

Table A: Summary of Harms and Ameliorative Measures*

Kind of Harm	Minimal	Minor Increase over Minimal	Major	Ways to Ameliorate
Inconvenience	Boring, interruption	Unexpected major involvement		Adequate informed consent
	Most vulnerable are those with complicated lives or time constraints.			
Physical Harm	Transitory or very minor injury	First aid may be indicated	Violent assault, life threatening**	Appropriate safety considerations
	Most vulnerable: Those in contexts in which there are safety issues.			
Psychological Harm				
Worry (warranted or otherwise)	All of these psychological harms are highly idiosyncratic in occurrence and degree of harm, and difficult to predict. Sensitively administered informed consent can give persons an opportunity to decline if feeling particularly fragile and vulnerable. Post-research procedures (debriefing and desensitizing, offering counseling, making referrals) can ameliorate or prevent harms and turn unpleasant experiences into lasting benefits. These are excellent opportunities for subjects to learn and grow from the experience; debriefing should be educational and nurture personal insight and wisdom. Reiteration of confidentiality measures taken to prevent disclosure may be useful after participation in some research. Deception and concealment, especially with powerful induction to involve self in upsetting or reprehensible acts is ameliorated by initial consent to concealment with promise of total debriefing. An alternative, when studying aggressive or other reprehensible behavior is to study response to heavily induced desirable behavior (e.g., disobedience to authority).			
Upset, depression				
Embarrassment				
Shame or Guilt				
Loss of Self-Confidence				
Disrespectful Treatment of Subjects	This is an attribute of the researcher or the research treatment that may cause any of the other above forms of psychological harm. Effective respectful congruent communication (not a consent form) is essential.			
Most vulnerable: those who are immature or emotionally fragile.				
Social Harm	Transitory embarrassment	Short-term minor stigma, conflict	Long-term stigma or scapegoating	Confidentiality & privacy protected
	Most vulnerable: those with something to hide.			
Economic Harm	Loss of a few \$\$\$	Short-term loss of financial opportunity	Loss of credit, insurance, job, loss of lawsuit	Compensate minor harm, assure privacy & confidentiality
	Most vulnerable: those in need of relevant forms of financial security			
Legal Harm	Involvement with law enforcement	Misdemeanor conviction	Subpoena of damaging data, felony conviction	Certificate of Confidentiality, anonymity
	Most vulnerable: those involved in studies of illegal behavior and those currently involved in legal action relating to the research (whose data might be subpoenaed by the prosecution or opposing party).			

*Table prepared for the Social and Behavioral Sciences Working Group on Human Research Protections by Joan E. Sieber, Working Group member (January 2004).

**Major harms of this nature are secondary.