Ethics: What is the Research Scenario in the Brazilian Symposium SBSC?

Luiz Paulo Carvalho[1]**, José Antonio Suzano**[2]**, Jonice Oliveira**[1]**,**
Juliana Baptista dos Santos França[3]**, Flávia Maria Santoro**[4]

[1]PPGI/UFRJ – Rio de Janeiro, RJ – Brasil

[2]DMA/UFRJ – Rio de Janeiro, RJ – Brasil

[3]IC/UFRJ – Rio de Janeiro, RJ – Brasil

[4]DCC/UERJ – Rio de Janeiro, RJ – Brasil

`luiz.paulo.carvalho@ppgi.ufrj.br, jose.suzano@matematica.ufrj.br,`

`jonice@dcc.ufrj.br, julianabsf@ic.ufrj.br, flavia@ime.uerj.br`

***Abstract.** Ethics is a human construction, therefore historical, social and cultural. It is impossible to conceive Collaborative Systems without thinking about ethics, because this is manifested in the practices between us. The largest academic-scientific event dedicated to the field of CS in Brazil is the Brazilian Symposium on Collaborative Systems. Through a Systematic Literature Review, we aim to answer the question: what is the panorama of the explicit occurrence of ethical aspects in the publications of the main track of the SBSC? Considering the importance of ethics associated with free, conscious and intentional human practice in a collective and collaborative scope, how are ethical aspects considered, if any, in the communications of these researches? In this sense, what was initially proposed as an Systematic Literature Review became a stimulus to reflection, why are ethical aspects neglected? More than that, is there any way to improve ethical deliberation or is this neglect a symptom of the current political-scientific state of the event?*

1. Introduction

Ethics is a human construction, therefore historical, social and cultural [Brasil 2016]. It is impossible to think about Collaborative Systems (CS) without thinking about ethics, because this is manifested in the practices between us, the digital human being. For a system to be considered collaborative, it goes beyond individuality and, therefore, is subject to ethical, or moral, scrutiny. We use the term "we" instead of "they" as traditional to science, because we perceive the very immanence of the discipline as integrative, the very practice of researching collaborative systems is a practice of collaborative systems and influences its surroundings. That is, dealing with ethics for "them" (or "you", who read us) makes us seem to be detached from this collaborative system, which compose, effectively, CS. The main intention of this work is, therefore, to foster collaboration, collaborate with thinking-doing collaborative systems in Brazil and encourage reflection on ethics or morals in this domain, with a focus on the Brazilian community and in Brazil.

The largest academic-scientific event dedicated to the field of CS in Brazil is the Brazilian Symposium on Collaborative Systems (*Simpósio Brasileiro de Sistemas Colaborativos* – SBSC). This event has been undergoing transformations that began in 2019.

After a hiatus in 2018, the symposium reappeared with a proposal to enhance collaboration between members of the collaborative systems community in Brazil. For this, the CS special commission has been promoting actions to strengthen research networks and bring Brazilian researchers closer together. As an example, we saw the SBSC 2019, in face-to-face format, structured from dynamics that favored the top among authors and participants. We saw the emergence of an online event called the Online Collaboration Workshop (*Workshop de Colaboração Online* – WCO) that brought the Brazilian CS community closer to the pandemic and has been strengthened through the participation of researchers in lectures, discussions, and informal interactions. SBSC 2021 was successful in its fully online format too. This restructuring of the SBSC has fostered new reflections in the CS community regarding scientific, social, technological and interaction practices. However, concerning to ethical aspects we still have a lot to improve.

SBSC community recommends the [Pimentel and Fuks 2011] collection as a conceptual basis for the respective community. In [Pimentel and Fuks 2011], in a total of 392 pages, "ethics" and related terms such as morals appear approximately ten times. However, occurrences with relevance, property or depth are absent, and no chapter dedicated to the topic is found.

Through the methodology of Systematic Literature Review (SLR) [Kitchenham 2004] we seek to answer the question, what is the panorama of the explicit occurrence of ethical aspects in the publications of the main track of the SBSC? Considering the importance of ethics associated with free, conscious and intentional human practice in a collective and collaborative scope, how are ethical aspects considered, if any, in the communications of these researches? We intend to go beyond the limits of traditional secondary research and, at the same time, propose a meta-scientific reflection.

The equivalent of SBSC, in Brazil, is the Conference on Computer-Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing (CSCW), for the international community. The 2021 edition of this event featured a workshop dedicated to research in the context of Latin America [1]. It is important to emphasize a political-scientific differentiation between the CSCW and the SBSC, while the first is directly related to the Special Interest Group of Computer-Human Interaction (CHI) (SIGCHI), the second is related to the Special Committee on CS (CESC) and , secondarily, sponsored by the SIGCHI. That is, there is a specific community for CS in Brazil, while within the CSCW this community is primarily linked to the CHI area. In Brazil, CHI and CS are separate communities, despite having several researchers working in the intersection.

In the context of CSCW and on the topic of ethics, as well as analyzing them as related works, authors also produce in both CS and CHI, two prolific authors are Casey Fiesler [Fiesler et al. 2018b, Fiesler et al. 2018a, Fiesler et al. 2015] and Katie Shilton [Shilton 2018, Shilton et al. 2020, Shilton and Sayles 2016]. Concomitantly, SIGCHI, and related events, promote official interventions and interactions especially dedicated to ethical issues [Frauenberger et al. 2017, Fiesler et al. 2018b, Munteanu et al. 2019], focusing on research in these areas and demonstrating an active and practical interest.

To the best of our knowledge there are no other SLR dedicated to the combination of ethics and collaborative systems topics, mainly in the Brazilian context, exposing the

---

[1]https://cscw.acm.org/2021/workshops-program/. Available in 11/11/2021

innovative character of this present work. As mentioned above, some works by authors dedicated to the theme deal with the intersection between CS, and its topics and sub-topics, and ethics, and its topics and sub-topics, however without secondary research on this combination.

Work similar to this one has already been carried out dedicated to the IHC-Br [Carvalho et al. 2021], referring to the Brazilian CHI community. Where a growing occurrence, either in quantity or quality, of ethical aspects over the years was noticed. In anticipation, the result of this research exposed a substantially different scenario from the IHC-Br, with approximately 10% of the publications showing some ethical aspect. Of these, none dealt with this topic with relevance or property. As well as there was no occurrence of Ethics Committee (EC), very few occurrences of Informed Consent (IC), and an unexpected changeable quantitative behavior. We hope that this exhibition raises critical awareness and reflection on ethical aspects related to CS in the Brazilian community.

2. Ethics, computer ethics and research ethics

Due to space limitations, this section dedicated to the concepts and objects of ethics is brief. The subject of ethics is morality, conceived by Moral Philosophy, presenting both a speculative philosophical side and a scientific side when dealing with moral behavior. Researchers, and their respective research, are guided by their moral ideologies, while scientific precepts dictate that scientific practice must be morally neutral, for those involved in it this is a paradoxical north, as we are all guided by moral ideology. Ethics, and morals, depend on context, historicity, temporality and other factors that make it of limited generalization [Vázquez 2018].

Ethics and science are intertwined, and as the social institution Science increases in social relevance, the quantity and quality of ethical dilemmas increase. For example, until a few years ago, ethics committees or research participant consent were morally insignificant; currently, research and careers can be severely hampered if these elements are disregarded. With regard to CS, including the research communicated in the SBSC, the overwhelming majority involve human participants, some going beyond the mere isolated, punctual or individual use related to CS, but also dealing with the collectivity, complex human relationships and sensitive personal data.

One of the conventional approaches to ethics is based on [Barger 2008] cases. As mentioned above, not every perception of reality or pragmatic approach can be generalized or transferred, as well as its results and contributions. A categorical example is the Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk); while several CSCW publications are strongly anchored to MTurk, this service is not available in Brazil and is even illegal, which already raises moral valuation. In short, ethical or moral reflections on MTurk are associated with the scenarios where this system operates, while in Brazil other systems operate, or are necessary, and bring own ethical or moral reflections.

CS has an additional characteristic, which is its collaborative character and association with subjectivity, including morality. In addition to the utilitarian character, there is a strong social tact (or a soft social networking category), which is also encompassed by ethics. If a system is coercive, it ceases to be collaborative and becomes imposing. The individuals present there are not collaborating through elements such as spontaneity, conscious choice or serendipity, which are internalized values, instead, they will be pres-

sured by external and alien values. This sets up a scenario close to coercion rather than collaboration. There is no "individual collaboration" and the very relationship between a research participant and the respective researcher is a collaboration *per se*; also subject to ethical or moral scrutiny, for example, through free and informed consent.

[Johnson 2008] defines computer ethics as:

"The study of the ethical questions that arise as a consequence of the development and deployment of computers and computing technologies. It involves two activities. One is identifying and raising into focus the issues and problems that fall within its scope, awareness of the ethical dimension of a particular situation. The second is providing an approach to these issues, a means of advancing our understanding of, and finding ways of reaching wise solutions to these problems." [Johnson 2008]

The universe of computational ethics necessarily deals with individuals, however for it it is plausible to approach a far from historical, cultural or social aspects. Just as an individual or punctual view is allowed, which is not possible in CS. Collaborative systems are composed of collectives, and can raise political questions, entering the field of ethics between groups and collectives with different values and worldviews; and implicitly moral, as in the case of social tact [Vázquez 2018].

In conclusion, CS is an area strongly anchored to ethics and morality, whether for its epistemological and ontological essence or academic-scientific practice.

3. Methodology and research method

Obviously, both research and academic-scientific communication published in CS go beyond the SBSC. However, considering it as the largest symposium dedicated to the area in the country, it is culturally to be expected that there will be an interest in communicating the findings, contributions and results of searches on this site.

The protocol followed for this SLR adopted the same procedure used in [Carvalho et al. 2021]. We analyzed the entire production of the 12-issue SBSC main track, from the years 2021, 2019, 2017 – 2008. The method is divided into two screenings, wide and narrow, covering both a wide and horizontal view, as well as in depth and vertical . Broad screening consists of searching for explicit terms related to primary interest, the search string used the terms "ethic", "etic", "ethical", "moral", "moral" , "consent". We seek to include, in addition to morals and ethics, the EC and IC, as these are secondarily essential elements in the morality associated with scientific research [Brasil 2016]. The searches covered terms in Brazilian Portuguese and English. Figure 1 illustrates the SLR process.

As a next step, all articles extracted by broad screening are analyzed by two researchers, validated and revalidated by both. Then, the pertinence, relevance and depth of the occurrence of ethical aspects is analyzed. From this analysis, the works for the qualitative synthesis are extracted, in fact. That is, works that deal with constructs associated with ethics with propriety. The qualitative synthesis would guide the main question, and respective sub-questions, to expose the panorama of how elements of ethics and morals occur in the production dedicated to CS at the SBSC. Unfortunately, no work selected by the wide screening was eligible for narrow screening. If the researches dealt with moral
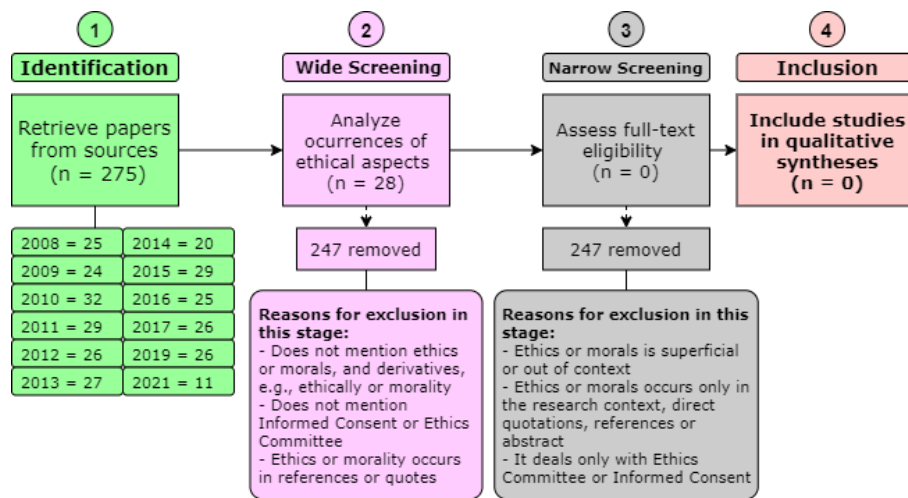
Figure 1. Diagram of the literature review process

values or any aspect linked to ethics or morals, they did not explicitly mention these terms. Other researchers involved gathered and reached this consensus, there were no adherent articles. In fact, none of the articles clearly mentioned the EC, and very few mentioned informed consent. The result of the wide screening can be analyzed and verified in an online database [2].

At this point we reach an impasse in relation to this present scientific communication, as the concrete result of an SLR is the qualitative synthesis of qualitatively adherent articles [Kitchenham 2004, Kitchenham and Charters 2007]. However, the result of a scientific research is not restricted to the destination, but mainly to the journey, its epistemology. In this sense, what was initially proposed as an SLR became an encouragement to reflection, why are ethical aspects neglected? Why, when they occur, are they shallow and simple? Why is EC totally absent? Is this phenomenon expected by the community, even if the area is so linked to ethics or morals? If not, how can this scenario be improved?

4. Discussion and conclusion

As a final result, 28 works, approximately 10%, presented some search term associated with ethical aspects. The peak of occurrences occurred in 2017, in 6 of the 26 works, approximately 23%. That is, in the year with the highest occurrence, ethical aspects did not reach a quarter of the publications. In this sense, it is also worth considering "the size of the SBSC". The table 1 shows the quantitative results of the wide screening, it should be noted that there were no proper editions of the SBSC in the years 2018 and 2020.

Some works had the epistemological potential to bring high-level reflections on ethical aspects, and did not do so. For example, in [Ferreira et al. 2017] when dealing with gender oppression in social networks; in [Cerqueira et al. 2015] on ethical issues of privacy in systems in the domain of Health; or in [Andrade et al. 2014] about the process of screening patients by Health agents. Specifically about the latter, the authors clearly indicate that the challenge is related to time, cost and patient requirements, but it is not an ethical issue or dilemma, because its moral conduct is simple, despite the complex

---

[2]https://cutt.ly/5Y1ITDU. Available in 12/12/2021

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2019	2021	T.	T. (%)
p.a.	25	24	32	29	26	27	20	29	25	26	26	11	275	100
EC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,0
IC	0	0	2	2	1	1	2	0	3	4	0	2	17	6,2
EC+IC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,0
No	0	0	2	2	1	1	3	5	4	6	2	2	28	10,2
Yes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,0
All	0	0	2	2	1	1	3	5	4	6	2	2	28	10,2
No %	0,0	0,0	6,3	6,9	3,8	3,7	15,0	17,2	16,0	23,1	7,7	18,2		
Yes %	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0		
All %	0,0	0,0	6,3	6,9	3,8	3,7	15,0	17,2	16,0	23,1	7,7	18,2		

Table 1. Wide screening results

scenario. That is, the challenge is not primarily or directly associated with ethical requirements. Not to mention the absence of IC or EC in research involving human participants, even if it is explaining the absence of these elements, for example, why this research was not appreciated by an EC? Could a IC undermine the essence of the research? And deliberating on these questions is about ethical aspects, just as the reviewers will appreciate the authors' epistemic responsibility in research.

While the SBSC appears, in 2021, to be fading away; the IHC-Br, which would be the event of its sister area (CS and CHI) demonstrates firmness and strength. While the IHC-Br presents ethical aspects in greater quantity and quality [Carvalho et al. 2021]; SBSC is the opposite. Another very complex factor to analyze objectively and categorically is, what differentiates research in CS and in CHI? That is, several communications in the IHC-Br are also adequate or compatible with the SBSC, although we are unable to answer, for example, in which event is publication X more adherent? However, a perception is clear, it is more interesting and safer to submit your scientific communication to a firm and strong event than to a waning event. And this, too, is an ethical dilemma associated with metascience.

Although the SBSC itself is absent from the focus of this present work, we realize that in order to have an appreciation for ethical aspects, a community, and related congregational events, must be firm and well-established. Which, according to recent data, does not seem to be the situation of the SBSC; on the other hand, when the CS community involved in CESC could choose to dismantle the SBSC itself, which was an ethical and moral dilemma, it chose to reinvent itself and, in an innovative way, propose its own and active referrals in the search for re-establish the event itself. That is, there was an active and explicit agency to try to bring the topic of CS back to light in scientific research in Brazilian computing, instead of simply keeping the same model of action hoping that, "naturally", the field of knowledge return to what would traditionally be its *alma mater*.

On the other hand, the SBSC itself, in all its years, has been unable to "take off" like its peer events with research strongly tied to human or collaborative factors. The CSCW is internationally well-established, also with Brazilian researchers producing for it and publishing on it; realistically, is there any possibility of elevating the SBSC to what it once was, or more? Or, in the Brazilian scenario, for this congregation dedicated to CS to persist without withering away, would it be plausible to annex itself in a subordinate way to another? This, we reiterate, from the perspective of the production of knowledge that reaches a high level and deals with conceptual and contextual issues, even philosophical, as well as logical or technical; in short, deal with ethics and properly consider

ethical aspects. As long as the CS collective is concerned and engaged in "surviving", it will be highly costly and hardly successful to seek more reflective and comprehensive communications in the short or medium term.

We noticed some challenges in carrying out a structured and sound analysis of the communications published in the SBSC, including: (i) the inconstancy of publishing agents and repositories, where we find the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE); Association for Computing Machinery (ACM); SBC Open Library (SOL); and self-managed. For example, it was quite difficult to obtain the annals of the 2011 edition. There is an inconstancy of document patterns, which is partially explained by the variation of publishing agents and repositories. Also, occurrence of truncated characters, as we searched for the term "étic" (acute accent on the "e"), certain documents presented return problems, which we solved by obtaining and analyzing in detail the publications. That is, if an interested party intends to develop a diverse SLR about CS in Brazil, or even any random bibliographic review for a monograph, a quick or superficial search will disregard the SBSC productions with truncated characters, especially accented words, harming its effectiveness as scientific communication.

5. Acknowledgements

References

Andrade, R. C., Nascimento, B. S., Borges, M. R., and Vivacqua, A. S. (2014). Desafios para colaboração no atendimento pré-hospitalar em acidentes de múltiplas vítimas. In *Anais do XII Simpósio Brasileiro de Sistemas Colaborativos*, Porto Alegre, RS, Brasil. SBC.

Barger, R. (2008). *Computer Ethics: A Case-Based Approach*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, RU.

Brasil (2016). Conselho Nacional da Saúde. RESOLUÇÃO Nº 510, DE 07 DE ABRIL DE 2016. Disponível em 07/07/2021: https://cutt.ly/yjSF2Lm.

Carvalho, L. P., Suzano, J. A., Pereira, R., Santoro, F. M., and Oliveira, J. (2021). *Ethics: What is the Research Scenario in the Brazilian Symposium IHC?* Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, USA.

Cerqueira, D. C., Cerqueira, M. M., and Bittencourt, R. A. (2015). Uma ferramenta colaborativa de apoio à discussão de casos clínicos em cursos de saúde. In *Anais do XIII Simpósio Brasileiro de Sistemas Colaborativos*, Porto Alegre, RS, Brasil. SBC.

Ferreira, R., Barbosa, G., Andrade, C., Silva, I., and Coutinho, F. (2017). Caracterização de opressão de gênero em redes sociais a partir de violações dos princípios de afetibilidade: Um estudo de caso no facebook. In *Anais do XIV Simpósio Brasileiro de Sistemas Colaborativos*, pages 1486–1500, Porto Alegre, RS, Brasil. SBC.

Fiesler, C., Bruckman, A., Kraut, R. E., Muller, M. J., Munteanu, C., and Shilton, K. (2018a). Research ethics and regulation: An open forum. *Companion of the 2018 ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing*.

Fiesler, C., Hancock, J., Bruckman, A., Muller, M., Munteanu, C., and Densmore, M. (2018b). Research ethics for hci: A roundtable discussion. CHI EA '18, page 1–5, New York, NY, USA. Association for Computing Machinery.

Fiesler, C., Young, A. L., Peyton, T., Bruckman, A., Gray, M., Hancock, J. T., and Lutters, W. G. (2015). Ethics for studying online sociotechnical systems in a big data world. *Proceedings of the 18th ACM Conference Companion on Computer Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing*.

Frauenberger, C., Bruckman, A. S., Munteanu, C., Densmore, M., and Waycott, J. (2017). Research ethics in hci: A town hall meeting. CHI EA '17, page 1295–1299, New York, NY, USA. Association for Computing Machinery.

Johnson, D. (2008). *Computer Ethics*. Pearson, 4 edition.

Kitchenham, B. (2004). Procedures for performing systematic reviews. *Keele, UK, Keele Univ.*, 33.

Kitchenham, B. and Charters, S. (2007). Guidelines for performing systematic literature reviews in software engineering. Technical Report EBSE 2007-001, Keele University and University of Durham.

Munteanu, C., Bruckman, A., Muller, M., Frauenberger, C., Fiesler, C., Kraut, R. E., Shilton, K., and Waycott, J. (2019). Sigchi research ethics town hall. In *Extended Abstracts of the 2019 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, CHI EA '19, page 1–6, New York, NY, USA. Association for Computing Machinery.

Pimentel, M. and Fuks, H. (2011). *SISTEMAS COLABORATIVOS*. Elsevier.

Shilton, K. (2018). Values and ethics in human-computer interaction. *Foundations and Trends® in Human–Computer Interaction*, 12(2):107–171.

Shilton, K., Heidenblad, D., Porter, A. M., Winter, S. J., and Kendig, M. (2020). Role-playing computer ethics: Designing and evaluating the privacy by design (pbd) simulation. *Science and Engineering Ethics*, 26:2911 – 2926.

Shilton, K. and Sayles, S. (2016). "we aren't all going to be on the same page about ethics": Ethical practices and challenges in research on digital and social media. *2016 49th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS)*, pages 1909–1918.

Vázquez, A. S. (2018). *Ética*. Civilização Brasileira, 39th edition.