Introduction

Josh, a student in Professor Santoro's Religion 666 class, contacted the Honor Council chair at the request of his professor. After reading Josh's final paper, the professor had suspected that the work was not entirely his own. Honor Council reached consensus that there was a suspicion of violation and sent the matter to an honor code jury.

Fact Finding

Professor Santoro began by describing her perception of the events which had taken place. The final paper for Religion 666 was supposed to discuss a specific text used in class, *Lucifer's Travels*. Upon reading Josh's final paper, the professor was struck by content and language use which "did not sound familiar" based on her readings of Josh's other papers. An article was cited several times in the paper and included in the bibliography. The professor was surprised by Josh's use of a secondary source, because the practice of using outside sources was not encouraged in the class. The professor then became concerned that parts of the paper which were not cited did not appear to be Josh's work.

Professor Santoro decided to look up the secondary source that Josh had cited. When she found the article, she compared it with Josh's final paper. She thought that the ideas and format of Josh's paper directly paralleled a portion of the source. She also noted that all of the quotes Josh cited from *Lucifer's Travels* were quoted in the secondary source. It was apparent to the professor that the quotes in Josh's paper had been taken from the secondary source and not from *Lucifer's Travels*. Virtually all of the paper appeared to be either cited from the source or paraphrased from the source, without citation.

After the professor's statement, Josh gave his account. Josh said that he had written a 2 1/2 page outline of his final paper, and had then decided to look for secondary sources to support his argument. He found a critical article on *Lucifer's Travels* and realized that the article contained an argument very similar to the one he had begun writing about. Josh felt that he had two options: use the source or pretend he hadn't seen it. He decided that since the article articulated the ideas more effectively than his outline did, he would edit out his material in favor of the source's more clearly stated arguments.

The jury asked some clarifying questions. Professor Santoro said that she had gone over a one-day citation exercise in class and had not spent any more time on it because the students did not ask any questions. Josh had not used a secondary source on any of his other papers. At the time, he did not think anything of his use of the secondary source on his final paper. In response to the jury's question as to what his definition of plagiarism was, Josh said, "If you quote it and it's in your bibliography, it's not plagiarism...that's my understanding."

Jury Deliberations
The jury began discussing whether or not it could reach a statement of violation. Jury members talked about Josh’s possible ignorance of proper citation and whether or not this would be a valid excuse. Intent was also discussed at length (DAYS, YEARS, MILLENNIA!!!) The jury was divided on this issue. Some members thought that Josh had displayed no conscious malevolence, while others were more skeptical of his motives. The jury discussed the possibility of miscommunication between Josh and Professor Santoro with regard to the final paper. Two jury members mentioned that if Josh had not known that he was not aware of the proper guidelines for citation, he would not necessarily have asked for help with them. In addition, if he had believed that his citation method was correct, he would not have had misgivings about his use of the secondary source. The jury members discussed their own experiences with learning about plagiarism and citation. The point was made that depending on their educational background, some students learn to demonstrate knowledge by simple regurgitation of facts or ideas. However, the jury was concerned about a number of points, namely, that Josh appeared to have completely replaced his own ideas with those of another source, and that he did not express any concern over the legitimacy of his actions. The jury finally reached consensus on statements of violation.

Statements of Violation:
Josh violated the honor code by:

1- Insufficiently citing a secondary source. He reproduced another person’s ideas, words, and scholarship as his own. The paper contained little or no original language or ideas.

2- Failing to follow the professor’s instructions as to the completion of the assignment.

Circumstantial
Josh said that he had been sick for a while, and that he had been trying to keep up with all of his classes. He had missed many of his Religion classes, but had kept in touch with the professor. The final paper was to be chosen from a list of topics specified by the professor. Students choosing topics not on the list were supposed to speak to the professor before going ahead. Josh said that he was not sure if he had seen the topic list and instructions. Josh chose a topic which was not on the list, and he did not talk to Professor Santoro about it. He said that he had written the paper while looking at Lucifer’s Travels and the secondary source. He said that he had been doing well in the class and that the assignment for the final paper had not been any more complicated than that for previous papers.

The jury inquired about Josh’s definitions of plagiarism and paraphrasing. He said: “I did not write a good paper...but I do not feel like I plagiarized.” He said that he had learned how to cite in high school, and that he defined plagiarism as copying something word for word. Josh mentioned that he “wouldn’t know how to paraphrase,” but said that he thought paraphrasing meant summarizing. Josh said that he had not known the school’s definition of plagiarism. He said that it was his responsibility to know the
definition and that his ignorance of it would not be an excuse. Josh added that he felt that he now understood plagiarism better than he bad when he wrote the paper.

The Jury asked Josh if he had any suggestions for possible resolutions. He said that he thought he should fail the paper, rewrite the paper in consultation with the professor and using the same source, and write a letter to the community.

More Jury Deliberations

The jury discussed possible resolutions. Most people liked Josh's ideas, but some concerns were brought up. Some Jurors were troubled by the fact that he had not looked at his paper since he had handed it in, despite the fact that the professor had confronted him about its content. Also, the jury was concerned about the fact that Josh said that he now understood plagiarism better, but still did not think he had done anything wrong. Another concern was that Josh was willing to accept failing the paper as a resolution, while he did not think that he had plagiarized. The professor had estimated that if Josh failed the paper, he would receive a 2.3 in the class. The Jury pointed out that a student who worked hard in a class and did not plagiarize could have received the same grade.

Resolutions
The jury recommends that:

1. Josh receive a 0.0 on the paper in question and his grade in the course be lowered to a 1.7.

2. Josh will meet with his professor to discuss a course of action to address the following:
   a) Josh will learn how to properly use and cite primary and secondary sources in his writing. The jury therefore expects that he will learn proper paraphrasing and quoting and gain a solid understanding of what constitutes plagiarism.
   B) Josh will write the paper on this book under the guidelines of Professor Santoro. Josh will receive no credit for this paper.

3. Josh will write a letter to the community upon completion of resolution 2 to discuss what he has learned from his experiences in completing the resolution and trial process.

Questions

1. Do you think the first resolution that addressed Josh's lowered grade was justifiable?

2. Should students be held accountable for guidelines of which they are not aware?