

KILL YOUR DOG, BEAT YOUR WIFE, SCREW YOUR NEIGHBOR'S KIDS, ROB A BANK?: A CURSORY LOOK AT AN INDIVIDUAL'S VAT OF SOCIAL CHAOS RESULTING FROM DEVIANCE

Charisse T.M. Coston and Babette M. Protz,
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte

ABSTRACT

The results of this qualitative research project offer evidence suggesting that forms of animal cruelty may co-exist with other types of criminal offenses. Using archival data describing police incidents in Charlotte/Mecklenburg, 1000 cases of animal cruelty were cross-referenced with criminally-involved cases. Based upon our results, we conclude several needs: 1) children learn both the role of victim and victimizer in human and non-human criminal cases; 2) adults who engage in human and non-human crime may be subject to the same environmental turmoil; and 3) aside from the similarities across human and non-human victims of crime, there are very important differences, such as the voicelessness of non-human victims.

Stephen had a history of adjudications, both as a juvenile and as an adult, for status offenses, property offenses, and violent behavior (including animal cruelty). For example, over a three-year time span, Steven was convicted of dog-fighting. Six months later, he was arrested for manufacturing and selling marijuana, opium and heroin, driving while his driver's license was revoked, drunk driving and disorderly conduct. Subsequently, he was arrested for first degree murder and robbery for which he has been convicted and is currently doing time. (An actual case history from the files of the Charlotte/Mecklenburg Police Department.)

Even though there is minimal research (only one known scientific study: Ascione 1992), scientific and anecdotal reports point to a link between cruelty to animals and adult criminal behavior. These descriptions have been illustrated by many dramatic case histories involving animal abuse, the increasing attention being paid to all forms of family violence, and the realization that forms of animal cruelty such as dogfighting co-exist with other types of criminal offenses (Hickey 1991; Lockwood, Church 1996). These acts of omission (deprivation of water, food and/or shelter) and acts of commission (yelling, hitting and/or throwing an animal) are signs of aggression that suggest other deep-rooted problems such as chemical abuse, domestic violence, murder, child abuse and other violent and non-violent acts. (Achenbach, Howell, Quay, Connors 1991; Boat 1995; Gelles, Strauss 1988).

The current analysis is significant for a number of reasons. First, it depicts a connection between the experience of being victimized and subsequent victimization of non-human animals thus adding to the limited

literature on the etiology surrounding animals as victims. Until recently, police, courts and other related agencies have ignored the association between cruelty to animals and violence towards humans. Secondly, we offer suggestions for increased and continued cross-reporting of animal cruelty and other crimes, within and between agencies whose responsibility it is to respond to violence. Third, it would be useful for educators to be exposed to this type of study as a way to increase awareness of the potential problems involved which can transfer from animals to people or vice versa. Finally, as a result of this study and others like it, individuals, and their families may be made aware of the patterns, nature and scope of the problems of animal cruelty, particularly, as precursors to a variety of serious crimes and other injurious offenses. Through such educational efforts, intervention and prevention of animal abuse are likely to occur.

BACKGROUND

It is appropriate at this juncture to provide the reader with our working definition of animal cruelty, and the laws that pertain to animal cruelty for our sample.

Animal Cruelty

For the purposes of this research, the following definition of animal cruelty is submitted: behavior that intentionally or negligently and repeatedly causes unnecessary pain, suffering or distress to and/or death to a non-human animal. This definition and versions of it have been used by past scholars (Achenbach et al 1991; Ascione 1992; Felthous, Kellert 1987; Spitzer, Davies, Barkley 1990). Absent from this definition, but no less controversial, are accidental acts and those acts of cruelty which involve the use of animals in laboratory

research, veterinarian practices, livestock production, hunting, and entertainment.

Relevant Laws and Processing

Non-human animals are more oppressed than human animals (Beirne 1995; Berry 1997). Laws protecting non-human animals evolved more slowly than those relevant to human rights. According to Berry, this slower evolution is due to perceptions that deny or minimize the pain experienced by non-human animals. Given the mass of laws we have on the federal, state and local levels (the treatment of humans by other humans), animal abuse has not been a large concern for criminologists, sociologists and other social and behavioral scientists.

Prosecution for animal cruelty falls under North Carolina's General Statute 14-360 (1994). The statute reads:

If any person shall willfully overdrive, overload, wound, injure, torture, torment, deprive of necessary sustenance, cruelly beat, needlessly mutilate or kill or cause or procure to be overdriven, overloaded, wounded, injured, tortured, tormented deprived of necessary sustenance, cruelly beaten, needlessly mutilated or killed as foresaid, any useful beast, fowl, or animal, every such offender shall for every such offense be guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to \$1500.00 and/or imprisonment for up to two years.

This statute includes the injuring or killing of a law enforcement agency animal, animal larceny, instigating or promoting animal cruelty, abandonment of animals, cockfighting, animal fights in general, and animal baiting. The City (Charlotte, North Carolina) and County (Mecklenburg) ordinances (Section 3-15; Article 2-26) only differ from the State in terms of the degree of punishment. The City and County render fines ranging from 25 to 500 dollars for violations of the ordinances.

The processing of suspected cases of animal abuse is initiated by a complaint. Every complaint is investigated by a field officer who decides its validity. The officer will determine if there is compliance with conditions. If there is no compliance the animal(s) can be seized, and a suspect can be arrested and/or cited to court. If someone is arrested, the criminal justice system processing continues with an initial appearance before a judicial officer of the court (a probable cause and bail consideration hearing). Offenders not in compliance

may be warned and subjected to an educational course on animal treatment, which will be followed-up with additional investigatory visits.

Theoretical Assumptions

The literature purports that one of the correlates of animal cruelty is what has been defined as conduct disorder (American Psychological Association 1994). *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM IV; rev. 4th ed.)* describes conduct disorder as a feature of an individual who violates the basic rights of others and, including, but not limited to, major societal norms, such as stealing, mugging, purse snatching, murder, rape, and various property offenses. One of the callous behaviors and typical features of this disorder that usually manifests itself in childhood is hurting animals (Borzendowski, Ehrhardt 1993; Deviney, Lockwood 1983; Kazdin 1990). Achenbach et al (1991) found that children with (combined) conduct disorder and incidents of animal cruelty were most often reported by parents who have children in mental health care than by parents of children in their non-clinic sample. Past research indicates that while hurting animals is one of the earliest reported symptoms, not all children with conduct disorder engage in animal cruelty. Additionally, some children who abuse animals show signs of stability and predictability, and demonstrate no signs of human-directed violence. Although we cannot, without caution, predict violence against humans from early incidents of animal cruelty, findings do provide us with a diagnostic window for further investigation and give us further evidence of an apparent link between the two phenomenon (Felthous 1991; Jaffe, Wolfe, Wilson 1990).

Research shows that many criminals who have been violent toward people share a common history of brutal parental punishment and cruelty to animals (Gelles, Strauss 1988; Mauro, Eberle 1989; Mead 1964; Miller, Knutson 1997; Weil 1989). These findings appear to suggest a possible generational problem involving human and non-human violence.

Indeed, some research has shown direct relationships between animal abuse and child abuse (Deviney et al 1983; Kellert, Felthous 1995; Lockwood, Church 1996) such that children who abuse animals are abused by parents and parents who abuse children also abuse animals. These findings suggest a pecking order of aggressive acts, involving a

lack of empathy, being passed down from the head of the household through the child and down to the animals. For example, Deviney et al (1983) found that of 60 percent of families with instances of child abuse also were found to have instances of animal abuse. Perhaps children are imitating parental or guardian interpersonal violent behaviors when they having been victims of abuse themselves, become abusers of animals. In situations such as these, children are learning what it is like to be the scapegoats as well as the perpetrators of violence. These families also reported more turmoil as evidenced by other family conflicts. Domestic and sibling violence, and chemical abuse were the other types of deviancies reported. The torturing and killing of animals, according to some scholars, has been shown to precede a continual pattern of violence against humans and animals by that individual as an adult (Felthous, Bernard 1979). The literature further stresses that in those families where domestic violence is present, 38 percent of those who had pets reported that their husbands had beaten the pets too (Jaffe et al 1990). In studies conducted by Sterba 1935, Weil 1989 and Hindman 1992, researchers found cases of wives being beaten by their husbands, who were then forced to have sexual relations with domestic and farm animals.

Scales have been developed pointing to patterns of both kindness and cruelty to animals, and these scales have been used to assign culpability in some jurisdictions (Ascione 1992). Famous violent criminals, in recent years, have had histories of abusing animals. Several serial killers, including, but not limited to, Jeffrey Dahmer, Theodore Bundy, Albert DeSalvo (The Boston Strangler), Edmund Kemper, III, and David Berkowitz (The Son of Sam) had histories of animal abuse ranging from cruelty to killing – some even used non-human animals to control and/or coerce, and used them for sexual interactions and symbolism for their preparation for killing humans.

The literature has demonstrated that non-human animal abuse can be a precursory activity of human-directed violence. Carving up stuffed animals is a practice reported by 46 percent of adolescent multiple murderers, according to Maiuro and Eberle 1989. Investigators of animal cruelty find that multiple violent offending is not unusual. These researchers state the obvious (Lockwood, Church 1996; Wax, Haddox 1974) that animal abuse is not a harmless way of venting emotion in a healthy individual; furthermore, that animal

abuse should be viewed as a warning sign of destructiveness.

Based on the literature, we compared cases of animal cruelty with cases of violence against humans over an overlapping time frame. We were interested in the nature, scope and patterns of this cross-reporting from police files of rapid responses to calls for service, citizen complaints and arrests.

METHOD

A total population of 958 cases was hand-drawn from the Animal Control Bureau's records of animal cruelty investigations for the 1996 fiscal year beginning on July 1. These 958 records were then cross-tabulated by computer, using the perpetrator's name, and his or her address, by the Criminal Records Division's records for the same fiscal year (both are divisions of the Charlotte/Mecklenburg Police Department in Charlotte, North Carolina). This time frame was chosen because it was administratively efficient in terms of money and time, e.g., it was the first year that data could be traversed with the Department's other criminal records because the Animal Control Bureau was funded by the County of Mecklenburg and therefore not under the auspices of the City police department. During fiscal 1996, there were 1016 incidents of the police being called to respond for service (911 calls) to the same address concerning the same suspected perpetrator who had been, either previously or afterwards, investigated based upon a complaint of animal cruelty. Of these, 750 (74%) were determined to be, by the police officer in charge, legitimate complaints. Our results will describe the frequency by type of call, and the final dispositions involving police action as a consequence of our matching cases. In some cases, (2%) the final disposition by the criminal justice system was revealed.

The Instrument

Data describing the 958 complainants of animal abuse only (both founded and unfounded), and sometimes involving multiple incidents at the same locale) were retrieved from the Animal Control Bureau records. These data, in the form of log books and written reports were filed by the investigating officers. Data include the name and address of the perpetrator and, where different, the location of the suspected abuse. The numbers of previous violations of any kind and their type(s) were also noted, as were the

complainant's name, address and phone number. Data on the gender, race and age of the alleged abuser were acquired. Information was gathered on the numbers and types of animal(s) who were abused, and the types of abuse were recorded. Finally, case outcomes of the investigations for the present animal cruelty complaints were recorded.

After the above data were collected, we gathered data from our verified matches i.e., animal and other complaints by one perpetrator. Details on the frequency, types and final dispositions of the 911 calls were accumulated and analyzed.

RESULTS

Descriptive Characteristics of the Sample

Of the 958 cases of animal cruelty investigated, the majority of the suspects were male (59%). The ages of the suspects ranged from one to eighty, and the average age was 36 years. In terms of race, most of the suspects were white (67%).

Most of the reports of animal cruelty were made anonymously (57%). But reports were also made by, in descending order, the police, neighbors, passersby, relatives, household members, and in cases of animal fighting for profit, someone in attendance. Most of the reports were for dogs (70%), cats (8%) and ferrets (5%), however, 17 percent of the reports involved cruelty complaints against farm animals (pigs, chickens, horses, cows, goats and ducks). Among farm animals, those complained about and investigated most often were goats and chickens, 5 percent and 3 percent, respectively. An additional six percent of the cruelty complaints involved skunks, raccoons, insects, and snakes. Snakes (3%) and raccoons (2%) were the types of other wildlife that were complained about and investigated most often.

Most of the complaints reported the lack of food, shelter and water (25%). There were incidents of (in descending order): inadequate shelter (17%), abandonment and injury of a police animal (9% each), unsanitary living conditions (8%), lack of medical care and emotional mistreatment (6% each), animal fighting, animal baiting, being a spectator at animal fights, owning animals used for fighting, and wounds from animal fighting (total 5%), torture (4%), diseased and roaming, and barking (3% each), and sexual assault (2%).

Twenty-seven percent of the complaints were unfounded and/or no animal was observed. Of the 73 percent of the grounded

Table 1: Percentages of Types of Requests for Service Involving Individuals Investigated for Animal Cruelty (two years before the study's time period of fiscal year 1996)

Type of Report	Percentage (N=1016)
Sexual assault	40
Mental health	23
Assault	22
Animal cruelty	6
Missing person	5
Domestic violence	4

complaints, most were resolved as a result of the officer making suggestions, educating the owner and following up with additional post-site visits (37%). Twenty-one percent of the cases involved the issuance of a warning (23%) and/or a criminal summons to appear in court (2%). The police rarely impounded the animal (5%). There were six arrests and referrals to court (6%), and all of these cases involved animal fighting. Only one case resulted in a trial where the defendant was found guilty and received prison time for animal cruelty and assault. The other five cases resulted in guilty pleas, and fines and restitution. Two of these five cases ended with the perpetrators receiving jail time. Seventy-five percent of the animal cruelty cases investigated during this year had received at least one prior complaint of animal cruelty. Fifteen percent of the cases had two prior complaints. There were reports of prior other complaints that ranged from three to nine complaints (10%). One report had received 24 past investigations for animal abuse.

Cross-Referencing: Animal Cruelty and 911 Calls for Service

All names of those investigated for animal cruelty were entered into the police department's records bureaus' computer for both two years before and one year after the fiscal year under study. Tables 1 and 2 show the types of calls for non-animal cruelty during these two time periods for the same individuals investigated for animal cruelty.

Of the 1016 matches for other crimes, 785 calls for service were for other than animal cruelty for two years before the fiscal year under study offenses. The average number of rapid response for service calls for each of the individuals was two with a range from 1 to 24. An examination of Table 1 reveals that most of the calls are for responses that resulted in

Table 2: Percentages of Types of Requests for Service Involving Individuals Investigated for Animal Cruelty During the 1996 Fiscal Year

Type of Report	Percentage (N=678)
Disturbance	32
Domestic violence	31
Assault	16
Missing person	6
Man with gun	5
Animal cruelty	4
Mental health	2
Sexual assault	2
Drugs	1

written reports for sexual assault followed by mental health requests, assaults, animal cruelty, missing persons and domestic violence. There were past arrests (resulting from the written reports) for crimes other than animal cruelty for this time period (33%). The range for the number of arrests was from one to nine. The average number of arrests was five. The average number of past convictions based upon the arrests was two, and these convictions were for domestic violence and sexual assault.

There were seven hundred and fifty-four matches for other calls for service during the 1996 fiscal year. Again, we use the suspect's name and address from the animal cruelty complaints. During the fiscal year of our study (1996), there were an average of four calls for rapid response for service involving subjects also investigated for animal cruelty. There was a range of between one and fifty-eight calls for each suspect for other crimes during this time period. Table 2 depicts the 678 types of service calls that resulted in written reports. The written reports are for: creating a disturbance, domestic violence, assault, missing person, man with a gun, animal cruelty, mental health, sexual assault, and drugs. Of the written reports taken during this time frame, thirty percent resulted in arrests. Of the 30 percent who were arrested, 10 percent were convicted of assault, domestic violence and drug possession.

DISCUSSION

Implications

It has taken society up until the mid-1980's to realize that domestic violence and child abuse are connected. Perhaps it is now time to realize that aggressive, deviant, criminal behaviors and animal cruelty co-exist. Past and

current research and discoveries from the present effort demonstrate that the worst thing that a person can do is to disregard animal cruelty thus allowing the individual (both children and adults) to get away without any castigation. Those who encounter this behavior in others need to stress that this behavior is morally and legally wrong. We, as a society, must as a public, with a conscious, as a social control system establish clear lines of non-destructive/non-harmful acceptable behavior. To do otherwise is to encourage violence. It has already been clearly demonstrated that children imitate both negative and positive behaviors. Therefore, they can be affectionate or train animals to be weapons or products of their aggression or acting out. Historically-speaking, given our adult-oriented culture, guardians and heads of households can play a preventive role as they interact with children at home, in school, and in the community. Teachers, guidance counselors and all auxiliary personnel who work in the school system should be made aware of the link between non-human animal cruelty and other violent and non-violent acts. Then, they can report these behaviors so that social service workers can intervene early.

There are implications for veterinarians as well. They treat animal victims of violence, and can make the problem of animal abuse less prevalent. Veterinarians should report suspected cases of animal abuse to the police.

Other measurable insinuations drawn from our inquiry are for practitioners and policy makers. Federal and State governments should supplement, at least, equal amounts of funds to investigate non-human animal cruelty allegations (equal to the units who investigate crimes against humans) within Counties and Cities whose responsibility it is to help remedy, not pacify, the problems surrounding animal cruelty. The laws against the abuse of animals must be enforced. Law enforcement officials must investigate, and when appropriate, arrest those individuals suspected of animal abuse. Police officers investigating violent crimes involving humans, and police officers investigating cases of non-human animal cruelty may not be mutually exclusive. Investigating and prosecuting crimes against animals may be an important tool for identifying people who may continue to abuse animals or become perpetrators of violent crimes against people. Prosecutors must prosecute individuals for committing crimes against animals. The correctional and social service personnel must

acknowledge the link between animal cruelty and other forms of social disorder (domestic violence, chemical abuse, and murder) and develop quality treatment plans related to each case.

Academic research agendas can include an exploration of animal cruelty. Based upon academic research, practitioners on the federal, state and local levels can be better informed about the incidents and prevalence of animal mistreatment. Researchers who study animal cruelty can point to ways of facilitating the prevention and intervention of criminality by examining relationships and correlates of impulsive violence. Researchers can also examine the relationships between people who mistreat animals by assault, murder, or use in controlling or coercing others being having sexual relations with them and/or using them for fantasy play and people who mistreat humans.

All professionals who are involved in rectifying harms resulting from animal brutality should be obligated to cross-report and cross-train within agencies and between agencies. This includes micro-and-macro levels of involvement. The media are also responsible for coverage of animal abuse, and the dissemination of information to the general public.

CONCLUSIONS

Society is slowly beginning to acknowledge that the treatment of non-human animals is not detached from its treatment of human beings. Politically-speaking, we can bring peace home by supporting a more progressive agenda in terms of social issues. As a result, hopefully, people will be more inclined to advocate empathy and benevolence towards all animals: human and non-human. In sum, we share the sentiment of the 18th century philosopher, Immanuel Kant:

He who is cruel to animals becomes hard also in his dealings with men. We can judge the heart of man by his treatment of animals.

REFERENCES

- Achenbach T, C Howell, H Quay, C Conners 1991 National society of problems and competencies among four to sixteen year olds - Monograph. *Society Res Child Development* 56 225
- Asclone F 1992 Children who are cruel to animals: a review of research *Anthrozoos* 4 226-247
- American Psychological Association 1994 *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* 4th ed rev Washington, DC: Author
- Belme P 1995 The use and abuse of animals in criminology: a brief history and current review *Social Justice* 22 5-31
- Berry B 1997 Human and non-human animal rights and oppression: an evolution toward equality *Free Inquiry Great Sociology* 25 2 155-160
- Boat B 1995 The relationships between violence to children and violence to animals: an ignored link? *J Interpersonal Violence* 10 2 229-234
- Borzonowski J, J Ehrhardt 1993 Protecting animals: an agenda for a non-violent future *J Amer Humane Assoc* 106 3-28
- Deviney E, R Lockwood 1983 The care of pets within child abusing families *Internat J Study Animal Problems* 4 4
- Felhous A 1991 Childhood cruelty to cat, dogs and other animals *Bulletin of the AAPL* 9 1 48-53
- Felhous A, H Bernard 1979 Euresis, firesetting and cruelty to animals: the significance of two-thirds of the triad *J Forensic Sci* 24 240-248
- Felhous A, S Kellert 1987 Childhood cruelty to animals and later aggression against people: a review *Amer J Psychiatry* 144 6 710-717
- Gelles R, M Straus 1986 *Intimate Violence* NY: Simon and Schuster
- Hickey S 1991 *Serial Murderers and Their Victims* Belmont: Wadsworth
- Hindman J 1992 *Adult and Juvenile Data Collection Form* Ontario, OR: Alexandria Associates
- Jaffe P, D Wolfe, S Wilson 1990 *Children of Battered Women* Newbury Park, CA: Sage
- Kazdin A 1990 *Prevention of Conduct Disorder*. Paper prepared for and presented at the National Conference on Prevention Research, National Institute of Mental Health, Bethesda, MD
- Kellert S, A Felthouse 1985 Childhood cruelty towards animals among criminals and non-criminals *Human Relations* 38 1113-1129
- Lockwood R, A Church 1996 Deadly serious: an FBI perspective on animal cruelty *HSUS News* 3 1
- Maiuro R, J Eberle 1989 New developments in research on aggression *Violence Victims* 4 1
- Meed M 1994 Cultural factors in the cause and prevention of pathological homicide *Bull Menninger Clinic* 28 11-22
- Mecklenburg County Animal Control Ordinance 1991 Sections 1-20. North Carolina
- Miller K, J Knutson 1997 Reports of severe physical punishment and exposure to animal cruelty by inmates convicted of felonies and by university students *Child Abuse Neglect* 21 59-82
- North Carolina General Statute 1994 Chapter 14: Articles 47-84, 163.1, 360, 361, 361.1, 362, 362.1
- Spitzer R, M Davies, R Barkley 1990 The DSM-III-R field trial of disruptive behavior disorders *J Amer Academy Child Adolescent Psychiatry* 29 690-697
- Sterba E 1935 Except from the analysis of a dog phobia *Psychoanalytic Qrly* 4 135-160
- Wax D, VG Haddox 1974 Euresis, firesetting and animal cruelty: useful danger signal in predicting vulnerability of adolescent males to assaultive behavior *Child Psychiatry Human Development* 14 151-156
- Well JL 1989 *Institutional Stimulation of Children: From Common Practice to Child Abuse* Madison, CT: International Universities Press