Scott Pilgrim vs. The World: An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released Fall 2018

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

Key:
Confronted Party: Scott Pilgrim
Confronting Party: Professor Stacey Pilgrim
Support Person: Wallace Wells
Class: Battle of the Bands 201
Plagiarized Work: Envy Adam’s thesis

Summary/Pre-Trial:
This trial concerned a final paper which was heavily plagiarized. Due to the heavy volume of trials at the time, this trial was run with four Honor Council jurors and five community members, and was chaired by an experienced member of Honor Council rather than a co-chair. Scott had a support person, Wallace, present throughout the trial.

This trial was complicated by the fact that Scott was dealing with a number of extreme personal circumstances both at the time of the violation and during the trial. The jury struggled with coming up with resolutions that balanced accountability with jurors' empathy for Scott. Some jurors felt that the resolutions did not include enough accountability.

Due to the personal circumstances discussed in the trial, we would like to put out a content warning for material relating to sexual assault.

Fact Finding:
Fact finding was complicated by Scott’s inability to remember details of writing his final paper. He explained he had gone to receive medical help due to migraines, and was prescribed a medication. Common side effects of the medication include drowsiness and a feeling of intoxication. A rare side effect is memory loss. He said the medicine impaired his judgement and caused him to "black out" and forget what had happened. He remembered that he had read many articles and dissertations, taken handwritten notes on them, and then used those notes to write the

1 At the request of the confronted party, the confronting party consented to a version of the abstract in which all mentioning of sexual assault was redacted. Therefore, the confronting party did not consent to the full version of the abstract as it appears here.
essay. He did not check over the paper before handing it in. He said, at the time, he hadn’t slept in several days and was merely going through the motions. He also noted that he had forgotten other things he had done during the exam period, and Wallace, his support person, corroborated that claim.

Professor Stacey began by saying that other than this paper, Scott had been an excellent student, even with his personal challenges. She first suspected plagiarism when she noticed a sentence that seemed to vary from Scott’s usual writing style. She found it verbatim on a website. She outlined all the types of plagiarism she found: inadequate paraphrasing, lack of citations, and verbatim copying. In particular, she talked about Envy Adam’s thesis, a thesis that Scott had plagiarized extensively in both structure and content. She expressed a concern that Scott may have attempted to hide the plagiarism with decoy footnotes and false attribution.

The assignment had been preceded by a final presentation. Professor Stacey found no problems in Scott’s presentation. She said that she hadn’t really discussed plagiarism with the class, though it was in the syllabus, as it was a small class with only upperclassmen.

After Professor Stacey left the room, Scott eventually expressed to the jury that in addition to his problems with the medication, he had been dealing with serious personal issues. However, he expressed that he would take full responsibility for the violation, as the paper had his name on it.

**Jury Deliberations/Statement of Violation:**

The jury went through the paper and concluded that at least 50% was plagiarized, probably more. The jury was unsure as to the intentionality of the violation due to Scott’s experience with the medication. However, they quickly decided that this violation counted as plagiarism and was substantial. Regardless of the circumstances, they unanimously felt that a violation had occurred.

The jury consented that one person could stand outside, as the trial was being run with 9 jurors.

The jury thus came to the following statement of violation:

*Scott violated the Honor Code by extensively plagiarizing on his final paper.* (9 consent, 0 stand outside)

**Circumstantial Portion:**

[Content Warning: Sexual Assault Mentioned]

Scott revealed more information about the difficult situation he had alluded to in Fact Finding. He avoided specifics at first, but shared more after a jury member reminded him that the trial was entirely confidential and that the more he could tell the jury, the better they could write resolutions. He explained that he had been sexually assaulted and that the people he had approached about the assault had proved unhelpful when he had approached them about the
situation. He said that he was in the process of meeting with people higher-up in the college’s administration regarding the situation.

**Jury Deliberations and Tentative Resolutions Part 1:**

The jury deliberated and discussed possible resolutions. The jury felt that Scott should get credit for the presentation (the non-plagiarized portion). The jury also felt it was important to restore trust between Scott and Professor Stacey. However, the jury did not want to impose additional stress on Scott. The jury adjourned and met the next day.

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

The jury decided to issue some ideas, not as formal resolutions, but as suggestions to Scott during Finalizing. The jury wanted to add more educational resolutions, but also felt that Scott understood what plagiarism was. They also thought that education for the community would be especially important for this case. The jury wanted the community to understand the intersection of sexual assault, medical issues, and academic stress. Some jurors were unsure that there was enough accountability and wanted to ensure that even though there were extreme circumstances, Scott was still held accountable for his actions. The jury discussed how to maintain Scott’s confidentiality, while still educating the community in relation to Scott’s circumstances.

The jury decided that for the grade, they wanted to give Scott some credit on the final, without adding more stress for him. They decided to include the possibility of rewriting the paper, while stressing that it was entirely optional. The jury discussed separation, with a couple of jurors voicing that separation might be beneficial for Scott. However, the jury decided against separation because they felt that considering the circumstances, the violation did not warrant mandated separation. The weight of the jury also felt that the trial should be reported as a disciplinary procedure to institutions of higher learning, but felt strongly that the circumstances should be taken into account.

While consenting, a juror stopped and expressed that he wished there was more the jury could do for accountability, but understood the limitations given the circumstances. The jury then stopped consensus, discussed this, and re-consented to the resolutions.

**Tentative Resolutions:**

9 jurors were present during this trial

1. *The jury recommends that [Scott] receive a grade of 0.0 on the final. The jury recommends that Professor [Stacey] give [Scott] the option to rewrite the final paper by [date] for up to 20% of the final. This 20% would reflect the plagiarism-free components of the final prior to the paper. (9 jurors consent)*

2. *[Scott] will meet with Professor [Stacey], if she is willing, by the end of the [] semester. This meeting will be mediated by a member of the jury. (9 jurors consent)*
3. [Scott] will write a letter to Professor [Stacey] by the end of the [] semester. (9 jurors consent)
4. [Scott] will write a letter to the community by the start of the [] semester. (9 jurors consent)
5. [Scott] will meet with his dean every two weeks until the conclusion of the [] semester. He will continue with monthly meetings in the [] semester. The jury supports the continuation of these meetings in the [] semester. (9 jurors consent)
6. The jury strongly supports [Scott’s] continued use of academic resources for future assignments. (9 jurors consent)
7. The jury supports Professor [Stacey’s] decision to discuss plagiarism in more detail in her classes. (9 jurors consent)
8. The jury recommends that PAFs and HCOS use this abstract for a joint session. (9 jurors consent)

On the resolutions as a whole: 9 jurors consent

Reporting to institutions of higher learning:
The weight of the jury feels that this would be considered a significant disciplinary proceeding at other institutions of higher learning. However, the jury also unanimously feels that the extreme circumstances surrounding the violation should be heavily considered. (9 jurors consent)

Finalizing Resolutions:
The jury met for finalizing with the parties. Professor Stacey skyped in for this meeting. Professor Stacey liked the idea of a rewrite, offered to work with Scott on it, and generally supported the resolutions. She asked about the letters, and a juror explained the reasoning. Professor Stacey signed off. A juror asked Scott to what extent he would be comfortable with the circumstantial details being put in the abstract. Scott was uncertain but replied that it was up to the jury and he didn’t mind. Scott then left.

Members of the jury expressed that they wished they could do more regarding the unhelpful response Scott had received when approaching others about having been assaulted, but recognized the limitations. They wanted to put as much detail as possible into the abstract. Some members of the jury questioned whether PAFS and HCOS were qualified to lead discussions about these issues, but ultimately the jury decided to keep that resolution, as they believed the potential benefits outweighed any possible difficulties.

The jury then moved towards consensus. Before consenting, one juror expressed her concern that the statement leaned too heavily towards reporting, which was not her view. The jury then attempted to consent, but one juror, when it was his turn to consent, hesitated because he felt that the statement might be too strongly worded. The jury discussed this at length, and decided that it was adequate as it stood and that the deans should make the ultimate decision. The jury then re-consented to the resolutions.
Final Resolutions:

9 jurors were present for this trial

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2. [Scott] will meet with Professor [Stacey], if she is willing, by the end of the [] semester. This meeting will be mediated by a member of the jury. (9 jurors consent)

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5. [Scott] will meet with his dean every two weeks until the conclusion of the [] semester. He will continue with monthly meetings in the [] semester. The jury supports the continuation of these meetings in [] semester. (9 jurors consent)

6. The jury strongly supports [Scott]’s continued use of academic resources for future assignments. (9 jurors consent)

7. The jury supports Professor [Stacey]’s decision to discuss plagiarism in more detail in her classes. (9 jurors consent)

8. The jury strongly recommends that PAFs and HCOs use this abstract for a joint session. (9 jurors consent)

On the resolutions as a whole: 9 jurors consent

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Post-Trial:
The trial was not appealed.

Scott’s Letter to the Community:

Dear Haverford Community,

My experience with the Honor Council overall was stressful. This is because throughout the time period of my trial, I felt so much uncertainty on what was going to happen and at times I wasn’t sure how I was going get through the day. Nevertheless, the process was insightful because I
learned that I cannot always get through things on my own that I should ask for help when I need it. Even though, I did not intentionally do this, I accept responsibility for the actions that brought me here. I just hope that this community, whose values I do admire, does not judge me as harshly as I judge myself. Everyone makes mistakes, and feels regret for their mistakes and this mistake will always be a burden for me.

Discussion Questions:
1. How should juries balance accountability and empathy for the confronted party's circumstances?
2. Can separation be recommended in a judgement-free way?
3. How do extreme health issues and prescription medication or traumatic events such as sexual assault influence student's interaction with the code?