

**‘Can’t Love Every Cat’... or Can You?:  
The Mental and Physical Health Correlates Associated with Viral Cat Video Viewing  
(VCVV).**

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## **Introduction**

The first cat video ever made was filmed by Thomas Edison in 1894, featuring two cats wearing boxing gloves ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=scI\\_XB5UGN8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=scI_XB5UGN8)). Since this time, cat videos have been filmed and shared by millions of people across the world. Keyboard Cat, one of the internet sensations, has accumulated over 30,000,000 views since 2007 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J---aiyznGQ>).

Other notable off-shoots include sites like [www.procatinator.com](http://www.procatinator.com), which combines cat GIFs with music.

To highlight the popularity of cat videos, the first Internet Cat Video Film Festival was celebrated in Minneapolis in 2012, commemorating the best international cute cat videos. This was attended by over 10,000 people.

Due to the high prevalence of cat video viewing, the research team hypothesizes that there is health outcomes associated with VCVV.

## **Research Objectives and Hypotheses**

- 1. To examine the cross-sectional association between viral cat video viewing and measures of physical and mental health.**

Hypotheses:

- VCVV increases happiness and may be linked to increased perception of mental and physical wellness as well as lower self-reported rates of mood disorders.
  - Humorous VCVV can facilitate increased laughter, which previous studies have linked to stress relief, immune function and longevity.
  - VCVV may be linked to the release of serotonin, which has been linked to digestive tract health.
  - VCVV are shared through social connections and facilitate positive social interaction, and viewing and sharing of VCVV may increase social support, and strengthen social networks, which, in turn, has been linked to numerous positive physical and mental health outcomes.
- 2. To examine the longitudinal association between viral cat video viewing and measures**

## **of physical and mental health.**

Hypotheses:

- a. Exposure to VCVV has not been studied from a longitudinal perspective. Hypothesize that early life exposure to VCVV may be linked to better health outcomes in adolescence and later in life.
3. **To identify the optimal level of VCVV for maximal health benefit as well as the components of VCV that are linked to the greatest health benefit.**

Hypothesis

a) There is the potential for a dose-response relationship between VCVV and physical health measures. A certain threshold may be required to achieve health benefits, but above a certain point, may lead to harms (sore cheeks from excessive laughing, obsessive behaviors, interfere with requirements of daily living, ergonomic considerations due to VCVV environment).

b) Hypothesize that there are qualities of VCV that are most conducive to health benefit. Theorize that humorous videos, cats performing mundane tasks, or gifs of cats set to upbeat music may be more beneficial than morose, film noir VCV (although I could be wrong: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=Q34z5dCmC4M](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=Q34z5dCmC4M))

## **4. To see if the increase in VCVV is linked to cat adoption rates in Ottawa.**

Hypothesis

- a. While VCV have become very popular, it is unclear if the rates of VCVV correspond to increased rates of cat adoption. Hypothesize that VCVV, which popular among cat owners, may serve as a proxy for cat ownership, whereby individuals can get the “warm-fuzzy” feelings of seeing cats play without having to deal with litter boxes. In this way, VCVV may serve to be a connection to pets for those who feel that they are too busy to own a pet.

## **Anticipated Challenges**

Despite the recent popularity of VCVV, there may be challenges getting accurate self-report data, due to possible stigma accompanied by being labeled a “cat lady” or viewing too many short video clips.

Any primary data collection may be hindered by my severe cat allergy...