

Brief for FEWO Committee

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

Authored by:

Dr. Kelly Babchishin
Professor, Department of Psychology
Carleton University
Kelly.babchishin@carleton.ca

Teena Stoddart
Violence Link Consulting
stoddatm@violencelinkconsulting.com

About the Authors:

Dr. Kelly Babchishin a professor of forensic psychology within the Department of Psychology. After completing her Ph.D. (experimental psychology, Carleton University), Kelly completed a Banting postdoctoral fellowship at the Institute of Mental Health Research (Ottawa) and the Karolinska Institute Department of Medical Epidemiology and Biostatistics (Stockholm; 2013-2017). Prior to starting at Carleton, Kelly was a research advisor at Public Safety Canada (2017-2019) and the Parole Board of Canada (2019-2021) where she conducted research to facilitate evidence-based policies for justice-involved individuals within Canada. Dr. Babchishin's research identify factors involved in the development and maintenance of sexually harmful behaviours to improve prevention efforts.

Teena Stoddart retired as a police sergeant after 30 years of service on May 20, 2021. As a Sergeant, Teena supported many critical thinking positions include major case management and Viclas. In 2010, Teena was seconded to the Ontario Behavioural Science Unit as a Viclas Analyst, where she received specialized training on serial sexual predator crime from RCMP, as well as training at FBI conferences. January 2018, Teena became one of the founding members of the Canadian Violence Link Coalition and lead the Enforcement Portfolio until November 2020, and has extensive expertise in policing and violence link. Teena retired from policing May 2021, and has started her own business, Violence Link Consulting, where she trains enforcement and victim services sectors on violence link, as well as assist governments with violence link initiatives.

The goal of the authors is to raise several issues with the Standing Committee that prevent victims from receiving the resources they need to escape violence and provide solutions to those issues.

Background

Violence link is the link between human abuse and animal abuse. It has been established through decades of evidence-based research that where there is animal abuse there is a high probability that a violent crime has or will be committed on a human. This research is supported by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the FBI, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, and studies by universities around the world.

Research has found that people who commit animal abuse (including bestiality) are more likely to commit offences against children and adults, including child abuse, domestic violence, elder abuse, school shootings, and human trafficking (Arluke & Madfis, 2013; Ascione, 2007; Ascione & Shapiro, 2009; Johnson, 2018). Animal abuse or threat of animal abuse is also used by perpetrators to keep their victims silent about the abuse (Arkow, 2014) and showing child pornography and engaging in bestiality is used to groom children for sexual abuse (Andrews, 2019).

As an example of this violence link, in a subset of Canadian criminal cases for bestiality, most (82%) also included sexual abuse of a child (Canadian Centre for Child Protection, 2019). Using a sample of all arrests for bestiality in the United States from 1975 to 2015 (given the US government collects nationwide data on this offence unlike Canada), 45.6% had sexual offending against a children or adult (most victims were under the age of 10 and lived with the perpetrator during the offence; Edwards, 2019). There is also research suggesting that animal pornography is also associated with child pornography and violent pornography consumptions (Carr, 2004).

Violence link research has mostly focused on domestic violence. A woman whose partner had threatened their pets are 5X more likely to experienced domestic physical violence in the relationship (Volant et al., 2008). Individuals who reported pet abuse by their partner also reported their partner used sexual violence, marital sexual assault, emotional violence, and stalking compared to those who do not report pet abuse by their partner (Simmons & Lehmann, 2007). Studies found that 56% of women stay or will not report abusive situations to protect their pets (Fitzgerald 2018), and some survivors return because they fear for the animals' safety (Carlise-Frank et al., 2004). In short, the violent link is a robust finding yet we do not collect necessary data on this in Canada, nor do we provide required training on this important factor in our criminal justice system.

Statistics Canada data collection guidelines (i.e., generally recording only the most severe offence per incident) has serious ramifications on the reliability and coverage of the crime statistics reported in Canada. As a result of only collecting partial data, there are no nationwide and reliable Canadian data on the prevalence rates of animal abuse, bestiality, child sexual abuse, and many other crimes. As a result, it is currently impossible to generate prevalence rates or research on the violence link in Canada using a nationwide dataset. As such, police services and government agencies do not have the necessary information to direct their policies.

Animal abuse is one of the earliest markers of future acts of violence (Johnson, 2018) and yet the various players of the Canadian Criminal Justice System, including police, are not trained to realize the significance of this link. They also are not trained to realize that instances where animal abuse and domestic violence co-occur are at higher risk of resulting in severe or fatal injury (Ascione, 2007; Campbell et al., 2018). This may not be surprising as Statistics Canada do not collect this data on animal abuse or violence link cases and, as such, Canadian research on the link between animal abuse and

violence as well as prevalence rates are lacking. **The lack of data collection, research, training, and reporting creates lost opportunities to prevent violent victimization of violence in Canada.** The current brief provides four recommendations to assist Canada in addressing the gaps.

List of Recommendations:

Recommendation 1: That the Federal Government implement a manner of collecting violence link and animal abuse data.

Recommendation 2: That the Federal Government support and provide funding for research to determine the prevalence rate and link between animal abuse and various violent and sexual crimes.

Recommendation 3: That the Federal Government revise the Criminal Code so that animal pornography is illegal to download or possess.

Recommendation 4: RCMP, and all other police services in Canada, have mandatory training on violence link.

Recommendation 1: That the Federal Government implement a manner of collecting violence link and animal abuse data.

To improve Statistics Canada reporting, we recommend that Statistics Canada: (1) update their systems to allow for multiple data entry row per incident so that Canada can have an accurate prevalence rate of all offence types and (2) Make violence link cases part of the flag system in Police Reporting Systems for Statistics Canada's Use.

To alleviate the need to create new Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) codes or sub-codes for the various crimes that have an element of animal abuse (though certainly an option), a quick fix is that police services' reporting systems (most use Versaterm) be updated so that a box on the flag system for violence link (i.e., animal abuse during the offence) is added so that Statistic Canada can report on this. Note that police services already use the flag system for gang, cyber, and hate crimes. As such, processes are already in place for this option to work.

As it stands now, when someone is charged with multiple offences in same incident, Statistics Canada exclusively captures the most severe offence in the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR; generally defined as the offence which carries the longest maximum sentence under the Criminal Code of Canada). For example, if there is a sexual assault, child pornography, bestiality, and invitation to sexual touching, the only offence that is captured in the UCR is sexual assault. How would anyone know that offence is the sexual assault of a child? Although some Statistics Canada incident surveys allow for up to four violations to be coded per incident, there is no reason to cap the number of crimes reported per incident given that datasets easily allow for multiple rows per offence. This practice has serious ramifications on the reliability and coverage of the crime statistics reported in Canada.

Therefore, Statistics Canada do not provide an accurate prevalence rate of offending (especially those often combined with other offences, e.g., sexual assault and child luring). Currently, there is also no way of knowing if an offence involved the use of an animal to intimate, control, or coerce the victim as Statistics Canada do not collect this information.

Recommendation 2: That the Federal Government mandate research to determine the prevalence rate and link between animal abuse and various violent and sexual crimes.

Given the limitations with Statistics Canada data, there are no nationwide and reliable Canadian data on the prevalence rates of animal abuse, bestiality, child sexual abuse, and many other crimes. As a result, it is currently impossible to generate prevalence rates or research on the violence link in Canada using a nationwide dataset.

Other methods available to Researchers is they can directly access representative offending sample via police case file information. This method allows researchers to summarize prevalence rates and key indicators that places an individual with animal abuse into heightened risk for other violent offences. This type of research can provide key information to inform evidence-based practice, policies, and training in Canada. However, this type of research requires collaboration between police, government agencies, and academic researchers. Without support and funding from government accessing police reports becomes very difficult, if not impossible.

Dr. Kelly Babchishin, one of the authors herein, has developed a research project which will examine the police reports of a representative cohort of individuals in the criminal justice system, and has received support for the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. The first step will be to assess the prevalence rates of animal abuse among those involved in the criminal justice system and describe these individuals. The second step will be to code their demographic (e.g., age, sex, employment status, marital status), criminal history (both prior and after the animal abuse event, when available), and any description of animal abuse available in their file. This information will be used to identify risk factors for committing sexual offences (e.g., child sexual abuse, bestiality), domestic violence, human trafficking, and nonsexual violence (e.g., gang violence) among those who abuse animals using readily available police information.

Funding needed to complete this research is estimated to be \$150,000 which includes the cost of a postdoctoral fellow (Dr. Alexandra Zidenberg, 1.5 year at 70K/year plus benefit; \$126,000), data collection travel (\$1800), and incidental fees (Carleton University service fee of 20% of total contract; \$22,200). Detailed financial accounting available upon request.

Recommendation #3: Adding to the Criminal Code an offence making animal pornography illegal to download or possess.

It is not currently illegal to download or possess animal pornography, yet animal pornography often is included in pornography collections with child pornography (Andrews, 2019, Carr, 2005). The Canadian Centre for Child Protection (2019) found that many individuals 82% (31 out of 38) who victimizes an animal, were also willing to victimize a child. Grooming is a process by which individuals motivated to commit contact sexual offence attempt to reduce barriers of abuse through normalizing sexual

activity with the child. One way to do so is by sharing images of animal pornography to test a child they are trying to lure. If these images were illegal, undercover internet child exploitation detectives could apply for warrants on the person's computer.

This has the capability of stopping another child from being victimized.

Recommendation 4: RCMP, and all other police services in Canada, have mandatory training on violence link.

When police officers are not trained on the violence link, victims fall through the cracks. Numerous cases show officers did not know the significance of an animal present in the home. Teena Stoddart, one of the authors of this brief, has been providing violence link training to police, victim services, and other professional sectors since 2018. Most police officers do not know basic evidenced based research on the use of an animal to coerce, control, and intimidate victims of violence.

Violence Link Consulting provides training that provides front line workers with the evidenced based research, how to apply the research in the field, and what resources are needed to stop the victimization. Without this practical training, domestic violence and other forms of violence is either missed or not dealt with entirely. Training from someone who has never dealt with victims of violent crime misses the practical component of the training. For more information on violence link training for enforcement officers please see www.violencelinkconsulting.com.

Bibliography

- Arkow, P. (2014). Form of emotional blackmail: Animal abuse as a risk factor for domestic violence. *Domestic Violence Report*, 19(4), 49-60
- Arluke, A., & Madfis, E. (2013). Animal abuse as a warning sign of school massacres: A critique and refinement. *Homicide Studies*, 20(10), 1-16.
- Ascione, F. R. (2007). Emerging research on animal abuse as a risk factor for intimate partner violence. In K. Kendall-Tackett & S. Giacomoni (Eds.), *Intimate partner violence* (pp. 3.1-3.17). Kingston, NJ: Civic Research Institute.
- Ascione, F. R., & Shapiro, K. (2009). People and animals, kindness and cruelty: Research directions and policy implications. *Journal of Social Issues*, 65(3), 569-587.
- Barrett, B. J., Fitzgerald, A., Peirone, A., Stevenson, R., & Cheung, C. H. (2018). Help-seeking among abused women with pets: Evidence from a Canadian sample. *Violence and Victims*, 33(4), 604-626.
- Campbell, A., Thompson, S., Harris, T. & Wiehe, S. (2018). *Intimate partner violence and pet abuse: Responding law enforcement officers' observations and victim reports from the scene*. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 1(20): Sage Publishing

- Canadian Centre for Child Protection (2019). "Bestiality" as reflected in the Canadian Case Law. Authors. Available from https://protectchildren.ca/pdfs/C3P_BE_CanadianCaseLaw_en.pdf
- Carlisle-Frank, P. , Frank, J.M. , & Nielsen, L. (2004). Selective battering of the family pet. *Anthrozoös*, 17, 26-42.
- Carr, A. Internet traders of child pornography and other censorship offenders in New Zealand (ISBN 0-478-09285-7). Department of Internal Affairs. Available from [https://www.dia.govt.nz/pubforms.nsf/URL/entirereport.pdf/\\$file/entirereport.pdf](https://www.dia.govt.nz/pubforms.nsf/URL/entirereport.pdf/$file/entirereport.pdf)
- Edwards, J. M. (2019). Arrests and prosecution of animal sex abuse (bestiality) offenders in United States, 1975-2015. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29158/JAAPL.003836-19>
- Johnson SA. Animal cruelty, pet abuse & violence: the missed dangerous connection. *Forensic Res Criminol Int J* . 2018;6(6):403-415. DOI: 10.15406/frcij.2018.06.00236
- Simmons, C. & Lehmann, P. (2007). *Exploring the link between pet abuse and controlling behaviours in violent relationships*. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 22(9): Sage Publications.
- Volant, A. M., Johnson, J. A., Gullone, E., Coleman, G. J. (2008). The Relationship Between Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse: An Australian Study. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 23(9), 1277-1295