

THE CONCEPT OF ETHICS IN ELECTRONIC QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Nouhad J. Rizk

Senior Lecturer, Computer Science Department, Notre Dame University, Zouk Mosbeh, Lebanon

Elias M. Choueiri

Chairman, Business Computer Department, Lebanese University, Karm El Zeitoun, Lebanon

President, Lebanese Association for Public Safety, Lebanon

WSO Liaison Officer to the United Nations, USA

Keywords: Ethics, Qualitative research, Internet-based research.

Abstract: As a key form of communications technology, the internet has created new methodological approaches for social science research. This study focuses on moral issues created by information technology for qualitative research environments. The primary concern is with ethical analysis and legal issues and how both are applied to, although not limited to, issues of privacy, intellectual property, information access, interpersonal communication, moral and civil rights, responsibility and liability, and professional codes as well as some social implications of technology. The Internet is now exposed to a growing number and a wider variety of threats and vulnerabilities. Moreover, Internet-based research raises several ethical questions and introduces new ethical challenges, especially pertaining to privacy, informed consent and confidentiality and anonymity. This study aims to highlight the main ethical issues in electronic qualitative research and to provide some guidance for those doing or reviewing such research. While recognizing the reservations held about strict ethical guidelines for electronic qualitative research, this study opens the door for further debate of these issues so that the social science research community can move towards the adoption of agreed standards of good practice. In addition, it suggests that empirical research is desirable in order to quantify the actual risks to participants in electronic qualitative studies.

1 INTRODUCTION

Ethics are norms or standards of behavior that guide moral choices about one's behavior and relationships with others. The goal of ethics in research is to ensure that no one is harmed or suffers adverse consequences from research activities (Cooper and Schindler, 2003).

Johnson (2001) raises a central meta-ethical issue of whether, at one extreme, computer ethics (CE) represents nothing new and/or, at the other extreme, CE represents radically new ethical issues for which the traditional ethics framework are largely useless. The term computer ethics is open to interpretations both broad and narrow. On the one hand, for example, computer ethics might be understood very narrowly as the efforts of professional philosophers to apply traditional ethical theories such as

utilitarianism, kantianism, or virtue ethics to issues regarding the use of computer technology. On the other hand, it is possible to construe computer ethics in a very broad way to include, as well, standards of professional practice, codes of conduct, aspects of computer law, public policy, corporate ethics -- even certain topics in the sociology and psychology of computing (Spinello, 2003).

Online ethics raises the issue of universal or relative ethics across continents and cultures. Thus ethical issues deal with ethical practice, but ethics is itself a field socially constituted and situated. However, there is no answer to the question of whether research ethics should be of universal application or dependent on time and place. This raises problems concerning how to understand concepts and phenomena such as privacy,

confidentiality and harm across culture (Birch and Miller, 2002).

The twenty-first century is sometimes called the Knowledge-Information Society. This is because knowledge and information are essential elements in this century. As the Internet is the main tool behind this info-society, there is a drive to develop a secure cyber world so that users can communicate private and public information through the Internet with safety. However, anonymity on the Internet cannot be resolved and tends to diminish responsibility and accountability of users (De George, 2003).

This study aims at highlighting the main ethical issues in electronic qualitative research and at providing some guidance for those doing or reviewing such research. While recognizing the reservations held about strict ethical guidelines for electronic qualitative research, this study opens the door for further debate of these issues so that the social science research community can move towards the adoption of agreed standards of good practice. In addition, it proposes that empirical research is desirable in order to quantify the actual risks to participants in electronic qualitative studies.

2 THE CONVENTIONAL ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

Pring (2002) explores the contentious relationship between codes of ethics in research and the range of virtues demanded of ethical researchers in the face of temptation. These virtues are the disposition to find out and to tell the truth as it is and not as one would like it to be; second, the respect for participants who are the objects of the research; third, the courage to resist the opposition of powerful persons when conclusions are critical; fourth the modesty to recognize the tentative nature of their conclusions; and fifth the trustworthiness which allows the participants and those interested in the research to accept both data and conclusions drawn from those data.

Silverman (2001) and Small (2002) expand the relationship between codes of ethics in research and the range of virtues demanded of ethical researchers in the face of temptation described by Pring (2002). They believe that researchers should be in a position to justify the decisions made as a result of the following considerations should it be required: the value of the research, informed consent, openness and honesty, right to withdraw without penalty, confidentiality and anonymity, protection from

harm, briefing and debriefing, reimbursements, payments and rewards, suitability/experience of researcher, ethics standards of external bodies and institutions, reporting on ethical issues throughout research for clients/consultants and intended dissemination.

2.1 Informed Consent and Debriefing

In order to be informed prior to consenting, the participant should have an understanding of project aims, objectives, any potential benefits or harm that may arise and likely outcome of the research. Informed consent should also be based on an understanding that participation is voluntary. This issue needs to be emphasized as it may lead to feelings of obligation or gratitude (Lewis, 2003).

In situations when respondents are intentionally or accidentally deceived, the researcher should share the truth of any deception (Cooper and Schindler, 2003). Even when research does not deceive the respondents, it is a good practice to offer them follow-up information.

2.2 Access and Acceptance

The relevance of the principle of informed consent becomes apparent at the initial stage of the research. That of access to the institution or organization where the research is to be conducted, and acceptance of those whose permission one needs before embarking into the task. Thus, accessibility of information is a precondition of a proper discussion of any opinion, policy or practice (Pring, 2002). The first stage involves the gaining of official permission to undertake one's research in the community, and to access the required information.

2.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Anonymity means the identity of those taking part not being known outside the research team. In most cases, absolute guarantees of anonymity cannot be given and the participant should be aware of who may know of their participation (Birch and Miller, 2002).

Confidentiality means avoiding the attribution of comments, in reports or presentation, to identified participants. Thus, if archiving of qualitative data is envisaged, there are also issues about whether consent to archive is required, and whether data sets should be anonymized before archiving. Privacy is

normal practice in research and law and it is important not only to retain validity of the research but also to protect respondents (Lewis, 2003; Cooper and Schindler, 2003).

Individual right to privacy is usually contrasted with the public right to know. In the context of research, therefore, right to privacy may be easily violated during the research or denied after it has been completed. The researcher has to balance the right to know against the possible harm which might follow from the research (Pring, 2002).

2.4 Protection from Harm and Safety

Researchers have a responsibility to ensure that the physical, social and psychological well-being of research participants is not affected in an adverse manner by the research. Moreover, researchers may also place themselves at risk. Thus, arrangements should be made at the beginning of the study to minimize any possible risk. The relationship between the researcher and the participants should be of mutual respect and based, wherever possible, on trust (Birch and Miller, 2002). The researcher has the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that inquiry is not only done honestly, but done with ethical integrity. For example, the lack of reciprocity is definitely an ethical challenge highlighted in cross-cultural studies (Ryen, 2004). Reciprocity can be materialized as taking something back to the community in which the study takes place or including some form of social action or change. Moreover, the selection of data does not refer to the quality of qualitative research only, but also to ethics (Silverman, 2001). Another ethical responsibility of researchers is their team's safety as well as their own. However, researchers should remember that respondents are not totally powerless, and that they can withhold their participation as long as researchers do not do rapport too convincingly.

2.5 Educational Researcher Virtues: Openness and Honesty

A virtuous researcher may be aware of difficulties that others would not be; such a researcher will bring factors into the deliberations which others will omit (Pring, 2002). Education is a social process, and so in its way is research into education. It too requires interpersonal skills of a high order, supported by human personal and professional values rooted in a shared culture if researchers are to deal effectively

with the ethical challenges of the research process (Cohen and Manion, 1994).

However, a researcher can betray participants by publicising data disclosed in confidence in such a way as to cause embarrassment, anxiety, or perhaps suffering to the participant. It is a breach of trust and the participant is deceived. Thus, one of the researcher virtues is to balance power and values, informed consent and the manner in which research data and results are presented (Trauth, 1997).

2.6 Relevancy to Context: Community

An educational research envisages searching for new knowledge, with improved practice and new understanding emerging through critical inquiry. Thus, the applicability of this new understanding and these practices to wider contexts depends on the nature of the research, on the way in which it is reported and on the research community. A research community may provide the forum or the context in which criticism, which supports knowledge growth, would be invited and welcomed and become part of the normal life of an educational institution (Pring, 2002). But such an invitation is risky as it is difficult to sustain (Calvey, 2000; Hamelink, 2000).

2.7 Research Strategy, Ethics and Law

Ethical issues may stem from the kinds of problems investigated by social scientists and the methods they use to obtain valid and reliable data (Cohen and Manion, 1994). Small (2002) argues that an alternative to reliance on a code of ethics is to place more emphasis on procedures and strategies for making ethical decisions. Moreover, the individual's development of the capacity to make ethical decisions about the design and the conduct of research is a great support of ethical issues on educational research (Ryen, 2004).

The question remains of the extent to which professional researchers are governed by laws and regulations. These exist at several levels: state legal statutes, ethical review committee to oversee research in universities, and ethical codes of the professional bodies and associations as well as the personal ethics of individual researchers are important regulatory mechanisms.

3 ETHICS AND THE INTERNET

In the Information Age, computer ethics are growing and changing rapidly as computer technology also grows and develops. However, truthfulness is one of the values necessary for the success of the information revolution. ICT ethics are not excepted from the above-mentioned view of ethics as applicable to all human development in today's society where information and communication technology have come to define how people live and work, and have critically affected culture and values (Rizk and Buser, 2004).

All types of internet-based research make people's interactions through the use of a computer as a tool uniquely accessible for researchers and erases boundaries of time and distance. Such research raises new issues in research ethics, particularly concerning informed consent and privacy of research subjects, as the border between public and private spaces is sometimes blurred (Spinello, 2003). Thus, the following ethical dilemmas emerge while doing Internet-based research:

3.1 Dilemma 1: Security

Holvast (1996) discusses the question that the technology is capable of not only constructing the world but of destroying it as well. The challenges lie mainly in the general lack of awareness of information security issues, the rapidly evolving complexity, capacity and reach of information and communication technology, the anonymity afforded by these technologies, and the transnational nature of communication networks. Thus, Internet research may be biased due to minimal security measures. For example e-mail communication may sometimes be re-routed to unanticipated locations due to technical malfunctions within the computer network (Frankel and Siang, 1999), which affects the validity and reliability of data collected. However, in some cases the minimum security provides greater convenience for someone with online access to participate in the study not willing to do it in physical world (Murray and Sixsmith, 1998).

3.2 Dilemma 2: Property

Ryen (2004) argues that while performing a long-lasting online interview, she had to reflect on how to make the interviewee keep up his/her interest in the communication, as the interviewee may not be as

enthusiastic as the researcher. The main dilemma she faced in the online environment was that of obtaining the interviewee's permission to publish the data. The data property should be made clear while obtaining informed consent. Another dilemma of asymmetry and imbalance is also noticed by Ryen when the interviewee replies with long narratives after a long silence.

3.3 Dilemma 3: Biased Interpretation

Through the internet identities, relationships, and social structures can be constituted solely through the exchange of texts. This can be accomplished by giving careful reflection to the outcome of interpretation and critical examination of the extent to which the interpretation reflects one's own biases versus the experiences of the participants (Markham, 2004). Moreover, the conversational style with a written form suffers from problems of misinterpretation.

3.4 Dilemma 4: Destruction of Local Culture

Capurro and Pingel (2002) raise the issue of oral culture. They argue that "Online communication has brought about a renaissance of oral culture, although the Internet in its early years has been a written medium. E-mail, forums, and chats have clearly oral dimensions, independently of their (until now) written form. The examples of Internet-TV, Internet-Radio, Internet-Telephone, Mobile-Internet, etc., make the orality of Internet culture unmistakable". The resulting globalization has often appeared destructive of local cultures (Hamelink, 2000).

3.5 Dilemma 5: Education

A lack of understanding among researchers and potential subjects regarding the technical components and limits of the Internet may complicate the issue of privacy and confidentiality. Therefore, the internet researchers should be knowledgeable about the power and the limits of their research medium (Frankel and Siang, 1999). In order to grasp the complexity of online research, professional societies should develop ethical guidelines and educate researchers on technology and on Internet ethics.

4 ONLINE ETHICS

In electronic qualitative research trustworthiness and reliability depend upon how the data are being collected and analyzed. The principles previously mentioned regarding traditional research ethics are guidelines and values that Internet researchers must take as normative or at least as an initial ethical starting point. The new dimensions of these principles can be the following:

4.1 Informed Consent

When research participants are to be exposed to pain, physical or emotional injury, invasions of privacy, or physical or psychological stress, or when they are asked to surrender their autonomy temporarily, informed consent must be fully guaranteed but under the Internet all of these are protected by nature as identities can be easily hidden. However, the difficulty to have informed consent of subjects makes internet-based research (cyber-research) particularly vulnerable to ethical breaches by ever more scrupulous scholars (Spinello, 2003).

Thus, the need to rethink routes and modes of access, both at the outset and once electronic qualitative research is underway, is clearly necessary. The question of who is actually giving consent and of what must be considered is raised (Miller and Bell, 2002). Moreover, the differences between gaining access and gaining consent are not always clear.

4.2 Access, Acceptance and Security

The production of new knowledge requires access to relevant data (Pring, 2002). Data-mining is the process of discovering useful information within a database that can then be used to improve actions (Quinn, 2005). Homan (2002) among others argues that collecting data in educational research is problematic. Thus, the mining of the data collected from advanced technological tools to track participants offers infinite possibility for research abuses. The primary ethical data-mining issues in cyberspace are privacy and consent. There is no comprehensive act or rules or regulations about privacy. Participants in an electronic qualitative research should be aware that there is no secure access to any electronic information. Any professional hacker can access the information without the consent of the person concerned,

whether he/she is a participant or a researcher. Moreover, the participants' privacy can be violated by spamming, which is the practice of receiving unsolicited emails. Westfall (1997) raises the issues of security and confidentiality. He argues that when information security is violated a great deal of damage can be done, for example to individuals' rights. One of the solutions to security issues is data encryption, which is difficult to implement in electronic qualitative research. Considering confidentiality, most of the information collected is used for what is intended.

4.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Confidentiality and anonymity becomes a real issue when data are recorded on computer. Once the guarantee of confidentiality is given, protecting that confidentiality is essential. But privacy is more than confidentiality. General privacy laws may not be sufficient to protect the unsuspecting in the cyberspace realm of data collection. However, participants' right to privacy leads them to refuse to be interviewed by neglecting the researcher's virtual request to be a participant at the first place or to refuse to answer any question later on. Thus, researchers are obliged to protect human subjects and do right in electronic venue as in more conventional ones during the whole process (Frankel and Siang, 1999).

Anonymity in text-based environments gives one more choices and control in the presentation of self, whether or not the presentation is perceived as intended. Thus, anonymous internet-based interactions facilitate knowledge of self and the other that is interwoven with naming and perception, and yet is fundamentally grounded in the exchange of texts. Authenticity, in this case, is found as much attached in the perception of participants as in the body title attached to the name (Markham, 2004). Capurro and Pingel (2002) argue that face-to-face communication has not a higher degree of moral authenticity. We may lie face-to-face and tell the truth in a chat-room or vice-versa.

4.4 Protection from Harm

Ess (2003) and Elgesem (1999) and other researchers discuss the issue of protecting participants from harm while doing research. Capurro and Pingel (2002) hold up the same concerns but while doing Internet research. They say that "when facing issues of identity, a main

challenge for the ethics of online communication research concerns the awareness of these differences between digital identities and their bodily source and the possible individual and social harm the researcher may cause when categorizing and reporting data that may influence directly or indirectly the digital and/or bodily life of people with their different life projects". There is a need for the researcher to be trusted and thus to be trustworthy as well as for his/her keeping his's own moral virtues such as dispositions like courage, kindness, generosity of spirit, honesty and concern for justice (Pring, 2002). Moreover, the researcher has to set out the kind of knowledge required which will affect the nature of harm with regard to the types of questions asked.

4.5 Educational Researcher Virtues

While using IT, education is a needed virtue. The education of both users and researchers is needed to consistently emphasize the various ethical issues and ethically-relevant facts of using IT and researching those uses. For example posting labels such as ethical warning labels warns users that their postings are not necessarily private. Moreover, the researcher should be aware of the language used in the online communication. Thus, the possibility of misunderstanding due to different pre-understandings and cultural background becomes all the more likely since there is no spatio-temporal gap hinting to a possible distance (AoIR, 2001).

4.6 Relevancy to Context: Community

Scharf (1999) illuminates a set of ethical issues that are typical of online research: the morally relevant differences between observation, recording and reporting in electronic contexts, the need to get the subject's consent, the relevancy of the private / public distinction in such a field, and what are the expectations of the participants in online field concerning how information will be used.

One can usefully conceptualize the Internet as a tool for retrieving or transmitting information and connecting with others. There is an elegant simplicity in the idea of studying Internet context as a social scientist, collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data to build theory and knowledge of this network of social potential (Markham, 2004). Hine argues that seeking authenticity in these contexts is negotiated and situated: "A search for

truly authentic knowledge about people or phenomena is doomed to be ultimately irresolvable" (2000, p. 49). Complicating the issue of authenticity, the online person may be much more fluid and changeable.

4.7 Research Strategy, Ethics and Law

Users may be less informed about the issues involved in textual production via the Internet than in print media or traditional broadcast media such as the radio or television. There is a need that addresses the risks of Internet use (Hamelink, 2000), for example, the minimum code of conduct while focusing on the usage of email within an existing environment and the personal responsibilities as the sender of messages. Electronic Mail is a vital asset, both as a communication tool and as an information resource, and as such requires protection from unauthorized access and misuse. Therefore, a clear and well-followed research strategy has to be adopted in electronic qualitative research.

Research involving human subjects is premised on a fundamental moral commitment to advancing human welfare, knowledge and understanding, and to examining cultural dynamics. There is an urgent need therefore, to mitigate the misuse of Internet at early stages and promote the ethical use of Internet through the awareness and educational programs and enacting suitable cyber laws. Cyber law has to tackle any misuse of the Internet, such as unauthorized access and breaching participants' and researcher's privacy (Nissenbaum, 2004).

5 SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES OF TRADITIONAL AND ONLINE ETHICS

The similarities lie in primary ethical consideration such as not to do harm, to preserve anonymity and to specify property. Moreover, the utilitarian efforts to balance long-term benefits against short-term harm, the deontological understanding of people and their rights, the ethics virtue, and the conception of human nature are also common meta-ethical considerations for the conventional and for the online research. Differences lie in the difficulty of protecting privacy and anonymity and in getting informed consent. Diversity of research venues and

the global reach of media evoke the risk of doing research online. Therefore, differences between traditional and Internet research include greater risk to individual privacy and confidentiality because of greater accessibility of information (Quinn, 2005); challenges to researchers because of difficulty in obtaining informed consent (Homan, 2002); difficulty of ascertaining participants' identity (Cooper and Schindler, 2003; Ess, 2003); difficulty in discerning ethically correct approaches because of the diversity of research venues such as e-mail, chatrooms and WebPages (Markham, 2004); and difficulty of discerning ethically correction approaches because of the global reach of media involved, which involves different cultures (AoIR, 2001).

However, the differences between traditional and online human subjects research warrant certain sorts of limitations and exceptions. Traditional guidelines recognize exceptions to the requirement for obtaining informed consent such as when identifying the purpose of the research may unduly affect the behavior of the participants. In addition, Internet research makes acquiring informed consent very difficult, if not impossible in cases where age is concealed, or in cases of research using chat rooms so the population shifts and changes (Miller and Bell, 2002). In light of these differences, exception to the requirement to obtain informed consent may be ethically justified as under the Internet user names are already pseudonymous. Thus, pseudonyms are usually taken as sufficient protection of the participants' real-world identity. It might be argued that referring to this pseudonym in published research would provide the subject with as much protection of privacy and confidentiality as referring to the subject's real-world identity-- should such references be justifiable (Sveningsson, 2001).

It is worth mentioning that one of the difficulties for both traditional researchers and online researchers lies in determining what harm there is and how far it is reasonable to protect subjects from any kind of harm that may follow from their participation in a research study (Miller and Bell, 2002).

6 CONCLUSIONS: PRACTICE OF ETHICS ON THE INTERNET

Internet research in contrast with traditional human subject research requires careful study and attention from ethically-informed perspectives (Small, 2002).

This study tries to acquaint the researchers with some of the ethical difficulties they are likely to experience in the conduct of Internet research. Internet research is distinctive because it is highly interdisciplinary. Because this study tries to highlight the ethical considerations in conducting electronic qualitative research, additional ethical positions and guidelines are important to supplement those of sociology, ethnography, psychology and others.

Although no code of practice can anticipate or resolve problems (Small, 2002), Cohen and Manion (1994) describe a six-fold advantage in fading a personal code of online ethical practice: First, such a code establishes one as a member of the wider community, having a shared interest in its values and concerns. Second, a code of ethical practice makes researchers aware of their obligations to the participants. Third, when one's professional behavior is guided by a principled code of ethics, one can be confronted by a moral challenge to be more or less ethical. Fourth, a balanced code can serve as an organizing factor in researchers' perceptions of the research situation. Fifth, a code of practice validated by their own sense of rightness will help researchers to develop an intuitive sensitivity which helps them in dealing with unexpected events. And six, a code of practice will bring discipline to researcher's awareness.

Walker (1997) proposes that an ethics of responsibility provides an alternative framework for appreciating ethical dimensions against the ethics of care present in some feminist debates. Yet the call for an understanding of the research relationship from the perspectives of participants together with the researchers' own reflexive account of the research process, can pose further dilemmas (Birch and Miller, 2002). The researcher has to link a set of practices to a framework of ethical responsibilities that demands close attention to be paid to the process of participation. Feminist researchers have recognized and increasingly documented the need to reflect on the relationship between the ways in which participants are accessed and the data collected and the ways in which decisions are taken around access (Mauthner, 2000).

Elgesem (1999) argues that a primary way of resolving ethical issues is to respect first of all the expectations of the persons involved. This attention to expectations, moreover, is supported by Capurro and Pingel's call for an ethics of care and a specific practice of respect for the interests and values of the people subject to online research (Capurro and Pingel, 2002). More broadly, the importance of

expectations is supported by strategies forwarded, for example, by Ess (2003) that emphasize an effort to empathically understand and support, so far as possible, the perspectives and views of one's group of study. This is, more broadly, a form of the golden rule, which, whatever its complications in praxis, remains an important guideline for ethical behavior.

Doucet and Mauthner (2002) develop two arguments that point to concrete ways of conducting ethical research practice, as well as to dilemmas that occur while attempting to do so. The first argument focuses on research relationship. The second argument is about ethical issues of accountability. The fact that research respondents are not a homogenous group can be an additional dilemma. They argue that research may be best served by situational or contextualized ethics.

Ethics in qualitative research examines the theoretical and practical aspects of ethical dilemmas in qualitative research. For many researchers, ethics has been associated with following ethical guidelines and gaining ethics approval from academic bodies. However, the complexities of researching private lives and placing accounts in the public arena increasingly raise ethical issues, which are not easily solved by rules and guidelines. This study addresses the gap between traditional ethical principles and online research practice that inform it, focusing on exploring ethical issues in research from a range of angles, including access and informed consent, and tensions between being a professional researcher and a caring professional (Doucet and Mauthner, 2002; Capurro and Pingel, 2002; Ess, 2003). Thus, this study comes out with a conclusion that being ethical in online research practice involves varied degrees of four ethical factors, namely responsibility, accountability, caring and relationship. Electronic qualitative research is effective if it encompasses simultaneously the four factors just mentioned as a norm for ethics online. In the light of the online ethical norm, ethical principles are important for conducting an electronic qualitative research.

Thus, it is important to adopt old principles for a new ethics or new laws on the Internet. The principles are equality, non-discrimination in access and use; inviolability, or the inadmissibility of intentional harm against humans and liberty, or absence of external coercion or constraints that obstruct self-determination (Hamelink, 2000). In other words, doing online research is not much different from doing any research (Jones, 2003).

Yet the Internet poses several challenges in attempting to identify and measure benefits and

risks. More work is needed on defining what constitutes benefits and risks in Internet research. Thus, there is a need to balance the interest and to specify priorities while doing online research.

REFERENCES

- AoIR (Association of Internet Researchers) (2001) AoIR ethics working committee - a preliminary report. <http://aoir.org/reports/ethics.html>
- Birch, M. and Miller, T. (2002) Encouraging Participation: ethics and responsibility. In M. Mauthner, M. Birch, J. Jessop and T. Miller (eds), *Ethics in Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 91-106
- Calvey, D. (2000) In G. Lee-Treweek and S. Linkogle (eds), *Danger in the Field: Risk and Ethics in Social Research*. London: Routledge
- Capurro, R, and Pingel, C. (2002) Ethical Issues of Online Communication Research. *Ethics and Information Technology* . ONLINE: http://www.nyu.edu/projects/nissenbaum/projects_ethics.html
- Cohen, L. and Manion, L. (1994) *Research Methods in Education*. London: Routledge.
- Cooper, D. and Schindler, P. (2003) *Business Research Methods*, (8ed). The McGraw-Hill Company, Inc. U.S.
- De George, R. (2003) *The Ethics of Information Technology and Business*. U.K.: Blackwell Publishing,
- Doucet, A. and Mauthner, N. (2002) Knowing responsibility: Linking ethics, research practice and epistemology. In M. Mauthner, M. Birch, J. Jessop and T. Miller (eds), *Ethics in Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 123-145
- Elgesem, (1999) What is special about the ethical issues in online research? ONLINE: http://www.privacy.org/pi/intl_orgs/ec/final_EU_Data_Protection.html
- Ess, C. (2003) Are we there yet? Emerging ethical guidelines for online research. In Shing-Ling Sarina Chen, G. John Hall and M.D. Johns (eds), *Online Social Research: Methods, Issues and Ethics*. New York: Peter Lang
- Frankel, M. and Siang, S. (1999) Ethical and legal aspects of human subjects research on the Internet. A report of a Workshop, Washington DC
- Hamelink, C. (2000) *The Ethics of Cyberspace*. London: Sage Publications.
- Hine, C. (2000) *Virtual Ethnography*. London: Sage.
- Holvast, J. (1996) Codes of Ethics. In J. Berleur and K. Brunstein (eds), *Ethics of Computing: Codes, Spaces for Discussion and Law*, London: Chapman and Hall
- Homan, R. (2002) The principle of assumed consent: the ethics of gatekeeping. In M. McNamee and D. Bridges (eds), *The Ethics of educational Research*. London: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 89-110

- Johnson, D. (2001) *Computer Ethics*. 3rd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall
- Lewis, J. (2003) Design issues. In Ritchie, J. and Lewis, J. (eds), *Qualitative Research Practice*. London: Sage.
- Markham, A. (2004) The Internet as research context. In C. Seale, G. Gobo, J.F. Gubrium and D. Silverman (eds), *Qualitative Research Practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 358-374
- Mauthner, M. (2000) Snippets and silences: ethics and reflexivity in narratives of sistering. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, vol. 3, no. 4, pp. 287-306
- Miller, D. and Bell, L. (2002) Consenting to what? Issues of access, gate-keeping and informed consent. In M. Mauthner, M. Birch, J. Jessop and T. Miller (eds), *Ethics in Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 53-69
- Murray, CD. and Sixsmith, J. (1998) E-mail: a Qualitative research Medium for Interviewing? *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 103-121
- Nissenbaum, H. (2004) Privacy as contextual integrity. *Washington Law Review*, vol. 79, no. 1, pp. 119-158
- Pring, R. (2002) The Virtues and Vices of an Educational Researcher. In A. McNamee and D. Bridges, *The Ethics of Educational Research*, London: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 111-127
- Quinn, M. (2005) *Ethics for the Information Age*, U.S.A.: Pearson Education
- Rizk, N. and Busher, H., (2004) Changing University Culture through Introducing Technology. In *Proceedings of the IADAT-E2004*, pp. 1-32, Bilbao, Spain
- Ryen, A. (2004) Ethical issues. In C. Seale, G. Gobo, J.F. Gubrium and D. Silverman (eds), *Qualitative Research Practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 230-247
- Scharf, B. (1999) Beyond Netiquette: The Ethics of Doing Naturalistic Discourse Research on the Internet. In S. Jones (ed), *Doing Internet Research*. London: Sage, pp. 243-256
- Silverman, D. (2001) *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analyzing talk, Text and Interaction*. London: Sage
- Small, R. (2002) Codes are not enough: What philosophy can contribute to the ethics of educational research. In M. McNamee and D. Bridges (eds), *The Ethics of educational Research*. London: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 89-110
- Spinello, R. (2003). *Cyberethics: Morality and Law in Cyberspace*. Sudbury, Mass.: Jones and Bartlett.
- Sveningsson, M. (2001) *Ethical Aspects of Research in a Web Chat Community*. Paper prepared for the Ethics Work Group, Association of Internet Researchers.
- Trauth, E.M. (1997) Achieving the Research Goal with Qualitative Methods: Lessons Learned Along the Way. In A.S. Lee, J. Liebenau and J.I. deGross (eds), *Information Systems and Qualitative Research*, London: Chapman and Hall
- Walker, M. (1997) Picking up pieces lives stories and integrity. In D. Tietjens Meyers (ed), *Feminist Rethink the Self*. London: HarperCollins
- Westfall, J. (1997) The welfare of the community. In *Issues in Ethics*, vol. 8, no. 3