

Comments to the Dane County Executive Board on Resolution 214.275
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Thank you for your time tonight. Let me begin by noting that I do not speak today as a representative of the university in any way, but as a Ph. D. bioethicist with familiarity with the research and with the large and well developed literature on the ethics of animal research. I want to speak to the ethics of the research under discussion tonight.

From an ethics perspective, there are several overarching questions that need to be answered when one is evaluating the use of animals in research. First are two questions about the benefits of the research: how significant are the expected benefits and how likely are they to occur. Second is a question about the harms of the research: how bad is the research for the animals involved. How much will they be harmed, either physically or psychologically? Will they suffer, and if so, for how long and how intensely? Third is a question about how the independent moral importance of the animals being used compares to that of the people who stand to benefit. At one extreme is the view that animals are so morally *unimportant* that any research use of animals, no matter how much harm they suffer, is justified if it can be reasonably expected to lead to some benefit to humans. At the other extreme is the view that animals are so morally *important* that no harmful research use of animals is justified, no matter how large the benefits are to humans. I find myself in between these views, as I expect most people do. Deciding on the ethically

acceptable trade-off between harm to animals and benefits to humans requires deciding how their moral importance compares to ours. Some animals, I think, have no independent moral importance: sponges and fruit flies, for example, do not make the cut. Other animals, such as great apes or dolphins, although they have a lower degree of moral status than we do, nonetheless have something very close to the same moral status as we do. I think monkeys are much closer to the great ape and dolphin end of that spectrum than they are to the fruit fly and sponge end of that spectrum. We should therefore take the harms we do to them very seriously, and the greater the harm, the more seriously we need to take it. This means that in order to justify causing them to suffer a great deal, we need an especially large benefit and we need to be relatively certain that that benefit will obtain. That is the standard by which I evaluate this kind of research. Much research at UW meets this standard, but the research under question today does not.

This study, by taking baby monkeys away from their mothers at birth, subjecting them to numerous tests that will cause fear and anxiety, and, finally, killing them, is indisputably going to cause the monkeys a great deal of harm and a great deal of psychological suffering. We already know that this kind of rearing for monkeys negatively affects serotonin levels in the animals' brains which affects their happiness and sadness and causes a tremendous amount of anxiety, all the way to the point where finally, in a disturbingly large number of cases, monkeys raised without their mothers engage in what is referred to as self-injurious behavior. This is well-documented in the peer-reviewed literature. Gene Sackett, a professor at the

Washington National Primate Research Center who is a primate researcher himself and was a postdoc under Harry Harlow (so is no opponent to primate research generally), is quoted as saying that “Harry [Harlow] discovered that if you rear two infants together, it’s almost as bad as total isolation... Nobody in their right mind, who knew Harry [Harlow’s] work, would raise rhesus babies in pairs.” (Blum, *Love at Goon Park*, 199). And I note that the researcher doing the research in question himself says that total isolation would be unacceptable in primates. Indeed, rhesus monkeys are often selected as a model in this kind of research because researchers know that the psychological effects they experience, although undoubtedly not identical to those a human being would experience, are nonetheless very similar to them. And although I hope that this research, if it continues, will produce new information that will contribute to our helping the many people who suffer from anxiety or depression, I don't think this extreme amount of suffering is ethically justified by that speculative hope.