The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated. ~ Mahatma Gandhi

Human-Companion Animal Relationships in Family Contexts: The Good, The Bad and the Ugly
Animals, Children, Families, The Elderly and the Violence Link
by Effie Heotis, MS

Human-Animal Relationships
ANIMALS & FAMILY STUDIES: Research

- As of 2017, 68% of U.S. households own a pet

- Approximately 44% of all households in the United States have a dog, and 35% have a cat.
  (Source: American Pet Products Association 2015-2016 (APPA))

TOTAL US PET INDUSTRY EXPENDITURES IN BILLIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>$62.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>$60.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>$58.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>$52.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>$52.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>$50.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>$28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>$17</td>
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BONDS Research shows that we live with them as family members.
SOME AREAS OF RESEARCH TODAY

- Significant family members
- Source of companionship
- Foster well-being

SOME AREAS OF RESEARCH TODAY

- The human-animal bond benefits: Review of Research on Physical, Mental and Emotional Benefits Among:
  - Youths
  - Men
  - Women
  - Elderly
  - Clinical Populations

- Loss and Bereavement: The importance of pet grief counseling

HUMAN-ANIMAL RELATIONSHIPS

- We are living less rural to more urban lifestyles; We feel the need to be close to animals and nature
- We have increased separation from animals and feel the need to have them in the home
- Companion animals have become increasingly more important in our lives
- Play a significant role in family contexts
SOME AREAS OF RESEARCH TODAY

- The link between animal abuse and human-human violence; intergenerational violence
- Animal-caused violence such as dog bites and dog attacks
- Zoonotic Diseases from Pets to Humans
- Animal-assisted therapy, and animal-assisted services and emotional support dogs

Real-World Implications of Companion Animal Relationships

ANIMALS & FAMILY STUDIES: Research

- Almost half (48%) of Americans consider their animals as “companions”; half (50%) consider them as “members of the family”
- More than half (68%) of households with children under age 6 and about three-quarters (74%) of households with children over age 6 have pets
- A child in America is more likely to grow up with a pet than with a father
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANIMALS &amp; FAMILY STUDIES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Three-quarters (75%) of all women report seeing their pets as surrogate family members and referred to them as their “babies”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Almost all (90%) of the women said that their pets were important as a source of emotional support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pets given away to punish children have been found to have more negative family atmospheres and family dysfunction</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE LINK &amp; VIOLENCE (Graduation Hypothesis)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Studies show the harsh reality of the “Link” between Spousal, Child, Elder Abuse and Animal Abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Diagram of the link between abuse types]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>A CLEAR DEFINITION:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is Animal Abuse or Animal Cruelty?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly taking an action that mistreats, harms or kills any animal without just cause, such as torturing, tormenting, mutilation, maiming, poisoning, or abandonment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Included are instances of duty to provide care, e.g., shelter, food, water, care if sick or injured, transporting or confining an animal in a manner likely to cause injury or death; causing an animal to fight with another; inflicting excessive or repeated unnecessary pain or suffering, e.g., uses objects to beat or injure an animal. This definition does not include proper maintenance of animals for show or sport; use of animals for food, lawful hunting, fishing or trapping</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Graduation Hypothesis implies a direct causal link between animal cruelty and interpersonal aggression or human on human violence.

This hypothesis is based on two postulates: (1) that animal cruelty precedes interpersonal aggression, and (2) that the effect is specific to violent forms of antisocial behavior.

Two Types: Predictive and Co-occurrence

The first empirical study of the link was conducted in the 90s which investigated the role of animals in family contexts.

Acts of cruelty to animals and violence toward humans, including child abuse, elderly abuse, spousal battery, bullying and other types of violent behavior have been directly linked.

Established the need to re-evaluate the role of animals in society, re-assess violence and establish Safe Havens for victims and their companion animals.

Animal Protection Laws are evolving: Animal Cruelty is finally being taken more seriously as a symptomatic indicator in families and society.

Multiple similarities have been found between the actual means by which individuals mistreat animals and humans.

People who commit acts of animal abuse frequently have previous histories of and/or future tendencies toward violent crimes against humans.
KEY FINDINGS & THE LINK

- Reports of animal cruelty incidents coincided with violent outbursts against human family members half (51%) of the time.

- Batterers who harm animals have been found to be more dangerous and to use more forms of violence and controlling behaviors than batterers who do not abuse pets.

- 12 top lethality factors in intimate partner violence, one of which the abuse of the family pet is cited.

- Over 71% of battered women have reported that their batterers had harmed, killed or threatened animals.

- More than 75% of these incidents occurred in the presence of the women and/or children to coerce, control and humiliate them.

- Twelve independent studies have reported that up to half of battered women delay or refuse leaving abusive situations out of fear for the safety of their animals.
Exposure to animal abuse in childhood, especially abuse committed by parents or peers, is a particularly strong predictive factor for subsequent acts of animal abuse perpetrated by the observer.

Children exposed to domestic violence were found to be three times more likely to be cruel to animals than children in nonviolent households.

Up to 76% of animal cruelty in the home occurs in front of children.

33% of battered women reported that their children had hurt or killed animals.

Animal cruelty committed by children is very often symptomatic of future abuse toward other animals or people.

88% of homes with physically abused children also included abuse or neglect of the family pet.

13% of youths have admitted that they had hurt pets, and 8% admitted to having killed animals.

Youths who have sexually abused other children have been found to have histories of sexually abusing animals.

Almost all (96%) of the juvenile animal offenders also admitted to perpetrating sex offenses against humans.

Sexually abused children were five times more likely to abuse animals than were children who were not sexually abused.
KEY FINDINGS & THE LINK

- Studies have indicated that some children have kept their victimization “in secret” to save their pets from being harmed or killed.

- Stat figures and chronicles most likely show an under representation of incidents and reports of animal abuse due to the voiceless nature of the victims, and the socialized discretion of this type of violence.

ASSESSMENT: THE LINK

- Service Coordinators, Social Scientists, Social Workers, Therapists, Counselors, Educators, Law enforcement agencies and courts worldwide are increasing recognizing this “Link”.

- Significant research has documented a relationship between childhood histories of animal cruelty and other patterns of chronic interpersonal aggression.

- “Boys will be boys” attitude and leniency of animal cruelty is beginning to fade.

CONDUCT DISORDER & THE LINK

- The American Psychological Association has determined that animal cruelty aligns conduct disorder, interpersonal violence and other offenses, and it is referred to in the Diagnostic Statistical Manual.

- Acts of animal abuse are some of the strongest and earliest diagnostic indicators of conduct disorder, often beginning as young as age six and a half.
FEDERAL STUDIES & THE LINK

- The FBI identifies animal cruelty as one of several juvenile behaviors associated with increasingly violent behavior
- The FBI uses reports of animal cruelty in analyzing the threat potential of suspected and known criminals
- Almost all serial killers have histories of animal cruelty

OTHER KEY FINDINGS OF VIOLENCE & THE LINK

- Half of school shooters have histories of animal cruelty
- Animal offenders report substantially a more wide range of perpetration offenses against humans
- Bullying

OTHER KEY FINDINGS OF VIOLENCE & THE LINK

- Exposure to animal abuse in childhood has been linked to damage of emotional and mental health
- Those who reported engaging in or observing animal cruelty also were more likely to report greater involvement in a variety of anti-social or delinquent behaviors, both within the past year and over the course of their lives
- Hate Crimes are being researched in light of the “Link”
WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

Pay attention
Say something
Do something
Stay connected
Stay active

Implications - What’s Next?

Up to now, the growing body of research has demonstrated our need as a society at large to:

1) **re-evaluate** of the critical role animals play in families, communities, and institutions involving human services
2) **pay more attention & increase awareness** of subtle cues that indicate symptoms in communities and the need to re-evaluate our way of thinking
3) **revise** protocols, policies and procedures
4) **develop and provide innovative services to** address specific needs in the communities

Enhancing Agency Effectiveness

What you can do boost preventative measures and enhance agency effectiveness:

1) **Cross communication between agencies**

2) **Collaboration with a mutually shared and agreed upon protocols for:**
   - Assessment of animal abuse and/or abuse on humans
   - Intervention methods for victims and offenders (i.e., referral services, community agencies, coalitions)
   - Treatment options counseling, therapy, Anicare and Anichild treatment programs
Implications - What's Next?

- Community Connection

- Bring multi agencies together to conduct needs assessments and form community coalitions

Conclusion

- Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has. ~ Margaret Mead

- History is being taught to us everyday, but it is very biased and has shown us that we have a tendency to ignore or omit rights and services to every body, to not see them all as equals.

- History can be very influential if we pay attention to that fact that we can greatly influence women, men, girls and boys. ~ Effie Heotis
History can be very influential if we pay attention to that fact that we can greatly influence families, women, men, girls and boys.

~ Effie Heotis