Theories:

1. Constructivism: Pit Bulls are viewed as the scapegoat for many of the violent crimes that occur against people and other animals. Evidence throughout history shows us how these dogs were once considered a true family pet, but are now seen as malicious and ruthless dogs. The physicality of the modern pit bull includes; a strong muscular body, large skull, and ridge teeth that are used to crush bones. This combination of features makes them a potentially dangerous breed. Pit bulls are also associated with moral panics or social problems. The term social problem is indicated that something is wrong. It is popularly understood, a social problem is not something like happy families, physically fit people, or schools that teach children to read. This is known as the social problem as it is obviously refer to conditions evaluated as wrong because they create harm” (p. 43). People associate this breed with social problems or social upheaval because of how they are portrayed by the media as violent creatures. Many cities and provinces believe that by creating breed-specific laws, that it will limit dog attacks and eventually stop out a breed that they consider threatening and dangerous.

2. Breed Specific Laws: The idea of the Pit Bull ban has by many has been called “animal racism.” In 2013 the anti-breed law in Westbury, N.Y., challenged a local pit bull ban because the law limited the dog by “breed, rather than its actions. The court found the ban unconstitutional because it denoted pit bull owners equal protection and due process. Most courts have ruled breed-specific laws are not a valid tool to prevent dangerous dogs, because a “pit bull” is composed of so many different breeds. Breed-specific laws are put into place because of threats that have been made against other people and animals. In the media, the only dog attack stories that are shown are when just a pit bull attacks a human being. “By 2000, pit bull breed and dog-related shootings had reached such proportions that the breed was banned in more than two hundred cities and counties around the United States. Lost in all the legislation was the fact that for decades the pit bull had been considered one of the most loyal and loving, people-friendly dogs on the planet” (Jay Gerzen Pg. 137).

3. Essentialism: Why is it that society believes that it is in the nature of pit bulls to be dangerous and aggressive? Part of the reason that society states this dog as naturally aggressive is because of the owners that raise them to be vicious. Pit bulls have historically become a strong member of urban decay. This also illustrates a poor social structure, therefore the creation of dogs and dog owners. This extremely loyal breed has become the icon for aggression and violence. The use of pit bulls in dog fighting is a practice that is growing in the United States. There are breeders who breed pit bulls specifically to be used as their protection and amusement. In the 1980s the American Pit Bull became the pet of choice for tough guys and thugs. How many were could be determined by how mean and vicious your pit bull was. People creating such dogs choose them for the very reason the rest of us fear them” (The Reporter).

4. Methodology: This project seeks to explore this phenomena through conducting a content analysis of journalistic accounts of Pit Bulls and legal proceedings regarding Pit Bulls in order to identify how Pit Bulls are typified (Brent, 2007) and with what significant social problems are associated. This project will also examine other popular cultural artifacts, including music videos and produce systematic patterns of many pit bull typifications and associations with various activities. Many newspaper accounts depict specific stories of pit bull attacks on children and elderly people. According to the Toronto Star, many in Canada believe that “the pit bull is a potential killer. It’s a dog—just a dog—can inflict terrible damage on other animals and humans, especially children, unable to defend themselves” (Wardmore, Toronto Star). Bandow of the Toronto Star also explains, “The reason you see more reports on pit bull bites is that when a pit bull bite, it’s not just a bite, it’s a mauling. The dog has a highly developed predatory drive, he sees biting as fun, as a game. It’s his genetic program.” It is here that this misconception comes from among people because the media causes to encourage this belief.

5. History: One of the most well-known and respected Pit Bulls was Stubby, a Pit Bull who served as an army and soldier in the World War I. Founded by Private John Robert Conroy on the Ypres Cam, in 1917, Stubby became a beloved member of the training camp that Private Conroy and others were attending. When the soldiers were being transferred, Private Conroy had smuggled the dog to a variety of places until finally Stubby had made a great journey to Germany. Stubby became the mascot for the 102nd special division who were on the front lines during February 1918. The soldiers, including Stubby were forced to live in harsh conditions; in trenches during the war. At one point during their stay in the trenches the German launched a gas attack upon Stubby’s infantry, the gas would cause the skin to be burned, hideous, and lose of limbs. This caused Stubby’s first injury, from this point on he became extremely sensitive to the slightest gas attack. He became so sensitive that when the Germans launched another gas attack on the 102nd division the end of the war Stubby had been part of 17 battles, and had saved many of his fellow soldiers. He was promoted to the rank of Sergeant, and was given many medals for his honourable efforts during the war. (stubby.org)

6. Alternative Narrative Overview: The process of this study will also consist of developing a more positive image of the Pit Bull breed. In light of our research efforts, a strong and evidence-based will be used to reverse the detrimental damage that many have created by making this specific breed. The creation of social stigma has caused almost irreparable damage, and therefore our analysis to the best of our ability will counteract such accusations made upon Pit Bulls. It won’t end long ago that these dogs were considered to be beloved family pets, with this project we hope to encourage this belief.

Works Cited