

Protecting people who participate in research

*CITI Training Study Guide
Avoiding Group Harms*

Types of groups that could be vulnerable to group harm

- Ethnic or racial groups
- Religious groups
- Occupations
- Groups defined by a stigmatized physical condition
- Groups defined by stigmatized behaviors

Types of group harms

- **Economic:** group may lose medical insurance, or access to economic services
- **Political:** group is disenfranchised
- **Social:** group is discriminated against
- **Educational:** group may be identified as less educable or not worthy of education
- **Genetic determinism:** group is assumed to have certain genetic characteristics
- **Cultural:** group's norms and values are violated

Examples of past group harms

- **Economic:** publication of results purporting to show high rates of alcoholism among Alaska Native residents of Barrow resulted in city bond rating reduction as well as stigma
- **Political:** U.S. Army study in Chile to understand social change and improve its counterinsurgency program generated Chilean protests and complaints
- **Social:** studies purporting to compare intelligence of racial groups resulted in increased stigmatization

Questions researchers (and IRBs) should ask to prevent group harms

- What possible harms could result for the groups of which research participants are members?
- Are there any possible unintended consequences of the research?
- If I were a member of this group, how would I feel about the research questions and possible findings?
- Could the results be used to ill effect by others such as media or government?

Steps to prevent group harms

- Conduct preliminary community consultations
- Combine IRB with ethics review
- Conduct ongoing community consultations
- Disclose results to the community first
- Ensure benefits result for the group
