

The Nature Versus Nurture Debate

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After watching a panel of Pro and Anti pit bull people discussing dog behavior (to the best of their ability) on the Huffington Post on line show, it hit me; The fundamental topic is not being properly addressed, which is breed identification and perception .

“Pit bull” is not a breed, repeat NOT A BREED but merely an umbrella term used to describe a substantial array of several pure breed, mixed breed, boxy headed, short haired dogs. So, to sit and argue nature vs. nurture, inherent aggression, and ability to do damage is erroneous and will likely leave you frustrated and uncertain. Some groups may have you believe that all similar looking dogs are innately vicious and in order to keep communities safe, you need to ban them based on appearance and perceived propensity toward violence; when science and esteemed professionals completely contradict that perspective. The Anti-Pit Bull agenda argues that the Pro-Pit Bull community uses advocacy sites like www.badrap.org to cite data for their position and Pro-pit bull folks state the opposition uses biased victim sites like www.dogsbite.org to sway the public. Could this be a debate that will remain unresolved with no means to reach common ground?

Speaking as an oncology certified Registered Nurse, evidenced based research plays a significant role in my day to day duties. Valid methodology is vital when acquiring and trialing new therapies or making changes to protocols, for example. Likewise, obtaining information from reputable sources and analyzing peer-reviewed studies by revered canine professionals and well-regarded canine behaviorists, seems the most logical and accurate route to take when it comes to the Pro versus Anti-Pit Bull debate. Here is just a sampling of un-biased sources and what they have to say on the matter:

- Dr. Kristopher Irizarry, PhD, associate professor, Bioinformatics, Genetics and Genomics at Western University/ College of Veterinary Medicine states: “I’m not sure what a “pit bull characteristic” is because the term pit bull does not refer to any specific breed of dog. It is ironic that legislation contains the words “pit bull” and “specific breed.” It is my professional opinion that this group of dogs must be the most genetically diverse breed on the planet.” (www.westernu.edu/stp/bios.php?)
- According to American Pet Products Manufactures Association Survey 2009-2010, approximately 50% of the 78 million dogs living in the US today are mixed-breed dogs. (www.americanpetproducts.org/)
- Dr. Ian Dunbar PhD, Veterinarian, animal behaviorist and author with a Doctorate in Animal Behavior from UC Berkeley states: “In spite of their reputation, bully breeds are in fact among the friendliest, most playful dogs there are. Should I ever have kids in my family again, I would

love a Rottweiler or Pit bull, which would be among my first choices, because they are so accepting of children” (<http://www.lifewithdogs.tv/2012/05/an-interview-with-ian-dunbar/>)

- American Bar Association researchers report: “Extensive studies of the effectiveness of BSL in reducing the number of persons harmed by dog attacks were done in Spain and Great Britain. Both studies concluded that their “dangerous animals’ acts,” which included pit bull bans, had no effect at all on stopping dog attacks. The Spanish study further found that the breeds most responsible for bites-both before and after the breed bans-were those breeds not covered by it, primarily German Shepherds and mixed breeds” ([https://www.americanbar.org.../pit bull.](https://www.americanbar.org.../pit%20bull.))

Regardless of where you stand, it is imperative you get your information from accredited, non-biased sources along with testimony from people who actually interact and surround themselves by bully breed dogs. Dogs are individuals and deserve to be treated humanely and with respect. Responsible pit bull guardians *are the majority*, despite what many in the media would have you believe. Remembering that a domestic dog’s environment is completely controlled by human beings, maintaining an open mind, and keeping an unbiased perspective; all of these should help you find legitimate information you can stand behind.

