



Ethics in Emerging New Media and E-Learning Environments

Ética em mídias emergentes e ambientes de aprendizado eletrônico

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RESUMO

O avanço das tecnologias de informação e comunicação (TIC) gera a oportunidade de novas formas de conhecer e fazer, muitas vezes ultrapassando a capacidade dos humanos de acompanhar as mudanças. Essa disparidade entre pessoas e tecnologia aparece na aplicação da ética aos espaços digitais, particularmente no campo de ambientes de aprendizado eletrônico. Estudos recentes mostram como padrões éticos aplicados em espaços físicos estão sendo utilizados também em ambientes digitais, mas esta utilização não dá conta dos desafios do aprendizado eletrônico, incluindo as percepções de fraude, e das responsabilidades vitais de pesquisadores *online*. Este artigo explora o campo do comportamento ético relacionado aos ambientes de aprendizado eletrônico. Especificamente, foca na problemática da desonestidade acadêmica entre estudantes, além das obrigações dos professores de ensinar e de conduzir os estudos de forma a obedecer padrões éticos. O artigo conclui com a discussão das implicações da priorização e da integridade na ética digital.

Palavras-chave: Ética Digital; Aprendizado eletrônico; Responsabilidade Ética; Ensino da Ética.

ABSTRACT

The advancement of information communication technology (ICT) brings with it the opportunity for new ways of knowing and doing, oftentimes outpacing the capacity for humans to keep up with those changes. This disparity between people and technology is apparent in the application of ethics in digital spaces, especially in the realm of e-learning environments. Recent studies show that ethical standards employed in physical spaces are being utilized in digital spaces as well, but this application fails to account for the challenges that e-learning presents, including perceptions of cheating and the vital responsibilities of online researchers. This paper explores issues in ethical behavior related to e-learning environments. Specifically, cheating and academic dishonesty among students is explored in addition to instructors' obligations to teach and conduct research in a manner that abide by ethical standards. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of prioritization and integrity in digital ethics.

Keywords: Digital Ethics; E-Learning; Ethical Responsibilities; Teaching Ethics.

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INTRODUCTION

The subject of ethics, especially regarding new media, continues to challenge the old norm that “ethics are ethics”—that the right thing is and always has been constant without regard to time or advancements in technology. However, this notion may be overly simplistic, as it does not account for other relevant variables such as communication media, culture, and perhaps generational view of ethics. In fact, it appears that when it comes to digital media or information communication technologies (ICTs), people are applying the old, traditional norms to evaluate ethics in new media. This is problematic because recent evidence suggests that new media has outpaced law enforcement (e. g., Drushel & German, 2011; Bullard, 2012). Bullard (2012) argues that children have engaged in inappropriate behavior when viewed from the perspective of old media. In particular, children engage in sexting—sending nude pictures of themselves to friends—as a form of reciprocative daring or an electronic version of *I’ll-show-you-mine-if-you-show-me-yours*. Consequently, Bullard (2012) questioned the ethical dilemma of charging these children with a crime for using new media to do what teens have always done: to explore their sexuality. In some instances, children have been prosecuted as sexual offenders, landing them in the same categories as adults who commit rape or exchange pornographic materials.

Even in situations where sexuality is not the issue, the concept of ethics still has been challenged. A case-in-point is the recent TV changeover from analog to digital broadcasting, which mired the government in an ethical conundrum. The initial decision to switch from analog to digital broadcasting would leave many without the ability to watch network programming because they either would have to purchase a more expensive high-definition television or a converter box for their existing analog televisions. Although the federal government provided coupons to people to purchase converter boxes, some coupons expired before the changeover date, and individuals were limited to two coupons per household only. Consequently, former FCC chairman Kevin Martin proposed that citizens find others to apply for coupons in their names—an action prohibited by federal rules. Ethically, it could be argued that Martin saw the greater good in serving individuals who needed coupons for converter boxes rather than following strict federal rules (Drushel & German, 2011; Bullard, 2012). Nevertheless, the FCC chairman’s ethical behavior comes into question depending on perspective. Citizens who benefited from Martin’s suggestion might view him as ethical, while others may not be so kind. After all, he suggested that individuals willingly break federal law for personal benefit. Bullard (2012) stresses that this is the kind of question that did not surface when, say, the country adapted to radio in the first half of the last century.

Emerging technology, especially new media, has put the issue of ethics at the forefront of what journalists and others can do, especially in situations where there is no precedent. For example, the voicemail hacking scandal in the British tabloid magazine *News of the World* created debates over invasion of privacy (Manne, 2011). Furthermore, discussion on what counts exactly as privacy was spurred by Wikileaks’ blogger Julian Assange, who felt that the public had a right to know information and that transparency justified revelation of sensitive materials, even if doing so jeopardized a country’s security and diplomatic negotiation (Ludlow, 2010). These issues of ethics bring us to uncharted waters, thanks to digital media and the growing prevalence of ICTs.

This paper explores issues in ethical behavior related to e-learning environments. Specifically, cheating and academic dishonesty among students is explored in addition to instructors’ obligations to teach and abide by ethical standards. The paper

concludes with a discussion of the implications of prioritization and integrity in digital ethics.

INFORMATION ETHICS

While the concept of ethics covers a broad spectrum of issues, the goal of this paper is to investigate ethics as it relates to e-learning and digital research. In this vein, the field of computer ethics encompasses a wide variety of definitions that begin with establishing the purpose of Information Communicative Technologies (ICT) and extend to the implications of technologies within or society. Moor (1985) a postulated the purpose of technology by describing computers as malleable technological devices representative of a universal too designed to preform logical operations that can be used to satisfy human needs (Moor, 1985). For this reason Moor (1985) proposed that the ethical dilemmas relating to the use, implementation or ownership of computer technology requires the development of a “conceptual framework within which to formulate a policy for action” (p. 266). Bynum and Rogerson (1996) explained when discussing information ethics, it is essential to understand the depth and breadth of the subject along with how to establish realistic ethical guidelines that are “above all effective in helping to realize a democratic and empowering technology rather than an enslaving or debilitating one” (p. 135). Furthermore, technology has a significant impact on our society that ranges from healthcare, financial and academic institutions to how we perceive our sense of freedom, privacy and even personal and public security (Bynum, 1989; Bynum & Rogerson, 2004). Johnson (2001) extended this notion by stating that the evolution of technological advancements presented “new versions of standard moral problems and moral dilemmas, exacerbating old problems, and forcing us to apply ordinary moral norms in uncharted realms” (p.1). Therefore, it was essential to view the ethical dilemmas presented by technology forces all individuals to update their policies of professional ethics to ones that are more in line with the technological age. This is in particularly true in regard to challenges related to eLearning and matters of digital ethics as they relate to online research.

ETHICS IN E-LEARNING

Penny and Dukic (2012) state that “e-learning can include the use of many ICT technologies” (p. 183) and define it as:

a technique to enhance learning and teaching experiences and as a tool to educate students through digital media, with or without the guidance of their instructors. E-learning can be used to replace traditional face-to-face teaching completely, for example via distance learning, or only partially, for example as an additional teaching tool to be used alongside face-to-face teaching. (p. 183)

E-learning provides distance education to students both domestically and internationally. Many universities mandate the use of ICTs in traditional course delivery as well as in distance education curricula to expand their student population or even to reduce costs. E-learning reaches beyond immediate geographic borders necessitating the examination of behavior that may lead to cheating and academic dishonesty (Isa, Sammah, & Jusoff, 2008). After all, as more instructors gravitate toward the use of ICTs to deliver content electronically, it is fair to argue that these instructors are concerned with the integrity of their courses. As a result, academic

dishonesty is an endemic part of the higher education context (Roberts & Hai-Jew, 2009).

Furthermore, the issue of academic dishonesty and fraud is believed to be more prevalent in e-learning environments than traditional face-to-face environments. Many conclude that it is easier for an instructor to catch cheating behavior in face-to-face encounters since the instructor is physically present with the students. In physical environments, instructors can build rapport with students, which aids in discouraging cheating. At a minimum, face-to-face contexts allow instructors to observe suspicious behavior or identify scenarios that encourage cheating. However, such is not the case with e-learning encounters (Toprak, Ozkanal, Aydin, & Kana, 2010; Gearhart, 2001). Academic dishonesty may be more problematic in online settings than the conventional campus classes because it is more difficult to determine whether the students are the ones doing the work. Hence, students' violations of ethical standards in e-learning—whether blatant or inadvertent—can jeopardize the credibility and integrity of assignments, projects, and evaluations. Gearhart (2001) and others suggest that it is the responsibility of college and learning institutions to inform students about ethical expectations and course policies. Therefore, addressing issues of ethics is at the center of e-learning; understanding the issue and identifying its causes and complexities is important, and students must be made aware of the implications of ethics violations such as cheating and academic dishonesty.

CHEATING AND ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Academic misconduct involves a range of behaviors. According to Hughes and McCabe (2006), misconduct may include:

working on an assignment with others when asked for individual work, getting questions and answers from someone who has already taken a test, copying a few sentences of material without footnoting, fabricating or falsifying lab data, and receiving unauthorized help on an assignment. (p. 1)

It is imperative to investigate how and why students engage in academic misconduct like cheating or dishonesty, as this would allow academic institutions to safeguard against such behavior and perhaps ensure the integrity of their courses and associated degrees (McCabe, Feghali, & Abdallah, 2008). Broadly, research shows that “undergraduates, males, members of Greek social organizations, as well as those with low self-esteem tend to cheat more” (Spaulding, 2009, p. 184). Further, Spaulding (2009) suggested that perceptions play an integral role in determining if and how students participate in academic dishonesty and how instructors intervene in such behavior. Factors such as attitudes toward cheating, school policies, course motivations, and social norms contribute to students' decisions to cheat (Spaulding, 2009; Iyer & Eastman, 2006; Jordan, 2001).

Additionally, a link has been established between the level of college cheating and a country's corruption index (Magnus, Polterovich, Danilov, & Savvateev, 2002). Corruption and lack of business ethics hinders economic growth, thus making a country unattractive to foreign capital investments. Although academic integrity has been framed as an important issue for developing countries (Wilhelm, 2002), the global economic meltdown of 2008 originated in developed countries due to greed in the financial markets and manipulations in real estate. Consequently, the issue of

academic integrity is germane to developed countries just as much as it is for lower economically developing countries.

Values and ethics are socially constructed and often embedded within a culture. In general, factors influencing values of academic dishonesty have been categorized into two areas: external and internal (see Roberts & Hai-Jew, 2009). External factors typically include situational influences. Internal factors of academic dishonesty are those influences that are developmental. McCabe et al. (2008) addressed external factors by examining the role of societal culture in academic dishonesty in an international setting. Some researchers found cheating more pervasive in collectivist cultures, while other researchers discovered cheating more so in individualistic cultures. At the same time, it has been suggested that individual conscience takes precedence over the claims of culture or society (Kaplan & Mable, 1998; McCabe et al., 2008) and hastens academic integrity on university campuses (Gallant & Drinan, 2006). Other external factors, including competition and the pressure to succeed, are issues known to influence academic integrity. Furthermore, test anxiety, specific class environments, risk of detection, and institutional policies regarding the institution's academic code of conduct are contributing factors that also need to be taken into account (Higbee & Thomas, 2002). The challenges of academic dishonesty do not apply only to undergraduate students, but also to graduate students, especially when studying outside their areas of specialization and beyond control of their academic advisors (Mitchell & Carroll, 2008). In fact, as Spaulding (2009) notes, a 2006 study revealed that 56% of business and 47% of non-business graduate students admitted to cheating. Therefore, wide-ranging external factors are significant in protecting the integrity of the e-learning environments.

Internal factors of academic dishonesty are attributed to developmental upbringing (Roberts & Hai-Jew, 2009). For instance, Angell (2006) found potential links to personality constructs. However, demographic variables, such as ethnicity and religious beliefs, show no correlation with academic honesty. Further, age and GPA have negative correlations to the propensity to cheat. As mentioned earlier, individuals involved in campus organizations like fraternities, sororities, or athletic teams had a greater propensity to cheat than those who did not belong to such organizations (Carpenter, Harding, Finelli, Montgomery, & Passow, 2006; Eberhardt, Rice, & Smith, 2003). While it is possible that external and internal factors ostensibly impact academic integrity, these findings also raise questions regarding how academic dishonesty is measured.

More importantly, it is imperative to note that cheating often is misinterpreted depending on individuals and the culture from which they come. As a matter of fact, students have varying senses of what they consider cheating. In the past, cheating consisted of copying answers, passing others' work off as original, knowingly (or unknowingly) plagiarizing without giving proper credit. Today, cheating still encompass copying, but students seem to adopt plagiarism as the primary form of cheating, commonly uncertain about what needs acknowledgement and what does not. One may even contend that Millennials fail to realize their engagement in copyright infringement or academic dishonesty due to increased use of social media and sharing (e.g., music, video, text messages, etc.). Similarly, Hughes and McCabe (2006) argue that a collaborative student culture may clash with a faculty culture that tends to be more traditional and individualistic in nature. Therefore, cross-cultural comparisons of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors regarding cheating should reveal differences and similarities that may have far reaching global consequences. For example, certain dishonest behaviors in one cultural context could be perceived as

appropriate in another (McCabe et al., 2008). In a study comparing Lebanese and US students regarding academic dishonesty, a positive relationship existed between academic dishonesty and the perception of peers' behaviors, while a negative relationship existed with the possibility of being reported. Quite intriguing about the study is the significant disparity between Lebanese and US students' self-reports of participating in academic dishonesty in which 80% of Lebanese versus 54% of US students participated (McCabe et al., 2008). Such findings lead one to speculate how academic dishonesty was explained to both sets of students. McCabe et al. (2008) did not observe any main effects from other independent variables (e.g., severity of penalties, perceived understanding/acceptance of policy, and perceived certainty of being reported by peers); the researchers simply dismissed this non-observance by speculating that it was because those variables were less relevant to Lebanese students than their perception of peers' behavior (McCabe et al., 2008).

Notwithstanding, another study on the criteria of ethical decision-making found that students are particularly more concerned about the reaction of their peers and university administrators to the norms of honest or ethical behavior than the norms themselves (Kaklauskas, Zavadskas, & Budzeviciene, 2009). Further, students assess their environments and then decide how to act accordingly. For instance, if students perceive their learning environment as a *low-risk* one, it is possible that they will engage in academic dishonesty; they also may choose not to report their dishonest peers, even if it is an institutional requirement (Jendrek, 1992). Similarly, a thick trust culture also will result in low levels of dishonest peer reporting because, typically, loyalty supersedes any institutional honor policy (Gallant & Drinan, 2006; McCabe et al., 2008).

DIGITAL ETHICS BEYOND STUDENTS

Although a majority of ethical misconduct studies have emanated from the context of students' cheating behaviors, it stands to reason that issues of digital ethics goes beyond students and their possible engagement in academic misconduct. In particular, one must acknowledge that instructors who are responsible for teaching ethically appropriate behavior sometimes violate these principles. With e-learning instructors being able to observe network activity in synchronous and asynchronous contexts, challenges ensue. For example, Kanuka and Anderson (2007) state:

Web-based cameras (webcams), listening devices, tracking software, and other data-mining Net-based devices allow researchers to observe, monitor, and study real-time as well as asynchronous activities. Collection tools might be visible and obtrusive, but they are more likely to be unseen, thereby challenging our sense of privacy and aloneness. (p. 2)

The use of these connected devices has been argued as a form of innocent or perceptively benign accumulation of information that can impact or violate an individual's privacy negatively (Garrison & Anderson, 2003; Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Kanuka & Anderson, 2007; Kitchin, 2003; Reiman, 2004). Therefore, the use of the Internet in any of these applications can generate ethical issues and concerns for which there are no readily available solutions or recommendations.

Many e-learning researchers are finding that the application of traditional ethical guidelines for research—especially for qualitative research—is creating confusion and uncertainty among both academics and ethics review board members (Kanuka &

Anderson, 2007). Kanuka and Anderson (2007) identified three main areas in Internet and web-based qualitative research that impact ethics: participant consent, public versus private domains, and confidentiality versus anonymity.

Participant Consent

In traditional research settings, informed consent is required often before participation or otherwise immediately post-participation. However, securing informed consent in e-learning environments can pose problems. Kanuka and Anderson (2007) alluded to the fact that in traditional classrooms, a researcher can distribute consent forms easily to students and have them signed immediately by willing participants. In e-learning settings, this same procedure can be difficult to carry out since privacy laws prohibit institutions from providing students' contact information (e.g., e-mail addresses) to researchers. This is to protect e-learning students' right to decide whether or not they are willing to participate or even be contacted in regard to research opportunities.

Furthermore, the increased interest in observing, classifying, and understanding student behavior in e-learning contexts through data mining poses problems as well. Data mining is a technique that relies on extensive analysis of weblog entries created by online users (Zaiane, 2001). Data mining may also utilize protocol such as cookies, small pieces of code attached to web browsers that collect information about users and their activities online. However, Kanuka and Anderson (2007) indicate that these data are secondary in nature because they are not used to pinpoint activities of identifiable individuals, and as such, there is no need for researchers to collect informed consent. Notwithstanding, this activity makes use of students' information that may be considered proprietary, thus, necessitating informed consent. Furthermore, these techniques can be used to track individual behavior, which also can be matched to a particular person or identity, especially when an e-learning class size is small.

Perhaps more confusing is this: If a particular research technique requires informed consent, should the participant be made aware of all the possible ways his or her data or participation can be used? According to Kanuka and Anderson's (2007) study, the majority of respondents replied negatively on the basis that since Internet information that is publicly accessible no informed consent is warranted for data mining to occur. For example, Walther (2002) argued that the Internet is public and, "while some participants have an expectation of privacy, it is extremely misplaced" (p. 11). However, Kanuka and Anderson (2007) indicate that this is not the case in traditional face-to-face research, such that

if students enrolled in an educational institution are being observed and recorded by a researcher in a classroom, the researcher would normally be required to obtain consent from the students and instructors, even though most education institutions are accessible to the public. (pp. 5-6)

This clear difference between traditional and e-learning classrooms brings attention to the possible disparity in ethical integrity between the two. Consequently, some researchers have advocated the need for obtaining informed consent before using data collected from e-learning courses (e.g., Schrum, 1997) in an effort to eliminate confusion or difference.

Also, the increased popularity of online courses bolsters an accompanying need to analyze transcripts to evaluate e-learning effects on students. Therefore, informed consent in transcript analysis is important (Garrison & Anderson, 2003). Course transcripts are gathered automatically in some e-learning environments by educators and researchers. Kanuka and Anderson (2007) argued that securing informed consent for transcript analysis is difficult since students are geographically dispersed, which makes it difficult to track and identify them. So, the only way to circumvent the problem is for e-learning course instructors to simply provide a statement to users asking them to communicate their objections to the external use of their transcripts by the instructor. This is problematic from various standpoints, however. Students may or may not read the statement; if and when they perceive a violation of personal information, they have very little repercussions because the statement was made available to them at the beginning of the course. Additionally, students may be apprehensive that not providing such consent may backfire; they may feel that instructors will be able to identify them and punish them for lack of participation.

Some researchers argue that ethics approval—which includes informed consent—is needed only when textual data contains participants' identifying information. Additionally, if the data can be stripped of such identifying information, there is no need for permission (Kanuka & Anderson, 2007). Similarly, there is the argument that when textual data collected for primary purposes is used instead as secondary data and all identifying information has been removed, there is no need for consent (Garrison & Anderson, 2003). Arguments such as these confound the issue of ethics—and digital ethics in particular—because of the application of old measures to new media.

Public versus Private Domain

As indicated above, the argument is that information available on the Internet is considered public domain, especially when the information is non-password protected. Thus, blogs, social media postings, and newsgroups are contained within public spaces, which in essence are not considered confidential or private (Bassett & O'Riordan, 2002; King, 1996; Kitchin, 2003; Walther, 2002). Materials posted in these spaces are intentionally made available to the public, so there is no need to secure informed consent prior to using this information.

The issue then becomes determining when Internet-based communication is public and when it is private. Is it fair to use someone's postings from online spaces without some sort of recognition and or acknowledgement to the author(s)? Waskul and Douglass (1996) suggested that information posted online is neither public nor private; instead, it is simultaneously *privately public* and *publicly private*. Given that the Internet is publically accessible—even when information is behind secured firewalls and other authentication—some argue that all web-based activities are potentially public (e.g., Frankel & Siang, 1999). However, Kanuka and Anderson (2007) claim that this argument is not applicable to e-learning environments because a knowledge management system housed on the Internet (i.e., a college course) requires login information and this implies that all content contained there within is exchanged in a private space (even though it may not be so technologically).

Learning happens best when it occurs in a safe environment, so instructors must be mindful to promote a trustworthy exchange of ideas between themselves and students. When the perception of a safe place has dissipated, students are less likely to engage in active learning, and they are even less inclined to participate in proposed

research studies initiated by their instructors or other third parties. Taking this into consideration, Waskul and Douglas (1996) argued that what counts as public and private online must be determined subjectively based on experience and perception. Others agree. In fact, some researchers suggest that the best way to approach the public versus private conundrum is to “think about privacy on a continuum” (Online research challenges, 2010, p. 76)—to think logically about what information could be detrimental if used outside of its original intent or can be linked back to the original author. As such, many conclude that it is unethical and even dangerous to assume that all online information is public and thus requires no need for informed consent (Kanuka & Anderson, 2007).

Confidentiality versus Anonymity

The issues of confidentiality and anonymity go hand-in-hand; and while each is distinct in its own right, they work synonymously to promote integrity and legitimacy in research. Confidentiality focuses on how collected information will be safeguarded and kept private, and it aims to protect the needs of research participants. The premise of confidentiality seems simple enough in physical settings where a researcher can request that no identifying information be included on paper surveys or can exclude such information from interview transcriptions. However, using seemingly public information can be tricky. For instance, what a researcher finds in a public sphere might not always have been public, which was the case when Google purchased old private online news and support groups (Online research challenges, 2010). An employee discovered that information she had provided when one of the news groups was private was now accessible to anyone. When ownership of the online groups changed hands, the information also changed from private to public. Thus, very little information provided online in “safe” places collected for research purposes can be guaranteed to remain as confidential as long as it originated online.

Anonymity, on the other hand, focuses on the removal of identifying information such as names, addresses, institutional affiliations, geographical data, and other unique identifying information that can be linked back to specific participants. According to Kanuka and Anderson (2007), respecting participants’ needs is and should be a fundamental requirement of ethical practice among researchers, and it provides participants the opportunity to make an informed and unbiased decision about whether or not to participate in a given study. Again, this practice seems sensible in physical settings, but it can prove elusive in online research. For instance, information gathering of qualitative data from online digital sources that includes comments or quotes inadvertently can be traced back to the participants’ identities; “it might be possible to put exact quotes in an Internet search engine and come up with the correct person” (Online research challenges, 2010, p. 76). Therefore, researchers should be more cognizant of the way their research is presented when the data originates from online sources so as not to accidentally reveal the identities of their subjects.

Lastly, most writing style guides and their associated organizations detail researchers’ responsibilities of conducting ethical research and adhering to certain professional responsibilities. While the details vary among disciplines, the concept remains consistent among disciplines and media: do no harm and protect research participants. This principle includes providing full disclosure to participants about how their data will be protected and subsequently used as well as what kinds of effects they can expect from their participation. When applying these standards to

research conducted online, researchers should consider the implications of maintaining traditional ethical practices along with the positive and negative consequences associated with their decisions.

IMPLICATIONS

Teaching and actively implementing ethics must become a priority in e-learning research and data collection, and it is important that research methods courses focus on this issue. First, instructors should realize that what works in traditional classrooms may not always work in e-learning environments. Individuals and researchers must acknowledge that the issues of dignity, rights, confidentiality, and privacy must be protected, regardless of whether or not information is freely and publically available in Internet spaces. After all, individuals wish to be treated with respect and want to know that somebody recognizes and is willing to honor such rights. Likewise, researchers, in order to represent unbiased and meaningful findings, should uphold the highest integrity no matter the medium.

From another standpoint, educators and researchers must recognize that it is not enough to simply transfer ethical or honor code expectations to students; they must be active participants, willing to live by the standards established by the academic institution. E-learning instructors must model what they expect their students to do or become. For example, it is not unusual for e-learning instructors to provide electronic examples (e.g., YouTube video clips and other freely available information) to illustrate a point, yet they fail to provide proper acknowledgment to the author(s) or information content providers. However, students are expected to document or provide appropriate citations. Therefore, leading by example can prove extremely beneficial in instances where issues of digital ethics are unclear or undefined. This can pave the way for clarification between what is ethical and what is not.

Perhaps the major take away from this issue is that old rules may no longer be adequate regarding new forms of technology or new ways of knowing and doing. It takes time for new rules to catch up with innovation. With the exceptional rate of advancement in technology, it is unrealistic to think that ethical standards present in traditional research and coursework would be comprehensively present in e-learning environments as well. Notwithstanding, the ethical responsibility of any researcher is to behave appropriately at all times. For instance, sustaining ethical research on the Internet does not mean simply following guiding principles outlined by external agencies. Rather, ethical behavior means maintaining personal integrity (Kant, 1956; Kanuka & Anderson, 2007). A good understanding of how the Internet works along with the willingness to self-reflect with an open and honest assessment about all aspects of work is required (Kanuka & Anderson, 2007). Others have reminded us of how “the dialectics of praxis and praxeology” is at the center of developing good ethics (Hwang & Roth, 2004). Regardless of viewpoint or medium, ethics—if nothing else—must be upheld so that research, coursework, and e-learning can be protected and represent the foundations of our society.

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