

# Free research paper on ethical concerns of criminal justice and security managemen...

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Like any other discipline, ethical research for Criminal Justice or Security Management ensures the credibility and reliability of the activities involved in the process. Codes of Ethics ensure that the system is fair, legal, and protective of civil rights, especially of the more vulnerable subjects of research and investigation.

Considering the precariousness and hazards of the nature of this type of research, crucial areas of concern are contented by ethical principles as fundamental to the practice, as they are likely to be encountered most often. Paramount of these areas are the concerns of neutrality, integrity, confidentiality, and competence, among others.

## **Neutrality**

The Justice Research and Statistics Association (JRSA, 2004), based in Washington, DC, considers neutrality to be the first element of necessity to credibility. This ideal must be strove for in the analytical process, even though, in the strictest sense, neutrality is not quite possible to attain. Data selection, sampling methods, utility of analytical tools, modes of presentation – all these, in one way or another contribute some form of bias to the analysis. To avoid or to minimize bias as much as possible, the analyst must consider the potential for bias in basic research decisions such as what variables to utilize or exclude; how the variables are employed, manipulated or controlled; how survey questions are phrased; or to what degree are the findings generalized. Examples of these variables could be the topic of investigation itself, the group of people to be studied, or even sources of funding (Scott, 2009).

An analyst's or researcher's professional judgment is expected to be

uncompromised by any interests or loyalties, personal or organizational, other than the proper and ethical conduct of research in its due course and when presenting the findings to requesting bodies of policy makers (JRSA, 2004). Although a research process, like the basic scientific experimentations, is begun with a hypothesis, data obtained is not to be manipulated to support original hypothesis, but must be left to speak for itself. Example, anticipation of higher crime rate in poor localities must not influence interpretation if the data says otherwise (Scott, 2009)

## **Integrity**

The JRSA (2004) considers professional integrity as second to neutrality as necessary element of credibility of criminal justice research. It is fundamentally the equal treatment of people involved in all professional dealings regarding the research process. The sphere of issues of integrity is broad and encompasses all of the stages of the research process. Under it are specific key concerns that are always raised in the research process, such as competence and confidentiality.

## **Competence**

It is the demand of every code of ethics of, especially to that of criminal justice research, to adhere to the highest technical standards of research (ACJS, 2000). It is considered a duty (JRSA, 2004) and includes being aware of one's limitation as a researcher or analyst. These limitations must be acknowledged and what could their effect be on the findings of the research (ACJS, 2000). Researchers are expected to decline work beyond their

competence, and are expected to seek advice of colleagues and peer review whenever practical to do so (JRSA, 2004).

## **Confidentiality**

This concern is probably one of the most controversial ones, yet one of the crucial ethical practices as related to data gathering. It is considered of paramount importance as subjects are expected to divulge sensitive, even dangerous information about crime or criminal justice procedures. Without adherence to this practice, crucial information, may they be from defendants, or police, or prosecutors, or even judges, are proven very difficult to obtain (Fobbs, 2011).

Respect to rights and privacy of clients and subjects are demanded in most known criminal justice research code of ethics. It is expected that federal and state laws applicable pertaining to right to privacy, informed consent dissemination, and security of privileged information must be rigorously adhered to in all stages of research and analysis (JRSA, 2004). According to the British Society of Criminology (BSC, 2006), ethical code reference to the American Society of criminology, informed consent includes the responsibility of the researcher to fully explain, in terms understood by the participants, what the research is about, who is conducting and financing it, why is it being conducted, and how the findings are to be disseminated. The participants must understand that they have the right to refuse involvement for whatever reason they wish. They are to be informed of the extent of anonymity and confidentiality they are afforded.

These concerns are especially precarious when participation from children,

young people, or vulnerable individuals is sought. Consent from an adult responsible for these individuals may be deemed necessary, aside from the consideration that they themselves must be consulted. Researchers should regard the concerns of child protection and make provision in cases of disclosure of abuse (BSC, 2006).

A researcher's position must never be used to obtain information beyond their professional purposes. And releasing findings or publishing results of a research must be with prior notification or consent, whenever appropriate, of the client or sponsor (JRSA, 2004).

### **Additional Concerns**

Michael Scott (2009), professor of justice studies at Westminster College in Utah listed the following concerns regarding the ethical challenges of criminal justice research.

### **Choice of Topic**

Unfairly influential factors may dictate the topic of research to be undertaken, such as research demands and funding considerations.

Extensive funding for one area of concern may lead to excess research in this area at the expense of other equally important areas. To help draw a holistic picture of causes of crime and functionality of the criminal justice system, criminal justice researchers and analysts must endeavor to research on a wide range of topics and justice concerns.

## **Focus**

There is a recent criticism that criminal justice research has been focusing excessively on poor and minority populations, using the research to justify harsh punishments against them. An unfair assumption that these minorities lack the IQ to be law-abiding members of the society is even executed by researchers, which is a display of bias and unethical judgment on the part of the researcher. Selection of study groups must be unbiased and random in manner to be ethically sound.

## **Conclusion**

Criminal Justice Research is an important and equally sensitive discipline which practice must be grounded on ethical grounds to be protected from distrust and unreliability, should the justice system of any given country is to survive, and deemed fair and impartial. In the volatility and unpredictability of the practice, adherence to an well structured ethical code will keep the research grounded, astute, and upstanding.

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