

APPROVAL VERSUS DISAPPROVAL OF DOGFIGHTING AND COCKFIGHTING AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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We explored the extent of approval/disapproval of dogfighting and cockfighting in 206 community college students with 97.1% disapproving of dogfighting and 93.8% disapproving of cockfighting. Disapproval of dogfighting was associated with higher scores on the Pet Attitude Scale (Templer, Salter, Dickey, Baldwin, & Veleber, 1981), scoring in the continuous rather than dichotomous direction on the Animal-Human Continuity Scale (Templer, Connelly, Bassman, & Hart, 2006), and high scoring in empathy toward humans on the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1980). Disapproval of cockfighting was associated with women. Despite the finding of an extremely high percentage of disapproval of dogfighting and cockfighting, continued educational programs and preventive efforts are recommended to achieve our aim, which is zero dogfighting and cockfighting.

Keywords: dogfighting, cockfighting, animal attitudes, pets, Interpersonal Reactivity Index, Pet Attitude Scale, Animal-Human Continuity Scale.

We explored both the extent of approval/disapproval of cockfighting and dogfighting and the personality and animal attitude correlates of such approval versus disapproval. Cockfighting was selected because it is one of the most common sports in the world, especially in Latin America and Asia. Dogfighting was selected because, even though it is illegal, it frequently occurs in the United States.

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Atyeo (1979) reviewed the history of dogfighting in the United States from its roots in England, where the Staffordshire bull terrier was bred for aggressiveness. English breeders first introduced Staffordshire terriers to the United States in the 1860s. The American bull terrier was bred to be larger and stronger than its English counterpart.

Evans, Gauthier, and Forsyth (1998) interviewed 31 American dogmen for between two and four hours at dogfights, at prefight meetings, and at the homes of the dogmen. Evans et al. found that as dog fighters tended to be men, Southern, and working class, pit bull fighting was essentially a poor man's sport. They maintained that dogfighting is a symbolic expression and validation of masculinity.

Lee, Gibbons, and Short (2010) showed college students a dogfight film involving a bait dog and administered a 6-item scale they devised and called Sympathy for the Bait Dog. Women were associated with greater sympathy and empathic concern (i.e., general trait sympathy), and scored higher on the Trait Sympathy for Animal Suffering 6-item Scale. Bonas, McNicholas, and Collis (2000) found in their study of pets in the network of family relationships that scores for companionship, nurturance, and reliable alliance were higher for human-dog relationships than for human-human relationships. In addition, support from human-dog relationships was higher than support from human-cat relationships.

McCaghy and Neal (1974) observed that few sports have the wide geographical distribution of cockfighting, which is found throughout the western hemisphere, for example, in Hawaii, and in the Philippines, Indonesia, Southeast Asia, India, and central China. In the United States, cockfighting is a sport said to be especially common among Puerto Ricans, Cajuns, Delta Blacks, Mexican-Americans, and rural Whites, and is most popular in the southern and western states (Forsyth, 1996). Cockfighting is now illegal in every state of the USA and a felony in 35 states and the District of Columbia (ASPCA, 2012).

In this study, we examined the extent of approval/disapproval of both cockfighting and dogfighting among a group of American college students and their correlates by assessing masculinity, empathy toward humans, and attitudes toward animals. Gender was included as a factor because it has been found in previous studies that dogfighting and cockfighting are primarily male activities.

Method

Participants

The 206 volunteer participants comprising 141 women (68%) and 65 men (32%) were recruited in American undergraduate courses. The age of participants ranged from 18 to 53 years, with a mean of 24.38 and a standard

deviation of 7.64. In terms of ethnic origin, 36% defined themselves as White/Euro-American, 33% Hispanic American, 10% Asian Pacific Islander, 6% Other, 4% African American, 3% Middle Eastern, 3% Native American, 3% Southeast Asian, and 2% East Indian.

Instruments

In addition to using four psychometric instruments, we used the scale shown in Table 1 to assess participant approval/disapproval of dogfighting and cockfighting.

Table 1. *Dogfighting and Cockfighting Disapproval/Approval Opinion Scale*

Please give your opinion about dogfighting and cockfighting
Please circle +3, +2, +1, -1, -2, or -3

Dogfighting is a good sport.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3

Cockfighting is a good sport.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3

Interpersonal Reactivity Index. Davis (1980) developed the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) to measure human-directed empathy. The IRI is a 28-item Likert-type instrument that has four 7-item subscales with internal consistencies ranging from .71 to .72. We employed total score for this study. Preylo and Arikawa (2008) found that vegetarian status correlated .39 with the empathic concern subscale, .36 with the fantasy subscale, .37 with the perspective-taking subscale, and .25 with the personal-distress subscale of the IRI. The present authors reasoned that empathy toward humans could be related to a general empathy propensity.

Pet Attitude Scale. The Pet Attitude Scale (PAS) developed by Templer, Salter, Dickey, Baldwin, and Veleber (1981) is an 18-item Likert-type instrument that assesses general attitudes toward companion animals. It has a Cronbach's alpha of .93, test-retest reliability of .92, and meaningful factors. Templer et al. (1981) found that kennel workers had significantly higher PAS scores than social work students. There were meaningful correlations with the Mini-Mult, an abbreviated form of Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (Kincannon, 1968), the Study of Values Manual (Allport, Vernon, & Lindzey, 1960), the Eysenck Personality Inventory (Eysenck, 1958), and the Personality Research Form (Jackson, 1967). In the above-cited Preylo and Arikawa (2008) study, vegetarian status correlated .37 with the Pet Attitude Scale.

Animal-Human Continuity Scale. The 12-item Animal-Human Continuity Scale (Templer, Connelly, Bassman, & Hart, 2006) has a Likert-type 7-option format. It was constructed to measure the extent to which the respondent views humans and animals in a dichotomous fashion versus on a continuum. The scale contains such items as “Humans can think but animals cannot” and “People have a spiritual nature but animals do not.” A Cronbach’s alpha of .69 and meaningful factors were obtained in their study. As expected, they found a significant difference between participants from a Unitarian Universalist church (in the continuous direction) and those from a conservative rural Methodist church (dichotomous direction).

Personality Attributes Questionnaire. Bem (1974) constructed the Personality Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ) in the context of her concept of androgyny. The validity of the PAQ was established by correlations with other scales of masculinity and femininity. The 10-item Masculinity scale only was used in this study. Bem reported that the Masculinity scale has a Cronbach’s alpha of .85.

Procedure

We obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board at Fresno City College before the data collection. Students who agreed to participate were given a research packet containing a participation consent form, a demographic information form and the five research instruments. Participants were instructed to read and sign the consent form and then to complete the demographic information form and the five research instruments.

Results

On a scale of 1 = *greatest disapproval* to 6 = *greatest approval*, it is apparent from Table 2 that 97.1% of the participants disapproved of dogfighting and 93.8% disapproved of cockfighting. The product-moment correlation coefficient between the dogfighting approval/disapproval and cockfighting approval/disapproval was .69, $df = 204$, ($p < .001$).

Table 2. Number and Percentage of Participants Who Endorsed Each of the Six Approval/Disapproval Options for Dogfighting and Cockfighting

Option	Dogfighting		Cockfighting	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
1. Strongly disagree	167	8.1%	147	71.4%
2. Disagree	28	13.6%	35	17.0%
3. Slightly disagree	5	2.4%	11	5.3%
4. Slightly agree	2	1.0%	5	2.4%
5. Agree	0	0.0%	4	1.9%
6. Strongly agree	4	1.9%	4	1.9%

Table 3 contains the product-moment correlation coefficients of the five independent variables with dogfighting approval and with cockfighting approval. It is apparent that disapproval of dogfighting was associated with a favorable attitude toward pets, a perception of animals and humans in a continuous rather than a dichotomous fashion, and greater empathy toward other humans. Disapproval of cockfighting was associated with women. The means of cockfighting were extremely similar, 1.42 ($SD = .81$) for Whites and 1.45 ($SD = 1.17$) for Hispanics, $t(df = 139) = .17, p = .86$. The dog fighting means were also very similar, 1.22 ($SD = .53$) and 1.28 ($SD = .93$), $t(df = 139) = .55, p = .60$.

Table 3.

Correlations of Independent Variables With Dogfighting Approval and Cockfighting Approval

Independent variable	Dogfighting Approval ($M = 1.31$, $SD = .84$)	Cockfighting Approval ($M = 1.52$, $SD = 1.06$)
Pet Attitude Scale ($M = 93.71$, $SD = 19.51$)	-.21**	-.09
Animal-Human Continuity Scale ($M = 54.53$, $SD = 11.84$)	-.14*	-.11
Personal Attributes Questionnaire - Masculinity Scale ($M = 70.93$, $SD = 12.66$)	.05	.06
Interpersonal Reactivity Index ($M = 67.10$, $SD = 13.37$)	-.13*	-.06
Sex (male = 1, female = 2)	-.04	-.21**

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .002$.

Discussion

The finding of 97.1% disapproval of dogfighting and 93.8% disapproval of cockfighting is good news for animal rights advocates. On the other hand, the findings that 2.9% of the participants had at least some approval of dogfighting and 6.2% had at least some approval of cockfighting suggests that work in the realm of education and attitude change is needed to achieve our aim, which is zero dogfighting and cockfighting. We suggest that the correlation of .69 between approval of dogfighting and approval of cockfighting may be attributed to an individual's attitude toward animal fighting being related to a more general attitude toward the mistreatment of animals.

The significant correlations in Table 3 are congruent with both common sense and previously reported findings. In our view it is most understandable that disapproval of dogfighting is associated with a positive attitude toward pets. People who love their pets presumably do not want dogs to be hurt. We also

find it understandable that those people who, compared with other groups of individuals, view animals as more like people and would not want dogs to be hurt. We also find it very relevant that, in the study by Bonas et al. (2000), human-dog relationships were rated higher in social support and lower in conflict than in both human-human and human-cat relationships. The findings with respect to the IRI show that those people who have more empathy than others for their fellow humans tend to be against dogfighting. Preylo and Arikawa (2008) found that college student participants who had greater empathy than others toward humans were more likely to be vegetarians. In this study, we found that women tended to disapprove of cockfighting more than did men. This finding is congruent with an abundance of research reviewed by Herzog (2007), in which the results showed that women had a more positive attitude toward animal rights and a more negative attitude toward harming animals than did men. It is recommended that educational and other programs to prevent animal fighting should be especially directed toward aggressive men with apparent antisocial propensities.

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