SEXUAL VIOLENCE RESEARCH INITIATIVE

Background Paper on Guidelines for Researchers on Doing Research with Perpetrators of Sexual Violence

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1. **Preamble**

This document is prepared for the Sexual Violence Research Initiative (http://www.svri.org). It presents a background document on guidelines for researchers doing or intending to do research with perpetrators of sexual violence. Before proceeding, it should said that embarking on research on perpetrators, or indeed victims, of sexual violence should not be undertaken without careful forethought, preparation, attention to motivation, ethics, and dissemination, and where possible, support. This is not a topic to be researched lightly or in passing or as an undergraduate level project or unsupervised and unsupported or in a context that is likely to be self-serving (see Ellsberg & Heise 2005). The process of producing these guidelines has involved contacting over 50 experts in the field worldwide, examining many research codes of ethics, and many research articles on ethics and methodology in researching violence and sexual violence, as well as drawing on our own research experience.

There are several different research literatures that are relevant to the task in hand, including those on violence, sexual violence, ethics, sensitive topics, as well as on policy, intervention and treatment. However, these literatures address victims/survivors more than perpetrators, and even when they do address the latter they rather rarely discuss practical and ethical guidelines for doing such research. When they do so, their observations range from very general, sometimes vague statements to specific issues of how to phrase certain questions. Moreover, some recommendations for researching sensitive topics generally (Lee 1993) may be inappropriate for research on perpetrators of sexual violence. Importantly, ethical issues are an integral part of methodology, not a separate issue.

The structure of the text is as follows. First, we introduce the broad area of sexual violence and some definitional and related questions; this is followed by discussion of issues in researching sexual violence perpetrators, ethics, research process, legal aspects, and applications for ethical approval.

2. **Introducing Sexual Violence**

The definition of sexual violence

Sexual violence can be defined as: any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or acts to traffic for sexual purposes, directed against a person using coercion, and unwanted sexual comments, 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. Sexual violence refers to treating people as an object for sexual purposes and violation of that which is sexual or sexualised (Krug 2002).

Sexually violent acts can take place in different circumstances and settings, including:

- coerced sex and rape within 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;

- systematic rape during armed conflict;

- unwanted sexual advances or sexual harassment, including demanding sex in return for favours;

- sexual abuse of mentally or physically disabled people;

- sexual abuse of children;

- forced marriage or cohabitation, including the marriage of children;

- denial of right to use contraception or adopt measures to protect against sexually transmitted diseases;

- forced abortion, forced sterilisation, forced Caesarian-sectioning;

- violent acts against the sexual integrity, including female genital mutilation, obligatory inspections for virginity, forced anal examination;

- forced prostitution and trafficking of people for the purpose of sexual exploitation. (see Krug 2002: 149-150).

The term, "sexual violence" covers many actions, activities and experiences. Some are readily known and defined in laws; others, for example, coercive sex, are not. Sexual coercion, both physical and non-physical, refers to various forms or combinations of physical and/or psychological pressure for sexual activity. Understandings of sexual violences can change greatly across the life course, including retrospectively (Kelly 1987). This is important for victims, perpetrators and researchers, relying, at least partly, on perceptions, definitions, memories and definitions. In a number of ways limiting sexual violence to legal definitions is problematic. How forms of sexual violence are defined, in law and society, varies throughout the world. There are many different kinds of sexual violence, with different characteristics. For example, separating "forced" prostitution and "non-forced" prostitution can be difficult. Sexual harassment may take many forms, from rape to trading sex for favours to non-contact action, such as creation of threatening sexual environments and use of pin-ups and pornography. It may be helpful to pluralize sexual violence to sexual violences.

Drawing clear boundaries around what are considered "sexual" or "sexual acts" can sometimes be difficult. In some views anything can be given sexual meaning (Plummer 1982, 2003). However, sexual violence usually refers to treating people as an object for sexual purposes and violation of that seen as sexual or sexualised, by those concerned or others in society. Intense and complex relations may exist between sexual violence and other experiences and arenas of life, for example, sexuality, childcare, friendship, employment.

Sexual violence in ongoing sexual and intimate relationships clearly affects sexuality and intimacy, before, during and after other sexual and intimate experiences.

There is a strong tendency to individualise sexual violence, as with much other violence, even when it is relatively common. This can be because of the structuring of criminal justice systems, which characteristically focus on (alleged) offending incidents rather than more general collective patterns. This characterisation can be reinforced by psychiatric and medical perspectives. Many forensic perspectives emphasise biological, psychodynamic or psychological underpinnings, with different treatment implications. Having said this, a clear distinction is needed between structural causes and patterns of sexual violence and individual responsibility for such actions.

Sexual violence is a very specific kind of research topic, with its own specificities. It brings together the specific features of researching sexuality, including the issues of, for example, sensitivity, privacy, body integrity, sexual histories, and the relations of sexual pleasure, reproduction and sexual/gender power, along with the specific features of researching violence, including issues of, for example, pain, safety, personal distress, sexual/gender hierarchy and power relations. Researching sexual violence necessitates an understanding of and a willingness to be able to deal with and respond to such matters, in planning research, data collection, and data analysis. Most sexual violence can at least in part be understood in terms of dominance, power and abuse, rather than sexuality. Although some such acts do not involve the use of physical violence, all acts are experienced as violating and on this (victim-centred) basis we justify our use of the term 'violence'.

Sexuality, violence and social divisions/differences

A major series of questions that affects all the issues raised is the intersections not only between sexuality and violence, but intersections with other social divisions and social differences, including age, class, disability, ethnicity, generation, religion and racialisation. Sexual violence can be cross-sex, same-sex or transgendered people. Objectification of people can happen on the basis of sex/gender, age, class, race/ethnicity, and other social divisions (Eichler & Burke 2006). Such objectifications and intersections concern both mutual constitution of divisions/differences, including sexual violences, and power differentials in the constructions of sexual violence, for example, in terms of age differences.

Terminology: "Perpetrators" and "victims"

In focusing on perpetrators, a number of clarifcations need to be made. Perhaps the most important is the distinction between offenders (largely restricted to those convicted within the criminal justice system) and perpetrators more generally (who may or may not have contact with the criminal justice system). The differences between self-described perpetrators (confessed), alleged perpetrators (by another party), offenders (convicted in a criminal justice system) and alleged offenders (charged but not convicted) also need to be considered. Implicit in terminology are different interpretations of events and experiences. Further differences can also be recognised between charged, convicted and confessed perpetrators, and between disclosed and non-disclosed perpetrators. There are also several

different formulations of those who subject to sexual violence: "victim", "survivor", "thriver", "AMAC" (adults molested as children), "victim-survivor" (also see Appendix 1).

3. **Researching Sexual Violence Perpetrators**

Why conduct research on the perpetrators of sexual violence?

An important question in research is: why do it? This has two levels:

- Why research sexual violence?
- Why research sexual violence perpetrators?

The obvious first answer here is the need to reduce and stop sexual violence, and indeed this is paramount. However, in research there is often more than one agenda, and the task may not be to reform the particular individual perpetrator as such, but to gain more knowledge about perpetrators more generally. This can also involve ethical conflicts between more immediate and longer-term or wider research aims. This links closely with the more specific question of the relation of research to explicit policy and practice interventions. Much research on perpetrators may have implications for policy and practice, but not all research needs to be designed for quick fixes of the problem. In some cases a longer-term view is needed that problematises taken-for-granted "truths" in current policy and practice. Research on perpetrators can be seen as contributing to public safety and risk reduction. Policy and practice can assist furthering 'relapse prevention'. It might contribute to policy development, including on non-convicted perpetrators.

Differences amongst perpetrators of sexual violence

Perpetrators can be male or female, of most ages, all ethnicities, all classes and have a variety of "abilities" (physical and intellectual). Sexual violence is a broad category, even though the majority of perpetrators are male.

It may be useful to consider these perspectives on sexual violence:

- use of force, physical or otherwise, by the perpetrator;
- intention to cause (sexual) harm;
- experienced *a*s sexually damaging and/or sexual violation;
- designation of certain acts, activities or events as "sexually violent" by a third party, for example, a legal authority (Hearn 1998);
- violation of integrity of the body and dignity of the person. Such acts not only violate a person's sexuality, but reduce a person to an object, and violate their dignity as a person. This is a human rights issue.

In research, one needs to clearly specify the focus, and within that context clarify definitions, differences and the perpetrator(s) to be addressed in the study. Different issues arise with different kinds of perpetrator: men, women, adolescent, "professional" (on different types of perpetrators see Appendix 2-4). While not all perpetrators of sexual violence are men, most are. The vast majority of victims of rape and sexual assault are women and girls. This raises questions about researching and interviewing men, and dealing with defensiveness, emotional closure, bravado. Male gender, of both researcher and researched, is usually paid little attention (McKegany & Bloor 1991). This is a key issue in research in prisons (Cowburn 2007). It is important to problematise dominant understandings of the male sex offender, and consider their implications for researching them *as men*. Many perpetrators may have fluid identities. This may involve being a "normal" man, in terms of misogyny, homophobia, and compulsory heterosexuality. It may involve perpetrators learning in treatment groups to "talk the talk", a process that can obscure questions of risk (see Appendix 5).

The perpetrator is not necessarily an individual sexually assaulting another. Perpetrators include those using direct interpersonal sexual violence, organising sexual violence; acting alone, in consort, in groups or organisations; covertly, overtly; regular, long-term, occasional; at different times in the life course. Some perpetrators are past or even current victims of sexual or other violence; for some there may be a relation between being abused and abusing. To say this is not to attribute any necessary cause and effect or divert attention from responsibility, but rather to note some of the complications of research in this area. The inference that they are inevitably destined to be perpetrators needs to be strongly resisted (Ryan 1989; Sandford 2005). Any trail from victim to victimiser is not inevitable. On the other hand, where perpetrators have been or are also victims, this could mean additional complications in specific research situations, in terms of, for example, the focus of interviews, possible links between these experiences, distress in interviews, and the offering of advice contacts at the end of the interview.

> In trafficking and (forced) prostitution, there are various ways in which different kinds of perpetrator or potential perpetrator relate to sexual violence:
>
> - Those engaged in buying or procuring others for sex of different kinds: married men, "regular guys", regular buyers, tourists, "one-off" buyers, covert buyers, buyers in groups, men thinking of buying, men ambivalent about buying.
>
> - Those organising trafficking and (forced) prostitution as pimps: one person pimps; organised business pimps; partners of women who prostitute.
>
> - Those organising such activities, including virtual organising, or involved in related business activities, both "respectable" business and organised crime.
>
> - Those who perpetrate violence to "subdue" or "control" people they traffick or force into prostitution.

Some perpetrators may be in relations with others that involve mutual violation, sometimes mutual perpetration, albeit perhaps at different times. In addition, this may or may not involve explicit or implicit sado-masochistic relations; these can raise complex questions of consent, especially when there are major power differences, such as by age, class, ethnicity, between those involved.

"Culture" and related divisions/differences

Cultural context is extremely important, in terms of researching in different parts of the world, with large variations in legal, social and therapeutic infrastructures. An aspect of difference worthy of special comment is that of "culture" and related concepts such as ethnicity, language, location, migration, nationality, religion, spatialisation, and way of life. However, this does not mean that sexual violence can or should be tolerated more in one place than in any other or to suggest any legal or cultural relativism (Edwards & Hearn 2005). Rather it is that the varying social conditions in different places may make for the imnplementation of different local solutions in different places, for example, conditions around migration, ethnicity and race/racism vary in different places.

There may be various complex and contradictory patterns: on the one hand, public discourse and criminal justice processes racist overstating of sexual violence by minority ethnic men, and racism in service provision (Davis 1981; hooks 1982; Collins 1991), and, on the other, possible underreporting of sexual violence from within minority ethnic communities (Droisen 1989) and tendencies of anti-racists to minimise the extent of violence in such communities in furthering anti-racist agendas (Sahgal 1990). Reverse patterns might be likely for white and ethnic majority communities, for example, racist understating of sexual violence from within white and ethnic dominant communities and tendencies of racists to maximise the extent of sexual violence in ethnic minority communities in furthering racist agendas. There could be racially/ethnically-based differences in definitions of sexual violence or willingness to disclose that differentially affect degrees of under-reporting across groups. Another question is that what constitutes abuse in relation to forms of touching. This is not to suggest cultural relativism, but rather than cultural practices and cultural acceptability, including in representation, change.

4. **Ethical Issues**

Introduction

While much of the above discussion of research process clearly concerns ethical matters, we now examine further questions in research ethics in a more focused way. International agreed principles for research, as set out in the Helsinki Declaration (World Medical Association 2004), are: safeguarding research subjects; informed consent; minimising risk; adhering to an approved research plan/protocol (see Appendix 6).

Ethical issues persist throughout all phases of research (Peled & Leichtentritt 2002), and rest partly on different assumptions about epistemology and ontology. They include confidentiality and prevention of harm: to the community, known or unknown potential victims, respondents, self harm, harm from others, the researcher(s), interviewers etc. While principle-based approaches may inform how research is done, overall it may often be more helpful to carefully interrogate ethical dilemmas in the research process. Ethics involves key choices rather than following a set formula. Ethics codes are to be read as guidelines for making ethical choices; researchers have the responsibility to make such choices and be prepared to make clear the assumptions and facts on which those are based. A common denominator among different ethical guidelines is the emphasis on the rights of the research participants as primary, and that the obligations to the people studied supersede the seeking new knowledge. Beneficence refers to the ethical principle to maximise possible benefits and minimise the potential for harm, to both research participants and the wider group of individuals they represent (Ellsberg & Heise 2002; Findholt & Robrecht 2002).

Researchers are responsible for:

- informing respondents of the purpose of the study, and when possible include them in the research design.

- Ensuring that the participants have consented, if feasible by signed consent forms (though this may not be practicable in some cases).

- Making sure that the participants understand the research and has agreed to participate.

- Repeated discussion of issues of information and consent during the fieldwork.

Participants have the right to:

- withhold their support for the research.

- Refuse to participate.

- Withdraw their consent at any time without penalties.

Respect for and safety of research participants (perpetrators) and victims of sexual violence

Researchers have actual and/or potential relations with a range of actors including not only the researched, but also other actors, principally victims/survivors, the families of those concerned, as well as the wider community or communities. Though it may be very difficult to accomplish, researchers researching perpetrators need to respect and be alive to possible implications for all these groups of people. This includes having responsibility not to increase risks for victims/survivors, and if possible to contribute to reducing such possible risks. The safety of past, present and potential victims/survivors is paramount in research.

> Totten (2003) conducted interviews with young men and boys who agreed that the research team made contact with current or ex-girlfriends by phone in order to:
>
> - support safety planning;
> - explain legal rights;
> - offer referrals to local services for abused females;
> - explain the research.
>
> The research team did not make any attempt to verify the abuse since that might have put the young women and girls at further risk of assault. The safety of victims can be addressed to some extent by informing the participants that the researcher is obliged to report the awareness of life-threatening acts to the proper authorities; such acts include death threats, physical and sexual assault involving knives or guns, serious injuries resulting from assault (Totten 2003). This procedure might in turn inhibit disclosure of these kinds of acts. While the intentions behind this particular research approach are commendable, in specific researches, these strictures may not be fully enforeable or feasible, if research on perpetrators is to be carried out.

Perpetrators also have rights to safety. This is important when there is high community hostility to alleged or convicted perpetrators. No one except the informant should know that the research includes questions on sexual violence (WHO 1999; Jewkes et al. 2000; Ellsberg & Heise 2002). At the beginning and at the end of interviews, respondents should be advised not to tell other people about the detailed nature of the interview (Jewkes et al. 2000). It is advisable to inform interviewees about potential risks linked to revealing involvement in such research and that they might be exposed to retaliation acts, for example, from local community members, if they suspect perpetration of sexual violence. In a community collaborative approach to research, there are risks of "hit and run" or "helicopter" research – going in and out to do research without consulting anyone or coming back to share findings.

Ethical issues in primary data collection

Ethical issues apply in research design and the conduct of the research. Research involving primary data collection always raises ethical issues that must be addressed. The WHO 1999 document on ethics and safety recommendations for research on victims of domestic violence is also relevant to conducting research on perpetrators of sexual violences, such as: the safety of respondents and the research team is paramount and should infuse all project decisions; the study design must include a number of actions aimed at reducing any possible distress caused to the participants by research. This second point is a very complex area. For example, men who deny that what they did was 'rape' can find it distressing being brought to this realisation in an interview. Thus a key question is: how do researchers avoid inciting such distress without colluding? Similarly, other questions not about sexual violence, such as about childhood traumas, can cause distress in men but that does not mean that such questions should not be asked. In such ways participant distress is not a neat coherent

'whole', but an area of contestation and negotiation, that needs to be critically interrogated and evaluated in the specifics of each research project. Asking men if they have raped may lead to distress for some, but that does not mean the question should not be asked.

Ethical guidelines do not in themselves offer to guarantee that the questions posed will be moral or ethical. The formality surrounding the ethical process, signing forms etc, might even imply a lack of trust. It establishes a contractual rather than a trusting relationship, where the informant has rights and the researcher has obligations. (Ross 2005). Ross (2005: 99-100) suggests that "asking for confirmation of 'informed consent' through use of consent forms presupposes the viability, acceptability and enforceability of formalist contractual relationships". These "are not a product of a negotiated knowledge-construction process between equal parties engaged in a dialogue but are rather an agreement to terms of engagement set by other agendas in other places" (Ross 2005: 100).

Application of ethical principles to sensitive topics

Studying sensitive but also powerful topics calls for addressing specific ethical issues on the research process and method(s) used. Ethical issues concern especially professional integrity and relations with and responsibilities towards research participants, sponsors and/or funders. Possible problems, such as methodological, technical, ethical, political and legal problems, need to be taken into consideration at every stage of the research on a sensitive topic. Ethical guidelines provide important legal protections for both researchers and research participants (Ross 2005). Ross (2005) urges researchers studying violence and the aftermath of violence to take an ethical stance by conducting research and writing in a way that does justice to both the research subject and other involved parties. Ross suggests that ethics should be informed by something beyond that which a written code of ethics offers; a shared concern for a mutual respect and the possibility to enact such. If ethical protocols prevent people who have committed sexual offences to disclose unreported sexual coercive acts they have perpetrated, "then qualitative research may have a limited role to play in improving public safety." (Cowburn 2005: 61).

Consent

Convicted offenders might believe that participation in research is connected to their treatment, that taking part in the study would place them in a more favourable light with the authorities or that refusing to take part might be detrimental to their future (Hudson 2004). Researchers need to make clear their separation from authorities and professionals, ensuring that there are not false hopes raised in the consent process. Consent does not have to be written, however, in the case of dispute, the party responsible for personal particulars has the burden of proof of consent. In particular, "limitations to confidentiality must be explicitly noted in the consent form" (Findholt & Robrecht 2002: 261). "Informed consent assumes that research participants understand the general purpose of a research project before they agree to be part of it" (Riessman 2005: 479), otherwise the only purpose of the document will be to satisfy review boards. Riessman (2005) warns that informed consent forms are not always what they seem, and they are not sufficient in order to conduct ethical research. Special care must be taken to ensure that signing consent does not undermine anonymity, by both secure storage of records and confidential ethical conduct, not least regarding professional agencies.

Consent must be:

- voluntary

- particular, a general consent to participate in research is not accepted

- informed, after information about the research has been received

- an unmistakable expression of one's will; 'silent' consent is not acceptable

- explicit

Research information for research participants

Perpetrators (including self-described and alleged perpetrators) should be informed of possible useful information on interventions, even though provisos probably need to be added that researchers cannot usually give formal recommendation for specific named interventions or agencies.

The information to research participants should contain the following:

- who is responsible for storing personal particulars (detailed information identifying individuals)? When it comes to research it is ordinarily the research institute or university that is the legally responsible party, and information about contact persons at that institute should be provided.

- For what or which purpose the personal particulars should be used?

- Which personal particulars will be included in the study?

- How long the personal particulars will be kept?

- What are the right to receive information about and make corrections in the personal particulars?

- How the personal particulars are bound by secrecy for the researcher?

- That participation is voluntary

- Information about computer security

Confidentiality

The objective of research is to elicit material from the respondent not to lecture him or her on their offending behaviour. There are, however, various research strategies in this regard. Totten (2003) suggests confronting interviewees labelling the behaviour as abusive and making perpetrators accountable for their actions at the end of the interview. The

purpose of this is to avoid a tacit approval of the behaviour (Ptacek 1988). To keep such information confidential could be said to involve collusion (Cowburn 2005: 53). Maintaining total confidentiality may leave someone in an ongoing seriously harmful situation, but by putting boundaries on confidentiality, it may be that the researcher will receive a significantly moderated version of the sexually coercive behaviour. A compromise stance is to give participants material that defines sexual violence, expresses disapproval of these behaviours and provides resources without stating that they apply specifically to a particular participant.

In studying serious crime, Sagarin and Moneymaker (1979) noted that confidentiality in such cases would be 'tantamount … to aiding and abetting the crime, something that would be morally, legally and professionally dubious' (Lee 1993: 168). Research should respect the dignity and worth of the individual and strive for preservation and protection of fundamental human rights. Protecting confidentiality can involve serious legal problems, such as in cases when a researcher, through a promise of confidentiality and the trust of the relationship, has obtained knowledge of mistreatment, malpractice, child abuse, use of drugs or other criminal behaviour by the interviewee or others (Kvale 1996: 115).

Protecting confidentiality is generally important for both research participants' safety and data quality. However, research participants must understand that confidentiality cannot be assured under certain circumstances. "The consent process should include opportunities for participants to discuss their questions and concerns with investigators to ensure that they thoroughly understand what reporting requirement and their consent mean" (Findholt & Robrecht 2002: 262). It should be noted that confidentiality is itself a social process.

In survey research one can generally guarantee confidentiality relatively easily, as it is not necessary to collect any information on who is being surveyed. There are thus some distinct advantages in doing this, especially when seeking information at this level of generality. Thus there can be somewhat different challenges and issues in the conduct of qualitative and quantitative research in this respect. Alleged or actual breaches of confidentiality, in both modes, are breaches of respect of the researched, as well as creating major complications for researchers. Another question is whether the researcher should intervene and remind the informant of the limited nature of confidentiality during the interview process. On this, Cowburn discusses the need to offer informants the opportunity to make decisions about how to continue the conversation. (p. 59). "[T]here is an ethical mandate to remind the research respondent of her/his situation immediately prior to their making a disclosure that will require the researcher to take further action." (p. 59).

Cowburn (2005) worded the consent form to informants, granting confidentiality unless they told him in detail about an offence they had committed but had not been prosecuted for, or if they indicated that they themselves were at risk. Cowburn also stated that when writing-up he would do everything in his power to ensure that the informants not could be identified by readers of his report, but that he could not guarantee that the informants not would be recognised by anyone. In his confidentiality declaration Cowburn did, however, not mention disclosure related to unreported behaviour of third parties. This he recommends including in future research. However, while such formulations may operate satisfactorily in qualitative research, it is difficult to apply in surveys. With surveys, it is probably more appropriate to maintain the survey as 100% anonymous.

Restricted confidentiality and respondent disclosure

The Abel et al. (1987) study represented a watershed in the knowledge base about sex offenders, because of the huge amount of previously unknown information revealed, and served to dispel some previously held ideas and stereotypes. (Fisher 1994: 6). The issue of confidentiality and previously undisclosed or imminent offending becomes much more problematic when the researcher is contemplating interviewing individual sex offender(s) (also see Parker 1969; Chin-Keung 1986; Scully 1991; Fuller 1993; Colton & Vanstone 1996; Hearn 1998; Messerschmidt 2000).

Another possibility is the respondent disclosing the intention to harm members of the public not specifically identified. Or they might indicate harming themselves. Also the researcher may feel (or be) threatened. (Cowburn 2005: 60)."[T]here is an ethical mandate to remind the research respondent of her/his situation immediately prior to their making a disclosure that will require the researcher to take further action." (Cowburn 2005: 59). Cowburn argues that information containing unreported details about identified offences and/or identified victims cannot remain confidential to the researcher (Cowburn 2005: 61).

On the disclosure of unreported illegal sexual behaviours, some form of statement informing research participants of the limited nature of confidentiality is necessary. Research participants should be informed that if they discuss coercive and illegal sexual behaviours that have not been reported to the police and they identify specific victims and offender(s) this information will be passed on to the police. Where a research participant expresses intentions to harm someone who is specifically identified there are no grounds for maintaining confidentiality. In the case of a research participant expressing a general intention to harm, the researcher has a duty to inform the proper authorities if the threat is time-specific and if the respondent is subjected to any statutory control.

Disclosure concerns:

- The nature of the offence/harmful act. The concerns are about incidents or intentions where identified people may be at risk of physical or psychological harm, and whether these incidents or intentions are unknown to the authorities.

- The identity of the perpetrator. The nature of the disclosure depends on if they are self-reported or whether they concern third party. In the latter case, what the researcher would be reporting is second-hand information, which may later be denied.

- Identity of victim. A specific person or persons may be identified to have been harmed in the past by the respondent, or someone they intend to harm in the future.

Others (Chin-Keung 1986) have suggested encouraging the participants to discuss illegal/unreported sexual activities in generalised terms, and discouraging the participants from revealing any personal details. Research participants could, in such cases, be encouraged to speak in non-specific terms.

On the other hand, it should be noted that researchers often would not know whether something was unreported unless they specifically ask. Researchers often have considerable ability to manage interviews to ensure that information they do not want to hear is not revealed. Such abilities could be acknowldged andc indeed more explicitly. Moreover, it should be further acknowledged that there is often a high degree of doubt about the pupose that would b e served by reporting disclosures. In many countries and contetxs it is very unlikely that any purpose would be served, in terms of the authorities interest or ability to pursue such reports. This may be a reason not to give the ethical debate on reporting so much emphasis; in fact in some situations to report could do the victim/survivor a mis-service.

5. **Research Process**

Ensuring sound methodological approaches

Not all research projects with perpetrators necessarily share the same goals. Some research may be concerned with evaluating the effectiveness of a therapeutic project, whilst other research may be concern developing wider understandings of perpetrators as people located in various social settings. Funders and sponsors of research, such as universities, have their own interests. Researchers need to develop confidence to complete research thoroughly and ethically, and, where necessary, resist pressure and extra demands from funders and sponsors. Likewise, funders need to be clear in their commissing of research. Renzetti and Lee (1993: 11) argue that: "ignoring the methodological difficulties inherent in researching sensitive topics is also socially and scientifically irresponsible because this ignorance may potentially generate flawed conclusions on which both theory and public policy subsequently may be built. If social scientists are not to opt out of research on sensitive topics, they must confront seriously and thoroughly the problems and issues that these topics pose." Both quantitative and qualitative research methods can be used in researching perpetrators of sexual violence. However, strict separation of these two forms of methods should not be made. Often combining quantitative and qualitative methods is advisable (Appendix 7).

Researching "other" issues

Whilst researching "other" issues, such as life history research, it is possible to inadvertently uncover perpetration of sexual violence. This can be confusing. The researched person(s) may then and thus become redefined as a perpetrator rather than as, say, a father, worker or student. Perpetrators are also fathers, sons, partners, workers, and sometimes convicted offenders. Perpetrators "perform" sexual violence by doing, not by being essentially and only perpetrators. It is perhaps more typical that researcher choose to omit questions on sexual violence perpetration, even where such questions might be relevant, and contribute to knowledge on intersections with health and other issues.

In this situation many of the issues raised here may become applicable. In this way, those researchers who research sexual violence and specifically the perpetrators of sexual violence can be a useful resource for other researchers. This can take the form of advising on specific research projects, whether in a prognostic sense where such issues may be likely to

become significant in practice in the course of the research, and in ensuring that these issues are taken account in "general" education and training on research, research ethics and similar matters. In that sense, in a wide range of research, such as on "family life", "leisure", "dating", "tourism", "sport", sexual violence may be reported, or mentioned 'in passing', but then researchers may not see this as relevant to their main research questions. To engage with such interrelations opens many research avenues, including how much sexual violence occurs within everyday life contexts rather than in separate spheres or as separate activities. This means, in a sense, mainstreaming knowledge of and attention to sexual violence, and its perpetration, in research development and education on research and research methods.

Interviewing perpetrators

Adopting an appropriate stance in interviewing and similar face-to-face research with perpetrators is a complex process. It is necessary to be polite and respectful, and establish some form of rapport, whilst at the same time being non-collusive. Collusion between interviewer and interviewee can be more or less conscious, for example, in not overstating the extent of sexual violence. An example of a collusive question can be as simple as: "Is that the *only* time you sexually assaulted her?" Another might be: ""She's never been damaged or anything like that?" Such questions make it easy or easier for the interviewees to minimise their sexual violence. A further possible aspect of collusion can lie in the use of such short words as "just" by the interviewee ("I just forced her once or twice") or the interviewer ("That was just all you did?"). Even the use of "yes" or nodding too quickly or too emphatically in agreement in response to interviewees' use of, say, sexist or sexually violent statements or questions, such as "You know what I mean with women?" or "You know she deserved it" can constitute collusion. Interestingly, 'bad', even collusive, questions can sometimes elicit more developed or elaborated answers, if the interviewee considers that the interviewer is supportive.

Very detailed aspects of research involve tensions, difficulties and decisions by researchers and interviewers in ways that cannot always be predicted or planned in advance (Hearn 1998: 54-55). Non-verbal communication is important in interviewing perpetrators, not least because of the emotions, such as around distress, that can be aroused in interviews. These need to be recorded as data in the research process. There is also the reverse kind of anti-collusive question, such as "I would call that rape wouldn't you?" This is not collusion, but another form of ethical issue. Such detailed aspects are very much affected by the similarities or differences, in terms of age, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, between interviewer and interviewee. Collusion is probably easier where there are more similarities between them. Where the interviewee is from a higher status group to the interviewer, the latter may defer to the former and so collude. Where the opposite is the case, the interviewer may not wish to question the interviewee too firmly for fear of being thought 'oppressive'. Such processes may be more or less conscious. Interviewing men on sexual violence involves close attention, careful listening, and empathy, but also critical distance and critical awareness. 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).

It is important to be upfront as a researcher in terms of your interests, rather than trying to 'trick' interviewees. This can be combined with a healthy scepticism, an awareness of possible inconsistencies and contradictions, and a willingness to explore them. This may be easier to accomplish in a clinical setting and more difficult in research projects where ethical concerns may constrain how much probing is allowed. Denial and minimisation can be a major aspect of many perpetrators of sexual violence. An awareness of this is necessary for researchers; it can also suggest the need for several research contacts or interviews, and in some cases triangulations, for example, with agency reports. On the other hand, in some local contexts, where there is a culture of violence against women, there can be little or no difficulty getting men to tell about the acts of sexual violence that they have done. They are still likely to deny and minimise in terms of the *meaning* of the acts (not whether the acts took place). This distinction has led to the methodological recommendations that acts of sexual violence be elicited in surveys in terms of behaviourally-defined acts.

Research on why offenders confess to their crimes shows the importance of avoiding a sense of the informants being interrogated, the interviewer refraining from acts of domination, and the informant experiencing the situation as humiliating. The possibility of perpetrators confessing or disclosing acts of sexual violence increases if the interviewee feels acknowledged and that the interview situation 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). On the other hand, it is important that interviewees know the main subject of interviews, if indeed it is sexual violence, and in some cases it may be preferable for both parties to move to the main agenda more quickly.

With some difficult to interview informants, such as those with learning disabilities, Hudson used a technique of "grand tour" questions, followed by further probing, and developed a conversation approach to the interview. Hudson emphasises the importance of observing "physical cues, such as face work and body language" in order to "identify when it was suitable to proceed with more sensitive topics." (Hudson 2004; see Scully 1990). Even with this difficult subject, there is a responsibility for the interviewer to seek to ensure that respondents leave the interview feeling good about their engagement in research. This may involve closing the interviews by discussing neutral, non-threatening topics unrelated to the main interest. Interviewees should be left with thanks for their cooperation, and, where necessary, assurance that discussion can continue in the following interview. The interviewer needs to be aware of passing of time and to allow sufficient time for the interviewee to prepare for the ending of the interview. This is particularly important when the interview has been emotional and where it has been in a potentially hostile environment, such as prison.

Interviewing on sexual violence can also lead to sexual arousal. This can apply for the interviewee, but also possibly for the interviewer. This may necessitate careful debriefing in a research context of trust. Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that participants might use the interviews as a type of therapy and/or counselling session. If participants become upset during the interview it is necessary to deal with the situation sympathetically, creating a supportive, non-judgmental presentation. Similarly, when participants disclose details of an offence, it is important to maintain a neutral expression and not show, or mention personal views, which might prevent such disclosure. On the other hand, such responses might

encourage the respondent to attempt to shock or invoke a reaction from the researcher. This raises the issue of whether or not a research interview can have a therapeutic content. Kvale (1996) has been very clear that research should never become therapy; after all respondents do not usually agree to therapy. However, Coyle & Wright (1996) consider that the use of counselling skills in an in-depth interview facilitates data collection and reduces distress for the interviewee (also see Cowburn 2002: 112-115). This is distinct from the point that therapy should not be used to collect data for research; researchers often lack such training.

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. 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, such as hitting, slapping or forcing sex; specific settings (Koss 1993; Fisher, Cullen & Turner 2000; Ellsberg & Heise 2002). Relevant research may be about eliciting accounts of offending behaviour, but it may not only be about that.

Interviewing men

Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2001a, 2001b) argue that the interview situation men have the chance to portray themselves as powerful, in control, autonomous, rational, yet such elements may be threatened in interviews. The interview situation may be experienced as a threat. A stranger probing for information about internal or backstage realities may be experienced as threatening exposure of aspects of the interviewee's public persona.

Schwalbe and Wolkomir stress the importance of the interviewer's awareness of potential threats and ability to respond to problems arising. When interviewees seek to compensate for such threats 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.

- Men might sexualise an interview with a woman or man interviewer in an attempt to reassert control, by flirting, making sexual innuendoes, touching or making remarks on appearances. This can diminish their legitimacy as an interviewer. It can have a detrimental effect on the interview as a result of the interviewee trying to create an impression of himself as sexually desirable, concealing unflattering information and deflecting the purpose of the interview.

The interviewer may believe that he/she knows exactly what participants mean, as when a interviewer speaks on topics that may lead to discrediting statements. Male participants may use "the unspoken" as a means to uphold a masculine self, such as "bonding ploys" like "you know what I mean?" (Schwalbe and Wolkomir 2001a: 98). A male interviewer might accept this invitation, gain acceptance, yet lose information. This may involve perpetrators inviting male researchers to collude with sexist, misogynistic or comparable negative attitudes. Schwalbe and Wolkomir suggest informal rather than formal structured interviewing if possible. The researcher should pay attention to what the participant does and says before the interview starts. How does he move, stand, sit? What does he say and do after the interview ends? These may provide further relevant research data.

The struggle for control can take the form of minimising the significance or impact of negative actions. Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2001a: 94) suggest:

- If cues and probes results 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 intimidate the interviewee, put them aside and later capture as much as possible 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.

Challenging research situations and environments

In addition to these general comments on different research methods and approaches, special mention needs to be made on doing research in especially challenging situations and environments. These include researching in *prisons*, in *violent criminal contexts*, and during and in the aftermath of *war and armed conflict*, and doing some forms of *covert research*.

> Such research situations and environments demand special care and additional advance planning, whether in terms of:
>
> - need for extra vigilance regarding safety of the researched and/or the researchers;
>
> - additional emotional demands on researchers and researched;
>
> - actual occurrence or potential for physical and other forms of violence;
>
> - likely presence of high levels of distress and trauma;
>
> - vulnerability of researched to consequences from others in their immediate environment.

Furthermore, some forms of *virtual research*, for example, with paedophile rings or on the sex trade, pose special challenges. This is not only in terms of the problem of confirming identity in internet/virtual research, but also extra ethical and legal demands in accessing proscribed websites and storing pornographic and/or illegal web material. Such complications also need to be highlighted in applications for ethical approval, with appropriate justifications. In all such challenging situations and environments research mentors, advisory groups and experts with relevant research experience can be very useful to deal with the dilemmas and uncertainties that are likely to occur.

Doing collaborative research

The importance of a good collaborative work process and appropriate ethical practices cannot be emphasised too strongly. This becomes even more important in the development of comparative, transnational and interdisciplinary research. It applies all the more so when the attempt is made to act against violence, in this case sexual violence. The development of collaborative research raises practical challenges in terms of getting tasks done with the benefit of the greatest input and contribution from all concerned, from different ethnic(ised), gendered, sexual, linguistic, national and other differenced socio-political contexts. Indeed the ability to work collaboratively is a *sine qua non* of successful collaborative research, especially transnational research work on difficult and sensitive topics such as sexual violence. These ways of working are also matters of both the content of research knowledge and of epistemology (Appendix 8).

Training and supporting the research team

All research team members should be carefully selected and receive specialised training and ongoing support (WHO 1999), whether in interviewing or other methods. Selection needs to attend to the key question of the ability of the researcher(s) to deal with the issue of sexual violence and its perpetration without collusion, and yet without distancing. This may well raise different personal issues for women and men, for those who have experienced sexual violence, and those who have not. Great care needs to be taken not to select those who

have perpetrated sexual violence, at least not in the recent past and without considerable reflective personal change. This may mean that such difficult issues need to be raised at interview, including where appropriate, through checks with the police and criminal justice system.

Team training needs to include training on methods, ethics, legal issues, confidentiality and safety. It can involve becoming at ease with researching sexual violence, examination of researchers' own relations to and experiences of sexual violence, role plays, consideration of possible scenarios in research, and the production of the research team's own guidelines to suit the project in hand (Hearn et al. 1993). Training also needs to address 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 perpetators. This involves a willingness to share such thoughts and feelings in a trusting and anti-oppressive research environment. Jewkes et al. (2000: 94) trained their teams to conduct interviews only in complete privacy, so that persons nearby were not distracted by efforts not to overhear or disturb the interview. If the interview is interrupted, interviewers can flick the questionnaire back to a "safe" part of the questionnaire. It is also important that interviewees are aware that this can happen, and why (see Ellsberg & Heise 2005).

Interviewer training should include "practice sessions on ways to identify and respond appropriately to symptoms of distress, and how to end an interview if the effect of the questions becomes too negative" (Ellsberg & Heise 2002: 1600). It is also of importance to help field-staff to analyse their own attitudes to and experiences of sexual violence. This is a lesson learned from interviewing women about violence against women (Ellsberg & Heise 2002), but it is just as pertinent when interviewing perpetrators. It is likely that interviewers' stereotypes, misconceptions and biases colour both the interview and the research design more generally if these issues are not addressed. In the worst case, researchers' biases can collude with the minimisation and justification of sexual violence.

The research team should be aware of the emotional toll of listening to repeated stories of sexual violence. As Ellsberg & Heise (2002: 1601) note, "It is hard to overestimate the emotional effect that research on violence might have on field-workers and researchers." It is crucial to spend time discussing sexual violence during the fieldwork to reduce stress (Ellsberg & Heise 2002). Researchers are themselves humans, gendered humans, and as such are liable to be affected by listening to multiple accounts of sexual violence, just as watching sexually violent pornography can appear to have effects on men viewers, especially in the short term after viewing. These matters need to be taken up in support, supervision and counselling, within and outside the research team, including transcribers, administrators and other 'non-research' staff involved in the research process.

There can be physical, sexual, emotional and health risks to safety and well-being in researching sexual violence, or at least certain forms of sexual violence, such as trafficking. Safety issues include both physical safety and emotional safety in (a) planning the research, (b) conducting the research, and (c) after the research. Moreover, safety needs are different for researchers, according to their various identities, their personal histories, who is being interviewed, and where and when they are being interviewed. It is imperative to ensure the well-being of researchers. This is partly to emphasise that this kind of research is like any other work, in the sense that occupational safety needs to be ensured. However, the risks are likely to be greater for this kind of research than for many other types of research. There may

be additional risks, both in some cases directly from research participants and also from the strain and stresses of working with issues of violence and sexual violence (Dunn 1991).

In doing virtual research (using information and communication technologies), researchers may be affected by pornography: to gain knowledge on such a contestable issue as pornography exposes researchers to many forms of abusive and offensive material (Hearn & Jyrkinen 2007). Research staff should be prepared for this and strategies for risk reduction should be continuously discussed. These might include limiting the watching of pornography; debriefing, including explicitly sharing and discussing experiences and responses, perhaps on a single-sex basis; and analysing power relations depicted.

To ensure safety, and from the experience of researching violence against women, Jewkes et al. (2000: 94) recommend that:

- survey should not be widely known as a violence study;

- budgets should always accommodate extra repeat visits for rescheduled interviews;

- interviewer safety should be taken into account, with an escort if necessary for women interviewers and the team or interviews conducted in pairs;

- interviews should be conducted in private, so giving better data (see WHO 1999; Ellsberg & Heise 2002).

However, three caveats can be added. First, any interviewing "in private" should not mean that the researcher could put themselves in an isolated situation. "Privacy" must mean that the privacy should be in a safe place where help could be available if necessary. Second, the question of escorts should not be seen as specifically a question of a male escort. There is a danger of duplicating a pattern that women need to be protected from men by men. On the other hand, those men who may present as "lifesaver" may themselves be among the groups of acquaintance rapists. Third, it is important to have a wide range of measures in place.

To reduce risks to researchers, the following issues may be considered:

- Leave message of where the interviewer is going to conduct the research/interview;

- Phone in on arrival;

- Phone in on completion of interview;

- Give the team leader's work phone number or mobile phone number to someone where the research/interview is to take place;

- Have someone within earshot, near enough to see the need to step in without overhearing (thus need to limit "privacy" accordingly); ensure you are not alone in the vicinity of the interview; if necessary two interviewers may need to attend (one to interview, one to be nearby);

- Where possible, field staff should to be provided with mobile phones, have accompanying drivers (or other escorts), and be prepared to end an interview if it becomes uncomfortably sexualised or felt dangerous.

- Interview early in the day (to minimise possible alcohol use by respondents);

- Attack alarms are available if necessary;

- Sit between the door and the interviewee;

- Raise alarm, shout if necessary;

- Get away if interviewee grabs you;

- Employ active listening to break down feelings that may be overwhelming or to make problems manageable;

- Use pre-printed cards/paper to focus on, draw on, etc. if necessary;

- Use deliberate breaks;

- Be aware of relevant information from agencies.

Risk reduction involves a combination of issues, including awareness of risk, significance of interviewing at different times of the day, arrangement of different venues, and the information known about the perpetrator. (Hearn et al. 1993)

Data management

Detailed attention needs to be given to ethical and security questions in the gathering, storage and distribution of data and other information. This is to observe general conditions and requirements of data management according to national and international law and codes of research practice, and because of the additional demands in researching perpetrators, and

- Laws and regulations around data, information and access vary in different countries. Researchers need to be aware of these, and if they are unsure to seek expert legal or other advice.

- Handling personal particulars comprises collecting, registering, organising, storing, processing and distribution of such information.

- Information gathered may not be used for other purposes than those originally stated.

- The purposes for which the information was gathered must be stated when the gathering is conducted, and they must be specifically stated As long as there exists a code key to coded information such information is considered to be personal particulars.

- If there is no possibility to connect information to a living individual, then it is no longer considered to be a personal particular.

victims, of sexual violence. Perpetrators may deliberately or inadvertently disclose details of the identity of victims or alleged victims. Data management is likely to involve consideration of the extra sensitivity of data. This means that anonymising data, by removing or changing identifiers, is necessary throughout, not only at the point of publication and dissemination.

Encrypting data is also relevant. If data are stored on computers (or disks) that are subsequently stolen, measures should be in place to ensure that the data cannot be accessed and contains no identifying information. The security of linking lists is another issue, as a common design in this field is a broad survey to identify sexual perpetrators for later more in-depth interview. This design requires that a linking list be maintained. There is the issue if an inquiry is linked to any medical information that would entail the ethical obligation to notify participants of future developments that could affect their well-being and medical care. The exact requirements of data management are also likely to depend partly on the specific methods and methodologies used, be they interviews, transcripts, observations, videos, official records, case files (Hayes & Devaney 2004), other documents, email or other virtual communications. The state of research infrastructure and resources is another vital element in data management, as is the exact nature of national laws on data and information.

Reporting, representation and dissemination

Writing up research should ensure protection of confidentiality of the informants, victims and others involved in the research. The issue of how fully to report such matters raises a problematic issue requiring sensitive and ethical exploration. This should involve not only anonymising individuals, but also agencies and locations. This might include changing details that might indicate the identity of individuals, agencies or places. Researchers and donors have an ethical obligation to help ensure that their findings are properly interpreted and used to advance policy and intervention development.

Another important issue is the potential danger of introducing into the public domain graphic accounts of sexual violence. Apart form potentially re-victimising the victim by telling offenders' tales in public, there is also the danger of producing material that could be used as pornography. There are further ethical issues in writing up results and in the presentation of research on pornography or reporting accounts of rape. This includes the avoidance of sensationalism, and decisions *not* to include visual material that might have shown pornography/pornographisation visually on the page (Hearn & Jyrkinen 2007).

Sieber (1992) urges social scientists researching sensitive issues to consciously communicate with members of the community where the research was conducted, politicians and the mass media. Public communication through the media is one part of research, including reporting back to the community and use of data for informing policy change. When communicating with the media, researchers should be aware of the difference between their goals as scientists and the goals of journalists. More specific recommendations follow.

Instead of answering a 'bad' question from a journalist, the researcher can reformulate it: "A better question would be …". Researchers should consider issuing press releases at key points in the research. Generally, only findings of research should be released; otherwise journalists can pressure researchers to release findings prematurely, with inadequately analysed data being released and subsequent problems. Researchers studying sensitive issues should also be prepared to be misinterpreted, misrepresented, misunderstood and criticised.

Researchers can improve the accuracy of reporting by:

- where possible, insisting on a face-to-face interview;

- preparing a press release in advance;

- having the reporter's notes read back to them;

- seeking to see the draft article before it is printed (this is normal practice in some countries);

- when providing information that should not appear in print, announce this before providing the information, or to be safer still do not mention at all;

- describe the research in simple, direct, jargon-free language;

- it can be useful if the researcher asks about the reporter's background, and tries to educate the reporter about the research, but never assume the reporter is knowledgeable in a particular specialisation (Sieber 1992).

The researcher can ask the reporter:

- What interests you in this research?

- Why did you decide to talk to me?

- What will be the angle of your story?

Scientific or professional societies, and university or institutional legal counsel may have sound advice to offer. Questions of misrepresentation in the media should be discussed in the research team before, during and after dissemination.

6. **Legal Aspects**

Project leaders must inform themselves and the research team of laws relevant to the study. These vary from country to country and depend on the group of research participants. "The legal system both regulates and intervenes in the research process. The state … regulates the relationships that researchers have to those they study [Akeroyd 1988]" (Renzetti & Lee 1993: 10) (see UNESCO 2005).

> Researchers should consider the risks to participants, their partners and family members from involvement in the study; the legal and ethical responsibilities of the principal investigator and members of the research team; and the procedure to follow when illegal sexual activity is suspected or reported (Findholt & Robrecht 2002: 262).

Some countries have laws requiring professionals to report cases of sexual or physical abuse to social service agencies, especially when these involve suspected child abuse. Researchers who are also health professionals, teachers or similar professionals might be required to report child maltreatment (Findholt & Robrecht 2002). Such laws create

dilemmas for researchers; they may conflict with other ethical principles, such as respect for confidentiality, and respect for autonomy (Findholt & Robrecht 2002).

> The UK Human Rights Act 1998 (see Williams 2001) has several articles which may have contradictory implications:
>
> - Article 3 protection from harmful treatment (not disclosing could infringe victims' rights);
>
> - Article 8 (1) the right 'to respect for his [sic] private and family life, his home and his correspondence';
>
> - Article 8 (2) the necessity in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country for prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or the protection of rights and freedoms of others.
>
> Which responsibility carries the greater weight varies in different researches. In seeking to increase knowledge of sex offenders, particularly regarding undetected coercive behaviour, it may sometimes appear necessary for researchers to act in ways that do not minimise risks to the safety of others, even though this is itself a fundamental human right.

7. Applications for Ethical Approval

What is needed for a successful ethics review board application?

When researching perpetrators of sexual violence, special attention should be and usually is given by ethics committees. Such research may involve: vulnerable groups; sensitive topics; access to records of personal or confidential information; and research which could induce psychological stress, anxiety or humiliation or cause more than minimal pain. Researching perpetrators can be difficult and in some respects different from other research. As well as all the general issues of research process and ethics that need to addressed, additional challenges need to be faced.

There are many key issues to be dealt with in an ethics review board application. These include: attention to harm, threat or other likely effects on others; harm, threat or other likely effects on self; the type of (alleged) offence; the status of (alleged) offence within the criminal justice system; whether it is the interviewee's own (alleged) offences or someone else's; the time passed since the (alleged) offence; the imminence of any likely future offence (e.g. likely to assault x this evening as against would like to do so to y who lives in another country …); the probabilities of the above; practice protocols; sessional reminders of confidentiality contract.

Applications for ethical review board approval are also usually required to include information on such issues: as appropriate sample, methods to used, how informed consent will be obtained, copy of consent form, description of procedures that will be given to

participants, risks, benefits, steps taken to protect confidentiality, right to refuse or withdraw, uses of the data, responsible authority for the research, and responsible authority for monitoring compliance with the protocol for protection.

Other issues to be considered include threats to community standing or legal risks and research on "captive" samples, such as prisoners. Proposals suggesting clandestine or deceptive research (for example, research conducted without participants' full and informed consent) or research involving intrusive interventions should not be considered ethical as they do not abide to the primary ethical obligation to consider participants' rights. In some cases an ethics committee might approve verbal consent being obtained in order to safeguard privacy and confidentiality (Jewkes et al. 2000).

There are extra major complications in terms of researching perpetrators in prisons, in researching those who have perpetrated multiple forms and examples of sexual violence, in researching in diverse societal and community contexts with high levels of sexual violence and with little relevant support infrastructure or awareness of the problem, and in researching at times of war and civil conflicts, and when there is use of sexual torture, and their aftermaths. More generally, there is the question of whether the ethical approach is constructed in a fixed or relatively flexible way, through ongoing suggestions or guidelines. In conclusion, ethics concern the constructions of sexual coercion/violence as a social or psychological problem; the location of research itself epistemologically in relation to dominant forms of knowledge; the location of research in a context of language and power; the relationship of research to dominant forms of knowledge and funding.

8. Acknowledgements

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Terminology: "Perpetrators" and "victims"

Those active in research can be referred to as: "respondents", "(research) participants", "informants", "interviewees". Where those researched are less active or non-active, for example, through case files, then terms such as "(research) subjects" or simply "the researched" may be used. What is interesting in all such formulations is how those researched may be redefined from their (relation to) perpetrating or other relevant behaviour to their relation to the research in question.

Appendix 2 Professional perpetrators

"Professional" perpetrators constitute a specific group of perpetrators. They may abuse trust within organisations and gain access to and abuse children within institutions or organisations where they work, such as those dealing with young people or sports clubs (Sullivan & Beech 2004). This raises complex questions about access to networks and organised forms of sexual violence and abuse. In such cases snowball sampling may be useful; in some cases there may be justifications for covert research, despite the ethical complications, but these need to be very carefully argued and justified with those legally responsible in the research context. In addition, vulnerable adults may also be abused by professional perpetrators.

Appendix 3: Adolescent perpetrators

There is a large literature on adolescent perpetrators (Araji 1997; cf. Hutton & Whyte 2006). Some of this notes that propensity to sexual violence may begin at a relatively young age. Over 58% of the professional perpetrators studied by Sullivan & Beech (2004) stated that they first became aware of their sexual arousal to children before the age of 16. Estimates from some studies suggest that 25% - 30% of all child sexual abuse is committed by those under 18 (Hutton & Whyte 2006). According to Hudson (2004), 25% of males convicted or cautioned of a sexual offence in 2000 were between 12 and 20. There are specific ethical issues related to researching "children", especially in terms of *informed* consent (Eder & Fingerson 2002). Parental, or guardian's (individual or state), consent will be required in most cases; this may limit potential forms of research.

Appendix 4: Women perpetrators

The question of women perpetrators is contested. There are key methodological issues and choices, in identifying prevalence and nature of women's perpetration. Issues to be considered are: (1) different definitions; (2) does the research distinguish between offences committed with a (usually male) partner and those committed alone? (3) does the research reveal whether offences are carried out by family members? (4) are victims children or adults, male or female? (5) what is the nature of the study? Is it a study of a clinical population or a prevalence study? With that backdrop, recent findings can be cautiously noted, they should not be taken to suggest any gender symmetry in this respect.

In a recent Dutch study Hendriks & Bijleveld (2006) suggest that underreporting of sexual violence relates especially to women perpetrators. Green (1999, cited in Hendriks & Bijleveld 2006) found that 14-24 % of boys and 6-14 % of girls who had been subject to sexual violence had been abused by women. In many such cases the women abused their own children, adopted, step- or foster children, or in childcare situations (Hendriks & Bijleveld 2006). The prevalence of female adolescent sexual abusers is difficult to generalise, but Hendriks & Bijleveld suggest that approximately 30-45% of adolescent sex abusers are female. Some evidence suggests that girls may start offending younger than boys, and the majority of offenders abuse children in a family context, are related to the victim, or in a childcaring situation (Hendriks & Bijleveld 2006). Grubin (1998: 23) states that the extent of female offending is difficult to determine given that in western societies women are permitted greater freedom than men in physical interactions with children. Where child sex abuse is perpetrated by women in the family this may often be connected to extensive physical abuse by the woman and by other members of the family (Peter 2006). There may be interconnections between abuses, sometimes by different perpetrators. However, all these comments need to be treated with great caution, as other studies have different findings.

Appendix 5: Problematising "the male perpetrator"

Dominant discourses creating men and male sex offender through media and forensic disciplines tend to be underpinned by a natural science paradigm, be based only on convicted populations, ignore sexually coercive behaviours of non-convicted men, and assume a specific fixed identity for sex offender populations. Dominant constructions of male sex offenders are influenced by the media, often in terms of the stereotype of the "folk-devil": a person or group portrayed as outsiders and deviant, and blamed for crimes or other social problems (Cohen 1972). Media representations often emphasise "stranger danger", the predatory rapist, the deceitful paedophile, dangerous public space and safe domestic space. Their common feature is that the sex offender, including the male sex offender, is represented as "atypical" (Cowburn & Dominelli 2001).

While there is a strong tendency to portray male perpetrators as "folk devils", they can also be thought of ordinary men. To construct male perpetrators as ordinary men may seem strange, but this approach is more viable in view of the low reconviction rates of sexual offenders. Hanson & Bussiere (1998) found 13.4% of 23,393 were reconvicted after 4-5 years (61 studies during 1943-1995). Hanson & Morton-Bourgon (2005) found a rate of 13.7% for 19,267 men after 5-6 years (73 studies during 1943-2003). On the other hand, over-emphasising legally-defined recidivism brings problems. Given the rarity of rape convictions, it is not surprising that those who rape would rarely get convicted more than once. In the light of reconviction data, it might be appropriate to focus more on the unconvicted. This is reinforced by low rates of criminal convictions of rape from crime reports, along with some prevalence studies (Cowburn 2005). Self-report studies also lend weight to the preponderance of "ordinary men", and research on "ordinary" US college students suggests that repeat perpetration is very common.

The difference between "ordinary men" and sex offenders continues to be unclear in research that examines the attitudes about, and proclivities towards, sexual violence in populations of "normal" adult men. Most of these studies, conducted in the last 30 years, use samples of white middle-class US college students. Although they cannot be regarded as representative of the general population, this research reveals that a significant proportion of "normal" men have pro-rape attitudes and proclivities. Stermac and

colleges (1990: 146), reviewing this literature note, that a fairly consistent finding of approximately 30-35% of the males across the studies indicated that there was some likelihood they would rape if there was no comeback. These studies suggest that there may be areas of similarity between male sex offenders and the wider population of men (Knight & Sims-Knight 2003; Malamuth 2003; Cowburn 2005; Jewkes et al. 2006). This adds further argumentation against individualisation of the problem, and instead points to the structural issues embedded in social hierarchies, such as the "normalising" of "objectification" and "commodification" of people for sexual purposes. On the other hand, it would mistaken to assume that low conviction rates mean there is no significant difference between men who rape and those who do not.

Appendix 6: Introduction to general ethical texts

There are several ways to frame ethical concerns. Kantian ethics considers the innate nature of an action rather than its consequences. Moral actions live up to principles such as respect for the person, honesty and justice. In contrast, utilitarian ethics are more concerned with the outcome(s) of specific actions and judges them to be more or less ethical on this basis: the greatest good for greatest number (Banks 2006). Ethics can also be seen in terms of the virtue of ethics of skills. Here ethical behaviour is seen less as the application of general principles and rules, than as the researcher internalising moral values. The personal integrit y of the researcher, the interaction with the community studied, and the relation to their ethical values is prioritised. The emphasis is on the researcher's ethical intuitions, feelings and skills as well as on negotiations between actors in a specific community (Kvale 1996: 122).

Appendix 7: Quantitative and qualitative research

While different research questions suggest different methods, Hudson (2004) and Scully (1990) argue for the use of multiple methods and advocate ethnographic observation in order to build up a strong relationship of trust. The use of repeated interviews helps build a relationship of trust and rapport that can encourage participants to be more open (Hudson 2004). Multiple perspectivism can also be built into research design in order to reduce the likelihood of expectations or assumptions on the part of the research subject leading to misunderstandings (Riessman 2005).

Survey research can involve asking sensitive questions to random samples. How this is handled for both perpetrators and non-perpetrators needs careful thought and planning. This includes the offering of possible and possible support, especially when they are themselves victims/survivors. This can include contact addresses of relevant agencies, even if they cannot be spec ifically recommended or underwritten. The availability of such interventions is of course not always possible; so in this situation a judgement has to be made if any support can be offered. Community surveys raise extra complications beyond individualised researches. Surveys may, however, be the most effective and less ethically problematic means of elicitng information about undisclosed offending behaviour – both its nature and its frequency. Questions on sexual violence should be incorporated into surveys designed for other purposes only when ethical and methodological requirements can be met. Otherwise, research may be done "in passing" or inadvertently. After all, research particip ants may not be concerned whether a relevant series of questions is part of a specialist study on sexual violence or a study of "family life". It is effects that count, not the researcher's intentions (Knight & Sims-Knight 2003; Malamuth 2003; Cowburn 2005; Jewkes et al. 2006).

Appendix 8: Collaborative research

Without good collaborative practices the epistemology of dominant one(s) may dominate the epistemologies of others. These points apply for all participants, and particularly for those in leadership positions. In particular, it is vitally important to develop facilitative and supportive research workings, research practices, and research leadership. Matters of research process cannot easily be separated from the content of research, including comparative, transnational and interdisciplinary research on sexual violence.

Thus we suggest these guidelines:

- Be respectful of all researchers and what they bring to the research; this extends to understanding of difference, and respect for others' research and national and regional locations.

- In comparative, transnational and interdisciplinary recent one cannot assume common ethical frameworks; these are need to be negotiated and developed at the outset of such collaborative projects.

- Be aware that the major regional differences among the collaborating countries mean that assumptions that single models should be applied in all countries should be treated critically and with great caution. As is often the case within structural and uneven power relations, those with less resources often know more about those with more resources, than vice versa. They typically hold different kinds of knowledge.

- Be aware of major national, legal and cultural differences among the collaborating countries, around openness/secrecy, financial accounting and many other matters - including disclosure of illegal acts and legal responsibility of researchers to report such acts.

- Value self-reflective approaches to development of multiple methods, and in the conduct of research.

- Be aware that much research is done by goodwill and overtime work by researchers, and with few or no additional resources. Thus excessive demands can mean that time and resources are taken from other academic and related activities, and other research projects. This is an issue of ethical allocation of researchers' time and resources among different activities, which is especially important in working on questions of violence and violation.

- Express positive support and gratitude, not excessive criticism.

- Be aware that researchers may be working in their second, third or fourth language, and that extra attention may need to be given to clarity in the working language. This highlights the importance of exploring linguistic commonalities and differences within projects. Some languages have more restricted codes for speaking about sexual behaviours. For example, some South Asian languages have either a romantic or a profane linguistic code in which to discuss sexual matters (Neate 1991). Addressing these issues – of whose sex, and whose language - would be of great importance for international projects.

- Take care in writing emails and other communications; where possible, write clear short emails and other communications; do not use obscure phrases or make ungrounded suggestions in email and other communications.

- In collective research discussions give feedback in good time, and not late in the process of research production.

- Develop an appropriate and fair collective publishing policy, so texts and information are not used inappropriately by others as their own.

- Be aware of internal differences with in research projects, especially between those who are more funded and those who are less (or not) funded, and among universities and similar institutions that are better resourced and universities and similar institutions those that are less well resourced. This involves a thorough grounded understanding of the conditions under which different researchers are working: some are working on permanent contracts, some temporary contracts; some are well paid, others are not; some are in supportive working environments, others are in situations lacking support. Researchers are subject to other social divisions and differences, such as by age, class, disability, ethnicity and racialisation, gender, sexuality.

- Develop projects that have fair distribution of resources, including between those with greater coordinating functions and other research functions, between those who are more funded and those who are less funded, and between universities and similar institutions that are better resourced (for example, in North America and Western Europe) and universities and similar institutions that are less well resourced (especially in the South, and in Central and Eastern Europe). This is especially so with the under-resourcing of research and the overwork of many researchers doing much work unpaid or in "overtime".

- Recognise the importance of community collaboration and working with service providers and policy advocates who may also have input into and a stake in research. Such agencies complain that university researchers rarely want to pay them to be involved, and often do not do a good job of communicating research results to enhance policy and practice.

- Develop ways of organisation and working that are free from violation, and aim to produce workplaces in which people wish to work. This includes giving recognition to issues of power, authority and decision-making in the management of projects (Hearn et al. 2007).

Appendix 9: Research Codes of Practice

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

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