

Considering the Canine: Human Discourses of Gender, Race, and Power in  
Interspecies Entanglements

by

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores discourses in the contemporary United States surrounding the creation, coding, sterilization, and general keeping of canines in order to interrogate how sex, gender, race, class, sexuality, and species together serve biopolitical formations of social control, patriarchal white supremacy, and heteronormativity. Interrogating these socially constructed and oftentimes stereotypical narratives through an interspecies lens demonstrates how taxonomies of power and systems of oppression and privilege become situated across species. This project utilizes interviews and ethnography, as well as analysis of popular culture, legislation and news media.

Interspeciesism is informed by feminist influences, functioning as a framing paradigm that engages with a politicized question of the animal that explicitly acknowledges human-animal entanglements across sites that are shaped by imperialism and colonialism. This interspecies project considers the political nature of relationships between humans and canines. It suggests that people situate their own identities and power not only in relation to other humans but also to other species. Simultaneously, the interspeciesism I engage with extends analyses of biopolitics, or the regulations of living bodies, beyond humans to all species. It interrogates how contemporary U.S. society has organized and identified itself in part through the ways in which it controls and monitors canines, often in relationship to the multiple ways dogs in the U.S. are racialized, classed and gendered by specific breeds. This coding of canine bodies with various taxonomies of power is not about dog breeds' in-and-of themselves, but instead indicates that dominant U.S. society seeks to assert control over certain populations that are constructed as undesirable and unproductive.

Canines exist in a unique space in the U.S. cultural imaginary where they have multiple and oftentimes contradictory meanings that are influenced by a variety of power

relations that transcend species. At stake is a critical concern regarding how interspecies bodies are made, controlled, formed, and refigured together under heteropatriarchal white supremacist modes of power. It draws attention to what these corporeal un(makings) imply for an ethics of being with, and thinking of, the other—human and animal.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is for my Dad. You did not understand what I did, but you supported me regardless. It is because of that support that I have been able to complete this degree. I wish you could be here to see it. Thank you for everything – now and forever. It is also for Putty, Drew, Boomer and Diesel. You are missed.

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## CHAPTER 1

### The Interspecies Relationship:

### Uncovering Meaning in the Microcosms of Everyday Life

#### Part I. Introduction

It was a beautiful afternoon in February at the burnt-grass, rectangular-shaped dog park located in the suburban college town of Tempe, Arizona. The cloudless sky, hot sun and cool breeze combined perfectly, acting as a reminder for the valley's residents who tolerated month after month of triple digit heat in the desert all summer in exchange for these flawless winter days. A white man in khakis and a navy polo shirt who appeared to be in his forties was playing fetch with his neutered black Labrador. With each overhand throw of the tennis ball the dog enthusiastically ran to the opposite end of the park, grabbing the ball in his jaw with a level of precision that indicated he was no novice to the activity, before dashing across the park again to deliver the ball at the feet of its thrower.

The game of fetch continued while another white man in his thirties who was wearing athletic gear jogged across a soccer field and approached the dog park, a leashed, neutered pit bull at his side. The exterior and then the interior gate each closed with a clank as the pair strolled inside. The khaki-clad man noted their arrival with his body language, turning his head and pausing the game as they entered. The leash was unhooked and the athletic human sat down on a bench against the fence of the park, fiddling with his watch while the pit bull wandered off, in search of fun. The afternoon at the dog park seemed to be progressing as usual.

The youthful pit bull began attempting to entice the Labrador away from his game of fetch with childish persistence. The Labrador ignored the bouncing playfulness of the other dog, fixating instead on the intense game of fetch, but the pit bull continued his attempts at engaging as the lovely winter day in the desert continued. Things seemed

largely convivial and quiet, but the tranquility of the dog park was about to come to an abrupt end.

“Get your ghetto dog out of my dog’s face,” screamed the khaki-clad man.

After an initial moment of confusion, the other man rose to his feet and walked towards the screaming man. “Are you talking to me?” he said in response, now a mere two feet from the man to whom he was directing his question.

“You bet I am. That dog doesn’t belong in here. Get him outa my dog’s face,” replied the screamer, his voice continuing to boom with intensity despite the significant decrease in distance between the two men.

“What do you mean, ghetto?”

“Those dogs aren’t safe, he’s harassing my dog. Get him outa here!”

“The dogs are fine, you’re the *fucking* problem,” the athletic man announced, feet planted firmly in the ground, hips apart in an intimidating stance, putting great emphasis on the curse word.

“They’re violent thugs! Take him back to the ghetto where he belongs!” he screamed, mirroring the other man’s stance.

The conversation between the two men was becoming increasingly hostile. The caramel-colored pit bull continued his activities, jumping on and licking the Labrador, rolling on his back, prancing around and persisting with other general dog playtime antics. The Labrador, having dropped the drool-drenched ball at the screaming man’s feet, continued to ignore the pit bull while obsessively pacing, anxiously awaiting the continuation of his beloved game of fetch. It appeared that the dogs were indeed fine, and that the problem was in fact the screaming human.

The man’s issue with the pit bull, whose behavior, at worst, could be described as annoying, was clearly based on deeply rooted stereotypes that haunt the breed. Those

stereotypes are steeped in socially constructed inequalities that are embedded with various social formations, resulting in them being hugely racialized, gendered and classed. The screaming man's use of the words "ghetto," "violent" and "thugs" situate the dog in a space typically used to describe urban men of color in the United States, revealing that the playful pit bull had been deemed dangerous and unwanted in the primarily white, suburban neighborhood of Mitchell Park in Tempe, Arizona.

"This is a dog park, if you don't want your dog to play with other dogs, don't come to a *fucking* dog park," announced the athletic man.

"My dog has the right to be here. He's a family dog," responded the screamer, becoming increasingly louder with each proclamation.

"What does that mean? You got a lot of fucking problems, man," he said, holding his domineering stance before shaking his head until, with considerable effort, he relaxed. "Come on buddy, we're getting out of here," he said walking away from the other man and toward the pit bull, clipping on the leash and leaving the dog park, slamming each gate closed behind them. The instigator of the confrontation watched them walk out. Finally his body language also relaxed and the game of fetch resumed, to the great relief of the Labrador. The afternoon seemed to have reverted back to its formerly tranquil state.

The men's combative responses to one another hold multiple overlapping meanings. For one, the troubling stereotypes about pit bull type dogs transcend the species boundary, demonstrating that the discriminatory and dangerous narratives applied to men of color run rampant in mainstream society can also be used to refer to what is often positioned as the most hated dog in American culture today. Just as socially constructed narratives and categories that relate to humans are mechanisms of social control and manipulation, so too are the symbolic meanings humans have imprinted

onto nonhuman bodies. It is important to consider the material and discursive impacts of these discriminatory belief systems on the intimately intertwined lives of humans and canines.

Additionally, the way that the men communicated about their dogs reveal nuanced information about the space that dogs inhabit in our modern world. The use of the words “family” and “buddy” reveals a level of familiarity, kinship and camaraderie between the men and their dogs. These terms are typically used to describe other humans and the only reason they do not sound odd when applied to an animal is because dogs have been labeled not only as pets by a great deal of mainstream, contemporary American culture, but also as “man’s best friend.”

Situating the dogs as “man’s best friend” positions them in a unique space that disrupts dichotomies, including those of the human and animal, humanity and animality, nature and culture and civilization and wild. The contradictory nature of dogs’ various constructions results in their categorization on the hierarchy of species, which gives value to some and condemns others to death, being extremely inconsistent. The labeling of dogs as pets can allow them certain privileges, resulting in the lives of many dogs being more comfortable and all-around livable than the lives of many humans. The only other species that are broadly granted this particular distinction in mainstream U.S. culture, separating them from the rest of the nonhuman animal world, are cats. But due to the differences in how they exist biologically and culturally, I assert that cats and dogs have very different relationships to humans individually as well as to humanity more broadly.<sup>1</sup> As such, this project will focus specifically on the canine in contemporary U.S. culture while acknowledging its position as a pet more broadly. This project will not

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<sup>1</sup> Erica Fudge. *Pets*. (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2008), 80.

address how cultures and communities outside of the United States construct dogs, nor will it focus on the relationship of immigrants in the U.S. to the canine.

Furthermore, the interaction also tangibly represents the men's own hegemonic masculinities, as raised voices and domineering body language served to remind each other as well as those witnessing the incident that their voices were worthy of being heard, that their opinions were of value. While the incident remained entirely verbal, the threat of physical violence was palpable. The meanings attached to the white, cisgender, male bodies imbued them with a confidence and authority that allowed them to not only speak, but also scream assertions and curse in a public space while maintaining eye contact. During the confrontation, the other humans in the dog park, all of whom happened to be women, remained silent. While exploring why hegemonic masculinities are constructed is not the primary focus of this project, it is important to note the presence of masculinities as well as other social formations and taxonomies of power in these interspecies encounters. In this incident white, heteropatriarchal, hegemonic masculinities are used in a way to naturalize, frame and enact power in differential but stereotypical ways upon human and nonhuman bodies.

This project asks how these narratives not only develop and have material and discursive impacts on the lived realities of people and canines. It also asks how those narratives transcend species, perpetuating the coding and regulation of human and nonhuman bodies alike. In order to do this, I will examine multiple spaces where humans and canines interact, including dog parks, rescue and adoption events, veterinary offices and homes as well as various places in the media, including newspaper articles, spaying and neutering campaigns organized by nonprofit animal welfare organizations, documentaries and reality television shows. Various statistical resources from governmental and nonprofit organizations will be examined as well throughout the

project. In all these spaces, the humans and dogs are positioned and interact in ways that demonstrate how entangled these relationships are with systems of power and oppression and the social formations that they shape.

Pets play a significant role in our modern world. The 2015-2016 American Pet Products Manufacturers Association (APPA) National Pet Owners Survey reports that 65% of U.S. households have at least one pet and 44% of those households have at least one dog, translating to 77.8 million pet dogs total.<sup>2</sup> The APPA also estimates that as of 2016 Americans will spend over \$60 billion annually on items such as food, healthcare and accessories for their companion species, positioning them as unique species in our capitalist culture.<sup>3</sup> In comparison, in 2015 the U.S./Canada box office for movies was \$11.1 billion.<sup>4</sup> The breeding and subsequent selling of companion species, which is contingent upon market forces such as trendiness and technology, also situates them as products, some of which are sold for upwards of a thousand dollars per dog, including trendy “designer dogs” such as Goldendoodles as well as French Bulldogs and miniature versions of traditional breeds, including Australian Shepherds and Siberian Huskies. While many pet owners claim to “love” their pets and consider them family, simultaneously and rather contradictorily, the Humane Society of the United States asserts that each year approximately 2.4 million healthy unwanted companion species are destroyed via euthanasia,<sup>5</sup> costing American taxpayers \$2 billion annually to

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<sup>2</sup> “APPA National Pet Owners Survey,” American Pet Products Association, accessed September 8, 2016, <http://www.americanpetproducts.org/>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> “2015 Theatrical Statistics Summary,” Motion Picture Association of America, accessed March 25, 2017. [http://www.mpa.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/MPAA-Theatrical-Market-Statistics-2015\\_Final.pdf](http://www.mpa.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/MPAA-Theatrical-Market-Statistics-2015_Final.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> “Pets by the Number,” Humane Society of the United States, accessed September 11, 2016, [http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/pet\\_overpopulation/facts/pet\\_ownership\\_statistics.html](http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/pet_overpopulation/facts/pet_ownership_statistics.html).

impound, shelter, euthanize, and dispose of unwanted companion animals.<sup>6</sup> These statistics demonstrate that pets, including dogs, are hugely pervasive and their constructions are contradictory in mainstream American culture. As such, it is imperative to consider the relational role of the human-dog relationship when attempting to understand how oppression, privilege and power as well as livability, or quality of life, and subsequently social death are negotiated in various spaces.

It is important to consider dogs and their relationships to humans in contemporary United States culture because of the importance that dogs play in national narratives, ideologies related to “family,” affective entanglements across species and the substantial economies and elements of consumption surrounding the canine. As gender is a socially constructed analytic, power structures and institutions enforce inelastic gender norms, policing human and nonhuman bodies alike.<sup>7</sup> And just as Donna Haraway’s *Primate Visions* established an overlap between the construction and enactment of gender and the interspecies relationship, analyzing the human’s entangled relationship to the canine can assist in understanding how masculinities and femininities, as well as other intersecting taxonomies of power, are constructed in contemporary U.S. culture.<sup>8</sup>

## Part II. Why Does this Matter for Women, Gender, and Feminist Studies?

Until recently, nonhuman animals largely have been disregarded in social science and humanities research. Instead, animals were relegated to the biological sciences. As a

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<sup>6</sup> “United States Facts and Figures,” Oxford-Lafayette Humane Society, accessed September 7, 2016, [http://www.oxfordpets.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=61](http://www.oxfordpets.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=61).

<sup>7</sup> Mary Hawkesworth, *Feminist Inquiry: From Political Conviction to Methodological Innovation* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Donna J. Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nation in the World of Modern Science*. (New York: Routledge, 1989).



result, nonhuman animals were reduced to mere bodies, without consideration for their socially constructed entanglements with culture. To say that nonhuman animals are socially constructed means that their identities are not simply innate, but are also imprinted with historically and contextually contingent cultural meanings, both symbolically and in a way that becomes imprinted onto their literal physical bodies. While nonhuman animals certainly have biological bodies, they are also coded with social meanings, as the caustic interaction at the dog park described earlier demonstrated. Additionally, these social meanings are embedded with notions of power, oppression, and privilege.

Considering the nonhuman animal from a social science and humanities perspective is important because biological bodies are entangled with cultural constructions. The presence and power of animal imagery is evident throughout human history as well as in our modern era. So-called wild animals have deep symbolic meanings that are hugely entangled with culture (e.g., the bald eagle's association with the United States, the bear in children's literature such as *The Bernstein Bears* and the noble, grieving elephant) and impact their lived realities, including where conservation money is allocated and ultimately which species are selected to live and which are forgotten and ultimately become extinct. Domesticated animal bodies not only have symbolic meanings, but they also exist explicitly because of how people have produced their bodies and identities. Whether for food, service or companionship, domesticated animals play a central role in the lives of humans and are entangled in culture and civilization.

The increasingly popular field of human-animal studies asserts that we live in a mixed species society and as a result have prioritized a consideration of nonhuman animals, including the companion animal, in everyday life. The inter-subjectivity

between the human and the animal, or how it is that humans construct their understandings of animals as well as how animals shape human constructions of themselves, is considered in human-animal studies. The flexibility of animal symbolism is contextually contingent and determined by the species being constructed, allowing them to be positioned in various and oftentimes-conflicting ways.

Unfortunately, just as nonhuman animals have been left out of much of feminist scholarship, human-animal studies has often ignored gender, ecofeminism and critical race theory as well. For instance, Cary Wolfe,<sup>9</sup> who is considered to be rather canonical in human-animal studies, has been extensively critiqued by feminist and critical race scholars, who assert that Wolfe has privileged continental philosophers such as Derrida<sup>10</sup> over ecofeminism and indigenous theorists.<sup>11</sup> Alexander G. Weheliye even claims that Wolfe's lack of consideration of critical race theory results in a "spiteful" argument that positions black subjects in such a way that they must "bear the burden of representing the final frontier of speciesism."<sup>12</sup> And just as the privileging of white, male voices over women and people of color is nothing new in academia, such a tradition is rather blatantly evident in human-animal studies.

Considering nonhuman animals is important because nonhuman lives matter in their own right as well as because they are entangled with our own. The systems of oppression that (re)produce hatred and inequalities such as sexism, racism,

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<sup>9</sup> Cary Wolfe is the author of *Before the Law: Humans and Other Animals in a Biopolitical Frame* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012) and *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, Translated by David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> Susan Fraiman, "Pussy Panic versus Liking Animals: Tracking Gender in Animal Studies," *Critical Inquiry* 39, n.1 (Autumn 2012): 103.

<sup>12</sup> Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 9-10.

homophobia, and classism also include speciesism, ultimately working together to serve biopolitical formations of social control, patriarchal white supremacy, and heteronormativity. As oppression is not a zero-sum game, understanding on a more complex level how social inequalities impact nonhuman animals helps one better understand how the same social inequalities impact humans, as we live in a world where the lives of different species are intimately knotted. When attempting to deconstruct inequalities, noting how similar mechanisms are enacted to oppress multiple species simultaneously, acknowledging our interspecies entanglements, assists in making a more just world for everyone.

Interspecies considerations entered the realm of feminist scholarship through ecofeminism, the academic and activist movement that merges ecology and feminism, drawing parallels between the exploitation of nature and the domination of women.<sup>13</sup> Ecofeminism asserts that the objectification of women is similar to the objectification of animals, as their status as less than is reinforced by similar belief systems. Ecofeminism “addresses the various ways that sexism, heteronormativity, racism, colonialism, and ableism are informed by and support speciesism and analyzing the ways these forces intersect.”<sup>14</sup> Ecofeminism is an important step along the genealogical highway that links feminist ideologies and the question of the animal. While there are certainly problematic elements to ecofeminism because it has the unfortunate tendency of reproducing woman as a monolithic category and often falls prey to essentializing, utopian narratives, it has also pointed out important parallels between the destruction of the environment,

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<sup>13</sup> For examples, see: Barbara Noske, *Beyond Boundaries: Humans and Animals* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1997); Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory, 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition* (New York: Continuum, 2010); and Greta Gaard, *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993).

<sup>14</sup> Carol J. Adams and Lori Gruen, *Ecofeminism: Feminist Interactions with Other Animals and the Earth*, ed. Carol J. Adams and Lori Gruen (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 1.

nonhuman animals and oppressed humans as well as the animalization and oppression of women and people of color and the feminization, sexualization and racialization of animals.<sup>15</sup>

Julie Livingston and Jasbir K. Puar's interspeciesism<sup>16</sup> is primarily informed by feminist influences, functioning as a framing paradigm in a space that engages with a more politicized question of the animal because it explicitly acknowledges human-animal entanglements across sites that are shaped by imperialism and colonialism while considering relationships between species instead of simply assuming a dominance of human over nonhuman species. My interdisciplinary project is informed by interspeciesism in that it will draw interspecies parallels while also critiquing the tendency of much of human-animal studies to decenter and devalue the marginalized, including women and the feminine, black life and black radical imaginings, and indigenous epistemologies.

Livingston and Puar's interspeciesism draws upon critical race studies and postcolonial studies and emphasizes "the relationship *between* different forms of biosocial life and their political effects" to provide "a broader geopolitical understanding of how the human/animal/plant triad is unstable and varies across time and space."<sup>17</sup> While posthumanism has the tendency to situate the human as a singular unit, interspecies is more obviously politicized because it explicitly acknowledges human-animal entanglements across sites that are shaped by imperialism and colonialism while considering relationships between species instead of simply assuming a dominance of

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>16</sup> Interspecies is a concept developed by Julie Livingston and Jasbir K. Puar (eds.) "Interspecies," *Social Text* 29, n.106 (Spring 2011).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 3-5.

human over nonhuman species. As such, interspecies claims to place a critique of power and an emphasis on acknowledging relational elements at its ideological forefront by emphasizing that a consideration of the nonhuman is not about the mastery of those nonhumans by humans, but is instead about a symbiotic existence with the other. An interspecies consideration also clearly challenges humanist narratives and aims to illuminate the larger social context, working to make sense of the social milieu of the time. How certain values become attached to the human and the nonhuman based on notions of property and accumulation are acknowledged along with the concept that all species, including viruses, are valuable.<sup>18</sup>

Through their interactions with humans, animals are given socially constructed metaphorical meanings, symbolically transporting them into civilization. The pet is differentiated from other nonhuman animals because it lives in the home. It is not only domesticated, but also explicitly domestic. As women have oftentimes been relegated exclusively to the domestic sphere, so too has the pet been positioned as a private accessory. And while the pet is given a name, fed, provided with medical care, loved, mourned and ultimately situated as a family member in the home, such considerations have historically been provided to women and other subjugated “othered” bodies as well.<sup>19</sup> While such paralleling can be problematic, I think that considering the domestic and acknowledging the world of the everyday, or “grappling with the ordinary” as Donna Haraway puts it, is an explicitly feminist action that can assist in uncovering new answers to old questions. It can also assist in centering those who have been pushed out

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<sup>18</sup> Ed Cohen, “The Paradoxical Politics of Viral Containment; or, How Scale Undoes Us One and All,” *Social Text* 29, n.106 (Spring 2011): 15-35.

<sup>19</sup> Lucy Jen Huane Hickrod and Raymond L. Schmitt, “A Naturalistic Study of Interaction and Frame: The Pet as Family Member,” *Urban Life* 11, n.1 (1982): 55-77.

of the public sphere and far-too-frequently deemed unworthy of academic consideration.<sup>20</sup>

Given the hierarchy of species that exists in the contemporary United States, considering the critter involves considering the marginalized, which is foundational in feminist research. But feminist research does not just “study down,” it also considers those whose social locations situate them in positions of power, including men and masculinity, whiteness, and those who are economically advantaged.<sup>21</sup> This is relevant when considering interspecies relationships, especially those involving companion species, for “pets” are a byproduct of our capitalist, consumer-driven culture and in many cases are only affordable for people who are privileged enough to purchase a living commodity that requires food, healthcare and other expensive and time consuming maintenance. Just because companion species can be extensions of human privilege does not mean that they exist solely in that capacity. But regardless, considering how critters can be extensions of power and even hold power themselves is important for feminist research, for “without a parallel concentration of research focusing on the problematic character of elites and the social institutions bolstering their privilege, the focus of what is wrong with disadvantaged people creates a picture in which those on the downside of the hierarchies have, *and thus are*, problems.”<sup>22</sup>

In feminism and feminist scholarship, to quote Donna Haraway, “the category work of gender is never alone,” but is instead complexly, reciprocally implicated with

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<sup>20</sup> Donna J. Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 3.

<sup>21</sup> Joey Sprague, *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers: Bridging Differences* (Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Books, 2005), 11.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 11.

other social locations, including race, class, nationality, sexuality and even species.<sup>23</sup> The construction and regulation of bodies across species demonstrates how social inequalities are implemented in favor of dominant power structures, resulting in the reification of hierarchies and perpetuation of stereotypes. Canines, whose identities are so entangled with our own, are simultaneously positioned as product and consumer, as both subversive beings and as entities positioned to reinforce neoliberal, hierarchical economic and familial structures. While emphasizing the contradictory and complex I propose that companion species overall, and the practices of breed labeling, euthanasia, and sterilization in particular, are constructed in relationship to various social locations and, as such, are culturally and contextually contingent.

This project matters for women and gender studies because while a great deal of human-animal scholarship does not question the dominant narrative or explicitly decenter the autonomous male subject, this project aims to acknowledge and deconstruct power structures and mechanisms of social control while foregrounding an intersectional, feminist perspective. This project exists in the explicitly politicized space that is encouraged within women and gender studies, bridging the gap between activism and the ivory tower of academia. The leashed canine is often overlooked as simply another microcosm of everyday life, but it is also in that space that a consideration of the dog becomes explicitly appropriate for women and gender studies because that which seems minute, personal and not worthy of analysis can in fact reflect how the personal is political, and how the intimate elements of everyday life, including the animal that is both coded as “man’s best friend” and as a piece of property, can reveal a great deal about power structures, social inequalities and how bodies, regardless of species, are socially constructed.

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<sup>23</sup> Joseph Schneider, *Donna Haraway: Live Theory*, (New York: Continuum, 2005), 131.

While there is a great deal of activist work engaging with the canine and the human relationship to the canine, there is not a huge amount of explicitly feminist, intersectional scholarly work on the inter-subjectivity of the human-animal connection and I hope to assist in bridging that divide. And while a consideration of interspecies relationships is becoming increasingly more common in scholarly work, there remains a substantial cohort of people who question and critique the value of this work when so many inequalities exist that seemingly exclusively impact humans. But I argue, as does interspeciesism, that given the interconnected relationship of humans and nonhuman animals, oppressions are not singular, but rather intensely knotted.

### Part III. Theoretical Frameworks

Multiple methodologies and theoretical concepts, including intersectionality, social constructionism, critical anthropomorphism, hegemonic masculinities and subordinated femininities, interspeciesism, bio/zoopolitics, the challenging of dichotomies, and affect theory inform this project. While these concepts are not all explicitly methodological, they influence my thought processes throughout the entirety of the project in different but consistent ways. These foundational concepts are ideological and I value them all as useful perspectives that, when layered, contribute to my overall approach to this project.

#### *Intersectionality*

Western feminist theory developed in an effort to challenge the androcentric biases that permeated public and private spaces. Unfortunately, Western feminist theory initially perpetuated notions of the universal, monolithic woman who was imagined as white, heterosexual, Western, and upper- or middle-class, while women who did not exist at that limited intersection of privileged social identities were reduced as mere



"others" or even made invisible altogether.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, while many feminists were critiquing normative, Eurocentric, masculinist sites of knowledge production, they were simultaneously continuing to leave out the voices of most women and others who have been historically and contemporarily marginalized. In response, feminists of color developed intersectionality, "the mutually constitutive relations among social identities," as a concept in an attempt to address and correct the hypocritical bias that permeated Western feminist thought.<sup>25</sup>

Before intersectionality was coined as a term, feminists of color were drawing attention to the importance of considering multiple axes of women's identities. For instance, in "Age, Race, Class & Sex: Women Redefining Difference," Audre Lorde discussed the importance of acknowledging differences to allow for the mobilization of women's power.<sup>26</sup> And since the "mythical norm" of white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure is an impossibility for most, feminists need to consider those who exist outside the narrow American ideal and acknowledge difference outside the scope of male versus female.<sup>27</sup>

Kimberlé Crenshaw originally coined the term intersectionality in an effort to "develop a Black feminist criticism."<sup>28</sup> She troubled the "single-axis framework" that permeated traditional research for merely contemplating one element of an individual's

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<sup>24</sup> Alison M. Jaggar, *Just Methods: An Interdisciplinary Feminist Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 5.

<sup>25</sup> Stephanie A. Shields, "Gender: An Interdisciplinary Perspective," *Sex Roles* 59, n.5 (July 2008): 310.

<sup>26</sup> Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2007), 114-123.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 116.

<sup>28</sup> Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 140 (1989), 139.

identity while “limiting inquiry to the experiences of otherwise-privileged members of a group.”<sup>29</sup> In its place, Crenshaw contended for a “multiply burdened framework,” or intersectionality, that acknowledged not only sex, but also race, in an effort to stop producing work that “erases Black women.”<sup>30</sup> In highlighting that the intersections are greater than the sum of sexism and racism, a more multifaceted analysis can be conducted. When discussing human and nonhuman animals in this project, I will strive to situate them as individuals within a larger community in an attempt to understand on a more complex level how various hierarchically-situated social locations interact to (re)produce cultural narratives and perpetuate problematic stereotypes and structures of domination and oppression.

Intersectionality can limit analyses when only the holy trinity of gender, race and class are considered without other social locations as well as history and specificity.<sup>31</sup> In order to understand how systems of oppression and power operate in the United States, species should be added to intersectional analyses. Intersectionality as a framework will be applied to this project to allow for the consideration of the canine in such a way that creates space for the interrogation of sex, gender, race, class, sexuality and *species* together in order to uncover how these social locations serve biopolitical formations of patriarchal white supremacy and heteronormativity together. In the trajectory of those deemed worthy of academic analysis, even in intersectional feminist academic analysis, species has oftentimes been ignored or even deemed unworthy as a category. This anthropocentrism, the belief that humans are the most important species

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 140.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 140.

<sup>31</sup> Sprague, *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers: Bridging Differences*, 11.

on the planet, leads to the explicit oppression and objectification of nonhuman animals and the erasure of their socially constructed symbolic and material links to human animals and the cultures they produce. I do not intent to imply that animals are more important than humans, but instead that the examination of human animals as they exist devoid of nonhuman animals erases processes of power, inequality and oppression that impact everyone. Instead, species should be taken seriously as a site of intersectional, feminist analysis.

### *Social Constructionism*

Social construction is a mechanism that produces meanings that have been created by a society and are shared by a portion of that society's members. For something to be socially constructed means that it is not innate or biological, but is instead fashioned by a group of people in a society and is therefore malleable and contingent upon context. Postmodernism asserts that research itself is socially constructed and social formations, including gender, race, class, sexuality and species are socially constructed. Since these identities are not static it is important to understand how they have been shaped by various overarching cultural narratives that tend to be produced and perpetuated by those in positions of power and reinforced and coded as "natural" by the media and various other institutions. Mechanisms of social construction are thus intimately entangled with power, privilege and oppression. While these community formations are socially constructed and are therefore not intrinsic, social constructions do have very real consequences on the lived realities of human and nonhuman animals so it is imperative to acknowledge how they operate. I will be considering the socially constructed nature of our world while acknowledging the materiality of those social constructions.

Gender, for instance, is constructed through repeated interactions with various members of a society as opposed to being an essential or biological difference based on sex. West and Zimmerman's "Doing Gender" asserts "that a person's gender is not simply an aspect of what one is, but more fundamentally, it is something one does, and does recurrently, in interaction with others."<sup>32</sup> Gender is not an innate biological characteristic but is instead constructed through a perpetual and embodied "doing" of gender, just as the confrontational men at the dog park were "doing" hegemonic masculinities.<sup>33</sup> Species is similarly constructed and is contingent upon a particular historical time and place.<sup>34</sup> The construction of nonhuman animals is hugely contingent upon species categorizations, accounting for the loving of dogs, eating of pigs and disgust of rats that is common in United States mainstream culture. Species constructions impact human animals as well, for those defined and allowed the benefit of full human status varies depending upon context, allowing some access to resources and the ability to have a livable life and not others.<sup>35</sup>

### *Hegemonic Masculinities and Subordinated Femininities*

Hegemonic masculinities are the archetypical forms of masculinities that construct men's role as superior in the heteropatriarchal, white supremacist United States. Hegemonic masculinities are "defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of

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<sup>32</sup> Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman, "Doing Gender," *Gender & Society* 1, n.2 (June 1987), 140.

<sup>33</sup> Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>34</sup> John S. Wilkins, *Species: A History of the Idea* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2009).

<sup>35</sup> Livingston and Puar, "Interspecies," 3-5.

patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.”<sup>36</sup> Hegemonic masculinities are a socially constructed concept, making them plastic and therefore subject to change while also being entangled with other constructions of gender. Hegemonic masculinities are dominant and glorified but are not available to everyone consistently and to the same degree, although all men do benefit from the privilege of being male even if they are assigned subordinated masculinities.<sup>37</sup> Hegemonic masculinities therefore disseminate patriarchy and ultimately the power of certain, but not all, men while perpetuating the superiority of masculinity over femininity more broadly.

A consideration of hegemonic masculinities is theoretically imperative to this project because at a structural level, hegemonic masculinities are useful in understanding the messages and pressures put on men to maintain power. For men who do not conform to the expectations dictated by hegemonic masculinities, there can be very real social consequences that result in the loss of power. Some men as well as women define their own masculinities as well as the masculinities of others as aligning with various facets of hegemonic masculinities while others resist associating with them entirely. As hegemonic masculinities are socially constructed they take a variety of forms and interact with other constructions of femininities and masculinities, so I will engage with the concept critically, noting its plurality and how it can be both idealized and defied simultaneously.

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<sup>36</sup> R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 77.

<sup>37</sup> R.W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinities: Rethinking the Concept,” *Gender & Society* 19, n.6 (December 2005): 829-59.

Hegemonic masculinities are relational, created on the micro and macro levels, structurally as well as in everyday relationships and interactions.<sup>38</sup> They are also intimately entangled with heteronormativity. Hegemonic masculinities are constructed in conjunction with subordinated masculinities as well as femininities, but since femininities are constructed as subordinate to all masculinities there cannot be a feminine version of hegemonic masculinity.<sup>39</sup> It is important to consider femininities because forms of gender exist in tandem with one another. Masculinities cannot be considered without also considering femininities, as they exist on a gender continuum. Considering femininities is also important because masculinities are marginalized in proximity to heteronormative feminine characteristics. For instance, terms like sissy are used to code male bodies and characteristics as feminine while troubling normative frameworks of sexuality in order to minimize and ultimately position them in negative ways.<sup>40</sup>

In this research project, I explore how male dogs that are neutered are described as feminized, as less than when compared to intact male dogs, who embody characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinities. The same system that codes the neutered canine bodies as feminine can also be applied to the male owners of the dogs, demonstrating how socially constructed gender roles and expectations transcend species. I will also assert that neutering dogs is intertwined with narratives surrounding hegemonic masculinity. Acknowledging both the structural and individual influences on these human and nonhuman male animal lives while working to avoid reproducing the

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<sup>38</sup> Geoffrey Greif, *Buddy System: Understanding Male Friendships* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) and Connell, *Masculinities*.

<sup>39</sup> R.W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987).

<sup>40</sup> Robert Heasley, "Queer Masculinities of Straight Men: A Typology," *Men and Masculinities* 7, n.3 (January 2005); 310-20.

dominance of hegemonic masculinities within my own research. I also acknowledge that hegemonic masculinities as well as femininities take a variety of forms and are shaped differently depending upon context and intersectional social formations such as race, class, sexuality and species.

### *Critical Anthropomorphism and Inter-Subjectivity Across Species*

Anthropomorphism is the belief that nonhuman animals have human qualities and capabilities. Anthropomorphism has been heralded as problematic because it can both romanticize and sentimentalize nonhuman animals and is “unscientific” in its reliance on anecdotes and emotions. Anthropomorphism can also erase the physiological and cognitive differences between human and nonhuman animals, ultimately leading to the reinforcing of the equally problematic anthropocentrism, or the perspective that humans are the most important species and that all other species see and interact with the world in the same way as humans. Taken uncritically, anthropomorphism can be hugely problematic, resulting in substantial misunderstandings because as Lorraine Daston and Gregg Mitman point out in *Thinking with Animals*, “humans project their own thoughts and feelings onto other animal species because they egotistically believe themselves to be the center of the universe.”<sup>41</sup> The creation and perpetuation of massive physical and emotional disabilities in various breeds of canines have developed from this troubling anthropomorphism.<sup>42</sup> But as a tool, anthropocentrism can also be hugely economically and emotionally effective. For example, animal suffering has been shown to elicit more sympathy than human suffering, granting some animals (and by extension,

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<sup>41</sup> Lorraine Daston and Gregg Mitman, *Thinking with Animals: New Perspectives on Anthropomorphism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 4.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 129.

animal rights and conservation organizations), those whom humans can identify with, or at least find cute and cuddly, a great deal of money, power and even love.<sup>43</sup>

While anthropomorphism can be dangerous, when engaged with critically it can be useful when attempting to consider the inter-subjectivity that exists between the human and the animal. I agree with Arnold Arluke and Clinton Sanders, who assert that “as an analytic tool, critical anthropomorphism can provide a useful guideline for understanding how animals think and feel in the same way that empathy allows us to gain insight into the subjective experience of our fellow humans.”<sup>44</sup> It allows humans to draw upon their own experiences when attempting to understand the experiences of nonhuman animals, which is useful because people are more likely to empathize with others over similarities than differences. But critical anthropomorphism also has the ability to forefront those differences that exist between human and nonhuman animals that can otherwise be difficult to empathize with. Such a consideration assists in avoiding homogenizing experiences across species. Critical anthropomorphism allows “ourselves to touch and to be touched by others as fellow subjects and may imagine their pain, pleasure, and need...but stop short of believing we can know their experience” with the ultimate goal being critical empathy.<sup>45</sup>

Critical anthropomorphism can assist in challenging human exceptionalism, or “the premise that humanity alone is not a spatial and temporal web of interspecies dependencies.”<sup>46</sup> In my own engagement with critical anthropomorphism in this project

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>44</sup> Arnold Arluke and Clinton Sanders, *Between the Species: A Reader in Human-Animal Relationships* (New York: Routledge, 2008), xviii.

<sup>45</sup> Kari Weil, *Thinking Animals: Why Animal Studies Now?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 20.

<sup>46</sup> Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 11.



I will work to acknowledge similarities between species while also applying Audre Lorde's concept that difference is not equated with deviance.<sup>47</sup> This perspective will be especially pertinent in discussing the politics of spaying and neutering, which is the literal sterilization of the canine as well as when discussing relationships and notions of intimacy, love, family and affection that transcend species. In these instances, I will not be able to transcend my own perspective as a human, but will attempt to navigate the space where I also consider and discuss the perspective of the nonhuman, as is allowed by critical anthropomorphism. Instead of speaking for animals, a goal of critical anthropomorphism is to assist humans in thinking with them in an "intense yearning to transcend the confines of self and species."<sup>48</sup>

#### *Affective Connections and Intimate Encounters*

In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* scholar Sara Ahmed discussed how emotions, affective connections, have huge political and cultural implications on the bodies and lives of individuals and collective societies. Ahmed defines affect as "readings of the bodies of others."<sup>49</sup> She goes on to explain that "affect does not reside in an object or sign, but is an effect of the circulation between objects and signs" and that "it is through affective encounters that objects and others are perceived as having attributes, which 'gives' the subject an identity that is apart from others."<sup>50</sup> Affect and affective connections are not only helpful but also imperative when considering interspecies interactions because in attempting to understand the other, in this case the canine,

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<sup>47</sup> Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 114-23.

<sup>48</sup> Lorraine Daston and Gregg Mitman, *Thinking with Animals*, 11.

<sup>49</sup> Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 25.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 48-50.

identities are reconfigured and understandings deepen, allowing for more complex analyses.

Donna Haraway explains that the relationship between humans and companion species is “less a category than a pointer to an ongoing ‘becoming with’...[in] the dance linking kin and kind.”<sup>51</sup> Representations of human-animal intimacies are part of the very construction of dominant mainstream U.S. culture and systems of oppression and power as much as they are locations to resist these biopolitical formations. Consequently, this project considers how constructions of human-animal intimacies, of family and friendship, foster notions of affection, love and kinship as well as how aversion and disgust can manifest between humans and companion species in ways that shore up colonial power relations. Although certain formations of human-animal intimacies may serve projects that enhance the precarity of certain humans and animals, these intimacies also provide the potential to reconfigure our conception of the human/non-human divide and provide the starting-point to develop a queer, feminist, anti-racist, decolonial and non-anthropocentric ethic to resist the precarity of human and animal bodies *together*.

#### *Bio/Zoopolitics, Necropolitics, and the Regulation of Bodies*

Biopolitics, the term that was popularized by Michel Foucault to discuss how positions and institutions of power regulate human life, has primarily been applied to humans.<sup>52</sup> The biopolitical regulation of bodies is directly connected to the production and reproduction of capital and capitalism more broadly and provides a significant analytic focus for the biopolitical production of life and the necropolitical condemnation

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<sup>51</sup> Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 16-17.

<sup>52</sup> Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

of life-in-death, which foregrounds various theorizations of dehumanization. Biopolitics and necropolitics allow for the consideration of the conditions under which a life is recognized as a life, questioning the way that the boundaries of the human inform this recognition. A bio/necropolitical framework draws attention to those considered in the definitive outside of processes of normalization—bodies that are rendered abject—and hence read as monstrous, killable and unworthy of mourning. Thus, the regulation and abjection of bodies also figures centrally in this project’s interest in the politics of monstrosity, biopolitics, necropolitics and social death.

Tracing the biopolitical and zoopolitical co-constitution of human and animal subjectivities—theorizing how human and animal lives come to matter or are condemned to death together through intersectional power that mobilizes *species* as a central affective and discursive frame – guides this project. My analytic attention to frames of gender, race, sex, sexuality, class and *species* seeks to move beyond what Jasbir Puar and Julie Livingston call “biopolitical anthropomorphism,” the centering of the human in analyses of biopower and the workings of race and sex,<sup>53</sup> and instead move toward an analytic attendant on what Nicole Shukin calls “zoopolitics”—a framework for considering how *animals* are central to the un/making of life as well as for attempting to understand animal lives on their own terms.<sup>54</sup>

### *Naturecultures and Challenging Dichotomies*

Dichotomies are problematic because they hide social phenomena that perpetuate systems of discrimination, oppression and privilege.<sup>55</sup> According to Giorgio

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<sup>53</sup> Livingston and Puar, “Interspecies.”

<sup>54</sup> Nicole Shukin, *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

<sup>55</sup> Sprague, *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers*, 11.

Agamben, in Western thought the human and the nonhuman animal have been positioned in multiple ways by sovereignty, which ultimately decides who is excluded versus who is allowed entry into political life. On one hand, the nonhuman animal and animality in man has been humanized and on the other the human has been animalized.<sup>56</sup> But Agamben asserts that the binary between the human and the nonhuman animal is in continual conflict and because Western politics is essentially synonymous with biopolitics, humanness is established through the negating of the animal. This negating distinguishes the human from the nonhuman animal as well as the not-fully human person because it establishes power and state sanctioned violence which assist in shaping such things as citizenship, the national body and racialization. In shaping who is allowed something like citizenship status, which can render someone legible or invisible, it becomes evident that sovereignty is also dictating who is granted a livable life and who is granted a bare and therefore not livable life.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, canines exist in a space between our humanity and our animality, and their bodies and identities hold great social meanings that are entangled with our own.

In deconstructing what Bruno Latour refers to as “the Great Divides” between nature and culture and human and animal, as well as the “Others to Man...in both past and present Western cultures: gods, machines, animals, monsters, creepy crawlies, women, servants and slaves and noncitizens in general,” one comes to see connections and overlaps where division existed previously.<sup>58</sup> In sustaining these polarizing divisions,

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<sup>56</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 36-37.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, eds., *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy* (Karlsruhe: ZKM Center for Arts and Media; and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005)

othering, the perpetuation of hierarchies and stigmatization occurs. But in seeing overlaps, walls can be torn down. For instance, nonhuman animals have socially constructed cultural identities, as was evident in the conversation between the men at the dog park. This social construction of nonhuman animals disrupts dichotomies between nature/culture, human/animal and civilization/wild, subject/object. The troubling of these dichotomies, as well as others, including public/private spheres, victim/enemy, organic/technical, self/other, wild/domestic, freedom/unfreedom, and good/evil challenges stereotypes and does not leave us trapped by the limitations of our preconceived notions of so-called differences and deviances.

Labeling certain animals “pets” also acts to explicitly challenge the human/animal binary because of how pets are situated in our daily lives, affective connections and national imaginary. Being labeled a pet shapes the lived realities of certain animals to such a degree that as a category “pets” could also be seen as establishing a new dichotomy, one between “pets” and all other nonhuman animals. But This dichotomy is not as clear-cut as the dominant culture projects because those animals categorized as pets are still situated as property, denied agency and killed when they are no longer deemed wanted.

Various examples explored in this project will demonstrate that the seemingly simple question “to neuter or not to neuter?” that appears on the surface to exist in the realm of the biological, of nature, quickly reveals itself as a space where Harawayan notions of natureculture materially and discursively manifest. Naturecultures is a concept introduced by Donna Haraway in *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People and Significant Otherness* in order to provide a vocabulary for the entangled

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in Donna J. Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 9-10.

reality of the natural with the cultural.<sup>59</sup> In this way, naturecultures acts to problematize the notion that nature and the body exist in isolation from culture and the mind. In exploring the entangled situatedness of these categories while simultaneously working to destabilize the nature/culture and human/nonhuman dichotomies, as well as other problematic and limiting dualisms, one comes to see that there always exist more layers, further knots, that need to be disentangled.

#### Part IV. Limitations of Language

This project works to actively disentangle heteropatriarchal, anthropocentric meanings, but it also remains trapped by the limitations of the English language. While the very use of the terms “human” and “animal” perpetuate dualistic, hierarchical thinking, I am discussing the material and discursive realities of these terms and the implications they have on those lived realities. As such, I believe it is appropriate to utilize them. However, I will be doing so critically. Additionally, instead of referring to canines as objects throughout this project by calling them “things” and “it,” I will be utilizing pronouns such as “he,” “she” and “they,” which I believe better reflect an interspecies perspective.

There are a variety of ways to discuss dogs in modern U.S. culture, all of which position them differently in relationship to humans. The terms “pet” and “owner” are part of the common vernacular but have been troubled in academic work and by activist organizations because they position dogs as objects and humans as masters, asserting a deeply hierarchical and speciesist relationship. While I am not a fan of the terms “pet” and “owner,” they will be used sparingly throughout the project because of how frequently they are used in common discussions of dogs. When the terms are used, it is

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<sup>59</sup> Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People and Significant Otherness* (Chicago: Prickly Pear Press, 2003).

critically and is meant to reflect how dogs are positioned by the dominant U.S. culture at large. Those who are critical of the dominant culture's terms, including scholar Donna Haraway, tend to prefer "companion species" and "caretaker" because they reflect a more symbiotic relationship between the human and the dog, allowing the canine greater agency and status as a subject. I will primarily use the term "companion species," for "to knot companion and species together in encounter, in regard and respect, is to enter the world of becoming with, where *who and what are* is precisely what is at stake."<sup>60</sup>

## Part V. Primary Research Questions

In an effort to write research questions from a feminist perspective, I strive to frame the following questions in such a way that does not emphasize what is wrong with the human or nonhuman animal that is experiencing a problem. Instead, my goal is to focus on asking how the current social system produces these problems. In doing so, I hope to avoid objectifying this project's subjects and strive to view human and nonhuman animals holistically, in relationship with society as a whole, in order to avoid fragmenting subjects and reducing them to mere data. The questions and inquiries below are categorized according to chapter, although they may not be solely answered in each of those given chapters. While I am explicit in some of the questions that I am focusing exclusively on the United States, I want to be clear that all of these questions as well as this project as a whole focus exclusively on the United States.

Chapter 1 has explored some different approaches to studying interspecies interactions and asked why it is important to study interspecies relationships, particularly in feminist in academic research. Chapter 1 also asked how the nonhuman animal defines the human animal and vice versa while also interrogating why it is that

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<sup>60</sup> Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 19.

interspecies interactions matter in the academic field of women, gender, and feminist studies.

Chapter 2 explores the role of the canine historically in the United States. Additionally, the chapter explores how the canine came to be constructed as “man’s best friend” in the United States and how the literal body of the canine and its role in national narratives and interspecies relationships has become politicized. What roles do canines have in contemporary life in the United States, how are breeds of dogs created and what are the social and economic implications of creating breeds and how are canine bodies created and coded in oftentimes-contradictory ways is explored as well in Chapter 2. Chapter 2 also asks if the canine can reconfigure notions of love, home, affection and family, ultimately acting to shift paradigms. Finally, Chapter 2 asks how the canine is imprinted with taxonomies of power in the United States as well as what are the politics of adoption and euthanasia as they relate to the canine in the United States.

Chapter 3 asks how is the canine constructed and regulated, how is the American pit bull terrier as well as other breeds of dogs coded and what is the role of the media in coding these canine bodies. It inquires as to the role of Harlan Weaver’s “canine racism” in interspecies interactions and asks what is Breed-Specific Legislation (BSL) and how does it operate. Furthermore, Chapter 3 asks how are American pit bull terriers represented within popular culture and how does that contribute to the perpetuation or challenging of stereotypes as well as interspecies relationships? Finally, Chapter 3 asks how is the American pit bull terrier entangled with notions of monstrosity and violence as well as are there material and/or discursive links between the American pit bull terrier and men of color and/or felons in the United States?

Chapter 4 asks what are the politics surrounding the spaying and neutering of the canine as well as why do people choose to spay, neuter or leave a canine intact and how



does this reflect social locations and the coding of bodies, particularly in regards to hegemonic masculinity and heteronormativity. The chapter explores how spaying and neutering exist in relationship to biology or culture as well as what are Neuticles and what role do they have in neutering. Finally, Chapter 4 asks how spaying and neutering campaigns engage with cultural narratives that reproduce inequalities, perpetuate stereotypes and/or resist dominant belief systems.

Chapter 5 explores why it is important to consider canines and interspecies relationships. It asks if the role of the canine can evolve in such a way that it challenges mechanisms of social control. Chapter 5 also asks what do canines have to do with power and the regulation of bodies in life as well as in death. Finally, the chapter concludes with an exploration of what research can be done in the future that considers interspecies relationships and the construction of the canine in the United States.

## Part VI. Research Methods

I am applying a feminist, interdisciplinary, qualitative-methods approach that allows me to address my various research questions. The methods of discourse analysis, interview, and ethnography are the best tools to address my research goals and questions. My methods are influenced by grounded theory. While I have already addressed the theoretical foundation of my project, grounded theory explicitly informed how I went about developing my methods and the project more broadly, as in many ways it developed naturally. Unlike positivist research, which forefronts theory, grounded theory emphasizes theory from the “ground-up.” Embracing this particular lens allowed my research to evolve while producing hypotheses from emergent data as it developed over the course of data collection. Doing so helped uncover the entangled relationships that exist between subjects, variables, discourses, and even myself as the researcher. Grounded theory is complementary to feminist research because this methodology

speaks to the needs for variation within representation, allows for multi-site research, acknowledges the importance of power dynamics, is conscious of context, and situates the subject within discourse.

The bulk of my ethnographic data, including interviews and observations, came from Maricopa County, Arizona. This fact provided a unique sample due to certain demographics and contextually specific nuances. For example, Maricopa County has the second highest percentage of companion species who enter the shelter system and end up being euthanized in the entire United States.<sup>61</sup> I have collected, transcribed and analyzed data from interviews with veterinarians, staff who work in veterinary offices, animal advocates and people who live with canines. I also conducted extensive observations noting interspecies interactions at various dog parks, veterinary offices and adoption events in Maricopa County over the course of three years, from 2013-2016. When analyzing the data, I engaged with focused coding, constant comparison, and memoing in order to find and organize themes.

Other data, including information on Breed-Specific Legislation (BSL) and spaying, neutering and adoption campaigns have been pulled more broadly from the United States overall. I have utilized cultural analysis when considering the various spaying, neutering and adoption campaigns as well as a range of images produced by popular culture. This dissertation is also informed by a great deal of research from animal activist groups in the United States and published books. Breed data has been received from the American Kennel Club (AKC). Through discourse analysis I explored various narratives related to rescuing, spaying and neutering that were produced by animal rights and rescue groups, including but not limited to the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

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<sup>61</sup> Arizona Humane Society. Accessed March 25, 2017. <http://www.azhumane.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Transformational-Change-Snapshot.pdf>.

(ASPCA), and Best Friends Animal Society, which exist nationally in the United States, as well as Arizona Animal Welfare League (AAWL), Arizona Humane Society (AHS), and Maricopa County Animal Care & Control that exist in a local capacity in Maricopa County, Arizona.

I have also utilized discourse analysis as well as textual analysis and close reading of materials from various places in popular culture and from the mass media in general, comprised of news outlets and television shows, including E! Network's *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* (2007-Present) and Animal Planet network shows *Pit Bulls & Parolees* (2009-Present). While I will acknowledge the association between American pit bull terriers and dog fighting, this is in no way the focus of the project. I find there is already a great deal of scholarly work that grapples with and problematizes this topic very well. I do, however, attempt to trouble the stereotype that pit bull type dogs are innately more violent than other breeds of dogs. I bring bite statistics, social constructionism and media representations together to try to combat this stereotype. This project draws upon statistics surrounding BSL that are produced by the HSUS as well as Best Friend's Animal Society. It situates the BSL in relationship to men of color more broadly, but inmates and felons in particular. I analyze representations on the Animal Planet network show *Pit Bulls & Parolees* (2009-Present). To draw these parallels I consider notions of home, vulnerability and precarity, imprisonment, social control, masculinity, violence, overall regulation of life and biopolitics, and social death. I engage with these various theoretical formations from an explicitly intersectional, feminist perspective, drawing on scholarly work as well as tangible examples.

## Part VII. Assumptions and Limitations

The ability to produce knowledge, which includes generating a dissertation, is intimately entangled with power and privilege. As such, when producing feminist research, self-reflexivity, or acknowledging my own social locations and biases as a researcher, is imperative. I carry a great many preconceptions into this research. I identify as a white, cisgender woman and was raised in a suburb outside Cleveland, Ohio in a very traditional, upper-middle class family. I was also raised with companion species who we considered to be part of our family; they slept in our bedrooms, were given Christmas gifts, received substantial veterinary care and were mourned when they passed away. While we genuinely loved these animals dearly, they were still regulated with electric fence collars, leashes, and spaying and neutering and were overall denied agency. While I did not trouble this system growing up, I will critically reflect on how mainstream American families manage to both love their pets as family members while also regulating them and I will consider the social and personal ramifications of these interspecies relationships in this project.

As an adult, I have chosen to live with companion species, in many ways preferring their company to those of my human companions. My love of animals has occasionally been minimized by people around me, at times leading me to deny my affective connection to nonhumans, so while I can fully acknowledge that in many cases companion species are merely add-ons in our consumer and commodity-driven culture, I also know that they can act in ways that transcend normative boundaries of love, home, affection and family because I have experienced that personally. Also, while I theoretically trouble how I regulate my companion species, all of the critters I live with are either spayed or neutered, micro-chipped for identification purposes and are

generally kept on leashes when not in a fenced-in area, tangibly demonstrating the contradictory space that can exist between theory and practice.

## Part VIII. Chapter Overviews

In this chapter, Livingston and Puar's notion of interspeciesism served as a framing paradigm. I emphasized how my interdisciplinary project is informed by interspeciesism in that it will draw interspecies parallels while also critiquing the tendency of much of Human-Animal Studies to decenter and devalue the marginalized, including women and the feminine, black life and black radical imaginings, and indigenous epistemologies. This chapter discusses why considering nonhuman animals is important because nonhuman lives matter and systems of oppression that (re)produce hatred and inequalities such as sexism, racism, homophobia, and classism also includes speciesism, ultimately working together to serve biopolitical formations of social control, patriarchal white supremacy, and heteronormativity. And as oppression is not a zero-sum game, in understanding on more complex level how social inequalities impact nonhuman animals, one comes to better understand how the same social inequalities impact humans. Chapter 1 also includes the basic theoretical and methodological foundation, discussion of methods, research questions, and an acknowledgment of my own positionality and biases.

Chapter 2 explores the role of the canine in the contemporary United States. The social construction of the dog as "man's best friend" in the white, middle-class, heteronormative, American family will be forefronted. The chapter will explore how the dog is situated legally, acknowledging that dogs are technically property under United States law. Chapter 2 also explores how dog breeds are created via technology and constructed as literal material, living bodies as well as in overarching social narratives and value systems will be discussed. The nature of dog breeding and selling as well as

how the American Kennel Club (AKC) recognizes and categorizes different dog breeds will be explored in Chapter 2. I also discuss how people purchase various products for their dogs to mark them with different intersectionally situated identity categories. This will be considered in relationship to capitalism and consumerism. This chapter will then explore the legal and social positioning of companion species as disposable bodies who are euthanized en masse, and oftentimes in ways that are marked by socially constructed notions of gender, race, “humanness,” and other overarching social inequalities. The chapter concludes with a brief consideration of how notions of affection, love and kinship can manifest between the human and companion species, allowing for the queering of relationality and reconfiguring of intimacies.

Chapter 3 focuses on exploring the politics of spaying and neutering, which are coded with various, socially constructed gendered meanings. In order to minimize the number of disposable companion species, the Humane Society of the United States and the American Veterinary Medicine Association recommends sterilization via spaying and neutering. I discuss how socially constructed narratives related to taxonomies of power become inserted upon the bodies of companion species and how, in turn, those nonhuman animal bodies become sites where Donna Haraway’s concept of natureculture becomes tangible. Interrogating these narratives reveals that the presence (or lack thereof) of a nonhuman animal’s testicles has the ability to frame constructions of (e)masculinity and (hetero)sexuality in companion species and their human “masters.” Chapter 3 engages with an analysis of various spaying and neutering campaigns, emphasizing how they are imprinted with various taxonomies of power. This chapter also considers Neuticles®, artificial testicles that are surgically implanted into nonhuman animals, that are hugely anthropocentric and ocularcentric. I also incorporate various

interviews from dog parks with men who made the decision to leave their canine intact as well as with men who decided to have their dogs neutered.

Chapter 4 provides a discussion of how certain visible characteristics of canines are used to code their bodies with man-made, socially constructed meanings in the same way that we socially construct gender, race, class, and sexuality in humans. Through this social construction, we actively engage with and perpetuate harmful stereotypes that produce social inequalities, while limiting who one is allowed to be(come). In the case of the canine, similarly to the human, the coding and perpetuation of stereotypes can ultimately result in whether an animal lives or dies. The so-called pit bull type dog, for instance, has been highly gendered, racialized and classed in American culture in what scholar Harlan Weaver calls “canine racism.”<sup>62</sup> This chapter engages various sources within popular culture, public policy and legislation and the news media to demonstrate how pit bulls have come to be associated with men of color in urban America. Furthermore, Breed-Specific Legislation (BSL), which seriously restricts and even bans the pit bull as well as other breeds labeled “dangerous” from a great many residences and communities, as well as privatized houses on military bases, entire cities, such as Denver and Kansas City, and the states of Hawaii, Montana, and Oregon also are explored in Chapter 4.

Chapter 5 includes a summary of findings and provides overall conclusions. I argue that dogs are important to consider from an intersectional, feminist perspective because oppression is not a zero sum game. The construction and regulation of bodies across species demonstrates how social inequalities are implemented in favor of dominant power structures, resulting in the reification of hierarchies and perpetuation of stereotypes. In this chapter I interrogate what a dog is worth in contemporary United

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<sup>62</sup> Harlan Weaver, “Becoming in Kind’: Race, Class, Gender, and Nation in Cultures of Dog Rescue and Dogfighting,” *American Quarterly*, 65, n.3 (September 2013): 689-709.

States culture, utilizing various interviews and statistics in an attempt to analyze the affective and monetary value of the canine to society at large as well as individuals in particular. In engaging certain interviews of humans who live with canine companions, it becomes extremely evident that dogs have multiple, simultaneous, and oftentimes contradictory meanings. The bodies and lives of canines exist simultaneously as disposable commodities and byproducts of capitalist, consumer-driven U.S. culture as well loved and loving members of heteronormative as well as non-normative and even radical interspecies relationships.



## CHAPTER 2

### The Human-Canine Relationship: Creating Bonds and Breeds Over Time

#### Part I. Introduction

“She’s my best friend, my family,” explained a 26-year old Chicano woman named Isabella. “She is the only one that has been there for me nonstop over these last few years. She moved across the country with me, all the way from Chicago, two years ago. I knew no one when we moved here. It was hard to leave everything and everyone I knew behind and come to Arizona, but having her with me made it so much easier...we struggled together. When school wasn’t working out and I was up all night trying to study, she was always right next to me. When my boyfriend and I broke up, I was a wreck. My heart was broken. She helped me through that too. She even helped me recover from an injury recently. Without her I don’t know if I’d be running again. She just gives so much and asks for so little in return. I love her.”

Isabella’s kind words were not about a parent or sibling or any other two-legged human. Instead, Isabella was talking about her dog Dakota, a large, scrappy brown mutt with long gray whiskers. Dakota was leaning against Isabella’s legs, seemingly contented as she was being spoken of so highly by her human on an unusually overcast and cool December day at Mitchell Park in Tempe, Arizona.

“Dogs were a part of my family growing up. My mom came to the U.S. from Mexico when she was fourteen and she always said loving a dog was a privilege, cause if there wasn’t enough food the dog was always the first one to miss a meal. I’ve thought about that a lot as an adult, but back when I was younger I always knew I wanted to adopt, regardless of my income. But I guess that’s cause I always grew up with enough food,” Isabella reflected, pausing briefly in thought, “But anyways,” she continued, “I lived in the dorms my freshman year but moved into a house with some friends after

spring semester. I adopted Dakota from the pound that summer before my sophomore year of undergrad at Loyola [University]. She looked so sad in her cage [at the pound], but the second they brought her into this small room to meet me she jumped on my lap and covered me with kisses and was so sweet and energetic. I knew we were meant for each other! I wanted a cuddle buddy and a running buddy and she was both,” shared Isabella.

“...The adoption was rocky at first. We both had to learn how to take care of each other. I was only nineteen and had never been completely responsible for someone, even myself, before I adopted Dakota. And it was pretty clear from day one that she had never gotten any sort of training. She wasn’t potty trained, couldn’t walk on a leash, she even jumped up on the kitchen table! All four paws, on the table! It was crazy! ...But as she learned, I learned too. It took time for me to adjust to having to feed someone else twice a day and pay her bills and be home enough to let her out and to exercise her even when I didn’t want to exercise myself. But we got used to living together. She learned manners and I learned to be responsible. And we took care of each other.”

Isabella and Dakota’s supportive partnership demonstrates the intimate relationship that can develop across species, between human and dog. It shows that the dog can play a familial role in the life of a human, providing comfort, support and companionship. These relationships that transcend species boundaries are not uncommon in the United States. According to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) 70-80 million dogs are currently “owned” in the United States and approximately 37-47% of households contain at least one dog<sup>63</sup>. An Associated Press Petside poll conducted in 2011 reported that half of “American pet owners” consider their pets to be family members in equal measure with the humans in the

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<sup>63</sup> “Pet Statistics: Facts about US Shelters,” ASPCA, accessed August 31, 2016, <http://www.asPCA.org/animal-homelessness/shelter-intake-and-surrender/pet-statistics>.

household and another 36% identify the dog as a member of the family but not on the same footing as other family members.<sup>64</sup> And while it certainly cannot be surmised that every human who lives with a dog has the same relationship as Isabella and Dakota, the statistics support that the lives of humans and dogs are deeply entangled in the contemporary United States.

“We’re almost always together; we sleep in the same bed, exercise in the morning, she snoozes at my feet all day while I work and she even goes with me sometimes to hangout at night. Without her, I’d be really lonely here [in Arizona]. Even back in Chicago where my family lives, I can’t imagine having made it through undergrad without her. Sometimes I have trouble being social with new people and I can get anxious and just shut down, but when she’s around I feel calmer, more confident, cause I know she’s there being supportive, not judging me,” added Isabella, scratching Dakota’s ear, “and without me, I don’t think she’d still be alive, given the kill rates at the pound. It makes me want to cry thinking about it. Dogs are so amazing, so kind and loving and intelligent. Dakota has brought so much happiness into my life. It makes me sick to think how so many people treat them, as less than, and how many healthy dogs are just killed because they don’t have a home. It makes me think that us humans aren’t so humane.”

These contradictory relationships between human and dog, one that situates them simultaneously as beings with agency who can and do form familial relationships of mutual support with humans as well as disposable bodies susceptible to mass execution positions the dog in a unique place in our cultural imaginary. The ASPCA reports that approximately 3.9 million dogs enter animal shelters every year in the

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<sup>64</sup> “The AP-Petside.com Poll,” Associated Press, accessed August 31, 2016, [http://surveys.ap.org/data%5CGfK%5CAPPetside%20com%20October%202011%20Pets%20Top%20line%20FINAL\\_Shelter.pdf](http://surveys.ap.org/data%5CGfK%5CAPPetside%20com%20October%202011%20Pets%20Top%20line%20FINAL_Shelter.pdf).

United States and 1.2 million of those dogs are killed.<sup>65</sup> So while a human-dog relationship like the one Isabella describes having with Dakota are not uncommon, ultimately the dog is only of social value when he or she has a relationship with a human. If Isabella had not chosen Dakota at the pound, the dog very possibly would have been killed. The dog in human society becomes worthy only through the validation and love of a human. Like all relationships, the human-dog entanglement is ripe with socially constructed power dynamics, including the very ability to grant life. Therefore, canines have what scholar Judith Butler refers to as precarious lives,<sup>66</sup> meaning those lives can be ended, or made viable, at the will of others. As social participants, intimately entangled in the world of the human, the precariousness of the canine demonstrates that “one’s life is always in some sense in the hands of the other.”<sup>67</sup>

In contemporary Western culture, dogs are visible primarily as companion species and literal pieces of property.<sup>68</sup> They are removed from public view and participation unless under the direct supervision of their human masters and are valued for their appearance and ability to be controlled – a distinction historically and even

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<sup>65</sup> “Pet Statistics: Facts about US Shelters,” ASPCA, accessed August 31, 2016. <http://www.asPCA.org/animal-homelessness/shelter-intake-and-surrender/pet-statistics>.

<sup>66</sup> Butler does not use the term “precarious lives” to refer to animals, instead it is other scholars who have applied the term to the nonhuman animal: James Stanescu, Species Trouble: Judith Butler, Mourning, and the Precarious Lives of Animals. *Hypatia* 2, n.3 (August 2012): 567-582. Chloe Taylor, The Precarious Lives of Animals: Butler, Coetzee, and Animal Ethics. *Philosophy Today* 52, n.1 (Spring 2008): 60-72.

<sup>67</sup> Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009), 14.

<sup>68</sup> There are exceptions to this rule, as very rural areas, particularly those in the Southern states as well as Indian reservations in the United States are significantly more likely to have unleashed canines visible in the public domain. For the scope of this project, I will primarily be referencing dogs that exist in the leashed realms of urban and suburban America, but it is important to note that the presence of unleashed canines in parts of the United States often deemed “wild” or “uncivilized,” including impoverished rural areas as well as Indian reservations, both of which often lack adequate social services and have complex histories of discrimination and systemic oppressions, provides further evidence that the regulated, leashed and primarily indoor domesticated canine is a symbol of “civilization.”

contemporarily forced upon women as well. They are the financial responsibility of their human caregivers, which can be very difficult for people, particularly for those of the working class. While historically, dogs were kept not only for companionship but also as labor, primarily in agriculture settings I argue that dogs yet again are viewed as not only an economic burden, but as living beings that provide a valuable service. In this day and age, that includes making their human companions mentally and physically healthier, as numerous studies have demonstrated and as Isabella experiences when Dakota helps ease her anxiety.<sup>69</sup> Invisibly, and with great controversy, in contemporary Western culture dogs also are used in scientific research,<sup>70</sup> although this practice is becoming less common due to public outcry.<sup>71</sup> The varied roles of canines as they exist in relationship to humans reflects their ability to exist in various social roles, across time and place, aiding in their own survival as well as our own.

“My Mom was so angry when I adopted Dakota,” shares Isabella. “Dakota was less than a year old [at the time of adoption] and her hair wasn’t as long as it is now, so she kinda looked like she could have pit [bull] in her. My Mom was even kinda afraid of her ‘cause she thought Dakota was dangerous. She thought that I should’ve gotten a dog from a breeder so I knew its history or whatever. But I wanted to save a life and ignored

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<sup>69</sup> While numerous studies exist exploring the health benefits of living with a pet, see the following for overviews of multiple studies: Hayley E. Christian, “Dog Ownership & Physical Activity: A Review of the Evidence,” *Journal of Physical Activity & Health* 10, n. 5 (July 2013): 750-60. Deborah L. Wells, “Domestic Dogs & Human Health: An Overview,” *British Journal of Health Psychology* 12, n.1, (February 2007): 145-56.

<sup>70</sup> According to the American Anti-Vivisection Society 72,149 dogs were held in laboratories and over 25,000 were subjected to painful experiments in 2012; “Dogs,” American Anti-Vivisection Society, accessed August 31, 2016, <http://aavs.org/animals-science/animals-used/dogs/>.

<sup>71</sup> “Scientific & Human Issues in the Use of Random Source Dogs & Cats in Research,” National Research Council (Washington D.C.: The National Academic Press, 2009), accessed 26 March 2017, [https://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/Random\\_Source\\_Dog\\_and\\_Cat\\_Report.pdf](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/Random_Source_Dog_and_Cat_Report.pdf). Susan Hunnicutt, “Opinion has Limited the Use of Stray Dogs & Cats in Scientific Research,” *At Issue: Animal Experimentation* (Farmington Hills, Michigan: Greenhaven Press, 2013).

her. She was a real snot about the whole thing,” she said, rolling her eyes as she recalled the incident, “but once Mom got to know Dakota she fell in love with her too. Now whenever she sends me a care package from home she always includes something for Dakota! Last month she made her homemade dog treats! And she teaches middle school and even has her sixth graders read a story and do an activity about the importance of adoption and she tells them about Dakota. It’s really awesome. Mom also felt more secure about me moving out here by myself cause Dakota was with me. It can be hard to be female and alone in this world, but with her I’m never really alone.”

Isabella’s comment on the difficulties of being “female and alone in this world” reflects the belief that being female and alone can be dangerous and is something that should be avoided, particularly while in public. Despite the fact that women are less likely to be the victims of violent crime by a stranger in the United States than men,<sup>72</sup> the belief that women need protection and companionship, particularly in public, remains a common belief system that is deeply embedded in notions of benevolent sexism, which perpetuates the idea that women need assistance being safe and secure.<sup>73</sup> This is demonstrated further when one considers the numerous websites discussing the “best dogs for protection for single women” that are available online as well as my own research, which revealed that women who live with dogs are more likely than men to bring up increased personal safety as a reason to live with a canine.

Just as human bodies are imprinted with meanings that stem from socially constructed assumptions and codings that are intimately entangled with both nature and culture, so too are canine bodies. Isabella’s mother’s assumptions about Dakota being

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<sup>72</sup> Janet L. Lauritsen and Karen Heimer, *Gender and Violent Victimization, 1973-2005*. U.S. Department of Justice. Modified December 2009, accessed August 31, 2016. <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/229133.pdf>.

<sup>73</sup> Peter Glick & Susan T. Fisk, “Hostile & Benevolent Sexism: Measuring Ambivalent Sexist Attitudes Towards Women,” *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 21, n.1 (March 1997): 119-135.

“dangerous” because she could have pit bull in her are the result of socially constructed and highly gendered, racialized and classed stereotypes that transcend Dakota’s literal physical body. Being “afraid” of Dakota was the result of American culture and the media in particular situating the pit bull body in a space where it is not only deemed not worthy of human love and affection, but is also innately disposable and even killable, as is evidenced by Breed-Specific Legislation (BSL) and pervasive discriminatory beliefs surrounding so-called “bully breeds.”<sup>74</sup>

The legal ability to discriminate based on breed is discursively and materially entangled with the legal ability to discriminate based upon other socially constructed identities, including gender, race and class. This reflects the biopolitical nature of animal life. How animals fall within political discourse influences life itself and the ability to maintain or truncate that life is contingent upon numerous external power dynamics. Feminist, critical race and postcolonial theories critique humanism and other exploitative systems of thought that permeate our legal system and lived realities and ultimately perpetuate inequalities towards humans. Such oppressive systems of thought also perpetuate speciesism, which is another system of oppression that codes difference with deviance and those critiques should become more commonplace. Moral philosopher Peter Singer argues that the human should not be separated from the animal

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<sup>74</sup> “Bully breeds” is a label placed on various breeds of canine that have been stereotyped as aggressive. While pit bull type dogs are the primary breed granted the bully breed label in contemporary American culture, the German shepherd, Rottweiler, and Akita are also included as bully breeds, although legislation against dogs via Breed-Specific Legislation (BSL) tends to focus primarily on pit bull type dogs. The dog breed labeled “dangerous” is not stagnant and is instead contingent upon time and place. For research exploring how pit bull type dogs have been constructed in more American culture, see the following works: J. Cohen & J. Richardson, “Pit Bull Panic,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 36, n.2 (November 2002): 285-317. Lisa M. Gunter, Rebecca T. Barber & Clive D.L. Wynne, “What’s in a Name? Effect of Breed Perceptions & Labeling on Attractiveness, Adoptions & Length of Stay for Pit-Bull Type Dogs,” *PLoS* 11, n.3 (March 2016): 1-19. Weaver, “Becoming in Kind”: Race, Class, Gender, & Nation in Cultures of Dog Rescue & Dogfighting,” 689-709 and Harlan Weaver, “Pit Bull Promises: Inhumane Intimacies & Queer Kinships in an American Shelter,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian & Gay Studies* 21, n.2-3 (June 2015): 1-22.

philosophically because it allows for objectification of animals and in turn other humans, which is the foundation for racism, and instead argues that status as a subject should be extended beyond humans.<sup>75</sup> Such a change in perspective could potentially allow for an increased understanding of the other, reducing inequalities and allowing for a consideration of difference without appropriation or misrepresentation.

“I had a great landlord when I lived in Chicago. I was in the same rental house for almost four years. She [the landlord] had no problem with Dakota living there or any of the other animals my roommates had over the years. But when I moved to Arizona it was difficult to find housing for both of us. I kept being told she was too big and the stupid pit bull situation even came up once when I was asked to send a photo. It was ridiculous. We ended up having to just drive out here and do CouchSurfing at a couple’s house who didn’t care that Dakota was with me for about a week until I could lock down a place. I ended up having to find an individual who would rent her guesthouse to us cause all the complexes and rental companies had too many rules and fees for dogs. It was really messed up. But I’m really glad it worked out, I know it doesn’t always work out for everyone,” explained Isabella.

Isabella’s difficulty finding somewhere to live provides a tangible example for how BSL impacts the human and nonhuman animal<sup>76</sup>. So while dogs are hugely pervasive in modern American culture and in the American family our social structure, embedded with socially constructed stereotypes, can make it difficult to live with a

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<sup>75</sup> Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009).

<sup>76</sup> Lord et al., “Demographic Trends for Animal Care & Control Agencies in Ohio from 1996 to 2004,” *Journal of the American Medical Association* 229 (2006): 48-54. Ledy VanKavage, “BSL: Why Breed-Specific Legislation is All Bark & Fiscal Bite,” *Pass It On* 18, n.2 (Winter 2009), accessed August 31, 2016: <http://bestfriends.org/resources/bsl-why-breed-specific-legislation-all-bark-and-fiscal-bite>. Dana M. Campbell, “Pit Bull Bans: The State of Breed-Specific Legislation,” *GPSOLO* 26 (July/August 2009), accessed August 31, 2016: [http://www.americanbar.org/newsletter/publications/gp\\_solo\\_magazine\\_home/gp\\_solo\\_magazine\\_index/pitbull.html](http://www.americanbar.org/newsletter/publications/gp_solo_magazine_home/gp_solo_magazine_index/pitbull.html).



canine companion, particularly from a financial perspective. Isabella's observation, "it doesn't always work out for everyone," has been demonstrated by the American Humane Association, who found that the most common reason (29%) people relinquish their dog to an animal shelter is because their place of residence will not allow pets.<sup>77</sup> A limitation on dog breed and size by landlords and insurance companies clearly impacts those of lower socioeconomic status more than others, discriminating against not only the dog but also the people with whom they share their lives.<sup>78</sup> Such limitations and their subsequent consequences further cement the precariousness of the canine as beings simultaneously perceived of as subjects with agency who are worthy of a livable life and as objects to be regulated, discriminated against and even destroyed.

Engaging with Isabella and Dakota's experiences together highlights some themes that will be interrogated throughout this chapter. The chapter will initially focus on exploring how the dog went from being just another nonhuman animal to being considered "man's best friend" and even a family member in modern American culture. It will then explore how canine bodies have been shaped by domestication and technology, ultimately creating biological breeds that are deeply imprinted with social constructions and formations. Finally, the chapter will explore some of the contradictions that exist in the human-dog entanglement. Throughout the chapter issues

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<sup>77</sup> "Keeping Pets (Dogs and Cats) in Homes," American Humane Organization, accessed August 31, 2016, <http://www.americanhumane.org/aha-petsmart-retention-study-phase-1.pdf>.

<sup>78</sup> Research does not support the reasoning behind discrimination against dogs based upon size or breed. For instance, it has been shown that Dachshunds and Chihuahuas, two small dog breeds, are the most likely breeds to show aggression against humans according to Deborah L. Duffy et al., "Breed Differences in Canine Aggression," *Applied Animal Behavior* 114, n.3-4 (December 2008): 441-60. Other research asserts that dog breed is not a good predictor of aggression, including Rachel A. Casey, "Human Directed Aggression in Domestic Dogs," *Applied Animal Behavior* 152, (March 2014): 52-63. Despite the lack of correlation between dog breed and human aggression, discrimination by insurance companies is on the rise and has profound impacts on humans and canines, as demonstrated by Larry Cunningham, "The Case Against Dog Breed Discrimination by Homeowners' Insurance Companies," *Connecticut Insurance Law Journal* 2, n. 1 (2004): 25-53.

related to power, privilege, and oppression will be at the forefront in an effort to understand how the dog came to not only be materially but also discursively in relationship with various social locations.

## Part II. From Wild Animal to Man's Best Friend: Evolution, Domestication and Conflicting Perspectives

Efforts to understand how the canine evolved and became domesticated are underway at universities across the globe via projects that have earned millions in funding, including a \$2.5 million from the National Environment Research Council in England and the European Research Council to decipher dog domestication through a combined ancient DNA and geometric morphometric approach.<sup>79</sup> The project is currently ongoing with various researchers at Oxford University as well as other collaborating institutions. Perhaps upon its completion, canine ethologists will have more answers surrounding how dogs evolved and domesticated. Desires to comprehend the evolutionary history of the canine, the world's first domesticated nonhuman animal, stem in part from Western society's obsession with its own pets as well as the intimately intertwined history of the human and the canine. In other words, when the evolutionary and social history of the canine is understood to a greater degree, so too will the evolutionary and social history of the human be comprehended to a more substantial degree.

In the genealogy of human development, dogs have always been present. While it is known that "dogs were the first animals to take up residence with people and the only

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<sup>79</sup> For information on the project, see: "Deciphering Dog Domestication Through a Combined Ancient DNA and Geometric Morphometric Approach," Palaeogenomics and Bio-Archaeology Research Network, accessed March 26, 2017, <http://www.palaeobarn.com/deciphering-dog-domestication-through-combined-ancient-dna-and-geometric-morphometric-approach> and James Gorman, "The Big Search to Find Out Where Dogs Come From," *The New York Times*, January 18, 2016, accessed March 26, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/19/science/the-big-search-to-find-out-where-dogs-come-from.html>.

animals found in human societies all over the world,” how the canine came to be remains controversial.<sup>80</sup> So-called canine ethology, an increasingly popular interdisciplinary academic field that tends to be housed in psychology, biology and even archaeology departments, has different explanation about how the dog evolved. While it is generally accepted that the dog evolved from the Eurasian gray wolf about 15,000 years ago, some DNA evidence suggests the domestication of dogs occurred over 30,000 years ago.<sup>81</sup> There is also great debate surrounding where the domestication initially transpired, as there are conflicting hypotheses and even evidence that the domestication occurred all across the globe, from as disparate places as Africa, Mongolia, East Asia and Europe, potentially simultaneously.<sup>82</sup> There is also a great deal of evidence that the evolution occurred exclusively in the southern part of East Asia and that dogs migrated across the globe from there.<sup>83</sup> In 2009, the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm conducted a mitochondrial DNA analysis of dogs from around the world and found that there was one domestication event that is responsible for all dog lineages.<sup>84</sup> Yet in 2016 scientists from

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<sup>80</sup> Marion Schwartz, *A History of Dogs in the Early Americas* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 2.

<sup>81</sup> For further research on the domestication of the canine, see: Laura M. Shannon et al., “Genetic Structure in Village Dogs Reseals a Central Asian Domestication Origin,” *PNAS* 112, n.44 (November 2015): 13639-13644. Darcy F. Morey, “In Search of Paleolithic Dogs: A Quest with Mixed Results,” *Journal of Archaeological Science* 52, (December 2014): 300-307. Mietje Germonpre et al., “Paleolithic Dogs and Pleistocene Wolves Revisited: A Reply to Morey (2014),” *Journal of Archaeological Science* 54, (February 2015): 210-216.

<sup>82</sup> J. Clutton-Brock, “Origins of the Dog: Domestication & Early History,” in *The Domestic Dog: Its Evolution, Behavior & Interactions with People 1995*, ed. J. Serpell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 8-20.

<sup>83</sup> P. Savolainen et al., “Genetic Evidence for an East Asian Origin of Domestic Dogs,” *Science* 22, n. 298 (November 2002): 1610-3. Jun-Feng Pang et al., “mtDNA Data Indicate a Single Origin for Dogs South of Yangtze River, Less than 16,300 Years Ago, from Numerous Wolves,” *Molecular Biology & Evolution* 26, n.12 (September 2009): 2849-64. Cornelya FC Klutsch & Peter Savolainen, “Geographical Origin of the Domestic Dog,” *Encyclopedia of Life Sciences* (2011).

Oxford's dog domestication project hypothesize that there was a dual domestication of dogs that occurred in Asia and Europe.<sup>85</sup>

Even the nature of that biological and social evolution and domestication is debated in some circles. Canine ethologists do know with a great deal of certainty that humans and dogs have been working and living together long before the domestication of other nonhuman species occurred. Humans worked and lived with dogs when they were still hunter-gatherers, well before the widespread advent of agriculture, beginning somewhere between 15-30,000 years ago. But it is not known exactly how the canine first came to be domesticated. Some canine ethologists argue that the human acted alone in domesticating the canine to assist with hunting, for protection or in another working capacity such as herding and hauling in addition to companionship. This perspective places canines as passive agents in their own domestication, for they were simply tools that were biologically and socially manipulated for the benefit of the human species. The above hypothesis is a rather human-centric perspective on canine evolution. I tend to agree more with those canine ethologists who hypothesize that canines had a hand in their own domestication and formed a relationship with humans that altered both species.<sup>86</sup> With the aid of the human, canines could procure better shelter and more consistent food sources in addition to other forms of support, thus making it advantageous for dogs to evolve towards domestication and even a potentially familial relationship with their human companions. As such, humans did not act alone in

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<sup>84</sup> Jun-Feng Pang et al., "mtDNA Data Indicate a Single Origin for Dogs South of Yangtze River, Less than 16,300 Years Ago, from Numerous Wolves," *Molecular Biology & Evolution* 26, n.12 (September 2009): 2849-64.

<sup>85</sup> Laurent A.F. Frantz et al., "Genomic & Archaeological Evidence Suggests a Dual Origin of Domestic Dogs," *Science* 352, n.6290 (June 2016): 1228-1231.

<sup>86</sup> Raymond & Lorna Coppinger, *Dogs: A New Understanding of Canine Origin, Behavior & Evolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001). Paul Tacon & Colin Pardoe "Dogs Make Us Human" *Nature Australia* 27, n.4 (2002): 52-61. Brian Hare & Vanessa Woods, *The Genius of Dogs: How Dogs are Smarter than You Think* (New York City: Plume, 2013).

domesticating the canine; instead domestication was a phenomenon that occurred through the cooperation of both species because it was mutually beneficial to human and canine, for they “took care of each other,” as Isabella noted earlier when reflecting on her relationship with Dakota.

When Westerners think of the canine it is generally as man’s best friend, a nonhuman animal that lives with a human, but it is currently estimated that of the billion dogs on the earth less than two hundred million live in a home with a human companion. The majority of dogs have adapted to live near humans but not with them. Raymond and Lorna Coppinger assert that attempting to understand these “humanless” canines can provide a link between the “man’s best friend” that those in the West are familiar with and the wild animals they evolved from thousands of years ago.<sup>87</sup> The Coppingers assert that exploring the social behavior and genetics of those dogs that belong to no one but themselves, provides answers that can assist humans in understanding the evolution and domestication of the dog as pet. In attempting to understand the “unleashed” dogs of the world, the theory that dogs had a role in their own domestication gains further support. For when more than three-quarters of the world’s dogs live without the direct assistance of humans, although they indirectly rely on the garbage that humans produce, it becomes clear that dogs are not simply passive beings who are dependent upon humans for survival but are instead complex agents with a hand in shaping their own lived realities.

While the dog was used to assist with certain activities such as hunting, hauling and for protection, archaeologists have found evidence that as far back as 14,000 years ago it was not unusual for people all across the world to bury dogs alone as well as with humans, indicating a bond that existed across species that transcended a simple working

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<sup>87</sup> Coppinger, *What is a Dog?*.

relationship in favor of something more unique, affectionate, familial and complex.<sup>88</sup> It is in this space that one can argue that the evolution and domestication from wild animal to so-called man's best friend is one that occurred at least relatively early in human history. Taking the time and energy to bury a body, regardless of species, indicates mourning and the rendering of that life lost worthy of grief, or what Judith Butler refers to as a "grievable life," a dignity that is far-too-often not granted the world's living beings.<sup>89</sup>

The familiarity and entangledness of the human-canine relationship is further complicated when one considers how they have evolved to communicate with one another. Scientific research has demonstrated that canines are more sensitive to human social cues than any other nonhuman animal, even chimpanzees, which are considered human's closest relative.<sup>90</sup> Functional magnetic resonance imagery (fMRI) scanning of dog's brains has also revealed that dogs understand not only words but also intonation of human speech.<sup>91</sup> Such research helps us to understand the evolution of language as well as the human-dog relationship.

It is also in this space of entangled familiarity that the canine is deeply entangled with socially constructed notions of identity and inequality, further complicating the dog's position in the world. For the more entangled the dog is with the human, the more they have been imprinted, both biologically and socially, by socially constructed codings that are deeply marinated in power relations, hierarchies and intersectionally-situated

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<sup>88</sup> Darcy F. Morey, *Dogs: Domestication & the Development of a Social Bond*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.)

<sup>89</sup> Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?*, 20.

<sup>90</sup> Monique A.R. Udell et al. "What did Domestication do to Dogs? A New Account of Dogs' Sensitivity to Human Actions". *Biological Reviews* 85, n.2 (November 2009): 327-45.

<sup>91</sup> A. Antics et al., "Neural Mechanisms for Lexical Processing in Dogs" *Science* 353, n.6303 (September 2016): 1030-32.

social locations. I emphasize *entangled* because it is how Donna Haraway in *When Species Meet* describes the inextricably united world of the human and the animal and the naturecultures that shape them together.<sup>92</sup> The human-canine relationship is an extremely tangible example of that entangled relationship, for as “man’s best friends,” canines are affectively, materially and discursively knotted with their human companions and have been for thousands of years.

### Part III. Manufacturing Bodies: Inventing Breeds, Pursuing Pedigree, and Purchasing Identities

The domestication of the dog occurred thousands of years ago, but the creation of the vast majority of specific breeds<sup>93</sup> of dogs came about more recently, beginning in the eighteenth century.<sup>94</sup> According to philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, the modern dog is a human biological and social construction; dog breeds are merely examples of our technologized, capitalist machine at work, with bodies produced to be marketed and sold as property.<sup>95</sup> As a species, dogs had a hand in their own domestication, but it is humans who created breeds, manipulating the biological body to suit cultural needs and desires. The genetically modified bodies of dog breeds have been shaped by technology and brought into the world to act as products, property and even as consumers for the benefit of individual people as well as the global capitalist market more broadly. Those bodies also provide ample evidence in support of Deleuze and

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<sup>92</sup> Haraway, *When Species Meet*.

<sup>93</sup> Breed is defined as “a subspecies or race with definable physical characteristics that would reliably reproduce itself if its members were crossed only with each other” and is a concept that was constructed primarily in the Victorian age. Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 93.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 94.

<sup>95</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Continuum, 1987).

Gauttari's perspective on canines. People in Western societies have used dogs in different ways, including for working via herding, protection, and hauling but not all breeds of dogs were created for so-called practical purposes. While having a working dog was at one time unexceptional in Western culture, particularly for those involved in agriculture, from the Victorian era onwards the vast majority of dogs that live with a human act exclusively as pets, or companions.<sup>96</sup>

Harriet Ritvo's *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* explained that pet keeping emerged in the Middle Ages, but it was common primarily among the aristocracy and especially upper class women, but during the nineteenth century the "Victorian cult of pets" became common for those of more moderate means as well.<sup>97</sup> Simultaneously, dog fanciers began to raise, show and classify canines.<sup>98</sup> In the Victorian era pets started to become profitable for merchants, as luxury items for canines, including brass collars, food specifically for dogs, specialty grooming and even satin wedding coats entered the market.<sup>99</sup> The canines themselves could also be costly products that elevated the social status of their human owners, as owning an expensive, pedigreed, idle animal was only for those privileged enough to have a disposable income, which was becoming increasingly more common as the middle class expanded during the Victorian period of peace and prosperity in the West.<sup>100</sup>

The extensive expansion of breeds of dogs that occurred in the Victorian era was rooted in upper and middle class, bourgeois constructions of purebred that applied to

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<sup>96</sup> Clutton-Brock, "Origins of the Dog: Domestication & Early History," 18. and Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 85.

<sup>97</sup> Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 85-86.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, 82.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 86.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 87.



canines as well as to people.<sup>101</sup> The term “breed” in the Victorian era was even at times used interchangeably with “race,” bringing to mind the problematic nature of both categorical devices, for while they are popularly situated exclusively as realms of the biological; in reality they are byproducts of social construction.<sup>102</sup> The very breeds themselves even changed across time and place, despite maintaining the same name, providing further evidence of their social construction.<sup>103</sup> And while dogs became increasingly more common as pets in the Victorian Era, they were also progressively policed out of public spaces, which is a trend that continues to this day and further reflects the desire to control nature, regulate bodies and dispose of the undesirable.<sup>104</sup> In controlling breeding and creating systems of categorization, animals and subsequently nature become easier to regulate and ultimately control.<sup>105</sup>

Extensive breeding began primarily with the social elite of urban England and it disseminated throughout the business, professional and middle classes in other parts of Europe and the United States. The breeding of canines was not a hobby that required substantial wealth, unlike the breeding of show horses, so more people could take part.<sup>106</sup> Before the nineteenth century dogs had primarily been bred for function, but with the Victorian Era came the breeding of dogs for appearance, oftentimes to the detriment of

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 93.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. 96.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 106-15.

<sup>104</sup> Philip Howell, *At Home and Astray: The Domestic Dog in Victorian Britain*, (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2015).

<sup>105</sup> Lynn L. Merrill, *The Romance of Victorian Natural History*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>106</sup> Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 84-85.

function.<sup>107</sup> So-called properly bred, pedigreed dogs then appeared in dog shows, which were highly regulated and associated with genteel society. Despite their association, however, pedigreed dogs and dog shows in the Victorian Era “seemed to symbolize simply the power to manipulate and the power to purchase—they were ultimately destabilizing emblems of status and rank as pure commodities,” for the expanding middle class could take part.<sup>108</sup>

The creation of “types” or breeds of dogs was rooted in an obsession with pedigree and purebred, allegedly entirely biological categories that were socially constructed, and very much rooted in notions of genetic purity and good breeding.<sup>109</sup> Those canine bodies with good pedigree and positive associations were deemed worthy and considered desirable purebreds. Those purebreds deemed especially desirable by society at any given time were generally dictated by the tastes of the elite in Victorian England, which the middle class then attempted to duplicate by purchasing that breed themselves, resulting in certain breeds becoming “trendy” while others were deemed less desirable.<sup>110</sup> Desirable purebreds were labeled economically and socially worthy of the upper and middle classes and could therefore be granted a livable life while so-called mongrels,<sup>111</sup> or those canines of impure blood, were significantly more likely to be

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 84.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 106.

<sup>109</sup> The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were dedicated to developing breeds and studbooks for horses and livestock, especially cattle and sheep, and dog breeding developed subsequently. Margaret E. Derry, *Horses in Society: A Story of Animal Breeding and Marketing Culture, 1800-1920*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

<sup>110</sup> Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 89.

<sup>111</sup> A dog breeder in the nineteenth century even claimed, “nobody who is anybody can afford to be followed about by a mongrel dog” (Gordon Stables, “Breeding and Rearing for Pleasure, Prizes and Profit,” *The Dog Owners’ Annual for 1896*, (London: Dean and Son, 1896),

discarded by human society and ultimately killed.<sup>112</sup> This process of labeling purebreds and mongrels, or mutts, and the ramifications that such labeling had on the lived realities of canines, continues to this day as so-called purebreds are much more likely to be rescued from shelters and granted life than their mutt counterparts.<sup>113</sup>

As Western nationalism, imperialism, colonialism, and racism continued throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it became increasingly important to categorize and hierarchize human and nonhuman bodies, in an effort to rationalize the era's "enthusiastically exploitative culture."<sup>114</sup> With the advent of scientific racism, the classification and hierarchization of people based almost exclusively on appearances became methodical, earning widespread belief in the West.<sup>115</sup> The intense bodily regulation and focus on appearances, respectability and decorum that marked the era could also have influenced the desire to regulate the nonhuman body. I argue that the regulation of human bodies assisted in shaping the creation, classification and hierarchization of breeds of canines as well. While comparisons can be dangerous business because they tend to homogenize experiences and draw parallels where none may exist, and one should be especially cautious when comparing the experiences of species, the same discursive and rhetorical processes that humans use to create to

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166, quoted in Harriet Ritvo, "Pride and Pedigree: The Evolution of Victorian Dog Fancy," *Victorian Dog Fancy*, 29, n.2 (Winter 1986), 227).

<sup>112</sup> Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 91.

<sup>113</sup> The National Animal Interest Alliance reports that purebreds account for approximately five percent of dogs in U.S. shelters. "Survey of Shelter Dog Composition: Mutts vs. Purebreds." The National Animal Interest Alliance. Modified July 2015, Accessed September 13, 2016. <http://www.shelterproject.naiaonline.org/purebred/>.

<sup>114</sup> Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 6.

<sup>115</sup> Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man (Revised & Expanded)* (New York: W.W. Norton-Company, 1996).

produce and replicate material inequalities amongst themselves can successfully be used to produce and replicate material inequalities amongst other species.<sup>116</sup>

The mores and influences of the Victorian Era, which included the propagation of pet keeping and dog fancying, quickly disseminated throughout the Western world. In the United States, the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show began in 1877 in New York City's Madison Square Garden<sup>117</sup> and has been held every year since.<sup>118</sup> The American Kennel Club (AKC) was formed in 1884<sup>119</sup> and began, following precedents set in England, setting and regulating purebred breed standards, hosting dog shows and validating those canines deemed worthy.<sup>120</sup> The AKC also established a registry for eligible purebred dogs. To be included, owners have to pay a fee. To this day, affiliation with the AKC results in a canine being worth more money than its mutt counterparts, despite the fact that purebreds have significantly more health problems and lower life expectancy due to a lack of genetic diversity than mutts.<sup>121</sup> Keeping that in mind, I argue that "purebred" as a social construct is rooted in bourgeois pretensions and elitism,

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<sup>116</sup> Seminal texts exploring overlapping inequalities involving sexism, racism and speciesism, see the following (Marjorie Spiegel, *The Dreaded Comparison: Human & Animal Slavery* (New York: Mirror Books, 1997) and Adams *The Sexual Politics of Meat*.

<sup>117</sup> The first dog show was hosted in 1859 in England and was "dedicated to the achievement of three related goals: to improve the various breeds of dogs, to display model specimens, and to discourage the breeding of mongrels." (Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 101.)

<sup>118</sup> "The Colorful History of America's Dog Show." The Westminster Kennel Club, accessed September 7, 2016, <http://www.westminsterkennelclub.org/about-sensation/history/>.

<sup>119</sup> The Royal Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) of the United Kingdom was formed in 1824 and the American Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) of the United States was formed in 1866, further indicating the increased presence of pet keeping in mainstream Western culture as well as the growing interest in regulating the bodies of nonhuman animals and companion species in particular. ASPCA, accessed February 2 2017, <https://www.asPCA.org>. and RSPCA. accessed February 2 2017,. <http://www.rspca.org.uk>.

<sup>120</sup> "History of the American Kennel Club," The American Kennel Club. <http://www.akc.org/about/history/> (8 September 2016)

<sup>121</sup> Michael Brandow, *A Matter of Breeding*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015).

obsessions with categorizing visible difference, establishing and reaffirming hierarchies and the importance of biology, as well as the desires of capitalism and consumerism that situates human and nonhuman bodies as marketable, sellable and ultimately disposable commodities.

As of June 2015, the AKC recognizes 187 different purebred dog breeds that are categorized into nine different groups; sporting, hound, working, terrier, toy, herding, non-sporting, miscellaneous and a Foundation Stock Service Program.<sup>122</sup> The lax breed restrictions that prioritize appearance, and arguably profit, over health have also tragically resulted in an estimated 25% of dogs registered with the AKC having hereditary genetic disorders.<sup>123</sup> The AKC derives a profit from registering dogs that are then bred and sold, leaving them with little motivation to take the health of the dogs being registered into consideration. Unfortunately, despite being widely criticized by veterinarians, trainers, breeders, and animal activists, including the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) the AKC continues to hold a great deal of power in shaping the bodies and lives of canines.<sup>124</sup> In many ways, the creation and glorification of breeds, which has produced a substantial increase in genetic disorders and disabilities in canines, makes them increasingly dependent upon their human companions and less likely to live healthy and full lives. The bodies of canines, in this space, demonstrate how Harawayan naturecultures come to life, for the literal bodies of canines have been altered to suit the cultural desires of the human.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> The Foundation Stock Service Program is a service that provides record keeping for rare breeds of purebred dogs that are not yet able to be registered with the American Kennel Club.

<sup>123</sup> Michael D. Lemonick & Ann Blackman, "A Terrible Beauty," *Time Magazine* 144, n. 24, December 1994, 64.

<sup>124</sup> Mark Derr, "The Politics of Dogs," *The Atlantic* 265, n.3, 1990, 94.

<sup>125</sup> Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto*.

The creation of particular types of dogs via selective breeding remains a popular practice, even while millions of dogs, often pit bull type dogs and mutts, are awaiting rescue or death in virtually every county across the United States. The 2015-2016 American Pet Products Association (APPA) Manufacturers Association National Pet Owners Survey found that 34% of dogs were purchased from a breeder, up from 32% from 2012-2013 while 37% were acquired from a shelter or rescue.<sup>126</sup> In producing dog breeds, canines are reduced to commodities that promote hierarchical thinking and biological determinism while promoting notions of “pet keeping” that contribute to the “disappearance” and even abuse and exploitation of the animal.<sup>127</sup> The very system of breeding and selling dogs for profit establishes the canine as a commodity and is rather contrary to the popular narrative that dogs are members of the family, for being a commodity positions one as an object, not a subject and individual member of a family. Dogs purchased from a breeder are almost always purebred and cost substantially more to purchase than dogs that are acquired from a shelter or rescue. The cost of maintaining purebred dogs, due primarily to their increased likelihood of having substantial health problems that require more frequent and costly medical care, is higher than that of their mutt counterparts as well.<sup>128</sup>

The concept of pets as commodities and even brands becomes even more evident when one considers how the desire for particular breeds follows certain cultural trends. For instance, when Disney’s live-action movie *101 Dalmatians* was released in 1996 the public demand for Dalmatians increased and was subsequently followed by a substantial

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<sup>126</sup> “APPA National Pet Owners Survey,” American Pet Products Association, accessed September 8, 2016, <http://www.americanpetproducts.org/>.

<sup>127</sup> John Berger, “Why Look at Animals,” in *About Looking* (New York: Vintage, 1992), 14.

<sup>128</sup> Michael Brandow, *A Matter of Breeding*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015).

increase in abandoned Dalmatians at shelters across the U.S., as people thought they were cute in the film, but did not understand that they are a very active and potentially high maintenance breed.<sup>129</sup> The current desire for so-called hypoallergenic, low-shed dogs in the United States has led to an increase in breeding of such hybrid, “designer” breeds as the Pomapoo, a crossbreed between a Pomeranian and Toy Poodle, often by unethical and inhumane puppy mills. Consumer desire supports the breeding of such dogs, which often sell for thousands of dollars, despite a high prevalence of genetic health conditions and a far-too-frequent misunderstanding regarding the time, energy and money it takes to maintain companion species.<sup>130</sup>

So why do people continue to purchase purebred dogs? For Isabella’s mom, it had to do with a number of factors. Isabella explained, “She thought that I should’ve gotten a dog from a breeder so I knew its history or whatever. But I wanted to save a life and ignored her. She was a real snot about the whole thing.” PetSmart Charities 2014 U.S. Shelter Pet Survey found that 25% of people prefer obtaining a pet from a non-adoption source. 36% of those individuals believed that shelters did not have the type of pet they desired, 34% did not think shelters had purebreds, 13% thought pets from shelters had behavioral problems, 12% did not know about adoption, 12% thought adoption was too difficult, 11% believed shelter pets had health problems and 10% did not know what you will get from a shelter.<sup>131</sup> As such, the purchasing of dogs continues in postmodern,

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<sup>129</sup> Mireya Navarro, “After Movies, Unwanted Dalmatians,” *New York Times*, September 14, 1997. Accessed February 2, 2017. <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/09/14/us/after-movies-unwanteddalmatians.html?module=ArrowsNav&contentCollection=U.S.&action=keypress&region=FixedLeft&pgtype=article>.

<sup>130</sup> “Fact Sheet: Designer, Teacup and Hypoallergenic Dogs.” The Humane Society of the United States, accessed February 2, 2017, [http://www.humanesociety.org/assets/pdfs/pets/puppy\\_mills/breed-club-statements-on.pdf](http://www.humanesociety.org/assets/pdfs/pets/puppy_mills/breed-club-statements-on.pdf).

<sup>131</sup> “PetSmart Charities 2014 U.S. Shelter Pet Survey,” PetSmart Charities, accessed September 8, 2016,

consumer-driven America because there exists a pervasive belief that, “you are what you buy.”<sup>132</sup> As dogs can be placed in a symbolic role as products, with individual breeds acting almost like brands, where they become identity markers that can signify class status, so, as Isabella would say, being “a real snot” could encourage people to purchase a particular breed of dog instead of adopting a mutt.<sup>133</sup> Therefore, purchasing a purebred dog, similarly to purchasing a name brand product, can reflect constructions of trendiness, economic stability or even wealth as well as racial, class, sexuality and gender markers, as is the case with other products in contemporary U.S. culture.

#### Part IV. Challenging Dichotomies: Exploring the Contradictory Role of the Canine

Humans have positioned the pet in a unique way in not only our cultural imaginary and political discourse, but also in our lived and symbolic realities. Pets are “boundary breakers” in that have literally crossed over “from outside to inside,” for those granted life live in the home, in a domestic space, with their human companions.<sup>134</sup> Donna Haraway says we need to theorize the pragmatics of living with another species, of the inter-reliance that forms between the human and the companion species, and this section will explore some of the ways that humans have positioned the canine, both in relation to themselves and other nonhuman animals, as well as in relationship to humanity and civilization more broadly.<sup>135</sup> The power differentials embedded within

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[https://www.petsmartcharities.org/sites/default/files/PetSmart%20Charities%202014%20U.S.%20Shelter%20Pet%20Report\\_2014Oct1.pdf](https://www.petsmartcharities.org/sites/default/files/PetSmart%20Charities%202014%20U.S.%20Shelter%20Pet%20Report_2014Oct1.pdf).

<sup>132</sup> Todd, Danielle. “You Are What You Buy: Postmodern Consumerism and the Construction of Self,” *HOHONU*, n.10 (2012): 48-50.

<sup>133</sup> Richard Elliot and Kritsadarat Wattanasuwan. “Brands as Symbolic Resources for the Construction of Identity.” *International Journal of Advertising* 17, n.2 (1998): 131-144.

<sup>134</sup> Fudge, *Pets*, 17.

<sup>135</sup> Haraway, *When Species Meet*.



various social locations dictate the numerous and often contradictory ways that the canine is constructed. Those constructions relate not only to the social locations of the humans interacting with the canine, but also to the way that the canine has been entangled with its own gendered, racialized and classed social formations.

While canines are technically nonhuman animals, in the contemporary United States they often have names, live in homes and have special laws protecting them as companion species, differentiating them from other nonhuman animals. Some canines even have better medical care than some human Americans as well as extensive options for food, bedding, toys and accessories. In this way some are explicitly privileged nonhuman animals. However, there remains great inconsistency in their existences as millions of unwanted canines continue to be killed in the U.S. every year, having been denied the agency to live on their own, wild and public, as is granted other nonhuman animals such as squirrels and chipmunks in the U.S. and “unleashed” canines in other parts of the world. Despite the special protections that are granted canines and not other nonhuman animals, they are still primarily property in the eyes of the law.<sup>136</sup> While Aristotle categorized life as *bios*, or the good life that humans live within a polis or community and *zoe*, or animal life, philosopher Giorgio Agamben asserted there is a third category referred to as bare life, which applies to someone who lives in a community but is exiled.<sup>137</sup> I argue that pets live in this liminal space where they have recognition but predominantly remain property, and in this liminal space they are never citizens, but they are not simply animals. Instead, they come to occupy a space that exists between our humanity and our animality.

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<sup>136</sup> Casey Chapman, “Not Your Coffee Table: An Evaluation of Companion Animals as Personal Property,” *Capital University Law Review*, 38, n.187, (2009): 187-228.

<sup>137</sup> Agamben, *The Open*.

Culture is the social and technological process of evading the frictions of human corporeality and animality, with everything from kitchen utensils to modern medicine and transportation serving as ways to elide our bodies. Animality has historically and contemporarily been perceived of as antithetical to humanness and civilization. As a concept, it has been used to enforce racist ideologies and practices, for those humans perceived of as closer to nature have been labeled simultaneously as closer to animals and therefore deserving of objectification and oppression.<sup>138</sup> Common cultural suppositions assume animality has been set aside for civilization, which is perceived of as a domesticating force. Humans in Western culture have actively tried to do away with the animal as well as animality, largely removing the nonhuman from public view while regulating human bodies in a way that discourages animality. But while this is going on, humans are also increasingly likely to live with companion species. It is in this way that dogs, acting in a contradictory space, have “connected the wild and the tame, and they joined nature and culture,” for they are a force that has the capacity to blur boundaries while acting as tangible examples of Haraway’s natureculture.<sup>139</sup>

Taken at face value, the canine is corporeal. The canine’s fur, poop bags and tendency to roll in dirt remind their humans of that corporeality. As members of contemporary U.S. society, they are imprinted with culture via a negotiation with that corporeality, but being dogs, these modalities work to remind us of animality rather than remove us from it. Such devices prompt us that these nonhuman animals are living within a human world but with their ever-insistent corporality. So while as nonhuman animals canines can be perceived of as wild, as a domesticated species that typically lives

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<sup>138</sup> Michel Foucault. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France, 1978-1979*, ed. Michel Senellart, translated by Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008).

<sup>139</sup> Schwartz, *A History of Dogs in the Early Americas*, 3.

in a home in contemporary U.S. culture, they have been tamed. As the home and domestic are constructed as civilizing and even feminizing forces, the American canine has in many ways been civilized in its domestication. In these ways, the canine also acts to destabilize dichotomies of human and animal, domestic and wild, civilized and savage. But in our contemporary Western culture, where the domesticated canine is kept primarily indoors, walked on a leash and groomed to our specifications, I argue that dogs can serve as symbols of civilization, existing in a space between our humanity and animality in such a way that marks a society as civilized. Alternatively, those parts of the world where the cultural regulations and impositions on the canine are lighter or at least less visible are marked as “less civilized.”<sup>140</sup> In controlling the canine via the boundaries of the home humans have mastered wildness and excelled at civilization and when canines have the audacity to break that boundary, either via behaviors such as marking or dominance, or because their bodies have been coded with certain cultural meanings, as is the case for pit bulls, they are quickly tamed again, this time via the shelter and even the euthanasia needle.

Of the forty-two interviews I conducted with individual canine owners at dog parks in Maricopa County, Arizona thirty-seven participants, or 88% percent, believed that responsible dog ownership involved keeping dogs inside of the home while all

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<sup>140</sup> Historically and contemporarily, animals have been used discursively to discuss socially constructed inequalities amongst humans, including marking some as civilized and others uncivilized; “embodying the lower classes as sheep and cattle validated the authority and responsibility exercised by their social superiors. Embodying the lower classes or alien groups as dangerous wild animals emphasized the need for their masters to exercise strict discipline and to defend against depredations...The dichotomy between domesticated animals and wild animals was frequently compared to that between civilized and savage human societies. Darwin often speculated that the wildness often shown by hybrids of domestic species had the same cause as the wickedness that characterized human half-breeds...Darwin cited a report that two Scottish collies who visited Siberia ‘soon took the same superior standing’ with regards to the native dogs ‘as the European claims for himself in relation to the savage.’” (Charles Darwin, *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication* (New York: D. Appleton, 1892), II, 19-21. and Charles Darwin, “A Preliminary Notice: ‘On the Modification of a Race of Syrian Street-Dogs by Means of Sexual Selection,’” in *The Collected Papers of Charles Darwin*. Ed. Paul H. Barrett (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), II, 279. In Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 16).

humans were not home and one hundred percent believed that dogs should always at least be kept in a fenced-in yard when all humans were away from the home. Containing the canine is a marker of pet keeping in the contemporary United States and is reinforced by the law and even insurance companies. When asked about “responsible pet ownership” one participant, a white male in his early fifties, preceded to explain that one of his neighbors, “a Mexican family who let their dogs run all over the place,” were not good dog owners or good members of society more broadly because, “while it might be okay to let your dogs run free on the other side of the border, over here you have to be responsible and respect your neighbors and the rules of the state.” The man’s comments speak to the importance of controlling the leashed canine in our current dominant cultural model and how not controlling the canine can mark a person as irresponsible and even un-American. They also speak to notions of private property, ownership and even breed-specific laws, which will be addressed further in the next chapter. While all interviews were conducted in one location in the U.S., limiting generalizability, the importance of controlling the canine in the U.S. is further demonstrated when one considers that an uncontrolled canine, one who is on the streets without identification, is picked up by the county to be impounded and potentially killed.

The domesticated canine as marker of civilization becomes evident when one examines not only lived reality, but also popular culture. On the popular AMC television horror drama *The Walking Dead*, where literal zombies consume anything living, human or nonhuman, to sustain themselves, notions of civilization, humanity and the human are common themes. The zombies are explicitly not human, despite having human form, and the few humans remaining alive are forced to run for their lives from not only the zombies, but from one another. The series follows a group of people as they journey into a world in which foraging and killing are the only ways to remain one of the living. On

multiple occasions the post-apocalyptic series portrays a leashed canine in the few spaces left where walls were established early enough in their zombie-ridden world to protect those humans, and canines, inside.<sup>141</sup> The leashed canine, the domesticated and tame nonhuman animal, is a marker that the glimmers of the previous world still remain.

The episode “Them” of *The Walking Dead* begins a number of years after the initial collapse of human civilization.<sup>142</sup> At this point, the series’ principle characters have watched most of their loved ones succumb to violent deaths and have themselves escaped death on multiple occasions. The episode begins with them wandering the woods. They do not have a secure home base and are having great difficulty finding food and water. Their strength is waning as a pack of dogs, dirty and feral, teeth bared, come upon them from the woods. The dogs are shot and consumed for dinner. While consumption of the canine is generally taboo in Western society, in *The Walking Dead* civilization is seemingly no more, and the dogs that descend upon the group no longer resemble the domesticated family pet. Now wild, or feral, the dogs have been altered in order to survive, in many similar ways to the series’ human characters. Despite the horrors that all of the human characters have experienced up to this point in the series, it is the stack of dog collars, removed before cooking and consuming the canines, that act as a reminder of the developed nation that has been lost, that makes one of the characters lose his faith, which up to this point had kept him going. I argue that the stack of discarded collars is symbolic of a loss of organized society, for the collar is a civilizing force that acted to domesticate the canine, marking her as part of culture. The killing and consumption of the canine was so emotionally traumatizing to the character because of

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<sup>141</sup> The leashed canine appears in two episodes of *The Walking Dead* in the fortified towns of Woodbury (*The Walking Dead*. “Walk with Me.” 22. Directed by Guy Ferland. Written by Evan Reilly. AMC, October 2012) and Alexandria (*The Walking Dead*. “Remember.” 62. Directed by Greg Nicotero. Written by Channing Powell. AMC, March 2015).

<sup>142</sup> *The Walking Dead*. “Them.” 60. Directed by Julius Ramsey. Written by Heather Bellson. AMC, February 2015.

how the canine has been constructed in modern U.S. culture, as a symbolic reminder of family, home and a regulated society with law and order, which, for the characters of *The Walking Dead*, have all been lost.

The United States is a canine-loving culture, at least for “leashed” canines of particular breeds. According to a 2012 American Veterinary Medicine Association U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographic Sourcebook, 66.7% of people consider their dogs to be family members and another 32.6% consider their dogs to be pets or companions, while only 0.7% considers their dogs to be property.<sup>143</sup> The American Pet Products Association (APPA) estimates that as of 2016 Americans will spend over \$60 billion annually on items such as food, healthcare and accessories for their companion species, positioning them as a unique species in our capitalist culture.<sup>144</sup> It has even been estimated that Americans spend over \$700 million on Valentine’s Day gifts each year for their pets.<sup>145</sup> The American canine is very much a unique and even privileged species in contemporary U.S culture. In taming the animal and turning her into a product that needs additional products, the human has created the civilized beast, one that can never run wild, instead requiring hypoallergenic, grain-free food, beds made of memory foam and a batch of heart-shaped dog biscuits every February 14<sup>th</sup>.

The murky place of the canine becomes fuzzier still when one considers how the dog is situated legally. Dogs are technically objects, simply property in many ways according to the law. However, as a companion species dogs have special protections

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<sup>143</sup> “2012 American Veterinary Medicine Association U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographic Sourcebook,” accessed September 7, 2016, <https://www.animalsheltering.org/page/pets-numbers>.

<sup>144</sup> “APPA National Pet Owners Survey,” American Pet Products Association, accessed September 8, 2016, <http://www.americanpetproducts.org/>.

<sup>145</sup> “National Retail Federation 2015 Valentine’s Day Survey,” National Retail Foundation, accessed September 7, 2016, <https://nrf.com/media/press-releases/cupid-shower-americans-jewelry-candy-this-valentines-day>.

under that law that are not granted to other nonhuman animals. These special protections are rooted in the speciesist nature of the law and animal rights discourse, which grants protections to nonhuman animals under certain circumstances while allowing gross exploitation of others.<sup>146</sup> Animal cruelty was also recently re-categorized by the Federal Bureau of Investigations as a Class-A felony, which could result in animal abusers facing jail time as well as allow for the tracking and collecting of criminal information from animal abuse cases.<sup>147</sup> While this is a positive change from the perspective of the canine, the law is also hugely drenched in speciesism, racism, and classism, for animal cruelty laws only protect companion species and are only used against individuals who engage in animal abuse, leaving out corporations that engage in factory farming that abuses millions of animals every day while polluting the environment and destroying habitats. The speciesist nature of the law becomes even more complex when one considers that dogs and other companion species eat meat that comes from factory-farmed animals. Furthermore, those individuals who tend to be prosecuted under such laws are nonwhite and of lower socioeconomic status, whereas middle and upper class whites continue to capitalize on the exploitation of nonhuman animals in settings where their bodies are used to produce a profit for those people in positions of power, such as in horse racing and industrial farming.<sup>148</sup>

The keeping of canines, those creatures perfected by the capitalist machine, also exists in a space where the human, animal and technological overlap. Yi-Fu Tuan in *Dominance & Affection* claims that with increased urbanization and industrialization

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<sup>146</sup> Wolfe, *Before the Law*, 11-16.

<sup>147</sup> "Tracking Animal Cruelty," FBI News, modified February 1, 2016, accessed September 7, 2016, <https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/-tracking-animal-cruelty>.

<sup>148</sup> Claire Jean Kim. *Dangerous Crossings: Race, Species, and Nature in a Multicultural Age*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

“humans needed an outlet for their gestures of affection [as] this was becoming more difficult to find in modern society as it began to segment and isolate people into their private spheres.”<sup>149</sup> In our current technologized neoliberal time, where the individual unit is emphasized above a more inclusive community model, where people log on to the Internet in search of connectedness instead of interacting with other humans in person, are becoming increasingly likely to live alone, partner later in life and success is linked with accruing capital and career success rather than children perhaps it is pets that help fill that affective, corporeal void.<sup>150</sup> And the disposability of those bodies, which stay in individual homes as pets for only two years on average, makes them convenient in our fast-paced, ever-changing world.<sup>151</sup> This construction of canines allows them to exist in a space between being an animalized animal and a humanized critter companion, shaped by the technological world that produced them. Pet keeping could also be that space in modern America where humanity is being pushed towards its animality, its feral past, for in the desire to share one’s home with an animal, perhaps the sterility that is modern humanness is compromised in a way that still feels manageable and ultimately entirely controllable, for if the desire to be entirely sterile resurfaces, one can simply dispose of the critter.

The leashed canine’s body has been regulated to the point where we control virtually every function that allows him or her to live. We also have the ability to condemn the canine to death by simply deeming the living being unwanted. I argue that our ability to control the canine is at least part of what makes pet ownership so desirable

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<sup>149</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan. *Dominance and Affection: The Making of Pets*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 112.

<sup>150</sup> Haraway. *When Species Meet* and *Primate Visions*.

<sup>151</sup> Tuan, *Dominance and Affection*, 8.



in our culture. In the process of excessive regulation, which dictates the canine's movements, diet, defecation and the very ability to live or die, humans have created an almost living doll that they have virtually complete control over. Human's relationships with dogs is essentially "intimacy structured on dominance," creating an explicitly unequal relationship that seems to allow for profound familiarity and identification, despite an obvious difference in species and power dynamics.<sup>152</sup>

Having a pet continues to grow in popularity, particularly over the last thirty years. In many cases the companion species is merely constructed as a continuation of the human self and caring for or even claiming to love the canine ultimately translates to a narcissistic love of one's self, as is proposed by Deleuze and Guattari.<sup>153</sup> John Berger viewed pet keeping as an oppressive institution that marginalizes the canine to the point of mere spectacle, reducing them to the "animal puppet."<sup>154</sup> On the other hand, the flourishing pet culture in the United States and abroad also has the potential to be constructed "as seeds of transgression, or the early markers of the demise of human exceptionalism...[where]... it's not that the family dog is himself a paradigm-shifting entity, but the massive scale of pet culture could signal a shift that many of us humans have indeed fallen in love with someone besides ourselves."<sup>155</sup> Donna Haraway even argues that the companion species-human relationship allows for an increased linguistic and empathetic understanding of otherness.<sup>156</sup> The co-mingling of species in the same household additionally could mean that difference is being embraced instead of feared,

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<sup>152</sup> Kim. *Dangerous Crossings*, 271.

<sup>153</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*.

<sup>154</sup> Berger, *Why Look at Animals?*, 36.

<sup>155</sup> Kathy Rudy. "LGBTQ...Z?" *Hypatia* 27, n.3 (2012), 602.

<sup>156</sup> Haraway. *When Species Meet*.

that attempts at translation are being incorporated into one's everyday life.<sup>157</sup>

Furthermore, it is possible that such relationships exist in a space where cooperation between species is present, where hierarchies and other power dynamics are actively being subverted. This is a space where scholar Harlan Weaver's "becoming in kind," which "signals the deep imbrications of identity and being that many relationships between humans and nonhuman animals entail," can blossom to benefit all species involved.<sup>158</sup>

Such a conceptualization of pet culture creates space for the imagining of the making of human and animal together in interspecies kinship. These nonnormative, even monstrous entanglements, allow for the positioning of critters in such a way that challenges speciesism and heteronormativity, queers family structures and allows for the rethinking of the links that exist between the socially constructed categories of species, breed, gender, race and class.<sup>159</sup> It also leaves space to acknowledge the important role that affect and especially love, which speaks to the "affection that is potentially shared and to the intrinsic value of companionship," have in the relationship between human and nonhuman animals as well as in the space between humanity and animality.<sup>160</sup> While I argue that it is certain that "animal-human love has intrinsic value,"<sup>161</sup> unfortunately in

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<sup>157</sup> Fudge, *Pets*, 68.

<sup>158</sup> Weaver. "Becoming in Kind: Race, Gender, and Nation in Cultures of Dog Fighting and Dog Rescue."

<sup>159</sup> Weaver. "Becoming in Kind: Race, Gender, and Nation in Cultures of Dog Fighting and Dog Rescue." and Rudy. "LGBTQ...Z?" and Haraway.

<sup>160</sup> Anca Gheaus. "The Role of Love in Animal Ethics." *Hypatia*, 27, n.3 (2012). 584.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid*, 585.

our technologized world, “for the most part, pet animals are add-ons to postmodern, consumption-based, globalized life, not paradigm shifters.”<sup>162</sup>

It is also important to note that the canine has not always been a companion species for all humans. Historically and contemporarily, dogs have been a part of the policing apparatus of our nation, which disproportionately targets people of color, queer humans, and impoverished individuals for the benefit of white, heteronormative upper-middle class society. Historically, for instance, dogs were used to terrorize native people by the Spanish explorers at the very beginning of American colonization<sup>163</sup> and bloodhounds were “weaponized” by the Spanish and utilized by the French in the West Indies to pursue and devastate runaway slaves and “defeat the black revolution” more broadly during the nineteenth century.<sup>164</sup> Contemporarily, canines continue to be used by the armed services in colonizing expeditions and wars abroad. Domestically, canines are used in K-9 Units by literal community police forces and sheriff’s departments as well as by the prison industrial complex for such purposes as perimeter security and cell extraction.<sup>165</sup> U.S. federal agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Transportation Security Administration (TSA), the DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration), and U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) also use canines for purposes related to national security and human regulation in the fight for so-called American freedom and dominance.

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<sup>162</sup> Rudy. “LGBTQ...Z?,” 602.

<sup>163</sup> Grier Varner and Jeannette Johnson Varner. *Dogs of the Conquest*. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983).

<sup>164</sup> Paul Youngquist and Gregory Pierrot, Introduction to *A Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayti*, by Marcus Rainsford (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), xlv.

<sup>165</sup> Kelly McDonald, “How Police Dogs Turned into Cybernetic Hunters.” *Motherboard*, December 21, 2015, accessed February 12, 2017, [https://motherboard.vice.com/en\\_us/article/how-police-dogs-turned-into-cybernetic-hunters](https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/how-police-dogs-turned-into-cybernetic-hunters).

During the war in Iraq that began March of 2003, dogs were used as a part of the so-called “drama of sovereignty” to assist U.S. soldiers in the torture of Iraqi detainees at Abu Ghraib prison, a site that blatantly embodies the legacy of colonialism (Figure 2.1).<sup>166</sup> As instruments of torture, the guard dogs demonstrate how a great deal of strategic inconsistency is at work in constructing who is fully “human” and who is the “other” in interspecies relationships. In the case of Abu Ghraib, the “other” is the highly racialized men of color being tortured, as opposed to their fellow canine soldiers who had been trained as torturers by their imperialist masters. Furthermore, instead of being horrified by the dehumanizing acts that were forced upon the men of color in the photos, it has been reported that factions of the American public celebrated the violating of their racialized, less-than-human bodies.<sup>167</sup> The men being tortured were thus positioned as colonized objects who were unworthy of a livable life while the guard dogs were representationally situated as subjects worthy of praise for carrying out the racist, colonizing actions of the sovereign United States.



Figure 2.1 - Abu Ghraib prison

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<sup>166</sup> Colleen Glenney Boggs. *Animalia Americana: Animal Representations and Biopolitical Subjectivity*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 66.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

The canine's role as "protector," which was discussed earlier in relationship to Isabella's comment on the difficulties of being "female and alone in this world," becomes troubled when one considers the abovementioned ways that canines have been used to oppress and criminalize, instead of protect, certain vulnerable humans. If trained in a particular way and utilized by those in positions of power, the leashed canine can become an extension of state power, regulation and control, potentially cementing their status as symbols of a white, capitalist, and masculinist nation and civilization. As nation building and nationalism are intimately intertwined with notions and constructions of gender, sex, race and species, the use of canines in policing is tangibly imprinted with intersectional taxonomies of power and as such, human's relationships with canines can also become imprinted with these systems of oppression, privilege and power, shifting canine identities from companions to agents of empire.

Despite the complicated and oftentimes contradictory ways that canines exist in contemporary U.S. culture, "pet-keeping" thrives in the United States and abroad and kill rates are improving. Despite this, I argue that by-and-large, pets are property and are therefore byproducts of our anthropocentric, materialist culture. It remains cognitively and affectively perplexing how people can simultaneously position these animals as members of the family who deserve ample medical care, love and food and "as expendable individuals that can be killed en masse at human will – or even whim."<sup>168</sup> But, as Isabella shared, "loving a dog was a privilege, cause if there wasn't enough food the dog was always the first one to miss a meal." Keeping this in mind, I argue that in attempting to understand how some canines can have so much while others have so little we can come to see that those canines who are granted a livable life and a grievable death

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<sup>168</sup> Clare Palmer. "Killing Animals in Animal Shelters." In *Killing Animals* ed. The Animal Studies Group. (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 171.

are materially and discursively entangled with privileged social formations, whereas those canines who are labeled disposable and killed in mass are more likely to be coded and entangled with social formations that are constructed as being less than or even deviant in contemporary U.S. culture.

Part V. Coding Bodies:  
Imprinting the Canine with Social Formations

The widespread ways that the material and discursive body of the canine has been coded with social meanings demonstrates just how entangled the canine is in the human world. In *A History of Dogs in the Early Americas* Marion Schwartz explains, “Dogs are remarkable animals because they are uniquely sensitive to the cultural attributes of the people with whom they live. Not only are dogs a product of culture, but they also participate in the cultures of humans.”<sup>169</sup> In our mixed species society, the canine exists in a unique space, exposing “both the potential violence in our desires for pets and the potential for real love.”<sup>170</sup> While dogs and humans worked together to bring one another into civilization, they became transformed together, and meanings became made that have serious ramifications for the bodies and lives of human and canine alike. As “the themes of modern America [are] reflected in detail in the bodies and lives of animals,” humans oftentimes imprint stereotypical, hierarchically drenched meanings onto the animal others that they interact with in their daily lives.<sup>171</sup> How and why those gendered, as well as racialized, classed and sexualized stereotypes develop has real, lived implications on the inter-reliant lives of humans and canines.

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<sup>169</sup> Schwartz, *A History of Dogs in the Early Americas*, 2.

<sup>170</sup> Weil, *Thinking Animals*, xxi.

<sup>171</sup> Donna J. Haraway. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. (New York: Routledge, 1991) p.21.

In many ways the canine and in particular certain breeds of dogs are constructed as part of the white, middle-class, heteronormative, American family. When American suburbia comes to mind, images of white picket fences, white children and golden retrievers are present. The golden retriever, as well as other canine breeds, are part of American suburban iconography, whereas other breeds of dogs have been coded differently, resulting in them being associated with different types of people and places in the American landscape. How breeds become coded, or stereotyped, is complex, resulting from a combination of things, including media images, the literal biological body of the canine, the human tendency to stereotype, categorize and overgeneralize as well as through simple misinformation.

Isabella's reflections about her mother's initial feelings towards Dakota are indicative of how people may internalize socially constructed codings of canine bodies: "My Mom was so angry when I adopted Dakota," shared Isabella. "Dakota was less than a year old [at the time of adoption] and her hair wasn't as long as it is now, so she kinda looked like she could have pit [bull] in her. My Mom was even kinda afraid of her cause she thought Dakota was dangerous." Isabella's mother's opinions surrounding pit bulls as a breed reflects how pit bull bodies have been imprinted with problematic and highly racialized, classed and gendered stereotypes. The impact of such stereotypes on the material and discursive realities of humans and canines will be explored in future chapters in depth. At this time, I would simply like to argue that humans construct meanings that are deeply embedded with narratives of power, privilege and oppression and that those narratives have real, lived implications on both human and nonhuman animals while also reflecting social and cultural climates in the United States more broadly, which I explore in future chapters.

## Part VI. Conclusions

The human-canine relationship is an incredibly complex one, deeply embedded in how human society has sought to understand itself. In this chapter, I argued that humans imprint meanings onto the bodies of canines, constructing their identities in ways that reflect power dynamics and social hierarchies, as is evidenced by breeds and the meanings imprinted upon them. These constructions are historically and contextually contingent and are typically produced in tandem with various bodily characteristics of the animal, including so-called breed, color and length of hair and shape of head. I argue that these constructions result in how a dog exists in the cultural imaginary and ultimately whether an animal lives or dies. And while humans often inflict their own social constructions upon canine bodies, for “the dog is as much a cultural construct as a biological species,” canines have the ability to be social actors themselves, potentially marking them as complicit in a system that both oppresses and provides privileges due to their species as well as their individual breeds and the meanings applied to both.<sup>172</sup>

“I just don’t know what I’d do without Dakota,” mused Isabella, “I dread the day she crosses the rainbow bridge. She’s still pretty active and keeps me running, but she’s slowed down a bit over the last couple years. She’s middle aged now. And she’s not a huge fan of Arizona weather. The heat slows her down too. I hope that in three years when I graduate and get a job that it’ll be somewhere milder. Hopefully I’ll be able to buy a house and she can have a big yard. Maybe I can adopt more dogs too. I’d love to have as many dogs as I can afford! I want human kids too, but I think dogs and kids go together. I’m definitely a better person cause I was raised with dogs as a kid and I’m *definitely* a more responsible and caring adult cause of Dakota. In a lot of ways she helped shape

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<sup>172</sup> Schwartz, *A History of Dogs in the Early Americas*, 19.



who I am today, what I care about and how I see the world, she helped shape all of it,” Isabella explained. Dakota had strolled away from the bench Isabella was sitting on while she spoke, heading towards a large tree that she spread out underneath, enjoying the shade provided by its branches. “I hope we have a lot more years together,” Isabella said, turning her head to look at Dakota, “like I said, she’s my best friend. And she’s looking like she’s ready to get home and have something to drink. You ready to go, friend?” Isabella asked. Dakota raised her head, “You ready to go home?” Isabella asked again. In response, Dakota stood up, walked over to Isabella and the two prepared to head home together.

CHAPTER 3  
“Dude, Don’t Neuter Your Dog:”  
Entangling Identities Across Species

Part I. Introduction

“Dude, don’t neuter your dog. I did and now he’s not nearly the man he should be.” The seemingly unsolicited advice came from a short white male in his late twenties, whose sleeve of colorful tattoos spanned his muscled shoulder down to his hand, which grasped a worn black leather leash. He leaned against the bar, arms and legs spread, taking up as much space as possible. At the end of the black leash sat a white and black pit bull who resembled Petey from *The Little Rascals*. The dog’s long pink tongue hung comically out the side of his smiling mouth as he leaned against his owner, looking like anything but the menacing stereotype that haunts his highly gendered, racialized and classed breed.

The comment was being directed towards a tall Latino male wearing a white “wife-beater” tank top. The man’s dark, shoulder length hair was pulled into a low ponytail at the base of his neck and he appeared to be somewhere in his twenties. In one hand the man grasped a glass of what appeared to be beer. In the other he dangled a navy blue nylon leash. Wearing a matching navy blue nylon collar, a brindle puppy that visually presented as a pit bull mix was enthusiastically struggling to wedge himself underneath a brown wooden bar stool in an attempt to retrieve a fallen French fry from the dirty stone floor.

The men were at Casey Moore’s Oyster House, which could arguably be considered the most popular, or most populated, bar in the college town of Tempe, Arizona. They leaned against the grimy outdoor bar, seemingly enjoying the mild weather, the warm sun and their alcoholic beverages with their fellow human and nonhuman bar-goers. A large, muted flat screen television tuned to a football game was

on the wall behind the bar, surrounded by shelves containing an array of multi-colored liquor bottles. Competing conversations filled the almost-full patio of eclectic patrons while 1990's rock ballads played at a semi-reasonable level over the bar's antiquated but adequate sound system.

The tattooed man's comment sparked a rather lengthy conversation between the two men about the alleged virtues of having an intact and therefore "manly" dog: he is protective of his home and owner, or "master," can fend off human and nonhuman predators and is overall bigger, tougher, and more prone to violence than his "fixed" counterparts. And as a result of these alleged virtues, a manly dog is "cooler" and more desirable than a dog that is not manly or, even worse, feminine. These presumed virtues correspond strongly with hegemonic masculinity, or "how masculinity constructs dominance and remains in control" and "assist[s] men in maintaining social control" while dictating, "what it takes to be a 'real man' in society."<sup>173</sup> Clearly, the men's discussion and overall demeanor during happy hour of their dogs' testicles, or lack thereof, was deeply entangled with the far-too-common "gender performance" that is hegemonic masculinity.<sup>174</sup>

The men's conversation indicated they believed that an unneutered dog, and especially an unneutered pit bull, was manlier and therefore "better" than the "puny" alternative because he embodied the traditional characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity. An intact dog was a strong, tough, protector who would and could be violent when on the defense or provoked, whereas a "fixed" dog was positioned as traditionally feminized; as a weak, helpless coward, and as someone needing protection, as opposed to the other way around. Neutering one's dog, which involves

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<sup>173</sup> Jodi O'Brien, *Encyclopedia of Gender & Society*. New York: Sage Publications, 2009) 411.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid, 411.

actual castration, therefore was positioned as a feminizing act that blurred the boundaries between biology and social construction, ultimately resulting in the dog being less masculine.

Having a “manly” dog also implied that the men were more manly themselves. The men’s discussion of their dogs quickly became intertwined with their discussion of their own bodies and identities: the “fixed” dog’s lack of musculature and “toughness” was paralleled with the tattooed man’s desire to spend more time in the weight room and not be seen “on the street” with his “puny” dog in case it reflect poorly on him. This discussion demonstrated that having a neutered and therefore less masculine dog meant that said dog’s owner was also stripped of at least some of the potential elements of his masculinity. The men’s own masculinities were thus wrapped up with the perceived masculinities of their dogs, with the so-called man’s best friend. Given that masculinity and especially hegemonic masculinity is socially constructed, it is people that imprint gendered stereotypes onto their animals and not the animals themselves who embody them “naturally.” As such, the presence, or lack thereof, of a canine’s testicles coupled with the canine’s interpreted socially constructed gender performance and the human interpretation of his material body has the ability to say a great deal about their complex and oftentimes contradictory interspecies relationship. The dog’s testicles and the human’s decision to leave them there or have them removed also reflect overarching social value systems in addition to what it means to be an “ideal” heteronormative male in the contemporary United States.

The men’s conversation and the examples explored later in the chapter demonstrate that the seemingly simple question “to neuter or not to neuter?” that appears on the surface to exist in the realm of the biological, of nature, quickly reveals

itself as a space where Harawayan notions of natureculture<sup>175</sup> materially and discursively manifest. It is in this space that we come to see that in critical feminism and feminist scholarship, to quote Donna Haraway, “the category work of gender is never alone.”<sup>176</sup> Instead, gender is richly, complexly, reciprocally connected to other social locations, including race, class, nationality, sexuality as well as species. Gender is also intimately tied to notions of naturecultures, for “nature/culture and sex/gender are no loosely related pairs of terms; their specific form of relation is hierarchical appropriation...symbolically, nature and culture, as well as sex and gender, mutually (but not equally) construct each other.”<sup>177</sup> In other words, naturecultures are an acknowledgement of how the biological body becomes imprinted with cultural mores and vice versa. In the case of the canine, a lack of interest in neutering, in altering the biological body, can be about people’s tendency to reify masculinity, which is socially constructed. Neutering companion species is therefore an example of how natureculture exists, for it is not exclusively about biology or culture, but instead is about how the two work together. As was discussed earlier, exploring the entangled situatedness of these categories while simultaneously working to destabilize the nature/culture, sex/gender and human/nonhuman dichotomies, as well as other problematic and limiting dualisms, one comes to see that there always exist more layers, further knots, that need to be disentangled.

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<sup>175</sup> Naturecultures are defined as “a synthesis of nature and culture that recognizes their inseparability in ecological relationships that are both biophysically and socially formed” which “emerges from the scholarly interrogation of dualisms.” Nicholas Malone and Kathryn Ovenden, “Naturecultures,” *International Encyclopedia of Primatology*, 2016, accessed February 24, 2017, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781119179313.wbprim0135/full>.

<sup>176</sup> Schneider, *Donna Haraway*, 131.

<sup>177</sup> Haraway, *Primate Visions*, 12.

The conversation at Casey Moore's Oyster House reveals how the nature/culture, sex/gender and human/nonhuman dichotomies that are fervently upheld in much Eurocentric humanist discourse, scholarly and otherwise, become so easily intertwined in interspecies engagements. It also provides a clear example of how people imprint gendered stereotypes onto their companion species, which Donna Haraway explains is "less a category than a pointer to an ongoing 'becoming with'...[in] the dance linking kin and kind."<sup>178</sup> In other words, the companion species are so intimately entangled with the human in their contradictory and multiple roles as property and family members that their makings and meanings cannot be contemplated independently. Instead, the companion species must be considered in an ecological space in relationship to literal human bodies as well as to the heteropatriarchal, capitalist society that assisted in creating and maintaining them. For while there exists the tendency to only discuss how humans are impacted by socially constructed identity categories and ideologies, those constructions also affect those beings who exist outside the scope of "human" as a bounded category. Considering how animals and their human companions are impacted by socially constructed identity categories and ideologies reveals in new and more complex ways how those same categories and ideologies impact humans as well. So while constructions of hegemonic masculinity shape human bodies and lives, that same hegemonic masculinity can be reified in the bodies of some canines, acting as extensions of the human masculine body and identity.

Spaying and neutering is not the clear-cut issue it appears to be on the surface. Despite the fact that animal activist groups, veterinarians and mainstream society at large have deemed spaying and neutering to be a socially responsible part of good pet ownership, it is a controversial and deeply gendered issue, as the men's conversation at

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<sup>178</sup> Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 16-17.

Casey Moore's demonstrated. While canines have multiple roles and meanings, including that of family member and affective being, in our capitalist culture they are also consumer products. Similarly to other products, people select canines in order to reflect particular characteristics of their identities, including those glorified by hegemonic masculinity. Keeping that in mind, I assert that the decision to keep one's canine intact is a consumer choice and in this light a canine's testicles act as an extension of their canine accessory, similarly to how adding a pair of fake testicles to the back end of a vehicle acts to masculinize the individual driving the car. The dog's testicles are kept in place to show the world that the owner is masculine and therefore associated with characteristics of hegemonic masculinity, including being powerful, strong, and dominant. As the lives of humans and companion species are intimately and affectively entangled, an intact dog acts to symbolize and reify social structures of hegemonic masculinity.

Spaying and neutering is a deeply complex issue, impacted by a range of intersectional political nuances. As "the themes of modern America [are] reflected in detail in the bodies and lives of animals," humans clearly imprint oftentimes-stereotypical, hierarchically drenched meanings onto the animal others that they interact with in their daily lives.<sup>179</sup> How and why those gendered, as well as racialized, classed and sexualized stereotypes develop has real, lived implications on the inter-reliant lives of humans and nonhuman animals. The politics of spaying and neutering, which are embedded in these stereotypes, are ripe for critical feminist analysis. For whether it means that people choose to neuter their family dog to discourage food aggression or urinating in the house, allow their pit bull to reproduce litters of puppies that are systematically euthanized or sold for profit, or decide to implant Neuticles, the artificial testicles used following sterilization because they think it allows their critter as well as

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<sup>179</sup> Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, 21.

themselves a better life, there are important elements of socially constructed cultural and biological power dynamics at play.

This chapter begins with an exploration of spaying and neutering as a medical procedure as well as human social performance. That exploration will be placed in conversation with various spaying and neutering campaigns that have been composed by animal activist groups in an effort to combat the overpopulation and mass euthanasia of companion species. Doing so will highlight the role of spaying and neutering in animal activism and “good” pet ownership. Additionally, it will bring attention to the seemingly well-intentioned actions of activists who far-too-often end up reinforcing problematic and limiting stereotypes that are informed by hegemonic masculinity as well as other taxonomies of power. The role of artificial dog testicles called Neuticles will also be investigated as a technology that is deeply intertwined with gendered stereotypes and the consumer-driven culture that permeates the role of the companion animal in contemporary Western societies. Understanding these social constructions of hegemonic masculinity in relationship to biological sex in present-day United States demonstrates how systems of gender and sex are knotted and become imprinted upon bodies across species, particularly in regards to constructions of hegemonic masculinity. I will conclude the chapter with an analysis of how male-identifying individuals make the decision to fix or keep their canines intact. The interviews reflect the political nature of spaying and neutering, as it exists beyond the realm of the biological body in conversation with gender as a social construct. These considerations will reveal how the contemporary canine body, which is often in place at least in part to serve the needs of the human, can act to reinforce narratives of hegemonic masculinity across bodies, ultimately limiting avenues of gendered expression and reinforcing problematic power dynamics.



## Part II. To Neuter, Or Not to Neuter? The Politics of “Fixing” and Attempts to Address Overpopulation

Spaying and neutering involves surgically rendering a nonhuman animal infertile. While it is widely promoted by animal activists, veterinarians and a substantial number of companion species owners, it remains controversial to some individuals in contemporary United States culture, as the men’s happy hour conversation demonstrated. The controversy is rooted in various gendered narratives that act to impact people’s decisions to spay or neuter their companion species. As a result, the spaying and neutering of companion species is deeply embedded in the taxonomy of power that is gender and its subsequent constructions. Critically interrogating those gendered narratives reveals how they are embedded in unequal power dynamics that intimately shape interspecies relationships. Simultaneously, the narratives act to both subvert and reinforce inequalities across human and nonhuman bodies and lives, particularly in regard to hegemonic masculinity and its hierarchical and pervasive impact on all members of society.

Animal activists and veterinarians promote spaying and neutering in an effort to reduce the overpopulation of companion species. Overpopulation of companion species has been a common problem throughout history. By-and-large, the most common solution to that problem has been the systematic destruction of unwanted companion species via euthanasia.<sup>180</sup> In an attempt to minimize the production and ultimate destruction of unwanted canine bodies, animal rights groups and veterinarians began experimenting with sterilization surgeries in the early twentieth century.<sup>181</sup> Sterilization

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<sup>180</sup> Bernard Oreste Unti, *Protecting all Animals: A Fifty-Year History of the Humane Society of the United States*. (New York: Humane Society of the United States, 2004) and Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*.

<sup>181</sup> Andrew N. Rowan, “Animal Sheltering Trends in the U.S.” The Humane Society of the United States, 2009, accessed January 7, 2017,

includes the castration of male-bodied animals, a procedure that would come to be commonly referred to as neutering. The sterilization of female-bodied animals would come to be called spaying. In the 1970's low-cost spay and neuter clinics began to open, first in Los Angeles in 1971, followed by other locations in the United States. By the 1980's there began to be a decline in euthanasia rates of companion species across the country, making it clear that sterilization was a surefire way to halt the (re)production of companion species bodies.<sup>182</sup> As technologies become more advanced and awareness spreads, spaying and neutering have become increasingly common throughout the country.

As stated above, experimentation with sterilization surgeries for companion species began early in the twentieth century in an effort to halt the large-scale (re)production of bodies that would ultimately end up being destroyed.<sup>183</sup> According to *The Journal of Veterinary Behavior* spaying and neutering is now a widely used and medically safe way to manage the current overpopulation of companion species in the United States and abroad. Furthermore, spaying and neutering has been shown to decrease certain behaviors that are generally viewed as unsavory in nonhuman animals, such as marking via urination and aggression and dominance towards people as well as other animals.<sup>184</sup> These undesirable behaviors can make it difficult for human and nonhuman animals to cohabitate. In our anthropocentric world where nonhuman

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[http://www.humanesociety.org/animal\\_community/resources/timelines/animal\\_sheltering\\_trends.html?referrer=http://dogtime.com/dog-health/spay-neuter/34567-history-spaying-neutering-pets](http://www.humanesociety.org/animal_community/resources/timelines/animal_sheltering_trends.html?referrer=http://dogtime.com/dog-health/spay-neuter/34567-history-spaying-neutering-pets).

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> D. Berthaud, C. Nevison, J. Waterhouse, D. Hawkins, The Prevalence of Neutered Dogs (*canis familiaris*) across Countries of the Western World, *Journal of Veterinary Behavior: Clinical Applications & Research* 6 n.1 (2011); 78.

animals are destroyed if they do not conform, such behaviors can result in nonhuman animals being abandoned at animal control centers and shelters. Following abandonment these animals have about a fifty percent chance, depending upon a number of factors, of being deemed unwanted and then killed.<sup>185</sup> Issues with the unsavory behavior of canines reflect the unequal relationship that exists across species, for failing to meet the needs and desires of the human master can very possibly result in the death of the animal. This fact further complicates the human-canine relationship, reifying the dog's primary status as a purchasable and in turn disposable product in contemporary United States culture.

Spaying and neutering, which assists in substantially reducing the number of unwanted, disposable bodies, is a topic worth considering for a variety of ethical, financial and affective reasons. It is estimated that it costs American taxpayers \$2 billion every year to impound, shelter, euthanize and dispose of unwanted companion animals.<sup>186</sup> The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals reports that approximately 2.7 million unwanted companion animals are euthanized every year in the United States, although other groups report even higher rates of euthanasia across the country.<sup>187</sup> A difference in euthanasia rates reflects the inconsistencies in data collection across U.S. counties' animal care and control agencies. While some states and counties

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<sup>185</sup> "Pet Statistics," American Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, 2017, accessed January 30, 2017, <http://www.aspca.org/animal-homelessness/shelter-intake-and-surrender/pet-statistics>.

<sup>186</sup> Phyllis Coleman, Heather Veleanu, and Sandra K. Wolkov, "It's Raining Cats and Dogs...Government Lawyers Take Note: Differential Licensing Laws Generate Revenue, Reduce Costs, Protect Citizens, and Save Lives," *Stetson Law Review* 40 n.2 (2011): 393-434.

<sup>187</sup> "Pet Statistics," American Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, 2017, accessed January 30, 2017, <http://www.aspca.org/animal-homelessness/shelter-intake-and-surrender/pet-statistics>.

mandate the keeping of very specific records, others do not. Furthermore, who is counted is a very political issue, particularly since higher rates of euthanasia can garner negative press, so keeping the on-paper euthanasia rates artificially low can positively benefit animal care and control agencies. While some consider spaying and neutering to be cruel, agency stripping and hugely anthropocentric because it involves regulating the sexed bodies of animals, it would seem to be the only alternative in our current cultural model to avoid the mass euthanasia of healthy critters. While the regulation of another's reproductive capabilities is certainly domineering, the human-canine relationship is one of dominance. As leashed canines exist in our current social model, they are without agency in all regards, for humans control virtually every element of their lives and deaths. Keeping that in mind, spaying and neutering could arguably be viewed as a means of protecting individual canine bodies as well as future generations from abandonment and death. Thinking about spaying and neutering as such positions it as a surprisingly controversial but largely positive and socially responsible component of modern-day pet keeping.

Despite the many individual and social benefits that are derived from spaying and neutering, it remains a practice that not all pet owners embrace, as the men's happy hour conversation revealed. Instead, it is a deeply complex issue, entangled in a range of intersectionally situated political nuances that are prevalent in the United States as well as abroad. Examples of the deeply political nature of spaying and neutering include a rather wide-ranging "Real Men Neuter Their Dogs" (Figure 4.1) campaign created by the Ireland-based organization SpayAware. In a press release Pete Wedderburn, a representative of SpayAware, claims the campaign was created because, "many men tend to project their attitudes and feelings about masculinity and virility onto their dogs, with the result that they refuse to have them neutered," and further explains that the

campaign posters, are “witty, thought provoking and a way to engage particularly with young men who see their dogs’ virility as an extension of their own.”<sup>188</sup> The press release goes on to explain that over 4,500 unwanted dogs and an even greater number of cats were destroyed in Ireland in 2012 and that initiatives such as the “Real Men Neuter” campaign help combat how “many men still cling to the traditional view that it is wrong or unnatural to spay or neuter pets, in spite of clear evidence that it is the only effective way to deal with the country’s pet overpopulation crisis, resulting in the deaths of thousands of healthy but unwanted cats and dogs.”<sup>189</sup>



Figure 4.1 – SpayAware

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<sup>188</sup> “Real Men Neuter: Press Release,” SpayAware, July 17, 2016, accessed January 27, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/Spayaware/posts/150269118502028>.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

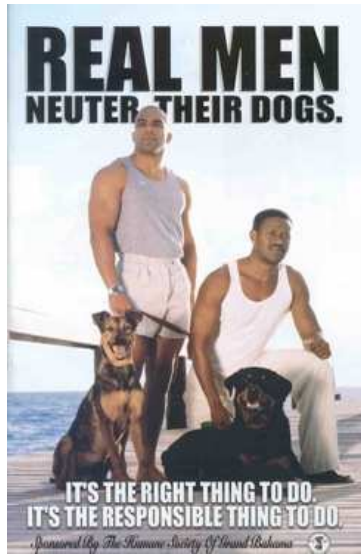


Figure 4.2 – Real Men Bahamas

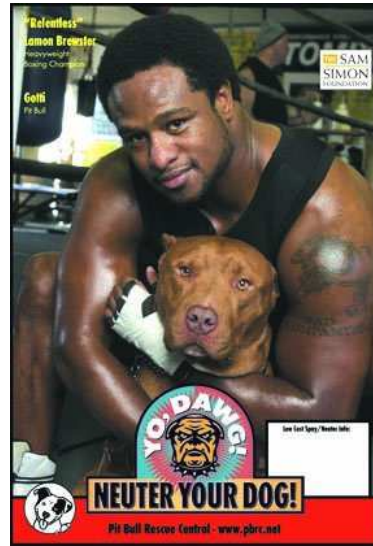


Figure 4.3 – Pit Bull Rescue Central

The “Real Men” narrative is deeply embedded with characteristics of hegemonic masculinity. SpayAware is not the only animal welfare organization that utilizes the “Real Men Neuter” slogan while placing large, muscled, imposing, hyper-masculine, male-bodied individuals in their advertisements. A number of other organizations that engage with the “Real Men Neuter” rhetoric even feature images of large, muscled men of color with the highly racialized, classed and gendered dogs that present as so-called “bully breeds,” which is a category of canine interrogated extensively in the next chapter. In situating these bodies together, these animal activist organizations are enthusiastically engaging in problematic gendered narratives. They are also imposing human-created gendered constructions onto nonhuman animals. Utilizing gendered stereotypes about what a “real man” allegedly looks like in contemporary United States culture perpetuates the limited and limiting narratives surrounding hegemonic masculinity. Those narratives have been and continue to be utilized to oppress women as well as men who do not have access hegemonic masculinity, either by choice or because it was not available to them in the first place. As a result, activists engaging in such sexist

rhetoric, even if their intentions across species are positive, are ultimately counterproductive because it perpetuates oppressive systems of power.

Further examples of organizations that utilize the “Real Men Neuter” narrative includes the Humane Society of Grand Bahamas, K9 Compassion Foundation of Los Angeles, online education resource Pit Bull Rescue Central, Metroplex Animal Coalition of Dallas, Texas and the Palm Beach County Animal Care and Control Division. All of the aforementioned animal activist groups engage with imagery that is embedded with taxonomies of power in such a way that yet again entangles masculinities across species. The Humane Society of Grand Bahamas (Figure 4.2), for instance, has a poster featuring two muscled men of color with two dogs who have been coded as masculine, including a Rottweiler, which has been considered a “bully breed.” Pit Bull Rescue Central (Figure 4.3) also features a muscled black man with a brown pit-bull appearing dog. The muscled black man is wearing weight-lifting gloves and appears to be at the gym, further signifying traits of hegemonic masculinity, including strength and toughness. K9 Compassion Foundation (Figure 4.4) showcases the muscled, shirtless, tattooed and tough-looking Latino actor Danny Trejo, who is featured in Hollywood action films such as 1996’s *From Dusk Till Dawn* and 2010’s *Machete*, often playing a villain or antihero. Trejo is shown with a large and equally tough-looking Rottweiler. All of these images work to reify oppressive and limiting narratives of hegemonic masculinity. As representations, these campaigns tell men what is ideal in contemporary United States culture. They glorify hegemonic masculinity and the dominance and hierarchical thinking the system of gender emboldens. In perpetuating the sexist and limiting gendered rhetoric of hegemonic masculinity and its “real men” narratives, these animal activist organizations are promoting dualistic and oppressive systems of thought, not interspecies social responsibility and activism.

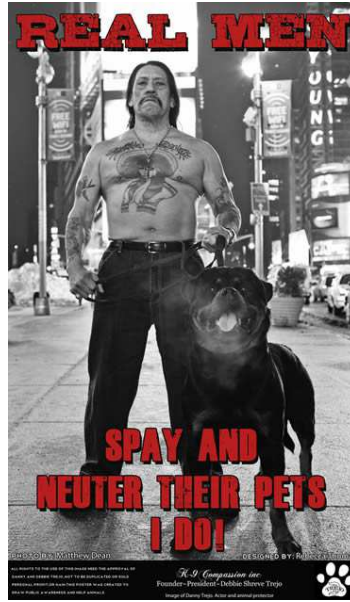


Figure 4.4 – K9 Compassion

The muddling of the human/animal dichotomy is oftentimes positive because it can allow for the challenging of anthropocentrism, the destabilizing of categories and norms and a recalibration of the center. But in the above campaigns, muddling may perpetuate problematic and even life threatening stereotypes about masculinity as a vehicle of dominance, toughness and even violence, particularly as it pertains to men of color and the “bully breeds” they are associated with in the contemporary American cultural imaginary. Research has demonstrated that men who are exposed to images of the so-called ideal male body in the media report wanted to build larger chests and leaner abs in order to impress women,<sup>190</sup> are less comfortable with normal bodily elements such as sweat and hair<sup>191</sup> and are significantly more likely to be depressed while having higher levels of muscle dissatisfaction than those exposed to neutral images in the

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<sup>190</sup> Rebekah T. Ridgeway and Tracy L. Tylka. College Men’s Perception of Ideal Body Composition and Shape. *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, 6 (2005): 209-220.

<sup>191</sup> Deborah Schooler and Monique L. Ward, “Average Joes: Men’s Relationships with Media, Real Bodies, and Sexuality,” *Psychology of Men and Masculinity* 7 (2006); 27-41.



media.<sup>192</sup> Therefore, utilizing these images of what so-called “real men” look like also perpetuates a very narrow representation of how masculinity manifests itself upon the male body, potentially leading to feelings of inadequacy by male-bodied individuals who are unable to conform to the social ideal.

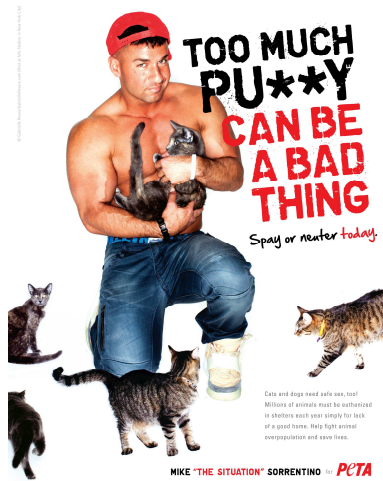


Figure 4.5 - PETA



Figure 4.6 - SPCA

Other spaying and neutering campaigns refrain from engaging with the problematic language of “Real Men” but instead draw upon other explicit glorifications of hegemonic masculinity and the objectification of women. Some even act to reinforce negative stereotypes about the criminalization of male bodies of color. The spaying and neutering campaign produced by the highly problematic animal rights organization People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)<sup>193</sup>, includes the slogan “Too Much

<sup>192</sup> Daniel Agliata and Stacey Tantleff-Dunn, The Impact of Media Exposure on Males Body Image. *Journal of Social and Cultural Psychology* 23 (2004); 7-22.

<sup>193</sup> It has been reported that despite having a \$30 million annual budget, PETA’s shelters have a 2.5% adoption rate for dogs in their facilities, significantly below the national average (James McWilliams, “PETA’s Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad, History of Killing Animals,” *The Atlantic*, 2012, accessed March 21, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2012/03/petas-terrible-horrible-no-good-very-bad-history-of-killing-animals/254130/>.) It has also been reported that PETA consistently produces objectifying and body shaming advertisements that emphasize shock value and attention seeking over substance and producing real change (Lucy Uprichard, “The

Pussy Can be a Bad Thing – Spay or Neuter Today” (Figure 4.5) and features a muscular, shirtless, chest-hair-free and overall hyper-masculine cast member of the MTV reality television show *Jersey Shore* holding a cat. Another spaying and neutering campaign produced by SPCA International out of Auckland, New Zealand (Figure 4.6) includes two black male animals, one cat and one dog, with signs around their necks in an attempt to duplicate a human criminal’s mug shot with the question “Is Your Pet a Sex Offender?” below the image. And the “I Hate Balls” campaign (Figure 4.7) features a video with white, blonde actress Katherine Heigl strutting around in a highly sexualized, tight, low-cut pink dress while she discusses how she “hates testicles” in an attempt to encourage spaying and neutering. These campaigns demonstrate the highly entangled nature of our constructions and conceptualizations of nonhuman animals with the gendered and racialized narratives of human animals. In doing so, these activist organizations reproduce sexism and racism across species. While that reproduction may be unintentional, it is still very dangerous because it limits facets of individual and cultural identities while perpetuating harmful power dynamics that situate the hyper-masculine male over others. The campaigns also work to glorify the sexualized and objectified white body (Figure 4.5 and Figure 4.7) while criminalizing the black body (Figure 4.6) across species.



Figure 4.7 – I Hate Balls

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Problem with PETA," *The Huffington Post*, 2013, accessed March 21, 2017, [http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/lucy-uprichard/the-many-failings-of-peta\\_b\\_2945870.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/lucy-uprichard/the-many-failings-of-peta_b_2945870.html).)

A final spaying and neutering campaign example that I will explore was started by one of the largest no-kill shelters in the United States, Best Friends Animal Sanctuary that is based in Kanab, Utah. Nonetheless, it has been used rather extensively all over the United States. The campaign features the slogan “Hooters for Neuters” (Figures 4.8 and 4.9) and was started, “to reach men who might feel uncomfortable neutering their pets for fear it will take away their masculinity.”<sup>194</sup> This campaign includes a great many objectifying posters and other campaign material featuring images of sexualized scantily clad women who conform to normative societal standards of beauty in an effort to promote spaying and neutering overall, but they aim to specifically highlight events where, “men can enjoy free chicken wings while visiting with the Hooters girls and watching sports games while their pet is neutered on a mobile spay/neuter unit or transported to a nearby clinic” before being returned to Hooters to be reunited with their companion people.<sup>195</sup> Such activities (eating chicken wings and watching sports amongst scantily clad women) allow them to be “manly” while doing something intrinsically not manly (neutering their companion species, also referred to as, “taking another man’s balls”). The Hooters for Neuters campaign is therefore using problematic language that calls women “girls” while assuming that men are the only ones in need of discounted spaying and neutering services. The objectifying portrayals of women (Figures 4.8 and 4.9), which are used to appeal to heteronormative men, are also promoting sexism in the name of animal rights. These gendered campaigns perpetuate narratives of hegemonic masculinity and in turn sexism in an effort to help companion animals and their human owners, instead of attempting to draw attention to the nature of linked, intersectional oppressions.

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<sup>194</sup> “Hooters for Neuters Press Release,” ASPCA 2015.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.



Figure 4.8 – Hooters for Neuters 1    Figure 4.9 – Hooters for Neuters 2

The Hooters for Neuters program interweaves animal advocacy and the blatant objectification and sexualization of women. In working to combat the fear of emasculated companion species, and all species, and to help decrease the tragic and staggering euthanasia rates in the United States, Best Friends Animal Sanctuary and other animal rights organizations who have adopted the program perpetuate sexism. They also legitimately help animals and the community and are, by-and-large, seemingly very well intentioned. But however unfortunate it may be, injustices and inequalities are entangled and “we cannot fight animal exploitation without challenging patriarchy, and we cannot challenge patriarchy without fighting animal exploitation.”<sup>196</sup> For just as the overarching, all-encompassing social mechanism that is the patriarchy is contingent upon the domination and oppression of women, the reign of anthropocentrism is reliant upon the domination and oppression of nonhuman animals. Given that oppressions are knitted in such a way that one can never be made entirely separate from another, the fight for equality must transcend normative gender as well as species models that

<sup>196</sup> Julie Urbanik, “‘Hooters for Neuters’: Sexist or Transgressive Animal Advocacy Campaign?” *Humanimalia* 1 n.1 (September 2009), 48.

contribute to discrimination and exploitation.<sup>197</sup> Animal activists should strive to challenge all systems of oppression, instead of duplicating oppressions of one in an effort to benefit another. Instead of creating advertisements and campaigns that encourage spaying and neutering in addition to oppressive narratives and representations of hegemonic masculinity, it could be more productive to emphasize fiscal and social responsibility as well as the benefits of fixing for individuals across species, including that it discourages urinating inside the home and lowers the risk of canines developing certain diseases, including testicular cancer in male dogs and breast tumors in female dogs.<sup>198</sup>

The Hooters for Neuters campaign, as well as the other campaigns mentioned above, claim to promote animal rights. While they certainly produce some positive material change they also simultaneously reinforce highly troubling, archaic narratives surrounding gender and other social locations. And since “*all* systems of oppression/domination are interlocked...one can’t alter one without altering them all,” so we must work to challenge all systems of oppression that work together to uphold the privileges of some and oppress others.<sup>199</sup> Being aware of how such intersecting oppressions work together to form structural inequalities needs to be considered when producing campaigns advocating for the spaying and neutering of companion animals.

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<sup>197</sup> Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat* and Carol J. Adams & Josephine Donovan, *Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).

<sup>198</sup> “Fact or Fiction? Spay/Neuter Myths Busted,” ASPCA, February 17, 2017, accessed March 3, 2017, [http://www.aspc.org/news/fact-or-fiction-spayneuter-myths-busted?ms=em\\_new\\_news-spayneuter-true-false-20170217&initialms=em\\_new\\_news-spayneuter-true-false-20170217&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=newsalert&utm\\_source=newsalertemail-20170217&eml\\_name=2017.02.17%20-%20News%20Alert%20National%20\(final%20redo\)&eml\\_id=10455795&spMailingID=10455795&spUserID=NjA1MDY3MzA2MzYS1&spJobID=1101411695&spReportId=MTewMTQxMTY5NQs2](http://www.aspc.org/news/fact-or-fiction-spayneuter-myths-busted?ms=em_new_news-spayneuter-true-false-20170217&initialms=em_new_news-spayneuter-true-false-20170217&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsalert&utm_source=newsalertemail-20170217&eml_name=2017.02.17%20-%20News%20Alert%20National%20(final%20redo)&eml_id=10455795&spMailingID=10455795&spUserID=NjA1MDY3MzA2MzYS1&spJobID=1101411695&spReportId=MTewMTQxMTY5NQs2).

<sup>199</sup> Urbanik, “‘Hooters for Neuters’: Sexist or Transgressive Animal Advocacy Campaign?”, 48.

The mechanisms used to oppress one being, regardless of species, are ensnared with those that oppress another. Therefore, avoiding language and actions that perpetuate stereotypes as they apply to all taxonomies of power will avoid the attempt to liberate one at the expense of another, as has been done in the animal activist campaigns explored above.

### Part III. Implanting Masculinity: Plastic Surgery, Ocularcentrism, and the Canine

Maintaining narratives and practices surrounding hegemonic masculinity assists in perpetuating and normalizing the dominance of men over women in contemporary United States culture. Glorifying masculinity in relationship to the politics of fixing companion species becomes further tangible when one considers the existence of Neuticles (Figure 4.10), which are hormone-free artificial silicon testicles. These are produced primarily for companion species but can and have been used in livestock as well. One of the primary reasons that people do not spay or neuter their companion animal(s) is because of cost. A program like Hooters for Neuters addresses issues of cost with its low cost or even free spaying and neutering options, which is certainly of social benefit in spite of their sexist rhetoric.<sup>200</sup> But Neuticles do not address the problem of cost; they only address the socially constructed concern that neutering somehow emasculates across species. Neuticles come in a range of size from extra small to extra extra large and cost anywhere from \$150 a pair to well over \$500, drastically increasing the cost of neutering. Using the campaign slogan, “It’s like nothing ever changed,”

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<sup>200</sup> J. Blackshaw and C. Day, “Attitudes of Dog Owners to Neutering Cats or Dogs: Demographic Data and Effects of Owner Attitudes,” *Australian Veterinary Journal* 71 (1994): 113-116.

Neuticles act as a stand-in for “the real thing” in our ocularcentric, product-obsessed capitalist culture and their popularity continues to grow every year.<sup>201</sup>



Figure 4.10 - Neuticles

After two years of development inventor Gregg A. Miller of Independence, Missouri was able to offer Neuticles to the general public beginning in 1995 as part of his company Canine Testicular Implant. According to the company’s website, the product is “endorsed by hundreds of humane societies worldwide” and the company has sold over 500,000 pairs in the United States and abroad. The implants can be purchased online, along with Neuticle t-shirts, bumper stickers and even earrings that are shaped like the actual implantation itself.<sup>202</sup> The company also features such appearance-focused products as PermaStay ear implantations and TempoStay ear support for canines, eye implantations for a variety of species and surgical scar removing gel for pets.<sup>203</sup> Miller, who was inspired to create the product after learning about the alleged emasculating horrors of neutering, passionately markets his products. Miller explained to *The Huffington Post* that after neutering, “of course the dog knows a familiar part of his body is missing – he misses them,” but “with Neuticles, he doesn’t know anything has

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<sup>201</sup> Neuticles, 2011, accessed February 7, 2017, <http://www.neuticles.com/>.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.



changed. For a male dog, his little things down there are his favorite part of his body. He needs them. Dogs are very smart” (Figure 4.11).<sup>204</sup>



Figure 4.11 – Dog with Neuticles

Humans can determine whether or not a dog is neutered by simply visually checking the animal’s body. Ocularcentrism, a term used to describe the “centrality of the visual to contemporary Western life,” shapes a great deal of our postmodern era, and the politics of testicles are no different.<sup>205</sup> Therefore, a limitation with Miller’s rationale is that it is an entirely anthropocentric, ocularcentric perspective. We do not know how animals feel, for “animals present us with the absolute problem of alterity – the difficulty or near impossibility of seeing or, perhaps even more so, hearing, smelling, sensing from the place of the absolute other.”<sup>206</sup> Neuticles are about the human gaze. They are about sight, not the other senses. Therefore, they are about looking the same, not feeling the same, as the company’s website and commercial claim. While actual nonhuman animal testicles regulate hormones within the body and omit a scent evident to members of

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<sup>204</sup> Andy Campbell, “Neuticles: Dogs ‘Need’ Testicle Implants, Says Inventor,” *The Huffington Post*, April 25, 2013, accessed February 2, 2017, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/25/neuticles-dog-testicle-implants-castration-behavior\\_n\\_3156424.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/25/neuticles-dog-testicle-implants-castration-behavior_n_3156424.html).

<sup>205</sup> Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretations of Visual Methodologies*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (London: SAGE Publishing, 2007), 2.

<sup>206</sup> Weil, *Thinking Animals: Why Animal Studies Now?*, 32.



one's own species externally, Neuticles are simply there to be gazed upon by humans. For while dogs, for example, do not appear to run around their local dog parks visually checking other dogs for testicles or a lack thereof, humans do engage in such visually-focused activities, because while dogs are much more in touch with their other senses, humans are extremely visually-fixated.<sup>207</sup> While spaying and neutering are blatantly biopolitical, Neuticles do nothing but further contribute to the human altering of nonhuman animal bodies. As a human-created and manufactured technology they further shift the animal away from the so-called "natural" state that is apparently incredibly desired by people concerned with neutering as an emasculating act, as the interviews explored later in this chapter demonstrate.

Despite the problematic nature of the product from a social perspective, veterinarians assert that Neuticles are medically safe for animals. When asked about Neuticles, Dr. John Martin of Metairie, Louisiana asserts, "if it convinces people to neuter their pet I'm all for it" and Dr. Alicia Boyce of Radcliffe, Kentucky said "if a simple, harmless procedure brings more people in to have their pets neutered – in a country where over seventeen million pets are put to sleep each year – that's fine with me."<sup>208</sup> And Dr. M. Murray of Queensland, Australia even acknowledged, "I think more chaps would agree to neuter their pet if they knew about Neuticles."<sup>209</sup> Such perspectives are perhaps easy to understand, for if given the choice between leaving a critter intact and capable of bringing more unwanted companion species into the world that will only end up being euthanized and inserting Neuticles to create a cyborgian critter, endorsing the product may be the lesser of two evils. While Haraway argues that cyborgs are

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<sup>207</sup> Paul E. Miller and Christopher J. Murphy, "Vision in Dogs," *Journal of American Veterinary Medical Association* 207 n.12 (1995); 1623-1634.

<sup>208</sup> Neuticles, 2011, accessed February 2, 2017, <http://www.neuticles.com/>.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

positive for society and I largely agree with her assessment, in this particular instance, implanting a human-created technology into a nonhuman animal that has no actual benefit for that animal is inhumane, making this particular cyborgian creation socially negative.

Customers who have purchased Neuticles for their critters are enthused as well, for they clearly believe that neutering without Neuticles is traumatizing for pets, as the company's website and commercial claim. A man who purchased the product for his family's pet dog asserted Neuticles "let the poor dog keep his dignity" after neutering and on the company's website satisfied customer Lane Hinderman of Metairie, Louisiana proclaimed, "he's a guy and I wanted him to remain looking like one."<sup>210</sup> Eddie Hamblin of Archdale, North Carolina even said "some of my friends have commended me for being a caring owner who knew the importance of maintaining Bruno's [his dog] natural look."<sup>211</sup> These statements reflect how the gaze and ocularcentrism work to reify masculinity upon the bodies of some canines, for they allow a visual identifier of masculinity to remain intact. Neuticles were even embedded in our current popular culture narrative when they were featured in the episode of the E! Network's reality television show *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*.<sup>212</sup> In the episode Caitlyn Jenner, who at the time was identifying as Bruce, purchased them for Kim's boxer, Rocky Kardashian, in an effort to ensure the dog's masculinity was retained following surgery, and perhaps also to continue the family's trend of embracing plastic surgery.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*. "Kourt Goes A.W.O.L." Season 5, Episode 6. Executive Producer Ryan Seacrest. E! Network, September, 2010.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

Neuticles are a rather troubling byproduct of our consumer-driven, ocularcentric culture. They are also very much intertwined with narratives embedded in human animals' conceptualizations of hegemonic masculinity. Neuticles are about appearing macho and powerful; they are to be looked at in an effort to assure that outsiders think the critter is still entirely "masculine." As a result, they clearly have more to do with human than nonhuman animals, as they are in place to alleviate the bizarre projection that "many men continue to view their male pets as personifications of their own egos and libidos."<sup>214</sup> Neuticles therefore imprint our socially constructed, visually fixated perception of masculinity onto nonhuman animals and companion species in particular. They also highlight how entangled companion species are with the industry of pet keeping, for as Donna Haraway so articulately notes, "Companion-species kin patterns of consumerism should be a rich place to get at the relations that shape emergent subjects, not all of whom are people, in lively capital's naturecultures. Properly mutated, the classics, such as gender, race, and class, hardly disappear in this world – far from it."<sup>215</sup> Therefore, the technologies created, manufactured and sold in contemporary U.S. culture's booming pet industry, which includes Neuticles and in many ways the canine bodies themselves, exist in a space ripe with social formations and taxonomies of power. Keeping that in mind, the next section will explore constructions of gender and hegemonic masculinity further across species as I interrogate why individual male-identifying people chose to neuter or leave their canines intact.

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<sup>214</sup> Urbanik, "Hooters for Neuters": Sexist or Transgressive Animal Advocacy Campaign?"; 48.

<sup>215</sup> Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 11.

#### Part IV. Constructing and Performing Gender, Glorifying Hegemonic Masculinity

From November 2015 through April of 2016 I conducted 44 interviews with male identifying individuals who live with canines at dog parks throughout Maricopa County, Arizona. I asked the men why they chose to spay or neuter, as opposed to leaving their dogs intact, in an attempt to understand men's reasoning behind the decision, including if there was a gendered motivation. Half of the interviews conducted (22) were with owners who chose to spay or neuter, with 14 of those individuals explaining that their dogs had already been spayed and neutered upon adoption and 6 choosing to spay and neuter themselves, citing not wanting to be responsible for potential puppies that could result from being left intact, social responsibility, to discourage behavioral issues and the health of their dogs as reasons for their decisions.<sup>216</sup> An additional 22 interviews were with men who chose not to spay or neuter their companion canine(s), with 8 individuals citing prohibitively high cost as the primary reason they chose not to have the procedure done, 8 utilizing gendered narratives to rationalize their decisions and another 6 claiming that spaying or neutering had simply not occurred to them in the first place. When selecting participants, I attempted to develop a diverse sample. Of the 44 men interviewed, 27 identified as White, 9 identified as Latino or Hispanic, 4 identified as Black or African American, 3 identified as Asian and 1 identified as "mixed race." The age range of the participants was 18-58 with the average age being 35. Socioeconomically, 7 identified as working class, 34 identified as middle class, and 3 identified as upper class while 4 participants identified as homosexual and 40 identified as heterosexual. In this

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<sup>216</sup> In the state of Arizona, as well as in thirty-two other U.S. states, it is required that releasing agencies, including animal controls and humane societies, spay and neuter animals before they are adopted out in an attempt to combat the overpopulation of companion species. Cynthia Hodges, Brief Summary of State Spay and Neuter Laws, Michigan State University College of Law, Animal Legal and Historical Center, 2010, accessed December 8, 2016, <https://www.animalaw.info/intro/state-spay-and-neuter-laws>.

section I will interrogate how gender more broadly and hegemonic masculinity in particular is constructed. I will situate those constructions in relationship to the interviews I conducted in an attempt to understand how gender as a taxonomy of power becomes entangled with notions of identity and applied across species.

Gender is neither innate nor is it static. Instead, gender is constructed as “something one does, and does recurrently, in interaction with others.”<sup>217</sup> Gender is also culturally and historically contingent, as it is shaped by society at large as well as the media in a given time and place.<sup>218</sup> Situated as a primary unit of analysis in feminist discourse and research, gender can be defined and utilized in multiple and multifaceted ways and is oftentimes positioned rather simplistically and problematically as both oppositional to and interconnected with sex via the sex/gender dualism. Sex is oftentimes explained as biological and therefore innate whereas gender is discussed as socially constructed, or produced by social conditions, expectations and mores. This means that on the surface gender could be read as having no clear-cut link to the biological human body, but is instead assembled entirely by society, whereas in actuality, socially constructed gender is intimately linked with biological sex and shaped in conversation with multiple intersecting taxonomies of power. A complex definition of gender must include a consideration of “sexuality and reproduction; sexual difference, embodiment, the social constitution of male, female, intersexual, other; masculinity and femininity; ideas, discourses, practices, subjectivities and social relationships.”<sup>219</sup>

Keeping in mind the entangled and political nature of sex and gender, the interviews elicited some interesting emotional responses from the men. “That’s not

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<sup>217</sup> West and Zimmerman, *Doing Gender*; 125-151.

<sup>218</sup> Raewyn Connell, *The Men and the Boys* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

<sup>219</sup> Caroline Ramazanoglu and Judith Holland, *Feminist Methodology: Challenges & Choices* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2002), 5.

natural! If I neutered him he wouldn't be a real man anymore! And I couldn't do that to another man," a dapper-looking, fifty-eight year old white man named George<sup>220</sup> said to me when I asked him why he had decided against having his three-year-old Rhodesian Ridgeback neutered. While answering he appeared uncomfortable, his face becoming serious, shifting his legs away from me, as we sat next to one another on a light green bench at a dog park in Maricopa County, Arizona. "I might want to breed him too," he proceeded to explain, "I mean look at him, he's so handsome, strong and fit. And what man doesn't want to pass on his seed?" George seemed to sit taller as he continued to carry on about the impeccable nature of his dog's genetics, clearly taking great pride in his physicality. Meanwhile, the Rhodesian Ridgeback was running around the dog park, lifting his hind leg to urinate in between failed attempts at getting the other dogs at the park to play with him. "Finding a female Rhodesian worthy of such a man would be the real challenge!" George proclaimed, "but who knows...I'd never neuter him. I'd never do anything to him I wouldn't do to myself! And no man wants to be neutered! That's not something men do to one another...[it's] not civilized!" George started out calm, even soft spoken, when I initially began speaking to him, but he became increasingly more animated as he discussed his decision to keep his dog intact before abruptly announcing he needed to leave, at which point he leashed his canine friend (something I can only surmise he would never have done to himself, contradicting his previous statement) and drove away from the park in a black BMW sedan.

George framed his intact Rhodesian Ridgeback in relation to stereotypical constructions of gender that situate it as innate and intimately entangled with the human biological body. George communicated as though the dog himself could perform gender,

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<sup>220</sup> Please note all names have been changed so that all names mentioned in this dissertation are pseudonyms.

which I assert is impossible as gender is a human social construct that can be projected onto the bodies of canines, but not performed directly by a member of nonhuman species. In *Undoing Gender* Judith Butler attempts to “undo restrictively normative conceptions” of gender.<sup>221</sup> She describes gender as being a collective construction done as “a kind of doing, an incessant activity performed, in part, without one’s knowing and without one’s willing, it is not for that reason automatic or mechanical. On the contrary, it is a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint.”<sup>222</sup> Considering gender as a performance, produced in context with a community, a society at large, that one simultaneously actively produces and unconsciously regurgitates allows for a new awareness of gender. Gender as performance takes into account gender’s external and internal manifestations. Butler’s definition allows for a consideration of not just how gender is being done, but also how it is being undone in its performances, and what that means in people’s daily lives. The men’s happy hour conversation, in addition to their general demeanor, is an example of gender being performed, as was George’s body language (he took up more space with his physical body) and general change of demeanor (he became louder and more hostile) when discussing his decision not to neuter his dog.

Gender performance is oftentimes modeled on societal norms. Being “constituted by norms” allows gender to be constructed and maintained by an overarching social system, which in the contemporary United States means correlating sex with gender.<sup>223</sup> Gender norms are based on sex difference, on the overly simplistic dichotomy of male versus female. Male is situated as permanently fused with masculinity and female with

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<sup>221</sup> Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 1.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid, 3.

femininity. While constructions of masculinity and femininity are historically and contextually specific, overarching themes exist. Masculinity becomes linked with toughness, power, stoicism, strength, the tendency to take up space and the overall ability to *do*. Femininity, on the other hand, becomes associated with caregiving, delicacy, emotionality, beauty, dependence and even weakness or the ability to be undone. People are forced to exist as entirely male or entirely female, positioning the biological man as inherently masculine and the biological woman as inherently feminine. Those who exist in other spaces, who cannot or do not want to be one or the other encounter great difficulty. As Butler explains, “if I am someone who cannot *be* without *doing*, then the conditions of my doing are, in part, the conditions of my existence.”<sup>224</sup> For the men interviewed here, doing their gender requires that their dogs remain biologically intact.

“I wanted a big, male dog, so I wouldn’t neuter him,” explained twenty-nine year old white male Calvin, an MBA student at Arizona State University when discussing his two-year-old black-and-white Great Dane. When I asked him what makes a male dog’s personality distinct from a female dog’s personality, he said, “I grew up with male and female dogs and some of the female dogs were, well...kinda bitchy. But the male dogs were way easier to get along with. Way less dramatic. I don’t like drama. I like everybody to just get along.”

“What makes a dog dramatic?” I asked.

“Oh, you know, being kinda intense, picking favorites. Only being friendly with certain people and you know, being bitchy,” Calvin responded, providing no further details.

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid, 3.



“And you believe neutering Buster [the Great Dane] would change his personality and that he could start acting “dramatic,” like a female dog?” I inquired.

“Well, yeah. You know, without his parts he might as well be female,” he responded, indicating that the body literally makes the man. “He might start acting like a bitch. I wouldn’t want that. They call female dogs bitches for a reason, you know,” Calvin said, laughing, making eye contact with me in the hopes that I would join in on the hilarities. “He’s really friendly with me now and he’s good whenever my friends come over, I wouldn’t want to change that. And he’s friendly with my girlfriend. He tries to hump her sometimes,” he said, laughing again. “I think it’s funny. She doesn’t think it’s funny, but it’s funny. Buster is just being one of the guys!” Calvin said.

Calvin’s observations about female dogs being “dramatic” and “bitchy” when not being as “friendly” as he desired struck me as indicative of normative gender(ed) stereotyping and their subsequent scripts being applied to the nonhuman. Furthermore, proclaiming Buster’s humping to be a behavior that made him, “one of the guys,” normalized sexually aggressive behaviors in males across species while also minimizing the feelings of his girlfriend, who he acknowledged did not enjoy being humped. Such troubling scripts reinforce gendered narratives that normalize sexual violence in males while policing and silencing women who are perceived to be not friendly enough and/or do not enjoy sexual advances. While the aggressor is a canine, the rhetoric of sexist rape culture applies across species in this particular incident.

“Does he ever try to hump you,” I ask.

“No way,” Calvin says assertively, “he knows who’s boss. He’d never try to dominate me.”

Gender norms in contemporary U.S. culture continue to situate the male as masculine and therefore a full, active subject while positioning the female as feminine

and therefore a passive object. Gender norms structure our relationship with others and ourselves. They are a way to produce a common standard. Norms dictate how things should be, they are not inherent and instead we are born into familial and societal structures that dictate norms. Considering familial and societal norms is important because they define our relationship with others as well as with ourselves. Gender constructions are central to debates surrounding social norms and what makes for a livable life, making gender fundamental to broader questions of norms, identities and expectations. How one performs gender, either conforming to norms or subverting them, is related to how society grants individual freedoms of expression as well as the ability to be marked by social death and literal death, as is dictated by such things as the staggeringly high murder rate of transgender individuals who fail to conform to society's sex/gender binary.

Gender norms can therefore have the ability to dictate whether or not a life is livable, encouraging conformity and the perpetuation of a narrow understanding of what it means to be a man or a woman in contemporary U.S. culture. It is often gender norms and the influence of hegemonic masculinity in particular, for instance, that discourages some humans from neutering their dogs, resulting in an increased likelihood of behavioral issues while contributing to the overpopulation and euthanasia of unwanted but healthy companion species. So while dogs cannot perform gender, how their humans choose to perform gender and externalize that gender performance onto their bodies has the ability to dictate the quality of their lives and even their abilities to live or die. To develop more complex notions of gender performativity and make space for an interrogation of what permits for a livable life we need to recalibrate what is possible to avoid becoming trapped by the limitations of our imaginations and societal regulations. In allowing gender to be constructed as a continuum where choice and freedom are

imperative, instead of as a limiting and narrow dichotomy, space can be made for a more livable life across species boundaries.

“Why did you choose not to neuter your dog,” I asked a thirty-two year old Black male named John as his one-year-old brindled pit bull rambunctiously ran around the dog park with a group of other equally enthusiastic canine park goers.

“Why would I?” he responded, rather caustically, “It’s not natural [to neuter]. It’s bad for them.”

“Why is it bad for them?” I inquired further.

Looking further irritated and slightly flustered, John responded by explaining, “It would be bad for me! Men are supposed to be big and strong. You don’t take another man’s balls.”

“So you worry that if he were neutered, he wouldn’t be as big and strong,” I asked, pushing him further to explain.

“Men are supposed to be aggressive. They’re supposed to be that way,” he said, seeming to lack any interest in speaking to me further.

Pushing John again, I asked, “If he wasn’t as big and strong and aggressive as he is now, would that reflect poorly on you as his owner?”

“Well, yeah!” he all but shouted at me. “You don’t want to be one of those men with some little pussy dog. Like those guys with little purse dogs and shit, nobody takes those guys seriously. Look at that guy over there,” John says, pointing to a man walking into the dog park with a small mutt that he was carrying in one hand, “Nobody takes that guy seriously. A real man’s gotta be serious.”

After the conversation with John ended, I was left with the knowledge that a “real man” and a “real man’s dog” must be big, strong, aggressive and serious and that there was no space for alternative forms of masculine expression. Hegemonic masculinity can

be the result of not allowing alternative systems of gender expression and performativity. As stated earlier, hegemonic masculinity is a socially constructed gender norm that maintains power, control and dominance within a patriarchal society. Raewyn Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees, or is at least taken to guarantee, the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.”<sup>225</sup> While widely celebrated, it has been determined that those individuals who embrace societal norms associated with hegemonic masculinity, including “self-reliance,” “pursuit of playboy behavior,” and “power over women,” are statistically more likely to experience symptoms associated with negative mental health, including depression.<sup>226</sup> Yet, despite its personal and societal drawbacks, hegemonic masculinity is considered the ideal form of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity acts in such a way that it establishes a hierarchy between masculinity and femininity, placing itself at the top of the gender hierarchy with other expressions of masculinities and all femininities beneath it.

Embracing the “ideal” masculinity is what inspired the man at Casey Moore’s to discourage neutering, for to neuter would be a deviation from the hegemonic, both as it was etched upon the canine as well as the owner. Working in opposition to other forms of gender expression, hegemonic masculinity also exists in relationship to other femininities and masculinities.<sup>227</sup> While structurally and individually<sup>228</sup> pervasive in

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<sup>225</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*, 77.

<sup>226</sup> Y. Joel Wong, Moon-Ho Ringo Ho, Shu-Yi Wang, and I.S. Keino Miller, “Meta-Analysis of the Relationship between Conformity to Masculine Norms and Mental Health-Related Outcomes,” *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, Advance Online Publication, November 21, 2016, accessed February 2, 2017, <http://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/cou-cou0000176.pdf>.

<sup>227</sup> Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics*.

contemporary United States culture, hegemonic masculinity is neither innate nor static. Instead, it is a malleable construction and impacts people and cultures in a variety of ways,<sup>229</sup> for while all men benefit from the patriarchy not all men have equal access to hegemonic masculinity.<sup>230</sup>

Individually some men have structural access while others either choose to embrace or reject cultural images associated with being a “man”; those who fail to conform potentially face negative consequences such as being called a “sissy” or degraded in other, potentially physically violent, ways.<sup>231</sup> Other men, in attempts to conform to the limitations of hegemonic masculinity, will change certain elements of their personality or actions, such as the man who glorified the constructions of hegemonic masculinity and discouraged his friend from neutering his dog.<sup>232</sup> Intersectionality, including a person’s race, class and sexual orientation, shapes access to hegemonic masculinity as well.<sup>233</sup> As a result of structural racism, men of color, for instance, have less access to hegemonic masculinity.<sup>234</sup> Additionally, poor and working class men also have less access because wealth increases the probability that one will be able to engage in hegemonic masculinity.<sup>235</sup> As hegemonic masculinity is hugely

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<sup>228</sup> Greif, *Buddy System*.

<sup>229</sup> Connell and Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept.”

<sup>230</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*.

<sup>231</sup> Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics*.

<sup>232</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*.

<sup>233</sup> Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman, *Theorizing Masculinities*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1994). Connell and Messerschmidt, *Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept*.

<sup>234</sup> A.J. Lemelle, *Black Masculinity and Sexual Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2010). bell hooks. *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity* (New York: Routledge, 2004). Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism*. (New York: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>235</sup> Aundrea Janaé Snitker, “Constructing Masculinities and the Role of Stay-At-Home-

heteronormative, heterosexuals are granted privilege over homosexuals or others who prescribe to alternative sexual orientations.<sup>236</sup>

“Why would I neuter him? What if that turns him gay or something?” responds a thirty-six years old white man named Tom when I ask why he chose to keep his five-year-old boxer intact.

“Turns him gay?” I repeat back to him, as my eyebrows rose inquisitively.

“Yeah, you know, like what if he starts humping other guy dogs at the park or something? That would be embarrassing,” Tom explains further.

“Embarrassing for him, or embarrassing for you?” I asked.

“For both of us!” he responds, turning away from me, seemingly not thrilled with my questions.

“If you had a female dog, would you spay her?” I inquired.

“I don’t know,” Tom said, “That’s different [than a male dog]. You don’t do that to another guy.”

“Do you think it’s okay to spay females, though?” I ask again.

“It’s not as big of a deal,” he says, “Maybe it would be good to spay a female dog cause then she would be sweeter. You don’t want a female dog acting like a male dog.”

“What do you mean by that?” I asked in an attempt to get him to explain further.

“I don’t know. You know, it’s not as big of a deal,” Tom said, pulling his phone from his pocket, indicating the conversation was over. I yet again felt as though my inquiries were producing a hostile response from the men I was questioning. The question, to neuter or not to neuter, was clearly very personal to some men who chose to keep their dogs intact. Neutering evidently was deeply rooted in the owner’s own

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Fathers: Discussions of Isolation, Resistance, and the Division of Household Labor” (Ph.D. dissertation, Arizona State University, 2016) 16.

<sup>236</sup> George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. (New York: Basic Books, 1994). Connell, *Masculinities*.

conceptions of masculinity and heteronormativity and to neuter was somehow a betrayal to male-bodied individuals across species. It also was clear that normative constructions of masculinity were tied to male-bodied canines in different ways than femininity was tied to female-bodied canines. As such, sex and gender were not only entangled across the human and nonhuman bodies, but male dogs were expected to be masculine and female dogs were expected to be feminine. These narrow conceptualizations of gender reinforce problematic structures like hegemonic masculinity while not allowing space for alternative forms of expression across species.

In disentangling masculinity from the male body and disconnecting sex from gender, it becomes clear that while sex and gender are co-constituted, they are still distinct elements that are not necessarily innate in all bodies. In *Female Masculinity*, for instance, Jack Halberstam “conceptualizes masculinity without men,” forcing a destabilization of the common assumption that men and masculinity, and in turn female and femininity, are innately and inextricably linked.<sup>237</sup> Through the separation of biological male from gendered masculinities and delinking masculinity from biology, its socially constructed elements and fluidity become more tangible. So while the man at Casey Moore’s assumed that a dog’s testicles, its sex, were directly correlated with those behaviors labeled masculine, including aggression and an increased desire to protect an owner’s property, those characteristics reflect gender and may or may not have anything to do with the presence or lack thereof of a canine’s testicles. This is particularly tangible in relationship to Halberstam’s work, which demonstrates that masculinity can exist in the absence of testicles and the entire sexed male body. Therefore, aggression and the desire to protect an owner’s property can very well exist in a neutered canine, just as

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<sup>237</sup> Jack Halberstam. *Female Masculinity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 2.

those same personality characteristics can be absent when a canine's testicles are present.

Further examples of destabilizing assumptions that men and masculinity are permanently fused can be found in C.J. Pascoe's *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity & Sexuality in High School*. In highlighting how "girls can be masculine," explaining that, "they dressed, talked, and carried themselves in many ways 'like guys,'" the plasticity and performativity of masculinity became tangible.<sup>238</sup> Girls engaged in activities often associated with masculinity. They discussed wanting to play sports, playing basketball, acting aggressive and being loud, all typically associated with masculinity. Thus, instead of masculinity simply existing as a stable gendered identity that is entirely dictated by norms, it is so much more - a field of meaning, a set of practices, as well as an identity forged interactionally through the mobilization of gender capital. Considering these alternative forms of doing gender, these alternative ways of existing and performing, creates space for a livable life outside the boundaries of the constructed norm. It also provides evidence troubling the allegedly innate entanglement of sex and gender, challenging the established but extremely limiting dichotomy.

"Why did you decide to neuter your dog?" I asked a thirty-nine year old Latino man named Robert at the dog park about his one-year-old lab mix.

"I could tell he was an alpha dog when he was really young, only a couple months old, so I took him to be neutered. I didn't want him being a problem when he got older," Robert explained.

"What do you mean, an alpha dog?" I asked.

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<sup>238</sup> C.J. Pascoe, *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity & Sexuality in High School* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 115.



“Well, he wasn’t easy to train and always wanted to go through the door first, ahead of men, and [he] was really into food, like he’d try to take it from my hand really aggressively. It wasn’t good behavior. So my wife and I had him neutered to try to calm him down,” he said.

“Did having him neutered positively impact his behavior?” I inquired further.

“Sort of. He’s still dominant,” Robert said, laughing, “but he’s a lot better with food, a lot calmer. I think if he wasn’t neutered he’d be really aggressive still and that he’d be a lot more dominant. It was good to neuter him. And I don’t want him running all over the place getting them [other dogs] pregnant. I can only handle having one dog, you know! I don’t want a dog who thinks he’s a stud.” Robert decided to have his dog neutered, to alter his biological body in an attempt to shift his personality characteristics, which are generally thought of as gender constructs.

Sex and gender are often positioned as intertwined but still distinct concepts. Anne Fausto-Sterling considers the relationship that sex has to gender in *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics & the Construction of Sexuality*, where she asserts, “that labeling someone a man or a woman is the social decision. We may use scientific knowledge to help us make that decision, but only our beliefs about gender - not science - can define our sex. Furthermore, our beliefs about gender affect what kind of knowledge scientists produce about sex in the first place.”<sup>239</sup> In troubling the dualism that is sex and gender, Fausto-Sterling allows for a more complex and nuanced definition of gender to emerge. In that space, gender turns out to be a place where biology and culture overlap, becoming perpetually enmeshed. It is a space where, “There is no either/or. Rather, there are

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<sup>239</sup> Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics & the Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 3.

shades of difference.”<sup>240</sup> Keeping this in mind, considering how the body of the neutered canine, given the absence of his primary sexed organ, the testicles, in addition to the hormones they release into the body, exists in relationship to not only sex but also gender as social constructs allows for a new consideration of how both sex and gender are socially and scientifically constructed across species.

Fausto-Sterling considers how purported science has sexed as well as gendered the body, explaining that while society often projects the idea that “scientists create truths about sexuality,” it is imperative to acknowledge that “as our social viewpoints have shifted, so has the science of the body.”<sup>241</sup> While neither Fausto-Sterling nor myself are in any way purporting a discourse of “alternative facts,” science is socially constructed. In acknowledging the fluid nature of “scientific sexuality,” it becomes imperative to note that socially sanctioned constructions are in place in an effort to solidify notions of normality. Those notions of normality contribute to the creating and bolstering of so-called gender norms, including those applied to hegemonic masculinity, as was discussed earlier. Furthermore, that constructed normality is embedded in social inequalities and massive oversimplifications. Fausto-Sterling notes, “to maintain gender divisions, we must control those bodies that are so unruly as to blur the borders,” including the bodies of intersexed people and others who are not easily categorized, in addition to, arguably, the canine body that transcends normative constructs of sex and gender in the process of being “fixed.”<sup>242</sup> As a result, the process of “scientifically” sexing the body helps to solidify gender norms. Additionally, not all people are capable of, or even interested in, molding their bodies and lives around those norms, whereas other

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid, 5-7.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid, 8.

humans, including the men at Casey Moore's, strive to implement that conformity across species.

Gender cannot be entrenched exclusively in notions of social constructionism and sex cannot wholly stand for biology, as Fausto-Sterling has demonstrated. Historically, arguments rooted exclusively in biology have been highly problematic and used to oppress and even eliminate people, as has been demonstrated by scholars such as Jennifer Terry.<sup>243</sup> This provides further support for Fausto-Sterling's argument. Terry highlights how wholly rooting an explanation for social identities in biology can be seriously troubling. While Terry's article focused on the "historical effort to name and police homosexuality," her points can easily apply to social and historical constructions of gender as well, which as a category is intimately linked to sexuality.<sup>244</sup> In an effort to show how homosexuality is embodied, a fixation on biological explanations has been prioritized, with lesser considerations for socialization and freedom of choice. Instead of viewing nature/culture and sex/gender as oppositional forces, considering how these dichotomies merge and flow allows for a more complex consideration of these categories formations and stampings upon bodies and lives.

Similar biological essentialist narratives surround hegemonic masculinity, implying that dominance and power are innate elements of the gender category and its assumed corresponding sexed body, as opposed to socially constructed characteristics. This classification of the human body has at times yielded poor results that have often been used to oppress people who deviate from the norm, leading to the type of gender policing that was discussed earlier in this chapter. Instead of exclusively considering the

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<sup>243</sup> Jennifer Terry. "Anxious Slippages between 'Us' and 'Them': A Brief History of the Scientific Search for Homosexual Bodies." In *Deviant Bodies: Critical Perspectives on Difference in Science and Popular Culture*. Ed. Jennifer Terry and Jacqueline L. Urla (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 129-69.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid, 129.

biological or “natural,” culture must be examined too, in conversation with rhetoric surrounding choice and overarching power structures. This is true when considering sexuality as well as gender in addition to other taxonomies of power. As such, considering what Donna Haraway refers to as naturecultures becomes paramount. Naturecultures is Haraway’s holistic concept that she developed in *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* in an effort to do away with the deficiencies embedded in dualist thinking which ignore how nature becomes positioned with culture and vice versa. Considering naturecultures as they exist in relationship to spaying and neutering and the interspecies relationship more broadly can also highlight gendered inequalities. As was brought up earlier, “nature/culture and sex/gender are no loosely related pairs of terms; their specific form of relation is hierarchical appropriation...symbolically, nature and culture, as well as sex and gender, mutually (but not equally) construct each other.”<sup>245</sup> This understanding also helps to illuminate how structures like civilization and citizenship, which on the surface seem to be based in culture, are actually deeply intertwined with biological bodies across species. Failing to incorporate a consideration of the body (sex) into social theory (gender) leads to an incomplete analysis of interspecies interactions more broadly and spaying and neutering in particular, making the embracing of naturecultures imperative.

## Part V. Conclusions

“When I adopted Max he was already neutered. I got him from Arizona Animal Welfare League in Phoenix a few years ago. But even if he hadn’t been neutered when I adopted him, I would have had him neutered. It’s the right thing to do,” explained Andrew, a thirty-five year old white male, graphic designer in Chandler, Arizona. Andrew

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<sup>245</sup> Haraway, *Primate Visions*, 12.

and Max, a four year old, medium-sized, black-and-white, longhaired mutt, were enjoying the dog park together while we were speaking. Max was sticking close to Andrew, seemingly enjoying simply observing the other four-legged park goers from afar instead of engaging.

“Why is neutering the right thing to do,” I inquired.

“It just is,” Andrew replied, before elaborating, “there’s just too many dogs and not enough homes and it’s sad. We just kill them. We don’t need more dogs. It’s like recycling. It’s the right thing.”

“What do you mean, when you compare neutering to recycling?” I asked.

“Well, I care about the planet and the future want to do my part. So I recycle. It’s just obvious. And I think rescuing is important and not going to breeders. And neutering. They’re all important things to do if you want to be a good person,” Andrew explained earnestly.

“So you think that responsible pet owners neuter,” I queried.

“Yeah! I think it’s the right thing to do. It’s not right to keep breeding dogs just to kill them. It’s [neutering] an easy way to stop that. Everyone should do it, no question” he responded.

“Do you think that neutering makes Max less masculine,” I queried.

“No! What?” answered Andrew energetically, “That’s dumb. I don’t think he’s worried about being a man or anything like that. He’s a dog. He just cares about food and getting to run around and hanging with me. Max doesn’t care about being a tough guy or whatever. It’s dumb enough when people worry about that stuff. He’s a dog. He doesn’t care. And what’s a masculine dog, anyways? A tough, angry dog? An alpha dog? Who’d want that? I like that Max is a good dog. He can be around other dogs and my friend’s kids, no problem. I don’t know why you’d want a macho dog.”

“Do you think others perceive you to be less masculine because Max is neutered?”

I asked Andrew.

“What?” Andrew responded, laughing. “That would be so dumb. If people think that I don’t care. But who would think that? Some really macho guy who’s probably insecure, maybe, but it’s dumb. I don’t need to prove that I’m a man. Some men worry about that too much. Men should just do whatever they want and not worry about that stuff. If people see Max and me out, if they think anything it’s probably just that he’s really cute. He helps me get a lot of dates, you know!” Andrew said jovially while reaching down and scratching Max’s head. Max looked up at Andrew contently in response. “Not a lot of dates, actually,” he clarified. “I did get one date though when Max and her dog hit it off at the dog park in Glendale last year. We started talking and dated for a while. Max being neutered didn’t stop her from talking to me! But yeah, anyways, if people judge me cause Max is fixed I wouldn’t want to be around those people anyways. Neutering is the right thing to do. I’m secure enough to not worry about something like that,” Andrew concluded assertively.

Andrew’s observation, that certain humans care about things like being perceived of as masculine, whereas others do not, reflects how social pressure to conform to gendered stereotypes impacts individuals differently. Whereas some, including the men at Casey Moore’s and a number of men I interviewed above, felt the pressure to conform to hegemonic masculinity and the narrow parameters of gender expression that it allows for, not everyone feels the need to conform to the norm. Andrew, for instance, did not feel the need to reify narratives of hegemonic masculinity across species. In doing so, he resists hegemonic masculinity’s pervasive presence in contemporary U.S. culture. He also demonstrates that all male-identifying individuals do not strive to be viewed as hyper-masculine, embracing instead an alternative, and potentially more socially

responsible, form of gender expression. Andrew's comments indicate that hegemonic masculinity and social responsibility may be negatively correlated, an interesting proposal that posits collective social benefits over individual dominance over other beings, across species. Keeping this in mind further supports the point made earlier in this chapter that glorifying hegemonic masculinity in hopes of encouraging people to fix their canine companions, as have some animal rights organization, may ultimately prove to be counter productive. Not only does such activism perpetuate sexist rhetoric, it also may discourage individuals like Andrew from utilizing their services due to his lack of interest in perpetuating "real men" narratives. Instead of utilizing such gendered narratives, emphasizing the positive impacts that spaying and neutering has on interspecies communities may prove to be more effective and inclusive.

Allowing gender to exist in a space where differences are acknowledged and where all beings are able to exist free of normative categorical restrictions while still having space to construct their own identities can elevate society in a more inclusive and complex manner. The (de)construction of gender and power allows for a rethinking of material bodies and discursive realities as they apply across species, ultimately working to destabilize and denaturalize those interactions that are far too often left intact. It has also been made evident that "gender can never be observed as a 'pure' or solitary influence" and that "gender as an abstract universal is not a useful category of analysis."<sup>246</sup> But considering gender in a way that permits the embracing of alternative existences could lead to the deregulation of the gendered body and life across species. Ultimately this may contribute to the acknowledgment of gender differences free of hierarchy and oppressive systems of gendered thought, including that of hegemonic

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<sup>246</sup> Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter. (1993). *Feminist Epistemologies*. (New York: Routledge), 3.

masculinity, which neither correlates with broad social responsibility nor individual happiness.



CHAPTER 4  
Social Death Across Species:  
Disposable Bodies in the Contemporary United States

Part I. Introduction

“There’s a dog in our yard,” my roommate exclaimed, pointing out the window to the front porch, where a large black dog was sniffing the patio furniture.

I stopped unloading groceries and turned my head to where she was pointing. “He must have gotten separated from his person,” I responded, noticing that he was wearing a chain collar and dragging a cameo leash, “I’ll grab him and put him in the backyard. We can post him to the neighborhood’s Facebook page to let people know where he’s at.”

I walked out the front door, “Hey buddy,” I said to the dog, noticing now that I was closer that he was an unneutered pit bull mix with one of the largest heads I had ever seen. I grew a bit hesitant as he noticed me as well, because I was having some difficulty separating the stereotypes that haunt the pit bull from the actual dog standing in front of me.

Panting heavily, he lifted his head and made eye contact before bolting down the street. It was around 5pm on a triple digit summer day in Tempe, Arizona. My barefooted feet were burning on the cement, heated from the harsh desert sun, and I knew the dog must be in pain as well. I went back inside, slipped on my sandals, grabbed car keys and a bag of dog treats, “I’m going to go try to grab him again, he has to be burning his paws out there,” I announced as I walked back out the door.

I pulled out of the driveway and drove in the direction of the pit bull. He was moseying on the side of the road a couple of blocks from the house. I pulled up next to him, put the car in park and hesitantly exited the vehicle. “Hello again, doggy. Want a treat?” I asked, holding up one of the biscuits. He immediately bolted past me, jumping

through the open driver side door and made his way to the passenger seat, where he sat down and looked at me expectantly. I handed him the treat, which he took politely and preceded to consume.

I slowly got back into the driver's seat, "Please don't bite me," I pleaded, noticing his muscular body and large, sharp teeth. Even though he exhibited no signs of aggression as he continued to sit there, finishing his treat and panting with great intensity, I was concerned. As a participant in modern American culture I had been indoctrinated with myths of the "evil" pit bull, whose alleged locking-jaw could quickly kill another dog or even human, and those stories that permeate the media were playing through my head as I drove us back to the house. While intellectually I knew the breed was unfairly represented, knowing and feeling are very different things, and in interacting with my new panting friend, I was being forced to confront the prejudices I had unintentionally internalized.

We pulled into the driveway as his panting continued. With great trepidation I encouraged him to exit the vehicle and join me in the gated yard. He enthusiastically followed, again showing no signs of hostility. Instead, he was friendly and surprisingly relaxed. He lapped up a huge bowl of water and then another as I noted that despite having a collar, he did not have tags. A quick visit to the closest vet office made it clear that he did not have a microchip either. So I took a half decent photo of him and posted it online, but unfortunately, nothing would ever come of that photo. Despite distributing flyers throughout the neighborhood, notifying local shelters and announcing his existence all over the Internet no one ever contacted me.

I was not willing to drop him off at the local shelter, where I was told by a volunteer at the Maricopa County Animal Care and Control's East Valley location that the chances of him being euthanized - as a large, black, unneutered male pit bull - were

extremely high. Of the 670,000 unwanted dogs that are killed every year in shelters across the United States, roughly 40% are estimated to be pit bull type dogs.<sup>247</sup> Probability of euthanasia was especially high during Fourth of July weekend, when the pit bull appeared, because it is the busiest and most crowded time in U.S. shelters due to the high number of animals that are scared by fireworks.<sup>248</sup> Pit bulls are so stigmatized that they will automatically be euthanized at some shelters without ever being granted even the possibility of adoption.<sup>249</sup> In spite of how pit bulls have been branded, there also exists the occasional rescue that focuses on the breed, including Villalobos Rescue Center, the largest pit bull rescue in the United States, which will be addressed more in depth later in this chapter. Despite the best attempts of sympathetic individuals and breed-specific rescue groups, however, the majority of pit bulls that enter the shelter system do not leave alive.

In spite of the unfortunate circumstances that condemn so many pit bulls to death, I was eventually able to find a no-kill shelter to give me a free neuter voucher and ultimately put the dog I found in my neighborhood up for adoption. But for the week that Baxter (the name I gave him) lived with me it became all too obvious that the stereotypes that haunt his breed are just that, stereotypes.<sup>250</sup> Instead of being aggressive and

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<sup>247</sup> “ASPCA Pet Statistics,” ASPCA, accessed September 9, 2016, <http://www.asPCA.org/animal-homelessness/shelter-intake-and-surrender/pet-statistics>.

<sup>248</sup> “July 5<sup>th</sup> is the Busiest Day of the Year for U.S. Animal Shelters,” Dog Time, accessed September 11, 2016, <http://dogtime.com/how-to/pet-safety/18007-july-5-busiest-day-of-the-year-for-u-dot-s-dot-animal-shelters>.

<sup>249</sup> “The Reality of Pit Bull Adoption,” Pit Bull Rescue Central, accessed December 23, 2016, <http://www.pbrc.net/adoption/reality.html>.

<sup>250</sup> “A stereotype is about perception and deception. Its colloquial use often refers to a certain kind of intellectual laziness that prefers to interpret situations through ideological shortcuts, rather than searching seriously for what’s ‘really true’...Racial stereotypes are not degrading because race is devalued. Stereotypes are degrading because they link race to other categories of devaluation, just as race is redeemed when linked to other properties of personhood universalized as socially valuable, such as heteronormativity or U.S. citizenship.” Lisa Marie

domineering towards other dogs, Baxter proved to be passive, throwing himself on his back and acting trepidatiously around my intense fourteen-pound Chihuahua mix. Instead of being territorial and violent towards me and other humans, he allowed me to remove food from his mouth while he ate and waited patiently for permission before doing almost anything, including entering the house or curling up on a dog bed. Yet over the course of that week, every time that I took Baxter into vet offices, shelters and for walks around the neighborhood other humans responded by physically moving away from him, crossing to the other side of the street or office, often giving us both dirty looks in the process. The contradictions between who Baxter was and who people thought he was were staggering and clearly deeply embedded with a multitude of social inequalities and taxonomies of power.

In the United States, certain dogs have been labeled “bully breeds,” a stigmatized group that includes “pit bull type dogs.”<sup>251</sup> So-called “bully breeds” tend to be (mis)identified by physical traits, including a muscular body, large head and short hair. They are also associated with young urban Black males, who likewise are criminalized and portrayed as “bullies” and allegedly breed and train pit bull type dogs to be violent towards people and other animals, in the American cultural imaginary.<sup>252</sup> Despite this misrecognition and imaginary, the material reality, however, is that pit bulls exist in all spaces and live with all demographics of humans. Furthermore, all young, urban, Black,

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Cacho, *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 2-3.

<sup>251</sup> “Bully breeds” technically includes the following breeds, although “pit bull type dogs” are the most emphasized and persecuted of the “bully breeds”: Alapaha Blue Blood Bulldog, American Bulldog, American Pit Bull Terrier, American Staffordshire Terrier, Banter Bulldogge, Boston Terrier, Bull Mastiff, Bull Terrier, Cane Corso Italiano, English Bulldog, French Bulldog, Olde English Bulldogge, Staffordshire Bull Terrier and Valley Bulldog. “Bully Breeds,” Bully Breed Education, accessed September 22, 2016, <http://www.bullybreededucation.com/bully.html>.

<sup>252</sup> Kim, *Dangerous Bodies* and Weaver, “Pit Bull Promises: Inhuman Intimacies and Queer Kinships in an Animal Shelter.”

males who interact with pit bulls do not do so in a way that perpetuates violence and dominance. Unfortunately, these stereotypes still exist and have very real consequences on the lived realities of human and nonhuman lives. Despite the many ways that pit bulls and their people live, media representations remain powerful enough to link these stigmatized bodies, labeling them violent and disposable monsters of modern American society.

Dogs identified to be bully breeds also have been legally targeted via Breed-Specific Legislation (BSL) in the United States, Canada and abroad. BSL, also called Breed-Discriminatory Legislation (BDL), is ordinances written to restrict or outlaw an entire breed of dog, typically the denigrated “pit bull type dog,” generally throughout a city or county in the U.S.<sup>253</sup> While these ordinances have repeatedly been shown to be both extremely expensive and ineffective at reducing dog-related violence, they continue to be held up in various locations across the country. This chapter will explore how and why BSL came to exist and what its implications are for the inter-reliant lives of humans and canines. Additionally, BSL is a direct product of racist, classist and sexist ideologies that influence how we code human and nonhuman bodies. Those codings in turn come to be embedded in the U.S. legal and criminal justice system.

I also explore how stigmatized humans and stigmatized canines, which by-and-large are pit bulls, are situated together in an attempt to understand how the meanings and makings of these bodies become done and undone together. The Animal Planet reality television show *Pit Bulls & Parolees* focuses on a pit bull rescue organization that employs parolees and will be discussed more in depth later on in this chapter. How the parolees and organization staff communicate about the pit bulls amongst themselves

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<sup>253</sup> Ledy VanKavage, “BSL: Why Breed-Specific Legislation is all Bark and Fiscal Bite,” Best Friends Animal Society, accessed September 22, 2016, <http://bestfriends.org/resources/bsl-why-breed-specific-legislation-all-bark-and-fiscal-bite>.

specifically, and to their audience more broadly, demonstrates how marginalized bodies exist across species due to the power dynamics that are embedded in their unique taxonomies of power. This reality show demonstrates how the parolees, as stigmatized members of society, come to identify with the abandoned pit bulls. In coming together they learn to have a more livable life across species, despite their condemnation to social death. Additionally, pit bulls, despite being stigmatized, are still less denounced by our canine-loving society than parolees, a highly racialized, classed and sexed demographic. Therefore, the pit bulls act as a humanizing force for the parolees on the show.

In an analysis of BSL as well as *Pit Bulls & Parolees*, this chapter will discuss how certain visible characteristics of canines, such as breed or length and color of hair, encode their bodies with socially constructed meanings in the same way that gender, race, class, and sexuality are socially constructed in humans. Through this social construction, we actively engage with and perpetuate harmful stereotypes that produce social inequalities, while limiting who one is allowed to be(come). In the case of the canine, similarly to the human, the coding and perpetuation of stereotypes can ultimately result in whether an animal lives or dies. The pit bull type dog, including Baxter, has been highly gendered, racialized and classed in American culture, which has profound implications on their lived realities. Ultimately, the production, regulation and contestation of how certain bodies exist across species and their assigned meanings will be considered together in an effort to better understand the power dynamics that shape our entangled lives. Certain bodies are subjected to surveillance and social death based on certain characteristics that are deemed dangerous, violent, and disposable. This demonstrates the ways in which white heteropatriarchy continually remakes itself in human society. This is done via the extending of certain socially constructed characteristics to human companion animals. That includes linking certain dogs and

humans who together, across species, come to be labeled as dangerous and disposable in contemporary U.S. society.

## Part II. Constructing Disposable and Dangerous Bodies

### *Creating and Destabilizing Hierarchies: Considering Taxonomies of Power*

Both human and nonhuman animals are influenced by what philosopher Michel Foucault refers to as biopower, which is “the ways in which the modern state controls and regulates their citizens’ bodies.”<sup>254</sup> Biopower, in conversation with socially constructed taxonomies of power, has the ability to shape who is and who is not granted full “human” status at a particular time and place. To be granted full “human” status in contemporary U.S. culture is to be provided with at least an element of social value, security and legibility, legal and otherwise, in our insecure, ever-changing world. To be fully “human” is to be deserving of a livable life<sup>255</sup> and a grievable death; “some lives are grievable, and others are not; the differential allocation of grievability that decides what kind of subject is and must be grieved, and which kind of subject must not, operates to produce and maintain certain exclusionary conceptions of who is normatively human.”<sup>256</sup> Humanness is a privileged status that is generally assumed to apply to all those beings categorized as part of the human species, which in theory consists of all biological homo sapiens. Alternatively, those who are members of other species, including domesticated

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<sup>254</sup> Margo DeMello, *Animals and Society: An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 94.

<sup>255</sup> The term “livable life” was developed by Judith Butler in order to distinguish between life as sustainable via simple material conditions that make it possible and the social and cultural allowances that make life bearable. For instance, in a society that does not allow alternative expressions of gender outside the male/female binary, transgender and queer individuals are not granted a livable life, regardless of the material conditions that make life in its most elementary way sustainable. Judith Butler. *Undoing Gender*. (New York: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>256</sup> Judith Butler. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. (London: Verso Books, 2006), xiv-xv.

animals, are not granted such a privileged status.<sup>257</sup> But in reality, only select humans have access to full human status and the livable life it provides, and people's access is largely dictated by their social locations.

Scholar Claire Jean Kim in *Dangerous Crossings: Race, Species, and Nature in a Multicultural Age*, explains that the social locations of race and species, as well as, I would argue, gender, class and sexuality, are "taxonomies of power [that] structure how we see, think, feel, and act."<sup>258</sup> These ideological categories are socially constructed and have very real implications on bodies and lived realities across species. The human desire to categorize, or place living beings as well as items into taxonomies, or systems of classification, both assists and limits cognitive understanding across genres.<sup>259</sup> Hierarchy is a system of organization in which groups are ranked. Historically and contemporarily a complicated and at times contradictory hierarchy has been imprinted upon these so-called taxonomies of power that situate male over female, white over black, upper class over working class, heteronormative over queer and human over nonhuman. This is evident throughout contemporary U.S. culture. As an example, Donald Trump, the nation's 45th President signed Executive Order 13769 on January 27, 2017 banning predominantly non-Christian, people of color from particular nations from entering the country, declaring them dangerous, while statistics demonstrate that it is white men who are most likely to commit violent acts. These policies demonstrate the hierarchical

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<sup>257</sup> As Western culture is still significantly influenced by Judeo-Christian belief systems, the hierarchy of species that is present in U.S. social and legal culture can be traced as far back as the *Bible*, where Genesis 1.26 of the English standard version states; "Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

<sup>258</sup> Kim, *Dangerous Bodies*, 20.

<sup>259</sup> Tom Vanderbilt, "The Psychology of Genre," *The New York Times*, May 28, 2016, accessed February 27, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/29/opinion/sunday/the-psychology-of-genre.html>.



nature of taxonomies of power. For while one group of othered people are banned because they are demonized and thought of as less-than, the statistically more dangerous group continues to go unchecked because they are in positions of social privilege.<sup>260</sup>

Hierarchies are so prevalent because “value is made intelligent relationally.”<sup>261</sup> Hierarchies (re)produce limiting dichotomies where one constructed category is “good,” worthy, of value and is granted status as a subject and the other is labeled as a “bad,” “othered,” unworthy, and even disposable object. These taxonomies of power and the hierarchies that shape them are intimately entangled, creating complex identities that are uniquely shaped by various external and internal forces, including cultural mores, the media, the criminal justice system as well as the biological bodies that each individual was granted at birth. As a result of these entanglements, how bodies become coded and situated within these socially constructed hierarchies have profound impacts on the lives and deaths of all beings, ultimately shaping their experiences in ways that they have very little, if any, ability to control.

While the socially embedded hierarchies appear on the surface to be consistent, they can also act in ways that are contradictory, demonstrating the plasticity and constructed nature of taxonomies of power. These inconsistencies in the hierarchies of social identities can also trouble the very categories themselves, encouraging one to question assumptions and stereotypes. But unfortunately, the system of labeling one as better than another still exists. That system of labeling is generally done by those in locations of power in our white supremacist, heteropatriarchal culture, where

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<sup>260</sup> Adam Liptak, “President Trump’s Immigration Order, Annotated,” *The New York Times*, January 28, 2017, accessed February 27, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/28/us/politics/annotating-trump-immigration-refugee-order.html>. Charles Kurzman and David Schanzer, “The Growing Right-Wing Terror Threat,” *The New York Times*, June 16, 2015, accessed February 27, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/16/opinion/the-other-terror-threat.html>.

<sup>261</sup> Cacho, *Social Death*, 13.

positioning one identity as privileged and another as oppressed ultimately discourages an optic of equality in continuing to promote hierarchical thinking. For instance, while humans are generally positioned above the nonhuman in the hierarchy of species, categories become murky when one considers how “in the American cultural imaginary, the most animal of humans (the Black man) and the most human of animals (the dog)” can be framed in ways that posit the pet over the person, destabilizing the hierarchy of species that situates the human above the nonhuman. This also brings to mind the historical and contemporary coding to bodies of color with animals and animality Western societies.<sup>262</sup>

Positioning the pet over the person of color in the United States is especially tangible when one considers the images and cultural narratives that surfaced after Hurricane Katrina in August of 2005. Over 1,800 people died and over one million humans were displaced as a result of Hurricane Katrina, while damages to infrastructure totaled over \$81 billion.<sup>263</sup> Impoverished people of color were either left behind to suffer and die or were forced to fend for themselves in the aftermath of the storm. These citizens of New Orleans initially were granted very little attention or assistance from the federal government, the media or the American people at large following the natural disaster.<sup>264</sup> When the media reported on the poor people of color left in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina, it was often to vilify their actions as criminals while

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<sup>262</sup> Kim, *Dangerous Bodies*, 255.

<sup>263</sup> “Hurricane Katrina Led to Largest Ever Red Cross Relief Response,” American Red Cross, August 28, 2015, accessed September 27, 2016, <http://www.redcross.org/news/article/Hurricane-Katrina-Led-to-Largest-Red-Cross-Relief-Response>.

<sup>264</sup> Cacho, *Social Death*.

framing them as refugees, despite being tax-paying citizens who were displaced in their own country.<sup>265</sup>

While many survivors of Hurricane Katrina were ignored or maligned, some did speak out in their defense. Rap star Kanye West, for instance, even proclaimed during a televised benefit for victims of Hurricane Katrina that occurred shortly after the storm; “I hate the way they portray us in the media. If you see a black family, it says they’re looting. See a white family, it says they’re looking for food.”<sup>266</sup> Kathleen Blanco, the Governor of Louisiana at the time of Hurricane Katrina, even issued a “shoot to kill” order and referred to those who were looting by the highly racialized term “hoodlums.”<sup>267</sup> The Fritz Institute also found that sixty-eight percent of the people who had to wait at least a week for assistance following Katrina were people of color while forty-three percent were disabled and thirty-three percent made less than \$35,000 per year.<sup>268</sup> Instead of being framed as victims or survivors, poor Blacks were viewed from a racist, classist, neoliberal perspective that blamed them for not vacating the city and then criminalized them when they attempted to survive with the limited resources they had in the aftermath of the devastation.

On the other hand, the plight of pets during Hurricane Katrina, many of whom were abandoned, oftentimes not by choice, and ultimately left to fend for themselves and

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<sup>265</sup> Kristen Lavelle, Hurricane Katrina: The Race and Class Divide, *Monthly Review: An Independent Socialist Magazine*, 58 n. 3 (July-August 2006).

<sup>266</sup> John M. Broder, “Amid Criticism of Federal Efforts, Charges of Racism are Lodged,” *The New York Times*, September 5, 2005, accessed September 24, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/05/us/nationalspecial/amid-criticism-of-federal-efforts-charges-of-racism-are.html>.

<sup>267</sup> Caroline Heldman, “The Truths of Katrina,” Feminist Fight Club, August 25, 2010, accessed October 31, 2016, <https://carolineheldman.me/2010/08/25/the-truths-of-katrina/>.

<sup>268</sup> “Hurricane Katrina: Perceptions of the Affected,” The Fritz Institute, 2006, October 30, 2016, [http://www.fritzinstitute.org/PDFs/findings/HurricaneKatrina\\_Perceptions.pdf](http://www.fritzinstitute.org/PDFs/findings/HurricaneKatrina_Perceptions.pdf).

in many cases die following the storm, resulted in widespread public outcry. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) approximately 600,000 pets were either killed or abandoned as a result of Hurricane Katrina and its aftereffects, and those pets who were killed or abandoned were largely the companions of working class and impoverished people who did not have the means to vacate the city in their own vehicles.<sup>269</sup> Following Katrina, when abandoned pets could be seen fighting for survival on the streets of New Orleans, director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Michael Brown announced during a press conference that, “they are not our concern...” despite the fact that a National Guard officer was reported to have said to Russel Honore, a rescue efforts coordinator, that “we estimate that thirty to forty percent of the people who refuse to leave the affected areas are staying because they want to take care of their pets.”<sup>270</sup> The Fritz Institute also reported that forty-four percent of people who did not evacuate before Hurricane Katrina remained because they did not want to leave their pets.<sup>271</sup>

The media frequently published photos of pets fighting for their lives on the streets of New Orleans following the hurricane. These images prompted the American public at large to engage in a very vocal campaign to help those animals and prevent such abandonment and death during future natural disasters. That campaign was oftentimes drenched in rescue narratives that expressed great sympathy for the pets of Hurricane Katrina in addition to the people who lost the four-legged members of their family. The

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<sup>269</sup> R. Scott Nolen, “The PETS Act: A Legal Life Preserver,” American Veterinary Medical Association, July 29, 2015, accessed September 27, 2016, <https://www.avma.org/News/JAVMANews/Pages/150815b.aspx>.

<sup>270</sup> Stanley Coren, “The Dogs of Hurricane Katrina: Medicine for the Mind,” *Modern Dog Magazine*, accessed September 27, 2016, <http://moderndogmagazine.com/articles/dogs-hurricane-katrina/151>.

<sup>271</sup> “Hurricane Katrina: Perceptions of the Affected.” The Fritz Institute, 2006, October 30, 2016, [http://www.fritzinstitute.org/PDFs/findings/HurricaneKatrina\\_Perceptions.pdf](http://www.fritzinstitute.org/PDFs/findings/HurricaneKatrina_Perceptions.pdf).

subsequent public outcry following the unprecedented natural disaster even resulted in new legislation, as Congress passed the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards (PETS) Act almost unanimously in the fall of 2006, which required rescue agencies to save pets as well as people in the event of natural disasters, forcing FEMA to make pets their concern.<sup>272</sup> The PETS Act has a positive influence on interspecies relationships, as research on pet loss as a result of Hurricane Katrina found that forced abandonment of a companion animal during an evacuation adds considerably to acute trauma, significantly increasing the risk of long term Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).<sup>273</sup>

The PETS Act muddies the boundary between the human and nonhuman animal, acting to humanize the pet while actively differentiating the pet from other nonhuman animals. It is important to note that while the PETS Act is more inclusive from a species perspective because it requires that people be saved with their pets during a natural disaster, it remains a speciesist law as it does not protect all nonhuman animals. Instead, the PETS Act only benefits those nonhuman animals who live in people's homes, have been assigned names and identities and are affectively connected to humans. The bipartisan nature of the law also reflects that the human connection to companion species exists across all demographics, including political ones. This unique willingness to spend additional resources assisting companion animals reaffirms the muddled nature of the species hierarchy, for there rarely, if ever, exists the bipartisan desire to spend additional resources assisting humans in and of themselves. It takes the addition of the pet to humanize those needing assistance. It is therefore the human's relationship to the animal that acts to humanize the human.

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<sup>272</sup> David Grimm, "How Hurricane Katrina Turned Pets into People," *BuzzFeed News*, July 31, 2015, accessed September 27, 2016, [https://www.buzzfeed.com/davidhgrimm/how-hurricane-katrina-turned-pets-into-people?utm\\_term=.vf9A5dKwL#.tbnz0jVKL](https://www.buzzfeed.com/davidhgrimm/how-hurricane-katrina-turned-pets-into-people?utm_term=.vf9A5dKwL#.tbnz0jVKL).

<sup>273</sup> Melissa Hunt, Hind Al-Awadi and Megan Johnson. "Psychological Sequelae of Pet Loss Following Hurricane Katrina." *Anthrozoos* 21 n. 2 (January 2008): 109-21.

So while the death, abandonment and displacement of people of color caused by Hurricane Katrina produced either very little public visibility or their abject criminalization, the death and displacement of pets resulted in the passing of more inclusive laws that would save the lives of companion species as well as people. Why is it that people have the tendency to be more empathetic when confronted with the victimization of companion species than people? Sociologists Arnold Arluke and Jack Levin of Northeastern University presented their findings from a study that attempted to get to the root of that question at the 108<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association. The study had 240 male and female college students read four fictional news stories that discussed a beating that were all identical except for the victim, which included a one-year-old human child, a thirty-something year old human adult, a puppy and a six-year-old dog.<sup>274</sup> The participants were asked to rate their empathy towards the victim and findings revealed that people were most empathetic towards the human child, followed by the puppy, the adult dog and lastly, the human adult. While species played a serious role in how people empathized, age was the most important factor, ultimately resulting in people being most empathetic towards those deemed “innocent and defenseless,” as opposed to adult humans who are typically granted more social freedom and viability than children or dogs.<sup>275</sup> While race is not mentioned in the scope of the study, Arluke and Levin’s research speaks to the moral inconsistencies surrounding how people conceptualize and empathize with the pet compared to the human.

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<sup>274</sup> “Empathy with Dogs Stronger than with Humans: Study,” *The Huffington Post*, August 12, 2013, accessed October 31, 2016, [http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2013/08/12/empathy-with-dogs-humans\\_n\\_3744081.html?just\\_reloaded=1](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2013/08/12/empathy-with-dogs-humans_n_3744081.html?just_reloaded=1).

<sup>275</sup> Hal Herzog, “Why People Care More About Pets than Other Humans,” *Wired*, April 13, 2015, accessed October 31, 2016, <https://www.wired.com/2015/04/people-care-pets-humans/>.

Those moral inconsistencies become further tangible when one considers the actions and perspectives of Joseph Michael “Joe” Arpaio, a former white law enforcement officer who was the Sheriff of Maricopa County, Arizona from 1993 until January 2017. Maricopa County is the fourth-largest county in the United States; it includes Phoenix, covers over 9,000 square miles and contains a population of close to four million people, with Arpaio’s Sheriff Office employing 4,000 people in addition to 3,000 “volunteer posse members.”<sup>276</sup> Arpaio, a Republican who self-identified as “the nation’s toughest sheriff,”<sup>277</sup> has been accused of assorted criminal transgressions against humans and human society at large, including abuse of power, misappropriation of funds, failure to investigate sex crimes, inappropriate clearance of cases, unlawful implementation of immigration laws and election law violations.<sup>278</sup> In October 2016 federal prosecutors charged Arpaio with criminal contempt of court for discriminatory policing against both citizens and undocumented Latinos in Maricopa County.<sup>279</sup> The United States Department of Justice even concluded that Sheriff Arpaio’s office oversaw the worst pattern of racial profiling by a law enforcement agency in U.S. history through the creation and perpetuation of a culture that deemed the abuse of Latino rights acceptable.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> William Finnegan, “Sheriff Joe,” *The New Yorker*, July 20, 2009, accessed January 3, 2017, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2009/07/20/sheriff-joe>.

<sup>277</sup> Steve Dale, “America’s ‘Toughest Sheriff’ has a Soft Spot for Animals,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 11, 2015, accessed December 22, 2016, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/pets/sns-201502101830--tms--petwrlldctnya-a20150211-20150211-column.html>.

<sup>278</sup> “Joe Arpaio,” *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. January 2, 2017, accessed January 4, 2017, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joe\\_Arpaio](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joe_Arpaio).

<sup>279</sup> Fernanda Santos, “Sheriff Joe Arpaio, Accused of Targeting Latinos, Is Charged with Contempt,” *The New York Times*, October 17, 2016, accessed December 22, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/18/us/sheriff-joe-arpaio-arizona.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/18/us/sheriff-joe-arpaio-arizona.html?_r=0).

As Sheriff, Arpaio oversaw eight jails and even created Maricopa County's infamous "Tent City" jail in an industrial neighborhood of southwest Phoenix that he describes as, "next to the dump, the dog pound, the waste-disposal plant."<sup>281</sup> Tent City consists of barbed wire surrounding enough Army-surplus tents from the Korean War era to house up to 2,500 inmates in harsh conditions,<sup>282</sup> including triple-digit Arizona summer days, with temperatures in the tents reaching as high as 145-degrees.<sup>283</sup> Despite the fact that it has been reported that 98% of the inmates in Tent City were there for non-violent offenses or probation violation, Arpaio and his office found it appropriate to feed them moldy bread, rotten fruit and other contaminated food while denying them water, even in extreme heat.<sup>284</sup> Arpaio himself even referred to Tent City<sup>285</sup> as a "concentration camp" and it has been reported that inmates have created survival guides and beatings by gangbangers and guards are commonplace.<sup>286</sup> Riots have broken out at Tent City and the jail itself has prompted multiple protests over the inhumane

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<sup>280</sup> Ray Stern, "Sheriff Joe Arpaio's Office Commits Worst Racial Profiling in U.S. History, Concludes DOJ Investigation," *Phoenix New Times*, December 15, 2011, accessed December 22, 2016, <http://www.phoenixnewtimes.com/news/sheriff-joe-arpaios-office-commits-worst-racial-profiling-in-us-history-concludes-doj-investigation-6655328>.

<sup>281</sup> Finnegan, "Sheriff Joe."

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> James Ridgeway and Jean Casella, "America's Ten Worst Prisons: Tent City," *Mother Jones*, May 3, 2013, accessed January 3, 2017, <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2013/05/10-worst-prisons-america-joe-arpaiio-tent-city>.

<sup>284</sup> Darius Rubics, "Joe Arpaio's Tent City in Phoenix will be Closing this December after 22 Years in Operation," *News Examiner*, 2016, accessed January 4, 2017, <http://newsexaminer.net/crime/tent-city-closing-this-december-after-22-years/>.

<sup>285</sup> Tent City has been ordered to close by Maricopa County's newly elected Sheriff Penzone: "Maricopa County Sheriff Penzone Orders Tent City Closed," *Arizona Daily Independent*, April 5, 2017, accessed April 11, 2017, <https://arizonadailyindependent.com/2017/04/05/maricopa-county-sheriff-paul-penzone-orders-tent-city-closed/>.

<sup>286</sup> James Ridgeway and Jean Casella. "America's Ten Worst Prisons: Tent City."



treatments of its inmates.<sup>287</sup> Arpaio's jails also had the highest death rates in the United States.<sup>288</sup> Anthony Papa, former inmate and current artist, author and advocate against the war on drugs even stated in the forward to Shaun Attwood's *Hard Time: Life with Sheriff Joe Arpaio in America's Toughest Jail*, "the safety of my maximum security prison made doing my time a piece of cake as opposed to the dangerous and out-of-control conditions of a jail that was under the guidance of Joe Arpaio."<sup>289</sup>

Arpaio banned cigarettes, movies, coffee, hot lunches, salt and pepper, and meat in his jails while clearly taking pleasure in humiliating the inmates, forcing the male inmates to wear hot pink underwear and retro black-and-white uniforms.<sup>290</sup> Arpaio also limited inmates' access to television, only allowing the Food Network (apparently to tantalize the inmates with images of foods they are not allowed to consume), the Weather Channel (which Arpaio says is "so those morons will know how hot it's going to be while they are working on my chain gangs") and conservative politician Newt Gingrich's speeches.<sup>291</sup> Arpaio was also a huge fan of chain gangs and can be credited for creating the first female and juvenile chain gangs in the country.<sup>292</sup> William Finnegan of *The New Yorker* explains, "the chain gangs' tasks include burying the indigent at the county cemetery, but mainly they serve as spectacles in Arpaio's theatre of cruelty," and

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<sup>287</sup> Donna Rossi, "Arpaio's Tent City Troubles," *KPHO*, August 3, 2012, accessed January 6, 2017, <http://www.cbs5az.com/story/19193635/arpaio-tent-city-troubles>.

<sup>288</sup> Shaun Attwood, *Hard Time: Life with Sheriff Joe Arpaio in America's Toughest Jail*, (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2011).

<sup>289</sup> Anthony Papa, forward to *Hard Time: Life with Sheriff Joe Arpaio in America's Toughest Jail*, by Shaun Attwood. (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2011), 1.

<sup>290</sup> Finnegan. "Sheriff Joe."

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

Arpaio himself says, “I put them out there on the main streets, so everybody sees them out there cleaning out trash, and parents say to their kids, ‘Look, that’s where you’re going if you’re not good’.”<sup>293</sup>

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and Amnesty International both criticized Arpaio and his office for ill treatment of inmates.<sup>294</sup> In 2008 and 2010 a district judge found that Arpaio’s jails failed to meet constitutional standards for food quality, access to recreation areas, high temperatures, and quality and availability of medical and mental health care.<sup>295</sup> Arpaio claimed that the sub-standard conditions forced upon the inmates discouraged them from returning to jail and saved money, but in reality, as of September 2015, cases involving Arpaio and his office actually cost Maricopa County taxpayers \$142 million in legal expenses, settlements and court awards.<sup>296</sup> Due to his unlawful activities, Arpaio himself is currently at risk of being incarcerated, to which he is reported to have responded, “If I do go to jail, I’m glad it will be federal, because I’ll get three square meals a day,” a rather telling response from a man whose jails only serve two meals each day.<sup>297</sup>

Arpaio’s cruelty towards his fellow humans took an interesting turn during his tenure as Sheriff. In 1999 Phoenix’s First Avenue Jail, which Amnesty International had

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<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Jacob Davidson, “America’s Toughest Sheriff Takes Meat Off Jail Menu,” *Time Magazine*, September 27, 2013, accessed January 3, 2017, <http://newsfeed.time.com/2013/09/27/americas-toughest-sheriff-takes-meat-off-jail-menu/>.

<sup>296</sup> Michael Kiefer, “Sheriff Joe Arpaio has Always Done it His Way,” *The Republic*, September 11, 2015, accessed December 16, 2016, <http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/arizona/investigations/2015/09/11/sheriff-joe-arpaio-legacy/71888720/>.

<sup>297</sup> Santos, Fernanda, “Sheriff Joe Arpaio Loses Bid for Seventh Term in Arizona,” *The New York Times*, November 9, 2016, accessed January 3, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/09/us/joe-arpaio-arizona-sheriff.html>.

cited in 1997 for failing to meet minimum standards for prisoner treatment as established by the United Nations, was officially deemed unsuitable for human habitation following issues with the sewer system.<sup>298</sup> The windowless, concrete and iron, three-story building could originally house up to 500 human inmates when it was built in 1962. Instead of abandoning the jail entirely, Arpaio decided to convert it into an animal shelter for animals confiscated by law enforcement following abuse and neglect.<sup>299</sup> Legally, animals seized must be maintained as evidence until judges have heard the cases and they are completely resolved, at which point the animals are often killed. Despite Arpaio's inhumane behavior towards his fellow humans, he claims to have a serious soft spot for animals and companion species in particular. In the First Avenue Jail Arpaio saw an opportunity to develop the Maricopa Animal Safe Haven (MASH), where animals can live in the "no-kill" shelter or be made available for adoption instead of being killed following an abuse or neglect case. Arpaio claimed he started MASH because he "believe[d] in life for all."<sup>300</sup>

The MASH unit, with walls painted in upbeat pastel colors, houses roughly 100 dogs and 130 cats inside in addition to having horses on the property.<sup>301</sup> Twenty-four female inmates and eight to ten male inmates are responsible for caring for the animals, which involves feeding, cleaning, exercising and interacting with them.<sup>302</sup> The *Chicago*

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<sup>298</sup> Scott Craven, "Inside Arpaio's Pet Shelter, Where Pets Get New Life – Or Life Sentence," *The Republic*, November 1, 2014, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://www.azcentral.com/story/life/az-narratives/2014/11/01/inside-arpaio-pet-shelter-where-pets-get-new-life--or-life-sentence/18356845/>.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

<sup>301</sup> Dale, "America's 'Toughest Sheriff' has a Soft Spot for Animals."

<sup>302</sup> Nick D'Andrea, "Sheriff Joe still Paints Himself as an Animal Rights Hero, While Ignoring Allegations of Animal Abuse Against the MCSO," *Phoenix New Times*, October 1, 2008,

*Tribune* reports that while no studies on the recidivism rates of the inmates who work in the MASH unit have been conducted, anecdotally the inmates who work with the animals are said to have built confidence, taken their animal care responsibilities seriously and developed compassion.<sup>303</sup> Additionally, research has indicated that participation in dog training programs can decrease prison misconduct and the probability and timing of re-arrest, indicating that having inmates care for and interact with companion species is positive.<sup>304</sup> Arpaio himself asserted, “I believed from the start that working with animals softens hardened criminal types.”<sup>305</sup> However, because inmates must have been sentenced for non-violent crimes to qualify to work in the MASH unit this potentially rehabilitative work is not available to everyone.<sup>306</sup>

Joe Arpaio claims to be an animal lover and deeply embedded that into his public persona. In addition to creating MASH, Arpaio started the Animal Cruelty Investigation Unit in January 2000<sup>307</sup> and made a point of targeting those engaging in bestiality.<sup>308</sup> Arpaio also supported Proposition 204 in 2006 to provide farm animals with better care and filed cruelty charges against Chandler, Arizona Police Sergeant Tom Lovejoy after his K9 Bandit died from exposure to extreme heat in the back of his squad car in 2007.<sup>309</sup>

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accessed January 11, 2017, <http://www.phoenixnewtimes.com/news/sheriff-joe-still-paints-himself-as-an-animal-rights-hero-while-ignoring-allegations-of-animal-abuse-against-the-mcso-6636173>.

<sup>303</sup> Dale, “America’s ‘Toughest Sheriff’ has a Soft Spot for Animals.”

<sup>304</sup> Leslie Brooke Hill. “Becoming the Person Your Dog Thinks You Are: An Assessment of Florida Prison-Based Dog Training Programs on Prison Misconduct, Post-Release Employment and Recidivism.” (Ph.D. dissertation, The Florida State University, 2016).

<sup>305</sup> Dale, “America’s ‘Toughest Sheriff’ has a Soft Spot for Animals.”

<sup>306</sup> Kiefer, “Sheriff Joe Arpaio has Always Done it His Way.”

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

<sup>308</sup> Dale. “America’s ‘Toughest Sheriff’ has a Soft Spot for Animals.”

In comparison to the dietary and meal limitations inflicted upon Maricopa County's human inmates, Arpaio has said, "it costs more to feed the dogs than it does the inmates,"<sup>310</sup> and asserted, "some (have) said the animals have it better than people in my jail. Well, the dogs and cats are innocent. The people are there for a reason."<sup>311</sup> Despite Arpaio's very well publicized proclamations of critter love, evidence exists to the contrary as well. It has been reported, for instance, that it has not always been clear where funds raised for MASH were used and the *Phoenix New Times* has even referred to MASH as a "publicity gimmick" constructed by Arpaio so that he be perceived as an animal lover in order to gain sympathy and votes following controversy as well as to contrast his tough-on-humans and explicitly racist policies.<sup>312</sup>

*The Republic* described MASH as "a place – with its soulless façade, steel bars and concrete corridors that amplify the canine chorus – that is undeniably a jail."<sup>313</sup> They reported that the dogs spent more than twenty-three hours per day confined, with some receiving as little as fifteen minutes of social interaction each day, leading many of them to go "kennel crazy," indicating that they are at their mental limit for confinement.<sup>314</sup> Karianne Phillips, a Tent City inmate who worked in MASH and was interviewed by *The Republic* about her experiences said, "I wish I could do something. I feel for these dogs, in cells all day with only fifteen minute breaks all day. I try to spend as much time as I

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<sup>309</sup> D'Andrea, "Sheriff Joe still Paints Himself as an Animal Rights Hero, While Ignoring Allegations of Animal Abuse Against the MCSO."

<sup>310</sup> Finnegan, "Sheriff Joe."

<sup>311</sup> Dale, "America's 'Toughest Sheriff' has a Soft Spot for Animals."

<sup>312</sup> D'Andrea, "Sheriff Joe still Paints Himself as an Animal Rights Hero, While Ignoring Allegations of Animal Abuse Against the MCSO."

<sup>313</sup> Kiefer. "Sheriff Joe Arpaio has Always Done it His Way."

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

can, give them some attention during spot checks. But maybe it would be best to put some of them out of their misery, you know.”<sup>315</sup> This sentiment is echoed by Heather Allen, president and CEO of HALO Animal Rescue, a no-kill shelter in Phoenix, who stated that at MASH, “They put a no-kill mantra in front of quality of life.” Scott Pisani, director of animal services for Arizona Humane Society asserted, “If they are not suitable for a home, it’s better to euthanize than to have it live in a kennel for the rest of its life.”<sup>316</sup> This issue becomes even more relevant when one considers that a number of the dogs at MASH are “lifers” because violent incidents in their past have resulted in a judge declaring them unadoptable so they must either be euthanized or spend their remaining years in a cell. And while many of the animals are up for adoption, many remain at MASH for years, essentially living in solitary confinement for over twenty-three long hours each day. Such an existence makes it clear that MASH is a jail and as inmate Phillips said, “It’s depressing no matter how much paint they put on the walls.”<sup>317</sup>

If quality of life is low and even unbearable for the critters at MASH, why continue with the program? I assert that Joe Arpaio was manipulating the love the voting public and sympathetic media have for animals to his own benefit. The publicity-hungry Arpaio, who has written two books and been featured on the television shows *Smile...You’re Under Arrest!* and *Inmate Idol*, utilized the public’s love of rescue narratives and cute critters for personal attention and not animal activism. Arpaio wanted his purported love of animals to be a humanizing force. He wanted his alleged love of critters to make his public persona more likable, sympathetic and even benevolent. Presumably, this had at least some positive political consequence for Arpaio,

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<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

as he was elected six times despite multiple public and expensive controversies involving human rights violations, which resulted in him being the most sued sheriff in the country.<sup>318</sup>

In engaging with such manipulations, Arpaio enacted a multi-species hierarchy, situating the animal and especially the companion animal above the so-called criminal in contemporary United States culture. Arpaio thus institutionalized the narrative that those who break the law are less human and therefore less worthy than nonhumans, who are victims and therefore are worthy of not only sympathy but also of resources. So while Arpaio evidently did not have issue acting in explicitly racist and xenophobic ways, he cultivated a public persona as an animal lover. Arpaio's treatment of animals and companion animals in particular further demonstrates his dehumanization of people. His actions may have allowed some of his supporters to justify their support because they could have rationalized that Sheriff Arpaio was a nice guy if he loved animals. For other supports, perhaps they agreed animals were more innocent and worthy of assistance than human "criminals" and therefore supported his toughness.

In attempting to understand how taxonomies of power are knotted perhaps we can work to more effectively and efficiently destabilize hierarchies of oppression instead of simply reconfiguring them. Instead of engaging in "zero-sum, either/or thinking" that weighs the value of critters against humans, I agree with Claire Jean Kim's assessment that we should strive to "connect these forms of institutionalized violence against Black people [and all othered people] to the many forms of institutionalized violence against dogs (and non-human animals generally), grasping that these phenomena are connected all the way down."<sup>319</sup> Representationally, contemporary United States culture

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<sup>318</sup> Attwood, *Hard Time: Life with Sheriff Joe Arpaio in America's Toughest Jail*, 7.

criminalizes particular bodies across species in order to benefit those in positions of power and subjugate “othered” bodies. While certain canines are actively criminalized, mainstream (white, heteropatriarchal, middle class) society has the ability to “selectively empathize” with the criminalized canine to a greater degree than the criminalized human. Increasing empathy across species, stereotypes must be deconstructed in order to allow for a better life and reduction in social death. Instead of falling into normative speciesist narratives, making the effort to “resist the reflexive moves of asserting human superiority and reducing animal advocacy to anti-Black racism,” could allow us to see more clearly, “how the conjoined logics of race and species work together to decide who lives, who dies, who is used as an experimental subject without consent, who is imprisoned, who is asked to bear the cost of war, who is set upon each other for the entertainment of others, who is rendered a commodity, whose labor is exploited, who is fully grievable, and who is not.”<sup>320</sup>

*Making Monsters: (Canine) Racism and Criminalized Beings*

Those who diverge from the mythical norm, that human being described by activist and writer Audre Lorde as white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure, are “othered” in contemporary American culture and often have negative stereotypes associated with their bodies and lives. Furthermore, being human is a presumed category of the mythical norm as well, as was addressed earlier in this chapter in regards to the hierarchy of species, which places humans above nonhuman animals. This othering occurs because they are perceived as “different” due to their inability to conform to the mythical norm. Instead of being celebrated, that difference becomes synonymous with deviance, so all of those people who do not fit into the narrow

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<sup>319</sup> Kim, *Dangerous Crossings*, 276-8.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid, 278.



box provided by the mythical norm come to be situated negatively.<sup>321</sup> Coding bodies as different and therefore deviant is how people of color following Hurricane Katrina came to be criminalized instead of assisted. Those “othered,” deviant bodies become imprinted with stereotypes that turn them into allegorical monsters, as dangerous distortions from the norm that must be destroyed. While these monsters are positioned as hazardous to society, in most cases it is society that is hazardous to those so-called monsters.

Prominent scholar Donna Haraway emphasizes the importance of considering “boundary creatures – simians, cyborgs, and women – all of which have a destabilizing place in the great Western evolutionary, technological, and biological narratives.”<sup>322</sup>

Haraway goes on to explain that, “these boundary creatures are, literally, monsters, a word that shares more than its roots with the word, to *demonstrate*.

Monsters...interrogate the multi-faceted biopolitical, biotechnological, and feminist theoretical stories of the situated knowledges.”<sup>323</sup> In many ways all of the beings that fall outside the boundary of the mythical norm qualify as monsters in the contemporary American cultural imaginary. As a result, all those humans and nonhumans who exist in an “othered” space allow us to question the dominant paradigm, as they demonstrate that alternative ways of being and knowing exist, and they are also culturally and politically vulnerable because of their situatedness in that space outside the mythical norm. But what do we make of those human and nonhuman beings who are labeled monsters in the absence of either the intent or the actual action of harm? How do we come from positioning an individual as a monster to positioning entire groups or

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<sup>321</sup> Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*.

<sup>322</sup> Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, 2.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

categories of human and nonhuman bodies? How, as a society, do we come to view entire groups as monsters, who are presumed to be dangerous and deplorable beings, and what impact does that have on the allegorical and literal body of those beings? And what, if anything, does this have to do with the relationship forged between humans and canines?

Humans, animals and even non-organic things can be monsters. Monstrous beings are positioned as deviations from the fully human, as either closer to nature and animality, as is the case for Haraway's simians and women, or as closer to the technological, as is the case for the cyborg.<sup>324</sup> Historically and contemporarily, people of color have also been situated as closer to the animal and animality than white people.<sup>325</sup> Therefore, "as a taxonomy of power, race has been elaborated in the United States in intimate connection with species and nature," and people of color have been "imaginatively located in a human-animal borderlands" where they are proclaimed to be not quite human.<sup>326</sup> Those raced, monstrous bodies that society has situated at the boundary between the human and the animal, between nature and culture, fail to be easily definable. The "boundary failures" of these monsters manifest themselves culturally as deviations from the norm and so the monsters themselves come to be culturally ostracized, making it difficult to not only have a livable life, but also a grievable death. I contend that pit bulls are the monsters of the canine world, which will be explored more in depth as this chapter progresses.

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<sup>324</sup> Sherry B. Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" In M.Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (eds), *Women, Culture and Society*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1974); 68-87.

<sup>325</sup> Kim, *Dangerous Crossings: Race, Species, and Nature in a Multicultural Age*, 24.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid, 60.

While human monsters are very much made and unmade in modern American culture, so too are nonhuman monsters. The leashed, regulated and controllable canine is primarily glorified in our society, for it is an animal whose animality has by-and-large been tamed. But our culture has also demonized certain dogs, those we have come to label “bully breeds,” or pit bull type dogs. Pit bulls are often represented to be uncontrollable monsters in American society. Instead of being controllable, they allegedly have jaws that lock onto unsuspecting victims, killing them without cause or provocation. The mythology surrounding the canine monster resulted in entire cities banning them via Breed-Specific Legislation (BSL), causing them to be the most commonly euthanized dog in the United States.<sup>327</sup> Why is it that as a culture we claim to love dogs, but have made monsters out of pit bulls? I agree with scholar Claire Jean Kim who asserts that “the pit bull is now raced Black in the American imagination,” and because of that construction, the pit bull is perceived to be violent, dangerous and ultimately killable.<sup>328</sup> Despite initially being constructed as a family dog, including as Petey in *The Little Rascals*, beginning in the 1980’s pit bulls came to be associated with young urban Black men who engaged pit bulls in dog fighting.<sup>329</sup> Pit bulls therefore came to be seen in relationship to those young urban Black men, “as extensions of social status, as symbols of masculine power, as tools to intimidate others, as weapons for the protection of property and illicit drug activities” by the media and in turn dominant U.S. culture at large.<sup>330</sup> Kim explained:

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<sup>327</sup> “Pitbulls are the most euthanized breed of dogs,” Wistv.com, 2013, accessed October 30, 2016, <http://www.wistv.com/story/22970691/pitbulls-one-of-most-euthanized-breed-of-dogs>.

<sup>328</sup> Kim, *Dangerous Crossings*, 24.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid, 272.

Animals are often raced in the national imaginary to register the sense of threat they pose. That is to say, race, which borrows from species, gives back to it; race is part of the lexicon by which species is made just as species is part of the lexicon by which race is made. Like Blacks, pit bulls have been constructed as a group of beings whose behavior is biologically determined as violent, ruthless, and dangerous. Like Blacks, pit bulls are often victims of a “shoot first and ask questions later” policy by police. Like Blacks, they are objects of public loathing and fear whose very presence provokes a strongly disciplinary (if not murderous) response.<sup>331</sup>

The subsequent passing of BSL and an overall societal “pit bull panic”<sup>332</sup> that resulted due to the racialization, gendering and classing of the breed caused the pit bull to be viewed as the monster of canines. As monsters, pit bulls are often disposed of en masse, largely not for their own actions or even intentions, but because of the body they were born into.<sup>333</sup>

It is important to note that the linking of pit bulls with young, urban, Black, men occurred in the 1980’s. Republican Ronald Reagan was President of the United States from 1981-1989. The Reagan Era brought about a glorification of capitalism, corporate rights and neoliberal policies in addition to a significant critique of affirmative action and civil rights for women, people of color and LGBTQ individuals. Instead of working for equality, Reagan and his administration exalted “white male patriarchal and

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<sup>330</sup> Linda Kalof and Carl Taylor, “The Discourse of Dog Fighting,” *Humanity and Society* 31 (November 2007): 319-33.

<sup>331</sup> Kim, *Dangerous Crossings*, 272.

<sup>332</sup> Cohen and Richardson, “Pit Bull Panic.”

<sup>333</sup> Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*.

heterosexual identities” while actively demonizing other groups.<sup>334</sup> Patriotism was even linked in the Reagan era to reestablishing that white, heteropatriarchal authority, effectively leading to oppressive policies and the promotion of oppressive ideologies.<sup>335</sup> The so-called War on Drugs, which was initiated by Richard Nixon in the 1970’s, continues to this day but was very much a hallmark of the 1980’s. As such, the War on Drugs, in addition to the dubious trickle-down-economics that were a landmark of the era, was in many ways a product of the oppressive ideologies that Reagan and his administration promoted. The War on Drugs criminalized black life broadly and young, urban, Black males in particular. As a result of the policies and ideologies of the Reagan Era, Black poverty rates were at a twenty-five year high in 1983<sup>336</sup> and by 1990 the National Institute on Drug Abuse divulged that African Americans were four times more likely to be arrested on drug charges than whites, despite being significantly less likely to be habitual drug users.<sup>337</sup> Furthermore, hate incidents were spiking and in an attempt to crush the rising Black movement 30,000 protestors were detained and 2,500 were killed between 1984 and 1986.<sup>338</sup> Black bodies and lives were clearly being targeted by oppressive political policies and ideologies that socially constructed them as dangerous monsters via the criminalizing process. In extension, pit bulls also came to be labeled as dangerous as they became associated with those criminalized Black bodies and so-called Black urban violence. Criminalization thus came to be applied across species, something

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<sup>334</sup> George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 73.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid, 90.

<sup>336</sup> Jeff Chang, *Can’t Stop, Won’t Stop: A History of the Hip Hop Generation* (New York: Picador St. Martin’s Press, 2005), 177.

<sup>337</sup> Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, 10-11.

<sup>338</sup> Chang, *Can’t Stop, Won’t Stop*, 217-223.

that continues to this day and continued to be perpetuated by the federal government from the Reagan Era onwards.

Scholar Harlan Weaver also focuses on how dangerous dogs and particularly pit bulls are constructed in the United States, demonstrating how “the intersections of race, species, gender, breed, and nation...reflect social conflicts about identities.”<sup>339</sup> Through a consideration of various material and discursive representations of pit bulls, including the dogfighting incident that involved the African American star athlete Michael Vick in 2007, Weaver successfully links the racism against people of color that runs rampant in the United States with so-called “canine racism” that shapes such things as BSL and the disproportionately high rate at which pit bulls are incarcerated in animal shelters and euthanized when compared to other breeds of so-called “man’s best friend.” Weaver explains that just as Black men are positioned as animalized, monstrous “others,” so are pit bulls, which is reminiscent of the “long-standing metonymic relationship that associated African peoples and animals.”<sup>340</sup> Weaver’s argument draws parallels between pit bulls and the racialization and dehumanization of African Americans throughout history. It also addresses the construction of pit bulls that resulted in dominant U.S. discourse creating monolithic categories that served to oppress instead of considering human and nonhuman animals individually.

Systems of oppression and privilege are linked, as scholars Lori Gruen and Kari Weil have pointed out,

There is a conceptual link between the ‘logic of domination’ that operates to reinforce sexism, racism, and heterosexism and the logic that supports the

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<sup>339</sup> Weaver, “‘Becoming in Kind’: Race, Class, Gender and Nation in Cultures of Dog Rescue and Dogfighting.”

<sup>340</sup> DeMello. *Animals and Society*, 83.

oppression of nonhuman animals and the more than human world more generally, a link that translates into individual and institutional practices that are harmful to women, people of color, nonnormative humans, as well as other animals and the planet.<sup>341</sup>

Therefore, just as contemporary United States culture places humans above animals, it also works to make some humans more human than other humans. It is therefore important to consider how we not only define the full “human” in relationship to human animals, but also to nonhuman animals. Considering how we implement power dynamics, various –isms and notions of normalcy and deviance across species can assist in our understanding of how narratives of humanness and grievability, or a lack thereof, shape our national policies and practices as they exist in conversation with socially constructed identity categories and ideologies. Contemplating how the marginalized human is situated alongside the marginalized nonhuman is valuable, for their perceived social values (or lack thereof) are reflected onto each other, across species, in a way that makes a livable life an essential impossibility.

Despite false assumptions that “pit bull = gang = Black”<sup>342</sup> that result in the demonization of the breed, the negative stereotypes that surround pit bulls are not supported by actual data, similarly to how stereotypes that surround humans are not always accurate. First of all, the belief that pit bulls have magical locking jaws is a myth, as pit bulls do not have jaws that are physiologically different than the jaws of other muscular dogs.<sup>343</sup> Additionally, the American Temperament Test Society, Inc. (ATTS), an

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<sup>341</sup> Lori Gruen and Kari Weil, “Animal Others – Editors’ Introduction,” *Hypatia* 27 n. 3 (Summer 2012), 477-487.

<sup>342</sup> Kim, *Dangerous Crossings*, 273.

organization that promotes uniform temperament evaluation of purebred and spayed and neutered mixed-breed dogs, collected data from 1977 to 2016, revealing that upwards of eighty-five percent of pit-bull-type dogs pass the temperament test. This data situates the temperament of the pit bull type dog in a similar space as the culturally beloved golden retriever and as less aggressive than breeds such as dachshunds, greyhounds, bloodhounds, cocker spaniels, cairn terriers, collies, old English sheepdogs and the Australian cattle dog, none of which are victims of BSL and negative stereotyping.<sup>344</sup> The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) also asserts that breed as a whole is a poor predictor of dog bites and studies show no increased risk of dog bites from so-called pit bulls.<sup>345</sup>

Furthermore, the process of labeling a dog a particular breed, including a pit bull, is hugely problematic. Numerous studies have shown that visual breed identification is inaccurate.<sup>346</sup> A 2009 study with 20 mixed-breed shelter dogs showed that ninety percent of the dogs identified as a particular breed did not have their visually identified

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<sup>343</sup> “Toledo v. Tellings, -REVERSED-2006-Ohio-975, 25.” Court of Appeals of Ohio, Sixth Appellate District, accessed November 10, 2016, <http://www.sconet.state.oh.us/rod/docs/pdf/6/2006/2006-ohio-975.pdf>.

<sup>344</sup> “ATTS Breed Statistics,” The American Temperament Test Society, Inc., 2016, accessed November 5, 2016, <http://atts.org/breed-statistics/>.

<sup>345</sup> “Dog Bite Risk and Prevention: The Role of Breed,” American Veterinary Medical Association, 2014, accessed November 4, 2016, <https://www.avma.org/KB/Resources/LiteratureReviews/Pages/The-Role-of-Breed-in-Dog-Bite-Risk-and-Prevention.aspx>.

<sup>346</sup> V. L., Voith, E. Ingram, K. Mitsouras, & K. Irizarry. Comparison of Adoption Agency Breed Identification and DNA Breed Identification of Dogs. *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* 12 n.3 (2009), 253-262. Voith, V. L., Trevejo, R., Dowling-Guyer, S., Chadik, C., Marder, A., Johnson, V., & Irizarry, K. Comparison of visual and DNA breed identification of dogs and inter-observer reliability, *American Journal of Sociological Research* 3 n.2 (2013): 17-29. Croy, K. et al. “Dog Breed Identification: What kind of dog is that?” Retrieved from: <http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/library/research-studies/current-s...> Olson, K. R., Levy, J. K., Norby, B., Crandall, M. M., Broadhurst, J. E., Jacks, S., Barton, R. C., & Zimmerman, M. S. Inconsistent identification of pit bull-type dogs by shelter staff. *The Veterinary Journal* 206 (2015): 197-202.



breed as the predominant biological breed based on their DNA analysis.<sup>347</sup> The National Canine Research Council says there is no reliable evidence that demonstrates a link between breed and fatal dog bites.<sup>348</sup> Furthermore, a 2016 study determined that breed labeling influences potential adopters' perceptions and decision-making, resulting in those dogs labeled pit bulls remaining in shelters for longer periods of time, or simply being condemned to death, and ultimately recommended removing breed labels in shelters.<sup>349</sup> Despite the lack of reliability with breed labeling, it continues to be a common practice in shelters throughout the United States that has deadly consequences for those dogs who become victim to the pit bull stereotyping and labeling. Instead of turning one breed of dog into a monster, research supports viewing dogs as complex individuals. But that is easier said than done.

Lisa Marie Cacho in *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected* discusses how targeted populations have been stereotyped in such a way that criminalizes their very bodies, disallowing them status as complex subjects. Cacho explains that this results in certain groups, particularly people of color in the United States, being constructed as criminals regardless of their actual intentions, actions or circumstances and ultimately positions them as “*ineligible for personhood*” and condemned to social death.<sup>350</sup> This (mis)recognition, with the assistance of the media<sup>351</sup> and United States (il)legal and criminal justice systems,

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<sup>347</sup> Voith, Ingram, Mitsouras, & Irizarry, “Comparison of Adoption Agency Breed Identification and DNA Breed Identification of Dogs,” 253-262.

<sup>348</sup> “Visual Breed Identification,” National Canine Research Council, 2016, November 5, 2016, <http://www.nationalcanineresearchcouncil.com/ineffective-policies/visual-breed-identification>.

<sup>349</sup> Gunter, Barber, and Wynne. “What’s in a Name? Effects of Breed Perception and Labeling on Attractiveness, Adoptions and Length of Stay for Pit-Bull-Type Dogs.”

<sup>350</sup> Cacho. *Social Death*, 6.

produces the criminalization of human bodies based upon social identities and stereotyping, ultimately prohibiting people from being law-abiding while simultaneously excluding them from legal protection.<sup>352</sup> This is why people of color came to be described as “looters” and “hoodlums” instead of being empathized with and assisted following Hurricane Katrina, which Cacho explores extensively throughout *Social Death*. It is also why Sheriff Joe Arpaio could commit numerous human rights infractions while continuing to be elected by Maricopa County’s voters, as the “rescued” companion species acted to humanized Arpaio as well as his constituents, giving them justification to vote for him again and again.

Cacho focuses primarily on race as the determining factor in deciding who is granted social death, but I assert that species, breed and other taxonomies of power, including gender, class and sexuality, deeply matter as well. Being “*ineligible for personhood*” is person-specific, and allegorically, there is a great amount of overlap in how neoliberal America codes and (mis)recognizes gendered, raced and specied bodies. This (mis)recognition and subsequent criminalization also explains why pit-bull-type dogs, due to their association with criminalized young, urban, Black males have come to be demonized. Despite being members of a species generally perceived to be “man’s best friend,” pit bulls are instead marginalized and collectively positioned as monsters before they are ever given a chance to prove otherwise. This “canine racism”<sup>353</sup> ultimately resulted in the continued passing of Breed-Specific Legislation (BSL), resulting in pit bull type dogs being the most frequently euthanized dog breed in the United States with

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<sup>351</sup> Cacho explains, “how news media participate in creating or fabricating criminals by providing us with tools that enable us to see and simultaneously deny what we are seeing.” *Ibid*, 10.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>353</sup> Weaver. “Becoming in Kind: Race, Gender, and Nation in Cultures of Dog Fighting and Dog Rescue,” 689-709.

about seventy-five percent of municipal shelters euthanizing pit bulls as soon as they arrive in the shelter instead of allowing them even the opportunity to be adopted.<sup>354</sup> It is also why people went out of their way to avoid being in the same physical space as Baxter, the pit bull I introduced at the beginning of this chapter. Despite the absence of actual violence or aggression, people made assumptions about Baxter and all pit bulls that are based upon the cultural (mis)representations of him and their internalized fear of his black, masculine canine body and the black, masculine human bodies that he is knotted to in contemporary U.S. culture. Entangled in that knottedness is a profound amount of societal fear; the same societal fear that was promoted by the Reagan administration during the 1980's and continues to this day in many ways with the criminalization and policing of bodies of color across the United States.

The next section of this chapter will explore how “canine racism” and the subsequent coding of the pit-bull-type dog as monstrous and disposable has resulted in the passing of BSL throughout the country as well as abroad. It will explore more in depth what BSL is as well as how a national “pit bull panic” resulted in their passing. I will also explore the fiscal impact that BSL has on cities in an attempt to understand the economic impact of BSL on communities. Keeping in mind how the canine is constructed in relationship to conceptions of civilization and social regulation, I will attempt to deconstruct why the pit bull has been positioned at odds with those extremely pervasive national narratives while other breeds of dogs complement them through an exploration of BSL.

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<sup>354</sup> Kim, *Dangerous Crossings*, 274.

### Part III. Explorations in Breed-Specific Legislation

Breed-Specific Legislation (BSL) is a term used to refer to laws that regulate or outright ban certain breeds of dogs. The legislation can range from a complete prohibition of an entire breed, essentially enacting a death sentence for those dogs targeted regardless of their individual actions, to requiring pet owners to spend additional money on homeowners and renters' liability insurance, high fences and outright fines if they wish to continue living with a particular breed of dog. These additional expenses clearly have a more substantial impact on people of lower socioeconomic statuses than middle and upper class individuals. BSL may also place restrictions on the actual body of the animal, including requiring the use of muzzles outside the home, necessitating spaying and neutering and banning the breed from entering spaces such as dog parks and military bases.<sup>355</sup> BSL impacts those dogs labeled "bully breeds" that are thought to be innately aggressive, violent and uncontrollable, regardless of upbringing or individual socialization. Numerous dog breeds at different times and places in history have been regulated and/or banned, including the Rottweiler, mastiff, German shepherd, chow-chow and Dalmatian. Currently it is pit-bull type dogs that are most likely to be impacted by BSL, oftentimes for the highly socially constructed and problematic reasons explored earlier.<sup>356</sup>

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that approximately 4.5 million dog bites occur annually in the United States<sup>357</sup> with approximately three bites

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<sup>355</sup> "Position Statement on Breed-Specific Legislation," American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior, 2014, accessed November 11, 2016, [https://avsab.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Breed-Specific\\_Legislation-download-8-18-14.pdf](https://avsab.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Breed-Specific_Legislation-download-8-18-14.pdf).

<sup>356</sup> "Breed-Specific Legislation," American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, 2016, accessed November 11, 2016, <http://www.asPCA.org/animal-cruelty/dog-fighting/what-breed-specific-legislation>.

<sup>357</sup> Preventing Dog Bites, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015, accessed March 20, 2017, <https://www.cdc.gov/features/dog-bite-prevention/>.

annually proving to be fatal.<sup>358</sup> While dog bites are a public safety issue, instead of focusing on targeting a specific breed studies have shown it would be more efficient to emphasize the importance of responsible dog ownership and the targeting of dangerous individual dogs.<sup>359</sup> As the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior (AVSAB) points out, “most dogs referred to as ‘pit bulls’ are merely individuals with a common general phenotype,” and “a dog’s physical appearance (phenotype) does not necessarily correspond with genetic composition (genotype),” so visually identifying a dog as a particular breed is not reliable to begin with, resulting in BSL being even more inefficient.”<sup>360</sup> Keeping in mind the difficulties related to identifying particular breeds, the profiling of those dogs labeled pit bulls and the subsequent passing of BSL becomes even more questionable.

In addition to failing to minimize the incidence of dog bites, BSL also has a significant fiscal impact on the communities that pass the ordinances. It costs a substantial amount of money to legislate and enforce the breed bans and regulations in addition to the costs incurred by the government to kill the banned dogs and dispose of their bodies. The national nonprofit group Best Friends Animal Society, which calls BSL a “waste of tax dollars,” has collected data on the fiscal impact of BSL across the United States. Prince George’s County of Maryland, for instance, spends approximately \$280,000 every year enforcing its ban and the city of Denver, Colorado, which has

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<sup>358</sup> Gary J. Patronek, Margaret Slater, and Amy Marder, “Use of a Number-Needed-to-Ban Calculation to Illustrate Limitations of Breed-Specific Legislation in Decreasing the Risk of Dog Bite-Related Injury,” *Journal of American Veterinary Medical Association* 237 n.7 (2010): 788-792.

<sup>359</sup> “Position Statement on Breed-Specific Legislation.” American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior, 2014, accessed November 11, 2016, [https://avsab.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Breed-Specific\\_Legislation-download-8-18-14.pdf](https://avsab.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Breed-Specific_Legislation-download-8-18-14.pdf).

<sup>360</sup> Ibid.

banned pit bulls since 1989, spends approximately \$938,000 annually.<sup>361</sup> The independent economic research firm John Dunham and Associates, Inc. concluded that the total annual cost of BSL for U.S. taxpayers to be an astonishing \$459,138,163, which includes animal control and enforcement, expenses for kenneling and veterinary care, expenses related to euthanasia and carcass disposal, litigation costs from residents appealing or contesting the law as well as possible costs associated with DNA testing.<sup>362</sup> These profound fiscal impacts have contributed to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the Obama Administration, the ASPCA, the HSUS, and the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior all opposing BSL.

BSL is often put in place after a well-publicized violent incident involving a pit-bull-type dog and either another dog or a person. Karen Delise, author of *Fatal Dog Attacks* and *The Pit Bull Placebo*, assessed stories from the media that covered dog attacks that occurred over a four-day period in August 2007 and determined that only events that involved a pit bull garnered national attention, while the stories involving other breeds of dogs were only covered by the local media.<sup>363</sup> Such media attention contributes to the demonization of the pit bull. Instead of focusing on individual circumstances, the media and popular culture at large places at the forefront a narrative saturated in racialized, gendered and classed stereotypes that biologically essentialize the

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<sup>361</sup> “Breed-Discriminatory Legislation Fiscal Impact Calculator,” Best Friends Animal Society, 2016, accessed November 11, 2016, <http://bestfriends.org/resources/breed-discriminatory-legislation-fiscal-impact-calculator>.

<sup>362</sup> “The Fiscal Impact of Breed Discriminatory Legislation in the United States,” Prepared by John Dunham and Associates, Inc. for Best Friends Animal Society, 2009, accessed November 11, 2016, <http://aldf.org/wp-content/uploads/ALC/2011/vankavage---fiscal-impact-of-breed-discrimination.pdf>.

<sup>363</sup> “BSL: Why Breed-Specific Legislation is All Bark and Fiscal Bite,” Best Friends Animal Society, 2016, accessed November 11, 2016, <http://bestfriends.org/resources/bsl-why-breed-specific-legislation-all-bark-and-fiscal-bite>.

breed while laying the groundwork for fear, hatred, discrimination and ultimately BSL throughout the United States.<sup>364</sup>

BSL explicitly plays into problematic discourses of civilization, discipline and governmentality because they enforce narratives related to social control and regulation, including a hierarchy of species and the discrimination of racialized others. While canines in the United States are generally thought to be fully domesticated and therefore controllable, BSL labels one breed of dog wild and even savage, as closer to nature and therefore uncontrollable. Therefore, the profiled breed must be regulated or even condemned to death because they are not only dangerous, but are also disposable. Furthermore, without the passing and enforcing of legal measures, which are foundational to the maintaining of so-called civilization, the mainstream, and arguably privileged members of population would be at great risk. In the contemporary United States, the pit bull is the uncontrollable, unpredictable, violent, racialized, gendered body that is pitted against the domestic, controlled, sweet non-pit-bull-type dog in our cultural imaginary. BSL, like other legislation including the three-strikes law that are highly racialized and gendered, continue to be passed and enforced despite being fiscally irresponsible and affectively damaging to entire populations of beings. While BSL clearly has negative fiscal impacts while failing to improve public safety, it also has negative affective impacts, for it literally tears families apart while unfairly impacting people of lower socioeconomic status, similarly to the carceral state as it was discussed by Cacho.

Alternatively to BSL, other laws are being passed that ban BSL itself due to the ordinances' lack of success at improving public safety, their high fiscal impact and the affective and financial impact the regulations and bans have on individual pit bull

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<sup>364</sup> "Position Statement on Breed-Specific Legislation," American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior, 2014, accessed November 11, 2016, <https://avsab.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Breed-Specific-Legislation-download-8-18-14.pdf>.

owners. In 2016, for instance, Governor Anthony Ducey of Arizona signed SB 1248 into law, forbidding breed discrimination by cities and towns throughout the state.<sup>365</sup> Instead, some cities, towns and states are embracing more effective policies that target individual reckless owners who have been cited for animal abuse or neglect; the National Canine Research Council has determined that these cases have been involved in eighty-four percent of fatal dog attacks. The National Canine Research Council has also determined that ninety-seven percent of fatal dog attacks involve canines that were not spayed or neutered, resulting in policies that provide free spay and neuter vouchers to communities and make it more expensive to license intact canines as opposed to their fixed counterparts. And with twenty-five percent of fatal attacks since the 1960's involving chained dogs, chaining restrictions have also been put in place in some communities.<sup>366</sup> All of these tactics are more efficient at improving public safety as well as reducing community trauma than BSL.

BSL can make it difficult, if not impossible, for people of limited socioeconomic means to live with their dogs because many rental properties are not willing to rent to people with “bully breeds” to begin with; if they are able to rent the increased cost in renters’ insurance can be prohibitory. This results in not only unwanted but also wanted dogs being relinquished to their local animal care and control agency, typically resulting in euthanasia due to a combination of overpopulation but especially because of the stigma attached to the breed. As a result, rescue groups that focus on the breed have sprung up across the country, working in their own small ways to not only rescue

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<sup>365</sup> Rebecca F. Wisch, “Overview of States the Prohibit Breed-Specific Legislation by State,” Animal Legal and Historical Center, Michigan State University College of Law, 2015, accessed November 11, 2016, <https://www.animallaw.info/article/overview-states-prohibit-bsl>.

<sup>366</sup> “Position Statement on Breed-Specific Legislation,” American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior, 2014, accessed November 11, 2016, [https://avsab.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Breed-Specific\\_Legislation-download-8-18-14.pdf](https://avsab.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Breed-Specific_Legislation-download-8-18-14.pdf).



individual pit bulls but to also assist in changing the narrative that surrounds the demonized breed. The next section will focus on exploring one such pit bull rescue that has been featured on a reality television program called *Pit Bulls & Parolees* over the last eight years on the Animal Planet network. This will be done in an effort to better understand how society both constructs and manages the breed in contemporary U.S. culture in relationship to the similarly stigmatized human parolees.

#### Part IV. Bringing Disposable and Dangerous Bodies Together

*Pit Bulls & Parolees* is a reality television show that focuses on the world's largest pit bull rescue organization called Villalobos Rescue Center (VRC). VRC is run by a woman named Tia Torres and employs formerly incarcerated men who are currently on probation. The show focuses on the dramas associated with keeping VRC running in order to offer "second chances" for "pit bulls, the world's most misunderstood breed of dog" as well as for "parolees, the guys I hired because no one else would," as Torres explains at the beginning of each episode.<sup>367</sup> *Pit Bulls & Parolees* began airing in 2009 on the American cable and satellite television channel Animal Planet. As of February 2015, Animal Planet is available in 81% of American households that have a television (roughly 94,288,000 households) and *Pit Bulls & Parolees* is one of the network's most successful shows, with its eighth season currently airing.<sup>368</sup> In this section I will analyze how parolees, ostracized members of society who in many ways are marked by what Cacho refers to as "social death," are positioned materially and discursively in relationship with the similarly demonized pit bull at VRC.

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<sup>367</sup> *Pit Bulls and Parolees*. "Second Chance Ranch." Episode 1. Directed by Lance Jeffrey. Animal Planet, October, 2009.

<sup>368</sup> Robert Seidman, "List of How Many Homes Each Cable Network is in as of February 2015." TV by the Numbers, Zap2it. February 22, 2015, accessed December 1, 2016, <http://tvbythenumbers.zap2it.com/reference/list-of-how-many-homes-each-cable-network-is-in-as-of-february-2015/366230/>.

In the pilot episode of *Pit Bulls & Parolees*, titled “Second Hand Ranch,” Tia Torres, a middle-aged white woman, is shown engaging in various managerial duties at VRC.<sup>369</sup> She sports a seemingly contradictory combination of acrylic nails and long dyed red hair with baggy jeans and an oversized t-shirt. Her only visible accessory is a dog leash hanging across her body. Her body language is focused, intense even. She has a great deal to do and a new challenge lies around every corner. Torres is the founder of VRC and rescuing dogs and especially pit bulls is her passion. With the help of her biological daughters Tania and Mariah and her adopted sons Kanani and Keli’i, Torres founded VRC in the 1990’s in Agua Dulce, California in Los Angeles County. In addition to running VRC, Torres also ran a Pit Bull Support Group that offered free obedience classes, spaying and neutering, medical assistance and training seminars. Torres quickly became known as the area’s “pit bull expert” and according to an Animal Planet press release:

Tia’s career flourished and after a 12-year relationship with Mariah’s father ended, she began a prison pen-pal relationship with Aren Jackson, AJ. Tia and AJ wrote to each other for five years, and then in 2006, he called and had been paroled after serving 14 years. Once they met, they were inseparable and eventually married. Together, they came up with the idea of employing parolees to work at Villalobos – giving both stigmatized dogs and men a second chance. It was also during this time that Mariah brought home abandoned twin teenage

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<sup>369</sup> *Pit Bulls and Parolees*. “Second Chance Ranch.” Episode 1. Directed by Lance Jeffrey. Animal Planet, October, 2009.

boys, Kanani and Keli'i, who Tia eventually adopted into her “functional, dysfunctional family.”<sup>370</sup>

Tia Torres's nontraditional family, which contains both biological and found human family members in addition to companion species, exists in a space that challenges the heteronormative, patriarchal, nuclear family paradigm. Throughout the show it is clear that the Torres family also contains some of the current or former parolees that VRC employs and Torres is consistently shown as the head of the family, subverting the male as patriarch trope. Furthermore, her family throughout the show provides support for one another that extended into their communities in an open-minded manner. That support comes to transcend species, race and blood in addition to social stereotypes and the limitations they place upon human and nonhuman bodies and lives.

Incarceration can brand a person for life. Once out of prison and on parole, individuals continue to be limited in regards to where they can live, work and travel. These limitations are due to legal restrictions in addition to the stereotypes entangled with their identities as former inmates that discourage businesses and landlords from employing them or providing residence. Parolees remain stigmatized wards of the state who are simultaneously told they have paid their debts to society while also remaining literally and figuratively tied to their incarcerations. The U.S. Department of Justice has found that within three years of release from prison, approximately two-thirds (67.8%) of released prisoners were rearrested and within five years over three-fourths (76.6%) of released prisoners were rearrested.<sup>371</sup> Without the ability to find a job and residence,

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<sup>370</sup> Tia Torres: Founder, Villalobos Rescue Center Press Release, *Pit Bulls & Parolees*, Animal Planet, December 7, 2014, accessed November 5, 2016, [http://media.press.discovery.com.s3.amazonaws.com/ugc/documents/2014/07/12/1\\_Tia\\_Torres\\_Bio.pdf](http://media.press.discovery.com.s3.amazonaws.com/ugc/documents/2014/07/12/1_Tia_Torres_Bio.pdf).

<sup>371</sup> Matthew R. Durose, Alexia D. Cooper, and Howard N. Snyder. “Recidivism of Prisoners Released in Thirty States in 2005: Patterns from 2005 to 2010,” U.S. Department of

parolees are effectively being denied a livable life and are condemned to social death, which hugely contributes to the tragically high recidivism rates that exist across the United States.

A place like VRC, in legally employing parolees, makes it significantly more likely that those individuals will not end up back in prison.<sup>372</sup> Armando Galindo, a middle aged Latino parolee employed by VRC reflected, “If I wasn’t working here at Villalobos I’d probably be doing something that I’m not supposed to be doing on my way back to prison. No doubt. This opportunity, it means everything for me, to be able to go home to my wife and say, I’m hired, I got a job.”<sup>373</sup> Armando’s daughter is also grateful for VRC, stating, “My dad has always been a good role model. It was really hard for him at first to get a second chance. I’m very grateful for that.”<sup>374</sup> Another former Latino male inmate named Jesse Gonzalez explained on the show that he was grateful that Torres gives parolees a “second chance” because “nobody advocates for us,” and that his “change of life wouldn’t be as strong as it is today if I didn’t have them [Torres, VRC and the pit bulls] as an inspiration.”<sup>375</sup>

Just as parolees are stigmatized so too are pit bulls who, oftentimes regardless of their actions, are often prevented from living certain places and are denied a livable life

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Justice, 2014, accessed January 11, 2017,  
<https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/rprts05p0510.pdf>.

<sup>372</sup> Peter Cove and Lee Bowes, “Immediate Access to Employment Reduces Recidivism,” *Real Clear Politics*, June 11, 2015, accessed January 17, 2017,  
[http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2015/06/11/immediate\\_access\\_to\\_employment\\_reduces\\_recidivism\\_126939.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2015/06/11/immediate_access_to_employment_reduces_recidivism_126939.html).

<sup>373</sup> *Pit Bulls and Parolees*. “On the Run.” Episode 5. Directed by J. McMahon. Animal Planet, November, 2009.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>375</sup> *Pit Bulls and Parolees*. “A Fighting Chance.” Episode 4. Executive Producer Rasha Drachkovitch. Animal Planet, November, 2010.

as an extension of their condemnation to social death. As images of pit bulls fighting and human inmates walking in a prison and barbed wire appeared on the screen Tia notes, “both pit bulls and parolees are very maligned by society, so for me pairing up a pit bull with a parolee to do pet therapy work is the ultimate way to break the stereotype.” She is reflecting on one of the paradigm shifting programs that exists at VRC that trains therapy dogs to go into places like hospitals and senior citizen homes.<sup>376</sup> Galindo, who was training a formally abused pit bull named Bella Donna explains, “It’s a blessing and an honor to train her. I can relate to what she’s gone through. Being neglected, being mistreated, I kind of see myself sometimes when looking at some of these dogs. It’s like, I know exactly what you’re going through, buddy. I know these dogs have been through hell and I’m just trying to make a smooth transition for them.”<sup>377</sup> In providing a livable space at VRC for both pit bulls and parolees, in bringing them together in a positive way, Torres works to rehabilitate these socially constructed modern monsters in hopes that their marginalized bodies can heal before moving on with their lives.

The lucky pit bulls who end up at VRC instead of at the receiving end of a euthanasia needle each have their own story. Some of the dogs were rescued from abuse and neglect cases, including dog-fighting rings, while others were abandoned because of their age or health conditions and some of the dogs were abandoned because their people moved and left them behind. VRC even took in forty pit bulls that became homeless following Hurricane Katrina, having arrived severely malnourished and diseased. While some did not make it, others were adopted. Still, twenty Katrina survivors remained at VRC over five years later, acting as a reminder of the devastation

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<sup>376</sup> Ibid.

<sup>377</sup> *Pit Bulls and Parolees*. “Second Chance Ranch.” Episode 1. Directed by Lance Jeffrey. Animal Planet, October, 2009.

long after many American's had moved on.<sup>378</sup> Many of the dogs at VRC had to be given up by their people because insurance companies or landlords would not allow the so-called demons of the dog world on their policies or properties. Such policies clearly impact those of lower socioeconomic status to a greater degree than people who are more financially secure, reflecting the societal assumptions placed on pit bulls and the people who own them in a way that produces more abandoned dogs and tears multispecies families apart.

Some of the dogs were abandoned because of aggression issues, with Torres explaining that, "all aggression is fear based" in dogs and therefore tends to be the product of nurture and not nature.<sup>379</sup> Those aggressive dogs, branded Potentially Dangerous Animals (PDA), are so labeled because they have injured another animal or person. While some PDA have the option of entering their owner's homes again, to do so would require the owners to purchase insurance and fences that often prove to be too expensive and lead to many PDA being abandoned and then placed on "death row" before being killed.<sup>380</sup> Torres also describes the area where PDA are kept at a shelter as, "like solitary confinement in a prison" and as a sort of "pit bull lane"<sup>381</sup> and even explains that once dogs have a "rap sheet" it is difficult to find them a home.<sup>382</sup> Once at VRC, Torres pronounces certain PDA as "under house arrest" and "parole" and even has to use GPS trackers, similar to ankle bracelets used for humans on parole, when court ordered

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<sup>378</sup> *Pit Bulls and Parolees*. "Devastation." Episode 5. Executive Producer Rasha Drachkovitch. Animal Planet, November, 2010.

<sup>379</sup> *Pit Bulls and Parolees*. "Redemption." Episode 2. Directed by J. McMahon. Animal Planet, November, 2009.

<sup>380</sup> *Pit Bulls and Parolees*. "Whiteout." Episode 3. Directed by J. McMahon. Animal Planet, November, 2009.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid.

<sup>382</sup> *Pit Bulls and Parolees*. "Crisis." Episode 4. Directed by J. McMahon. Animal Planet, November, 2009.

to do so. “The only thing missing is a piss test for drugs,” declares Torres when going over court orders regarding a PDA who is entering VRC.<sup>383</sup> Such linguistic descriptors as “death row,” “like solitary confinement,” and “rap sheet” further entangle the material and discursive realities of pit bulls and the parolees. Their values are reflected onto each other as marginalized beings and these linguistic strategies assist in intertextually entangling their social values and ultimately their social deaths.

These entangled constructions lead the parolees to identify with the pit bulls. While describing the excitement and joy seen in eleven pit bulls that were released following more than three years locked up in a shelter while their former owner was being prosecuted for dog fighting, white male parolee Jack Gardner explained, “I can definitely relate to that, just the sense of freedom that you get when you get out of someplace like that.”<sup>384</sup> When describing pit bulls that were formerly used in dog fighting, former inmate Gonzalez and current Mixed Martial Artist (MMA) fighter explained, “You know what I like about it? They’re so much like me. People just judge dogs, once it’s a fighting dog they’re no good, you know what I mean, and that’s just how it is with parolees. They deserve a second chance as much as we do.” Torres’s daughter Mariah added, “just like a pit bull Jesse got back up after he’d been knocked down and didn’t give up,” after witnessing one of Gonzalez’s MMA fights.<sup>385</sup>

One of the goals of VRC is to engage in community outreach in an effort to actively challenge the entangled stereotypes that haunt pit bulls and parolees and alter the lived realities of both species. Robert, a Latino male parolee who was arrested at

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<sup>383</sup> *Pit Bulls and Parolees*. “A Battle of Wills.” Episode 2. Executive Producer Rasha Drachkovitch. Animal Planet, October, 2010.

<sup>384</sup> *Pit Bulls and Parolees*. “A Fighting Chance.” Episode 4. Executive Producer Rasha Drachkovitch. Animal Planet, November, 2010.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid.

seventeen for robbery and tried as an adult, joined Tia to speak to children who live in the inner city where pit bulls are often the dogs of choice due to their association with gang life and dog fighting. As a former gang member who spent six years of his life in prison, Robert had first-hand experience with “thug life” and shares with the children how getting involved with gangs and engaging in pit bull abuse is not positive for anyone. In an attempt to discourage that life, Robert shared his story of getting involved with gangs at the age of thirteen, which lead to prison. Robert explained, “Prison is not a place for human beings” and that “prison is worse than the street” because prison guards start wars between races and horrible things happen inside.<sup>386</sup> He concluded his talk by encouraging the students to “run your own life and stay in school” instead of becoming a part of the horrendous cycle of multispecies violence that is gang life, which leads to nothing but “death or prison.”<sup>387</sup>

Torres reinforced Robert’s points by explaining to the classroom of inner city children that VRC is about breaking stereotypes because “stereotyping can be destructive, whether it’s against a particular breed of dog, or people.” She used ear cropping, which is a cosmetic surgical procedure done on some breeds of dogs, including pit bulls, to make them appear “tougher” and BSL in Colorado that has resulted in dogs being removed from loving homes and killed as examples of how stereotyping can manifest in different but destructive ways. In deconstructing the impact of stereotypes, while simultaneously reinforcing stereotypes with her own language, Torres referenced how dog chains, which VRC and other animal activist groups oppose as abusive, symbolize the pit bull’s “bling,” drawing parallels between human gang members and

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<sup>386</sup> Ibid.

<sup>387</sup> *Pit Bulls and Parolees*. “Crisis.” Episode 4. Directed by J. McMahon. Animal Planet, November, 2009.



mistreated canines. According to data collected by The Humane Society of the United States, chaining a dog is a high risk factor in serious dog bites and attacks.<sup>388</sup> Torres, in explaining that humans' utilization of such "bling" enacts abuse against the canine while increasing the likelihood that said canine will act aggressively towards another animal or person, is addressing the cycle of violence that plagues the human-pit bull relationship which can ultimately channel its way to entangled violences against humans, as Robert's experiences demonstrated.

Attempting to address the stigma and mistreatment that is shared by pit bulls and parolees is present throughout the reality television show. The societal stereotypes that position the pit bull as unpredictable, dangerous and vicious condemns many to death and makes adoption out of VRC difficult. It is a similar stigma - one based on hateful stereotypes and massive overgeneralizations that are far-too-frequently perpetuated by the media - that makes it difficult for parolees to find jobs and places to live, which ultimately condemns them to social death as well. Torres, while accepting a check at a Las Vegas fundraiser, explained that at VRC, "it's not just for the pit bulls, but it's for the underdogs period, and that's what this is all about, that's what we do at our place, now we're not just helping pit bulls, but we're helping people who are underdogs also."<sup>389</sup> In subverting the societal stigma and mistreatment, *Pit Bulls and Parolees* is constantly utilizing second chance narratives to describe the work that they do on behalf of both species. For instance, in rescuing canines formerly used in dog fighting, which are some of the most stigmatized of all pit bulls, Torres shares, "it's like hiring the

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<sup>388</sup> "Chaining and Tethering Dogs: Frequently Asked Questions," The Humane Society of the United States, 2017, accessed January 17, 2017, [http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/chaining\\_tethering/facts/chaining\\_tethering\\_facts.html?credit=web\\_id83608263#How\\_does\\_tethering\\_dogs\\_pose](http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/chaining_tethering/facts/chaining_tethering_facts.html?credit=web_id83608263#How_does_tethering_dogs_pose).

<sup>389</sup> *Pit Bulls and Parolees*. "Sin City." Episode 6. Directed by J. McMahon. Animal Planet, December, 2009.

parolees, no one else wants them, so I guess I'll take them."<sup>390</sup> While such a statement may be true, it certainly positions Torres as a sort of working class white savior to the highly racialized pit bulls and parolees.

While VRC consistently presents itself as providing second chances to pit bulls and parolees, there are also numerous instances where the pit bulls are discussed as saving people. "I think dogs save people," explains a woman who is visiting VRC to adopt a pit bull.<sup>391</sup> Teenage, white parolee Cameron even explained that in caring for the pit bulls at VRC, he also learned how to care for himself, utilizing the gendered narrative that he arrived at VRC a boy and is now a man.<sup>392</sup> Robert, a Latino parolee, is even described as having dropped his tough exterior because he connected with the canines he was caring for at VRC, which carried over into his personal life, making him a better father whose children no longer feared him.<sup>393</sup> In this way, the parolees' caring relationship with the canines act as a humanizing force. As loving a canine is something middle class white America can relate to, Robert and other parolees loving and caring for the canines makes them more human(e) and therefore relatable to Animal Planet's television audience.

While Torres and others at VRC present second chances as largely positive and pervasive for those typically condemned, there are limitations on who is deserving of a second chance, and there are definitely limitations on how many chances a pit bull or a parolee is granted at VRC. Numerous parolees, for instance, were fired from VRC for not

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<sup>390</sup> *Pit Bulls and Parolees*. "Breaking Point." Episode 7. Executive Producer Rasha Drachkovitch. Animal Planet, December, 2010.

<sup>391</sup> *Pit Bulls and Parolees*. "A Battle of Wills." Episode 2. Executive Producer Rasha Drachkovitch. Animal Planet, October, 2010.

<sup>392</sup> Ibid.

<sup>393</sup> Ibid.

fulfilling their work obligations, particularly in regards to caring for the pit bulls in a thorough and loving manner, and while Torres has repeatedly said she believed in second chances, they are not granted to sex offenders, which she will not even consider hiring. When discussing a parolee who was having a difficult time, Torres explained, “I’m gonna give you the rope and whether you throw it to someone else to help them, to pull them in, or you stick it around your own neck and hang yourself, that’s up to you. I’ll help you to this point and give you this tool but you have to decide what to do with it. I hope Cameron [a parolee] thinks about the rope in what we call the free world. You know, these guys just need to understand the free world is not easy. There’s a lot of really judgmental people out there who are not gonna look at him the way I do and it’s sad because I know these guys better than anybody and I know the good they can be.”<sup>394</sup> As for the pit bulls, if they remain aggressive over an extended period of time in such a way that marks them as both unadoptable and unable to live at VRC, they will be euthanized. Torres also acknowledges that certain pit bulls, and those with “blue” genes in particular, have become “almost designer dogs” because they are bred for looks and color, which has resulted in genetic abnormalities and an increased likelihood of aggression, ultimately preventing “rehabilitation.”<sup>395</sup>

When *Pit Bulls and Parolees* started, VRC was located in Agua Dulce, California in Los Angeles County, but the property was already becoming too small for the ever-expanding VRC. The first episode of season three, aptly called “Judgment Day,” focused on VRC’s attempt to be granted a permit to run the rescue on a larger piece of land in Tehachapi, California. In a public hearing, Torres explains, “We are here to help. We

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<sup>394</sup> *Pit Bulls and Parolees*. “Mission of Mercy.” Episode 8. Executive Producer Rasha Drachkovitch. Animal Planet, December, 2010.

<sup>395</sup> *Pit Bulls and Parolees*. “Beware of Dog.” Episode 6. Executive Producer Rasha Drachkovitch. Animal Planet, December, 2010.

don't discriminate. We don't care what you did. We don't care what color you are. We don't care what kind of dog it is. We just want to help." Such a statement yet again situated VRC as an intersectional project, acknowledging the entangled nature of bodies across species. Unfortunately, the community has largely expressed opposition to VRC, which parolee Gardner explains is rooted in ignorance and judgments based upon how the pit bulls and parolees look. In opposition to VRC, a white male community member asserted that the genetics of pit bulls have been tampered with to produce the mythical locked jaw while another white man complained about the effects of pit bulls and parolees on his property values and that having so many fences around was reminiscent of a prison, making him feel threatened and insecure.<sup>396</sup> In the end, VRC was denied the permit, reinforcing a value system that places property values and the fears of white men over the needs of the marginalized.

After being denied the ability to build on the new property in California, VRC relocated to New Orleans, dubbed "the city of second chances." Once located in New Orleans, the violence of Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath, which left so many humans and animals homeless, permeated the show. Instead of primarily focusing on rescuing pit bulls and parolees, the show addressed the rebuilding of New Orleans for its human and nonhuman residents. VRC set up their primary shelter in New Orleans Ninth Ward, one of the most impoverished and devastated parts of the city following Hurricane Katrina. In various episodes, the Ninth Ward's landfills, abandoned homes, and dumped dogs are shown on screen in a way that could perpetuate negative stereotypes about the neighborhood. Fortunately, VRC's efforts to assist the community with free spaying and neutering services, fence building and education programs are also featured, bringing literal tears of joy to the citizens of the Ninth Ward who could not afford such services

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<sup>396</sup> Ibid.

and potentially would have been forced to relinquish their nonhuman family member without such assistance. While rescue narratives and white savior stereotypes are also at hand in such actions given that Torres is a white woman, VRC is a very racially and socioeconomically diverse organization, thanks in part to its parolee population. Furthermore, showcasing parolees as “heroes” and “saviors” with agency and the ability to produce positive change is paradigm shifting both materially and discursively in a society that not only homogenizes them, but also stereotypically represents them as devious and even inherently monstrous.

*Pit Bulls and Parolees* constantly works to subvert stereotypes about pit bulls and parolees as well as pit bull owners. Whereas representationally and discursively society assumes young urban men of color own pit bulls in U.S. culture, *Pit Bulls and Parolees* consistently shows its canine residents being adopted by white families and white women who are single mothers in particular. In doing so, the show is challenging the racialized and gendered stereotypes surrounding pit bull owners to a certain degree, but it is keeping intact the stereotype that “good” dog owners who rescue abused and abandoned pit bulls are white people and that people of color are the “bad” pit bull owners whose behavior resulted in the pit bulls ending up at VRC in the first place. While there are exceptions to this throughout the show, largely portraying “good” pit bull adopters as white people ultimately reinforces the racialized stereotypes that work against both pit bulls and people of color.

Repeatedly emphasizing the adoption of pit bulls by single mothers, on the other hand, challenges heteronormative constructions of what a family looks like. A single mother who goes to VRC to adopt a pit bull explains she was drawn to the “misunderstood” breed because, “I understand what it’s like to be abused and it’s no fun and you learn not to trust people and you think less of yourself and you start making bad

decisions and all it takes is one or two people who make that difference and it's like me, if a few people hadn't given me a chance and loved me, where would I be?"<sup>397</sup>

Understanding how abuse and violence is enacted across species demonstrates further how the construction of stereotypes makes certain bodies and identities vulnerable to abuse, neglect and social death. Highlighting that entanglement throughout the reality television show humanizes both pit bulls and single mothers and in this way is a positive representation. Alternatively, given that the rhetoric surrounding single mothers adopting pit bulls often involves the pit bull "protecting" the single mother and her children, who are positioned as vulnerable without a patriarch, *Pit Bulls and Parolees* actually recodes heteronormative scripts onto the families.

While VRC is a place that claims to care for both humans and nonhumans, and in many ways is a place of great rehabilitation and transformation, issues remain. For instance, the dogs are consistently shown to have ample access to healthcare on the show. No surgery or medication is ever too expensive to be out of reach for the critters of VRC. The humans, on the other hand, do not seem to have access to healthcare to such a degree. Earl Moffett, for instance, had an injury so severe throughout the bulk of his time on *Pit Bulls and Parolees* that his entire right arm was functionally unusable and instead hung at his side, paralyzed and painful. After years on the show Earl finally went to a doctor who makes an effort to help people who do not have insurance and was able to have surgery. So while the animals of VRC have extensive access to healthcare, the employees, including the parolees, do not. Such a profound discrepancy in care reflects that the dogs have more value than the parolees.

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<sup>397</sup> *Pit Bulls and Parolees*. "A Battle of Wills." Episode 2. Executive Producer Rasha Drachkovitch. Animal Planet, October, 2010.

*Pit Bulls and Parolees* is a complex television show that situates marginalized bodies together in a way that acts to humanize across species. So while pit bulls are a stigmatized dog breed in contemporary culture, as BSL and its consequences demonstrate, mainstream America still relates to them to a greater degree than they do people of color and other historically and contemporarily criminalized bodies. As a result, showing the significantly racialized, classed and gendered demographic of parolees on a personal level caring for and relating to pit bulls, helps to make them more relatable. In this complex entanglement, the hierarchy of species which we presume situates the human over the nonhuman becomes further muddled, emphasizing the importance of considering species and breed in addition to gender, race, class, sexuality, and (dis)ability when attempting to engage with taxonomies of power. In other words, *Pit Bulls and Parolees* simultaneously privileges the dogs and their care above humans for the sake of the dogs and their audience while using the dogs to humanize the parolees. The reality television show and the workings of VRC also raise larger questions of how to approach bringing about equality for all in a space that can exist beyond theory as well as species.

## Part V. Conclusions

In acknowledging how social construction and power dynamics apply to interspecies interactions, humans themselves are reconceptualized as well as how humans are defined in relationship with nonhuman animals. This is especially important because similar belief systems and overarching structures that allow for the abuse and degradation of nonhuman animals apply to the oppression of human animals too. While we must be careful when using comparisons that highlight the similarities between the unequal power dynamics that exist between humans of various social locations and

human and nonhuman animals, cautiously exploring the overlaps can also be a very fruitful feminist project.<sup>398</sup> Considering those who exist outside the realm of the “human” also reminds us that there are always different ways and forms of relating, a concept that is paramount in feminist epistemology.

As the Hurricane Katrina, Sheriff Joe Arpaio and even the *Pit Bulls and Parolees* examples demonstrated, humans have the tendency to be “selectively empathetic” in a way that is contingent upon taxonomies of power, embedded stereotypes, and an overall fear of difference.<sup>399</sup> When Torres introduced a new canine member of VRC to the parolees she employed she proclaimed, “He’s kind of like you guys, he just looks scary.”<sup>400</sup> Torres and everyone else at VRC are even seen wearing clothing with “Racism is the Pitts” stamped on it, demonstrating a conscious effort to acknowledge the linked, stigmatized realities of pit bulls with people of color in the United States’ cultural imaginary. Given that race and species “sustain and energize one another in the joint project of producing the human and the subhuman, not-human, less than human,” considering their knotted nature allows for a more complex understanding across species.<sup>401</sup>

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<sup>398</sup> DeMello, *Animals and Society*, 268-9.

<sup>399</sup> Cacho, *Social Death*, 3.

<sup>400</sup> *Pit Bulls and Parolees*. “Second Chance Ranch.” Episode 1. Directed by Lance Jeffrey. Animal Planet, October, 2009.

<sup>401</sup> Kim, *Dangerous Crossings*, 283.



CHAPTER 5  
What Is A Dog Worth?  
Interspecies Economies and Intimacies

Part I. Introduction

Dogs have multiple meanings in contemporary United States culture. In many instances, those meanings are contradictory, existing simultaneously in the same interspecies relationship. Canines can be byproducts of capitalism, situated as status symbols, disposable bodies and products, acting as extensions of their humans' social locations, as was discussed earlier in reference to masculinity and neutering. But they can also exist as sources of interspecies love, affection and support. While dogs are technically property under U.S. law, positioning them firmly as objects, they also can be subjects in the scope of individual human-canine relationships and other areas of the interspecies landscape, including in popular culture. Canines can be part of the heteropatriarchal nuclear family unit, which traditionally consists of a husband, wife, two children and one dog, but they can also be members of non-normative and even radical kinships. People also place human values onto dogs in contradictory ways that can be touching, such as when people decide to rescue instead of purchase in order to save a canine life. But the placing of human values onto dogs can also be violent, as has been the case for pit bull type dogs whose bodies have been targeted and criminalized via Breed-Specific Legislation due to their association with young, urban, Black males, as was discussed earlier. The meanings of dogs are therefore complex. Focusing on the complexity and relationality of interspecies relationships has the ability to both reinforce and challenge hierarchical value systems.

Humans can have deep and even familial relationships with dogs even if the humans themselves are not valued by society at large. Furthermore, dogs have the ability to humanize humans, as was discussed in reference to Sheriff Arpaio and *Pit Bulls and*

*Parolees*. This final chapter will explore more in depth how an interspecies analysis allows for the multiple meanings of the canine to be explored while simultaneously making space for a more complex understanding of how humans, institutions and power are constructed across species. It will focus on how a canine is valued in contemporary U.S. culture. While the human-canine relationship can reinforce heteropatriarchal capitalist structures, it can also reject those structures through intimacy. The human-canine relationship can even act in such a way that prevents social death across species, for in moments of human isolation canines can provide the comfort and support denied by members of their own species.

“We bought her a couple years ago. She was a fortune - over \$2,000! And we had to be on a wait list for months and months before she became available,” explained a thirty-seven year old white man named Bret. Bret was referring to his dog Trixie, a Goldendoodle who was enjoying time at a dog park in Tempe, Arizona. Goldendoodles are considered “designer dogs.” They are highly sought after and oftentimes-costly hybrids resulting from breeding a Golden Retriever with a Poodle. Bret seemed frustrated as he continued to discuss Trixie, “All that money and I really don’t know if she was worth it. She just acts like a regular dog. And her hips are already bad. That’ll be a fortune to deal with too, I’m sure.”

“Why did you decide to purchase a Goldendoodle in particular?” I asked.

“My wife really wanted one. I didn’t really care at the time. I didn’t really want a dog at all. But I’ve been thinking about that money lately [the money spent to purchase Trixie] and wish she’d just gotten a free dog at the pound,” Bret responded.

“Why didn’t you want a dog?” I inquired.

“They’re too much work and money. And I knew she [his wife] wouldn’t exercise her enough. That’s why I’m here with her now. She’s [Trixie] cooped up all day while

we're at work," Bret answered, explaining why he was at the dog park sans his wife on a chilly January morning in Tempe, Arizona. Meanwhile, Trixie had amassed a collection of filthy, multi-colored balls and seemed delightfully undecided by her options. The only other dog in the park at the moment, an anti-social Chihuahua, had already rejected her attempts to engage. So Trixie was left to entertain herself, which she seemed to be doing with relative success.

"Do you know why your wife wanted a Goldendoodle in particular, instead of another breed or dog?" I asked Bret.

"I don't know. She likes expensive things. And Trixie is cute. She's a nice dog. Just a lot of work and money," Bret explained, watching Trixie pick up and put down one ball after the next, sometimes tossing one up into the air before selecting another.

"So you think your wife wanted Trixie because she was expensive?" I queried further.

"It was a factor," Bret responded, chuckling ever so slightly. "Sarah [his wife] has expensive taste. Every time she shops, it's always for expensive things. Even Trixie's collar was expensive. I think she got it from Nordstrom or somewhere else in Scottsdale," he explained, rolling his eyes while equating Trixie to other expensive "things" his wife had purchased. "She'd [Sarah] never buy anything at Wal-Mart or anything. If I was gonna get a dog, I'd go to the pound and grab a collar at Goodwill. But my wife and I don't tend to agree on stuff like that...financial stuff," Bret trailed off, seemingly becoming lost in thought.

"What other expenses does Trixie incur," I asked Bret, attempting to redirect his attention to the present, "aside from what you spent purchasing her and buying her collar? You mentioned her hips, earlier."

“Her vet bills are huge, every time she goes, and Sarah takes her a lot,” he responded eagerly.

“Why does she go to the vet a lot,” I asked.

“I don't even know, half the time. She does have allergies and has had tests for that. Now she's on a really expensive food and takes pills every day. The food is so expensive. It's like fifty bucks a week or something, minimum. The pills are expensive too. And her hips are bad and she takes pills for that and may need surgery soon. That'll be another \$2,000, at least,” Bret explained, his body language indicating he was becoming increasingly stressed as he explained the many expenses associated with Trixie. “Oh! And when we went out of town for Christmas it was a fortune to have someone watch her for the week. And we had to have a taller fence put around our house about a year ago 'cause she kept jumping the shorter one that was already there. Every month there's more and more money spent on her.” Bret seemed overwhelmed by all of the expenses associated with Trixie.

“So would you say that Trixie is a financial hardship?” I asked Bret.

“Definitely! We could be saving this money or spending it on vacation or other stuff,” he responded. Despite his irritation with Trixie, he kept a close eye on her while we conversed and appeared concerned about her general wellbeing.

In an attempt to turn the conversation in a more positive direction, I asked, “Is there anything you enjoy about Trixie?”

“Not really,” Bret said quietly, looking guilty. “She's sweet but she's just so much work and money. Sometimes it feels like taking care of a kid would be less stress! It's hard to keep her happy. I told my wife we're not getting another dog - especially such an expensive dog. It's too much maintenance...too much money. If she [Sarah] wants something else expensive to post on Facebook or wherever, she can go buy shoes or

something.” Yet again, Bret was drawing parallels between Trixie and inorganic objects purchased by his wife.

“So Sarah posts photos of Trixie to Facebook?” I asked.

“Oh yeah! She loves showing her off. She is cute. Sarah likes showing her friends how cute she [Trixie] is. She wants everyone to know we have a Goldendoodle,” Bret explained.

“Do you think Sarah enjoys Trixie for any other reason?” I asked, “Aside from showing her off.”

“I don’t know. I guess. Sometimes she [Sarah] takes her for walks, but not enough. I know she loves Trixie, I know that. Sometimes we all watch TV together at night and that’s nice. It’s just hard. She [Sarah] does say she likes having her there when I’m out of town for work, so that’s good. She feels safer with a dog in the house. And she is a nice dog. My nieces love her. It’s just hard, all the work and money,” Bret said, reiterating his earlier points. The dog park had starting to get a bit busier during our conversation. Trixie was now playing with other dogs and seemed to be enjoying herself. “She’s finally running around and we have to leave,” Bret said, frustrated, glancing at his iPhone while noting the time. “I gotta get to work.” He said goodbye to me and called out to Trixie as he headed towards the park gate. She immediately responded, running enthusiastically to catch up with Bret. At the park exit he reached down to attach her leash before they left the park together. Despite Bret’s general lack of interest in having a dog, Trixie certainly seemed to enjoy his company as she frolicked down the street at his side.

What is a dog worth? What is the value of the family pet in contemporary U.S. culture? According to Bret, Trixie was primarily a product that was purchased to positively influence his wife’s social status and garner attention in social media spaces

such as Facebook. Trixie had monetary and social value because of her position as a cute and expensive “designer dog.” Bret even referred to Trixie as a “thing” on multiple occasions throughout our discussion. But Bret also claimed his wife loved Trixie and that they both enjoyed spending some time with her, providing evidence that affective value existed as well. He mentioned that his wife Sarah felt “safer” when Trixie was home and Bret was out of town, indicating that she had value for providing a sense of security as well. Trixie was also very costly and took a lot of labor to maintain, which Bret noted repeatedly. While Bret did not appear to care about the Goldendoodle’s pedigree, he did seem to care that she had a certain quality of life, as was indicated by his very presence at the dog park with Trixie.

The time and money spent on a dog is another measure of value attached to the canine. For despite being clearly irritated that maintaining Trixie took such a significant amount of time and energy, Bret still took the time to wake up and take Trixie to the park early in the morning before going to work. He also seemed genuinely concerned about the amount of exercise Trixie received each day. Additionally, Bret and Sarah spent a considerable amount of money maintaining Trixie and while her status as a Goldendoodle and items like her expensive collar are markers of her humans social status, purchasing expensive food and medication for Trixie also have positive impacts on her life as well. Trixie evidently was perceived as being worthy enough to spend copious amounts of money maintaining, for the benefit of her people as well as Trixie herself.

It is also interesting to note that Bret communicated about his wife and her relationship with Trixie in a way that was embedded with multiple socially constructed taxonomies of power. Bret described Sarah as rather materialistic, superficial and also in need of protection, which are all characteristics associated with traditional constructions

of white, middle-class femininity. Bret's description of the relationship between Sarah and Trixie reflects intersectional stereotypes that materially manifest across species. The very act of purchasing Trixie was done at least in part because she had monetary market value as a trendy Goldendoodle and would in turn demonstrate to the world that Sarah had a sizable disposable income. Bret, if taken at face value, did not seem to feel the need to demonstrate his social status through purchasable goods such as Trixie, although it is important to note that self-reporting is certainly not always reliable. Furthermore, Sarah was allegedly in need of protection by Trixie when Bret was not home, but that protection was evidently not needed when Bret was home. These explicitly gendered descriptions of Brenda and Trixie's interspecies relationship reflects how gender and other taxonomies of power, including race and class, become coded across bodies. They can also come to be reproduced upon the bodies and lives of canine companions, as Trixie's expensive collar and very identity as a "designer dog" demonstrate.

When considering the world of social media in addition to other every day, visible parts of life in modern America, it appears as though companion species are not only present but pervasive in their cuteness and ability to provide love, affection and laughs. You cannot log onto social media without being bombarded with videos of critters doing adorable things. Bret even noted that Sarah enjoyed posting photos of Trixie on Facebook, a not-so-unusual activity for modern day pet owners. Furthermore, in-person interspecies spaces, including dog-friendly patios, dog parks and even workspaces that allow people to bring their dogs are becoming more and more common across the country. Frequent advertisements on television and online for pet supplies and a number of large Hollywood movies, including *A Dog's Purpose*, *Max* and *The Secret Life of Pets*, that feature canines as main characters all were released from 2015-2017. *The Secret Life of Pets* even had product tie-ins with the pet supply chain PetSmart. Taken at face value,

these extremely visible elements of human life with companion species provide nothing but a bright and happy picture of the interspecies, human-critter relationship. The reality, however, is that the interspecies relationship is significantly more complex and is certainly not always as simple or happy as frolicking puppies, hilarious dog memes and big budget Hollywood films.

Bret's relationship with Trixie highlights my earlier point, that dogs have multiple meanings in contemporary United States culture. They can be beloved four-legged family members and they can also be pieces of property. Dogs can have profound affective, entertainment and therapeutic value for humans and they can also be sources of financial and emotional hardship. Canines can be perceived to be the most privileged of all the nonhuman species, given that in many cases they are allowed to live in homes, have access to expensive medical treatments, their own fluffy beds and toys and even their own laws that protect only companion species. Simultaneously, however, it is important to note that canines are also a highly regulated species that can be subject to cruelty and abuse and are primarily denied agency. This is evident when one considers how millions of dogs are deprived of the ability to move and even defecate freely as they are locked in homes or contained on leashes without the capability to go outside without the aid of their human caregiver, or prison guard, depending upon the lens one uses to interrogate the relationship. Leashed canines are victims of benevolent speciesism, for many regulatory acts, including keeping them locked indoors when humans are not at home and on a leash when in public, are constructed at least in part as necessary to keep them safe. Such arguments are also made about women, for to regulate their bodies is constructed as necessary in order to protect them. Ultimately, the leashed canine exists in a unique space between subjects and objects in modern, capitalist Western society,



marking them as complex beings with which humans have a range of interspecies interactions.

This chapter will continue to explore more in depth the multiple ways that people exist with canines in contemporary United States culture. In addition to deconstructing additional interviews of people who live with dogs, I will also rehash some of the information interrogated in earlier chapters. This do this in an attempt to understand interspecies relationships as well as how humans and dogs relate across species, particularly in regards to how humans perceive of and even alter (or, alternatively, keep intact) their canine companions in relationship to their own social locations. Throughout these chapters I have worked to demonstrate that while profound dissimilarities exist across species, as human and canines are without a doubt very different, there are also many ways to relate beyond the realm of the human. Considering those interspecies relations helps to illuminate the knottedness of our world. Interrogating that knottedness is of great value because it allows for the questioning of power dynamics and structures of social construction that exist beyond the human world. This is vital because in our anthropocentric culture, it is easy to forget that humans are not the only ones impacted by systems of oppression, privilege, and domination.

This final chapter will focus especially on what a canine's worth is in modern American culture. Value, or how worthwhile and useful someone is perceived to be, tends be based on heteropatriarchal, normative, capitalist belief systems. In other words, for someone to be labeled as valuable, they must be "productive" members of society. They must produce and accumulate monetary value as members of the capitalist machine. An individual must conform to other normative standards of living according to contemporary U.S. culture. But how is the value of a canine, a creature that is at best a product or even byproduct of the capitalist machine, determined? Value, or worth, needs

to be considered beyond the scope of the industrial, consumerist, normative, hierarchical framework in order to understand on a more complex level the worth of a dog.

Considering “how ‘value’ and its normative criteria are naturalized and universalized enables us to uncover and unsettle heteropatriarchal, legal, and neoliberal investments,” creating more space for understanding how beings become of worth in an alternative way.<sup>402</sup> In reconsidering value, it can be assigned beyond the incomplete and limiting realm of the “productive,” moneymaking, nuclear-family-embracing human.

The worth of a dog is extremely personal and inconsistent, as my interview with Bret demonstrated. My observations also reveal that a dog’s worth is almost always linked to his or her relationship to a human and is deeply influenced by the social locations and affective connections of those humans. It is important to note, however, that some activist groups are working to change that reality to a certain degree in an effort to create a more inclusive interspecies world. This final chapter will also grapple to a greater degree with what dog ownership means in modern America. To at least a certain degree, dog ownership is an extension of contemporary U.S. consumer-driven culture and in that light canines exist as excessively regulated, constructed beings dependent upon a hopefully benevolent master. This was largely the case for the relationship that existed between Bret, Sarah and Trixie. Alternatively, under certain circumstances living with a companion animal can be not only of significant value across species, but can even be radical in its ability to transcend heteropatriarchal constructions of the nuclear family and interspecies companionship more broadly.

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<sup>402</sup> Cacho, *Social Death*.

## Part II. Exploring Multiple Meanings: The Economic and Affective Value of the Canine

Pets are big business in contemporary Western society. Entire industries exist related to their creation and care, including regulatory and welfare agencies, breeders, food and supply producers and retailers, veterinarians, groomers, walkers and sitters and even hotels and spas. Those industries are growing every year and are arguably being supported by members of upper and middle class America. For instance, the number of veterinarians has increased by 100% since 1996.<sup>403</sup> The average cost of a routine visit to one of those veterinarians for a dog is \$235 and a surgical vet visit will cost an owner \$551 on average.<sup>404</sup> Given that 79.7 million (65%) households in the United States have at least one companion animal, there is a significant economy surrounding the medical care of pets, not to mention the other economies of the canine. It costs approximately \$1,570 annually to own a large dog and over a twelve-year lifespan, over \$22,000.<sup>405</sup> Overall, pet care spending has grown by 60% from 1996-2012<sup>406</sup> and it is estimated that Americans spend over \$60 billion on their companion animals annually.<sup>407</sup> This spending also reflects the classed nature of pet ownership, for one must have a sizable disposable income to be able to comfortably afford a companion

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<sup>403</sup> Austin Frakt, "How Emotion Over Pet Care Helps Explain Human Health Spending," *The New York Times*, January 9, 2017, accessed March 4, 2017, [https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/09/upshot/how-caring-for-dogs-and-cats-explains-human-health-spending.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/09/upshot/how-caring-for-dogs-and-cats-explains-human-health-spending.html?_r=0).

<sup>404</sup> "Pet Industry Market Size and Ownership," American Pet Products Association, 2016, March 4, 2017, [http://www.americanpetproducts.org/press\\_industrytrends.asp](http://www.americanpetproducts.org/press_industrytrends.asp).

<sup>405</sup> Beth Greenfield, "The True Cost of Owning a Pet," *Forbes*, 2011, accessed March 4, 2017, <https://www.forbes.com/2011/05/24/true-costs-owning-pet.html>.

<sup>406</sup> Frakt, "How Emotion Over Pet Care Helps Explain Human Health Spending"

<sup>407</sup> "APPA National Pet Owners Survey," American Pet Products Association, accessed September 8, 2016, <http://www.americanpetproducts.org/>.

animal. Without said sizable disposable income, living with a canine could become a serious financial and in turn affective hardship, as not being able to provide for a four-legged family member could become difficult emotionally, especially when a lack of disposable income forces people to relinquish their critters. With that being said, it is important to note that people of lower socioeconomic statuses are competent and emotionally engaged pet owners and that it is not necessary for pet keeping to be so financially burdensome. However, given the high cost of certain services, including veterinary care, as well as the social pressure to conform to materialism in modern America, pet keeping can potentially be a significant burden across the socioeconomic spectrum.

The pet industry and its subsequent economy continue to grow every year, situating the companion animal rather firmly as a product and not a participant in consumption-driven, capitalist U.S. culture. The pet can be a product and not a participant because the pet can be in and of itself a constructed commodity, as the discussion about dog breeds in Chapter Two as well as my conversation with Bret in reference to his “designer dog” revealed. Furthermore, like other products, critters can act to symbolize and even act as extensions of those humans who choose to purchase instead of rescue. Furthermore, canines can be disposable commodities, as is the case with other products in our society overflowing with excesses, accumulation and ultimately waste. The disposability of companion species results in approximately 670,000 unwanted dogs being killed every year in shelters across the country, further cementing their status as a disposable product.<sup>408</sup>

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<sup>408</sup> “Pet Statistics,” ASPCA, 2016, March 4, 2017, <http://www.asPCA.org/animal-homelessness/shelter-intake-and-surrender/pet-statistics>.

The worth and status of a pet becomes murky when one considers the role of the dog in contemporary divorces. There was a 27% increase in pet custody cases and 20% increase in cases where judges deemed pets an asset in a divorce from 2009 through 2014, with dogs accounting for 88% of the companion animals in question.<sup>409</sup> Such statistics indicate that the canine is a central feature of the modern American family and is worthy of discussion when that family is disintegrating. While the pet is technically property under United States law, *The New York Times* reports that divorce cases are shifting from viewing pets primarily as property to emphasizing “the best interests of the animals” when determining rulings.<sup>410</sup> This implies that dogs have value in their own right and regardless of their human’s desires and their technical legal status; they deserve as rewarding a life as possible. The potentially costly nature of divorce proceedings reiterates the economic and affective worth of individual canines to individual people. As does the fact that shared custody, visitation and even alimony payments to owners have been court ordered during divorce cases involving companion species.<sup>411</sup> Additionally, starting about fifteen years ago, states began allowing people to leave estates or trusts to care for their pets.<sup>412</sup> Taken together, this information indicates

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<sup>409</sup> “Pet Custody Disputed On the Rise Find Nation’s Top Matrimonial Lawyers – Survey Reveals More Couples Clawing Through Divorce,” The American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, February 12, 2014, accessed March 23, 2017, <http://www.aaml.org/about-the-academy/press/press-releases/pets/pet-custody-disputed-rise-find-nations-top-matrimonial-l>.

<sup>410</sup> Christopher Mele, “When Couples Divorce, Who Gets to Keep the Dog? (Or Cat.),” *The New York Times*, March 23, 2017, accessed March 23, 2017, [https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/23/us/divorce-pet-custody-dog-cat.html?module=WatchingPortal&region=c-column-middle-span-region&pgType=Homepage&action=click&mediald=thumb\\_square&state=standard&contentPlaceme nt=11&version=internal&contentCollection=www.nytimes.com&contentId=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nytimes.com%2F2017%2F03%2F23%2Fus%2Fdivorce-pet-custody-dog-cat.html&eventName=Watching-article-click](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/23/us/divorce-pet-custody-dog-cat.html?module=WatchingPortal&region=c-column-middle-span-region&pgType=Homepage&action=click&mediald=thumb_square&state=standard&contentPlaceme nt=11&version=internal&contentCollection=www.nytimes.com&contentId=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nytimes.com%2F2017%2F03%2F23%2Fus%2Fdivorce-pet-custody-dog-cat.html&eventName=Watching-article-click).

<sup>411</sup> Ibid.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid.

that the economic and affective worth of a canine is complicated and for many families, the canine is much more than a disposable product, but is instead a source of love and support that is worth fighting to keep.

“She’s not worth anything. Her coloring is off,” explained Janet, a sixty-four year old white woman at the dog park on a sunny Friday afternoon in Scottsdale, Arizona. Janet was referring to her dog, a seven-year-old, brown and white English springer spaniel named Maple. Maple was wandering the dog park, sniffing the ground, shrubbery, benches, people’s shoes and the bottoms of her fellow canines as Janet and I conversed. “We only moved here about six months ago,” Janet explained. “My husband retired and our daughter lives in Tempe and we decided to relocate from upstate New York. Tired of fighting those winters! I used to do some work with the dog shows up there and had some prizewinners. Perfect coloring! Now they were worth something! But they’ve all passed over the years and only Maple is left. She was never shown [in dog shows]. She’s only a pet. But she’s a lovely pet, well-mannered and loving.” Janet’s reflections equated Maple’s value with her physical appearance and ability to show, which can earn prestige and even cash rewards for the human caregiver, instead of having innate relational value as a nonhuman companion or because of her status as a living being.

“So when you say Maple isn’t worth anything, you mean monetarily,” I asked Janet.

“Yes. Exactly. She doesn’t have any monetary value. I had dogs with value over the years though,” Janet explained enthusiastically. “I even had a male who was requested to sire multiple litters of puppies. He showed so well! He was a perfect specimen! A perfect English springer spaniel! Excellent coloring! And he trained just

beautifully. Rupert was his name. He passed a number of years ago though. Now there's only Maple left."

"So you tended to focus on owning dogs that were of value," I asked.

"Well of course. Show dogs are valuable. I never bred myself, but others breed [dogs] so they'll show well and be valuable. It's all about genetics. Good genetics are so important," Janet responded, again equating the makeup of Maple's biological body with her value.

"Does it cost more money to own dogs of monetary value than dogs that are just pets, such as Maple?" I inquired.

"Absolutely!" Janet responded immediately. "Show dogs need special diets, elaborate grooming, lots of training, things like that. It's just not necessary to put all that time and money into dogs that don't show. Maple goes to the groomer once every few months. But with Rupert and my other dogs, they were there at least once a month. Sometimes once a week! It was a lot to maintain. Showing is work! A lot of people don't understand that," Janet said, reflecting on the monetary cost as well as the physical labor associated with maintaining dogs of economic worth. Her comments also expose the high level of bodily regulation, both externally with grooming and training as well as internally with dietary restrictions, which can surround the canine. Furthermore, Janet's comments make it clear that the pedigreed, or show quality canine, is a very classed entity, given the costs associated with such a critter. People of lower or even middle class socioeconomic statuses may not be able to afford such extravagances (or bodily regulations and manipulations, depending upon how it is considered) for their companion animals.

“How did you end up with Maple if you focused on owning show dogs,” I asked Janet as we strolled to the other side of the park, where Maple had abandoned her sniffing in favor of interacting with a few of her four-legged peers.

“She was actually a rescue from the English springer spaniel rescue up in New York,” Janet responded. “Already had two dogs at home when we received the call from the woman who ran the [rescue] group. She had my info from all the showing I was doing at the time,” Janet explained. “She [Maple] had been abandoned at the shelter, poor thing. It was just supposed to be temporary, a foster situation, but my husband fell in love with her. She was a baby still. Poor thing. Only six months old or so. Horribly matted hair, totally filthy, skinny and an ear infection! A mess! After a trip to the vet and groomer she was adorable though. I wasn’t exactly thrilled at first, but what’s one more dog, you know?” Janet said, shrugging her shoulders. “Plus Richard [her husband] was just completely in love with her from day one. I swear I knew we were keeping her the moment she was put in Richard’s arms! He fell in love! I just had to accept it! Which isn’t hard. She’s so sweet. I love her too.”

“Would you say that Maple has any other type of value as a member of your family, aside from her lack of monetary value,” I asked Janet.

“What do you mean?” Janet asked, continuing before I could respond, “She’s a member of the family! Certainly! She means a lot to us.”

“So Maple has emotional value for you and your husband, despite her lack of monetary value,” I inquired again in an attempt to clarify.

“Absolutely! The most valuable things aren’t about money,” Janet responded emphatically. “I don’t know what we’d do without Maple. She’s even more special to us as the only dog. When we had more than one spaniel they’d all play together. But now



Maple is alone and only has us [Janet and Richard]. We're very bonded. She's a big part of our family. We love her!"

Despite Maple's lack of monetary value due to her alleged genetic imperfections that prevented her from being a show-worthy English springer spaniel, Maple did have affective and familial value for Janet and Richard. My conversation with Janet revealed how a dog's perceived value can be defined in different ways. The monetary value of the canine can be contradictory to the affective value of the canine. The conversation also highlighted a common theme of this project, which is that a dog's appearance plays a substantial role in whether or not a canine is considered to have monetary value. Appearance is largely rooted in the canine's biological body, which is established via the human construction of breeds and the socially constructed nature of desired characteristics associated with those breeds (including things like coloring, height and other markers of appearance) in addition to other human manipulations and regulations of the canine body. In emphasizing the individual personality of each canine over the bodily appearance of breeds of canines, a more equitable relationship can develop across species.

Capitalism and the materialism and regulation that it encourages also (re)produces the human-canine assemblage as a docile formation. The creation of leashed canine bodies, many of which have profound medical and behavioral issues due to irresponsible breeding, to act essentially as products for humans to regulate and dispose of at will, removes agency across species. Humans are docile in this assemblage because of the lack of questioning that surrounds the keeping of canines. The purchasing, modifying, regulating and disposing of living bodies without hesitation or critique reaffirms the docile nature of the relationship. The very language surrounding canines, which is deeply entangled with narratives and practices of "ownership" and

“obedience,” assumes a speciesist power dynamic that is almost entirely naturalized. Alternatively, living with a companion species does not have to be a complacent assemblage. It can transcend normative constructions of love, affection and family, providing support, comfort and kinship across species. When challenging the docility of the human-canine assemblage one comes to see that alternative systems of value, ones that exist beyond the scope of capitalist production and consumption, shape the interspecies relationship.

“I would do anything for her,” a fifty-seven year old Latina woman named Roberta explained in reference to her six-year old medium-sized, mixed-breed dog Gloria. “She’s worth everything. She saved my life after my divorce and health issues. She stood by me and provided more comfort and unconditional love more than anyone else in my life at that time. Even my children! My human children are much more fair weather than Gloria!” Roberta explained, chucking slightly, “Well, in all fairness, they were there during the divorce and then I got sick and they came around when they could, but how much time could they give their grown mother? They’re all busy and out of town. But Gloria was always there. Always,” Roberta reiterated, looking at Gloria lovingly. Gloria was lounging in the sun at a dog park in Tempe, Arizona while Roberta and I spoke, seemingly content on the beautiful March afternoon. She had short legs, a robust body, short brown hair and a prominent under bite. I would not exactly describe her as classically adorable, but she was clearly calm and sweet.

“In what ways was she there for you?” I asked Roberta.

“She just always stood by me, during all of it, from the moment I adopted her. Honestly, Gloria understands me more than my husband ever did! She is patient and listens to me and gives me more affection. Definitely more affection than he did! She just gives. He took! All my energy, every day, was sucked out in that relationship. Gloria gives

me energy! And she always sleeps with me. That was a big one after the divorce! It's hard to get used to sleeping alone again, after over twenty years. And I was so sick during chemo. I'd be up all night vomiting and she'd lay on the bathroom floor with me. I don't know if I would have made it through those long months without her. She's so loyal and loving. And you know, what," Roberta said to me, "she never judges me. Never. My kids love judging me! They judge what I wear, what I eat, where I live, all of it. Gloria doesn't judge. She just loves," she explained matter-of-factly.

"It sounds like you two have a very caring relationship," I said to Roberta.

"Oh we do! And I try to pay her back for her love and kindness, but it's hard. She gives unconditionally! But we try to come here as much as we can. She doesn't really play with other dogs, but she loves being here anyways. And we take walks, which is great for me too. That's another thing she does! She gets me out of the house and moving this body. My old body needs to move! Even my doctor said it was important. I watch too much TV." As Roberta was speaking Gloria stood up and walked over to the bench we were sitting on before plopping down herself and leaning against Roberta's leg contentedly.

"Is there anything challenging about living with Gloria?" I asked Robert.

"What do you mean?" Roberta inquired.

"I mean, is it difficult to care for Gloria either financially or from a time perspective or anything like that," I clarified.

"Oh! Well, sometimes. I'm on disability since my diagnosis, so my income is limited. I had to cancel some things to make sure I can afford to pay for her food and medical costs as well as my own!" Roberta responded. "I cancelled the cable and even the Internet. And I sold my car and really pinch my pennies. It's worth it though. I'd do whatever I could for her [Gloria]. And we're lucky! At least we have each other. Plus I got

the house in the divorce, so I don't have to worry about that. My kids were upset at me for selling the car though; especially since I had a tumor removed from her [Gloria] that same month. But health matters more than a car. Both of our health! Why do I need a car? The hospital and my church have people who will take me to the doctor and help me with groceries and things like that. And amazing people in my community here! It's really kind. And I'm not working! I don't need a car! I need Gloria!" Roberta concluded enthusiastically.

"So your human children are not always supportive of your relationship with Gloria?" I asked Roberta.

"They're judgmental!" Roberta responded energetically, a touch of anger in her voice, "My son even told me she [Gloria] should be dropped off at the shelter after my diagnosis! I couldn't believe it! I didn't respond to him for a month after. She's my family. She's here for me. He's in Texas! That was just too much. Too much."

"Is it difficult for you when people don't validate your relationship with Gloria?" I followed up with Roberta.

"People don't understand! My son really hurt me. It was hurtful that he would ever even recommend doing that to a dog. I raised him better! You don't abandon someone who's there for you. Gloria is family," Roberta explained, shaking her head, "people don't understand that. She's not something to throw away no more than I am. Well, I guess my son might think I should be thrown away too," Roberta said, her sadness turning to laughter. "It would be a lot easier to not have deal with me!" she said, laughing again, "Maybe one day they'll drop me off at the shelter - me and Gloria together! Always together!" Roberta said, continuing her laughter. "Actually, my friends and I talk about how our kids would rather drop us off at the old folks home than deal with us half the time! Especially our sons! But what do you do? Kids grow up and leave.

The ones who stay are no better,” Roberta said, chuckling. “But at least I’ll always have her,” Robert said as she bent her face down to Gloria’s as the two exchanged kisses. “Oh, you probably think I’m some crazy old woman!” Roberta said, suddenly becoming more reserved and seemingly self-conscious.

“Not at all,” I answered, “I think you and Gloria love each other and that’s really great.”

The interspecies kinship embedded in Roberta and Gloria’s relationship reflects how love, affection, comfort and support can transcend species. While leashed canines are a part of the ideal American nuclear family, the human-canine relationship can be invalidated when it appears in forms outside of the heteropatriarchal nuclear family or when the canine is privileged above other material comforts, as was the case for Roberta and Gloria’s relationship. Validating the inherent worth of this cross-species relationship can be helpful for the human and nonhuman animals in those relationships. It can also allow for the reimagining of familial relationships in a world that far-too-often invalidates those who live in a way that does not conform to the norm. Doing so allows alternative systems of value to be recognized in a world where the heteropatriarchal nuclear family is glorified over all other familial relationships. Validating alternative kinship networks can assist in revealing the workings of power and biopower in everyday life and how dogs are triangulated into the way certain bodies are valued or not valued across species and relationships. Additionally, invalidating alternative kinship networks gives further credence to normative familial formations that can reproduce sexist, heteronormative and even speciesist power dynamics. Invalidation can also contribute to an increased chance of vulnerability and even death across species, as occurred during Hurricane Katrina when largely low income individuals did not evacuate the city before the storm because they were unwilling to leave their pets behind. The Pets Evacuation

and Transportation Standard (PETS) Act of 2006, which was passed following Hurricane Katrina, helps to validate those interspecies relationships, placing value upon human and companion species bodies.

The worth of a canine is complicated. Economically, canines can be of material worth in and of themselves, particularly if they are “purebred” or “designer dogs.” In this way, canines act as byproducts of our capitalist, consumer-driven culture instead of as unique individuals who are worthy of a livable life. Canines can also require significant amounts of work and money to maintain in a way deemed acceptable in contemporary U.S. culture, which can involve the purchasing of elaborate accessories, toys and expensive food and medical care. The work done by humans for their canine companions indicates the dog is of value, for people en masse would most likely not be willing to put in such a significant investment, either financially or from an energy perspective, if it was not for someone they thought worth the effort. Ultimately the worth of a canine lies in its affective entanglements, in the relationships that can develop across species. While those relationships are almost always predicated on a hierarchical power dynamic that places the human over the canine, a caring and complex relationship can exist that acts to benefit both species. It is in this space that the human-canine connection can act to transcend normative kinship patterns, acting as a support system and even radical form of love. It must be noted, however, that the worth of canines remains predicated upon their relationships with particular people and are typically shaped by those human’s intersectional social locations.

### Part III. Conclusions

Gender, race, class, sexuality and species are ways of knowing and existing that assist in making sense of social reality in the contemporary United States. This project

has called for an analysis across species of the ways in which human and canine bodies are subjected to surveillance and social death, often because of certain socially constructed, bodily characteristics that are deemed dangerous, violent, and asocial. This surveillance demonstrates the ways in which white heteropatriarchy continually remakes itself in human society and extends to human companion animals, modifying certain human characteristics upon animals while also reading the disposability of certain human bodies upon the dogs associated with those bodies. The human-canine relationship is deeply naturalized and even romanticized in contemporary U.S. culture. On the surface, representationally, it appears to be an affective cross-species relationship, and while it has the possibility to be that, it is almost always deeply embedded with power dynamics in which the human dictates life and death for the canine. This relationship exists in similar ways to other "naturalized" power dynamics, including ones that position men over women and white over people of color. And just as there are spaces of "freedom" for the canine in our culture (being out in public on a leash, being contained in a yard, being contained in a home), there are also spaces of "unfreedom" (animal controls, mass euthanasia, puppy mills); but ultimately, none of these spaces are actually free. Despite these inconsistencies, there remain more animal shelters than battered women's shelters, speaking again to the canine as worthy of more empathy and assistance than many people in contemporary United States society.<sup>413</sup>

At stake in this project is a critical concern regarding how human and canines bodies are made, controlled, formed, and refigured together under heteropatriarchal white supremacist modes of power with attention to what these corporeal un(makings) imply for an ethics of being with, and thinking of, the other—human and animal. As oppressions are linked, the logic of speciesism has a strong association links the colonial

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<sup>413</sup> Barbara Boxer, *The Art of Tough: Fearlessly Facing Politics and Life* (New York: Hatchette Book Group, 2016).

project, racialization and sexism. This project explored socially constructed, stereotypical narratives surrounding the coding, sterilization, euthanasia and the keeping of companion species to interrogate how sex, gender, race, class, sexuality, and species together serve biopolitical formations of social control, patriarchal white supremacy, and heteronormativity. Interrogating these narratives allowed me to examine how taxonomies of power and systems of oppression and privilege become modified across species.

This interspecies project has explored the political nature of relationships between humans and canines. This suggests that people situate their own identities and power not only in relation to other humans but also as a community or society in relationship to both inorganic objects as well as other species to which they give meaning. Simultaneously, the interspeciesism I have engaged with extends analyses of biopolitics, or the regulations of living bodies, beyond humans to all species. It has also interrogated how contemporary U.S. society has organized and identified itself in part through the ways in which it controls and monitors canines, often in relationship to the multiple ways dogs in the United States are racialized, classed and gendered by specific breed. This coding of canine bodies with various taxonomies of power is not about the breeds themselves, but instead indicates that dominant U.S. society seeks to discriminate against certain populations that are constructed as undesirable and unproductive. In considering how society embraces certain dog breeds (e.g. Golden Retrievers) while working to eradicate others (e.g. Pit Bulls), I attempt to highlight how stereotypes arise to naturalize, reproduce and even glorify social constructions based on differences of power. Ultimately, this project sought to deconstruct the white supremacist, heteropatriarchal structure in the contemporary United States that renders certain dogs worthy of rescue while other breeds are made to embody poverty, immigrants, and



precarious property values. Additionally, pets' status is an extension of their owners' property rights, which are also established in that discriminatory U.S. system of heteropatriarchal white nationalism.

This project explored how discursive and material systems of power shape lives and deaths across species from an interspecies, feminist perspective. It is significant because interrogating the human-canine relationship, which is often taken for granted as a natural microcosm of everyday life, it is made evident that taxonomies of power come to shape, code, and regulate interspecies bodies. As there are multiple ways that humans exist with canines, exploring their economic, affective and political value broadly as well as individually demonstrates how members of this interspecies relationship can modify one another. Untangling the knottedness of those varied and oftentimes inconsistent relationships has the ability to reveal what it means to not only to be canine in contemporary U.S. society, but also what it means to be human.

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