Abstract discussions will be held on Tuesday, May 7, 2013 and Thursday, May 9, 2013 at 7:30 PM in Ryan Gym.

N’Sync: An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released Spring 2013

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Key:
Justin Timberlake: student
JC Chazez: professor
Boy Bands 200: academic course

Summary: This case involved an incident of plagiarism by Justin Timberlake in Professor JC Chazez’s course, Boy Bands 200. When working on a course assignment, Justin Timberlake accidentally plagiarized from one of the course materials. When this came to Professor Chazez’s attention, there was an initial confrontation between the two parties and the case was brought to Honor Council for full restoration of trust on the community level. While the incident of plagiarism was relatively minor, the case remains important because of the significance plagiarism holds in an academic community. This case also brought forth discussion of plagiarism in light of different cultural norms because of Justin Timberlake’s status as an international student.

Fact Finding: Justin Timberlake began by explaining that he had finished homework for a different class very late at night, and then started his assigned reading response for Boy Bands 200. He looked up several opinions of the piece online and of other similar pieces that the class was previously assigned. Justin took notes and prepared to write his reflection. He looked through his notes and found a phrase he had jotted down to be particularly insightful and appropriate. He incorporated the phrase into his response, which he proceeded to submit later that night.

The next day, Professor Chazez wrote up part of Justin’s writing and disseminated it to the class as an example. In that moment, Justin realized that one of the sentences he had written was not in fact his own work. He felt guilty and told a number of his classmates that the sentence was not student written, but was initially too embarrassed to tell Professor Chazez. Other students in the course then told
Professor Chazez that the sentence was plagiarized.

After hearing that a sentence of Justin’s work was plagiarized, Professor Chazez emailed Justin to meet and discuss his work. Justin met with Professor Chazez and explained what happened, and agreed to bring himself to Honor Council.

Before meeting with Justin, Professor Chazez looked up what other courses Justin was taking on Moodle, and saw that Justin was enrolled in the Academic Integrity Tutorial (as all students are). Out of curiosity, he took the tutorial and found it very insightful. During Professor Chazez’s meeting with Justin, he asked him to take the Academic Integrity Tutorial. Justin did so prior to the beginning of the trial, and said that he found it helpful. Professor Chazez explained to the jury that he was impressed by the comprehensiveness of the tutorial and feels that it should be required of all students. He said that Justin was in some ways unlucky that he was not required to take the tutorial prior to the incident.

Professor Chazez explained that he periodically assigns short writing reflections to the class, which are graded on completion, receiving either full or no credit. These assignments are meant to provide room for thought, and do not require outside research. Professor Chazez explained that because he does not see these as serious assignments, he would be surprised if the gravity of the assignment put students under the kind of pressure associated with making poor decisions. Despite his sympathy for Justin that it can be difficult to know how to cite a quote taken from the book jacket, Professor Chazez did view the violation as plagiarism, a serious infraction of the Honor Code. Professor Chazez relayed to the jury that he was not so concerned with the assignment itself, but rather with the greater picture of how to deal with plagiarism.

Jurors asked about Justin’s background with plagiarism education. Justin explained that his background mostly stemmed from his freshman writing seminar and working with writing partners, though plagiarism had not been covered in a comprehensive fashion. Jurors also inquired about the purpose of Justin conducting research, to which he responded that he was looking up some more background context because he did not feel he had a full understanding of the text. Professor Chazez clarified that most students do not do research for this assignment, though it was not specifically prohibited.

**Jury Deliberation/Statement of Violation:** After a very short period of deliberation, the jury came to the following statement of violation:

*Justin violated the Honor Code by representing another’s work as his own in failing to cite. (All jurors consented.)*

**Circumstantial Portion:** Justin explained what he felt the circumstances surrounding the violation were, namely that he was tired and he was working on the assignment very late at night. A juror asked Justin to elaborate on what his experiences with plagiarism had been in the past. Justin then replied that he
came close to violating the Honor Code once before at a Bryn Mawr College Lip Synching class when another student asked him for help on a take-home midterm, which he declined to help on.

The juror then clarified that they meant to ask what Justin’s experience with plagiarism education was. After some discussion it became apparent that Justin’s experience with plagiarism education had taken place during Customs, the Academic Integrity Tutorial, his Writing Seminar, and in working with a Writing Center writing partner. However, plagiarism was not thoroughly discussed in any of these experiences. Another juror then asked Justin about the extent to which cultural differences play a role in his perception of plagiarism. (Justin attended primary and secondary school outside of the USA.) Justin explained that plagiarism is a non-issue in the country that he is from, and that the education system is structured such that it is common for academics to borrow each other’s work without permission. Another juror asked about Justin’s note-taking method, and asked Justin to explain why it was not effective in preventing plagiarism. Justin showed the jurors how he usually underlines print sources and takes notes on online research, identifying different sources with different markings. Justin said that he always used this method of taking notes, even prior to enrolling at Haverford. In this particular incident, Justin had trouble reading his markings and figuring out what was his own work, and what was derived from another source. Since the phrase he copied so clearly encompassed what he was thinking, he figured it had been his own writing.

**Jury Deliberations and Tentative Resolutions:** The jury then discussed tentative resolutions. Jurors suggested meetings at the Office of Academic Resources to discuss time management and learning styles, and a meeting with a faculty tutor at the Writing Center. A concern was raised about international students not having a strong enough introduction to plagiarism education on campus given the role cultural differences played in the trial. Suggestions to work with Honor Council, the Committee on Plagiarism Education, and the International Student Association on this issue were made. The jury liked the idea of Justin being involved in helping improve plagiarism education on campus, though there were concerns that this was more work than it was fair to dictate in resolutions for an Honor Code violation that the jury considered to be relatively minor. The jury decided that a fair middle ground would be to have Justin write an anonymous letter to the Committee on Plagiarism Education about his experience as an international student with plagiarism education, which the committee could then use to better inform their development in international student-specific programming. If Justin wished to get more involved, he would have the option to do so, but it would not be mandated by the trial resolutions. Once the jury felt that the issues of restoration and education were covered, it moved on to accountability. The jury quickly agreed to recommend that Justin receive a 0.0 on the assignment, but that he not be separated from the community and that the incident not be reported to other institutions of higher education. From this discussion the jury formulated the below resolutions:

1. *The jury recommends that Justin receive a 0.0 on the assignment. (All jurors*
consented, no jurors stood outside.)
2. Justin will meet with a staff member of the Office of Academic Resources before the end of the fall semester and at the beginning of the spring semester to work on time management and note-taking skills. (All jurors consented, no jurors stood outside.)
3. Justin will meet with a faculty member of the Writing Center before the end of the fall semester and at the beginning of the spring semester to discuss strategies for avoiding plagiarism. (All jurors consented, no jurors stood outside.)
4. Justin will write an anonymous letter of advice to international students to be given to the Committee on Plagiarism Education. (All jurors consented, no jurors stood outside.)
5. The jury does not recommend that this incident be reported to other institutions of higher education. (All jurors consented, no jurors stood outside.)
6. Justin will not be separated from the community. (All jurors consented, no jurors stood outside.)

All resolutions: All jurors consented, no jurors stood outside.

Finalizing Resolutions: One juror was absent from this portion of the trial, one Skyped in. The jury received Justin’s consent to move forward despite their absence. Professor Chazez did not attend this portion of the trial, but emailed the trial chair responding positively to all the resolutions. Justin also felt that all of the tentative resolutions were fair. After Justin left, the jury consented to finalize the resolutions:

1. The jury recommends that Justin receive a 0.0 on the assignment. (All present jurors consented, no present jurors stood outside.)
2. Justin will meet with a staff member of the Office of Academic Resources before the end of the fall semester and at the beginning of the spring semester to work on time management and note-taking skills. (All present jurors consented, no present jurors stood outside.)
3. Justin will meet with a faculty member of the Writing Center before the end of the fall semester and at the beginning of the spring semester to discuss strategies for avoiding plagiarism. (All present jurors consented, no present jurors stood outside.)
4. Justin will write an anonymous letter of advice to international students to be given to the Committee on Plagiarism Education. (All present jurors consented, no present jurors stood outside.)
5. The jury does not recommend that this incident be reported to other institutions of higher
education. (All present jurors consented, no present jurors stood outside.)

6. Justin will not be separated from the community. (All present jurors consented, no present jurors stood outside.)

All resolutions: All present jurors consented, no present jurors stood outside.

Post-Trial: Justin followed up and completed resolutions 2 and 3 in a timely manner, but did not compete resolution 4 within a reasonable timeframe following the trial.

Discussion Questions:

1. How can Haverford better educate its students, particularly international students, in avoiding plagiarism?

2. What do you think prevents someone from coming forward about an academic violation of the Honor Code? Is it mainly embarrassment or are there other reasons? What would make it easier to come forward?

3. The resolutions refer Justin to several academic resources. How can students use these resources more effectively before unintentional plagiarism occurs?