

A Vicious Cycle of Abuse: The Relationship between Domestic Violence and Animal Cruelty

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By

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## **Abstract**

This paper explores research on the relationship between cycles of domestic violence and animal cruelty. It not only depicts that there is an under acknowledged a relationship between the two subjects, but also considers this relationship from multiple perspectives. This paper summarizes what constitutes animal cruelty and domestic violence, what causes people to treat other people and animals in this manner, who are more likely to be perpetrators of abuse and also victims of domestic violence (DV), and the different types of mistreatment in animals and intimate partner violence (IPV). Additionally, this paper reflects on policy implications of existing research in terms of what kind of laws and services are in place to combat this issue and what more can be done. Finally, this paper presents resources for those who wish to make a difference and report any cases of cruelty towards people and animals.

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## **Introduction:**

Our world has experienced a plethora of social issues that have either been resolved within the last few decades, or they still resonate to this day. There was a time where the concept of maintaining power and control could only be exerted through force and fear. Those who were at risk were the subordinates, a group that has historically often included women and children. For those who inflicted violence within their homes towards their loved ones, they sometimes also extended their wrath upon the family pet(s). Innocent creatures both animal and human have been at risk of being abused, violated, tortured, and neglected. Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and animal abuse and mistreatment have been around for centuries because of patriarchal values and beliefs that impose the notion that the man of the house should be unquestionably respected and obeyed. So, if the abuser is a heavy drinker, experiencing economic strains, feels powerless in the workforce or society, they are going to be accumulating a lot of stress. Research on abusers has shown that many feel like they can relieve that stress on their own and are in no need of any sort of professional assistance- a fact often due to pride or economic status.

However, if their frustration isn't channeled in a healthy and productive manner, they are most likely going to take it out on those they consider under their control, "property," and weak. They may partake in one fit of rage towards the family pet, feel incredibly guilty, apologize, and swear off similar behavior in the future. However, what also happens is that, during the attack, they experienced a sense of dominance and power with which some abusers develop an unhealthy relationship, thus beginning the cycle of IPV and animal cruelty. Once the act of violence is ensued, it is like a ripple effect within the family unit. For example, father hurts child, child hurts dog, and the dog becomes scared and untrusting just like the child. Victims of abuse have no idea when the next violent act will occur and they are completely surrounded by

violence. They have no idea that this is not the norm. IPV victims can be husbands, wives, co-habiting partners, or children. Once the victimization has occurred, victims begin to feel insignificant and emotionally/ physically scarred. While it is true that most mothers or spouses of the abuser would most likely want to keep their children safe, some of them are unable to because the abuser has the victims caught in a bind of isolation-socially, economically, and also because it may endanger the lives of the victim and the children.

The abused partner may find that participating in animal/ intimate partner violence is the only way that they can escape their own hell from the abuser. Children also mimic family members through social cues, ideals, and most importantly behavior. If they are accustomed to violence within their household, then partaking in such behavior is presented as a norm. Once children are victimized, they can become emotionally and physically unstable and want to gain the control that was taken from them. This is one patterned way in which animal cruelty comes into play. Kids learn to see their parent's behaviors as normal.

One patterned response, for instance, is that children who have experienced abuse choose to act out on their frustration and aggression upon someone who may not be able to fight back. Pets are more at risk for receiving acts of violence if members of the family are also being abused. Those pets may try to fight back but only in self-defense. Most of the time, however, they will just be submissive and wonder why their owners are hurting them and treating them in such a poor manner. The vicious cycle of animal abuse and intimate partner violence is a significant problem within our society and there are many different perspectives to take into account when observing this horrific atrocity. The relationship, however, between IPV and animal cruelty and abuse has definitely been established. But there is less research on the relation

between these forms of violence than there could be. Cruelty toward both members of a household unit and pets is connected in a self-perpetuating cycle of violence.

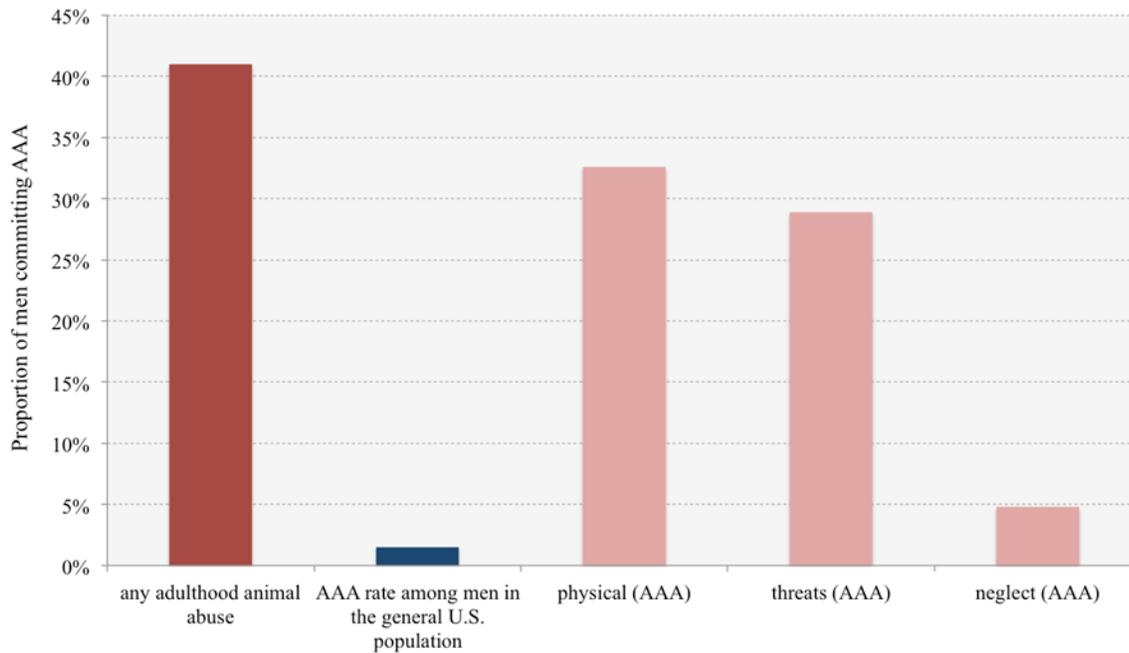
### **Statistics:**

According to the American Humane Association (2013), “71% of pet-owning women entering women’s shelters reported that their batterer had injured, maimed, killed or threatened family pets for revenge or to psychologically control victims” (Facts About Animal Abuse & Domestic Violence, 2013). It was also reported that 32% of mothers stated that their children had hurt or killed their pets (Ascione, 1998). Men have been shown to be overwhelmingly more likely to be abusing (rather than abused) partners roughly 95% of reported domestic violence cases of men abusing women (Profile of an Abuser, 2014). In addition, The Animal Legal Defense Fund (2014) states that people who mistreat animals are “five times as likely to harm humans” and virtually half of the victims who remain in violent households do so because they fear for their pet’s well-being (ALDF, 2014). Despite these grim statistics, research on this topic is in short supply.

One of the most extensive studies conducted on the relationship between IPV and animal abuse is entitled “Adulthood Animal Abuse Among Men Arrested for Domestic Violence” (Febres *et al.*, 2014). The authors uncovered some startling realities in regards to this relationship of violence. In this study of three-hundred and seven men arrested for domestic violence, there was a recorded forty-one percent who committed at least one act of animal abuse since the age of 18 (Febres *et al.*, 2014). This rate is considerably higher than the 1.5% rate of animal cruelty discovered by a nationally representative sample of adult men from research that was drawn from the 2001-2002 National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions

(Vaughn *et al.*, 2009). In Figure 1, it depicts how perpetrators of domestic violence have also engaged in adulthood animal abuse (AAA). Even though this study is not representative of the entire U.S. population, in this study alone, 41% of the respondents participated in AAA. This statistic stands in stark contrast to the 1.5% of American men known to have participated in AAA in the U.S. population more generally. While not a representative sample, this is strong evidence of a relationship between IPV and AAA.

**Figure 1. Rates of Men's Adulthood Animal Abuse**



**Data Sources:**

Rates of AAA reported from a study of 307 men arrested for domestic violence (Febres, et al. 2014).

Rate of AAA reported in the general U.S. population comes from Vaugh, et al. (2009)

It also appears that these respondents were more likely to engage in physical harm and threatening the animal, rather than neglecting it. Another important thing to realize is that even though we cannot generalize this phenomenon to the overall population, this is still a shocking statistic within this study that convicted perpetrators of domestic violence have also aggression

towards animals as well. I believe that more people would find this relationship of violence to be more significant and prevalent within our society if further research was conducted. If we could perhaps have a larger sample of convicted domestic abusers, we might be able to generalize to the overall population and be closer to saying definitively that there is a serious cycle of cruelty among people and animals within our society.

### **What is animal cruelty and domestic violence?**

The terms animal cruelty and domestic violence have separate meanings, but address a similar relationship and social dynamic. According to Febres, *et al* (2014), *animal abuse* refers to “socially unacceptable behavior that intentionally causes unnecessary pain, suffering, or distress to an animal” (2014, 1060). With animal cruelty, the perpetrator can project the abuse physically, verbally, and mentally. The section “What types of mistreatment are used in domestic/ animal abuse?” will go into further detail about the different concepts. *Domestic violence* can also be referred to as Intimate Partner Violence (or IPV). According to the CDC, *Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)* is “physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse. With this sort of violence, it can occur among heterosexual or same-sex couples and doesn’t necessitate sexual intimacy” (Intimate Partner Violence, 2015).

### **What causes violence inside the home/ upon pets?**

There are numerous aspects as to what motivates someone to inflict pain and suffering to animals and IPV victims. Dadds, Turner, and McAloon (2002) depict that there are nine distinct incentives for maltreatment. The first motivation is to have control over the animal, which includes influencing an animal’s behavior or eradicating unwanted features of the pet (Dadds *et al.*, 2002, 367). Secondly, there is retaliation, in which an offender may partake in excessive

reprimand or vengeance alleged wrong on part of the animal (Dadds *et al.*, 2002, 367). The third is “satisfaction of a prejudice against a species or breed”, whereby abusers label a species as either good or bad. There has been strong evidence of extreme prejudice frequently found against certain types of rodents, pests, or insects; and with that comes a supplementary belief that such animals do not deserve fair treatment (Dadds *et al.*, 2002, 367). Another shared incentive is the manifestation of violence through an animal, so in this case dogs may be trained to attack other animals or people (Dadds *et al.*, 2002, 367). Another related motivation is the enhancement of one’s own aggression.

Dadds *et al* (2002) portray that perpetrators engaged in brutality to animals as a way of cultivating their own aggressive abilities or to influence others with their ability for violence (2002, 367). Encompassing shock value and amusement is the sixth incentive for violence against animals (Dadds *et al.*, 2002, 367). For example, the perpetrator could burn cats and set them up to run around a bar. In a sick and twisted way, the abuser may view this as enjoyment and give him that thrill factor. Another motivation that is used is retaliation or exacting revenge against other people by abusing their pets (Dadds *et al*, 2002, 367). For example the perpetrator might castrate a neighbor’s cat.

The eighth incentive mentioned in this study is the dislodgment of hostility and belligerence from a person to an animal, which was a common motivation for convicts who have been abused as children (Dadds *et al.*, 2002, 367). Displaced aggression means that the perpetrators exact their revenge for beatings they suffered when they were younger because the subject hated or feared their authority figures but was fearful to aggress against them (Dadds *et al.*, 2002, 367). The final motivation that Dadds *et al* (2002) states is that non-specific sadism

incorporates the aspiration to impose harm, suffering, or death on an animal with lack of any particular provocation or especially antagonistic feelings toward the pet.

In addition to the factors already mentioned, the American Prosecutors Research Institute (APRI) (Lockwood, 2006), categorize the various types of animal cruelty. The first one mentioned is *simple neglect*, which is the “failure to provide adequate food, water, shelter, or veterinary care” to the animal (Lockwood, 2006). This is also likely the most frequent form of animal mistreatment. Secondly, there is *cruel or malicious neglect*, which refers to deliberately or knowingly suppressing food or water, leading to the animal being dehydrated or famished (Lockwood, 2006). Subsequently, the APRI define *intentional abuse and torture* as engaging in violent actions towards the animal due to a sadistic upbringing or nature. Relatedly, there is the issue of *organized abuse* which can be identified as cockfighting and dogfighting (Lockwood, 2006). This is one of the worst forms of animal mistreatment because of the basis of organized abuse is to gain a profit on which animal is the most vicious and deadly.

Related problems also exist, such as *animal hoarding* which is the accretion of a great number of animals and inadequately providing the marginal principles of nutrition, sanitation, and veterinary care (Lockwood, 2006). When it comes to animal hoarding, one must carefully examine the health and well-being of the members of that household. Most animal hoarding cases appear to involve older people who may not be able to properly take care of themselves much less the animals in their homes. Finally, Lockwood (2006) mentions that bestiality or animal sexual abuse can occur as a way to mistreat animals.

### **What fits the profile of the abuser?**

One thing we have to realize is that no one ever expects to grow up as a violent person. From the moment one is born, everything that happens after that either positively or negatively affects that person. For instance if a young boy grows up witnessing his father hitting his mother on a regular basis, they are more likely to mimic that behavior upon someone else in the future. The boy may be lead to believe that what his father did to his mother is normal behavior, thus leading him to have unhealthy relationships with future partners. This is important as it means that violent behavior is both “learned” and “taught.” That violence is *learned* tells us that cycles of violence result from difficult upbringings and challenging relationships. That violence is *taught* tells us that we need not only focus on who is being socialized to become violent and how, but also on those providing this kind of socialization.

According to domesticshelters.org (2014), other potential factors can mold people into abusers as well. First of all, there could be a lack of appropriate coping skills (2014). The boy could have been living in a poor neighborhood where schools had inadequate resources to assist with this issue. With no one to show him healthy ways to work through this problem at home, he will be more likely to resort in exerting his aggression through other channels. Some examples of coping skills one could engage in are breathing techniques, relaxation training, self-dialogue, and role-playing. Another factor mentioned is that there is evidence of low self-esteem (2014). Not only was the boy watching his own mother get abused, he may have been the victim of abuse as well. The boy may have started to think that this is not okay and this is not how families are supposed to interact with each other. Yet, the father said that if “you weren’t such a burden I wouldn’t be hurting your mom” or “I hurt those who deserve it.” And even in the absence of these things, he may perceive himself to be burdensome. So perhaps the boy starts to think that he is to blame for his and his mother’s suffering.

Codependent behavior is another factor that was presented as to shaping abusers. According to Mental Health America (N.d.), having someone who is codependent in a relationship usually portrays that the relationship is “one-sided, emotionally destructive and/or abusive” (Mental Health America). This website also suggests that codependent behavior can be learned from observing and mimicking other family members who demonstrate this type of conduct (Mental Health America).

Another factor presented on domesticshelters.org (2014) that can attribute to making an abuser is untreated mental health issues (Profiler of an Abuser). People who live in lower socio-economic groups may not have the access or the resources to see a doctor on a regular basis and could be experiencing signs of chronic mental health deficiencies that require treatment. If these people go uncared for, their chances of thriving in society and forming healthy relationships with loved ones diminish. Whether the treatment is going to see a psychologist, weekly meetings with others who are struggling with the same issues, or having prescription medicine handling the chemical imbalance, there are many different venues one could take in order to treat mental health issues.

Finally, the last factor is socio-economic pressures. I believe that socio-economic strains can have the most significant impact on someone who is vulnerable to becoming an abuser. As mentioned before, having fewer connections in the community and having a significantly lower income can lead one on a dangerous path to negative outcomes. When people are unable to afford quality health coverage, they will most likely not get proper diagnoses if and when they suffer from health problems. Health issues lead some to engage in unhealthy coping mechanisms such as drugs and alcohol. With extended use and misuse, people can become isolated, irritable, and potentially violent. Essentially, it is very hard to succeed in society if you aren't presented

with the resources at the start of your life, and if one partakes in drug use to cope with strains, they increase their chances of remaining at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder.

### **What fits the profile of the victim?**

There are several risk factors that come into play when identifying a victim of domestic violence. According to the Domestic Violence Council, they state that simply being female is the single greatest factor that increases one's risk of becoming a victim of domestic violence.

Statistics show that in 95% of all domestic violence cases, women are the victims (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1994). Gender is where the commonalities among victims ends. Victims are of every age, class, race, religious, geographic, sexual orientation, and personality group. In the United States, nearly one in three adult women experience at least one physical assault by a partner during adulthood (American Psychological Association, Presidential Task Force on Violence and the Family 1996 Report). According to Volant *et al's* (2008) study, women that were abused were “younger and contained fair or poor mental health and the abusive partner being a former partner” (2008, 1279). If the victim has witnessed the family pet being abused, they are more likely going to delay leaving the violent environment due to the concern of the pet's welfare (Volant *et al*, 2008, 1280).

### **What types of mistreatment are used in domestic/ animal abuse?**

When it comes to domestic violence or animal abuse there can be distinct and similar forms of harm that can come to humans and their pets. With domestic violence, victims can endure physical harm such as hitting, kicking, biting, burning, choking, stabbing, sexual assault, rape, and unfortunately death. Verbal abuse can also be as detrimental as physical mistreatment. According to Abigail's Support Group for Women with an Abusive Partner (2005) there are

many different forms of verbal abuse can be associated with domestic violence. First of all there is *belittling*, which is “putting down” the victim and invalidates her feelings or opinions (Kennedy, 2005). It also can be used to tell the victim that her endeavors or apprehensions are unimportant. The other form of verbal abuse mentioned is *countering* and *correcting*, such as when the abuser shuts down the victim’s thoughts, opinions, and reality (Kennedy, 2005). When the abuser is constantly disproving the victim, he feels that he is preserving his control and dominance over her. Next, there are “*abusive jokes*,” which are “putdowns disguised as jokes often referring to women’s gender, mental abilities, or to her competency” (Kennedy, 2005). Then there is *holding out*, which is when the abuser refuses to disclose himself to his partner, who ignores or refuses to listen to her, or refuses to share information that is violating the premise of a relationship (Kennedy, 2005). When the perpetrator holds back emotional support, that can erode confidence and determination.

Another form of verbal abuse that is portrayed is *side-tracking* and *shutting down*. This is when the abuser forces the “discussion off track, shuts it down, or changes the subject are ways to control and frustrate the conversation” (Kennedy, 2005). In some cases, accusing and blaming are used to seize the discussion and end up having the victim in an unstable state. This support group website also shows that intimidation can also be huge sign of verbal abuse. *Intimidation* can appear through “words or actions that threaten or imply harm or loss, and it is designed to control and gain power through fear” (Kennedy, 2005). *Selective memory* is another factor of verbal abuse. Perpetrators of abuse may "conveniently forget" or change the facts of what really happened, and can be used to contradict, twist, and alter reality (Kennedy, 2005). Finally, there is *lashing out*, which includes “angry verbal attacks, yelling, raging, and temper tantrums” (Kennedy, 2005). Unfortunately, all of the different forms of verbal abuse can be extremely

effective ways to terrorize and control others, thus perpetuating the ongoing cycle of domestic violence.

In Clifton P. Flynn's journal article (2011), there are six different ways of animal abuse that perpetrators could engage in. They include *drowning, hitting or kicking, shooting, choking, burning, and having sex* with the animal. Other forms of animal abuse include *hoarding, fighting, mutilation, throwing, stabbing, and vehicular*. However, *neglect* can be just as detrimental to the animal as physical harm. When it comes to neglecting an animal, that means basically depriving the animal of its basic necessities. When a pet owner refuses to bring an animal to the vet because it got hit by a car to avoid veterinarian bills that they may not be able to afford, that increases the chance that the animal will suffer and not live its whole lifespan. Perhaps times are hard economically for a family and they cannot afford to keep the pet so the family leaves the animal behind to fend for itself. Not all animal mistreatment involves violence; however neglect can be similar to verbal abuse in domestic violence victims because both perpetrators don't have to lay a hand and make a single visible mark on their victims to inflict suffering.

**Are there any laws or services that protect victims of domestic abuse/ and animal protection laws in NYS?**

The Animal Welfare Institute stated that as of now, across the United States there are roughly around 1,436 safe havens (Safe Havens, 2016). These safe havens are either sheltering services for the companion animals of domestic violence victims, have a relationship with an entity that does, or provide referrals to such facilities (Safe Havens, 2016). In regards to strictly domestic abuse situations, New York State has many different organizations, such as the Family Justice Center of Erie County located in Buffalo. The Family Justice Center provides free services for domestic violence victims and their children through an extensive collaboration with

several partner agencies, all located at one secured, comfortable location, where victims can get all the services they need to safely escape abuse (Services for Domestic Violence Victims, 2016).

Their services include (Services for Domestic Violence Victims, 2016):

- *Advocacy*- Advocates understand the criminal justice, family court, and social service systems and are familiar with other community resources that might be helpful to you. Advocates can also provide you practical and emotional support. Family Justice Center advocates can explain what the police and courts can do for you and how the courts function in Buffalo and Erie County. They can help you decide whether to use the system and can help you navigate the process of pressing charges and/or obtaining an order of protection. Advocates can also help you fill out a safety plan, will provide you with emergency resources such as hotline numbers and can provide access to shelter.
- *Family Justice Intake Assessment*- Completed by an intake specialist who meets with you to determine what services you need. Once the intake is completed, the intake specialist will make referrals to FJC partners and advocates.
- *Safety Planning*- Safety plans may be made for a variety of different situations, such as when you are threatened with physical assault or if an assault has occurred; if you are continuing to live with or to date a partner who has been abusive; or to protect yourself after you have ended a relationship with an abusive partner. You don't need to wait for an emergency to develop a safety plan.
- *Order of Protection*- A document issued by a court to help protect you from harassment or abuse. In an order of protection, a judge can set limits on your partner's behavior. Once an order is issued, only a judge can change it.

- *Forensic Medical Unit*- Physical injuries can be documented at the FJC by a nurse practitioner from the UB Department of Family Medicine. Documentation consists of photographs and body mapping with accompanying explanations of all injuries that you have received. This material can be of great importance if you decide to press criminal charges against your abuser.
- *Child Waiting Area*- When you come to the FJC with your children, the Child Waiting Area provides a safe play environment for them while you receive the services that you want. Foster grandmothers and volunteers provide supervision. An advocate from the Child Advocacy Center is also available to provide access to counseling services for your children if you feel that this would be helpful for them.
- *Pressing Charges*- Every time the police respond to a domestic violence call, they are required to fill out and give you a copy of the Domestic Incident Report even if an arrest is not made. If an arrest has not been made and you decide that you wish to press charges, when you come to the FJC, you will meet with an advocate from the BE-SAFE Program and with an officer from the Buffalo Police Department who will help you.
- *Civil Legal Assistance*- At the FJC you can also receive help resolving civil matters. Generally this might involve going to Family Court with the goal of protecting you and your family. Advocates can help you decide whether you want to pursue an order of protection from Family Court, or answer questions related to divorce, custody and visitation, or problems with benefits through the Department of Social Services.

There is also the YWCA of Genesee County located in Batavia, which serves families throughout western New York. They offer domestic violence crisis and prevention services, affordable, flexible, and accessible childcare and economic empowerment opportunities. Finally,

they strive to achieve racial justice and advocate on behalf of women and their families through multiple community outreach opportunities (YWCA of Genesee County, Inc. (2016). Their services are included in areas of advocacy, temporary housing, and career advancement training.

Finally, there is the organization Alternatives for Battered Women located in Rochester. Their mission is to prevent domestic violence and ensure every survivor has access to the services and supports needed along the journey to a safe and empowered life. They also firmly believe that their organization should be a community free from domestic violence, where healthy relationships flourish (About Us, 2015). Finally, every service provided is free and confidential. Willow Center offers crisis and emergency support services such as (About Us, 2015):

- 24/7 Hotline* – call anytime, day or night, we are here to support you
- Emergency Shelter* – safe housing for you and your children
- Safety Planning* – personalized to your needs and situation
- Court accompaniment* – to obtain a court order of protection

The following associations provide aid and services towards animal cruelty within New York State. The Humane Society of Greater Rochester for example, states (2016) that they are committed to constructing lasting unions between people and animals by “education, community outreach programs and the prevention of cruelty” (Our Mission). They imagine a time when the community rejoices the human-animal bond; holds the mutual benefits within; and gives all companions with “care, compassion, and respect” (Our Mission, 2016). This organization values the provision of the finest service to the animals, the community, organization and themselves.

This organization has four main goals they hope to achieve in order to make a difference in animal welfare (Our Mission, 2016) First of all they want to achieve an 82% save rate by 2017, by (2016):

- Expanding our companion & farm animal adoption promotions
- Providing our adoptable animals the best medical, behavioral, and physical care.
- Increasing our efficiency to reduce lengths of stay, and reduce costs.
- Enhancing our staff development programs to foster internal growth and expertise
- Improving our customer experience.

Secondly, they want to increase the community access to veterinary services by properly spaying and neutering their animals. They will be able to do this by (Our Mission, 2016):

- Developing funding for providing veterinary services to pet owners
- Implementing comprehensive outreach strategies to educate the community on spay/neuter and on how to access affordable services

The next goal is to enhance humane law enforcement coverage & community awareness of animal cruelty laws. They hope to achieve this objective by (Our Mission, 2016):

- Hiring 2 new officers and reducing response time
- Partnering with government agencies and other stakeholders to educate on current animal cruelty laws.
- Delivering programs for the community on preventing animal cruelty
- Advocating for better animal protection laws

Finally, the Humane Society of Greater Rochester wants to continue to grow and remain sustainable by establishing a long-term financial plan. They will also (Our Mission, 2016):

- Developing a more sustainable business model and building internal capacity
- Evaluating current programs for effectiveness and impact.
- Developing additional revenue sources.
- Strengthening brand identity and expanding our reach

Another animal abuse prevention organization is the Mohawk and Hudson River Humane Society located in Albany. Since 1887, The Mohawk Hudson Humane Society has been a non-profit organization that has been providing lodging for lost, maltreated and unwanted animals (MHHS: About Us, n.d.). The Society is the oldest and largest animal protection organization in New York's Capital Region, receiving an average of over 6,000 animals per year. Some of their services include (MHHS: Services Offered. (n.d.):

- *Pet Adoption*- Animals who have been found by SPCA, Animal Control, or that have been surrendered are able to be adopted out to loving homes and families to start a new and happy life.
- *Animal Surrender*- If a situation occurs that may lead you to believe you have to give up your pet; services are available to see if there is any chance that the pet can still remain in your home. Veterinarians and animal behavior specialists will provide tips and advice on what steps need to be taken in order to keep your pets.
- *Cruelty Investigation*- Investigators who report cases of animal cruelty and work collaboratively with law enforcement to uphold animal protection laws.

- *Animal Control*- Officers who locate stray animals or lost animals and bring them to animal shelters to give the necessary care or reunite missing animals to their owners.
- *Pet Insurance*- Pays, partly or in total, for veterinary treatment of the insured person's ill or injured pet. Some policies will pay out when the pet dies, or if the pet is lost or stolen.
- *Microchipping*- The implementation of a microchip under the skin of a domestic animal as a means of identification.
- *Nursing Home Visits*- Animals are brought to nursing homes as a means to provide comfort and companionship to those that may not have family or friends to keep company.
- *Euthanasia & Cremation*- Perhaps the kindest thing you can do for an animal that is terminally ill, aged or so severely injured it will never have a good quality of life is to induce his or her death quietly and humanely through euthanasia. The Society has a crematorium on-site and can return your pet's remains to you if you prefer.
- *K9 Memorial Site*- The Capital District Police K9 Training Group, in cooperation with the Mohawk Hudson Humane Society, established the Law Enforcement K9 Memorial site to recognize and memorialize the invaluable services these dogs have given to their agencies and the communities they have served.

Finally, there is the Animal Protective Foundation located in Schenectady. Their organization's mission is to report pet overpopulation and animal distress through instruction and proper action, to improve human/animal relationships, and to deliver attention to animals in need (Who We Are, 2016). Thankfully there are significantly more organizations that can adhere to the needs of abused animals throughout New York State.

New York is one of states that actually have services that help domestic violence families and their animals together rather than be separated. One of them includes the Urban Resource Institute People and Animals Living Safely organization, located in Brooklyn. In 2013, the URI launched the URIPALS program, which was New York City's primary and only initiative that permits domestic violence survivors to enter the shelter with their pets (History of URI, 2013). The services that they provide for the affected families include (Programs and Services, 2013).

- Individual and group counseling that focuses on safety assessment and planning, recovery from trauma, and family relationships.
- Family counseling helps families in crisis adjust to their new surroundings and begin the healing process.
- Medical referrals are provided to off-site hospitals and clinics in the community.
- Legal services to help families navigate the court system and enforce their rights. Our Legal Education and Advocacy Program (LEAP) provides specialized legal services to our domestic violence shelter residents.
- Child therapy, administered by qualified professionals, helps children living in shelter cope with the trauma associated with domestic violence.
- Recreational activities for adults and children are arranged on a regular basis, on-and off-site. Activities range from physical fitness to cultural and social outings.
- Educational/vocational services include educational evaluations and guidance, GED preparation classes, daily practical skills classes, resume-writing workshops, and assistance with developing job-interviewing skills. Our Working Internship Network (WIN) gives shelter residents an opportunity to become interns in various work settings and gain valuable on-the-job training.

- Children’s services include a daily pre-school program for toddlers and young children and onsite child care.
- Housing assistance helps clients search for safe, permanent housing.
- Special workshops, such as cooking classes and computer training, provide clients with a range of new skills they can apply.
- Comprehensive aftercare/discharge planning allows individuals to utilize shelter services as a resource even after they leave the facility.
- PALS: People and Animals Living Safely, the only program of its kind in New York City, assists pet owners facing domestic violence by co-sheltering them with their pets.

In Oswego, there is A New Hope Center, which they not only attend to domestic violence cases but also offer shelter, respite care, adoption and other services for companion animals and even certain farm animals. They believe that animals are beloved members of many families, and are often the targets of abuse. It can be either to intimidate and further taunt a victim, or to suffer additional abuse just because a batterer feels like hurting the animal. As a part of their comprehensive services to families struggling with the effects of domestic violence, ANHC feels that this program is critically important, and can even make the difference between a battered woman escaping, or staying with an abuser rather than leaving a vulnerable animal behind.

Finally, there is the Dutchess County SPCA & Grace Smith House located in Hyde Park, NY. The Dutchess County SPCA and Grace Smith House are combining their efforts to keep battered women and their pets safe. While the DCSPCA provides safe haven for pets, the abused women can lodge at the Grace Smith House emergency shelter. Safe Pet Sheltering is a program that offers up to 90 days of homage for animals in a “safe, undisclosed and confidential location

while their owner is staying in the Grace Smith House Emergency Shelter” (Safe Pet Sheltering, 2016). In 2010, the murder of Linda Riccardulli by her husband, made an impact with the Dutchess County Legislature’s Citizens’ Advisory Committee on Domestic Violence. After the case was concluded, they submitted a report outlining numerous recommendations for the county, including providing temporary sheltering for pets to assure they are not pawns or impede a victim’s ability to escape violence (Safe Pet Sheltering, 2016). So as one can gather, these are just but a few of the many various resources that victims of animal cruelty and domestic violence could seek assistance from the violent environments from which they came.

### **Discussion and Conclusion:**

This main goal of this research is to prove that there is a major problem within our society pertaining to domestic violence victims and the animals also affected. There has been a clear indication that there is a significant need for not only more research on this overwhelming relationship between animal cruelty and domestic violence, but also more social awareness so society can combat the problem before it gets out of hand. If people saw the warning signs of potential abuse in the home, they should absolutely report it instead of leaving the issue behind closed doors. We need to start realizing that this societal problem will not decimate overnight, nor in a couple months or even years. However, if we start becoming more aware of the factors that can eventually lead to a perpetrator of abuse, we can then provide that individual with the aid and resources necessary to not become another contributing dynamic towards the cycle of violence.

If we don’t start taking this societal issue more seriously, we are potentially responsible for letting dangerous people continue their cruel behavior and inflicting pain upon their victims, both human and non-human. It is also clear within this research, that people who do engage in

hurting animals when they are younger have a higher chance of hurting loved ones within their family units. Additionally, those who hurt significant others are also more likely to hurt animals. The cycle of abuse therefore continues to escalate, and victims either let the abuse continue or they later on become the thing that they feared the most, the abuser.

There are several considerations to be made as far as drawing major conclusions about this particular topic. According to Volant, Johnson, Gullone, and Coleman (2008), concerns of “access, security, privacy, and respect are of paramount importance when conducting this type of research” (Volant *et al*, 2008). Within much of the literature presented, the data comes from those who are characteristically recipients of recent abuse hence recruiting participants for studies in this issue can be very laborious and challenging. One must take into account that this issue is fairly new within the scope of research and in order to make more definitive interpretations of the data available, there needs to be larger samples of perpetrators of domestic violence and animal mistreatment in order to generalize to the overall population. It is imperative to realize that this particular matter requires more prospective research.

Also, I must note that women are just as capable of becoming perpetrators of violence within the home as men are. There is a serious lack of information available as to women abusers in domestic situations and animal mistreatment. Perhaps society thinks that this particular epidemic is only derived from men and that women are always the victims. If there was going to be future research conducted on this overwhelming cycle of violence. With the research that has been provided thus far, it is safe to say that where there is violence within the home, multiple members, human and non-human tend to be at risk.

Intimate Partner Violence and animal cruelty are two vastly different forms of abuse, however both can ultimately depict that they share similar factors. When someone hurts a dog, they don't see the dog as a member of the family and should be respected, but actually objectified and treated like they are meaningless and a potential outlet for letting out aggression due to interpersonal relationship problems. If more safe havens provided support for victims of domestic and animal violence together, then families wouldn't fear separation between their pets in order to receive sanctuary. If more educational opportunities were available on the relationship between animal cruelty and intimate partner violence, perhaps people would be more willing to report the violence and do what is necessary to keep every member of their family safe from harm.

Conducting this research definitely helped to reinforce my future desire to obtain a career in animal welfare. While I know this research is far from completion, it is my hope that this will aid future research in the particular field and we will become closer to say definitively that there is a significant relationship between domestic violence and animal abuse. Many different factors are necessary to get a bigger picture of this overwhelming issue in our society. If future research was going to be conducted, I would add in women as potential abusers, larger sample on a national scale, and if more victims were willing to speak out about past violence done to them and their pets so there can be better representation on how this overwhelming issue is plaguing our society. This perpetuating cycle won't ever go away without everyone's support. No one deserves to be treated like garbage, regardless of being animal or human. It is not my intention for everyone who reads this to believe that this is the only societal issue out there. However, it is a devastating reality that should no longer be overlooked. Otherwise this cycle of violence will continue indefinitely.

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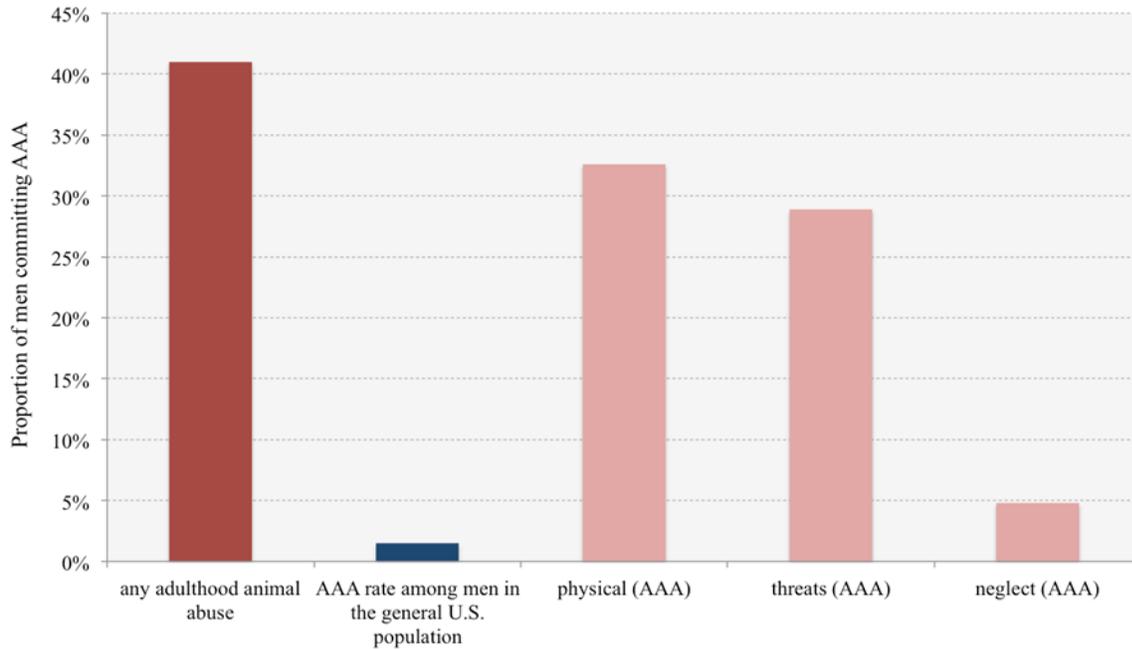
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## Appendix A—Figure 1

**Figure 1. Rates of Men's Adulthood Animal Abuse**



**Data Sources:**

Rates of AAA reported from a study of 307 men arrested for domestic violence (Febres, et al. 2014).  
Rate of AAA reported in the general U.S. population comes from Vaughn, et al. (2009)

## Appendix B—You can make a difference

The Animal Legal Defense Fund (2014) states the following as a means of how you can help combat this ongoing issue of the domestic violence and animal cruelty, such as (Animal Cruelty and Domestic Violence):

1. *Have a Plan.* If you or someone you love is in a dangerous situation, have an escape and emergency plan for both human and animal victims. Do NOT leave animals with the abuser.
2. *Seek Shelter.* If family and friends aren't options, contact local shelters and ask for information about sheltering companion animals. Many shelters have temporary "safe haven" foster programs.

3. *Seek Legal Advice.* One of the smartest things victims can do to empower themselves is to get educated. Many local shelters and social services offer free legal advocates who provide crucial resources, assistance filing protective orders, and support in prosecutions. Contact your local shelter, the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network hotline, or the National Domestic Violence Hotline.
4. *Advocate.* Encourage women's shelters to add questions about animals to intake forms, and to build animal kennels at their facilities. Encourage animal shelters to adopt temporary foster programs. Help victims establish ownership of companion animals and retrieve animals left behind. Establish community groups against domestic violence that includes local animal groups.
5. *Support the Victims.* Because the rules of evidence have been so skewed to favor the defendant (at the expense of victim safety) victims need to be present in the courtroom at trial. This is often a time of great anxiety and stress; providing a victim with the support necessary to get to court, testify truthfully while looking the abuser in the eye, is vital to ensuring offenders are held accountable. On average, a victim attempts to leave an abusive situation up to seven times before getting out for good. With support, legal assistance, and safe shelter, victims can escape violence.