Honor Council Abstract
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LOLA
(withheld for one year)

SUMMARY

Professor Barry confronted Lola for plagiarizing a paper in an Art in Religion class. Lola, a second semester Bryn Mawr senior, spoke to the chairperson of Honor Council. After speaking to Professor Barry, the chairperson met with Honor Council. Because of the suspicion of academic dishonesty, Honor Council reached consensus that a trial should be held.

FACT-FINDING

The trial began with a moment of silence. After the chairperson explained trial procedure, Professor Barry began with his account.

The assignment, to review a work of art, had been given about two months before the paper was due and was worth about 20% of the final grade. Students were to react to the art in a personal way. The professor had handed out a sample review and had given detailed instructions on how to cite the sources students would be using. Lola did not hand in the paper on time. Professor Barry received the paper three weeks late and decided to grade it with the next batch of papers he was grading. As soon as he began reading, he began to ask himself, “what is the source of this?” Finding a great deal of technical language as he got further into the paper, he went and looked up the artwork reviewed. He found that the paper closely paralleled a published commentary on the work of art. Professor Barry felt that Lola’s paper was “a cut-and-paste reworking of the material,” but it was a “well-crafted” one.

Professor Barry confronted Lola and asked her to speak to a member of Honor Council.

Lola then gave her account. She began by saying “There’s little I can say in my own defense.” She had read the commentary which accompanied the reproduction of the piece. She said she had hoped to use this as a starting point for her paper, for she felt she did not have a good sense for art. She explained that she was having some
personal problems and that she was having trouble turning things in on time in all her classes. “I just got into a panic and turned it in as it was.” She said that this was all she had to say.

The jury began to ask clarifying questions. A juror asked if Lola had gotten an extension on the paper. She had not. Another juror asked if she had thought the paper was plagiarized when she handed it in. Lola answered that she did not believe she would have handed it in if she had thought it was plagiarized, but she also “wasn’t surprised” at being confronted about it. When asked how she had researched the paper, Lola said that she had taken notes as she read the review, and only had those notes in front of her as she wrote. She had not always differentiated in her notes between direct quotations and paraphrases because she felt she "knew" which was which, besides no one else would see her notes. A juror asked why she had turned in a questionable paper, and Lola said that she had been desperate to get something in to the professor, no matter how poorly written. Prof. Barry responded that the paper was not poorly written and repeated that it was "well-crafted". With that the fact finding portion of the trial ended.

**Jury Deliberation:**

The jury compared the paper to a copy of the review which Professor Barry had given them, and found that large sections of Lola’s paper closely paralleled it. She had not lifted large sections of the paper directly, but the tone, specific word use, and structure of the papers were nearly identical.

The jury quickly reached consensus on the following statement of violation:

Lola’s use of another person’s ideas, words, and structure without citation constitutes plagiarism and thus violates the Honor Code.

**Circumstantial:**

After a moment of silence, the chairperson read the statement of violation to Prof. Barry and Lola. Because neither of them wanted to respond, the jury began asking circumstantial questions.

One juror asked Lola when she had written the paper. Lola explained that she had begun to write the paper before the due date, but had been “kinda racing with the clock.” After the mid-semester
break, she continued writing, but soon became unable to distinguish between what was her own writing and what was not. She worked on the paper several times over the next week. She had considered talking to Prof. Barry about the difficulties she was having in the class, but she was afraid of admitting that she needed help. She was also afraid to approach Prof. Barry, whom she found intimidating. She had also been having personal problems which seemed to make things more difficult.

Prof. Barry explained his extension policy, which he described as a “liberal grace period,” and then went on to describe Lola’s standing in the class in general. He had not seen her for most of the past month, and when he received her paper, he was surprised to realize that she was still in the class. She had attended less than half of the classes where he had taken attendance. Prof. Barry remarked that according to college policy, he could fail her on attendance alone (more than two unexcused absences is grounds for being dropped from a course). Lola had also failed both exams in the class. When he confronted her about the paper, she seemed upset and distressed but not shocked. Professor Barry seemed puzzled by the whole matter.

Lola said that the only thing she could think of that Prof. Barry might want to speak to her about would be the paper, but she reiterated that when she had turned the paper in, she had not thought it was plagiarized. She had been embarrassed to go speak to him earlier because of her poor attendance record. She also made it clear that she had learned proper citation technique, but she thought that the citation required for this paper was different. The opening paragraph of the paper was a direct quotation and in quotation marks, but because she did not think she knew how to cite the quotation she had not cited it at all, as she thought that putting it in quotes was enough.

A juror asked Lola how much of the paper she thought was plagiarized. Lola said that the background history was paraphrased and should have been footnoted, while some material was “what I would consider flat-out plagiarism.” (The paper was about 60-80% high-lighted. The high-lighted portions were those that appeared to be plagiarized).

The chairperson asked Lola if she had any final comments or any resolutions to suggest. Lola said that she realized the “seriousness” of the plagiarism, but “my concern now is graduating, so I would not like to see this result in immediate failure of the class.” She emphasized that “this paper is shit” and she did not want to re-write it “because I cannot do it justice.” However, Lola hoped
that with a lot of hard work on her part, she would be able to pass the class with a 1.0, despite Professor Barry's comment that he thought it was a "mathematical impossibility" for her to pass. She realized that it wasn't fair to other students to pass the class only by virtue of a special arrangement with the professor, but was concerned by the prospect of not graduating. When asked if she thought her plagiarism had any ramifications beyond this one course, she did not seem to understand the question, even after it was rephrased and repeated with the mention of the effects of plagiarism on the integrity of the Haverford community and the larger academic community.

Lola ended with the statement that she had not had any intention of "pulling something over on" the professor. A final question addressed her plans for next year. She said that she was job-hunting.

After a moment of silence, Lola and the professor left and the circumstantial portion of the trial came to a close.

**Jury Deliberation:**

The discussion began with a juror saying he was "appalled." He felt that Lola should be worried about staying in the college, not about passing the course. Other jurors agreed, adding that they were shocked that Lola, a senior, did not recognize that this was plagiarism, and she did not seem to understand the severity of her actions. A juror emphasized her discomfort with Lola's distinction between paraphrasing without citation and "really plagiarizing."

A juror mentioned that failing the class seemed a given, because 1) Lola would have failed the class anyway, and 2) just failing the paper was insufficient because if she had never written it she would have failed the assignment by default. Besides, it was not fair to other students in the class that she should pass with dishonest work and perhaps receive the same grade as someone who had done honest work.

On the other hand, several jurors were concerned about Lola's circumstances, especially her personal problems and her status as a second semester senior who had invested a great deal of time, money and work in Bryn Mawr. Others felt strongly that no matter what the circumstances or the intent (or lack thereof), plagiarism is stealing and affects the larger academic community. Consideration of Lola's status as a second semester senior was controversial; some jurors felt that this made her violation more serious, while others were concerned that it made the prospect of separation more serious.
The issue of intent came up again, with a great deal of disagreement on the effects of the 3-4 weeks during which Lola wrote the paper. Did the length of time make the distinctions between her ideas and the reviewer’s fuzzier, or did the time she spent in writing the paper make the plagiarism even more egregious?

The jury decided it could not fully determine her intent, and it returned to consideration of failing the paper and the class. Realizing that they needed to address the three goals of resolutions (education, repairing the breach of trust, and accountability), the jury agreed that Lola should fail the paper and turned to a discussion of failing the class. Some jurors objected, saying that failing the class would eliminate the option of graduating on time, as well as perhaps casting suspicion on Lola’s other work. Another juror responded that plagiarism is a direct breach of the purpose and standards of the academic community. Thus, failure of the class did not render any more significance to Lola’s plagiarism than was necessary. This discussion resulted in agreement that Lola should fail the paper and the class. Due to concerns regarding her status as a Bryn Mawr student at Haverford who had never signed the Honor Pledge and who might well have never seen an abstract at either Haverford or Bryn Mawr, the jury also agreed to distribute the abstract of the trial on both campuses.

A juror suggested that Lola should write a letter to the community. Everyone agreed that this was a good idea, but the jury was greatly divided as to whether or not the letter should be mandated or recommended. Jurors who felt the letter should be recommended argued that mandated letters were unproductive, “too cliched,” and hypocritical. These jurors felt that no one can mandate communication. They felt a mandated letter only says what the student feels a jury or the community wants to hear. On the other hand, some jurors felt strongly that the letter was too important as a form of communication and education to run the risk of its not being written. They felt a suggested letter would be an unwanted letter. At this point only two jurors remained firm in their opposition to mandating the letter. The jury reached consensus that Lola should write a letter to the community with unspecified content, to be published in the Bi-College News. Two jurors stood outside of this consensus.

Then began a lengthy discussion of separation. One juror felt that separation would give Lola “much needed time away.” Another juror felt that it was not appropriate for Lola to leave with a Bryn Mawr degree at this point, and a different juror added to this that separation would repair the breach of trust between Lola and the
faculty as well as Lola and the students. Separation would also serve to address the issue of accountability and would help Lola realize how serious her plagiarism was. In this respect, one juror felt that "separation is almost a requirement." Separation would also drive home the point that stress is no excuse for plagiarism, and that one should not sacrifice one's integrity or that of the college in response to pressure. While jurors recognized that separation might be devastating to Lola, some maintained that it also might be beneficial.

Several jurors were unconvinced of Lola's intent to plagiarize, although they agreed that she had indeed plagiarized the paper. One juror felt frustrated that separation seemed to be the only possibility and she feared that it would be devastating to Lola. However, the option that Lola return after the summer away did not address the jury's concerns.

The conversation began to focus on the logistics of separation. Should separation be immediate or at the end of the semester? Should Lola be able to finish her other work, and if separation were immediate, would it unfairly penalize her other work? Losing that credit would be frustrating and punitive. Some practical facts were considered: there were only a few weeks left in the semester, and the appeals process might well run into Finals week. This seemed to make immediate separation pointless. However, only taking one class upon her return might not re-integrate her into the community. This created the question of whether or not Lola should take a full load upon her return. When she entered Bryn Mawr, she had agreed to take 32 courses. Some jurors felt that the jury could not change this contract, while others felt that Lola's plagiarism detracted from the community and thus it was fair to ask her to give something back to the community, if not through extra courses then perhaps by living on campus or doing community service. However, several jurors felt that they could not quantify community involvement or define what kind of involvement in the community was appropriate for Lola.

Someone suggested that she be given the option to withdraw from her other three courses. This led to a discussion of "all or nothing": either Lola should complete all her remaining courses this semester, or she could withdraw and leave immediately. If she did the latter, one juror felt that she would be saying "I wish to redo my classes with complete integrity." The jury hoped that this option would give her an active role in the process. One juror especially wanted to leave Lola this choice. He thought that Lola knew what was best for herself, and the jury should just try to find resolutions to benefit the community. The resolution to separate her should not
be meant to "mold her" to some ideal, but rather to benefit the community because it could not tolerate a second semester senior who plagiarizes. A juror agreed, saying she felt that she couldn't figure Lola out or understand what her needs were, and thus could only address community or faculty concerns. Other jurors considered this a "cop-out" while one juror disagreed with both sides, saying "we've been talking about Lola for the last two days...we need to address the community."

At this point, several jurors voiced their concerns that the jury was losing sight of Lola the person. Separation would probably be a terrible shock to her because she still seemed to be hoping to pass the class. The jury needed to admit that separation is indeed somewhat punitive, albeit beneficial to the community. With this, the jury reached consensus on separation and on the "all or nothing" option.

The jury discussed a few other options, for example a pamphlet on plagiarism, participation in the HCO program, community education on plagiarism, or a reaffirmation of Lola's commitment to the Honor Code. However, none of these seemed to address the source of Lola's problems, and as they began to look more and more like "busy-work," the jury rejected them. However, several people wanted to verbally recommend that Lola re-read the Honor Code, and the jury agreed that this would be fine. The jury also agreed that it would be acceptable if individual jurors suggested the content of the letter.

Before the jury reached consensus on the tentative resolutions, jurors discussed the seriousness of separation. A juror said "it is serious, but so was her offense." The jury's response had to be serious. Another juror commented, "separation is going to hit her--it's a scary term--it's scary for me to agree to it, but I'm still convinced this is the right resolution." Many other jurors agreed. Someone also commented on how important it was to represent the faculty's views and needs as well as those of students.

Jurors were also concerned about losing sight of the individual. "I hope we're not sacrificing her to the community," one person said. Someone responded that her hope was to strike a balance between the individual and the community.

The jury then reached consensus on the following tentative resolutions:

1) The jury recommends that Lola fail the paper and the course.
2) Lola will be separated from the community for one semester.

- Her separation will begin at the end of this semester. However, Lola has the option to withdraw immediately from her remaining courses.

- Any course(s) required for her graduation must be taken in the bi-college community.

3) Lola will write a letter to the bi-college community. Because she is a Bryn Mawr student, the letter will be published in the Bi-College News and attached to the abstract which will be distributed on both campuses. (One juror stood outside of consensus with regard to this resolution).

After a moment of silence, the jury adjourned to rest and reflect for one to two days. During this time the tentative resolutions were presented to Prof. Barry and Lola.

Presentation of the Resolutions:

Before Prof. Barry and Lola rejoined the jury, the jury reconfirmed their tentative consensus on all resolutions (with two jurors standing outside of consensus on resolution 3).

Prof. Barry, Lola, and Lola’s support person (who was now present for the first time) rejoined the jury. The chairperson read the resolutions and asked if they had any questions. Lola asked, "did you realize the full implications [of failing the class] for a second semester senior?" Jurors assured her that they did, and explained their reasoning behind the resolution.

Each juror spoke about their personal reasons behind the resolutions emphasizing both their sympathy with her and the need to do what was right for the community.

After jurors had explained their thoughts on the resolutions, Prof. Barry said that he was feeling guilty that he had not acted earlier after Lola’s long series of absences. He expressed a sense of not being able to understand why this had happened, and he wished he could.

The chair asked if Lola had any comments. Lola said, “I think
it's an incredibly harsh set of resolutions. I made a mistake, and a really big mistake at that, and I'm the first to acknowledge that.” She felt though that she had been dealing with the situation responsibly and maturely “by coming forth and admitting I made a mistake. I have no problems writing an apology to the bi-college community.” She also felt that jurors were being inconsistent in acknowledging that they couldn’t get inside her mind and then turning around and saying that a semester away would be “good for her.” She said that when she returned, she would be “very angry and bitter...This isn’t what the Code is all about. It shouldn’t embitter any member of the community.” She later said “If I were a freshman or sophomore, this would make sense”, but she did not understand how her “three and a half years of honesty and work [could] be wiped out by one big mistake...I just don’t understand why there isn’t some way to redeem myself without putting graduation in jeopardy.” She suggested that she fail the paper, write the letter, and do extra work to get credit for the course. Jurors tried again to explain that they did not think it would be fair to other members of her class.

The chairperson explained the appeals process, and after a moment of silence, Lola, her support person, and Professor Barry left the room.

The jury quickly reached final consensus on the resolutions, and the trial process ended.

Administrative Review:

The Dean and President upheld the resolutions, only slightly altering the wording.

Bryn Mawr upheld the jury's decision to separate Lola but did not require Lola to return to the bi-college community in order to complete her final credit. The other resolutions were upheld.