Kramer and Elaine

Introduction: This case was brought to Honor Council by Prof. Newman who suspected that Kramer and Elaine had violated the Honor Code by exceeding the bounds of collaboration on a homework assignment in her Physics 105 class. Honor Council decided that a trial would be necessary.

Fact-Finding: Prof. Newman began by saying that Kramer and Elaine were each in her Physics 105 class. In this class, weekly homework assignments accounted for 30% of the grade. She provided the jury with a copy of the syllabus for the course which included detailed instructions about what kinds of collaboration were allowed. These instructions specifically stated that students were not allowed to share completed homework assignments, and it seemed to Prof. Newman that this was exactly what had happened.

Next, Kramer spoke about what had happened. He said that the week before Spring Break he and Elaine had gotten together to work on both the homework due that week and the homework that would be due following Spring Break. Class assignments were due on Mondays and were returned later in the week, with rewrites due the following Wednesday at 5:00. Kramer explained that they were unable to complete a few of the problems on the set that was due that week.

Kramer saw Prof. Newman in her office on the the Monday after break to get help with one of the problems, they worked on it for 45 minutes and solved it. Kramer then wrote out the final draft of his homework that night. On Wednesday, Kramer was studying in the Library just before class. Elaine approached him and asked him if he'd gotten the problem which he had worked on with Prof. Newman. Kramer tried to explain, but there were only 20 minutes before class and he ran out of time. He then said that he was not exactly sure whether he or Elaine suggested that she take his paper, but that he gave it to her with the expectation that it would be turned in before 5:00.

Elaine then spoke. She explained that she had been home for break and did not return until late Monday night. She explained that she had not thought about physics over the break and that she had a full day of classes on Tuesday so she did not work on the incomplete problems until Tuesday night. She reaffirmed Kramer's account of what happened on Wednesday. She then went on to explain that she had used Kramer's paper to help her figure out the problems and then wrote out the problems herself. She explained that both of them had felt that the handing over the paper was an "extension" of their collaboration.

The jury then asked what Elaine had meant when she said she had written out the problems herself. Elaine replied that she had gotten her answers from Kramer's paper as well as from her own notes. She had worked on the problem set for two hours that afternoon and was not sure how she had broken up her time between examining Kramer's notes and writing out the problem set. Elaine told the jury that she had looked at all of Kramer's paper but only consciously remembered using it directly for one problem, #34. She felt she could have recreated the problems on her own but said she would never know. She mentioned that they usually worked together with blackboards and scratchwork.

Professor Newman mentioned that showing scratch work would have been a violation of the spirit but not the law. Either way, said Elaine, I think I broke the rules as put down on the sheet. Prof. Newman told the jury that she encouraged collaboration but that this had clearly crossed a well spelled out line. She understood though how it could happen. She said there would be no breach of trust unless Elaine maintained she had not used more than question #34.

Elaine mentioned in response to a question that she had felt bad turning the paper in. She told the jury that she wouldn't have done it unless she was out of time. She felt
she had taken advantage of the time Kramer had put into the problem but at the same time hadn't seen another solution.

In response to other questions the jury learned that many students handed in assignments with a blank question. Kramer hadn't known if Elaine would have time to do the assignment adequately and thought that in the future Elaine would just leave the problem blank.

**Deliberation**

The jury as a whole felt that the rules had been broken but many weren't sure if the spirit had been as well. Some jurors pointed to a difference between "playground rules" and the Honor Code and felt that they themselves might have done the same thing (with regard to Kramer). The jury talked about the meaning of collaboration. Some felt that you couldn't collaborate with a finished piece of work while others pointed out that in Physics collaboration often involved one student explaining to another. In the end the jury seemed to agree that in any event collaboration was a two-way street and that Kramer giving Elaine his paper was not an "extension of the collaboration." Several jurors also felt that in this case the directions were painfully explicit.

The jury reached the following statement of violation:

_She had copied question #34 from Kramer's completed homework assignment._

In the course of doing her homework Elaine copied question #34 and parts of #28 from Kramer's completed homework assignment. This constitutes a second violation of the Honor Code.
to some jurors that the two of them had skirted uncomfortable issues during the fact-finding. In response, other jurors said that Elaine and Kramer's statements had been too vague to find another violation. Also, it seemed that it might be too late to address the issue since they had both seen the statements of violation. However, the discussion continued because some jurors were still uncomfortable with the fact that Elaine and Kramer seemed to have been "dancing" around the issues and also that this seemed to suggest that Elaine and Kramer had done little to address either responsibility or accountability for their actions. It was pointed out that the stress level on them must have been unusually high. It was agreed to proceed and see what Elaine and Kramer had to say in light of the violations already found.

Circumstantial:

The Chair outlined the main reasons behind finding the violations. These have been previously outlined. Individual jurors spoke to this saying that the explicit nature of the instructions was very important, as was the issue of collaboration.

In response Elaine told the jury that she had not approached Professor Newman because she knew she would not have gotten an extension. Professor Newman confirmed that she wouldn't have. She told the jury that neither the transfer nor the copying would have occurred. She had not handed the problems in blank because she had felt she could understand the problems and didn't want to lose credit.

Kramer then told the jury that he had given Elaine his homework because she "needed help and I had to give it." He told the jury that because of this trial she wouldn't do the same again.

Both Elaine and Kramer agreed that they wouldn't have done the same had this been a test. Said Kramer, "you tend to forget the Honor Code on a homework." Professor Newman wanted the jury to know that she felt there was a difference due to the collaborative nature of the homework. Elaine told the jury that she would have known she was doing something wrong had she thought about it, but that she hadn't in this case. She felt that she wouldn't have committed the violation if she had been able to get an extension. Students were allowed to drop one homework grade but Elaine had not been in class the first week and had thus received a zero.

One juror asked them to tell the jury how they had felt during the preceding week. Kramer said that he had thought it was a non-issue a first but now saw the seriousness. He felt very positive about the integrity of the process. Elaine said that upon confrontation she had realized at once that there was a violation, and dealing with that had been hard. They both felt pleased with the process. They suggested essays and both felt that a grade change was not necessary. Professor Newman asked that the problem set be redone.

Deliberations

In accordance with Kramer's suggestion the jury consensed on the following:

1. Kramer will write a 3-5 page paper dealing with issues of collaboration, following a professor's instructions and other issues relating to this case. In addition Kramer will write a letter to the community describing his own understanding of the violation itself.

The jury then considered whether or not a grade change for Kramer would be appropriate. After some discussion the jury agreed that, though not directly related, this incident should be reflected in Kramer's grade for the homework. Jurors felt that this should not be too serious in light of the fact that Kramer had done the work honestly. The following was consented to:
The jury recommends that Kramer will fail this homework assignment and lose the right to drop this or any other homework grade in the course.

The jury then held a very long debate over whether or not to mandate community service for Kramer. The jury split evenly, with some thinking the severity of the violation didn't merit such a resolution. Others felt that community service in the form of acting as a math help session tutor would be the best possible resolution. Points raised included what impact a formal suggestion (resolution) would have on the community and whether this would be too much in conjunction with the other resolutions.

After several hours of debate the jury agreed that this would be the best possible resolution and in order not to pile too much on dropped the other resolutions. After more debate a letter was added.

Final Resolutions for Kramer

Kramer will act as a Haverford Math Department help session tutor for 1 hour a week during next semester.

Kramer will write a letter to the Community regarding the importance of following a Prof.'s instructions and how this pertains to his violation.

The jury then turned it's discussion to Elaine. It was agreed that Elaine's violation was more serious than Kramer's. The jury consensed that Elaine should receive a failing grade for this homework but thought taking away the right to drop another would be too much, given that she had been forced to drop the assignment due the first week when she was not in the class.

The jury suggests that Elaine receive a 0 for this homework assignment.

It also consensed,

2. At the suggestion of both herself and Professor Newman Elaine will redo the homework assignment.

And at Elaine and Professor Newman's suggestion:

1. Elaine will write a 3-5 page paper dealing with issues of collaboration, following a professor's instructions and plagiarism. In addition, Elaine will write a letter to the community describing her feelings about both the trial process and the outcome.

The jury began to consider whether a grade drop was appropriate and, if so, how much of one. To answer this we needed to decide whether this act constituted plagiarism. After reading the faculty statement on plagiarism it was generally felt that Elaine's act did fall under that aegis.

In light of this the jury began to discuss whether a .7 or 1.0 change in course grade was appropriate. The fact that the jury felt this was an act of plagiarism led to the
severity of the suggested grade change. Jurors were careful to draw distinctions between this act and copying a test, but still felt that it was quite severe. It seemed to many that Elaine had blatantly misrepresented another's work as her own. Jurors were also careful not to seek to address the issues surrounding dishonesty which had been raised earlier. After a long discussion the jury was able to reach consensus that the severity of any act of plagiarism represented a serious breach of the Honor Code and consensed on the following,

The jury suggests that Elaine's final grade in the course be lowered by 1.0.

Presentation of Resolutions

The jury explained the reasons already outlined. Elaine, Kramer, and Professor Newman seemed to accept the resolutions though all felt that a 1.0 grade change was overly severe. Professor Newman said she would have to "reflect hard" on whether or not to change the grade.

The mood changed abruptly when the chair told Elaine and Kramer that he did not feel they had been completely honest during the proceedings. It was clearly pointed out that these were personal feelings and had not been reflected in the resolutions. Kramer did not feel that this was true and felt that this was a very unfair characterization. Elaine said that they may not have been as forthcoming as possible, but did not feel that they had been dishonest. Prof. Newman did not comment. At this point the first presentation of resolutions came to a close.

Kramer contacted the Chair a few days later and asked that the jury reconvene. This was done and was treated as a continuance of the presentation of resolutions.

Kramer began the new session by saying that he disagreed with the assertion that lying was not part of the resolutions. His belief was that the jury seemed to be saying that the copying was conscious whereas both he and Elaine had said that it wasn't. Prof. Newman was also worried because of the apparent discrepancies with the Tony abstract which seemed similar.

The jurors spoke to these concerns, mentioning that the Tony abstract had been different in several ways. The jury felt that this act was conscious unlike the Tony precedent. In this case the problems were lengthy and the answers identical.

All of the parties then spoke about the grade change, reasons for mentioning the perceived dishonesty, how everyone felt on that issue now, and gave a more in depth explanation of the jury's thoughts. Kramer in particular, but also Prof. Newman and Elaine did not seem completely satisfied. However, since there did not seem to be more to be said on either side the session ended.

The parties left and the jury reached final consensus.

Possible questions for community. How do you feel about using community service as an educating resolution? Is it better or worse than changing a grade, or does it depend on the person you are dealing with?