

Ethical Considerations of Using Animals as Sentinels: Research Subject Protections, Citizen Science Issues, and Shared Health



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What Kind of Ethics?

- Embedded Ethics
- Everyday Ethics
- Microethics
- Not:
 - The ethics police
 - Compliance issues
 - Regulatory check lists





The Social Context of Pets as Research Subjects

- Relationships with individual animals have always been part of human culture
- Companion animals' moral status has changed
 - Animals are considered a "special type of property"
 - Structural social changes left a void
 - Pets are defined by kinship relationships
 - Veterinary medicine changed accordingly

Companion animals have a special moral status because people have complex and paradoxical relationships with animals



Family members?

Working partners?



Powerless victims?

Selected Ethical Issues in Research Subject Protection

- Informed Consent is a misnomer
- Using pets in research exposes (can exploit?) a gap in regulatory protection
- Compensation/Payment can be coercive when pets are the subject



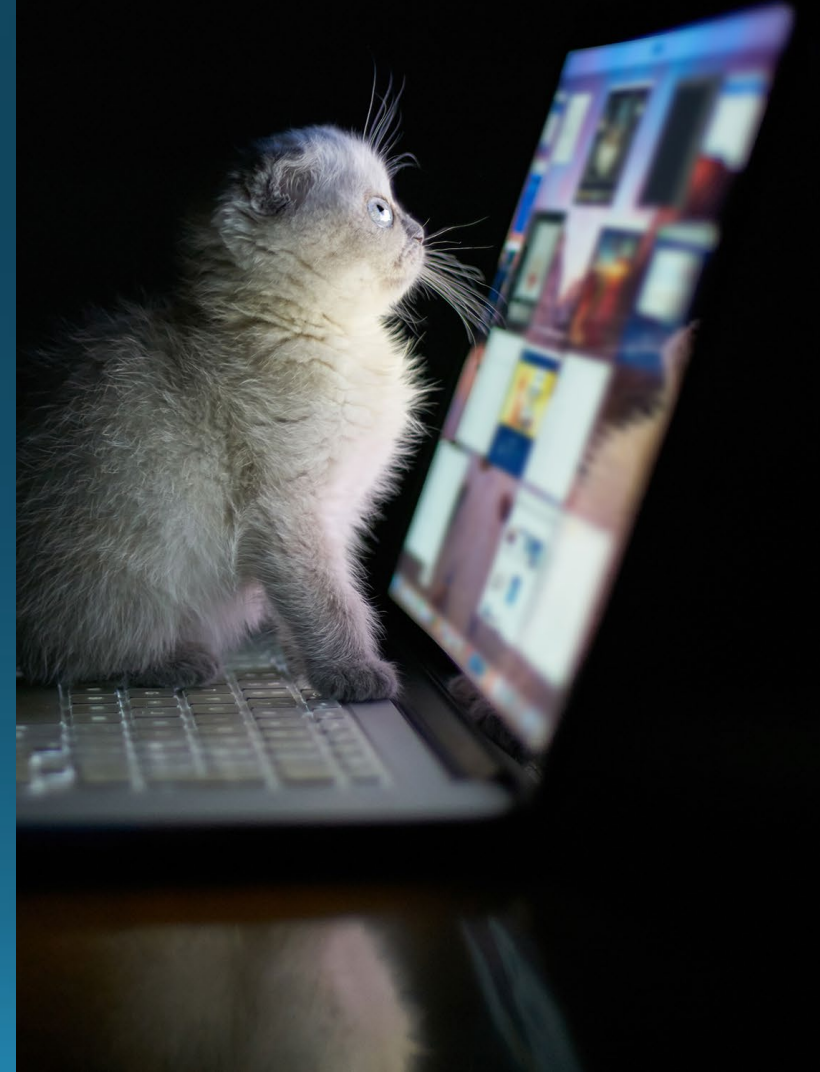


Informed Consent protects pet owners, not animal subjects

- Informed consent exists to protect the bodily autonomy of human subjects, whereas “veterinary informed consent is designed to allow the owner to make autonomous choices which protect the *value* of their animal (whether economic, emotional, etc.) to themselves” (Ashall *et. al.* 2018).

Using pets in research exposes (can exploit?) a gap in regulatory protection

- Consider a research ethics consult when designing studies
 - Preferably with an ethicist who has experience in pets as research subjects
- Seek out a Veterinary Clinical Trial Ethical Review Committee, in addition to an IACUC



Compensation/Payment can be coercive when pets are the research subject

Access to
veterinary care
in the US is
INEQUITABLE

People may be
desperate to help
their animals





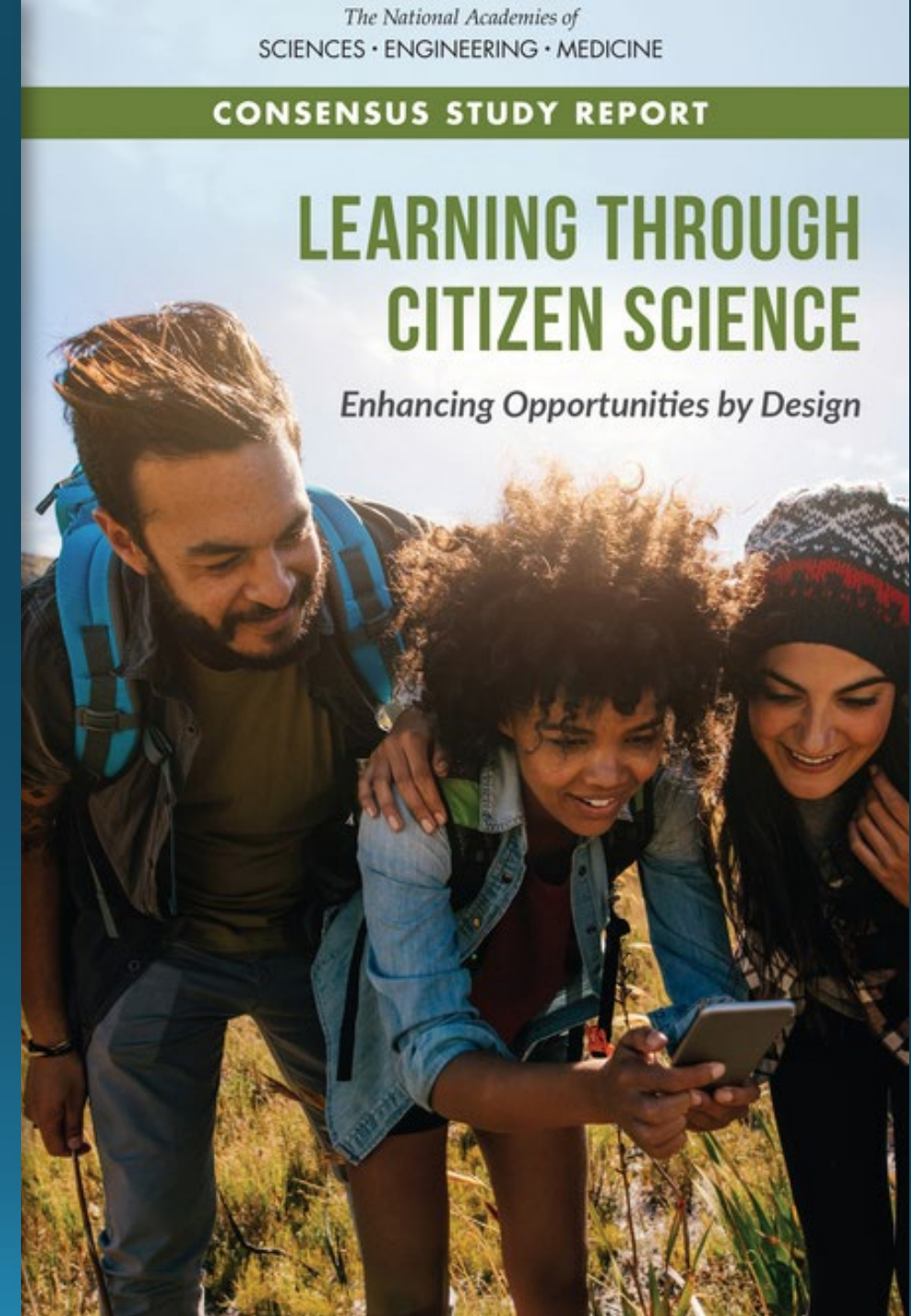
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The Promise Of Citizen Science

- Collect data that would otherwise be unattainable
- Engage the public in science and build trust
- Directly increase scientific literacy
- Create results that work to fix community problems
- Democratization of science

Pathways to More Equitable and Meaningful Public-Scientist Partnerships

- Incorporate the values of scientific reciprocity and investigator reflexivity
- Diversifying participants to improve data quality
- Create defined learning objectives and build in training for scientific literacy
- More “extreme” projects to enhance democratization of science



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