Madonna
Honor Council Abstract Fall 1996

Introduction:
Madonna, a student in the Professor Formerly-Known-As-Prince's Physics class, contacted an Honor Council member concerning her conduct on a recent exam. Honor Council met and reached consensus on a suspicion of violation.

Fact Finding:
The Professor Formerly-Known-As-Prince spoke first and described what he perceived to have taken place. A group of students from the class had started the exam early and were in a different room. After starting the remainder of the class, he went to the library to clear some carrels for a student he knew would be arriving late. While the professor was roaming the building, Madonna decided to move to the library. Ten minutes later, the professor came to the library to check on Madonna. The professor saw a magazine in the carrel with Madonna and said, "This shouldn't be here." When she picked up the magazine, she found what appeared to be a "cheat sheet" inside. Madonna immediately claimed that it wasn't hers and must have been there before the exam started. The professor left with the sheet and let Madonna finish the exam. Five minutes later, Madonna sought out the professor and told him that the sheet was hers, but she was simply studying before the exam. The Professor Formerly-Known-As-Prince acknowledged Madonna, and told her to finish the test. When Madonna handed in the exam, the professor asked her to wait and speak further about the cheat sheet. In this discussion, Madonna came forward with her intent to cheat, but said she was glad the professor found the notes. Madonna told the professor that although she had the notes for ten minutes, she did not use them. After comparing Madonna's test with the cheat sheet, the professor decided that it was highly unlikely that Madonna had cheated. The professor suggested that Madonna contact an Honor Council member.

Madonna spoke next, and confirmed everything that the professor had said. She added that the day before the test, she had decided that she wasn't adequately prepared, and had prepared a "cheat-sheet." Once the exam had started, she found that the auditorium was too loud and distracting, and that moving to the library would give her an opportunity to cheat. Upon her arrival at the library, she asked the librarian about the professor's location, and the librarian went to find the professor. She placed the notes in the magazine and began the test. She reiterated that she was glad the professor found the notes, and that she hadn't cheated. Because she knew she hadn't cheated, she had no problem signing the Honor Code Pledge at the end of the exam.

The jury proceeded to ask clarifying questions about the order of events and how the professor found the notes. Once the jury was confident about what took place, Madonna and the professor left.

Jury Deliberations:
The jury began by listing any potential Honor Code violations. These included: cheating, intent to cheat, increasing the potential to cheat by going to the library, lying to the professor, and signing the honor code pledge on the exam. The jury quickly eliminated cheating from the list because it was clear that she had not cheated. Also, because she hadn't cheated, and was accepting responsibility for her actions, Madonna had not violated the Honor Code by signing the pledge. The jury then began discussing whether intent to cheat was a violation of the code. Many jurors were unsure whether or not intent constituted a violation. The jury also discussed the issues of Madonna's lying to the professor and her increasing the potential to cheat. Unable to reach consensus, the jury broke for the night.

The next night, the jury was saddened to learn that one of the jurors, Meatloaf, had spontaneously combusted and would not be able to rejoin the trial. After thinking about the issues for a day, the jury agreed that Madonna's intent to cheat did not constitute a violation. The jury also felt that increasing her potential to cheat did not place her in violation of the code. Most jurors, however, were bothered by one or both of Madonna's lies to the professor. After further
discussion, the jury felt that Madonna's initial denial of ownership of the notes was an understandable gut reaction. However, the jury was troubled because she sought out the Professor Formerly-Known-As-Prince, but lied to explain the purpose of the notes. Some jurors felt that she was in violation of the portion of the code which reads, "As students we are responsible for proper conduct and integrity in all of our scholastic work." The jury reached consensus on the following statement of violation, before breaking for the evening:

The jury feels that while it is clear to the parties involved that Madonna did not cheat, Madonna violated the Code by failing to conduct herself properly during the exam.

Circumstantial:

Upon reconvening, the jury was once again distressed to find that another juror, Tiffany, was forced to leave the trial due to a Shuffleboard match. Madonna returned (the Professor Formerly-Known-As-Prince did not attend this phase of the trial) and the statement of violation was read to her. She accepted it, and was asked to explain her situation at the time of the exam. Madonna explained that she was dealing both with personal issues on campus and family problems. She was then asked to suggest resolutions. Madonna suggested that she could write a letter to the community, fail the exam, and do an out of class project with the professor. The trial then broke for the night.

Deliberation on the Resolutions:

After reconvening, some of the jurors initially felt that no resolutions were necessary because Madonna had held herself accountable for her actions, repaired the breach of trust with the professor, and learned from the entire experience. Others, however, felt that she should repair the breach of trust with the community. Everyone felt that because she did not cheat on the exam, her exam grade should stand. Taking into account Madonna's suggestions:

The jury decided that Madonna will write a letter to the community addressing her actions both before and during the exam and what she has learned from this process.

The jury also recommended that Madonna have a conversation with the Professor Formerly-Known-As-Prince regarding her best course of action for the remainder of the semester. The jury then broke for 24 hours to reflect on the resolutions.

Presentation of Resolutions:

When the jury reconvened, the resolutions were presented to Madonna. She accepted them and thanked the jury for their time and effort. After a moment of silence, the trial ended.

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you agree with the resolutions? Do you feel that Madonna should have been found in violation of the Code?

2. Do you think the intent to cheat constitutes a violation of the Honor Code?

3. Do you agree with the interpretation of "proper conduct" that led to the statement of violation?

If you have any questions or comments regarding this or any other Honor Council abstract, please contact the Honor Council chair. In addition, if you would like to talk to a juror from this case, contact the chair.