Abstract discussion will be held on Wed 3/16 at 7pm in the Hurford Center (Stokes 102).

Boyhood:
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released Spring 2016

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 consented to the release of the abstract.

Key:
Confronted Party: Mason
Confronting Party: Professor Turlington
Student copied from: Samantha
Course: Photography 101

Summary:

The case went to trial the semester after Honor Council consented to sending the case to trial. During the trial, [Mason] was open about the fact that he had copied from another student’s quiz and talked with the jury for a significant time about some severe mental health issues he had been dealing with. Both Mason and Professor [Turlington] were engaged and forthcoming, and seemed very much on the same page with each other. The resolutions focused especially on restoration and education. One resolution was directed at education not just for Mason, but for the rest of the Haverford community, in that the jury encourages PAFs and HCOs to use this abstract to discuss the intersection of mental health and the Honor Code.

Pre-Trial:

Honor Council received statements from both parties and sent the case to trial late in the previous semester. During the last few weeks of the semester, it was not possible to run the trial, and during the summer Mason dealt with some mental health concerns that made running a summer trial unfeasible. After the beginning of the next semester, the Co-Chairs of Honor Council met with Mason to discuss proceeding with the trial, which he seemed ready to do.
Fact Finding:

Both parties were present at this meeting. Mason spoke briefly, discussing how he felt very guilty when confronted and immediately admitted to having copied. He emphasized that he had wanted to be very open and forthcoming and that he really respected Professor Turlington.

Professor Turlington then explained that when grading, he had noticed two quizzes (separated by only one other in his grading stack) with the same answer, which contained a mistake that no one else in the class had made. He then contacted both students separately and asked to meet. He met with the other student, Samantha, first and said that she had seemed very upset when he showed her the quizzes. He then spoke with Mason in his office, and he straight away admitted to having copied part of the quiz from Samantha.

Professor Turlington explained that the assignment was one of ten quizzes for the term, with each quiz only counting for a very small percentage of the overall grade. Professor Turlington had refrained from giving Mason a grade in the course last semester, leaving Mason with an incomplete. One juror asked what Mason was thinking when he decided to copy an answer, to which he responded that he was feeling very “cloudy” at the time and panicked, making a decision he later regretted.

In terms of Samantha’s involvement, Mason said that she had had no part in the violation and that he did not really know her nor had spoken with her since the violation. Professor Turlington said that he had simply told Samantha that her part in the issue was over after speaking with Mason.

A juror also asked about how Professor Turlington felt about Mason taking later quizzes after knowing he had cheated on one. He explained that he had not been worried, and Mason said that the two had maintained a professional relationship since the violation.

Jury Deliberations/Statement of Violation:

After both parties left, the jury discussed whether they felt a violation had occurred. The jury seemed to unanimously feel that a violation had taken place and that Professor Turlington and Mason were on the same page about this. They then moved to discuss what the violation was, and whether they believed Mason’s claim that the copying was limited to one or two questions on the assignment in question. After briefly looking at copies of the two students’ quizzes, and discussing that he seemed very honest and had nothing to gain, the jury felt comfortable believing what Mason had said.

In terms of the nature of the violation, one juror suggested that it was copying, but questioned whether it was also plagiarism. This idea felt ‘wrong’ to a lot of people, and it was instead suggested that the copying was a form of non-consensual collaboration. The jury then drafted and consented on the following statement of violation:

[Mason] violated the Honor Code by copying off another student’s quiz. (10 jurors consent)
**Circumstantial Portion:**

Professor Turlington was not present at the meeting, but had sent his thoughts ahead of time via email. The meeting began with Mason explaining that he had gone through some serious mental health issues, which had contributed significantly to his violation. He said that near the end of the semester he had gone into a downward spiral of depression. This had made the rest of his semester incredibly difficult, and when he went home for the summer, his parents immediately noticed. During the summer he was hospitalized and began seeing a therapist and started taking antidepressants. He explained that he felt much better this semester and was continuing his treatment.

Discussing the violation specifically, Mason explained that not long before he took the quiz, he had undergone a “traumatic event” that had been a catalyst for the depression he was experiencing. He did not want to talk about the nature of this event, but emphasized that while it had contributed to what he did, it wasn’t an excuse, and he still knew what he did was wrong. He said that because of his depression, he had not been able to focus on classes and had gone to [Photography] unprepared to take the quiz.

Mason explained that during the previous semester, he had made one appointment at CAPS but had decided not to go. His mother is a school counsellor, and as a result Mason feels very uncomfortable speaking with school psychologists about mental health issues.

He also said that he had felt instantly guilty when walking out of the class, and that he had even known while copying that it was wrong, but that he had simply panicked in that moment. He hadn’t said anything to Professor Turlington right away because he had been incredibly terrified. He told the jury that had he not been confronted, he would have turned himself in out of guilt.

The discussion then turned largely toward resources and possible future situations of academic stress. When asked if he had a support system in place at Haverford, he said that he was going home every weekend for psychological treatment, that his parents were very supportive, and that he had a few friends on campus who knew varying amounts about his depression. Mason said he would be comfortable reaching out to his dean or his professors if a similar incident occurred, and that he generally tries to maintain good relationships with his professors. He added that his relationship with Professor Turlington was very much intact.

A juror asked Mason to expand on the relationship between his depression and academics. Mason explained that he had felt awful and helpless -- that he would sometimes struggle to get out of bed and that he had lost all of his drive and sense of purpose. However, he didn’t feel that Haverford could have done much more to help this. He felt that the things which had prevented him from seeking help at Haverford were personal, not problems with the institution.

The jury then discussed Mason and Professor Turlington’s proposed resolutions. Mason was glad he had already worked toward repairing his relationship with Professor Turlington. He also felt that he would like to write a letter to the community since this might give him a sense of
closure. Professor Turlington proposed that Mason receive a 0 on the quiz, and that he write a letter to community.

Mason agreed with Professor Turlington’s suggested grade change. A juror asked if he had any specific ideas about what he might include in a letter that could be educational in some way for the community. Mason suggested writing about his personal experience with mental illness and encouraging others to seek help if they experience something at all similar. Mason also talked a bit about how he was very happy with his psychological support system at home and did not feel he needed more support on campus. He also mentioned that he had considered writing a letter to Samantha shortly after the violation and would still be comfortable doing that, although he did not want to open up ‘old wounds’ for Samantha. Finally, Mason said that he wanted to be able to have closure from this trial by accepting and completing the resolutions to the best of his ability.

Jury Deliberations Part 1:

The jurors then discussed resolutions. Many jurors seemed comfortable with the 0 on the quiz. They also discussed having Mason write an essay about the Honor Code, write letters to Professor Turlington and Samantha, and write a letter encouraging students who find themselves in a similar position to get help. The jury also thought that this case seemed very relevant to PAFs and HCOs who could in some way use it as a resource when discussing mental health and/or the Honor Code.

Jury Deliberations Part 2:

The jury reviewed the set of resolution ideas they had from the previous meeting. They dropped the idea of an essay on the Honor Code because they felt that Mason’s violation seemed to be more about difficult circumstances rather than a lack of understanding of the Honor Code.

One juror said they felt strongly that the letter to Samantha was important, as that breach of trust had not been healed, and the letter could additionally serve as a form of accountability. Someone else pointed out that it could bring back feelings of resentment or discomfort for Samantha. The jury then discussed the content of the letter to the community in more detail, saying that this letter could double as an opportunity for Mason to advise that people get help with mental health issues.

One juror pointed out that while Mason seemed to have a strong support system at home, he still had very few resources on campus. To address this, the jury decided that a resolution about meeting once with his dean to open avenues of communication would be beneficial. The jury also briefly discussed encouraging him to have at least one meeting with CAPS, but decided against it because they felt uncomfortable requesting that someone go to CAPS, and because Mason’s psychological services at home seemed very complete.

A juror also brought up the idea that a letter to Professor Turlington should be recommended rather than required, because it would be better to allow Mason to figure out how
best to restore trust (if necessary at all) with him on his own.

The jury then discussed the size they felt was appropriate for the grade change. Many jurors agreed with Professor Turlington and Mason’s suggestion of a 0.0 on the quiz. While some jurors felt that a bigger grade change would be appropriate, most of the jury seemed uncomfortable with this idea, feeling that the violation was small and that any grade change larger than a 0.0 on the quiz would be punitive. In the end, the jury agreed to a 0.0 on the one quiz only.

Finally, the jury discussed separation and the question of reporting the trial to other institutions of higher learning. The jury was unanimous in feeling that separation would not be beneficial. The jury also felt that the violation should not be reported to other institutions due to the scale of the assignment, as it would likely not have been considered a disciplinary proceeding at a different college.

**Tentative Resolutions:**
The jury consented to the following set of tentative resolutions:

1. The jury recommends that [Mason] receive a 0.0 on the quiz in question. (10 jurors consent)
2. The jury strongly recommends that [Mason] meet with his dean to open avenues of communication, should he ever need them. (10 jurors consent)
3. The jury encourages [Mason] to take whatever steps he deems necessary to repair any remaining breach of trust between him and [Professor Turlington]. (10 jurors consent)
4. By [date], [Mason] will write a letter to [Samantha] intended to repair any breach of trust. (10 jurors consent)
5. By the end of the [semester], [Mason] will write a letter to the community reflecting on how this experience has changed his perspective on the Honor Code. (10 jurors consent)
6. The jury encourages PAFs and HCOs to consider using this abstract, and in particular [Mason]’s letter to the community, to discuss the intersection of mental health and the Honor Code. (10 jurors consent)

**Resolutions as a whole:** (10 jurors consent)

The jury then consented to a tentative statement explaining how they felt about reporting the procedure to other institutions, and why:

Due to the scale of this violation, the jury feels that it would not constitute a disciplinary proceeding at other institutions of higher learning and therefore should not be reported as such. (10 jurors consent)

**Finalizing Resolutions:**

Both parties were present at this meeting. Neither had any objections to the resolutions,
nor anything they felt needed to be added. The jury clarified for Mason that his letter to the community could include more than just reflections about the Honor Code, and encouraged him to also include his thoughts about getting help for mental health issues.

Professor Turlington had noticed that the jury had recommended not to report the procedure due to the scale of the violation. He asked, since this was considered small, whether it had really needed to go to an Honor Council trial, or whether he could have simply resolved it with Mason. The trial chair and a few other jurors on Honor Council shared their thoughts about why things had happened the way they did, including that there is currently no formal Honor Council proceeding between “nothing” and “a trial,” but also that the Honor Code explicitly states that academic issues should not be resolved simply between a professor and student because they constitute a larger breach of trust with the community. It was also mentioned that another way trials can be beneficial for the community is in the education they can provide through the release of abstracts and letters from parties involved.

At this point, Mason and Professor Turlington left and the jury discussed whether they wanted to change the tentative resolutions in any way. All jurors seemed comfortable with keeping the resolutions unchanged, so they consented to the following (unchanged) final resolutions:

1. The jury recommends that [Mason] receive a 0.0 on the quiz in question. (10 jurors consent)
2. The jury strongly recommends that [Mason] meet with his dean to open avenues of communication, should he ever need them. (10 jurors consent)
3. The jury encourages [Mason] to take whatever steps he deems necessary to repair any remaining breach of trust between him and [Professor Turlington]. (10 jurors consent)
4. By [date], [Mason] will write a letter to [Samantha] intended to repair any breach of trust. (10 jurors consent)
5. By the end of [semester], [Mason] will write a letter to the community reflecting on how this experience has changed his perspective on the Honor Code. (10 jurors consent)
6. The jury encourages PAFs and HCOs to consider using this abstract, and in particular Mason’s letter to the community, to discuss the intersection of mental health and the Honor Code. (10 jurors consent)

Resolutions as a whole: 10 jurors consent

The jury also consented to an unchanged statement about reporting the procedure to other institutions of higher learning:

Due to the scale of this violation, the jury feels that it would not constitute a disciplinary proceeding at other institutions of higher learning and therefore should not be reported as such. (10 jurors consent)
Post-Trial:
The resolutions were not appealed.

Mason’s Letter:
My Letter to the Haverford Community:

There are no words that could truly convey the regret I feel for my actions this past semester, as well as no words that could capture the sincerity of this apology. With that being said, I will do my best to express my remorse.

I have broken the Honor Code by copying another student's answers on a quiz in my [Photography 101] class. Not only did this negatively impact my own experience in the class, but because of my wrongful decision to violate the honor code, I also involved another student and put her through unnecessary stress and grief, that she did not deserve at all. This is because this student had no knowledge of the fact that I had looked at her quiz while we were taking it. I have already apologized to this student, and have made peace with the offense I committed against her. However, it is equally important to me that Haverford, as a whole community, understands my remorse, and can feel comfortable accepting me back into the community and allow me to regain their trust.

Since the conclusion of my trial, I have reflected more upon my studying habits and have also evaluated my strengths and weaknesses as a student as a whole in order to better myself for higher academic achievement and integrity. This process has been eye opening for me and has allowed me to really focus on improving my time management and organization skills. With that, this has allowed me to rediscover what it means to be a student at Haverford College and has reminded me of why I chose to come here in the first place.

Sincerely,
[Mason]

Discussion Questions:
  1. How might mental health impact a student’s ability to comply with the Honor Code?
  2. How should Honor Code violations of small scale be dealt with? (i.e. is a trial the best procedure?)