Abstract Discussions will be held at Wednesday, November 3rd at 7 pm and Thursday, November 4th at 6:30 pm in the Sunken Lounge of the DC

Vincent and Julius
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released Fall 2010

This abstract was released in accordance with the timeline in the Constitution. The confronting and confronted parties were given the opportunity to review this abstract prior to its release.
(The addition of this disclaimer began Fall 2010).

Introduction
Vincent and Julius, twin brothers, were students in Professor Benedict’s introductory-level Family Genetics class. When grading their research papers, Professor Benedict noticed that a paragraph from Julius’s introduction was nearly identical to a concluding paragraph in Vincent’s paper. Six sentences were identical in both papers with the exception of a point in each paragraph where the brothers cited separate articles. The identical passages even shared the same capitalization error. The professor confronted the two students and asked them to bring themselves to Honor Council. Honor Council came to a suspicion of violation, and sent the matter to an academic trial.

Fact-Finding
Confronting Party – Professor Benedict’s statement
Professor Benedict began by explaining the assignment, a paper in which the students were to compare two scientific articles. The professor provided one of the articles, and the students were to find the second through their own research. Professor Benedict read Vincent’s paper first, and noticed that the paragraph in his conclusion had a style distinct from the rest of the paper. Benedict described the paragraph as more “inflated” and “grandiose.” She later read Julius’ paper, and noticed that he had repeated in his introduction some of the same odd phrases that his brother had used. Upon comparing the two papers, Benedict noticed that the “grandiose” paragraph from the end of Vincent’s paper matched a section of the beginning of Julius’s paper. Professor Benedict confronted the two students after the next class.

During the trial, Professor Benedict explained that she left the initial confrontation feeling very confused. In the meeting, Vincent and Julius maintained that they did not discuss their papers with each other at all while they were writing. Both had sought help from a mutual high school friend, but the professor did not understand how that help could have resulted in identical paragraphs. Professor Benedict told the jury that the articles were about similar topics, so that the paragraph in question did fit both papers topically; however, the paragraphs did not fit stylistically with the rest of the papers.

Confronted Parties – Vincent and Julius’ Statements
Vincent told the jury that both he and his brother had begun work on the paper three weeks prior to its due date. Julius contacted their high school friend Marnie first for help towards the end of the paper writing process. He sent her part of his introduction, since he had always considered the introduction to be the weakest part of his papers. Marnie had given Julius similar help before as they had been close in high school. A day later, Vincent also contacted Marnie for help, which he had never done before. At first Vincent asked her for some general editing help with the entirety of the paper, and then he asked her to focus on helping him with the conclusion. He had considered conclusions to be the weakest part of his papers, and so he wanted to get the additional help there.

Vincent described Marnie’s help with his conclusion as collaborative, clearly stating that they went over the paragraph sentence by sentence while Marnie gave him suggestions. Julius said Marnie was more involved in helping with his introduction. After he sent her the introduction, she made some corrections, and then read them to him over the phone while he typed the new paragraph. The brothers said that they had no idea about the similarity between the paragraphs, even after they had been called into Professor Benedict’s office. According to Julius, he had contacted Marnie after the confrontation, and she also had no idea how the problem could have come up. Both Vincent and Julius told the jury that they understood that they had done something wrong by relying too heavily on Marnie’s help. Both brothers also pointed out that the help had affected only a small percentage of their overall papers.

Professor Benedict was given the opportunity to talk to the jurors after Vincent and Julius had left. She said that Vincent and Julius need to understand that what they did was wrong. She felt said that the students really needed more confidence in their writing, since the rest of the papers were actually better than the paragraphs in question.

**Statements of Violation**

The jury began deliberations by deciding that it was important to distinguish between the brothers’ actions and to treat them discretely. Members of the jury noted that both Vincent and Julius had admitted to using Marnie’s language, though Julius had stated this more explicitly. The jurors also noted the possibility that one of the students had used another’s ideas, either Marnie’s or his brother’s, in addition to using Marnie’s language. Therefore they asked to make it clear to the parties that the word “scholarship” in the statements of violation would signify wording and language, but that the meaning might expand to include ideas as the trial progressed.

The jury consented to the following statements of violation:

1. *Vincent violated the Honor Code through committing an act of plagiarism by representing another person’s scholarship as his own.*
2. *Julius violated the Honor Code through committing an act of plagiarism by representing another person’s scholarship as his own.*

**Circumstantial**

The statements of violation were sent to the parties, before Vincent and Julius returned for the circumstantial portion of the trial. The jurors had received and read the rest of each party’s research paper in the period before the circumstantial meeting.

Julius began the circumstantial portion by pointing out again that he had begun the paper three weeks before its due date, so he never felt stressed out about it. He was nervous about the
assignment, and so sought out help, which he had never done before at Haverford. He had done decently well on the first test, but he knew that the paper was worth a larger percentage of the final grade. Also, Julius mentioned that he was considering becoming a Family Genetics major, and so he especially wanted to do well. A juror asked whether Julius had felt uncomfortable getting such help from Marnie. Julius said that he trusted her, since she was a better writer and studied English. In retrospect, he understood that he had inappropriately used Marnie’s wording in his paragraph, though he felt that the ideas expressed there remained his own. Still, in rereading the paper before handing it in, Julius said that he did not notice any difference between Marnie’s style and his own. He also told the jury that he had never discussed Haverford’s Honor Code with Marnie, but he believed that she understood plagiarism.

When Vincent addressed the jury, he began by noting that he had never really sought out this type of help before. As reasoning for seeking the help now, Vincent pointed out the fact that this paper constituted a large percentage of the grade for the class, and said that he too was interested in being a Family Genetics major. He also said that when Marnie helped Julius on his paper, he wanted her to look over his, too, because he wanted to receive the same help as his brother. Vincent reiterated the point that Marnie and he went over his paper “sentence by sentence,” and at the time he felt that it was still his own work. He conceded that often Marnie just told him to delete whole sentences, and then told him what to write in their place.

One juror pointed out the fact that there was an identical typo in each of the questionable paragraphs. The jury didn’t understand how an identical error could have arisen if Marnie had only given the pair help over the phone. Neither Vincent nor Julius could remember exactly how the phone calls had gone, but Julius said that he remembered getting specific grammar instructions from her which could have included capitalization. Vincent pointed out that his own conversation with Marnie lasted for forty-five minutes to an hour, so instructions of such detail could have been included.

Conference Call with Marnie

Vincent and Julius offered the jury Marnie’s contact information. The jury met without the brothers to conduct a conference call with Marnie, who spoke willingly with them for nearly an hour. However, jurors questioned whether they could trust her memory at points where her account differed from Vincent and Julius’s. Some jurors also expressed the opinion that they had an obligation under the Honor Code to place their trust first in the brothers as fellow members of the Haverford community.

The jury asked Marnie to try to specify a timeline for the help she’d given, and she described a back-and-forth e-mailing process with Julius that started two weeks before the paper was due and lasted until a few days before the due date. She remembered Julius’ initial draft as being unfinished and having neither introduction nor conclusion. After Marnie sent him grammatical corrections via e-mail, Julius sent her another draft with the specific instruction to focus on the introduction. Marnie said that she worked out some notes on her own, writing down 4-5 key aspects of the paper. She then talked to Julius on the phone for around an hour and a half about transforming these key points into sentences.

At that point, Vincent asked Marnie for the same help, and sent her his paper. Reading that first draft, Marnie felt that the papers were almost the same, a point that she reiterated a number of times in the conference call. She also conceded that she knew nothing about Family Genetics or about the topics of their papers. Therefore, she did not feel that she could give Vincent any additional help beyond what she had given his brother, and so she sent him the notes she
had formulated about Julius’ paper. Vincent then asked her for help with his concluding paragraph, which was not in the first draft. She went over it with him briefly over the phone. At one point, Marnie e-mailed Vincent back regarding the conclusion; in the conference call she admitted that it was a possibility that she had sent him Julius’s introduction by mistake, since she had been confused with all the e-mail correspondence between the brothers and herself.

After the conference call, the jury was concerned by the obvious discrepancies between Marnie’s version of events and the brothers’ version. These discrepancies included how many times and for how long she had worked with each brother on his paper, how much the processes of working with them differed, and how clear she was with them about the similarities between the two papers. The jurors once again debated whether they could trust Marnie. They eventually decided that they should at least make the brothers aware of these discrepancies.

Circumstantial Discussion Continued

The jury reconvened with Julius and Vincent to discuss their conversation with Marnie. Prior to this meeting, two members of the jury and the Chair met with Professor Benedict to discuss the phone call with Marnie. The jury began their meeting with the brothers by presenting a timeline of the events and details as they understood them and asked both of them to comment on their accuracy.

At this point, Julius clarified that he had sent the first half of his paper to Marnie, which only contained an analysis of his first article. When he eventually spoke to Marnie on the phone, he had found his second article and proceeded to explain it to her during the conversation. Julius described the process as more of constructing the introductory sentences than rewriting them.

Vincent could not provide the emails he had sent Marnie due to recently cleaning out his outbox. He insisted that he had worked with her for almost an hour, moving sentence-by-sentence through the conclusion without her mentioning that she had given the same advice to Julius. He felt that the process was not rushed, and that they were rearranging the sentences into their final order together. He explained that he had not sent that paragraph back to Marnie for review because they had worked on it together.

The jurors had decided in a prior meeting that it might be impossible to disentangle and account for the process each brother went through in writing his paper, the extent of Marnie’s involvement, and the difference between Julius’s and Vincent’s situations. Despite members’ frustrations in attempting to ascertain a verifiable and comprehensible narrative of events, the jury resolved to move forward; the process had already been lengthy, and the jury needed to be fair to all parties involved and not drag out the process any longer. With this in mind, the jury asked Julius and Vincent to offer suggested resolutions.

At the jury’s request, each brother spoke individually, but both men suggested that the resolutions be the same for each of them. The brothers thought that letters to the community about what they had learned from their experiences would be appropriate. Neither sibling was sure as what kind of resolution would restore their relationship with Professor Benedict, because they felt their involvement with the professor before the trial had been limited. The brothers acknowledged that in past abstracts students often fail plagiarized papers, but they argued that since their plagiarism was unintentional, affected only small parts of their papers, and was not a result of cutting and pasting from other sources that such repercussions would be disproportionately harsh in this case. Julius suggested that a percentage (matching the amount
their papers were plagiarized) be removed from their final grades on the assignment\(^1\). Vincent suggested rewriting their papers without the plagiarized content.

Neither brother distinguished his actions from the other one's actions. When asked by a jury member if they saw any differences in their actions, Vincent responded that he thought that they had written their papers in the same way, and that he had received the same help as his brother.

Professor Benedict’s suggested resolutions, which were included in an early letter written to the jury, had not changed after jury members conveyed the details of their conversation with Marnie to her. The Chair read those suggestions at this time. The Professor suggested that the students should each individually take responsibility for his actions. Professor Benedict also acknowledged being skeptical about the truthfulness of the stories as they were explained. She questioned whether failing the paper would adequately hold the men accountable; she felt that the paper was weighted lightly in the course grading, making up less than 20% of the final grade.

Julius and Vincent were both upset by the professor’s letter. Julius asserted that he was taking responsibility for his actions, and that he was frustrated that Professor Benedict worried that they were lying. Vincent agreed, pointing to the efforts that they had each made to give the jury as much information as possible as a sign of their commitment to the process.

**Tentative Resolutions**

Later that day, Julius and Vincent sent an email to the Chair reiterating that they were hurt by the Professor’s comments that questioned their truthfulness. They both asserted that they wished to apologize to Professor Benedict and explain to her that they were taking responsibility for their actions. They noted that they wished to speak to her as soon as possible, but since they did not know if this was permissible before the end of the trial, that they would submit this request as a suggested resolution. The Chair read this email to the jury at the start of the meeting to discuss tentative resolutions.

After putting forward the brothers’ resolutions and adding their own ideas, the jury settled on two important issues that needed to be discussed: First, should the jury create resolutions that addressed the pair’s choice to constantly live together and take courses together? Second, did the twins’ writing processes differ, and, if so, how did they differ?

In addition, jurors expressed the following possibilities as options for one or both brothers—which were discussed at length—as possible resolutions: failing the course (jurors questioned what measures might be in between failing the paper and failing the course in terms of severity); separation (to emphasize the community’s deep disapproval of plagiarism and to acknowledge that space and time might be beneficial in healing the breach of trust for the brothers and the community); visiting the writing center (to increase confidence in writing); learning more about plagiarism; drafting a plagiarism policy with Professor Benedict; living in separate rooms in the upcoming year; taking separate courses from one another; having a mediated dialogue with Benedict; rewriting the papers with different sources; and reading more abstracts related to plagiarism and responding to them.

Some jury members questioned how the brothers’ choice to live and take classes together affected their academic work. If those choices affected the integrity of the papers in question or personal academic accountability, some jurors argued that they would need to address such

\(^1\) If X% of the paper was plagiarized, X% of the points available on the assignment would be subtracted from their already graded papers.
issues. After much discussion the jury decided that there was no causal link between the brothers’ lifestyle choices and their plagiarism, and that any judgment on these choices would be outside of their purview; they would not make resolutions regarding such decisions. The jury agreed that individual jurors could raise their concerns regarding the effects such decisions had on intellectual and academic individualism during the presentation of tentative resolutions.

Jurors discussed separation at length, but even those who struggled to find ways to better engage the pair in confronting their plagiarism and its significance eventually decided against such a resolution. Jurors moved to other possible resolutions after some noted that in this case separation would likely come across as punitive and would shock the brothers into incomprehension rather than helping them find a greater awareness of the magnitude of their actions.

When considering the possibilities for the grades on the papers and the grades for the course, jurors kept in mind the possibility that one or both of the brothers might continue on to major in the Family Genetics department. After discussing the possibility of the brothers each receiving 2.0 for the course, jurors came to the realization that failing the paper would also put their grades close to a 2.0 while still allowing them to work hard on the final to demonstrate their commitment to the course. The jurors thought that a resolution asking that the two each receive a 0.0 on the paper would hold them accountable for their actions and help them understand the seriousness of plagiarism without being unduly punitive.

Throughout the trial and this particular discussion jurors continued to struggle with understanding and differentiating between what Julius and Vincent had each done. Jurors could not all agree on how much Marnie seemed to help each individual or how each party understood that help at the time. Without agreeing on every particular, the jury was convinced that Vincent’s violation was more severe than Julius’s violation. Jurors did not believe that the process that Vincent went through with Marnie could have felt like appropriate collaboration, as all six sentences had been created in their entirety with Julius. The jury remained worried that neither of the brothers fully understood intellectual theft or the community’s commitment to academic integrity. The jury focused on resolutions to help each party to learn more about intellectual property that would create written products to help better educate the community upon their publication. The jury decided to assign Vincent an entire research paper to reflect the severity of his plagiarism and to promote greater engagement with issues of intellectual property.

Jurors came to consensus on the following tentative resolutions, which were then sent to all parties:

- Julius and Vincent will meet individually with Professor Benedict where they will have the opportunity to apologize.
- Julius and Vincent will collaborate with Professor Benedict to draft a policy on plagiarism to use in her courses as she sees fit.
- Julius and Vincent will both receive a 0.0 on the paper. (Two jurors stood outside of consensus.)
- Julius and Vincent will both visit the Writing Center with a paper and should then continue to consider it a resource.
- Julius will write a letter to the community in which he will respond to Haverford Professor Maud McInerney’s essay, “Plagiarism and How to Avoid It,” and reflect on his experience in the trial process.
- Vincent will write a letter to the community reflecting on his experience with the trial process.
Presentation of Resolutions

After a period of time for reflection, the jury reconvened and affirmed the resolutions with a change in the final resolution so that it would read “that meets the approval of Professor Benedict,” instead of “to the approval of Professor Benedict.” The jury hoped that this would clarify that the professor would set the length and direction of the paper but would not be burdened with reading and approving the final product.

The two jurors that stood outside of consensus on the grading resolution explained to the parties that they felt uncomfortable with the two writing processes being treated similarly. They felt Julius’s process may have been appropriate collaboration in which he was a participant in the creation of the paragraph in question. Another juror expressed his disagreement with this and noted that he understood the content of the paragraph to be equally incongruous with the respective larger arguments in each paper.

Professor Benedict spoke about initially feeling accused by the resolutions; the resolutions seemed to suggest that the she did not do enough to educate the students about plagiarism. Professor Benedict explained that the resolution regarding a plagiarism policy would entail meeting with both parties individually as well as her department, and that such an effort would be difficult and time-consuming.

Julius and Vincent each told the jury how much their understanding of plagiarism had grown. When the jury asked each brother to speak more about their responses to the proposed resolutions Vincent objected to being asked to write a research paper. He explained that he felt like he had already learned a lot about plagiarism during the trial and did not know how what he had done was different than Julius’s actions. Some jurors responded to this by explaining that they had talked to him before about intellectual property, but that they had not perceived that he fully understood its significance.

One juror expressed his concerns about how the twins’ relationship may have influenced their violation. He noted that he felt like his own work had felt less personal and unique when he took most of his courses with a friend one semester. Professor Benedict encouraged the twins to develop separately. The Professor acknowledged that it would be difficult, but that it would be better for them to work on it themselves than having it be compulsory due to a resolution. The brothers stressed how important it was that they had someone with whom they could share everything, who was always there, and who would always understand them.

The Chair thanked the parties for their engagement throughout the exceptionally long duration of the trial. The jury acknowledged that the difficulty in concealing the brothers’ identities would need special care in the written abstract and might warrant particular consideration as to the abstract release date.

Final Resolutions

After the parties left, the jury discussed the responses to the tentative resolutions. They agreed to reconsider the resolution regarding drafting a plagiarism policy. The jury felt a need to direct information about plagiarism so that it would reach freshmen and to focus on better informing professors about what preparations Haverford provided students with before they entered a classroom. To this end, the jury drafted a resolution requiring Honor Council to investigate how much education about plagiarism, citation, and collaboration the Customs and
Freshmen Writing Programs were each offering freshmen, and then to inform the faculty of their findings.

The jury consented to each of the following final resolutions:

- Julius and Vincent will meet individually with Professor Benedict where they will have the opportunity to apologize. In addition, the students will offer suggestions to help other students understand appropriate collaboration and avoid plagiarism (All jurors consented)
- Julius and Vincent will both receive a 0.0 on the paper. (One juror stood outside of consensus.)
- Julius and Vincent will both visit the Writing Center with a paper next semester and should continue to consider it a resource. (All jurors consented.)
- Julius will write a letter to the community in which he will respond to Maud McInerney’s essay “Plagiarism and How to Avoid It” and reflect on his experience with the trial process. (All jurors consented)
- Vincent will write a letter to the community reflecting on his experience with the trial process. (All jurors consented)
- Vincent will write a research paper on intellectual property that meets objectives outlined by Professor Benedict. Upon receiving the paper, Honor Council will decide how to make it publicly available (its release will be no later than that of the abstract). (All jurors consented)
- Honor Council will write a letter to professors notifying them of the extent of education that incoming students receive regarding plagiarism, citation and collaboration. This is of particular concern considering the variation of citation styles across disciplines. Prior to writing this letter, Honor Council should examine what education the Customs and Freshmen Writing Programs are currently providing. (One juror stood outside of consensus.)

After consenting to each resolution individually, the jury consented to them as a set, with one member standing outside of consensus. The juror expressed continuing concern that Julius’s collaboration may not have been inappropriate and noted that coming to consensus on Statements of Violation before the jury had spoke to Marnie had been problematic for him. Other jurors supported his concerns but noted that Julius had described his own process as “dictation,” and that Julius seemed to believe himself that he had inappropriately collaborated with Marnie.

Jurors affirmed the trial process and expressed conviction that the resolutions appropriately addressed education, restoration, and accountability.

Questions:

1. Is it appropriate for juries to make resolutions addressing lifestyle choices?
2. To what extent should the jury consider itself an evidence gathering body?
3. What concerns should students have when getting help from individuals unfamiliar with the nuances of the Haverford Honor Code?

Julius’s Letter

To the Haverford Community:
As I read Maud McInerney’s *Plagiarism and How to Avoid It*, I kept thinking that this information was information that everyone knows. “Plagiarism is using someone else’s words or ideas without acknowledgment” (McInerney, 1). But what I never realized and what this essay touches on was the extent of the damage to the academic community. McInerney explains this damage as an intellectual’s “stock in trade” and “wealth.” Before this, I had never heard plagiarism explained in these terms. Words are an intellectual’s property, his or her own making. A person puts in a lot of effort to write down and form his or her thoughts into sentences and to just take these words and represent them as your own devalues all of that work. McInerney’s essay is also very helpful in understanding what exactly constitutes as plagiarism and includes examples. It does not however, really explain what happened in my case. My honor code violation resulted from collaboration with a friend about my paper and using some of her words. The lines are kind of grey as to the exact violation, but it is important for everyone to know and understand the limits of collaborating with others.

My trial enabled me to see my mistake. The trial process at Haverford is exceptional compared to many other schools because at Haverford, there actually is a trial process. I was given the opportunity to explain exactly what happened and was guided by the council. It was during the trial that I truly learned and understood my fault. Every time I met with the council I was nervous just because of the intimidation of being interrogated by the council and fear of being judged. It, however, was not that bad. The council explained every step of the trial process to me and tried to understand every element of my case in order to try me fairly. Although it is unfortunate that I had to go through this process, at least I was given the opportunity.

**Vincent’s Letter**

To the Haverford Community –

My professor recently confronted me about possible plagiarism in my mid-term paper. I recently admitted to plagiarism in my mid-term paper. I used someone else’s words instead of my own. No, I did not copy and paste a paragraph from another paper or but a term paper from the Internet. However, I did use my friend’s words in my paper.

I started writing this paper three weeks in advance. I wanted it to be perfect. Once I had finished writing my paper, I did not have confidence in the conclusion. So I sent my friend a copy of my draft so she could read the conclusion. I thought she was going to help me re-word it. Yet, in the end, I ended up just writing down sentences as she read stated them over the phone. I was tired of writing the paper and thought that the six sentences she came up with were witty and interesting (unlike my boring, repetitive one). So I figured everything would fit well together. But it really did not.

After being confronted, I was so nervous and scared. I did not know what to expect: a failing grade? My professor no longer trusting me? The community no longer trusting me? Yet, the Honor Council made me feel comfortable with the whole trial process. Naturally, I still felt uncomfortable when in the trial, but when the process was over, a sense of relief came over me. I no longer had this burden of plagiarism over my shoulders.

I cannot describe the shame, guilt, and disgrace that I felt. Yet, the trial process relieved me of both those terrible emotions. I was able to explain myself completely and answer any
questions the jurors had. They respected me even though I had plagiarized. The resolutions they came to were fair and reasonable. That’s all I could have asked for.

I am so sorry for my actions. Nothing should have prompted me to commit this act of plagiarism. There are no excuses. I am so grateful that I was allowed a second chance and that the trial process helped my professor trust me once again.

There is nothing worse than not having any confidence in your work. I should have had pride in my own work. I had never asked for help on a paper before and I kept asking myself why I felt I needed help on this one. I still do not know the answer. But what I do know now is that I need to have integrity in my work and have faith in my own abilities. One’s personal intellectual property is sacred and should always be respected. Everyone should have pride in his/her work.