

ABSTRACT

RESEARCH PAPER: Critical Discourse Analysis of Institutions of Higher Education Student Handbook Policies for Sexual Misconduct and Violence

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DEGREE: Master of Arts

COLLEGE: Science and Humanities

DATE: May 2020

PAGES: 64

A staggering number of people are sexually assaulted during their time in college. Campus policies for sexual violence drastically influence campus culture and the aftermath of sexual violence and misconduct. Many other disciplines, ranging from criminology to education to psychology, have studied texts from institutions of higher education for their sexual misconduct and violence policies (Karjane et al.; Pasky McMahon; Richards). This scholarship, however, has neither adequately intersected critical discourse analysis, nor has it examined if these policies subvert and/or perpetuate rape culture. In this study, I perform critical discourse analysis to analyze 13 student handbooks from a clustered, stratified random sample of institutions of higher education student handbooks from a range of institutional size, geographical settings, and residential status from various two- and four-year public and private not-for-profit institutions of higher education. This paper concludes that student handbooks (1) frame college sexual violence around laws instead of around how sexual violence is wrong; (2) are generally exclusive and non-intersectional as well as perpetuates rape myths; and, (3) missing many required policies. By closely examining student handbooks' policies for sexual misconduct and violence, this project sheds new light on how critical discourse analysis can be used to analyze student handbooks for their ideologies as well as

how institutions of higher education (dis)embody rape culture. In order to further dismantle rape culture, IHE should revise their policies to frame as wrong for all realms of sexual violence and misconduct as well as revise policies to be inclusive, intersectional, and actively dispel rape myths.

Keywords: Student Handbooks, Rape Culture, Sexual Violence, Sexual Misconduct,
Critical Discourse Analysis