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.