

Friends, status symbols and weapons: the use of dogs by youth groups and youth gangs

Jennifer Maher and Harriet Pierpoint

From the issue entitled "Special Issue: Animal Abuse and Criminology"

[Download PDF \(218.5 KB\)](#)

[View HTML](#)

[Permissions & Reprints](#)

[REFERENCES \(53\)](#)

[EXPORT CITATION](#)

[ABOUT](#)

Abstract

Recent UK media reports and government responses evidence a rising concern over irresponsible dog ownership, particularly the use of so-called status or weapon dogs. Youth criminal and antisocial behaviour using these dogs has been widely reported in urban areas and associated with street-based youth groups, in particular, the growing phenomenon of UK youth gangs. This article reports on the findings and implications of a small-scale study, comprising interviews with 25 youths and seven animal welfare and youth practitioners, which aimed to identify the nature of animal use and abuse in youth groups and gangs. It found that over half of the youths belonged to a youth gang and the remainder a youth group, with the majority owning an animal which was most often a 'status' dog (e.g., bull breed/type). Analysis revealed that dogs were used mainly for socialising and companionship, protection and enhancing status. More than 20 types of animal abuse were described by youths and practitioners.

Images

A	B	C
	Table	

A	B	C
	Table	

Fulltext Preview

Friends, status symbols and weapons: the use of dogs by youth groups and youth gangs

Jennifer Maher · Harriet Pierpoint

© Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2011

Abstract Recent UK media reports and government responses evidence a rising concern over irresponsible dog ownership, particularly the use of so-called status or weapon dogs. Youth criminal and antisocial behaviour using these dogs has been widely reported in urban areas and associated with street-based youth groups, in particular, the growing phenomenon of UK youth gangs. This article reports on the findings and implications of a small-scale study, comprising interviews with 25 youths and seven animal welfare and youth practitioners, which aimed to identify the nature of animal use and abuse in youth groups and gangs. It found that over half of the youths belonged to a youth gang and the remainder a youth group, with the majority owning an animal which was most often a 'status' dog (e.g., bull breed/type). Analysis revealed that dogs were used mainly for socialising and companionship, protection and enhancing status. More than 20 types of animal abuse were described by youths and practitioners.

Introduction

Concern over youth ownership of so-called status, weapon or bling dogs has entered both the public and political domain in the United Kingdom [UK]. This is evident in: a) increased negative media attention on youth dog owners and 'dangerous dogs' [13, 40], b) increased reporting of youth's dog fighting by the public to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals [RSPCA] [35], and c) current governmental discourse and policy which has led to—the development of the Metropolitan Police Status Dog Unit [SDU], a provision of the Policing and Crime Act 2009 (s.35) prohibiting gangs using 'status' dogs in public, and proposals to

J. Maher (✉) · H. Pierpoint
University of Glamorgan, Centre for Criminology, Pontypridd, Mid Glamorgan CF371DL, UK
e-mail: jmaher@glam.ac.uk

Published online: 21 April 2011

 Springer

[Criminal Justice Classes](#)

AIU® Online College-Financial Aid Programs-New Classes Start 7/18.

www.AIUSchools.com

AdChoices 

Share this Item

[email](#)

[citeulike](#)

[Connotea](#)

[Delicious](#)