Abstract Discussion:

Monday, 11/6 at 10:15 PM in Room 205 of the Campus Center

Peanuts

A Joint Panel

Abstract Released Fall 2000

Introduction: Linus, Charlie Brown, and Snoopy all contacted Honor Council concerning events that had occurred at a previous social gathering. Linus confronted Charlie Brown and Snoopy about their behavior, along with their guests’, on the event in question. Linus felt that the guests’ violent actions and words had created an unsafe environment for him.

Statements of Parties:

Linus’ Statement:

Linus said he was at a social gathering and was approached by three members of the Peanuts Crew from another school, who he had never seen before. He thought they were going to harm him. They began to yell at him regarding a previous disagreement between Linus and a friend of theirs, whose identity was yet unclear. Linus said that they were pushing him around at this point and proposed walking two blocks away and settling it. Linus tried to engage in dialogue and asked which friend they were talking about. They identified themselves as guests of Charlie Brown and claimed Linus should know what the conflict was about already. At this point, Linus said Charlie Brown and Snoopy arrived at the scene of the conflict. He said Charlie Brown approached him and was close to his face, yelling about their previous disagreement. Linus said that the Peanuts Crew and Charlie Brown, who were all yelling at him again, surrounded him.

A member of the community, Peppermint Patty, separated the group and tried to calm them down. However, the yelling continued and one member of the gang implied that violence would be used if the disagreement wasn’t settled. Linus’ cousin, Pig Pen, heard parts of the conversation where he claimed guns were mentioned. Some time later, Linus was approached by one of the members of the Crew. He apologized for the conflict and explained that he was confused about the nature of his disagreement with Charlie Brown. Later, Linus said he saw Charlie Brown talking to two of Linus’ friends. Charlie Brown said, according to Linus, “This is
serious. People die for this.” Linus interpreted this statement as a threat. That was the end of the exchange, after which Linus reported the incident to security.

Charlie Brown’s Statement:

NOTE: Charlie Brown and Snoopy presented a joint statement of the events in question, but in the question and answer period, it became clear that Snoopy’s involvement was only as an observer.

Charlie Brown explained that a lack of constructive communication between himself, Snoopy, and Linus caused growing tension, which resulted in a verbal disagreement the night of the social gathering. He said that the disagreement began when his guests, the Peanuts Crew, confronted Linus based on their personal concern for Charlie Brown and his disagreement with Linus. Charlie explained that he had requested that his guests cause no disturbances while visiting Haverford, because the policies are unusual.

At the social gathering, Charlie said he was not drinking but some of his guests were. He explained that he was good friends with one member of the Peanuts Crew, Woodstock. He knew one of the others slightly and did not know the third. They were standing at an entrance to the gathering and Woodstock recognized Linus from a previous party. He asked Charlie Brown if he knew Linus and Charlie told him that Linus was the person he had a disagreement with. Woodstock and the rest of the Crew asked if Charlie Brown wanted their help in resolving the issue and Charlie Brown told them “I do not want your help.”

A while later, Charlie Brown said he went outside and found a member of the Peanuts Crew engaged in a heated confrontation with Linus. He went to investigate the situation. He felt that Linus had pulled him into this conflict and he felt provoked. Charlie Brown explained that the dialogue escalated and both parties exchanged menacing remarks. He said that the conflict was soon broken up by someone he didn’t know, but that he and Linus were still exchanging words. Charlie Brown said that the private conversation was also very heated. He explained that Snoopy was not present at this point. Shortly, Charlie Brown said, the argument simmered down, at which time he apologized to Linus about how the chain of events occurred. He explained that his guests were not from Haverford and therefore didn’t understand the school’s policies.

Panel Questions:

The Panel asked a number of questions, some of which sought to clarify the specifics of the event and terminology used; others were aimed at discovering the parties’ feelings about and responses
to the situation. Linus defined pushing as general shoving in a circle, while surrounded by the Peanuts Crew. He said this lasted for approximately 15 to 20 minutes. When asked about his feelings of physical danger, Linus said he felt he could be harmed. He said that at this point, he no longer felt threatened but would still like some resolution to the previous threats. When asked whether the comment about guns was aimed at him, Linus said he thought he was intended to hear it but that the threat was not made directly to him. Finally, Linus was asked whether he thought that any of the parties involved were intoxicated and he said he did not believe so.

Many of the questions asked of Charlie Brown surrounded his guests and the nature of the information he gave them regarding his disagreement with Linus. He told the Panel that one guest had been told of the conflict and that that guest told the others. When asked whether he was aware that his guests mentioned guns and violence, Charlie Brown said that he was not aware but thought it was possible. The Panel asked Charlie Brown to explain his intentions in saying “This is serious. People die for this.” He said that was just stating the seriousness of their original disagreement and was not intended to threaten Linus. He recognized that this comment, among others, could be interpreted as threats, but that he had not intended for them to be taken as such.

After questions regarding Charlie Brown’s responsibility for his guests, he stated that he did feel some responsibility but felt that he had acted appropriately in informing them of the Social Honor Code. He stated that he did not deploy his guests in his defense.

After further discussion with the Panel and confronted parties, it became clear that while Snoopy had been involved in the disagreement which led to this conflict, he was not directly involved in the conflict in question, and did not threaten Linus. Both the confronted and confronting parties agreed with this interpretation of events.

**Panel Deliberations:**

In considering if and how Charlie Brown and Snoopy violated the Honor Code and College Policy, the Panel discussed Snoopy’s role, Charlie Brown’s role as an individual, and Charlie Brown’s responsibility for his guests’ actions. The panel recognized the seriousness of Charlie Brown and his guests’ threats and behavior and was concerned for Linus’ general safety and sense of security.
The Panel concluded that Snoopy did not violate the Honor Code or College Policy, but felt that because he knew about the disagreement, he may have had a greater responsibility to intervene than a non-involved observer. Therefore, the Panel made the following recommendation:

Snoopy was not found in violation of the Honor Code, though the Panel was concerned that he witnessed the confrontation and chose not to intervene.

He is invited to write a letter to the community addressing this issue, to be published at a time determined by Honor Council to protect confidentiality.

The Panel discussed Charlie Brown’s individual actions at the event. His words and demeanor towards Linus, although not intended to be threatening, could easily have been perceived as threats. It is Charlie Brown’s responsibility, under the Honor Code, to consider the way his actions would be interpreted and thereby affect Linus. Charlie Brown engaged in threatening and demeaning name-calling and did not go through the proper avenues of confrontation.

A great deal of the Panel discussion revolved around the host and his responsibilities for his guests. Some members of the Panel felt that a host must be held accountable directly for his guests’ actions, since it was his decision to bring them on to campus. Most of the Panel felt that Charlie Brown’s responsibility lay not directly for his guests’ actions but rather in how he related and responded to them. The Panel felt that, under College Policy, there were two major things Charlie Brown had neglected to do: he did not accompany his guests throughout the duration of the event and he did not intervene in the conflict but rather participated. The Panel agreed that Charlie Brown was accountable for his behavior and his response to his guests’ behavior. The Panel came to consensus on the following statement of violation:

On the night in question, Charlie Brown engaged in insulting, demeaning, and intimidating language and actions toward Linus. The Honor Code states that students “must consider how our words and actions may affect the sense of acceptance essential to an individual’s or group’s participation in the community,” (III.B). He violated the Honor Code by compromising Linus’ sense of acceptance and by failing to comply with the guidelines of confrontation. The public nature of Charlie Brown’s behavior also can be viewed as an assault on the community’s sense of safety and security. His actions threatened the atmosphere of trust, concern, and respect outlined in the Honor Code.
Charlie Brown also violated College Policy on guests and one’s responsibility for them by his failure to adequately monitor and attempt to control the behavior of his guests. College Policy states that: “If a student brings a guest to a social event, he/she must: Accompany the guest throughout the duration of the event. Students bringing guests will be held strictly accountable for their behavior” (Student Guide “Event Rules and Regulations”).

Resolution Deliberation:

The panel discussed ways to address the issues of education, repairing the breach of trust, and accountability in the resolutions. They also kept in mind issues surrounding Linus’ lost sense of safety and acceptance. One of the major issues discussed was whether Charlie Brown’s guests should be barred from campus. In the end, the panel decided to include Resolution Three not because they wanted to take punitive action against Charlie Brown, but because they felt the Peanuts Crew could be a threat to Linus’ safety. The panel also debated whether it was appropriate to include these resolutions in Charlie Brown’s file until graduation. Some members of the Panel felt that this resolution might not be in the spirit of the Honor Code, as it would not let Charlie Brown rejoin the community like any other student. The panel finally agreed, however, that including these resolutions in Charlie Brown’s file would help reaffirm Linus’ sense of safety. The panel came to consensus on the following resolutions:

Resolutions

1) Charlie Brown should reflect on his behavior and the way that it affected Linus. After a period of reflection specified by the Panel, Charlie Brown is to write a formal apology, incorporating his reflections, to Linus for his behavior on the night in question.

2) It is this Panel’s expectation that Charlie Brown will, in the future, more carefully consider how his actions affect others and refrain from behavior that is perceived as threatening and intimidating. A letter including these resolutions will be kept on file in the Dean’s Office until Charlie Brown graduates. Should Charlie Brown be found to have engaged in similar behavior in the future, the fact that he has been cited by this Panel for inappropriate behavior will be made known and factored into whatever resolutions are suggested at that time.

3) Owing to the nature of Charlie Brown’s guests’ behavior on the night in question, we must ask that these individuals be barred from the Haverford
campus until Linus graduates. If they do return to campus, Security will notify the local police who will issue trespass citations.

4) Charlie Brown will construct guidelines regarding one’s responsibility for guests on campus with the purpose of educating the community. These guidelines will be submitted to Honor Council, who will then decide how they are to be used.

5) Charlie Brown will write a letter to the community after completion of the other resolutions.

Panel Statements:

Panel Member #1

I think that Charlie Brown’s actions were clearly unacceptable in an environment that fosters trust, respect and concern. No student should be made to feel that their personal safety is threatened nor should they be demeaned by their peers. These are fundamental human rights, not just at Haverford but in all situations. I think that he realized right away that he had not handled the situation well in the first place and therefore my concern in forming resolutions was not to educate about proper avenues of confrontation. Rather, it was to aid in Charlie Brown’s recognition that his words and behavior had an impact on Linus that he may not have intended.

Panel Member #2

I was a little worried that more wasn't done in this case to ensure the safety of Linus and this campus as a whole. I came to consensus because I trust that this will not happen again and that the confronted party will not let this happen again. I feel that ERA has been achieved. However, the fact that Charlie Brown's guests were not controlled and seemed to not be able to be controlled worried me because we cannot always keep nor do we strive to keep people who do not attend school here off our campus and a lot of times we loose track of our guests at parties or trust that they won't get drunk and violent.
Looking back at it now, I wonder if maybe statements of violation should not be written in the terminology of the Code or if our Honor Code can or should deal with assault. I absolutely agree that Charlie Brown violated the Code "by compromising Linus' sense of acceptance and by failing to comply with the guidelines of confrontation," but this seems to me not to convey the extreme threatening nature of the case. Linus was put not only in an uncomfortable situation, but an unsafe situation. In my personal view, remarks about physically hurting someone and personally slanderous calls is something serious that makes me feel unsafe. I won't speculate as to what might have happened without intervention, but I want to make sure this is taken seriously. I'm sure this won't happen again, but I think that we need to take higher responsibility for our guests who visit and that we need to look at this case very seriously. This abstract and the resolutions, I feel were written in accordance with the Code, which may not reflect the grave reality of the case. I hope people put this into account when reading it.

Questions:

1) Does it seem fair that Haverford students are required to accompany their guests at all times?

2) To what extent is the host responsible for her/his guests’ actions?

3) Does the Honor Code require students to intervene in conflicts such as this one?