

An ethnographic study of an online health community: Group dynamics, roles, and relationships

The research project examines a fairly well studied, long established, and thriving online health bulletin board through a multi level, in-depth analysis. Ethnographic research methods will be used in combination with social network analysis and an examination of issues related to usability. The purpose of the research is to document the role the online community plays in the lives of its members; define the patterns of interaction within the group; compare group dynamics in the online community to those in face to face mutual aid groups, and examine the impact of usability issues on group process.