

Investigating Animal Abuse: Some Theoretical and Methodological Issues

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Abstract:

This paper focuses on some basic issues that have been an object of debate in the last few years in the field of human-animal studies, namely the meaning and definition of animal abuse, the methods used to investigate it, and the relation between animal abuse and interpersonal violence. The interconnections among these issues are discussed within a theoretical framework that underlines the role of cultures in affecting people's attitudes and behaviors toward animals. Some of our assumptions are: a) in the study of animal abuse experiences it is necessary to understand participants' conceptualizations of animal abuse; b) it is important to use qualitative, in addition to quantitative, data, especially if we want to gain a deeper insight into animal abuse experiences, in particular into perpetrators' motivations; c) it is imperative that the field of animal abuse research is considered an integral and important component not only of psychiatry and clinical psychology but also of sociology and social psychology; d) the commonalities between animal abuse and interpersonal violence are deep and numerous. Some general issues regarding the development of instruments to assess animal abuse are also discussed. A significant support to our theoretical considerations is provided by some qualitative data we obtained from a study that involved 137 pupils aged 9-16 years (70 girls and 67 boys) in three Italian schools and whose main aim was to field-test and validate the Italian version of the child self-report form of The Children and Animals Inventory (CAI).

Keywords: [ANIMAL ABUSE](#); [CULTURAL DIFFERENCES](#); [INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE](#); [METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES](#)

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