

The Safe and Ethical Conduct of Violence Research



Guidance for Researchers and Research Staff

Purpose

This document provides a brief overview of the policies and best practices for ensuring the safe and ethical conduct of violence¹ research at IPA. It also articulates the specific roles and responsibilities of IPA and its academic partners with respect to violence research. It is intended for principal investigators and research staff at IPA who are already familiar with the ethics of human subjects research, but are interested in more specific guidance related to the collection of violence data.

Background

In many ways, the ethics of violence research is the same as that which guides all research with human subjects: researchers should strive to respect the autonomy of all participants, maximizing potential benefits of participation and minimizing risks while ensuring that both are accrued equitably and respect vulnerable populations. However, due to the traumatic and potentially threatening nature of the subject matter, the weight of each ethical deliberation within the project is heightened. Indeed, it is by no means hyperbolic to suggest that if handled in properly, the safety and even the lives of respondents and interviewers may be at risk.

Therefore, it is essential that some special precautions be taken to minimize the risk for harm. In particular, we've identified seven key considerations that all researchers should review before embarking on violence research:

- **Informed consent.** As is the case for all human subjects research the informed consent of all participants is essential. However, there is a debate among researchers about whether the consent language should explicitly acknowledge that the study will include questions about violence. The WHO advises subjects that "some of the topics discussed may be personal and difficult to talk about" but waits until the violence module to specifically address violence.
- **Ensuring participant safety.** Care should be taken to ensure that participants do not suffer any repercussions as a result of their participation in violence research. This is

¹Note for the purposes of this document, the working definition of violence is to include: neglect, emotional, sexual and physical violence against girls and boys under 18 years old, women, men and vulnerable groups. Economic abuse is not included for the purposes of this document as constructs used to measure this include financial decision-making or other related questions which do not need to follow the guidance given they are less sensitive.

IPV Ethical Guidelines

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