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STUDENT ATTITUDES TOWARDS CODES OF CONDUCT AND THEIR  
IMPACT ON BEHAVIOR

by  
Jessica H. Smith

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration  
of  
The Graduate School  
at  
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Thesis Chair: Burton R. Sisco, Ed.D.

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## ABSTRACT

Jessica H. Smith  
STUDENT ATTITUDES REGARDING CODES OF CONDUCT AND THEIR  
IMPACT ON BEHAVIOR  
2010/2011  
Burton R. Sisco, Ed.D.  
Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration

The purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes of students towards a code of conduct and their impact on behavior. The study took place during the Fall/Spring 2010-11 academic year at Rowan University in Glassboro, NJ. The subjects of the study were students who had previously been sanctioned for violating the student code of conduct. The survey looked at four factors: demographics of students, knowledge of the code of conduct, attitudes towards the code of conduct and impact on behavior. For a portion of the survey a Likert-type scale of 1-5 was used to gauge student responses where 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree. Data analysis of the students responses showed that in general, students are not as familiar with the code of conduct as they should be and this may be one factor explaining why students feel that the code of conduct does not impact their behavior.

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

Colleges and universities in the United States seek to promote the social, physical, emotional, and philosophical development of students. This can be seen in the mission statements or homepages of the websites in which the institutions emphasize the value of students becoming responsible citizens. Schools over time have sought to encompass many roles while helping to mold students. This task has become increasingly difficult as the student/university relationship has shifted over time. Students are now viewed as adults and universities can no longer play a parental role. Now schools must peruse other ways of guiding their students into model citizens.

One way colleges and universities help students develop is through a student code of conduct. A code of conduct states the policies that the school has in place, the standards and values it seeks to uphold, and specifies the rights, rules, and responsibilities of the students.

#### Statement of the Problem

A common feature found on most college campuses is a code of conduct and an administration which deals with disseminating and enforcing the policy. Some of the services provided include: judicial affairs, hearing boards, campus safety, community services, counseling and advisement centers. A code of conduct specifically lays out the rules and obligations that a student must follow while in school. This typically includes students' rights, policies for the institution, and different sanctions and procedures for any

infractions. Due to the importance of code of conducts at higher education institutions it is invaluable that the policies are continuously reviewed to make sure they are relevant and working.

In order to study the impact of a code of conduct on students at a university, a number of factors were investigated. Rowan University's conduct code was looked at to see its effectiveness and impact on campus climate. Students were used as the sample population in order to study the impact the Code of Conduct has on behavior at Rowan University.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the Student Code of Conduct at Rowan University from the perspective of the students enrolled in the spring 2011 semester, who have been sanctioned by the institution. The study specifically looked at student knowledge of the Student Code of Conduct, student attitudes towards the policy, its influence on personal behavior, and its influence on the campus environment.

#### Significance of the Study

The study looked at the effectiveness of the student code of conduct from the perspective of students. The Student Code of Conduct is one of the most important legal documents a student has with the institution as it states the policies and procedures of the school. The students' knowledge and awareness of the Student Code of Conduct was studied in order to gauge their attitudes and impact on behavior.

#### Assumptions and Limitations

This study took place at Rowan University Main Campus in Glassboro, NJ during the 2010-11 academic year. The study surveyed students enrolled at the institution who

have been sanctioned by the Office of Community Standards and Commuter Services. It examined their knowledge of Rowan's Student Code of Conduct and its influence on behavior. Information gathered is based on of students' attitudes and as such is open to subjective analysis. The number of students surveyed is only a small percentage of Rowan's population and there is no way of knowing if it is reflective of the total population. While the survey tried to use a wide range of students including age, race, gender, school year, and major in order to get a more inclusive picture of the Rowan student population, the study was based on students who agreed to complete the survey.

Another limitation might be students who completed the survey might have had negative interaction with the Student Code of Conduct. A student who has previously gotten in trouble may have a different opinion of the policies at Rowan. Due to their sanctions, they may no longer be students at the institution making it difficult if not impossible to collect data. Also, only a small percentage of Rowan's students were surveyed and this number may not be reflective of the community overall. Finally, there is the potential for researcher bias as I interned for the Office of Community Standards and Commuter Services.

#### Operational Definitions

1. Attitudes: Manner, disposition, feeling, position, etc., with regard to a person or thing; tendency or orientation, esp. of the mind (Dictionary, 2010). This study looks at students' attitudes on Rowan's Code of Conduct.
2. Community Standards and Commuter Services: The mission of the Office of Community Standards and Commuter Services is to articulate to students the standards of behavior expected within the university community. Standards of

student conduct ensure respect for all members of the community and maintenance of a collaborative and learning-centered environment as described in the university's mission statement (Rowan University, 2010). In this study the Office of Community Standards and Commuter Services is responsible for the overseeing and implementing the Student Code of Conduct. Infractions are reported to and dealt with the office.

3. Contract Law: The branch of civil law dealing with the interpretation and enforcement of written agreements between parties (Dictionary, 2010). For this study, contract law refers to the agreement a student has with Rowan University upon enrolling in classes.

4. In Loco Parentis: In place of a parent (Dictionary, 2010). In loco parentis is the term used in reference to universities making decisions for students in place of the parent while they attended the institution.

5. Responsible: Answerable or accountable, as for something within one's power, control, or management (Dictionary, 2011). Students when bought up on sanctions may plead either responsible or not responsible for the charges.

6. Sanction: A provision of a law enacting a penalty for disobedience or reward for obedience (Dictionary, 2011). Students found in violation to the Rowan's Conduct Codes are subject to be sanctioned by the institution's Office of Community Standards and Commuter Services.

7. Students: Students who attended Rowan University main campus in Glassboro, NJ during the 2010-11 academic year.

8. Student Code of Conduct: Rowan University has instituted a Student Code of Conduct to set forth the standards and expectations that are consistent with its purpose as an educational institution. The Student Code of Conduct has been developed to guarantee procedural fairness to students when there has been an alleged failure to abide by Rowan University's policies and regulations (Rowan University Handbook, 2010).

### Research Questions

This study examined the following research questions:

1. How much knowledge do selected students have about the Student Code of Conduct at Rowan University?
2. What are attitudes of selected students towards the Student Code of Conduct at Rowan University?
3. Does the Student Code of Conduct influence the behavior of selected students?

### Overview of the Study

Chapter II provides a literature review for the study. The review starts with a brief history of higher education in America focusing on the student/university relationship. It discusses the transition from in loco parentis to contract law. The study also looks at student code of conducts particularly at Rowan University. Finally, the review looks at Hoekema's Student Discipline theory in relation to the Student Code of Conduct.

Chapter III presents the study's methodology and procedures. In this chapter the context of the study, the population, sample, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis are presented.

Chapter IV presents the findings of the study. The narrative and statistical analysis gathered are then compared to the research questions in Chapter I.

Chapter V summarizes the study, discusses findings in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter II, and offers recommendations for practice and further research.

## CHAPTER II

### Review of Literature

#### Introduction

Undergraduates have the unique opportunity to grow both academically and socially in a microcosm in which they can develop and thrive. Universities facilitate this growth by having the students in environments where they can be independent from their parents or guardians while having access to the school resources that, educate, nurture, and provide support; while still maintaining structure for students.

The student code of conduct at universities serves as structure for the students. It is the contract between the school and the students; stating laws that govern the school, maintaining order, and outlining their freedoms and responsibilities. The laws that students are given to follow in school help them to learn how to adhere to laws they will follow throughout their natural life. For this reason a schools code of conduct is very important. It dictates how students should behave, what is expected of them while at school, and what will be expected of them when they graduate. A general working knowledge of the student codes will only help students to better adhere to them rather than being found guilty of infractions.

In this chapter, I discuss the history of universities and the different phases that colleges have gone through in regards to their relationship with students. I then look at the creation of the student code of conducts at schools and its purpose. Next, I look at theories of authority and maturity that students develop in school. Finally, I show a



connection between the student code of conduct, students' awareness of the policy and its effect on their development in school.

### History of Colleges

Higher education in America has been a corner stone in the United States development since the creation of the country itself. European settlers once coming to America began to create institutions based off of those found in Europe (Freeland, 2007) The universities were in place for men and later women, with the purpose of improving themselves through the use of education. Freeland (2007) states:

To advance learning, knowledge and professional practice may appropriately characterize the mission of North American higher education since 1636.

Beginning with the nine colleges of the English Colonies to the approximately 4,000 postsecondary institutions of the present, men and women have struggle to provide opportunities for others to become highly educated. (p. 36)

Higher education in America since its inception has gone through different periods of transition where its purpose, structure, and type of student has changed. Universities were originally seen as parental figures to the students that attended the schools. They were not only responsible for their education, but for their well-being and safety. Freeland (1992) presents this aspect of the student-university relationship when he discusses Harvard, the first higher education institution in America. He states: "The need to regulate student life outside the classroom developed from Harvard's decision to embrace a collegiate lifestyle, albeit imperfectly implemented" (Freeland, 1992, in *The History of Higher Education*, 2007, p. 127). In order to make sure that students were fully

immersed in the schools mission and culture it was therefore important to take responsibility over the students.

The term *in loco parentis* is often used when discussing the role university has in being parental figures for its students. “In the context of higher education institutions, *in loco parentis* means that ‘college authorities’ stand in the place of the parents to the students entrusted in their care” (*Student Rights*, 2007, p. 323). The law case in which the term *in loco parentis* was coined was *Gott v. Berea* (161 S.W at 205). Previously university authority over its students was only assumed. *Gott v. Berea* was the first time that the courts formally recognized the parental authority colleges had over its students. The case cemented the role of the university for its students at that time.

The courts sided with Berea College when a local restaurateur sued the school when it prohibited students from going to the restaurant. The court case as cited by Brigham Young University states:

College authorities in loco parentis concerning the physical and moral welfare and mental training of the pupils, and we are unable to see why to see to that end they may not make any rule or regulation for the government or betterment of their pupils that a parent could for the same purpose. (2007, p. 324)

After the decision was handed down, universities were then officially looked at as parental figures, having all the authority attached with that role. Students in this sense were not looked as adults due to the fact that even at the university level they still were expected to adhere to the university like a guardian in the eyes of the law.

*In loco parentis* in higher education lasted until the 1960s. The United States was going through turmoil at that time. The civil rights movement was taking place as well as

the Vietnam War. Students who participated in the civil rights movement were very influenced by its message and took it back to their schools. Activism grew on campuses as students protested for the rights and freedoms that they felt they were being denied. Students became especially vocal about being seen as adults. Laws in the country were beginning to hold the age of majority to be 18. According to many state and federal laws students were now being seen as adults (Kaplin & Lee, 2007). There began to be a transition on campus as courts started to rule in favor of students being seen as adults with the rights and responsibilities that come with that ruling.

*Dixon v. Alabama State Board of Education* (1961) is the landmark case in higher education often cited when referring to this shift in authority. In the case, students were expelled for participating in civil rights demonstrations without due process. The court sided with the expelled students citing the actions were unconstitutional (*StudentRights*, 2007, p. 326). This decision had major implications for higher education. Kaplin and Lee (2007) state:

The court in this case rejected the notion that education in state schools is a “privilege” to be dispense on whatever conditions the state in its sole discretion deems advisable; it also implicitly rejected the *in loco parentis* concept, under which the law had bestowed on schools all the powers over students that parents had over minor children. (p. 294)

Students were now being seen as adults and as such universities no longer had the free range jurisdiction once granted with *in loco parentis*.

While schools no longer have the authority over the students once granted to them by the courts through *in loco parentis*, the courts have ruled that universities still have a

responsibility to their students in regards to personal safety. *Mullins v. Pine Manor College*, 449 N.E. 2d 331 (Mass.1983) is a case in which a student was attacked and raped on campus. The university was found liable for not providing safe haven for the student. This decision was important because it showed universities have a duty to protect students. Universities when dealing with students must take strides to reasonably protect them or risk being found liable. Cases and laws enacted since then such as *Crime Awareness and Security Act* (1990) also known as the Cleary Act and *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA) further upholds a level of accountability and privacy for students.

The role of universities in students' lives has continued to evolve overtime. Where once schools were looked at as guardian type figures, students today are looked at as adults responsible for their own education. Laws have determined that universities must employ efforts to keep students out of harm's way. Young adults, no matter how many rights and freedoms they are now granted, under certain stipulations remain susceptible to university rule when they decide to become students.

#### Student/University Contract

In higher education, students over the age of 18 are most typically seen as adults by reaching the age of majority. The lowering of the voting age to 18 by the 1971 ratification of the Twenty-Sixth Amendment helped to get many state laws to lower the age of majority (Kaplin & Lee, 2007). The lowering of the voting age to 18 also helped further solidify the notion of students entering schools to be seen as adults.

This idea is important because it allows universities to enter into contracts with the students.

The age-of-majority laws can affect many postsecondary regulations and policies. For example, students at age eighteen may be permitted to enter binding contracts without the need for a cosigner, give medical consent to medical treatment, declare financial independence, or establish a legal residence apart from the parents. (Kaplin & Lee, 2007, pp. 294-5)

Universities can deal with students on a one-to-one level because they are seen as adults and any interaction with the school they should be treated as such.

One of the clearest examples is when a student decides to go to college. By agreeing to attend a certain institution, a student enters into what is considered to be a contract. *Carr v. St. John's University, New York* (N.Y. 1962) is the ruling that set the precedent of student status in regards to contracts. The courts found that when students enroll at private universities, they enter into a contract with the school (N.Y. 1962). Other cases such *Healy v. Larson* 318 N.E. 2d 608 (N.Y. 1974) and *Ross v. Creighton University* (1992) have led courts to take the same stance on student contract status for all types of universities including public.

By entering into this contract both sides are expected to follow the regulations stated. In the case of the university, not only would it be to give the opportunity of an education, but also an informal understanding between the two parties about behavior on campus granting reasonable safety precautions. In order to remain at an institution a student must follow the rules of the university.

The contract that the student enters with the school can be presented in various forms. Mawdsley (2004) states:

Student Handbooks and bulletins form the basis for most contractual litigation between students and colleges. In addition, the college student can include statements found in the application, brochures, syllabi, other publications, and even oral statements made by the faculty and administrators. As long as the statements are specific enough to enforce, courts will treat them as promises and enforce them. (p. 5)

Contracts for students can be in the form of handbooks and conduct codes. When students are accepted into institutions it is then on the basis of following these rules. As long as the rules do not infringe on the students rights, local, state and federal laws, must be followed in order to remain at the university.

#### Code of Conduct

Codes of conduct or student codes are examples of contracts between the university and the student. Bach (2003) in *Students Have Rights, Too* writes:

Most universities have adopted written student conduct codes, or general policies of fairness, which are distributed to the students. Courts have held that schools may not deviate from the express due process protections established in their student conduct codes...as such deviations would violate the implied contractual interest of the student. ( p. 6)

Codes of conduct at universities are integral because they state the expectations that the university has for the student while they are enrolled. The code of conduct must express all of the policies that the school may have in place.

As a school contract, a code of conduct generally holds certain information and is in a written specific way. Mawdsley (2007) states, “Codes of Conduct should be written

clearly and enforced fairly. Colleges should identify the kinds of academic and disciplinary misconduct that could subject to punishment and encourage students to report misconduct specifically identified college officials” and later also says that codes of conduct “...should include safety policies and procedures ...”( p. 13).

In order for codes of contact to be effective and legally enforceable they must be carefully written. *Soglin v. Kaufmann* 418 F.2d. 163 (7<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1969) is often referenced in regards to writing a code of conduct for a university. Students were successfully able to overturn their expulsions by stating that the code of conduct was too vague. Brubacher in *The Courts and Higher Education* cites the court’s decision which said “Disciplinary procedures should be instituted only for the violation of the standards of the conduct defined in advance and published through such means as a student handbook or a generally available body of university regulations” (1971, p. 14). A school can not penalize a student for something that is not covered any article of writing that can be construed as part of the contract.

In the formation of a code of conduct, administrators and university officials should make sure that their codes are legally sound and include all pertinent information. “Three major issues are involved in the drafting or revision of codes of conduct: the types of conduct the code will encompass, the procedures to be used when infractions of the code are alleged, and the sanctions for code violations” (Kaplin & Lee, 2007, p. 410). A good code of conduct should take these three issues and expand upon them so that they fit the universities expectations.

In regards to types of conduct the code will encompass, codes of conduct are usually divided into two categories: academic and disciplinary. In a proper conduct code

a student should be able to look at it and find out what the requirements are for him or her in-and out-of-the classroom. Students should be able to use it as a guide for almost any situations.

It has already been stated that that a code of conduct should also uphold legally in the courts. The codes should be fair and not impede on the rights of the students.

Whether an institution is public or private, it should adopt a student bill of rights that includes the rights protected by the United States Constitution and the constitution of the particular state in which the institution resides, in addition, rights may be added or elaborated upon to meet the particular purposes of a college or university environment. (Bach, 2003, p. 3)

When setting up codes of conduct for academic and discipline issues it is important to make sure that they are impartial. The *1<sup>st</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Amendments, Titles II,III and VI* are just examples of some of the laws university staff members should be aware of when creating, revising, and using a code of conduct. These laws are examples of the laws used to protect the students.

The second major issue code of conducts should include is procedures for infractions. A code of conduct should list procedures that are in place for academic and disciplinary issues. Students should be aware of the process they must go through if they make an infraction. Specifically, a code of conduct should make a student aware of the fact they are entitled to some form of *due process*. *Due Process* is granted by the 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the *Bill of Rights* to US citizens under the constitution. It refers to the government being prohibited from depriving a person of life liberty or property without



certain protections particularly procedural protections of notice of allegations and a hearing (Kaplin & Lee).

*Goss v. Lopez* 419 U.S. at 581 specifically refers to higher education and students rights to due process. As cited by Kaplin & Lee in *The Law of Higher Education*, the court stated in *Goss v. Lopez* that:

We do not believe that school authorities must be totally free from notice and hearing requirements...<The> student<must> be given oral or written notice of charges against him and, if he denies them, an explanation of the evidence the authorities have and an opportunity to present his side of the story. The <Due Process> Clause requires at least these rudimentary precautions against unfair or mistaken findings of misconduct and arbitrary exclusion from school. (2007, p. 460)

Universities have the responsibility to afford their students due process when they face infractions. This requires notice to the students on possible violations of the conduct code as well as the chance to present their side of the case. “A student conduct code which provides adequate *due process* must ensure that an accused student receives adequate notice, a fair hearing, the right to cross-examine witnesses, the right to be represented by counsel, the right to an open hearing and a fair evidentiary standard of proof” (Bach, 2003, p. 30).

To afford students *due process* most institutions have set up hearing boards. “Disciplinary hearing boards, or judicial tribunals, are a common feature in many campus systems” (Dannells, 1997, p. 61). Varying at different institutions, hearing boards may be comprised up of impartial students, faculty, and staff advisors. Bach agrees with this

when he states “These committees often consist of student, faculty, and administrative members, and are chaired by a predetermined member...this type of committee, made up if a cross-section of the campus community, at least gives the perception of being unbiased and fair” (p. 18). Following guidelines set in the code of conduct the members of the board have set procedures to hearing and ruling on university cases.

When a decision is reach the hearing board must adhere to the third major rule of conduct codes which refers to sanctions.

Once a student has been judged to have violated a rule of an institution’s code of conduct, the institutional response will generally fall in one of the three categories: punitive (commonly called “sanctions”), rehabilitative (educational and developmental are more popular terms today) and environmental (actions directed at external causes. (Dannells, 1997, p. 63)

Depending on the offense there are varying degrees in which a student who has been found guilty can be reprimanded. All possible sanctions with descriptions should be in the code of conduct for any student to reference; allowing students the opportunity to be aware of possible actions from the school for breaking any codes.

#### Rowan University Student Code of Conduct

Rowan University has a Student Code of Conduct. This code of conduct can be considered a contract for students. The Student of Code of Conduct is published in the *Student Handbook & Planner*; an annual handbook distributed and available to students, faculty, and staff on campus. On the first page of the handbook it comes with an advisory to students which states:

The Rowan University Handbook provides an overview of policies and practices

governing undergraduate work at the institution. The University expects students access and review this Handbook in order to remain informed of rules, regulations, policies and practices in the Rowan Catalog or issued by the faculty, administration and the Rowan University Board of Trustees. (Rowan University 2010-2010 Student Handbook & Planner, 2010)

This note at the beginning of the handbook serves as a way to inform students of policies and procedures, and the importance of being aware of them.

The handbook is reviewed and enforced by the Office of Community Standards and Commuter Services which is in the Division of Student Affairs. Part of the Community Standards mission is to "... articulate to the students the standards of behavior expected within the University community"(Rowan 2010-2011 Student Handbook & Planner, 2010, p. 24). One of the major components to the office is its work with the Student Code of Conduct and all that it encompasses. Some of its responsibilities include: reviewing and managing university policies and overseeing university hearing board meetings and officers. At Rowan all issues dealing with the Student Code of Conduct are referred back to the office, from the writing of the codes, to handling of sanctions, to sanctions for student infractions.

Due to the nature of a Code of Conduct and its importance to an institution, the codes should be constantly reviewed and updated. This is to make sure that the codes are fair, legally enforceable, and relevant. Periodically the code is reviewed and changed when deemed necessary. This enables the university to have the most up to date and useful code of conduct.

The actual Student Code of Conduct is divided into sections. The two major sections discuss Academics and Discipline. In each of these sections, a description provided of the codes, procedures, sanctions and rights of the students. The Student of Conduct also has codes in regards to on-campus and off-campus activities. The off-campus policy states:

Rowan University will discipline student Code of Conduct violations committed off-campus when the Associate Vice President for Residential Learning/Dean of Students or designee determines that the conduct has an impact on the educational mission or the interests of the University and/ or the safety and welfare of the University community. (Rowan University 2010-2011 Student Handbook & Planner, 2010, p. 85)

Rowan students are responsible for upholding the Student Codes of Conduct whether they are on-or off-campus. Failing to do so can result in sanctions by the university. This is especially true when the student is found in violation on both of the Student Code of Conduct and local, state, and federal laws. Infractions on both the university and government level can lead to harsher punishment such as suspension or expulsion due to the nature of the crime. An example of this is *Krasnow v. Virginia Polytechnic Institute*, 551 F. 2d 591 (4<sup>TH</sup> Cir. 1977) in which students were sanctioned for criminal actions off-campus (Kaplin & Lee, 2007).

In order to remain fair and neutral, Rowan has policies in place in regards to non-discrimination. “Rowan affords equal opportunity to all and does not discriminate on the basis of sex race, age, religion, national origin, handicap, sexual orientation, or any other protected class in its education programs, activities or employment policies and

practices” (Rowan University 2010-2011 Student Handbook & Planner, 2010, p. 85).

This policy is in place at Rowan to protect all those who work or enrolled at Rowan. It can also be a point of reference for any student who feels discriminated against, who is protected by the policy to file a complaint.

Other important sections in the Student Code of Conduct are its Alcohol and Drug Policies, Sexual Assault, Assault and Harassment policies, residence, parking, free speech and peaceful assembly policies, and finally polices on cheating. These policies are worth noting because students are most commonly sanctioned for violating such rules (Rowan University 2010-2011 Student Handbook & Planner, p. 88).

#### Student Development Theories

“Students must learn how to become responsible citizens and few places are more significant in developing those skills of development than in public schools” (Cambron-McCabe, 2009, p. 1). The same could be said for students attending higher education institutions. The schools help students to develop into productive adults. Codes of conduct are established to help maintain order at universities. They also help to hold students accountable for their actions, similar to laws that govern the United States. Beyond that, +codes of conduct are a way of instilling discipline, morality and ethics into students, all things which help them to become model citizens.

There are multiple theories that are useful when discussing student development and discipline in the university atmosphere. Hoekma’s theory on student discipline, for example, looks at the purpose and goals of code of conducts at universities. This theory is essential to comparing the goals of the university with code of conducts and the outcome of success with the students.

Hoekema's model on student discipline discusses the role of student code of conducts at schools and their goal towards students. Hoekema (1994) discusses the void left from *in Loco Parentis* pertaining to university authority over students and the use of student code of conducts to try to fill that void.

The model of the university or college as fictive parent, clearly, no longer operates in the legal context...In the eyes of the law students are adults, not minors subject to the supervision of an institutional guardian. The university has no special duty of parental care toward them, and it can expect no exemption from the law's scrutiny if its concern for their welfare leads it to infringe their constitutional freedom. (Hoekema, 1994, p. 40)

Universities can no longer act as parental figures in the lives of students. The student code of conduct is, therefore, established as a way to supervise and oversee student actions while simultaneously avoiding any infringement on rights given to the students by the law.

Due to the importance of student code of conducts it is important for universities to review and understand the purpose of their codes. One thing to remember is even if though codes of conduct may differ for one institution to the next, all share similar goals.

Hoekema states:

Even though rules and procedures must reflect local circumstances, the rules may still serve the same ends...overall goals can be articulated in a way that is broad enough to transcend different implementations but specific enough to offer a basis for assessing success. (1994, p. 118)

There are three purposes that all student conduct codes should strive to achieve. The three goals according to Hoekema are to: *Prevent exploitation and harm*, *Promote an atmosphere of free discussion*, and to *nurture a sense of community*. In the student of conduct each code should be able to fall into one or more of these three categories.

Hoekema (1994) discusses the first two categories and generalizes them as ways to try to keep students safe from harm as well as rules that protect students' rights and freedoms while on campus. Examples are but not limited to alcohol/drug policies, sexual harassment and assault, residence life ordinances, off-campus guidelines, discrimination, free speech, and academic freedoms. The third category deals with shaping the character of students. According to Hoekema, when a school tries to *nurture a sense of community* it is essentially trying to promote a campus environment in which its regulations, beliefs, and overall school culture would reflect a place where a profound moral character can be cultivated. "The university can and should seek to create an atmosphere characterized by respect, openness, and mutual recognition of both rights and responsibilities" (1994, p. 129).

A person's character has already begun to be shaped by the places, things and people, he or she interacts with before coming to a university. A university has the opportunity to build upon this development: promoting a certain climate and enforcing certain rules that would further reinforce what the school would deem to be upstanding citizens (Hoekema, 1994). A university accomplishes creating this type of atmosphere by putting in place policies that reflect the culture and the schools mission.

A student learns quickly, as much from unspoken signals as from speeches and handbooks what sort of behavior is expected on campus...when cribbing

excessive drinking meet firm and consistent discipline, the students know that they will be held responsible for their actions and academic work. Moreover, the behavior of administrators and faculty can communicate far more than any set of rules. (p. 129)

A school can not just have rules in place they must enforce them and help to truly create an atmosphere reminiscent to the one it strives for in its mission statement.

The way a university may help develop the campus culture through its student of code of conduct is its stance on rules put in place. A school must weigh the importance of each code, and how they deal with infractions. Hoekema states that for the three categories there are three ways in which the school may react. The first is *restrictive* where a school may feel strongly that regulation is necessary. Next the school may act *permissively* where an institution would want to focus on students taking responsibility for their own decisions. Finally a school may act as *directive*, where the school does not use the first two options and looks to oversee the behavior of students another way (Dannells, 1997).

Hoekema (1994) also looks at these three stances a school may take and compares them to how a school may decide what may be an infraction. He goes on to say that the three ways a school can look at an infraction is that “the prohibited conduct is unacceptable on campus, the prohibited conduct can be effectively prevented or deterred and reliable and fair measures of enforcement are available to the institution” (p.149). This could also be looked at with the culture of the school. Students, faculty staff and administrators should be aware of what is and is not acceptable on campus. An example of this could be an alcohol violation. At the institution where an alcohol violation has



taken place, does the university have codes in place about alcohol, what is the purpose of these policies, what does the campus culture say about the use of alcohol, and finally what is the school's stance on alcohol? These are all questions that a university should have concise answers to when dealing with students, campus culture, and code of conducts.

Hoekema's student development theory is relevant to Rowan's code of conduct because it can be used as a tool to assess the policies and practices in place at the university and whether they are successful in helping to create a campus culture outlined in Rowan's mission. Accordingly, the codes put into place are there to create a safe, tolerant environment in which students feel free to learn and interact socially. Any student found in violation of the code of conduct at Rowan should be sanctioned in a way that educates the student on any wrong doing, deters the student from repeating such action, and signifying to the community at large that violations to the code of conduct are not tolerated at the university.

Two studies relevant to Hoekema's theory on student development are Barrett (1992) and Heafitz (2008). Barrett (1992) looked at the history of the judicial process in higher institutions. The study looked at 66 institutions judicial programs to look at the effectiveness. The study also looked at whether the judicial programs at the schools including code of conducts were maintaining the standards set by the council for the advancement of standards in higher education (CAS) guidelines (Barrett, 1992).

The CAS Standards created in 1979 were constructed as a way to monitor universities in order to make sure that schools were continuing to self-evaluate their programs while following the guidelines put in place by CAS (CAS, 2010). Schools are

routinely investigated. Any institution that does not meet CAS standards are threatened with the loss of accreditation and funding. The code of conduct falls under the CAS standards for student conduct programs. All universities must follow the guidelines for the code of conducts which include providing safety to students through procedures and practices as well promoting fairness when responding to problems (CAS Standards for Student Conduct Programs, 2010).

The second study done by Heafitz (2008) looked at the student perception on code of conducts and whether they found the discipline process to be fair and education. The study found that there was a correlation between student attitudes and code of conducts.

Both studies looked at the impact of code of conducts on particular campus across the country. Citing Hoekema (1994), the two studies both try to look at what is the purpose of codes of conducts at institutions and whether they actually fulfill there goals. They look to see the impact of code of conducts on students and the institutions.

#### Conflicts to the Theories

The success or failure of the idea of helping students become good citizens because of polices on campus and how they are enforced relies strictly on the schools code of conduct. First some scholars may argue that student code of conducts do effectively leave the gap left by *in loco parentis*. A student code conduct can not successfully help to build upon a student's character in the same measure as when schools had more authority over what students did.

Second, Hoekema (1994) has stated that in general school codes have similar parameters. Even if this is true, universities are still responsible for making up codes that specifically cater to the school. They are also in charge of making sure everyone enforces

and follows the rules. This leaves room for rules to be unlawful, unnecessary or unenforceable or ineffective. When this happens they can not positively affect the school climate.

#### Summary of the Literature Review

The university's role as a parental figure in student lives has shifted over time. Schools have moved away from having complete authority over its students. Institutions now have a limited scope in overseeing behavior. Student code of conducts have come into place to be contracts that state the expectations and rights of students while in school. Hoekema's Student Discipline theory is valuable because it lays out the purpose of student code of conducts. Aside from being contracts between the student and university, rules help to foster a university culture. Hoekema goes on to say that schools must not only make up codes but enforce them as well. Enforcing the codes lets students know what will be tolerated both socially and academically. This contributes to the creation of a school's overall culture which in turn helps to influence students learning to be responsible citizens. For this reason, student code of conducts when successful can be invaluable in fostering the university's goal of making students into upstanding citizens. In order to judge the success of the code of conducts they must be reviewed. Also, records of sanctions and violations must be investigated. Finally student attitudes must be assessed on the impact of code of conducts on campus, to see whether students knowing the policies in place, previously being subjugated to sanctions or knowing someone who has shapes their behavior.

## CHAPTER III

### Methodology

#### Context of the Study

The study was conducted at Rowan University's main campus located in Glassboro, NJ. Glassboro is a suburban town in south jersey with a population under 20,000. The town is located approximately 30 minutes from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (city-data.com, 2010).

Rowan University was established in 1923 as a normal school. It would later transition into Glassboro State College expanding its mission and the degrees offered. In 1997, it was renamed Rowan University after receiving a generous 100 million dollar donation from Henry and Betty Rowan. The school has now grown from being a teachers college to offering numerous degrees in other programs, at the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral level. The school has become renowned for its engineering program and in 2009 Rowan announced plans to open a Medical school in conjunction with Cooper Medical Hospital (About Rowan University, 2010).

Rowan University has over 11,000 students at all of its campuses and participates in NCAA Division III sports (About Rowan University, 2010) *US News and World Report* ranks Rowan as 23 in regional north schools for 2011 (US News & World Report, 2010).

Rowan's main campus is residential with just under 3000 students living on campus. Rowan's students typically commute to campus with many undergraduate

students taking residence in nearby apartments and homes that surround the university. Students who have to commute further typically average under one hour travel time each way. The students who live off campus in Glassboro are not isolated, due to the fact that the town is residential. Students and Glassboro residences live in close proximity to one another.

Rowan University has a Student Code of Conduct located in the Student Handbook and is available online on the school website. The Student Code of Conduct is updated and made available annually to students. The Office of Community Standards and Commuter Services oversees the Student Code of Conduct. This entails reviewing and revising the policies, conducting disciplinary hearings and sanctioning students on violations of the code of conduct (Community Standards and Commuter Services, 2010).

#### Population and Sample Selection

The target population was students enrolled at Rowan University. Students were specifically looked at from the main campus due to their availability to receive and complete a survey. The study surveyed students who had been previously sanctioned by the Office of Community Standards and Commuter Services during the fall 2010 semester. It was felt that students, who were previously sanctioned by the university, would have more awareness of the code of conduct. The study sought to be reflective of the population that attends Rowan. This includes but is not limited to race, gender, age, major, and class year. The convenience sample was students who attended Rowan University and worked with the Office of Community Standards and Commuter Services. They were selected because of their availability to take the survey, their status as students at the institution, and their knowledge of the student code of conduct. For the fall

semester over 300 students were sanctioned by the Office of Community Standards and Commuter Services. Those students were selected to receive the survey.

### Instrumentation

The instrument used to assess students' attitudes of the Student Code of Conduct at Rowan University was adapted from two previous studies. In the first study, student perception and experience with the college discipline process was investigated (Heafitz, 2008). The second survey specifically targeted students who were already sanctioned to get their opinion on the discipline process (Mullane, 1999). These two surveys were reviewed and modified in order to fit the purpose of the study. They were originally selected to use because the studies were similar to this study.

The students in the study were given the revised survey (Appendix B). It contained 45 items which were divided into four parts. The first part of the survey asked for background information. A Likert style scale was used for the final three sections of the survey. It used a scale with SA=strongly agree, A=agree, N=neutral, D=disagree and SD=strongly disagree. The second part of the survey asked students about their knowledge of the Student Code of Conduct. The third sectioned asked the selected students their attitudes towards the code of conduct. The final section of the survey asked students to gauge the code of conduct impact on their behavior.

Once the survey was created it was reviewed by Dr. Sisco in order to have it approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The board approved the survey (Appendix A) on February 23, 2011. Following approval, a field test of the survey was given to five people who were students at Rowan University during the 2010/11 academic year. They worked with the Office of Community Standards and Commuter

Services and presented an above average knowledge of Rowan's Student Code of Conduct. This was beneficial because they provided feedback on the quality and validity of the survey. Based on the student responses the survey remained intact with minor changes to grammar and format. The final survey was then tested in order to make sure the survey was reliable. Chronbach's Alpha test was calculated and showed an  $r$  coefficient of 0.946, which suggested the instrument was internally consistent.

#### Data Collection

In order to complete the survey a proposal was sent to the IRB for review. Once approved by the board and my advisor, a standard consent form was created and placed at the beginning of the survey (Appendix B). The surveys were distributed during March 2011 to students two ways: online, through an email link to the website Survey Monkey and in person, during Community Standard classes. All surveys were distributed with the permission and help of Joe Mulligan, Director of the Office of Community Standards and Commuter Services. The only criterion for taking the survey was that the subjects were students who fit the previously discussed criteria in the population section. When the surveys were completed they were collected with the consent forms and placed in separate envelopes. The surveys were anonymous and no identifying information was on the actual survey or in the study. Students were given to one week to complete the online surveys. To stimulate interest for students to participate in the survey and yield the highest return rate, the surveys were distributed multiple ways: online and as a paper copy. This was done in order to guarantee that maximum amount of students received the surveys.

## Data Analysis

This study included several independent variables including gender, age, and class year. The first part of the survey was used to gather the information for the independent variables. The second part of the survey included dependent variables on the attitudes of students at Rowan University about the Student Code of Conduct. The information from the dependent variable was based on the independent variables. Results from the information were analyzed using Predictive Analytic Software (PASW). For the study, PASW tabulated frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations.



## CHAPTER IV

### Findings

#### Profile of the Sample

The subjects of the study were students who attended Rowan University in Glassboro, NJ during the 2010-2011 academic year. The population was selected from a pool of students who were brought up for sanctioning during the same year. Of the 842 students who were up for being sanctioned during the Fall 2010 academic school year, 119 students participated in the survey yielding a 14.1 % response rate. Of the 119 students that returned in the survey, 90 students completed the entire survey.

Students who completed the survey were asked to answer a series of demographic questions in section one of the survey. Of the students that participated, 69.7% identified themselves as males, 29.4% identified themselves as females and only one person did not identify gender.

In regards to race and ethnicity, 100 (84%) students said they identified themselves Caucasian/White, six (5%) as African American, two (1.7%) as Latino, two (1.7%) as Asian, four (3.4%) as Multiracial and three (2.5%) as other. The students' identified themselves as being in the age range of 18 or older. Of those students 77 (64.7%) stated they were between the ages of 18-20, 38 (31.9%) said they were between 21-23 years old, two (1.7%) said they were 24 or older and only one student chose not to self-identify by age.

Table 4.1 contains the demographic data on the class year of the students when they participated in the survey. Forty students (33.6%) identified themselves as being freshmen. Twenty-seven (22.7%) students said they were sophomores, 24 (20.2%) juniors, 22 (18.5%) seniors, and only six students (5.0%) did not identify their class year.

Table 4.2 shows where students lived while participating in the survey. Of those who returned the survey, 77 students (64.8%) stated they lived on campus whether in the residential halls or in on-campus apartments. Seven students (5.9%) stated that they lived off-campus outside of Glassboro, NJ. Thirty-two students (25.9%) stated they lived off campus but in Glassboro while only two students did not report their residence.

Table 4.3 and 4.4 shows if students were found responsible when sanctioned, and how many times students were sanctioned. Eighty-four students (70.6%) stated that they were found responsible when being sanctioned. Thirty-three of students (27.7%) stated that they were not found responsible when sanctioned. When asked how times they were sanctioned, the majority of students (43.7%) stated they have only been sanctioned one time. Thirty-three students (27.8%) students stated that they have been sanctioned on more than one occasion.

Table 4.1

*Class Year (N=119)*

<u>Class Year</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>
Freshman	40	33.6
Sophomore	27	22.7
Junior	24	20.2
Senior	22	18.5
No Response	6	5.0

Table 4.2

*Residential Status (N=119)*

<u>Residential Status</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>
On-Campus	77	64.8
Off-Campus Glassboro	32	26.9
Off-Campus Not in Glassboro	7	5.9
No Response	3	2.5

Table 4.3

*Sanctioned (N=119)*

<u>Sanctioned</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>
Found Responsible	84	70.6
Found Not Responsible	33	27.7
No Response	2	1.7

Table 4.4

*Times Sanctioned (N=119)*

<u>Sanctioned</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>
0	32	26.9
1	52	43.7
2	22	18.5
3	7	5.9
4	4	3.4

Analysis of the Data

Research Question 1: How much knowledge do selected students have about the Student Code of Conduct at Rowan University?

The students were given a series of 10 statements about their knowledge of the university's student code of conduct while taking the survey. The items in section two,

appropriately titled *Knowledge of Student Code of Conduct*, varied from overall knowledge of the code of conduct to knowledge of specific sections of the code of conduct. Using a Likert scale of 1-5, students were asked to rate their knowledge responding with either: “strongly agree,” “agree,” “neutral,” “disagree,” or “strongly disagree.” Of the 119 students surveyed, 101 completed the section on knowledge of the student code of conduct.

Table 4.5 provides data on the subjects’ knowledge of the student code of conduct. Ten survey items are rank ordered from highest to lowest level of agreement in the table along with the mean, standard deviation, frequency (*f*), and percentage (%).

The students, when asked about their general knowledge of the student code of conduct community standard off-campus policies overall, responded positively. The majority of students, 42 (35.3%) stated that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “I know the student code of conduct of off-campus policies.” For the same item, 35 students (29.4%) responded as being neutral while 24 (20.2%) students stated that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

Forty-one (33.4 %) of the students strongly agree or agree with the statement: “I know the student code of conduct discrimination and harassment policies.” Thirty-eight (31.9%) students’ responded positively by selecting strongly agreed or agreed to the statement: “I know the student code of conduct assault and violence policies.”

When students were asked, “I know how to access the Student Code of Conduct,” 54 (44.5%) students selected disagreed or strongly disagreed for the statement, 23 (19%) students’ indicated being neutral, while 25 (21%) of the students stated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

Table 4.5

*Knowledge of Student of Code of Conduct (n=101, missing=18)*

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>		<i>Agree</i>		<i>Neutral</i>		<i>Disagree</i>		<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
1. I know the student code of conduct off-campus policies. <i>M</i> = 3.04, <i>SD</i> =1.37	17	14.3	25	21.0	24	20.2	15	12.6	20	16.8
2. I know the student code of conduct discrimination and harassment policies. <i>M</i> = 3.04, <i>SD</i> = 1.33	16	13.4	25	21.0	25	21.0	17	14.3	18	15.1
3. I know the student code of conduct assault and violence policies. <i>M</i> = 2.95, <i>SD</i> =1.40	17	14.3	21	17.6	25	21.0	17	14.3	20	16.8
4. I know how to access the Rowan student code of conduct. <i>M</i> = 2.97, <i>SD</i> =1.38	5	4.2	20	16.8	23	19.3	25	21.0	28	23.5
5. I have looked thoroughly at the student code of conduct. <i>M</i> =2.72, <i>SD</i> = 1.24	16	13.4	23	19.3	27	22.7	12	10.1	23	19.3
6. I know the administrative procedures for violating the student code of conduct. <i>M</i> =2.60, <i>SD</i> =1.20	7	5.9	17	14.3	28	23.5	27	22.7	22	18.5
7. I generally know community standards section of the student code of conduct. <i>M</i> = 2.49, <i>SD</i> = 1.23	8	6.7	21	17.6	29	24.4	22	18.5	20	16.8
8. I know the student code of conduct residential policies. <i>M</i> = 2.47, <i>SD</i> = 1.25	6	5.0	17	14.3	25	21.0	26	21.8	25	21.0
9. I know the student code of conduct drug policies. <i>M</i> = 2.37, <i>SD</i> =1.17	4	3.4	14	11.8	28	23.5	24	20.2	31	26.1
10. I know the student code of conduct alcohol policies. <i>M</i> = 2.26, <i>SD</i> = 1.15	3	2.5	13	10.9	25	21.0	27	22.7	32	26.9

Research Question 2: What are the attitudes of selected students towards the Student Code of Conduct at Rowan University?

In section three of the survey *Attitude towards the Student Code of Conduct* (Table 4.6), students were given 15 statements regarding their attitudes towards the student code of conduct. The same Likert scale used for section two of the survey was also used in this section, in order to gauge student responses. For this part of the survey, 96 students completed the section out of 119 who returned the survey.

The students, when asked about their attitude about the fairness of the student code of conduct, in general responded positively. The majority of the students, 42(35%) responded with agree or strongly agree to the statement, “Overall the student code of conduct is fair.” An additional 29 students (24.4%) students responded neutral. Only seven students (5.9%) responded with strongly disagreed to the statement.

Students were also asked about the specific policies in the code of conduct: off-campus policies, alcohol policies, drug policies, discrimination and harassment policies and administrative procedure policies. The following example yielded the highest response rate. Fifty-one (42.8%) students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “The student code of conduct is fair regarding alcohol polices.” Thirty-five students (29.4%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

Students also had a high response rate to the statement: “Students who are more aware of the student code of conduct policies are less likely to violate them.” Fifty students (52%) stated that they agreed or strongly agree with this statement. Twenty-eight students (23.5%) responded with disagree to the statement while the rest of the students responded with neutral.

Forty-one (34.4%) students answered agree or strongly agree to the statement: “The student code of conduct is fair regarding administrative procedures for violating the student code of conduct.” Twenty-eight (23.6%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

One of the highest response rates for disagree or strongly disagree was to the statement: “The student code of conduct is fair regarding residential living policies.” Fifty-nine students (49.6%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with need for the code of conduct to be reviewed and changed while 23 (19.3%) remained neutral.

Finally when students were asked: “The student code of conduct covers too many things regarding me as a student,” 45 (37.8%) responded with disagree or strongly disagree, while 36 students (30.3%) answered neutral. The response rate was similar when students were asked: “The student code of conduct covers everything relevant to me as a student.” Thirty-nine students (32.8%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, while 36 (30.3%) responded with neutral.

When asked whether they felt that the conduct policies “easy to understand,” the student response rate generally responded as neutral. The results showed 43 (36.1%) appearing neutral, while the rest of the results were evenly divided with 27 (22.7%) of students agreeing or strongly agreeing, and 28 (23.6%) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement.

Table 4.6

*Attitude towards the Student of Code of Conduct (n=96)*

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>		<i>Agree</i>		<i>Neutral</i>		<i>Disagree</i>		<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
1. Overall the student code of conduct is fair. <i>M</i> =3.50, <i>SD</i> =1.23	19	16.0	23	19.3	29	24.4	18	15.1	7	5.9
2. The student code of conduct is fair regarding alcohol policies. <i>M</i> = 3.36, <i>SD</i> =1.35	25	21.0	26	21.8	14	11.8	21	17.6	10	8.4
3. Students who are aware of the student code of conduct policies are less likely to violate them. <i>M</i> =3.30, <i>SD</i> =1.20	23	19.3	27	22.7	18	15.1	11	9.2	17	14.3
4. The student code of conduct is fair regarding administrative procedures for violating the student code of conduct. <i>M</i> =3.20, <i>SD</i> =1.35	21	17.6	20	16.8	25	21.0	19	16.0	9	7.6
5. The student code of conduct is fair regarding residential living policies. <i>M</i> = 3.04, <i>SD</i> = 1.13	13	10.9	14	11.8	43	36.1	16	13.4	10	8.4
6. The code of conduct is easy to understand <i>M</i> =2.98, <i>SD</i> = 1.69	13	10.9	13	10.9	41	34.5	17	14.3	12	10.1
7. The student code of conduct is fair regarding drug policies. <i>M</i> = 2.95, <i>SD</i> =1.36	17	14.3	15	12.6	29	24.4	17	14.3	17	14.3
8. The student code of conduct policies help promote a safe environment. <i>M</i> =2.95, <i>SD</i> =1.20	12	10.1	18	15.1	31	26.1	23	19.3	12	10.1
9. The student code of conduct covers everything relevant to me as a student. <i>M</i> = 2.70, <i>SD</i> = 1.13	7	5.9	13	10.9	36	30.3	25	21.0	14	11.8
10. The student code of conduct is accessible to students. <i>M</i> = 2.65 <i>SD</i> =1.24	8	6.7	17	14.3	25	21.0	25	21.0	25	21.0
11. The student code of conduct is fair regarding assault and violence policies <i>M</i> =2.47, <i>SD</i> =1.08	5	4.2	6	5.0	40	33.6	24	20.2	20	16.8
12. The student code of conduct over reaches its authority over students. <i>M</i> = 2.25, <i>SD</i> = 1.31	8	6.7	8	6.7	23	19.3	20	16.8	35	29.4
13. The student code of conduct needs to be reviewed and changed. <i>M</i> = 2.14, <i>SD</i> = 1.24	6	5.0	7	5.9	23	19.3	20	16.8	39	32.8
14. The student code of conduct is fair regarding discrimination and harassment policies. <i>M</i> = 2.45, <i>SD</i> = .99	3	2.5	5	4.2	45	37.8	24	20.2	18	15.1
15. The student code of conduct covers too many things regarding me as a student <i>M</i> =2.53, <i>SD</i> =1.09	5	4.2	10	8.4	36	30.3	25	21.0	20	16.8



Research Question 3: Does the Student Code of Conduct influence the behavior of selected students?

The final research question looked at whether the student code of conduct impacted student behavior (Table 4.7). Students who participated in the survey were given eight items related to this in section four of the survey under *Impact on Behavior of Students*. Similar to the previous two sections, a Likert scale was used to measure the response rate of the students. Of the 119 students who returned the survey, 90 (75.6%) completed this section.

The students, when asked if they had prior knowledge of the code they were sanctioned for, generally responded positively. Forty-six (38.6) students agreed to strongly agreed with the statement “I knew the exact student conduct code that I was being sanctioned for before I violated it,” while 19(16) disagreed to strongly disagreed.

When students were asked: “Being sanctioned for a violation of the student code of conduct has no impact on my behavior,” 40 (33.5%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (Table 4.7). Comparatively, 25 (21%) students disagreed with the statement. When students were asked: “I was familiar with the student code of conduct prior to being sanctioned,” 23 (29.3%) responded with disagreed or strongly disagreed, 27 (22.7%) with neutral, and 45 (29.4%) agreed or strongly agreed.

Finally, when asked to answer the following statement: “Knowledge of code of conduct has no impact on my behavior,” the response rate was equal with students who agreed and students who disagreed with the item.

Table 4.7

*Impact on Behavior of Students (n=90)*

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>		<i>Agree</i>		<i>Neutral</i>		<i>Disagree</i>		<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
1. I knew the exact student conduct code that I was being sanctioned before I violated it. <i>M</i> =3.28, <i>SD</i> = 1.50	23	19.3	23	19.3	20	16.8	9	7.6	10	8.4
2. Being sanctioned for violation of the student code of conduct has no impact on my behavior. <i>M</i> = 3.18, <i>SD</i> = 1.29	13	10.9	27	22.7	20	16.8	12	10.1	13	10.9
3. I was familiar with the student code of conduct prior to being sanctioned . <i>M</i> = 3.00 <i>SD</i> =1.39	13	10.9	22	18.5	27	22.7	13	10.9	10	8.4
4. Knowledge of the student code of conduct has no impact on my behavior. <i>M</i> = 2.93, <i>SD</i> = 1.26	10	8.4	22	18.5	26	21.8	16	13.4	16	13.4
5. Overall I feel that knowing the student code of conduct helps me to avoid violating the policies. <i>M</i> = 2.74, <i>SD</i> =1.34	12	10.1	14	11.8	25	21.0	17	14.3	22	18.5
6. Being sanctioned has caused me to act differently. <i>M</i> = 2.53, <i>SD</i> = 1.40	10	8.4	11	9.2	26	21.8	18	15.1	20	16.8
7. Now that I am aware of the student code of conduct I am less likely to violate its policies. <i>M</i> = 2.53, <i>SD</i> = 1.39	11	9.2	9	7.6	26	21.8	19	16.0	21	17.6
8. I am now more aware of the student code of conduct. <i>M</i> = 2.43, <i>SD</i> =1.33	9	7.6	9	7.6	23	19.3	23	19.3	23	19.3

## CHAPTER V

### Summary, Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

#### Summary of the Study

This study investigated student attitudes regarding Rowan University's student code of conduct. The study looked at three aspects: student knowledge of the code of conduct, their attitudes towards it, and the code of conducts impact on behavior. The study also assessed demographic factors (gender, age, class, year, residence). The subjects of the study were full-time undergraduate students at Rowan University, in Glassboro, NJ. The population was selected from a list of students who had been sanctioned by the Office of Community Standards and Commuter Services. The students were sanctioned during the Fall/Spring 2010-11 academic year, for violations to the university student code of conduct.

The four part survey had an anonymous informed consent at the beginning of the instrument, which contained instructions, information pertinent to participating and contact information for any questions the subjects might have. The first part of the survey had 12 items that asked the subject demographic information (race, gender, age, class year), this included asking the subjects about being sanctioned, when did it happen and for what. The following three parts of the instrument were divided into statements about knowledge of the code of conduct, attitudes towards the code of conduct, and its impact on behavior. A Likert-type scale was used for the three sections and had a combined total

of 33 items. Ninety of the 119 surveys were completed and deemed usable for data analysis.

The survey was distributed to students in March 2011 using two methods. The first method was distributing the surveys through an email link which was created on the survey website Survey Monkey. Surveys were also distributed in person to students in the Community Standard classes. The class is conducted for students who have been sanctioned and found responsible for violating certain student codes of conduct. Permission was given to distribute the surveys by the director of the Office of Community Standards and Commuter Services and after review by the Institutional Review Board for Human Research.

Frequency, percentages, means, and standard deviations were the statistics used when analyzing the data. Predictive Analytic Software (PASW) software was used to examine the data.

#### Discussion of the Findings

The goal of this study was to investigate student attitudes towards the student code of conduct. Sanctioned students at the university were the subjects of the study. Their selection was based on first-hand exposure to the student code of conduct. The findings of the surveys distributed were very diverse, yet enlightening in regards to relevance to previous studies on similar subjects and to university code of conducts in general.

Since the abolishment of *in loco parentis*, scholars and administrators have tried to create ways to fill the vacuum left from when institutions acted as parental figures for students. Currently, student codes of conduct try to fill that void. They act as contracts

between the university and students, holding them accountable for their actions, while trying to help mold them into model citizens. The codes of conduct try to accomplish this by making rules and then having penalties for when those rules are not enforced or are broken. For this study, Hoekma's theory on student discipline was looked at closely to see if it was relevant to the Rowan University Student Code of Conduct. Hoekema (1994) essentially stated that there were three main goals that all institutional student code of conducts should have: *prevent harm to the student, create an atmosphere of free discussion, and nurture a sense of community*. To gauge whether it was valid for Rowan, the students' responses reflecting their knowledge, attitudes, and behavior were analyzed.

In part two of the survey students were queried about their knowledge on the code of conduct. It is important to note that a significant number of students responded negatively or neutral when asked if they knew where the student code of conduct was located. Survey results also demonstrated that more students were unaware of the community standards section of the code of conduct than were aware. Questions regarding knowledge about specific policies such as alcohol or drug were almost evenly divided between students who were aware and students who were unaware. From this information there appears to be a problem with students knowing about the code of conduct. Overall, students appear to have difficulty in either: locating the code of conduct or comprehending the code of conduct once located.

In part three of the survey, the subjects were asked their attitudes towards the code of conducts. When asked whether students felt that the policies and codes for the student code of conduct were fair, the majority of students, responded positively or neutral for policies regarding residential living, alcohol, drugs, and administrative

procedures. When asked if the student code of conduct should be reviewed or changed the majority of the students responded that it did not need to be changed or that they were neutral about the subject. While in some responses, students reported that they felt some of the Rowan University policies should be changed. Overall, the students responded either positively or neutral when discussing the fairness of the code of conduct. Thus, it appears that once students are aware of the rules and violations they feel that the actual code of conduct is fair.

For the final section of the survey, subjects were asked if the code of conduct impacted behavior. It is important to note that when students were asked whether being sanctioned had impacted their behavior, more students responded that it did not or that they were neutral than those who said that it did impact behavior. More subjects also responded negatively when asked if now that they were more aware of code of conduct of conduct, they were less likely to violate the code. These results suggest that being sanctioned has not deterred some of the subjects from previous behavior which lead them to being sanctioned.

Thus, it appears that the Rowan University student code of conduct does not fulfill all of Hoekema's (1994) goals. When comparing the results of the surveys' with Hoekema's theory, Rowan's policy only partially meets Hoekema's goals. The Rowan student code of conduct strives to prevent harm to students. In the mission statement from the Office of Community Standards and Commuter Services, which oversees the student code of conduct, it states "Standards of the student conduct ensure respect for all members of the community" (Student Handbook, 2010-11, p. 24).

The Office of Community Standards and Commuter Services in reference to Barrett's (1992) study, follows the guidelines set by the *CAS Standards* (2010). The student code of conduct does this to make sure all codes set forth are legal and enforceable under New Jersey law. When students are therefore sanctioned, it is because they have broken a rule in the code of conduct. Disciplinary measures provided are to cure bad behavior and to promote a safer environment for the students at large. Rowan University's Student Code of Conduct in accordance to Barrett's study is effective because it follows the guidelines, set by the *CAS Standards* (2010) that uniformly regulate institutions' discipline processes.

Due to its use of Hoekema's theory on student development, Heafitz (2008) was another study that was reviewed. In the study Heafitz (2008) discovered a correlation between students and discipline. When compared to Heafitz (2008), this study looked at a smaller population of sanctioned students only. Also any correlations discovered while analyzing data were found to be irrelevant to the research questions of this study. Heafitz (2008) study would ultimately be useful in future studies that look at the correlation between students and discipline.

The code of conduct at Rowan as it stands, accomplishes creating rules for students to follow, sanctioning the students when they do not follow the rules, and making sure said rules do not violate the rights of the students. Doing these things helps to make the campus safer while protecting the freedoms students are guaranteed.

The code of conduct falls short in Hoekema's (1994) third goal of *nurturing a sense of community*. According to data, the student code of conduct does not deter students from committing sanctions. This could be for several reasons. As indicated by

the surveys, the students were not well versed in their knowledge of the code of conduct. Knowledge of the code of conduct and understanding of the sanctioning process could be a significant way of decreasing the number of students who get in trouble. Subjects from the survey also said that the sanctions had no impact on behavior. For this reason, sanctions may need to be reviewed and perhaps changed. Alternatives in sanction could also be a way to impact student behavior.

Only when student behavior is changed, can Hoekema's (1994) third goal be achieved. In order to have a *nurturing sense of community*, a student must feel a connection and responsibility towards the community. This can not happen if students do not feel remorse for their actions or continue to violate the student code of conduct. Once behavior is changed students can have a positive effect on the community at large.

#### Conclusions

With cases such as *Gott v. Bera* (161 S.W at 205), the courts put in measures so that schools could be looked at as guardians to students, someone to take responsibility over them. The student code of contact has emerged in higher education as an alternative way to oversee students. No longer are institutions looked at as controlling parents. Instead, universities can be looked at as figures that try to steer students in the right direction. Regulation between students and schools has now come in the form of a contract. Schools set standards and rules for students and then implement punishments when these rules are violated. Similar to rules that govern society, the rules in place at the institution are used to shape the students into model citizens once they leave the institution.



Hoekema' theory on student development and its three goals of code of conducts presents a framework for how codes of conduct should work. They should build a better sense of community and help students to mature into law abiding citizens. Rowan University is similar to other institutions in the fact that it does achieve some of the goals that Hoekema (1994) presented. In order to reach its full potential, the code of conduct and how it is presented and implemented at the institution should be reviewed. If student behavior is not changed, then the code of conduct can never be completely effective according to Hoekema. Once behavior is changed, then and only then can previously sanctioned students become a vital part of the Rowan community.

#### Recommendations for Practice

1. The Office of Community Standards and Commuter Services should look at other institutions for alternative sanctions, such as restorative justice and community service.
2. Rowan University should work to make the code of conduct more visible to students.
3. New students should be required to read the code of conduct and to pass an online test during orientation.
4. The Office of Community Standards and Commuter Services should have students who have been sanctioned fill out questionnaires in order to assess the Student Code of Conduct.
5. The office should update its website to make it more interactive and accessible to students.

6. All Freshmen students should participate in a presentation about community standards during orientation.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

1. In order to collect data, more quantitative data research should be conducted with larger populations.
2. Further research should look at students who have not been sanctioned by the university.
3. Researchers should work closely with the Office of Community Standards to collect data on sanctioned students.
4. Further research should be done to see if there are any correlations with certain demographic factors such as age, race, and academic year.
5. Surveys should be given to students after they have served their sanctions as a mandatory exit requirement.
6. Qualitative research should also be conducted for students and administrators.

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**APPENDIX A**

**Institutional Review Board Approval Letter**



February 23, 2011

Jessica Smith  
7 Somer Hill Place  
Blackwood, NJ 08012

Dear Jessica Smith:

In accordance with the University's IRB policies and 45 CFR 46, the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to inform you that the Rowan University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has exempted your project:

IRB application number: 2011-119

Project Title: Student Attitudes on Code of Contacts and its Impact on Behavior

If you need to make significant modifications to your study, you must notify the IRB immediately. Please reference the above-cited IRB application number in any future communications with our office regarding this research.

If, during your research, you encounter any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects, you must report this immediately to Dr. Harriet Hartman ([hartman@rowan.edu](mailto:hartman@rowan.edu) or call 856-256-4500, ext. 3787) or contact Dr. Gautam Pillay, Associate Provost for Research ([pillay@rowan.edu](mailto:pillay@rowan.edu) or call 856-256-5150).

If you have any administrative questions, please contact Karen Heiser ([heiser@rowan.edu](mailto:heiser@rowan.edu) or 856-256-5150).

Sincerely,

Harriet Hartman, Ph.D.  
Chair, Rowan University IRB

c: Burton Sisco, Educational Leadership, Education Hall

Office of Research  
Bole Hall Annex  
201 Mullica Hill Road  
Glassboro, NJ 08028-1701

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**APPENDIX B**  
**Survey Instrument**



## Code of Conduct Survey

The information presented to you in this voluntary survey is being requested to gain better understanding of your knowledge and attitudes regarding the current Rowan University student code of conduct, for the purpose of master's thesis publication. The data collected from this survey will be used for statistical reporting purposes only. Your responses will remain anonymous and all the data collected will be kept confidential. By completing this survey you are certifying that you are at least 18 years of age or older.

If you have any questions or problems concerning your participation in this study, please contact Jessica Smith at (856) 217-8972( [smithj52@students.rowan.edu](mailto:smithj52@students.rowan.edu)) or Dr. Sisco at 856-256-4500 ext.3717 ([sisco@rowan.edu](mailto:sisco@rowan.edu))

### I. Background Information

**Answer the following questions by circling your answer.**

1. What is your gender?
  - A. Female
  - B. Male
2. What is your racial background?
  - A. African American/Black
  - B. American Indian/Alaskan Native
  - C. Asian/Pacific Islander
  - D. Caucasian/White
  - E. Latina/o
  - F. Other \_\_\_\_\_ (specify)
3. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_ (specify)
4. What is your current academic level?
  - A. Freshman
  - B. Sophomore
  - C. Junior
  - D. Senior
5. What is your residential status?
  - A. On-campus residential hall
  - B. On-campus apartment
  - C. Off-campus (in Glassboro)
  - D. Off-campus (not in Glassboro)
6. Have you ever been sanctioned for a violation to the student code of conduct?
  - A. Yes
  - B. No
7. How many times have you been sanctioned?
  - A. 0
  - B. 1
  - C. 2
  - D. 3
  - E. 4 or more
8. How long has it been since you were last sanctioned?
  - A. 1 year or longer
  - B. 6 months to a year
  - C. 3-6 months
  - D. less than 3 months
  - E. Never been sanctioned

9. What were you last sanctioned for? (circle all that apply)

- A. Alcohol violation
- B. Drug violation
- C. Noise violation
- D. Violence
- E. other

10. If you circled other for the question 9 please specify:

\_\_\_\_\_

11. How were you sanctioned? (circle all that apply)

- A. Fine
- B. Alcohol/Drug/Commuter Standards policy class
- C. Suspension from residential living
- D. Suspension from Rowan
- E. Probation
- F. Other

12. If you circled other for question 11 please specify:

\_\_\_\_\_

## II. Knowledge of Student Code of Conduct

For each statement identified below circle the number that best fits your level of agreement.

SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

Description of survey item	SA	A	N	D	SD
13. I know how to access the Rowan student code of conduct.	5	4	3	2	1
14. I have looked thoroughly at the student code of conduct.	5	4	3	2	1
15. I generally know the community standards section of the student code of conduct.	5	4	3	2	1
16. I know the student code of conduct for off-campus policies.	5	4	3	2	1
17. I know the student code of conduct for alcohol policies.	5	4	3	2	1
18. I know the student code of conduct for drug policies.	5	4	3	2	1
19. I know the student code of conduct for residential living policies.	5	4	3	2	1
20. I know the student code of conduct for discrimination and harassment policies.	5	4	3	2	1
21. I know the student code of conduct for assault and violence policies.	5	4	3	2	1
22. I know the administrative procedures for violating the student codes of conduct.	5	4	3	2	1

### III. Attitude towards the Student Code of Conduct

For each statement identified below circle the number that best fits your level of agreement.

SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

Description of survey item	SA	A	N	D	SD
23. The student code of conduct is easily accessible to students.	5	4	3	2	1
24. The student code of conduct is easy to understand.	5	4	3	2	1
25. The student code of conduct covers everything relevant to me as a student.	5	4	3	2	1
26. The student code of conduct is fair regarding drug policies	5	4	3	2	1
27. The student code of conduct over reaches its authority over students.	5	4	3	2	1
28. The student code of conduct is fair regarding alcohol policies.	5	4	3	2	1
29. The student code of conduct needs to be reviewed and changed.	5	4	3	2	1
30. The student code of conduct is fair regarding residential living policies.	5	4	3	2	1
31. The student code of conduct is fair regarding discrimination and harassment policies.	5	4	3	2	1
32. The student code of conduct is fair regarding assault and violence policies.	5	4	3	2	1
33. The student code of conduct covers too many things regarding me as a student.	5	4	3	2	1
34. The student code of conduct policies help to promote a safer environment.	5	4	3	2	1
35. The student code of conduct is fair regarding administrative procedures for violating the student codes of conduct.	5	4	3	2	1
36. Students who are aware of the student code of conduct policies are less likely to violate them.	5	4	3	2	1
37. Overall the student code of conduct is fair.	5	4	3	2	1

#### IV. Impact on Behavior of Students

For each statement identified below circle the number that best fits your level of agreement.

SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

Description of survey item	SA	A	N	D	SD
38. I was familiar with the student code of conduct prior being sanctioned.	5	4	3	2	1
39. I knew the exact student conduct code that I was being sanctioned for before I violated it.	5	4	3	2	1
40. Being sanctioned has caused me to act differently.	5	4	3	2	1
41. I am now more aware of the student code of conduct.	5	4	3	2	1
42. Now that I am aware of the student code of conduct I am less likely to violate its policies.	5	4	3	2	1
43. Overall I feel that knowing the student code of conduct helps me to avoid violating the policies.	5	4	3	2	1
44. Knowledge of the student code of conduct has no impact on my behavior.	5	4	3	2	1
45. Being sanctioned for violation of the student code of conduct has no impact on my behavior	5	4	3	2	1

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND PARTICIPATION**