

Ethics and Criminological Research: Charting a Way Forward

Deirdre Healy*

Summary: When researching sensitive topics such as crime, researchers encounter a number of ethical and legal obstacles. Little guidance is available about how to address these issues. The ethical codes produced by criminological societies often provide only limited advice, and the generic guidelines espoused by institutional ethics committees are not always appropriate for research on specialised topics. This paper discusses key ethical issues in criminology, including the difficulties associated with maintaining confidentiality, protecting privacy, obtaining informed consent, managing participant distress and ensuring voluntary participation. Drawing on existing literature and the author's own experience, it discusses strategies that have been used to promote ethical criminological research.

Keywords: Research ethics, criminology, governance.