

The Nature of Animal Crime: Scope and Severity in Chicago

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Abstract

This study sought to contribute to our sociological understanding of animal crime. Using Chicago Police Department data that include primary and secondary charges of all animal crimes between 2009 and 2012, findings indicate that most animal crime offenders were male, African American or Hispanic, and under 35 years. When other crimes were committed with animal crime, they were likely drug or weapons offenses. Juveniles arrested for animal crimes tended to commit more severe animal crimes than adult offenders. Finally, regression results indicated that race was positively related to animal crime severity, while concurrent drug offenses were inversely related to animal crime severity. Implications for theory, research, and policy are discussed.

Keywords

animal crime, violence, offending, juvenile delinquency

Introduction

Starting in January 2016, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) began to collect data on animal cruelty crimes throughout the country. Under the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS), animal cruelty will now be classified as a “crime against society” and a Class A felony, and will be categorized into four different types: simple/gross neglect, intentional abuse and torture, organized abuse (like dogfighting and cockfighting), and animal

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sexual abuse. The new reporting system will also collect information about animal abusers, including their age, gender, and criminal history. In addition to this federal action, a small but growing number of jurisdictions around the country have created animal abuser registries, much like sex offender registries, to track those convicted of animal cruelty and presumably prevent them from buying or adopting future pets.

These law enforcement initiatives signal a long-held but less empirically demonstrated assumption about the link between violence against animals and subsequent violence against people. In fact, on the rare occasions when animal crime is considered in criminological or criminal justice discourse, it is generally only as a predictor of later human violence. However, there is much that we do not know about the nature and scope of animal crime. For example, animal crimes are often studied from a psychological perspective, and in the context of psychopathology or family violence. Furthermore, theory and research have been vague about the specificity of the animal–human crime link; that is, whether animal crime may be correlated to a range of human crimes, not just violence (Flynn, 2011; Walters, 2013). Thus, research is needed to produce a fuller picture of animal crime, one that goes beyond individualistic explanations and situates animal crime in a broader criminological and sociological context. Using Chicago Police Department (CPD) data that include primary and secondary charges of all animal crimes between 2009 and 2012, this research intends to analyze the types of animal crimes commonly committed and who is committing them, their connections to other street crimes, and offender- and crime-related characteristics that may predict animal crime severity.

Background

We have many examples of the growing significance of animals, and animal welfare, in our lives. Of course, companion animals including dogs and cats are the primary source of human–animal interaction. According to the American Pet Products Association (2016), 65% of American households own a pet. Additional demographic data further indicate that, at the same time that the birthrate is declining, children are more likely to grow up with a pet than a father (Martin, Hamilton, Osterman, Curtin, & Matthews, 2015; Melson, 2005). Also, according to a recent Gallup Poll (Rifkin, 2015), almost one third of Americans believe that animals should have the same rights as humans; this statistic is up from 2008. And with the popularity of shows like “Animal Cops,” the use of social media as a platform to share stories of animal cruelty, and undercover footage from factory farms revealing the horrific abuse suffered by livestock animals, we can no longer ignore the worst forms of human–animal interactions and the implications of these interactions for our relationships with others.

Perhaps as far back as Mills' sociological imagination, if not Weber's *Verstehen*, a fundamental goal of sociology is to engender empathy, the ability to experience or understand the role of the "other." Sociological pioneers in the fields of race and gender studies, for example, have attempted to humanize subordinate groups and bring to light their systemic oppression so that we, as a society, may understand and connect to their plight. More recently, qualitative sociologists have suggested that the ability to build rapport with research subjects in ethnographic research necessitates the exercise of empathy (Duncombe & Jessop, 2002; Watts, 2008). And in a TED Talk that has been viewed over 1,400,000 times, sociologist Sam

Richards (2010) argued that sociology "begins with empathy. Take yourself out of your shoes, put yourself into the shoes of another person."

Empathy also plays a central role in the growing field of human–animal studies. With volumes of theory and research in that field dedicated to understanding the risk and protective factors related to the human–animal bond, empathy is understood as a fundamental feature of that bond. More specifically, a central goal of human–animal studies is to examine the implications of our ability, or lack thereof, to empathize with animals. When presented in the context of animal crime, this discourse is generally restricted to psychological studies that pathologize animal abuse as the product of sick individuals whose inability to empathize will lead to violence in their relationships with both humans and animals. Thus, animal crime becomes an object worthy of study only because it is an indicator of other forms of human violence.

The "Link"

Accordingly, much of what we know about animal crime, or, more broadly, animal cruelty—as many of these cases go unreported—derives from a body of psychological literature commonly known as the "Link," referring to the relationship between violence against animals and human violence (Ascione, 1993; Flynn, 2001). There is a large body of empirical evidence connecting animal abuse to other forms of violence (DeMello, 2012; Flynn, 1999, 2012). Many of the studies that have examined this connection have done so retrospectively, comparing the childhood histories of violent criminals, including murderers and sex offenders, with noncriminals. Findings reveal that violent criminals typically exhibit more animal cruelty in their childhood than other criminals or noncriminals (Kellert & Felthous, 1985; Ressler, Burgess, & Douglas, 1988; Tallichet & Hensley, 2004; Verlinden, Hersen, & Thomas, 2000; Wright & Hensley, 2003). The primary explanation for this pattern—the "Link"—is that children who commit violence against animals will "graduate" to other forms of antisocial behavior, that this subsequent behavior is specifically violent, and that this relationship is causal, ostensibly due

to some underlying pathology (Walters, 2013). But many compelling questions remain about the etiology of the initial animal cruelty and the mechanisms connecting it to later crime and violence.

Thus, recently, scholars have begun to move beyond this individual pathology model to address the social context of animal abuse by studying its incidence and prevalence in relationships, specifically within families and among peers. Although we have no reliable national estimates of animal cruelty and we know that most cases go unreported, at least two recent studies of college students suggest that half of these students have witnessed or perpetrated animal abuse during childhood (Flynn, 1999; Miller & Knutson, 1997). Additional research that has examined the onset of childhood animal cruelty generally implicates primary social relationships, including families and peers, as key agents of socialization into violence and animal abuse (Hensley & Tallichet, 2005). This body of research further reveals the complexities of the animal abuse—human violence connection by describing the interplay between exposure to animal cruelty and spousal violence, childhood physical and sexual abuse victimization, and perpetration of childhood animal cruelty (Ascione, Friedrich, Heath, & Hayashi, 2003; Baldry, 2003; DeGue & DiLillo, 2009; Thompson & Gullone, 2006). One of the most intriguing findings to come out of this body of research relates to the role of witnessing animal abuse: It appears that witnessing animal abuse can be a significant predictor of the future commission of it (DeGue & DiLillo, 2009; Flynn, 2012). These findings are consistent with theory and research involving violence in human families, in a phenomenon referred to as the intergenerational transmission of violence (Widom, 1989). They are also consistent with one of the leading criminological theories, social learning theory, in that children's proclivity toward violence may be learned through observation and socialization within families and peer groups.

The age at which animal abuse is first witnessed is also important. In a retrospective study of prison inmates, those who *witnessed* animal abuse at a younger age were more likely to *initiate* animal abuse at a younger age and commit abusive acts more frequently (Hensley & Tallichet, 2005). Although the motivations for these acts is unclear, it may be that children exposed to early violence become desensitized to it and are more likely to escalate in terms of frequency, and possibly severity. It may also be that young children who engage in animal abuse early and often are best described by the offending trajectory referred to as "early onset/life-course persistent;" these abusers may fit the stereotypical mold of the psychopathological individual who engages in animal cruelty at a very young age and then, as an adult, escalates to human violence (Ascione, 2008; Ascione, Kaufmann, & Brooks, 2010; Gullone, 2012; Moffitt, 2003).

However, not all children who abuse animals fit that mold. Many children who abuse animals may be described as "adolescent-limited" and do not continue this abuse, or any other forms of violence, into adulthood (Gullone,

2012). Their youthful misbehavior may be understood as an exaggerated form of normal adolescent rebellion (Moffitt, 2003). Arluke (2002) has gone so far as to suggest that animal abuse may be normative among adolescents and young adults, thus why it often occurs in groups of young people; the “dirty play” of animal abuse is an outcome of adolescent socialization and an opportunity to try on adult roles. Thus, as Patterson-Kane and Piper (2009) rightly pointed out, though the incidence of animal abuse might be quite high, most abusers go on to live normal, nonviolent lives.

Another piece of evidence that contradicts the Link’s claim that animal abusers will inevitably graduate to specialize in human violence is the finding that many individuals with a history of animal abuse will go on to commit a variety of crimes, both violent and nonviolent (Arluke, Levin, Luke, & Ascione, 1999; Walters, 2013). This generalized deviance model is presented as an alternative to the Link and suggests that many criminal offenders are motivated by demographic characteristics and structural disadvantages such as poverty and residential segregation, and thus are highly opportunistic and versatile (Arluke et al., 1999). Thus, pathologizing animal abusers via the Link again undermines the sociological context of this abuse and distorts the reality that this type of crime is fairly commonplace and may be present among our friends, family members, and local community (Patterson-Kane & Piper 2009).

From the research summarized above, it is apparent that the Link, which posits a causal relationship between childhood animal cruelty and later adult human violence, may overstate and oversimplify the relationship between animal abuse and human crime. Perhaps because of the psychological nature of the Link framework, it is not surprising that criminology, with its more sociological perspective, has neglected the inclusion of animal crimes in its theory and research. However, we can conclude that animal abuse is common, that its roots, through early exposure and social learning processes, are similar to those of other crimes, and that not all animal abusers grow up to be violent criminals. In fact, it may be that animal abusers have more in common with “typical” street criminals than previously thought. Accordingly, criminologists must use the theoretical and methodological tools of their discipline to develop a sociological and criminological understanding of animal crime—one that moves beyond individual psychopathology to identify the scope, structural and sociodemographic correlates, and offending patterns of this behavior.

A Criminology of Animal Crime

In a 1999 piece in the leading journal *Criminology*, Piers Beirne offers several compelling reasons why criminologists should not only move beyond the limitations of the Link but also no longer overlook the relevance of animal crime for their discipline. Beirne (1999) reminded his readers that animal

cruelty is in fact illegal under the criminal law; that it is a factor in the utilitarian calculus of the avoidance of pain and suffering; and that it is another form of oppression linked to structural inequality.

The construction of a “criminology of animal crime” would signify a movement toward a “non-speciesist” criminology, one that rightly seeks to examine all forms of harm and suffering (Beirne, 1999). Thus, using the theoretical and methodological tools already at a criminologist’s disposal, animal abuse could be situated within the same structural conditions that predict homicide, robbery, burglary, and the like.

Scholars could begin this examination by comparing the causes and correlates of animal crime and street crime. In fact, in another study also using CPD data, Burchfield (2016) found that animal crime was prevalent in socioeconomically disadvantaged and racially segregated communities, along with high rates of index, violent and property crime. At the individual level, it appears that those convicted of animal crimes share some of the same demographics as other criminals: they are male, under the age of 35, and have lengthy criminal records (Arluke & Luke, 1997). In another study using official police data to examine correlates of animal crime, Degenhardt (2005) examined CPD arrest data and criminal histories of all individuals charged with animal-related crimes between July 2001 and July 2004. He found that animal cruelty was related to a variety of offenses, both violent and nonviolent, with a majority of these offenders having multiple felony arrests, narcotics charges, and self-reported gang involvement.

The confluence of dogs, drugs, guns, and gangs is well-established in the literature on dogfighting (Ortiz, 2010). Simon Harding (2014), in his book about dogs as symbols of status and power, quotes Chicago Police Sergeant Steve Brownstein who says, “There is a marriage between dogfighting and gangs. Dogfighting is violent and that is what gangs like” (p. 174). Other scholars have speculated about the structural conditions and cultural norms that allow dogfighting to persist, particularly in urban areas (Daley, 2010; Merz-Perez & Heide, 2003; Ortiz, 2010). Economic disenfranchisement and persistent poverty, along with gang activity, have helped to normalize fighting dogs as a means to earn money, gain respect, and even guard the product and proceeds from other illegal activities (Daley, 2010). Furthermore, it may be that animal crime, including abuse and dogfighting, may be a common part of a criminal enterprise consisting of gang use, weapons and drug trafficking; in these cases, we would expect that the animal abuse is not be due to some underlying psychopathology, but is simply reflective of opportunity structures or situational conditions that make these behaviors more likely than not.

Thus, in contrast to clinical samples of animal abusers whose criminal histories have been used to validate the Link, an examination of the criminal careers of those arrested for animal crimes seems to indicate that, over time, these individuals are generalists, rather than specialists. That is, perpetrators

of animal crime, like most criminals (see Piquero, Farrington, & Blumstein, 2003), commit a range of offenses in addition to animal crime and may be best described by the generalized deviance model. Thus, it is important to consider whether and how those arrested for animal crimes specialize, and whether and how they escalate from less to more serious offenses.

In one of the first studies to consider this question, Arluke et al. (1999) examined criminal records and official reports of animal cruelty and found that “animal cruelty may precede, coincide with, or follow a broad range of anti-social behaviors” (p. 9). These findings seem to discredit the idea that animal crime always precedes and escalates to more serious human violence. In fact, in a recent study of prison inmates, the only animal crime that predicted later violence against humans was having sex with an animal (Hensley, Tallichet, & Dutkiewicz, 2012). Walters (2013) has also presented evidence that discounts the graduation hypothesis and further supports a generalized deviance model, by demonstrating in a meta-analysis that animal cruelty correlated as well with violent offending as it did with nonviolent offending. However, research by Hensley and Tallichet (2005) and Tallichet, Hensley, and Singer (2005) examining the onset of animal cruelty indicated that those who hurt or killed animals at a younger age were more likely to commit frequent recurrent animal cruelty. This suggests that some individuals may initiate animal abuse at a young age, persist in this behavior, and perhaps even escalate throughout their criminal career.

This review has attempted to summarize the literature examining the sociological correlates, patterns, and scope of animal crime, specifically by presenting evidence that challenges the prevailing Link model of animal abuse and human violence. By broadening our understanding of the ways in which animal crime emerges, evolves, and engages with other types of crime, we may begin to see how this crime is not so different from other types of common street crime.

To support this approach, in this article, I will examine the prevalence of animal crime in Chicago. To further understand the nature of crime in a large American city, I will investigate the types and severity of animal crime that occur there, as well as their connections to other crime. Accordingly, using CPD data, I will analyze the characteristics of animal crime offenders, the correlation between animal crime and other crimes, and the variables that predict animal crime severity.

Method

Data

The data for this study were obtained by special request from CPD.¹ These data encompass all criminal events, including incidents and arrests, between

2009 and 2012 in which an animal crime was the primary or secondary offense recorded. There were a total of 670 incidents with 605 unique charges for animal crimes. Furthermore, there were a total of 435 arrests with 2,446 charges, including 1,990 charges for animal crimes.

Animal crimes are defined as those incidents charged by the CPD as *Animal Abuse/Neglect* under 510 Illinois Compiled Statutes (ILCS) 70/3.01-.03, as well as those incidents charged as *Animal Fighting* under 510 ILCS 70/4/01, 720 ILCS 5/26-5, and Municipal Code of Chicago (MCC) 7-12-370. *Animal Abuse/Neglect* includes incidents that involve the beating, cruel treatment, tormenting, starvation, overwork, abandonment, or other abuse of an animal that may cause it to suffer serious injury, hunger, or exposure; the infliction of extreme abuse intended to increase or prolong the pain, suffering, or agony of an animal; or any act that causes a companion animal to suffer serious injury or death (CPD, 2014). *Animal Fighting* includes the unlawful fighting of dogs, roosters, or other animals (CPD, 2014).

Measures

Variables were constructed for the *type of crime* for the primary and secondary charge of each incident and arrest. Variables were also constructed for the *charge type* (misdemeanor or felony), *age*, *race*, and *gender* of offender, as well as *concurrent charges* involving other crime types. Finally, a scale of *animal crime severity* was computed, ranging from one to five. The least severe animal crime is “possession of certain dogs by a felon.” In the state of Illinois, it is illegal for a felon to possess an unmicrochipped, unsterilized, or vicious dog within 10 years of his or her felony conviction. Next is “owner duties,” which refers to the owner’s responsibility to provide adequate food, water, tethering outdoors, shelter, veterinary treatment, and humane care. Next is “animal cruelty—misdemeanor,” which results from charges of abuse and abandonment of any animal. Next is “animal cruelty—felony,” which is charged with subsequent convictions of animal cruelty or more serious forms of animal abuse against companion animals. The most severe animal crime is “animal fighting,” which may involve dogs, roosters, or other animals fighting for the purposes of sport, wagering, or entertainment.

Analyses

Because this study is primarily intended to examine the scope and severity of animal crime in Chicago, a variety of analyses were performed. These included descriptive statistics of relevant variables, as well as frequencies of other crimes co-occurring with animal crimes.² Furthermore, given past theory and research suggesting important differences between youthful and

Table 1. Incident-Related Variables.

| | Number | Percent |
|--|--------|---------|
| Type of crime—Primary charge | | |
| Assault | 24 | 1.20 |
| Burglary/theft | 4 | 0.40 |
| Narcotics | 15 | 2.20 |
| Other offense (includes animal crimes) | 605 | 90.70 |
| Other property/minor offense | 12 | 0.10 |
| Robbery | 2 | 0.10 |
| Weapons violation | 8 | 1.20 |
| Type of crime—Secondary charge | | |
| Animal abuse and neglect | 586 | 87.46 |
| Animal fighting | 19 | 2.84 |
| Other drug offense | 15 | 2.24 |
| Other property offense | 12 | 1.79 |
| Other violent offense | 25 | 3.73 |
| Other nonindex offense | 13 | 1.94 |
| Total | 670 | 100.00 |

adult animal offenders and between violent and nonviolent animal offenders, *t* tests were conducted comparing animal crime severity by age group and by violent versus nonviolent offender. Because there were 32 juveniles included in these data who, by nature of their age, could not be charged with *possession of certain dogs by a felon* or *owner duties*, the independent *t* test comparing animal crime severity between juveniles and adults excluded these two offenses. Finally, an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis was conducted, examining predictors of animal crime severity. The regression analysis excluded juvenile offenders, thus examining the full scope of animal crime severity for adults.

Findings

Descriptive Results

Table 1 presents frequencies for the types of charges present in all incidents involving animal crimes. Because animal crimes do not rise to the level of seriousness to warrant their own primary charge classification, a majority (91%) of these crimes were recorded with “Other Offense” as the primary charge and the animal crime being recorded as the secondary charge. Of the 605 animal crime charges, 586 (97%) were for *animal abuse/neglect*, and 19 (3%) were for *animal fighting*.

Table 2. Charge-Related Variables.

| | Number | Percent |
|-------------------------------------|--------|---------|
| Type of crime—Statute charged | | |
| Assault/battery | 43 | 1.76 |
| Narcotics | 141 | 5.76 |
| Other violent offenses | 3 | 0.12 |
| Burglary/theft | 50 | 2.04 |
| Weapons | 97 | 3.97 |
| Other minor offenses | 122 | 4.99 |
| Miscellaneous nonindex offenses | 1,990 | 81.36 |
| Possession of certain dogs by felon | 284 | 14.27 |
| Animal owner duties | 804 | 40.40 |
| Animal cruelty | 870 | 43.72 |
| Animal fighting | 32 | 1.61 |
| Charge type | | |
| Felony | 270 | 11.04 |
| Nonanimal | 158 | 58.52 |
| Animal | 112 | 41.48 |
| Misdemeanor | 2,016 | 82.42 |
| Nonanimal | 192 | 9.52 |
| Animal | 1,824 | 90.48 |
| Missing | 160 | 6.54 |
| Total | 2,446 | 100.00 |

Table 2 presents the statutes charged for the 435 arrests involving animal crimes. Each arrest involved multiple charges, resulting in 2,446 total charges. When looking at other crimes that were charged concurrently, 6% were narcotics offenses, and 4% were weapons offenses. Of the 1,990 animal crimes, charged as miscellaneous nonindex offenses, 14% were *possession of certain dogs by a felon*, 40% were *animal owner duties*, 44% were *animal cruelty*, and 1.6% were *animal fighting*. It is also worth noting that 92% of all animal crimes were misdemeanors, 6% were felonies, with the remaining missing charge type.

Table 3 presents descriptive information about offenders arrested for animal crimes. Seventy-three of these offenders were Black, 18% Hispanic, and 7% White. The majority (88%) were male, and most (56%) were 18 to 34 years of age. This table also presents the types of animal crimes included in the animal crime severity scale, with the most common animal crime being *misdemeanor animal cruelty*. The mean for this scale is 2.71, with a standard deviation of 0.98. Finally, this table includes the types of offenses committed along with animal crime. Of the 281 offenders who committed concurrent

Table 3. Arrest-Related Variables.

| | Number | Percent |
|--|----------|-----------|
| Race | | |
| Black | 320 | 73.56 |
| Hispanic | 81 | 18.62 |
| White | 32 | 7.36 |
| Native American | 1 | 0.23 |
| Missing | 1 | 0.23 |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 383 | 88.05 |
| Female | 51 | 11.72 |
| Missing | 1 | 0.23 |
| Age, years | | |
| Less than 18 | 32 | 7.36 |
| 18-34 | 245 | 56.32 |
| 35-50 | 115 | 26.44 |
| Greater than 50 | 42 | 9.66 |
| Missing | 1 | 0.23 |
| Animal crime severity | | |
| Possession of certain dogs by felon | 71 | 16.32 |
| Animal owner duties | 59 | 13.56 |
| Animal cruelty—Misdemeanor | 248 | 57.01 |
| Animal cruelty—Felony | 39 | 8.97 |
| Animal fighting | 18 | 4.14 |
| Concurrent offenses | | |
| Violent | 33 | 7.59 |
| Weapon | 47 | 10.80 |
| Drug | 95 | 21.84 |
| Property | 30 | 6.90 |
| Other | 76 | 17.47 |
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
| Animal crime severity (on a scale from 1 to 5) | 2.71 | 0.98 |
| Total | 435 | 100 |

nonanimal crimes, 22% were also charged with drug-related offenses, followed by 11% charged with weapons offenses. Only 8% of offenders charged with an animal crime were also charged with a violent offense.

Tables 4 and 5 further describe patterns of animal crime for juvenile versus adult offenders and for violent versus nonviolent offenders. For those crimes

Table 4. Animal Crime Severity by Age.

| | Juvenile | Adult | Total |
|--|----------|-------|---|
| Misdemeanor cruelty | 17 | 231 | 248 |
| Felony cruelty | 13 | 26 | 39 |
| Fighting | 2 | 16 | 18 |
| Mean of animal crime severity (scale from 1 to 3) | 1.53 | 1.21 | (significantly different at $p < .01$) |

Table 5. Animal Crime Severity by Violent/Nonviolent.

| | Violent offender | Nonviolent offender | Total |
|--|---------------------|------------------------|---|
| Possession of certain dogs by felon | 2 | 69 | 71 |
| Owner duties | 3 | 56 | 58 |
| Misdemeanor cruelty | 23 | 225 | 248 |
| Felony cruelty | 5 | 34 | 39 |
| Fighting | 0 | 18 | 18 |
| Mean of animal crime severity (scale from 1 to 5) | 2.93 | 2.69 | (not significantly different at $p < .05$) |

that juveniles could be charged with, including *misdemeanor cruelty*, *felony cruelty*, and *fighting*, the 32 juveniles arrested scored significantly higher than adults on the animal severity scale. The *t* test results presented in Table 5 demonstrate that there is no significant difference in animal crime severity between violent (those charged with *assault*, *battery*, *homicide*, or *robbery*) and non-violent offenders. This finding seems to dispel the notion that violent offenders who commit animal crime may necessarily escalate in animal crime severity or possess particularly violent animal cruelty tendencies.

Regression Results

Table 6 presents the results of the OLS regression model examining characteristics of animal crime offenders and offenses that might be significant predictors of the crime's severity. Findings revealed significant positive effects for Black offenders, indicating that these offenders commit significantly more severe animal crimes. This is consistent with other research using CPD data that indicated that animal crimes were more common in Chicago community areas with a larger proportion of Black residents (Burchfield, 2016). The findings also indicated that those offenders who commit a concurrent drug offense commit significantly less severe animal crimes. This relationship may offer empirical evidence of the dogs, drugs, guns, and gangs

Table 6. OLS Regression Predicting Animal Crime Severity.

| | Beta | β |
|----------------------|-------------------|---------|
| Intercept | 2.518 (0.150) | — |
| Black | 0.270** (0.106) | .123 |
| Male | 0.053 (0.142) | .018 |
| Any drug offense | -0.661*** (0.118) | -.286 |
| Any violent offense | 0.192 (0.185) | .051 |
| Any weapon offense | 0.162 (0.157) | .052 |
| Any property offense | 0.094 (0.209) | .022 |

Note. OLS = ordinary least squares.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

connection mentioned earlier; perhaps drug offenders commit less severe animal crimes like *felon in possession of certain dogs* and *owner duties* when they use dogs to guard their drugs.

Discussion

This research has examined several important questions related to the problem of animal crime. First, it has presented the types of animal crimes that are reported and charged in Chicago. These findings indicate that most of these crimes are charged as animal abuse and neglect, a misdemeanor. This research also described the types of offenders committing these crimes, with most being male, African American or Hispanic, and under 35 years of age.

One of the unique contributions of this research was to empirically examine the concurrent offenses of those arrested and charged with animal crimes. Counter to the Link’s suggestion that those who commit animal crimes are necessarily involved in violent crimes against humans, less than 10% of those arrested for animal crimes also committed violence. For animal crimes involving other types of crimes, most were drug offenses, followed by weapons offenses. The relationship between animal crime, drugs, and weapons is consistent with Daley’s (2010) and Harding’s (2014) work that suggests that animal abuse may occur with a constellation of offenses related to gang activity. The positive bivariate correlation between possession of certain dogs by a felon and concurrent drug offenses further supports this assertion (see the appendix). With drug trafficking being the most commonly reported criminal activity of gangs, it is possible that gangs are using and abusing animals, usually dogs, to guard their drugs and weapons (National Gang Intelligence Center, 2015).

Another important contribution of this work was to examine predictors of animal crime severity using urban crime statistics, rather than a clinical sample. The *t* tests indicated that juveniles arrested for animal crimes tend to commit more severe animal crimes than adult offenders. Unfortunately, I am only able to speculate about what this finding might indicate. Perhaps these young offenders are those early-onset/life-course persistent offenders who initiate animal abuse at a young age, persist, and escalate in severity through their early criminal careers. To examine this hypothesis, we would need offender rap sheets; however, the CPD were unable to share this information.

The second set of *t* tests indicated that violent offenders do not commit more severe animal crimes than nonviolent offenders. This is another finding that contradicts the Link's assertion that animal crime offenders are uniquely violent. Interestingly, all of the offenders who committed the most severe animal crime, dogfighting, were otherwise nonviolent offenders.

Finally, regression results indicated that Black offenders are more likely to commit severe animal crimes and that offenders who commit concurrent drug offenses are likely to commit less severe animal crimes. These findings again suggest that the nature of animal crime, at least in Chicago, is not due to psychopathological, uniquely violent offenders, but instead may be owed to the same forces of segregation and disenfranchisement that predict other types of street crime.

There are some limitations to these data that must be considered. First, they are official police department data that only represent crimes for which a report was filed or arrest was made. Considering the focus on "more serious crime" by law enforcement and the general lack of attention given to animal crime by scholars and citizens, it is likely that animal crime is greatly underreported and underenforced. Thus, the dark figure of animal crime may be even greater than that of other crime, so these findings must be interpreted with caution; they may cover only a small fraction of all animal crimes.

Furthermore, these data only include primary and secondary offenses. The hierarchy rule in reporting criminal incidents involving multiple offenses dictates that more serious offenses are charged first. Thus, the data included here do not include more complex criminal incidents that might also involve animals, because the animal charges would be reported as tertiary, or lower, charges. For example, an arrest involved a stolen car, narcotics, weapons offenses, and dogfighting would likely not be reported here. Although the FBI's decision to make animal crime a type A felony may encourage police to file more reports and arrests for these offenses, those changes were made in 2016, 4 years after these data were collected.

One final important piece of information missing from these data is the location of the animal crime incident or arrest. A thorough sociological

examination of animal crime would ideally incorporate the sociodemographic and locational context in which these crimes occur. Although another study of animal crime in Burchfield (2016) did incorporate the location of these offenses, it only utilized primary charges. Thus, neither Burchfield nor the research presented here was able to examine the social and spatial dynamics of the more complex criminal enterprises involving animal crime, drugs, and guns that appear to be a pattern in Chicago.

Despite the limitations inherent in this research, these findings offer several fruitful directions for future criminological research. First, and most importantly, these findings highlight the need to move beyond the “Link” as the leading explanation of animal crime. Animal abuse is not always the product of a diseased mind, and animal crime is correlated with more than just violent crime. Thus, animals may play more of a role in crime, including street crimes, than simply as a predictive variable. Results from ethnographic research and conversations with law enforcement and humane investigators indicate that animals are often present with drugs and guns. In fact, Chris Schindler, deputy manager of Animal Fighting Law Enforcement for the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), stated that

When I go on raids, we often come across large amounts of drugs and money. That might be an open door for police. It can be easier to get a warrant for the dogs than to get a warrant on drugs. (Garrett, 2008, p. 80)

Considering this confluence of crimes, it would be misguided to assume that these offenders are motivated by animal cruelty; likely these are instrumental crimes, with the animals being one “tool” used for security and perhaps profit, in the form of dogfighting. The race and gender patterns provide further support for this hypothesis, in that they are similar to those of other street crimes in Chicago. Law enforcement who recognize the connection between animal crime and large drug trafficking and gang operations are in a better position to not only fight animal cruelty but also combat drug, gun, gang, and other forms of violent crime that are plaguing urban areas, particularly in Chicago. Law enforcement should also consider cooperating with local humane agencies. These agencies may be in a better position to understand animal cruelty laws, but often lack the funding and resources to investigate and enforce such laws (Schlueter, 2008). Of course, law enforcement means nothing without adequate prosecution. Although Illinois possesses some of the toughest animal crime laws in the country, national statistics indicate that as few of 3% of these cases are ever prosecuted (Arluke & Luke, 1997; Rackstraw, 2003).

This research also situates itself within an important body of criminological literature regarding offending trajectories. The results presented here

indicate that the small number of juveniles arrested for animal crime were committing more serious animal offenses. It may be that these juveniles initiate animal crime at an early age and escalate in severity rather quickly. This speculation contradicts the graduation hypothesis, or at least suggests that it is specific to certain groups of offenders. If it is the case generally that only a small number of offenders graduate from animal crime to violent human crime in a unidirectional and causal way, then studies should seek to identify and isolate the correlates of these offenses and offenders.

Conclusion

Perhaps because of the Link's perspective that is at once psychopathological and anthropocentric, we fail not only to consider the social forces that converge to create animal victims but also to see animals as victims at all (Beirne, 1999). This brings us back to the role of empathy. Empathy is relevant as more than just a potential explanation for animal cruelty. We as criminologists, as sociologists, would do well to remember that a central goal of our discipline is to use empathy as an interactional and methodological tool to understand the plight of the oppressed and disenfranchised. Given the myriad ways that we humans oppress and disenfranchise animals, including through animal crime, it is time to consider animals as subjects in their own right.

Accordingly, it is time to critically examine the ways in which we benefit from our relationships with animals, rather than only considering our troubled relationships with them as a risk factor for violence. Research highlights the protective effects of animals in a community, treating them as "social lubricants" that facilitate social interaction and provide a sense of social integration in communities (Garrity & Stallones, 1998; McNicholas et al., 2005; Messent, 1983; Serpell, 2010). A recent study has gone so far as to describe companion animals as an important source of social capital, one that increases neighborly interaction and civic engagement, and reduces fear of crime (Wood, Giles-Corti, & Bulsara, 2005). Thus, informal and formal efforts to strengthen the human-animal bond, in turn creating humane relationships, might also work as important protective factors to reduce crime and violence rates.

It is the goal of this research to contribute to the growing body of evidence documenting a significant, yet misunderstood, sociology of animal crime. To that end, sociologists must continue to broaden their perspectives on the roles of animals as both objects and subjects in our society. We must see how problems of animal victimhood are related to broader patterns of inequality, poverty, and discrimination. And yet we must also recognize the complex and protective roles they play in our lives, in our families, and in our communities.

Appendix

Correlations With Other Crimes (N = 435).

| | Seriousness | Possession of certain dogs by felon | Owner duties | Cruelty misdemeanor | Cruelty felony | Fighting | Any drug offense | Any violent offense | Any weapons offense | Any property offense | Any other offense |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------|----------------|----------|------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Seriousness | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Pearson correlation | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sig. (two-tailed) | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Possession of certain dogs by felon | | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| Pearson correlation | -.625 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sig. (two-tailed) | 0 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Owner duties | | | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Pearson correlation | .045 | -.129 | | | | | | | | | |
| Sig. (two-tailed) | .344 | .007 | | | | | | | | | |
| Cruelty misdemeanor | | | | 1 | | | | | | | |
| Pearson correlation | .429 | -.432 | .195 | | | | | | | | |
| Sig. (two-tailed) | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | | | | | |
| Cruelty felony | | | | | 1 | | | | | | |
| Pearson correlation | .413 | -.169 | -.217 | -.297 | | | | | | | |
| Sig. (two-tailed) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | | | | |
| Fighting | | | | | | 1 | | | | | |
| Pearson correlation | .486 | -.146 | -.151 | -.133 | -.065 | | | | | | |
| Sig. (two-tailed) | 0 | .002 | .002 | .005 | .175 | | | | | | |
| Any drug offense | | | | | | | 1 | | | | |
| Pearson correlation | -.275 | .243 | .078 | -.14 | -.127 | -.11 | | | | | |
| Sig. (two-tailed) | 0 | 0 | .104 | .003 | .008 | .022 | | | | | |
| Any violent offense | | | | | | | | 1 | | | |
| Pearson correlation | .067 | -.091 | -.115 | .061 | .062 | -.06 | -.088 | | | | |
| Sig. (two-tailed) | .163 | .058 | .016 | .207 | .197 | .215 | .065 | | | | |
| Any weapons offense | | | | | | | | | 1 | | |
| Pearson correlation | -.048 | .086 | .07 | .017 | -.057 | .002 | .318 | -.072 | | | |
| Sig. (two-tailed) | .315 | .074 | .143 | .725 | .232 | .966 | 0 | .135 | | | |
| Any property offense | | | | | | | | | | 1 | |
| Pearson correlation | .09 | -.057 | -.113 | -.089 | .264 | -.057 | -.056 | .128 | .051 | | |
| Sig. (two-tailed) | .062 | .24 | .019 | .065 | 0 | .239 | .244 | .008 | .285 | | |
| Any other offense | | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| Pearson correlation | .012 | 0.049 | -.061 | -.05 | .046 | .026 | -.009 | .143 | .015 | .138 | |
| Sig. (two-tailed) | .796 | .304 | .208 | .296 | .335 | .589 | .855 | .003 | .749 | .004 | |

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Notes

1. These data were provided by and belong to the Chicago Police Department. Any further use of these data must be approved by the Chicago Police Department. Furthermore, points of view or opinions contained within this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the Chicago Police Department.
2. Correlations are presented in the appendix.

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