



Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Research on the Perpetration of Sexual Violence



Suggested citation:

Jewkes R, Dartnall E and Sikweyiya Y. (2012). Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Research on Perpetration of Sexual Violence. Sexual Violence Research Initiative, Medical Research Council, Pretoria, South Africa.

Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Part I: About these recommendations	3
Introduction.....	3
Background.....	3
Researching sexual violence perpetration.....	3
Who should use this document?.....	4
Part II: Key concepts	5
Definitions.....	5
Part III: Guiding principles and recommendations for research on perpetration to be ethical and safe	6
1. Researchers have a duty of care towards research participants.....	6
2. The duty of care of researchers towards research participants is limited.....	7
3. Informed consent procedures must be adequate and should be regarded as a process, not an event.....	9
4. Researchers must not collude with research participants.....	10
5. Researchers must recognise that perpetrators may also be victims.....	11
6. Researchers have a duty of care to the research team.....	12
7. The best interests of a sexual violence survivor may sometimes be to ensure the rape is not reported to authorities.....	13
8. Researchers should ensure the ethical and safe conduct of their research and be appropriately trained and mentored.....	13
9. Research findings must be released in a manner that is ethical and safe.....	17
10. Research with incarcerated offenders presents additional challenges that must be addressed.....	17
References	20
Research Codes of Practice	21

List of boxes

Box 1 Disclosure concerns.....	8
Box 2 Text of the publicly distributed information leaflet for a community survey that included violence perpetration questions in South Africa.....	10
Box 3 Examples of questions framed from the victim's perspective or that challenge the acceptability of violence.....	11
Box 4 Managing situations where research is viewed as a threat to consenting participants in qualitative research.....	14
Box 5 Example of survey questions on rape perpetration from the Gender and Masculinities Regional Study for Asia and Pacific.....	16

Acknowledgements

These recommendations have been developed on behalf of the SVRI with input from consultations with sexual violence perpetration researchers from several global regions. They have been drafted by Rachel Jewkes, Elizabeth Dartnall and Yandisa Sikweyiya from the Gender & Health Research Unit of the Medical Research Council of South Africa, drawing on a background paper on the ethics of rape perpetration written by Jeff Hearn, Kjerstin Andersson and Malcolm Cowburn. They draw on deliberations of a workshop on this subject held by the SVRI from 17-18 July 2008.

Workshop participants: Malcolm Cowburn, Sheffield Hallam University, United Kingdom; Kjersten Andersson, Linköping University, Sweden; Nancy Kass, Johns Hopkins Berman Institute of Bioethics, USA; Robert Morrell, University of Cape Town, South Africa; Yandisa Sikweyiya, Gender & Health Research Unit, Medical Research Council, South Africa; Juan Manuel Contreras, International Center for Research on Women, USA; Gary Barker, Promundo, Brazil; Mary Koss, Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health, USA; Mary Ann Burke, Global Forum for Health Research, Geneva; Kristin Dunkle, Emory University, USA; Alessandra Guedes, Pan American Health Organisation; Claudia Garcia-Moreno, World Health Organisation; Iatamze Verulashvili, Women's Centre, Georgia; Jill Astbury, Monash University, Australia; Rachel Jewkes, Gender & Health Research Unit, Medical Research Council, South Africa; Elizabeth Dartnall, Sexual Violence Research Initiative, Medical Research Council, South Africa; and Lizle Loots, Sexual Violence Research Initiative, Medical Research Council, South Africa.

Additional reviewers: The authors would also like to thank the following experts who reviewed draft versions of the current document, including: Jill Astbury, Monash University, Australia; Juan Manuel Contreras, International Center for Research on Women, USA; Abbie Fields, University of Central America, Managua, Nicaragua; Claudia Garcia-Moreno, World Health Organisation; Alessandra Guedes, Pan American Health Organisation; Ruth Macklin, Yeshiva University, New York, USA; Charles Ngwena, University of the Free State, South Africa; Annelize G Nienaber, University of Pretoria, South Africa; Carla Saenz, Pan American Health Organisation; Alan Wertheimer, Harvard University, USA and Linda Williams, University of Massachusetts Lowell, USA.

Part I: About these recommendations

Introduction

Scientific research can and should play a critical role in raising the public profile and understanding of sexual violence at global, regional and national levels and help to define appropriate responses. Sexual violence perpetration is a relatively neglected area of research. As global and national agendas shift from responding to victims and incidents to primary prevention, there is increasing recognition of the importance of research with men and boys, including those who have perpetrated sexual violence. This area of research is highly sensitive, with distinct ethical challenges, and requires careful preparation, attention to legal issues and thoughtful dissemination of the research findings. Researchers who want to better understand sexual violence perpetration need a comprehensive understanding of the ethical issues involved. A paper published by the SVRI on ethics and research with men who commit sexual violence, highlights the lack of guidance for this work (Hearn, Andersson & Cowburn 2007)¹. It is against this background that these ethical and safety recommendations for doing research on perpetration of sexual violence have been developed.

Background

In July 2008 the SVRI organized a workshop that brought together ethicists and researchers from a range of global regions with an interest in research on sexual violence perpetration, to develop and strengthen ethical recommendations on researching perpetration of sexual violence. The workshop was guided by the background paper that outlined some of the ethical dilemmas found in this area of research (Hearn, Andersson & Cowburn 2007). During the workshop participants presented and discussed aspects of research in the area and developed a set of ethical recommendations to guide future work. These recommendations were finalised through a process of international consultation.

These ethical recommendations draw on the experience of and complement, but do not replace, the following guidelines:

- Putting Women First: Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Research on Domestic Violence against Women (2001).
- The WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Interviewing Trafficked Women (2003).
- WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Researching, Documenting and Monitoring Sexual Violence in Emergencies (2007).

Researching sexual violence perpetration

“Why should we hear the stories of convicted sexual offenders? ... The answer is as straight forward as it is complex. If we do not make an attempt to understand those who violate our social norms by perpetrating violence... we are most certainly likely to fall victim again. Sometimes it is in our best interests to listen, however difficult that may be.” (Waldrum, 2007).

Sexual violence is a human rights issue and a global public health problem. There is an increasing awareness of the importance of research with men who commit, or have committed, sexual violence in order to increase and contribute to knowledge about perpetration of sexual violence. From a public health perspective, researching perpetration is crucial for informing evidence based interventions to prevent, reduce and stop sexual violence, thus research on perpetration can be seen as contributing to public safety and risk reduction.

¹ Paper available online at: <http://www.svri.org/perpetrators.pdf>

Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Research on the Perpetration of Sexual Violence

Perpetration research participants include those who have, and those who have not, committed instances of sexual violence. These guidelines assume the work will be conducted with men, but the principles outlined are applicable to research with women, who may also perpetrate sexual violence. Perpetrators of sexual violence are predominantly male, may be of almost any age, any ethnicity, social classes and have a variety of abilities (physical and intellectual). Different issues arise in research on different contexts of perpetration and when using different methodologies. Those who are regarded by researchers as perpetrators may not recognise themselves as such. For example, men can respond affirmatively to survey questions about perpetration, without themselves realising that they are indeed “confessing to rape”. There is an additional layer of sensitivity in research on perpetration with minors as informed consent is needed from parents, as well as assent from the minor, and parents may not know whether their son ‘has raped’ when giving this. Both parents and their minor children need to be fully informed about risk and protections provided in the study. Research data is often not protected in law, or the extent of that protection may be unclear or untested. Confidentiality of survey interviewees can be more readily protected and questionnaires may be drafted such that victims cannot be identified, but these protections are harder to establish, or may be impossible, in qualitative research.

Researchers must inform themselves and the research team of legislation relevant to the study and of any requirements imposed or protections provided by any funding sources. These constraints may vary from country to country, and amongst professional bodies. For example, some countries have mandatory reporting laws. Such laws create dilemmas for researchers; they may conflict with other ethical principles, such as respect for confidentiality and for research participants (Findholt & Robrecht 2002). Research participants also need to be informed that confidentiality may be breached due to legislative provisions. In some instances the researcher may need to reconsider the feasibility of continuing with the research.

This document applies to all forms of research on sexual violence perpetration. A number of recommendations are offered to guide this research and to ensure compliance with all relevant international and ethical and safety standards. The document follows a similar structure to that provided by the WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Researching, Documenting and Monitoring Sexual Violence in Emergencies. Under each recommendation, the text outlines the key ethical and safety issues that must be addressed. Wherever possible, practical examples are provided to illuminate the ethical and safety issues that are outlined in this document, and examples of good practice from the field are provided. A recommended reading list is also provided. This is not a stand-alone document. It has been developed to complement and enhance existing texts, professional standards and ethical guidelines. As outlined by WHO, these include but are not limited to:

- research protocols and policies of specific institutions or research bodies;
- protocols and practices for providing direct services to survivors;
- locally established procedures for obtaining consent, documenting sexual violence incidents and referring research participants for assistance and services;
- standards and policies for human rights investigations;
- organisational policies for staff recruitment, hiring, training and supervision, and
- internationally agreed ethical standards for research involving human subjects.

Who should use this document?

This document is formulated to inform those who are concerned with the planning, conduct, funding, reviewing of protocols or approving data gathering on sexual violence perpetrations. This document should be viewed as a resource or tool for researchers and all members of the research team, including data collectors, translators and transcribers, interpreters, data entry staff and others, as well as Research Ethics Committees or Ethical Review Boards, funders, reviewers and users of research.

Part II: Key concepts

Definitions

Sexual violence

Sexual violence can be defined as: *any sexual act, attempts to obtain a sexual act, or acts to traffic for sexual purposes, directed against a person using coercion, harassment or advances made by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work* (Jewkes, Garcia-Moreno & Sen 2002).

The acts that are categorized as sexual violence can take place in different circumstances and settings, including (but not limited to):

- rape in marriage or dating relationships;
- rape of non-romantic acquaintances, peer sexual abuse, abuse by those in positions of trust, such as clergy, medical practitioners or teachers;
- rape by strangers;
- gang rape;
- sexual contact via coercion, trickery, deception, or persons who are incapacitated or are too drugged or drunk to consent;
- rape during armed conflict;
- sexual harassment, including demanding sex in return for work, school grades or favours;
- unwanted sexual touching or exposure to pornography;
- sexual abuse of mentally or physically disabled people;
- sexual abuse of boy and girl children;
- violent acts against sexual integrity, including female genital mutilation, sterilization, obligatory inspections for virginity, forced anal examination;
- sexual exploitation via prostitution and trafficking of persons for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

The term, “sexual violence” covers many actions, activities and experiences. Laws differ between countries and so the overlap between acts of sexual violence and legal definitions of “rape” and other “sexual offences” differ between countries and other legal jurisdictions. The best national laws on sexual offences recognise that: a) sex can be coerced by physical or non-physical methods; b) that many forms of sexual violence exist above and beyond ‘rape’. Understanding of sexual violence can change greatly across the life course, including retrospectively (Kelly 1987).

Terminology: “Perpetration”, “perpetrators” and “victims”

Research may be conducted on perpetration in circumstances where the research participants may or may not have been involved themselves in acts of sexual violence. Research with men or women who have committed sexual violence (‘perpetrators’) is conducted with those who are known to have been involved in such acts. However, depending on the circumstances they may not recognise themselves as ‘sexual violence perpetrators’, just as victims of sexual violence do not always identify themselves as ‘victims’. This may be because of a reluctance to embrace a victim or perpetrator identity, but it may also be because they have not identified the acts that gave rise to these categories as sexual violence or rape. Perpetrators may also have a mistaken view as to what counts as consent. Moreover, some men believe that consent to marriage entails consent to sex whenever one’s husband demands. Furthermore, given the close relationship between male sexual victimisation and perpetration, many men who perpetrate sexual violence may also have been victims of such violence.

Part III: Guiding principles and recommendations for research on perpetration to be ethical and safe

The following guiding principles are intended to complement existing policies, procedures, processes, guidelines, local and international ethical texts.

1. Researchers have a duty of care towards research participants.
2. The duty of care towards research participants is limited.
3. Informed consent procedures must be adequate and should be regarded as a process, not an event.
4. Researchers must not collude with research participants.
5. Researchers must recognise that perpetrators may also be victims.
6. Researchers have a duty of care to the research team.
7. The best interests of a sexual violence survivor² may sometimes be to ensure the act is not reported to authorities.
8. Researchers should ensure the ethical and safe conduct of their research and be appropriately trained and mentored.
9. Research findings must be released in a manner that is ethical and safe.
10. Research with incarcerated offenders presents additional challenges that must be addressed.

1. Researchers have a duty of care towards research participants

Risks

Research participants have a right to safety. However, research of all types holds inherent risks. With research on perpetration for example, those revealing perpetration are incriminating themselves by doing so. It is therefore essential that they do not face harm, including legal consequences, as a result of research participation, and that they are fully informed of any risks that may arise. In perpetration research, not all participants are perpetrators of sexual violence. There is a potential risk for these participants of being identified as a perpetrator to others who may view participation in the study as an indication that they have perpetrated. It is important that only the research participant should know that the research includes questions on sexual violence (WHO 1999; Jewkes et al. 2000; Ellsberg & Heise 2002). Participants should be advised not to tell other people about the full scope of the interview (Jewkes et al. 2000), and, informed of potential risks of revealing their involvement in such research. Referring to the study euphemistically e.g. as a 'study of masculinity and men's behaviour' or 'research on sexuality and health', can also help minimise the potential risks of being labelled as a perpetrator of sexual violence by participating in a study of this nature.

Recommendations

- 1.1 Studies of perpetration of sexual violence should not be openly identified as 'perpetration research'. The focus should not be included in the title or in publicly distributed information sheets or in descriptions of the work provided to those who are not required to give informed consent.

² The terms survivor and victim of sexual violence are used interchangeably throughout this document.

- 1.2 Questions about sexual violence perpetration where possible should be embedded in surveys that cover a much wider range of issues, because this allows for the research to be truthfully presented as a survey that is not just “about rape perpetration”.
- 1.3 Information sheets about a study should not include mention of questions being asked on sexual violence perpetration but this must be explicitly mentioned in the informed consent process.
- 1.4 Interviews should be conducted, where possible, with complete auditory privacy. Visual privacy is also desirable but this can be impossible in a prison, for example, where the prison requires the ability to observe what is happening in the room for the safety of all involved.
- 1.5 Research participants should be advised not to discuss with others the fact that the survey has included questions on sexual violence perpetration and to consider how they will respond to anyone who asks about the content of the interview. They should be informed that there could be a risk of misunderstanding, and even stigma, if it was known that they had participated in sexual violence perpetration research.
- 1.6 To protect the safety of participants, information obtained in perpetration research should be recorded anonymously. Unless it is essential, the names of research participants should not be collected. Where names and contact details are needed for fieldwork purposes, they should be kept in a locked cabinet or on a password protected computer and destroyed immediately after use.
- 1.7 Oral consent is preferable to signed consent forms for research on perpetration. The fieldworker may sign the consent form to indicate that consent procedures have been followed. Where written consent is required or unavoidable, there must be no way of linking the signed form and the completed interview.

2. The duty of care of researchers towards research participants is limited

Risks

Research should not be used for the investigation of criminal cases. Researchers should therefore avoid being in possession of information that may be of value in punishing, or preventing, specific acts of crime. If such information is provided to researchers they need to be prepared to report to the authorities.

During an interview, researchers may learn of a threat to an identifiable individual or may learn that an identifiable person has been a victim of a prior serious, as yet unpunished, crime. These circumstances require researchers to take reasonable steps to protect a future victim, or see that justice is done, by reporting the case to the relevant authorities such as the police or a social worker. At times, a research participant may express a general intention to harm (but does not name, or otherwise identify, an intended victim). The researcher has a duty to inform the proper authorities in this case if the threat is time-specific and if the respondent is subjected to any legislative provisions (such as when research is carried out among prison populations). Generally social workers are well informed about processes for making reports and should be consulted during the preparatory stages of a project to enable an operating procedure for reporting to be drafted. Various disclosure concerns are discussed in Box 1 overleaf.

Box 1 Disclosure concerns

- » The nature of the offence/harmful act: these relate to both past acts and future intentions, when these are not already known by the authorities.
- » The identity of the perpetrator: these relate to self-reported acts or intentions. Researchers are not advised to report disclosure of an act committed by a third party and this is second-hand information, which may be denied or found to be untrue.
- » Identity of victim: a specific person or persons must be identified by the respondent. There is no obligation on a researcher to report, or value in reporting, acts against persons unknown.

Recommendations

- 2.1 Limit the detail collected in perpetration surveys: Researchers should not include items in questionnaires on perpetration that enable victim identification or enable the incident described to be specifically identified. This is done by limiting the detail included in items on questionnaires.
- 2.2 If possible, sexual violence perpetration should be studied using self-completion techniques so that data may be collected on perpetration of sexual violence without gathering information that allows for the identification of the one who perpetrated.
- 2.3 Limit the detail collected in qualitative research: Participants in qualitative research on perpetration should be warned that there are limits to confidentiality. They should be advised not to describe incidents that are not known to the authorities in such detail as to enable victim identification or enable the incident described to be specifically identified.
- 2.4 During qualitative interviews on perpetration, researchers should continuously be mindful of the need to avoid particular types of incriminating disclosure and should warn the research participant whenever he or she may be providing too much detail. This should also form part of the informed consent process.
- 2.5 Researchers should develop a protocol before the study commences for responding to incidents where a specific and serious violent threat is made against an identified individual, or act disclosed that has yet to be brought to justice. Reports of serious crime should not be sought in research and if inadvertently revealed, require immediate review by the principal investigator and such cases will usually need to be reported. The possibility of reporting information should be included in the informed consent process.
- 2.6 In the case of a research participant expressing a general intention to harm (not naming an intended victim), the researcher has a duty to inform the relevant authorities if the threat is time-specific and if the respondent is subjected to any legislative provisions (such as when research is conducted among prison or other incarcerated populations). This should be included in the informed consent process.

3. Informed consent procedures must be adequate and should be regarded as a process, not an event

Risks

Researchers need to draft information sheets and consent forms sensitively so they adequately inform research participants about the nature of the interview and the range of topics covered in the questionnaire or interview guide, without raising undue fears regarding the repercussions of their participation. It is possible to strike this balance, but this needs to be approached with sensitivity. Research on perpetration has been successfully conducted in many different settings demonstrating that potential research participants will give consent if:

1. they are adequately informed about the purpose of the research and the value of the information they are asked to provide; and
2. if protections for research participants are adequately described.

Box 2 overleaf provides an example of text from an information sheet that was used to inform research participants, as well as other interested individuals, about a survey that included questions on rape perpetration among those on many other topics. This information sheet strongly indicated that questions would span a range of sensitive areas without allowing for the survey to be dubbed a 'rape perpetration survey', which would have been both incorrect and could have stigmatised research participants. Concern with stigmatisation should not however trump the validity of the informed consent process. Balance should be sought so potential participants are given relevant information and can make an informed decision about their participation.

Recommendations

- 3.1 Researchers must be familiar with the specific laws and professional reporting requirements of their jurisdiction and reflect on the ethical dilemmas that they may pose in sexual violence perpetration research before commencing a project.
- 3.2 Information leaflets and consent forms need to be drafted so as not to mislead research participants about the scope of questions. Specific consent documents will need to be reviewed and approved by an independent ethics committee that will take the specifics of the study into account.
- 3.3 Informed consent should be regarded as a process. Research participants should be reminded during the interview that continued participation is voluntary and that they can choose not to answer any questions. Asking participants in they are 'happy to continue' at different points throughout the interview is good practice.
- 3.4 Assurances of confidentiality, and disclosure of any limitations to confidentiality, are very important when informed consent is obtained. They should be repeated at the end of the interview to help allay lingering anxieties.
- 3.5 A statement informing research participants of the limited nature of confidentiality is necessary in the consent form or information sheet. Limitations can differ in different studies.
- 3.6 Research participants should be informed that if they discuss illegal sexual behaviours that have not been reported to the police and they identify specific victims this information will be passed on to the police.

Box 2 Text of the publicly distributed information leaflet for a community survey that included violence perpetration questions in South Africa

The men's health and relationships study

The Gender and Health Research Unit at the Medical Research Council (MRC) is undertaking research with men in the Eastern Cape Province and KwaZulu-Natal on men's health and relationships. We want to understand what it means to be a man in South Africa in 2008: how men think, what men do, how they have grown up, how healthy they are and how they relate to their families and children. Men are important in society, their behaviour, experiences and ideas influence their own health and also the health and well-being of women close to them and children. One of our key challenges as a country is to build a healthier, happier and safer place for us all to live in and in order to do this we have to have a good understanding of the lives and experiences of South African men.

Why the research?

There are many faces of South African men. When we open our newspapers or watch TV we see many conflicting images. We see men as community leaders and politicians, men in trade unions and men who are unemployed, men engaged in crime and men as carers for their families and small children, men as business leaders and men who are frustrated, unemployed and landless. Men also differ a great deal in their health. Many men feel and are physically strong and fit, but men often have health problems too. Men often get sexually transmitted infections and many adult men have HIV. Whilst some men do not drink, many men drink a lot of alcohol and we often hear of fights occurring after drinking and each year many men are in road accidents related to alcohol. Many men find their life experiences make them feel sad or frustrated and find it hard to talk about these problems. Often their anger bottles up inside and then this can lead to many problems in communities.

Very often we hear men, young and old, blamed for many of the problems we face in communities, but we don't usually give men a chance to tell us about themselves and their lives so that we can understand them. If we do not understand men properly and what their lives and ideas are really like and the challenges they face and have faced, we cannot learn how best to improve their lives and health. Our challenge as a country is to help all men fulfil their maximum potential in every area of their lives and in order to do that we have to learn about all South African men. If we can make men healthier and happier the benefits will be enjoyed by men, women and children.

4. Researchers must not collude³ with research participants

"It is clear that simple notions of easy interviewer-interviewee empathy and emotional closeness are, at least partly, challenged in this work, as are ideals or naïve possibilities of power symmetry in interviewing" (Hearn 1998: 53-55).

Risks

Many perpetrators deny that what they did was 'rape'. This may be because they genuinely did not view their actions in that way or because they externalise blame or otherwise resist taking responsibility for their actions. Researchers should be polite and respectful, and establish some form of rapport with the participant whilst at the same time being non-collusive. Qualitative researchers are usually trained to maintain rapport in interviews through positively engaging and expressing sympathy for their

³ Collusion is when the researcher either consciously or unconsciously sanctions a respondent's illegal behaviour in order to encourage their participation in the research process.

informants. If this is done in perpetration research during accounts of perpetration it may be perceived as colluding or agreeing with the respondents. The challenge then is to allow the research participant to express attitudes or describe acts that are, or have been, harmful to others without appearing to agree with what is said. Questions framed from the victim's perspective or that challenge the acceptability of violence are provided in Box 3.

Box 3 Examples of questions framed from the victim's perspective or that challenge the acceptability of violence

Interviewer: "What makes you believe she was not harmed by the act?"

Participant: "You know what women are like.."

Interviewer: "No, tell me what are women like?"

Participant: "Those children said 'Come and have sex with us', they actually said 'Come and f*** us'"

Interviewer: "I am surprised by what you are saying as these children were 6. It's unusual for children to talk like that. Are you sure that's what they said?"

Recommendations

- 4.1 Researchers need to be trained in presenting a neutral affect during interviews. This includes awareness of body language and non-verbal responses (e.g. head nods or mmhm sounds).
- 4.2 Researchers need to anticipate possible attempts by participants to draw them into collusion in minimising their acts. Researchers need to prepare a range of non-collusive responses for these situations (See Box 3).
- 4.3 Researchers should indicate the criminal nature of sexual violence through questions asking about consequences experienced. For example, "What was the most serious consequence you experienced from this act?" Then probe, "feeling guilty"; "arrest"; "jail".
- 4.4 If a research participant explicitly asks the interviewer's opinion on matters related to gender relations and violence, it is important to defer the answer until after data has been collected. A clear statement of the researcher's views on the non-acceptability of violence should be given at that point. This should be done in a non-confrontational way and must not be framed as an attack on the research participant as this may be disrespectful and may be dangerous.

5. Researchers must recognise that perpetrators may also be victims

Risks

Research on rape perpetration globally shows that male perpetrators are much more likely than other men to have been victims of sexual violence and usually to have experienced more adversity or trauma in childhood (Barker et. al 2011). Researchers need to be aware that perpetrators may also become upset or express emotions of grief and sadness during an interview and that this requires an appropriate response from the researcher. Researchers should respond in accordance with the research protocol, with sympathetic recognition of any emotional distress the participant is expressing. The response should be non-judgmental, even when distress is caused by reports of perpetration, and at no time should a researcher minimize the harm the act may have caused or the perpetrator's responsibility for the act.

Recommendations

- 5.1 Interviewers must be trained to respond to distress exhibited in interviews. This should include expressions of sympathy, providing short breaks or offering to recommence on another date if distress is enduring and severe.
- 5.2 Interviewers must be trained to be able to distinguish between distress or trauma caused by circumstances where the research participant was a victim, and distress caused as a consequence of the acts of harm he inflicted on others. Where the participant was a victim, emotional support and sympathy should be offered. Distress as a consequence of violence perpetrated by the participant may be responded to by measures that enable settling immediate emotions, such as taking a short break, but interviewers must be trained to respond in ways that indicate that the perpetrator is responsible for any consequences because of the act of sexual violence.
- 5.3 Interviewers need to have a readily available list of services for victims of sexual violence, as it may be appropriate to refer research participants to these if they disclose victimisation and request help. If there are any resources, such as NGO programmes, that help perpetrators, information should also be provided on these.
- 5.4 Interviewees should be thanked for their cooperation, and, where necessary, should be provided with details about how to contact the researcher following the interview.
- 5.5 Effort should be made to ensure the participant leaves feeling positive about their engagement in research. This is likely to come from an acknowledgement that they have made a contribution by participating. In prisons it is particularly important that the participant knows how to get support and to develop a protocol for activating support systems if they are deemed to be needed.

6. Researchers have a duty of care to the research team

Risks

Research on sexual violence perpetration can take an emotional toll on those who listen to the stories of sexual violence. This includes frontline interviewers and anyone who has to listen to or read recordings of interviews, such as transcribers, interpreters or anyone coding and analysing qualitative data. The emotional toll may be more severe with qualitative research. This research may also present risks of actual physical or sexual violence to research team members.

Recommendations

- 6.1 Appropriate time and structured opportunities should be provided so that researchers can discuss the interviews and emotions they generate on a daily basis during fieldwork.
- 6.2 Research timetables should ensure that interviewers limit the number of interviews conducted per day (a total of 3 interviews per day is recommended), and limit the number of days of work per week (preferably to 4).
- 6.3 Self-completion methods should be used where possible in surveys to minimise the impact on research team members as well as to increase confidentiality.

- 6.4 Research team members should be informed about vicarious trauma⁴ and how it may manifest itself so that they can be aware of signs that they may be having difficulty.
- 6.5 Professional counselling should be made available to research team members, with expenses covered by the research project or institute.
- 6.6 Risks of physical or sexual harm should be assessed before conducting interviews and a detailed protocol developed for avoiding danger, plans for frequent monitoring of safety by persons other than the interviewer, and precautions to be taken as well as devising exit strategies or of ways of calling help, if needed.

7. The best interests of a sexual violence survivor may sometimes be to ensure the rape is not reported to authorities

Rape Victim Stoned to Death in Somalia Was 13, U.N. Says

REUTERS 05 11 08

NAIROBI, Kenya – A Somali stoned to death by Islamist militants after she had been accused of adultery was a 13-year-old girl who had been raped while visiting her grandmother.

Risks

It is also important to note that, in some settings, the authorities' interest or ability to pursue reports of offenses disclosed during an interview process may be very limited. In some situations, reporting the offense could do the victim/survivor a disservice or place them at greater risk of abuse. Researchers need to be aware of the risks involved in reporting abuse to authorities. They should develop in advance a protocol for responding to unsolicited disclosures of an offence. This plan will need to take into account specific country circumstances, and existing mandatory reporting laws.

Recommendations

- 7.1 It is important for researchers to be informed of the cultural, political and legal contexts in which they work, including being aware of the potential consequences of reporting rapes to authorities. Researchers must ensure that their research protocol is appropriate for the specific setting.

8. Researchers should ensure the ethical and safe conduct of their research and be appropriately trained and mentored

Risks

Researching perpetration of sexual violence is more complex than working on many other areas of violence research. Researchers engaged in this type of work must be adequately trained and mentored, and the research must be methodologically sound so researchers are confident that the benefits of generating the findings will outweigh any risks. Research team members should be carefully selected and receive specialised training and ongoing support. More specifically, selection and training need to focus on the ability of the researcher(s) to deal with the issue of sexual violence and its perpetration without collusion, and ensure that the person understands the role

⁴ Vicarious trauma is defined as "the transformation of the therapist's or helper's inner experience as a result of empathetic engagement with survivor clients and their trauma material" (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995). For more information on vicarious trauma and doing research on sexual violence, see: "Researcher Trauma, Safety and Sexual Violence Research. Briefing Paper" at <http://www.svri.org/traumabooklet.pdf> and "Vicarious Trauma: Understanding and Managing the Impact of Doing Research on Sensitive Topics" at <http://www.svri.org/researcherhandout.pdf>

of the researcher and how that is distinguished from that of a service provider, the principles of the ethical conduct of research; is aware of and sensitive to protocols for assessing danger; knowledgeable of the way in which the interviewer response can impact the participants, compromise the research, and compromise safety and confidentiality. Suggestions for managing situations where research is viewed as a threat to consenting participants in qualitative research are provided in Box 4.

Box 4 Managing situations where research is viewed as a threat to consenting participants in qualitative research

Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2001) discuss the possibility of research being viewed as threatening to research participants and strategies that may invoke reactions in interviews. Interviewers should be aware of this possibility and prepare responses in case problems arise. When interviewees seek to compensate for a feeling of threat by exerting control in the interview, they suggest:

- » Allow symbolic expression of control, by letting the participant choose the time and place of the interview.
- » Let the participant ask the first question.
- » Challenge the participant to take charge as an expert, by providing useful information.
- » Probe sensitive topics only when an opportunity presents itself, or when such topics are brought up by the participant himself.

The struggle for control can take the form of minimising the significance or impact of negative actions. They suggest:

- » If cues and probes result in brief answers. Let the interview proceed and after the last question circle back, formulating questions admitting the interviewer's uncertainty, affirming the participant's experience as complex, and try to put the participant in the "driver's seat".
- » If notepads and tape recorders seem intimidating, put them aside and reconstruct the interview in field notes.
- » Men may attempt to reassert control by inexpressivity and non-disclosure of emotions. A direct question often results in an answer in keeping with the strictures of masculine self-presentation:
 - Do not immediately probe emotionally loaded topics; circle back to the topic later.
 - Ask for stories. It may be easier for many men to talk about emotions.
 - Use elicitation devices, such as "Can you tell me some more on that".
 - Ask about thoughts, not feelings – then work back to feelings.
- » If the interviewer is a woman, men may seek to undermine her status with sexual innuendoes or flattery. It is helpful to anticipate this and prepare responses in advance that enable professional relations to be maintained

Good practice in design of research instruments is an ethical imperative in sexual violence perpetration research. Studies of victims of violence show that “disclosure rates are highly affected by the design and wording of questions, training of interviewers, and implementation of the study” (Ellsberg & Heise 2002: 1601). These are important issues when it comes to research on perpetrators as well. Multiple questions should be used. These should ask about specific acts, specific victim/perpetrator relationships, and contexts of multiple perpetrator assault. Single, broad questions of abuse are usually inadequate to elicit reports of sexual violence. Questions should be designed to avoid use of vague or ambiguous terms such as ‘abuse’, ‘rape’, and ‘violence’, and instead, directly ask respondents about specific acts, as in the example of survey questions shown in Box 5 overleaf (Koss 1993; Fisher, Cullen & Turner 2000; Ellsberg & Heise 2002).

Those who have perpetrated are more likely to disclose acts of sexual violence if they feel acknowledged and if the interview is characterised by friendliness and cooperation (Kebbell, Hurren & Mazerolle 2006). An interview can be started with less threatening topics and gradually build up to more sensitive areas of the participants’ sexual history and details of their current sexual offence (Scully 1990; Hudson 2004). It is important that interviewees know the main subject of interviews, and in some cases it may be preferable for both parties to move to the main agenda more quickly.

There is a risk that the interview or data collection process itself can be a source of sexual stimulation for perpetrators which could increase the risk of re-offense. This is a particular risk with group discussion of offences and motivations for these. We recommend that research with sexual violence perpetrators not be conducted using group methodologies, although these may be used if the research focuses on social norms related to sexual violence perpetration.

Recommendations

- 8.1 Research team selection should include discussion of candidates’ own experiences of sexual violence unless self-completion data collection methods are to be employed, anyone who has perpetrated sexual violence, is not suited to this area of research because of the risk of collusion.
- 8.2 Research on sexual violence perpetration should not be undertaken unless researchers are adequately trained and mentored, and unless there is a clear plan for using the research findings to meaningfully advance knowledge, or inform policy, services or prevention.
- 8.3 Adequate time must be allocated for training research teams on ethical and safety issues, as well as researchers’ own relevant personal experiences, to assist them in becoming familiar with their own reactions and responses, both negative, (for example, disgust), and positive (for example, feeling sorry for perpetrators).
- 8.4 Survey instruments need to be well designed and incorporate principles of best practice. There should be sensitivity to the balance of the questions and question flow to ensure that research participants end feeling positive about their research participation experience.
- 8.5 Research questions should be subjected to testing to ensure that they are understood, culturally appropriate and framed in a way that is explicit enough to elicit the required information but not so explicit as to cause offence.
- 8.6 In writing or presenting findings from qualitative research on perpetration it is important to avoid sensationalism and to ensure that graphic accounts of perpetration are not presented.
- 8.7 Researchers should avoid studying rape perpetration through group discussion methodologies.

Box 5 Example of survey questions on rape perpetration from the Gender and Masculinities Regional Study for Asia and Pacific

There are now a few more questions about things you may have done with women who are your current or previous partners, wives or girlfriends. These next questions are asking about the whole of your life, including when you were a boy. Please feel free in answering these questions, we really want to learn more about things men do. Remember that what you answer here cannot be linked to you in any way.

815		Never	Once	Few	Many
a	Have you ever forced your current or previous wife or girlfriend to have sex with you when she did not want to?	1	2	3	4
b	Have you ever had sex with your current or previous wife or girlfriend when you knew she didn't want it but you believed she should agree because she was your wife/partner?	1	2	3	4
c	Have you ever forced your current or previous wife or girlfriend to watch pornography when she didn't want to?	1	2	3	4
d	Have you ever forced your current or previous wife or girlfriend to do something sexual that she did not want to do?	1	2	3	4
CK 8 IF HAS NEVER FORCED A WIFE OR GIRLFRIEND TO HAVE SEX WITHOUT CONSENT (815a&b =1) SKIP TO 815f					
e	Have you done any of these things in the past 12 months?	YES... 1	NO... 2		

These next questions are about things you may have done with women who were not your wife or girlfriend. The questions are asking about the whole of your life, including when you were a boy.

		Never	Once	More than once
f	Have you ever forced a woman who was not your wife or girlfriend at the time to have sex with you?	1	2	3
g	Have you ever had sex with a woman or girl when she was too drunk or drugged to say whether she wanted it or not?	1	2	3
h	Have you and other men ever had sex with a woman at the same time when she didn't consent to sex or you forced her?	1	2	3
i	Have you and other men ever had sex with a woman at the same time when she was too drunk or drugged to stop you?	1	2	3
CK 9 IF HAS NEVER FORCED A WOMAN OR GIRL WHO WAS NOT HIS WIFE OR GIRLFRIEND TO HAVE SEX WITHOUT CONSENT (815f-i=1) SKIP TO ...				
816	Have you done any of these things (forced a woman or girl into sex) in the past 12 months?	YES... 1	NO... 2	

9. Research findings must be released in a manner that is ethical and safe

Risks

Whilst researchers have an ethical obligation to write up and disseminate their research findings, in so doing they must also ensure that the confidentiality of the participants, victims and others involved in the research is protected. Researchers must also ensure their findings are properly interpreted and used to advance policy and intervention development. Researchers need to be aware of the potential uses and misuses of research findings. Good practice in qualitative perpetration research must include recognising that there are potential dangers in introducing into the public domain graphic descriptions of sexual violence. These may include re-victimising the victim by placing the perpetrator's account of their victimisation in the public domain and the danger of producing material that could be used as pornography. It is also important to avoid sensationalism and to avoid presenting visual material that might be used as pornography (Hearn & Jyrkinen 2007).

Recommendations

- 9.1 Ensure findings of research are reported in a sensitive way so that the dignity of victims is protected as well as the confidentiality of interviewees.
- 9.2 Sensationalism must be avoided when reporting research findings and researchers must be mindful of the need to avoid including graphic accounts of sexual violence, or visual material, that could be used as pornography.

10. Research with incarcerated offenders presents additional challenges that must be addressed

Risks

Incarcerated offenders are commonly the subjects of perpetration research. In many countries, there is little official recognition of the concept of prisoner's rights, and so researchers need to follow a standard of ethics that provides protection that will often extend far beyond the local social norms. When accused persons are incarcerated and awaiting trial, they may be particularly vulnerable as it is almost impossible to guarantee that information shared during research will not be used against them. It is therefore highly undesirable that detained accused persons be the subjects of research on sexual violence perpetration. After a conviction, in most legal systems prisoners cannot further implicate themselves by giving information about the crime for which they have been convicted, but they remain vulnerable to the possibility of being tried for other crimes. It is essential that researchers develop a protocol for informing prisoner participants of any risk and the limitations on confidentiality (if any) if they reveal details of other crimes to the researcher.

Obtaining informed consent from prisoners is a complex issue. For example, convicted offenders might believe that participation in research is connected to their treatment, could place them in a more favorable light with the authorities or that refusing to take part might be detrimental (Hudson 2004). During the consent process, researchers need to make clear how they relate to authorities so as not to raise false expectations.

Prisoners are often willing to participate in research, not least because it breaks up the monotony of a normal prison day. However prisons are closed environments in which there are few secrets and there is a potential risk of victimisation of prisoners accused of particular crimes by warders and fellow prisoners. As with all research, protecting participant confidentiality and explaining limits to confidentiality is essential. However, in prisons, in addition to the usual precautions, two other strategies may provide added protection:

Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Research on the Perpetration of Sexual Violence

1. ensuring that the number of prisoners interviewed is large enough so there is not immediate identification; and
2. if necessary, omitting (or somewhat changing) some details of the individuals when writing up qualitative findings.

Prisoners usually narrate their stories and their offence to multiple listeners, including police, lawyers, social workers, fellow inmates and so forth. This process can lead to the creation of one or more 'public' narratives and prisoners may be influenced to add or omit aspects of the narrative during these processes. This threatens the validity of data and researchers need to be very aware of this possibility. Strategies such as repeat interviewing and challenging certain aspects of the account through skilful probing may assist in providing insights into which aspects of a narrative are more reliable. In some research, with the offender's permission, friends and family have been interviewed to externally validate some aspects of their accounts. This may only be done with the permission of the offender.

Conducting interviews in prisons may pose additional risk to the safety of the researcher, in particular when a female researcher conducts research in a male prison. Researchers need to be informed of potential risks and of the protocol in place to minimize such risk. It is important to consider safety strategies from the onset of planning the study and discuss this with the prison authorities to obtain their co-operation.

Recommendations

- 10.1 Perpetration research with incarcerated perpetrators should follow best practice in protection of research participants⁵, even if this standard is higher than local considerations for the care of prisoners.
- 10.2 Ensure that prisoners understand the purpose of research and do not lead them to believe that: a) the research is linked to treatment; b) participation may place them in a favourable light with the authorities; and c) refusal to participate will be detrimental to them.
- 10.3 Because of the risk of incrimination and potential difficulties in maintaining confidentiality, research should not be conducted with those awaiting trial.
- 10.4 Prisoners should be warned about the difficulties of protecting confidentiality in prison interviews and about the possibility of self-incrimination if they reveal offences for which they have not been convicted.
- 10.5 Particular attention should be paid to ensuring the confidentiality of the data in a prison setting even if that means slightly altering or omitting identifying details in the account of the research.
- 10.6 Researchers need to be aware of the changes that may be made to narratives in the course of criminal justice proceedings and meetings with social workers and fellow prisoners. Repeat interviews and skilful probing and even external validation may be used to test aspects of a narrative to strengthen confidence in accounts.
- 10.7 A research safety protocol must be developed in advance of the commencement of interviewing. Developing such a protocol would involve the researchers familiarising themselves with prison procedures, and areas which may be considered safe and accessible to the research team.

5 The Belmont Report can be accessed at: http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED183582&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED183582

- 10.8 Where incarcerated offenders are considered dangerous, interviews should be conducted with a warden or corrections officer present but out of immediate listening range so as to still ensure confidentiality.
- 10.9 Strategies such as conducting interviews using one way mirrors for wardens or correctional officers to observe may be very valuable in further helping to ensure safety.

References

- Barker, G., Contreras, M., Heilman, B., Singh, A., Verma, R & Nascimento, M. (2011) Evolving Men: Preliminary findings of the International Men and Gender Equality Survey, ICRW
- Ellsberg, M., & Heise, L. (2002) Bearing Witness: Ethical domestic violence research. *The Lancet*, 359, 1559-1604
- Findholt, N., & Robrecht, L. C. (2002) Legal and Ethical Considerations in Research with Sexually Active Adolescents: The requirement to report statutory rape. *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, vol. 34(5), pp. 259-264.
- Fisher, BS., Cullen, FT., & Turner, MG. (2000) *The Sexual Victimization of College Women*. Research Report. National Institute of Justice, Washington.
- Hearn, J., Andersson, K., & Cowburn, M. (2007) *Guidelines for Researchers on Doing Research with Perpetrators of Sexual Violence*. University of Linköping, Sweden, Sexual Violence Research Initiative and Medical Research Council, Pretoria, South Africa.
- Hearn, J., & Jyrkinen, M. (2007) "I could be talking about a porn flick": Television-Internet Media Companies' Policies and Practices, Young People and Pornographisation. In A. Hirdman, M. Jyrkinen & S.V. Knudsen *Unge, kjønn og pornografi i Norden – Mediestudier* [Young people, gender and pornography in the Nordic region – media studies], Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers. TemaNord 2006:544.
- Hudson, SM. (2004) Pathways to Rape: Preliminary examination of patterns in the offence processes of rapists and their rehabilitation implications. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 10, 7-20.
- Jewkes, R., Sen, P., Garcia-Moreno, C. (2002) Sexual Violence. In: Krug, EG., Mercy, J., Zwi, A., & Lozano, R. (Eds) *World Health Report on Violence and Health*. World Health Organization, Geneva, 2002. pp 148-181.
- Kebbell, M., Hurren, E., Mazerolle, P. (2006) An investigation into the effective and ethical interviewing of suspected sex offenders. *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, (November), 1-6.
- Kelly, L. (1987) *Surviving Sexual Violence*. Cambridge: Polity
- Koss, MP. (1993) Detecting the scope of rape. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 8, 198-222.
- Lee, RM. (1993) *Doing research on sensitive topics*. London: Sage
- Schwalbe, M., & Wolkomir, M. (2001) The Masculine Self As Problem and Resource in Interview Studies of Men. *Men and Masculinities*, vol. 4(1), pp. 90-103.
- Scully, D. (1990). *Understanding Sexual Violence: A Study of Convicted Rapists*. Cambridge, Mass.; London: Unwin Hyman.
- WHO (1999) *Putting Women First: Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Research on Domestic Violence Against Women*, Department of Gender and Women's Health Family and Community Health, World Health Organization.
- WHO *Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Interviewing Trafficked Women* (2003) World Health Organization. Geneva.
- WHO *Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Researching, Documenting and Monitoring Sexual Violence in Emergencies*. (2007). World Health Organization. Geneva.

Research Codes of Practice

A Comparative Assessment of Good Practice in Programs for Men who use Violence Against Female Partners. (2004) Canberra, ACT: Office of the status of women, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/research/vicservice.html

Code of Ethics and Conduct (2006) The British Psychological Society. www.bps.org.uk/

Code of Ethics and Policies and Procedures of the ASA Committee on Professional Ethics. (1999) American Sociological Association. www.asanet.org

Code of Ethics of the American Anthropological Association (1998) American Anthropological Association. www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethcode.htm

Ethical guidelines and principles of conduct for anthropologists (2005) *Anthropology Southern Africa*, vol. 28(3&4), pp. 142-143

Ethical Principles of Psychologist (1981) *American Psychologist*, vol.36(6), pp. 633-638

Findholt, N. & Robrecht, L. C. (2002) Legal and Ethical Considerations in Research with Sexually Active Adolescents: The Requirement to Report Statutory Rape. *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, vol. 34(5), pp. 259-264.

Forskningsetiska principer inom humanistisk-samhällsvetenskaplig forskning. (2002) Vetenskapsrådet. www.vr.se

Guidelines For Research. (2006) National Children's Bureau. www.ncb.org.uk

NOTA Code of Ethics (2002) The National Organisation for the Treatment of Abusers.

Research Ethics Framework (2005) The Economic and Social Research Council <http://www.york.ac.uk/res/ref/news.htm>

The Belmont Report. Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research. (1978) The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research.

The RESPECT Code of Practice. Professional and Ethical Codes for Socio-Economic Research in the Information Society (2004) The Respect Projects www.respectproject.org/code

Statement of ethical practices for the British Sociological Association (2002) British Sociological Association. www.britisoc.co.uk

UNESCO (2005) Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights, 19 October 2005. Available at: http://portal.unesco.org/shs/en/ev.php-URL_ID=1883&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

WHO (2001) *Putting Women First: Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Research on Domestic Violence Against Women*, Department of Gender and Women's Health Family and Community Health, World Health Organization.

WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Interviewing Trafficked Women (2003) World Health Organization. Geneva.

WHO ethical and safety recommendations for researching, documenting and monitoring sexual violence in emergencies (2007). World Health Organization. Geneva.

World Medical Association (2004) *Declaration of Helsinki Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects.* <http://www.wma.net/e/policy/b3.htm>



Sexual Violence Research Initiative

Gender and Health Research Unit
Medical Research Council
Private Bag X385
Pretoria
South Africa
0001

svri@mrc.ac.za
www.svri.org