

# ANIMAL RESEARCH ETHICS & POLICY

Bioethics & Animals (Spring 2013)

Laura Guidry-Grimes

## Ravens at the Tower of London



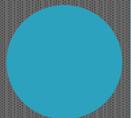
## Vegan rally in Munich



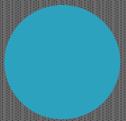


## SOME BEGINNING QUESTIONS

- What are the goals of research policies? What should they be?
- What are all of the potential considerations that policy-makers need to incorporate into their decisions?
- Should regulations protecting human subjects be roughly the same for non-human subjects?
- To what extent do policies map onto the moral terrain?



# CONFLICTING MOTIVATIONS & OBLIGATIONS

- “the objective of protecting freedom of inquiry and efficiency in research is fundamentally different from the objective of protecting animals from misuse and abuse” (Kahn 921)
  - IACUCs motivated to advance research *and* comply with regulations...
    - What should they do when these duties conflict?
  - What are the metrics for successful policies?
    - How much useless research is prevented?
    - How many important advances have been published?
    - How few animals have been used?
    - ...something else?
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# MORAL STATUS

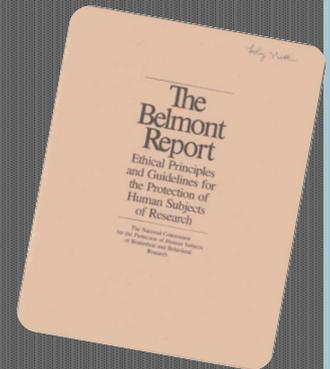


- Difficult to build policy when basic philosophical/ethical issues are highly contentious or unstated
  - What has moral status?
  - How do creatures' status compare?
  - What are the entailed obligations of different levels of moral status?
- **Minimal consensus:** Sentience → morally considerable interests
  - Rights can be interpreted and prioritized differently
  - But: “with even a limited moral status come some valid claims that recognize interests” (925)

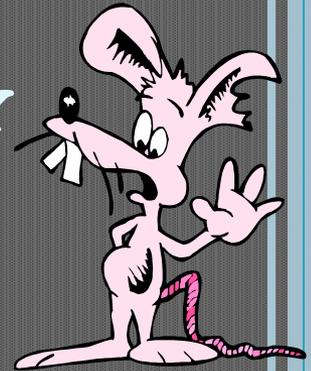


# DOUBLE STANDARD RE: VULNERABILITY

- **Belmont Report (1978)** – lays out basic ethical principles for research on **human** subjects (incorporated in federal regulations)
  - **Respect for persons**
    - 1) Respect autonomous agents; and 2) protect those with diminished autonomy
  - **Beneficence**
    - *Strict obligation* to 1) do no harm, and 2) maximize potential benefits and minimize potential harms
  - **Justice**
    - Equals ought to be treated equally; fair distribution
    - Prevent exploitation (taking unfair advantage of another's vulnerability)



# DOUBLE STANDARD RE: VULNERABILITY



- In research on **human** subjects, there are **added special protections** for vulnerable populations
  - **Who's vulnerable?** – Those susceptible to exploitation or coercion; those with minimal power to advocate for themselves
    - Prisoners, pregnant women, children, cognitively disabled individuals
- **“for humans lesser capacities correspond to greater protections but for animals the opposite is true”** (Walked qtd. on 926)



# POLICY BUILDING



- Translate Belmont principles to non-human research subjects?
  - Respect for persons... surrogate/advocate consent?
  - Demands of justice for animals?
  - Beneficence...**promoting animal welfare**
- **Welfare is NOT equivalent to human treatment**
  - **Demands of humane treatment:** *minimally decent* cage size, basic food and water, refraining from unjustified cruelty
  - **Demands of welfare:** “acting to protect and promote the well-being of animal subjects” (927)
    - Can still view human interests as more significant...?

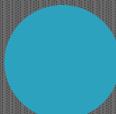
# POLICY BUILDING

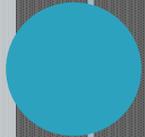
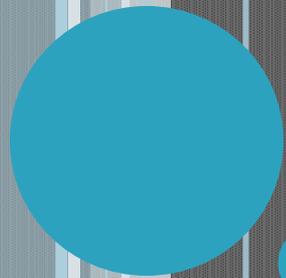


- Changed policies if pro-welfare stance taken:
  - **Higher scrutiny** for studies that expose animals to significant risks for the sake of others
  - **Some differences in treatment permitted** for non-human vs. human subjects, but differences in capacities should not be exaggerated either.
  - **“require greater attention to balancing the risks to animal subjects against the likely benefits to human or animals and the value of the knowledge to be gained” (928)**
    - → more rigorous peer-review of scientific merit of studies



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Is the double standard re: vulnerability protections justified?
  - Can we simultaneously take a strong pro-welfare stance for animal subjects and still think of human interests as more important?
  - Does incorporating stronger peer review in the IACUC process make sense from an ethical point of view? What about from a policy perspective?
  - Ideally, would it make sense to solicit surrogate/advocate consent for non-human animals?
    - Could this be practical in any way? Perhaps for some animals (e.g., chimps)?
  - Is it problematic if generally ethicists use different philosophical approaches for human vs. animal research (e.g., deontology for one subject type, consequentialism for the other)?
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Questions? Comments?