

Signifying Difference: Muslim Experiences with Dogs in  
Canada

by

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## **Abstract**

There is a tendency for signifiers to be constructed within intergroup tensions as a means of distinguishing "us and them". Dogs are seemingly held up as "man's best friend" in "Western" society, and often defined as a symbol of certain cultural values not shared by "non dog-lovers" – a label commonly applied to Muslims in these intergroup tensions. Although there may be broader cultural understandings of the ways in which certain animals are conceptualized, an individual's perspective is, in fact, mediated through the lens of their personal experiences. While dogs are generally held in Islam as unclean animals and not commonly kept as pets, individual Muslims regard them with a diverse set of viewpoints. This study finds that among Canadian Muslims, personal experience appears to exert the greatest influence on personal opinions of dogs. This research was conducted through an analysis of online Muslim forums and an online survey (54 respondents).

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## Chapter 1 - Introduction

### 1.1 “Walk your Dog in front of Mosque Day”

On August 18, 2012, an Al-Quds Day rally held at Toronto Queen’s Park became a source of contention in the Canadian community (Davidson 2012b). The event occurs annually, originating with former Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979, to protest against the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Allan Einstoss, a Canadian Jewish man who purportedly opposed Al-Quds Day, walked his mastiff, Cupcake, a registered therapy dog, who was wearing an Israeli flag around its neck, near where the event was occurring. With Einstoss walking so close to the protest, some tension arose within the demonstration. The situation escalated when Cupcake was kicked by one of the demonstrators, and Allan Einstoss was arrested by the Toronto Police for attempting to incite conflict.

In response to this, Hindu Canadian Advocacy, along with Canadians United Against Terror created a (now defunct) Facebook page called “Walk your Dog in front of Mosque Day,” which was set to take place at the Salahuddin Mosque in Scarborough on September 14 2012 from 4:30 to 7:30 pm, so as to correspond with Muslim prayer times. The group posted the following message:

On September 14th, 2012, in response to the Muslim kicking of the dog at al Quds Day, everyone is asked to bring your dog and walk in front of the radical Salahuddin Mosque in Scarborough Ontario. Our CANADIAN VALUES Dog Walk will correspond with Islamic prayer times. We will be holding this event in conjunction with Canadian Hindu Advocacy.

Ron Banerjee of the Canadian Hindu Advocacy also writes that: “They’ll see us when they go in, walking our dogs, and we’ll have a loud speaker and they’ll know why we’re there... In a democratic society, we are kind to our animals” (Davidson 2012b)

What is interesting to note about this post is the strong emphasis both on “Canadian values” and “dogs.” The strong response that this conflict drew seems to be one that equates Canadian pride, values, and nationalism with dogs. Indeed, with the esteemed status that “man’s best friend” holds in the West, it is commonplace to imbue the dog with numerous values and roles, or in this particular sense, “Canadianness.”

There was a considerable amount of media coverage surrounding the “Walk your Dog in front of Mosque Day” event, with opinion pieces by those on all sides of the issue. While originally promoted by Hindu Canadian Advocacy, the event had also been promoted by StormFront.org, a white supremacist group, and anti-Islamic groups like BareNakedIslam.com.

The Facebook group caused a great deal of reaction: Facebook purportedly removed a post (Davidson 2012a), promising that: “I’ll tie you all up and throw you all in a lake of fire if you show up at the salahuddin [sic] mosque ahhaahah every dog will be shot on [the] spot, bring as many as you want!!!”

Other reactions were more moderate. Sheila Musaji, the founding editor of the site *The American Muslim* (TAM) argued that this event would only serve to divide people (Musaji 2012). After hearing about the planned protest, Toronto Sun Reporter Maryam Shah remarked on her pet dog in her native Pakistan. She writes that ideas of dog ownership are different than that of Canada.

In Pakistan, we keep our dogs in a way that may seem alien to North Americans, who believe puppies come from their own wombs. While I love my indoor cat Ryan as if he’s my first-born, none of our dogs lived indoors. Instead, they had the run of the grounds and a large brick kennel built for them in the backyard. [Shah 2012]

She concludes by writing: “Muslims don’t hate dogs, Canada. Dog-haters hate dogs, and they come in every colour, shape, and size” (Shah 2012).

On the day of the demonstration, despite the high publicity, only around twenty people and three dogs showed up at the Salahuddin Islamic Centre (Davidson 2012c), although about 114 people were planning to attend according to the Facebook post (Davidson 2012a).

The mosque demonstration came on the heels of another incident, in which Sue-Ann Levy, a Toronto Sun reporter had difficulty in getting a ride home from the airport when taxi drivers refused entry to her Dachshund “Kishka”, which she deduced was due to religious reasons. She wrote an article about the event on July 15, 2012, writing: “Last I looked this is Canada. Seeing as they’ve

chosen to move here for presumably a better life, the least we can expect is that they assimilate” (Levy 2012).

As these two Canadian news stories demonstrate, “loving dogs” has been aligned with “Canadian values,” “democracy,” and intertwined with matters of religion, free speech, immigration, and nationalism. By perpetuating the stereotype that Muslims hate dogs, this has positioned dogs as a signifier of group difference between Muslims and the “rest” of Canada.

One Muslim respondent that I was in contact with wrote the following about this incident: “...unfortunately these days media pick up these incidents [kicking a dog] and link it with Islam when Islam totally condemns these incidents.” Another respondent asserted that dogs have a positive role in mainstream Islam, arguing that “[t]he issue with dogs is that it is the best barometre of discerning between a radical Islamist and an ordinary Muslim.” This quote provides a similar instance of dogs being represented as a signifier of group difference, even between members of the same religious affiliation. Further examples will demonstrate a similar construction of dogs in cases of inter-group tensions.

While there is a great deal of media coverage concerning the Muslim aversion to dogs, several Muslim websites exist which seek to correct these misunderstandings. The Facebook group “Good Muslims Love Dogs!” was created in 2010. In their description, they write the following:

First of all, we hope not to be misunderstood. We would like to clarify that the meaning of 'Love' here is up to every person's interpretation. You could be (appropriately) in love with dogs, or you could be a person who is scared to touch dogs, but secretly smiles in your heart at them. Our best definition here is that, if you don't hate dogs and you don't secretly wish to throw stones at every dog you see, then join this page; Muslims or non-Muslims. :)

The group serves as a medium for Muslims to post pictures and stories about dogs. Furthermore, “the main objective is to break the stereotype that Muslims are dog haters.” Another group is the MuslimsWithDogs Tumblr site (<http://muslimswithdogs.tumblr.com/>), which shares photos and stories of Muslims with their dogs.

## **1.2 Negotiation within the Human-Animal Interface: Dogs within Human Society**

The study of animals holds an important position within Anthropology, as the ways in which people relate to animals provides useful insights regarding subsistence, religion and cultural change. Claude Lévi-Strauss's famous quote; "natural species are chosen not because they are 'good to eat' but because they are 'good to think'" (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 89), speaks to the utility of animals as a subject of study and observation within human cultural systems. Ferguson (2004: 386) notes that the dog has a "semisacred positioning;" being closer to humans than most animals. In this sense, several scholars have argued that dogs have become a Western "sacred cow" (Beck 1973: 51; Bustad 1991: 235; Lawrence 1987: 147). It becomes clear that the dog holds an esteemed position in the mainstream of Canadian culture, and seemingly there is an expectation that others hold them to the same standard. Indeed, dogs could be described as "omnipresent" in Canadian society. In addition to the large portion of the population that enjoys them as pets, dogs are also found in therapy work, security and other public services. Yet at the same time, stray dogs are also conceptualized as an "urban pest."

Classification of animals is not static; rather, it varies across time and space (Fuentes 2006: 128; Lawrence 2004: 75). A country as diverse and pluralistic as Canada, therefore, is unlikely to be homogenous with respect to attitudes towards animals. Nonetheless, the generally high regard of the dog in Canada becomes a source of contention when this status is perceived as threatened. For instance, certain groups (i.e. Hindu Canadian Advocacy, Canadians United Against Terror, Stormfront.org and BareNakedIslam.com) have emphasized and perpetuated a "Canadians [Westerners] love dogs" concept in regards to the "Walk you dog in front of mosque day" event, to contrast with the Muslims who allegedly do not.

Those who self identify as Muslims number about 1.2 billion, and hail from a variety of cultural backgrounds (Foltz 2006a: 8). Consequently, attitudes within a given culture or group are far from homogenous. This diversity in perception of dogs is prevalent both within Canada and among

Muslims. Nonetheless, the allegedly prevalent and esteemed nature of the dog in Canada has created what I will term “*a signifier of group difference*” between Muslims and “the rest” of Canada.

Anti-Islamic sentiment has been growing in prevalence in North America, particularly after incidents like the World Trade Center bombing (Faragallah, Schumm & Webb 1997: 197) and the 9/11 attacks, creating an “us” and “them” dichotomy (Merskin 2004: 157). Consequently, the Muslim community has faced resistance and discrimination, along with the rise of public debate over matters of immigration and religion. Within public debate, dogs have held a surprising role, with numerous news articles and stories concerning the issues of Muslims and dogs.

Within predominantly Muslim cultures, dogs generally inherit a different status than they do in Canada. As with many societies, the dog holds a very ambivalent position. While dogs may be valued for the work they provide, they rarely achieve the “pet” or “companion animal” status they are so readily assigned in “Western” society. At the same time, there is a strong aversion to dogs due to being perceived as “unclean” or “*najis*.” Islamic religious law dictates that one must achieve a state of purity before prayer (*salāt*) and this can be compromised by impure substances, like a dog’s saliva – or in some schools, the dog itself.

At the same time, there is also a strong sentiment in Islam for dogs to be treated with kindness and respect. The saluki, a sight hound that is popular in the Middle East, is highly prized for its hunting ability. As well, there are references in religious texts to a man (a prostitute in another version) being granted entry into paradise for bringing water to a thirsty dog. As well, a Qur’ānic version of the “Seven Sleepers of Ephesus” tells of a dog that guarded a group of youths for three centuries.

### **1.3 Cultural-Religious Negotiation by Muslims in Canada**

Muslims in Canada represent a diverse group of cultures and backgrounds (Abu-Laban 1983: 77). It is estimated that 37% of Canadian Muslims hail from South Asia, while 21% are Arab and Middle Eastern, 14% are West Indian, and 28% are from other backgrounds and ethnicities, like

African or Chinese (Canefe 2007: 6). Canefe notes that “similar to the Jews, the preservation of religious belief, ritual and practice remains key to the maintenance of Muslim identity in Canada, especially in the context of being a minority community with multiple qualifiers for the position” (2007: 7). Muslims may adopt Canadian cultural practices, or retain those from their original country (Canefe 2007: 7). However, beliefs that conflict with the “dominant” society, such as those concerning young women dating, interest on loans, or pork by-products in food (Waugh 1991: 79-80), contribute to the difficulty of negotiating culture. The Muslim experience in North America, as Waugh (1983) puts it, is one of tension, conflict, and ambiguity (1983: 29).

Much of this depends on how Islam is perceived by individuals. Many view Islam as an “absolute list of “dos” and “do nots” (Barazangi 1991: 136), that govern all aspects of life, and cannot be changed even in new environments. Conversely, others interpret it as a set of broader guidelines that allow it to be followed and practiced with less stringency (Barazangi 1991: 136). This negotiation between cultural maintenance and cultural adoption raises questions about identity and practices. Canefe asks: “...how does one become what is defined as Canadian while remaining a unique individual with idiosyncratic though politically meaningful choices?” Furthermore, “where does communal identity end, where does individual identity start, and, what does citizenship entail with reference to each of these two ways of addressing membership?” (2007: 22).

### **1.3.1 Acculturation**

While important in its early history, acculturation has not been a major subject of inquiry in anthropological studies in the past few decades. Rather, matters of individuals negotiating culture and cultural change have been of greater interest to psychological studies. However, in the context of animal studies, particularly when each culture has their own defined models of prescribed human-animal interaction, the ways in which humans modify and negotiate their culture and practices becomes important. Acculturation is generally defined as “the process of cultural change that occurs

when individuals from different cultural backgrounds come into prolonged, continuous, first-hand contact with each other” (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits 1936: 146).

The process of entering a new culture inevitably results in conflict between values from one’s culture of origin with that of the dominant culture (Yeh et al. 2005: 172). It creates a sense of conflict about the extent to which one should adopt the culture and values of the host country, or strive to maintain the original.

In the case of pluralist societies, a culture group or individual will adopt what is known as an “acculturation strategy,” that is, the process in which they will acculturate. This will predominantly consist of a negotiation between their “cultural maintenance” of their home culture, or the extent of their “contact and participation” with the new culture (Berry 1997: 9).

Berry (1979) was among the first to propose a bilinear acculturation process, arguing that one’s cultural orientation can be simultaneously geared towards both their home and new cultures (Miller 2007: 119). This is the assertion that an individual can comprise more than one culture and proposes that one may engage in cultural maintenance, as well as engage in the host culture (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver 2006: 6).

The key element of this model is that identification with one’s original and new cultures are measured independently. Sayegh and Lasry (1993) conducted a study on Lebanese immigrants living in Montreal with this framework, asking questions like: “Do you feel completely or not at all Lebanese?” and “Do you feel completely or not at all Canadian?” to determine the degree of identification to each culture (Sayegh & Lasry 1993: 107).

Pluralist societies may also have adequate resources for allowing the cultural maintenance of the individual (i.e. community centres, schools, healthcare etc.) (Berry 2005: 703). However, despite a supposedly pluralist system, there are implicit hierarchies in place. A “mainstream” or “dominant culture group” may result from these unequal balances of power. This creates “the assumption that

“minorities” are inevitably (or should be in the process of) becoming part of the “mainstream” culture” (Berry 1997: 8).

In the case of this study, the role and perception of animals (namely dogs) is one that is largely constructed by the dominant culture. Although there is a great deal of individual variation, society tends to maintain a form of “cultural standard” in regards to proper animal status. This “standard” may be something that is perpetuated through religion, cultural norms, legislation, and media. And although there is individual variation, these norms provide a major influence on an overall societal level. It is here, I find, that much cross-cultural conflict occurs, with an apparent expectation that new migrants conform to these particular cultural mores (i.e. Soroka & Robertson 2010: iv, 8).

### **1.3.2 Discrimination**

Often compounded with culture shock (Oberg 1960) for new immigrants, many find themselves discriminated against. Muslims are often perceived unfavourably in Canada (Soroka & Robertson 2010: 14, 18), and one in five Muslims believe that most Canadians are hostile towards them (Environics Focus Canada Survey 2006 cited in Soroka & Robertson 2010: 35). The post-911 rhetoric contained language like “us and them,” or “evil,” to characterize Muslims, creating an “artificial binary opposition” (Merskin 2004: 157-159) between the “pre-modern” and “modern” (Mamdani 2002: 767). This rhetoric is similarly demonstrated in political scientist Samuel Huntington’s controversial thesis; *The Clash of Civilizations*. He (1996: 28) writes: “For forty - five years the Iron Curtain was the central dividing line in Europe. That line has moved several hundred miles east. It is now the line separating the peoples of Western Christianity, on the one hand, from Muslim and Orthodox peoples on the other.”

The process of stereotyping and discrimination renders one an “other” (Waugh 1991: 92), or “alien” in regards to the West (Suleiman 1999: 33, 44). Michael W. Suleiman notes that Muslims/Arabs are “the other of the other of the other,” in that they are considered among “the worst” of the non-Western groups (1999: 44). Western news media also constantly focuses on

“shadowy militant networks” like al-Qaeda (Mandaville 2010: 197). Discriminatory attitudes towards Muslims in North America appear to hinder the integration of immigrants into the dominant culture. This compounds the negative media images of Muslims (McDonough & Hoodfar 2009: 133; Waugh 1991: 75), such as that described in Edward Said’s famous 1978 book “*Orientalism*”. This all culminates into what Abdullah Omar (2011: 25) terms a “psychological incarceration” of the Muslim community. Kruger, Mulder and Korenic (2004) argue that the September 11, 2001 attacks might have been prompting a shift in Canadian attitudes towards immigrants, initiating a return to earlier rhetoric concerning “preferred” and “non-preferred” immigrants (2004: 72, 77). These attacks also lead to a rise in discrimination and violence against certain minority groups, particularly Muslims (2004: 84-85). However, Kruger, Mulder and Korenic note that these public fears about immigrants were quelled very quickly, and largely returned to pre-911 levels only two months after the attack (2004: 85). Beiser et al. (1988) note that while multiculturalism in Canada is stressed, “Canadians do not share a uniformly welcoming attitude towards newcomers, particularly those with visible minority origins.”

#### **1.4 Animals as a “Signifier of Group Difference”**

Some anthropologists, particularly those who advocate a structuralist perspective, argue that cultures categorize and classify the natural world, and define themselves based on what is permitted and tabooed, particularly with the use of animals. In effect, animals are constructed as prominent symbols displaying both group affiliation and identity, but also as a marker or signifier of difference when compared to “other” groups.

Mary Douglas in her book *Purity and Danger* (1966) presents a case that human cultural systems establish and maintain symbolic boundaries. This is done through an attempt to impose order on a “disordered” universe, wherein the world is classified in a manner that separates the “sacred” from the “profane.” Thusly, such measures are characterized by “separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgressions” (1966: 4) and that “[h]oliness means keeping distinct the categories of

creation” (Douglas 1966: 53). Thusly, avoidance of “forbidden animals” like dogs and pigs may symbolize a “purity” and “oneness” with God (Douglas 1966: 57). These categories are implemented and enforced by the society through cultural norms and rules.

Douglas thusly argues that the key to “holiness” is separation (Douglas 1966: 50), noting that certain taboos in Leviticus (i.e. cooking meat with milk) were justified because such activities were practiced by other “heathen” tribes (1966: 48). Consequently, human cultures classify and distinguish themselves and others on the basis of such categories. Douglas summarizes by saying: “By rules of avoidance, holiness was given a physical expression in every encounter with the animal kingdom and at every meal. Observance of the dietary rules would thus have been a meaningful part of the great liturgical act of recognition and worship which culminated in the sacrifice in the Temple” (1966: 57).

Claude Lévi-Strauss, promoting his structuralist approach, also illustrates the ways in which human culture examines, constructs, and orders nature. This is demonstrated in the context of Totemism, which is popularly understood as the association of individual or cultural identity with a particular animal or other aspect of nature. According to Lévi-Strauss, however, rather than human cultures merely adopting a totemic identity because they identify with it, there is also a strong sense of using this association to distinguish one’s group from others. Lévi-Strauss writes that “[i]t is not the resemblances, but the differences which resemble each other” (1963: 63, emphasis in original). He further writes: “The resemblances and differences of animal species are translated into terms of friendship and conflict, solidarity and opposition. In other words the world of animal life is represented in terms of social relations similar to those of human society” (1963: 83). As with Mary Douglas, Claude Lévi-Strauss also stresses this prominence of classifying the universe.

According to both theorists, human cultures frequently classify themselves and others on the basis of animal-linked identification. I utilize such anthropological understandings further in the construction of animals as a “signifier of group difference,” wherein the conceptualization of certain animals is held as a symbol for the distinction between in-group and out-group. The concept of the

“sacred cow” for instance in Hindu culture, is an example of such a constructed significance and meaning. In the case of Hindus and Muslims who live around the border between India and Pakistan, the differential treatment of cattle serves as a marker for the differences between the two groups (Hurn 2012: 90). The consumption of pork has been a historical means of distinguishing Christians, Jews and Muslims because of its tabooed status among the latter two groups. Mary Boyce (1977) writes that the differential treatment of dogs is a source of tension between Muslims and Zoroastrians in the Sharifabad community in Iran (see Chapter 3). This research asks whether dogs are similarly constructed as a signifier of group difference within a “Western” multicultural society such as Canada.

Naturally, it should be noted that Muslims do not exhaust the world’s diversity in attitudes towards dogs. Several pet studies have been conducted about the diverse social constructions of dogs among different ethnic groups (Brown 2005; Risley-Curtiss, Holley & Wolf 2006; Westgarth et al. 2013).

Many of these alternative cultural conceptions of dogs (i.e. as food) are generally perceived negatively in the West (Sahlins 1978: 173). Masaki Tosa (2010) writes of the Western criticism and controversy over dog-eating customs in South Korea, which in turn sparked a movement in South Korea in which the consumption of dog meat became a symbol of tradition and nationalism.

Differing perspectives of animals cross-culturally also leads to tension, such as during the public outcry against the Inuit seal hunts (Wenzel 1991) or criticism of Muslim *halāl* slaughtering practices (Nast 2006: 303). As well, the consumption of certain animals (e.g. horses) is common in some cultures but generally not within North America (Sahlins 1978: 173).

As noted, this “animals as a signifier of group difference” concept was demonstrated in Canada with the “Walk your Dog in front of Mosque Day.” There was a similar instance in Temecula, California in 2010, in which the proposed construction of a mosque was contested. Protesters would bring their dogs to the demonstrations as a means of offending the Muslims (Goodstein 2010). One

protester, Diane Serafin says: “They hate Jews, they hate Christians [sic], they hate women, they hate dogs...[The idea of the new mosque] scares the daylights out of me” (McMorris-Santoro 2010). The protesters also purportedly sang patriotic Christian songs like “God Bless America,” furthering the divide between “Islam” and “Americanness” (McMorris-Santoro 2010).

This expectation is further illustrated in an article in *Slate*, entitled *Love My Dog, Love Me: The great Arab-Muslim-American puppy story* by Ahmed Tharwat, who describes his experiences as a Muslim dog owner living in America. Caving to pressure from his daughter, the family brought home a beagle puppy. Tharwat describes how being an Arab-American with a dog had completely changed his image in the eyes of other Americans.

I noticed something new was happening out there, something Arab-Americans have rarely experienced since Sept. 11. People on the street, in their cars, in the parking lot, and at the supermarket were giving me a new look—a friendly one. Strangers who used to skillfully avoid eye contact now wanted to engage me in warm conversation. Patriotic national hotline tippers, who are usually more concerned about Muslim sleeper cells, now stopped me and cordially inquired about my puppy's sleeping habits, breed, and big black eyes. [Tharwat 2004]

He also writes that “[a]s a hyphenated-American, I discovered that owning a dog easily accomplished what many diversity training programs have failed to do for years. Regardless of our race, color, religion, or country of origin, we were one community of civilized dog lovers” (Tharwat 2004). He closes by referring to his dog as his “post 9/11 homeland-security blanket” and urges other Arab-Americans to get a dog (Tharwat 2004).

This article further suggests that dogs function as a signifier of group difference, that one’s attitude towards dogs provides signals and symbols that are picked up by others. In this instance, Ahmed Tharwat remarks how Americans respond more positively to him when accompanied by a dog, rather than dwelling on and focusing on his Arab heritage. While this is an American perspective, this would also appear to be the case in Canada.

The perception of dog owners as being more likeable is something that has been demonstrated in scientific study (Serpell 1986: 83). One such study conducted by Kelly Ann Rossbach and John P.

Wilson (1992: 40) notes that American university students considered persons who were pictured with a dog to be happy and approachable, and that photos of people walking dogs were quite aesthetically pleasing. A Swedish study conducted by Adell-Bath et al. (1979) suggests that dogs may facilitate human social interactions, such as “making friends” for humans (cited in Hart 1995 166). Hurn (2012: 102) and Sanders (1999: 7) reported a similar trend.

These examples paint a portrait of the conceptualization of dogs in Canada, or Western society in general. This construction of dogs into the “man’s best friend” or “family member” role has imbued them with certain symbols and values of society. On a broader cultural level, dogs have been imbued with an “us-them” quality that appears to influence a sense of group identification and a view of “the other”. While Canadians are largely in favour of immigration and multiculturalism, there is an apparent expectation for new immigrants to adopt certain cultural norms. With the added tension of “preferred” versus “non-preferred” immigrants (Kruger, Mulder & Korenic 2004: 73), Muslims in particular have been singled out as a contested group. The differential treatment of dogs in different cultures has created inter-group tension, such as dog-eating in South Korea (Tosa 2010) or Western responses to the often negative treatment of stray dogs in the Middle East (Ibrahim 2012), or Muslim scholarly criticisms of lavish dog-owning practices of the West (Associated Press 2006; Crethi Plethi 2011). In Canada, and many Western nations, dogs symbolize these group divisions.

Although tensions *between* groups on the basis of differential interpretations of animals will be of prime importance, I also find that such tensions exist *within* groups; namely the differential ways in which the role of dogs is interpreted within Islam.

### **1.5 The Role of Personal Experience**

While the human-animal interface – the ways in which humans interact with animals – is largely delegated, defined, and mediated by culture, there is a strong potential for individual variation within this process. Human beings are subject to the influences of personal experiences, which characterize one’s beliefs, actions, and worldviews. The role of culture in shaping a human being, while present,

does not necessarily mould an individual in a manner that is predictable and deterministic. Mary Douglas writes that: “Culture, in the sense of the public, standardised values of a community, mediates the experience of individuals. It provides in advance some basic categories, a positive pattern in which ideas and values are tidily ordered” (Douglas 1966: 38-39)

Although culture plays an important part in writing the script for the human-animal interface, the individual actors may not follow that script. This study investigates whether personal experiences with animals would influence the ways in which humans participate in human-animal interaction. As well, this study asks whether one’s cultural upbringing versus one’s personal experiences is the greatest factor in determining Canadian Muslim attitudes towards dogs.

## **1.6 The Study and Methodology**

This thesis is comprised of two major components. The first is a two-part literature review about animal studies, particularly focusing on dogs. The first part will detail the conception of dogs and other animals in the “Western” world, and the ambivalent status that dogs hold. A second will explore the role that dogs play in Islamic scripture, poetry, literature, history, and other scholarly materials. These will provide a framework to examine the ways in which animals are conceptualized through religious, cultural, and historical lenses. An understanding of the factors that influence cultural attitudes is also important when considering individual persons.

The second component of this study is an analysis of social media concerning the issue of Islam and dogs, and research data generated through an online survey distributed to various Muslim communities and forums.

### **1.6.1 The Use of Online Forums – Direct Method**

Qualitative analysis of forum posts is important as a supplement to the more quantitative approach of surveys, as the individuals have more freedom to discuss what they feel the important issues are. Online Muslims forums were utilized in two ways, both directly and indirectly. The direct method of study was used as a means of finding participants for the online survey. From May to

August 2013, I visited a variety of online Islamic forums to distribute the survey. I specifically requested Canadian Muslims for the online survey and email interview portions. However, Muslims from outside of Canada were participating in the forum discussions and did provide their own insights.

To begin, I would create a new thread on the site and introduced myself as a researcher wishing to study Canadian Muslim viewpoints on dogs. I provided a link to the online survey, and participants were invited to take part. I also stated that I would be interested in seeing numerous perspectives and I encouraged the forum members to engage in conversations within the thread.

### **1.6.2 The Use of Online Forums – Indirect Method**

To obtain a broader scope on these conversations about dogs, I also studied numerous older threads in the forums. The decision to analyze threads other than my own stemmed from two key observations. Firstly, these threads are greater in number and in scope and diversity, allowing for a more complete picture of the perception of dogs in Muslim communities. The major problem with this approach, however, is the extent of user details. While some users have their nationality and location displayed on their profile, many do not. This makes it difficult to analyze information from a purely Canadian perspective, and as such, these findings may be more general than country-specific. The second reason for this approach is due to a key difference between the flow of conversation in the older threads in contrast to my own thread, namely due to the presence of a researcher or observer. Observing interactions in older threads allows for a “fly on the wall” perspective, whereas an active observer may hinder such interactions (Sveningsson 2004: 49, 58).

However, as many of these discussions were several years old, concerns with informed consent meant that these conversations could not be utilized in any manner that could identify the online persons (i.e. usernames) (see Appendix B). Instead, these conversations were analyzed based on the broad themes and trends that emerged, and how individual Muslims respond and negotiate issues surrounding the place of dogs in Islam.

While analyzing forum posts makes for research that is not necessarily Canadian-based, it does allow for insight into emerging trends. This method is also less restricting than a quantitative survey, allowing for more freedom and shifts in topic. As well, users are able to remark about what issues are most important to them, which are not necessarily the ones the researcher wishes to focus on. This data can also be compared to the survey results to see whether the same dominant themes emerge.

### **1.6.3 The Survey**

An online survey was the fundamental means of gathering information exclusively from Canadian Muslims for this project. While it was used as a tool for collecting quantitative data, it contains numerous opportunities for detailed and open-ended responses. This allowed for a more in-depth qualitative approach, as many individuals wrote extensive responses in the survey. A total of 54 people completed the survey.

The study was conducted in this manner because I wished to utilize a more reliable and concrete set of data that would be difficult to attain with more anonymous and changing forums. As such, surveys allowed for the examination of numerous factors that could potentially influence one's attitudes towards dogs, such as religious beliefs, past experiences, and cultural upbringing.

Participants for the survey were found using various forms of online media, such as forums and Muslim organizations. As the trend toward dog ownership among Canadian Muslims appears to be rather weak, I utilized social media as a means of locating such individuals. Finding participants for this study was also aided by so-called "snowball sampling" in which participants would pass on the information to others. As this is controversial issue for some people, matters of privacy may also compound the process of directly interviewing these individuals. As a result, social media became the primary method for contact with the participants.

I utilized Fluidsurveys as the host for the survey. As this site is on a Canadian-based server, it is not directly subject to the Patriot Act in the ways that American sites would be. This results in a survey that may be more suited to the privacy and confidentiality that such a study requires.

Fluidsurveys is also flexible in allowing branching questions, in which an individual's responses determine which questions they receive. This allowed for more specified questions in regards to whether or not the participant owns/has owned a dog, is new to Canada, is in contact with dogs, or whether they engage in Western media. The survey consisted of a total of 58 questions, although depending on the respondent's previous answers, they did not need to answer all of them. It dealt with a variety of topics in regards to dog ownership (see Appendix A for more information). The survey was generally constructed on a 5-point Likert scale, with several opportunities for open-ended responses.

Both Muslim dog owners and non-dog owners participated in the study, and many of those who submitted the survey commonly wrote about "hypothetical dogs," often detailing the conditions and circumstances in which one may own a dog. For those who did not own dogs, I wished to discern between those who did not own dogs for religious reasons from those who had other concerns (i.e. health reasons, expense, etc.)

Those who submitted their results were also given the option to provide their email address to be contacted for participation in further study. Those individuals providing their email were contacted for further questioning.

The email portion consisted of correspondence between myself and the participants. I provided them with a list of around five questions. Depending on their responses to the initial survey, however, some of the questions sent to them were skipped (for reasons of repetition or irrelevancy). This portion of the study was largely skipped due to the lack of participants volunteering for further study.

The fact that many portions of the survey were open-ended makes it difficult to properly analyze quantitatively. Respondents would commonly add qualifiers or explanations to their answers, as well as differing interpretations of the issues discussed. As many of the responses contained rather lengthy answers, this survey has both qualitative and quantitative dimensions. The numerical data collected

allows for comparison, and the use of open-ended questions provides personal data that stringent questions do not allow for. The results of these findings will be addressed in chapters 4 and 5.

This study seeks to address what factors most influence one's perception of dogs, and the extent to which both cultural trends and personal experience play a role in this process. Investigating the personal experiences of individual Muslims offers clarity in a way that hermeneutical analysis of religious texts does not.

It is clear that cultural systems place a great deal of importance on constructing the status of certain animals. In the case of dogs, they may be conceptualized as "close to human" protectors, companions or pets, but it is common in other cultural situations to also acknowledge their often-unsightly behaviour and propensity towards viciousness. Thus, dogs are constructed differently in different contexts, which may foster similarly diverse attitudes among individuals. Cultural systems are inclined to present animals as symbols, expressing them with values, taboos, or group identification. Thusly, different ideologies concerning the status of animals create contention within inter-group relations. Here I find that dogs are constructed as a prominent signifier of group difference, serving as a marker of division between the so-called canine-centric Western culture and the so-called dog-aversive Muslim culture. Pre-existing tension between the two groups perpetuates such division, wherein the dog's status becomes over-simplified and essentialized within both cultures as a means of distinguishing them. This study proposes that social researchers (and the general public) should not essentialize the ways in which animals are constructed at a cultural level, namely to not assume homogeneity among individuals in a culture. Rather than a presumed "universality" in the ways in which animals are constructed, it is clear that there are inherent ambiguities that exist among individual persons. Although culture plays a prominent role in mediating and influencing human-animal interaction, this study has found that it is the personal experiences of the individual that contribute a larger factor in such interactions.

This thesis proposes that while cultures construct dogs and other animals in particular manners – as valued, tabooed, or a source of group identification – these broad cultural understandings are negotiated, rather than strictly followed by individual persons – drawing upon their own cultural understandings and personal experiences and influences. This results in a variable and ambiguous cultural picture that does not align with cultural essentialism.

## **Chapter Overview**

### **Chapter 2: The Place of Dogs and “Other” Animals in Western History and Thought**

This chapter will serve as a literature review regarding the status of animals in the West. As this chapter illustrates, the dog holds an unusual position in many cultures, as it is recognized both for its “animalness” but also its human “closeness.” This chapter explains the foundation of modern attitudes towards dogs in Western countries – Canada in particular, as a means of illustrating the ambivalence in the status of “man’s best friend.”

### **Chapter 3: The Place of Dogs and “Other” Animals in Islamic History and Thought**

In the same manner as Chapter 2, this chapter will examine the role that dogs play in predominantly Muslim cultures. This role will be analyzed through the use of religious scriptures, scholarly writings, literature and poetry, as well as legal rulings (i.e. fatwās) to explore the diverse ways in which dogs are considered. As with Western societies, dogs hold an ambiguous role wherein they enjoy a respected status in certain instances, yet are also established as being lowly or unclean. Modern perceptions and social issues involving dogs will be explored through the use of news articles. This chapter will begin with a discussion about the general role of animals within this religion, as well as the theoretical works of Clifford Geertz and Talal Asad.

### **Chapter 4: Results and Discussion**

This chapter provides an analysis of the diverse viewpoints of Muslims concerning dogs. Online Muslims forums, websites and blogs were widely utilized as a means of gauging a more international and thorough viewpoint on dogs. Of key importance are the surveys which were particularly geared

towards Canadian Muslims. These results indicate viewpoints that reflect a wide diversity of opinions. The survey analyses explore numerous factors in relation to attitudes about dogs, including religiosity, religious beliefs, time spent in Canada, and personal opinions and experiences.

### **Chapter 5: Discussion on the Interplay between Cultural Influence and Personal Experience**

This chapter embarks on a further discussion about the ways in which dogs in Islam are conceptualized on a cultural or religious level (i.e., in religious texts) and compares it with the findings presented in both the online forum study and online survey results from Chapter 4. As such, this chapter provides a discussion into a main focus of the study - namely, the ways in which one negotiates their cultural understandings through the lens of personal experience.

### **Conclusion**

This thesis will conclude with an overview of the construction of animals in human culture, as well as my analysis and conclusions about the study. Importantly, this section will also discuss the need for further research.

### **Appendices**

The Appendices contain further information about the role of dogs in Muslim culture and also address much of the additional data collected in the survey results. This section also contains copies of the survey questions and consent forms, and a discussion of the ethical concerns of online research.

## **Chapter 2 – The Place of Dogs and “Other” Animals in Western History and Thought**

### **2.1 Dogs in Canada**

It is estimated that 32.3% of Canadians own at least one dog (Perrin 2009: 50), spending an average of \$557 annually on their care (Ipsos-Reid 2001: 18). Most dogs in Canadian society have the role of “pet,” but as is consistent with much of Western culture, dogs are also highly valued as family members.

Despite their highly regarded status in Canadian society, attitudes towards dogs in Canada are often ambivalent. Public legislation and a negative media image of certain breeds represent a negative societal construction of certain dogs. This is exemplified in the 2005 Ontario ban on pit bulls, citing them as dangerous and a threat to public safety (Brisbin 2009). As well, one to two people are killed by dog mauling in Canada every year (Raghavan 2008: 577). Raghavan (2008: 578) writes that this rate is higher in aboriginal reserves and rural areas, likely attributable to a free-roaming and un-neutered dog population..

When studying the situation of Canadian Muslims and dogs, it is important to examine the perceptions of dogs and other animals within the West. While many of those in Western countries espouse the dog as “man’s best friend,” a historical context reveals a relationship that is anything but clearly cut.

“Rowan’s principle,” a phrase sometime espoused by theorists, states that: “The only thing consistent about human-animal interactions is paradox” (Rowan quoted in Herzog 1997: 236 cf Cassidy 2001: 194), emphasizing the ambivalence in attitudes towards animals. This ambivalence – even within a culture – implies both a potential “culture unclarity” in regards to the ways in which an animal is conceptualized, as well as the role that personal experience plays in human relations to animals.

This chapter explores the ambivalent and contradictory role that dogs and animals hold in the West. “Western” society is a term that will be used repeatedly within this paper, though it should be

stressed that its usage is largely problematic. As the “West” generally encompasses Western Europe and North America, it entails an implication of homogeneity amongst all peoples within those geographical locations. However, given that these are heavily industrialized nations with post-domestic ideologies (Bulliet 2005; Hurn 2012: 41), the use of the word “West” may be used to appropriate “mainstream” attitudes towards animals on a general level. Commonly in animal and pet studies, the term “Western” is used to delineate a distinction from “other peoples”, like hunter-gatherer societies (i.e. Serpell 1987).

One author whose work I will be drawing extensively upon is the zoologist James Serpell, who has written on the subject of historical and contemporary human-animal interactions and attitudes, as well as canine behaviour. His academic contributions include *In the Company of Animals*, which discusses the role of companion animals in human culture, including both historical contexts and its impact on psychological and physical health. His book, *The Domestic Dog*, illustrates a similar phenomenon with a canine focus, including aspects of human-dog relations, as well as canine behaviour and biology. His other works provide insight into the role and construction of dogs and other animals within human culture, as well as how this construction is formed in regards to individual persons. By providing a picture of the place of dogs among [Western] society and individuals, these models have been useful in applying this information in other contexts. By demonstrating the factors that shape human perceptions, Serpell’s work has afforded me the theoretical framework to investigate the place of dogs within Muslim culture, and among individual Muslims.

## **2.2 Western Historical and Religious Influences**

Much of the social construction of animals in the West is derived from the Great Chain of Being, a principle that organizes the world into a “natural” hierarchy. As such, animals are positioned at a lower status than humans (Goatly 2006: 24; Preece & Fraser 2000: 251). As well, the work of René Descartes, known as the founding father of vivisection, had lasting impact on the construction of

animals. Descartes, a seventeenth century French philosopher and scientist observed, as others did during this period, that nature functioned like a machine. Animals were simply *Animaux-machines* or automata; they did not possess a soul, a mind, feelings, language, nor were they believed to feel pain (Noske 1992: 227; Blouin 2008: 21; Tonutti 2011: 186; Sanders 1999: 114).

### **2.3 The Changing Relationship with Nature**

A mythos of human supremacy has dominated Western thought for centuries (Serpell 1986: 136). Rod Bennison (2011: 41-42) suggests that this human-nonhuman divide is socially constructed and is a process of “othering” nonhumans.

It has been argued that people are increasingly alienated from the natural world and animals (Bustad 1991: 234). Richard W. Bulliet (2005: 3) relates this to a distinction between what is referred to as characteristics of “domesticity” and “post-domesticity.” Domesticity refers to a way of life in which humans are in close contact with the domestic animals they utilize (i.e. farming). Post-domesticity, however, is characteristic of modern urban society, wherein most people are far-removed from the animals that provide the food or materials they consume. Instead, most human-animal interaction in modern societies is through the companion animals, which are often treated as “human-like.” Building upon this, animals have an ambiguous and marginal role in modern society, and can function as both a “family member” and “valueless object” (Katcher & Beck 1991: 267). The utilitarian and dominionist rhetoric is prevalent in agribusiness and the biomedical research industry wherein animal life is tied with profits (Longo & Malone 2006: 114), particularly with factory farming. This conflicting relationship between utilizing and befriending animals is one that has long permeated many cultures.

### **2.4 The Importance of the Human-Dog Interface**

The domestic dog plays a prominent role in Western society. James Serpell (1995) writes “[t]he Western stereotype of the dog is that of the loyal and faithful companion who shares our homes, our lives and, not infrequently, our food and furniture as an equal or near-equal member of the family”

(Serpell 1995: 252). Yet the way in which dogs are perceived in Western culture is ambivalent (Hickrod & Schmitt 1982: 56). In a dominionist frame of mind, for instance, dogs may hold a utilitarian function. Additionally, they can also exist in the malleable, familiar, humanized role of a companion animal. James Serpell notes that this is “a paradox exemplified by a society in which a dispassionate, utilitarian attitude to factory-farmed livestock coexists with affectionate and sympathetic relationships with domestic pets” (Serpell 1986: 186). The object-being dichotomy can invoke ambivalence, particularly in the context of animal shelters and laboratories (Sanders 1999: 4). While dogs are human companions, they are also an “other” (Sanders 1999: 16). The fact that identities are fluid and changing is represented well with how people conceptualize animals - as individual animals may occupy several categories at once - creating contradictions and ambivalencies (Grier 2006: 185; Sanders 1999: 111), such as the category of “livestock pets” (Grier 2006: 201).

In reference to Claude Lévi-Strauss’ (1963: 89) famous phrase, dogs in particular are “good to think with,” Edmund Leach claims that dogs represent a tabooed ambiguity between two logically distinct categories (Leach 1964: 39). Donna Haraway echoes this, asserting that “[d]ogs are agents in cross-species worlds” (2003a: 118). Pets like dogs fall in between the traditional nature/culture binaries, a creature that often lives closely with humans, yet is still recognized as an animal.

Dogs are also conceptualized negatively in the West. James Serpell (1995) cites their association with vicious attacks, dirt and disease, as well as being a source of unsightly organic pollution on public property. He also cites recent sensationalism of the news media in regards to dog attacks, something he notes “may be out of proportion to the actual risks they pose to the average individual, but they nevertheless reflect, and to some degree foster, a widespread, latent antipathy for *Canis familiaris*...” (Serpell 1995: 2).

## **2.5 Pets**

In the West, dogs are usually pets, but the term “pet” is one that entails a great deal of ambiguity. Pets occupy a liminal category between human and animal (Fox 2006: 526) and can be said to live in

the “margins” (Grier 2006: 183). Some of them may embody certain utilitarian uses, while may also function as companions (Zimolag 2011: 238). Pets are generally considered inedible (Leach 1964: 44) and Arluke and Sanders (1996: 170) write that pets are seen as “the best animals” next to humans because of their tameness. This is more so than livestock and laboratory animals.

Pets embody many roles in our society, from “living toys” to status symbols (Mullin 1999: 216), or multiple roles simultaneously. For instance, Katherine Grier notes that high status show dogs may also embody the role of the companion animal (Grier 2006: 7). Adopting pets, and domestication in general, also symbolize a form of human domination and superiority over nature (Webb 1998: 76). Keith Thomas notes three characteristics of the pet: Firstly, the pet is permitted in the house; secondly, it was given a name; and lastly; never eaten (Thomas 1983: 112-115). Pets, consequently, are an ideal medium for studying negotiations of the human-animal boundary in the everyday (Fox 2006: 526).

Until the late nineteenth century, keeping dogs solely as pets was something generally restricted to the upper classes. For others, they were often perceived scornfully and were valued for purely utilitarian purposes (Blouin 2008: 17). However, people would sometimes keep companion animals as a means of mimicking the upper class (Ferguson 2004: 376). In comparison to other domestic animals, pet dogs usually serve little purpose, and yet they are strongly cherished (Serpell 1995: 252). They are not milked, nor do they lay eggs. Their fur and skin are not made use of, and they are generally not utilized as draft animals (Serpell 1986: 12; Serpell 2003: 87).

The usage of the word “pet” is rather controversial, as many animal welfare groups believe it implies a perspective of “animals as property” (Grier 2006: 7), or indicating a relationship comparable to slavery (Sanders 1999: xiv). For this reason, many prefer the term “companion animal.” I will be using the terms somewhat interchangeably, but will mostly be making use of the word “pet” as it is the most commonly utilized in literature and by the general public.

### **2.5.1 Changes in Pet Ownership in the West**

With their historical link to death and disease, cultural attitudes towards the domestic dog have been ambivalent over time. There are numerous suggestions about why this change in the status of dogs occurred. Reasons for the rise of “pet culture” have ranged from a decline in the earth-centric universe model (Serpell 1986: 128) and an acknowledgment of human closeness to nature (i.e. through an increased public understanding of biological evolution), the rise of animal welfare movements and public interest in animals (Grier 2006: 19; Ritvo 1987: 161; Serpell 1986: 130), increased secularism (Menache 1997: 38), the rise of the industrial urban society (and consequently, a romanticization of the “exotic” natural world), the formation of a more affluent middle class, increasing social isolation (Nast 2006: 304), or a decreasing societal pressure to have children (Bustad 1991: 234) resulting in the search for emotional fulfillment elsewhere. Of course, many of these arguments have been criticized with the prominence of pets among hunter-gatherer peoples (Serpell 1987: 169-172).

While pets have been common in middle class households for two-hundred years, it has been only more recently that they became more significant in those households (Blouin 2008: 19). A major shift in the treatment of dogs began in the early twentieth century, and accelerated during its later half; dogs shifted from being an outdoor pet to an indoor one. Bruce Fogle notes that at the turn of the last century, dogs in Canada generally lived outside in the yard, and were only permitted in the house during the harshest of winter weather. However, after World War II, dogs moved indoors permanently (Fogle 1999: 234); potentiating the emotional bond between humans and their pets, furthering their “closeness” (Power 2008: 536, 548). Jon Katz, author of *The New Work of Dogs* (2004) similarly writes:

Dogs were in the background, not at the center of family life. They slept in the basement or – unthinkable today – in a backyard doghouse... Often much loved and fondly remembered, dogs were not treated as family members, according to behaviorists who have studied human-animal bonds. Nor did they have playdates, a phenomenon fairly common in Montclair today. The notion that they were a part of one’s deepest emotional experiences would have been a joke. [Katz 2004: 8]

The practice of keeping outdoor pets is sometimes attributed to messiness or fleas. Flea preventative measures in the 1980s, however, have largely extinguished this problem, facilitating a closeness between humans and pets that may not have been possible in earlier times (Grier 2006: 85; Zimolag 2011: 242). The proxemics of pet keeping allows intimacy in the human-animal relation (Grier 2006: 61).

Additionally, this occurred during a time of affluence, when food was plentiful and inexpensive, permitting pets to become extended family members (Fogle 1999: 234). This period also witnessed a growth in services targeted towards pets (Blouin 2008: 19). The rise of pet-keeping corresponded with the rise of the consumer nation (Grier 2006: 8). We see this in the growing interest in registered pure-bred dogs (Grier 2006: 12). The financial and emotional investment in pets has increased dramatically since the 1980s (Nast 2006: 305). A post-industrial society may have favoured pet ownership, as a response to changing family size and structure, increased mobility, isolation and alienation (Nast 2006: 304).

Lifestyle factors, finances, health (i.e. allergies), cultural factors and demographics all influence one's propensity to own a pet (Blouin 2008: 5, 23; Zimolag 2011: 241). Past experiences with animals play a particularly large role (Serpell 1986: 120; Hart 1995: 171). Dog-ownership for companion purposes, while arguably beneficial, is not universal. Reasons for not owning pets may include inadequate housing, a lack of time, or economic constraints (Serpell 1986: 120). The lack of pet ownership among certain peoples or societies may reflect a lack of need to supplement existing human relationships (Serpell 1986: 121).

Through globalization, Western influence of pet culture has permeated into non-Western countries (Zimolag 2011: 241). As will be described further in subsequent chapters, this is something that has occurred in predominantly Muslim countries with the increased trend of "dogs as pets" (Golsorkhi 2010). However, the advent of pet-keeping is criticized as being a marker of Western affluence. Dogs in North America, for instance, may be seen as being valued more than humans, as

the resources lavished on them may be better spent on underprivileged persons (Ferguson 2004: 373, 384; Serpell 1986: 43). This is a view that is often similarly promoted by both Muslim religious scholars and authority figures (Associated Press 2006; Crethi Plethi 2011), as well as lay Muslims themselves (see Chapter 4). These trends represent a similar instance of cross-cultural tensions and “othering” in regards to public conceptions of dogs, and will be later discussed in greater detail.

## **2.6 Liminality and Ambivalency**

Key to understanding the ambiguous categorization of the dog is Victor Turner’s construction of “liminality”; meaning “threshold.” Turner built upon Arnold van Gennep’s (1909/1960) concept of the transitional state of a rite of passage, the “in-between” phase in the process of achieving a new status. Turner notes that during the liminal phase, the ritual subject is “betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial” (Turner 1969: 95). This is characterized as a state that is very ambiguous in terms of characteristics, but nonetheless is expressed through a wide range of symbols that represent transition. The individual is essentially placed in a situation in which they are outside the realm of the normal and the mundane; an in-between phase that is imbued with sacredness (Turner 1969: 95). Certain animals can be thought of as liminal beings with boundary crossing potential. They have the ability to occupy more than one realm, as well as transgress them. This is most obvious in creatures that have both human and animal qualities.

Dogs function as liminal boundary crossers, at the threshold of nature/culture, human/animal, and wild/domestic. They occupy simultaneous roles, for instance dog-as-pet and dog-as-animal. As a result of their tendency to blur the human/non-human categories, they often are seen as “polluting” (Douglas 1966: 38-39). Their link to humans may be due to dogs being among the few species of animal permitted inside the house, and family life (Horowitz & Bekoff 2007: 25). Claude Lévi-Strauss (1972) writes that while domestic dogs are considered part of human society, they are

attributed a very low status. He also writes that dogs should be considered as *metonymical human beings* (1972: 205-207).

Dogs and other animals can be seen as both being “thinglike” and “personlike” (Hills 1989: 100), as both utilitarian and humanoid. This results in a paradoxical relationship with dogs. Dogs are loved, yet are commodities to be consumed. Dogs are considered property and are abandoned, relinquished and euthanized (Serpell 1995: 252; Katcher & Beck 1991: 267) often for trivial reasons such as downsizing or because they destroy furniture (Sanders 1999: 77). But dogs are also seen as very appealing and elicit empathy, and feature in all sorts of media, which can contrast with how they are actually treated (Armbruster 2002: 352). James Serpell (1995) summarizes the ambiguous role of the dog thusly:

In symbolic terms, the domestic dog exists precariously in *the no-man's s land between the human and non-human worlds. It is an interstitial creature, neither person nor beast, forever oscillating uncomfortably between the roles of high-status animal and low-status person. As a consequence, the dog is rarely accepted and appreciated purely for what it is: a uniquely varied, carnivorous mammal adapted to a huge range of mutualistic associations with people. Instead, it has become a creature of metaphor, simultaneously embodying or representing a strange mixture of admirable and despicable traits. As a beast that voluntarily allies itself to humans, the dog often seems to lose its right to be regarded as a true animal...Elsewhere, the dog's ambiguous or intermediate status has endowed it with supernatural powers, and the ability to travel as a spiritual messenger or psychopomp between this world and the next...In our own culture, the dog has been granted temporary personhood in return for its unfailing companionship. But, as we have seen, this privilege is swiftly withdrawn whenever the dog reveals too much of its animal nature...* [Serpell 1995: 254-255, emphasis added]

David Blouin (2008) in a comprehensive study of American pet owners, notes three main “cultural styles” or orientations in regards to attitudes towards pets (Blouin 2008: 3). Dominionist pet owners, while they may be fond of their keep, tend to conceptualize their pets as lesser creatures than themselves, and view them in a more utilitarian light. Such dogs may be used to guard the house, or to protect the garden from wildlife (Blouin 2008: 3). Humanists have significantly more attachment with their pets and tend to conceptualize their animals as surrogate humans and forge strong relationships with them, considering them “companions” and/or “children” (Blouin 2008: 3). Blouin

dubs the third category as Protectionists, who, like the Humanists, also have close attachments to their pets and may see them as family members or friends. However, they also recognize their pets as “animals,” rather than “humans” (Blouin 2008: 3). He summarizes this as follows: “In sum, these orientations represent distinct cultural constructions of animals: to dominionists a dog is “just a dog;” to humanists, a dog is not a dog at all, but a child or friend; and to protectionists, dogs are precious “companion animals” and all animals are deserving of respect and protection” (Blouin 2008: 3-4).

Such distinctions clearly demonstrate the potential variation that can exist even within a single “cultural group” (e.g. the American people) – i.e. the importance of inter-group variation (Lawrence 1987: 147). As well, it illustrates the potential for “sub-cultures” to be formed by factors other than the surrounding culture (i.e. personal experience, upbringing). The ways in which the human-animal interface is experienced is not the same for all people, although culture may play a prominent role in facilitating, regulating and conditioning such interactions.

## **2.7 Problems of Dog Ownership**

Dog attacks serve as a reminder of a dog’s “animalness;” that dogs cannot become the “civilized” beings that our culture has molded them into. Vicious behaviour exhibited by dogs marks a transformation of the loyal dog into a savage beast, an inversion of the role humans may expect of them (Serpell 1995: 253). Most reported dog bites involve children or the elderly (Lockwood 1995: 134). Serpell (1995: 252), however, criticizes the tendency of the media to sensationalize dog attacks made by a particular “dangerous” species (e.g.. Rottweilers).

Other concerns associated with the close presence of dogs are zoonoses (diseases) and sanitation concerns. Hart notes that most pet owners unaware of the potential health hazards (Hart 1995: 172). A study conducted by Stull et al. (2012) reveals that the majority of Ontario pet owners were generally unaware of potential animal-human disease risks associated with pets, with 64% stating that they had never received information about such possibilities. Furthermore, when given a list of

diseases, participants could only correctly identify half of the conditions that are transmissible from animals to humans (Stull et al. 2012).

Alan M. Beck has covered the concerns raised by urban stray dogs extensively. There are numerous zoonoses that can be spread between dogs and humans, particularly through feces (Beck 1973: 65). The presence of feces and urine has potential consequences related to disease and environmental issues (Beck 1973: 55). While not only being unsightly, it is also seen as a form of “environmental pollution.” As such, the movements of dogs are typically restricted in urban areas and are prohibited from entering most establishments, with the exception of assistance dogs (Beck 2013: 6).

Rabies is a major concern among urban dogs (Beck 1973: 67), but the rates of disease vary worldwide. In Western Europe for instance, out of the annually reported cases of rabies, only 0.1-5% are found in dogs (wild animals - usually foxes - comprise the rest). Wandeler et al. (1993: 59) attribute this to the generally restricted movements of domestic dogs (i.e. kept indoors or on leashes) and widespread or compulsory vaccination. The authors compare this to Sri Lanka, with a high dog population density and they are rarely confined and arbitrarily owned, resulting in high rates of rabies (Wandeler et al. 1993: 59). This topic will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

## **Conclusion**

An examination of the stage of human-dog interaction in “Western” society, through a historical lens, demonstrates that animals (particularly dogs) hold simultaneous and conflicting roles within culture. Dogs, on the one hand, are acknowledged for their “nonhumanness,” “dogness” and “animality,” with their associations with zoonoses (i.e. rabies), ferocity, and socially unacceptable “dirty” practices, such as licking themselves and promiscuous sexual behaviour. However, the dog’s role in Western society also sees them valued for their work; as in the case of police, therapy, and farm dogs. Most characteristically among urban peoples, domestic dogs generally occupy the role of the “companion animal,” and have embodied a closeness and high status that is distinct from most

animals. In many homes, dogs are considered a family member, and often achieve a “pseudo-human” status.

While dogs have enjoyed an affluent status in much of Western culture, the fact that cultural attitudes towards dogs are not homogenous illustrates that other factors play a large role in regards to such attitudes. Past experiences and exposure have been shown to heavily influence one’s propensity to keep a dog as a pet (Serpell 1986: 120; Hart 1995: 171). Additionally, exposure can also come from media, as sensationalized reports of dog attacks (particularly from stereotypical “vicious” breeds like pit bulls) can also affect public attitudes. As such, when examining conceptions of dogs, one’s culture heavily influences the framework, stage and script for human-dog interaction, but ultimately does not control the actors. This setting of human-dog relations is changing and variable depending on factors like historical context, cultural context, and personal views.

While the topic of “Western” pet culture has received a fair amount of scholarly attention, similar analyses conducted in Muslim-dominant countries or contexts are fairly sparse, with some notable exceptions (i.e. Al-Fayez et al. 2003; Knobel et al 2008a; 2008b; Morrow 1998; Sejra et al. 2009; Subasi 2011; Turner, Waiblinger & Meslim 2013: 15-16). While this study does not explicitly address pet culture in these countries, a cultural examination into the topic of Islam and dogs is crucial to providing a framework for studying Canadian Muslims and dogs. The next chapter will engage in a similar overview of the role and status of dogs in Islamic religion and Muslim culture.

## **Chapter 3 - The Place of Dogs and “Other” Animals in Islamic History and Thought**

### **3.1 The Anthropology of Islam: The Role of Culture, Religion, Personal Experience, and Negotiation**

As will be covered more fully in this chapter, the role and status of the dog is fairly ambivalent in “Muslim cultures”. Islam, having emerged in an Arab cultural context, retained many pre-Islamic Arab cultural norms as it spread (Foltz 2006b: 13; Hitti 2002: 87). In particular, dogs and cats were thought to be linked to the “evil eye” or as the incarnations of jinn (Foltz 2006b: 150). However, in pre-Islamic times, dogs were the only domesticated animals to be given a proper name (Menache 1998: 75; Viré 2013). As will be noted, there is debate about whether the strong prevalence of stray and often rabid dogs in the region may have contributed to negative perceptions (Menarche 1997: 35).

As such, the question becomes whether the social constructions of dogs originated in Islam, or stemmed from earlier cultural traditions, or is the result of environmental factors (i.e. an abundance of stray dogs). This question is further compounded by the fact that Islam has become a far-reaching religion with roughly 1.2 billion adherents (Foltz 2006b: 8), hailing from diverse countries and cultures around the world, each appropriating other local cultural norms.

The manner with which Islam has permeated a wide diversity of cultures, may account for the discrepancies in the ways in which the religious principles of Islam are integrated and understood on a cultural level. Clifford Geertz, in his book “*Islam Observed*”, has highlighted such discrepancies by contrasting the different forms of Islam in Morocco and Indonesia. In Morocco, for instance, Islam entered the region in the 7<sup>th</sup> century primarily through military conquest (Geertz 1968: 4-9), cultivating what Geertz (1968: 16) describes as a more purified, canonical and uniform creed. In Indonesia, however, Islam arrived much later, in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, as a consequence of trade relations, and existed in a negotiated form with many elements of local Javanese culture (Geertz 1968: 9-13). The implication being, that there are numerous “types” of Islam that exist simultaneously.

The cultural anthropologist Talal Asad argues against Clifford Geertz's implication of "multiple Islams" and instead argues that Islam should be approached as a discursive tradition – a tradition that is rooted in a particular historical context and provides a form of orthodoxy and orthopraxy. In his paper "*The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*," Asad notes that this form of tradition is one that is strongly contingent on authority, and criticizes Geertz for ignoring the role of "power" (Asad 1983). Asad (1986: 14) further explains: "A tradition consists essentially of discourses that seek to instruct practitioners regarding the correct form and purpose of a given practice that, precisely because it is established, has a history" and that "all instituted practices are oriented to a conception of the past" (Asad 1986: 15). This is demonstrated in Islam by its strong focus on foundational texts and institutions (1986: 14).

While Asad argues that Islam's discursive tradition heavily stresses orthodoxy and orthopraxy, he also notes the ways in which the religion is transmitted through individual Muslims. He writes: "A practice is Islamic because it is authorized by the discursive traditions of Islam, and is so taught to Muslims-whether by an 'alim, a khatib, a Sufi shaykh, or an untutored parent" (Asad 1986: 15).

Asad's assertions are useful as a framework for understanding the relationship between Muslims and Islam. While the precise definition of an "Islamic perspective" of dogs is debatable, its promotion is one that many respondents of this thesis' survey emphasize as a source of authority. Despite differences of interpretation, the emphasis on traditionally rooted guidelines is of importance. On the other hand, the role of personal experience and upbringing seems to play a large factor in determining how one understands and negotiates these religious traditions. Indeed, Asad (1986: 16) writes that "[a]rgument and conflict over the form and significance of practices are therefore a natural part of any Islamic tradition." Conceptualizing Islam as a "discursive tradition" allows for explanation of both an authoritative transmission of religious traditions, but also one that allows for differences in opinion in how these traditions are understood and practiced within this context.

As such, it is important to understand how individuals practice negotiation within their specific cultural contexts. Sociologist Anthony Giddens - known for his work on the relationship between structure and agency – argues that “the notions of action and structure *presuppose one another*” (1979: 53, emphasis in original). Furthermore he writes that: “‘Action’ or agency, as I use it, thus does not refer to a series of discrete acts combined together, but to a *continuous flow of conduct*. We may define action...as involving a ‘stream of actual or contemplated causal interventions of corporeal beings in the ongoing process of events-in-the-world’” (Giddens 1979: 55, emphasis in original). Importantly, Giddens refers to individual agents as possessing both power and the ability to intervene within their structure. In the case of animals, this illustrates the importance and role of personal agency with regard to how an individual interprets and negotiates their social structure or culture. Individuals exhibit this ability by the manner with which they construct animals on a personal level, while mediating broader cultural understandings of them.

For this reason, it is important to have an understanding of the ways in which animals are constructed in broader cultural contexts, as well as the ways in which they are interpreted by individuals. An analysis of the online survey and forums reveals that personal experiences play the greatest factor in influencing how individual Muslims perceive dogs. Additionally, these findings illustrate the ways in which Muslims negotiate their understanding and interpretation of Islam within the context of dogs. Therefore, culture (and religion) *does* play an important role in framing an individual’s worldview, but the manner in which this is expressed is not deterministic.

### **3.2 An Introduction to Islam and Related Terminology**

To understand how dogs and other animals are viewed in Islam, one must first review its terminology and its processes, such as those associated with purification and *wudū’*. An understanding of the differences between the Qur’ān and hadīths, as well as between Sunnī, Shī’a, and Sufi doctrines are also required.

The word *islām* means “submission” in deference to God. The followers of Islam are referred to as *muslim* (*muslima* if female) (Denny 1994: 67). As those who identify as Muslim come from a multitude of backgrounds and cultures, it is not possible to paint them with a single brush. However, Muslims do identify with one another in a worldwide community known as *ummah*, and there are certain universals that all Muslims identify with. David Waines (2003: 2) describes it thusly: “...all Muslims share in the possession of a scripture which they hold to be the very words the Lord of the World, Allah, revealed to his Messenger or Prophet, Muhammad, as guidance for all his people and all humankind.” Despite this commonality, however, there is a great deal of pluralism in the Muslim belief system, whether between various sects, or between individual interpretations (Waines 2003: 2).

### **3.2.1 The Five Pillars**

There are five pillars of Islam; *shahadah* (witnessing) *salāt* (prayer) *zakah* (charity) *sawm* (fasting) and *hajj* (pilgrimage), as well as a set of dietary laws that must be observed (Bonne and Verbeke 2008: 36). *Shahadah* is the act of bearing witness, in which a Muslim must affirm their devotion through the phrase “there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.” The second pillar of Islam are the prayers (*salāt*) that Muslims must conduct at five specific times of the day. The third pillar is *zakat*, or charity towards the poor; 2.5% of one’s savings must be given to the poor as an expression of compassion. The fourth pillar concerns the act of fasting during the month of Ramadan, or “*al-saum*”, in which Muslims are to go without food, drink, and sex, a process that is meant to illustrate their reverence for Allah. The fifth pillar is the *hajj*, or the annual pilgrimage to Mecca that every able Muslim should embark upon at least once during their life (Faruqi 2007: 462; Denny 1994: 118-130; Waines 2003: 30, 91-92).

### **3.2.2 Shari’ah**

*Shari’ah* law consists of five categories of actions. They are “[*halāl*] (approved), *mandūb* (recommended), *mubah* (indifferent), *makrūh* (reprehensible) and *harām* (forbidden)” (Abdull 2004: 72). In Islam, religion and politics are intertwined, particularly in the case of *Shari’ah* and *Fiqh*

(jurisprudence) systems of Qur'ānic law. Thusly, “[t]hese Quranic Islamic laws provide justifications for formation and implementation of laws that govern religious practices and obligations, social life, marriage and divorce, commerce and business, taxation, government, criminal justice, economics, and other areas” (Faruqi 2007: 463).

### **3.2.3 The Qur'ān and the Sunnī Hadīths**

The Qur'ān, meaning “recitation” (Denny 1994: 61), refers to the collection of scripture reflecting the revelations from Allah received by The Prophet Muhammad through the angel Gabriel (Waines 2003: 11). The Qur'ān contains 114 chapters or *sūras*.

The *sunna* refers to “the Prophet’s “custom,” his words, deeds, and habitual practices” (Denny 1994: 159), his life and teachings (Bonne and Verbeke 2008: 38). These teachings were preserved and communicated through the hadīths (Denny 1994: 159). Qur'ānic scripture does not provide any biographical information on the Prophet; such information is contained in the hadīths (Waines 2003: 11). The hadīths are organized by subject matter and encompass a wide array of topics pertaining to the law. They also covered subject matter that is not in the *fiqh* (jurisprudence) (Waines 2003: 72).

The hadīths were likely transmitted to subsequent generations through both oral and written traditions and were probably not established until the eighth or early ninth century (Foltz 2006a: 18; Waines 2003: 40-41). This lengthy process entailed the evaluation of numerous accounts and transmissions for their authenticity (Denny 1994: 159). The word hadīth is used to refer to the individual stories or anecdotes, as well as the body of text as a whole. Each hadīth consists of two components; the message it conveys (*matn*) and the sequential chain of transmitters (*isnad*); the persons who conveyed the message that can be traced back to an original source. These original sources could be the Companions of the Prophet, The Successors (i.e. the second “generation” of the Companions), or the Prophet Muhammad himself (Denny 1994: 162; Waines 2003: 35, 41). Criticism of any one hadīth tends to focus upon the authority of the transmission itself, not simply the

content (Waines 2003: 72). Hadīths were ranked by scholars as being of “sound” (*sahih*) “good” “weak” or “spurious” authenticity (Foltz 2006a: 18).

Denny (1994: 163) states that despite issues of authenticity, “the *hadīths* do in fact convey extremely valuable and pertinent data about the social and intellectual world of early Islam.” For this reason, studying the hadīths provides a useful means of critically examining Islamic beliefs about dogs.

### **3.2.4 Major Hadīth Collections**

Mālik Ibn Anas, a descendent of one of the companions, was the founder of the Mālikī school and produced *Al-Muwatta* (“beaten path”). This hadīth collection is considered to be one of the most authentic (Denny 1994: 164).

Muhammad Ismā‘il al-Bukhārī (d. 870) and Muslim Ibn al-Hajjāj (d. 875) contributed to what are considered to be the most authentic hadīths - *Sahih al-Bukhārī* and *Sahih Muslim*. Both of them traveled great distances to record oral accounts from a wide array of informants, and consistently cross-referenced them with other sources. These collections are given the name *sahih*, meaning “sound” or “authentic” (Denny 1994: 164-165).

*The Sunnī Collections* refer to four collections of hadīths that are considered authentic among Sunnīs, in addition to the aforementioned *Sahih Muslim* and *Sahih al-Bukhārī*. These collections were made by al-Tirmidhī, Abu Dā‘ūd al-Sijistānī, al-Nasā‘ī, and Ibn Mājah. They are referred to as the “Six Books” (Denny 1994: 165-166).

### **3.2.5 Sufism**

Sufism is a form of Islamic asceticism or mysticism, an exploration of spirituality, rather than a separate faith. Sufism also focuses on bringing Islam to the forefront of every aspect of life, providing a great deal of Islamic insight into concerns like economics, as well as human interaction with nature (Kemmerer 2012: 242). Waines finds that Sufism focuses on the esoteric or inner realm; a “spiritual path of contemplation” (2003: 138). As well, Denny writes:

To some extent, Sufism was the inner power of Islam from the beginning, but in another sense it has been a renewing and reforming response to developments and trends that have from time to time sapped Islam of its vitality and spontaneity. For example, as mosque-centered worship and devotional life became more formalized and dominated by the *'ulamā'* [legal scholars], many Muslims yearned for a warmer, more spontaneous daily spiritual life, in the English poet William Cowper's words, "a closer walk with God. [Denny 1994: 219]

### 3.2.6 Shī'ism

The five pillars of Shī'ism are relatively similar to those of Sunnī Islam. They are Divine Unity (*tawhīd*), prophethood (*nabuwwah*), the resurrection (*ma'ād*), the Imāmate (*imāma*), and divine justice (*'adl*) (Momen 1985:176-177). Where Shī'ism particularly diverges from Sunnism is in the importance of the Imāmate.

A prominent figure in Shī'ism is the Prophet Muhammad's cousin 'Alī b. Abi Talib, who also married Muhammad's daughter Fatimah (Momen 1985: 16). A key difference between Sunnī and Shī'a Muslims is the question of the succession of Muhammad after his death in year 632 (1985: 11). While it is asserted among Shī'a Muslims that the Prophet Muhammad had chosen 'Alī as his successor (1985: 16), Abū Bakr – one of the companions of the prophet - became the first Caliph (1985: 18). This decision sparked a great deal of controversy over 'Alī's perceived right to Caliphate (1985: 18) and would play a pivotal role in the schism between Sunnī and Shī'a Muslims.

For Sunnī Muslims, leadership of the Muslim community is held by the elected Caliphate. Shī'a Muslims, however, assert that leadership is determined through a chosen successor as Imams. Thusly, the Prophet Muhammad delegated 'Alī as Imam, and each Imam delegates their own successor (Momen 1985: 147).

The Shī'a hadīths are not transmitted through a chain starting with the Companions like that of the Sunnī, rather, the chain of transmission is through Imāms (Momen 1985:173-174). As such, the Shī'i hadīth are different from those recognized by the Sunnī.

### 3.3 Animals in Islam – A General Introduction

Before exploring the role and status of dogs, it is important to provide an overview of the place of animals and nature within Islam in general. The first portion of this chapter aims to be a counterpart of the previous chapter which described the position of animals within “Western” society. As mentioned, an investigation into the role of animals within a culture is important for anthropological study.

The Qur’ān contains more than 750 verses related to nature (Shomali 2008: 2), 485 of which reference the Earth (*‘al-ard*) (Kamali 2010: 11). Furthermore, 7 out of the 114 *sūras* of the Qur’ān are named after animals (Tlili 2009: 166). However, it is difficult to illustrate overall trends (Foltz 2006a: 8) in attitudes towards non-human animals and nature, given that Muslim adherents hail from diverse countries and cultures around the world. Consequently, Foltz also makes the important point that “[t]he actual practices and attitudes of Muslims have always been shaped by Islamic sources in combination with extra-Islamic cultural ones. Islamic sources tend to be embodied in authoritative texts, while cultural sources often are not” (Foltz 2006b: 149-150).

#### 3.3.1 Animal Compassion/Cruelty

Some hadīths note that cruelty to animals warrants divine punishment. In contrast, kindness to animals is to be rewarded (Saniotis 2012: 157). “Animals can be a means by which God allows Muslims to earn his pleasure through their compassionate acts” (Foltz 2006a: 80).

There are several accounts detailing the prohibition of animal cruelty (Ba Kader et al.1983: 17). When a prophet ordered the burning of an entire ant colony after being stung by one, Allah rebuked him saying “Thou hast destroyed a whole nation that celebrates God's praise for an ant stung thee” (Ba Kader et al.1983: 17; Kamali 2010: 22). A woman who had locked up a cat until it had starved was punished (*Sahih Muslim*: Book 4, Number 1975), as the Prophet Muhammad had specifically prohibited such an act (Ba Kader et al.1983: 17). People who used a bird for target practice were damned. (*Sahih al-Bukhārī* Book 67, Number 422-423) (Ba Kader et al.1983: 17; Kamali 2010: 23)

for those who kill sparrows will testify on the day of Judgement (Sunan al-Nasa'i, Vol 7 p.229) (Kamali 2010: 23; Shomali 2008: 3; Saniotis 2012: 157-158).

There is a general consensus that Muslims cannot kill a living creature that is not a threat (Kamali 2010: 22). Indeed, harm to animals is something that must be avoided (Kamali 2010: 24). In Islam, it is generally thought that the use of animals is permitted, as long it is done morally, and that an animal's life is only taken when necessary (Gharebaghi et al. 2007: 62).

### **3.4. Dogs in Islam - Introduction**

One of my principle reasons for embarking on this project was prompted by an identifiable gap in scholarly literature. The majority of writings on the subject of Muslims and dogs fall into four main categories: 1) Scholarly analysis of Islamic scripture 2) Islamic apologetic writings or fatwas, usually by Imams 3) Personal writings in the form of blogs or personal websites, and 4) News articles dealing with dogs and Islam as an issue of public concern. The first category largely deals with the question: "What do the Islamic texts say about dogs?" Writings that fall into the second category tend to be framed in the somewhat authoritarian context of "This is what Muslims *should* think about dogs." The third and fourth categories are what I have attempted to address in this study; rather than exploring the opinions that Muslims *should* have about dogs (i.e. through scripture and Islamic apologetics), I aim to explore what lay-Muslims *actually* think about dogs. Personal writings in the form of blog posts and chat rooms reveal a complex picture of dogs that does not necessarily fit into the framework presented by scripture and apologetics. Newspaper articles also reveal these complexities, framed in an environment of "the West and the Other," in which Muslim ambivalence towards dogs is contrasted with the "man's best friend" milieu of the West.

There are numerous references to dogs in Islamic scripture, literature, and poetry. And indeed, there has been some scholarly focus in this area, largely in the form of Islamic hermeneutical and scriptural reviews, such as Vera Subasi's 2011 dissertation "*Dogs in Islam*." An analysis of Islamic scripture plays an important role in this research, as it provides a frame of reference for people's

beliefs, since Muslims hold the Qur'ān and hadīths as sources of high authority. These texts, like people's beliefs, also paint an unclear and ambivalent picture regarding the ways in which dogs are constructed. One cannot assert a uniform construction of dogs by examining authoritative sources. The diverse opinions expressed by Muslims about dogs cannot be measured simply by analyzing religious texts. Consequently, it is important to gauge the opinions of the lay Muslim, particularly with regards to personal religious beliefs, upbringing and past experiences. Thus, what I aim to do in the project is to examine categories three and four in a scholarly manner, similarly to the ways in which categories one and two have been studied.

In this chapter I will provide an overview of the general role that dogs play in Muslim culture and history and address recent questions raised by the growing interest in animal welfare and the criticism of “canine-centric” Western culture. The opinions expressed in Islamic scripture and literature span a broad spectrum, ranging from the portrayal of the dog “Qitmir” in the “al-Kahf” (Cave) story of the Qur'ān as a symbol of fidelity, to the portrayal of the dog in the hadīths as unclean, as preventing angels from entering the house, as blocking prayers, and as a cause for the loss of Qirāt [rewards for good deeds] if one owns a dog that does not provide a non-trivial service (i.e. as a pet). On the one hand, they are associated with “unsightly” activities that are taboo in human society (i.e. sexual promiscuity) and diseases like rabies, underlying the promotion in several hadīths of the killing of stray dogs (particularly black ones) and yet, on the other hand, both Sunnī and Shī'a stress the need for kindness towards animals, including dogs.

In predominantly Muslim countries, there is generally a distinction between the working dogs, like the hunting and sheep dogs, and freely roaming or stray dogs (Digard 1995). Stray dogs who are shunned to the margins of society become driven to eat carrion (dead flesh), possibly perpetuating the cycle of their negative cultural constructions (Serpell 1986: 162). Indeed, the fact that dogs will consume human carrion may have been the origin of their association with death throughout societies

in Europe, the Middle East and Asia (Huet 2005: 1) and possibly the origin of the notion of the dog as a taker of “souls” or psychopomp in many cultures (Trubshaw 1996/2008b).

### **3.4.1. The Dog in the Qur’ān**

The Qur’ān, being the book of primary importance in Islam, is thusly of fundamental significance when studying a Muslim worldview. There are three main references to dogs in the Qur’ān. The first of which relates to hunting dogs, the mouths of which may be regarded as being “clean”:

“Lawful for you are [all] good foods and [game caught by] what you have trained of hunting animals which you train as Allah has taught you. So eat of what they catch for you, and mention the name of Allah upon it, and fear Allah.” Indeed, Allah is swift in account. [Q 5:4]

This verse will be discussed further in the section on “Uncleanliness.” The dog referenced in sūra 7:176 is typically interpreted as being a metaphor for an unbeliever, or asserting the dog’s “baseness” (Fudge 2001).

And if We had willed, we could have elevated him thereby, but he adhered [instead] to the earth and followed his own desire. So his example is like that of the dog: if you chase him, he pants, or if you leave him, he [still] pants. That is the example of the people who denied Our signs. So relate the stories that perhaps they will give thought. [Q 7:176]

#### **3.4.1.1 The Companions of the Cave**

The most well-known mention of a dog in the Qur’ān is the story of The People of the Cave from the 18th sūra, known as “al-Kahf” or “The Cave.” This telling is derived from the tale of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, a group of monotheistic Christian young men who are on the run from their persecutors. They sought refuge in a cave, where they slept for 300 years. Upon awakening, they discover that the entire region has been converted to monotheism.

In the Qur’ānic version of the story, the youths are accompanied by a dog, which according to a Shī’a text, ‘Ali calls Qitmir (or Kitmir), and describes its colouring as white with black spots (Al-’Āmili 2008b). The youths entered the cave to sleep, while Qitmir is described as lying across the

cave's threshold (Q 18:18). An interesting example of the perceived liminal nature of the dog (discussed in Chapter 2), as Qitmir occupies the boundary between the human world and the outside world; blurring the wild/domestic binary. It may, in fact, be this liminal nature of the dog's position that underlies its often ambivalent role in Islam.

The Qur'ānic version of the story also raises a question regarding the status of the dog as a non-human person. There is speculation about the number of youths, and whether Qitmir is counted among them: "Some say there were three, the dog being the fourth of them; others say there were five, the dog being the sixth, guessing at the unknown. Yet others say there were seven, the dog being the eighth" (Q 18:22).

Other versions expand the story further, regaling that the young men originally attempted to drive Qitmir away with stones because they feared that his barking may alert others to their location. God then allowed the dog to speak, so that he could promise to guard them against their enemies (Al-Âmili 2008b; Fudge 2001; Menache 1998: 76). Qitmir is held up as a model of loyalty, something that is thought to be inherent in all dogs (Nurbakhsh 1989: 20).

The example of Qitmir is often cited in the common debate over whether animals can enter Paradise. Some jurists have stated that only three or possibly four animals have ever entered Paradise, and Qitmir is generally considered in Muslim tradition to be one of them (Campo 2009: 201; Fudge 2001; Menache 1998: 76; Omidsalar & Omidsalar 1995; Viré 2013). References to dogs in the Qur'ān allude to its often ambivalent construction in Islam. While the "cleanliness" of hunting dogs and the fidelity of Qitmir are established, dogs are also imbued with "baser" instincts. While the Qur'ān is a primary foundation of religious information, other sources - like the hadīths or religious scholars - further this ambivalency.

### **3.4.2 Criticism of Pet-Keeping**

Many Muslim scholars argue that the proscriptions against keeping dogs as pets prevent the wasting of time, money, and resources on a frivolous activity. This is often presented in the context

of criticizing “Westerners” for lavishing on their dogs. Yusuf Al-Qardawi, a prominent Egyptian theologian writes the following:

Keeping dogs inside the house without any necessity merely as pets was forbidden by the Prophet (pbuh). When we observe how lavishly the well-to-do treat their dogs while despising their relatives, and how much attention they give their dogs while neglecting their neighbors, we realize the wisdom of this prohibition. Moreover, the presence of a dog makes the household utensils unhygienic due to their licking of them. [Al-Qardawi 1997: 116]

However, despite his concern with hygiene, including worms (1197: 118–120), he relents that : “Dogs which are kept for a purpose, such as hunting, guarding cattle or crops and the like are exempted from the above ruling (Al-Qardawi 1997: 117). He also adds: “On the basis of this *hadith* [regarding a loss of Qirāt] some jurists argue that the keeping of dogs as pets can be classified as *makruh* rather than *haram*, as the *haram* is absolutely prohibited without regard to whether there is a decrease in reward or not” (Al-Qardawi 1997: 117). In brief, ownership of dogs is clearly permitted in certain circumstances.

### **3.5 Dogs in Islam and the Middle East - General**

Dogs occupy a very ambiguous place in Middle-Eastern societies. While working dogs, such as hunting and herding dogs, are valued, most dogs in the region are strays, which are generally looked upon with contempt (Foltz 2006a: 131).

Sufi writer Dr. Javad Nurbakhsh notes that: “In the literature of this region, the dog is the symbol of foulness and ferocity, savagery and viciousness, and in everyday language, the word ‘dog’ was used as the vilest of insults” (1989: 4). The association of the dog with certain behaviours like scavenging or eating carrion may have influenced this perspective (Foltz 2006b: 152). The aversion to dogs in the Arab world is most prominent in urban areas, where most dogs are strays and do not contribute in the manner that working dogs do. However, they are considered valuable as scavengers in the removal of waste (Viré 2013)

### 3.5.1 Saluki Dogs

Islam was born of the pastoralist tribes in Saudi Arabia (Hoyland 2001: 117). Here, hunting scenes are commonly depicted in Arabia, many consisting of hunters accompanied by dogs (Hoyland 2001: 193). Hunting was very important for the Bedouin (Morad 1994: 7). Saluki dogs, a form of greyhound popular in the region (Glassé 2001: 121; Denny 1994: 115), are featured prominently in Arab hunting poetry (*Tardiyyāt*), much of which is pre-Islamic (Smith 2013; 1990: 167). While the Arabic word for dog, *kalb*, is often used negatively (Menache 1997: 35; Tlili 2009: 119), such as in proverbs like, “More greedy than a dog after a bone” (Menache 1997: 35), the word does not technically convey any distinction between esteemed hunting/herding dogs and shunned wild dogs (Viré 2013). Geoffrey David Miller (2008) writes that the Old Testament uses the related Hebrew word “*Kelebh*” in the same manner. Miller notes that while the Old Testament frequently describes dogs disparagingly, the ambiguity in the terminology may suggest a similarly ambivalent picture.

Hunting dogs are not considered unclean in the same way that strays are; a distinction not dissimilar to Western perspectives on pure-breds and mongrels. This is particularly so with Salukis, who play the central role in various Arab hunting schemes (Clark 2004). The Prophet Muhammad was said to have owned a white one (Bustad 1991: 240). Terrence Clark (1999) remarks that the Saluki holds a status far above a “mere dog;” recalling an instance in which he was reprimanded for using the word “*kalb*” to refer to one (Clark 1999: 65). A similar circumstance is noted in the Qur’ān (sūra 5:4) wherein dogs trained as (hunting) hounds are referred to as *mukallabīn* rather than *kalb* (Fudge 2001). Saluki dogs have traditionally been kept in the palaces of Arab sheiks and princesses, where they were highly valued and respected (Grutz 2008; Serpell 1986: 163).

A tenth century account by Ibn al-Marzubān reveals that Salukis were evidently permitted inside Bedouin tents, while other breeds of were not (Ibn al-Marzubān 1978: 22). Hole and Wyllie (2007: 177) echo this understanding, although Morad (1994: 9) writes that Salukis, while kept for protection, were not permitted within the actual home.

### 3.5.2 The Status of Dogs in Predominantly Muslim Countries

In predominantly Muslim countries, owning a dog strictly as a pet is uncommon; a practice often criticized as evidence of Western influence (Foltz 2006a:130). Khaled Abou El Fadl – a prominent Islamic scholar - notes that in the contemporary Muslim world, the only people who generally own dogs are the Bedouin, those in law enforcement, and often those in the “Westernized” upper classes (Abou El Fadl 2004). A testament to their ambivalent position, one hadīth proscribes that dogs cannot be bought or sold (*Sahih Muslim*: Book 34, Number 299) while others speak of Islamic endowments (*awqaf*) for providing food, water, and shelter to needy animals, like stray cats and dogs (Abou El Fadl 2005; Stilt n.d.: 13-14).

It is important to recognize that there is, and always will be a diversity of opinions; both secular and religious. The Islamic legal scholar Khaled Abou El Fadl, who has studied the support for anti-dog rhetoric within Islamic texts, has concluded that there is no rational basis for dogs to be considered unclean, rather only religious prescriptions (Abou El Fadl 2005). He has also said that anti-dog views had been justified by hadīths that were questionable. His non-literalist views have resulted in death threats (Foltz 2006b: 157). Abou El Fadl believes that provided that domestic dogs are prevented from eating filth and are assuredly clean, then ownership should be permitted (Abou El Fadl 2005).

Examples like Abou El Fadl show the existing diversity in attitudes towards dogs by Muslims, some of which is reflected in the scriptures. In a prominent hadīthic story, a man (or a prostitute in another version - *Sahih al-Bukhārī*: Book 54, Number 538) is walking through the desert when he begins to feel thirsty, whereupon he goes down a well to retrieve fresh water. Afterwards, he notices a nearby dog who was similarly suffering from thirst. Feeling empathy towards the dog, the man goes back down into the well and uses his shoe to draw water and bring it to the dog. Allah forgave the man for his sins through this good deed. In one telling of the story, The Prophet Muhammad’s followers asked “O Allah's Apostle! Is there a reward for us in serving (the) animals?” He replied,

“Yes, there is a reward for serving any animate (living being)” (*Sahih al-Bukhārī*: Book 40, Number 551).

### **3.6 The Dog in the Hadīths**

While there is very little written in the Qur’ān regarding dogs, and the most prominent occurrence is the positive treatment of Qitmir, the perception of dogs in the hadīths is much more ambivalent.

#### **3.6.1 Dogs in the House**

A major influence on the decision by Muslims to not keep dogs is the belief that angels will not enter a house when a dog is present. This belief originated from a well-known story in the hadīths in which the angel Gabriel failed to appear when anticipated by the Prophet Muhammad. When it was discovered that a puppy had entered the house, Gabriel informed Muhammad that angels will not enter a house that contains a dog or a picture. One account implies that the dog may have been killed (*Sahih Muslim*: Book 24, Number 5248), while another states that Muhammad simply turned it out (*Abu Dawud*: Book 32, Number 4146). Angels are said to not accompany travelers with dogs either (*Sahih Muslim*: Book 24, Number 5277).

#### **3.6.2 Ritual Purity and Uncleanliness**

Purification is an important consideration in Islam in regards to the study of dogs. Notably, Islamic law stresses both the importance of physical purity and ritualistic purity in the context of prayer. Frederick Denny (1994) writes the following about its importance:

The consideration of purification is preliminary to a consideration of Islam’s major devotional duties. Purification, then, both logically and temporally precedes worship. It is, in fact, a sort of entry into sacred time and space. As one washes, one is symbolically as well as physically separated from the mundane marks of normal living and working and made new for the conscious entry into the presence of God. [Denny 1994: 118]

There is a series of ritualized practices associated in achieving ritual purity; substances like blood, pus, feces, and urine are considered impure and must be washed from the individual, their

clothes and the prayer space before prayer (Stilt n.d.: 30). It is required that one make themselves pure before they engage in certain religious practices, like handling the Qur'ān, or performing prayer (*salāt*), amongst others (Denny 1994: 113). Saliva is also considered to be an impure substance, which is one of the reasons why dogs are seen as unclean (Menache 1998: 74). Avoidance of these impure substances is thus another important aspect in maintaining ritual purity.

The concept of “ritual purity” and the “clean/unclean” binary is one that has been commonly analysed in the anthropology of religion. Mary Douglas (1966) argues that this stems from a social and cultural trend to separate the “sacred” (holy/pure) from the “profane,” (impure) and the importance of protecting the integrity of the former (Douglas 1966: 7). She also stresses the necessity of maintaining “holiness” by keeping such categories distinct (Douglas 1966: 53) and that “dirt” represents disorder, and removing it is a means of positively organizing the environment (1966: 2).

In the case of pigs (comparable to dogs), Mary Douglas theorizes that taboos, like dietary restrictions, serve as a means to institute a separate, holy world (Douglas 1966:54; Lobban 1994: 58). Douglas notes that the pig is “out of place” relative to the required Old Testament category of cud-chewing, split hoof animals (Harris 1987: 71). Lobban notes that “...taboos exist to control access to something that is otherwise desirable, such as specific sexual partners or foods. This is often achieved by establishing symbolic, scientific parameters between the domains of sacred and profane as the idealists have noted” (Lobban 1994: 72). Those who are placeless, however, reside in a marginal state – something that is seen as “dangerous” in an ordered universe (Douglas 1966: 95-96).

Douglas writes that the “body” is an important metaphor for studying the “bounded system” (Douglas 1966: 115). The liminal orifices of the body, therefore, are crucial when considering the role of urine, feces, and blood, which are issued from the bounded body (Douglas 1966: 121). In the case of dogs, saliva – an impure substance – is relevant to the question of the purity or impurity of the dog. Douglas relates this to the Israelites, who placed great importance on maintaining the purity of the body and an aversion to bodily issues (Douglas 1966: 124).

A. Kevin Reinhart's *Impurity/No Danger* is offered as an Islam-oriented response to Mary Douglas' work. Reinhart notes that this framework has limits in an Islamic ritual context, writing: "if we ask the practical question, What's wrong with being impure? And I believe the Islamic answer is, Nothing at all" (1990: 21).

Reinhart maintains that being "impure" does not affect one's "ordinary" (i.e. secular) life, it merely precludes ritual activities, which require ablutions. Essentially, "[r]itual cleansing is only a cleansing for ritual" (1990: 21). Reinhart also argues against Douglas' assumption that a person or thing that is polluted experiences a transformation into a "dangerous state," (i.e. presently menstruating women cannot achieve ritual purity). While the impure substances are considered "dangerous," they can be washed off and do not promote a change in one's "nature" or "state" (Reinhart 1990: 22). Thusly, as Douglas notes similarly, there is a stress on ritual, rather than hygienic cleanliness (Reinhart 1990: 6).

Reinhart classifies things that "defile" into two categories: "things coming from within bodies" and a second category that he defines as "not logical" [within an Islamic ritual context], historical/sociohistorical, or "ethnic-origin." The former category, echoing Mary Douglas, refers to substances that have left their place in the bounded body (Reinhart 1990: 7-8).

The latter category contains things or substances like dogs, pigs, wine, and carrion, which Reinhart argues are influenced by pre-existing cultural ideas from neighbouring religious influences (i.e. Judaic, pre-Islamic Arabian, Zoroastrian/Iranian) at the time of Islam's development (1990: 8).

Reinhart further writes:

...there are things unclean (dogs, e.g.) that *serve as shibboleths to distinguish Muslims from non-Muslims*. No single logical principle can adequately account for all these defiling objects, but these lists of "defiling" and "not defiling," while logically incoherent, do *delimit the world into Islamically acceptable and non-Islamic*. [1990: 8-9, emphasis added]

This echoes Douglas' statements (1966: 48) about Israelite practices to separate themselves from "heathen" tribes, further illustrating a tendency for dogs serving as a constructed signifier of group difference.

Within Islam, there is a set of ritualistic actions that must be taken to maintain a state of ritual purity. Prior to performing prayer within an interior space, the area must be purified. This is something that applies to mosques, rooms within homes or offices, or a carpet space. The area is usually cleaned with a brush, sprinkled with water and the pronouncing of the *ta'awwudh* and the *basmalah* (Glassé 2001: 365).

Impurities that are external to the individual, known as *najāssa*, may come into contact with the skin or clothing, and must be removed before one is considered pure. This typically refers to the wet discharges of humans and animals, like urine, saliva, blood, and feces. In the case of dogs and pigs, which are considered in most Islamic schools of thought to be especially impure, the affected area must be washed seven times.

One removes minor impurities through ablutions (i.e. washing one's self), known as *wudū'* (Denny 1994: 116). This procedure is described in the Qur'ān (5:6), and entails a brief washing of the hands, face, and feet (Glassé 2001: 20). This is known as the "lesser ablution." Major impurities, however, are removed through a ritualized full bath known as *ghusl* (Denny 1994: 117; Glassé 2001: 20).

It should be noted, however, that while purity/impurity binaries exist in many cultures, unclean animals are not necessarily "hated." B.A. Masri - a scholar who has written numerous works on animal rights issues in Islam - wrote the following about pigs: "According to the Qur'an *majīd*, Allah has not created anything but for a purpose; and surely He has not created pigs for the purpose of being hated" (Masri 1989: 68 cited in Foltz 2006b: 131).

In the case of Islam, dogs may represent a marginal, polluting animal. Stray dogs in particular may be seen as beings that cross the human-animal threshold - proximal to human society, yet are

also wild. Stray dogs tend to live on the margins of human communities and have no clear role or status. Trained working dogs like salukis, however, may be more favoured for their more defined, positive role. The link between dogs and dirt may not only be by virtue of their association with saliva, but also with disease. The dog's mannerisms may also be a contributor to their polluted status. With a mindset focused on purity, the integrity of the physical body may have been threatened by the dog. Dogs engage in numerous activities that are "tabooed" in human culture, such as promiscuous sexual activity, eating carrion, or licking their private areas. Such actions may have reinforced the dog's "animalness" and cemented them as an "other" from humans. With respect to the dog's liminal nature, being perceived as "human-like" constructs them as a symbol or metaphor of human moral depravity (Serpell 1986: 162). In the Freudian sense (Webb 1998: 82), a dog could be thought of as an "id on four legs".

The tendency of the dog to eat carrion may have also contributed to their liminal status as between the living and the dead, as carrion itself is considered a polluting substance. While deemed separate from humans, such undesirable activities may model the dog as "the antithesis of correct human conduct" (Tambiah 1969: 455). Dogs, as well as pigs, are seen as polluting drinking sources (Wescoat 1998: 268), and there is also a taboo against eating them (Zimolag 2011: 248).

### **3.6.2.1 Canine Uncleanliness in Different Madhab/Schools**

Generally, an individual will adopt the beliefs of one particular "madhab" or Islamic school of law. Such schools often conflict over specific issues, such as the various rulings concerning the cleanliness of the dog.

The Hanafī School is the oldest extant example, having been founded by Abū Hanīfā (d.767). It is considered the most liberal and flexible of the Sunnī schools (Denny 1994: 202). In it, the dog is considered to be clean with the exception of their saliva. Shaykh Faraz Rabbani, a scholar of the Hanafī School, writes that simply touching a dog does not invalidate *wudū* unless one has made

contact with saliva. In this case, the affected area should be washed seven times, one of them with dust or earth (Rabbani 2010)

The Shāfi‘ī School was founded by Muhammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi‘ī, a very prominent Islamic legal scholar (Denny 1994: 203). Unlike Hanafī and Mālikī, this school considers the dog to be wholly impure, including their saliva, hair, and skin. Shaikh Ahmad Kutty writes that for those identifying with the Shāfi‘ī School who are living with a dog for reasons not of their own (i.e. living with someone who owns a dog) it is permissible to adopt the rulings of one of the more permissive schools like Hanafī or Mālikī in difficult situations, as the principles of fiqh allow this (Kutty n.d.). Again, upon contact with a dog, one should wash the affected area seven times, once with earth (al-Akiti n.d.)

The Hanbalī School was founded by Ahmad Hanbal (d. 855) who, like al-Shāfi‘ī, made great use of the hadīths (Denny 1994: 204). The Hanbalī school is similar to that of the Shāfi‘ī, in which dogs are considered to be wholly impure (Kutty n.d.). Sheikh Muhammed Salih Al-Munajjid of the Hanbalī School, writes that while dog hair and saliva do not nullify *wudū’*, they are very unclean and the affected area needs to be washed seven times, once with earth. (Al-Munajjid n.d.).

The Mālikī School was founded by Mālik ibn Anas (d. 795), who also compiled the *Al-Muwatta* hadīth collection (Denny 1994: 203). Unlike the other Islamic schools of law, the Mālikī School decrees dogs, including their saliva, as pure. SeekingIlm.com writes that the Mālikī perspective was likely based upon those verses in the Qur’ān (or the hadīths), such as sūra 5:4, which state that prey delivered by a hunting dog’s mouth is pure, or the hadīthic description of a dog urinating in a mosque as not being unclean (*Sahih al-Bukhārī*: Book 4, Number 174). However, keeping a dog as a pet (as opposed to a “working dog”) is generally frowned upon (al-Hasani 2002: 238), nor should one be kept in the house (al-Qayrawani n.d.: 44.05). SeekingIlm.com also notes that some Mālikī rulings state that one should wash a vessel that has been licked by a dog to remove filth, not because the dog is inherently unclean (SeekingIlm.com 2007).

Generally speaking, all schools of Islamic thought, with the exception of Mālikī, consider dogs to be ritually impure (*najis*) (Foltz 2006a: 130; Denny 1994: 115). Mālikī jurists state that “everything found in nature is presumed to be pure unless proven otherwise” (Abou El Fadl 2004). Those in the Hanafī school note that only parts of the body and clothing that touch dog saliva need to be washed before prayer, as only the dog’s saliva is considered impure (Stilt n.d.: 31). Clearly, there is not a uniform view of dogs as an unclean animal.

There are specific hadīths that describe the unclean nature of the dog, particularly its saliva. For instance, there is a proscription noting that: “If a dog drinks from the utensil of anyone of you it is essential to wash it seven times.” (*Sahih al-Bukhārī*: Book 4, Number 173). Another hadīth states to rub it with earth on the eighth time (*Sahih Muslim*: Book 2, Number 551). However, this mandate is sometimes interpreted by others as merely comprising hygienic advice (Abou El Fadl 2004; Stilt n.d.: 29).

Despite the perceived uncleanliness of dog saliva, the Qur’ān notes that it is acceptable to eat game which has been in the mouth of a hunting dog, provided Allah’s name is invoked, making it permissible as a form of ritual slaughter. The Mālikī School, in particular, emphasizes this point (SeekingIlm.com 2007).

They ask you, [O Muhammad], what has been made lawful for them. Say, "Lawful for you are [all] good foods and [*game caught by*] *what you have trained of hunting animals* which you train as Allah has taught you. *So eat of what they catch for you*, and mention the name of Allah upon it, and fear Allah." Indeed, Allah is swift in account. [Q 5:4, emphasis added]

This is echoed in the hadīths (*Sahih al-Bukhārī*: Book 67, Number 384). Furthermore, some hadīths note that dogs would frequently enter mosques and occasionally urinate in them. And yet, the water, normally used to purify the contaminant, would not be used in this situation. “And narrated Hamza bin 'Abdullah: My father said “During the lifetime of Allah's Apostle, the dogs used to urinate, and pass through the mosques (come and go), nevertheless they never used to sprinkle water on it (urine of the dog.)” (*Sahih al-Bukhārī*: Book 4, Number 174). However, a dog urinating in a

mosque may be seen as indicative of the overall decline of a city (*Muwatta Malik* Book 45, Number 45.2.8).

### **3.6.3 Blocking Prayers**

It is thought that if a stray donkey, a woman, or a dog passes by while a man is praying, his prayers will be blocked. Another version adds pigs, Jews, and Magians (sorcerers) (*Abu Dawud*, Book 2, Number 704).

### **3.6.4 Working Dogs – Hunting, Herding, and Guarding**

The ownership of dogs was generally permitted so long as the dogs were serving human needs, such as hunting, herding and guarding (Abou El Fadl 2004). This ruling is sometimes interpreted as being a proscription against owning a dog for frivolous reasons, like bragging rights (Abou El Fadl 2005; Stilt n.d.: 4, 33). Indeed, some hadīths suggest that all dogs, except for those used for hunting, herding and guarding, should be put to death (i.e. *Sahih Muslim*: Book 10, Number 3812).

### **3.6.5 The Loss of Qirāt**

While there is considerable scholarly debate over the precise meaning, a “Qirāt” is generally interpreted as a reward given by Allah for one’s good deeds. Keeping a dog is thought to compromise these rewards.

Narrated Abu Huraira: “Allah's Apostle said, “Whoever keeps a dog, *one Qirāt* of the reward of his good deeds is deducted daily, unless the dog is used for guarding a farm or cattle.” Abu Huraira (in another narration) said from the Prophet, "unless it is used for guarding sheep or farms, or for hunting." Narrated Abu Hazim from Abu Huraira: The Prophet said, "A dog for guarding cattle or for hunting.” [*Sahih al-Bukhārī*: Book 39, Number 515, emphasis added]

Another account claims the loss of two Qirāts (*Sahih Muslim*: Book 10, Number 3815).

### **3.6.6 Killing Dogs**

It is asserted among some Islamic jurists that all dogs should be killed, with the exception of working ones (Foltz 2006a: 130). For instance, one hadīth purports that “the Messenger of God ordered all dogs (other than sheepdogs or hunting dogs) to be killed”. (*Muwatta Malik*, Book 54,

Number 54.5.13). Another version does not specify what kind of dogs: “Ibn 'Umar (Allah be pleased with them) reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) giving command for killing dogs.”(*Sahih Muslim*: Book 10, Number 3809). This is similarly noted in Book 10, Number 3810, and Number 3811. One hadīth narrated by Abu Dawud and al-Tirmidhi quoted the Prophet Muhammad as saying: “If dogs were not a community (ummah) among communities, I would have ordered that they be killed” (cited in Al-Qardawi 1997: 117).

In contrast, some scholars assert that killing dogs is testament to destroying creation, which is presumably prohibited. As a result, some have interpreted these proclamations as fabricated (Abou El Fadl 2004/2005). Such proscriptions appear to conflict with the prohibitions on animal cruelty. Examples include rebuking the woman who tortured a cat (*Sahih Muslim*: Book 4, Number 1975; Book 26, Number 5570), the attempted burning of an ant colony (Ba Kader et al.1983: 17; Kamali 2010: 22) and the use of birds for target practice (*Sahih al-Bukhārī*: Book 67, Number 422-423).

One interpretation of these proclamations pertains to public health and safety. The Prophet Muhammad permitted the killing of five kinds of animals: “the crow, the kite, the mouse, the scorpion and *the rabid dog*” (*Sahih al-Bukhārī*: Book 29, Number 54, emphasis added).

A similar ruling is noted in *Abu Dawud*: “The Prophet (pbuh) was asked which of the creatures a pilgrim in sacred state could kill. He replied: The snake, the scorpion, the rat; he should drive away the pied crow, but should not kill it; *the biting dog*, the kite, *and any wild animal which attacks (man)*” (*Abu Dawud*: 4: 1844, emphasis added). These two instances emphasize the rabid nature of the dog as the justification for killing it.

This is emphasized in Imam Nawawi’s commentary on *Sahih Muslim*, which is sometimes used to clarify these hadīths about killing dogs. Imam Nawawi notes that the hadīth uses the phrase “al-kalb al-aqur” meaning “predatory dog,” and, therefore, only refers to vicious dogs; suggesting that dogs in general should not be killed without reason (Desai 2000; Abou El Fadl 2005). The presence

of dangerous strays and the transmission of rabies may have served as justification for killing dogs, as several hadīths appear to support this (Viré 2013).

### 3.6.7 Black Dogs

Black dogs carry a special significance in many cultures around the world, and are particularly noted in British Isles folklore (Brown 1958). PJ Heather (1948) describes the numerous symbolisms associated with black; the colour of night, fear, closed eyes, injury and death. Later on, primordial symbolism would begin to associate black with evil, and Hell (cited in Huet 2005: 1). As a result, black dogs became associated with death and the afterlife. Examples include the Hindu god Shiva, who possesses both creative and destructive powers, is often represented as a black dog. The Egyptian god of the mummified dead, Anubis, was depicted with the head of a black jackal. The Greek goddess/sorceress Hecate was also commonly associated with dogs (Huet 2005: 1-2; Trubshaw 1996/2008b). Such dogs were religiously powerful in some societies, carrying both the roles of faithful servant and religious omen (Huet 2005: 3).

Some hadīths seem to support the killing of black dogs, because, as in neighbouring religious traditions, black dogs were linked with the Devil (Menache 1997: 34; Omidasalar & Omidasalar 1995).

Abu Zubair heard Jabir b. 'Abdullah (Allah be pleased with him) saying: Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) ordered us to kill dogs, and we carried out this order so much so that we also kill the dog coming with a woman from the desert. Then Allah's Apostle (may peace be upon him) forbade their killing. He (the Holy Prophet further) said: It is your duty the jet-black (dog) having two spots (on the eyes), for it is a devil. [*Sahih Muslim*: Book 10, Number 3813]

In other words, the Prophet Muhammad was originally understood to want all dogs killed; a stance that was later restricted to only black strays, particularly those with light patches, thought to be a mark of the Devil (Viré 2013). This verse, combined with Imam Nawawi's aforementioned commentary on *Sahih Muslim*, appears to suggest that only black dogs are ever to be killed. However, some scholars describe these references to black dogs as apocryphal (Abou El Fadl 2004, 2005).

### 3.7 Dogs in Shī'ism

In Shī'ism, dogs are among the ten things considered *najis*; a list that includes urine, feces, semen, dead bodies, blood, pigs, Kafir (unbelievers), alcoholic drinks, and the sweat of an animal that frequently consumes *najis* substances (Seestani 1994: 13). Dogs as a whole are considered *najis*, including their “hair, bones, paws and nails, and every liquid substance of their body” (Seestani 1994: 15). According to Ali al Husaini Sistani, a very prominent Shī'a authority in Iraq, if a dog licks a vessel or utensil, it should be scrubbed with earth or dust and washed three times (Seestani 1994: 21).

However, in accordance with surā 5:4 of the Qur'ān, the prey caught by a hunting dog is considered *halāl* provided certain conditions are met. The hunter needs to be a Muslim to invoke Allah's name and to have specifically directed the dog. The prey should be killed by the dog's teeth, as opposed to suffocation, and if the prey should be left alive by the dog, it may be ritually slaughtered by the hunter (Seestani 1994: 348).

In Shī'ism, the uncleanness of the dog is largely associated with wetness. The Shī'a hadīth, Tahara, notes the following:

Muhammad b. al-Hasan (Shaykh Tusi) by his isnad from al-Husayn b. Sa'id from Hammad from Hariz from al-Fadl Abi 'l-'Abbas. He said: Abu `Abdillah (as) said: When your clothing comes in contact with the dog with wetness, then wash it. And if it comes in contact with it dryly, then pour water upon it (al-hadīth). [Tahara 571 from <http://www.tashayyu.org>]

This hadīth also states that a vessel that a dog has drunk from is unclean, and that humans may not use the remaining water for drinking or purifying themselves (*Tahara* 573-577). Verses 4025 through 4035 provide similar rulings, as well as clarifying that even Saluki dogs are impure (*Tahara* 4033).

A hadīth called “The Book of Hajj” (Chapter 43) has various rulings on the keeping of dogs. Like the Sunnī hadīths, it states that one should not own a dog unless it is for the purpose of hunting, herding, or guarding (*Hajj* 43: 15458 from <http://www.tashayyu.org>). Muhammad b. Ya`qub concludes that: “It is disliked for the dog to be in the home of the Muslim man” (*Hajj* 43: 15457). If

one is to keep a dog, it needs to be kept separate from the rest of the house. As one ruling puts it: “Do not keep a hunting dog in the home unless there is a door between you and it” (*Hajj* 43: 15459). This is echoed in *Hajj* Chapter 43 15460 and 15462, suggesting that it is more permissible for people living in the country to own a dog (*Hajj* 43: 15463). There are also punishments for the dog owner, as with the Sunnī hadīths, in the form of lost Qirāt each day (*Hajj* 43: 15461). Elsewhere we are also reminded that non-working dogs cannot be bought, sold or traded; as with the Sunnī hadīths (Seestani 1994: 267).

The Prophet Muhammad’s cousin ‘Alī, a key figure in Shī’ism, is believed to have offered a positive statement regarding dogs; one that is also prominent in Sufī writings:

Happy is the one who leads the life of a dog! For the dog has ten characteristics which every believer should possess. First, the dog has no status among creatures; second, the dog is a pauper having no worldly goods; third, the entire earth is his resting place; fourth, the dog goes hungry most of the time; fifth, the dog will not leave his master’s door even after having received a hundred lashes; sixth, he protects his master and his friend, and when someone approaches he will attack the foe and let the friend pass; seventh, he guards his master by night, never sleeping; eighth, he performs most of his duties silently; ninth, he is content with whatever his master gives him; and tenth, when he dies, he leaves no inheritance. [Nurbakhsh 1989: xi]

In the *Nahjul Balagha* (The Peak of Eloquence); a famous collection of letters and sermons attributed to Imam Alī, he also reported that The Prophet Muhammad had said that even vicious dogs should not be tortured (Talib, Ali ibn Abi - Nahjul Balagha Letter 47).

### **3.8 Dogs in Sufism**

The Sufi tradition generally recommends a great deal of compassion to animals (Bennison 2003: 106; Tlili 2009: 107). Richard Foltz writes that: “Positive references to dogs in Islamic texts tend to focus on certain qualities that are desirable, but often lacking in humans, such as fidelity, gratitude, dutifulness, and modesty of needs” (Foltz 2006a: 133).

Dr. Javad Nurbakhsh proposes a Sufi-oriented perspective of this issue. “The idle individual is like a stray dog, worthless and unproductive, while the useful individual, like the dog that is beneficial to society, is valuable to that society and worthy of respect” (Nurbakhsh 1989: xii).

The Persian poet Sa'di shares this view. "The trained hunting dog is respected by people, not the stray dog of the city streets: The stray dog of the city is always subjected to stoning and torment because it is not out doing service by chasing game for the hunt" (Sa'di cited in Nurbakhsh 1989: 71). An advocacy of perceiving dogs in the same manner as humans; those who do not actively contribute to society are relegated to the margins of society – a view that may explain why hunting dogs like Salukis are so highly valued, while other breeds (i.e. strays) are not.

Despite the general aversion to dogs in the Middle East and in Islam specifically, Nurbakhsh believes that Sufism tends to hold dogs in a much higher regard. Dogs are seen as possessing many virtuous qualities that humans purportedly lack. Indeed, even the wretchedness of the dog is highly esteemed by Sufis (Nurbakhsh 1989: 4). Nurbakhsh's book "Dogs from a Sufi Point of View" explores this topic in depth. A prominent theme throughout the book is the giving of food and water to starving dogs. In many stories, Sufis have the ability to speak with dogs; in keeping with the belief of some authorities that dogs have the same origins as humans (Nurbakhsh 1989: 24). In Sufism, the dog is considered a model of fidelity (Nurbakhsh 1989: 56).

A story in *Hilyat al-awliya* ("The Ornament of the Saints;" a major text that laid the foundations for Sufism) by Abū Nu'yām relates how a baby boy, whose family had been lost to a plague in Isfahān, was cared for by a dog who nursed him along with her own puppies (Abū Nu'yām 10:148 cited in Tlili 2009: 112-113). A similar story is recounted by Ibn al-Marzubān (1978: 22) and al-Jāhiz (Pellat 1969: 143).

Despite a generally positive perception, dogs are often bestowed with negative qualities in Sufi literature as well, like gluttony (Nurbakhsh 1989: 87). Nurbakhsh explains that the dog is likened to the "commanding soul" (*nafs-e ammāra*), likely to be in keeping with the Qur'ānic verse:

And if We had willed, we could have elevated him thereby, but he adhered [instead] to the earth and followed his own desire. So his example is like that of the dog: if you chase him, he pants, or if you leave him, he [still] pants. [Q 7:176]

The association of a stray dog with the commanding soul is offered as an explanation of its savage and trouble-making qualities (Nurbakhsh 1989: 75-76). This is seen in the passage: “You have fallen low because of this miserable dog of a nafs [soul], you have become drowned in pollution...” (cf Nurbakhsh 1989: 77).

Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī, a thirteenth century Persian Sufi Poet, similarly compared the *nafs* to an out of control guard dog in his poem “The Dog in the Doorway,” one that is both restricting and dangerous.

Or you've seen a nomad's dog  
lying at the tent entrance, with his head  
on the threshold and his eyes closed.  
Children pull his tail and touch his face,  
but he doesn't move. He loves the children's  
attention and stays humble within it.  
But if a stranger walks by, he'll spring up  
ferociously. Now, what if that dog's owner  
were not able to control it? [Barks 1995: 73-74].

### **3.9 Rabies and Other Zoonoses in History**

Stray dogs are problematic in poorer regions, both as a risk of mauling, and as vectors of disease. Times of economic disparity, inextricably linked to the problem of strays (Diehn 2011), may better explain the aversion to dogs in the Arab world rather than purely religious concerns. Periods when large groups of pariah dogs were rampant would have certainly raised both health and security concerns (Menache 1997: 35). In the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, for instance, the Syrian ruler Al-Nasir Mohammed ordered all the dogs in Damascus to be killed. Menache notes that this is a testament to how lowly the dog was considered in the Arab world (Menache 1997: 35).

Menache notes that in contrast to those in Medieval Christendom, Islamic scholars appeared to be well aware of the danger of rabies (Menache 1997: 36). Ibn Qutayba, a ninth century Persian scholar observed that: “if a rabid dog bites a human being, it happens that it changes him into a 'barker' like itself, renders him pregnant, and impregnates him with little whelps that you see as coagulated blood in the shape of dogs” (*Uyun al-akhbar*: 55 cited in Menache 1997: 36). However,

al-Jāhiz attempted to dispel similar beliefs in *Kitāb al-Hayawān* (Pellat 1969: 139-140) (see Appendix C).

Al-Qazwini listed rabid dogs among the “five scoundrels” who should be killed. Anyone bitten by a rabid dog was only considered safe only after surviving 40 days without symptoms (al-Qazwini 1928: 34 cited in Menache 1997: 36).

The generally mangy strays of the Muslim world are both spurned and feared. Richard Foltz notes that even Muslims who own dogs, such as farmers, will rarely touch them (Foltz 2006a: 131). It is difficult, however, to label the prevalence of disease as the principal factor influencing human relations to dogs. This is reminiscent of 19<sup>th</sup> century scholars who linked restrictions against pork consumption among Jews and Muslims to the risk of trichinosis in undercooked pork – an argument that has largely fallen out of favour (Harris 1987: 69). However, there are a few non-anthropological articles within veterinary journals that appear to espouse the link between the prevalence of disease and attitudes towards dogs.

C. W. Schwabe (1979) writes that an aversion to dogs may be beneficial in regions in which hydatid disease – a condition that affects both humans and animals – is rampant. Christian Lebanese children over the age of ten were found to have been bitten by dogs more frequently than Muslim children of the same age (Schwabe 1979: 113-114). Knobel et al. (2008b: 285) notes that among Tanzanian dog owners, there is a correlation between one’s personal opinion of dogs and willingness to vaccinate them against rabies.

### **3.10 Dogs in Muslim Countries – Modern Times**

The role and status of dogs in Middle Eastern countries tends to vary considerably compared to in Western countries. While omnipresent promotion of neutering, spaying, and vaccinations in Western countries has largely reduced the social stigma of rabid, feral dogs, this has not yet manifested in many Middle Eastern countries. High rates of rabies among stray dog populations have socially constructed them as a menace and threat to public health and safety.

Stray dogs have been culled in large numbers by governments in order to reduce such health risks, as has happened recently in Baghdad (Juhi 2010), and Lebanon (Aburawa 2011). An environmentally conscious website called *The Green Prophet* has, instead, argued for the spaying and neutering of strays (Aburawa 2011).

The often poor treatment of dogs in Muslim-dominant countries is a common source of contention in the West. Raymond Ibrahim, the creator of the website “Islam Translated,” commenting on a well-publicized image of stray dogs suffering the effects of tear gas in Egypt, said that: “there is no great surprise that the dogs have been left like vermin on the streets: deemed najis, or unclean, dogs are outcasts in Muslim societies” (Ibrahim 2012).

Although dog ownership in Iran is controversial, particularly taking them out in public, it is becoming quite popular in the major cities (Crethi Plethi 2011). Ayatollah Nasser Makarem Shirazi, a senior cleric describes the keeping of pet dogs as a “blind imitation of the West,” and also criticizes the esteemed role of dogs in Western culture, claiming that many men love their dog more than their wives and children (Crethi Plethi 2011). Saudi Arabia is similarly cracking down on pets, as it is also seen as a sign of Western influence by clerics there (Associated Press 2006). This is an example of the ways in which dogs may be marked as a signifier of group difference.

There is much debate over what social or economic conditions and factors promote a “pet culture” within a society. In Chapter 2, several authors have offered viewpoints on how this trend occurred in the “West”. Economic factors, like an increasingly industrialized and affluent society, the rising middle class, increased mobility (i.e. severing human social ties) (Nast 2006: 304) and increased consumerism (Grier 2006: 8) are often stressed. James Serpell, instead, emphasizes the shift away from an anthropocentric universe model, and a greater public understanding of the interconnectedness of humans and nature (i.e. through Darwinian evolution) (Serpell 1986: 124-133). As well, declining rates of disease may foster closer human-dog contact (Grier 2006: 85; Zimolag

2011: 242). As such, it can be difficult to ascertain the influences associated with the appeal of pet-keeping on a social or economic level.

The case of stray dogs in Istanbul is worthy of note. As a result of the increasing push towards modernization and gentrification in Turkey, government officials have attempted to remove stray dogs and send them to new “habitat parks” outside of the cities where they will be cared for and available for adoption. Many are skeptical about the government’s proposed plan, questioning whether it is a guise for rounding up the dogs for culling. Some residents feel that the dogs are a part of the city – as they are locally well-known and are often cared for by average people. Others, however, cite stray dogs as indicative of economic disparity and “backwardness;” citing public safety and tourism concerns (Christie-Miller 2012).

These attitudes are echoed in an article by Lorena F. Aspe entitled *Nobody in Turkey wants a dog, but everybody feeds them*. While the dogs are commonly fed, many argue against the ownership of a dog, which is seen as something that would impinge upon a dog’s freedom. An animal rights group in Turkey known as SHKD (Sahipsiz Hayvanlari Koruma Dernegi) practices a system of “neuter – vaccinate – release” as an alternative to municipal shelters which simply incarcerate dogs (Aspe 2011).

The use of news articles and other media to examine attitudes towards dogs is an important research tool, as it reveals the diverse perceptions among Muslims. This will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

### **3.11 Dogs in Zoroastrianism**

Before the spread of Islam, Zoroastrian was the dominant religion in Iran. At that time, dogs held a high, prominent place within society. Dogs were considered to be the cleanest of animals (Boyce 1977: 109) which underplayed their function as intermediaries between the living and the dead. They were, in fact, an integral part of funerary rites (1977: 139) as well as numerous other religious practices (Boyce 1995).

Mary Boyce (1977) describes the Iranian city of Sharifabad, which has both Muslim and Zoroastrian communities, and how dogs had been the cause of a great deal of inter-group tension. The differential ways in which the local dogs are treated is used as an indicator of religious identity. Boyce believes that Muslim hostility towards dogs has “been deliberately fostered in the first place in Iran, as a point of opposition to the old faith there...Moslems found a double satisfaction in tormenting dogs, since they were thereby both afflicting an unclean creature and causing distress to the infidel who cherished him” (Boyce 1977: 141). Boyce similarly writes:

Probably maltreating a dog (like discarding the *kusti*, or spitting in a fire) was a distinctive outward sign of true conversion; and the amount of suffering since inflicted on these animals by Muslims down the centuries is a sad instance of the cruelty that religious rivalry can bring about. [Boyce 1979: 158]

This would appear to be an example of a *signifier of group difference*, in which dogs are positioned dissimilarly within the two communities, creating tension and allowing for identification based on the nature of the human-dog interface.

In modern Iran, for instance, there has been an increasing trend by young Iranians to express their “middle-class resistance” (Golsorkhi 2010) by keeping dogs as house pets, echoing earlier trends in Zoroastrian society. This effective demonstration of the malleability and diversity of a culture is likely the product of both reclamation of older Zoroastrian ideals and the spread of Western pet culture. Golsorkhi (2010) also links this to the trend of the overall rise of the middle class, one of the contributing factors to the rise of pet culture in the West (i.e. Serpell 1986: 135).

### **3.12 Other Studies on Muslims and Dogs**

Ankita Sejra et al. (2009) conducted a study in the United States on the human relationships with companion animals among different ethnic backgrounds. The survey found that people of Indian descent are less likely to own dogs; many citing a fear of dogs as a major factor. The authors suggest that this may stem from the fact that India has a high population of unvaccinated street dogs, which are associated with disease and ferocity (Sejra et al. 2009: 3). Interestingly, many of the Muslims

who participated in the study were unaware of the proscription of dogs as unclean, and simply followed the example set by their parents Sejra et al. (2009: 3-4).

Al-Fayez et al. (2003) measured the attitudes of Kuwaiti adolescents and their parents towards companion animals using the Pet Attitude Scale (developed by Templer et al. in 1981) and compared them to the attitudes of American families. The mean of the scale was about a standard deviation lower for Kuwaiti families (Al-Fayez et al. 2003: 22). Further, in keeping with the more dominant role of the father in Arab culture, the Kuwaiti youth were more likely to share the opinions of their father than their mother – the converse of the American results (Al-Fayez et al. 2003: 25-26). The authors recommend repeating the study in more Middle Eastern countries, as there is a great diversity in Western or Muslim influence in different regions (Al-Fayez et al. 2003: 26). However, this study does not address dogs specifically.

Dennis C. Turner conducted a cross-cultural study in 2010 comparing attitudes towards animals in twelve countries. While the study has not been fully released at this time, some of the results have been published in the 2013 edition of *Dogs, Zoonoses, and Public Health*, edited by Calum N.L Macpherson, François-Xavier Meslin and Alexander I. Wandeler. In response to the statement “Keeping animals as pets brings many benefits to the person,” women, pet-owners, and those connected to animal-friendly institutions responded the most positively. Broken down according to religion, Jews responded the most favourably out of all religious groups, with Muslims responses falling in-between those of Jews and Christians (Turner, Waiblinger & Meslin 2013: 15). However, to another statement on the survey; “Dogs are very likeable animals,” Muslims were among the least likely to answer favourably, second only to Hindus. This sentiment was echoed in Muslim responses to the statement “Dogs make ideal pets” (Turner, Waiblinger & Meslin 2013: 15-16).

Knobel et al (2008a) observed that among Tanzanian households, Muslims are less likely to have dogs than Christians; a religious distinction that was not repeated when considering those households that owned livestock.

A study conducted by Virginia Morrow examines the role that pets play in the lives of British School children of various ages. The study included a group of 52 Muslim students of Pakistani origin to compare with the “majority” culture (Morrow 1998: 219). The study was introduced to the children in the context of describing one’s work and responsibilities, and what they do when they are not at school. Those who finished early were asked to either draw a picture of their family, or make a list of what they feel children’s rights should be. Children would typically include mention of their pets in these contexts. The role of the pet appears to shift depending on the age group (Morrow 1998: 219-220). Younger children generally perceived their pets as being members of the family, and spoke of their unconditional love and uncritical support; a source of comfort and entertainment (Morrow 1998: 224). These themes are mirrored in studies of older children, although pets are more likely to be classified as a responsibility (Morrow 1998: 224). Morrow suggests that one of the key findings in the study was that none of the Pakistani children mentioned their pets. Morrow writes that “we need to understand childhood as a socially-constructed phenomenon and the appropriate artifacts of childhood (in this case, pets) as culturally specific” (1998: 224).

### **3.13 Muslims and Dogs in the Media – News Articles, Websites, and Blogs**

Leading into Chapter 4 which will cover my investigation of Muslim attitudes towards dogs through social media, this segment will detail Muslim attitudes using a variety sources. These include news articles dealing with the issues of Muslims and dogs, along with various websites and blogs.

As will be demonstrated in Chapter 4, the ways in which dogs are perceived in Islam are diverse and heterogeneous. These opinions, as well as public and religious debates about the role and status of dogs are well expressed through Muslim-oriented websites, apologist journals, blogs, and news articles.

Additionally, such articles also present the tendency for dogs to be demarcated as signifiers of group difference between Muslims and “Westerners,” or “dog lovers” and “non-dog lovers.” Although a great many of these examples are non-Canadian, it does demonstrate these issues in a

larger “Western-Muslim” context. Such news stories also provide context on how this division is reported in the media.

### **3.13.1 Positive Perceptions of Dogs**

Many Muslim websites espouse the positive qualities of dogs (i.e. Submission.org n.d.b). This includes the *Good Muslims Love Dogs!* Facebook page and the *MuslimsWithDogs* Tumblr (<http://muslimswithdogs.tumblr.com/>) site that were discussed in the Chapter 1.

As claims about the uncleanness of dogs are exclusive to the hadīths, some Muslims raise the possibility of these sources as fabrications. The website *submission.org* stresses that nothing ill of dogs is said in the Qur’ān, and assert that any hadīths that contradict the Qur’ān are spurious. In particular, this website emphasizes those narrated by Abu Hurairah, who was purported to favour cats and despise dogs and women; a bias demonstrated in many of his hadīths (Submission.org n.d.b). Some argue that an aversion to dogs is more cultural than religious, and occurred during a time of rampant disease (i.e. rabies) and a lack of proper medicine (Islamic Interactive n.d.). As such, the continued avoidance of dogs is no longer something that needs to be practiced.

### **3.13.2 The Issue of Dog Ownership**

While the keeping of dogs is generally looked down upon, many Muslim websites emphasize that dogs may be kept for necessity, typically for guarding property. AbuUbaida, the administrator for MuslimConverts.com, for instance, offers a quote from Al-Nawawi’s famous commentary on the *Sahih Muslim* hadīth (*Sharh Sahih Muslim*). Al-Nawawi writes the following:

The correct view is that it is permissible to keep a dog to guard the house, because if it is permissible to keep a dog in order to benefit from it, as in the case of hunting, it is more appropriate that one be allowed to keep a dog in order to ward off harm and protect oneself. [Al-Nawawi cited by AbuUbaida 2009].

AbuUbaida (2009) goes on to say that “Muslims do not hate dogs but we just do not keep them inside our homes nor as pets” and that “A dog has its value but its value is not above humans. We Muslims value humans above animals.” With this, AbuUbaida (2009) criticizes the tendency in

Western cultures to elevate the status of the dog to above that of the human; that favouring the care of pets redirects resources from humans.

Other scholars criticize the esteemed position occupied by dogs in many societies. Sheikh Muhammed Salih Al-Munajjid, a lecturer in Saudi Arabia writes: “We must ensure that Muslims continue to be averse to dogs, even in the midst of what the kuffaar [non-believers/non-Muslims] are used to do and what some Muslims have adopted of their habits” (Al-Munajjid n.d.b). Conversely, some scholarly opinion characterizes keeping dogs as permissible within Islam, such as Khaled Abou El-Fadl.

### **3.13.3 Difficulty with Dog Interaction**

Mohammad Akhtar, the President of the Muslim Council of America, writes about the potential problems that Muslim immigrants to the United States may face when confronted with the omnipresence of dogs. He cites an Urdu expression: “if you have a sweet heart that you love very much then you have to endear even her dog,” noting that Muslims may need to look past their reservations about dogs in order to effectively integrate (Akhtar 2013). He also speculates whether certain Islamic teachings need to be reinterpreted in new American cultural contexts (Akhtar 2013).

Muslim help sites often address concerns from Muslims who are in living with a dog not by their own choice (i.e. a dog that belongs to a non-Muslim family member (Desai 2002). These tend to deal with the problem of cleanliness and prayer, with the advice to set aside a particular room or set of clothing that the dog does not come into contact with.

Some Muslim veterinarians have voiced their opposition to unnecessary surgeries, which they liken to mutilating creation. Some veterinarians have expressed the concern that spaying and neutering animals should be considered a form of invasive surgery (Al-Munajjid n.d.a), while others advocate its importance in reducing animal suffering from overpopulation (Banderker n.d.).

### **3.13.4 Personal Stories**

Many news articles focus on the personal stories of Muslims who are living in “canine-centric” Western countries. These tend to include their own experiences and negotiations in the case of interactions with dogs and their religious beliefs.

A contributor to the News site DearbornPatch is “Mary,” a third generation Lebanese-American. In her article *Follow Me I’m The Pied Piper: Why some Arab Americans are fearful of dogs?* she writes of her experiences growing up in a situation where her family stressed the unclean nature of dogs. She ended up getting dogs in adulthood, and describes her experiences with family and community (Mary 2012).

An article in *The Guardian* entitled: *Dogs: face to face with my worst enemy* was a piece written by Sarfraz Manzoor, wherein he remarks upon his personal experiences with dogs. Manzoor writes that “in Britain, to be a dog-hater is to admit to an unforgivable perversion. There is no socially acceptable way, I have learned, to recoil in horror when someone tries to plonk their pooch on to my lap” (Manzoor 2010). His point being that there is always an expectation in “canine-centric” countries, like Britain, for one to have a favourable opinion of dogs. He attributes much of his fear of dogs to a childhood association with skinheads, who would unleash their dogs on any dark-skinned individual. The bulk of the article goes on to discuss his interaction with an English bulldog named Cookie, with whom he engages with to overcome a fear of dogs (Manzoor 2010). Towards the end of the article, he writes: “I feel I understand dogs better and now realise that my antipathy towards them was rooted mostly in unfamiliarity, which led to fear. In believing the media scare-stories about dangerous dogs and stereotyping all dogs as potential killers, I had done to dogs what the rabid rightwing press does to Muslims” (Manzoor 2010).

### **3.13.5 Conflict between Muslims and Dogs in the News**

A major trend in Muslim-dog conflicts in canine-centric countries is the issue of Muslim bus or taxi drivers refusing the entry of a dog, even when it is a service animal (Dolan 2010); conflicting

with legal disability acts. Daniel Pipes, the founder of a group called “Middle East Forum” has compiled an extensive list of all reported cases of Muslim taxi drivers refusing entry to guide dogs (Pipes 2005).

Mary Otten, a blind American Muslim has written an article entitled *Islam and The Rights of The Disabled*, which has been published both in *The Minaret* (July 1999) and in the *Canadian Blind Monitor* (Spring 2000). Otten remarks on several instances of conflict between those with guide dogs and Muslim taxi drivers, and the need for Muslims to be more accommodating to such individuals. Otten writes:

I understand that many of our brothers come from cultures which view dogs very differently from the way I do. And I am well aware that the brothers who refuse to do business with the disabled service dog users truly believe that such refusal is religiously grounded. But cultural attitudes and prejudices should never be presented as religious dogma. [Otten 2000]

In the United Kingdom, the Shariah Council decreed that Muslims should be permitted to use service dogs. As well, Muslim business owners and taxi drivers should be accommodating to the needs of the blind (ManchesterEveningNews 2007).

### **3.13.5.1 Muslims with Guide Dogs**

A guide dog can provide a blind individual with a sense of independence and protection. However, the attitude of Muslims towards the use of guide dogs is ambivalent. On the one hand, like dogs who hunt and herd, guide dogs are animals that provide a function and are therefore permissible to keep. Conversely, the nature of a guide dog requires their constant proximity as they accompany the blind individual in their house and within the community.

An article in *The Age* about two Australian blind Muslim women follows their relationships with their guide dogs, family, and community. However, both women apparently restrict the movements of the guide dog within the home; one evidently keeps the dog in an enclosure outside (Szego 2011).

An article in the Washington Post refers to a blind Muslim in Washington D.C. named Mazen Basrawi, who speaks of the challenges of balancing his guide dog with the Muslim community. He

states that he is often denied entry into Muslim owned businesses, but is generally welcomed within mosques (Sacirbey 2012).

A BBC article writes of an 18 year old blind Muslim who was having concerns about his guide dog being permitted within mosques. A ruling given by the *Muslim Law Shari'ah Council UK* decreed that mosques should be accommodating of guide dogs, although they are restricted from prayer rooms (BBC 2008).

### **3.13.6 All-American Muslim and Wrigley**

The fifth episode of the recent TLC reality show *All-American Muslim*, “Muslims Moving On” (broadcast December 11, 2011) featured the newlywed couple Shadia, an Arab-American, and Jeff, an Irish-American who has converted to Islam. Jeff’s fifteen year old dog Wrigley, whom he owned before the marriage, becomes a source of contention when they decided to move. Shadia has reservations about allowing Wrigley into the new house. She cited her asthma as a major concern, and also that her father was unwilling to pray in a house that had a dog. Shadia’s mother, however, voiced her concerns about rehoming Wrigley, saying “That’s [Jeff’s] baby.” It was eventually decided, however, that they would find Wrigley a new home. Shadia later says that her aversion to Wrigley may be based on her upbringing, citing a lack of experience with dogs. The episode ended with Wrigley being left at a farm that cares for old dogs.

The issue with Wrigley has prompted numerous ideological and political reactions, such as from the right-winged blog BareNakedIslam (2011) in which there have been efforts to save her. In response to the episode, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) wrote to TLC urging them to broadcast a PETA Public Service Announcement starring Muslim-Americans, speaking of how Islam promotes compassion for animals (PETA 2011).

In the next episode (broadcast December 18, 2011), Shadia decided to bring Wrigley back home after seeing how upset the situation had made Jeff. It was decided that Wrigley would only be

permitted in certain areas of the house to avoid aggravating Shadia's asthma. The controversy surrounding this event appeared to die down with this revelation.

## **Conclusion**

The role of dogs within human culture appears to be dependent not only on the collective culture, but also on individual experience. Within Islamic scripture and religious tradition, dogs are conceptualized rather ambiguously. The loyalty and protectiveness of the dog is highlighted strongly in the story of the Cave. However, several hadīths allude to their unclean status, particularly regarding their saliva. Some hadīths enforce the aversion or killing of dogs, especially black dogs. Other hadīths espouse that kindness towards dogs is a virtue. Other Islamic-influenced texts, such as those of al-Jāhiz, allude to a similar status, where the dog serves as a model for desirable human qualities like loyalty, but also embodies negative “animal-like” traits, like diseases, ritual pollution, or “baseness.”

As noted, Muslim pet culture is a topic that is lacking in scholarly attention. While domestic dogs have played a prominent role in the Arab world throughout history, the general consensus of Muslim scholars is that dogs should be kept for working purposes, such as guarding property and livestock, herding animals, or hunting. Some studies indicate that the rise in ownership of dogs as “frivolous” or “status” animals may be a consequence of the spread of “Western pet culture” (Polgreen 2009; Salman 2013). Although, as some of the articles in this chapter have reported, the “pet status” of dogs is a controversial one, as demonstrated in the crack-down on dog owners in some countries, or the marginal status of strays. As well, there have been numerous news articles and media coverage linking anti-Muslim sentiments with “dog-hating.” Conversely, many Muslim scholars have stressed this division by constructing dog-keeping as a “Western trend.” This is a demonstration of how dogs are constructed as a symbol of group difference, as was discussed in Chapter 1.

As discussed in Chapter 2, one's cultural background can have a profound influence on one's beliefs and attitudes. Some scholars have suggested that the often negative conception of dogs in Middle Eastern cultures is tied to large populations of stray dogs, who are associated with vicious attacks and zoonoses like rabies (Menache 1997: 36; Foltz 2006a: 131; Schwabe 1979: 113-114). This, combined with certain religious beliefs in Islam, may have fostered a dog-adverse culture. However, it is clear that the attitudes of the collective culture are not homogenous. Rather, they set the stage for the human-dog interaction and create a conceptualization of the dog. As such, personal experiences and interactions with dogs become sources of variation, as cultural attitudes are not deterministic and unchanging. News articles and blogs reveal how attitudes towards dogs take on a variety of forms, suggesting a need to explore the opinions of the average "lay Muslim" about dogs, as this perspective cannot be gained through a hermeneutical, literary or cultural analysis of Muslims. The viewpoints of "lay Muslims" will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

## **Chapter 4 – Results and Discussion**

Chapter 3 details the numerous ways in which dogs are constructed in Muslim culture. This includes textual references, religious interpretations and dogma, legal ramifications, historical context, as well as the role of dogs in measures of group identity. Generally speaking, dogs are classified as unclean animals commonly associated with the unsightly, “baser” human instincts, in addition to associations with viciousness and disease. More positive aspects include their often esteemed role as working dogs and protectors (particularly salukis) and as models of loyalty.

What is important in this study, however, is exploring the ways in which individual “lay Muslims” understand, interpret, and negotiate these factors in their beliefs and practices regarding dogs.<sup>1</sup> Rather than simply understanding broader “Muslim culture” to gauge attitudes towards dogs, it is crucial to understand the importance of personal experiences. The latter portion of Chapter 3 covered this to an extent via a summation of modern news articles and blogs distinguished by more individualistic “opinion pieces,” which demonstrate a great deal of diversity on the subject. Chapter 4 goes a step further, presenting the more personal views of individual Muslims and an exploration of the ways in which Muslim cultural-religious understandings are negotiated and integrated into the human-dog interface. A summary of the ethical considerations and limitations of this study can be found in Appendix B.

### **4.1 Online Forum Study**

The data used for the online Muslim forum analysis were taken from several English language Muslim websites and discussion boards in which the issues surrounding dogs were discussed. While

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<sup>1</sup> Gary R. Bunt has written extensively on Islam on the internet, or as he terms; “Cyber Islamic Environments.” He writes how the Internet can influence the expression of religion, particularly as it allows for a cloak of anonymity. As well, this environment may also promote new forms of religious expression to develop (Bunt 2009: 9). However, the nature of the “digital divide” means that access to the Internet is difficult to procure in many parts of the Muslim world (Bunt 2003: 205), particularly for women (2003: 8).

this is generally a Canadian study, most of these mediums were international in nature, and are utilized to obtain a more open-ended dataset. A large degree of variance is shown within these responses, illustrating the diversity of opinions of Muslims worldwide. Individual respondents, although commonly using usernames, will not be specifically identified. Rather, this section will be exploring the very general themes that emerged from this analysis. Identifying these themes suggests which issues are most important to Muslims in regards to dogs. A total of about 2000 posts were analyzed.

Discussions about dogs in the forums take on many forms. Generally, such discussions are initiated by someone inquiring about the position of the dog in Islam (i.e. on a scriptural basis). The participants frequently engage in questions of the dog's uncleanness, the permissibility of ownership, interacting with dogs, and the positions of a specific madhab (school of thought). A more complete list of topics can be found in Appendix D. The construction of dogs as a signifier of group difference is presented more strongly in the forum discussions than it is in the survey. Here, much of the criticism of dog ownership stems from its association as a "Western" practice or trend. This is further argued on an ideological level, where Islamic rulings on the role and status of the dog become stressed in these contexts to distinguish "Islam" from such "Western" trends. This reflects the ways in which cultural ideals (i.e. such as those regarding animals) tend to be structured in a manner that essentializes both group identification and cultural differences (Douglas 1966; Lévi-Strauss 1963).

#### **4.1.1 Criticism of Dog Ownership – Economic Reasons**

One major criticism of owning dogs as pets that emerged from the forums is the fact that the pet industry diverts attention and resources away from needy people. There has been criticism about the amount of resources that are provided for pet dogs instead of people, and that pet keeping is a wasteful endeavor. This is linked with the theme against owning pet dogs for frivolous reasons.

#### 4.1.2 Criticism of Emotional Attachment

Related to the above concerns about economic issues, several participants of the Muslim forums have criticized the tendency for people in Western countries to grow emotionally attached to their dogs. The tendency to treat dogs as family is similarly implying that the status of pet dogs has been raised above other human beings. Despite the often stressed “Muslim-Westerner” dichotomy using the construction of dogs as a marker of difference, there are many Muslims on the forums who venture into differing interpretations of religious and cultural practices.

#### 4.1.3 “Tell me about dogs”

Most of the threads in Muslim forums on the topic of dogs begin with a user asking for clarification about the Islamic position on dogs. They may ask for clarification on information they heard from a friend or family member, and what Islam has to say in regards to the permissibility of dog ownership. Often, these discussions involve a story of a human-dog encounter (27 references), like at a friend’s house or in a public area.

The dog may have sniffed them, brushed up against them, or licked them, eliciting concerns over uncleanness. Such discussions will usually entail a conversation about the rulings of canine purity in the different *madhab* or *fiqh* and what needs to be done to restore *wudu’*. This query tends to entail a conflict within Muslims in Western society, wherein dogs are permitted in many public places and a large percentage of the population owns one. Contact with dogs can sometimes be unavoidable.

The fact that so many discussions about dogs begin with someone asking for clarification on the status of dogs in Islam indicates some ambiguity concerning their role. The resulting discussions reveal a similar ambiguity given the great diversity of viewpoints and arguments that are expressed.

On the forums there are two kinds of appeals that seem to be made when defending one’s position on dogs – *appeals to religious hermeneutical (or scholarly) interpretations, or personal experience*. Articles and websites written by Muslim scholars are commonly cited in response to

religious concerns about dogs.<sup>2</sup> These are generally many of the same articles that were referenced in Chapter 3. Articles on websites like *IslamQA* are typically posted in response to clarification on the Islamic rulings on dogs. On the one hand, there is a great emphasis placed on authoritarian and hermeneutical explanations for the role of dogs, often drawing upon larger cultural and religious understandings. On the other hand there is a great deal of personal interpretations and negotiations of such rulings. For instance, many who hold a positive view of dogs in Islam point to the fact that “there is nothing negative about dogs in the Qur’ān.” Rather, it is the hadīths that portray the dog as unclean, as blocking prayers, as keeping away angels and as a creature that it is permissible to kill. It is the view of some that the Qur’ān is the only truly infallible Islamic text, and its silence on dogs is indicative of their permissibility. Such individuals are usually referred to as “Qur’ānists.” Those who hold the hadīths to a higher level of authority tend to argue against these beliefs. Furthermore, some argue that surā 5:4 (prey in a hunting dog’s mouth may be eaten) in the Qur’ān proves dogs are not unclean. The positive portrayal of the dog Qitmir in the Cave story of the Qur’ān is also frequently offered.

#### **4.1.4 “Dogs are Unclean”**

“Impurity” is by far the most prevalent topic that was discussed on Muslim forums when the topic of “dogs” was raised. The resistance of some Muslims to dog ownership is very much grounded in their uncleanliness. *Wudū’* practices are meant to cleanse one’s self, and the maintenance of ritual purity is considered important (Denny 1994: 116). In this instance, the dog’s saliva was also very

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<sup>2</sup> While the Internet presents new forms through which Islam can be expressed, Gary R. Bunt remarks that this has propagated concerns of “representation” and “authority.” In particular, Bunt examines the role of the Internet in the “decision-making process” of Muslims, who seek out “Islamic approaches” on certain topics. The multitude of available information creates an ambiguity; the difference between a “traditionally trained Muslim scholar” and one who lacks such qualifications can become blurred for a casual observer (Bunt 2003: 124-125). There are power issues at play as well, as certain Islamic platforms may possess the resources and financial means for promoting their own ideologies on the Web (Bunt 2003: 132). This is particularly demonstrated in “who” has the authority to issue fatwās (2003: 132-135).

frequently cited as an impure substance. The need for the household, especially the prayer area, to remain pure becomes problematic with a dog living in close quarters. The general ruling is that one should wash their hands seven times – once with earth – if in contact with a dog’s saliva (al-Munajjid n.d.f; al-Oadah n.d.). Discussions about uncleanness and *wudu’* indicate how religious proscriptions are interpreted and negotiated within certain contexts. This is particularly demonstrated among dog owners, who require a balance between religious requirements and dog responsibilities.

#### **4.1.5 Good qualities of dogs**

The dog’s good qualities may be mentioned alongside their negative ones (i.e. their uncleanness). This is usually framed in the context of stressing that a dog is a part of creation and should be looked upon and treated with respect. However, they are an animal that was created unclean, and therefore certain precautions should be taken. “Avoidance” of a dog does not necessarily entail “dislike.” Several users have espoused the good qualities of dogs through the numerous roles and functions they serve in society. These include their use as guide dogs, protection, rescue dogs, therapy, and as role models for loyalty and love.

#### **4.1.6 The Matters of Dog Ownership**

In regards to owning dogs, users will frequently cite a proscription that occurs numerous times in the hadīths, stating that one may only own a dog if they are fulfilling some kind of purpose, and does some kind of “work.” This includes hunting, herding, or protection. As hunting and herding are largely irrelevant for those living in urban societies, the “guard dog” category is the only one that is deemed permissible. Pet dogs, as a result, are seen as essentially useless, and will entail a loss of spiritual reward (*Sahih al-Bukhārī*: Book 39, Number 515). A considerable portion of Muslims who said they owned dogs classified them as guard dogs; as an addition to their “pet roles.” The issue of owning a dog that provides a purpose creates concerns for Muslims who wish to own or already own dogs, because owning a dog needs to be properly justified according to Islamic principles. One user, who expressed the desire for a dog, joked about also purchasing some livestock for the dog to herd.

As keeping a dog as a pet (i.e. frivolous reasons) is considered undesirable, there have been a couple of instances of newly converted Muslims “redefining” their dog into a different role. Generally, this means re-classifying it as a guard dog.

For those that have dogs, the hadīth suggesting that angels will avoid their house is a prominent example of religious and cultural negotiation. Those Muslims who own dogs will often engage in forms of spatial negotiation to abide by these proscriptions. Many users espoused the permissibility of dog ownership as long as the dog remained outside of the house. As such, numerous people described their dog as living in the backyard or garden, often in a separate building like a dog house. Another variant of this arrangement allows the dog to remain within the house, but to restrict it from certain areas, like bedrooms. In most cases, they are restricted from “prayer spaces,” namely separate rooms in which *salāt* takes place, since there is a requirement for ritual purity during prayer (Denny 1994: 113). However, some Muslim dog owners do not describe any kind of restrictions in place within the house, including allowing their dogs to sleep in their beds.

#### **4.1.7 Stories and personal views of dogs**

While dogs are considered impure by the majority of Muslims, this does not necessarily entail a negative perception. Many praise the positive qualities of the dog, although many such users often add that they would not actually own a dog themselves.

Other Muslims have expressed a somewhat negative perception of dogs, whether it’s through their dirtiness, odor, or appearance. While the word “hate” was scarcely utilized, many wrote about a general dislike or fear of dogs. The majority of these instances were usually followed by some form of justification, such as a fear that their saliva would corrupt ritual purity.

Many people wrote about their personal experiences with dogs, which were very often negative ones. These include situations of being chased or bitten by dogs, whether themselves or others. This was especially the case with individuals from regions where such encounters are prevalent; with a few contributors discussing their negative experiences with rabid dogs.

#### **4.1.8 Web Study Conclusion**

Analysis of Muslim websites and forums illuminates many religious, social, cultural, and personal issues involving dogs. The key element of Muslim discussions regarding dogs is diversity, as the convergence of many differing viewpoints commonly leads to debate. Particularly, many describe the conflict of living in “canine-centric” societies, citing issues related to a high degree of contact with dogs, and criticism of frivolous or lavish pet ownership. Often this results in a construction of dogs as a signifier of group difference, delegating “Westerners” and “dog culture” as separate from Islam. However, situations of human-dog contact are enveloped in forms of cultural and religious negotiation, and there are multiple understandings of this interface. This is similarly illustrated in the online survey results, in which individuals describe the negotiations that take place on a personal level.

#### **4.2 Online Survey**

This portion of the study consisted of an online survey specifically aimed towards Canadian Muslims and their experiences with dogs. Links to the survey (on Fluidsurveys) were posted on various online Muslim forums and groups. This study additionally used a “snowball effect” in which the participants forwarded the survey to other respondents. While analyzing online forums provides a useful means of examining those issues that are most important to Muslims in an open-ended medium, the survey allows for broader examination of an individual’s personal experiences that is difficult to achieve in anonymous forums. Respondents were asked about how they feel dogs are conceptualized within Islam, their personal opinions and past experiences with dogs, and their perceptions of the possibly “dog-centric” nature of Canadian society. Additional questions were asked to determine religiosity, cultural and immigration background (if applicable) and other demographic information, like gender and level of education. These numerous points of interest were examined to determine what possible factors influence one’s perception of dogs.

While the survey was generally in a 5-point Likert scale format, most questions permitted participants to elaborate on their responses if they wished to do so. This allowed the survey to have qualitative aspects. As this survey consists of written responses, direct quotes will be used intermittently throughout this section. These quotes may contain some spelling or grammatical errors, but will be left as they are written.

The most important type of data collected with this survey is the response to the question: “What is your personal opinion of dogs?” which was asked on a five-point scale ranging from “Strongly Negative” to “Strongly Positive.” As a major component of this paper is to determine factors that influence perceptions of dogs, this data will be compared to the numerous potential influences that the survey attempts to address. This includes those influences related to religion, culture, length of time spent in Canada, previous countries of origin, upbringing and personal experience regarding dogs, and media influences. The strongest findings are addressed within this chapter; some of the more extraneous data is covered in Appendix F through I.

Of those 54 individuals who responded to the survey, 36 identified as Sunni, 9 identified as Shī’a, 6 identified as Sufi, 8 did not identify with a particular branch. 3 wrote “Other” and identified themselves as Quranist, Progressive, and one with a general identification with Islam. Participants were permitted to select more than one option for this section.

#### **4.2.1 What do you consider to be the common conception of dogs in Islam?**

When asked for their opinion about dogs, there was often a disconnect between what the respondent considered to be the conceptualization of dogs in Islam and their own personal opinion of dogs. As one respondent writes: “The Islamic perspective on dogs is quite complex and it is not possible to paint it one way or the other” (see Appendix E). Some state that Islam has a negative conception of dogs, although some write that they do not necessarily completely agree with this

stance. The reasons for this view include their perceived uncleanliness, or their associations with disease or danger, and reservations about keeping them in the house.

Several people interpreted this question as referring to the general perception among Muslims. These respondents tended to believe that the aversion to dogs was rooted in cultural practices and fears, rather than religious proscriptions. Thus, several respondents described Islamic views as positive, but culturally negative. It is here that I believe that the disconnect between the “Islamic” stance on the issue of dogs and one’s personal opinion becomes most clear. One respondent sums it up as: “I do not believe that the Qur’an or Islam are 'anti-dog' but I think many Muslims understand their Islam to be anti-dog.” This assertion seems to indicate a large degree of diversity in the ways in which Islam is interpreted and understood in relation to dogs. Returning to Talal Asad’s concept of Islam as a “discursive tradition,” however, would argue that despite these differences in interpretation, such viewpoints are still “Islamic” as they are rooted in a particular tradition (Asad 1986: 15).

Other respondents wrote that Islam has a positive view of dogs. In particular, these respondents cited the strong promotion of animal welfare within the religion (i.e. the “thirsty dog” hadīth) as well as the positive role that the dog plays in the Companions of the Cave story of the Qur’ān. Similarly, some write that while the dog may be classified as unclean, they must still be treated kindly. For instance: “Dogs in Islam are forbidden had [sic] pets but we still need to show compassion towards them,” or that: “They are unclean animals and we are not allowed to keep them in our homes. However, you must be kind to all animals.”

#### **4.2.2 What is your personal opinion of dogs?**

The question of one’s personal view of dogs is the most important concept of this survey. As much of this study aims to examine human-dog interactions and the factors that influence such interactions, the nuances of one’s personal beliefs carry a great deal of significance. For this reason, the data from this section was compared to numerous other sections of the survey. The data from this

question has been combined into two sets of results. The first one contains the data as it was collected – consisting of personal opinions ranging from “Strongly Negative” to “Strongly Positive.” The second set of data is a re-ordered version in which the “Strongly Negative” and “Negative” categories have been combined into “Negative” and the “Positive” categories were similarly merged. This created three categories of “Positive,” “Neutral,” and “Negative.” The purpose of this was to create a more simplified categorization for the purposes of comparing these findings to other sets of data. Much of this data is reproduced within Appendices E-H.

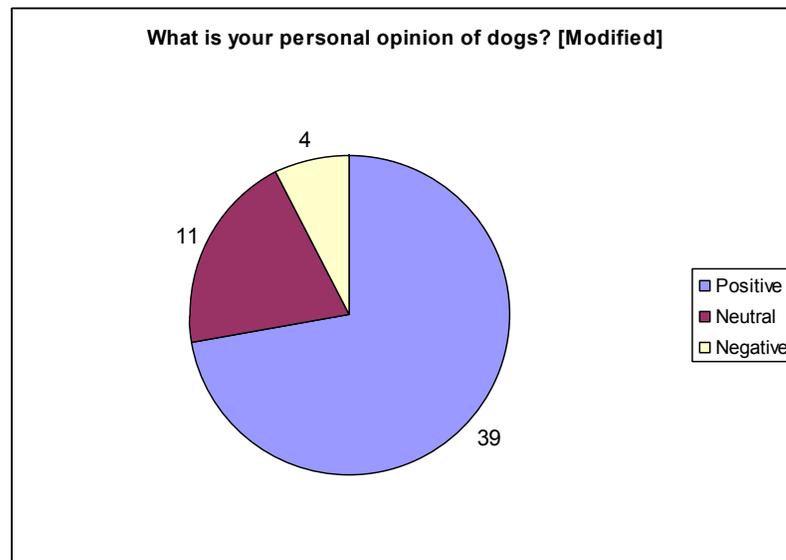


Figure 1 - What is your personal opinion of dogs [Modified]

In many respects, the responses in this category were similar to those expressed in the previous question. Many of those who espoused a positive view cited Islamic principles of kindness towards animals and the good qualities of dogs. Several also cited the positive status of dogs, such as the story of the Companions of the Cave.

As this question dealt with personal experiences, many spoke of their childhood dogs or current pets. Though, as mentioned with the previous question, there may be a disconnect between what people consider to be the “Islamic” stance on dogs, and their personal one. Generally, the

respondents expressed a more favourable opinion of dogs on a personal level, and considered the “Islamic” view to be more negative. Responses, as such, are very diverse. One respondent considers their dog as akin to a family member: “My dog is like my child as are my three cats. I have always had a love for all animals and NO religious dogma will tell me otherwise. I do not believe that a kind and loving God would create an animal just to have it hated or discriminated against.” Others consider there to be religious proscriptions against dogs. One writes: “I think dogs are not halal.”

Some describe themselves as feeling uncomfortable or scared around dogs, but not necessarily a dislike: “I used to have a phobia of dogs and I still feel a [sic] uncomfortable around strange dogs. But generally speaking, I like that they are loyal and loving creatures.” Another writes: “I’m personally a bit scared of dogs, but it’s not for any real reason; it’s just a fear I grew up with no known foundation.” Some write that they have a favourable view of dogs, but would not necessarily keep one as a pet. “I think Dogs are great and perhaps the best possible pet. However, I would personally never want to own a dog...” Another respondent similarly writes: “Generally speaking, I am fond of dogs but as Muslims, we cannot keep them as pets therefore the fondness is limited to a certain degree.”

#### **4.2.3 Do you currently own a dog or have you ever owned a dog?**

Depending on their response to this question, the participant would receive a different set of subsequent questions (see Appendix A). Further refinement was made between those who had a dog by choice and those who did not. This was meant to factor in those who may live in a situation where a family member or housemate is the one who has the dog. The question of whether or not the participants had owned dogs is useful in gauging the role of past experiences, and also how one negotiates religious and cultural understandings.

##### **4.2.3.1 Owning a dog**

The vast majority of those who have dogs view them as companion animals, although several cite them as a source of protection (i.e. a guard dog). It is not clear whether this is related to the

generally held stance in Islam that only working dogs are permitted. This is similar to trends among dog owners in the online forums, who may stress their dog's role as a guard dog.

One of the key focuses of this survey was to study the human-dog interactions of Muslims who had dogs. In particular, I was interested in how they interacted with their dogs and how (or whether) certain religious practices were integrated into their dog keeping practices. Particularly among Muslim converts, several respondents mentioned owning dogs prior to their conversion. These dogs were generally regarded very positively (see Appendix F). One respondent noted a change in their dog-owning practices, however. "We always had a dog when we were kids but when I became an adult and Muslim, I follow the rules of Islam to not have dogs as pets but I still love dogs and show all compassion towards them." Two respondents also wrote of prior experience with dogs, but noted that if they currently had a dog; it would have to be kept outside. One of them wrote:

At the time, I did not pray nor did I understand why dogs were not allowed to be kept in the house. Now that I do understand why, I probably would not unless it was a situation of compassion where I would then probably keep him in the backyard or comfortably in the hallway depending of course on weather / conditions.

Another respondent wrote of positive experiences with dogs in their childhood, and wished to get a dog once they move somewhere more suitable. As such, interaction with dogs provides a medium with which to explore the ways in which Muslims apply and negotiate cultural or religious understandings within personal spheres. However, it is important to further understand the extent to which cultural or religious influences play a role in comparison to personal experiences. Using the survey data, a discussion about the role of "cultural connectedness" and "religious influence" will be postulated below.

#### **4.2.4 Cultural Connectedness and Immigration**

As many of the respondents identified themselves (and/or their parents) as immigrants, it is important to examine the role of one's cultural background and cultural connectedness when studying perceptions of dogs. Since each culture has their own defined script and relationship of the

human-animal interface, the process of changing one's culture should be analyzed in regards to this interface. Namely, it is a question of whether one's opinion of dogs is tied to the degree of cultural connectedness and time spent within a culture. In this instance, whether living in a "dog-loving" society like Canada influences personal opinions. However - as has been discussed - the role of culture is not a deterministic one, but its influence on an individual is still potentially important.

#### **4.2.4.1 What is your current Citizenship status?**

Positive attitudes towards dogs are correlated with spending one's formative years in Canada, particularly if their parents were born in Canada as well. Acculturation literature tends to cite children as more readily identifying with their adopted culture than adults (Goldmann 2000: 13). Those who immigrated to Canada as adults are more likely to have a less favourable opinion about dogs (see Appendix H). As part of this study deals with the question of attitudes towards animals and culture, one's cultural identification becomes a source of inquiry. As attitudes towards animals (dogs, in this case) are influenced by culture, it is postulated that one's conception of dogs changes according to cultural (or country) identification.

However, an obvious point of contention is that attitudes within a given culture are far from homogenous. A few respondents have written about their experiences living in such "dog-negative" countries, where their family or community regarded dogs highly. As well, such trends are likely more generally attributable to past experiences.

In addition, relating back to the material on acculturation – the degree of "connectedness" to one's past and present cultures, as well as time spent in Canada, or age may factor into such studies. Thusly, this section was measured with a "biculturalism" angle, wherein the respondent was asked about their feelings of "connectedness" for their past and present countries as separate questions.

Several of the survey questions were adapted from the article: "Acculturation of Arab-American Immigrants: An Exploratory Study" by Mona H. Faragallah, Walter R. Schumm, and Farrell J. Webb. This study sought to study the acculturation practices of Arab-Americans, examining factors such as

satisfaction with life in the United States, religious identification, and extent of American cultural practices among others.

#### 4.2.4.2 How connected do you feel to Canadian culture?

In terms of connectivity to Canada (for immigrants) in relation to positive feelings towards dogs, there is not a very strong correlation. However, as noted from the question about citizenship, being born in Canada seems to be greatest indicator. Those respondents who stated that they and their parents were born in Canada were exempt from this section (see Appendix H). For those who have immigrated to Canada, connectedness to Canadian culture does not appear to be hugely correlational when compared to personal opinions about dogs. Attitudes towards dogs appear to have less to do with immigration experiences, but rather direct experiences with dogs.

#### 4.2.5 Religiosity

In addition to cultural background, one’s religious beliefs and religiosity offer other potential factors when considering attitudes towards dogs. Respondents were first asked to identify the nature of their religious affiliation – whether by birth or by later conversion. When compared to one’s personal opinion of dogs, those who have converted to Islam have an overall more positive attitude towards dogs.

How would you describe your religious affiliation?/What is your personal opinion of dogs?			
How would you describe your religious affiliation?		Frequency	Percent
No response	Positive	1	100.0
	Negative	4	10.8
By birth	Neutral	11	29.7
	Positive	22	59.5
	Total	37	100.0
	Positive	6	100.0
By conversion (10 years or more)	Positive	10	100.0
By conversion (less than 10 years)	Positive	10	100.0

Figure 2 - Table comparing one’s religious affiliation (first column) with one’s personal opinion of dogs (second column).

Although the nature of one's religious affiliation is an important factor, the extent of one's religiosity is another. However, as the link between religiosity and attitudes towards dogs was not intended to be a primary focal point, there were only three questions that dealt with the subject directly. I used a modified three question version of the five-question Duke University Religion Index (DUREL) (Koenig & Büssing 2010).

- 1) How often do you attend religious services?
- 2) How often do you spend time in private religious activities, such as prayer, meditation or scripture study?
- 3) Please indicate the opinion on the following statement that is the most true to you:  
"My religious beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life"

The role of religion and religiosity in relation to pet ownership is one that has not been explored extensively in academic literature. Whether or not religiosity can be identified as a factor in comparison between those who regard dogs positively and those who do not is unclear. A quote from a respondent previously mentioned in Chapter 1 asserts that "...the issue with dogs is that it is the best barometre of discerning between a radical Islamist and an ordinary Muslim." This seemingly argues that negative views of dogs are spurred by extreme religious views, as opposed to more moderate mainstream ones. Furthermore, there have been a couple of studies that postulate whether pet owners may be slightly less religious in general (Cameron & Mattson 1972: 286; McMellon & Torres-Baumgarten 2004: 73-77).

In the case of this study, however, the effects of religiosity are difficult to correlate with the data. As there are differing interpretations of the role of dogs within Islam, the extent to which one is "religious" does not necessarily indicate a particular stance on the issue (i.e. highly religious does not mean a negative perception of dogs). As such, there does not appear to be any correlation between one's religiosity and their personal opinions about dogs (see Figures 29-31 in Appendix H)

#### **4.2.5.1 How authoritative/authentic do you consider the prominent Hadiths to be?**

The hadīths, as discussed in Chapter 3, contain much of the information, beliefs and proscriptions about dogs in Islam – much more so than the Qur'ān. This includes allusions to the dog's

uncleanliness, its propensity to keep angels from entering one's house, and its association with the Devil. Though the dog is largely cast negatively, kindness towards dogs and animals in general, is also espoused. However, the question of hadīth authenticity – particularly regarding dogs – has generated some controversy, and whether these rulings about dogs were fabricated or misinterpreted. As a result, I aimed to investigate whether there was a link between the survey respondents' personal opinions about dogs and their perceived authority and authenticity of the hadīths. Due to the diversity of the hadīths, a great number of respondents wrote qualifiers explaining their stances on the hadīths. Many cited the hadīths as authentic sources, explaining that the chains of transmission were well-documented and reliable, and have been confirmed by many scholars over the years, while others expressed criticism of them.<sup>3</sup>

A problem with this approach, however, is that it assumes that the participants have a degree of knowledge about the content and history of these texts. Among discussions in online Muslim forums, there are many questions asked about what is written in the hadīths about dogs. This could imply that certain elements of the hadīths may not necessarily be common knowledge to some Muslims. Thus, it is difficult to ascertain whether considering the hadīths to be authoritative implicitly implies an agreement with its rulings about dogs (Figure 3).

In terms of the relationship between attitudes towards dogs and perceived authenticity of the hadīths, prominent trends are not entirely clear. On the one hand, all those who expressed a negative or strongly negative opinion about dogs considered the hadīths to be “authoritative” to “very

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<sup>3</sup> This trend emerges from a long-standing debate over questions of the authenticity of the hadīths, one that has permeated from the early Islamic period to the modern Muslim world, as well as among Western scholars. Jonathan A. C. Brown's *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (2009) contains a comprehensive discussion of this controversy. As the Qur'ān is not a book of law, the legal tenants of Islam have been compiled into the hadīths, transmitted over decades (sometimes centuries) before being written down and compiled. Consequently, debates over authenticity and the potential manipulation of hadīths persists (Brown 2009: 3-4). Certainly, the arise of “Qur'ān only” movements (also termed “Islamic Modernism” by Brown) does not consider the hadīths to be a reliable representation of the Prophet Muhammad (2009: 244).

authoritative.” On the other side of the spectrum, those who considered the hadīths to be inauthentic also had a positive view of dogs. Those who have a neutral opinion about dogs tend to hold the hadīths anywhere from “somewhat authentic” to “very authentic.” Aside from these trends, however, the data makes it difficult to determine whether attitudes towards dogs and perceptions of the hadīths are linked – particularly as those with positive and strongly positive attitudes towards dogs are spread across all levels of perceived hadīth authenticity. While it is sometimes difficult to determine precise opinions about the hadīths’ contents, and whether the participants are aware of them, this data can be compared, to some extent, with that of the online forums. In particular, many on the forums expressed criticism about the role of the dog in the hadīths, as these beliefs about the dog’s uncleanliness, keeping angels away, their links to the Devil and The Prophet Muhammad condoning killing them – are all references that exist solely in the hadīths and not the Qur’ān. The latter of which is held as being far more infallible than the former.

**How authoritative/authentic do you consider the prominent Hadiths to be?/What is your personal opinion of dogs?**

How authoritative/authentic do you consider the prominent Hadiths to be?		Frequency	Percent
No response	Positive	1	100.0
	Negative	1	8.3
Authentic	Neutral	4	33.3
	Positive	7	58.3
	Total	12	100.0
	Neutral	4	23.5
Somewhat authentic	Positive	13	76.5
	Total	17	100.0
	Positive	5	100.0
Somewhat inauthentic	Negative	3	21.4
	Neutral	3	21.4
	Positive	8	57.1
	Total	14	100.0
Very authentic	Positive	5	100.0

Figure 3 - Table comparing one’s opinions about hadith authenticity (first column) with one’s personal opinion of dogs (second column).

The tendency for debates about dogs to spark debates about hadīth authenticity in the forums may imply a slight link between a favourable opinion about dogs and criticism and skepticism about certain aspects of the hadīths. In this case, it may be possible to assume this is the case for the survey data as well, as those who hold a positive view of dogs are more likely to hold the hadīths as less authentic, and vice-versa.

#### **4.2.6 On Cultural and Religious Influences**

The previous section sought to explore whether cultural or religious identification was a key factor in the ways in which dogs are perceived. Based on the survey results, it appears as if cultural identification – while arguably a factor in characterizing human-dog relationships – does not influence individuals in a manner that is consistent, predictable or universal. Similarly, religious identification or degree of religiosity is a difficult to define status, and one that is not inherently applicable to one’s construction of dogs. Rather, these findings appear to illustrate the ways in which individuals draw upon religious and cultural practices and understandings, and how they interpret and negotiate them based on their own understandings. In other words, there has been a negotiation of an understanding of the hadīths with their own understanding of dogs.

#### **4.2.7 Do you have any personal anecdotes/stories that summarize your history with dogs?**

The necessity of gathering stories about human-dog relationships is important in animal studies. As well, there has been research about the effect of past experiences in attitudes towards dogs (Serpell 1986: 120; Hart 1995: 171). As questions of perceptions of dogs run far deeper than simply one’s religious or cultural beliefs, it is important to examine past experiences as a potential factor in attitudes towards dogs.

Among the most prominent aspects to compare are the personal opinions of dogs to the anecdotes provided. As the question provided requested the most prominent memory associated with dogs (i.e. the one that the respondent feels is most pertinent) it is hoped that this information will shed some light on the role of past experiences in human-dog perception and interaction.

Respondents were asked if they could provide an anecdote that they felt “summarized their history with dogs.” Out of the fifty-four people who participated in the survey, twenty-four provided an anecdote. The remaining thirty either wrote “No” or left the question blank. The responses from the anecdotes ranged from childhood experiences to ones from adulthood. Some people wrote about more than one event, and some of these stories transcend more than one classification. Ten respondents included anecdotes about negative experiences with dogs. Out of the ten anecdotes that fell into this category, seven of them involve a scary experience of being chased by a dog, often strays. Three of those who were chased described some reservations about being in close contact with dogs, but generally did not hold largely negative attitudes towards them. One respondent wrote that a family member had been killed by a dog in their home country, resulting in one family member subsequently developing a fear of dogs. It is difficult to determine overall trends with this small sample size, however.

Many of the respondents who described negative incidents write that they currently hold a favourable view of dogs. One participant wrote about having a fear of dogs as a child, but having positive interaction with a friendly dog helped them overcome that fear. Similarly, one respondent wrote they were frequently chased by stray dogs in their birth country, but described more positive experiences with dogs after moving to Canada. Another respondent wrote that aside from one incident of being chased, their past experiences with dogs have been largely positive. The key factor seems to be having positive experiences alongside the negative ones.

A second category of anecdote involves positive experiences with dogs, as well as attitudes towards them. Eighteen anecdotes described such situations. This category typically contains “personal dog stories,” in which the respondents spoke fondly about past or present dogs. Out of those who submitted anecdotes, none of those who wrote of personal pets ever did so in a negative context. Other positive anecdotes sometimes did not involve a specific story; rather several made general remarks about the positive qualities of dogs. Two respondents wrote about how they like to

pat all dogs they come across. One writes: “I’ve had lots of relationships with dogs who were not mine but belonged to friends, family members, and so on. Love them all.” One respondent wrote that they were generally neutral about dog-related matters.

The final categorization of these anecdotes for analysis is as follows: Negative experiences, Neutral experiences, Positive and Negative experiences, and Positive experiences. Based on the categorization of these responses, they are then compared to the participants’ answers to the question: “What is your personal opinion of dogs?” (Figure 4).

What is your personal opinion of dogs?			
Do you have any personal anecdotes/stories that summarize your history with dogs?		Frequency	Percent
Negative Experiences	Neutral	4	80.0
	Positive	1	20.0
	Total	5	100.0
Neutral Experiences	Positive	1	100.0
Positive and Negative Experiences	Positive	5	100.0
Positive Experiences	Positive	13	100.0
No response	Negative	4	13.3
	Neutral	7	23.3
	Positive	19	63.3
	Total	30	100.0

Figure 4 - Table comparing the nature of one’s past experiences with dogs (first column) with one’s personal opinion of dogs (second column)

What this demonstrates is that more so than religious beliefs, religious affiliation (i.e. by birth or conversion), beliefs about the authoritativeness of the hadīths, or time spent in Canada – one’s past experiences appear to have the greatest degree of influence on one’s attitudes towards dogs.

In a related question, respondents were asked whether their attitudes towards dogs have changed over time, and to cite any possible factors that they felt attributed to it. Similar to trends noted by academic studies (i.e. Hirschman 1994: 627-628), positive perceptions of dogs were attributed to increased exposure, good experiences and exposure to dogs in popular media. Those who reported a

shift towards a more negative perception of dogs, while few, reported similar reasons, but presumably in negative contexts.

Comparing the respondents' anecdotes with their personal opinion about dogs is a little problematic given the inherent limitations in the data. All of those who cited an explicitly negative personal view of dogs declined to provide a personal anecdote. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the extent to which past experience influences one's perceptions of dogs in a negative fashion.

Although several respondents listed negative experiences (generally being chased or scared by a dog), their current opinions about dogs are largely neutral. Those respondents who provided more than one anecdote often listed both positive and negative experiences with dogs. In all five instances of this though, the respondents mention one or more negative occurrences – such as a situation of being chased or scared by a dog as a child – but then contrast it with separate - and often more frequent or long term – positive experiences with a dog or dogs. In contrast to those who listed a single negative instance, those who had positive past experiences appear far more likely to hold positive views on dogs later in life. Similarly, those who offered purely positive past experiences held unanimously positive perceptions in the present. A study by Doogan and Thomas (1992) reveals that “significantly more dog-fearful than non-fearful adults, but not children, reported that they had had little contact with dogs prior to their first aversive experience with one” (1992: 392). The authors stress that having early positive or uneventful experiences with dogs can help to offset subsequent negative experiences.

As the survey findings imply, whether an individual has a positive or negative opinion of dogs is largely contingent upon past experiences with them. This is demonstrated more so than other factors, with religiosity, and cultural connectedness exhibiting far less of an influence. The respondents have shown a great deal of religious negotiation and interpretation with regard to the status of dogs within Islam - particularly among those who keep dogs – such as washing one's hands after contact. However, the majority of survey respondents reported a positive or neutral perspective on dogs, and

those with negative views are less represented in the data. It is necessary to explore the ways in which one's personal experiences and cultural worldview are negotiated within the context of the human-dog interface in order to fully understand the ways in which humans interact with animals. Chapter 5 will explore this interplay.

## **Chapter 5 - Discussion on the Interplay between Cultural Influence and Personal Experience**

The diversity of opinions expressed both by those in the online communities, as well as in the survey demonstrates the ambiguity of the position of the dog in Islam. Chapter 3 provided an examination of this construction through Islamic religious texts, cultural practices and understandings, as well as historical and legal contexts. This revealed a constructed image of a dog that is often negative for their perceived unclean and polluting nature, but also as a means of promoting human kindness (e.g. the thirsty dog hadīths) as well as a positive role as a protector. Proscriptions in the hadīths that condone the killing of dogs have likely arisen out of a need to protect people against vicious and rabid dogs, but this is a possibility that is open to discussion and debate. The purpose of this chapter is to build upon and explore the limitations inherent in Chapter 3, and to analyze the results of Chapter 4. I find that a sole investigation of broader Muslim cultural, religious and scholarly contexts creates a restrictive and narrow perspective on the issue of dogs. Namely, it overlooks the multitude of opinions expressed by individual “lay Muslims,” and the important role of personal experience acting as a lens through which culture is interpreted and negotiated. As such, Chapter 4 and 5’s exploration into these personal factors becomes pertinent. Chapter 3 does, however, provide an overview of the constructions of the dog in Islam, which provides a religio-cultural framework and worldview in which Muslims are influenced. From these variable Islamic religious and cultural constructions of the dog emerges a similar degree of ambiguity among individual Muslims. Many describe keeping dogs within the home and even sharing their beds, while others on the opposite end of the spectrum express that such actions are forbidden. Religious and cultural mediation, while playing a prominent role in the human-dog interface (e.g. the proscription to wash after contact with a dog) does not ultimately characterize one’s personal viewpoint on dogs, especially when the cultural understanding of dogs is itself full of similar ambiguity.

Generally speaking, the results of this study - particularly the survey - demonstrate that past experience is a more prominent factor than “degree of religiosity” and cultural identification in

forming personal conceptualizations of dogs. Particularly, as the latter two categories are difficult to define and determine. As noted in the survey, there is a strong discrepancy between what respondents consider to be the “Islamic view” of dogs and their personal one. Conversely, an exploration of one’s experiences (i.e. anecdotes) aligns more closely with their personal views on dogs. This is demonstrated in the online forums as well. The expression of one’s opinion about dogs is generally accompanied by a personal anecdote that characterizes their opinion. As such, this may indicate that a perspective of dogs is one that is generally separate from religious beliefs.

On the other hand, past experiences are intertwined with culture. The script, setting, and roles that are assigned in experiences of human-dog interaction are largely created and influenced by culture. As previous research has noted, the ways in which humans and dogs interact is not universal, and is instead weighed by numerous factors. Several respondents cite a society with high stray dog populations and a prevalent concern with rabies and other zoonoses as fostering “anti-dog” attitudes. Conversely, a culture where dogs are considered family members and “man’s best friend” will create a different stage for human-dog interaction. Certainly, these conceptions about a presumed “cultural role” of dogs can arise from situations of cross-cultural conflict, such as the linking between dogs and “Canadian values” as noted in the “Walk your dog in front of mosque day” incident. As a result of these diverse stages for interaction, one’s culture (and religion, due to an intertwining with “culture”) may have a profound effect on experiences with dogs. Indeed, these spheres of the human-dog interface tend to breed diversity rather than homogeneity.

In summary, culture (and religion, to an extent) constructs an (often ambiguous) image of a dog – thereby creating specific settings and roles for human-dog interaction. Such interactions create personal experiences, which in turn affect one’s personal definitions and perceptions of culture and religion regarding dogs.

It should be noted, however, that the issue of ambivalence towards dogs should not be boiled down to statements such as, “widespread rabies (i.e. attacks) creates an anti-dog culture,” applied

homogeneously to all Muslim cultures. Having said that, negative experiences with stray dogs were frequently reported by respondents in this study and in other non-anthropological studies as well. For instance, Grier's (2006: 85) assertion that the increased closeness of humans and dogs in America was fostered by lower rates of zoonoses, and the Tanzanian study by Knobel et al. (2008b) noted that those who had favourable opinions of dogs tended to have vaccinated ones.

A study conducted in Sweden by Jens Karlsson and Magnus Sjöström (2007: 610) reveals that attitudes towards wolves are linked to distance by a large degree. Those who live close to wolf territories and have more direct experience are more likely to have a negative opinion about wolves and conservation. Conversely, those who live further away from wolf territories are more likely to have a positive view of them. This implies that prolonged close negative exposure results in more unfavourable opinions. This could explain aversion to dogs in areas of large stray dog populations – places where close contact with dogs may be negative, compared to places where this interaction is more positive. While the prevalence of stray and/or rabid dogs is not deterministic of negative attitudes, it is certainly a factor that may influence the potential “stage” of human-dog interaction in a particular context. Thusly, such negative experiences have the potential to colour personal opinions about dogs.

There are numerous factors that can influence culture change. These include politics, cross-cultural contact, and the influence of individual people. As culture changes the human-dog interface, the human-dog interface can affect culture in turn. For instance, Western pet culture has spread internationally, particularly with the rise of the middle class (Polgreen 2009; Salman 2013). The increase of pet dogs in Iran among the youth of their Middle class is potentially tied to a resurgence of Zoroastrianism (Golsorkhi 2010).

The effects of cross-cultural contact may be quite pertinent in this case. In a multicultural society like Canada, many concepts of past experience and culture come into play. Part of this study examines the experiences of those who move from one society or country to another through the

diverse lens of human-dog interaction. One respondent, for instance, wrote that they had experienced instances of being chased by stray dogs while in their birth country, but had more positive experiences with dogs when in Canada. As noted, however, this study does not stress uniformity in the process of moving from one culture to another. Especially, since attitudes towards dogs within a culture are equally ambiguous. Rather, the ongoing process of cultural negotiation and personal experiences culminates into a large degree of differentiation within peoples, rather than assimilation. However, one's cultural "stage" can provide a degree of influence in human-dog relations.

### **5.1 The Role of Personal Experience**

As noted, the key conclusion of the online studies is that past experience plays the most important role in influencing future human-dog interactions and perceptions. By and large, those survey respondents who wrote of positive experiences with dogs had an overall positive perception of dogs. As mentioned, however, these personal experiences are mediated to an extent by one's culture.

The nature of past experiences allows for the potential separation between one's cultural background and individual experience. Kay Milton's (2002) book *Loving Nature: Towards an ecology of emotion*, largely delves into the question of why some in Western societies become nature and animal conservationists and advocates, and others are indifferent to the natural world – despite being raised in the same culture or society. Whereas one's cultural background influences worldview, it is far from deterministic, universal, or predictable. Notably, Milton cites positive or emotional childhood experiences with nature or animals as being a key factor in influencing future alignment with conservationist causes in adulthood. Milton cites several studies to this effect, including one she conducted. Out of twenty-eight environmental conservationists, twenty reported being influenced by personal experiences in nature; sixteen noted such experiences extending back to childhood, such as playing in the wilderness or bird watching (Milton 2002: 63). Wells and Lekies (2006) similarly illustrate the link between prominent childhood experiences in nature and environmental attitudes as

adults. Although the topic of pets is a subject that is more specific than nature as a whole, it is indeed a relationship that is cultivated by past personal experiences.

The survey questions provided a means of examining cultural and religious influences in relation to one's opinion about dogs. Feelings of connectedness to Canadian culture and overall religiosity did not play a significant role. However, the role of culture in relation to one's *upbringing* had a much stronger correlation.

Those respondents who were born in Canada (and especially if their parents were as well), were more likely to have a favourable opinion of dogs than those who were born abroad. It is theorized that spending one's formative years in a country with the "dogs are man's best friend" ethos would have influenced their perceptions in adulthood. A similar trend is seen for those who converted to Islam. Individuals who had previously owned a dog prior to conversion similarly express positive attitudes towards them. This is demonstrated with the forum data as well – many new converts post commentary about reconciling their role as dog owner with new religious proscriptions. It is speculated that those who had fond experiences with past family pets were more likely to have positive feelings about dogs later in life, regardless of changes in their religious affiliation.

James Serpell (1981) conducted a study to ascertain whether childhood pet keeping practices were carried over as an adult. He found that those who had pets during childhood were more likely to own pets as an adult – typically of the same species. Conversely, those who had not kept pets in childhood were less likely to keep them as adults and less likely to express the desire to. However, Serpell (1981: 652) writes that childhood experiences with pets certainly do not necessarily dictate pet-keeping practices in adulthood. Rather, he argues, more information should be gained about the nature of childhood relations with pets. What he suggests – and what Kay Milton (2002: 55, 63) also points to among nature conservationists – is the importance of strong emotional and positive experiences in childhood. Interaction with animals can illicit numerous psychophysical changes

within individuals. Though, as Serpell mentions, this does not manifest strongly in all individuals (1981: 652). Elizabeth C. Hirschman similarly writes that:

...with the incorporation of the pet into the family, an enduring type of animal-human socialization may occur: essentially, the children in such homes *come to view the people-plus-animals family structure as normal and right*. They develop deeply embedded expectations that when they become adults and form families, a pet should/must be included within the family structure to make it complete. [Hirschman 1994: 628, emphasis added]

She also states that these childhood experiences create the formation of companion animal “preference patterns,” which often results in keeping similar pets in adulthood. In this sense, one’s past experiences with animals – specifically pets – creates a framework with which individuals experience the human-animal interface as an adult. This is a product of one’s personal and unique experiences with the surrounding culture. Hence, a culture that places emphasis on keeping certain animals (i.e. “The American family dog”) would foster a similar tendency among individual persons.

What makes the role of past experiences in shaping one’s current opinions of dogs clear is that these two topics are paired up constantly in forum discussions. During discussions about dogs in the forums, individuals commonly bring up past anecdotes along with their personal opinions about dogs. In a manner reminiscent of the survey results, many write about being scared or fearful of dogs and bring up stories about being chased or being bitten. This tends to be supplemented with stories that they had been told by others, or news articles about dog attacks. For those living in “Western” nations, this is linked with the added stress of being in a canine-centric society. On the other hand, many also cite the good qualities of dogs based on past experiences. Particularly, the dog’s role as a protector is one that is commonly stressed, some had written about having their lives saved by dogs, or fond memories of previous dogs they have owned. In a trend similar to the surveys, newer converts to Islam, who may currently have a dog, or had one previously, also tend to express a more positive sentiment. This would appear to demonstrate the role of religious negotiation in the human-

dog interface, in which the dog is given a redefined role in the relationship, often in spatially-oriented contexts within the household.

A problem with this study, however, is that it tends to draw upon only a few specific anecdotes and situations from an individual's entire life. Certainly in the case of the forums, the added anonymity creates difficulty and uncertainty in creating a broader picture of one's life experiences. However, the personal anecdotes that respondents choose to bring up are ones that they evidently consider to be most prominent.

The fact that personal opinion of dogs and one's past experiences are so commonly paired strongly emphasizes and acknowledges the intricacies of human experience and individuality. During debates and discussions about dogs in the forums, one's past experiences are used as a form of "proof" in expressing one's opinion.

Although there is a tendency towards the differential conceptualization of animals cross-culturally (see "the signifier of group difference" discussions in Chapter 1), these differences extend to individual levels with the added element of personal experience.

Dogs and other animals are commonly imbued with particular cultural understandings and significance, including values, taboos, or as markers of group identification. As noted in Chapter 1, Mary Douglas and Claude Lévi-Strauss have illustrated that certain cultures place distinctions of in-group and out-group identification based on animals. For instance, that aversion to unclean animals and other practices can be seen as markers of Judaism (or Islam, for that matter) (Douglas 1966) or animal-based identification in a manner similar to Totemism (Lévi-Strauss 1963). Such recognition of group divisions can possibly lead to inter-group conflict, wherein animal based-identifications become exaggerated to the point of essentializing groups; such as the "Muslim-Westerner" division.

But while society tends to stress a "cultural standard" in approaching the human-dog interface, it is clear that individuals construct their own understanding of this relation based on personal experiences. Moments in which one's personal understanding of the human-dog interface appears to

be conflicting with the “cultural standard” create situations of tension in which the true nature of the “cultural standard” is challenged. On the forums, in particular, this leads to debates about the role of the dog within Islam, including hermeneutical interpretations of religious texts. As noted, the question of the authenticity of the hadīths is one that is expressed as a result. This is illustrated in both the forums and survey results. Consequently, forms of religious negotiation with the human-dog interface occur.

## **5.2 Religion versus Culture and Group Difference**

The distinction between religion and culture may be one to examine within the context of this issue. While not a specific topic on the survey, several respondents brought up the “religion vs. culture” dispute regarding dogs. These respondents essentially stressed that there is a strong demarcation between “Islamic religion” and “Muslim culture” (or, presumably, Arab culture). The former is considered to embody the straight religious beliefs, laws and teachings that exist in the Qur’ān and hadīths. The latter is considered to combine these religious teachings with certain local customs, beliefs, and practices, which may be considered – by this definition – “un-Islamic.” Those respondents who assert this distinction write that aversion to dogs is something that is rooted in Muslim or Arab culture rather than Islam itself.

A trend that appears to emerge in the responses – particularly among those Muslims who express a more positive view of dogs – is that negative attitudes towards dogs by Muslims are the result of cultural beliefs. One respondent wrote: “Most Muslims, in the modern Muslim world, have cultural views of dogs which are highly disparaging and not supported by traditional fiqh (Sharia’) which allows for Muslims to keep dogs for a variety of reasons.”

These respondents imply that the reason for differing attitudes towards dogs is largely the result of cultural influence and the ways in which Islam is interpreted. As Clifford Geertz has implied, religion is interpreted differently in diverse cultural or historical contexts. Geertz describes religious patterns as “frames of perceptions, symbolic screens through which experience is interpreted; and

they are guides for action, blueprints for conduct” (Geertz 1968: 98). This may shed some light on the role that Islam – or religion in general – plays in diverse cultural or historical contexts, and how this is interpreted and negotiated by individual persons.

Talal Asad, however, would argue against the notion that differing cultural or historical interpretations create “multiple Islams.” Rather, all of these interpretations should be considered “Islamic,” as their knowledge and practice is oriented towards deeply rooted traditions. However, this framework allows for diversity and interpretive differences within Islam through the ways in which this tradition is communicated to individual Muslims (Asad 1986: 14-16).

The concept of dogs serving as a “signifier of group difference” may similarly be interpretable in another context. While many survey respondents reported a positive perception of dogs – both on a personal level and within Islam - they noted that other Muslims have a different understanding on this issue. To repeat what one respondent noted: “I think many Muslims understand *their* Islam to be anti-dog” (emphasis added). Rather than the construction of dogs as a signifier of group difference solely expressing itself in “Muslim” and “Western” contexts, it appears to also demonstrate divisions within intra-group relations as well.

### **5.3 Dogs and “Canadianness” and a signifier of group difference**

This study also touched on the question of whether or not the “omnipresence” of dogs within Canadian society became associated with “Canadianness” in people’s minds. As mentioned earlier in this paper, dogs are prominently displayed in all forms of media, as well as having a strong presence within households. Dogs inhabit a role that is unique from most other animals in that they live in close proximity to humans. Their high status and the tendency to associate with them as “members of the family” or “man’s best friend” has sparked an industry of “canine culture” and a slew of studies into human-dog interrelationships. This raises questions about the important role that culture plays in determining one’s personal attitudes and ideologies, as well as those collectively shared by a nation.

In a culture where dogs may be touted as “man’s best friend” or a close family member, is there a “must love dogs” ideology?

This question also hearkens back to Ahmed Tharwat’s article: “*Love My Dog, Love Me. The great Arab-Muslim-American puppy story,*” in which the author reported a greater sense of acceptance in America after adopting a beagle puppy. Consequently, the question of whether nationalism and culture can be tied with dogs should be explored. The “Walk your Dog in front of a Mosque Day” incident discussed in Chapter 1, pertains to this as a conflict between dogs and Muslims that sparked a debate on Canadian values, nationality, and an “us and them” mentality. In other words, a construction of dogs as a “signifier of group difference”. Hence, I was interested in whether respondents felt there was any kind of pervasive ideology in this country which associates dogs with nationalism or “Canadianness.” As well, participants were asked their opinions on this “elevated status” of dogs in Canada.

Generally, respondents were mostly in agreement on the “elevated status” of dogs in Canada. “I think dogs are loyal and affectionate and I can see why people would feel that way,” or: “If a lot of people like dogs then I'm happy for them!” However, responses to the question of “dogs and Canadianness” were quite mixed. Responses included: “I just love dogs, nothing Canadian or unCanadian about it.” One wrote that although dogs play a particular cultural role in Canadian society, they are not inherently tied to “Canadianness”: “I don't think owning a Dog makes one "Canadian" per se, it's just another cultural thing to keep dogs as pets.” One point that was brought up occasionally though, is that Canadians are not a homogenous group. One respondent wrote: “Being Canadian doesn't mean agreeing with all the other Canadians, it means respecting differences.” Two respondents did criticize the high status of dogs in Canada to a certain extent, writing that such relationships may be an inappropriate replacement for human interaction. A couple of respondents did suggest other animals they felt were more aligned with the concept of “Canadianness,” such as the Canadian goose, moose, beavers, and polar bears. Although the high

status nature of the dog in Canada was very much acknowledged by the respondents, an explicit linkage of the dog with nationalism and “Canadianness” was generally not made by Canadian Muslims.

#### **5.4 Negative Aspects of the Human-Dog Relationship**

One of the trends significantly highlighted by both the survey results and the online discussions is the diversity of human-dog interactions. While many positive aspects of this relationship are emphasized, some of the more negative implications are present as well. Though more commonly discussed in the forums, the criticism of “bad dog owners” was a topic that frequently emerged. These opinions were expressed as well by the survey respondents (see Figure 22 in Appendix G). It should be noted that such concerns are not necessarily those restricted to Muslim communities, rather they are concerns expressed by other groups, including law makers and even other dog owners. The concern of dog waste in public areas is both seen as unhygienic and unsightly. The most common complaint in this category is the presence of leash free, often ill-behaved dogs in public areas like parks, where a few respondents argued they should be banned from. While this is cited as a risk to ritual purity by Muslims, it also raises risks for those with allergies, or those who have a fear of dogs. This, compounded with a societal problem of vicious dogs (Canada Safety Council 2005), can become problematic. Some have suggested that separate leash free dog parks should become more commonplace. Concerns of dog attacks are prevalent; highlighting the association between dogs and viciousness. It is stressed that more preventative measures should be taken to curb such incidents, such as public education concerning responsible dog management (e.g. Sacks, Kresnow & Houston 1996: 52) (see Appendix H).

## **Conclusion**

Anthropology may benefit from a closer consideration of animals as crucial figures of the human experience. Although their role in human society and culture is more often analyzed on a purely utilitarian level (i.e. as food), animals also have the potential to serve as a function of one's culture, social group, religion, and past experience. With their multitude of roles in human society, human-animal relations provide a means of examining numerous elements regarding personal interaction and the broader culture.

Much of how an animal is perceived by society is dependent upon the dominant culture. Animals embody a culturally constructed position in society that intertwines them in a web of religion, kinship, hierarchy, food (or food taboos) and pets. Animals exist in a culturally influenced role that mediates the framework of human-animal interaction, although likely not in a manner that is inherently deterministic. Nonetheless, culturally defined perceptions of the human-animal interface become exaggerated and universalized in situations of an "us" and "them" conflict, creating a measure of group difference.

The strength of the pervasive surrounding culture versus one's personal experiences is a question that is crucial to the ways in which anthropologists understand human culture. The role of individual experiences and agency helps to explain why members of the same culture do not espouse identical opinions and worldviews (i.e. Milton 2002). This study sought to examine the interplay between one's surrounding culture and their personal experiences or upbringing in regards to interaction with and conceptualization of animals. While it is noted that the broader mainstream culture has profound impacts on an individual's worldview (i.e. religious views), it is important to realize that there is heterogeneity within a social group or culture. Thus, the role of personal agency, individual experience and upbringing all impact an individual. This – I find – does more so than one's surrounding culture.

This study was born of an interest in the role of dogs in human society, generally, and the apparent tendency for Muslims, specifically, to be conceptualized as “dog-haters.” This study sought to better understand the ways in which dogs are perceived by Muslims through the use of participant observation in online media and Internet surveys. This investigation reflects a recognition of the lack of academic material on Muslims in the human-dog interface, and pet studies in this demographic.

Although the survey investigated numerous factors influencing attitudes towards dogs, such as religiosity, social circle, “connectedness” to Canadian culture, frequency of human-dog interaction and exposure to “dog-positive” American and Canadian media, the factor that played the greatest role in influencing these attitudes was past experience.

### **Directions for Further Research**

While this study intended to explore the topic of Muslim dog ownership, such studies and those on human-animal relations in general, should be better represented within the anthropological literature. Although this study provides useful insight into the ways in which Canadian Muslims conceptualize dogs, homogenizing all responses into a single “Muslim” category ignores the fact that Islam is a religion that spans the globe of diverse cultures; making it difficult to study overall trends with any certainty (Foltz 2006b: 8). It would be useful to research the cross-cultural attitudes towards dogs across the cultural array of neighbouring countries of the Middle-East.

As well, a more qualitative approach to examining an individual’s personal experiences with dogs – rather than a quantitative survey – would be beneficial in examining its influence in the human-dog interface.

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## Appendix A - Online Survey Questions

### Canadian Muslim View of Animals

Page #1

Simple Skipping Information

- If = Proceed then Skip to Page 2
- If = Exit survey then Terminate survey
- If Are you a Muslim currently living in Canada? has no response then Terminate survey
- If Are you a Muslim currently living in Canada? has a response then Email me

An estimated 32% of Canadian households own one or more dogs. While Canada appears to be a canine-centric society, its population is diverse and multicultural. With this study, I am interested in discerning these differing Canadian attitudes towards dogs.

This survey is targeted towards Canadian Muslims.

Since the topic of Muslims and dogs in Canada has not been studied in great detail, the information collected from this study could be beneficial in raising awareness of this situation in Canadian society. The pluralistic and multicultural nature of Canada makes it important to foster a diverse cultural awareness around certain social issues. In particular, the canine-centric nature of Canadian society may be at odds with certain beliefs of Islam. This study intends to better understand Muslim attitudes towards dogs to contribute to the education of the entire Canadian population.

At the end of the survey, you may optionally provide your e-mail address. Those individuals who do so may be contacted shortly afterward to provide more in-depth information via e-mail communication. Whether you will be contacted or not will be based on your survey responses. In particular, I am interested in the opinions of Canadian Muslim dog owners. This further correspondence is completely voluntary, and you may opt out at any time.

This questionnaire is provided through Fluidsurvey, which is a Canadian-based service and, consequently, unaffected by the United States Patriot Act.

The data collected from this study will be published in the form of a Masters Thesis for the academic community in 2013/2014, and may be made available in future publications. When the research period has been completed (late August – early September) the data collected will be removed from Fluidsurvey. This data will be kept on an external hard drive that will not be connected to the internet. Other than the researcher, no one else will have access to this information. This data may be held for future study, but care will be taken to ensure that any potentially identifying information (i.e. name, e-mail address etc.) is destroyed. If you wish to withdraw consent for your information and have it removed from consideration, please contact Johanne Horsfall at [johanne\\_horsfall@carleton.ca](mailto:johanne_horsfall@carleton.ca).

At the end of the survey, you will be provided with the option of whether you wish to submit your information. By submitting this survey, you will have provided consent for your information. If you

do not wish to submit your survey results, please exit at the end of the survey without pressing submit.

This project was reviewed and has received ethics clearance by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns, you are encouraged to contact the following:

Johanne Horsfall

Carleton University – Department of Sociology and Anthropology  
johanne\_horsfall@carleton.ca

Carleton University Research Ethics Board 613-520-2517

ethics@carleton.ca

- Proceed
- Exit survey

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Page #2

*Simple Skipping Information*

• *If Are you a Muslim currently living in Canada? = No then Terminate survey*

*Branching Information*

Thank you agreeing to take part in this survey. It will take about 15 minutes to complete.

Are you a Muslim currently living in Canada?

- Yes
- No

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Page #3

*Branching Information*

• *If Has your opinion concerning dogs been modified ove... = Yes, I now regard dogs more favourably then Skip to Page 4*

• *If Has your opinion concerning dogs been modified ove... = Yes, I now regard dogs more unfavourably then Skip to Page 5*

• *If Has your opinion concerning dogs been modified ove... = No, my opinion of dogs has not changed over the course of my life then Skip to Page 6*

With what branch(es) of Islam do you most closely identify? Check all that apply.

- Sunni
- Shi'a
- Sufi
- I do not identify with one particular branch
- Other, please specify... \_\_\_\_\_

What do you consider to be the common conception of dogs in Islam?

- Strongly Positive
- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative
- Strongly Negative

Please elaborate if necessary

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What is your personal opinion of dogs?

- Strongly Positive
- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative
- Strongly Negative

Please elaborate if necessary

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Should dogs be owned as pets?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, somewhat
- Neutral
- No
- Definitely not

Please elaborate if necessary

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Several of the questions in this survey discuss the often "ever-present" nature of dogs in Canadian society, both in day-to-day interaction and the media. Part of this research aims to explore whether or not Canadians consider the dog to be a symbol of "Canadianness."

An estimated 32% of Canadians own a dog. As such, positive attitudes towards dogs appear to be prevalent in Canadian society. How does your opinion of dogs make you feel?

- More "Canadian"
- Less "Canadian"
- Neither
- Haven't thought about it
- Other, please specify... \_\_\_\_\_

Please elaborate if necessary

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How strongly do you agree with the following statement about mainstream Canadian society: "Most Canadians have a positive perception of dogs, and regard them as loyal, affectionate companions."

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

With reference to the previous question, what is your personal opinion of the favourable "mainstream" view of dogs in Canada?

- Strongly Positive
- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative
- Strongly Negative

Please elaborate if necessary

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How frequently are you in contact with dogs?

- Never
- Once every few years
- A couple of times a year
- Once a month
- Every couple of weeks
- A few times a week
- Daily

Has your opinion concerning dogs been modified over your life in Canada?

- Yes, I now regard dogs more favourably
- Yes, I now regard dogs more unfavourably
- No, my opinion of dogs has not changed over the course of my life

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Page #4

*Branching Information*

• *If What factors have contributed to this modification... has a response then Skip to Page 6*

What factors have contributed to this modification of your opinion concerning dogs? Check all that apply.

- Increased exposure
- Good experiences
- Popular media
- Other, please specify...

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Page #5

*Branching Information*

- *If What factors have contributed to this modification... has a response then Skip to Page 6*

What factors have contributed to this modification of your opinion concerning dogs? Check all that apply.

- Increased exposure
- Lack of exposure
- Negative Experiences
- Popular Media
- Other, please specify...

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Page #6

*Branching Information*

- *If Do you currently own a dog or have you ever owned ... = Yes, by my own choice then Skip to Page 7*
- *If Do you currently own a dog or have you ever owned ... = No then Skip to Page 8*
- *If Do you currently own a dog or have you ever owned ... = Yes, but not by my own choice (i.e. the dog belongs to someone else in the household) then Skip to Page 7*
- *If Do you currently own a dog or have you ever owned ... = Yes, but not by my own choice (i.e. the dog belongs to someone else in the household) then Hide Do you agree with the following statement: "My dec..."*
- *If Do you currently own a dog or have you ever owned ... = Yes, but not by my own choice (i.e. the dog belongs to someone else in the household) then Hide Please elaborate if necessary*

Do you currently own a dog or have you ever owned a dog?

- Yes, by my own choice
- Yes, but not by my own choice (i.e. the dog belongs to someone else in the household)
- No

Please elaborate if necessary

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What role does your dog play in your life? Check all that apply.

- Pet/Companion
  - Protection/Security (i.e. a guard dog)
  - Working dog (i.e. hunting, guarding livestock, police dog)
  - Service/Assistance dog (i.e. Guide dog)
  - Therapy
  - Breeding
  - Temporary/Fostering
  - Other, please specify...
- 
- 
- 

How long have you owned a dog(s)?

- Less than a week
  - A week to a few weeks
  - A few weeks to several months
  - Several months to a year
  - A year
  - Multiple years
  - Other, please specify...
- 
- 
- 

Did you get your dog(s) before or after you became a Muslim?

- Before I became a Muslim
  - After I became a Muslim
  - I was born a Muslim
  - Other, please specify...
- 
- 
- 

To what part of your residence is your dog allowed?

- Permitted everywhere in the residence
  - Permitted everywhere in the residence, except in "prayer spaces"
  - Only permitted in the backyard
  - Other, please specify...
-

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What household rules apply to your dog? Check all that apply

- None
  - Only specific family members handle the dog
  - Isolated from guests
  - Isolated during prayer/meditation
  - Hands are washed after contact
  - Other, please specify...
- 
- 

What is the general opinion of your dog ownership by Muslim family and friends that do not have dogs?

- Strongly Positive
- Positive
- Neutral (No opinion expressed)
- Negative
- Strongly Negative
- Not applicable

Please elaborate if necessary

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Do you agree with the following statement: "My decision to own a dog was a conscious choice to "fit in" with the "mainstream" Canadian attitude towards dogs."

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral (Never thought about it)
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Please elaborate if necessary

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Are there individuals in your residence (including yourself) that have a negative opinion of dogs?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable, I live alone

Please elaborate if necessary

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Do you wish to own a dog?

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, somewhat
- Neutral
- No
- No, definitely not

Please elaborate if necessary

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What are your reasons for not currently owning a dog? Check all that apply

- Expense
- Time
- Space
- Not permitted in place of residence
- Hygiene
- Allergies and/or other medical conditions
- Fear of dogs
- Concerns from family (or other members of the household)
- Cultural concerns
- Religious concerns
- I do not like dogs
- Other, please specify... \_\_\_\_\_

Are there individuals in your residence that have expressed the desire to own a dog?

- No, no one in my residence has expressed this desire
- Not applicable, I live alone
- Yes

Please elaborate if necessary

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Do you feel there is external pressure to own a dog?

- No, not at all
- Not really
- Somewhat

- Yes, I feel there is some
- Yes, definitely

Please elaborate if necessary

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What do you do when you are greeted by a friendly dog? (i.e. do you behave affectionately towards it, or do you try to avoid such situations?). Please also list any practices that you engage in when meeting a dog (e.g., avoiding physical contact, washing hands after contact, etc.).

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Can you imagine ever owning a dog to "fit in" with the "mainstream" of Canada?

- Yes
- No
- Never thought about it
- Other, please specify... \_\_\_\_\_

Please elaborate if necessary

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Page #9

What words come to mind when you think of dogs?

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Please elaborate if necessary

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*Branching Information*

• *If How extensively do you read or watch American or C... = I almost never engage in American or Canadian-based media then Skip to Page 13*

How extensively do you read or watch American or Canadian-based media (i.e. movies, television, magazines etc.)?

- Very Extensively
- Extensively
- Somewhat
- Rarely
- I almost never engage in American or Canadian-based media

*Branching Information*

• *If In North American popular media, dogs are featured... = No, I'm not familiar with any of them then Skip to Page 13*

In North American popular media, dogs are featured prominently. These include characters like Lassie, Beethoven, Marmaduke, the Littlest Hobo, and the 101 Dalmatians among others. Are you familiar with any of these characters?

- Yes, I'm familiar with most or all of them.
- Yes, I'm familiar with some of them
- No, I'm not familiar with any of them

How do you feel about the prominent role that such dogs play in North American media?

- Strongly Positive
- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative
- Strongly Negative

Which breeds or roles of dogs (if any) do you regard unfavourably? Check all that apply

- I regard all pet dogs unfavourably
- I regard all Working dogs/Helper dogs unfavourably
- I regard large breeds unfavourably
- I regard small breeds unfavourably

- I regard black dogs unfavourably
- None - there are no types of dogs that I regard unfavourably
- Other, please specify... \_\_\_\_\_

Are you troubled by any of the following scenarios? Check all that apply

- The sight of a neighbour walking their dog
- The use of police sniffer dogs (i.e. at airports or border crossings)
- The presence of service/assistance dogs
- The presence of therapy dogs in hospitals
- The presence of leash-free dogs at a public park
- The sound of barking dogs
- No, I am not troubled by any of these scenarios

Please elaborate if necessary

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How do you regard animals? Check all that apply

- I regard animals as "persons"
- I regard animals as equal to humans
- I regard animals as superior to humans
- I think animals should be treated with care and respect
- I regard animals as servants to humans
- I regard animals unfavourably

Please elaborate if necessary

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Do you believe that animals have souls, or have an afterlife?

- I believe that animals have souls
- I believe that animals have an afterlife
- Both - I believe that animals possess souls and have an afterlife
- No - I do not believe that animals possess souls, nor have an afterlife
- Other, please specify... \_\_\_\_\_

Please elaborate if necessary

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How strongly do you agree with the following statement: "If I came across an unfamiliar dog that was in great physical or emotional distress, I would do my best to help it."

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Please elaborate if necessary

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Have you ever owned, or purchased as a gift for someone else, an iconic form of dog? (Such as a stuffed animal, charm or poster)

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Do you have any personal anecdotes/stories that summarize your history with dogs?

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Page #14

*Branching Information*

- *If What is your current Citizenship status? = I was an adult (aware) immigrant to Canada then Skip to Page 15*
- *If What is your current Citizenship status? = I was born in Canada, but my parents/guardians are immigrants then Skip to Page 16*
- *If What is your current Citizenship status? = I was a very young (unaware) immigrant to Canada then Skip to Page 16*
- *If What is your current Citizenship status? = I was born in Canada as were my parents/guardians then Skip to Page 17*

What is your current Citizenship status?

- I was born in Canada as were my parents/guardians
- I was born in Canada, but my parents/guardians are immigrants
- I was a very young (unaware) immigrant to Canada
- I was an adult (aware) immigrant to Canada

Please elaborate if necessary

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How long have you lived in Canada?

- 1 year or less
- 1 year to less than 10 years
- 10 years to less than 20 years
- 20 years or more

Were you aware of this favourable "mainstream" view of dogs prior to coming to Canada? (e.g., was this fact included in your Newcomer information?)

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable
- Other, please specify... \_\_\_\_\_

Please elaborate if necessary

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Have you experienced any culture shock in regards to the positive attitudes towards dogs in Canada?

- Very Strongly
- Strongly
- Somewhat
- Very Little
- None at all
- Not Applicable

How might the cultural shock of recent immigrants with strong religious views on dogs be minimized when confronted with the "mainstream" view of Canada?

- Better education of "mainstream" population
- Better Newcomer information for immigrants
- No changes necessary
- Other, please specify... \_\_\_\_\_

Please elaborate if necessary

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To what country other than Canada do you and your family have the strongest cultural/family ties (or from what country have you recently immigrated)?

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How connected do you feel to Canadian culture?

- Very strongly connected
- Quite connected
- Somewhat connected
- Not very connected
- Not connected at all

How connected do you feel to the culture of your home country?

- Very strongly connected
- Quite connected
- Somewhat connected
- Not very connected
- Not connected at all

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Your social circle is...

- Almost all Muslim
- Mostly Muslim, but some non-Muslim
- A combination of Muslim and non-Muslim
- Mostly non-Muslim

In Canadian society, do you feel discriminated against because of your Muslim background?

- Yes, strongly
- Yes, quite a bit
- Somewhat
- No, very little
- No, none at all

How would you describe your religious affiliation?

- By birth
- By conversion (10 years or more)
- By conversion (less than 10 years)

How often do you attend religious services?

- Never
- Once a year or less
- A few times a year
- A few times a month
- Once a week
- More than once a week

How often do you spend time in private religious activities, such as prayer, meditation or scripture study?

- Rarely or never
- A few times a month
- Once a week
- Two or more times a week
- Daily
- More than once a day

Please indicate the opinion on the following statement that is the most true to you: "My religious beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life"

- Definitely not true
- Tends not to be true
- Unsure
- Tends to be true
- Definitely true of me

How authoritative/authentic do you consider the prominent Hadiths to be?

- Very authentic
- Authentic
- Somewhat authentic
- Somewhat inauthentic
- Very inauthentic

Please elaborate if necessary

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What is your age?

- 19 or under
- 20 - 29
- 30 - 39
- 40 - 49
- 50 - 59
- 60 or over
- Skip question

What is your sex?

- Male
- Female
- Skip question

What is your marital status?

- Single

- Married
- Common Law
- Divorced
- Skip question
- Other, please specify... \_\_\_\_\_

What are your current living arrangements? If you are living with other people, check all that apply.

- Living alone
- Living with Partner/Spouse
- Living with parents, or other older family members
- Living with children
- Living with dependents other than children
- Other, please specify... \_\_\_\_\_

What is your highest level of education?

- Primary/Elementary (or equivalent)
- Secondary School (or equivalent)
- Post-Secondary School (Certificate, College or University)
- Post-Graduate
- Other, please specify... \_\_\_\_\_

What is your current living situation?

- Urban - Apartment/Condo
- Urban - House
- Rural - House
- Rural - Farm
- Other, please specify... \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for participating in this survey!

Would you be willing to provide your e-mail address for the purpose of further participating in this research in the form of a more in depth e-mail interview?

- Yes (please provide email address) \_\_\_\_\_

Any comments?

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- By submitting this survey I confirm that the information provided above is true and allow this information to be used for research purposes ONLY.

## **Appendix B - Ethical Considerations and Limitations**

### **The Use of Online Forums**

In addition to those threads created specifically for my research, I also analyzed older threads on Muslim forums concerning issues pertaining to dogs. The reason for this was that they provided a wealth of subtopics that would not necessarily be addressed in the survey.

As these older threads were created years ago, there are issues of informed consent raised in regards to the utilization of the material, as well as anonymity. Despite being public forums, even relatively anonymous users may be identifiable, as the standards of anonymity in online communities are not the same as the standards in anthropological ethical contexts.

Malin Sveningsson (2004) remarks that two important variables to consider in online studies are the degree of public-private perceptions within the forum, and how sensitive the information is that it contains. For instance, a public medium with non-sensitive information might imply a loosening of ethical obligations. However, there are still concerns that the users do not realize they are being observed, and therefore unable to properly provide consent (Sveningsson 2004: 55). Even if the research being carried out deals with non-sensitive data, there are still concerns with individuals being identified (Sveningsson 2004: 56). There is no pure anonymity, as users may be identified through email, and usernames may contain the individual's real name. There should not be an assumption that their username or nickname provides any form of protection (Lawson 2004: 84). Several authors have highlighted another important distinction, that while an Internet medium may be public, the members may not perceive it as such, and that their writings do not necessarily become public domain (Lawson 2004: 85; Sveningsson 2004: 57; Roberts, Smith & Pollock 2004: 161).

In keeping with these suggestions, for this portion I drew upon the overall themes and trends that arose from the discussions. As such, no usernames, dates, forum names or direct quotes will be utilized from these discussions. Compounded with the fact that a multitude of threads were analyzed, it is unlikely that material will be traceable to a singular post or individual.

## **The Use of Surveys**

While there were not any foreseeable ethics concerns regarding this study, precautions were taken to ensure the privacy of the participants, as this is a controversial issue among some Muslims. At the beginning of the survey, the participants were given an overview of the purpose of the study, and were given the option to proceed to the rest of the survey, or decline. Participants were not required to answer every single question. At the end of the survey, the participants were given the option to either submit or discard their results. The individuals who provided their email address were given the ability to opt out of this process. Incomplete surveys were deleted and not utilized in the study. The email participants were provided a copy of a consent form, as well as a description of the research. As this research was conducted online, the participants were given the option of only requiring their email address for the consent form. They were instructed to provide answers for these questions and to respond through email. They were permitted to write as much or as little as they wished and were also allowed to skip questions they did not feel comfortable answering.

## **Limitations**

As this survey was distributed over the Internet through online communities, certain demographics have consequently been largely excluded. Firstly, a “technology gap” may have hindered the access of less computer-savvy individuals, namely the elderly. Although the survey recommended that the participants pass on the survey to such individuals, they are a demographic that is largely underrepresented. As a result, the survey participants are largely female and well-educated. This study was conducted online due to the difficulty of finding such communities otherwise. Secondly, as the survey was in English, this may have hindered access from French-speaking regions of the country, as well as recent immigrants or ESL persons. Further research should be conducted in such a manner that allows these groups to be better represented. Conducting an online survey also raises the possibility of a difference between how people behave on the Internet in contrast to their daily life. While the anonymity of the survey may have allowed participants the

opportunity to answer freely, it is difficult to verify the true authenticity of their information. Also, for the sake of narrowing my scope, I exclusively used data from Canadian participants. It would be useful to compare results in other Western countries.

While this survey allowed for some open-ended questions, the nature of a stringent and structured survey does not allow for the respondent to discuss the issues that they perceive to be the most important and relevant. I aimed to remedy this problem with the inclusion of the Muslim forum analysis, in which individuals have greater control over which issues are raised and how they are discussed.

The term “Canadian Muslim” is also a bit of an ambiguous one, as Muslims hail from a diverse range of countries and cultural backgrounds. However, a general universality among worldwide Muslims is the adherence to the Qur’ān as a source of truth. The importance of scriptural tradition as an informer on the status of dogs was why ethnicity is not treated with great importance in this survey. However, participants (namely immigrants) were given the option of listing their home country, or the one to which they had the closest connection.

## Appendix C - Dogs in Other Islamic Sources

### Kitāb al-Hayawān - The Book of Animals

The prolific Iraqi author Abu ‘Uthman ‘Amr ibn Bahr al-Fuqaymi al-Basri al-Jāhiz (776-869) wrote the most prominent Islamic work of zoology, known as *Kitāb al-Hayawān* or “The Book of Animals.” This seven volume work draws upon Aristotle’s ‘History of Animals’ and contains a multitude of information on animal folklore, Qur’ānic-based taxonomy, and postulates an early theory of evolution (Foltz 2006a: 55-59). While the complete *Kitāb al-Hayawān* has not been translated into English, translated excerpts exist in Charles Pellat’s (1969) “*The Life and Works of Jahiz – Translations of selected texts*” as well as an abridged French translation under the name “*Le Cadi et la Mouche: Anthologie du Livre des Animaux*” by Lakhdar Souami (1988).

A major component of *Kitāb al-Hayawān* concerns the merits of dogs in comparison to roosters; a debate between a supporter of the dog (*sāhib al-kalb*) and the supporter of the rooster/cock (*sāhib al-dīk*) (Foltz 2006a: 135; Smith & Abdel Haleem 1978: xxvii; Pellat 1969: 138-145; Viré 2013). In the case of dogs, he highlights both their merits and shortcomings.

Al-Jāhiz cites the importance and prevalence of dogs among the Bedouin: “If you were to visit every single Bedouin tent in the world, looking for one which did not contain one dog or more, you would not find it! Thus were the Bedouin before and after Islam” (Ibn al-Marzubān 1978: xxvii Introduction by Smith & Abdel Haleem).

Al-Jāhiz raises some points about where the dog lies in regards to humans and other animals. He writes: “Species that are never wild but only domestic include the dog, which nevertheless is carnivorous; only mad dogs turn wild. As regards hyaenas, wolves, lions, panthers, tigers, foxes and jackals, they are all wild” (Pellat 1969: 173). While it appears to favour a distinction between the “domestic” dogs and “wild” animals, the dog is nonetheless acknowledged as being potentially dangerous. Al-Jāhiz then writes the following example:

A Bedouin once reared a wolf cub, thinking it would be better than a dog for guarding his flock. But as soon as it was big and strong enough it attacked a ewe and slit its throat – for that is the way of wolves – and ate part of it. When its master saw the havoc it has wrought, he cried: *Thou hast eaten my little ewe, thou who wert brought up among us! Who told thee thy father was a wolf?*” [Pellat 1969: 173-174]

Indeed, regarding the liminal nature of the dog, al-Jāhiz remarks that dogs exist on the threshold between the wild and the domestic spheres (Campo 2009: 201). He writes:

The dog is incapable of knowing his own interests and acting accordingly, since his temperament (*tabʿ*) lacks the self-preservation of ferocious beasts, or their ingenuity, their wiles (*ihdiyāl*) to ensure survival, or their ability to learn to recognize the places offering shelter to those who are exposed and formidable. All these defects are related to the fact that the *dog is not totally wild or totally domestic, so that one might take to be a hybrid (khalq murakkab), a composite mixture of heterogeneous natures (tabaʿiʿ mulaffaqa), a cross-breed of different tempers (akhlāt)*. It is comparable to a mule whose congenital dispositions (*akhlāq*) its polymorphs (*mutalawwin*), and its many defects are caused by his temperament (*mizāj*). [Souami 1989: 291-292 emphasis added]

According to Charles Pellat, al-Jāhiz spends part of his work attempting to refute legends (Pellat 1969: 139). Al-Jāhiz tells of a classmate who had been badly bitten by a dog. Upon his return a month later, his injury had healed, leaving only a scar. Al-Jāhiz remarks that he had not “barked or whined like a dog, asked for water and when it came said ‘Take it away’, or pissed things shaped like puppies or leeches...” (Pellat 1969: 139-140). By this implication, it appears there had been the belief that being bitten by a mad dog would result in such dog-like behaviours. He also argued that the Islamic rulings promoting the killing of dogs should only be used in particular circumstances, not as a general rule (Foltz 2006b: 157).

Al-Jāhiz also provides descriptions of several dog breeds, including the Kurdish sheep-dog (*kurḍī*) and the Kuwatz, which was probably an ancestor of the Hungarian herd-dog. (Viré 2013) as well as numerous others (Souami 1988: 204).

### **The Book of the Superiority of Dogs Over Many of Those Who Wear Clothes**

Ibn al-Marzubān’s (d. 921) “The Book of the Superiority of Dogs Over Many of Those Who Wear Clothes” (*Kitāb fadl al-kilāb ‘alā kathīr mimman labisa al-thiyāb*) is a literary collection from

tenth century Iraq. The book was conceived through a conversation between Ibn al-Marzubān and a friend. Ibn al-Marzubān was disheartened at the moral state of society, expressing nostalgia for desert life and a close-knit tribal unit and brotherhood (Ibn al-Marzubān 1978: x Introduction by Smith & Abdel Haleem).

This book illustrates both the moral decline of humans, as well as highlighting the valued qualities of dogs through a collection of stories and poetry. Comparing dogs to wicked humans, however, does not necessarily imply high regard for the former. The fact that there has been so much hostility and negative perceptions towards dogs, the book may be interpreted as scorning certain humans, rather than praising the qualities of dogs.

As the translators G. R. Smith and M. A. Abdel Haleem note in the introduction, Ibn al-Marzubān appears to be drawing upon numerous stories and anecdotes that are mentioned in al-Jāhiz's *Kitāb al-Hayawān*, although al-Jāhiz himself is not cited.

Ibn al-Marzubān notes a poem by Abū 'l-'Abbās al-Azdī, which reads:

Human dogs, If you consider them,  
do more harm to you than real dogs!  
For you can drive the real dog away and off he goes,  
but a human dog crouches ready to reproach you  
Moreover, a dog does no harm to those around him;  
but you are constantly tortured by human dogs [Ibn al-Marzubān 1978:  
12]

With the use of the words “human dogs” and “real dogs,” this poem indicates a rather disparaging attitude towards dogs (Tlili 2009: 81). However, the positive qualities of the dog are emphasized; Ibn al-Marzubān denotes faithfulness as a strong virtue of the dog, citing a story of a dog guarding its master's grave (Ibn al-Marzubān 1978: 10). Other poems emphasize the good qualities of a dog, and emphasizes that humans should become a “perfect dog” (Ibn al-Marzubān 1978: 16).

Like al-Jāhiz, Ibn al-Marzubān also rejects the sanctions that promote killing dogs. He exclaims: “...Anyone who ordered dogs to be killed in the past, did so only for a specific reason; dogs in

general are another matter altogether” (Ibn al-Marzubān 1978: 14). He also describes dogs as being kept in palaces (1978: 14), and implies that Saluki dogs were permitted within a Bedouin’s tent (1978: 22). In the theme of the wild/domestic dichotomy, Ibn al-Marzubān cites ‘Umar b. al-Khattāb, who stresses the dog’s domestic, human-like nature:

Those who have no sound judgement say that the dog is a wild predator. If that were so, the dog would not have been domesticated by man, would not have shunned wild predators, would not have avoided thickets, would not have settled in houses, would not have developed an aversion for deserts, would not have shunned waste lands nor would he have grown used to sitting around with people and sleeping in their homes. This clearly is the case, for the dog takes no pleasure in sleeping and lying around on the ground. Nor does he see a carpet or a cushion without getting on it and stretching out. There is no clean, dignified place accessible to him to which he would not make his way. You can see a dog always choosing the best spots in the majlis and the places which are specially kept by his master. [Ibn al-Marzubān 1978: 15]

A prominent motif in some of the stories is about a man whose wife cheats on him with his best friend. The dog, upon catching them together, kills both of them. When the man realizes what has happened, the dog becomes the new best friend (Ibn al-Marzubān 1978: 30-31). There are also numerous other stories of dogs defending their masters (1978: 26-27).

Ibn al-Marzubān cites the Prophet Muhammad, his Companions and successors on several occasions to support his arguments. However, these supposed quotations are not found in any of the more sound hadīths (Smith & Abdel Haleem 1978: xvi). He notes that one of the Prophet Muhammad’s wives – Maymūnah – had a dog named Mismār, who was taken on pilgrimage with her. She wept for his death saying “I am grieved to lose Mismār!” (Ibn al-Marzubān 1978: 15).

### **The Case of the Animals Versus Man Before the King of the Jinn**

“The Case of the Animals Versus Man Before the King of the Jinn” is an allegorical tale. It was written by a group of 10th century writers in Basra who refer to themselves as “Ikhwān al-Safā”, or “The Brethren of Purity.” This work is number twenty-two out of a series of fifty-two epistles. It is a fable that begins with a group of humans shipwrecked on an island in which the animal inhabitants are free of humans. Tension arises between the humans, perceiving animals as their servants, and the

animals, who reject this purpose. The result is a court case presided over by the King of the Jinn, wherein the humans attempt to prove their case that animals exist for human use. The animals also protest the poor treatment they have received.

The domestic dog and cat play a unique role in this fable. There was debate about whether such creatures should be considered wild animals or humans due to their perceived closeness to humankind. As a jackal notes about dogs, “have they not sheltered with humans and turned ally to them against all beasts of prey?” (Ikhwān al-Safā 2009: 158). The other animals consider domestic dogs to be gluttonous for consuming human food, and how they share the same undesirable qualities as humans (i.e. greed). The dogs are said to have lived among humans since the time of Cain and Abel, enticed by Cain’s luxury after plundering his brother’s wealth (Ikhwān al-Safā 2009: 158-161). However, the animals also criticize the humans for their mistreatment of domestic animals, including dogs and cats, and by denying them their basic instincts about food, water, and rest (Ikhwān al-Safā 2009: 251).

## Appendix D - Forum Topics and Coding

The following is a full list of the main topics that were discussed within online Muslim forums regarding dogs.

### **Dogs are unclean (203 references)**

- Washing (after contact) (84 references)

### **Dogs are *not* unclean (87 references)**

### **Human and Dog spatial dynamics within the home (161 references)**

- Angels will not enter (70 references)

### **Contact with dogs (27 references)**

### **Dogs in scripture and religion**

- Citing online scholarly resources (70 references)
- “There is nothing negative about dogs in the Qur’ān” (30 references)
- “Dogs are a part of creation” (47 references)
- The Companions of the Cave story (71 references)
- Asking about dogs (47 references)

### **Discussions of different madhab/schools concerning dogs (103 references)**

### **The question of keeping dogs**

- Guard dogs and hunting dogs are permissible (i.e. working dogs) (165 references)
- Dogs should not be kept as a pet (i.e. not for frivolous reasons) (66 references)
- Dogs are animals – keeping them as pets is cruel (6 references)

### **Personal stories about dogs (67 references)**

- Owning dogs
  - Would like to have a dog, but cannot have one (15 references)
  - New converts who have dogs (23 references)

### **Positive qualities of dogs (67 references)**

- Good qualities of dogs (67 references)
- Man’s best friend (16 references)

### **Negative view of dogs (60 references)**

- Criticism of bad dog owners (36 references)
- Criticism of dog ownership in general
  - Economic reasons (i.e. waste of resources) (11 references)
  - Becoming too emotionally attached to dog (9 references)

### **Animal Welfare**

- “Dogs and other animals should be treated kindly” (116 references)
- “We should love dogs, but not own them” (19 references)

**Rabies and Zoonoses (61 references)**

- Counterpoint: Humans (19 references) and other animals (24 references) have diseases too

**Citing news articles (26 references)**

**Other Pets (45 references)**

**Killing dogs (14 references)**

**Black dogs (15 references)**

**Eating dogs (11 references)**

**Buying/selling/trading dogs (7 references)\**

**Blocking prayers (5 references)**

## Appendix E - Online Survey Data

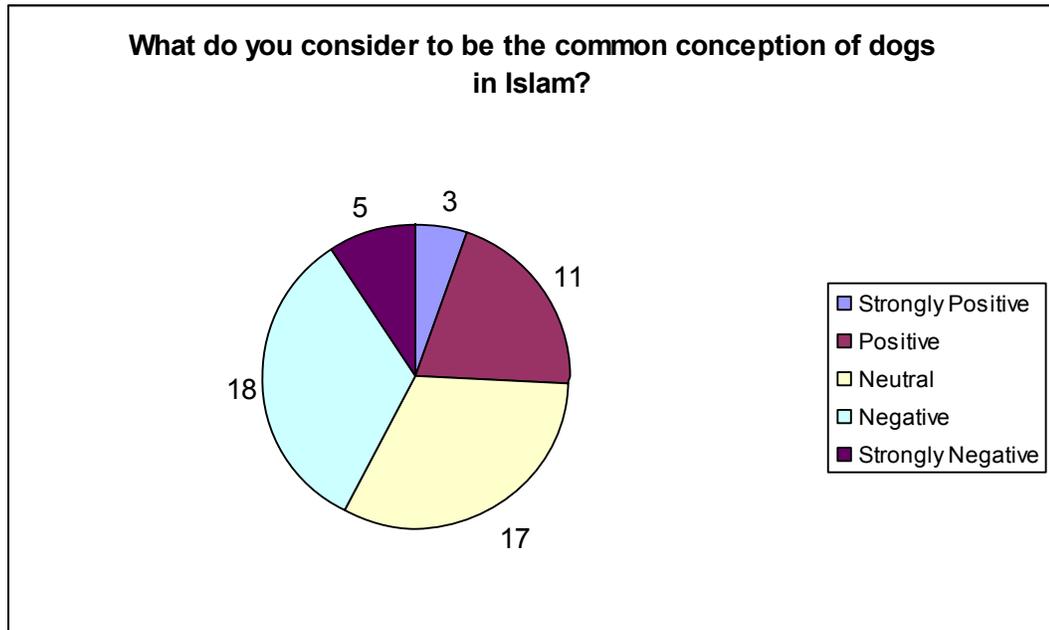


Figure 5 - What do you consider to be the common conception of dogs in Islam?

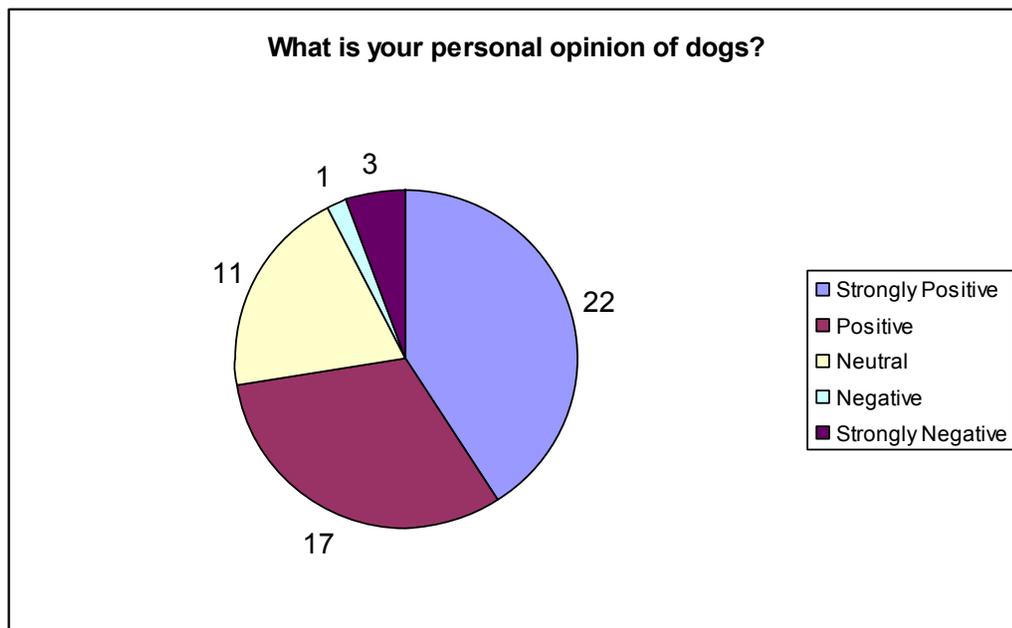


Figure 6 - What is your personal opinion of dogs?

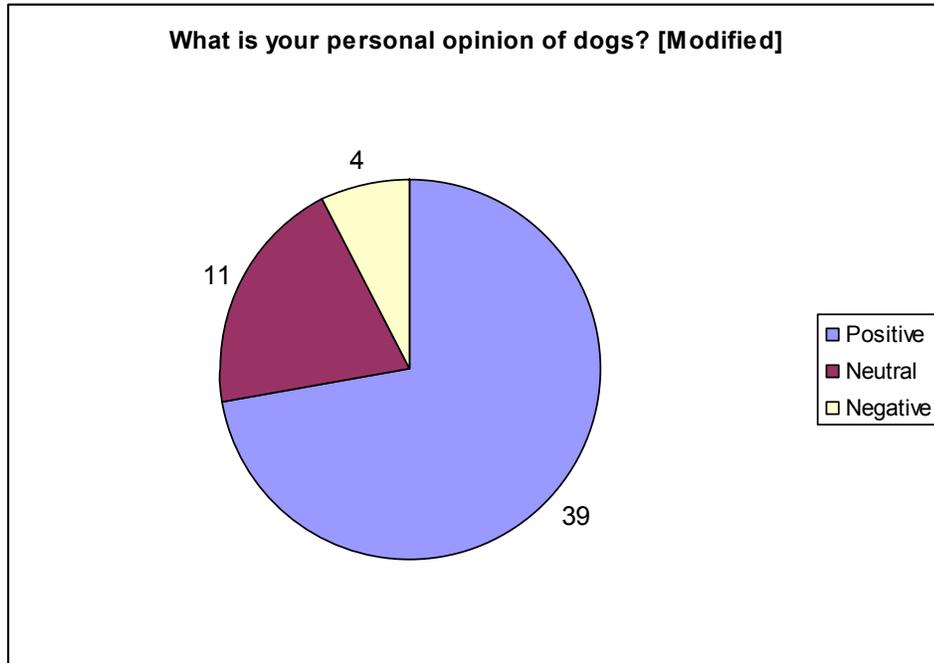


Figure 7 - What is your personal opinion of dogs [Modified]

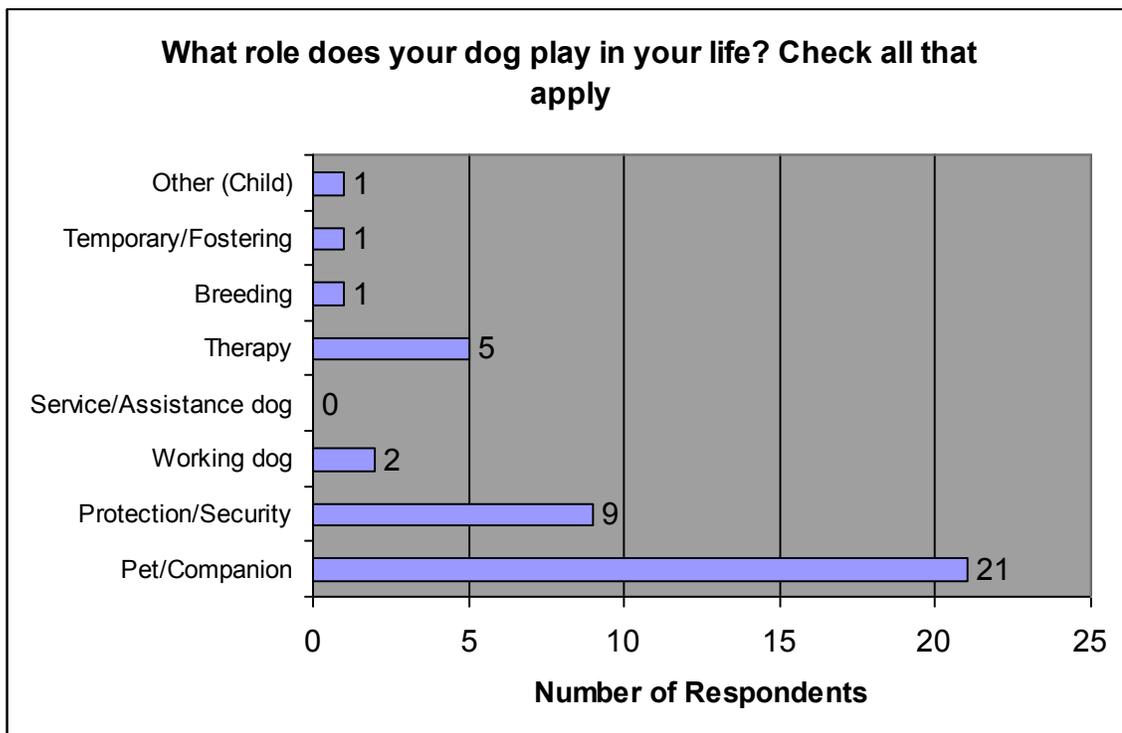


Figure 8 - What role does your dog play in your life? Check all that apply. Data was collected from those who stated that they currently own a dog, or have owned one in the past.

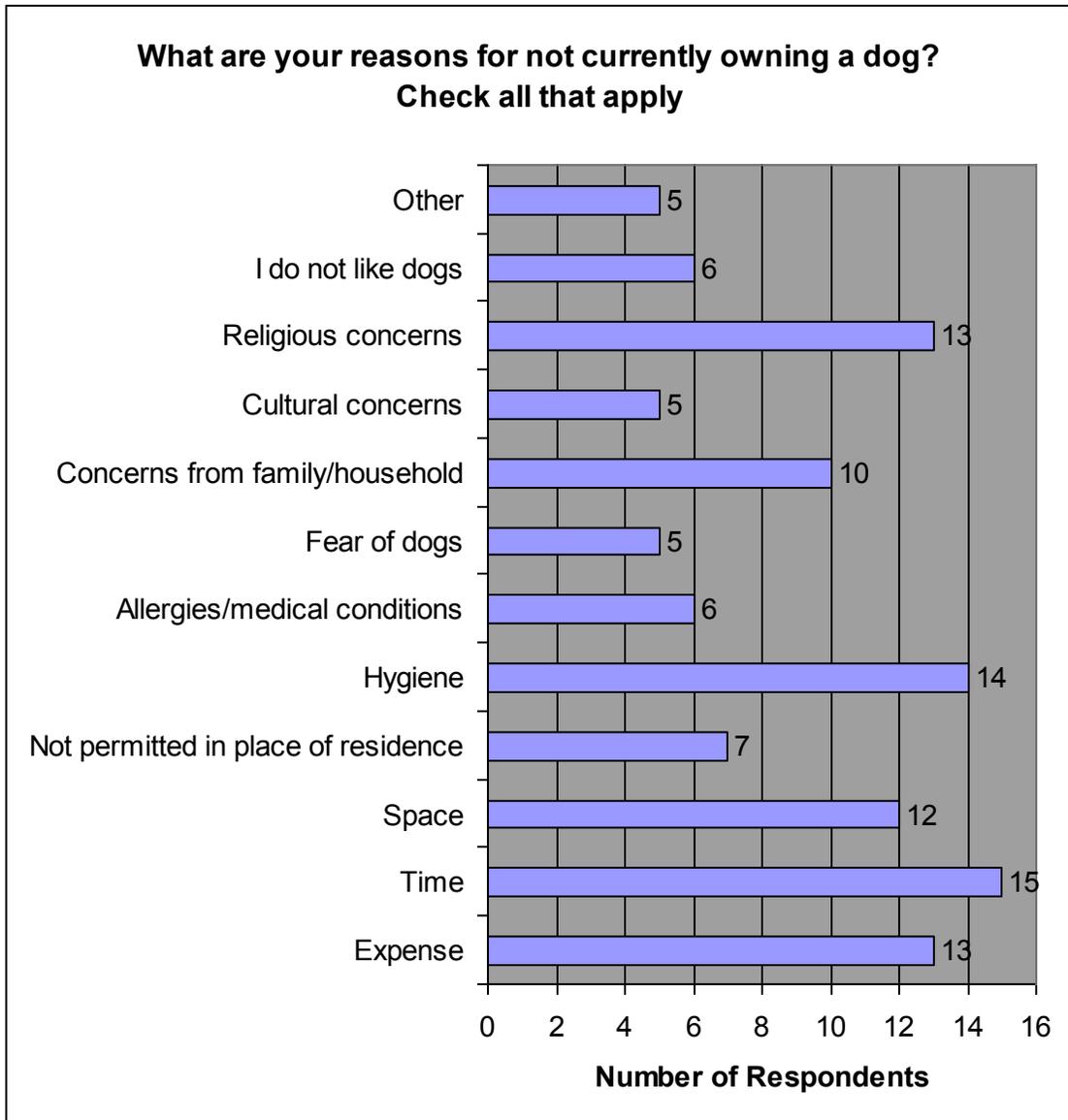


Figure 9 - What are your reasons for not currently owning a dog? Check all that apply. Data was collected from those who stated that they have never owned a dog.

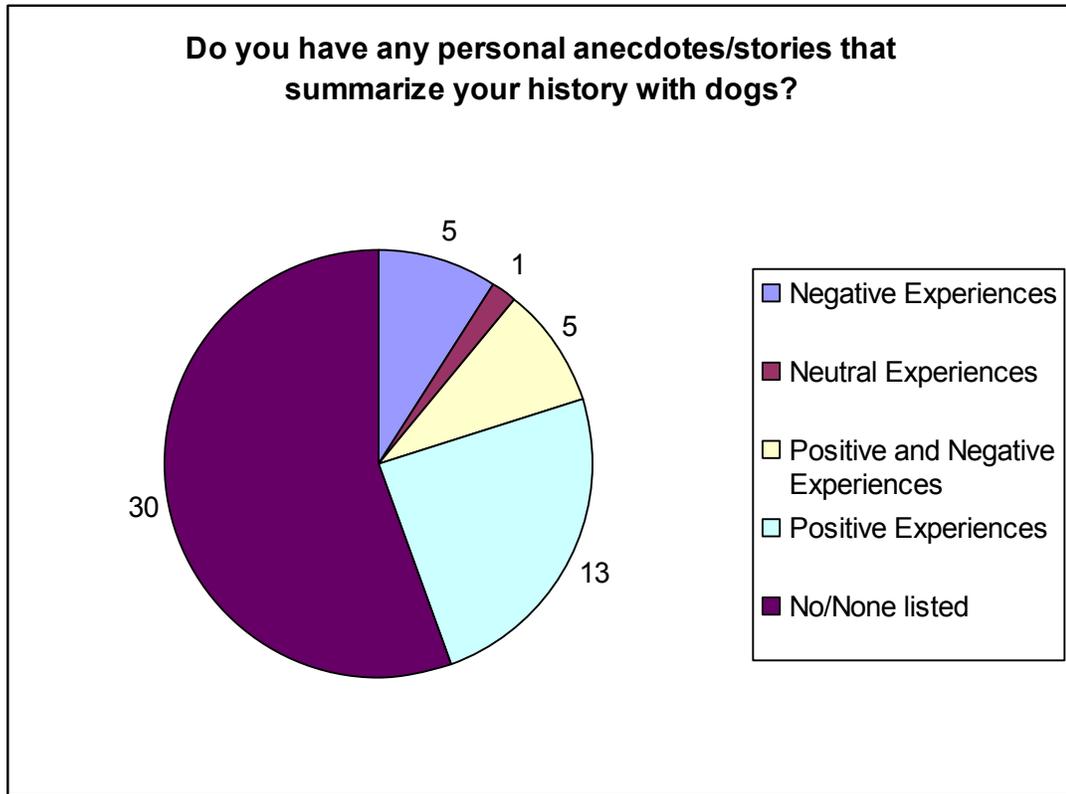


Figure 10 - Do you have any personal anecdotes/stories that summarize your history with dogs?

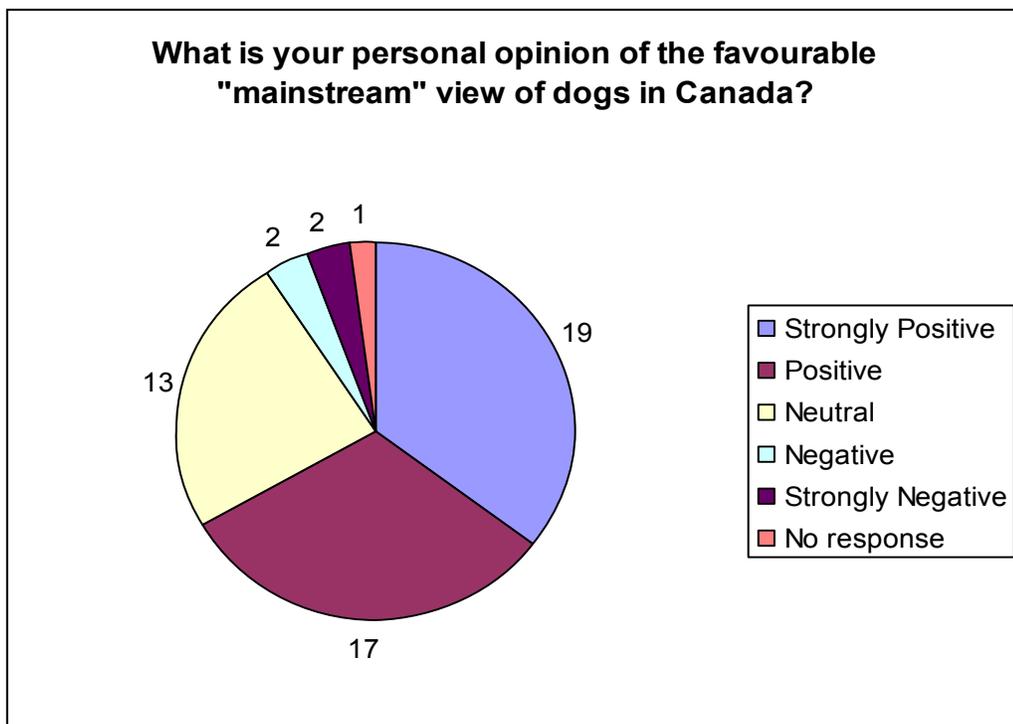


Figure 11 - What is your personal opinion of the favourable "mainstream" view of dogs in Canada?

## Appendix F - Additional Online Survey Data Part 1

This section of the appendix contains data from the online survey that is extraneous to the main findings and themes. This data does not produce many strong correlations, but they may be of interest to future research.

### Should dogs be owned as pets?

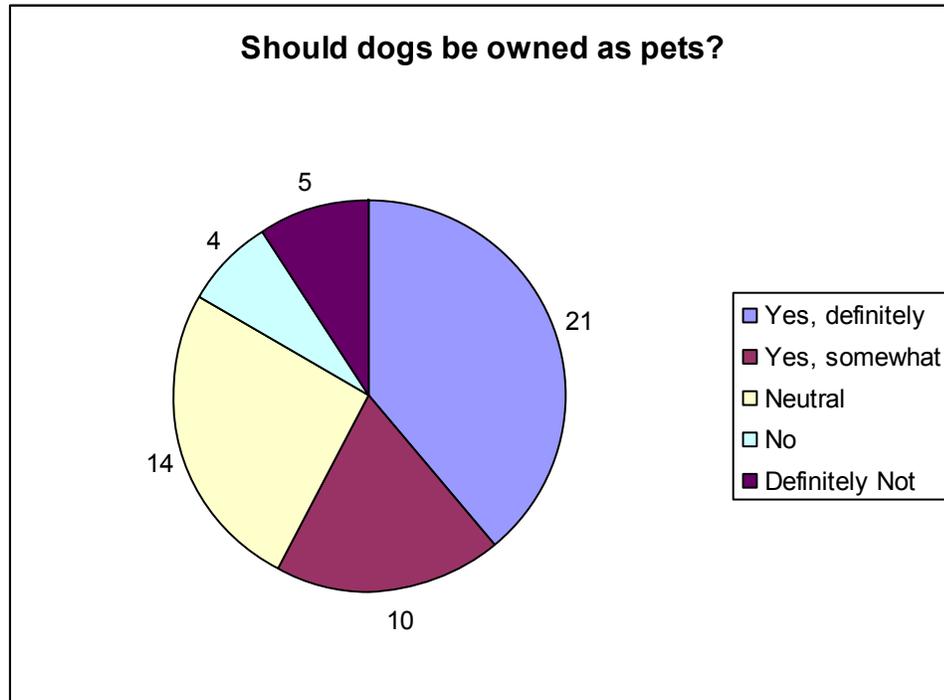


Figure 12 - Should dogs be owned as pets?

The responses to this question were quite diverse (Figure 12). As with other questions on this survey, many gave the example of “hypothetical” dogs, in which keeping dogs in permitted under certain circumstances (i.e. outside of the house, out of “prayer spaces” etc.). One respondent wrote:

...dogs can be owned, however must be taken care of, and generally should be owned if there is a necessary reason for something of routine life (seeing-dog, hunting, etc). Having a dog for the sake of having one is allowed, though has some restrictions when it comes to having them in the house.”

Similarly to the question about one’s opinions of dogs, respondents also spoke of their personal dogs and the positive traits of dogs, such as their companionship. One described dogs as “excellent

companions and defenders of the household.” Conversely, one respondent wrote that they had no problem with people keeping dogs, but “[n]ot if you are muslim.” Three respondents rejected the concept of keeping dogs under the principle that animals should not be “owned,” mirroring some of the objections leveled against the use of the word “pet” (i.e. Grier 2006: 7; Sanders 1999: xiv).

### **How frequently are you in contact with dogs?**

The degree to which one experiences the human-dog interface is pertinent to one’s overall perception of dogs. This question, however, does not address the matter of choice, or whether these human-dog interactions are positive or negative. On an overall level, frequent close contact with dogs is more closely correlated with positive attitudes towards dogs (Figure 13).

**How frequently are you in contact with dogs?/What is your personal opinion of dogs?**

How frequently are you in contact with dogs?		Frequency	Percent
Missing	Neutral	1	100.0
A couple of times a year	Neutral	3	33.3
	Positive	6	66.7
	Total	9	100.0
A few times a week	Negative	1	7.1
	Positive	13	92.9
	Total	14	100.0
Daily	Negative	1	8.3
	Positive	11	91.7
	Total	12	100.0
Every couple of weeks	Negative	1	12.5
	Neutral	3	37.5
	Positive	4	50.0
	Total	8	100.0
Never	Negative	1	25.0
	Neutral	2	50.0
	Positive	1	25.0
	Total	4	100.0
Once a month	Neutral	1	25.0
	Positive	3	75.0
	Total	4	100.0
Once every few years	Neutral	1	50.0
	Positive	1	50.0
	Total	2	100.0

Figure 13 - Table comparing the frequency of contact with dogs (first column) with one's personal opinion of dogs (second column)

## Has your opinion concerning dogs been modified over your life in Canada?

This question aimed to explore what factors lead to changes in an individual's perception of dogs.

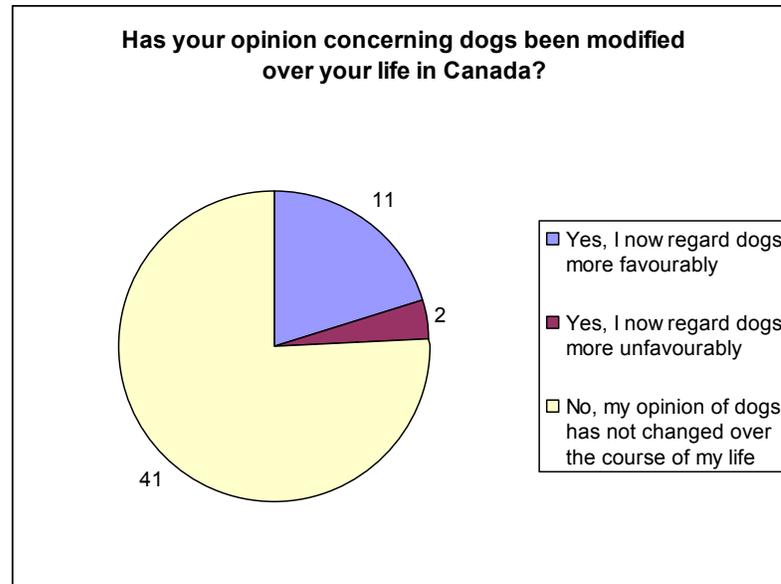


Figure 14 - Has your opinion concerning dogs been modified over your life in Canada?

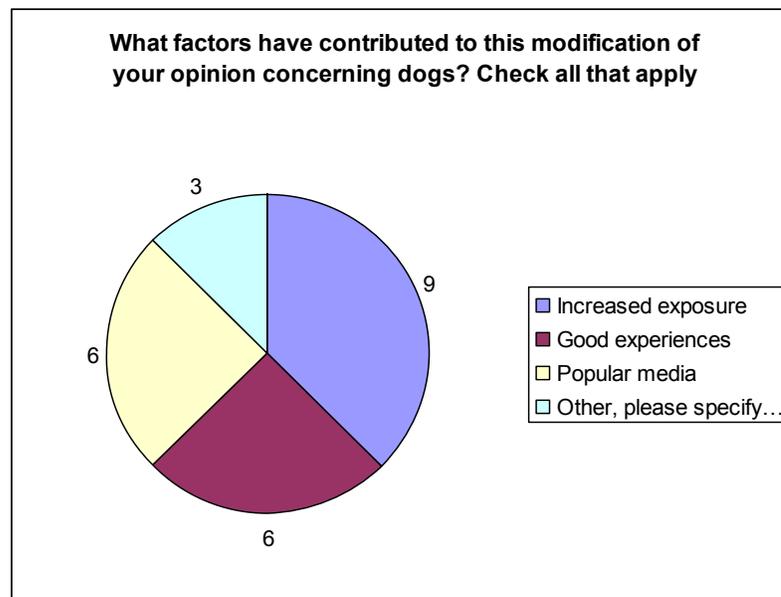


Figure 15 - What factors have contributed to this modification of your opinions concerning dogs? Check all that apply. Data was collected from those who wrote that they now regard dogs more *favourably*.

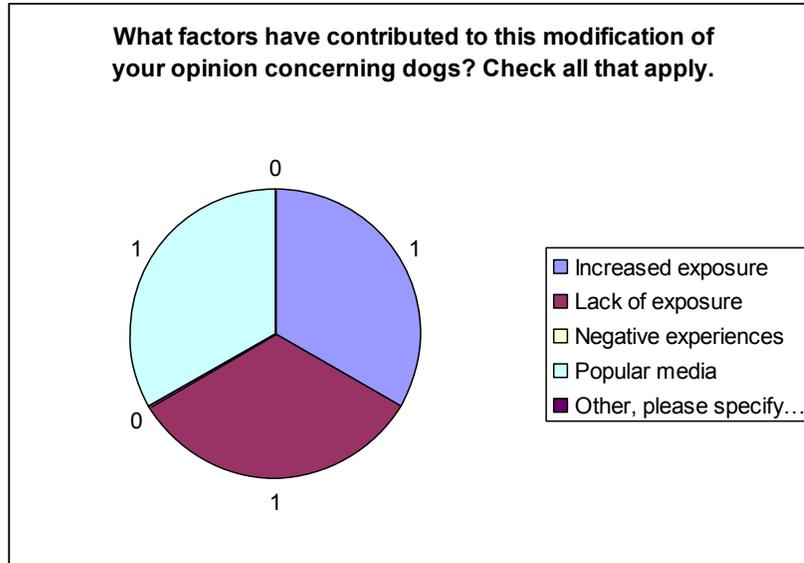


Figure 16 - What factors have contributed to this modification of your opinions concerning dogs? Check all that apply. Data was collected from those who wrote that they now regard dogs more *unfavourably*.

### Dog Ownership and Religious Affiliation

**How would you describe your religious affiliation?/Do you currently own a dog or have you ever owned a dog?**

How would you describe your religious affiliation?		Frequency	Percent
No response	Yes, but not by my own choice (i.e. the dog belongs to someone else in the household)	1	100.0
By birth	No	26	70.3
	Yes, but not by my own choice (i.e. the dog belongs to someone else in the household)	3	8.1
	Yes, by my own choice	8	21.6
	Total	37	100.0
By conversion (10 years or more)	No	3	50.0
	Yes, by my own choice	3	50.0
	Total	6	100.0
By conversion (less than 10 years)	No	1	10.0
	Yes, but not by my own choice (i.e. the dog belongs to someone else in the household)	1	10.0
	Yes, by my own choice	8	80.0
	Total	10	100.0

Figure 17 - Table comparing one's religious affiliation (first column) with whether one has owned a dog (second column)

## Did you get your dog(s) before or after you became a Muslim?

Many respondents had dogs prior to religious conversion.

**Did you get your dog(s) before or after you became a Muslim?/What is your personal opinion of dogs?**

Did you get your dog(s) before or after you became a Muslim?		Frequency	Percent
No response	Positive	1	100.0
	Negative	3	10.0
Not applicable	Neutral	11	36.7
	Positive	16	53.3
	Total	30	100.0
After I became a Muslim	Positive	2	100.0
Before I became a Muslim	Positive	8	100.0
I was born a Muslim	Negative	1	9.1
	Positive	10	90.9
	Total	11	100.0
Other, please specify...	Positive	2	100.0

Figure 18 - Table comparing the time of one's religious affiliation (first column) with personal opinion of dogs (second column). Data was collected from those who stated that they have owned a dog.

## Interaction with a Friendly Dog

“What do you do when you are greeted by a friendly dog? (i.e., do you behave affectionately towards it, or do you try to avoid such situations?). Please also list any practices that you engage in when meeting a dog (e.g., avoiding physical contact, washing hands after contact, etc.).”

This was a question that was asked of those who did not own dogs, as the survey would allow for similar information to be gleaned from those who did. Respondents were asked what they would do in the event of meeting a friendly dog, whether they tend to avoid such situations, or they respond positively towards the dog. The responses given tended to fall within the following categories. Five did not list a specific response.

Category 1: Tries to avoid such situations as much as possible. However, this may have to do with comfort level rather than general aversion.

2) Generally avoids interaction with dogs, but does not have serious reservations against such interactions. This grouping involves those who write that they usually avoid such situations, but will interact with the dog in certain circumstances.

3) Unclear or Context dependent – depends on whether they personally know the dog or the owner, as well as other factors.

4) Generally has no inhibitions about interaction with dogs and will behave affectionately towards them. However, they will wash their hands and/or change clothing afterwards.

5) Generally has no inhibitions about interaction with dogs and will behave affectionately towards them, but does not describe any washing or changing clothing, etc. This is very much similar to the previous category, although the respondent did not specifically mention washing up or changing clothing after physical contact with the dog. This is potentially an ambiguous category as it is based on an absence of information.

To an extent, this topic represents a form of religious negotiation within the human-dog interface in a similar manner demonstrated by those Muslims who have dogs. Some wrote, however, that they wash their hands after interacting with strange dogs for hygienic or allergy-related reasons. As in the case of dog owners, it is difficult to separate hand washing for religious proscriptions and health concerns (Figure 19).

When compared to one's personal opinions about dogs, positive perceptions of them tend to correlate to one's comfort level with interacting with them, as well as their willingness to engage in such interactions (Figure 20).

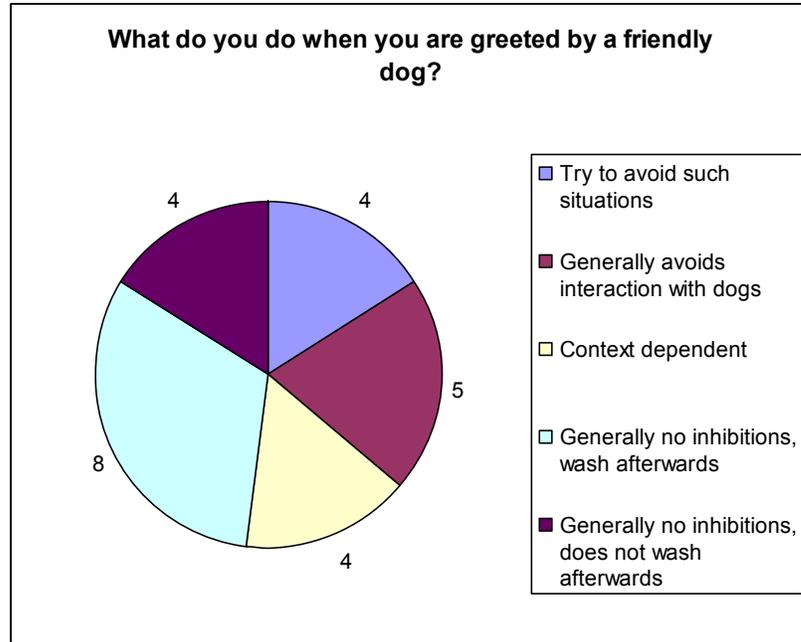


Figure 19 - What do you do when you are greeted by a friendly dog? Data was collected from those who stated that they have never owned a dog.

**What is your personal opinion of dogs?/What do you do when you are greeted by a friendly dog?**

What is your personal opinion of dogs?			Frequency	Percent
Negative	Valid	Try to avoid such situations	2	50.0
		Context dependent	1	25.0
		Total	3	75.0
	Missing	Not applicable	1	25.0
	Total		4	100.0
Neutral	Valid	Try to avoid such situations	2	18.2
		Generally avoids interaction with dogs	4	36.4
		Context dependent	1	9.1
		Generally no inhibitions, wash afterwards	1	9.1
		Total	8	72.7
	Missing	No response	3	27.3
	Total		11	100.0
Positive	Valid	Generally avoids interaction with dogs	1	2.6
		Context dependent	2	5.1
		Generally no inhibitions, wash afterwards	7	17.9
		Generally no inhibitions, does not wash afterwards	4	10.3
		Total	14	35.9
	Missing	Not applicable	23	59.0
		No response	2	5.1
		Total	25	64.1
	Total		39	100.0

Figure 20 - Table comparing one's personal opinion of dogs (first column) with how one reacts when meeting a friendly dog (second column)

## Appendix G - Additional Online Survey Data Part 2

Which breeds or roles of dogs (if any) do you regard unfavourably? Check all that apply.

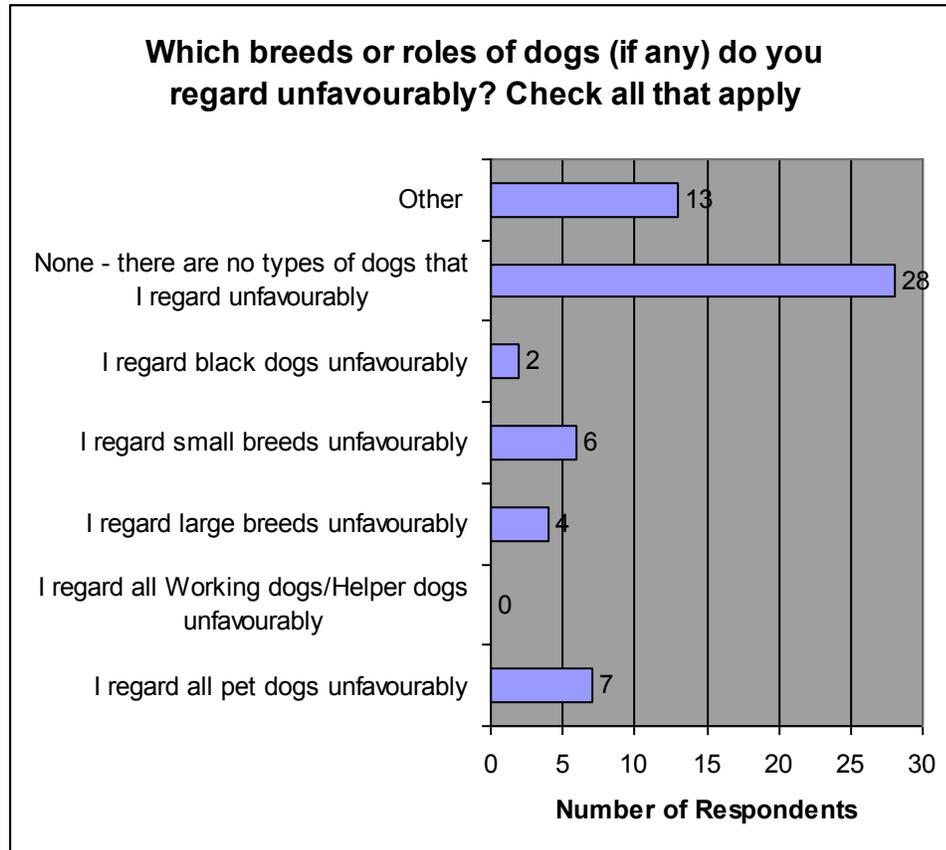


Figure 21 - Which breeds or roles (if any) do you regard unfavourably? Check all that apply.

Since “dogs” are not a homogenous group, respondents were asked “Which breeds or roles of dogs (if any) do you regard unfavourably?” Particularly, it was postulated whether “working dogs” would be perceived more favourably than pet dogs, as some of the discussions on the online forums would seem to indicate. Possible choices included pet dogs, working/helper dogs, large breeds, small breeds, and black dogs. Respondents were allowed to check off more than one category.

There was a higher scoring for “small breeds,” and two respondents specified a general dislike for small “yappy” dogs. Five respondents made reference to specific breeds of dogs that they found to be unfavourable. These included Pit bulls (3), Rottweilers (2), Bulldogs and German Shepherds.

This may be in part due to media representation of certain dogs. A study by Wright et al. (2007: 255) revealed that sociability is linked to perception of certain breeds. For instance, participants who were primed with footage of a certain breed of dog behaving aggressively were less likely to consider similar-looking dogs to be adoptable.

**Are you troubled by any of the following scenarios? Check all that apply.**

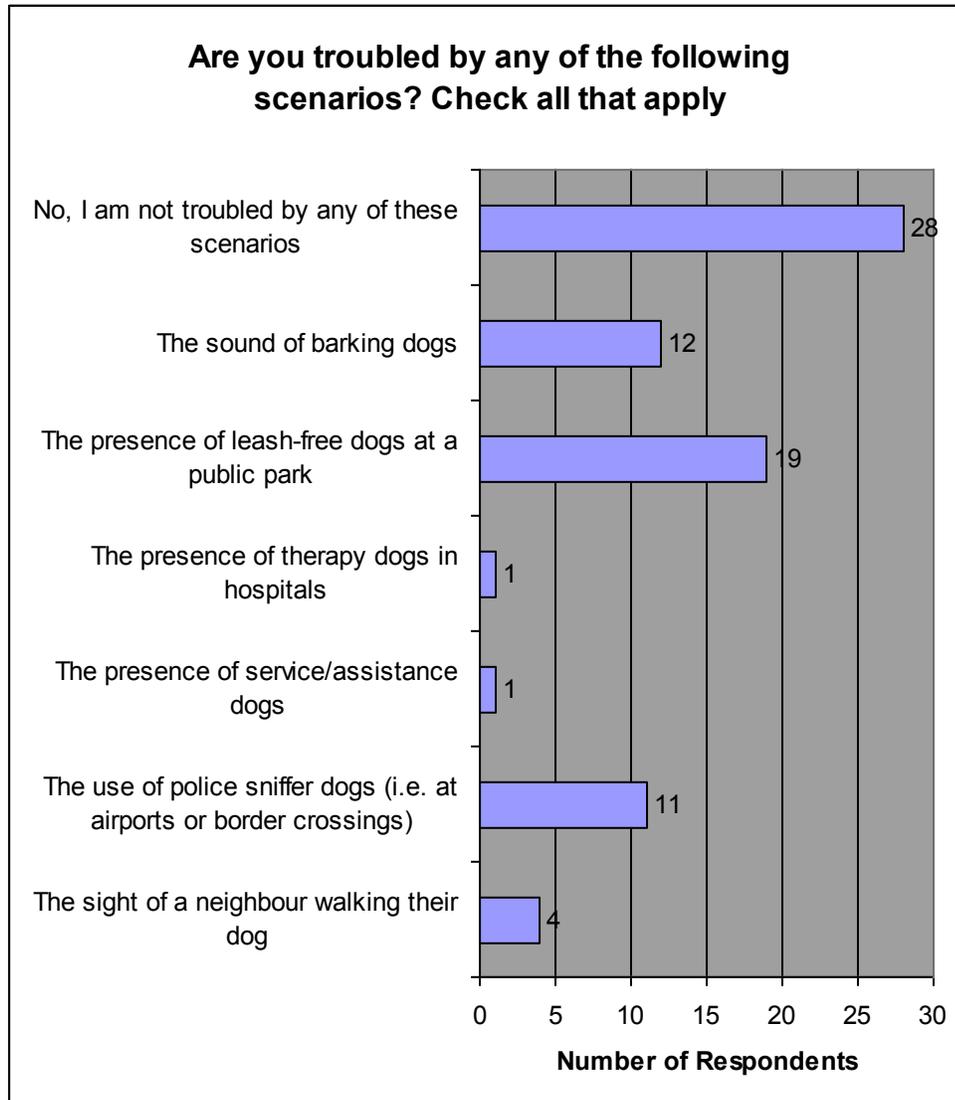


Figure 22 - Are you troubled by any of the following scenarios? Check all that apply.

A list of common scenarios involving dogs was provided and participants were asked whether they were “troubled” by any of them. Four people found police sniffer dogs unfavourable for reasons

other than the dogs themselves; the dogs were associated with the tendency for the police to profile Muslims at security crossings.

Leash-free dogs were cited as a concern for numerous respondents, particularly due to anxiety about ill-trained animals, allergies, with the risk to small children, or those who are scared of dogs. As this speaks to a legal concern over the permissibility of leash-free animals in certain districts, it illustrates that loose dogs are a troubling issue to many.

The behaviours of dog owners may also impact perceptions of dogs in society. It is noted that many dog owners behave irresponsibly in regards to proper training, neutering, and cleaning up after their dogs (e.g. Rohlf et al. 2010).

**How do you regard animals? Check all that apply.**

This question links back to some of the initial discussion about the place of animals. Elaborated in Chapter 2, this speaks to the role and status that animals hold in human religion, society, and culture. It relates to ideas about whether different species are conceptualized as being organized in a hierarchical nature of importance (i.e., the Great Chain of Being) and their purpose as food, labour, or kin. In the survey, this section consisted of two questions. The first was “How do you regard animals? Check all that apply.” The available options were as follows (see Figure 23).

This section of the survey was to determine whether attitudes towards animals as a whole were linked to one’s perceptions of dogs. Out of those who specifically cited an unfavourable opinion of animals in general were more likely to have a negative opinion of dogs as well. Commonly, attitudes towards animals overall are linked to one’s perceptions of dogs. Positive attitudes towards dogs are similarly correlated with whether one believes animals should be treated with care and respect and whether animals are equal to humans.

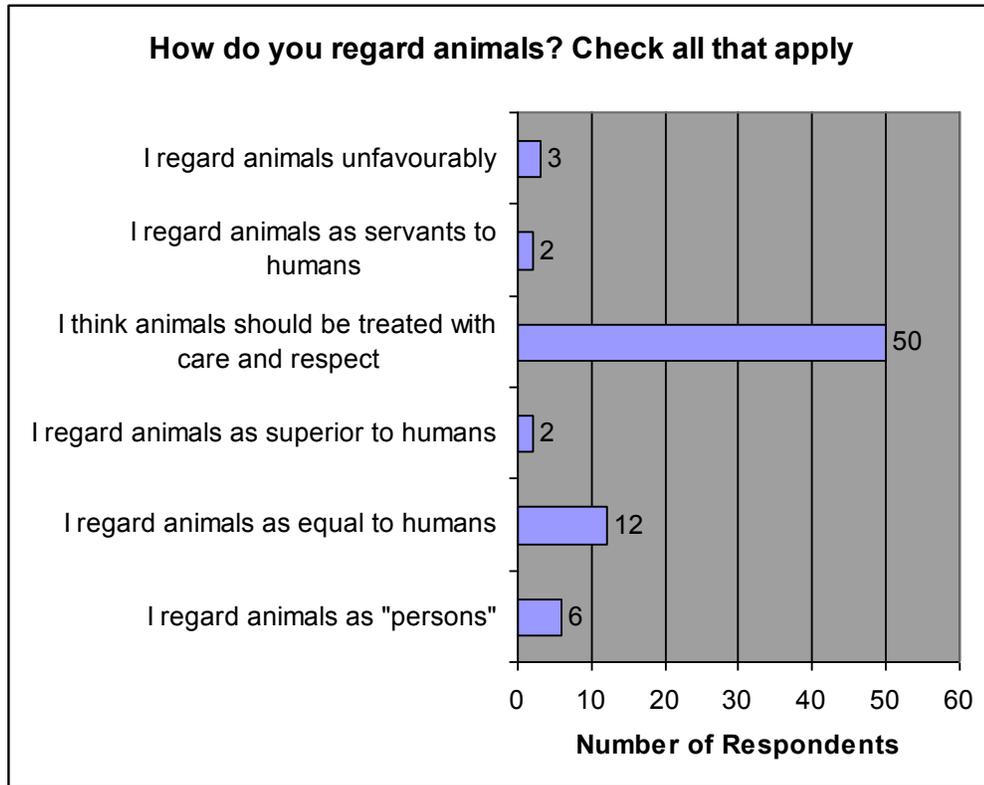


Figure 23 - How do you regard animals? Check all that apply.

The second question “Do you believe that animals have souls, or an afterlife?” (see Figure 24). When compared to personal opinions about dogs, those who expressed that animals have both souls and an afterlife tend to correlate to positive opinions about dogs in general.

#### **Animals and the Afterlife – Forum Results**

There are differing interpretations of whether dogs will enter the afterlife. It is often held that animals will turn to dust upon death, and will not enter an afterlife. “Indeed, We have warned you of a near punishment on the Day when a man will observe what his hands have put forth and the disbeliever will say, “Oh, I wish that I were dust!” (Q: 78:40). Some scholars have asserted that certain “exceptional” animals will be permitted to enter paradise. Qitmir from the Companions of the Cave story is held to be one such animal. However, this opinion is not sound among all scholars (Al-Munajjid n.d.d.). As such, there is a great deal of variation among Muslims in the forums about animals in the afterlife, and is a topic that is discussed frequently.

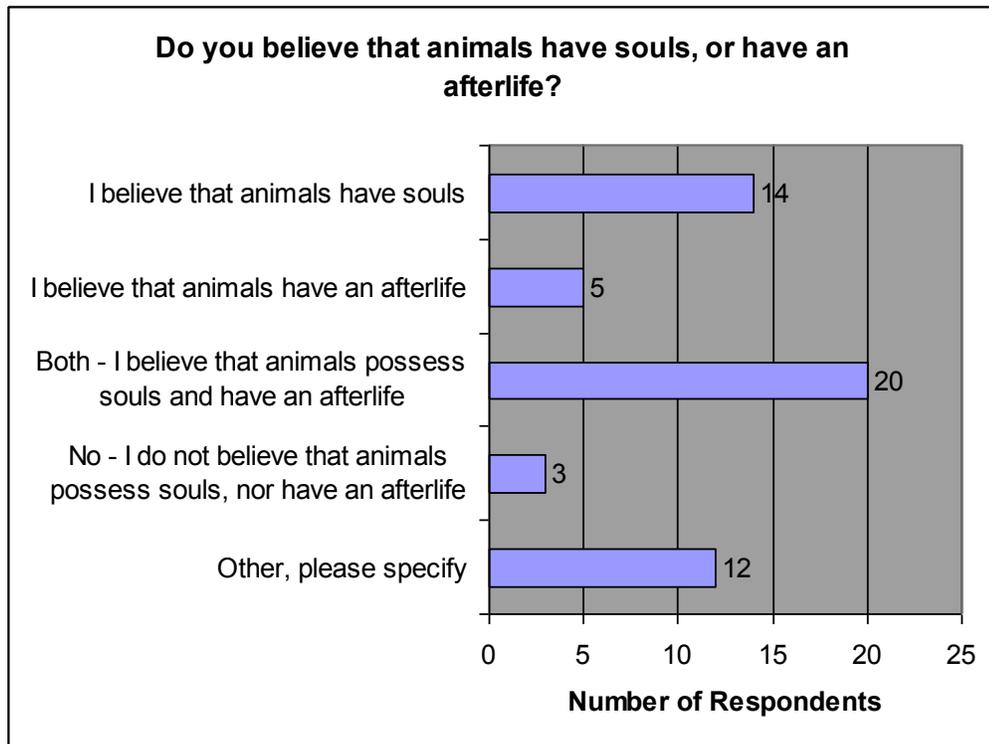


Figure 24 - Do you believe that animals have souls or have an afterlife?

**How strongly do you agree with the following statement: “If I came across an unfamiliar dog that was in great physical or emotional distress, I would do my best to help it.”**

This question was meant to be analogous to the hadīths concerning the man (or prostitute) who provided a thirsty dog with water (i.e. *Sahih al-Bukhārī*: Book 40, Number 551), by creating a hypothetical situation of human-dog interaction. A couple of Muslim websites (i.e. Al-Munajjid n.d.g. [IslamQA] and AbuUbaida 2009 [MuslimConverts]) reference this hadīth when regarding dogs, saying that this verse indicates kindness towards dogs, but does not imply permissibility of keeping one.

The vast majority (83.3%) of respondents (Figure 25) wrote that they would help the dog. However, when this data is compared to one’s personal opinion about dogs (Figure 26), it appears that these data sets are linked. All respondents who held a negative opinion about dogs disagreed

with the statement of whether they would help the dog. It appears to demonstrate the influence of personal views in a situation of human-dog interaction.

However, to provide some clarity about the results, two respondents wrote that they would only help the dog if it was safe to do so, citing the danger and unpredictability of strange dogs, or they would help indirectly by getting outside help.

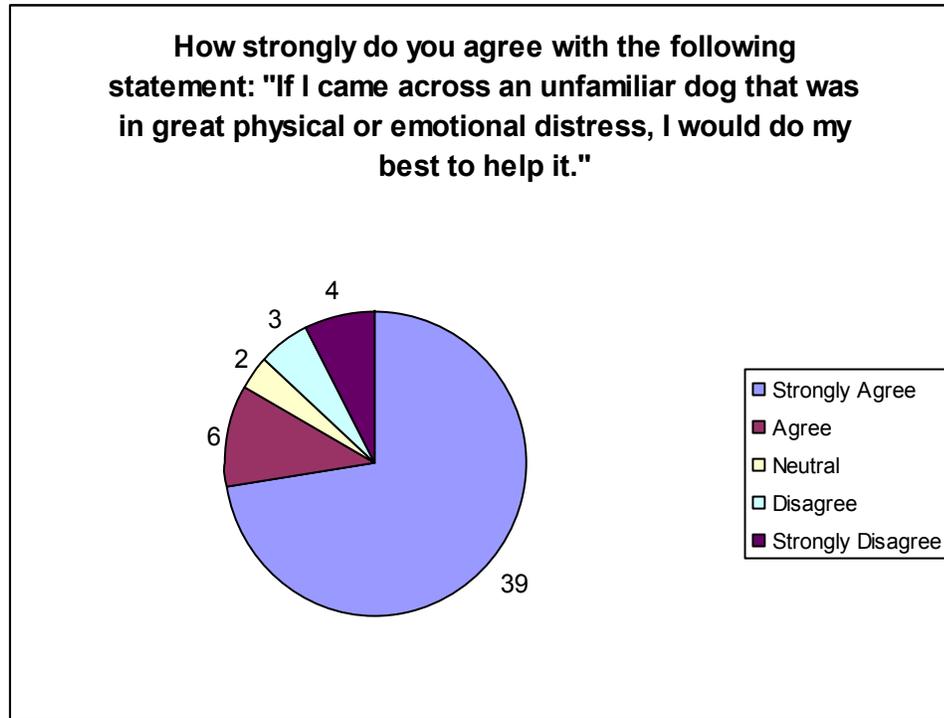


Figure 25 - How strongly do you agree with the following statement: "If I came across an unfamiliar dog that was in great physical or emotional distress, I would do my best to help it."

**What is your personal opinion of dogs?**

How strongly do you agree with the following statement: "If I came across an unfamiliar dog that was in great physical or emotional distress, I would do my best to help it."		Frequency	Percent
Agree	Neutral	2	33.3
	Positive	4	66.7
	Total	6	100.0
Disagree	Negative	2	66.7
	Positive	1	33.3
	Total	3	100.0
Neutral	Neutral	1	50.0
	Positive	1	50.0
	Total	2	100.0
Strongly Agree	Neutral	8	20.5
	Positive	31	79.5
	Total	39	100.0
Strongly Disagree	Negative	2	50.0
	Positive	2	50.0
	Total	4	100.0

Figure 26 - Table comparing a question of whether one would have a dog in distress (first column) with one's personal opinion of dogs (second column)

### Appendix H - Additional Online Survey Data Part 3

#### To what country other than Canada do you and your family have the strongest cultural/family ties (or from what country have you recently immigrated)?

To gain an understanding about the cultural background of the respondents, they were asked what countries they had immigrated from (if applicable) or which places they felt strongly connected to. There were numerous countries represented in this study, and some individuals felt connected to more than one. It is important to note, however, that some persons wrote of having very little connection to those countries, while others wrote that they felt a great deal of connection. These questions were skipped for those who wrote that they were born in Canada. Pakistan is the most represented country, followed by India. The countries represented are as follows:

Country	Number	Country	Number
Afghanistan	2	Mauritius	1
Australia	1	Pakistan	13
Bahamas	1	Russia	1
Bangladesh	3	Saudi Arabia	2
Bosnia	1	South Africa	1
The United Kingdom	3	South East Asia	1
Ethiopia	1	Sudan	1
Hong Kong	1	Tanzania	1
India	7	UAE	3
Iran	2	USA	2
Iraq	1	Yugoslavia	1

Figure 27 - Chart listed which countries (other than Canada) the survey respondents expressed a connection to. Those individuals whose parents and themselves were born in Canada were not asked this question.

## How connected do you feel to Canadian culture?

How connected do you feel to Canadian culture?/What is your personal opinion of dogs?		Frequency	Percent
How connected do you feel to Canadian culture?			
Not applicable	Positive	12	100.0
Not connected at all	Negative	1	100.0
Quite connected	Negative	2	9.1
	Neutral	5	22.7
	Positive	15	68.2
	Total	22	100.0
Somewhat connected	Neutral	4	57.1
	Positive	3	42.9
	Total	7	100.0
Very strongly connected	Negative	1	8.3
	Neutral	2	16.7
	Positive	9	75.0
	Total	12	100.0

Figure 28 - Table comparing one's degree of "connectedness" to Canadian culture (first column) with one's personal opinion of dogs (second column). Those individuals whose parents and themselves were born in Canada were not asked this question (Missing data).

### Canadian Adult Immigrants

Those immigrants who entered Canada when they were older were asked some additional questions about the prevalence of dogs in Canada (see Appendix A). As a topic of inquiry is the relationship between dogs and culture, any insight into the placement of dogs in cross-cultural contexts is pertinent. The participants were asked whether they had any experiences of "culture shock" when coming to Canada regarding the status of dogs. One respondent wrote that they were aware the prominence of dogs, but "didn't think Canadians walked their dogs and picked up their poop in plastic bags."

As previously demonstrated with the discussion of leash-free dogs in parks, there should be an understanding among Canadians that attitudes towards dogs are not universal within any given culture. Comfort levels with dogs - particularly unrestrained strange dogs, should be taken into consideration by those who take their dogs out in public. Discomfort with dogs is certainly not

something that is limited to Muslim population – past experiences and culture, as mentioned, also factor in to attitudes towards dogs.

Respondents were asked what measures should be taken when helping immigrants, who may be less comfortable with dogs, adapt to Canada. Options included whether “New comer” programs need to assist with this matter, or if the larger Canadian population should be educated as well (see the leash-free issue discussed above).

One respondent wrote that mosques need to play a larger role in this matter: “mosques need to educate people on the legality of dogs and stop teaching cultural fears masked as sunna [religious teachings].”

## Religiosity

How often do you attend religious services?/What is your personal opinion of dogs?

How often do you attend religious services?		Frequency	Percent
A few times a month	Neutral	2	25.0
	Positive	6	75.0
	Total	8	100.0
A few times a year	Neutral	4	28.6
	Positive	10	71.4
	Total	14	100.0
More than once a week	Negative	3	27.3
	Neutral	3	27.3
	Positive	5	45.5
	Total	11	100.0
Never	Positive	3	100.0
Once a week	Negative	1	10.0
	Neutral	1	10.0
	Positive	8	80.0
	Total	10	100.0
Once a year or less	Neutral	1	12.5
	Positive	7	87.5
	Total	8	100.0

Figure 29 - Table comparing one's attendance of religious services (first column) with one's personal opinion of dogs (second column).

**How often do you spend time in private religious activities.../What is your personal opinion of dogs?**

How often do you spend time in private religious activities, such as prayer, meditation or scripture study?		Frequency	Percent
Rarely or never	Neutral	1	20.0
	Positive	4	80.0
	Total	5	100.0
A few times a month	Positive	3	100.0
Daily	Negative	4	21.1
	Neutral	4	21.1
	Positive	11	57.9
	Total	19	100.0
More than once a day	Neutral	4	16.7
	Positive	20	83.3
	Total	24	100.0
Two or more times a week	Neutral	2	66.7
	Positive	1	33.3
	Total	3	100.0

Figure 30 - Table comparing the frequency of engagement in private religious practices (first column) with one's personal opinion of dogs (second column).

**Please indicate the opinion on the following statement.../What is your personal opinion of dogs?**

Please indicate the opinion on the following statement that is the most true to you: "My religious beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life"		Frequency	Percent
Definitely not true	Neutral	1	50.0
	Positive	1	50.0
	Total	2	100.0
Definitely true of me	Negative	2	9.5
	Neutral	4	19.0
	Positive	15	71.4
	Total	21	100.0
Tends not to be true	Neutral	1	50.0
	Positive	1	50.0
	Total	2	100.0
Tends to be true	Negative	2	8.7
	Neutral	5	21.7
	Positive	16	69.6
	Total	23	100.0
Unsure	Positive	6	100.0

Figure 31 - Table comparing the degree to which one's life is guided by their religious beliefs (first column) with one's personal opinion of dogs (second column).

## **Appendix I - Additional Online Survey Data Part 4**

### **Demographic Information and Possible Bias and Limitations**

The last section of the survey contained demographic information ranging from age, gender, marital status, living arrangements (i.e. children, older relatives, etc.), level of education and whether one lives in an urban or rural environment.

#### **Sex**

Thirty-seven of the respondents were female and fifteen were male. Two declined to provide gender. The overrepresentation of women in the study may be problematic in determining whether gender plays a factor in attitudes towards animals.

The question of gender in animal studies is one that should be addressed. Previous studies have noted that women tend to have more favourable and empathetic opinions of animals than men (Fogle 1999: 234; Herzog et al. 1991; Kendall & Lobao 2004; Turner, Waiblinger & Meslim 2013: 15-16). As well, feminism is strongly connected to environmental and animal studies and activism (Gaard 1993: 1).

Analogous studies of Muslim women are few. In a study conducted in Kuwait, Al-Fayez et al. (2003) note that women tended to score lower on the Pet Attitude Scale than their husbands or children. Turner, Waiblinger and Meslim (2013) conducted a similar dog attitude study in which country, religion and gender are compared, although differences in Muslim responses based on factors like gender are not mentioned. Whether religion plays a factor in gendered attitudes towards dogs is difficult to verify based on existing academic literature.

The results of this study appear to demonstrate findings similar to those of other academics studies, in which women are found to express a greater affinity towards animals than men. However, this may in part be the result of sampling bias, as the majority of the respondents are women.

What is your sex?/What is your personal opinion of dogs?		Frequency	Percent
What is your sex?			
	Negative	1	50.0
	Neutral	1	50.0
	Total	2	100.0
Female	Neutral	5	13.5
	Positive	32	86.5
	Total	37	100.0
Male	Negative	3	20.0
	Neutral	5	33.3
	Positive	7	46.7
	Total	15	100.0

Figure 32 - Table comparing one's sex (first column) with one's personal opinion of dogs (second column).

### Age

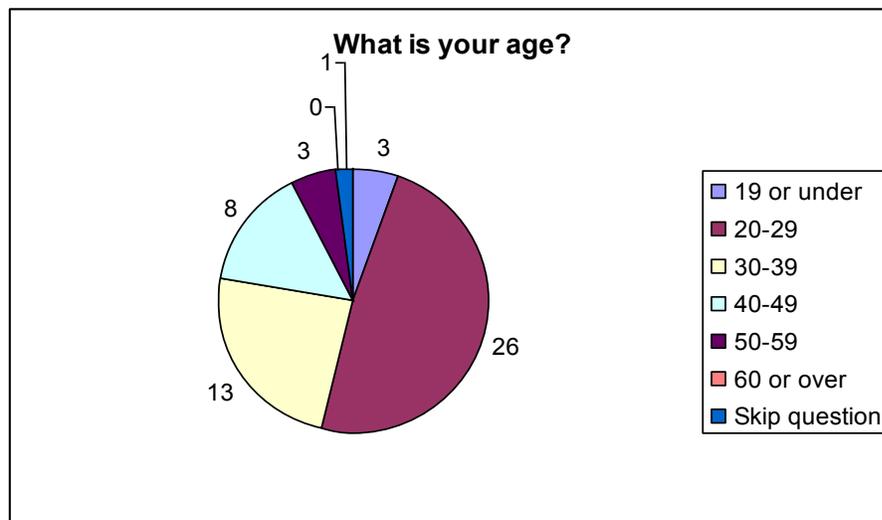


Figure 33 - What is your age?

There does not appear to be an apparent correlation between one's age and attitude towards dogs, although respondents in the 30-39 age category have the most favourable opinion. The participants were fairly young overall, with 53.7% being under the age of 30 (Figure 34).

What is your age?/What is your personal opinion of dogs?			
What is your age?		Frequency	Percent
19 or under	Negative	1	33.3
	Positive	2	66.7
	Total	3	100.0
20 - 29	Negative	1	3.8
	Neutral	9	34.6
	Positive	16	61.5
	Total	26	100.0
30 - 39	Neutral	1	7.7
	Positive	12	92.3
	Total	13	100.0
40 - 49	Negative	1	12.5
	Positive	7	87.5
	Total	8	100.0
50 - 59	Negative	1	33.3
	Positive	2	66.7
	Total	3	100.0
Skip question	Neutral	1	100.0

Figure 34 - Table comparing one's opinions about hadith authenticity (first column) with one's personal opinion of dogs (second column).

### Highest Level of Education

Another problematic concern in this study is the education level of the participants. Of the 54 participants, 15 identify themselves as post-graduate as their highest level of education, 30 are post-secondary, 5 are secondary, and 4 are listed as "other." Consequently, there are concerns about an overrepresentation of a university population (Figure 35).

The question of whether factors like education level or age influence one's attitude towards animals is controversial (Signal & Taylor 2006). A 600 person study conducted by Signal and Taylor (2006) in Australia revealed that educational level is not significantly correlated with attitudes towards animals. As with this survey, the link between education and attitudes towards dogs does not appear to be hugely correlational (Figure 36).

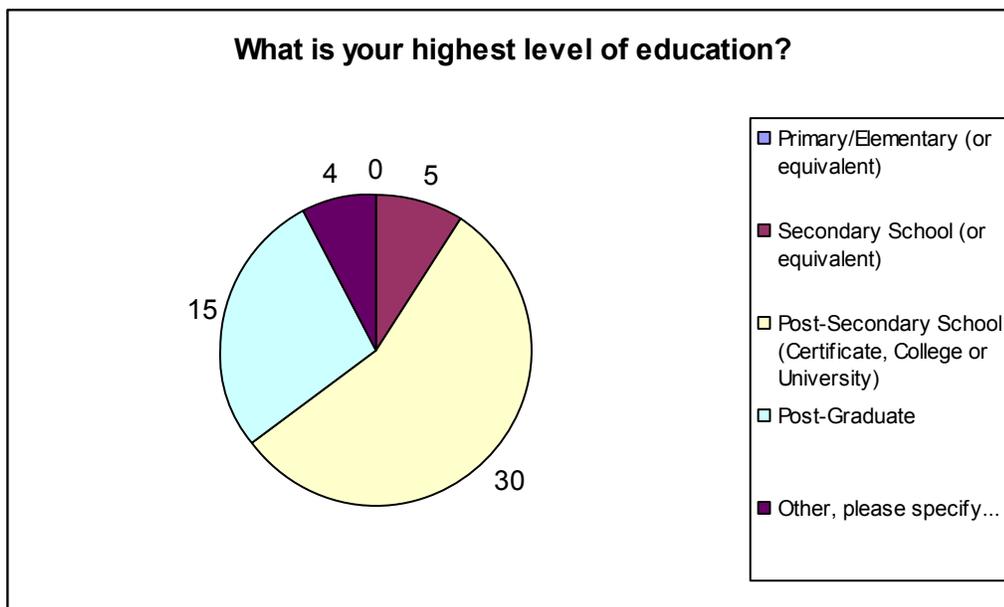


Figure 35 - What is your highest level of education

### What is your highest level of education?/What is your personal opinion of dogs?

What is your highest level of education?		Frequency	Percent
Other, please specify...	Neutral	1	25.0
	Positive	3	75.0
	Total	4	100.0
Post-Graduate	Negative	2	13.3
	Neutral	3	20.0
	Positive	10	66.7
	Total	15	100.0
Post-Secondary School (Certificate, College or University)	Negative	1	3.3
	Neutral	7	23.3
	Positive	22	73.3
	Total	30	100.0
Secondary School (or equivalent)	Negative	1	20.0
	Positive	4	80.0
	Total	5	100.0

Figure 36 - Table comparing one's level of education (first column) with one's personal opinion of dogs (second column).

## Appendix J - Letter of Introduction on Online Forums

The following message was posted on various Muslim and religious forums as a means of gaining participants for the survey.

---

Hello **[forum name]**, my name is Johanne Horsfall, and I am a Graduate Student at Carleton University in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. For my Masters Thesis, I am studying the different ways in which Canadians perceive dogs. In particular, I am intrigued by the perspectives of Canadian Muslims. The “mainstream” attitude towards dogs in Canada appears to be quite positive, as an estimated 32% own one.

One part of this project consists of an online survey that is targeted toward Canadian Muslims. If some of you could fill out this survey, I would greatly appreciate it.

<http://fluidsurveys.com/s/canadian-muslim-view-of-animals/>

I have been reading this forum for a little while, and I am interested in what people have to say about this issue. What is your personal opinion about dogs and dog ownership? Do those of you living in “dog-centric” countries like Canada feel any “conflict?” Are there any legal issues that you feel need to be addressed (i.e. the presence of police dogs at airports and border crossings etc.)?

For those Muslims who own dogs, I am interested in the ways in which you interact with the dog(s). For instance, is the dog kept outside, or in certain rooms? What practices do you engage in to maintain ritual purity? How do your Muslim friends or family react to this? If possible, if those Canadian Muslim dog owners are willing, I would be interested in engaging in email correspondence about additional questions. Please email me at [johanne\\_horsfall@carleton.ca](mailto:johanne_horsfall@carleton.ca) if you wish to participate in a private and confidential “email interview.” However, you are welcome to write about it in this thread too.

I am very interested in hearing people’s opinions about this issue. While this study is focused on Canadian Muslims, those from other parts of the world are more than welcome to participate in this discussion. However, I would ask that only Canadians fill out the survey.

Your responses will be kept in the strictest confidence, and this project has been given clearance by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board. Feel free to contact me at [johanne\\_horsfall@carleton.ca](mailto:johanne_horsfall@carleton.ca) or the Carleton University Research Ethics Board at [ethics@carleton.ca](mailto:ethics@carleton.ca)

## Letter of Introduction to Muslim Groups

Hello [organization], my name is Johanne Horsfall and I am a Graduate Student at Carleton University. The following is a request for participation in a survey for Canadian Muslims, for which I am seeking the assistance of Muslim organizations for participants. If it would be possible to append the message below to a mailing list, I would greatly appreciate it. Thank you.

-----

Hello, my name is Johanne Horsfall, and I am a Graduate Student at Carleton University in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. For my Masters Thesis, I am studying the different ways in which Canadians perceive dogs. In particular, I am intrigued by the perspectives of Canadian Muslims. The “mainstream” attitude towards dogs in Canada appears to be quite positive, as an estimated 32% own one.

One part of this project consists of an online survey that is geared toward Canadian Muslims. The URL is found below.

<http://fluidsurveys.com/s/canadian-muslim-view-of-animals/>

I am interested in learning about the experiences of Muslims in regards to living in a dog-centric society like Canada. This may concern any feelings of “culture shock” for new immigrants, or conflict with dog owners – for instance dogs running leash free in public parks. As well, dogs are found in other roles, like guide dogs for the blind, therapy dogs in hospitals, or police dogs, and there is a strong prevalence of dogs in popular media.

At the end of the survey, one may optionally provide their email address. Depending on your responses, you may be contacted for a further “email interview.” However, you may opt out of this process at any time if you wish to do so. One demographic that I am also interested in are those Muslims who own dogs.

Your responses will be kept in the strictest confidence, and this project has been given clearance by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board. Feel free to contact me at [johanne\\_horsfall@carleton.ca](mailto:johanne_horsfall@carleton.ca) or the Carleton University Research Ethics Board at [ethics@carleton.ca](mailto:ethics@carleton.ca)

Thank you very much for your assistance,

Johanne

## Letter to Those Who Partake in Further Study

---

Hello,

My name is Johanne Horsfall. A couple of days ago you filled out a survey about Canadian Muslims and dogs, and provided an email contact for further discussion. Thank you for agreeing to take part in a more in-depth study.

Before we begin, however, you will need to fill out an "Informed Consent form," which is standard practice in social research like this. I have attached the file to this email. Please type your name and date into the spaces and email the file back to me. **You do not need to use your real name if you are uncomfortable with doing so, an email address will suffice. You are also welcome to withdraw from this process at any time.**

You do not need to enclose a formally scanned document with your signature, typing in your name or email will suffice.

The following is a list of questions I am interested in asking Muslim dog owners. Feel free to write as much or as little as you like. You do not need to answer any questions that you are not comfortable with. If you wish to discuss other topics beyond the ones provided, please feel free to do so. Once you have finished, please email your responses to johanne\_horsfall@carleton.ca. You may receive a return email if I require clarification on certain answers, but you have no obligation to respond. You may request to withdraw from this study at any stage of the process. I thank you for your time.

- 1) In your view, what does Islam have to say about dogs and dog ownership? What are your own personal beliefs on the subject?
- 2) Do you consider your dog to be a member of the family? Do you regard them as a "person"?
- 3) Do you follow any ritual proscriptions in regards to the dog? (i.e. *wudu* procedures prior to prayer)
- 4) Do you, in any way, feel that this "dog culture" is tied to the idea of "Canadianness"? That is to say, with such a strong presence of dogs, do you feel that there is any kind of a "Canadians must love dogs" attitude in this country?
- 5) How do your Muslim family/friends react to your dog ownership?

If you know any other Muslim dog owners, would they be willing to contribute to this study (i.e. both the online survey and email interview)?

Thank you again for your time. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Johanne

---

**(Note: These questions were often altered based on the survey responses)**

## **Consent Form for Muslim Dog Owners Partaking in Further Study**

### **Consent Form**

Title: Traditions in conflict with their adopted societies: Muslims in canine-centric Canada

Date of ethics clearance: April 18, 2013

Ethics Clearance for the Collection of Data Expires: May 31, 2014

I \_\_\_\_\_ volunteer to participate in a research project that aims to explore the experiences of Canadian Muslims who own dogs. This may include studies about upbringing, family relations, and belief systems. This research is conducted by Johanne Horsfall, as a partial requirement for the completion of a Masters Degree in Anthropology at Carleton University under the supervision of Dr. Danielle DiNoveli-Lang from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Carleton University

Participation in this project will be in the form of one-on-one email correspondence. I, as well as other individuals were chosen for this study based on responses to questions on a previous survey (Fluidsurvey). On this survey, I was given the option of providing my email address if I wished to participate in subsequent follow-up questions. Those who filled out the survey and identified themselves as Canadian Muslim dog owners were contacted.

The email-based interview will consist of approximately 10 questions sent through email. I will be asked to respond at my own discretion. It is estimated that these responses will take me no more than 20-40 minutes to complete. I am permitted to write as much or as little as I wish.

I understand that there is a possibility of continued correspondence with the researcher if she requires additional follow-up questions, or for clarity. I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I will have the right to decline answering any questions I am not comfortable with. I will also have the right to bring up my own points of discussion.

While there may not be many foreseeable risks associated with this correspondence, the topic of dog ownership in Islam may be a troubling issue for some. Consequently, the information gathered from these correspondences will be held in the strictest confidence and steps will be taken to ensure my anonymity. As this is going to be a study conducted over e-mail, no other personal information other than my e-mail address will be required.

I understand that the data collected from this study will be published in the form of a Masters Thesis for the academic community in 2013/2014, and may be made available in future publications. The data obtained from this project will be kept on an external hard drive that will not be connected to the internet. Other than the researcher, no one else will have access to this information. This data may be held for future study, but care will be taken to ensure that any potentially identifying information (i.e. name, e-mail address etc.) is destroyed. If I wish to withdraw consent of my information, I am encouraged to contact Johanne Horsfall at [johanne\\_horsfall@carleton.ca](mailto:johanne_horsfall@carleton.ca) to have my information removed.

Since the topic of Muslims and dogs in Canada has not been studied in great detail, the information collected from this study could be beneficial in raising awareness of this situation in Canadian

society. The pluralistic and multicultural nature of Canada makes it important to foster a diverse cultural awareness around certain social issues. In particular, the canine-centric nature of Canadian society may be at odds with certain beliefs of Islam. This study intends to better understand Muslim attitudes towards dogs to contribute to the education of the entire Canadian population.

This project was reviewed and has received ethics clearance by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board.

If I have any concerns, I am encouraged to contact the following:

Johanne Horsfall  
Carleton University – Department of Sociology and Anthropology  
johanne\_horsfall@carleton.ca

Carleton University Research Ethics Board  
613-520-2517  
ethics@carleton.ca

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Name of participant

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Date

## **Consent Form for Muslim Non-Dog Owners Partaking in Further Study**

### **Consent Form**

Title: Traditions in conflict with their adopted societies: Muslims in canine-centric Canada

Date of ethics clearance: April 18, 2013

Ethics Clearance for the Collection of Data Expires: May 31<sup>st</sup> 2014

I \_\_\_\_\_ volunteer to participate in a research project that aims to explore the experiences of Canadian Muslims who own dogs. This may include studies about upbringing, family relations, and belief systems. This research is conducted by Johanne Horsfall, as a partial requirement for the completion of a Masters Degree in Anthropology at Carleton University under the supervision of Dr. Danielle DiNoveli-Lang from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Carleton University.

The email-based interview will consist of approximately 10 questions sent through email. I will be asked to respond at my own discretion. It is estimated that these responses will take me no more than 20-40 minutes to complete. I am permitted to write as much or as little as I wish.

I understand that there is a possibility of continued correspondence with the researcher if she requires additional follow-up questions, or for clarity. I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I will have the right to decline answering any questions I am not comfortable with. I will also have the right to bring up my own points of discussion.

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Name of participant

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Date