The abstract discussion for this abstract will be held on Friday, September 30 at 7 p.m. in the MCC (Stokes 106).

Sherlock Holmes:
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released Fall 2016

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Key:
Professor Sherlock Holmes - Confronting Party
John Watson - Confronted Party
Criminology - Academic Department

Pre-Trial:
John Watson was a senior working on a thesis with Professor Sherlock Holmes in the Criminology Department. Upon receiving the final draft of Watson’s thesis, Professor Holmes noticed that a significant portion had been plagiarized from an American Detective article. He contacted Watson about the issue, and asked him to bring himself to Honor Council. Watson contacted the Honor Council Co-Chairs, who collected statements from both the confronted and confronting parties. The trial was run in the summer.

Fact Finding:
Due to scheduling difficulties, fact finding was split into two portions. First, the jury met with Professor Sherlock Holmes via Skype. In his account, he explained that while reading John Watson’s Criminology thesis he noticed that there were strong similarities between the thesis and one of the cited articles. While the article was cited in his references, there was direct copying and pasting which was not properly cited. Professor Holmes explained that in the Criminology department students are given many intermediate deadlines throughout the year. In the Fall semester, Watson made good progress. However, in second semester there were signs of him getting stuck and having trouble moving forward. The drafts that he submitted weren’t as fleshed-out as the department usually expects. Several weeks before the thesis was due, Watson submitted his first final draft for review. Professor Holmes reviewed it and sent him back a list of things to improve in order to complete the requirements for the thesis. Among these was an increase in length, as the draft was around 15 pages short of what is typically seen for
Criminology theses.

When the final version was submitted, it was much longer and seemed satisfactory in a brief look-through. However, upon opening one of references, an article in American Detective, Professor Holmes noticed the high degree of similarities between the article and the thesis. Overall approximately 50% of the thesis was plagiarized, mostly through direct copying-and-pasting.

The next day, the jury Skyped with John Watson. Watson explained that during the Spring semester he had been taking 4 300-level crime courses in addition to his thesis, and so had trouble finding time to work on thesis. Towards the end, after his first final draft had been submitted, he was feeling very stressed and felt that whatever he submitted would not fulfill the thesis requirements. Putting text from the article into the thesis meant that at least at first glance his thesis looked presentable and long enough. He and Professor Holmes had discussed the article that he had copied from before, so Watson expected that Professor Holmes would notice.

When asked about the list of revisions that Professor Holmes sent him after the draft, Watson said that he tried to complete some of the list, but there were things he did not know how to go about changing. He would have gone to Professor Holmes for help but was so busy managing his four other courses that he did not find the time. He said that he added the text because it allowed him to put off dealing with the idea of not graduating for at least a little while. He knew that Professor Holmes would recognize the material from the article and the thesis would fail, but did not consider that Honor Council would become involved. He said that looking back he wished that he had just submitted the subpar, un plagiarized thesis because he had no idea that he could have talked to the department to get more time. He was worried the professors in the Criminology Department would think less of him if he asked about extensions or other options for the thesis.

**Jury Deliberations/Statement of Violation:**
After Watson signed off Skype, the jury began discussing a statement of violation or non-violation. The jurors unanimously agreed that Watson had committed an act of plagiarism, thereby violating the Honor Code. The jury came to the following statement of violation:

*Watson violated the Honor Code by knowingly plagiarizing a significant portion of his thesis. He represented the work of others as his own when he did not cite the full extent of the original text in his paper.* (10 jurors consent)

**Circumstantial Portion:**
At the beginning of the circumstantial portion, Watson recounted his mental state at the time of the violation, saying that he felt so embarrassed by the prospect of not finishing the thesis, and of explaining his lack of progress to his professors, that seeking help did not seem like a viable option. He then reiterated his appreciation of the Honor Code, as he hoped it would allow him to
repair the breach of trust that he had so valued with his professors. He also spoke about his relationship with his family and friends, and that while fear of how they would react loomed large in the build-up to the violation, his family and friends had been nothing but supportive since.

Watson then offered the opinion that he needed to do something for Haverford, to give back to the community, preferably in some manner that could keep others from following his path. He also mentioned that in his discussions with the Criminology faculty, they had spoken of potential pathways to finishing his thesis so that he could eventually graduate.

When asked about his future plans, Watson said that due to his failure to graduate, most of his immediate plans were on hold, and that he had no outstanding commitments over the coming year.

Watson was then given the option of talking about any psychological problems he may have had, and elected to reveal to the jury that while he had struggled with depression for quite a long time, he had never sought help due to a fear of stigmatization. He also mentioned that these feelings got worse when he was under the pressure of finishing his thesis. When asked if he had ever gone to CAPS for assistance, he responded that he had, but had not returned because the counselor had seemed insincere and unconcerned. Watson said that he was the first in his family to go to college, and that graduation -- and its importance to both him and his family -- loomed extremely large because of that. As such, it was very difficult for him to tell anyone in his family about the problems he was going through.

Watson and the jury also discussed how the high course load in criminology contributed to Watson’s level of stress.

**Jury Deliberations and Tentative Resolutions:**
Note: The trial chair missed this session due to illness. The chair’s role was filled by another Honor Council juror.

The jury first considered the suggestions by Watson and Holmes. Watson suggested rewriting his thesis with department help, as well as writing a guide for any seniors who might be in the same situation. Professor Holmes also suggested a thesis rewrite, and asked the jury to consider separation due to the severity of the violation. He also suggested that Watson’s fall semester grade remain unchanged, but that he receive a 0.0 for spring semester.

The jury first considered separation, with the semester-long separation as used in the James Bond abstract of several years ago as an example. The thesis rewrite, with the participation of the Criminology Department, was generally accepted as both parties believed it essential. However, when it came to discussion of Watson’s guide for students in a similar position, there was some discussion over practicality, with argument over whether CAPS, the OAR, or the Writing Center would be appropriate venues for distribution. In the end, the jury decided to let Watson handle that facet, as it seemed the letter was most essential for restoring his sense of place within the community.
Given the breach of trust involved professors besides Holmes, the jury believed that a mediated dialogue including a reading of the [Association of British Investigators’ Code of Ethics] and followed by a letter to the faculty would restore the trust between Watson and the Criminology faculty necessary to complete his thesis. As for the breach of trust between Watson and the College, jurors suggested a letter to the community as the best way to restore Watson to his place in the College at large.

The jury was required to make a recommendation as to whether the Dean should report the incident to graduate institutions. The jury believed that this was necessary, but agreed that such a report should be accompanied by a discussion between the Dean and two jurors.

Lastly, the jury agreed to recommend Watson seek counseling on his psychological state.

The tentative resolutions:

1. The jury recommends that Watson receive a 0.0 for his thesis seminar in the Spring [year omitted] semester and that Prof. Holmes assign a grade appropriate for the work Watson did in the Fall [year omitted] semester. (8 jurors consent, 2* stand outside due to absence)
2. Watson will be separated from Haverford College for the Fall [year omitted] semester. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside due to absence)
3. Watson will read the Association of British Investigators’ Code of ethics. Following his separation the jury recommends that Watson participate in a mediated dialogue with one or more members of the Criminology department. Watson will then write a letter to the Criminology department faculty to repair any breach of trust that may exist. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside due to absence)
4. The jury recommends that Watson work with members of the Criminology department, in accordance with their instructions, to complete his thesis following his separation. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside due to absence)
5. Watson will write a document intended for students who may find themselves in a similar situation. This document will be completed by the end of the Spring [year omitted] semester and will be made available on the Honor Council website. Two members of the jury will be available to provide any assistance Watson may need in completing this document. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside due to absence)
6. Watson will write a letter to the community to be released with the abstract. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside due to absence)
7. The jury recommends that this incident be reported to institutions of higher learning. Two members of the jury will meet with the Dean of the College to discuss the circumstances of this violation. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside due to absence)

9 jurors consented to resolutions as a whole, with 1 standing outside due to absence.

*The 9th juror arrived between resolutions 1 and 2.

Finalizing Resolutions:

After the tentative resolutions were drafted, the list of resolutions was sent to both Holmes and
Watson for input. Professor Holmes did not respond in the five days between the tentative resolutions and finalizing resolutions portions, and so the jury proceeded with finalizing resolutions.

The original trial chair returned for the finalizing portion. Watson Skyped in for the first part of the finalizing meeting. When asked for his thoughts on the resolutions, he said that he felt that they were constructive and would help him to repair damaged relationships, and was overall happy with the resolutions. He said that he didn’t completely understand the logic behind recommendation for reporting to graduate schools, but was OK with it. He also asked about the reasons for the one semester separation, and whether that was for him or for the community. A juror explained that it was intended more for Watson himself, to give him a period of reflection so that he could then come back in the Spring refreshed and ready to work on the thesis again.

The jury asked how he felt about writing a letter to CAPS. Watson said that he didn’t feel like CAPS did anything wrong, and that it was his own issues which prevented him from taking advantage of their services. A juror pointed out that it is CAPS’s job to overcome those sorts of issues to reach students in similar situations, and so the letter from Watson could help them in the future. However, the juror reminded Watson that writing the letter was just a recommendation and by no means a requirement. After that, Watson thanked the jury for their time and signed off Skype.

After Watson left, the jury began discussing possible changes to the tentative resolutions. The jury decided not to include the letter to CAPS as a resolution, but instead to include it as a suggestion when the chair emailed the final resolutions to Watson. In the end, the jury only changed some wording in Resolution 6 to provide Watson with some suggestions for what to discuss in his letter to the community.

1. The jury recommends that Watson receive a 0.0 for his thesis seminar in the Spring [year omitted] semester and that Prof. Holmes assign a grade appropriate for the work Watson did in the Fall [year omitted] semester. (10 jurors consent)
2. Watson will be separated from Haverford College for the Fall [year omitted] semester. (10 jurors consent)
3. Watson will read the Association of British Investigators’ Code of ethics. Following his separation the jury recommends that Watson participate in a mediated dialogue with one or more members of the criminology department. Watson will then write a letter to the criminology department faculty to repair any breach of trust that may exist. (10 jurors consent)
4. The jury recommends that Watson work with members of the criminology department, in accordance with their instructions, to complete his thesis following his separation. (10 jurors consent)
5. Watson will write a document intended for students who may find themselves in a similar situation. This document will be completed by the end of the Spring [year omitted] semester and will be made available on the Honor Council website. Two members of the jury will be available to provide any assistance Watson may need in completing this document. (10 jurors consent)
6. Watson will write a letter to the community to be released with the abstract. In this letter, the jury
encourages Watson to discuss both the circumstances that led him to violate the Honor Code and the breaches of trust within and beyond the Haverford community that were created by his violation. (10 jurors consent)

7. The jury recommends that this incident be reported to institutions of higher learning. Two members of the jury will meet with the Dean of the College to discuss the circumstances of this violation. (10 jurors consent)

10 jurors consented to resolutions as a whole.

Post-Trial:
The trial resolutions were not appealed.

John Watson’s Letter to the Community:

Dear Haverford Community,

For years I lived life as an ostrich. The sand was warm and inviting. It was mine to shape. I made castles and curtains. I was in the sand so long that I not only forgot how to get out I didn’t realize that I needed to. There were times when the sand got uncomfortably hot and the weight of it became heavy, but I came to believe that I was just too sensitive, and too weak.

The sand is an excellent analogy for the psychological barrier that I constructed between myself and the world around me. The sun on the sand is a good analogy for emotion sometimes it is felt and not seen. Sometimes we fall asleep and forget that it’s even there only to wake up to see the burns it has left. I didn’t realize that sharing my fears and feelings of sadness with someone (when I had them) could help me overcome them. I knew that it was supposed to, but because I had never allowed myself to fully share that part of myself, I didn’t believe that it would help me.

There were a handful of people that I considered close friends. There were also professors that were extremely supportive and who genuinely seemed to care about me. I valued those relationships. I was completely open with my thoughts when they were happy or funny, but tried to pretend not to have any when they weren’t. I viewed my negative emotions as things I created by choice (“happiness is a choice”) so I thought feeling overwhelmed by them was a sign of a mental weakness.

Along the same vein, I thought that by voicing these negative emotions I was bringing them to life evolving them from things fluttering around in my head to things that had real consequences for me and the people around me. I thought that if I shared them with someone it would make those people think of me as weaker and somewhat helpless and eventually bring them to decide I wasn’t worth their time or friendship. I also wanted to avoid talking about negative things with my friends because I dealt with them enough on my own time and didn’t want to bring more negativity into their lives.
My state of mind was so unhealthy that I began to feel that I deserved to experience the psychological pain of keeping those emotions inside because I was too emotional. I didn’t understand that keeping negative feelings inside is one of the worst things to do because it often keeps you from addressing them and in doing so gives them time to seep into every aspect of your life social and academic.

At the end of senior year I was afraid of graduating and afraid of not graduating. I was ashamed that I had not completed work I had promised to complete and felt I deserved to feel ashamed. The tendency I had to open myself to my negative feelings as a form of self-discipline turned into a vicious cycle I was ashamed, and yet felt I needed to feel ashamed to change. The shame made it more difficult to complete the work that I felt bad for not completing, and so I went longer without completing it and only felt worse. I waited so long to deal with my feelings that it had become too late to finish my thesis.

I realized it suddenly one afternoon while laying in my bed. The idea of not completing my thesis had been drowning in the emotion I was feeling until it finally hit a rock and came to the surface. The realization was utterly unbearable for me to deal with on my own. Not only did I feel bad that I had waited so long to do the work, but I had no idea what would happen if a thesis wasn’t completed and, again, felt asking about it would only make me feel worse.

The worst feeling of all came about when I suddenly knew that I was going to have to tell my family (which was coming to graduation) and my friends just how far I had fallen. I did not do what I did because I wanted to take credit for work I hadn’t done (though that is in effect what I did). I submitted an article I had been discussing with my professors for months and made no attempt to change the wording of it. I knew that my professor would realize what I had done but I felt that submitting the article as my thesis would at least give me a few days of peace, to break the whirlpool of emotion I was drowning in.

Nevertheless, in doing what I did I abused the trust of the Haverford community, and violated a code of ethics that is central and essential in society at large. Without trust, Haverford would be a very different institution. The sense of community would no doubt be much weaker, as everyone would have to constantly worry whether people were what they said they are; whether they do what they said they do. The progress of society at large hinges on us being honest with each other when we are dishonest we risk making people more distrustful towards society, which tends to make them withdraw themselves along with all of the positive contributions they could make. Sometimes this withdrawal even causes people to act against society in devastating ways. In academia, trust is particularly critical. Without it, people are afraid to share their ideas with each other. Without collaboration, little of what we know today could have been discovered.

I feel I owe a tremendous debt to Honor Council. By making me accountable for my actions, they forced me to address issues that I had lived with for a long time. I had to share what has happened with my friends and family. In doing so, I realized my friendships were much stronger.
than I thought and that my family loves me and has hope for me regardless of how far and for how long I fall. Once I realized this, I came to feel a lot better about myself. I stopped defining myself by my emotions, and at the same time came to appreciate them as things that need to be acknowledged and worked through.

I am no longer afraid to reach out to my family and friends when I feel bad about something. It’s perfectly healthy to feel sad or fearful once in a while. If you don’t address those feelings, they grow and can make you do things that are destructive to yourself and to the community. When you share them with the people you love and then also do something about them, you are strengthening those relationships by exercising honesty about the way you feel. You are forcing those emotions to become real enough that they can be dealt with, no matter how impossible they may seem. I’ve learned to realize when I need to confide in someone, and to fulfill that need when it arises.

I offer my deepest, most heartfelt apologies to the Haverford community and to anyone that I have directly or indirectly hurt by what I have done.

I have tremendous gratitude to honor council for helping me to change my life for the better. Thank you.

As for my evolution from ostrich to human, i still enjoy the sand but not because I like hiding in it. The sun gets hot but I know where the water is. I build castles but they are not built to be fortresses.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What is the difference between the jury recommending something to the trial party in person or via email vs. including the recommendation as a formal resolution? In what scenarios is one better than the other?

2. What could Watson have done to avoid the situation? What could Professor Holmes or other professors in the Criminology Department have done?

3. CAPS may not have been party to this trial, but it held a unique position within the community and was featured prominently in the circumstantial portion and tentative resolutions. What should the role of CAPS be during violations that involve issues of psychological health?