Rhett

Introduction

Scarlett contacted Honor Council about a prank phone message she received on her answering machine when she returned to her room one night. Two of Scarlett's friends identified the voice on the machine as Rhett's. Scarlett, aided by an Honor Council member, confronted Rhett, who admitted to having made the prank call. After lengthy discussion, Honor Council reached consensus on a suspicion of violation and agreed to send the case to an Honor Code Trial. Normally, social cases are encouraged to go to mediation before they appear before an Honor Code Jury. In this case Scarlett felt that since she and Rhett did not know each other before the incident there had been no break-down of communication, and a dialogue of this sort was not appropriate. Honor Council took Scarlett's opinion into consideration when making the decision to send this case to trial.

Fact Finding

The jury convened, and, after Scarlett, Rhett, and Rhett's support person, Belle Watling, arrived, Fact Finding began.

Scarlett's Statement

Scarlett returned to her room one evening to find two messages on her machine. The first was from a good friend, and as Scarlett was returning the call, she heard the second message. The message consisted of man's voice identifying himself as a newspaper reporter who was conducting a poll about the sexual experiences of Main Line college students. The reporter asked Scarlett how often she had sex, the number of partners she had had, and whether her current sexual behavior varied from her high school behavior, and then left a number for Scarlett to call back. Scarlett called the phone number the reporter had left and discovered that it was a fake number. Scarlett then called Security and filed a report. As Scarlett was playing the tape for Security, one of her suite mates came in and said that the reporter sounded like Rhett. After Security left, another friend of Scarlett's also identified the man's voice as Rhett's. Scarlett once again contacted Security and told them that two different people had identified the voice as belonging to the same man, Rhett. The police were called, and came over to take down formal statements. Scarlett was told that a detective would contact her to discuss the incident in further detail. Late that night, Scarlett called an Honor Council Co-Chair, and together they decided that Scarlett would contact her dean the next morning, given the late hour. The next day a detective called Scarlett to set up an appointment.
Three days later, Security and the detective met with Rhett, who admitted to having made the call. Security told Scarlett that they had informed Rhett that he was to have absolutely no contact with her. A few days later, Scarlett received a letter of apology from Rhett through campus mail. At this point Scarlett decided not to pursue the matter through legal avenues and instead decided to deal with the incident through Honor Council. With the help of an Honor Council member, Scarlett set up a meeting with Rhett, at which point she formally confronted him.

After Scarlett finished her statement, Rhett gave his side of the story.

Rhett's Statement

Rhett was hanging out with his friends one evening discussing prank calls they had made in high school. The group began talking about the Jerky Boys and decided it would be fun to try some of their prank calls. Rhett suggested that someone call one of his friends, Melanie, posing as a reporter conducting a survey on the sexual habits of main line college students, called Rhett's friend, who sounded distracted and told Melanie he would call her back to answer her survey. Since Rhett had suggested the first prank callee, it was now his turn to be the caller. India, another friend, suggested that Rhett call Scarlett, a woman she did not really like. Rhett did not know Scarlett, but since India obviously did, he dialed Scarlett's number. Rhett followed the model of the previous caller, Melanie, and posed as a reporter conducting a survey on the sexual habits of Main Line college students. Since Scarlett was not at home when he called, Rhett left a message stating his fake name, giving a few examples of questions he was interested in (i.e. How often do you have sex, how many partners, does your behavior vary from that of high school?), and offering a fake phone number for Scarlett to return the call.

A few days later Rhett was called into the Security office where a police detective explained why he had been called in, and asked Rhett to explain if and how he had been involved in the situation. At that point Rhett openly admitted to having made the call, and explained the circumstances surrounding the call. After this meeting, sensing the grief his prank had caused Scarlett, Rhett sent a letter of apology to Scarlett. Rhett explained to the jury that, since he didn't know Scarlett, he did not feel comfortable apologizing to her face, so he sent the letter through campus mail. Rhett says that Security never told him not to contact Scarlett, so he did not question sending a formal letter of apology to Scarlett. Several days later, an Honor Council Co-Chair called him to arrange the formal confrontation.

At the end of his statement, Rhett suggested bringing India in, since she had been the one to suggest Scarlett's name in the first place.

Questions

At this point, the jury asked clarifying questions of the confronting and confronted parties. Big Sam began the questions by asking Rhett why he should not be found in violation. Rhett replied by questioning whether or not the issue was even appropriate for a trial setting. He felt that since there had been no mediation, and since the only attempt at a dialogue was on his part, with his letter of apology, a trial was not the most appropriate avenue to take in this situation. Big Sam then asked Scarlett why Rhett should be found in violation. Scarlett replied that she had felt very
threatened by Rhett's call, and was still quite upset by it. She felt that his actions did not uphold the standard of respect that the Honor Code sets. Mammy, another juror, asked Scarlett what she would like to see come out of the process. Scarlett said that she did not really have an answer, but that she felt there had been a direct violation of the Code which needed to be addressed. She added that she was afraid of him, and since she did not wish to deal with Rhett personally, she hoped that the Honor Code Jury would address the implications of his actions on the community at large in terms of issues such as respect and atmosphere of trust.

Jury Deliberations

Scarlett, Rhett, and Belle Watling left the room and the jury began its deliberations based on the statements made during fact finding. At the start of deliberations, most jurors felt that Rhett had violated the Honor Code through his lack of respect for Scarlett. A few jurors expressed concern with how Scarlett had perceived the prank call. Scarlett was obviously very upset by the call, but a few members of the jury said that they did not personally perceive the call as threatening. One juror, Aunt Pittypat, pointed out that the kind of disrespect Rhett demonstrated with his phone call happens over and over on this campus, and perhaps this is a good example of how it can get out of hand. Ashley expressed concern that a member of the Haverford community had not thought twice before making a prank call with sexual content to someone he did not know. The entire jury agreed that the call had been made without serious forethought, and hence showed a significant degree of disrespect.

Bonnie Blue expressed concern over whether or not the jury was finding a violation simply because Scarlett had perceived the call as threatening, since many jurors did not personally find the call threatening. Jurors responded to this concern by saying that since Rhett did not know Scarlett, and did not know her boundaries, the phone call was a violation of the Honor Code in that Rhett's actions did not uphold the standard of respect set by the Code. Mammy remarked that the Code does not work unless we as community members take into consideration how another person will react to or feel about an action or statement. Several jurors pointed out that Rhett and his friends were amusing themselves at Scarlett's expense and distress. Mammy reiterated her early point by saying that we must all think twice before we act, and, in this case, Rhett did not. The jury concluded that it wasn't just the fact that Rhett made a prank phone call that was a violation, it was a combination of factors -- 1) He made a prank phone call; 2) It was perceived as threatening; 3) It had sexual content; 4) He did not know (and did not know the boundaries of) Scarlett; and 5) It was fun by making fun of someone else. After all jurors agreed that all pertinent issues had been examined, the jury reached consensus on the statement of violation.

Statement of Violation:

Rhett violated the Honor Code by making a disrespectful prank phone call to Scarlett, someone he did not know. She perceived the phone call as sexually threatening.

Circumstantial
The next day the jury reconvened to begin the Circumstantial portion of the trial. Rhett and Belle Watling were present, and Scarlett had sent an email message to the co-chair with her reactions to the Statement of Violation, and her suggestions for resolutions.

After hearing the Statement of Violation, Rhett was given an opportunity to ask questions about the jury's decision. Rhett asked why the second statement about the call being "sexually threatening" had been included. Several jurors explained that one of the most important aspects of the situation was that Scarlett felt threatened by the call. One juror said that it had bothered the jury that Rhett had not considered how his actions would affect Scarlett before he made the call.

In terms of the circumstantial portion of the trial, Rhett felt that the circumstances of the situation had already been discussed during fact finding.

The Chair asked Rhett what resolutions he had in mind for this violation of the Honor Code, keeping in mind the three things that resolutions seek to address: Education, Accountability, and Repairing the Breach of Trust. Rhett said that he was not sure how much more he could do for Scarlett, aside from the letter of apology he had already sent. He suggested a letter to the community to address the breach of trust with the community. Rhett said that he felt the trial process in itself was educational, and that he had already learned from his mistake. He felt that he had already taken accountability for his actions by openly admitting to having made the call and by his letter of apology to Scarlett.

In her email, Scarlett suggested that Rhett meet with the EEOC officer and head of the Women's Center to discuss how his phone call could have been perceived as sexually threatening. She also suggested re-reading and re-writing the Honor Code essay, keeping a journal, and discussing the broad issues of the trial with community members.

At this point, Rhett and Belle Watling left the room and jury deliberations began.

**Jury Deliberations**

Big Sam and Mammy had both generated long lists of possible resolutions taken from past social abstracts. Among these lists were suggestions of letters, essays, dialogues, journals, gender studies classes, community service and reading and responding to Herstories. The jury as a whole felt that all that could be done with this particular case had been done (i.e. the letter of apology, the confrontation, and the trial itself). In light of this view, the jury decided to address some larger issues intrinsic to this case -- individual boundaries and different types of communication and how they are perceived, as well as sensitivity to women's issues, particularly ones dealing with sexually threatening content. Having decided that these larger issues were what needed attention, the jury felt that a letter to the community or re-reading and re-writing the Honor Code essay were not avenues to best address these issues. Prissie, a juror, suggested that Rhett serve as a facilitator for a communications workshop, which might help him to better understand how actions and words can be perceived in many different ways. Many jurors really liked the idea of Rhett reading selections from Herstories, and then having a discussion with the EEOC officer and head of the Women's Center that centered around those readings. A similar number of jurors also liked the idea of the communications workshop. In the end, the jury agreed that giving Rhett the option of the two would allow him to choose what he most needs to work
on to address his violation of the Honor Code. The jury reached consensus on tentative resolutions and adjourned for the 24-48 hour period of rest and reflection.

**Resolutions**

Rhett has the option of one or both of the following resolutions:

1. **Rhett will be trained as a facilitator for a communications workshop. In addition, the jury strongly recommends that Rhett read selections from past Herstories.**

   and/or

2. **Rhett will read selections from past Herstories before meeting with the EEOC Officer and Women's Center head to discuss the readings and his actions. If the EEOC Officer and Women's Center head feels it appropriate, more conversations will be held.**

   All Herstory selections will be compiled by the EEOC Officer and Women's Center head in conjunction with the jury.

**Presentation of Resolutions**

The jury reconvened 24-48 hours after reaching consensus on tentative resolutions. Rhett and Belle Watling were present. After reading the resolutions, Prissie explained what the communications workshop would entail, and why the jury felt it was a good option. Big Sam explained that the jury hoped Rhett would read the selections from Herstories because it would help him to better understand how his phone call could have been perceived in a way other than what was intended. Rhett responded to these explanations by saying that he has gone to the most recent Herstory readings, so he would like to read some older selections. Rhett also said that he thought the resolutions were constructive ones, and that he would perform both of the resolutions.

After Rhett left the room, the jury reached final consensus on the resolutions. After a moment of silence, the trial ended.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Do you think India, the woman who suggested Scarlett's name, should have been a part of the trial?

2. What do you think about giving the confronted party choices of resolutions?

3. Do you agree with the jury's decision and/or resolutions?

**Note:** If you have further comments or questions about this abstract, Honor Council offers the opportunity for you to discuss this abstract with an actual juror from the trial. Please contact the Honor Council Chairs for more information. If you have general comments about this or any other abstract, please contact your Honor Council Representative.