Abstract discussion will be held the week of November 30, 2015.

Fringe:
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released Fall 2015

This abstract was not released in accordance to the timeline specified by the Students’ Association Constitution. The confronting party consented to the release of the abstract. The confronted party did not consent to the release of the abstract.

Key:
Astrid Farnsworth - Confronted party
Professor Walter Bishop - Confronting party
Pattern Detection 304 - Class

Summary/Pre-Trial:
[Professor Bishop] confronted [Astrid] about inadequate paraphrasing in a section of a paper she wrote for his [Pattern Detection 304] class. The jury of the resulting academic trial came to a statement of violation and developed resolutions that focused largely on education. Some issues that came up during the trial process included differences in the way the jury and the parties understood plagiarism and to what degree intentionality changes the nature of the violation.

Fact Finding:
Professor Bishop told the jury that after noticing an expression in quotations without a page number in Astrid’s paper, he looked it up and found that much of the introduction to the paper had been taken verbatim or nearly verbatim (without quotation marks) from various sources cited in the paper. Feeling that Astrid had inadequately paraphrased, Professor Bishop confronted her about the issue. Astrid was surprised when Professor Bishop emailed her asking to speak about her paper, but admitted when she looked over it with him that her paper was strikingly similar to sources she had referenced. She also seemed surprised that what she had done constituted plagiarism and was not paraphrasing.

Professor Bishop talked about the language in Astrid’s paper and how he had not been suspicious of plagiarism until he arrived at the aforementioned quote with no page number. Jurors asked about the extent of the plagiarism throughout the paper; Professor Bishop said that all of the suspected plagiarism was in the introduction, about 75% of which contained
plagiarized material. Astrid agreed with this estimate. Professor Bishop said that the passages in question contained both material taken verbatim without quotations from sources, as well as inadequate paraphrasing. Professor Bishop also said that the paper constituted 25% of the course grade, but that the introduction constituted only a small portion of the paper.

A juror pointed out that in the excerpts from Astrid’s paper that were provided to the jury, most of Astrid’s passages did not reference the source from which she was drawing. Professor Bishop said that his issue was not with citations, as Astrid did include them and they could be placed at the end of a paragraph if all material in that paragraph were from the same source. Another juror questioned two examples in which Astrid seemed to incorrectly cite a source within a source by attributing the words of the secondary source author to the primary source author. Professor Bishop agreed that this was an example of incorrect citing. However, he didn’t necessarily consider minor issues with citations to be matters of academic integrity, but rather something that he could resolve with a student.

Jury Deliberations/Statement of Violation:

A juror expressed that they would like to see a copy of the introduction in full in order to determine for certain what issues were present. The jury discussed whether it was appropriate for them to look at issues in the paper other than the inadequate paraphrasing which Professor Bishop had confronted Astrid about, and which he considered the only concern. The trial chair said that this was perfectly fine. The jury agreed, however, that the main issue at hand was Astrid’s inadequate paraphrasing, and that this constituted a violation of the Honor Code in itself. Therefore the jury chose to consent on a statement of violation and agreed to look more closely at the paper before Circumstantial Portion. The statement of violation was the following:

[Astrid] violated the Honor Code by plagiarizing a portion of her paper. (10 jurors consent)

Circumstantial Portion:

One juror was absent from this meeting and had been unreachable since Fact Finding, so from that point forward the jury operated with nine members. Both Astrid and Professor Bishop were present at the meeting. Between Fact Finding and Circumstantial, Professor Bishop had provided the jury with a copy of Astrid’s paper which they looked at before the meeting began.

During the meeting, Astrid explained her circumstances at the time of violation: she had four assignments due in the week of the paper, which was the last thing she had to turn in. Astrid wanted to turn in the paper on time as Professor Bishop had indicated to her that she did not have a valid reason for an extension and that there would be a grade deduction for handing the paper in late. She did not ask for extensions on her other assignments. As a result, she got very little sleep that week, including staying up all night before the paper was due. She said that while writing the paper, she hadn’t realized how close her words were to those of the authors she cited.
Astrid said that she thought the problems with her paper stemmed from sleep deprivation rather than from a lack of understanding of proper paraphrasing, especially since she had never had issues with paraphrasing before.

Juror questions then turned towards potential problems with citations in Astrid’s paper, including passages that lacked necessary in-text citations. Astrid and Professor Bishop said that they had not previously realized or identified this as another issue with the paper, though Professor Bishop now acknowledged that this was a separate but related problem. Astrid said that she thought that the problems with citations in her paper were mainly mistakes that she would not typically make, although she conceded that there was some lack of understanding on her part.

The trial chair asked both parties for their suggested resolutions. Astrid suggested that she rewrite the paper for a reduced grade, and that she meet with the OAR to help her get organized. She suggested that going to the Writing Center might be helpful as well. Professor Bishop also suggested that Astrid rewrite the paper for a reduced grade, and expressed support for Astrid’s ideas for getting academic support. Finally, he suggested that Astrid further educate herself on what constitutes plagiarism.

A juror asked Astrid and Professor Bishop about the state of their relationship. They responded that they hadn’t really spoken since their confrontation, but Professor Bishop said that he didn’t feel that any breach of trust remained between them and that he just wanted to get on with things. He said he felt bad for Astrid for being in this situation and that he might give more instruction on proper citation in the future.

A juror then asked Astrid how she hoped to restore herself to the community, to which she suggested that she write a letter to the community about time management. She also said that she could benefit from a refresher on plagiarism education. Professor Bishop asked the jury not to give Astrid too many resolutions to complete that semester because of how busy she was.

**Jury Deliberations Part 1:**

As discussion began, several jurors expressed that since only one section of the paper contained plagiarism, it would be unfair to recommend that Astrid receive a zero on the whole paper, but that the plagiarized portion did not merit any grade above a zero. One juror expressed that Professor Bishop did not seem to understand the extent to which Astrid had plagiarized, and other jurors agreed with this. The jury liked the suggestion that Astrid should rewrite the paper in order to revise the plagiarized passages. They felt that this could be a learning opportunity for Astrid, and that it could also be restorative for her to be given the opportunity to prove to herself and to Professor Bishop that she was capable of producing a paper free of errors in paraphrasing and citation. Contrary to Astrid’s and Professor Bishop’s suggestion, however, the jury did not feel that it would be fair for Astrid to earn credit for this revised introduction, given that plagiarism is a serious act of academic dishonesty, and that the plagiarism was extensive. Furthermore, since a student who performs poorly on a paper without committing plagiarism is
not usually given any opportunity to resubmit the paper for credit, the jury thought it would be unfair to afford such an opportunity to a student who plagiarized. One juror pointed out that Astrid might learn more from the rewrite if she were not focused on getting a good grade, since a focus on grades seemed to be a factor in the violation. Finally, the jury agreed that it could be beneficial for Astrid to go to the OAR during the following semester to talk about time management and proper citations in general.

**Jury Deliberations Part 2/Tentative Resolutions:**

The jury continued discussing resolutions aimed at education, including attending consultations with the OAR to discuss academic integrity and time management, retaking the Academic Integrity Tutorial, and reading Maud McLnerney’s essay “Plagiarism and How to Avoid It.” The jury also agreed that writing a letter to the community would help restore that breach of trust; however, some jurors felt that Astrid was not ready to write about time management as she had struggled so much with it. Instead, jurors felt that it could be educational and restorative for Astrid to write a letter about how her understanding of plagiarism had changed through this process.

Considering that the Honor Code stipulates that plagiarism normally results in separation from the community, the jury next discussed whether Astrid should be separated. One juror mentioned that Astrid’s violation was unintentional and another mentioned that separation would not give her any more time for reflection. The jury decided that separation would not be restorative or appropriate in this case.

The jury finally discussed whether or not this trial should be considered a disciplinary proceeding for the purpose of reporting to other institutions of higher learning. One juror said that they did not think reporting was appropriate considering that the plagiarism was unintentional and was confined to one section of the paper. Another juror disagreed, expressing that although the violation was unintentional, it was nevertheless very careless. Several other jurors then agreed that Astrid should be accountable for her actions, and one pointed out that at another institution such a matter would certainly be considered disciplinary. At the end of the discussion, the weight of the room was in favor of recommending to that the trial be considered a disciplinary proceeding for the purposes of reporting. The jury then consented on the following tentative resolutions:

1. **The jury recommends that [Astrid] receive a 0.0 on the [plagiarized portion] of this assignment.** (8 jurors consent, 2 stand outside in absentia)
2. **The jury recommends that [Astrid] rewrite the introduction, not for a grade, and submit it to [Professor Bishop].** (8 jurors consent, 2 stand outside in absentia)
3. **[Astrid] will meet with the OAR every other week for the [following] semester to discuss plagiarism education and time management. The jury encourages [Astrid] to continue these meetings for the [subsequent] semester if [Astrid] sees fit.** (8 jurors consent, 2 stand outside in...
4. [Astrid] will retake the Academic Integrity Tutorial by the beginning of the [following] semester. (8 jurors consent, 2 stand outside in absentia)

5. [Astrid] will read Maud McInerney's essay "Plagiarism and How to Avoid It" by the beginning of the [following] semester. (8 jurors consent, 2 stand outside in absentia)

6. [Astrid] will write a letter to the community to be released with the abstract reflecting on how her understanding of plagiarism has changed through this process. This should be completed by [date redacted]. (8 jurors consent, 2 stand outside in absentia)

7. The jury recommends that this trial be considered a disciplinary proceeding for the purpose of reporting to other institutions of higher learning. (8 jurors consent, 2 stand outside in absentia)

Resolutions as a whole: 8 jurors consent, 2 stand outside in absentia

**Finalizing Resolutions:**

When Professor Bishop received the tentative resolutions via email, he replied that he was very reluctant to enforce resolutions 1 and 2 together. In his opinion, requiring a student to do course work for no credit “seems overly punitive, and poor pedagogy.” He suggested that Astrid should either simply receive a zero or be asked to rewrite the plagiarized portion for a reduced grade, but not both. He also expressed reservations about reporting a case of unintentional plagiarism to graduate schools.

At the Finalizing Resolutions meeting, Astrid shared her concerns about the impact of the resolutions on her grade, as receiving a 0.0 on the plagiarized section would result in an overall 1.0 on a paper worth a quarter of her total course grade. Astrid also feared that reporting the matter to graduate schools would hinder her chance of matriculating into these schools since she thought that as an international student she was less likely to be accepted. Regarding the second resolution, Astrid felt that the paper was the biggest mistake of her life that rewriting it for no credit would remind her of the stress of the case, but would have no value to her academically. Regarding resolution 6 (the letter to the community), Astrid felt that issues of time management and self-care would be a more salient topic as she felt she had not learned much about plagiarism.

One juror noted that Astrid and Professor Bishop had originally suggested a rewrite and that doing so might help to further repair the relationship between them; Astrid responded that she did not think she would get anything out of rewriting if it was not for a grade and that trust had been restored between them after the Circumstantial meeting. Another juror expressed concern that Astrid was only concerned with her grade in possibly rewriting the introduction, and not with learning anything about plagiarism. In trying to understand Astrid’s concern about receiving a 0.0 on the plagiarized portion of the paper, another juror asked Astrid what grade she felt it was fair for her to receive instead. Astrid responded that she could not objectively answer the question.

When Astrid left, many jurors expressed concern with her focus on her grade and lack of
focus on learning from her experience. Some members of the jury were disappointed that Astrid did not seem to feel that she had done something morally wrong by plagiarizing, while others felt that the jury had no place in ascribing values for Astrid to follow. As part of this discussion, one juror suggested that Astrid should still receive a zero on the introduction and be asked to rewrite it for no grade, while another sympathized with Astrid’s concern about being accepted into graduate school as an international student. While a number of jurors still expressed that they were not sure if Astrid understood the moral severity of plagiarism, one juror also added that perhaps Professor Bishop did not either. Some jurors agreed with this, while others pointed out that perhaps Professor Bishop and Astrid placed more emphasis on intentionality when determining the severity of plagiarism. Many jurors were concerned that Professor Bishop and Astrid did not fully understand the reasoning behind the resolutions and were worried that Professor Bishop would not enforce resolutions 1 and 2 together. Furthermore, the jury felt that the educational and restorative value of resolution 2 (to rewrite the introduction not for a grade) would be lost since Astrid was resentful of it. Because of this, the jury decided to remove resolution 2 altogether. They still felt unsure that Professor Bishop would implement resolution 1 alone, and so decided to ask both Professor Bishop and Astrid to meet with two jurors after the trial to discuss why this resolution was important, and the reasoning behind it. Finally, the jury turned their discussion to Astrid’s comments regarding the letter to the community. They ultimately decided it would be best to allow Astrid to write about a topic of her choice rather than to limit her. The jury then consented to the following final resolutions:

1. **The jury recommends that Astrid receive a 0.0 on the plagiarized portion of this assignment** (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)
2. **[Astrid] will meet with the OAR every other week for the following semester to discuss plagiarism education and time management. The jury encourages [Astrid] to continue these meetings for the subsequent semester if [Astrid] sees fit.** (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)
3. **[Astrid] will retake the Academic Integrity Tutorial by the beginning of the following semester.** (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)
4. **[Astrid] will read Maud McInerney's essay "Plagiarism and How to Avoid It" by the beginning of the following semester.** (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)
5. **[Astrid] will write a letter to the community to be released with the abstract reflecting on this process and/or the violation. This should be completed by [date redacted].** (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)
6. **The jury recommends that this trial be considered a disciplinary proceeding for the purpose of reporting to other institutions of higher learning.** (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

**Post-Trial:**

The trial was not appealed. Astrid never responded to the jurors’ request to meet with her
to further discuss the resolutions, and Professor Bishop responded that he did not feel the need to meet with them, so this discussion did not take place.

Astrid’s Letter to the Community:

I didn’t go into this trial with a positive view on honor council and its proceedings, and that’s mainly due to my involvement with a previous trial (as a support person of sorts), and I really did want that to change but unfortunately it didn’t. In fact I am more certain that honor council needs to make some changes to the way in which they approach trials.

This was an academic trial and a huge point of contention for me was the fact that the professor’s (the confronting party) desires were ignored, and this became an aspect of discussion between the confronting party and I: that we were both very unhappy with the resolutions, and wasn’t helpful in restoration.

The resolutions by no means felt restorative to me, they felt punitive. They felt like the jury was out to punish rather than restore. One jury member (with reference to keeping one of the resolutions) stated that they personally wouldn’t feel comfortable with the removal of that resolution which I felt was a bit ridiculous because a jury member’s level of comfort shouldn’t play a role in it. (And the above statement is paraphrased because I don’t remember the exact statement).

The trial wasn’t all-negative. The whole incident did make me aware of certain things that I was doing wrong: namely over-working myself and not paying heed to self-care. Both of which I have been a lot more stringent about since then, which has helped me a lot. It’s also made me pay attention to my citations a lot more than I used to. I can talk about how I became a more responsible person and more aware of what I need to do to stay mentally healthy because of this but I don’t think that is as important as saying that I think that honor council needs to make some change.

Discussion Questions:

1. How should juries approach a situation where they feel that a professor and a student are both in agreement about not implementing one or more resolutions?
2. What role, if any, should juries have in educating faculty about what constitutes proper academic conduct?
3. To what extent do juries have the right to seek to change a confronted (or confronting) party’s values around academic integrity?
4. To what extent can an individual juror’s feelings or thoughts be considered a valid representation of the community’s?