Abstract Discussion: Tues, Nov. 24 @10:15, DC Basement

Note: This is an extremely concise version of the original abstract, which is 14 pages in its entirety. The goal of this mini-abstract is to present the dominant themes and issues of the case while leaving out relevant but somewhat detailed information. Full copies of the abstract are available outside the mailroom for those interested in the details of the case. The full abstract will also be up on the Web soon, linked from the Honor Council Web page:

http://honorcouncil.haverford.edu

Introduction

Bart and Lisa were asked by Professor Homer to contact Honor Council regarding a computer science project in which Professor Homer felt there were too many similarities to be accounted for by coincidence. Honor Council discussed the matter, reached consensus that a suspicion of violation existed, and convened an Academic Trial.

Fact Finding

Professor Homer began by saying that he encouraged collaboration in his class in the form of discussions, but did not allow students to write up solutions together or take notes on their
discussions. For the project at hand, Professor Homer noticed that the approaches used were almost identical, and in some parts were identical except for variable names. More troubling were the nonstandard stylistic similarities, especially the use of spurious tabs and spaces, which were in some cases completely identical. Professor Homer emphasized that while similar approaches are not in and of themselves suspicious, the line-for-line, space-for-space identical portions were extremely unlikely to have occurred by chance.

**Bart** said that Professor Homer had later on adjusted his rules on taking notes during discussions, and had said that it was okay to jot down reminders (Professor Homer confirmed this). He said that he and Lisa had taken notes as they were working together, but that he didn't copy Lisa's project nor did he let her copy his. Bart felt he had a good relationship with the professor, and was upset at the accusation.

**Lisa** said that she had worked with Bart previously. She said she and Bart discussed the project, going through all the functions, for about two hours, and then she went home and typed up the program. Both students took fairly complete notes on their conversation, in both English and computer language.

**Answers to Jury Questions.** Bart and Lisa worked on their own computers, not on temp storage. Neither student was in danger of failing, although neither was doing well. Neither still had any of the materials they had used for the project (disks, notes, files, etc.).

Deliberations

Homer sent a message to the jurors reiterating the format similarities, and stating that many of them show up in Bart's previous assignments, but not Lisa's. Furthermore, he noted that where the program indicated windows to open, those windows opened in identical but nonstandard locations on the screen. This could only have occurred if the windows were moved manually in the course of programming, and further indicated that what was submitted were two copies of one file, not two different files. The jurors felt they needed a second opinion, and also needed to speak to Bart and Lisa again. Both said they took fairly detailed notes in a combination of English and computer language, a level of collaboration which disturbed many jurors. When presented with this degree of collaboration, Professor Homer felt that it was probably too extensive, but since he had been vague, he didn't feel that the collaboration violated the Code. His main concern was the copying.

Professor Maggie, a second Computer Science professor from another school (the second opinion mentioned above), examined the files and said they were definitely copied. She also pointed out a new twist, an unresolved path reference to a third student's program. This reference was discussed endlessly, as it could not have been included accidentally, and appeared in both Bart and Lisa's programs. At first Homer did not feel it was relevant or incriminating, but when he revisited the matter (the jury also consulted a third professor, who said that the reference had to be deliberate), he felt that while it couldn't be ignored, it wasn't particularly relevant and he wasn't sure if reference indicated inappropriate conduct. Neither Bart nor Lisa could explain the
reference. A relevant point here is that the student whose file was referenced routinely used temp storage for his work, and the jury operated on the hypothesis that the work could have been accessed from there. The fact that the reference had to be deliberate, coupled with both Bart and Lisa's reluctance to explain it, led the jury to believe that one or both of them was lying to the jury about some aspects of what happened. The jurors were also fairly certain that someone had copied from the other person, but were not sure about who had done it, or if it had been done with the consent of the other person. Further questions brought to light that at some point when they were working together, Bart left the room to talk to someone for about 10-15 minutes. This, combined with the fact that the stylistic similarities appeared in Bart's other work but not Lisa's, effectively convinced the jury that Lisa had copied from Bart. Complicating this, Lisa stressed that she had left the room with Bart when he was talking to his friend.

Another interesting fact that came out during the end stages of these deliberations was that Bart was taking the course NNG. He said that because of this, he had very little incentive to cheat.

In sum, the primary factors influencing the Statements of Violation were: 1) Lisa apparently copied from Bart and lied about this fact, possibly without Bart's consent. 2) Bart lied about the path reference, but neither the jury nor Homer were sure if the path reference reflected inappropriate conduct. 3) The two collaborated to an inappropriate degree, but as this was not in Homer's view a violation, the jury was unable to come to a weight of the group decision on whether the collaboration represented a violation. With these factors in mind, the jury reached consensus on the following Statements of Violation:

1. a) Lisa violated the Honor Code by copying Bart's project 3. However, the jury remained uncertain whether the copying occurred with or without Bart's permission.

   b) Lisa violated the Honor Code by lying about some aspects of what occurred.

2. A reference to Sideshow Bob's project 3 appeared in Bart's final submission, proving that Bart used Sideshow Bob's project in the completion of his own project. Because Bart's testimony failed to explain the appearance to[sic] the Sideshow Bob reference, Bart violated the Honor Code by lying to the jury.

Presentation of Statements

The jury presented these statements to Bart and Lisa. Lisa expressed here frustration that she felt the only way one of them could be found not in violation of the Code was by implicating the other person. Lisa was visibly upset at the statements. Bart said that he did not know where the reference came from, and furthermore had no reason not to tell the jury about it.

Circumstantial

Professor Homer could not be present, but he sent a statement stating that while both students were not doing particularly well, they were not doing particularly poorly either. Bart and Lisa had no circumstantial evidence to add.
Resolutions Deliberations

Homer said that because Bart was taking the course NNG, there wasn't much point in lowering his grade, and was unsure what other consequence would be effective. He felt that Lisa's lying to the jury was fairly severe, and merited separation of a semester. He also suggested giving her a grade of 0 for the project, and some document showing that she had learned the importance of the Honor Code. Bart said that he thought living with the allegations of cheating, missed sleep, and missed classes held him accountable. It should be pointed out that this trial was quite lengthy. He also thought that it would be appropriate for him to fail the project and do it over. Lisa agreed that the allegations were accountability enough. She also stated that she had become paranoid of working with others, and that group work had always been important to her. With regard to the breach of trust, she said she felt uncomfortable repairing a trust she did not feel broke, and she felt the jury's statements violated her trust in them.

The jury now began its own deliberations. They established the following goals for the resolutions:

Goals for Lisa:

- 1. Help Lisa come to terms with the copying and lying.
- 2. Help Lisa think about this until writing a letter to the community.
- 3. Hold Lisa accountable for cheating and lying.
- 4. Educate Lisa about honesty and integrity in academic work.
- 5. Have Lisa learn from this, move on with her life, and be successful at Haverford.

Goals for Bart:

- 1. Hold Bart accountable to the jury for his lying.
- 2. Educate Bart about the proper use of temp storage.
- 3. Repair the breach of trust between Bart and the jury.
- 4. Have Bart come to terms with his lying.

The jury debated endlessly how best to achieve these goals. A more complete explication of the deliberation process is included in the full abstract, but for the sake of brevity that process will not be included here. The jury reached consensus on a set of tentative resolutions similar to the final resolutions below; these early resolutions were presented to Bart and Lisa. Lisa responded to these by saying that separation would be detrimental to her life at Haverford. Both Bart and Lisa were upset that the jurors hadn't trusted them. Several jurors responded by saying that they had wanted to trust them, and had up to a point, but that the physical evidence against them was overwhelming.

The jury deliberated on the concerns raised by Bart and Lisa, made minor modifications, and reached consensus on the following Resolutions (with one juror standing outside of consensus):

Resolutions:
1. Bart will receive a 0.0 on Project 3.

2. The jury recommends that Bart redo project 3.

3. Bart will write a statement on proper academic standards in Computer Science classes. This statement should address how the Honor Code relates to collaboration, copying, and student responsibility. This statement will be available to both Computer Science professors and students.

4. Bart will write a letter to the community after completing resolutions 2 and 3. This letter must address, but is not limited to: the incident in question, resolutions 2 and 3, and how temp storage is symbolic of the trust that exists in the Haverford community.

1. Lisa will receive a 0.0 for her final grade in the class.

2. Lisa will be separated for one semester. The jury feels Lisa needs time away to come to terms with the severity of her actions and the extent to which she damaged the trust of the community. While away, Lisa will keep a journal reflecting on community standards of honesty and integrity and her responsibility as a community member to uphold these standards.

3. Lisa will write a letter to the community. This letter must include, but is not limited to, Lisa's reflections on the trial, the statements of violation, and the incident in question. Also as part of this letter, Lisa will reflect upon the essay she wrote on the Honor Code when applying to Haverford and how her perceptions of the Honor Code have changed.

4. The jury recommends that Lisa talk to a Haverford Community member of her choosing before writing the letter.

Lisa appealed the decision to the President of the College, and it was upheld in its entirety.

To reiterate this abstract is designed as a brief summary of a normal abstract and is not as comprehensive as a full abstract. Copies of the full abstract are available outside the mailroom, and also on the Web, linked from the Honor Council Web Page:

http://www.students.haverford.edu/code/

Questions

Does this brief abstract form seem like a good idea? Should Council use this in cases where the full abstract is extremely long, in order to conserve paper?

When does collaboration become a violation of academic integrity?
To what extent is a professor responsible for outlining his/her specific guidelines for collaboration?

Is it reasonable for a jury to consider a student's academic conduct improper under the Code if their professor does not believe it is?

Should copying a computer program be treated the same as plagiarizing a paper? What constitutes gross plagiarism of a computer program?

Did the jury proceed appropriately in dealing with the lying of the confronted parties?

How can a jury take into account what is best for the person on trial (particularly with regards to separation) when jury members are chosen because they do not know the person involved?

Can the breach of trust with the community be repaired if the confronted party does not admit to violating the Honor Code?

Are these resolutions appropriate? Too harsh/lenient?

During the course of these lengthy deliberations, two jurors excused themselves from the trial for personal reasons. Can anyone stand outside a of a ten person jury? How many jurors should be necessary for a decision? What constitutes the weight of the group? If jurors leave should the trial be allowed to continue?

Send comments, problems, or suggestions to: code@haverford.edu
Last Revised: November 20, 1998.