

The Violence Link Review of the Literature

Despite a steady decrease of crime rates in Canada over the past two decades, the most recent General Social Survey on Victimization (GSS, 2014) shows that at least 5.6 million Canadians are still victims of crime each year. Women are at an increased risk of violent victimization (85 incidents per 1,000 women) compared to men (67 per 1,000), and individuals self-identifying as gay, lesbian or bisexual record the highest violent victimization rates in the country, at 207 incidents per 1,000 people (GSS, 2014). Furthermore, 30% of the indigenous population surveyed reported being the victim of a violent crime within the past year (GSS, 2014). There is a widely accepted notion that violence begets violence, which has led researchers in recent decades to look into the correlation between violence toward animals (animal cruelty) and violence toward people (interpersonal crime) in order to find new preventative measures for both forms of criminal behaviour.

The overlap between animal abuse and other forms of violence, particularly child maltreatment and intimate partner violence, has received increased attention in the past decades (Ascione, Weber, Thompson, Heath, Maruyama & Hayashi, 2007; Overton, Hensley & Tallichet, 2012; Simmons & Lehmann, 2007; Barrett, Fitzgerald, Stevenson & Cheung, 2017). Although the relationship is not causal, the correlation is reliable enough to suggest the importance of early intervention, in order to prevent violence against humans and animals, and other antisocial criminal behaviours (Lunghofer & Shapiro, 2014). Given the co-occurrence of animal abuse and violence toward humans, it is important to develop interventions for individuals who abuse animals – for the sake of both animals and humans (Lunghofer & Shapiro, 2014).

Intimate Partner Violence and Domestic Violence

Intimate partner violence (IPV) in its many forms is a major issue across Canada. Many survivors of this type of violence experience immediate as well as lasting physical and psychological consequences, including depression, anxiety, alcohol and drug abuse, panic disorders, eating disorders, and self-harm behaviours, among others (Campbell, Thompson, Harris & Wiehe, 2018). A re-occurring theme in the literature is the notion that pet abuse is an indicator of the co-occurrence of IPV and, more generally, domestic violence (DV). It is understood that the presence of pet abuse in the home is associated with an increased likelihood of domestic violence. Victims of IPV have a strong bond with their companion animal(s), and perpetrators of IPV often use this bond as an abusive tactic against their partner (Newberry, 2017; Flynn, 2011). Companion animals are viewed as family members, which creates a vulnerability for being victimized along with the human family members in instances of domestic violence (Stevenson, 2012).

Domestic Violence and Pet Abuse

In instances of DV when there is a pet in the home, higher reports of animal abuse are commonly documented. Post-hoc studies of women in emergency shelters show that 44-89% of survey participants who owned pets stated their abuser threatened to hurt and/or hurt and/or killed their pet (Volant, Johnson,

Gullone & Coleman, 2008; Barrett et al., 2017; Daniell, 2001; McIntosh, 2004; Ascione et al., 2007). One shelter study using a control group of women who had not experienced IPV found that women residing in a domestic violence shelter were nearly 11 times more likely to report animal abuse than their counterparts (Ascione et al., 2007). These findings were replicated in Australia, where women who owned a pet and were receiving service at an outreach centre were compared to women who had not experienced domestic violence but who also owned a pet (Volant et al., 2008). 52.9% of the domestic violence victims reported pet abuse compared to zero from the non-domestic violence group. Threats of pet abuse were approximately eight times greater among women in the DV group (Volant et al., 2008). All animals and humans residing in a home where both animal abuse and domestic violence are known to co-occur are at a substantially heightened risk of suffering severe or fatal injury (Campbell et al, 2018; Ascione et al., 2007). Similar results can be found when analyzing the criminal histories of men arrested for IPV and DV. In a sample of 307 men arrested for domestic violence in Rhode Island, 41% reported committing at least one act of animal abuse since the age of 18 (Febres et al., 2014).

Pet Abuse as a Sign of More Severe Domestic Violence

Not only is the co-occurrence of pet abuse and domestic violence significant, there is mounting evidence showing that pet abuse in the home is linked to a higher quantity of domestic violence incidences and the presence of more severe abusive tactics (Flynn, 2011; Barrett et al., 2017; DeGue & DiLillo, 2009; Ascione et al., 2007). IPV consists of a complex range of controlling behaviours that may include any combination of physical, emotional, sexual, and economic maltreatment as well as isolation, blaming, intimidation, threats, and/or minimizing/denying behaviours (Simmons & Lehmann, 2007; Campbell et al., 2018; Barrett et al., 2017). Other methods of psychological abuse may involve inflicted harm or threatened harm to a victim's pet (Campbell et al., 2018; Barrett et al., 2017), and forcing intimate partners to engage in bestiality (Ascione et al, 2007). There have been a few reasons identified for why men harm and kill companion animals, including demonstrating or confirming their power, expressing rage, punishing and terrorizing their partner, teaching submission, and discouraging women from leaving (Levitt, Hoffer & Loper, 2016).

Simmons and Lehmann (2007) conducted a study to establish the connection between a partner's use of controlling behaviours and animal abuse. They used the Checklist of Controlling Behaviours (CCB), an 84-item survey instrument with questions representing the spectrum of controlling behaviours: physical abuse, sexual abuse, male privilege, isolation, minimizing and denying, blaming, intimidation, threats, emotional abuse, and economic abuse (Simmons & Lehmann, 2007). Women who reported that their abuser also abused their family pets indicated higher scores on both the total CCB score, and each individual subscale (Simmons & Lehmann, 2007). They found that a higher percentage of individuals who reported pet abuse also reported their abuser used sexual violence, marital sexual assault, emotional violence, and stalking (Simmons & Lehmann, 2007). Barrett et al. (2017) and Ascione et al. (2007) found that women who reported more frequent and severe animal abuse also reported more severe physical violence at the hand of their partner. Campbell et al. (2018) found that 80% of victims of IPV in homes with animal abuse reported concerns that they will be killed, and thus are considered at extremely high risk compared to households without animal abuse. Similarly, there is evidence that this connection works

both ways, in that individuals who use more violent forms of pet abuse are more likely to have arrests for domestic violence, as well. In Levitt's et al (2016) study on animal cruelty offenders, at least 58% of those arrested for "Active" (beating, kicking, throwing, choking) animal cruelty had an arrest for interpersonal violence and 38% had an arrest for domestic violence specifically (Levitt et al, 2016).

A Deterrent to Victims Seeking Help

A large proportion of the literature on the violence link derives from retrospective surveys completed by women at emergency shelters for victims fleeing domestic violence (Daniell, 2001; Crawford & Clarke, 2012; Barrett et al., 2017; McIntosh, 2004; Stevenson et al., 2018; Ascione et al., 2007). The literature has shown that concern for the well-being of their companion animals can affect the help-seeking behaviour and subsequent actions of abused partners (Barrett et al., 2017; Crawford & Clarke, 2012; Ascione, 2007; Newberry, 2017). It has been found that women in these situations often delay leaving an abusive home, or do not leave at all, for fear of their pet's safety. In a study of female clients at a New Zealand emergency shelter, 60% of participants said they delayed leaving their home to protect their pets (Roguski, 2012). A further 33% stayed in the relationship for fear their partner would injure their animal if they tried to leave (Roguski, 2012). The figures are similar in Canada, where the numbers range from 56% (Barrett et al., 2017) of women stating they delayed leaving, to 57% (Crawford & Clarke, 2012), 43% (Daniell, 2001), and 25.4% (McIntosh, 2004), respectively.

Youth

Youth as Perpetrators

There is growing awareness of animal abuse as a marker for children's maladaptive behaviour (Lunghofer & Shapiro, 2014; Flynn, 2011). The research often focuses on the differences between accidental violence and repeated deliberate violence. Unsurprisingly, repeated and deliberate violence at a young age is linked to recurrent violent crimes in adulthood (robbery, sexual assault, aggravated assault, homicide) (Overton et al., 2012; Trentham et al., 2018; Connor, Currie & Lawrence, 2018; Tallichet & Hensley, 2004). Young males are more likely than females to commit childhood animal cruelty (Bright, Huq, Spencer, Applebaum & Hardt, 2018; Connor et al., 2018; Flynn, 1999; Sanders & Henry, 2017), and are more apt to continue the criminal behaviour into adulthood the younger they are at the time of the first offence (Overton et al., 2012; Bright et al., 2018; Hensley, Browne & Trentham, 2018). One of the more popular theories of the relationship between animal cruelty and interpersonal violence suggests a direct causal link between early animal cruelty and subsequent violent offending, known as the violence graduation hypothesis (Walters, 2013). This theory suggests that early animal cruelty violence, particularly in childhood, allows perpetrators to practice violence on available targets (animals), before replicating the violence on humans (Walters, 2013). The link between animal cruelty during childhood and subsequent physical violence during adulthood has been demonstrated in a number of studies leading animal cruelty to be added to the DSM III-TR as a symptom under the diagnosis of conduct disorder. However, not all children who are diagnosed with conduct disorder or engage in animal cruelty go on to become violent offenders.

One explanation is that youth who recurrently commit childhood animal cruelty may become desensitized to other acts of violence, and therefore participate in recurrent criminal behaviour in adulthood (Trentham, Hensley & Policastro, 2017). It is important to note that only a specific subset of animal abuse cases in childhood (acts of up-close and personal cruelty) may point to future violence, and not all acts of animal cruelty or abuse by children are predictive of subsequent extreme violence against humans (Arluke & Madfis, 2013). Nevertheless, it is thought that in the cases of those who do, an early "practicing of violent and/or sadistic behaviour" on a living creature plays a role in desensitizing the individual to violence against humans (Knoll, 2006). Some individuals progress past mere desensitization and actually derive pleasure and satisfaction from acts of animal cruelty (Knoll, 2006).

Sexual Felonies

As animal sexual abuse (bestiality) can only be classified as a deliberate form of violence, it is correlated to later sexual felonies and animal cruelty convictions (Hensley, Tallichet & Dutkiewicz, 2010). Looking at a sample of inmates who admitted to bestiality in childhood, 87% had committed a violent crime (sexual assault, homicide, robbery, aggravated assault), and they were significantly more likely to engage in interpersonal crime than those who did not (Hensley et al., 2010). Further, in a study of juvenile sex offenders, Fleming, Jory and Burton (2012) argue that juvenile animal offenders should be considered a specific subgroup of sex offenders in that 96% who admitted to bestiality also admitted to sexual offences against humans. Another study of 300,000 juvenile offenders in the United States with a sexual felony history found that these youth were 50% more likely to also have an animal cruelty history (Baglivio, Wolff, Delisi, Vaughn & Piquero, 2017). In their study on the development of child sexual abusers, Simons, Wurtele & Durham (2007) found that 38% of child abuse perpetrators reported engaging in bestiality during childhood (Simons et al., 2008). Of the perpetrators of adult sexual assault, 68% reported engaging in acts of childhood cruelty towards animals, compared to 44% of child sexual abusers (Simons et al., 2008). Thus, Simons' et al. (2008) research supports the theory that bestiality in youth is correlated with later sexual abuse of children, whereas animal cruelty in youth is associated with later intimate partner violence perpetration.

Conflict in the Home

It is clear that not all youth who commit animal abuse at a young age graduate to commit crimes against humans. It is also clear that the child's environment plays an integral role as either a protective factor or risk factor for their subsequent adult behaviour. Exposure to household conflict has been found to be associated with an increased likelihood of violent crime convictions (Malvaso, Delfabbro, Day & Nobes, 2018; Baglivio et al., 2017; Bright et al., 2018). In their research, Malvaso et al. (2018) explain that maltreatment results in neurological and psychological changes in the developing child and was associated with a 33% increased likelihood of conviction in adulthood. Bright et al. (2018) analyzed the data of 81,000 juvenile offenders in the state of Florida between December 2005 and December 2014. Any Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) had been tracked on all offenders, and 466 juveniles in the sample self-reported animal cruelty (Bright et al., 2018). For the purposes of their study, Bright et al. (2018) identified the ten most commonly studied ACEs, which include: physical, sexual, and emotional

abuse; emotional and physical neglect; caregiver divorce/separation; household member mental illness, substance abuse, incarceration, and domestic violence (Bright et al., 2018). They found that 99.1% of the youths who engaged in animal cruelty experienced at least one ACE, and 94.2% had experienced more than one (Bright et al., 2018). The likelihood of engaging in animal cruelty was 4.82 times higher for youth with high-risk ACE scores (four or more ACEs) than for youth with low scores (one to three ACEs) (Bright et al., 2018). More than half the youth who engaged in cruelty to animals also experienced domestic violence, caregiver divorce, and caregiver incarceration (Bright et al., 2018). Social-cognitive studies have demonstrated that individuals exposed to trauma and abuse at a young age can develop a propensity to perceive even trivial situations as threatening, activating anger and fight reactions, thus causing them to act out aggressively and violently in unwarranted scenarios (Malvaso et al., 2018).

Furthermore, social-learning studies have demonstrated that violent or abusive parental behaviour is often modeled by children and results in angry and aggressive emotional reactions (Malvaso et al., 2018; Currie, 2006). Research conducted by Knight et al. (2014) demonstrates that a parent's history of animal abuse is predictive of a child's later involvement in IPV perpetration. In their study, DeGue and DiLillo (2009) found that of their sample of 860 college students who witnessed animal abuse as children, 62.2% had also experienced child maltreatment or exposure to domestic violence (DeGue & DiLillo, 2009). Children who witness their parents perpetrating violent IPV behaviours are more likely to commit animal abuse, which lends support for the importance of the social environment and the family context when trying to understand why animal abuse and later IPV perpetration occur (Knight et al., 2014; Ascione, Friedrich, Heath & Hayashi, 2003). Witnessing physical fighting or physical abuse between parents has been associated with substantial levels of cruelty to animals (Ascione et al., 2003). In one Canadian study, children exposed to domestic violence were 2.95 times more likely to have displayed animal cruelty than those in the non-exposure group (Currie, 2006). Whether a child witnesses animal abuse and/or domestic violence in the home growing up, there is evidence that the psychological trauma has lasting effects which may lead to later criminality if proper early interventions are not implemented. Some children demonstrate patterns of adjustment suggesting that they are resilient to the impact of IPV in the household, while others experience compromised psychological functioning (McDonald et al., 2016). Animal abuse at a young age can be an early warning sign of maladaptive coping mechanisms toward familial violence.

Youth, Gangs, and Dogfighting

Another major known risk factor for youth deviance is the family's participation in criminal gang activity, including dogfighting (Heger, 2011). Dogfighting enthusiasts commonly see participation in the blood sport as a family event (Heger, 2011). In urban areas in particular, dogfights serve as an early introduction to gang life (Heger, 2011). Known risk factors for gang membership and violence include family deviance, parental attitudes regarding crime, violence and substance use, parental criminality/deviance, delinquent siblings, and criminogenic neighborhood indicators (e.g. drug use) (O'Brien, Daffern, Chu & Thomas, 2013). It has been found in studies across the world that gang-affiliated youth commit more crimes, especially violent drug and weapon-related offences, and are more delinquent than youth who have never been involved with gangs (O'Brien et al., 2013). Furthermore,

Heger (2011) suggests that the majority of active street dogfighters are teenagers, with younger children often watching and even participating. In the United States, an increase in street-based dogfighting in past decades has been linked to a proliferation of US youth gangs (Lawson, 2017). Among a group of youth dogfighters (aged 9-16), dogfighting was so imbedded in the subculture, it was used as a main method to help resolve street/gang conflicts (Evans et al., as seen in Lawson, 2017). The early introduction to animal cruelty through exposure to dogfighting, especially repeated acts, impacts development and has strong links to later interpersonal violence (Heger, 2011; Tallichet & Hensley, 2004).

A study in the UK interviewed male youths on the street, who owned dogs and frequently sought services from local youth shelters (Maher & Pierpoint, 2011). All the youths interviewed identified themselves as being part of a group and over half belonged to a youth gang (Maher & Pierpoint, 2011). Some of the animal abuses described by the youths included cruel training techniques for fighting (e.g. using electrocution to enhance aggression), withholding medical treatment for injured dogs, poor breeding practices resulting in severe health issues, forced dogfighting, tail docking, and physical abuse (kicking, punching, stabbing and beating dogs) (Maher & Pierpoint, 2011). Many of the youth spoke about using the dogs as weapons, against both humans and other dogs from rival gangs.

Youth as Victims

According to the principle of nature vs. nurture, we know that a child is also shaped by their own personality and behaviours, and not solely their environment. Many children who witness animal abuse in the home resist the abuse of their pets (Atwood-Harvey, 2007). In doing so, they attempt to protect their loved one and major social support, as well as their own identities in the process (Atwood-Harvey, 2007). Pets are an important part of any family, however, abused children often find their pets to be the sole source of security when their parents are perceived as distant and unloving (Atwood-Harvey, 2007). Similar to the methods used with pets against intimate partners, children become entangled victims of this animal abuse through various levels of participation: threats, witness, and even direct involvement (Atwood-Harvey, 2007). Atwood-Harvey (2007) argues that sometimes children will engage in animal cruelty to protect their pets from worse harm at the hands of their parent(s). In the studies conducted at emergency shelters, women often state that their children were present to witness the animal abuse in the home and they expressed concern for the impact this had on their child's wellbeing (Crawford & Clarke, 2012; Girardi & Pozzulo, 2012; McIntosh, 2004).

Though the research is sparse on the link between child sexual abuse and animal abuse, Levitt et al. (2016) found that one third of those who had been arrested for animal sexual abuse were also arrested for sexually assaulting a person, and more than half of the known sexual assault victims of animal sexual abuse offenders were minors at the time of the offence (Levitt et al., 2016). Beetz (2004) argues that this supports the theoretical explanation that using both subgroups of victims – children and animals – could be satisfying a need for dominance and control. To further support this theory, Baumgartner (as described in Beetz, 2004) investigated 35 cases of bestiality in a psychiatric sample and found that about every second participant had also engaged in some illegal sexual activities with minors.

Major Crimes

Serial Homicides

Wright and Hensley (2003) conducted a case study in an attempt to better understand the underlying motivations of serial killers (at least two separate homicides in at least two distinctly separate scenarios). In the case of numerous serial murderers, episodes of prolonged humiliation have been shown to exist in childhood (Wright & Hensley, 2003). With many, the source of this humiliation and subsequent frustration is inflicted on the child by one or both parents (Wright & Hensley, 2003). In five cases examined by Wright and Hensley (2003), the serial killers took out their frustration on animals as children, which acted as retribution for their own pain and suffering (Wright & Hensley, 2003). The abuse of animals may serve as a rehearsal for the abuse or killing of humans, including the planned tortures, sexual gratification, and killing, for sadistic offenders or sexual murderers (Beetz, 2004).

According to a German study on psychopathic criminals, using animals as early targets is likely an expression of what the authors refer to as “controlled predatory behaviour”: animal abuse implies controlling a creature; however, it also helps the psychopathic killer learn to channel and control their feelings and actions (Stupperich & Strack, 2017). Stupperich & Strack (2017) found significance between sadistic behaviour, psychopathy, and animal cruelty. Though many animal abusers limit their sadistic behaviour to animals, some German sexual murderers explained how the boundary between torturing a human versus a nonhuman victim was permeable, and that when torturing animals, their fantasies were already about humans (Stupperich & Strack, 2017). Stupperich & Strack (2017), also found that information on animal abuse may serve as an opening to understanding (and ultimately apprehending) sadistic killers, as the researchers noticed participants were more willing to share about their history of animal cruelty than their crimes against humans.

Mass Shootings

Serial and sadistic murderers are oftentimes compared to mass murderers, such as school shooters. It is a common misconception that leads one to believe that school shooters would have similar histories of animal cruelty as do serial and sadistic murderers. However, mass and serial killers derive different psychological gratifications from their crimes, thus it cannot be assumed that they will have the same propensity to abuse animals (Arluke & Madfis, 2013). For example, mass murderers are considerably less likely to demonstrate sociopathic or psychopathic personalities compared to serial murderers (Arluke & Madfis, 2013). Furthermore, serial homicides typically involve sexual assault, sadistic torture, and excessive pre-or post-mortem dismemberment and mutilation, whereas mass murderers rarely engage in these acts (Arluke & Madfis, 2013).

In order to gain a better understanding of school shooters, Arluke and Madfis (2013) studied a sample of 23 perpetrators of school massacres in the United States from 1988 to 2012. They found prior reports of animal cruelty in the histories of 10 of 23 (43%) school shooters (Arluke & Madfis, 2013). Though the proportion of animal abuse in mass shooting cases is smaller than for sadistic serial killers, the nature of the abuse is comparable; as 9 of 10 school shooters (90%) committed cruelty in an up-close

and personal manner (Arluke & Madfis, 2013). Arluke's & Madfis' research supports Verlinden's, Hersen's and Thomas' (2000) research, which found 5 of the 10 school shooters (50%) had displayed a history of childhood animal cruelty. This study supports the theory that animal cruelty perpetration during childhood, in deliberate and personal methods of animal abuse, is more likely to be an antecedent to extreme violence (Arluke & Madfis, 2013). This is particularly relevant, as the vast majority of school massacres are perpetrated by adolescents, and all the shooters studied by Arluke and Madfis (2013) were under the age of 20.

Guns, Drugs and Gangs

From one study conducted in Indiana, there is evidence that IPV suspects who abused pets were significantly more likely to have easy access to guns compared to IPV suspects who have no history of animal cruelty (68% vs. 31%) (Campbell et al., 2018). They were also more likely to have a history of alcohol/drug abuse (74% vs. 47%) and to have threatened to kill their partner (70% vs. 33%) (Campbell et al., 2018). Levitt et al. (2016) analyzed 400 incident reports of animal cruelty and neglect offences from the FBI's Behavioural Analysis Unit. Of the animal cruelty offenders in the sample, 96% had other documented criminal offences, either prior to the animal cruelty arrest or within the subsequent six years (Levitt et al., 2016). The most frequent crime for which offenders were arrested prior to the animal cruelty offence was drug possession, with one-third of offenders arrested for this crime (Levitt et al., 2016). The second most common was assault at 31%, and in total 41% were arrested for interpersonal violence at least once, of which 18% were arrested for a sex offence. Levitt et al. (2016) found that 64% of the Active (beating, kicking, throwing, strangling) animal abusers had a history of substance abuse (Levitt et al., 2016). These behaviours are conducive with an increase in gang activity, in which a distinct subculture of violence exists where members embrace values that are more permissive of the use of violence (Lawson, 2017).

Illegal dogfights are not the work of a single individual, and instead constitute a form of organized crime most often seen in the context of gangs (Heger, 2011). There are two main types of dogfights: Street fights (informal), and traditional or professional fights (formal) (Lawson, 2017; Heger, 2011; Evans & Forsyth, 1998). While street fights sometimes include betting, the dogs serve more as a status symbol and are used for their size and menacing appearance, (Heger, 2011; Lawson, 2017; Evans & Forsyth, 1998) almost as an extension of the owner's personality- or, as Preece and Chamberlain (1995) put it, "what they want the public recognition of their personality to be." In this sense, Preece and Chamberlain (1995) argue that we should be more wary of the owners of socially defined "dangerous" breeds than of the dogs themselves, as dogfighting and vicious canine behaviour against humans can only be effectively controlled at the level of the owners. Traditional fights are comprised of high-stakes national and international networks and the operations are much more deliberate than those of the spontaneous street fights (Heger, 2011). There will typically be a large number of spectators, and substantial sums of money are exchanged through fighting and gambling (Heger, 2011; Lawson, 2017). Aside from the dogs' lifetime of severe suffering, dogfighting is heavily associated to other, non-animal criminal activity (Heger, 2011). In a United States nationwide dogfighting raid from 1999-2004, police seized either guns or illegal drugs from 35 of the 37 raids (Heger, 2011). Heger (2011) refers to

dogfighting rings as “convenience stores for criminals,” with illegal gambling being the preferred form of currency, both in spectator bets and a fight purse (Heger, 2011). A single fight in the US is able to amass tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars in betting volume, notwithstanding the purse which is funded by the owners, who each put in half and the winner takes all (Heger, 2011). Though the research on dogfighting is limited in Canada, there is emerging evidence that dogfighting rings are not contained to the south and are indeed a serious social concern in our provinces and territories as well.

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