Report from the Ad hoc committee to Combat Harassment and Discrimination in the Theory of Computing Community

September 28, 2018

Committee Membership and Charge

The leadership of TCMF (FOCS), SIGACT (STOC,JACM), EATCS (ICALP), SIAM (SODA,SICOMP) have appointed this ad-hoc committee under the following charter:

Draft a proposal for joint ToC measures to combat discrimination, harassment, bullying, and retaliation, and all matters of ethics that might relate to that. Proposed measures may include, but are not restricted to, coordinating policies and guidelines, and setting community-wide institutions for reporting and oversight. The primary goal should be a determination to deter and root out such behavior in the theory community. The issues of false reporting and due process should be taken into account. The committee is expected to conduct the necessary research on existing practices. The committee will submit a report to the appointing organizations by September 30, 2018.

- Avrim Blum, Toyota Technological Institute at Chicago

- Erin Chambers, Saint Louis University

- Martin Farach-Colton, Rutgers University

- Michal Feldman, Tel Aviv University

- Sandy Irani (Chair), UC Irvine

- Rafail Ostrovsky, UCLA

- Paul Spirakis, University of Liverpool

Executive Summary

The committee recommends that every conference implement the following policies:

- Adopt a code of conduct for the conference. There should be a clearly marked link to the code of conduct on the call for papers and conference web page. In addition, a pop-up window at the time of registration should require participants to indicate that they understand the code and agree to abide by it. Conference organizers should also remind attendees about the code of conduct before the first talk of the conference and at the conference business meeting.

- Recruit and train a group of advocates to provide confidential support to people who have experienced harassment at conferences. At least one advocate should be present for the duration of every conference. The contact information for the attending advocates should be provided as part of the registration process and should also be listed on the conference web page.

- Every conference and journal should provide a mechanism for authors to confidentially declare a conflict of interest without having to be openly specific about the reason. The instructions to every program committee chair and editor-in-chief should contain specific language to take these declarations seriously. In order to prevent abuse of the system, a program chair could contact one of the trained advocates for confidential verification if he or she has reason to suspect the claim is not valid.

- Provide educational materials to the community at large.

Many of our suggestions would be more effective if implemented in a coordinated way. We suggest creating a consortium of conferences to manage the program of advocates, including advocate training and support.

Enforcing a code of conduct is more complicated issue. Due process is an essential component of any policy that could result in disciplinary actions against an individual. In our view, such a process should not be undertaken without some legal advice. We feel that it is beyond the scope of this committee to decide how much we, as a community, want to invest in having a process of formal complaints and disciplinary responses. The report outlines three different options and explains the pros and cons of each. Note that since the IEEE and ACM have a process for filing formal complaints, conferences sponsored by those organizations are already covered by those policies. The three options are:

1. Remain in a purely advisory role and point the complainant towards their options for filing a formal complaint with either the home institution of the accused or the IEEE or ACM (if the conference is sponsored by one of those organizations).

2. Provide advice and templates for each conference to form an ethics committee that can receive formal complaints, conduct investigations, and impose consequences in response to harassment incidents.

3. Form a single ethics committee to serve any conference not sponsored by the IEEE or ACM. With pooled resources, this group could receive training and access to legal counsel. This group would be able to track repeated incidents at different conferences.

1 Introduction

The Theory of Computing (ToC) community is committed to providing a professional environment that is free of harassment and discrimination, respecting the dignity of every participant. Our goal is to provide an environment that embraces diversity and is a safe, welcoming environment for all. Achieving a harassment-free environment requires that everyone in the community be committed to adhering to an appropriate standard of conduct. While many incidents of harassment are sexual in nature, harassment should not be tolerated in any form, including harassment based on gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, race, age, or religion. However, we recognize that many individuals are nervous about how addressing harassment could stifle the open, informal, and largely positive interactions in our community. Our intent is quite the opposite: we hope to encourage the community to discuss and engage in discussions of such topics in a productive manner, rather than to create anxiety about potential misunderstandings.

Some of the major conferences in ToC are governed by larger professional organizations, such as STOC (ACM) and FOCS (IEEE). The ACM and IEEE both have harassment policies in place, as well as the staffing and legal services needed to implement and enforce their policies. There are other professional organizations which are beginning to address sexual harassment in the conferences that they sponsor. For example, IACR (which sponsors conferences in cryptography, such as Crypto, Eurocrypt, etc.) has recently adopted a code of conduct along with procedures to respond in case of a violation. Their policy is devised and enforced by volunteer researchers in leadership positions within IACR. EATCS (which sponsors European conferences such as ICALP, ESA/ALOG, etc.) has a code of conduct but no procedure in place in case of a violation. There are many independent theory conferences that are entirely self-governed by volunteer researchers with no specific training or expertise in harassment policies and enforcement.

Most theory conferences, including those sponsored by IEEE and ACM, would benefit from having better support for people who have experienced harassment, education for the community on issues related to harassment, as well as more vigorous and visible community commitment to making sure that meetings, workshops, and conferences are a safe and welcoming environments for every attendee.

The goal of our report is to propose a unified approach that would make it easier for conferences to:

- establish a code of conduct for conference attendees

- adopt practices that would help prevent harassment from happening in the first place

- provide support to people who have experienced harassment

- possibly provide a mechanism to report complaints and/or implement disciplinary action against individuals who violate the established code of conduct.

Much of what we propose could be integrated with conferences sponsored by professional organizations such as ACM, IEEE, EATCS, and IACR. However, for some of the larger organizations (such as ACM and IEEE) that have well-defined harassment policies in place,

there may be some aspects of policy enforcement and reporting which may have to be handled by personnel within those organizations.

We propose establishing a consortium of conferences across the ToC community managed by a committee appointed by the steering committee chairs of the participating conferences. Conferences would have the option to join the consortium in exchange for certain services. Requirements for membership would include:

- having a code of conduct approved by the managing committee

- a commitment to implementing certain practices to prevent and respond to harassment

- providing a few community members to serve as advocates who are willing to undergo training necessary to support people who have experienced harassment.

This proposal outlines different options for the services that would be offered by the consortium. Some are more costly and time-consuming than others. The purpose of this report is to outline the pros and cons of different options in order to give flexibility in implementation. Since some services may have monetary costs, it may be also necessary to require an annual fee from member conferences.

2 Support and Advocacy for Targets of Harassment

Many targets of harassment wish to remain anonymous. Often times, harassment is aimed at junior community members who feel especially vulnerable to retaliation and may even be inclined to question their legitimacy as members of the community in the first place. Filing a formal complaint requires that the complainant reveal his or her identity to the accused harasser in order to provide the accused with the opportunity to respond. For this reason, there is often a strong disincentive to follow official reporting procedures. Nonetheless, as a community, there is much we can do to mitigate the effects of harassment by providing support to the person who has experienced harassment without confronting the harasser.

2.1 A Network of advocates

We propose having a group of advocates (called *ToC advocates*) who can be contacted in the event that a conference attendee experiences some form of harassment. Although the term "ToC advocates" is somewhat generic, these people are specifically charged with helping in situations related to harassment, not general academic issues. Each participating conference would be responsible to provide a few people who could serve in this capacity. The conference would commit to ensuring that every conference has at least one ToC advocate in attendance for the duration of the conference. The contact information for the attending ToC advocates would be provided as part of the registration process and would also be listed on the conference web page. Having ToC advocates wear a brightly colored name badge would also help to make them easily identifiable.

The role of ToC advocates would include:

- providing measures to ensure safety if the individual feels unsafe. This might include walking the person back to their hotel room or helping the person switch rooms or hotels.

- providing contact information for hotel security or local police.

- providing information about available resources, such as counseling.

- helping the person figure out how to navigate professionally tricky situations, such as how to decline an unwanted invitation.

- informing the person about available means of filing an official complaint if they decide to do so.

The ToC advocate would keep the incident confidential if requested. However, an individual approaching a ToC advocate should be informed that there are certain situations which require mandatory reporting, such as when the ToC advocate is from the same institution as the accused.

Providing proper training for ToC advocates is critical. They need to be sensitive to the condition of someone who has potentially experienced a traumatic event. They need to be equipped to provide accurate information regarding available procedures and services. They also need to be clear about the limits of confidentiality in following various procedures. The ACM is in the process of developing training materials for potential advisors on harassment-related matters. The most practical option would to partner with the ACM and use the material they are developing. The IEEE also has a training module for academics in leadership positions on preventing harassment which could possibly be of use. In the event that the IEEE and ACM training is not available or is unsuitable for our purposes, we propose developing a training program in collaboration with a professional consultant. (Appendix A lists several consultants who specialize in this area.)

Since there is a considerable investment involved in training ToC advocates, we suggest that they commit to at least 2-year appointments. ToC advocates could also serve more than one conference. A central web page maintained by the consortium would list all the ToC advocates and their contact information. ToC advocates could also potentially be contacted outside of a conference. This would be particularly advantageous for people whose home institutions have mandatory reporting procedures, where any person in authority who hears of an incident involving harassment is required to report the incident to the administration. A person who has experienced some kind of harassment at their home institution could potentially contact a ToC advocates for informal advice without the risk of losing anonymity.

Examples of similar programs are:

- Safe AGU (American Geophysical Union)

- Sigarch Cares (ACM SIGARCH)

- Siggraph Cares (ACM SIGGRAPH)

2.2 Declaring a conflict of interest

The paper review process for journals and conferences is the most likely avenue for retaliation against an individual who has accused someone of harassment or who has simply turned down an unwanted invitation. Therefore an important component in protecting people from retaliation is to provide a mechanism to declare a conflict of interest in a paper review without requiring that the individual publicly state the reason for the conflict. Unfortunately, a completely open-ended system leaves the review process open to abuse by authors who wish to disqualify a referee when there is no legitimate reason to do so. Therefore we recommend the following two practices:

- Have language clearly outlining what conditions constitute a conflict. The list should include the situation in which the potential reviewer has harassed an author of the paper but should also include other scenarios as well. The author should not be required to specify which item on the list is the reason for the conflict.

- In the event that the program committee chair or editor-in-chief suspects that claim of a conflict is not legitimate she or he can ask one of the ToC advocates closely affiliated with the field to confidentially verify the conflict.

Appendix B provides suggested wording for a conflict of interest statement. A link to the conflict of interest policy should be given on the conference or journal web page and should clearly appear to the authors at the time of submission.

2.3 The Callisto Project

The Callisto Project (www.projectcallisto.org) is a non-profit organization that offers technology-based solutions to combat sexual harassment. They recognize that it can be difficult for victims of harassment to come forward and file a non-anonymous complaint, especially if the victim believes that he or she is the first to do so. In response to this, the Callisto Project offers a means for people who feel that they have experienced harassment to make a confidential time-stamped account of the incident which can be later accessed if the person later wishes to file a formal complaint. In the event that a certain number of people file complaints against the same individual, the organization can put the complainants in touch with each other so that they can come forward and file a complaint together.

We contacted the Callisto Project and were told that they are currently too busy with their work on college campuses to work with us on a system for the ToC community. However, they offer a very appealing option which should be pursued in the future.

3 Education for Allies

3.1 Code of Conduct

Having a well defined code of conduct is the most essential step in communicating to the community what constitutes acceptable behavior. There should be a clearly marked link to the code of conduct on the call for papers and conference web page. In addition, a pop-up window at the time of registration should require participants to indicate that they

6

understand the code and agree to abide by it. Conference organizers should also remind attendees about the code of conduct before the first talk of the conference and at the conference business meeting. Appendix D gives a sample code of conduct, based largely on the current ACM code.

3.2 Community Education

We believe that our community has many well-meaning individuals who sincerely wish to help eradicate harassment in our community but may not have much experience in dealing with these issues. Therefore providing effective and efficient means of educating the community at large is important. Potential harassers are less likely to behave inappropriately if they know that the community is well educated and vigilant with regards to addressing harassment. Here are some of the questions that educational material should address:

- Exactly what types of behavior constitute harassment?

- How should I respond in the moment if someone is making me uncomfortable?

- How should I respond in the moment if I believe someone else is being harassed?

- How should I respond in the moment if I observe inappropriate comments or discussion?

- How can I, as a research advisor, prepare my students for attending conferences?

- What is the best way to support a colleague or friend who has experienced harassment?

Although, sexual harassment can occur between two people of any sex, the most common scenario is a senior male colleague behaving inappropriately towards a more junior woman. In our work on this committee, we have heard a number of men express concern that they are not sure exactly how to behave, so to be safe, they are inclined to collaborate less with women. This is certainly not an intended outcome of this work. The last thing we want is for everyone to be walking on eggshells and for women to have fewer professional opportunities as a result! Therefore, we think an important component of community education is to let people know that compliance with a reasonable code of conduct is not that difficult and to give people tools to discern and have a productive, positive discussion when an action or comment crosses the line.

There is a lot of material available around the general topic of harassment. The managing committee should curate and maintain a web page with resources to help people learn about harassment and how to prevent it. Appendix D has a list of links to video and written material that we recommend. Depending on resources available, it may be possible to develop some materials especially tailored for our community. For example, the two video webinars on the list published by AWIS (Association for Women In Science) have a wealth of useful material because they specifically address harassment at scientific conferences. However, they are long and contain many different types of advice for different audiences. The material in those videos would be more accessible if it was divided into shorter versions that answer specific questions for specific groups.

We debated what would be the most effective means of providing educational content around the topic of harassment at a conference. We discussed the possibility of hiring a professional speaker to give a plenary talk at a large conference or to offer a smaller interactive workshop before or after a large conference around the topic of harassment. For example, the Federated Logic Conference 2018 held an Ally Skills session as part of the conference. We leave it up to the various steering committees to decide if this would be a valuable use of time at the conference. We do strongly recommend that the advocate introduce himself or herself at the start of the conference each year and briefly remind attendees about the code of conduct. In addition, there should be a 5-10 minute refresher course at the business meeting. The talk could also include a set of best practices around one of the questions listed above. The ToC advocate attending the conference is the likely best person to present this material.

4   Official Complaints, Investigations, and Disciplinary Actions

We sincerely believe and hope that the ideas discussed so far will be effective in preventing harassment from taking place. If our community is well informed and dedicated to ensuring a safe environment for all members, harassment is less likely to happen. Providing support for individuals who have experienced harassment and who wish to remain anonymous is also critical. Nonetheless, it is also important to provide a way for an individual to file an official report of harassment and to have a well-defined policy as to how those reports will be handled. Note that in order for conference leadership to respond to a report in an official way, the identity of the complainant must be revealed at least to the accused. This is because an essential component of due process is to allow a person who is accused of misconduct the opportunity to defend himself or herself. That being said, authorities who are in charge of responding to a complaint should do their best to limit the set of people who know about the incident and report. In an emergency situation, however, conference leaders should have the authority to ask someone to leave the conference if necessary, as is the case already with IEEE conferences.

Here is a list of what we view as the essential elements in an enforceable harassment policy:

- A clearly written process

- Clear definitions/examples of harassment and/or bullying

- Community buy-in

- A mechanism to ensure that registering participants agree to abide by the code

- A properly trained individual designated to perform an investigation about the incident.

- A governing body to enforce policies consistently.

- A confidential data repository for cases handled and their outcomes to be used to track multiple offenders.

Large professional organizations such as ACM and IEEE have procedures in place for handling reports of harassment in addition to staff support for conducting investigations and resources for legal advice.Recently some conferences and professional organizations, such as IACR and SoCG, have adopted policies by which conference leaders can conduct investigations in response to reports of misconduct and apply disciplinary actions. However, there remain many conferences with no such mechanisms in place. We outline three different possible approaches to responding to official complaints.

1. Conference leaders remain in an advisory role and inform the complainant of his or her options in filing an official complaint. If an incident occurs at a conference that has an official reporting and response policy (such as any ACM or IEEE-sponsored conference), then advise the person making the complaint to file a report with the sponsoring organization. Otherwise, the complainant can file a report of the incident with the accused individual's employer. Any organization covered by Title IX (which includes all U.S. educational institutions) are required to investigate and follow up on reports of sexual harassment of their employees, even if the event does not take place at their home institution. We asked at University of Liverpool, Hebrew University, and Tel Aviv University to determine whether universities outside the US would also follow up on reports of misconduct of their faculty at conferences. It appears that they would, although at some places, this would be a novel request and might require considerable initiative on the part of the complainant.

2. Encourage every conference steering committee to implement a policy by which harassment reports are handled by the conference chair or a committee, such as a designated ethics committee or the conference steering committee. As a coordinated community, we can offer templates for procedures to follow as well as possible disciplinary actions. (See Appendices D and E for examples.) We can also connect individuals in charge of each conference policy so that they can share best practices.

3. Appoint the managing committee of the consortium of conferences to serve as a ToC ethics committee who can review cases and make recommendations for disciplinary action. The steering committee of an individual conference would still have final say as to the disciplinary action for a case regarding their conference; the recommendation from the ToC ethics committee would simply serve as an independent recommendation to inform the steering committee's decision. In response to an official complaint, the ToC advocate and/or conference leaders would encourage the individual to file a detailed complaint with the ToC ethics committee. One member of the committee would be in charge of following up and investigating as necessary. The investigating member would then abstain from deliberations regarding the outcome of the case. The committee would keep all records and correspondence about the incident. In case immediate action is necessary at a conference, the conference chair, in consultation with the ethics committee, could remove a person from the conference. Appendix E provides a sample policy on how to report incidents under this option.

The first option is certainly the easiest and most cost-effective option and would represent a significant improvement over the status quo. In many cases, academic institutions

are best equipped to perform investigations and apply disciplinary action against an employee. However, conference steering committees are unlikely to learn about the outcome of a case which means that there is no mechanism to ensure that an offending individual does not end up in a critical leadership position within the conference. Also, employers vary widely as to how seriously they will take such complaints which means that some incidents may go unaddressed.

The second option gives conference leaders some authority in addressing violations of the code of ethics. The mere threat of consequences may also serve as an effective deterrent to potential harassers. However, individual conferences may not have enough resources to implement a policy well. We believe that there is significant risk in having people with little training and minimal legal resources conducting investigations and imposing disciplinary actions as they could potentially be exposed to legal action. In addition, the second option does not provide a way to track multiple low-grade incidents at different conferences which should, in aggregate, be viewed as a more serious offense. There is still the issue that individual conferences may not be able to share outcomes of cases for legal reasons which means that a person could be accused of an offense at one conference could potentially be given a prestigious leadership position at another conference.

The third option is the most effective and safe way to implement a enforceable policy against harassment. However, it is also the most time-consuming and costly option. Proper training for the ethics committee in performing investigations and applying appropriate and consistent standards is essential. We strongly urge that if this option is adopted that a legal professional be involved in reviewing the policy and developing the training for ethics committee members. In addition, it is advisable for legal counsel be available for assistance in deciding on individual cases, as necessary. The costs for these services would have to be included in the cost for a conference to be a member of the consortium; we expect this cost to be minimal addition per registration, perhaps adding only a few dollars for faculty registrations.

One of the benefits of the third option is that by aggregating many conferences under one governing body, there would be more resources to implement a policy consistently and safely. The more cases handled by a committee, the more experience and perspective they have in handling future cases. In addition, having a data repository of cases spanning many conferences makes it easier to track multiple offenses by the same individual.

We would like to note at this point that a formal complaint does not necessarily need to be a request for disciplinary action. The information could still be useful in informing decisions regarding appointments to leadership positions within a conference, or for tracking repeated incidents across different conferences. For example, in appointing a program committee chair, the steering committee could vet potential names with the ethics committee. Since the information could potentially be used in this way, the person accused of the action must have a chance to respond before the incident is formally recorded by the committee.

It is also possible for anonymous complaints to be investigated. Of course, if any action is taken against the accused, it is essential to provide that person with the specifics about the incident, including the name of the accuser, so that they have an opportunity to respond. Nonetheless, sometimes looking into an anonymous complaint can lead investigators to a problem which then leads to individuals who are willing to make non-anonymous

statements.

It is still unclear to us how such a ToC ethics committee would interface with conferences run by the ACM and IEEE. Both organizations have made it clear that they require incidents at conferences they sponsor to be handled through their policies. Furthermore, these organizations will not share any information about formal complaints or outcomes of investigations. Option three still offers an effective solution to many conferences that are not covered by ACM and IEEE policies. However, it would be best if it were possible to work out a way for a ToC ethics committee to work in cooperation with the ACM and IEEE.

Another option is to explore whether it is possible for conferences to have a partial membership in the ACM for harassment policy enforcement. The ACM has recently been very proactive in developing a new harassment policy. They also have the experience and resources to enforce their policy effectively. A number of conferences have left the ACM over the years, often due to financial disputes. Of course, having an enforceable harassment policy requires resources and conferences must be willing to pay for that service. It is worth exploring whether there is a way for a conference to have partial sponsorship by the ACM in exchange for their expertise and time in implementing an effective harassment policy.

5   Future Steps

The committee suggests first disseminating this report to the steering committees of the various ToC conferences, as well as wider theory mailing lists where possible. (Appendix F contains a list of some suggested conferences to which the report should be sent.) Our hope is that at a minimum, the materials provided will help conferences develop a code of conduct and gain access to necessary resources when addressing complaints. We encourage each theory conference to develop, post, and discuss a code of conduct for meetings in the next year, so that we as a community will send a strong message that harassment and discrimination are unwelcome and not supported. We also encourage conferences to let attendees know that a conference leader (such as a steering committee chair) may have the right to ask someone to leave the conference if they pose a danger to the attendees.

Journals have a role to play in this process because they should honor conflicts of interest due to matters related to harassment or even declined invitations of a sexual or romantic nature. Therefore, the editor-in-chief of major journals should also be contacted for comment.

We also suggest polling each conference steering committee about the extent to which they would like to participate in a consortium of conferences. Even the less controversial aspects of what we propose, such as developing and training a cohort of ToC advisors to assist people who have experienced some form of harassment, will require some commitment from participating conferences. In addition, Section 5 of this report outlines several options for enforcement of a code of conduct. While all three options would be an improvement on the status quo, they vary greatly in the effort and resources required for implementation. As a committee, we felt that it should be up to the wider community to decide the extent to which we want to invest in addressing issues related to harassment. In particular, option 3, which requires the most time and resources, would need a broad commitment from the community. As such a process has no precedent, we expect many of the various

communities to discuss the issue and even hold a vote either over email lists or at the next conference business meeting.

After a decision is made as to which parts of our proposal will be implemented, a follow up committee will need to be appointed for implementation. This group would begin by coordinating the group of ToC advocates and developing their training program, hopefully making use materials already developed by the ACM. If the ToC community decides to form an ethics/disciplinary committee (option 3 in Section 5), the follow-up committee would need to formalize a training process for membership on the ethics committee, establish ties to the various individual steering committees that wish to be involved, and begin vetting codes of conduct of the various conferences. This committee would also need to evaluate what resources are needed and possibly arrange for funds to be collected. In addition, this committee could serve as the liaison to the ACM and/or IEEE, to coordinate policies and resources, and perhaps even reach out to similar programs such as SIGARCH Cares and Siggraph Cares, both of which have called for wider CS community discussion and coordination on this issue.

Appendix A: Recommended consultants

- Sherry Marts, PhD, CEO of S*Marts Consulting

- Alexandra Tracy-Ramirez, JD, (atracyramirez@hopkinsway.com)

- Heather Metcalf, PhD, Association for Women in Science (metcalf@awis.org)

Alexandra Tracy-Ramirez specializes in the legal aspects of sexual harassment policies. Sherry Marts and Heather Metcalf have expertise in responding to and preventing harassment, as well as support for people who have experienced harassment.

Appendix B: Sample wording for a conflict of interest

List here the names of anyone that you feel should not review your paper due to a conflict of interest. A conflict of interest is limited to one of the following categories:

- Family member or close friend

- Advisor or advisee (within the last 10 years)

- Manager/managee relationship

- Involved in an alleged harassment incident with an author. (It is not required that the incident be reported.)

- Frequent or recent collaborator whom you feel cannot objectively review your work

If an author feels that they have a valid reason for a conflict of interest not listed above, he or she can contact the PC chair (or Editor-inChief) directly. Note that if the program chair (or editor-in-chief) has reason to doubt the validity of the claim of conflict of interest, then he or she may request that someone from the committee of ToC advocates confidentially verify the reason for the conflict.

Appendix C: Educational resources for the community

- *No Means No: Respond to Harassment in the Moment* Webinar sponsored by the Association for Women in Science. (https://vimeo.com/163581972/6b1f96fb72)

- *Spot and Stop It: How To End Harassment at Professional Meetings* Webinar sponsored by the Association for Women in Science. (https://vimeo.com/166410162/8dc250e79a)

- Sexual Harassment Resources from the CRA-W (https://cra.org/cra-w/sexual-harassment)

- Federated Logic Conference 2018 had an Ally Skills workshop adapted from materials by Frame Shift Consulting (http://www.floc2018.org/ally-skills-session/)

Appendix D: Sample code of conduct

The following sample code of conduct is adapted from the ACM code, with minor modifications.

Policy Against Harassment at Conference X

The open exchange of ideas is central to the mission of Conference X. This requires an environment that embraces diversity and provides a safe, welcoming environment for all. This policy applies to all conference-related activities, including:

- all conference sessions and events sponsored by the conference

- all ancillary events and unofficial social gatherings, even those outside the conference venue

- exchanges among committees or other bodies associated with Conference X, including social media.

Expected Behavior

We expect that all participants at Conference X activities to abide by this policy:

- Exercise respect in your speech and actions.

- Refrain from demeaning, discriminatory, or harassing behavior and speech.

- Be mindful of your surroundings and your fellow participants: for example, other people may hear inappropriate comments even if they are not your intended audience.

- Alert community leaders and get involved (if safe and possible) when you notice a dangerous situation, someone in distress, or violations of this policy, even if they seem inconsequential.

Unacceptable Behavior

Unacceptable at any conference related activity is:

- **Abuse:** Any action directed at an individual that (a) interferes substantially with that person's participation; or (b) causes that person to fear for his/her personal safety. This includes threats, intimidation, bullying, stalking, or other types of abuse.

- **Discriminatory Harassment:** Any conduct that discriminates or denigrates an individual on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, citizenship, nationality, age, sexual or gender identity, disability, or any other characteristic protected by law in the location where the conference activity takes place.

- **Sexual Harassment:** Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal/physical conduct of a sexual nature. Examples include (but are not limited to):

  - unwelcome advances or propositions, particularly when one individual has authority over the other;
  - inappropriate touching of an individual's body;
  - degrading or humiliating comments about an individual's appearance;
  - using an activity-related communication channel to display or distribute sexually explicit images or messages;

Unacceptable behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- intimidating, harassing, abusive, discriminatory, derogatory or demeaning speech or actions by any participant in conference activities, at all related events and in one-on-one communications carried out in the context of conference activities;

- offensive, degrading, humiliating, harmful, or prejudicial verbal or written comments or visual images related to gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, disability, age, appearance, or other personal characteristics;

- inappropriate or unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal/physical conduct of a sexual nature;

- inappropriate or gratuitous use of nudity, sexual images, or stereotyped images including using an activity-related communication channel to display or distribute sexually explicit or otherwise offensive or discriminatory images or messages;

- deliberate intimidation, stalking, or following;

- harassing photography or recording;

- sustained disruption of talks or other events;

- repeated unwelcome and uninvited attention or contact of a sexual or romantic nature;

14

- physical assault (including unwelcome touch or groping);

- real or implied threat of physical harm;

- real or implied threat of professional or financial damage or harm.

Harassment can occur when there is no deliberate intention to offend. Be careful in the words that you choose. Harassment committed in a joking manner or disguised as a compliment still constitutes unacceptable behavior. Remember that sexist, racist, and other exclusionary jokes can be offensive to those around you.

Network of Advocates

There will always be at least one trained ToC advocate at every Conference X in attendance. If you feel that you have experienced harassment or witness an incident involving harassment, you are encouraged to approach the ToC advocate in attendance about the matter. That person can

- provide support and advice to navigate the situation

- take measures to help ensure your safety if you feel at risk

- explain to you what procedures are available to you to make a formal complaint should you decide to do that.

The ToC advocate will keep the matter strictly confidential if you request, although some ToC advocates are under mandatory reporting obligations if the ToC advocate and the person accused are from the same institution. If for some reason you do not wish to approach one of the attending ToC advocates regarding a harassment incident, it is also possible to contact the conference chair or any steering committee member.

Consequences of Unacceptable Behavior

If a participant at a Conference X engages in prohibited behavior, the conference leaders reserve the right to take any action deemed appropriate to ensure the physical and emotional safety of the attendees, including removing an individual from the conference without warning or refund. Appropriate sanctions also will be taken toward any individual who knowingly makes a false allegation of harassment.

Appendix E: Sample wording for a reporting procedure and response

The following sample procedure is adapted from the ACM policy, with minor modifications.

Reporting Unacceptable Behavior at Conference Activities

The first priority should always be personal safety. An individual who experiences harassment should take immediate action if needed to remain safe. The procedures here describe how to report unacceptable behavior at Conference X. The Code of Conduct (include link) describes actions that constitute harassment.

What Should I Do If I Experience or Witness Unacceptable Behavior?

In the event of unacceptable behavior, the best people to approach are the ToC advocates attending the conference. If you feel uncomfortable approaching any of the ToC advocates present, then you can approach the conference chair or any member of the conference steering committee. These individuals can provide information about the process for handling complaints or handling immediate onsite needs. *Note that there may be cases (such as those involving Title IX issues in the United States and venue- or employer-specific policies) where an on-site person who is informed of harassment will be required to file a complaint.*

Any investigation or further action requires that a written communication be made to the ToC Ethics Committee. Report the incident using the form for Reporting Violations of the ToC Policy Against Harassment (include link). Prompt reporting is critical so that the ethics committee can take action to stop the conduct before it is repeated. All reports will be followed up promptly, with further investigation conducted where needed to confirm facts or resolve disputed facts. In conducting its investigations, the ethics committee will strive to keep the identity of the individual making the report as confidential as possible beyond the investigation.

The ethics committee prohibits any threats or acts of retaliation against individuals who report unacceptable behavior or provide information in connection with a report by another individual. The ethics committee considers a threat or act of retaliation to be as serious an offense as harassment itself and will handle reports of retaliation accordingly.

What Enforcement Procedures Will be Followed?

When receiving a report of unacceptable behavior, a member of the ethics committee will review and direct appropriate follow up. The ethics committee as a whole will discuss the incident and will make a recommendation regarding whether the conference's policy has been violated and the consequences of any such violation. The steering committee for that conference will have final, binding say as to any consequences or disciplinary action taken.

Possible actions include, but are not limited to, suspension from future conferences or exclusion from conference leadership positions. The same actions may be taken toward any individual who engages in retaliation or who knowingly makes a false allegation of harassment.

Appendix F: Distributing the Report

The following is a list of conferences and professional organization not affiliated with the ACM or IEEE. Conferences and organizations on this list should be provided a copy of this report and invited to comment. In addition, they should be polled as to their interest in participating in the consortium of conferences as proposed in this document.

- IACR (CRYPTO, EUROCRYPT, ASIACRYPT, PKC, TCC)

- SoCG

- SIAM (SODA, ALENEX, ANALCO)

- EATCS (ICALP, ESA/ALGO, MFCS. DISC)

- ITCS,

- RSA

- SWAT

- WADS

- STACS

- CCC

- CCCG

- COLT

- CPM

- APPROX/RANDOM

- HALG

- FUN

- Graph Drawing

- EuroCG

- WINE

- SAGT

The following conferences are affiliated with the IEEE or ACM and should also be contacted in case they wish to participate in the ToC advocates program.

- IEEE (TCMF/FOCS, LICS)

- ACM (STOC, EC, SPAA, PODC)