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The connection between animal abuse, emotional abuse, and financial abuse in intimate relationships: Evidence from a nationally representative sample of the general public

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ABSTRACT

This paper empirically examines the extent to which the co-occurrence of the maltreatment of companion animals and intimate partner violence (IPV) previously documented in samples of women accessing services from domestic violence shelters extends to a nationally-representative sample of the general Canadian population, with a specific focus on emotional and financial abuse. Using data from the intimate partner victimization module of the 2014 Canadian General Social Survey ($n=17,950$), the authors find that reporting one's intimate partner threatened or abused companion animals in the home increased the probability that one had experienced at least one form of emotional abuse or financial abuse by 38.6% ($p\leq 0.001$) and 7.5% ($p\leq 0.001$) respectively, net of several key control variables. Moreover, the findings indicate that those who identify as women are significantly more likely to report their partner emotionally or financially abused them and threatened or mistreated their pet(s); the connection between animal maltreatment and IPV is particularly pronounced for emotional IPV when compared to other forms of IPV; challenge the commonplace conceptualization of animal abuse as a form of property abuse; and suggest a need for a more nuanced understanding of IPV perpetrators vis-à-vis animal maltreatment. This is the first study to use nationally representative data to assess the co-occurrence of animal abuse and IPV, and as such it makes significant contributions to the interdisciplinary literature on animal abuse and IPV.

Keywords: animal abuse, intimate partner violence, emotional abuse, financial abuse

Word count: 7364

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INTRODUCTION

There is now a sizable body of literature documenting significant, yet variable, levels of co-occurrence between animal maltreatment and intimate partner violence (IPV) (for a review see Fitzgerald et al., forthcoming). These studies have provided empirical support for the decades-old observation noted in IPV literature that companion animals can be harmed as part of the cycle of violence (e.g., Ganley, 1985; Renzetti, 1992; Walker, 1979). The maltreatment of companion animals is discussed in that literature as part of the constellation of emotionally and psychologically abusive behaviors that IPV perpetrators engage in, most specifically as a mechanism of intimidation (Follingstad & DeHart, 2000). The grouping of animal abuse with property abuse as a form of emotional abuse is often implicit in these discussions. For instance, the oft-cited and utilized Power and Control Wheel (Pence & Paymar, 1993) includes ‘abusing pets’ in the *Using Intimidation* category, right after “smashing things; destroying her property.” The animal-abuse-as-property-abuse discourse is also observable in the messaging of domestic violence shelters: A recent analysis of Canadian domestic violence shelter websites found that

nearly half of the 155 that mentioned companion animals did so in the context of discussions about objects, property, or possessions (Gray, Barrett, Fitzgerald, & Peirone, 2019).

This paper contributes to the literature on the co-occurrence of animal abuse and IPV—and the IPV literature more generally—via two main objectives. First, we assess the relationship between animal maltreatment and emotional IPV. The bulk of the research to date on the co-occurrence of animal maltreatment and IPV has been conducted utilizing shelter samples, and as a result may have been skewed towards more severe, physical IPV. In this study, we examine if a relationship between animal maltreatment and emotional abuse exists among the general population. To this end, the current paper presents findings from our analysis of data obtained from a nationally representative sample of the Canadian provincial population—part of a larger project (blinded for peer review) that is believed to be the first to examine the co-occurrence of animal maltreatment and IPV among a nationally representative sample of the general public in Canada or elsewhere. The second objective is to assess the relationship between animal maltreatment and (other) forms of emotionally abusive strategies abusers employ, focusing specifically on whether or not there is indeed an empirical basis for grouping animal maltreatment with property abuse.

The Co-Occurrence of Animal Abuse and IPV

Companion animals living in homes characterized by IPV are often co-victims of abuse. Studies of women in domestic violence shelters in the United States (US) have documented rates of co-occurrence of IPV and animal abuse ranging from 25% to 86% (Ascione, 1998; Barrett et al., 2017; Carlisle-Frank, Frank, & Nielsen, 2004; Faver & Strand, 2003; Flynn, 2000a, 2000c;

Simmons and Lehmann, 2007; Strand & Faver, 2005). Eighty-nine percent of women sampled in 16 Canadian shelters reported that their partner had mistreated or threatened their companion animals (Barrett, Fitzgerald, Stevenson, & Cheung, 2017). That study examined connections between animal maltreatment and types of IPV and found that respondents who reported relatively frequent and severe animal maltreatment by their partner were more likely to report their partner perpetrated physical, emotional/psychological, and sexual abuse against them. Their findings vis-à-vis emotional/psychological abuse are consistent with Hartman et. al.'s (2015) earlier findings using a sample recruited from US domestic violence programs.

Studies utilizing comparison groups further indicate the level of animal maltreatment is significantly higher in homes with IPV than those without. A US-based study of women accessing domestic violence shelters found they were 11 times more likely to report 'pet' abuse by their partners than women in the community not experiencing IPV (Ascione et al., 2007). Likewise, in Australia, women who reported their partner had threatened their companion animals were five times more likely to report they had experienced IPV than a community comparison group (Volant, Johnson, Gullone, & Coleman, 2008).

Given that the majority of homes in many developed countries— including Canada (Canadian Pet Market Outlook, 2014) and the US (American Pet Products Association, 2017)— contain companion animals, the scope of the problem is significant.

Consequences of Co-Occurring Abuse

Human IPV victims/survivors understandably worry about the well-being of companion animals in the home (Ascione, 1998; Flynn, 2000c; Strand & Faver, 2005), adding further stress to an already traumatic situation. This stress can be exacerbated by witnessing the distress and suffering of the companion animals, which can manifest in behavioral changes that can be long-term (persisting beyond the IPV relationship) and include cowering, hiding, running away, showing aggression to male perpetrators, becoming fearful of or avoiding men, or becoming fear aggressive more generally (Tiplady, Walsh, & Phillips, 2012; Tiplady, Walsh, & Phillips, 2015).

Due to the shared experiences of victimization, companion animals can be significant sources of emotional support for abused women (Faver & Strand, 2003; Flynn, 2000c). This includes supplying real or imagined protection, strength, and security (Fitzgerald, 2007; Hardesty, Khaw, Ridgway, Weber, & Miles, 2013). This emotional bond and its supportive effects during IPV is statistically more important among women whose companion animals were abused by their partner (88%) than among those whose companion animals were not harmed (51%) (Faver & Cavazos Jr, 2007). This stronger bond can also put the animal at greater risk of abuse (Flynn, 2000c; Hardesty et al., 2013).

Correspondingly, the abuse of a companion animal can facilitate or be a barrier to leaving an abusive partner. Within the literature based on shelter-samples, the proportion of women with co-victimized companion animals who report delaying leaving their abusive partners due to concern for the safety of the companion animals ranges from 18 to 56% (Ascione, 1998; Ascione et al., 2007; Barrett, Fitzgerald, Peirone, Stevenson, & Cheung, 2018; Carlisle-Frank et al., 2004; Flynn, 2000c). Barrett and colleagues (Barrett et al., 2018) controlled for severity of IPV experienced and length of the relationship, and still found that the maltreatment of a pet was a

significant predictor of delayed leaving and moreover that those who reported delayed leaving were more likely to report they were subjected to severe and frequent IPV. However, in some cases, violence against companion animals can serve as incentive to leave an abuser (Barrett et al., 2018; Strand, 2003), suggesting concern for companion animals' safety is a very complex consideration that impacts women's help-seeking. Even after leaving their abuser, women continue to worry about their companion animals' well-being if they are left with the abuser (Flynn, 2000a; Strand & Faver, 2005), and some even report considering leaving the shelter and returning to their abuser because he has their animal companions (Ascione, Weber, & Wood, 1997; Barrett et al., 2018; Fitzgerald, 2007).

Thus, although animals may legally be considered property, the way that some people interact with certain types of animals extends well beyond a subject-object relationship, both within and outside of the context of IPV. This is illustrated by data from the 2018 US General Social Survey, which indicates that 93% of dog "owners" and 83% of cat "owners" report viewing their animal companions as family members (Ingraham, 2019). The reported strength of the relationship people have with their companion animals is not infrequently stronger than their relations with other humans, even those they also consider family (Beck & Madresh, 2008; Walsh, 2009). Socio-culturally, companion animals occupy a special ontological space in-between property and personhood.

Animals as Property

Legally speaking, however, animals are property. This legal status is grounded in processes of appropriation, whereby certain nonhuman animals were set apart from wild animals

and considered property (Ingold, 1984). The term ‘domestic’ implies a specific type of relationship these nonhuman animals have with humans – one which is under the control of or subject to human use. The specter of control has come up in discussions of animal maltreatment in the context of IPV vis-à-vis understanding the motivations of perpetrators; animal maltreatment has been viewed as an instrument that abusers can use to achieve and preserve power and control over the human target (Allen, Gallagher, & Jones, 2006; Faver & Strand, 2007; Fitzgerald, Barrett, Stevenson, & Cheung, 2018; Flynn, 2000b; McDonald et al., 2015).

This method of ‘triangling’ (DeViney, Dickert, & Lockwood, 1983) involves (threats of) physically or psychologically abusing companion animals, often in front of intimate partner victims, in order to emotionally harm, intimidate them, or control their behaviour, including preventing them from leaving the relationship (Flynn, 2000a, 2000c; Loring & Bolden-Hines, 2004; Simmons & Lehmann, 2007). One’s attachment to their companion animals might make them particularly attractive targets (Flynn, 2000a; Hardesty et al., 2013; Newberry, 2017). Recent research indicates that abused women are likely to perceive their abusers’ maltreatment of companion animals in the home as motivated by a desire to achieve and maintain power and control when the type of animal maltreatment includes threats, neglect, and emotional abuse, but not when the animal abuse perpetrated is physical, net of socio-demographic and IPV control variables (Fitzgerald, Barrett, Stevenson, & Cheung, 2019).

Regardless of whether or not the power and control theory of animal maltreatment in the context of IPV is consistent with the perspectives of human victims/survivors in all instances, its prominence in the field has likely unintentionally reified the conceptualization of animals as property, and their abuse as a form of property abuse given the framing of their abuse as an

instrument or tool. This is how the abuse of ‘pets’ is defined in the context of human violence according to the Power and Control Wheel (Pence & Paymar, 1993), as discussed earlier, and by experts in the field of violence against women who tend to position animal maltreatment alongside the destruction of ‘cherished possessions’ or ‘property’, when it is addressed at all.

Current Study

The purpose of the present study is to examine the association between threatened or enacted violence against animal companions (VAAC) and emotional forms of domestic intimate partner violence. This study addresses two significant gaps in the literature on the intersection of VAAC and intimate partner violence (IPV). First, research on the co-occurrence of VAAC and violence in intimate partnerships has centered on physical forms of IPV. While a common theoretical assertion made in the literature is that perpetrators of IPV use VAAC as a means of exerting power and control over their partners, little empirical evidence exists documenting the association between VAAC and other emotionally abusive strategies used by abusers.

Understanding the association between VAAC and emotional forms of IPV, notably property abuse, is essential to evaluating the claim that VAAC is enacted by perpetrators as part of a larger constellation of power and control tactics. Second, research on the intersection of VAAC and IPV has largely relied on samples of women residing in battered women’s shelters and/or utilizing social services for abused women. To our knowledge, there have been no studies that have assessed the relationship between VAAC and IPV in a community-based sample that includes the experiences of both those who have and have not experienced IPV, those whose companion animals were and were not mistreated, and individuals who identify as women and those who

identify as men. Through analysis of data from a large nationally representative sample, our study is able to capture this full range of experiences. As such, this work provides a novel and important contribution to our collective understanding of the intersection of VAAC and IPV.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study analyzed data collected as part of the 2014 (Cycle 28) General Social Survey (GSS). The GSS is an annual national cross-sectional survey conducted by Statistics Canada under the auspices of the Government of Canada to assess the well-being of Canadians and provide data on changing social trends. The target theme of the GSS rotates annually, with a focus every five years on criminal victimization, including spousal violence. An in-depth description of methods used in survey construction and data collection for Cycle 28 of the GSS has been published by Statistics Canada (2016) and are briefly summarized below.

Sample

The GSS uses a geographically stratified random sample to render weighted results nationally representative. To obtain this sample, the 10 provinces of Canada were subdivided into a total of 27 geographic strata (a separate survey of the three northern territories of Canada was also conducted; however, data from the northern survey is not included in the present analysis). Within each geographic stratum, a simple random sample of households was conducted, with one eligible individual within each household selected for interview. While previous cycles of the GSS used Random Digital Dialing (RDD) to identify households based on landline numbers, Cycle 28 of the GSS introduced a new sampling frame inclusive of all telephone numbers in operation in Canada inclusive of cellular phones. Statistics Canada obtained records of all phone numbers in operation in Canada (cellular and landline) and matched phone numbers to addresses

using the Address Register (a list of all dwellings in each province). In cases in which there were multiple phone numbers associated with the same address, all associated numbers were aggregated into a single record in which the landline number served as the primary number for the household. Households with no telephone coverage (landline or cellphones) were therefore excluded from the sampling frame; however, it is estimated that less than 1% of households in the 10 provinces had no phone services (Statistics Canada, 2014).

The target population for the GSS was all individuals aged 15 years or older residing in Canada, excluding those who were full time residents of institutions. Cycle 28 of the GSS also targeted two populations for over-sampling to allow a more nuanced analysis of their experiences: immigrants and youth aged 15-24 (see Statistics Canada, 2014 for a description of oversampling methods). The total number of respondents for Cycle 28 of the GSS was 33,127 individuals, reflecting a response rate of 52.9%. All interviews were conducted over the phone via computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) and were conducted in the official language (French or English) of the interviewee's choice. Data collection occurred between January 2 and December 31, 2014.

Respondents who reported having a current or former spouse or common-law partner (inclusive of same sex marital or common-law partners) with whom he or she had contact within the last five years were administered an inventory assessing abuse perpetrated by the respondent's intimate partner, including emotional and financial abuse. Abuse by current and former partners are assessed in separate modules. As the application of this module was limited to those with marital or common law relationships, the GSS spousal violence module does not

capture other forms of intimate partner violence, such as violence that occurs in dating, multi-partner (polyamorous or non-monogamous), or non-cohabitating intimate relationships.

The size of the overarching sample used here is 17,950, although specific sample sizes for each model are provided in the analyses below because they vary due to missing data. The sample is composed of slightly more respondents who identify as female (8,990) than male (n=8,960). The mean age of the sample is 49.70 years and mean income is \$58,554.82. A larger proportion of the sample is comprised of those who identify as white (14,920) compared to non-white (3,010), as living in an urban area (14,680) versus rural (3,250), and as not having a disability or limitation in daily activities (13,410) versus having limitations (4,360).

Measures

Given the nature of the survey focus, variables of a sensitive nature are suppressed in the public use microdata file for Cycle 28 of the GSS. In order for researchers to access this data for analysis, including data regarding spousal violence victimization, researchers must apply to access data on-site at a secure facility through the Statistics Canada Research Data Center (RDC) program. To protect data confidentiality, all analysis of this data must occur on-site at the RDC facility and all output must be vetted by Statistics Canada prior to release to ensure compliance with all protocols for use with this data set (including the construction and application of survey weights). Our research team obtained access to the GSS dataset used in this analysis through this program.

Emotional spousal abuse.

The emotional and financial abuse module is prefaced with the statement: *I'm going to read a list of statements that some people have used to describe their spouse/partner. I'd like*

you to tell me whether or not each statement describes your spouse/partner. Remember that all information is strictly confidential. He or she... followed by an inventory of specific items (assessed separately). Emotional abuse items included (1) tries to limit your contact with family or friends; (2) puts you down or calls you names to make you feel bad; (3) is jealous and doesn't want you to talk to other men or women; (4) harms or threatens to harm someone close to you; (5) demands to know where you are and who you are with at all times; and (6) damages or destroys your possessions or property.

Financial spousal abuse. Financial forms of spousal violence were assessed with two indicators: (1) prevents you from knowing about or having access to the family income even if you ask; and (2) forces you to give him or her your money, possessions, or property.

Respondents who reported yes for either one of these items were coded as having experienced financial spousal abuse.

Harm or threats to harm animal companions. Included in the emotional and financial abuse module is an item assessing threatened or enacted VAAC by one's partner. Threatened or enacted harm to animal companions via a single item indicator: *He/she harms or threatens to harm your pet(s)*. Response options were dichotomous (yes/no), with a not applicable option for those without pets.¹

¹ One might point to Statistics Canada's inclusion of a measure of animal abuse (and as part of the emotional abuse measures) as evidence contrary to our argument here that when animal abuse has been attended to in the context of IPV it has tended to be, implicitly at least, framed as a form of property abuse. We should therefore note that one of the authors of this paper consulted with Statistics Canada and requested the addition of animal abuse measures, and we supplied draft questions. Ultimately, one question was selected and included in the 2014 GSS for the first time. We are hopeful that in the future additional questions about the perpetration of animal maltreatment and the consequences thereof will be added so that additional research questions can be probed.

Socio-demographic factors. Six socio-demographic characteristics that previous research has suggested are associated with spousal violence risk were included as control variables in our analysis. These variables included: (1) gender, dichotomously coded male and female; (2) age, measured as a continuous variable; (3) household income, measured as a continuous variable using imputation by Statistics Canada; (4) disability or limitations in daily activities, dichotomously coded yes and no; (5) racial identity, dichotomously coded white and non-white; and (6) geographic density of respondent's residence, dichotomously coded rural and urban. All variables were included in the GSS survey instrument with the exception of income. Data regarding income was obtained for the GSS dataset by linking survey data with the tax records of respondents. Respondents were notified as part of the interview of the proposed linkage and were asked to provide or withdraw consent for researchers to access tax records. This information was obtained for 82% of GSS respondents.

Analysis of all data in the present study occurred in accordance with the required data management protocols for use with this data set as mandated by Statistics Canada. Missing data was excluded from all analysis. All findings reported reflect weighted analysis.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

First, we conducted a series of bi-variate means testing analyses (X^2 or ANOVA) to compare the characteristics of GSS respondents with current spouses or common law partners who had, or had not, experienced VAAC by their abusers. In regard to socio-demographic differences between the groups, individuals who reported VAAC were significantly more likely than those who did not to be female (80.95% vs. 49.72%; $p \leq 0.001$) and to have a disability or

limitation in daily activities (50.00% vs. 24.25%, $p \leq 0.001$). Mean differences were nearly significant between white and non-white racial identities (90.00% vs. 83.14%, $p = 0.0567$) and were not significant for geographic density (85.00% vs. 81.84%, $p = 0.752$) (see Graph 1). Individuals reporting VAAC were also significantly more likely to be younger in age (46.5 versus 49.8 years old) and to have lower levels of income (\$45,760 versus \$58,612) (see Graph 2 and Graph 3 respectively).

[Insert Graph 1 about here]

[Insert Graph 2 about here]

[Insert Graph 3 about here]

Means testing found significant mean differences between individuals reporting VAAC and those not reporting VAAC for *any* and *all* forms of emotional and financial IPV measured ($X^2 p \leq 0.001$). Experiencing at least one form of emotional abuse was significantly more common among those who had experienced VAAC (86.67%) than among those who did not report VAAC (13.42%; $X^2 = 688.49$, $p \leq 0.001$) (see Graph 4). In terms of individual forms of emotional abuse, while over half of GSS respondents with current or ex-spouses or common-law partners who experienced VAAC reported their partners had limited their contact with friends or family (52.38%), less than five percent (4.12%) of those who had not experienced VAAC reported their partners had engaged in this behaviour ($X^2 = 841.42$, $p \leq 0.001$). Almost 9 out of 10 (85.00%) respondents who experienced VAAC stated their partners had put them down or called them names to make them feel bad, as compared to less than 1 in 10 (7.06%) of those who did

not experience VAAC ($X^2=1256.78, p\leq 0.001$). Individuals who experienced VAAC were significantly more likely than those who did not to report jealous partners who attempted to limit their contact with other men or women (65.00% vs. 6.50%; $X^2=784.51, p\leq 0.001$), partners who harmed or threatened to harm someone who was close to them (45.00% vs. 0.96%; $X^2=2106.80, p\leq 0.001$), and partners who demanded to know where they were and whom they were with at all times (65.00% vs. 5.70%; $X^2=886.09, p\leq 0.001$). Respondents whose pets were the target of threatened or actual harm by their partners were also significantly more likely than those who did not to report that their partners damaged or destroyed their possessions or property (60.00% vs. 1.98%; $X^2=2185.26, p\leq 0.001$). Experiencing at least one form of financial abuse was significantly more common among those who have experienced VAAC (47.62%) than among those who had not experienced VAAC (2.49%; $X^2=1097.32, p\leq 0.001$). More specifically, individuals who experienced VAAC were significantly more likely than those who did not to report being prevented from having access to family income (40.00% vs. 1.75%; $X^2=1059.77, p\leq 0.001$) or being forced to give up money, possessions or property (40.00% vs. 1.30%; $X^2=1326.80, p\leq 0.001$). (See Graph 5)

[Insert Graph 4 about here]

[Insert Graph 5 about here]

Next, we conducted a series of hierarchical binary logistic regression equations to assess the unique association between VAAC and each form of emotional abuse after controlling for the effects of socio-demographic factors. All six socio-demographic control variables were entered in Block 1 of the equations followed by VAAC entered in Block 2. All models produced

successful measures of model evaluation (Wald $X^2 p \leq 0.001$), increasing log-likelihood numbers, and generated noteworthy increases in pseudo- R^2 sizes, meaning the addition of the VAAC variable (in the second blocks) significantly contributes to explaining emotional and financial IPV reports. For ease of interpretation, marginal effects are reported here (see Table 1 and Table 2).

[Insert Table 1 about here]

After controlling for socio-demographic factors, VAAC was significantly associated with being a survivor of emotional abuse. Experiencing VAAC increased the probability that one had experienced at least one form of emotional abuse or financial abuse by 38.6% ($p \leq 0.001$) and 7.5% ($p \leq 0.001$) respectively. VAAC was also significantly associated ($p \leq 0.001$) with all forms of emotional abuse (see Table 1) and financial abuse (see Table 2) after controlling for socio-demographic variables. Experiencing VAAC increased the probability of a respondent reporting their partner had limited their contact with friends and family by 11.9%, that their partner had put them down or called them names to make them feel bad by 23.1%, and that their partner was jealous and tried to prohibit their contact with other men or women by 19.2%. VAAC elevated the probability that one's partner had harmed or threatened to harm someone close to them by 4.1%, the probability that one's partner demanded to know where he or she was or who he or she was with at all times by 17.5%, and the probability that one's partner had damaged or destroyed his or her property by 7.3%. Reporting VAAC also increased the likelihood that one's partner had

been prevented having access to family income by 5.3% and forced to give money, possessions or property by 4.9%.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

These results indicate that threatened or enacted VAAC by a partner is a significant predictor of all measured forms of emotional and financial IPV perpetrated against survivors among the Canadian provincial population, even when controlling for socio-demographic correlates of IPV. These findings make three main substantive contributions to the literature and point to important areas requiring further investigation.

First, the connection between threatened and enacted VAAC and IPV is particularly pronounced for emotional IPV when compared to other forms of IPV; those who indicate their partner threatened or harmed their companion animals have a 39% increased probability of reporting they were subjected to emotional abuse perpetrated by the same partner, net of the socio-demographic correlates of IPV included in the models. Threatened and enacted VAAC is less strongly associated with financial abuse (7.5% increased probability). Another paper from the larger project (blinded for peer review) documented an 11% increased probability of reporting physical IPV and a 0.5% increased probability of reporting sexual IPV (both $p \leq 0.001$) among those who reported threatened/enacted VAAC, controlling for the same socio-demographic correlates of IPV used here. In sum, these findings point to a variable relationship between animal maltreatment and different types of IPV; this variable relationship is likely less

appreciable among shelter samples, which are skewed towards more severe and physical IPV than that experienced in the general population.

This finding can be contextualized within the IPV literature that has for quite some time now acknowledged that animal maltreatment can be instrumentalized in perpetrating IPV, with one important caveat – a caveat that comprises the second primary contribution of this study. As discussed earlier in this paper, animal abuse has tended to be framed as a form of property abuse. Legally, of course, animals are considered property, so framing their abuse as such is not entirely surprising; however, it is not without consequence. There is evidence that the framing of companion animals as property has trickled down to domestic violence shelters. An analysis of Canadian domestic violence shelter websites found that nearly half of the 155 that mentioned companion animals on their websites did so in the context of discussions about objects, property, or possessions (Gray et al., 2019). The authors point out this may unintentionally trivialize the relationship IPV victims/survivors have with their companion animals and obscure the need for programs to shelter the companion animals of the human victims of violence while they seek assistance. They suggest that it is time to address animal maltreatment in a more nuanced way that is consistent with the fact most people with ‘pets’ in western cultures have for years now considered them family members (Cain, 1985; Veevers, 1985). Thus, the human victims/survivors of IPV are likely to view their animal companions as more akin to human family members than pieces of property.

Our findings provide a further, empirically grounded, reason why characterizing animal maltreatment as property destruction may be problematic. In our multivariate model, actual/threatened VAAC was associated with a relatively modest 7% increased probability of property

destruction. This is not the degree one would expect if the etiology of companion animal maltreatment could be reduced to the etiology of property destruction. Nevertheless, animal maltreatment does not cohere well with harming or threatening to harm other people either. In the multivariate model, actual/threatened VAAC is associated with a 4% increased probability of reporting one's partner harmed or threatened to harm someone close to the respondent.

Therefore, perhaps in the context of IPV, companion animals might best be conceptualized as occupying a liminal space between property/objects on the one hand and subjects on the other. Their abuse cannot be reduced to a form of property abuse. Just as years ago the IPV community advocated for more widespread recognition that IPV is not limited to physical abuse, and also includes emotional and psychological abuse, financial abuse, and sexual abuse, among others (Kelly & Johnson, 2008), animal maltreatment is multifaceted and can take many forms, including physical abuse, threats, neglect, psychological abuse, and sexual abuse (Fitzgerald, Barrett, Shwom, Stevenson, & Chernyak, 2016). As noted above, this maltreatment is likely differentially related to these forms of IPV. These forms of abuse may be perpetrated for different reasons and have different impacts on the human and non-human victims of violence. Further, just as addressing animals as mere property is unsatisfactory, they also cannot simply be added to the IPV literature, interventions, and related policies as another member of the family. Their presence and abuse raise unique issues, particularly in relation to help-seeking and law enforcement, which need to be carefully thought through. And this need is pressing given that companion animals are becoming an increasingly important part of homes in western cultures.

This brings us to the third contribution to the literature this paper makes that we would like to highlight here. In addition to suggesting a more nuanced understanding of animal

maltreatment, the forms it can take, its relation to forms of IPV, and how it is positioned vis-à-vis property destruction and aggression against other people, we also suggest that our findings indicate that a more nuanced understanding of perpetrators is required vis-à-vis animal maltreatment. There is a growing body of literature suggesting that those who engage in coercive controlling violence, or “intimate terrorists,” can be divided into two types: dependant and antisocial. The dependence of the former group is grounded in emotional dependence, which manifests as jealous and controlling behaviors. The antisocial intimate terrorist is motivated more by a desire to get their way than out of dependence, and they are more likely to also be violent outside of the intimate relationship (see Johnson, 2008). In our analysis, threatened/enacted VAAC appears to be part of the constellation of isolating victims and jealousy, that might be grounded in a dependant sub-type of intimate terrorist. More specifically, endorsement of the VAAC variable is associated with a 12% increased probability of limiting contact with others, an 18% increased probability of their partner keeping tabs on their activities, and a 19% increased probability of jealousy and disallowing contact with others, whereas VAAC is only predictive of a 4% increased probability of threatening or harming another person outside of the intimate relationship.

We cannot, however, conclude based on the data that animal maltreatment is more likely to co-occur with emotional abuse perpetrated by coercive controlling abusers motivated by dependency than that perpetrated by those who are more generally antisocial. It is possible, but it is also possible it is because this type of dependent-controlling behavior is more common than behavior that ranks high on psychological measures of antisocial personality characteristics. Further research with greater information about/from perpetrators would be required to draw

conclusions on this point. It is worth also noting that even if animal maltreatment is more predictive of the dependent/jealous subtype of intimate terrorists than the antisocial subtype, of all of the models tested here, the amount of variance explained is greatest (18.4%) in predicting the ‘threatens or harms others’ variable, so while the perpetration of harm against companion animals may be more likely to co-occur with dependency-motivated emotional abuse, animal maltreatment appears to explain a fairly sizable proportion of variance of threatening and harming others (the pseudo-R² value is only 6.3% without the animal abuse variable in Block 1). With enough data to divide the perpetrators into sub-types, the amount of variance explained by animal maltreatment might be even greater.

In addition to not being able to fully interrogate the relationship between animal maltreatment and sub-types of abusers based on this dataset, the data are also limited in that there are relatively few questions vis-à-vis the three key constructs under investigation here (emotional abuse, financial abuse, and animal abuse); in particular, there is only one question about animal maltreatment, and that question groups together threats and physical harm. It would be helpful if future iterations of the GSS victimization module include multiple forms of animal maltreatment as separate questions, such as those identified in the Partner’s Treatment of Animals Scale (Fitzgerald et al., 2016), as well as questions to assess impacts of animal maltreatment, such as those in relation to help-seeking among the human victims/survivors.

Nonetheless, this dataset provides the first glimpse into the relationship between the maltreatment of companion animals and IPV in a nationally representative sample of people living in the community (i.e., not in domestic violence shelters). This paper demonstrates that the connection between VAAC and IPV documented in previous studies utilizing shelter samples

extends to the general population and is particularly pronounced in conjunction with emotional abuse by intimate partners. While this co-occurrence is consistent with the way in which animal maltreatment has been positioned within the IPV literature (when it has been addressed) as part of the constellation of emotionally abusive behaviour that abusive intimate partners can perpetrate, it is empirically – and practically – more complex than it is reducible to a form of property abuse perpetrated to inflict emotional harm.

Finally, the findings indicate that among this representative sample, those who identify as female, have a disability or daily limitation, are younger, and have lower levels of income are more likely to report that their intimate partner threatened or abused their pet. It is important to take these intersecting vulnerabilities into consideration in developing and modifying interventions aimed at assisting victims/survivors of IPV. The liminal status of animals has two particularly important implications here: people often form strong attachments with animals as more-than-property, yet, as less-than-human, they are often overlooked in service provisions for the victims/survivors of IPV. This common gap in service provision not only undoubtedly impacts the animals involved, but also the people seeking services—particularly vulnerable groups—who may be concerned about the safety of their companion animals as well as their own.

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