

## TAXONOMY OF POSSIBLE HARMS

### Research on human beings: some avoidable harms

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Below I present a taxonomy of harms which is roughly based on Donald P. Warwick, "Types of Harms in Social Research," in *Ethical Issues in Social Science Research*, Eds. Tom L. Beauchamp et al., (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982) pp. 101-124.

Each of the harms listed may be intentionally or unintentionally the result of research.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive and there may be overlaps in the various categories of harm. It is a starting point for considering what we mean to prevent and suggest opposites to these harms that we may wish to promote.

- I. Harms to individuals, for instance, research subjects, researchers, and bystanders
  - A. Physical Harms
    - i. Death
    - ii. Physical injury
      - a. temporary
      - b. permanent
  - B. Mental Harm
    - e.g. Fear, guilt, loss of self-esteem
    - i. Psychological abuse
    - ii. Unintentional psychological injury
  - C. Harm to interests
    - i. Undermining personal relationships
    - ii. Character defamation
    - iii. Legal jeopardy
    - iv. Monetary expense
      - a. Harms to commercial interests
      - b. Costs not reimbursed
  - D. Harm to moral integrity
  - E. Violations of moral rights
    - e.g. Privacy, justice, fidelity, beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy
- II. Harms to Groups
  - A. Society as a whole
    - i. Cynicism, mistrust, wariness
    - ii. Less altruism
    - iii. Less effective social institutions  
(Warwick lists harms to government separately.)
  - B. Vulnerable minority groups in society
    - i. Dispersal

- ii. Victimization, especially scapegoating
- iii. Blaming the victims
- iv. Stereotypes
- v. Manipulation
- vi. Financial exploitation

C. Research Professionals

- i. Legal restrictions on research
- ii. A bad name
- iii. Lowered quality of research