Abstract Discussions: Wednesday, November 16th at 1 PM and Thursday, November 17th at 5 PM in the Sunken Lounge of the Dining Center.

Smurfette and Professor Mama Smurf
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released Fall 2005

Introduction:

Smurfette, a freshman from Bryn Mawr, was enrolled in Mama Smurf’s class called Smurf Psychology 101: “Feeling Blue.” Upon reading an 8-10 page final paper written by Smurfette, Mama Smurf noticed that several of the sentences in the paper sounded like someone else’s writing. Mama Smurf located the article which Smurfette had cited in the final paper, and found that several of the passages in the article were identical to those in Smurfette’s paper. Mama Smurf was unsure about how to deal with a case of alleged plagiarism involving a Bryn Mawr student and was hesitant to contact Honor Council during a college break. Instead of contacting Honor Council, Mama Smurf contacted a Haverford Dean, who then contacted Smurfette’s Dean at Bryn Mawr. Mama Smurf filed an incomplete for Smurfette and expressed her concerns to Smurfette over email. Smurfette never responded. The registrar, following school policy, changed the incomplete to a zero during a college break. When Smurfette checked her grades, she was very surprised and contacted Mama Smurf. Mama Smurf then confronted Smurfette about the possibility of plagiarism and instructed her to contact Honor Council. Both parties submitted formal statements.

Fact Finding:

Mama Smurf’s Statement:

Mama Smurf told the jury about the confusion over confronting a student from Bryn Mawr and the process of bringing it to trial. The final assignment for her class was to write an analysis of a theory using multiple sources. Smurfette chose only one source, an article analyzing Freud’s theories. When Mama Smurf first read Smurfette’s paper, she said that the work seemed advanced for a freshman and not similar in voice to Smurfette’s previous work. Mama Smurf began looking for the paper’s only outside source and discovered it missing from the Bryn Mawr library. She later found the source and reviewed it. In a few places in the paper the source had been properly cited; however, she believed that in other places Smurfette had inserted whole sentences into the paper without proper attribution. Later, Mama Smurf said that the plagiarism did not seem intentional because Smurfette had cited the source at certain points in the paper. A student with intent to plagiarize, Mama Smurf explained, would be unlikely to cite the source from which he/she plagiarized at all.

Smurfette’s Statement:

Smurfette generally agreed with Mama Smurf’s statement. She said the paper had been written the night before it was due and that she never intended to plagiarize. Smurfette also explained she had never received proper citation training in either high school or in her
freshman seminar. She also felt that neither changing a few words nor summarizing constituted plagiarism if the source was included in the references. Mama Smurf then added that she had provided numerous means of citation education, and that she had discussed the issue in class. She also had encouraged her students to speak with her if they needed additional help. The article analyzing Freud’s theories was divided into subject headings which organized the author’s argument. Smurfette stated that she thought the author’s headings were actually Freud’s original points and as a result felt that citing Freud’s critic was unnecessary.

**Jury Deliberations:**

Mama Smurf provided the jury with a copy of the original article (the critique of Freud) and Smurfette’s paper. She had highlighted paragraphs in both works that struck her as similar. The jury passed around these articles; there were not, however, enough copies for each juror to thoroughly analyze the similarities between the two articles. Based primarily on the questions the jury had asked the parties, the following issues were raised by several different jurors.

- Were Smurfette’s actions actually intentional?
- Had Smurfette taken the correct steps to avoid plagiarism?
- Was Smurfette aware of the plagiarism section of the Haverford Honor Code?
- Had Smurfette copied the sentences exactly from the article?

After several hours of deliberation, the jury decided it couldn’t come to a statement of violation without examining the paper and article in more detail. The jury adjourned for the evening.

During the break, the chair made several copies of the papers. The next day the jury sat in groups of three to compare Smurfette’s paper with the article on Freud. The jury considered not only the passages highlighted by Mama Smurf, but the entire paper and article. After the review, the jurors expressed the following sentiments:

- One juror noticed that Smurfette did not fully understand the critical text that she had used.
- Another juror added that sections of Smurfette’s paper summarized the article without proper attribution. In addition, the organization of Smurfette’s paper paralleled that of the article.
- Another juror was concerned by the fact that Smurfette’s thesis seemed to have been taken directly from the article.
- Another juror said that at least the first five paragraphs of Smurfette’s paper had been paraphrased without adequate citation.
- Another juror noted that Smurfette had taken an analogy directly from the article except she had changed the two objects of comparisons; smurfberries were replaced with blueberries.
- Another juror pointed out that Smurfette had cited in some places, indicating that she did in fact know how to cite.

After deliberating for several more hours, the jury came to the following statement:
Statement of Violation:

By representing another person’s words and ideas as her own, Smurfette committed an act of plagiarism thereby violating the Honor Code.

Circumstantial:

The next day the jury reconvened to begin the circumstantial portion of the trial. Mama Smurf was not able to attend the circumstantial portion of the trial; she sent an email, though, saying that she agreed with the statement of violation and considered the plagiarism “NOT anywhere near gross.”

Smurfette started by saying that the trial process seemed very supportive. Additionally Smurfette stated that Mama Smurf had been very fair in acknowledging the unintentional nature of the plagiarism. Smurfette also believed that this process was not detrimental to her relationship with Mama Smurf, and thought that the statement of violation was fair.

Smurfette then spoke about the circumstances surrounding the act of plagiarism. She mentioned that she was taking four reading and writing intensive courses and attributed the plagiarism to poor time management skills.

Jury Questions:

One juror asked her why the analysis in her paper was in the same order as the analysis in the article. Smurfette responded by explaining that she did not understand that the subject headings were the ideas of Freud’s critic and not Freud himself. The same juror asked Smurfette whether she had read the Haverford Honor Code, and she said she had not. Smurfette added that she believed it was easier to break the Haverford Honor Code because Haverford’s Code is “stricter” than Bryn Mawr’s.

One juror asked Smurfette if she was aware that she had not cited the article properly. Smurfette responded by explaining that because she discussed the source in her introduction, she felt she did not have to further cite it.

Smurfette expressed concern about the length of the process because she needed to know her grades to apply for an off-campus academic program. The jury asked her what resolutions she thought were fair and she and mentioned that she had been assured by her dean (who had spoken to a Haverford dean) that separation was unlikely in her case. Smurfette suggested that she re-write the paper with a 0.3 grade point penalty. After the chair of the trial explained to her that resolutions are not intended to be punishment, but a means of restoring the breach of trust with the community, Smurfette responded that she did not believe that the violation concerned the community; her actions concerned only her relationship with Mama Smurf.

Deliberations:

On the first day of deliberations, after the circumstantial questions, several jurors shared their general impressions:
• Some jurors were concerned because Smurfette did not seem to understand how an act of plagiarism affects the community at large.
• Another juror felt Smurfette had not taken the process seriously. One juror added that Smurfette’s suggested resolution (that she should receive a 0.3 grade reduction on the paper) spoke to her failure to truly comprehend the serious nature of her plagiarism.
• Although, jurors were frustrated by Smurfette’s limited understanding of what she had done, most jurors acknowledged that because Smurfette was a Bryn Mawr student, she simply did not fully comprehend the Haverford Honor Code.
• One juror, noting inconsistencies in her statements, suggested that Smurfette might be lying. However, an Honor Council member who had been on previous trials thought Smurfette was being very candid and felt there was little reason to distrust her.
• One juror expressed unease that Smurfette had referenced a Haverford Dean’s suggestion that separation was not likely in her case. The Chair was careful to clarify that Deans only have the right of review and it is the jury’s responsibility to make its own decision regarding separation.
• Smurfette’s general ignorance about the Haverford Honor Code surprised the jury, especially now that she was on trial. Most jurors felt that it was incumbent on them to explain to Smurfette that plagiarism results in a breach of trust with not only Mama Smurf by with the community at large.

On the second day of deliberations, Mama Smurf provided suggested resolutions in an email. She suggested that Smurfette fail the paper but not the class because failing the class would prevent Smurfette from majoring in Smurf Psychology. She also suggested that Smurfette be required to rewrite the paper.

A juror reiterated her frustration that Smurfette did not appear to be taking this process seriously. Another juror agreed and said she was concerned about a student who does not understand the Honor Code taking classes in at Haverford. The key questions discussed during the day’s deliberations were:

• **What was the extent of the plagiarism? Could it be called gross?**

Day two of fact finding deliberations had revealed that approximately five pages of the final text contained substantial plagiarized passages. Although Smurfette cited in places, she was not adequately crediting the source. Most of the structure, the thesis and main arguments of the paper were not her own. A couple of jurors questioned whether the plagiarism was intentional, but most jurors felt that Smurfette had been especially careless.

• **Is it easier to separate Bryn Mawr Students since (1) they don’t get a Haverford Honor Code orientation, and (2) separating a Bryn Mawr student is less extreme?**

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1 Smurfette had said that she would fail the class if she failed the paper. Earlier, however, she had said she did not know how she was performing in the class.
2 If a Haverford jury separates a Bryn Mawr student, the student is prevented from registering for Haverford courses and is barred from coming on Haverford’s campus. The student is not, however, separated from Bryn Mawr.
The chair asked the jury if this should be a question for consideration. One juror said “yes” because separating a Bryn Mawr student is less extreme than separating a Haverford student. A Bryn Mawr student is not forced to leave their primary college. Other jurors said that non-Haverford students are less likely to understand the college’s system and are therefore more appropriate candidates for separation. One juror felt Smurfette should be separated academically until she understood her academic responsibilities to the Haverford Honor Code. One juror, however, said that this would not be in the tradition of separation. Part of separation is getting distance both academically and socially from an institution to reflect on the institution. Another juror said Smurfette should be separated for following semester to prevent her from registering for Haverford courses.

- **How can the jury help Smurfette understand the Haverford system?**

Most jurors were concerned that Smurfette did not see how her violation constituted a breach of trust with the community. The jury thought the professor would be a great resource in helping Smurfette come to understand Haverford’s system. Most jurors felt that Mama Smurf should be an active participant in the resolutions.

- **Should the jury question Smurfette’s honesty?**

Although a couple jurors were concerned that Smurfette might be misleading the jury, one juror, who had previously sat on trials, thought Smurfette was more honest than other confronted parties. The jury concluded that Smurfette would not have much to gain from misleading the jury.

From discussing these questions, the jury reached tentative resolutions.

**Tentative Resolutions (2 jurors standing outside):**

1. Smurfette will read the Haverford Honor Code.
2. Smurfette will receive a 0.0 for the paper.
3. Before resolution #4, Smurfette will read a document of the Professor’s choosing on the subject of plagiarism.
4. In conjunction with the professor, Smurfette will write a paper of comparable intellectual rigor. Although not for credit, the terms of the paper will be decided upon by the professor.
5. Smurfette will write a reflection on this experience to be released to the community.
6. Smurfette will be separated from Haverford until these resolutions have been completed. (1 juror standing outside)

**Presentation of Resolutions:**

Both Smurfette and Mama Smurf agreed with the tentative resolutions. Both expressed the intention to quickly complete the resolutions so Smurfette could return to the Haverford community. Some jurors, however, cautioned Smurfette to take her time, explaining that this process should not be rushed. Mama Smurf assured the jury that she would ensure that Smurfette completed her paper with the same intellectual rigor as a real final paper.
One juror mentioned that a longer period of separation had been discussed during deliberations. Both Mama Smurf and Smurfette thought a longer separation would have been excessively punitive. Smurfette said that over the course of the trial she had reread her paper several times and had come to realize the severity of her violation. She stressed to the jury that she has learned from the process. Additionally she expressed concern that, for her, an integral part of her Bryn Mawr experience is spending time at Haverford. A longer separation from the school would prevent her from taking classes she wants to take.

Jury members expressed uncertainty about these resolutions; however, they felt that if Smurfette fulfilled her resolutions, she could be trusted in the Haverford community. The jury came to consensus on final resolutions.

Final Resolutions (1 juror standing outside):

1. Smurfette will read the Haverford Honor Code.
2. Smurfette will receive a 0.0 for the paper.
3. Before resolution #4, Smurfette will read a document of the Professor’s choosing on the subject of plagiarism.
4. In conjunction with the professor, Smurfette will write a paper of comparable intellectual rigor. Although not for credit, the terms of the paper will be decided upon by the professor.
5. Smurfette will write a reflection on this experience to be released to the community.
6. Smurfette will be separated from Haverford until these resolutions have been completed.

Questions:

1. Separating a Haverford student is much more serious than separating a Bryn Mawr student. Had Smurfette been a Haverford student, separation may not have been as seriously considered. Was it fair to separate Smurfette even though a Haverford student in a comparable situation may not face separation?
2. Can plagiarism be considered “gross” if the student did not intend to plagiarize?
3. How much communication should there be between Bryn Mawr’s Honor Board and Haverford’s Honor Council? What actions should Bryn Mawr take to educate students about Haverford’s Honor Code and vice versa?