CoCC's opinion and recommendation regarding PR #37501 -- Calling In and Calling Out

3 messages

Jean-Philippe Labbé <jean-philippe.labbe@etsmtl.ca>   Sat, Mar 30, 2024 at 5:42 PM
To: Matthias Koeppe <mkoeppe@math.ucdavis.edu>
Cc: sage-conduct@googlegroups.com

Dear Matthias,

I hope this email reaches you well.
I am writing you on behalf of the newly nominated CoCC, and this email more specifically regards the PR #37501,
although it's scope isn't bound only by that one.

We appreciate your gesture of asking the CoCC to look into the situation and pointing out the "Calling In and Calling Out
Guide" which helped to diffuse the situation.

Regarding PR #37501, the committee believes that the "eyes" emoji can easily be interpreted as "I am watching you". In
fact, your further explanation in the thread confirms that you use it to mark messages that you feel may violate the Code
of Conduct. Furthermore, you state that "it is also accounting to later report as abuse. This can be interpreted as
weaponizing the CoCC, which we find unacceptable.

In our opinion, marking comments that upset you without saying what upset you is not helpful in defusing contentious
situations. Your discussion partner will feel that allegations are being made against them without knowing what the
allegations actually are. As a result, they will feel attacked without knowing what to reflect on. If you read the very helpful
"Calling In and Calling Out Guide" you will see that the recommended way to call out behavior that upsets you is to use
language that very specifically describes what makes you upset about the behavior you find upsetting. When you do this,
you give your interlocutor something to work with and think about. Furthermore, by clearly focusing on describing how you
experienced the words used, rather than stating them in absolute terms, you invite the other person to consider that there
are multiple sides to how words are experienced, which generally helps people to think in more collaborative rather than
adversarial terms.

A good example of "Calling out" actually happened in the same thread: Gonzalo called out your use of the "Eyes" emoji.
He described how he found it offensive and asked you to stop using it in his posts.

The Committee believes that everyone involved in a heated discussion, including you, should strive to "carve every word
before letting it fall". Whenever a remark is made that offends you, do consider that most likely your discussion partner did
not intend to do so and didn't intend what you read into it. At the same time, when your discussion partner seems upset by
what you said, consider that they might have interpreted your statement differently from what you intended. Consider
taking a short break from the current situation, as time often helps to diffuse these tensions.

The committee is still discussing how to resolve the current issues (without going into details, we have had 3 meetings
and will continue to meet weekly until all issues are resolved).
We hope to come up with solutions and recommendations in the short term that will hopefully lead to consensus and allow
the community to move forward and work on its welcoming atmosphere.

Finally, we hope we can count on your cooperation to help defuse heated discussions, while the CoCC continues in its
preparation to fulfill its duties.

Best wishes from Montréal,
J-P on behalf on the CoCC

Matthias Koeppe <mkoeppe@math.ucdavis.edu>   Thu, Apr 4, 2024 at 8:34 PM
To: Jean-Philippe Labbé <jean-philippe.labbe@etsmtl.ca>
Cc: sage-conduct@googlegroups.com

Hi J-P and all:

J-P: good to hear from you! It's been a while.

All: There's quite a number of things that I have to respond to in this email...

But in my first response, I'll start with a reaction to this paragraph
near the end of the long email. I'll phrase it as general advice for
the committee regarding future communication with community members
who have reported abusive conduct to you.

> The Committee believes that everyone involved in a heated discussion,
> including you, should strive to "carve every word before letting it
> fall". Whenever a remark is made that offends you, do consider that most
> likely your discussion partner did not intend to do so

This recommendation, while undoubtedly well-meaning and certainly
reasonably-sounding etc. is **actively harmful** in any communication
with a community member who has reported to the committee that they
have been the target of abusive conduct (... and who is waiting for
the committee to acknowledge the report(s) and to take action).

Why? Because this recommendation denies the community member's
experience as the target of abuse. It does so in multiple ways:
- by casually making the judgment that the abuser "most likely did not
intend to do so",
- by trivializing the report as having been made because words
"offended" the community member,
- by painting the context as a "heated discussion" (a symmetric
situation) rather than as "abuse" (an asymmetric situation).

I hope this helps,
Matthias
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Dr. Matthias Koeppe . . . . http://www.math.ucdavis.edu/~mkoeppe
Professor of Mathematics

Matthias Koeppe <mkoeppe@math.ucdavis.edu>   Mon, Apr 8, 2024 at 10:55 PM
To: Jean-Philippe Labbé <jean-philippe.labbe@etsmtl.ca>
Cc: sage-conduct@googlegroups.com

Hi sage-conduct committee:

Prompted by the latest emails, I am following up with a necessary
response to other parts of this email.

On Sat, Mar 30, 2024 at 5:42 PM Jean-Philippe Labbé
<jean-philippe.labbe@etsmtl.ca> wrote:
> I am writing you on behalf of the newly nominated CoCC, and this email
> more specifically regards the PR #37501, although it's scope isn't bound
> only by that one.
>
> We appreciate your gesture of asking the CoCC to look into the situation
> and pointing out the "Calling In and Calling Out Guide" which helped to
> diffuse the situation.

There appears to be a fundamental and problematic lack of
understanding of the situation if the committee considers "heated

situations" the main problem that needs to be addressed by
"diffusing". It is not.

The problem is abuse and disrespect. Both are asymmetric.

The problem is not solved by asking everyone to be nice to each other.

And it is certainly not solved by asking those that are targets of
abuse in cooperating with the denial of abuse.

Your task is simple: Learn to recognize abuse and disrespectful
conduct; acknowledge abuse and disrespect; set clear expectations for
the perpetrators; give support to the targets of abuse and disrespect.

> [...] We hope to come up with solutions and recommendations in the short term
> that will hopefully lead to consensus

You are assuming that all are acting in good faith. It's already
documented abundantly that this is not a suitable assumption. Act
accordingly.
[Quoted text hidden]