

ABSTRACT

The discursive management of responsibility for violent acts: A study of excluded secondary students' narratives.

Krishna Seunarinesingh

This study explored the means through which students, who were suspended from school for frequent use of interpersonal violence, attempted to manage responsibility for their acts. Twenty one male students from three high schools were interviewed and a specialised corpus was created with that data, which was then subjected to corpus and discourse analysis.

Collocation and keyword analysis using *WordSmith Tools* (Scott, 1996) revealed that interviewees were primarily concerned with face issues (Brown and Levinson, 1987). They used scalar notions, modal auxiliaries, the Trinidad Creole verb *does*, and semi modals such as *have to*, in order to argue that they had no choice but to use violence against others who provoked them.

Additionally, discourse analysis of five interviews showed that excluded students wanted to avoid becoming victims in a social world they believed to be hostile, provocative and out to harm them. It was concluded that zero tolerance policies for violence will be meaningless unless changes are made to

Discursive management of responsibility

the semiotic environments in which violence is perceived to be an inevitable response to personal affront.

Keywords: violence, school exclusion, specialised corpora, discourse analysis, face.