ANIMAL MALTREATMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE:

A MANIFESTATION OF POWER AND CONTROL?

Amy Fitzgerald*
Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminology
Great Lakes Institute for Environmental Research
University of Windsor
401 Sunset Avenue
Windsor, Ontario, Canada
N9B 3P4
afitz@uwindsor.ca
519-253-3000 x2182

Betty Jo Barrett
Women's and Gender Studies
University of Windsor
bbarrett@uwindsor.ca

Rochelle Stevenson
Sociology and Anthropology
Thompson River University
rochelle.stevenson@live.ca

Chi Ho Cheung
Department of Mathematics and Statistics
University of Windsor
cheun113@uwindsor.ca

ABSTRACT

This study tests the theoretically-informed assumption that intimate partner violence (IPV) and animal abuse so frequently co-occur because animal maltreatment is instrumentalized by abusers to harm human victims. Using data from a survey of abused women in Canadian shelters, we find that threats to harm 'pets', emotional animal abuse, and animal neglect are clearly perceived by these survivors as being intentionally perpetrated by their abuser and motivated by a desire to upset and control them; the findings related to physical animal abuse are not as straightforward. Building on these findings, we propose a more nuanced theorizing of the coexistence of animal maltreatment and IPV.

There is now a significant interdisciplinary body of literature documenting the co-occurrence of animal abuse and intimate partner violence (IPV). The co-occurrence in samples of women in shelters has ranged from a low of 25% (Simmons & Lehmann, 2007) to a high of 86% (Strand & Faver, 2005). The vast majority of studies have been undertaken in the US, but increasingly the literature is being populated by studies from different national contexts, such as Ireland (Allen, Gallagher, & Jones, 2006), Australia (Volant, Johnson, Gullone, & Coleman, 2008), and the Bahamas (Fielding, 2010), although Canada -- the site of our research -- remains an understudied national context. While these findings collectively indicate that it is fairly common for IPV and animal maltreatment to co-occur, they also demonstrate that not all abused women report that their abuser mistreated their pet(s). This suggests that there are important variations among abusive relationships that render companion animals within some violent contexts at a higher risk of abuse than others. Some factors have been theorized to increase the likelihood that a perpetrator of violence against his partner will also enact harm against a pet, most notably the existence of a close relationship between the target of the IPV and the pet, which the abuser can exploit by using the pet to exert and/or regain power or control over the human target.

Specifying the factors that increase the probability of pet abuse is critical to inform the

development of risk assessment measures that can identify pets that may be in elevated danger, as well as people who are being victimized and whose decision-making regarding leaving the relationship may be shaped by the abuse of their pet(s). Such knowledge can be used by organizations and/or practitioners engaging in safety planning with survivors to promote the safety of not only women and children but also their pets, as research indicates that fear for the safety of pets may delay a woman's decision to leave an abusive relationship (Ascione, 1998; Ascione et al., 2007; Barrett et al., fortcoming; Carlisle-Frank, Frank, & Nielsen, 2004; Faver & Strand, 2003; Flynn, 2000a; Krienert, Walsh, Matthews, & McConkey, 2012; Strand & Faver, 2005; Volant et al., 2008) and contribute to her decision to return to an abusive partner after she has already severed the relationship (Barrett et al., forthcoming; Quinlisk, 1999). Therefore, promoting the safety of pets is not only critical for the well-being of animals but also for the protection of the people who care for them.

This paper builds on the literature by empirically assessing the hypothesis that animal abuse and IPV commonly co-occur because animal maltreatment is instrumentalized by abusers to further threaten and abuse the human victims of violence. We begin by situating this hypothesis within the literature, then outlining the methods and data we use to test it, followed by the presentation of our findings. We close the paper with a discussion of the contributions this study makes to better understanding the co-occurrence of animal abuse and IPV, the applied implications of our findings, and the directions we would recommend for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Companion animals, or 'pets', are increasingly a component of modern households, with over 65% of US homes (America Pet Products Association, 2017) and 57% of homes in Canada

(Candaian Pet Market Outlook, 2014) having at least one pet. Most people who have pets report forming very close bonds with them, often viewing them as members of the family (Cain, 1985; Veevers, 1985) or as important sources of support and love (Beck & Madresh, 2008; Sable, 1995). In the context of IPV, the human-animal bond may become even stronger. The IPV literature indicates that it is fairly common for abusers to attempt to isolate their victims from family and friends. As a result, for many women experiencing violence at the hands of an intimate partner, the love and support of a companion animal may be the only positive relationship they have left (Barrett et al., forthcoming). The hypothesis that animal abuse is instrumentalized to victimize the human targets of IPV is grounded in a recognition of the particularly strong bond that can form between abused women and their pets.

The hypothesis is also grounded in the literature which has highlighted power and control as potent motivators for IPV against women (e.g., Dobash & Dobash, 1979; H. Johnson & Dawson, 2011; M. P. Johnson, 2007; Kelly & Johnson, 2008; Stark, 2007; Walton-Moss, Manganello, Frye, & Campbell, 2005). Pence and Paymar's (1993) Power and Control Wheel, which is the foundation for many abuser intervention programs, offers control of the partner as the motivating factor for the constellation of forms of abuse, including financial, sexual, psychological, and physical. Abusing pets is listed under the use of intimidation (in conjunction with property destruction), an aspect of psychological abuse. In this way, pet abuse is conceptualized as being instrumental in the intimidation and psychological abuse of the woman herself. Owing somewhat perhaps to the popularity of this intervention tool, when practitioners do consider animal abuse, they are likely to view it as a form of psychological IPV. For instance, Follingstad and DeHart (2000) presented psychologists with a constellation of 102 potentially

abusive behaviours committed by men against women and asked them which they would classify as psychological abuse: the vast majority classified threats against pets and physical animal abuse as psychological abuse and clustered them with behaviours intended to intimidate the victimized partner.

Michael Johnson's (2006, 2008, 2011) work on types of IPV is noteworthy for the rather consistent inclusion of animal abuse therein. He includes animal abuse in his description of intimate terrorism, which is defined by the desire to achieve and maintain power and control over one's partner. Using data from interviews with survivors, he created measures of seven control tactics used by intimate terrorists, including threats, economic control, use of privilege and punishment, using children, isolation, emotional abuse, and sexual control. Animal abuse is included as a measure under *Using Children*. The question asks participants what their partner does when he is angry at them, and one of the response options is "Directs his anger to the children or pets" (Johnson, 2006, p. 1008). He also describes animal abuse as a form of intimidation in later publications, stating "If she resists, he can intimidate her. Show her what might happen if she doesn't behave. Scream at her. Swear at her. Let her see his rage. Smash things. Or maybe a little cold viciousness will make his point. Kick her cat. Hang her dog" (2007, p. 9). In his 2008 book, animal abuse is included under *Nonviolent Control Tactics*, as a type of *Threat and Intimidation*. Johnson writes,

> an intimate terrorist may express his anger with his wife by directing it toward objects (92 percent in this study) or toward the children or pets (65 percent). One of the most gut-wrenching cases of intimidation at the shelter where I work

involves a woman who told a colleague of mine that one day she didn't arrive home 'on time,' her husband told her to go look out in the garage – where she found that he had hanged her dog (p. 26).

Intimate terrorism tends to be more severe and to escalate more than other forms of IPV, and the perpetrators tend to espouse traditional gender roles (Johnson, 2008). There is a somewhat small but suggestive body of research which indicates that there are two types of intimate terrorists: dependent and antisocial. Dependent intimate terrorists are emotionally dependent on their partners, jealous, and controlling. They are less likely to be violent outside of the family than antisocial intimate terrorists, who rank high on psychological measures of antisocial personality characteristics. Instead of being grounded in dependency, their controlling behaviour is related to a desire to get their way (Johnson, 2008). How animal abuse may be differentially perpetrated by these two types of intimate terrorists is not discussed.

While we applaud the increasing attention being paid to animal abuse in the general IPV literature, we note that the many forms it can take (i.e., threats, removal of pets, neglect, sexual animal abuse, emotional animal abuse, and physical animal abuse) are not generally addressed and problematized, the actual victimization of animals tends to be glossed over, and the co-occurrence of IPV and animal maltreatment tends to be undertheorized. There is a growing body of literature situated at the intersection of IPV and animal maltreatment that has theoretically and empirically dug a little deeper into this issue (e.g., Adams, 1994; Ascione, 1998; Ascione et al., 2007; Faver & Strand, 2007; Fitzgerald, 2005; Flynn, 2000b; Newberry, 2016).

Carol Adams (1994, 1995), a pioneer in theorizing the co-occurrence of animal abuse and

IPV, has eloquently argued that like the abuse of women and children, animal abuse is rooted in patriarchy. She writes, "women's oppression is interwoven with that of animals, so that women and animals are both trapped by the control exercised over their own *and* each other's bodies" [emphasis in original] (Adams, 1994, p. 70). Applying this dynamic to the specific context of IPV, she argues that abusers can visit harm upon animal bodies as a way to further abuse the women who love them. She observes that when it comes to abuse of an animal, "it is not what is done, it is what is accomplished" (Adams, 1995, p. 59). She theorizes then that power and control are at the root of animal abuse in this context, and outlines specific ways that animal abuse can be instrumentalized by an abuser, including to demonstrate power; to teach submission; to isolate her from positive relationships; to limit independent action; to prevent her from leaving; to punish her; to involve her in animal abuse (abuse of trust); and to generally confirm or reify his own power and control (Adams, 1995).[1] In short, control is accomplished and power is displayed via animal maltreatment.

The hypothesis that IPV and animal abuse so commonly co-occur because animal maltreatment can be instrumentalized to harm the human victims of IPV has found support in qualitative studies. Most of these studies have been undertaken with samples of women in shelters. In one relatively recent study, Hardesty, Khaw, Ridgway, Weber, and Miles (2013) conducted interviews with 19 women residing at a domestic violence shelter who reported having pets. Nine women described the threats and abuse of the pets as being directly related to the abuser's attempts to control and intimidate them. The level of control was directly related to the closeness of the bond between the woman and her pets, in that those women who reported a closer relationship with the animal reported much higher levels of pet maltreatment and greater

distress about the abuse their pets faced. In their earlier studies, Flynn (2000a) and Fitzgerald (2005) also identified themes of control, manipulation and intimidation vis-à-vis pet maltreatment in their interviews with abused women, as well as strong bonds between the women and their pets, particularly those who were abused. Fitzgerald (2005) also found that a smaller, although certainly not inconsequential, number of the women she interviewed perceived their abuser's mistreatment of their pet as being motivated by jealousy.

In a recent study utilizing online survivor discussion forums, Newberry (2016) found that control exerted through abuse of and threats against companion animals was a key theme in the text, along with the importance of the relationship between the women and their pets. Similar to Fitzgerald (2005, 2007), Newberry (2016) found that the survivors relied on their companion animals as a source of support and that they often represented the only positive relationship in the women's lives, making abusive actions towards them an even more effective tactic for controlling the victimized partner in the relationship.

We are aware of only one quantitative study that has explicitly examined the relationship between controlling behaviours and animal maltreatment in the context of IPV. Using the Checklist of Controlling Behaviours (CCB) and four questions about pet maltreatment perpetrated by their abuser with a large sample of 1283 abused women receiving services from shelters in Texas, Simmons and Lehmann (2007) tested the hypotheses that batterers who also mistreat pets use more controlling behaviours than those who do not abuse pets, and that there is a positive correlation between controlling behaviours and animal abuse. As expected, they found that women who reported that their partner had engaged in animal abuse scored their partners

higher on the CCB and each of its constituent subscales, and there was a positive correlation between controlling behaviours and animal abuse; however, the amount of variance explained was 4.2%-10.5%, or in their words, "rather low" (Simmons & Lehmann, 2007, p. 1219). They conclude that "the idea that batterers abuse their pet(s) as a form of controlling behaviour may not be as straight-forward as it appears" (Simmons & Lehmann, 2007, p. 1219).

Simmons and Lehmann (2007) recommend further research into the relationship between controlling behaviours and animal abuse, and suggest that the data analyzed to date has not adequately allowed researchers to unpack this relationship. We agree with their assessment, and therefore included specific questions about the intentionality of and motivation for pet maltreatment in our survey of abused women, as well as measures of several forms of animal maltreatment (i.e., not just physical abuse) due in part to the possibility that some forms might be more related to a desire to exert power and control than others.

METHODS

Study Aims

The present study sought to evaluate predictors of pet abuse as reported by female survivors of IPV, focusing on the hypothesis that animal maltreatment commonly co-occurs with IPV because abusive men instrumentalize the abuse of animals to further victimize their human victims. Specifically, we assessed the association between different sub-types of IPV and survivors' perceptions of why their partners engaged in animal maltreatment in the context of their relationships. This investigation extends previous research examining the relationship between forms of animal maltreatment and types and severity of IPV among female survivors

(Barrett et al., forthcoming) to identify factors that may work in concert with IPV to elevate the risk of pet abuse in violent households. As such, this work aims to provide a better understanding of why animal abuse and IPV commonly co-occur.

Sampling

Sixteen first stage housing organizations (emergency shelters) for battered women served as sites for data collection for the present study. Shelters were selected from a comprehensive published listing of transition houses and battered women's shelters in Canada (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2008). An initial list of 40 shelters were selected from this publication using purposive sampling to ensure geographic representation across Canada as well as the inclusion of both small and large rural, suburban, and urban shelters. These shelters were invited to collaborate in a multi-phase research study investigating the experiences of sheltered women with animal abuse, and organizational policies/practices for serving the companion animals of shelter residents. Of the 40 service providers approached, 23 shelters agreed to be sites for data collection from shelter residents and/or shelter staff.[2] The current study includes responses from female survivors receiving services from the 16 shelters which consented to the collection of data from shelter residents, although it should be noted that one additional shelter consented to the collection of data from residents about their experiences of animal abuse but not about their experiences of partner violence, so data from that shelter was excluded from the present analysis. Research Ethics Board (REB) approval was obtained by the research team.

Data Collection

Shelter staff were briefed by the research team on data collection procedures and research ethics to ensure the administration of ethical research protocols and consistency in data

collection procedures across shelter sites. Survey packages were distributed and collected over a ten month period between April 2014 and January 2015. Participating shelters were given a $25 gift card to a local coffee shop for their staff to thank them for assistance in facilitating the research.

After introducing the study and discussing informed consent, shelter staff distributed a hard copy of the survey instrument to interested residents. Residents were asked to complete the written survey on their own at a time and in a private location of their choosing. Respondents then returned completed surveys to shelter staff in a sealed envelope and were given a small token of appreciation (a $5 gift card to a local coffee shop) for their participation. Shelter staff then compiled all surveys submitted by residents and returned the completed package of research materials to the research team.[3]

Participants

A total of 100 completed resident surveys were returned to the research team. The individual response rate cannot be calculated, as we do not know how many women were approached to participate in the research, and it would have been too onerous for the staff to keep track of given the multiple demands on their time. Of the returned surveys, 86 respondents provided data regarding whether or not they owned a companion animal during their abusive relationship. Fifty-five women reported owning a pet while with their abusive partner. Cats were the most frequently reported animal companions, with 78.2% of respondents reporting at least one cat ($M = 1.69$, $SD = 1.32$, Range = 0 to 6). Dogs were the second most common animal companions, with 63.6% of respondents reporting having at least one dog while with their perpetrator ($M = 1.24$, $SD = 1.32$, Range = 0 to 5). Among women who had companion animals

during their relationship with their abuser, 72.7% had at least one companion animal at the time

they left the relationship. Of women who still had pets at the time of their departure, 60%

indicated that their pets were still under the care of their abusive partner. The women who had

companion animals during their abusive relationship ranged in age from 21 to 66 years ($M =$

40.5, $SD =$10.99) and had an average of 1.4 ($SD =$1.65) children with their abusers. They also

had an average of 1.2 ($SD =$1.42) children with someone other than their abusive partner.

      The sample analyzed for the present study is restricted to respondents who had at least

one pet during the time of their abusive relationship (n = 55). Socio-demographic characteristics

of this sample are outlined in Table 1.

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Table 1 about here

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Predictor Variables

Intimate partner violence

      IPV experienced by the respondents was assessed with the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale

(CTS-2; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996). The CTS-2 is a 78 item scale which

measures conflict tactics used between intimate partners. The present study focused on six

subscales of the CTS-2 which were found to be related to animal maltreatment in a previous

study by the research team (Barrett et al. forthcoming): (1) *Severe Psychological Aggression;* (2)

Minor Psychological Aggression; (3) *Severe Physical Assault;* (4) *Minor Physical Assault*; (5)

Severe Sexual Coercion; and (6) *Minor Sexual Coercion.* Respondents were asked to indicate

how frequently their partners engaged in each tactic (0 = this never happened; 1 = once in the past year; 2 = twice in the past year; 3 = 3-5 times in the past year; 4 = 6-10 times in the past year; 5 = 11-20 times in the past year; 6 = more than 20 times in the past year; or 7 = not in the past year but it did happen before). For the present study, we created a summative score for each sub-scale of the CTS-2 by summing the total number of items within the subscale that the respondent indicated she had ever experienced. Internal consistency reliability of the CTS-2 is strong (between .75 to .95 for subscales), and the CTS-2 has demonstrated construct validity (Straus et al., 1996).

The original CTS was revised and replaced by the CTS-2 to address some limitations. One remaining limitation is that due to its focus on abuse in the context of conflict, the instrument does not do a good job of tapping into controlling behaviour that does not result from a specific cause (DeKeseredy 2011). To address this limitation, we also included the Checklist of Controlling Behaviours survey (CCB; Lehmann, 1998). However, we found consistency between the measures of physical, psychological, and sexual IPV between the CTS-2 and the CCB, and therefore for the sake of parsimony, we report only on the findings related to the CTS-2 here.

Socio-demographic variables. We included two socio-demographic variables of interest in the models: age and race/ethnicity. The age of participants is measured as a simple continuous variable. We created a dummy variable to measure the race/ethnicity of the participants, with white coded as 1 and the non-white categories collapsed and coded as 0.

Perceptions of abuser's motivations for abusing pet. We created four questions to measure the perceived motivation for and the intentionality of the animal maltreatment: (1) *How likely do you think it is that your abuser mistreated the pets to upset you and/or your children?*

(2) How likely do you think it is that your abuser mistreated the pets because he was trying to regain control over the situation or argument? (3) How likely do you think it is that your abuser mistreated the pets to exert power and control over you? (4) How likely do you think it is that your abuser planned his maltreatment of the pets in advance? Respondents were asked to score each question separately along a continuum from one to five (1 = extremely unlikely; 5 = extremely likely), with a don't know response also provided.

Outcome Variable

Animal abuse

Animal abuse was measured using the Partner's Treatment of Animals Scale (PTAS; Fitzgerald, Barrett, Shwom, Stevenson, & Chernyak, 2016). The PTAS is a 21-item measure of five sub-types of animal maltreatment specifically in the context of violent intimate relationships: (1) *Emotional Abuse of Animal* (for example, confining the pet in an inappropriately small space for an extended period of time, or intimidating or scaring the pet on purpose); (2) *Threats to Harm Animal* (for example, threatening to get rid of a pet to make the survivor do something); (3) *Physical Neglect of Animal* (for example, refusing to feed a pet); (4) *Physical Abuse of Animal* (for example, smacking a pet); and (5) *Severe Physical Abuse of Animal* (for example, breaking a pet's bones). Each individual item is scored on a scale from zero to four to evaluate the frequency of occurrence of each item (0 = never, 1 = rarely, 2 = occasionally, 3 = frequently, 4 = very frequently, with an additional don't know option). Each individual scale of the PTAS has been shown to have demonstrated acceptable reliability ($\alpha >$ .80). A summative score for each subscale of the PTAS was obtained by summing the individual item responses for all items within the subscale, with higher scores indicating higher occurrence

of animal abuse for the subscale.

Research Hypothesis

Consistent with the conceptualization of animal maltreatment as being instrumentalized by abusers to harm human victims of IPV found in the general IPV literature and the more specific literature on the co-occurrence of woman abuse and animal abuse, we predicted that survivors' perceptions of their abusers' mistreatment of their pets as premeditated and as intended to upset or control them would be significantly associated with higher levels of the five types of animal maltreatment measured by the Partners' Treatment of Animals Scale.

Analysis

Bi-variate relationships between study variables were initially assessed via a correlation matrix. As we were particularly interested in understanding the perceived motivation of animal maltreatment and the occurrence of different types of animal abuse after controlling for survivors' socio-demographic characteristics and specific types of IPV experienced by the survivor, we then conducted a series of hierarchal linear multiple regression equations. Each model was composed of two blocks of control variables (Block 1: age and ethnicity of the survivor; Block 2: specific types of intimate partner violence experienced by respondents as measured by specific sub-scales of the CTS-2), followed by a third block containing our primary predictor variables of interest (Block 3: perceived motivation of the abuse). A separate regression equation was conducted using each specific sub-scale of the CTS-2. As such, four predictor variables in total were included in each regression equation, consistent with the statistical power needed for analysis with a sample of our size.

RESULTS

Among the 55 women who reported having pets during their abusive relationship, only six did not report any form of pet maltreatment perpetrated by their abusive partner against their companion animal. Thus, approximately nine out of ten (89.1%) of abused women in our study experienced at least one instance of maltreatment of their pet by their partner. The most common forms of pet abuse enacted by perpetrators included threats to get rid of a pet (65.5%), scaring or intimidating a pet on purpose (60%), smacking a pet (56.4%), and throwing an object at a pet (50.9%). The most severe types of pet abuse experienced included the injury of a pet (20%), the killing of a pet (14.5%), and more specifically, breaking a pet's bones (10.9%) and drowning a pet (9.1%).

Specific questions were asked about the dynamics of animal maltreatment (if present) and relationships between the human and animals in the home. When asked whether or not the animal abuse changed over time, 47.3% said that their partner had become more abusive towards the pet. Only 0.05% said that the abuse against the pets deescalated over time. Additionally, when asked how close their relationship was with the abused pet, only approximately one out of five women said that they were not close at all.

Predictors of Emotional Animal Abuse

As indicated in Table 2, after controlling for socio-demographic factors and severe psychological aggression experienced by survivors, three of the variables measuring controlling behavior significantly predicted the emotional abuse of pets: abuser mistreated the pet to upset you or the children ($\beta = 1.72$, $p < .05$), abuser mistreated the pet to regain control over the situation or argument ($\beta = 1.61$, $p < .05$), and abuser mistreated the pet to exert power or control over you ($\beta = 1.85$, $p < .05$). These three characteristics were similarly predictive of the

emotional abuse of the pet after controlling for socio-demographic factors and minor

psychological aggression experienced by the survivor ($\beta = 2.38$, $p < .001$; $\beta = 1.95$, $p < .05$; and β

$= 2.15$, $p < .01$ respectively) and severe physical assault experienced by the survivor ($\beta = 1.96$, p

$< .05$; $\beta = 1.87$, $p < .05$; and $\beta = 2.13$, $p < .01$ respectively).

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Table 2 about here

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After controlling for socio-demographic factors and minor physical assault experienced

by survivors, two characteristics significantly predicted the emotional abuse of pets: animal

maltreatment to upset the human victims ($\beta = 2.01$, $p < .05$) and animal maltreatment to exert

power or control ($\beta = 2.06$, $p < .05$). Abuser's mistreatment of the pet to upset the human

victims, to regain control over the situation or argument, and to exert power or control were also

predictive of the emotional abuse of pets after controlling for socio-demographic factors and

both severe sexual coercion ($\beta = 1.64$, $p < .05$; $\beta = 1.78$, $p < .05$; and $\beta = 2.05$, $p < .05$

respectively) and minor sexual coercion ($\beta = 2.03$, $p < .01$; $\beta = 2.04$, $p < .01$; and $\beta = 2.34$, $p < .01$

respectively). Notably, the question about whether the abuse was preplanned was not significant

in any of these models.

<u>Predictors of Threats to Harm Pets</u>

After controlling for socio-demographic factors and severe psychological aggression

experienced by survivors, all four variables measuring motivation significantly predicted threats

to harm pets: pet maltreatment to upset the human victims ($\beta = 1.55$, $p < .01$), to regain control

over the situation or argument ($\beta = 1.64$, $p < .01$), to exert power or control ($\beta = 1.69$, $p < .001$),

and that the abuser planned the maltreatment of pets in advance (β = 1.36, p <.05). (See Table 3).

Three of these factors were also significantly associated with threats to harm pets after

controlling for socio-demographic characteristics and minor psychological aggression

experienced by survivors [pet maltreatment to upset the human victims (β = 1.51, p <.001), to

regain control over the situation or argument (β = 1.40, p <.01), and to exert power or control

over the respondent (β = 1.54, p <.01)] and severe physical assault experienced by survivors

[abuser mistreated the pet to upset the human victims (β = 1.83, p <.001), to regain control over

the situation or argument (β = 1.84, p <.001), and to exert power or control (β = 1.90, p <.001)].

 After controlling for socio-demographic factors and minor physical assault experienced

by survivors, three of the variables significantly predicted threats to harm pets: animal

maltreatment to upset the human victims (β = 1.57, p <.01), to regain control over the situation

or argument (β = 1.72, p <.01), and to exert power or control (β = 1.73, p <.01). These

characteristics were also predictive of threats to harm pet after controlling for socio-demographic

characteristics and severe sexual coercion (β = 1.47, p <.01; β = 1.72, p <.01; and β = 1.92, p

<.001 respectively). Finally, all four variables significantly predicted threats to harm pets after

controlling for socio-demographic factors and minor sexual coercion: animal maltreatment to

upset the human victims (β = 1.58, p <.001, to regain control over the situation or argument (β =

1.83, p <.001), to exert power or control (β = 2.00, p <.001), and that the pet maltreatment was

planned in advance (β = 2.01, p <.05).

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Table 3 about here

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Predictors of Physical Animal Neglect

After controlling for socio-demographic factors and severe psychological aggression experienced by survivors (see Table 4), two variables significantly predicted the physical neglect of pets: pet maltreatment to upset the human victims ($\beta = 1.86$, $p < .05$) and to exert power or control ($\beta = 1.94$, $p < .05$). Abuser mistreated the pet to upset the human victims also similarly predicted the physical neglect of pets after controlling for socio-demographic factors and minor psychological aggression experienced by the survivor ($\beta = 2.29$, $p < .05$).

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Table 4 about here

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Two variables significantly predicted the physical neglect of pets after controlling for socio-demographic factors and levels of severe physical assault experienced by the participants: pet maltreatment to upset the human victims ($\beta = 2.56$, $p < .01$) and to exert power or control ($\beta = 2.43$, $p < .05$). Three variables (abuser mistreated pet to upset the human victims, to regain control over the situation or argument, and to exert power and control over the respondent) also significantly predicted physical neglect of pets after controlling for socio-demographic factors and levels of minor physical assault experienced by respondents ($\beta = 2.91$, $p < .01$; $\beta = 2.35$, $p < .05$; $\beta = 2.79$, $p < .01$ respectively). Two variables (pet maltreatment to upset the human victims and to exert power and control) predicted minor sexual coercion experienced by the respondent ($\beta = 1.99$, $p < .05$ and $\beta = 2.39$, $p < .01$ respectively).

Predictors of Physical Animal Abuse

After controlling for socio-demographic factors and severe psychological aggression

experienced by survivors, one variable significantly predicted physical abuse of pets: pet maltreatment to upset the human victims ($\beta = 1.54$, $p <.01$). This variable was also predictive of physical abuse of pets after controlling for socio-demographic factors and minor psychological aggression experienced by survivors ($\beta = 1.55$, $p <.01$), severe physical assault experienced by survivors ($\beta = 2.05$, $p <.01$), respondents' experiences of minor physical assault ($\beta = 2.00$, $p <.01$), severe sexual coercion, and minor sexual coercion ($\beta = 1.82$, $p <.001$). (See Table 5).

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Table 5 about here

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Predictors of Severe Physical Abuse of Animal

In regards to the severe physical abuse of animals, none of the variables assessing perceived motivation for animal maltreatment were found to be associated with this type of animal abuse after controlling for socio-demographic factors and the six CTS-2 subscales. However, in some of the models, socio-demographic variables and forms of IPV were significant predictors of severe physical animal abuse (see Table 6).

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Table 6 about here

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DISCUSSION

Consistent with prior theorizing in the literature, our findings support the notion that survivors of IPV perceive that maltreatment of their pets is driven by their partner's desire to cause them emotional harm and/or to enact power and control over them. However, our study

makes a novel contribution to the literature by also finding that not all forms of animal maltreatment are perceived by IPV survivors in this way. This finding is important because it highlights the need to move beyond monolithic constructions of "animal abuse" as a singular construct to consider the ways in which different types of animal maltreatment may have distinct correlates with IPV against women. It also suggests that perpetrators' motivations for enacting some forms of violence against animals in the context of IPV, specifically physical and severe physical forms of animal abuse, may be more nuanced and complicated than a sole focus on power and control encapsulates.

In regards to three forms of animal abuse (emotional abuse of animals, physical neglect, and threats to harm animals), our models fairly consistently supported the hypothesis that survivors perceive these forms of violence against their pets to be motivated by a perpetrator's desire to upset them/their children and to exert power/control over them. Importantly, these relationships were significant after controlling for variations in the socio-demographic and IPV victimization profiles of survivors. These findings collectively suggest that the emotional abuse, threats against, and neglect of animals in the context of IPV are perceived by survivors to be part of the broader matrix of power and control tactics that perpetrators use to control them and/or cause them psychological harm. Interestingly, however, survivors largely did not perceive that these specific forms of animal abuse were pre-meditated on the part of their perpetrators.

The relationship found between perceived power/control and emotional harm motivations and levels of physical animal abuse enacted by IPV perpetrators (specifically, the physical abuse and severe physical abuse of animals) was not as straightforward. While physical abuse of pets was found to be significantly associated with a survivor's perception that her partner had harmed

the pet to upset her or her children in all of our models, physical abuse of pets was not found to be significantly associated with survivors' beliefs that their partners had acted in order to manifest power/control over the survivor or the situation. Moreover, none of our four variables designed to tap into intentionality and control as a motivator of pet abuse were significant predictors of the severe animal abuse scale. However, consistent with the findings for our models predicting the neglect and emotional abuse of pets, survivors did not believe that the physical or severe physical abuse of their pets was premeditated by perpetrators. .

Thus, while the survivors in our sample tended to understand the emotional abuse, neglect, and threats against their pets as intentional and as motivated to exert and/or to regain power and control, the same is not true of physical animal abuse, particularly severe physical animal abuse. There are some possible explanations for this finding. First, the instrumentalization of animal maltreatment to harm the human victims of IPV may be more obvious in relation to threats, emotional abuse, and neglect of pets because they may be more likely to contain ultimatums (e.g., "if you don't do what I say I will hurt the cat") compared to direct physical animal maltreatment. Related to this, severe animal abuse with the possibility of lethality risks the annihilation of the instrument of control (the animal in this context) and therefore may be less likely to be perpetrated due to – and/or perceived as being related to – a desire to (re)establish power and control.

Second, the patterns we found vis-à-vis the forms of animal maltreatment and the perceived motivations thereof may be related to a pattern of escalating abuse. Nearly half of the participants perceived an escalation in the animal maltreatment over time, whereas only 0.05% noted de-escalation over time. It is possible that as the abuse escalates over time, coercive abuse

may become concentrated on the woman herself and she may be victimized more directly; this interpretation would be supported by the findings outlined in Table 6 regarding the association between severe physical animal abuse and severe physical and sexual violence directed at the woman herself.

Finally, it is possible that these findings are related to a difference in the way that subtypes of abusers involve animals in their abuse. If we accept Johnson's (2008) argument discussed earlier that samples from shelters are overwhelmingly comprised of survivors of intimate terrorism, and the research he cites indicating that there are two main forms of terrorists – those motivated by dependency and jealousy, and those who are more generally antisocial – then we might speculate that the dependent/jealous perpetrators are most likely to use threats against animals, emotional animal abuse, and neglect to try and control the human victims. In contrast, the anti-social intimate terrorists, who are more likely to also be violent outside of the family, may also be more likely to be generalized animal abusers. The abuse of animals by anti-social intimate terrorists may be perceived as being explosive and perpetrated without a specific goal in mind, and we might expect that they would be more likely than dependent/jealous intimate terrorists to abuse animals in addition to family pets. This interpretation would be consistent with Ascione's (1999) conceptualization of animal abuse as represented by a circle in a Venn diagram that *partially* overlaps with IPV and child abuse (see also Simmons & Lehmann, 2007). Further research is needed to evaluate the explanatory potential of this and the other two potential explanations for our findings regarding power/control as a motivator for physical animal abuse.

A few words are also warranted regarding race/ethnicity, which became a significant

predictor in the severe physical animal abuse models (but not in the others). The literature

indicates that women of colour, particularly Indigenous women in Canada, are at greater risk of

victimization in general and by an intimate partner more specifically (Scrim, 2016). Our findings

indicate that they may also be at greater risk of having their pets physically abused. Further

research with a larger and more diverse sample than we had access to for this study is needed to

tease apart this relationship.

Another limitation of this study is that it relies on the women's perceptions of their

abuser's intentionality and motivation for mistreating their pet. We cannot know for certain what

their motivation was for this abuse; querying abusers themselves would provide another helpful

dimension, but even then one would be constrained by what the participants are willing to report.

Clearly there is a need for further research into the co-occurrence of animal abuse and

IPV. We hope that this paper will serve as an indication of the importance in future research of

attending to the many forms that animal maltreatment can take. By disaggregating animal abuse

into specific types of animal maltreatment, and accordingly not limiting our analyses to physical

animal abuse alone, we were able to begin to develop here a more nuanced understanding of the

relationship between animal maltreatment and IPV. Had we included only physical animal abuse

in our analyses we likely would have concluded that our sample of IPV survivors do not perceive

animal maltreatment as being instrumentalized by their abusers to further harm and control them.

Importantly, we found that threats, emotional animal abuse, and neglect – the most commonly

reported forms of animal maltreatment among our sample, and likely the most common to be

overlooked by scholars and practitioners – are overwhelmingly perceived as being motivated to

upset and exert power and control over the human victims of IPV. Just as IPV scholars and

practitioners have demonstrated that IPV can take many forms and that the perpetrators of IPV are not a monolithic group, it is time to acknowledge that animal maltreatment can take many forms, that the motivations for these forms of maltreatment may be perceived differently based on type, and that they may even be perpetrated at different rates and for different reasons by different types of abusers.

NOTES

1. These methods of instrumentalizing pets are fairly self-explanatory, perhaps with the exception of "to involve her in animal abuse (abuse of trust)." It is described as forcing or coercing the human victim into engaging in animal abuse. It often entails violating the trust that the companion animal has placed in their abuser, much like the trust a child places in their parent.

2. The project was composed of two stages: focus group pilot testing of the surveys, and the distribution of the revised surveys to shelter staff and clients. Of the 23 shelters that agreed to participate in the study, three withdrew prior to data collection due to scheduling conflicts. One homeless shelter and two second stage shelters that participated in the focus groups were not included in the revised survey distribution. The decision was

made to exclude these shelters from revised survey distribution as the focus groups

showed that surveys would require substantive revisions to accurately capture the client

and staff experience there. Plans for future research include surveys designed specifically

for these types of agencies.

3. As part of the larger study, staff members were surveyed about their knowledge of the co-

occurrence of animal abuse and IPV, shelter policies regarding pets, and

recommendations for addressing the unique needs of women with pets (see Stevenson et

al., 2018).

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Table 1 *Summary of Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Women with Animal Companions*

during Their Relationship with Their Abusive Partner (n =55)

Socio-Demographic Characteristic	Percentage

Ethnicity	
European Ancestry (White)	74.5%
First Nations	9.1%
Metis	5.5%
South Asian	1.8%
Arab	5.5%
Latin American	1.8%
Mixed Racial-Ethnic Heritage	1.8%
Sexuality	
Heterosexual	85.5%
Bi-sexual	5.5%
Asexual	3.6%
Other (unspecified)	5.5%
Highest Level of Educational Attainment	
Less than high school	12.7%
Some high school but (not yet) a high school graduate	12.7%
High school graduate or equivalent	14.5%
Some post-secondary education	52.8%
University graduate	7.3%
Marital Status	
Single (never legally married)	30.9%
Common law partnership	7.3%
Legally married	14.5%
Separated but still legally married or common law	43.6%
Divorced	1.8%
Widowed	1.8%
Limited in Activities due to Disability or Health Issue	
Yes	42.6%
No	57.4%

Table 2. *Hierarchal Regression Models Predicting Emotional Abuse of Animals (regression coefficients)*

	Controlling for CTS-2 Severe Psych	*Controlling for CTS-2 Minor Psych*	*Controlling for CTS-2 Severe Physical*	*Controlling for CTS-2 Minor Physical*	*Controlling for CTS-2 Severe Sexual*	*Controlling for CTS-2 Minor Sexual*
Age	-0.17	-0.14	-0.14	-0.14	-0.19	-0.13
Race	-2.98	-3.45	-3.20	-3.52	-2.21	-2.81
CTS-2 subscale	1.21	-0.54	0.19	0.16	0.98	1.10
To upset you or children	1.72*	2.38***	1.96*	2.01*	1.64*	2.03**
Model F statistic	**5.18****	**5.80****	**4.82****	**4.77****	**5.05****	**5.25****
Age	-0.25	-0.22	-0.22	-0.21	-0.23	-0.21
Race	-1.29	-2.23	-1.25	-1.74	-1.17	-1.82
CTS-2 subscale	1.87	0.71	0.40	0.52	0.67	0.51
To regain control over the situation or argument	1.61*	1.95*	1.87*	1.79	1.78*	2.04**
Model F statistic	**4.84****	**3.71***	**4.22****	**4.10***	**3.79***	**4.03***
Age	-0.22	-0.19	-0.18	-0.18	-0.19	-0.18
Race	-1.06	-1.88	1.12	-1.48	-1.18	-2.12
CTS-2 subscale	1.78	1.18	0.31	0.45	0.43	-0.25
To exert power or control over you	1.85*	2.15**	2.13**	2.06*	2.05*	2.34**
Model F statistic	**5.11****	**4.08***	**4.43****	**4.38****	**3.90***	**4.27****
Age	-0.23	-0.20	-0.20	-0.19	-0.21	-0.18
Race	0.15	-0.79	0.10	-0.14	0.72	-1.22
CTS-2 subscale	2.58	1.72	0.39	1.10	1.20	-0.78

Abuser planned the maltreatment of pets in advance	1.27	1.57	1.51	1.22	0.89	2.16
Model F statistic	**2.91***	**1.74**	**1.81**	**2.14**	**1.91**	**1.77**

Note: ** p≤.05, ** p≤.01, *** p≤.001*

Table 3. *Hierarchal Regression Models Predicting Threats to Harm Animals (regression coefficients)*

	Controlling for CTS-2 Severe Psych	*Controlling for CTS-2 Minor Psych*	*Controlling for CTS-2 Severe Physical*	*Controlling for CTS-2 Minor Physical*	*Controlling for CTS-2 Severe Sexual*	*Controlling for CTS-2 Minor Sexual*
Age	-0.05	-0.08	-0.07	-0.08	-0.08	-0.50
Race	0.48	0.58	-0.92	0.13	0.39	0.55
CTS-2 subscale	0.18	1.52	-0.43	-0.10	0.03	0.23
To upset you or children	1.55**	1.51***	1.83***	1.57**	1.47**	1.58***
Model F statistic	**6.33****	**9.19*****	**7.12*****	**5.97****	**5.22****	**6.37*****
Age	-0.09	-0.13	-0.11	-0.11	-0.10	-0.07
Race	1.50	1.09	0.24	0.94	0.86	0.94
CTS-2 subscale	0.63	1.94	-0.28	-0.06	-0.14	-0.22
To regain control over the situation or argument	1.64**	1.40**	1.84***	1.72**	1.72**	1.83***
Model F statistic	**6.61*****	**7.02*****	**6.79*****	**6.34****	**5.68****	**6.34*****
Age	-0.10	-0.11	-0.11	-0.11	-0.09	-0.09
Race	1.83	1.40	0.79	1.51	1.01	0.91
CTS-2 subscale	0.63	2.33	-0.26	0.07	-0.35	-0.70

To exert power or control over you	1.69***	1.54**	1.90***	1.73**	1.92***	2.00***
Model F statistic	**7.55****	**8.37*****	**7.17*****	**6.73****	**6.30*****	**7.80*****
Age	-0.11	-0.17	-0.13	-0.15	-0.12	-0.07
Race	3.40	2.11	2.42	2.93	2.59	2.54
CTS-2 subscale	1.40	3.37*	-0.08	0.84	-0.16	-0.71
Abuser planned the maltreatment of pets in advance	1.36*	0.96	1.52	0.94	1.56	2.01*
Model F statistic	**3.61****	**4.64*****	**2.72**	**3.50***	**2.44**	2.83*

Note: * *p≤.05, ** p≤.01, *** p≤.001*

Table 4. *Hierarchal Regression Models Predicting Physical Neglect of Animals (regression coefficients)*

	Controlling for CTS-2 Severe Psych	*Controlling for CTS-2 Minor Psych*	*Controlling for CTS-2 Severe Physical*	*Controlling for CTS-2 Minor Physical*	*Controlling for CTS-2 Severe Sexual*	*Controlling for CTS-2 Minor Sexual*
Age	-0.20	-0.20	-0.18	-0.22	-0.21	-0.19
Race	-4.41	-4.95	-8.61	-8.40	-5.26	-4.99
CTS-2 subscale	0.59	0.05	-0.86	-1.57	0.03	0.25
To upset you or children	1.86*	2.29*	2.55**	2.91**	2.00*	1.99*
Model F statistic	**3.02***	**3.68***	**3.60***	**3.95***	**2.48**	**3.00***
Age	-0.27*	-0.28	-0.26	-0.26	-0.26	-0.23
Race	-1.52	-3.68	-4.47	-5.08	-3.81	-3.17
CTS-2 subscale	1.76	2.02	-0.21	-0.77	-0.11	0.44

To regain control over the situation or argument	1.60	1.47	2.01*	2.35*	1.94	1.88*
Model F statistic	**3.09***	**2.61**	**2.64**	**2.82**	**2.24**	**2.69**
Age	-0.22	-0.19	-0.18	-0.19	-0.16	-0.20
Race	-2.32	-3.91	-5.27	-5.47	-4.49	-4.27
CTS-2 subscale	1.33	1.64	-0.43	-1.06	-0.50	-0.71
To exert power or control over you	1.94*	2.01*	2.43*	2.79**	2.46*	2.39**
Model F statistic	**3.36***	**2.84**	**3.14***	**3.50***	**2.68**	**3.20***
Age	-0.17	-0.13	-0.05	-0.08	-0.09	-0.10
Race	-0.35	-2.56	-5.34	-3.36	-2.21	-3.05
CTS-2 subscale	2.07	1.44	-0.98	-1.00	-0.12	-1.34
Abuser planned the maltreatment of pets in advance	2.12	2.12	3.28*	3.16*	2.55	3.08*
Model F statistic	**2.21**	**1.50**	**2.15**	**1.89**	**1.36**	**1.89**

Note: * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

Table 5. *Hierarchal Regression Models Predicting Physical Abuse of Animals (regression coefficients)*

	Controlling for CTS-2 Severe Psych	*Controlling for CTS-2 Minor Psych*	*Controlling for CTS-2 Severe Physical*	*Controlling for CTS-2 Minor Physical*	*Controlling for CTS-2 Severe Sexual*	*Controlling for CTS-2 Minor Sexual*
Age	-0.09	-0.08	-0.08	-0.08	-0.09	-0.07

Race	-0.96	-1.12	-2.62	-1.96	-0.48	-2.18
CTS-2 subscale	0.33	0.82	-0.48	-0.52	0.39	-1.05
To upset you or children	1.55**	1.55**	2.05**	2.00**	1.45*	1.82***
Model F statistic	**5.20***	**5.31***	**5.98***	**5.49***	**4.67***	**5.99***
Age	-0.14	-0.11	-0.11	-0.11	-0.11	-0.12
Race	0.62	-0.11	-0.12	0.02	0.59	-0.85
CTS-2 subscale	1.16	2.33	0.01	0.13	0.33	-0.69
To regain control over the situation or argument	0.93	0.97	1.26	1.18	1.06	1.34*
Model F statistic	**1.90**	**2.10**	**1.59**	**1.60**	**1.38**	**1.70**
Age	-0.16	-0.12	-0.12	-0.12	-0.13	-0.13
Race	1.04	0.14	0.58	0.84	1.14	-0.87
CTS-2 subscale	1.48	2.76	0.15	0.57	0.48	-1.09
To exert power or control over you	0.64	0.78	0.97	0.71	0.75	1.33
Model F statistic	**1.55**	**1.75**	**1.12**	**1.22**	**0.98**	**1.31**
Age	-0.19	-0.16	-0.15	-0.17	-0.13	-0.17
Race	1.94	0.89	1.92	1.91	1.15	-0.38
CTS-2 subscale	1.51	3.24	0.29	0.91	-0.38	-1.86
Abuser planned the maltreatment of pets in advance	1.22	1.20	1.32	1.01	1.98	2.20
Model F statistic	**1.95**	**2.31**	**1.42**	**1.73**	**1.19**	**1.83**

Note: *$p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

Table 6. *Hierarchal Regression Models Predicting Severe Physical Abuse of Animals (regression coefficients)*

	Controlling for CTS-2 Severe Psych	*Controlling for CTS-2 Minor Psych*	*Controlling for CTS-2 Severe Physical*	*Controlling for CTS-2 Minor Physical*	*Controlling for CTS-2 Severe Sexual*	*Controlling for CTS-2 Minor Sexual*
Age	0.05	0.02	0.06	0.01	-0.02	0.01
Race	-5.14**	-4.49**	-4.65*	-3.46*	-2.67	-3.52*
CTS-2 subscale	0.36	-1.72*	0.20	0.21	0.92*	0.38
To upset you or children	0.39	0.44	0.16	0.14	-0.14	0.25
Model F statistic	**3.39***	**4.95****	**3.44***	**1.89**	**3.91***	**1.92**
Age	-0.02	-0.00	-0.01	-0.01	-0.12	0.00
Race	-3.42*	-3.87*	-2.27	-3.49*	-2.69	-3.44*
CTS-2 subscale	0.64	-0.82	0.52*	0.20	0.87*	0.38
To regain control over the situation or argument	0.12	0.40	0.03	0.18	-0.08	0.25
Model F statistic	**2.34**	**1.94**	**3.75***	**1.95**	**3.83***	**1.97**
Age	-0.01	-0.00	0.00	.00	-0.12	0.00
Race	-3.50*	-3.77*	-2.51	-3.54*	-2.66	-3.54*
CTS-2 subscale	0.62	-0.65	0.46*	0.17	0.90*	0.26
To exert power or control over you	0.15	0.35	0.11	0.21	-0.13	0.27
Model F statistic	**2.51**	**2.03**	**3.73***	**2.09**	**4.15***	**2.08**
Age	-0.00	0.02	-0.01	0.01	-0.02	0.02
Race	-3.32*	-3.46*	-2.36	-3.41*	-2.18	-3.38*
CTS-2 subscale	0.63	-0.80	0.51	0.17	1.27**	0.19

Abuser planned the maltreatment of pets in advance	0.26	0.52	-0.10	0.28	-0.62	0.34
Model F statistic	**2.37**	**1.93**	**3.44***	**1.92**	**5.05****	**1.87**

Note: *$p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

Biographical Statements:

Dr. Betty Jo Barrett is an Associate Professor and Director of the Women's and Gender Studies Program at the University of Windsor. Her research focuses on intimate partner violence in heterosexual and LGBTQ+ communities, with a particular focus on survivors' help seeking and interactions with formal systems of support in response to violence, and on the intersection between animal abuse and woman abuse in the context of violent relationships. She is a member of the Animal and Interpersonal Abuse Research Group at the University of Windsor.

Amy J. Fitzgerald is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminology and in the Great Lakes Institute for Environmental Research at the University of Windsor. Her research focuses on animal (ab)use, broadly conceived, particularly as it intersects with human and environmental well-being. She has published numerous articles on the co-occurrence of animal abuse and intimate partner violence. Her most recent book, *Animal Advocacy and Environmentalism: Understanding and Bridging the Divide*, will be published later this year by Polity Press. She is a member of the Animal and Interpersonal Abuse Research Group at the University of Windsor.

Rochelle Stevenson is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology

at Thompson Rivers University. Her research focuses on the connection between intimate partner violence and animal abuse, including safe pet programs for women leaving abusive relationships, and the inclusion of companion animals in violent intimate relationships through the perspective of the male abusive partner. She is a member of the Animal and Interpersonal Abuse Research Group at the University of Windsor.