


Editors' Introduction: Special Issue on Cognition in Dogs

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We humans and dogs have a special relationship, so it is somewhat remarkable how little psychological research there is about dogs and/or our relationship with them. When I thought of this special issue, I immediately thought of Tom Zentall as the editor. Tom is a world-class comparative psychologist who has done much to bridge the divide between behaviorist and cognitive approaches and who has done marvelous work himself with dogs. I am thrilled with the finished product and I hope you enjoy reading this research as much as I have.

Thomas R. Zentall

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Given that humans and dogs have shared a history for over 10,000 years, it is surprising that more formal research has not been conducted on the intelligence of dogs. The symbiotic relation between humans and dogs began with dogs' natural tendency to warn of the approach of potential danger (their use as guard dogs), and, based on their inclination to develop dominance hierarchies, we found that they were capable of being trained to hunt, herd, and pull sleds for us. Although Pavlov's classic work on conditioning was conducted with dogs, since then most research with animals has been done primarily with rats, pigeons, and primates (including humans). The reason for this shift in experimental subjects can be attributed to a number of factors, including the issue of keeping them housed in cages, and although dogs are generally quite available as companion animals, researchers have been reluctant to have to deal with the large range in breed characteristics, experience, and age. In the past 20 years, however, researchers have recognized that those sources of variability may not be as great as once imagined, and a wealth of research on the cognitive abilities of dogs has appeared in the literature. The present special issue is an attempt to sample that literature and provide examples of the kind of questions that researchers have been asking with regard to the intelligence of dogs and their social relation to us.