RENT:
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released Fall 2018

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Key:
Confronted Party: Mark Cohen
Confronting Party: Professor Mimi Marquez
Co-Professors: Tom Collins and Angel Dumontt Schunard
Course in which the violation occurred: Bohemian 300
Course previously taken by Mark with Professor Marquez: Bohemian 200

Summary/Pre-Trial:
This academic trial involved Mark Cohen, a student in Professor Mimi Marquez’s Bohemian 300, co-taught by Professor Collins and Professor Dumontt Schunard. Mark contacted Honor Council after having been confronted by Professor Marquez in regards to one of his assignments for his class. The assignment was a synopsis of an article he had to read for his potential thesis. Professor Marquez noticed that there were parts of the synopsis that were alike his Bohemian 200 final paper, as well as others that appeared directly from the sources he was summarizing for his assignment. Council deliberated and then decided to send it to an academic trial.

During the preliminary meeting, the jury agreed that it seemed as a violation had occurred, but they did not want to be biased, since the professor stated that she had had bad previous experiences with Honor Council, and that those experiences may have impacted the way she was approaching this trial.

Fact Finding:
Mark stated that early in the semester, for an assignment he had to read academic articles and summarize, with the purpose to prepare him for his thesis. Mark chose two academic articles that he had read for his Bohemian 200 class, also taught by Professor Marquez. Professor Marquez then contacted him with concerns that he had used parts of his Bohemian 200 final paper in his assignment without proper citation.

Professor Marquez says that she taught the Bohemian 200, and she co-teaches Bohemian 300. At the beginning of the semester, the professor co-teaching the class made sure to talk in
depth about plagiarism before even going through the syllabus and highlighted how serious it is to commit plagiarism. They even read some articles and talked about how to deal with technical terms. When Mark handed in his first assignment, Professor Marquez saw that there were parts that sounded like his paper for Bohemian 200. She also stated that his Bohemian 200 paper had parts that were borderline plagiarism, since there was a model that follows too closely to the paper he was writing about.

Mark told the jury that he realized then that he should’ve been much more careful, as he thought this assignment didn’t matter that much and didn’t quite understand the objective of the assignment. Professor Marquez said that they had the students do a practice of summarizing articles, and emphasized that even if it was not graded work, it is still their work. She also stated that there is no such thing as accidental plagiarism and the student is responsible to actively avoid it at all costs. A juror asked Mark if he didn’t think anything he had done was plagiarism, but Mark said that he had no idea while writing the paper since he was rushing to another commitment. He said that he had always been honest about it and that it was just now that he realized the problem, and that he admits to see violations of the Honor Code in his paper.

**Jury Deliberations/Statement of Violation:**

One of the jurors said that since both parties had agreed that a violation had occurred, that the jury also felt strongly that a violation had occurred. Others jurors agreed. One juror pointed out that they agreed a violation occurred, but that they wanted to see all the sources, as well as the Bohemian 200 paper. However, everyone felt comfortable to move to a statement of violation.

The jury agreed that a statement of violation should state that there was plagiarism, including self-plagiarism from his Bohemian 200 paper, and from other sources. The jury also discussed intentionality in the statement, and if it should say that the jury felt that the violation seemed unintentional. One juror felt that Mark Cohen was being genuine about his intentionality and that he appeared shocked when brought up to Council. Another juror, however, pointed out that this statement should reflect how we want to move forward and worried that if they stated officially that it “seemed unintentional”, that it would not reflect truly the jury’s thoughts and that it would also seem that the jury is not listening to the professor at all, who is disheartened by the continued happenings of plagiarism in her class. The jury then decided that the statement should be only about whether a violation occurred, and intentionality could be addressed in the circumstantial meeting.

The jury consented to the following statement of violation:

**Statement of Violation:**

*Mark Cohen* violated the Honor Code by committing acts of plagiarism in his [Bohemian 300] assignment. He did so by plagiarizing from his own [Bohemian 200] paper and from published scholarly works. (10 jurors consent)
Circumstantial Portion:

Mark stated that this had been his toughest semester at Haverford thus far, being a double major, team captain, working on campus and looking for jobs, all of it was putting a lot of stress on him. He said while this is no excuse whatsoever, if he hadn’t had these commitments he would have been able to work more carefully on the assignment. He said that he valued his integrity and that he hadn’t thought about his academic integrity to such levels until then. He then proceeded to explain that when Professor Mimi Marquez, Tom Collins and Angel Dumontt Schunard were explaining how to avoid plagiarism in the class at the beginning of the semester, he was not in the right mindset to pay attention in class because he had just gotten out of practice - he said, however, that that was completely on him. He said that he greatly valued the community and that he wanted to restore the breach of trust with Professor Mimi Marquez, the students of Bohemian 300, and the community.

A juror asked if Mark Cohen could give further details about his stress related to other commitments. Mark Cohen said that he doesn’t think that students with many commitments require special treatment, and that speaking with professors about what is going on with your life is important - something that he admitted he didn’t do. Another juror asked if he felt he hadn’t had enough time to do the assignment. Mark Cohen responded that due to outside factors he felt so, but that was no excuse for committing plagiarism.

Mark Cohen then went on to state his proposed resolutions. He proposed a meeting with Professor Mimi Marquez, and a meeting with Professor Tom Collins and Angel Dumontt Schunard. He also said that he thought he should not get any credit for the assignment in question. Lastly, he wanted some engagement between him and the community as he hadn’t known that what he did was plagiarism. More specifically, he wanted to do community outreach and state that he had breached the Honor Code and be a resource for others.

Professor Marquez suggested a grade change in the class. When asked, Mark agreed that all of the suggested resolutions seemed fair, and would be helpful. Before going into jury deliberations, the trial chair explained more about Professor Mimi Marquez’s email. The chair stated that she felt frustrated that the jury felt this was “seemingly unintentional”, since no case of plagiarism is accidental and students need to be actively avoiding plagiarism. She felt strongly about the grade change, and about making this problem visible for the community and have a resolution addressing this to more of the community.

Jury Deliberations I

After a discussion on accountability measures, most importantly, a grade change, the jury agreed to ask Professor Mimi Marquez about the grading in the class, and whether she curved up or down in the class, so they could better understand the impact a grade change would have on Mark. Deliberations were paused until this information was received.
Jury Deliberations II

In response to the jury’s question, Professor Mimi Marquez said that the class is graded by a 4.0 scale, and that the grade tends to go up at the end of the semester depending on the curve.

The proposed grade change was debated extensively. Jurors felt that there should be more accountability than just a 0.0 in the assignment because that was just equivalent to not doing the job, and plagiarism was more than that. Further, a juror expressed that this was also a breach of trust with the students of the class and the whole community, and that accountability should address that in a visible manner. One juror was still having issues with a grade change, since Mark did put effort into the assignment, and a potential grade change might affect Mark Cohen’s search for internships and jobs in the future. Another juror stated that while it is true that Mark Cohen was looking for jobs, he had also signed the Honor Code and thus that should not be what the jury based their accountability resolutions on. After discussing other resolutions, the jury returned to the question of a grade change, but could not come to consensus. The trial chair adjourned the meeting, so that jury members could think about the resolutions they had built up and more specifically the accountability resolutions.

Jury Deliberations III/Tentative Resolutions

The jury discussed possible alternative resolutions, besides a grade change, that would address the goals of accountability. A rewrite of the assignment and still receiving a 0.0 was suggested, which made several jury members uncomfortable. One juror expressed that the point of a trial is restorative justice and that Mark Cohen should be able to move past and they don’t see him being able to move past this as a singular incident. Another said that while it is a restorative justice process, one of the pillars of the trial is accountability and they felt that the confronted party has to acknowledge and own up to their mistake, and the problem with just rewriting the assignment would be that Mark Cohen could just redo it and move on. Another juror restated that only giving Mark Cohen a 0.0 is like not handing it in, while plagiarism is worse.

One juror pointed out that there was “border-line plagiarism” in Mark Cohen’s Bohemian 200 paper, so although it was possibly a one time thing, Mark Cohen needed to realize the severity of plagiarism. Another juror said that this is also a Bohemian 300 level course, and that the articles were to prepare him for a further assignment. Further, the fact that it was the only resolution Professor Mimi Marquez proposed gave it some weight, given also that she felt frustrated about her past experiences with Honor Council and juries not taking into account the side of the professor. Another juror pointed out that it was a violation with the entire community, and when considering accountability, the jury also needs to take into account who Mark Cohen has interacted with, such as other students in the class and other professors.

The jury discussed rewriting the assignment as accountability. One juror proposed instead of a rewrite, Mark Cohen should revise the assignment so that he can see where exactly he
violated the Honor Code. Other jurors agreed, just as long as this still meant a 0.0 on the assignment.

The jury returned to the discussion of a grade change. Some said that this seemed to be the best form of further accountability, while others said that the fact that Professor Mimi Marquez tends to curve up led them to think that this would not harm Mark Cohen but rather incentivize him to do better. A juror asked if this juror’s problem with the resolution was the severity. They said that it felt unnecessary and that they thought Mark Cohen was taking this seriously and that it doesn’t sit right after Mark Cohen took so much accountability already. The juror then asked if the jury could make the resolution more vague, and then hear from the parties for the final meeting. The jury thought this was a good decision.

Tentative Resolutions

1. [Mark Cohen] will be meeting with [Professor Mimi Marquez], if she is willing, to amend the remaining breach of trust and to reflect on the whole trial. The meeting could also include talks on plagiarism and how to avoid it in the class. This meeting will take place by the end of [date]. (10 jurors consent)

2. [Mark Cohen] will get a 0.0 on the assignment.
   a. [Mark Cohen] will revise the assignment so that there are no issues of plagiarism.
      i. The revision of the assignment will happen after his meeting with [Professor Mimi Marquez].
      ii. [Mark Cohen] will send the revised assignment to [Professor Mimi Marquez]. (10 jurors consent)

3. The jury recommends [Mark Cohen] receives a further form of accountability that goes beyond a 0.0 on the assignment (e.g. a grade change on the class, a 0.0 on the synopses assignment percentage of the class, etc.) (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside)

4. The jury recommends [Mark Cohen] to meet with [Professor Tom Collins and Angel Dumontt Schunard], if they are willing, to amend whatever breach of trust there may be. (10 jurors consent)

5. [Mark Cohen] will write a letter to the community to reflect on the trial and what being trusted by the community means to him. This letter will be written by the end of the [date] semester. (10 jurors consent)

6. [Mark Cohen] will meet with a representative from the OAR to discuss time and stress management.
   a. These meetings will happen once a month
   b. The jury encourages them to happen once every two weeks. (10 jurors consent)

7. The jury strongly recommends [Mark Cohen] to go to the Writing Center before handing in any assignments. (10 jurors consent)

Resolutions as a whole: (10 jurors consent)
Statement on reporting:
The jury recommends that this violation is not reported to the other institutions of higher learning. (10 jurors consent)

Finalizing Resolutions:
The trial chair did not hear back from Professor Mimi Marquez. Mark Cohen was in agreement with the meetings, as well as the 0.0 on the assignment. He had concerns about the further form of accountability, since he thought that would put him at least a whole point down in his GPA. To that, a juror said that plagiarism goes beyond the assignment, and this way Mark Cohen is also held accountable to his performance in the class, and to the academic integrity of Haverford. The juror who felt uncomfortable with the grade change asked Mark Cohen if he knew of any other ways that could address accountability without being a grade change. Mark Cohen said that he would like to reach out the class, and that rewriting the assignment and even doing another one the right way could address accountability too.

The jury discussed the grade change again. The one juror who felt uncomfortable said that they felt that if the assignment in question was weighted more, the jury would have a different feeling about a grade change, which demonstrates that the grade change would not be right in the first place. Some jurors said that they were very sure a grade change was the right option, and that they felt more strongly about it since they felt Mark Cohen had not grasped the severity of plagiarism. Regardless of how much the assignment was worth, they said that the issue in question was plagiarism, that it had happened, and that it should be treated equally regardless of the assignment that it happened in.

The jury shifted discussion and talked about a letter to future Bohemian 300 students as a way to do public outreach for Mark Cohen. Everyone thought it was a good idea, but that then the letter to the community should be delayed so that it doesn’t add so much stress.

The weight of the room was still for a further form of accountability, and all agreed that it shouldn’t be as vague, but rather specify that the jury wants a grade change since it is the only form of accountability that the jury had discussed. The one juror said again that they felt extremely uncomfortable with this resolution, but seeing the constant weight of the room throughout the meetings, they would not block consensus.

Finalized Resolutions:
1. [Mark Cohen] will be meeting with [Professor Mimi Marquez], if she is willing, to amend the remaining breach of trust and to reflect on the whole trial. The meeting could also include talks on plagiarism and how to avoid it in the class. This meeting will take place by the end of [month]. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)
2. [Mark Cohen] will get a 0.0 on the plagiarised assignment.
   a. [Mark Cohen] will revise the assignment so that there are no issues of plagiarism.
The revision of the assignment will happen after his meeting with [Professor Mimi Marquez].

ii. [Mark Cohen] will send the revised assignment to [Professor Mimi Marquez]. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

3. The jury recommends [Mark Cohen] receives a grade change on the class (4.0 to 3.7, 3.7 to 3.3, etc.) (8 jurors consent, 1 stands outside, 1 stands outside in absentia)

4. The jury recommends [Mark Cohen] to meet with [Professor Tom Collins and Angel Dumont Schunard] if they are willing, to amend whatever breach of trust there may be. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

5. [Mark Cohen] will write a letter to future classes of [Bohemian 300], and the jury recommends it to be read at the beginning of the course, which will address the severity of plagiarism, how to actively avoid it, and what it meant to him being in an Honor Council trial. This letter will be written by the end of the [redacted] semester. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

6. [Mark Cohen] will write a letter to the community to reflect on the trial and what being trusted by the community means to him. This letter will be written by the start of the [next] semester. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

7. [Mark Cohen] will meet with a representative from the OAR to discuss time and stress management.
   a. These meetings will happen once a month
   b. The jury encourages them to happen once every two weeks. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

8. The jury strongly recommends [Mark Cohen] to go to the Writing Center before handing in any assignments. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

Resolutions as a whole: (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

Statement on reporting: The jury recommends that this violation is not reported to the other institutions of higher learning. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

Post-Trial:
The trial was not appealed.

Discussion Questions:
1. Do you think addressing the accountability by grade deduction is appropriate under this circumstance?
2. Do you think self-plagiarism should be counted as a violation of the Honor Code? Under this circumstance, to what extent does Mark Cohen’s self-plagiarism change the severity of his violation?