Ethics and the Computer: Moral Reasoning in the Domain of Computer and Internet Use

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Abstract

With the escalation of computer and Internet use in the classroom, there is a growing concern regarding the ethical use of the computer. Students are often tempted to take materials, intellectual property and ideas which belong to others and make these their own, as well as peruse illicit web sites, especially with the lack of coherent and clear rules for computer use. Though there has been extensive research conducted regarding the development of children’s moral reasoning, there is little, if any research involving children’s ethical understanding of copyright and Internet use, which is the focus of this study.

48 children between 8 and 11 years old were interviewed using short moral dilemmas involving the ethical issues surrounding Internet and computer use. Findings will be presented regarding their ethical understandings of copyright issues and computer use, including age and gender differences, and comparisons to their general moral reasoning.