In reality most human-pet relations are more complex, and contingent upon an array of social, cultural, and interactional factors. I also argue that literature in the sociology of culture offers a particularly rich perspective on the human-pet bond. Indeed much of pets' appeal may be their childlike qualities. Many pet owners prefer to adopt baby animals and may be drawn to them because they elicit parental tendencies (Franklin 1999; Serpell 1996). According to scholars, the widespread ownership of pets among the middle classes began around late eighteenth and early 19th century (Irvine 2004; Ritvo 1987, 1988; Serpell 1996). Evidence of the increased prevalence of pets, especially dogs, during this time includes increased profits from the dog tax and new publishing opportunities for books about dogs (Ritvo 1988). Studies revealed that most pet owners view their pets as both enhancing the quality of family life by minimizing tension between family members and enhancing their owner's compassion for living things (Barker, 1993; Pet Theories, 1984; Voith, 1985). Using a projective technique to investigate owners' closeness to their pet dogs, Barker and Barker (1988, 1990) found that dog owners were as emotionally close to their dogs as to their closest family member. With documentation of the strong human-companion animal bond came studies of how pet ownership may affect physical and mental health. Friedmann et al. (1989) found pet ownership and attitudes toward pets to be significant predictors of these variables. The Human-Animal Bond / Human Health Benefits of Pet Ownership / Test your knowledge. Animal companionship both relieves and entertains people. Pets can provide both social support and status. In coming to know their clients, veterinarians can assess the importance of the pet to a family and the extent to which the family members benefit from the potential psychosocial effects of living with an animal. The pet's...
contribution may be magnified for vulnerable people, such as older adults who are facing increasing disabilities and losses of close companions and family. Cardiovascular measures were better among pet owners than nonowners in a large Australian study. Two studies reported that pet ownership was related to decreased mortality.