

Companion Animals at Risk:
Violent Family Members' Attitudes, Perceptions and Treatment
Of the Family Pet

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Abstract --A two-tier study was conducted to examine the attitudes, beliefs and actions toward the family pet. The first tier of the study examined violent and nonviolent families, while the second tier examined batterers who abuse human family members only and those who also abuse the family pets. Conditions within the violent homes with regard to the family pets were also examined. The present study (Tier 1) examined the attitudes, perceptions and behaviors of both violent and non-violent families with regard to companion animals. The goal was to determine whether there existed significant differences between these two groups in their perceptions, attitudes and treatment of the family pets. Data was gathered through surveying victims of family violence residing at domestic violence shelters and a control group comprised of randomly selected pet guardians in upstate New York. More specifically, this study was conducted to determine whether there were differences between abusive and non-abusive family members in terms of (1) perceptions of companion animals as sentient beings vs. property, (2) tendencies to "scapegoat" the family pet for personal and/or family problems, (3) sensitivity to hassles and stressors in the environment--particularly those perceived as being caused by the pets, (4) unrealistic expectations about animals. The results indicated there are statistically significant differences between these two groups in attitudes, beliefs and behaviors with regard to the family pet.

Despite the growing body of literature in the area of non-human victims of family violence and the findings of the general public's attitudes and beliefs about pets within the family (Kellert, 1980; Katcher & Beck, 1983; Carmack, 1985; Voith, 1985; Kidd & Kidd, 1987; Bryant, 1990; Siegel, 1993; Schenk, Templer, Peters & Schmidt, 1994; Albert & Bulcroft, 1998; Yankelovich Partners, 2000) there remains a shortage of research seeking to uncover the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors of pet owner-guardians residing in violent households.

The present study sought to expand the body of existing queries about the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors of pet owner-guardians residing in violent homes. More specifically, the present study hypothesized that domestic violence abusers who harm the family pets may tend to differ from non-abusers in some important ways--namely, in their perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors with regard to their pets.

One goal of the present study was determine whether animal abusers tend to more frequently perceive their pets as property as opposed to sentient beings. A lack of empathy, the belief that

animals do not experience pain & the perception that animals are “property” have previously been hypothesized as key features associated with animal abuse (Agnew, 1998; Herzog & Borhardt, 1988; Flynn, 2000b).

Researchers have suggested that animal abusers frequently believe their abuse of animals is justified--even when the abusers' expectations for the animals were unreasonable (Kellert & Felthous, 1985; Arkow, 1994 (b); Agnew, 1998). Another goal of the present study, therefore, was to determine whether domestic violence batterers/animal abusers tended to have unrealistic expectations about their pets (that is, about the animals' ability to control natural behaviors such as barking and excreting) and whether there was more frequent and harsher punishment of the family pets when these expectations went unmet.

Previous research has also indicated that family pets--especially those residing in angry and aggressive households such as those families with ongoing domestic violence--are often made the scapegoat for family and personal problems (Kellert & Felthous, 1985; Veevers, 1985; Zahn-Walker, et al., 1985; DeViney, et al., 1983; Lockwood & Hodge, 1986; Vermeulen & Odendaal, 1993; Adams, 1994; Agnew, 1998, Flynn, 1999; 2000). Another goal of the present study was to determine whether abusive households had a higher tendency to scapegoat the family pet than non-abusive households.

Agnew (1998) suggested that those who engage in animal abuse tend to be more sensitive to stress and strain. One of the primary stressors for abusers may be the pet's behavior. Research findings indicate that animal abusers frequently report the animals' "bad" behaviors as a reason for abusing them (DeViney, et al., 1983; Kellert & Felthous, 1985; Felthous & Kellert, 1987a). Another goal of the present study was to determine if batterers/pet abusers were adversely affected by more daily hassles or stressors than non-abusers and in particular, whether abusers tended to be more frequently set off by the behavior of the family pet.

Methods

The present study entailed interviewing an experimental group comprised of domestic violence victims and a control group comprised of randomly selected members of the general pet-owning public about their and their partners' attitudes, perceptions and behaviors with regard to the family pet. This methodology was implemented not only to allow for a systematic approach but to address criticisms of prior research on animal cruelty and family violence (The Veterinary Record, 2001). More specifically, some prior studies have been criticized for lacking control groups or a systematic approach, as well as using survey populations that cannot be generalized. Respondents were questioned at length about the attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and behaviors of family members with regard to their companion animals and about the specifics surrounding abusive behaviors directed toward the family pet. Ascione (1998) has suggested that it is important to assess the batterers' perception of animal abuse as well as the victims'. An important question he has proposed for study is "What is the victim's knowledge of the partner's history (as a child, adolescent and adult prior to the current relationship) of animal abuse?" Assessing the conditions surrounding the batterers' attitudes, beliefs and actions surrounding abuse from the victim's perspective was the primary approach of the present study. This approach was taken for a couple of reasons. Firstly, obtaining a large enough pool of batterers willing to participate in this study was implausible. Secondly, even if such a pool of participants were possible, their responses would likely be unreliable. Researchers have found that partners in domestic violence families may not agree about the levels of different forms of violence the batterer perpetuates. In their sample of batterers who had undergone intervention, Edleson & Brygger (1986) found that at time of intake victims' and batterers' exact agreement was only 24% when asked about the batterer's violence and/or threats against pets.

Given that there may be a tendency for disagreement about the specifics surrounding pet abuse, who makes the better witness--the victim or the perpetrator? There is reason to believe that self-disclosure bias and social desirability precludes any ability to obtain accurate reports

regarding attitudes and actions surrounding pet abuse from pet abusers themselves. Adams (1995) has argued that batterers do not disclose the harm they do to animals because it exposes their real agenda for violence. Practitioners working with batterers and running battering groups state that while cases of deliberate harming or killing of the family pet is known, batterers' disclosure of harm to animals rarely occurs. Why do batterers refuse to disclose animal abuse when they acknowledge other forms of violence they have committed? By acknowledging they have harmed animals they admit it was a conscious, deliberate and planned act. Batterers, according to Adams, do not want to disclose their deliberate decision to be violent. In short, justification for surveying victims in the present study can best be summarized by the finding that most batterers do not admit to pet abuse (Arkow, 1994b).

To reduce potential problems associated with victim-respondents' reluctance, social desirability and interviewer bias connected with the sensitive nature of the subject matter, data was collected by way of a written survey. Surveys were distributed to several domestic violence shelters and veterinarian clinics in the upstate New York region. Managers and staff members were instructed to place the questionnaires in a prominent place and to advise those making inquiries that participation was voluntary and that interested participants should complete the surveys anonymously. The instruments included a cover sheet requesting their participation in a study to learn more about families and their pets and emphasizing that participation was voluntary and confidential. A security drop-box was provided at each location allowing respondents to deposit their completed surveys in a tamper-proof, secured box. Following the data collection period the security boxes of completed surveys were then retrieved. A total of 48 domestic violence victims and 52 members from the general public participated.

The survey had a total of 78 questions including three free-response essay questions. The survey questions discussed throughout this paper were forced-choice with the number of possible choices and "not applicable" options varying according to the type of information being sought.

For the purpose of this study animal abuse was defined as socially unacceptable, deliberate and unnecessary suffering and harm inflicted on animals.

Demographics

Participants came from a mixture of urban, suburban and rural regions. All of the respondents from the victims group were female. (It should be noted that the domestic violence shelters in the region are currently set up to accept only female victims.) Eighty-one percent of respondents from the control group were female. Respondents from the victims group ranged in age from 21-41, with their partners' age ranging from 21-51. Respondents from the control group ranged in age from 20-72, with their partners ranging in age from 21-66. When asked about their highest level of education attained, 56% of victims group respondents and 61% of their partners were reported as having a high school degree or "some college". Forty-nine percent of control group respondents and 34% of their partners were reported as having a college degree or graduate-level education.

Results

All of the respondents had companion animals. Fifty-one percent of the victims group respondents and 2.7% of the respondents from the control group reported abuse to the family pet. It was assumed that the control group had much less domestic violence overall than the victims group.

Some of the survey questions in the present study were worded in such a way that respondents were asked to respond about their own personal beliefs and actions, other questions asked specifically about the partners' beliefs and actions, and other questions asked about both respondents and partners. Those respondents who did not have partners had a choice to respond "no partner"; all of the victims group respondents had partners.

Perceiving the animal as a sentient being vs. viewing the pet as "property"

As mentioned previously, research indicates that the majority of Americans surveyed view their pets as members of the family. This tendency, we argued, stemmed from the owner-guardians' appreciation that their pets are sentient beings with feelings and preferences. This appreciation, we further argued, may have a tendency to be absent in the perpetrators of family violence. Researchers have argued that animals lose in violent families precisely because they are often viewed as "property" (Vermeulen & Odendaal, 1993; LaCroix, 1998). In the present study it was hypothesized that perpetrators of family violence would differ from non-abusers in the way they perceived the family pet. More specifically, it was hypothesized that violent abusers would be more likely to perceive their pets as property and be less likely to acknowledge that their animal family members were sentient beings.

In order to assess attitudes, perceptions and behaviors that might indicate a tendency towards either viewing the family pet as a sentient being with feelings and preferences or as an object (property) respondents were asked a series of questions about how members of their family interacted with the family pet. When asked how often family members told the pets that they loved them participants' answers indicated that non-abusers tend to more frequently tell their pets they love them "daily". Respondents reported that abusers "never" or "hardly ever" tell their pets they loved them. The difference between these two groups was highly significant ($\chi^2 = 21.40$, $df = 1$, $p < .0001$).¹ When asked how often family members showed affection to their pets, non-abusers were reported to show more affection than abusers. Respondents reported that abusers show less affection with the most frequent responses being "never" or "hardly ever" show affection to pets. For non-abusers the most common response was "daily" or "weekly" show

¹ Based on five categories collapsed into two categories to eliminate empty cells, with "never" "hardly ever" comprising one category and "daily", "weekly" & "at least once a month" comprising the other category.

affection towards pets. These results were highly significant ($\chi^2 = 30.04$, $df = 4$, $p < .0001$)². The results for the non-abusive group was consistent with previous research of random pet owners, which indicated that 95% of dog owners and 91% of cat owners pet and hug their companion animals daily (Yankelovich Partners, 2000).

A national study of pet owners found that the majority of dog owners and cat owners play with their pets daily (Yankelovich Partners, 2000). This was supported by the present study for non-abusers only, who were reported to be more likely to take part in the daily care-taking and playing of the family pet. Abusers, however, were reported to tend not to participate in the caring for or playing with the family pet. The difference between the non-abuser and abuser groups were highly significant with regard to this question ($\chi^2 = 12.79$, $df = 1$, $p = .0003$)³. Non-abusers and abusers were also reported to interact with their pets differently. Respondents reported abusers tend to talk to their pets primarily through "commands" or "threats" only, while non-abusers were reported to most often talk to their pets "conversationally". The differences between the two groups was highly significant in this area ($\chi^2 = 53.63$, $df = 1$, $p < .0001$)⁴ and thought to represent the differences in overall attitudes and perceptions about the pets between these two groups.

Previous studies have found that the majority of people who have pets view them as members of the family rather than as property (Kellert, 1980; Hutton, 1983; Katcher & Beck, 1983; Carmack, 1985; Voith, 1985; Albert & Bulcroft, 1988; Sanders, 1993; Siegel, 1993). The present study supported this finding for non-abusers only, with the majority tending to refer to their pets as "full-fledged family members". However, respondents reported that abusers most often refer to the family pets as "property". The results were again highly significant ($\chi^2 = 33.57$, $df = 1$, $p < .0001$)⁵. Additionally, abusers were reported to have attitudes highly consistent with viewing

² Based on five categories

³ Based on two categories

⁴ Based on four categories collapsed into two, with "threats" and "commands" comprising one category and "conversationally" comprising the other.

⁵ Based on three categories collapsed to two with "full-fledged family member" making up one category and "property" making up the other category

their pets as property even when respondents reported they did not view them as property when asked the question directly. Results of these attitudes were significant ($t = -2.30$, $df = 57$, $p = 0.02$)⁶. And finally, respondents reported that batterers who believe their pets are sentient beings abused pets less often than batterers who reportedly believe their pets are property. Again, the results were highly significant ($t = -5.04$, $df = 22$, $p < .0001$).

Previous research surveying pet owners nationwide indicates that the majority of families with companion animals celebrate their pets' birthday (AAHA Report, 1995; Yankelovich Partners, 2000). The results from the present study supports this finding for non-abusive families, the majority of whom celebrate their pets' birthday. Abusive families however, were far less likely to do so. When given several choices of possible family members--including pets--and asked to check all that apply for whose birthday was celebrated, partners of abusers were less likely to celebrate their pet's birthday while partners of non-abusers were more likely to celebrate their pets' birthday ($\chi^2 = 15.09$, $df = 1$, $p = .0001$). Non-abusers tend to be much more likely to celebrate their pet's birthday, while respondents reported that abusers tend to be much less likely to do so ($\chi^2 = 20.07$, $df = 1$, $p < .0001$). Again, this finding might be indicative of the differences in perceptions about the animals overall between abusive and non-abusive families.

When given choices of several family members--including pets-- and asked to check all that apply for who went along on family vacations or family outings such as picnics, walks, trips to the park, car rides, etc., non-abusers were just as likely to bring their pets along on family outings or vacations as to leave them behind. This is consistent with previous research findings where 45% of dog owners and 16% of cat owners nationwide reported they took their companion animals along with them on family vacations (Yankelovich Partners, 2000). However, in the present study respondents reported abusers tended to be much less likely to bring their pets along on family outings or vacation. The differences between the responses of abusive and non-abusive

⁶ Based on scaling and summing all sentient beings questions except the question concerning whether pets were viewed as family members

families was highly significant for this question ($\chi^2 = 12.75$, $df = 1$, $p = .0004$). While there are other possible explanations, taken together with the other results, this finding could be argued as supporting the idea that abusers tend to be more inclined to perceive their pets as property rather than as sentient members of the family.

Other questions asked to help tease out attitudes and perceptions of pets as sentient beings versus pets as property included where the family pet was allowed to live and whether the pets' names appeared with the other family members on greeting cards (AAHA Report, 1995). It was expected that abusers, hypothesized as having a tendency to perceive their animal as objects or property would be less inclined to appreciate the animals' needs to be close to the other family members or to have preferences for comfort. As expected, according to respondents, non-abusers were significantly more likely than abusers to let their pets live in the "living area" of their house (living room; bedroom; free-range to roam throughout the house), while abusers were reported by respondents to be more likely to require pets to live outside (with or without shelter); garage; or a cordoned-off "pet area" separate from the rest of the family. This finding was highly significant ($\chi^2 = 17.44$, $df = 3$, $p = .0001$)⁷. As for greeting cards, again it was hypothesized that abusers would be less inclined to consider pets as members of the family worthy of having their names listed with the other family members on greeting cards. As expected, when given a choice of several family members including the family pet and asked to check all that apply for whose names typically appear as signatures on family greeting cards, respondents reported that abusers tended not to include their pets' names on greeting cards while non-abusers were reported to be just as likely to include the pet's name with other family members on greeting cards as not. Again, the findings were highly significant ($\chi^2 = 12.75$, $df = 1$, $p = .0004$).

The final question in determining attitudes about whether pets were viewed as sentient beings and truly a member of the family or as objects/property concerned whether the pet was included

⁷ Based on four categories of living circumstances for family pts

in the family photo album. Previous research has demonstrated that the family photo album provides powerful insights about family relationships--including those relationships with the family pet (Entin, 1983; Ruby, 1982). It was hypothesized that abusers tend to view the pets as objects or property as opposed to sentient beings and actual members of the family. Using the family photo album as yet one more marker of the types of attitudes and relationships abusers have with their animals it was hypothesized that the pets would not be included in anything that symbolized or portrayed the abusers' "family". Therefore it was expected that abusive families would be less likely to include the pets in the family photo album than non-abusive families. As it turns out non-abusive families who have family photo albums were far more likely to have their pets' picture in the family photo album than not. Families with abusers who keep family photo albums, on the other hand, were just as likely not to have the pet included in the family photo album. The results for this question were highly significant ($\chi^2 = 8.13, df = 1, p = .0044$).

Independently these questions appear to support the hypothesis that non-abusive and abusive family members are indeed differentiated with regard to certain attitudes, perceptions and behaviors regarding the family pet. If, as it was hypothesized, these questions are indeed measuring something akin to perceptions of animals as sentient beings versus objects/property we would expect to see significant results when grouping these questions together in to a single scale. (All questions were converted in to binary variables with a value of "0 indicating a view more consistent with seeing pets as sentient beings. The questions were then summed to yield a single scale score.) Indeed this is what occurred; a t-test of the scaled questions appear to indicate that abusers tend to see their pets as property and are less likely to recognize them as sentient beings, while non-abusers tend to be more likely to perceive their pets as sentient beings and less likely to view them as property. The results were highly significant ($t = -7.60, df = 84, p < .0001$) with non-abusers having a mean score of 4.44 and abusers having a mean score of 10.43.

Pets as Scapegoats

DeViney, et al., (1983) found that some family violence against animals may be a function of the scapegoating of innocent, powerless victims. In the present study it was hypothesized that abusive households would be more likely to use their pets as scapegoats for daily frustrations than non-abusive households. That is, it was hypothesized that abusers might be more inclined than non-abusers to unfairly blame the animal for their feelings of frustration and anger. It was also hypothesized that abusers would be more likely to take their frustrations out on the pets than their non-abusive counterparts. This increase in frustrations, it was hypothesized, might take the form of more frequent punishments for the family pet.

The reports from respondents indicate that abusive households tend to be far more likely than non-abusive households to use their pets as a scapegoat. When asked to choose from several family members, including the family pet, who, if anyone was a scapegoat for family or personal problems, the results indicating the level of differences between these two groups with regard to using the pet as a scapegoat were highly significant ($\chi^2 = 15.57, df = 1, p < .0001$)⁸. Additionally, the results indicate that non-abusive households tend to punish their pets less frequently than abusive households. When asked about the frequency with which the family pets were punished the most common response for non-abusive households was "never" or "hardly ever". The most common response for abusive households for how often they punished their pets was "a few times a week". These results were highly significant ($\chi^2 = 36.07, df = 3, p < .0001$)⁹. These findings support the results cited by previous researchers who found considerable variation in the ways parents treated companion animals, with volatile, angry families tending to use their animals as scapegoats (Zahn-Walker, et al., 1985).

⁸ Scaled by asking respondents which family members were scapegoats and changing to a binary scale based on whether the family pet option was chosen

⁹ Based on four choices for levels of frequency

Unrealistic Expectations about Animals

Previous research has indicated that unrealistic expectations about animals' needs and abilities were clearly a factor in several instances of animal abuse and neglect (DeViney, et al., 1983). In the present study it was hypothesized that abusers would differ from non-abusers in their expectations about animals. More specifically, it was believed that abusers would tend to more often have unrealistic expectations for the family pet such as believing the animal has more control over natural bodily occurrences than is actually true (e.g. believing companion animals ought to be able to "hold" excretion for long periods without "accidents") or that the family pet is doing things out of "disrespect" to the abuser (e.g. the animal does not follow commands he/she was told the week before) or the family pet is doing things to "spite" the abuser (the abuser has unrealistic expectations for the animals' ability to understand what is expected of them). DeViney et al., (1983) found that 22% of abusers perceived pets as not being well-behaved, compared to only six percent in the non-abuser control group.

A series of questions were asked in order to assess the expectations pet owner-guardians have about their animals and to determine whether there were any significant differences in these expectations between abusers and non-abusers. According to the respondents abusers were reportedly more often upset by pets' misbehaviors than non-abusers. The difference between these two groups was highly significant ($\chi^2 = 27.84, df = 1, p < .0001$)¹⁰. Abusers were more often reported to believe "disrespect" was the reason pets disobeyed them ($\chi^2 = 19.53, df = 1, p < .0001$). Additionally, respondents reported that abusers had more expectations about how their pets should behave than non-abusers. Abusers were reported to believe their pets "shouldn't" do certain things such as make noise or have occasional "accidents" far more often than did non-

¹⁰ Scaled by giving respondents twelve choices for what sets their partners off—with instructions to check all that apply. This was converted to a binary variable based on whether "pets misbehaving" was selected

abusers. Again, the difference between these two groups was highly significant ($\chi^2 = 15.55$, $df = 1$, $p < .0001$)¹¹.

Expectations about how pets should and should not behave appears to have translated in to the frequency and level of punishment the pets received. As previously discussed, abusive families tended to punish their pets for misbehaving more frequently than non-abusive families. In addition, abusers were reported to use harsher, more severe methods of discipline when punishing their pets for misbehaving than did non-abusers. The difference between these two groups for the level of intensity of punishment was highly significant ($\chi^2 = 40.89$, $df = 1$, $p < .0001$)¹².

Independently these questions appear to support the hypothesis that non-abusive and abusive family members are indeed differentiated with regard to certain attitudes, perceptions and behaviors regarding the family pet. If, as it was hypothesized, these questions are indeed measuring something akin to unrealistic expectations regarding their pets we would expect to see significant results when grouping these questions together in to a single scale. Indeed this is what occurred; a t-test of the scaled questions appear to indicate that abusers tend to have unrealistic expectations about how their animals should behave. Neither these unrealistic expectations--nor subsequent punishment behaviors when the expectations go unmet--were shared by non-abusers. The results were highly significant ($t = -8.38$, $df = 84$, $p < .0001$) with non-abusers having a mean score of 0.97 and abusers having a mean score of 3.21.

Hassles & Stressors

It was hypothesized that abusers would be more reactive to everyday life stressors and hassles than their non-abusive counterparts and that pets would be viewed more frequently by abusers than non-abusers as one of the key stressors or hassles. Respondents were asked to choose all

¹¹ Scaled by asking four questions where an affirmative response would indicate 'unrealistic expectations'. If one or more 'agree' box was selected for the partner, the binary variable was set to '1', otherwise it was '0'

that apply from a 12-item list of everyday events that set their partners off. Included in this list were items such as "Pets misbehaving", "Messy house", "Lights left on in unoccupied rooms", "Problems with in-laws", "Money problems", "Dinner not on the table on time", and "Problems at work". As suspected abusers were reported to be set off by significantly many more items than their non-abuser counterparts. According to respondents, non-abusers on average, were reportedly set off by only one item. Abusers, on the other hand, were reported by respondents as being set off by an average of 8 items. The results were highly significant ($t = -9.00, df = 67, p < .0001$) with non-abusers having a mean of 3.33 and abusers having a mean of 6.78. Additionally, abusers were reportedly set off by "pets misbehaving" significantly more often than their non-abuser counterparts. Eighty-four percent of non-abusers were reportedly not set-off by pets misbehaving, while 78 % of abusers were reported to regularly be set off by something their pets did. Again, the results were highly significant ($\chi^2 = 26.05, df = 1, p < .0001$). Again, these findings are consistent with previous findings of batterers' sensitivity to perceived misbehavior of family pets (DeViney, et al., 1983; Kellert & Felthous, 1985; Felthous & Kellert, 1987b).

¹² Based on five categories of punishment collapsed to two cells, with 'physical punishment' being separated from other forms of punishment

Attitudes, Perceptions, Beliefs, & Treatment of the Family Pet: Abusive Homes vs. Non-Abusive Homes	
Perceiving Animals as Sentient Beings	Viewing Pets as Property
• Non-Abusers tell their pets they love them daily	• Abusers never or hardly ever tell their pets they love them
• Non-Abusers show affection to pets daily	• Abusers never or hardly ever show affection to pets
• Non-Abusers take part in daily caretaking & playing w/pets	• Abusers tend to not take part in daily care nor play w/pets
• Non-Abusers talk w/their pets conversationally	• Abusers talk to pets primarily through commands or threats
• Non-Abusers-majority refer to pets as "full-fledged family members"	• Abusers most often refer to pets as property
• Non-Abusive families tend to celebrate pet's birthday	• Abusive families tend not to celebrate pet's birthday
• Non-Abusive families more likely to take pets on family vacations	• Abusive families less likely to take pets on family vacations
• Non-Abusers more likely to let pets live in "living area" of home	• Abusers less likely to let pets live indoors in "living area" of home
• Non-Abusive families more likely to include pets' names w/other family members names on greeting cards	• Abusive families unlikely to put pets' names on greeting cards
• Non-Abusive families more likely to have pets' pictures in family photo album	Abusive families unlikely to have pets' picture in family photo album
Pets as Scapegoats	
Non-Abusers	Abusers
• Less likely to scapegoat pet	• Tend to blame pets for their feelings of frustration & anger/scapegoat pets
• Tend to punish pets less frequently-never or hardly ever	• Tend to take their frustrations out on pets
	• Tend to take frustrations out by frequent punishments of pets (a few times each week)
Unrealistic Expectations for Animals	
Non-Abusers	Abusers
• Tend not to have unrealistic expectations about pets	• Tend to have multiple unrealistic expectations about pets
• Tend not to be unreasonably upset about pets' behaviors	• Tend to be unreasonably upset about pets' behaviors
• Tend not to punish when expectations of appropriate behavior are not met	• Tend to believe pets "disrespect" them as key reason pets disobey
	• Tend to use frequent & harsh punishment to pets when their expectations go unmet
Hassles & Stressors	
Non-Abusers	Abusers
• Set off by very few daily hassles & stressors	• Set off by significant number of daily hassles & stressors
• Rarely set off by pets' misbehavior	• Frequently set off by pets' misbehaviors
Pet Mistreatment in Family of Origin	
Non-Abusers	Abusers
• Very or somewhat close w/family pets while growing up	• Neutral relationship w/pets while growing up
• Less likely to have abused family pet while growing up	• More likely to have abused family pet while growing up

Conclusion

The findings of the present study indicate that like their human counterparts, violence directed toward animals appears to be embedded in a complex content of attitudes, perceptions and belief systems that are translated in to actions. Of course further research is needed to test these variables under a variety of conditions and settings to determine whether the findings in the present study are consistent and applicable to other regions. It is possible that the regional culture of the area (e.g. norms, mores, beliefs unique to a specific region of the U.S. such as the Upstate, NY area or the Northeast) surveyed in the present study is unique enough as to prohibit applicability of the results to other communities. Caution should be used until the findings have been further replicated when generalizing the results to other populations.

Once the findings of the present study can be shown to be generalized, identifying attitudinal, perceptual and behavioral trends and tendencies will not only increase our understanding of what drives those who abuse but will also provide a number of red flags to alert those involved in identifying and/or stopping animal abuse that risk factors such as unrealistic expectations about animals and/or scapegoating of the family pet are present. Such a composite may be especially useful when there exists evidence--or suspicions of evidence--of abuse or threats of abuse such as those that may surface for veterinarians (Arkow, 1994a; Munro & Thrusfield, 2001) law enforcement, humane educators and mental health service providers.

Perhaps the most important goal of the present study was to offer yet another voice--and possible solution--for the animals who suffer at the hands of batterers. A conservative estimate brings the amount of healthy animals in the U.S. abandoned and dumped at public shelters due to the lack of safe-houses for animal victims of domestic violence somewhere in the hundreds of thousands every year (Ascione, et al., 1997). This is even more reason why those involved in the animal welfare movement would do well to take interest in assisting or working with domestic violence service providers. By establishing community safe havens for the animal victims those

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working to reduce unnecessary suffering and euthanasia of healthy companion animals can prevent untold numbers of animals from being killed.

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