us, and all have wanted to investigate whatever we do. Some were vocal from the beginning, but all of them became more so over time. They have greeted us enthusiastically in the morning when we have arisen and when we returned home, particularly after we have been away. There has not been a true loner in the lot of them.

They have all wanted to include us in their activities, making demands on us to play, pet them, or see a mouse they have caught before they would eat it. Frequently they would leave their catch for us to admire. When we lived in an apartment in Chicago and had only two cats, Georgy and Alex, we took them down to the yard in good weather. We would let them out the back door and follow them down the stairs. If we returned to the apartment to retrieve something we forgot, we would find them waiting for us on the landing or the stairs. They clearly defined the trip as a joint experience.

We have also found them to be highly adept at manipulating their environment, including us, to better serve their needs. We have been startled to find how many more interactions they initiate than we do. Whether one looks at instrumental interactions such as the quest for food or expressive ones such as the quest for affection, we would have come up with a very different social construction of the cat. Our cats have been highly sociable, involved in our activities, and quite dependent on us.

They are also very sociable with one another.[15] They greet one another by touching noses, sit together, imitate one another, and play together. Some groom each other. Shelly picked up Calvin's habit of drinking from the faucet, which she had not done until she saw him doing it. There are numerous examples of playing together, but we will give just one from our notes:

> Cassidy is full of beans, biting and kicking the area rug in the family room. Calvin comes in and she attacks him. He squeals and gets in defensive position, looking very serious. She circles him and he keeps turning to face her and she attacks three times, each time bringing squeals or grunts from Cal. Then

> she flops and rolls about as he watches. Something in another room catches her attention and she turns her head. She suddenly thrusts her front legs, claws out, in his direction. He gets up and puts his front paw out in her direction. He does this when he wants her to attack him. She gets up and half-heartedly obliges him. Their bodies meet in a stand-up-on-hind-legs position. They move down to all fours; she jumps over him and climbs to the upper tree seat on their cat tree. He watches her. She shifts to the radiator. He sits near the stereo cabinet and they look at each other. She goes to the window. I let her out into the cat run. He follows.

Calvin is very fond of Cassidy, who came from the Whiskers shelter. He allows her to sit in his favorite spots and, unlike his treatment of other cats, he does not slap her and try to make her leave a place he wants to occupy. He loves it when she attacks him and often tries to entice her to do so. She does not always oblige him. Their facial expressions are very communicative; when Calvin wants Cassidy to attack him and she is contemplating doing so, they both tuck their chins in toward their throats and stare intently at each other. Then, Cassidy will look away for a second while Calvin continues to stare. This is generally the signal that the attack will commence.

In short, if our information were based solely on our own cats, we would have developed a very different construction of the cat than that which exists in our culture. This alternative portrait was given further credence in our discussions with other "cat people" we met through the Whiskers Cat Shelter and in our observations of the shelter cats. As a result of our observations, we decided to study multi-cat caretakers and

their cats.[16] Because human–cat interaction varies greatly with the nature of the household, we deliberately chose 20 multi-cat owners who were either single or married without children living at home. These owners were committed to their cats and made time for them. Under these optimum conditions, we could ensure that the cats would act freely. These would be homes in which cats received a great deal of positive attention from their human associate(s) and had relationships with other cats. In addition, we felt that studying multi-cat households would allow us to compare the distinct personalities of the several cats. If, in such households, owners perceived their cats as aloof, uninterested in human affairs, lacking in empathy, and solitary, we might truly say that there is strong evidence to support the prevailing social construction of the cat.

Through the Eyes of Cat Lovers

We apply symbolic interaction to our study of cat interaction with humans and with other cats. The sociological perspective of symbolic interaction treats humans as active constructors of their social world: Humans do not act solely on the basis of norms and other external constraints. Rather, human actors receive and evaluate a social stimulus in terms of their own goals and prior experience as well as in terms of the social norms. The actor's *subjective viewpoint* thus is a factor that must figure in any explanation of how, once a stimulus occurs, actors define the situation, select a course of action, and act. For actors to interact symbolically, before they make a choice they must be able to imagine how others perceive them and how others might react to their choices. They can imagine the meanings others will attach to alternative courses of action because they can take the

perspective of the other. This *intersubjectivity* becomes the basis for cooperation and community as well as opposition and rebellion. Humans always have a choice. Consider the student who is turning a paper in late because he went to a party instead of working at the library. Which approach should he take with this professor? Should he tell the professor that his dog ate his paper or his printer ran out of ink? Or should he just tell the truth and beg for mercy? He knows this professor does not like lame excuses. He decides to try for mercy.

George Herbert Mead, a central figure in the development of symbolic interactionism, asserted repeatedly in his work that non-human animals could not engage in symbolic interaction. He believed that they lack the required cognitive skills, such as memory of past events and ability to project into the future, and they cannot take the perspective of the other and imagine how the other would respond to one's own actions. Most significant to Mead is animals' lack of language and, thus, the inability to converse with oneself about alternative courses of action without acting them out. Without language it is not possible to have a sense of self and see oneself as others do. According to Mead, animals may communicate with one another through gestures, but there is no indication that they are aware that their behavior has meaning for other animals. Further, they have no control over their gestures, which are instinctual manifestations. Animals, then, are not engaging in symbolic interaction when they communicate through gestures, because something is symbolic only if it is under one's control.[17] Thus, the play we described above between Calvin and Cassidy would not be meaningful. It would just be the acting out of some instinctual imperative.

Mead's famous colleague, Charles Horton Cooley, did not see language as critical for symbolic interaction. He wrote about his daughter's ability to take the perspective of her mother by the time she was six months old, long before she developed language skills.[18] Recently psychologists have begun exploring these issues and argue that even infants two or three months old have some capacity to take the role of the other in a social relationship, forming the basis of a complex mutual understanding.[19] We would argue that such role-taking is based only minimally on cognitive development. More important are the infant's observational skills, which provide the information about the other, and the social bond between infant and caretaker, which provides the motivation to understand and respond to the significant other.

Contemporary sociologist Randall Collins also argues for an emotional dimension to the concept of role-taking. He suggests that there are two types of symbolic interaction differentiated by type of goal: *practical goals* generated by our relationship to nature, such as problems of survival, comfort, and so forth;[20] and *social goals* generated by our relationship to social groups and focused on symbols of solidarity. Social goals develop out of what Collins calls "natural interaction rituals," which require at least two participants in the same location who "focus attention on the same object or action, and are aware that each other is maintaining this focus," and they "share a common mood or emotion." This creates a shared reality in which "participants feel like members of a little group, with moral obligations to one another. Their relationship becomes symbolized by whatever they focused upon during their ritual interaction. Subsequently, when they use these symbols [such as a secret handshake in a fraternal organization] they have a sense of group mem-

bership."[21] Symbols remind them to reconstitute the group assembly. Such social goals are expressive in nature and valued for themselves rather than having any utility.

The inner lives of animals and their relationship with one another become viable topics within this revised concept of symbolic interaction. We may ask whether something so evolutionarily advantageous would be likely to develop only in humans and not in other related animals who also face situations in which competing courses of action appear.[22] We must revisit the question of whether animals have a sense of self, a personality. We must ask whether animals choose between competing courses of action and how they make such choices. Through what mechanisms do they take the role of the other? Are emotional attachment, smell, and/or relational thinking involved? What types of symbolic interaction do animals engage in? Are shared meanings and a sense of past and future possible? Sociologists are now beginning to raise these questions.[23]

Following Sanders in his study of dogs and their caretakers, we asked our feline caretakers questions based on four issues. First, we tried to establish whether they saw their cats as able to think, including the ability to anticipate actions, solve problems, and make choices between alternative courses of action. We wanted to know if the caretakers viewed their cats as individuals with distinct personalities. We asked the owners if they saw their cats as emotional, empathetic, and able to reciprocate in the relationship. Finally, we wanted to know if they considered their cats to be family members with social standing in the home and the right to be included in various social rituals.[24] As caretakers of cats ourselves, we were not surprised that their responses did not conform to either Mead's views on animals or the social myths surrounding cats.

The Cat as Minded Actor

Virtually all of our respondents answered in the affirmative when we asked them the question, Do you think your cats think? We then went on to explore different dimensions of thinking. To see whether the caretakers believed that their cats could assess the future, we asked respondents if their cats anticipate events. One owner's husband told her that her favorite cats go to the door and wait for her shortly before her customary time of return from work. Another said that one of her cats knows when he is going to be medicated and hides. In our home, Shelly knows when we are going to brush her long, beautiful fur and runs away and hides before we can catch her. It also appears to us that some of our cats know when they will be taken to the veterinarian and hide *before* we take out the carriers we use to transport them. Since we do not take the cats to the veterinarian at frequent or regular intervals, it suggests that the cats can read our demeanor. These anticipatory actions are important evidence of the cat's ability to take the role of the other in social interaction.

We also asked the owners if their cats ever "figured out" something the owners did not expect them to grasp. We received numerous examples of such behavior. One respondent believed her cat learned on his own to ring the doorbell when he wanted to come back in the house. Another thought her cat had figured out how to flush the toilet to scare another cat away from her food so he could eat it. This owner also believed this same cat saved her life by sitting on her chest to wake her up when the furnace gave off toxic fumes. Almost all of our owners told of their cats' ability to open doors and cabinets. Thus, they believed that problem-solving was well within their cats' mental capacity.

We then asked our respondents if their cats ever seemed to make choices between alternatives. Such situations are treated as important in the symbolic interactionist conception of thinking because they require an internal conversation about future consequences. All of our owners were able to recount such situations. Several told us that their cats would wait to eat the food placed in front of them until they were sure they could not get the owner to give them something they liked better. As one owner described it, "Honeybun, when I first give her the food she is supposed to eat (Hills), will wait a bit to see if I will give her favorite (Fancy Feast); eventually, she will eat the Hills food."[25] Another study participant talked about her cat weighing alternatives:

> Piccolina (the blind one) also loves to go outside, but I can only let her do it when she's going to have my undivided attention, because she'll march right down the street without hesitation if I don't stop her. So when I do let her out, I sit on the back steps watching her. She'll spend time in the grass, etc., within her allowed range, but when she hasn't heard my voice in a while, she heads toward the driveway. The farther she gets, the faster she goes, as if she knows her chances of escape are improving by the inch. Then I say her name in a very low, demanding voice; she stops. Then I tell her in the same voice. . . . "Get back in the yard." She knows just what I am saying, and she turns around very grudgingly and walks back toward the yard, making little noises of protest along the way. I think of it as grumbling. She definitely knows she's not supposed to go down the driveway, tries to do it anyway, and knows when I tell her to go back.[26]

Although the caretakers did not believe that the cats had conversations with themselves in human language, they gave examples of cats appearing to make mental calculations based on memory, taking the role of the other, and assessing future consequences. These mental calculations allowed the cats to define the situation, choose a course of action, and change that course when necessary.

The Cat as an Individual

All of our cat caretakers saw their cats as individuals with distinct personalities. They were able to describe each of their cats in terms of such characteristics as his or her temperament, demeanor, playfulness, talkativeness, intelligence, and forms of self-expression:

> Mai-Ling is boss of the house–from Whiskers–independent and assertive. She established dominance over James Joyce [another cat] early on. She has no sense of humor. Katie [another cat] annoys her.
>
> Jasmine is a tomboy. If she were human, she would wear blue-jeans and get dirty. She's defiant and strong-willed from a kitten. She has a very colorful personality. She'll scream at you if she doesn't like what you're doing. . . . She's more in tune with John's [husband] emotions. John gives her free reign of everything. Jasmine rides on John's shoulder around the house.
>
> Chaucer is an extremely aggressive male. Like the school bully. Has to be top cat. Must have own way or he'll bite. . . . Headstrong. Can't physically stop him. Doesn't bite as hard as he used to–just enough to let you know who's boss. . . . Chaucer calculates–watches–very observant.[27]

The caretakers were particularly likely to emphasize how affectionate their cats were, how they related to the owners themselves and to the other cats in the household, and how they reacted to visitors. One respondent described one of her six cats in these terms: "Honeybun is the biggest love-mush. She loves everyone. She does not relate to the other cats but she cuddles with everyone who comes into the house. She demands affection and will actually 'hit' people with her paw to get them to pet her or to keep petting her."[28]

Many of our owners believed that their cats had strong likes and dislikes that added to their individuality. These preferences centered on a variety of things such as food, play, and social relationships: "Alfonse is crotchety. . . . He likes to knead hair. He likes peas and lima beans and corn." "Chaucer loves food and a dripping faucet." "Sheepie dislikes being told what to do. Gets angry if she wants to go out and we say no. Adores being with us outside. Loves the outside in general." "BC likes string; you can always lure her out of a hiding place with string. She also likes to sleep under the stove when there is a fire in it."[29]

Our cat caretakers often distinguished their cats in terms of their histories. Many of their cats had been rescued, either by the owners or by shelters, from situations of neglect or abuse. This background information was used to explain such traits as fear of strangers or an unaffectionate personality. A cat's history also entered into the caretaker's description of how the cat changed over time. One respondent described her cat who had been rescued from a collector as "shy, but starting to become playful and trusting."[30] Another said that her Kate:

> Was a stray, abused. She was a long time coming to me. Can only pet her from the back; if you try to

> touch her from the front she shies away. She approached my husband sooner than she did me. She plays by herself and with Tharpin [another cat]. She sleeps on the bed. . . . She doesn't really know how to play; she watches the others play. There was no one to teach her how to play.[31]

We conclude that these multi-cat caretakers saw their cats as individuals whose characteristics were affected by their history and experience as well as their inherited characteristics.

The Cat as Emotional and Reciprocating

Although we did not focus centrally on cats' emotions in this study, all of the respondents commented about their cats' feelings. They believed their cats showed such emotions as joy, love, sadness, jealousy, and fear and anger. Since cats in homes in which their basic needs are satisfied may experience a larger range of emotions than domestic cats living on their own, we will return to this topic later. In the realm of feeling we focused on whether cats were responsive to the emotions of their caretakers. Almost all of our respondents perceived their cats to be empathetic, as indicated by the following typical comments: "They are there for you. If you feel bad, they are always there. They can read your feeling. Bruce–if I am feeling bad–gets real close to me–very sensitive." "They have a sense of when things are not right. When we are sick or upset, they come to us and stay around us." "They sense my moods. If I am sad or crying, Cabbage comes and rubs against me." "James knows my moods. He can tell if I am upset and will climb in my lap. If I am crying he will lick my tears."[32]

Our caretakers also thought their cats were intensely interested in their affairs, following them around the house, investigating what they were working on, sitting on their work, greeting guests, and involving themselves in every aspect of their humans' lives. Further, as has been our experience, the owners thought their cats initiated many interactions. The cats were active in molding the relationship to and for their satisfaction: "Claudia comes up purring and howling to be picked up." "When Sheepie gets bored she tries to initiate play by being underfoot. She starts batting something around the floor all around us." "Patches cries to go outside. If we are outside he will cry at the screen . . . till we let him out. It always works. Shayda will hit you to pet her." Some cats affected their owner's responses to other people: "Once a pizza delivery man came, and the girls [cats] growled and stalked him and we got rid of him fast. They knew something was not right."[33]

We were alerted to an important aspect of human–cat interaction because of caretaker comments about the empathy of their cats and the cats' high involvement in their lives. The caretakers were motivated to interact with their cats by social expressive goals. That is, the relationship with the cats was an end in itself in which the owners derived pleasure from the interaction for its own sake. The interaction of the cats toward their humans was both instrumental (a means to an end) as well as social and expressive. For the animals, the human controls both their instrumental and expressive needs. We expect that the more stable and regular the meeting of instrumental needs such as food, water, and a safe environment, and the more attached the cats are to the owner, the more emphasis they will place on expressive needs such as play and affection in interaction with the

owner. The cats in this study were well loved and cared for and allowed out only to a limited extent and under supervision. Their interactions with their caretakers were dominated by their desire for affection, attention, and play.

In his study of dogs, Sanders focused on the emotion of guilt.[34] His study participants "saw their dogs as possessing a basic sense of the rules imposed by the human members of the household."[35] When the dogs violated these rules, their owners perceived them as showing guilt. This reciprocating behavior of dogs in relation to rules set by owners probably results from the fact that dogs require considerable training to be acceptable household members. The dog owner and dog, then, must focus significantly on practical goals. We specifically asked our respondents what rules they set for their cats and whether they attempted to train them. They provided comical responses. First, they set few rules and these were for things in their complete control. For instance, most said the cats could not go out, but this was not a rule in the sense that they opened the door and the cats could choose to obey it or not. Other rules related to scratching the furniture and climbing on counters and tables. These rules were not important to the owners. Some did not try to gain compliance, whereas others made half-hearted attempts. One claimed she would be tougher, but her husband was overly indulgent and allowed the cats to do what they wanted: "They are not allowed on the table by me but David lets them. They don't listen." "It used to be that they weren't allowed on counters, but now because of Rosie [a cat] living in the kitchen it can't be helped. They can't eat from my plate while I'm there. I used to chase them from the furniture, but now the furniture is unscratchable." One owner