



Introduction

- Black Cat Bias (BCB): “Cats with black coats are viewed more negatively, adopted less often, and euthanized more often than lighter colored cats” (Jones & Hart, in press)
- Shelter records of 2170 cats showed black cats stay in shelter about one month longer than non-black cats (Kubesova, Voslarova, Cecerek, & Vucinic, 2017)
- Length of stay in shelter positively correlated with risk of contracting URI (Dinnage, Scarlett, & Richards, 2009) and coronavirus (Pedersen, Sato, Foley, & Poland, 2004)
- Jones and Hart (in press) found black cats were perceived as more aggressive and less friendly than non-black cats
- Jones and Hart (in press) found that black cat bias (friendliness, aggressiveness, willingness to adopt) was predicted by superstitious behaviors, but not religiosity nor racial attitudes

Hypotheses

- Black cat bias is more prevalent amongst “dog-people” than “cat-people”
- Black cat bias can be predicted by superstitious behaviors and belief in witchcraft
- Black cat bias will be stronger near Halloween than not near Halloween

Methods

- **Sample**
 - 33 females, 4 males
 - $M = 19.1$ year, $SD = 0.7$ years
 - 3 cat-people, 13 dog-people, 20 both, 1 neither
- **Materials**
 - Demographics: sex, age, cat-, dog-, both-, neither person, number of cats lived with
 - BPP scale (Tobacyk & Milford, 1983)
 - 25 questions with 5-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)
 - Black magic really exists; The number 13 is unlucky
 - Test-retest: $r = .67$
 - Validity: intercorrelations with seven other scales
- **Design**
 - Demographics
 - BPP
 - Explicit cat rating task
 - See picture and description of cat
 - 4 black, 4 non-black cats in random order
 - Rate each cat on 5-point Likert Scale on “I would like to live with this cat” and “This is a good cat”
 - Brief Implicit Associations Test (Sriram & Greenwald, 2009) (Implicit cat rating task)
 - Remember two categories (black cats and bad words vs. non-black cats and bad words)
 - Categorize 20 stimuli (10 cat pictures, 10 words)
 - Reaction time (RT) measured
 - $d = (M_{RT \text{ non-black cats}} - M_{RT \text{ black cats}}) / sd$
 - d will be positive if BCB exists
 - Participants do tasks twice: 48 to 65 days before and 0 to 17 days before Halloween

Results

- Sample of cat-people too small to compare to dog-people
- Insufficient evidence of BCB measured explicitly
- Superstitious behaviors do not reliably predict BCB
- Belief in witchcraft predicts BCB at time 1 explicitly, $r(36) = .283$, $p = .045$, and at time 2 implicitly, $r(36) = .297$, $p = .037$
- Implicit BCB stronger nearer Halloween ($M = 0.238$) than farther from Halloween ($M = 0.169$), $t(36) = 1.826$, $p = .038$, $r^2 = .085$

Discussion

- Belief in witchcraft but not superstitious behaviors predicts BCB
- BCB is stronger around Halloween than earlier in semester
 - BCB is pliable – it can be changed by external factors
- Future research could look at whether an intervention designed to reduce belief in witchcraft would reduce implicitly measured BCB

References

- Dinnage, J. D., Scarlett, J. M., & Richards, J. R. (2016). Descriptive epidemiology of feline upper respiratory tract disease in an animal shelter. *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*, *11*, 816-825. <https://doi.org/10.1016%2Fj.jfms.2009.03.001>
- Jones, H. D., & Hart, C. L. (in press). Black cat bias: Prevalence and predictors. *Psychological Reports*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033294119844982>
- Kubesova, K., Voslarova, E., Vecerek, V., & Vucinic, M. (2017). Investigating some of the factors that affect the selection of shelter cats by adopters in the Czech Republic. *Anthrozoös*, *30*, 623-633. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08927936.2017.1370230>
- Pedersen, N. C., Sato, R., Foley, J. E., & Poland, A. M. (2004). Common virus infections in cats, before and after being placed in shelters, with emphasis on feline enteric coronavirus. *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*, *6*, 83-88. <https://doi.org/10.1016%2Fj.jfms.2003.08.008>
- Sriram, N., & Greenwald, A. G. (2009). The Brief Implicit Association Test. *Experimental Psychology*, *56*, 283-294. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1618-3169.56.4.283>
- Tobacyk, J., & Milford, G. (1983). Belief in paranormal phenomena: Assessment instrument development and implications for personality functioning. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *44*, 1029-1037. <https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.44.5.1029>