Chapter 1

Introduction
On a typical Friday night in Potchefstroom, you can go to Christian Fellowship Church (CFC), the Charismatic Pentecostal church, and there you will find a church abuzz with young people from different walks of life gathered for a Teens Ignited (TI) youth meeting. During 2007 I attended Teens Ignited’s weekly youth meetings. A vibrant youth group with a membership of on average a 100-140 young people, TI is the youth division of Christian Fellowship Church. Pastor Anton Myburg, the leader of TI, had a central goal, namely, creating a space where young people in Potchefstroom can come to learn more about the Christian faith as it intersects with issues related to contemporary youth culture in a fun and interactive way, a goal made evident by the way Friday nights, the main meeting time, were designed.

Friday nights were youth fellowship nights at TI members were encouraged to play sport, participate in interactive discussions on youth-related topics and socialize with their peers. On a typical Friday night the young people arrived between 6pm and 6:30pm, when sports were played. At 6:30pm activity moves to inside the church building for praise and worship, when music was played and the members were encouraged to sing along and dance. At every meeting Myburg engaged the young people in interactive discussions about a wide range of social issues including drug use, family relationships, choosing friends, dating, sexuality etc. and sought to draw on the bible and religious values as the basis for providing directives for how young people should address these issues in their own lives. The combination of topical social issues and religious instruction make TI a good case study for an investigation into the impact of religion on sexual perceptions, practices and sexual-wellbeing of adolescents in contemporary South Africa, which is the central concern of this dissertation.

Research Question
My broad concern in this study is with the relationship between religion and adolescent sexuality; however the research question is tailored around the specific characteristics of Teens Ignited as the case in point.
The central research questions thus are:

- How does the discourse of sexuality at Teens Ignited impact on the perceptions, sexual practices and sexual-wellbeing of adolescents?
- How can the contributions of religion and religious discourse to adolescent sexuality and sexual-wellbeing as reflected at Teens Ignited be strengthened to promote the improved sexual-wellbeing of adolescents at Teens Ignited?

These questions examine the content of the messages provided about sex and sexuality at Teens Ignited, how these messages are communicated and the ways in which these messages shape the sexual lives and sexual-wellbeing of the adolescents who attend TI.

Conceptually, the research questions will be discussed and analysed using a Foucauldian understanding of sexuality as a discursive project, constructed through knowledge that is systematically reproduced to the specific end of exerting power over the sexual behaviour of individuals. Following Foucault’s argument that discourses are potential tools of control that can be subverted through highlighting the often overlooked knowledge and lived experiences of less powerful social actors as they respond to the dominant ideology, these research questions are designed to detail and understand the dominant ideas, messages and sources of power that underlie the discourse of sexuality at Teens Ignited.

Furthermore, the sexual perceptions and practices of TI members form the basis for understanding both the impact of the dominant religious message about sexuality on sexual-wellbeing as experienced by TI members. While this is a study of a particular case, my intention is to contribute to understanding the relationship between the religious discourses of sexuality and the sexual perceptions, behaviour and wellbeing of adolescents as a broad concern in contemporary South Africa.

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To better understand the research question I now turn to discussing the immediate contexts that are the backdrop for this study. In this section I discuss the social composition of TI and outline the particular social and religious character of Potchefstroom, the city wherein CFC is located, which I argue add interesting dimensions to this study into the intersection of religion and sexuality in the lives of adolescents at TI.

**Teens Ignited**

I attended Christian Fellowship Church (CFC) and TI for approximately 11 months beginning April 2007 as a participant observer. CFC is one of the few Charismatic Pentecostal churches in Potchefstroom and has a membership of approximately 500 adults and children. TI was the youth division of CFC that primarily caters for young people aged 13-19 years old. TI was considered an internal department of CFC, but operates largely autonomously, as very few TI members attend the Sunday CFC services and are not expected to be of a Pentecostal background.

Not a complete outsider to Charismatic Pentecostal youth groups, having been a leader of such a group years earlier in Johannesburg, it did not take a long time before I was able to integrate into CFC and TI. During my time as participant observer at TI I was able to build relationships with members, better understand the culture and ethos of the group and was present for many sermons preached and discussions held in formal and informal aspects of the discourse of sexuality at TI. Between April and June 2007 the youth group averaged between 60 and 70 members. Between June and November 2007, attendance rose significantly to on average between 100 and 140 young people every Friday night. This increase was largely due to peer driven evangelistic groups formed by TI members at Potchefstroom Girls High School and Potchefstroom Boys High School, which are the prominent English medium secondary boarding schools in Central Potchefstroom.

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3 In Chapter 2 the broader national contexts related to youth culture, sexuality, sexual-wellbeing and religion are outlined as a part of the overall rationale for this study.
TI during 2007 was 70% males to 30% female. The majority of the group was an even spread across the age range 13-19 with very few members over the age of 20 (mainly assistant leaders). Though a diverse group in some respects, TI members were young people located in the South African youth culture and context, encountering many similar social issues as their peers; issues which undoubtedly include sexual decision-making and wellbeing. TI presented an opportunity to investigate the impact of religious messages about sexuality to young people who represent a range of South African adolescents.

With regard to differences in religious participation among the group, it is important to note that although the influx of particularly young people from Potchefstroom Boys High, I noticed the rise of two distinct but informal groups within TI. One group consists of long standing members who attended the meetings regularly. These TI members were considered by Myburg as representative of the most devoted members of the group with high levels of personal commitment to the religious values at TI. They were also by and large young people who were members of the CFC and are permanent residents of Potchefstroom. Sixty-five percent of participants reported regular attendance of a church on Sundays; however, less than half of these are members of CFC, and report a wide spectrum of denominational affiliations most commonly Methodist, Catholic and Anglican.

Unsurprisingly, these more committed members also make up the leadership contingent of TI. This group of about 30 young people (including the leaders), were also characterized by stronger social ties amongst each other, more concrete and personal relationships with Myburg, and an unwavering respect for Myburg as a leader and spiritual mentor. The leadership also attended separate weekly youth planning meetings, which double up as small group discipleship and mentoring. The larger group consists of mainly boarding students from Potchefstroom Boys High School. A perception held by Myburg and some of the youth leaders is that many of the members from Boys High attend TI do so as a legitimate means of being let out of their hostels on Friday evenings,
thought of as social rather than due to religious commitment. In an interview with Myburg, he identified these members are as less regular in attendance, less likely to fully participate in activities and were not always understood to be devoted in their religious beliefs which according to him brings into question their ability or desire to act on the directives provided within the context of the group.

Regardless of differences among TI members in age, gender, race and religious background and perceived levels of commitment, what they share in are common are the reasons they attend TI at all. When asked to express in their own words why they attended TI meetings the following central themes emerged: (1) a desire to learn more about what they believe (2) to learn about how to behave as Christians (3) to be in a place where they felt that they belonged. The reasons TI members stated for attending the youth group are important as they demonstrate that these young people have a desire to learn from and belong to a religious organisation and do so willingly.

**Potchefstroom**

A small city located in the North West province, 190km west of Johannesburg, Potchefstroom is centered largely on the university campus that is the main feature of the city. Previously an apartheid stronghold, the city centre still has a predominately white Afrikaans population and racial politics are a prominent feature of the social milieu of the city. Potchefstroom is divided into four main areas; Potchefstroom Central, Ikageng, Mohadien and Promosa. Teens Ignited is located in Potchefstroom Central.

Potchefstroom has two striking features which are related to the interface of religion and adolescent sexuality and sexual wellbeing. First, a large number of churches are easily noticeable and on Sundays mornings the streets are abuzz with people driving and

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4 In Chapter Three, evidence of the reasons for attendance at TI is presented fully and each of these reasons are discussed and analysed further.

Potchefstroom has many churches, so it is easy to think how loud those church bells must have been. Potchefstroom has a church for everyone from a Catholic to Methodist to the charismatic His People’s Church. Christianity is the dominant religion in my town.6

This excerpt taken from the essay of a Grade Eight learner in Potchefstroom entitled “Potchefstroom a town to be proud of!” demonstrates the awareness of Christianity by young people in Potchefstroom. The resounding chorus of church bells and the bustling of young people with their bibles in hand on a Sunday morning reinforce the value of religion in the city. Thus it appears to be a good setting wherein to examine the juncture between religious power and young people.

The second feature of Potchefstroom, which is important for this study, is the absence of public discourse concerning the issue of HIV/AIDS in Potchefstroom. The lack of information publicly drawing attention to the HIV/AIDS pandemic facing South Africa as a nation and Potchefstroom as a community is startling. With the exception of one billboard, at the entrance of the city, that interestingly reads “join the partnership against HIV/AIDS, youth must lead the way with information”, billboards, posters and information about HIV/AIDS are not easily noticeable in central Potchefstroom. This is particularly interesting in light of large scale media driven HIV/AIDS campaigns by both government and NGO’s in South Africa.

The importance of HIV messaging could not be stressed more in a province such as the North West where HIV prevalence and risk behaviour appear to be positively correlated. Studies show that from 1995 to 2000 HIV prevalence in the North West province had increased significantly, with the province accounting for 8.3% of national prevalence rates in 1995, with marked increase to 22.9% in 2000, making it the province with the fifth highest prevalence in South Africa. The increases in HIV infection rates are also

According to the National Department of Health, since the beginning of this decade sexual risk behaviour has continued to rise steadily reflect by factors such as the rise in teenage pregnancy increased from 11% in 2001 to 18.4% in 2003; the increased HIV prevalence among women attending antenatal clinics in the province from 26.2% in 2002 to 29.9% for 2003 and reached 31.8% in 2005. Furthermore, in a 2007 household survey testing the perceptions about condom use in the North West province, wherein Potchefstroom is situated, it was found that condom usage was not perceived by participants as practiced regularly in these communities. Of greater concern to the question of adolescent sexual-wellbeing was the widespread perception that young people in the North West Province are known for bad condom use as illustrated in the following quote:

Respondents were specifically asked if they thought young people used condoms: 48% of people responded by saying that youth did not use condoms, 24% were of the opinion that some youth used condoms, 20% said they did use condoms, and 8% did not know (N=50). Reasons mentioned for the lack of condom usage among youth included youth wanting to experiment, alcohol abuse, and youth selling sex for money. One respondent observed: "They just play with it and throw them away."

Added to high levels of risky behaviour is the paucity of recreational activities geared toward adolescents in Potchefstroom. The city is lacking in social activities that could attract adolescents in large numbers. As a city developed around the North-West University Potchefstroom Campus, its most prominent feature and basis for economic activity, most social activities or events are targeted at university aged students, who have

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and seek a particular night life. With the exception of adolescents in Potchefstroom have very few extracurricular activities targeted to meet their needs. This lack lends itself to two outcomes of interest in terms of this study.

First, because of the lack of adolescent friendly activities, youth groups are a noteworthy option as a place for adolescent specific social networking and entertainment. Second, members of Teens Ignited often made reference in discussions about their experiences, both past and present, to so-called ‘underground’ parties that are organized and attended by teenagers in Potchefstroom. Although I was never able to gather much information about the ‘underground’ the implications were of parties that included socializing, dancing, the consumption of alcohol, and the unsupervised meeting of males and females. TI members made clear that both Teens Ignited and the ‘underground’ serve similar purposes for adolescents but exist as a direct opposites in the minds of the youth members as respectively sacred and profane, socially appropriate and inappropriate spaces for meeting.

Thus far I have discussed features of TI and Potchefstroom which contribute to this suitability of this case to the aims of this study. This study aims at understanding the ways in which belonging to a TI shapes adolescent understandings of sexuality and consequently the effects on their sexual well-being socially, emotionally and mentally. In this study I identify the official and common message about sexuality communicated at Teens Ignited, seeking to understand the content of this message, its relevance in context and impact on the sexual perceptions, behaviour and wellbeing of TI members. Through participant observation research, a participant inquiry workshop and a survey questionnaire, the extent to which the discourse of sexuality at TI is understood and shapes the sexual perceptions and practices is illustrated. An analysis of both the discourse and these perceptual and behavioural responses of TI members will show that while the messages communicated within the official discourse of sexuality at TI is known by TI members, there appears to be high levels of ambiguity about the some aspects of the message as well as incidence of disjuncture between discourse and practice.
that may be contributing negatively to the sexual well-being of TI members. However, while factors that may be understood as negative contributors are acknowledged, considering the increasing problems associated with sexual health for adolescents in contemporary South Africa, I argue that there exists a need to mobilize all social structures that are in a position to influence and contribute to the sexual well-being of adolescents and strengthen the positive contributions that these structures can make.

Methodology

In the preceding section I have outlined the research questions that underlie this study into the impact of belonging to Christian youth group to the sexual actions and subsequently the sexual health of adolescents in Potchefstroom and discussed the immediate contexts wherein this case is situated. In order to best tackle the central research questions three key areas of enquiry have been identified. First, I reflect on the sources that inform the sexual choices that adolescent in Potchefstroom make as they impact on their sexual wellbeing. Second, I evaluate the content of the messages about sex provided at the youth group and relative importance these messages hold for the young people. Third, I gauge trends in sexual behaviours among adolescents who attend TI and factors that contribute to their sexual behaviour.

In this section I will outline the research methods that I have employed as well as the challenges I have encountered in the course of conducting this study. The data was gathered over an 11 month period from March 2007 to February 2008 by means of a combination of participant observation, participant inquiry research workshops, a survey questionnaire as well as informal discussions.

Participatory Research Methods

In the study of the role of TI on the sexual health of adolescents in Potchefstroom an account of the complex of methodologies employed as qualitative and quantitative approaches were used. The primary research methods I have selected are Participant Observation Research (POR), Participant Inquiry Research (PIR) and a survey questionnaire. As a participant observer I spent time as an active observer in the field. I
During the course of my participant observation, unstructured interviews and informal discussions were held. Furthermore, I was present at two Friday night programs where topics concerning romantic relationships and sexuality where specifically addressed, which included sermons by Myburg. As a participant observer I was able to access two primary data sets; 1) the sermons about sexuality presented by Myburg which form the basis for the official messaging about sexuality at TI and 2) the conceptual and behavioural responses of TI members to the official messaging, factors which both contribute in some or other ways to the sexuality at TI is constructed and understood.

Being a participant observer afforded me opportunities to better understand the structures, moods and motivations that drive the existence of the group, as well as experience the underlying group dynamics. Epistemologically, participant observation can be described as a research method that reproduces meanings as accurately as possible as it involves an engagement with human reasoning and meaning in the ways and environments that they naturally are created and communicated in. According to Robson, observational methods are most advantages in studies where due to the nature of the topic, data gathering may be negatively affected by asking direct question, he argues that, ē a major advantage of observation as a technique is its directness. You do not ask people about their views, feelings or attitudes; you watch what they do and listen to what they say. 10 The main motivation for this choice of method was based on the sensitive nature of the subject matter.

Given that the research question requires adolescents to speak about a subject as personal as sexuality, a subject that is often regarded as taboo in many public spheres including religions, I realized that it may be awkward for participants to answer questions posed

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Participant observation allowed me the opportunity to gain the trust of the young people. By having informal discussions I was able to collect data in a non-threatening and comfortable manner.

Over and above using methods that would allow me greatest access to the participants and would best facilitate data collection, my aim in the choice of methodologies was also to make create a unique space to discuss adolescent sexuality as experienced at TI that flows from the bottom up, focusing on bringing to the fore the lived experiences and conceptions held by TI members as it interacts with the official messaging about sexuality at TI. My intention was to do research that would have the immediate impact of creating spaces that enable future discussions wherein TI members would discuss the reality of their sexual lives and their understanding of the official message about sexuality at TI toward outcomes of improved sexual-wellbeing among individual members. It is with this in mind that I decided to extend my use of participatory methods beyond observation, toward structured discussion and action in the form of a Participatory Inquiry Workshop.¹²

The Workshops: Participatory Inquiry into Religion and Adolescent Sexual Health (PIRASH)

Using a combination of three participatory frameworks, namely, Participant Action Research (PAR), Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Appreciative Inquiry approaches, a participant inquiry workshop was conducted with TI members. These methods require participants to be an active part in the generation of expert knowledge of the participants and process whereby participants generate and effectively asses existing knowledge they posses.¹³

The Participatory Inquiry into Religious Assets and Sexual Health (PIRASH) is a research tool developed by myself and fellow researchers at Arhap Wits. The African

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¹² See Appendix One.

The Religious Health Assets Programme (Arhap) is an international research collaborative comprising of researchers from a range of African and international universities. The primary research interests of this collaborative in the intersection of Religion and Health, with a focus on Africa a central cite investigation and learning. PIRASH, which was in its second version when used for this study, involves a set of group activities based on a few key questions and themes. The exercises are simple and structured (yet not rigid), and provide a general guideline for the collection and collating of data. Traditionally group discussions for research would be done using focus groups, however, one of the great limitations of using this method is that it is not always possible to ensure that the entire group participate fully or equally, thus the participatory approach.

Participant Action Research
Developed and used largely in social psychology research Participant Action Research is an approach where the researcher recognises a social problem within a community and builds into the research process opportunities for the community members themselves to assist in identifying the possible solutions to the problem and communal actions that can be taken to positively address the problem. Having identified sexual-wellbeing as the primary concern of this study, my aim was to create a focused opportunity for TI as a group to consider how they understand sexuality as individual persons and a collective, and the impact the differences and similarities of their views on sexuality may be contributing to their sexual behaviour.

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15 The Participatory Inquiry Into Religious HealthAssists workshops is one such tool that has been developed and used to great effect in recent World Health Organisation Studies on religion and health conducted in Lesotho and Zambia by the African Religious Health Assets Programme (ARHAP) and is the model on which PIRASH was developed. See PIRANAH: Participatory Inquiry Into Religious Health Assests, Networks and Agency. Pietermaritzburg, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, 2007.
TI members with an opportunity to openly consider what they may think of as messages, perceptions and behaviour that contribute positively to or detract from sexual-wellbeing in their own lives and the lives of their peers. By developing a participatory research tool, I was convening a meeting with a particular agenda. However, it is the power to set the agenda that has been one of the critiques of Participatory Action Research, as it has been thought to still give too much power to the researcher to guide the outcomes of the process.\(^\text{18}\) To counter researcher bias I relied heavily on the six months of participant observation that preceded the workshops as a guideline for setting the questions in the creation of the Participatory Inquiry into Religion and Adolescent Sexual Health (PIRASH). Second, I drew on two more recent developments to participatory approaches, Participant Rural Appraisal and Appreciative Inquiry.

**Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Appreciative Inquiry**

What makes Participatory Rural Appraisal different from PAR is specifically that it seeks to address questions of power directly. First, PRA requires the researcher to approach a community not as one that necessarily or exclusively has a predetermined problem, but as a community that has social capital, such as relationships and knowledge that exist independently of the research process, and as such the process needs to both reflect and depend on these aspects of social life to guide the research process. Second, the research process should not be conceived of as a means toward a predetermined end, but as a means to forefront what a community has, and decide what an optimal end result would be, before developing a plan of action, placing greater emphasis on empowering the participants to act as they see fit to do so.\(^\text{19}\) In developing PIRASH, attention was paid to determining what messages and resources are present and available to TI members and understanding the meanings different people attached to these messages and resources. Moreover, the workshop was designed so that each activity builds in as far as was possible on the information gathered in the previous one, thus decreasing the possibility

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Appreciative Inquiry was a particularly useful approach considering the sensitive nature of the topic and the age of participants as it asserts that 1) the participants are the experts on their lived experiences and 2) it is important for researchers to not only regard data as something that will be given value through analysis, but to reflect the immediate value of the data to participants, focusing on their existing knowledge as assets and asking them to consider the value it has to them in determining future actions. To this end, each activity that formed part of PIRASH ends with a reflective discussion of the data produced in the process of responding to the questions. These discussions provide opportunities for the participants and researcher/s the opportunity to intentionally reflect on the value and implications of the data as it emerged.

Conducting the Workshops

During October 2008, a set of two PIRASH workshops were run at CFC as a part of the Teens Ignited Friday schedule. In the weeks leading up to the first workshop, I introduced the study to the participants, announced the running of the workshops and given the opportunity to invite the TI members to formally be participants at the workshop. Sampling for the study overall was purposive as TI was selected very specifically, however participants at the workshops could not be predetermined due to the varied nature of attendance patterns at the youth group. The workshops were designed around key activities and central questions. As the participant group was made up of adolescents, activities were designed to be interactive and fun, while still ensuring a rigorous process of data recording and collection. The nature of the method seemed well suited to the Teens Ignited environment, and complimented the activity based setup of their meetings. A total of 95 participants attended the sessions.

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21 See Burton, D. 2000. The number of participants was largely inconsistent between the first and second workshops. This is especially interesting in that the first evening-which was the smaller group- participants predominantly where a part of the devout faction (i.e. youth leaders and CFC church members) and the second evening-the big group- participants included a large contingent from the marginal faction.
22 See Appendix One. PIRASH Version 2- The facilitators guide is a document provides a set formula for the replication of the workshops.
Exercise 1 & 2 were focused on gathering information about the content and importance of the official messaging about sexuality at Teens Ignited as experienced by its members, the results of Exercise 2 are set out clearly in Figure 1 and have duly been discussed. The focus of the second workshop shifted to understanding the perceptions and practices of the young people about sex and sexuality in light of these messages. For this purpose three exercises were undertaken at the second workshop. In Exercise 3 a ranking of the conceptions of sex and sexuality as well as the perceptions of sexual behaviour among the group by was established by presenting participants the opportunity to respond to propositions about sex and sexual behaviour. Exercise 4 required participants to discuss and vote on the most appropriate response to scenarios based on possible sexual behaviour of members of TI. Finally participants completed an anonymous questionnaire reporting their own sexual practices. The questionnaire was anonymously and sought to establish the individual and often obscure perceptions and sexual behaviour of the participants.

Access and Limitations
Access to the Teens Ignited meetings and events has formally been granted by the youth leader Pastor Anton Myburg. Pastor Myburg granted me access to youth meetings and activities run by Teens Ignited from April 2007 to February 2008. All the workshop participants signed an individual consent form at the outset of each workshop.

The extent to which adolescents are comfortable discussing sex may vary. These tensions were experience more in relation to the religious space-both in the building and the social relational dynamics. This has been considered in the analysis of the data. As discussing sex and religious messaging about sex in the actual setting where TI meetings happen may have resulted in biases that have to be considered namely the Hawthorn effect and social desirability biases were a major be consideration in the formulation of the

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23 The findings and discussion of exercise 1 follow in the next section.
24 See Appendix One.
Although questions of bias are a strong possibility in this study, particularly when using methods that require public engagement with possibly sensitive information about something as personal as sexuality, I choose to risk possible bias as the benefits of participatory methods, as I have already outlined in this section, in my view add value in that it provides important insights into the social nature of issues and the shared or contested perceptions and experiences.

The importance of choosing optimal methods in any study cannot be overstated. An understanding and reflection on discourse is a key aspect of this study of the intersection of religion, adolescent sexuality and sexual-wellbeing at TI. As such, the participatory methods used in this study have provided direct, systematic, qualitative and quantitative ways of gaining insights into individual and collective impacts of religion and adolescent sexuality and sexual-wellbeing at TI.

Outline of Chapters

The central concern of this study is to understand the intersection between religion and sexuality in the promotion of sexual-wellbeing among South African adolescents. To understand the risks to sexual-wellbeing to adolescents in Potchefstroom; the influence of Teens Ignited as an agent of socialization that impacts of adolescent sexuality and to evaluate the contributions that religion in this context has made. In this dissertation I argue that religion, as illustrated at TI, as an agent of socialization serves as a direct and indirect contributor to shaping the sexual lives of adolescents and so cannot be ignored in an effort to better understand adolescent sexual-wellbeing in contemporary South Africa.

By way of introduction in Chapter One I provided a description of the Teens Ignited and background wherein the study is located. The religious and sexual health contexts immediate to TI are introduced and discussed within the context of the central concern of the study. Furthermore, I outlined the research question as well as highlighting the sub

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Chapter Two outlines the contexts that serve as the backdrop for the rationale for this study. I also critically discuss the literature that frames this discussion about the role of religion in understanding and impacting on adolescent sexuality and sexual-wellbeing in contemporary South Africa.

In Chapter Three the theoretical underpinnings underlying the major concepts related to the study are outlined and critically discussed. In this chapter, three key theoretical frameworks are addressed: sketching cultures of adolescent sexuality in contemporary South Africa; understandings of the WHO definition of sexual health as an alternative to traditional understanding of sexual health; finally, discussing sexuality as a discursive project and the ways in which the complex nature religious power lends itself to this project. The practice of religious power as experienced through Pentecostalism will also be illustrated as it impacts on the nature of the case study. This marks a distinct shift in the argument from the broad intersections to understanding the dynamics and particularities of religious settings to shape sexual perceptions and practices.

Chapter Four goes on to discuss and lay out the key findings of this study. In an effort to understand adolescent responses to religion in the lived experiences of sexuality and the sexual world, an analysis of the religious framework of sexual messaging at TI will be made in relation to the sexual perceptions and practices of TI members. Critically, the points of convergence, disjunction and discontinuities between discourse and practices are examined and the desire for religion in the lives of adolescents will be reflected upon. These will be analyzed in relation to various contexts that adolescents in South Africa are embedded in and that this discourse emerges in relation to popular youth culture, the very nature of sexuality and religious power are some of the contexts and theoretical backdrops that inform this analysis.
In Chapter Five, predominantly drawing on a Foucauldian argument that sexual surveillance, predominantly motivated, are a means of socially regulating sexuality, the impact of Christian discourses of sexuality on the social actions will be examined. The existing official messages about sexuality at TI will be analysed and practical recommendations for how the existing discourse could be mobilized to positively impact on the sexual wellbeing of TI members will be posited. To this end I will make practical recommendations that flow from both the findings and theoretical analysis that form the basis of the central argument. My aim is to use the findings and theoretical contentions of the study to highlight possible strategies for mobilizing religion as a social structure that could contribute to the continued pursuit of sexual wellbeing of adolescents in South Africa.
Chapter 2

Rationale: Youth Culture, Sexuality and Religion in South Africa
To be a young person in contemporary South Africa is to live in a free, non-racial and
democratic country that has made great social, political and economic progress. At the
same time, since the onset of the new democratic South Africa this country's youth have been faced with a number of challenges, one of the primary concerns in this regard being, sexual health. Over and above the physical health risks associated with risky sexual behaviour such as sexually transmitted illness and disease, it is important to bear in mind that it is contextual factors related to social and economic stratification, family structures and other agents of socialization that constitute the environment that shape the sexual perceptions and sexual choices of adolescents. TI members are no different to other young South Africans, facing the same challenges as other youths, and so, their experiences of sexuality and sexual-wellbeing speak to those of a broader population. It is my view that studies on adolescent sexual-wellbeing must address the subject by accounting for the role played by the contextual factors evident in South Africa. Based on high levels of religiosity in South Africa, I consider religion an important factor in this regard.

In this Chapter I discuss the social, political and health contexts that impact at the intersection of religion and adolescent sexuality and develop the rationale for the importance of this study. I make arguments for reasons why this study is both necessary and important in understanding adolescent sexual wellbeing in contemporary South Africa by discussing: 1) adolescence as an age cohort and complex developmental stage, 2) HIV risk and risky sexual behaviour among South African adolescents living in the region with the highest rates of HIV worldwide, 3) religiosity among South African youth, 4) the impact of law and policy on adolescent sexuality and the role of religion in HIV messaging particularly, and 5) the literature on adolescent sexuality that informs and contextualise this study.

**Contemporary Adolescence**

**Defining Adolescence**

The definition of adolescence as a distinct category of youth is not clear. The boundaries for defining adolescence vary as the onset of puberty is variable and psycho-social
developmental stages are not only variable but also highly contested across societal and cultural boundaries. According to UNFPA the term adolescence refers to the person ranging from age 10 to 19 year old. However other terms overlap the age boundaries and contribute to the ambiguity of the term. Again referring to UNFPA, youth as a group are considered 15 to 24 years, young people are 10 to 24 years and the category of children represents all persons from 0 to 18 years of age which makes the terminology confusing however for the purpose of this study adolescence will be considered to be age 10 to 19 years in accordance with the UNFPA definition which covers sufficiently the age ranges of the members of Teens Ignited who are the primary participants in this study.

In my view, the narrow definitions of young people as reflected in the South African statistics and policies regarding sexual health are problematic as it veils the magnitude of the problems associated with adolescent sexuality in particular. The move away from defining young people as a broad category of 15 to 24 is challenged in this study by the fact that the contexts and developmental needs of adolescents will continue to be addressed undermined and insufficiently addressed.

Adolescence as it is said to represent a period of transition neither fully one nor the other between childhood and adulthood. It is a point within evolution where decisions and action, pattern the progress of their lives. It is thus important to understand adolescence as a developmental stage. I have chosen to understand the developmental aspects of adolescence by examining the psycho-social developmental theory of Erik Erikson and by discussing the concept of risk-taking practices associated with adolescent groups. According to Erikson the adolescent development stage is marked by two crisis types that need resolution during adolescence; identity and intimacy and importantly for

28 See UNFPA, 2007b.
29 Various statistics and policies related to adolescents in the South African context are discussed in subsequent section in this Chapter.
Negotiating Identity, Religion, Intimacy and Sexuality during Adolescence

In South Africa young people actively seek out structures that encourage peer group identities. According to Rustenburg et al., South African adolescents regard community ties and social relationships with family, and friends as important. Moreover adolescents report that they seek perceptions and directives about sexuality from their closest social networks, in the case of TI I argue that religion presents one such social network. The external structures that young people seek direction from are likely to present different perspectives and information that will influence how they navigate decision making that will influence their growing sense of self and their behavioural choices. I argue that religion and sexuality as social constructs are closely related to adolescence as a developmental stage.

During adolescence identity is most crucially negotiated because adolescents are moving away from the influence of their parents and family as the primary setting of socialisation and are encountering a world of people with different backgrounds and belief systems which provides new options. Consequently, adolescent embrace or reject the values that were presented during childhood, make choices that will have positive or negative results in future. Moreover, a noteworthy point is that it is not only an individual identity that is being established, but adolescents have a strong sense of peer/group identity that

31 Duska, R and Whelan, M. 1977. Moral Development. New York: Macmillan Publishers. Human developmental theories are largely the domain of psychology. While many psychological theories focus on psychological development as a product of micro leveled, primary socialization, Erikson’s psycho-social leans to a more sociological approach as it attempts to explain the impacts of and interactions between the individual and their social world in light of what are considered secondary socialization factors on individual development process.


that of the individual. Often adolescents need a place able to influence the behaviour of others and choices concerning everything from clothing to sexual encounters. This is a significant observation in a discussion on adolescent sexuality, as it leads us to understand that choices about something as personal as sexuality can be influenced by external influences and pressures. If it is possible for adolescent peers to influence each other's sexual choices, it supports an argument for other structures that offer a sense of belonging such as religion to make an impact in this area.

Identity shaping is pivotal during adolescence. While identity development may be regarded as an individual process, individuals negotiate identity in relation to other people and social norms and values through socialisation. Adolescence is a life-stage when individuals are thought to be more very impressionable and when the opinions of others, particularly peers, becomes central to the process of identity shaping. Church-based youth programs provide a peer group that can support this process. Clifford Geertz provides a functional definition of religion that I consider a very comprehensive definition and may be useful for understanding the intersections between religious organizations, and an emphasis on belonging and social identity.

A religion is: (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.

Geertz's definition of religion, describes religion as a structure that systematically impacts on the emotions, perceptions and socio-cultural behaviour of people. Defining religion in terms of the establishment of moods, motivations and a general order of existence assumes religion to be inherently social and invested in social identity formulation. This definition allows us to see how religion can be useful in ascribing

and social identity for adolescents, thus possibly identity, behaviour and more particularly, their sexual behaviour. Being a part of a socially and culturally organized structure provides both a platform for companionship and acceptance that caters to the adolescent need to belong. Although adolescents, due to their developmental stage, are likely to challenge norms, values and authority, the prescriptions of norms and values by religion provides an identity option that is clearly demarcated and thus may make it easier to adopt and thus may serve as a tool to assist the adolescent in resolving the crisis associated with identity.

The peer relationships formed at church-based youth groups not only serve as a platform for generic identity building, but can be mobilised with specific regard to sexuality. In a church-based youth program these peer discussions are tied to largely consistent sets of morals, values and norms that the adolescents that they are able to use to form integrated ways of negotiating sexuality. Because youth programs often run concurrently and in relation to adult congregations, opportunities for increased communication about sex between adults and adolescents, and more importantly between adolescents and their parents. This creation of dialogue is an example of peer support impacting positively on negotiating adolescent sexuality.

Intimacy is the second developmental crisis from Erikson’s theory that I argue is relevant for understanding contemporary adolescence. Although Erikson’s theory suggests that the crisis of intimacy only arises in the latter part of adolescence, even early adulthood, the fact that the debut of sexual intimacy is occurring earlier amongst youth must be factored into the experience of a crisis of intimacy as described by Erikson. In South Africa, young people report low ages of sexual debut with national survey reporting that 3% of youth had their first experience of sexual intercourse by the age of 12 and 20% by the age


that the crisis of intimacy is emerging earlier in life. A crisis of intimacy can be understood as decisions that one needs to make about what kind of intimate relations/relationships to engage in and who these relations/relationships will be with. In terms of adolescent sexuality, what Gillies calls a ‘negotiation of intimacy’ does not occur in a vacuum and certainly in contemporary times does not only require simple interpersonal relational negotiations. Sexuality and intimacy are more complex and macro leveled for adolescents in contemporary settings.

As a part of the project of the modern world sex has not been sidelined but increasingly is a part of mainstream discourses which adolescents engage with. Moreover, adolescents experiencing youth cultures associated with late modernity have literally watched how sexual and social expressions of intimacy have been shifted from the private to the public domain and made accessible to them by the media, technologies and the products of a consumerist culture. South Africa is no different, it can be argued that with increased globalization the South African media overflows with information on sex and sexuality in a more liberal fashion than ever before in its history, and the dissemination of sexual information to adolescents is made easier by various technologies.

In the light of the exposure to sexual content it is not surprising that sex is something that young people speak about and wish to speak about often more than adults do. This is secondary to the hormonal changes that adolescents are dealing with as puberty takes its toll. It is near impossible for adolescents to ignore choices concerning their sexuality and

course, sexually transmitted diseases are deadly and
sexually transmitted diseases are deadly and
best behaviours, it would be foolish to discourage
adolescents, or anyone else for that matter, from consciously engaging with the issues of
sex and sexuality and necessary for various social agencies, with a particular histories of
participating in the construction of sexualities such as religion to actively engage the
contexts young people find themselves in.

Sexual Behaviour and HIV Risk

South Africa has high HIV and AIDS rates and is home to one of the largest populations
living with the disease, with young people and women at greatest risk. Peter Piot,
Executive Director of UNAIDS, argues that the countries where reductions of new HIV
infections have been effective, it is among young people of those populations that
reductions have been most remarkable. Given that young people are the cohort most
vulnerable to new infections; Piot’s insight should not be surprising; the critical nature of
reduction of transmission among young people as a key HIV prevention strategy is the
corollary of the reality that young people are the most vulnerable group to new infections.
This study seeks to provide insights into the complexities that come with being a South
African adolescent with particular reference to the sources of sexuality about sex to
adolescent and the sexual socialization that contributes to their sexual decision-making
construct. As illustrated in Figure 1, Sub-Saharan Africa is estimated to have the largest
number of people currently living with HIV/AIDS worldwide, accounting for 67% of
people infected.

From Disaster to Development? Development Update, Vol.5 No.3, pp. 69-89.
49 World Health Organization. 2009. HIV surveillance, estimates, monitoring and evaluation
Adolescents in South Africa increasingly have to deal with HIV/AIDS as a central part of the social landscape as people under 25 accounts for over half of the reported infections in this region. Moreover, adolescents report regularly having more than one sexual partner and the younger adolescents report a reduced likelihood of condom usage. These and other risky sexual behaviour such as poor condom usage impact negatively on the sexual wellbeing of adolescents and reinforce the need to understand the roles that various social institutions, including religious institutions, may have in the discourse on sexuality to adolescents, as sex is the predominant mode of transmission of HIV.

**A culture of risky behaviour**

South African youth are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS infection due to reportedly high levels of sexual health risk behaviours. Adolescent sexuality in contemporary South Africa as a developing country, is not only complicated by the fact that adolescence is a life stage where people are prone to deviant and risky behaviour, or by the fact that the sexual options available to young people seem to have increased dramatically.

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Adolescence is the time in one's life when decision-making can be at its most destructive and arguably the most telling period about the future of an individual and as an entire generation.\(^{54}\) Planet and Planet argue that risky behaviour amongst adolescents is not an isolated activity in that a large aspect of adolescent culture is based on risk behaviour being normative, when a social group creates a culture wherein risk behaviour becomes normative and meaningful; they then have become not only a society at risk but a society prone to risk.\(^{55}\) Besides sexual activity, two of the most commonplace activities among adolescents are the consumption and abuse of alcohol and drugs. This is not because adolescents are unaware of the danger, but because as social actors they have chosen to take a risk by evaluating their personal chances of actual harm as less than those predicted for the larger cohort. Coupled with the minimized role of adults and their feelings of invulnerability, youth tend to think that "it will never happen to me".\(^{56}\)

Whether it is taking alcohol to prove real manhood or popping an ecstasy pill to outlast your friends on the dance floor, risky behaviour is not rational behavior in the traditional sense. However, risk taking may be a meaningful action; an action that has some kind of social significance.\(^{57}\) This can be applied to risky sexual behaviour as the choice to have intercourse or the choice of sexual partner adolescence are not just stumbled upon, young people are engaging in the decision making processes as much as they are the behaviour. Studies in the U.S have shown that the threat of physical harm is not enough to dramatically change risky sexual behaviour amongst young people.\(^{58}\) These statistics contribute to the increase in the frequency of sexual encounters that is a feature of adolescent sexuality in contemporary.\(^{59}\)


Studies suggest that overall risky sexual behaviour amongst adolescents is not an isolated activity as most aspects of modern adolescent culture are based on risk behaviour being normative. From low levels of condom usage to an notable absence of an understanding of personal risk to disease, the afore mentioned studies demonstrate that although young South Africans exhibit high levels of knowledge about sexual health behaviour, the risk culture of adolescent decrease their sense of personal and collective vulnerability. Even in cases where vulnerability is acknowledged, adolescent perceptions about HIV infection particularly remain unhealthy, as demonstrated by the following quote from Varga:

Many 14-to-19-year-olds in the study were fatalistic about their relationship to HIV infection. A substantial proportion saw themselves as a corrupt generation being punished for their indiscretions through HIV infection and nearly half of those surveyed were almost certain that they themselves would be infected before long.

According to David Harrison the main contextual forces fostering risky sexual actions among young people are coercion, peer pressure, sex-for-money, low self-esteem, pessimism, lack of parental communication, poverty and low educational levels. These are a few of the push factors that motivate sexual decision making for South African adolescents. The need for interventions that seeks to address these structural factors cannot be ignored.

Religiosity among South African Adolescents

Religious freedom is protected by the constitution, because South Africa is a secular state where religion is separate from the functioning of the state. With the increase in consumerist cultures, previous sites of youth activity such as the churches or sports field are being exchanged for more desired venues for social exchange like shopping malls, arcades and illustrious night clubs as part of a growing global youth culture of

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61 See Varga, C. A. 1997, p.3.
62 Harrison, D as cited in King, J. 2003. In addition to these predictors of risk behaviour according to Pettifor, A. E. et.al. 2005a, urban youth are also more likely to participate in sexually risky behaviour than their rural counterparts.
In the light of the impact of globalization on youth culture, it should follow that religion would become less important in the lives of adolescents, yet this does not appear to be the case in South Africa.

The pervasiveness of religious presence can be seen in the lives of South African youth. According to the Community Agency for Social Equity (CASE), church is the second most popular organisation that South African youth are affiliate themselves to, with only sporting activities being more popular. This is not too surprising in light of the national census revealing that 75% of all South Africans report a religious affiliation. Christianity is the predominant religion, with 82% of religious South Africans report an affiliation to at least one of the many Christian denominations. While it may be argued that religious affiliation does not implicitly indicate whether or not people are practicing their reported religious beliefs, according to Davie the effects of the phenomenon of ‘believing without belonging’ should not be underestimated. She argues that latent religiosity that has survived secularism can and should be mobilised at times of crisis in the lives of individuals or the history of a society.

More specifically, a high level of religiosity among South African youth has important implications for the rationale that underlies this dissertation. I argue that if it is the case that religion is a social setting that South African youth choose to affiliate to, if poses a possible opportunity for interventions regarding sexual-wellbeing.

Stayton makes this argument more explicitly when he posits that:

Religious settings provide a great potential for sexuality education within a value framework. A helpful curriculum will include the meaning of sexuality; developing a positive concept of sexuality, and a healthy sexual identity; present

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Here Stayton suggests a holistic formula for effective sexual health messaging to adolescents that includes the circumscribing of meaning, shaping of identity, reinforcement of practical health messages and social health, a good model for creating a discourse of sexual health. Stayton suggests that religious settings are optimally placed to adopt a multi-dimensional approach to messaging, as attempts are made to include a moral and spiritual base for sexual decision making, in a quest to impact on motivation of sexual decisions should address biomedical and social factors if they are to make the desired impact.

Policy and the role of Religion in HIV messaging

The sexual health crisis in contemporary South Africa has brought adolescent sexuality to the forefront for regulation from multiple spheres of society. In this section I explore the ways in which the State has sought to regulate sexuality among young people, the ways in which the State through law and policy has attempted to institutionalize adolescent sexuality autonomously from other social institutions such as religion.

This brings two points to the fore as we consider issues at the intersection of religion and adolescent sexual-wellbeing: first there are competing discursive projects seeking to regulate and impact upon the sexual lives of South African youths; second, the modern imperative to institutionalize aspects of social life as well as the secularist paradigm wherein modern life is constructed seems to leave little room for religion to be understood as an agent of sexual regulation in the lives of South African youths and the ways in which religious contributions can best be incorporated into a broader societal response to problems related to sexual-wellbeing.

Sexual Regulation through Law

Through the constitution and legislature made two decisive changes that are worth noting as having implications on the sexual and sexual health choices of South African adolescents. An amendment to the Children's Act No 38 of 2005 in July of 2007 makes it possible for adolescents as young as 12-years-old access any surgical procedures including the termination of pregnancy without parental consent. The age of consent for HIV testing and access to contraception was also reduced from 14 to 12. 69 Steve Swarts argues that these and other constitutional changes (including those relating to same sex-marriages) reflect a greater crisis of morality and an attack on Christian values in contemporary South Africa. 70 Supporters of this change have cited risky sexual behaviour among children and adolescents at younger ages and the need to protect children and teens recognizing the realities of cultures of sexuality amongst young people. 71 Ultimately, through these changes the government’s role in influencing the sexual health choices of adolescents is illustrated. However, the state has also made changes that have an even more direct impact on the sexual practices of South African adolescents.

In December 2007, Parliament passed the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act No. 32 of 2007 which fixed the age of consent for everyone at 16. 72 The implications of this law for the sexual practices of young people under the age of 16 is that it directly prohibited and effectively criminalized all intimate physical acts such as kissing and fondling by adolescents aged 15 and under. This is an unprecedented law, and is the most direct and forceful exertion of power by the state to regulate adolescent sexuality. The response from affected adolescents was both immediate and vocal. Demonstrations, some in the form of public kiss-a-thons were accompanied by a media outcry against the law by the adolescents themselves. 73 The creation of laws to

72 See De Vos, P. 2008.
73 See De Vos, P. 2008.
I have already argued that adolescence is a developmental stage characterized by an interpersonal crisis of identity and intimacy. In addition to the interpersonal negotiations that impact on adolescent sexuality I have outlined social structures such as law and the State and discussed examples of how these structures seek to exert power over sexual decision making. The active resistance to the laws as discussed in this section is indicative of the agency adolescents have to respond to structures seeking to act upon the sexuality of young South Africans, this despite the complex of different and competing discourses of sexuality they encounter.

As discussed earlier in this Chapter, adolescent sexual-wellbeing is under threat in contemporary South Africa. Adolescents at Teens Ignited and many other adolescents are faced with the reality of challenges related to sexual-wellbeing. The combination of psychosocial and structural factors outlined thus far in this Chapter that South African adolescents encounter are an important rationale for this study as it highlights the need to understand sexuality and sexual-wellbeing as on the one hand it is an interpersonal struggle, however, sexuality is also located in the social impacted on by structures and power external to the self. As discussed earlier in this Chapter, religion as defined by Geertz conceives of religion as a social structure that seeks to give meaning to aspects of the self and has the power to shape the motivations and behaviour of individual actors. With this in mind, considering the high levels of religiosity among South African youth, questions should be raised about the role of religion in response to the challenges associated with adolescent sexuality and sexual-wellbeing.

Youth, Religion and HIV Policy

The South African government in its 2007 National AIDS Strategic Plan (NASP) has highlighted the high levels of risk for young people. The NASP highlights prevention strategies for young people as a critical feature of its plan. Central among these are two strategies: revisiting existing educational programmes among schools and the support of
NGO youth awareness and prevention campaigns. However, religion is absent from the religiosity reported over the last 12 years in South Africa. James Cochrane argues that researchers and policy makers in public health have suffered from religious blindness not taking into account the contributions religious organizations and beliefs systems could make. Moreover, Cochrane notes that particularly in the case of HIV/AIDS, religion is mentioned only when highlighting messages that have negatively impacted on health. In addition to religious blindness, another probable reason for this lacuna in the NASP is that while the reality of the religious nature of the population of South Africa is widely known and that sexual abstinence outside of marriage is a central tenet of religions in South Africa, what is much less understood is the specific nature of the impact of religion on the sexual lives of young people, and therefore, any clear understanding of how religious organisations can be supported in their endeavors to prevent the transmission of HIV among young people.

The government has to a certain extent recognised this feature of religious messaging about sexuality, and furthermore, that the continued dissemination of messages about sexuality by religious groups are valuable. For example, in 2005, Dr. Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, the National Minister of Health, urged church leaders to "continue to preach the church's adopted abstinence message to our youth throughout the country." An examination of Teens Ignited provides the opportunity to explore the current and/or possible impact of religion on sexuality and sexual health in a multi-racial, adolescent-specific and religion-focused context and in so doing, make a contribution to the ways in that religion may best be incorporated into youth focused sexual health strategies in future. David Harrison, the CEO of loveLife, has challenged religious leaders and Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) to recognize their role in contribute to and improving the impact of HIV/AIDS messaging to adolescents. Harrison suggests that the most effective

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Where are South African adolescents at? Adolescents are at a specific age (13-19), which brings with it specific psychosocial needs which must be taken into consideration if adolescents are to be reached and assisted in with sexual behavioral decisions that impact on their sexual-wellbeing.

Teens Ignited is a religious organization specifically targeted at young people, designed to consider the social needs and challenges faced at this crucial stage of their lives. TI is thus an organization that is responding to Harrisons call by addressing issues relevant to the lives of South African youth. My intention in this study is to highlight that such religious response do exist and to contribute insights what these contributions are and how to better understand and potentially strengthen religious responses.

Overview of Literature: Adolescent Sexuality in S.A

Thus far I have outlined the rationale for this study highlighting the imperative for understanding adolescent sexual-wellbeing in the context of HIV, the importance of religion in the lives of South Africa adolescents, the attempts by the State to regulate sexual behaviour and the startling absence of religion in HIV policy plans given high levels of religiosity in South Africa. In this section my attention turns to situating this study within the existing body of literature that informs current scholarly thoughts on the adolescent sexual-wellbeing in South Africa. Focusing on the important contributions of the existing literature to the arguments made in this study are underlined and gaps in the literature that this study seeks to address are highlighted.

There is a paucity of research into the intersection of religion and adolescent sexuality draws attention to the need for this study. The literature discussed in this section creates the backdrop for understanding the ways in which youth sexuality has been understood within the broader social context and the impacts of the social construction of sexuality

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Among South Africans, an important vantage point for understanding the impact of belonging to a religious organization on the sexual perceptions, behaviour and wellbeing which is the central concern of this study.

**Youth Sexuality and Sexual-wellbeing**

There are to my mind two categories of studies that directly address adolescent sexuality and sexual-wellbeing in South Africa. The first are studies that examine the ways a particular social factor impacts on risk behaviour and increased rates of sexually transmitted infections, and the second are studies that seek to highlight and explain the gap between knowledge and practice among adolescents with regard to healthy sexual behavior. Studies that seek to understand risk factors are usually focused on identifying those social structures, norms and values that influence sexuality more broadly or specifically are central to youth culture. These studies explore contextual factors that shape people’s perceptions and behaviour regarding sex.

In many communities young people face different challenges related to their sexuality: environment, age, gender, poverty, unemployment, diseases, which have an influence on their perception of the world and themselves. Lack of information and guidance about sex and sexuality make young people vulnerable to physical, emotional and economic exploitation.  

Some of studies have focused understanding the impact of violence, poverty and gender inequality on sexual decision-making and sexual behaviour. These studies correctly show that social inequalities contribute to the increase incidence and prevalence of HIV

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and other sexual transmitted infections among South African youth, flagging the social nature of sexuality and its impact on sexual-wellbeing, a position that this study builds on.

The second category I have identified are studies that signal and seek to explain the gap between knowledge and sexual behaviour among young people. According to the Reproductive Health Research Unit (RHRU) young people report a high general knowledge about HIV/AIDS, however, they severely underestimate the extent to which they are at personal risk of infection. Although mass HIV/AIDS prevention initiatives such as those run by loveLife do exist, the effectiveness of awareness campaigns should not only be measured by the extent to which information is received by adolescents but also by the extent to which a young people are able to convert general messages into behaviour that will improve their sexual health. This study seeks to build on these studies in the following ways: 1) by adding religion to the discussion of social structures that impact on sexuality and sexual-wellbeing and 2) addressing the gap between knowledge and behaviour from the perspective of religion.

A gap I have identified in local and international literature particularly addressing youth sexuality is an absence of direct engagement with the concept sexual health and wellbeing. This is partly due to an overlap between the terms sexual health and reproductive health. While reproductive health outcomes such as pregnancy lend itself easily to issues of adolescent sexuality, this only makes up one aspect of sexual-wellbeing. This study seeks to address questions of sexual health a broad concept that includes psychosocial and environmental influences on sexuality as part of a person’s


84 See fuller discussion of sexual health in Chapter 2.
The rationale of this study into the impact of belonging to a religious organization on the sexual perceptions, practices and wellbeing of adolescents draws on several factors including 1) the crisis of the HIV/AIDS pandemic as it affects young South Africans, 2) the complexity of contemporary adolescence; 3) the continued presence of religion as a characteristic of the adolescent experience in South Africa, and 4) the need that exists to contribute knowledge that seeks to explain and understand religion as it impacts on adolescent sexuality with the view to make critical recommendations toward strengthening existing positive and potential contributions religious organization such as TI could make. In Chapter Three, I discuss the conceptual and theoretical frameworks that make up the primary analytical tools I have used to understand the research question and interpret the findings of this study which will be outlined and discussed in Chapter Four.
Chapter 3
Conceptual Frameworks toward Understanding Sexual-Wellbeing, Discourse, Religious Power and the Body
An exploration of the impact of religion on the sexual perceptions, practices and well-being of TI members, can follow many paths and include a wide range of fields of study including sociology, anthropology, theology, religious studies and health sciences. Furthermore, the theoretical frameworks and concepts that may have bearing on such an exploration are endless, thus defining the specific parameters and focal points of this study is imperative and is the business of this chapter.

In this chapter, three key theoretical concerns that set the context for the addressing the research questions are discussed. First, I discuss the concept of sexual health/well-being as related to the World Health Organization (WHO) definition of sexual health as an alternative to traditional understandings of health and the relevance of the notion of well-being to this study will be clarified. Second, through a Foucauldian lens, the complex nature sexuality as socially contrasted through discourses of power is discussed and reflected on in light of religious power. The practice of religious power as experienced through Pentecostalism will be illustrated as it impacts on the nature of the case study. Finally, the body is discussed as a central feature when considering the intersections between religion and sexuality. I argue for a conception of the body as multifaceted, interrelated and regulated through social structures and power external to individual persons.

**Defining Adolescent Sexual-Wellbeing**

In Chapter Two I discussed important challenges related to sexual health, HIV/AIDS and risky behaviour among adolescents as they contribute to the rationale for this study, little attention has been given to revisiting and developing a better understanding of sexual health. In this section I discuss sexual-wellbeing as a broad concept. A possible reason for the lack of engagement with definitions of sexual health can be traced back to biomedical conceptions of health as inextricably related to illness. Often sexual health has been reduced to measures of reproductive outcomes or the presence or absence of sexually transmitted diseases. This oversimplification of sexual health is evident in the
It is my contention that if the sexual health of adolescents in South Africa today is to be understood and improved, dominant understandings of sexual health must be duly interrogated.

An important aspect of sexual health at the intersection between religion and adolescent sexuality is the understanding of the formative role social structures, norms and values in the production of sexual wellbeing, making necessary studies into the social structures that seek to shape sexuality. In a society in which religious structures, norms and values are as ubiquitous as they are in South Africa, both in the population at large and, in this instance, among young people in particular, the search for sexual health, requires, or to put it more strongly, demands a most careful consideration of the impact of religion on the sexual lives of young people, for good or for ill, and the potential of religion to be a positive factor in the sexual well-being of young people, what assets religion and religious organisations might possess for the promotion of sexual health.

Traditional biomedical models of health emphasize disease and the cure of physical illness as the primary concern, sexual health, particularly in the face of sexually transmitted illnesses could be defined quite narrowly in terms of the absences of illness and positive reproductive outcomes. However, the psycho-social health model, which has challenged the biomedical approach most successfully in the fields of sociology, anthropology and public health, has moved discourses of health toward a preventative and social determinant focused approach to health. In light of the nature of HIV/AIDS this model has become both necessary and useful, locally and abroad, in the formulating of strategies to combat this pandemic. HIV/AIDS discourses have shown that an effective understanding of sexual health must account for the social, economic and political determinants of health. This may explain the popular use the World Health Organization (WHO) definition of sexual health:

Sexual health is a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or

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require a positive and respectful approach to sexuality as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free from coercion, discrimination and violence. For sexual health to be attained and maintained, the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected and fulfilled.  

Through this definition the WHO assert that sexual health cannot be determined or measured solely on the basis of physical indicators but is a function of the quality of the social structures and relationships that, following a psycho-social approach, constitute the social determinants of sexual health. In my view, this definition refers to a multifaceted and holistic sense of well-being is central to sexual experiences that have positive health outcomes. This inference is central to this study. The aim of this investigation into the impact of religion on adolescent sexuality in South Africa, does not seek to measure the impact of religion on physical sexual health outcomes, rather to explore the contributions (positive or negative) religion makes to various dimensions of well-being that underpin sexual decision making.

In light of the negative impacts of HIV on sexual-wellbeing in South Africa, Benn argues that an understanding of healthy sexuality can only be gained through understanding the contexts that underpin people's perceptions and life experiences of sex, and in the South African context that can only be accomplished if at least three frameworks for understanding sex are considered, namely, scientific, religious and cultural paradigms. The WHO in my view does well to account for scientific frameworks by making reference to the absence of illness as implicit to understanding sexual health, as well as cultural frameworks by focusing on the social and emotional impacts of relationship as determinants of sexual health. However, I suggest that considering the religious nature of the South African social landscape the absence of religious and/or spiritual well-being as a part of the landscape of social determinants of sexual health is a weakness of the definition.

87 See World Health Organisation. 2002.
Considering the high levels of religiosity that exists in contemporary South Africa, I argue that the role of religion and its impacts on emotional, mental, social and spiritual well-being needs to be considered and understood within the framework of sexual well-being when applied in the South African context.

Sexuality, Religion and Power

In order for religion or any other social structure to impact on sexual-wellbeing, the first step would be to impact on sexuality. Although the central question of this study is that of the impact of religion on sexual-wellbeing, I acknowledge that it is essentially conceptions and practices of sexuality that determine sexual-wellbeing. Thus, to better understand the intersections between religion and sexual-wellbeing, we must first understand the intersections between religion and sexuality itself. Central to both religion and sexuality are questions of power, thus in this section I discuss theoretical arguments focused on understanding power as related to sexuality and religion and more specifically in light of the case particular to this study, I discuss the dynamics power presented in Pentecostalism as a religious form.

Sexuality as a discursive project

The terms sex and sexuality have, for the purpose of this study, deliberately been kept discreet from each other, as to signify the differences between these interrelated concepts. Sex and sexuality are often mistakenly used inter-changeably. Upon further investigation and consideration of the subject, a basic distinction is apparent. Simply stated sex is a behaviour or set of behaviours, while sexuality is the social construct that socially and culturally regulates sexual behaviour.  

Sexuality is a central aspect of being human throughout life encompasses sex, gender, identities and roles, sexual orientation, erotic pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and exercises thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, practices, roles and relationships. 


In essence, sexuality is the construction, expression and regulation of sexual desires. Although we may construe of it as a social structure itself it is often embodied and institutionalized through other tangible and intangible structures, such as the family, marriage, community, gender, fidelity and religion.

Sigmund Freud argued that the human ‘sex drive’ is one of the most powerful shapers of both identity and behaviour.\(^{92}\) Considering the fact that our bodies are able to spontaneously respond sexually when so stimulated, and that little conscious thought is needed to engage in the physical processes of sexual kissing and intercourse occurring, Freud’s suggestion appear to have merit. Sex, as a physiological process has behavioural effects, it has a somewhat intrinsic power. On the other hand, because sexuality is not biological and so cannot be said to have intrinsic power- at least not power that is universal and natural.

The power of sexuality stems from it being a social construction based on regulation and the establishment of norms and values regarding sex. Lukes, argues that social constructions and institutions are an exercise of power that is driven by the interest of one group over another. Lukes asserts that this power can either be enforced by coercion or the shaping of thoughts through social institutions such as the family, education and religion.\(^{93}\) Regulating sexual perceptions and practices and establishing norms may vary from one society to the next but still has underlying it the exercise of institutionalized power. In this way, social control over sexuality as exerted by (religious) institutions is not seen as a coercive power but rather, derives its repressive tendencies through the very social norms, cultural connotations and self-hoods that it constructs.\(^{94}\)

Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* argues for an understanding of sexuality not only as a series of sexual choices made by individuals but as a product of and response to socially...

Discourse in the way Foucault uses the term refers to the systematic management of knowledge and ideas that have as a product particular ideologies that are presented as truth. Foucault draws attention to the how the ebbs and flows of sexual messages and silences are discourses employed by society and its structures, in an attempt to direct, channel and determine sexual actions. He makes this more explicit by stating about sexuality that:

It appears rather an especially dense transfer point for relations of power: between men and women, young people and old people, parents and offspring, teachers and students, priest and laity, an administration and a population.

Sex and sexuality are embedded in power relations, thus, these relationships can either serve as aids or obstacles in the negotiation of the sexual practices of adolescents. Keeping foremost in our minds that sex is social and sexuality is a social construct, understanding the social structures that give meaning to these relationships of power is important. As something religious adherents in this study consider a source of divine power, Foucault’s argument highlighting the role of religion and religious power relations in shaping sexuality is pertinent.

Foucault argues that religious power relations provide a backdrop of meaning for the knowledge that determines the sexual behaviour of individuals in a process of cultural rationalisation. It is important to note that Foucault in many ways is critical of the ways in which discursive projects narrowly define the scope of human thought and experience. He argues that on the one hand increased knowledge is presented as a means to create a sense of choice and autonomy for the individual; however, inherently relationships of power in fact cause knowledge to constrain and dominate individuals.

There is an official ideology that governs messages about sexuality communicated by the leadership at TI (the details of which will be discussed and analysed in the following chapter). Underpinned by theological positions and social contextual factors these

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95 See Foucault M. 1978.
96 See Foucault, M. 1980.
messages are not communicated in isolation, they are communicated in the context of definite and operational relations of power. It is important to keep in mind that the ideas being communicated by Pastor Myburg and the youth leadership to TI members is one embedded in unequal power relations. Myburg does not present ideas as an individual but as a representative of an institution, endowed with legitimized authority provided by the history of the establishment and the immediate recognition of that authority by TI members. In line with the ethos of Teens Ignited, Myburg's intention may be to provide TI members with directive to help young people better negotiate their sexual choices, hence empowering them, however, according to Foucault's argument the power relations underlie the message ultimately create a bias that produces a tendency for less powerful TI members to follow the directive regardless of the quality or possible effects of the message. Good or bad, these ideologies become the overwhelming basis for the discourse of sexuality and will impact directly or indirectly on various outcomes for TL members.

Foucault argues that religion was a dominant institutional force in establishing the accepted ideological foundations of sexuality. However, he posits that while sexuality is subject to institutional power, it is also a force that resists such power.

Sexuality must not be described as a stubborn drive, by nature alien and of necessity disobedient to a power which exhausts itself trying to subdue it and often fails to control it entirely.  

Sexuality is not easily, nor entirely, controlled by structural forces seeking to subdue it, but this is not because of an actor's willful disobedience to institutional powers seeking to regulate sexuality, but because sexuality as a lived experience is in itself quite a powerful structural force that involves a complex of interpersonal and social factors. Thus, sexual behaviour is not solely influenced by the meanings ascribed to sex within institutional sexual messaging or the power exercised in conveying such messages but how meanings and power are interpreted and understood by persons.  

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99 See Foucault M. 1978. p 103
100 See Foucault. M. 1978.
broader argument Foucault makes with regard to knowledge and power. Foucault observed that an important aspect of what may be considered the turn away from the era of the meta-narrative in late modernity is the notion of the ‘return to knowledge’. He here argues that the generation of knowledge which is controlled by the structurally powerful will face what he terms ‘the insurrection of subjugated knowledge’. This refers to the ways in which historical and practical experiences of people in everyday life that have been ignored in the creation of dominant ideologies of the powerful before, are brought to the surface, expressed and accounted for as useful and relevant knowledge. The lived experiences of TI members with regard to their sexuality are an important aspect for consideration in this study. If we are to accept Foucault’s contention that sexuality is not easily or entirely subdued, then a reflection on the ways in which they lived experiences of TI members are consistent with or in conflict with the directives within the official messages about sexuality at TI provide an opportunity to investigate the extent to which sexuality truly is able to resist the structural forces that seek to shape it, as well as provide examples of how the utility of the suppressed knowledge of subordinate groups might be measured and intentionally leveraged in the development of a discourse of sexuality at TI.

Foucault refers to the dominant ideologies from which discourse emerges as ‘technologies of dominance’ as they are systematic approaches to knowledge and are largely one directional in the transfer of power. In the case of TI the direction in which dominant power flows is clear; however, while TI members are in a subordinate position to the leadership at TI, it could be argued that they are complicit in their own domination. In a compelling account of power relations, James Scott contributes to discussions about discourse and power the idea that the intentional and overt interaction we are able to easily identify between the more and less powerful role players or ‘public transcripts’ as he refers to them, are not only a product of the dominant but often the subordinate find it useful to assume the role they do within that setting. According to Scott the subordinate

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102 See Foucault, M. 1980.
do not necessarily submit themselves entirely to the directives given, but that even if they are not fully adherent they do just enough not to compromise the relationship with the powerful. According to Scott subordinates are often very aware of the need to counteract the power exerted by the dominant groups, however they do not readily act in this way. Interestingly, he argues that even in cases where the dominant ideologies fail people in positions of less power may still default to submissive roles.

If power relations at TI are as skewed as I have suggested, how and why has the attendance increased and why TI members voluntarily return to be the subordinate in this relationship? The actual responses to this question when it was posed to TI members will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four. However, even without knowing the responses, what we do know is that many young people choose to return weekly and in so doing assist in maintaining these unequal positions. What this does point to is a further assertion made by Scott, namely, that the more normative and ritualized the role of the subordinate in the public transcripts, the more they are indicative of greater disparities in power as opposed to greater actual compliance to the expectations of the powerful. Even compliance to messages by the most committed TI members may not be the result of a necessarily helpful message but an indicator of how great the disparities of power within TI are.

Religion setting the sexual agenda

To think of sexuality as an ideological project of power, raises questions about what the agenda of such a project may be, thus one of the foci of this study is an examination of the messages about sexuality at TI as these form the basis for the discourse of sexuality impacting on TI members. However, the question of the nature the power that enables and underlies messages about sexuality at TI is an important aspect toward understanding how TI members respond to these messages. In this section I discuss the characteristics of

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104 Scott, J. C. 1990. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. p. 2. Scott’s notion of public transcripts is akin to Foucault’s use of discourse as both see to emphasise the ways in which the both what is said and what is silence, action and inaction interact to shape the social nature of relationships and behaviour.

Whether or not religion is able to affect adolescent sexuality at all is contingent on religious structures, leaders and/or messages being able to reach young people in that they respond to and act upon what is prescribed about sexuality. Religion is not the only voice seeking to inform young people about sexuality, and is thus contending with other social structures for a position of power in this regard. Moreover, sex and sexuality also comes with its own exercise of power in the lives of adolescents that is also a factor in whether religious voices are effective or not. Lukes argues that the most pervasive and influential form of power is the power of agenda setting; the power of an institution to implicitly and unassumingly exercise power over the thoughts and behaviours of actors, without force or overt domination. This indirect and in some ways non-relational exercise of power would thus be able to permeate behaviours in both the public and private domains of social life or in this case sexual life. The power that religion holds can fit both a relational and non-relational account of power, however, that it is the non-relational and unintentional power that is more pervasive and potent. Many religious teachings and rituals have become a part of notions of common sense, decency and even law.

When thinking about religion in this way and considering the impact it has on the decisions and actions of individuals even when not directly instructing them, two startling observations can be made. First, if religion is indeed able to influence decisions outside of direct contact and even decisions that lay beyond the confines of a particular ritual and doctrine, it begs us to reconsider the way in which we measure religiosity. The task of measuring religion is complicated, and there has been little uniformity across studies with respect to the measures used. Although most religious scholars agree that religiosity is multidimensional few studies of religiosity and adolescent sexual behavior have used  

Even when a multidimensional approach is used based on observable adherence to religious instruction within the context of the religious meeting and direct instruction, which may include measures such as attendance of religious gatherings, participation in rituals, observing ‘holy days’ and ordinances etc. However, these measures often neglect to gauge actions and perceptions that people engage in outside of the religious setting which is important as if indeed this influence is present in an indirect, non-relational environment, religiosity though in a different guise could be considered present and perhaps even more so than when based on direct, relational power.

A study that takes a comprehensive look at the relationship between religion and adolescent sexuality is reflected in a groundbreaking book by Mark Regnerus entitled ‘Forbidden Fruit’. Based on three national surveys on youth and religion in the U.S.A and extensive interviews, Regnerus' work provides a compelling discussion of the relationship between religion and sexuality in the experiences of American adolescents. Among other findings these studies found that higher levels of religiosity are inversely correlated to risky sexual behaviour such as unprotected vaginal intercourse and directly correlated to older ages of sexual debut. Regnerus argues that religion is a good indicator of attitudes toward sex, but a poor one of sexual behaviour, and that this gap is especially wide among many teenagers who identify themselves as evangelical. Regnerus is unambiguous in his view that religion does impact on the sexual lives of adolescents but asserts that the extent of the impact of religion is not a mere function of religious affiliation but is contingent on the internalisation of religious beliefs. One of the most important findings of these studies has been that religion, particularly Christianity, must


pay careful attention to the content and context of its messages. While it appears that society, especially its adolescents are losing the desire for the religious confines. However, if it is true that religious values, doctrines and cultures operate on a level of power that is not necessarily overt or relational, and then it could be possible that religion is still an influence on the actions and perceptions of adolescents. The non relational power that religion exhibits also brings into question the idea that the world is becoming more secular as religion loses power. This is particularly important to understand in terms of sexuality as a structure, as a loss of religious power would infer that religion no longer has a large amount of control over the physical body, and lacks the power to influence sexual actions.\textsuperscript{112} Coupled with the perceived decreased regard for authority that is associated with adolescence, if religion has lost all and any power in society, the implication of this for young people is that this lack of influence would be more pronounced.\textsuperscript{113} However, the fact that religion’s power may not need to be direct to be powerful suggests that the possibility for religion to impact on adolescent sexuality may be far removed but is still likely.

How can this power be accounted for in terms of the intersection between religion and sexuality? According to Weber religious orientations and approaches toward sexuality polarize conceptions of sex either as a destructive and erotic force or as based on self-giving love and develop strategies for ensuring that the latter is reproduced through social interactions.\textsuperscript{114} This indicates how religion is seen as sanctioning some meanings associated with sexuality while others are considered dangerous and undesirable.

Foucault, in his analysis of discourses of sexuality in modern western societies reinforces Weber’s assertion. Placing a strong emphasis on religion and particularly Christianity as a dominant factor shaping common placed notions of sexuality, Foucault’s repressive hypothesis inextricably links the Victorian age of sexual secrecy to the dominant

\textsuperscript{112} Sexual actions is a term that has been derived from the Weberian understanding of all human action being meaningful social action. See Thornton, R. 2006.
\textsuperscript{113} See Dusk, R and Whelan, M. 1977.
Christian discourse and institutionalization of sex in marriage.\textsuperscript{115} Moreover he argue that and where sex was to take place, but also how and why it was to be engaged in. In many ways this link between sex and procreation could only have been strengthened by the modern, rational and technocratic thinking that had been introduced by the era of Enlightenment. These shifts in ideology set the backdrop for a an agenda of sexuality based on social control, denial of the natural power of sexuality, avoidance of sex and the dominance of a particular ideology that imposes itself on the choices and motivations of individuals. However, as Foucault suggested about sexuality, power may be skewed in one direction, but is rarely completely one directional and with regard to a power to set a particular agenda, we should not assume that it is only the powerful that are able to set an agenda. Referring back to Scott\textsuperscript{*} account of public scripts, it is useful to bear in mind that as is the case with discourses, the observable interaction in power relations between the dominant and the subordinate is a bi-directional process. Following Lukes assertion that the power of agenda setting is one that operates \textit{backstage} as it were, Scott posits that the power of the subordinate group is often shaped in indirect ways and less obvious spaces. Scott argues that the \textit{hidden transcripts} are intentional \textit{poses} and \textit{practices} that the subordinate enact to resist the power of the dominant in often subtle and passive ways, thus also employing the power of agenda setting as a counteractive means.\textsuperscript{116} This argument is similar to the one made by Foucault about the need for the \textit{insurrection of subjugated knowledge}. However, I am not convinced that the passive nature of Scott\textsuperscript{*} notion of \textit{hidden transcripts} reflects the kinds of action Foucault had in mind when he makes a similar argument.\textsuperscript{117} To my mind it seems that for Foucault it is not sufficient for the subordinate to be aware of their oppression and power to act, it is important that the dominant group become aware of the knowledge of the less powerful and that this knowledge facilitates a redistribution of power.

Religious Power: Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity and Teens Ignited

\textsuperscript{115} See Foucault M. 1978.
\textsuperscript{117} See Foucault, M. 1972.
Although religious power has qualities and impact that can be observed across various religious traditions, it is reasonable to assume that different types of religious groups mediate and exercise religious power differently. In this study my particular focus is on religious power has experienced in a Christian Charismatic-Pentecostal setting, a religious tradition that has very distinct qualities that impact on the nature of religious power and is most significant in a bid to understand the discourse of sexuality and the responses it produces.

Pentecostalism is a dynamic religious movement and is probably the fastest growing religious movement of the twentieth century, and has taken root in third world countries particularly. South Africa is no exception as the difference between 1996 and 2001 census show that while reported adherents the all other forms of Christianity combined only increased by 19 percent, Pentecostalism grew by 65 percent. According to the CDE, the positive social and economic effects of Pentecostalism in South Africa have gone largely undocumented and undervalued; in this study some of the theological and social elements of Pentecostalism and its impact on sexuality are highlighted and evaluated.

The Pentecostal movement consists of a range of theological schools of thought and has a number of different variants. However, most forms of Pentecostalism have in common the particular features, foremost amongst there being: a belief in the inerrancy of the bible; the literal reading of the bible as the authoritative sacred text; a focus on spiritual gifts and the Holy Spirit.

Features of Pentecostalism such as spontaneous and performative forms of worship, integration of various local and global cultural elements and relative use of music in Pentecostalism are posited as some of the explanations for the migration of people and

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120 Hollenweger, W. 1997.
people from mainline to Pentecostal churches.\footnote{121} According to Peter Berger in studies of Pentecostalism in Latin America, the Pentecostal movement is a cultural revolution that promotes a culture of learning, a strong work ethic, social cohesion, individual motivation and discipline. Pentecostalism is also argued to be more voluntaristic than mainline forms of Christianity.\footnote{122} Both theological and social features of Pentecostalism make it an interesting context for understanding our religion influences the perceptions and practices of young people living in contemporary South Africa.

One of the few South African studies that investigate the intersection between religion and sexuality provides some insight into the context wherein religiously motivated sexual messaging occurs and the content of messages about sexuality in Pentecostal settings. Conducted in Kwa-Zulu Natal, the study looked at three different groups of people; those who self identified as Pentecostal, those who self identified as Mainline Christians and people who are not affiliated with any church group. Garner found that only Pentecostal churches are able to reduce the levels of premarital and extra-marital sex. To explain this finding Garner argues that Pentecostal churches have inherent to them at least four mechanisms to influence the sexual behaviour of its membership, namely: indoctrination, religious experience, exclusion and socialisation.\footnote{123}

Garner makes an important contribution to this study as it highlights the particularities of Pentecostalism as it impacts on sexual health. He argues that Pentecostal churches are significantly more involved in the sexual regulation of its members and this was most

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Pentecostals reporting lower sexual encounters before marriage. Members of these churches to articulate and rehearse the churches official position on sexuality as the basis for their sexual decision making. Garner argues that sexual decision making for Pentecostal adherents is based on a combination of four aspects of Pentecostalism that are crucial features in how religious power in invoked in these settings.

According to Garner, indoctrination into norms, values and facts they are shaped by the sacred text and rituals. Second, for adherents to Pentecostalism the religious experience which refers to the extent to which religion pervades multiple dimensions of an adherent's life, is meant to be far reaching, as Pentecostalism encourages adherents to intentionally evoke religious meaning is all spheres of life. Third, Garner argues that Pentecostalism's exclusion of the possibility of holding other systems of belief or thought parallel to the doctrine of the church increases the impact of indoctrination and religious experience and so contributes to increased behaviour change. Garner finally attributes the effectiveness of indoctrination, religious experience and exclusion in achieving specific behavioural outcomes related to sex, to an emphasis on socialisation in the form of a culture of religious and social gatherings and the creation of a group identity as a key factor in the messaging process among Pentecostals.

Teens Ignited and its membership reflect many of the aforementioned characteristics of Charismatic Pentecostalism, particularly the literal reading of the bible and the social cohesion are important in understanding the discourse of sexuality. However, it is its location particularly as a Charismatic form of Pentecostalism that is most interesting with regard to religious power and its impact on the shaping perceptions and behaviours. In Charismatic Pentecostal Christianity (CPC) the Bible is read as the unambiguous truth and generally vests great authority in the person of the charismatic leader as the mediator and representative of God.

These two features, which are present at CFC and Teens Ignited, form a dominant practice in which authority is centralised in the person of the Youth Pastor of CFC and leader of Teens Ignited, Anton Myburg, who functions as the indisputable mediator of God’s truth to the members of Teens Ignited. This dynamic is clearly observable in the discourse about sex and sexuality at Teens Ignited; Myburg teaches what seems an inviolable truth under that is undergird by a particular use of biblical texts and anecdotal evidence from his own life and from contemporary society. Myburg’s role as charismatic leader finds clear expression in the manner in which members of the group quote him as a source of authority. This often takes the form of “Pastor Anton says” often followed by a quotation from the Bible rather than the more typical “The Bible says” This may reflect the lack of confidence the members of the group have in their own Biblical literacy, but still points to the pivotal role Myburg plays as a source of authority for the group.

The impact of charismatic leadership or authority as described by Weber, has implicit to it the notion of the charismatic leader having qualities that are not only extraordinary, but somehow supernatural and divine. Charismatic leadership is well suited to the voluntaristic in nature of the form of Pentecostalism at TI, where adherents legitimate the authority of the individual largely on the charismatic qualities the leader displays. Charisma also has a closer relational quality than other forms of leadership, thus the weight of what the leader communicates does not only lie in the position he holds, which in the case of religion is a representative of the divine and mediator of ultimate knowledge, but also in the relationship between the leader and adherents. Myburg’s position as the charismatic leader places his person as central to the message and the impact thereof. While the specific contours of this religious group are unique, at a more general level they share common features with other forms of religious expression within South Africa especially in light of the religious landscape of the country. I argue that one such common interest shared across religious traditions is the centrality of the body.

The body is the primary meeting point of issues concerning adolescent sexuality and religion. Adolescent sexuality is the construction, expression and regulation of the sexual desires of the physical body by the adolescent and religion is primarily concerned with the state and destiny of the spirit, mind and/or soul, the inner self, or as I will refer to it the interior body. Both sexuality and religion impose various meanings onto the body. In the previous section I have introduced Foucault's theory of religious regulation of sexuality, considering the centrality of the body to sexuality that regulation of sexuality is by default the regulation of the body, but as we will see in this section, in religious worlds the notion of the body and in turn its regulation is complex.

Exterior and Interior Bodies
Meredith McGuire argues that in many ways the sociology of religion has engaged in scholarship that disembodies religious individuals by making secondary the role of the physical body in religious contexts. McGuire articulates this well as she argues that:

"...spirituality fully involves people's material bodies, not just their minds or spirits. The key connection is not ideas about the body, nor simply moral control of the body and its impulses. Rather, spirituality is closely linked with material human bodies - and not merely in the abstract. I mean real bodies - arthritic bodies, athletic bodies, pregnant bodies, malnourished bodies, healthy bodies, and suffering bodies. I mean human bodies that labor and rest, bodies that create and destroy, bodies that nurse babies and bodies that torture the bodies of others, bodies that eat, drink, fart, and sweat. With our real material bodies, we also touch, hear, see, and taste our material worlds."

For the purpose of this study, I have added to McGuire's extensive list of real bodies, sexual bodies. Bodies that have sex, are sexually stimulated, have sexual desires, appreciate sexual activities and should to be sexually healthy. The exterior body is thus not merely a means for an interior body to exist but an entity that interacts with the material world for its own benefit. Physical or what I will refer to as exterior bodies are propelled to action by a range of survival, health, biological and social needs.

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Recognition of the relative autonomy of the exterior from the less visible or interior aspects of self such as emotion, cognition and belief is important for understanding the role of religion in behaviour prescription and regulation.

The interior body is the vehicle in which the non-material aspects of religion (beliefs, values, norms) are processed and internalized. According to Berger and Luckman, internalization is the second step in a dialectical process of constructing social reality—a model Berger later applies to explain religious socialisation. In this model, objectification, which may present as behaviour, must be preceded by externalized ideas that are then internalized. The non-material aspects of the self such as thoughts, beliefs and attitudes inform the behaviour of the material body. However, for religion the challenge is that if we are to follow Berger’s theory the dialectical nature of social reality means that the converse is also true. In as much as beliefs and values impact on practices, practices of the very real material body, with all its complex needs and desires, impacts on the state of, and in the case of religion, particularly, the destiny of the internal body. The quandary for religion is being able to influence to the interior body while simultaneously ensuring the consistent regulation the exterior body.

What Turner refers to as the “interior-body problem” and the “exterior-body problem” is useful in understanding how religion seeks to maintain an impact on both bodies. The “interior-body problem” refers to the tensions experienced by an individual in an attempt to subject their psychological needs and physiological drives to fit the normative societal expectation. The “exterior-body problem” refers to the tension that exists in an individual’s effort to act in a way that is socially acceptable. However, these problems should not be experienced as imposed restraints, but as problems of representation.

What is common in both these problems is that what informs the regulation of both the

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131 Examples are the Christian belief that the after-life is constituted by heaven and hell or the Hindu belief in reincarnation. In both cases destination or destiny is determined by both the beliefs of your internal body and the actions of your external body. The non-material internal body lives on and must face the consequences of the deeds of external bodies.
social, both bodies exist relationally. Sexuality is

body problems Turner suggests illustrate Foucault's argument that the social expectations exert power over individuals, as it is the social expectations seeks to direct and shape the interior perceptions and exterior actions of individuals. Turner's contributions strengthens the argument made by Foucault about the ways in which dominant ideologies, expressed at its most basic level as social expectation, result in tensions experienced by individual persons at the level of both perception and practice.

The Social Body
Following Turner's account of interior and exterior bodies a third aspect of the self emerges that Turner does not address directly, the part of the self that acts both as an extension into the world and regulatory force for the interior and exterior body, the social aspect of self. Consistent with Mary Douglas' understanding of the relationship between the physical body and social meanings thereof, I will refer to this aspect of the self as the social body. According to Douglas, individual persons comprise of at least two interrelated bodies, namely, physical and social bodies.133 Similarly to Turner exterior-body-problem Douglas asserts that to understand the behaviour of the physical body one must consider the cultural meanings and social expectations society imposes on it which shape social action.134 Physical bodies are understood in terms of the social categories that it is expected to conform to.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, religion and sexuality are social structures wherein human bodies are subject to various demands and expectations, constructed through discourse and embedded in power relations. Following Douglas' argument, it is the social body that religion and sexuality impact through social interaction and discourse that constrains the behaviour of the physical body.135 This insight importantly highlights that the social body cannot exist outside of relationships and structures which it engages and

134 See Douglas, M. 1996.
135 See Douglas, M. 1996.
The social body through interaction knows what the normative expectation should inform the interior and exterior bodies respectively.

With regard to this study into the impact of religion of the sexual perceptions, practices and wellbeing of TI members, it is important that the complex nature of the body is understood as this complexity contributes to how the bodies of TI members are constructed as on the one hand religious and on the other hand sexual, two representations of their bodies that may specific implications for identity, perception and behaviour.

Religious Bodies
Religion can be thought of as a bodily exercise and the adolescent bodies which are the subject of this study are certainly religious ones. As cited in Chapter One, South African adolescents report high levels of religious activity. Moreover, I observed how the members of TI weekly used their bodies to participate in religious practices such as singing, dancing and prayer. Even sports and games took on ritualized religious nature in the context of the youth group.

Although these activities always required the use of the physical body, it was always clear to me that these activities were meant to move the young people beyond physical expressions, toward shaping the emotional and spiritual aspects of the self. This is not an uncommon goal in Christianity. Following Hellenistic Christian traditions and the subsequent Cartesian dualistic model of understanding the body, modern Christianity views the interior aspects of self, the mind, soul and spirit and exterior aspects of self, the physical matter, as distinct, but this distinction does not mean that these ‘bodies’ are separate. In fact, Christianity could be placed on a long list of religions that hold the view that the state and actions of the physical or exterior body is related to the state and destiny of the interior body. 136 Thus, in an attempt to direct and preserve the interior body, religious entities often take on the role of regulating the physical or exterior body.

texts religion appeals to different and particular types of moral values and social norms that govern the actions of the adherents. This idea of regulation stems from changes in religious discourses of the body over time.

Pre enlightenment Christianity was particularly negative about the physical body, with the dominant approach being that due to its deviant, dangerous nature, the flesh, with its passions and desires, needed to be disciplined and subdued. The enlightenment brought to religious discourses of the body the idea of the exterior body as an object, a mechanism that can be regulated. Thus it is not surprising that any approach that sought to provide directives for sexuality would focus predominately on strategies that engage the exterior body, however, a more complex picture of the nature of the body and human behaviour must be considered if these directives are to be successful.

The social body is an integral part of religious activity. As the medium of socialization, religion engages the social body either by relationship with other people and/or in relation to the rituals, norms and values of the religious entity. This often reinforces belief and behaviour by emphasizing the communal nature and value of both. If a religious individual’s internal and external bodies falter in belief or behaviour they may interact on the level of the social body for support, instruction, care etc.

According to McGuire, because of the social and cultural nature of religion, a sense of community and belonging must form central aspects both of substantive and functional ways of defining religion. The social component of religion is what makes it distinct from individual spirituality. In a religious context the internal body is the body of belief, the external body is the body of behaviour and the social body is the body of belonging. These bodies are in some ways interlinked, in other ways autonomous but in all ways a crucial element of the religions bid to impact on sexual wellbeing.

While religious bodies can easily be located in the social as a direct product of a social structure, sexual bodies are most often understood as primarily physical. Biomedical understandings of sex have been largely based on biology, instinct, desire and impulse. Sex is understood as a natural response to a type of physiological arousal. It is thus not surprising that the body is central to sexuality. However, to speak of sex only in terms of physiology would be an oversimplification of human sexual behaviour as it is not merely a random occurrence driven by instinct; it is accompanied and complicated by choices, social structures, social circumstances and ideologies. It is not just an erotic action but using Max Weber’s conceptual framework, it can be termed a social action. Sex is social, not only a result of the reality that many sexual acts involve multiple persons, but because of the cultural, social and religious meanings it comes to hold within societies. Sex is a value ridden, meaningful and often purposive social action.

Associated with marriage, kinship and fertility, sex can be better understood as a meaningful relation with underlying implications that reach far beyond the biological sexual experience. That being said, whether sex is viewed as primarily biology or as highly social in nature, it is clear that sex and sexuality centre around and require a physical, exterior body, but is also related to less observable and tangible aspects of self. Sigmund Freud suggested that the human ‘sex drive’ is one of the most powerful shapers of both identity and behaviour.

As discussed earlier, sexuality is a social construct and is based on the social regulation of the exterior body, a regulation that may lead to the experience of an exterior-body-problem. Lukes, argues that social constructions and institutions are an exercise of power that is driven by the interest of one group over another. Lukes asserts that this power can be enforced by coercion; alternately the thoughts of a person could be socialized to adhere to the constraints of power through social institutions such as the family,

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education and religion, agents of socializations into norms, values and social expectations. Sexuality thus is not only experienced by exterior bodies but through socialisation persons may be presented with various interior-body-problems as they negotiate their sexual perceptions and practices in pursuit of sexual-wellbeing. Regulating sexual perceptions and practices and establishing norms may vary from one society to the next but always has underlying it the exercise of institutionalized power. In this way, social control over sexuality as exerted by (religious) institutions is not seen as a coercive power but rather, derives its repressive tendencies through the very social norms, cultural connotations and personhood that it constructs. 144

A central concern of this study is to reflect on the power relations present at TI as it impacts on the sexuality of TI members. In this chapter I have discussed power as implicit aspects of sexual discourses and religious structures, thus in Chapter Four close attention will be paid to the power relations that exist at TI both in the communication of the dominant discourse of sexuality, which are enacted in public transcripts and the hidden transcripts reflected by the perceptions and practices of TI members. Also, the role of the social body in regulating sexuality experienced as related to both the interior and exterior bodies as discussed in this chapter will be understood in light of the social milieu that already exists at TI.

143 Lukes, S. 1979.
144 See Foucault, M. 1978.
Chapter 4
Discourse, Disjuncture and Discontinuity: The Relationship between Messaging and Practice
This study explores the impact of religion on the sexual practices, perceptions and wellbeing of adolescent members of Teens Ignited, a Charismatic Pentecostal Youth Group in Potchefstroom South Africa. Central to this study is an understanding that sexuality, which determines sexual-wellbeing, is a socially constructed aspect of the self and is embedded in a complex of power relations which shape the everyday experiences of individuals. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter Three, sexual-welling has various physical, psycho-social and structural dimensions, with this in mind the intention of this study is to particularly explore the ways in which the social construction of sexuality at TI impacts on psycho-social and structural aspects of sexuality as perceived and experienced by adolescents at TI.

To this end, this Chapter outlines and seeks to explore the central findings of this study. In this Chapter I will: 1) articulate the official message about sexuality that exists within the context of Teens Ignited and reflect upon the complex nature of the sexual discourse as jointly created at different levels by and youth group leadership and the youth members; and 2) examine the responses of TI members to the official messaging at TI and outline the sexual perceptions and practices of TI members that are not directly observable. Through participant observation and participant inquiry, I was able to observe and identify the language, social relations, structural elements and specialized knowledge that contribute to the discourse of sexuality being established at Teens Ignited.

Drawing on the Foucauldian position that argues for sexuality as a discursive project I seek to discuss the official message about sexuality at TI in terms of Foucault’s notion of ‘technologies of domination’ seeking to exert legitimated religious power on the ways TI members construct their sexuality. Furthermore, I evaluate the responses of TI members to the official messages about sexuality at TI. Several discontinuities, ambiguities and experiences of disjuncture become evident as findings related to the perceptions about sex and the reported sexual practices of TI members; these will be highlighted and discussed as a starting point to understanding the ways that lived experiences and everyday knowledge of TI members interact with and contribute to sexuality as a discursive project at TI. Finally, based on the findings, conceptions of sexuality, religious
Relational qualities of both religion and sexuality will be addressed in addressing the discontinuities and disjuncture described throughout the chapter.

Understanding the Official Messaging about Sexuality

As discussed in Chapter Three I argue for understanding sexuality as a discursive project shaped by structural forces, in the forms of rule and regulations, messages and silences, responses and negotiations all embedded in power relations. Due to the strength of the structural elements of sexuality, I wish to foreground this Chapter with findings about the foundations, scope and central themes in the official messaging at Teens Ignited (TI), which focuses ‘no sex before marriage’ as a dominant message; strategies for avoiding things that may encourage sexual behaviour that is inconsistent with the religious message provided and the underlying importance of marriage as it related to the dating practices of TI members. My first encounter with this abstinence message at TI was in sermons preached by Myburg at TI meetings. Myburg’s sermons provided an opportunity to understand the main ideas that form the basis of the dominant position, represented by Myburg, to the ‘public transcripts’ about sexuality at TI.

No sex before marriage

The central message to emerge within the official messaging about adolescent sexuality within Teens Ignited is the doctrine that sex prior to marriage is a sin and should avoided by adolescents is the central theme of sexual messaging at TI. The prohibition of sex before and outside of marriage was the main pillar on which the discourse of sexuality rests. These two sermons effectively break down the message into two parts: 1) Avoid sex and 2) marriage is sacred.

Avoid sex

On the 13 April 2007, Myburg preached a message on abstinence, where sex is described as ordained by God is to be reserved for marriage as a source of pleasure and for the purpose of procreation. The tone and intent of the message was one of warning and
Provided TI members with what can be termed ‘avoidance strategies’. Myburg discussed how young people can avoid engaging in premarital sex, these he summed up as follows: ‘Watch what you see, watch what you hear and watch what you wear.’

‘Watch what you see!’ Here Myburg cited television, movies, magazines and cellphones as possible mediums of pornography, which should be avoided. Directing attention particularly to males, he suggested that the more exposure one has to sexual acts the more likely you would be to want to have sex, and the harder it would be to abstain. Myburg warned that even thinking about sexual things could be a sin already.

‘Watch what you hear!’ Music was the subject of this section of Myburg’s address. Focusing on the possible negative effects of sexually explicit lyrics in songs, Myburg suggested that sexually explicit lyrics encourage and normalise premarital sex. He referenced the 1991 hit Salt ‘n Pepper song, ‘Let’s talk about sex’, to illustrate how sex amongst young people is popularised and encouraged through music. Myburg urged TI members to avoid listening to any music that is not Christian based, and particularly music that may implicitly or explicitly communicate messages about sex.

‘Watch what you wear!’ Primarily addressing female members, Myburg, then addressed the relationship between dress code and sexual desire. He posited that clothing that was tight fitting or revealed too much of the body is sexually arousing to males and would elicit inappropriate sexual advances. Referencing 1Timothy 2:9 he proposed that girls dress ‘modestly’ as opposed to fashionably by contemporary standards.

What stands out in this discussion is the extent to which the things that according to Myburg young people are to be weary of are some of the central aspects that constitute contemporary youth culture. In light of this it is not clear that effective aversion of audio, visual and clothing related stimuli is practically possible. This is not unique to TI or even
Marriage is sacred

What is clear about the abstinence message as communicated by Myburg on the 13th April is the centrality of marriage. Myburg’s position is that sex should only form a part as a full expression of love within the context of marriage, and that it is only then that sex is most enjoyable. According to Basset this is not an uncommon message within the Christian community and its leaders, based on a discussion after the session, amongst young people who had attended the evening, its relevance is certainly debatable message for adolescents in 21st century.146

Major monotheistic religions including Christianity, Judaism and Islam share very similar understandings of sex as not only sacred but sacred unto marriage.147 Understanding the Christian abstinence message is premised on understanding the long standing relationship in western societies between religion, sex and marriage as a form of social order. Building on Engel’s argument that religious teachings on sex and marriage are intended to regulate social and thus material reproduction, Weber argued that the religious tendency to regulate the body, combined with the Protestant ethic, which is centered on rationality, self-control and the careful pursuit of one’s calling, has led to marriage being prioritized as a key means by which to control the very irrational nature of sex and sexuality.148 Thus, as a late form of Protestantism, it is not surprising that marriage would be a central and definitive part of the discourse of sexuality in a Pentecostal Christian setting.

On the 14 September Myburg gave a teaching on dating and sexuality. In this sermon he reinforced a sentiment I had gathered from conversations with youth goers prior to this evening, but had not understood as a direct instruction until this particular evening. The

145 See Foucault, M. 1980.
147 Benn, C. 2002.
The main idea communicated in this sermon was that dating was unbiblical and undesirable for the purposes of reaching two goals (1) abstinence prior to marriage and (2) having a fulfilling and healthy marriage in future. The centrality of heterosexual marriage within this discourse of sexuality at TI becomes most prominent at this point. It is clear that marriage is assumed as a norm, and should be protected even prior to a person being or considering marriage.

Dating, is considered a harmful practice at TI, one that endangers the scared nature of marriage (which is the only context in which sex is permitted); in Myburg’s words “Dating is practicing divorce.” Alternatively, he encourages what he refers to as “courting.” According to Myburg, courtship is a form of friendship which has the goal of marriage, but unlike dating the couple does not engage in any physical acts, including kissing or petting and emotional intimacy should be kept to a minimum. Courtship both decreases likelihood of sexual acts prior to marriage, and the likelihood that people engaged in the relationship would be hurt if the relationship do not lead to marriage. However, Myburg also explicitly communicates that “courting” should only be undertaken by people who believe they are ready for and are seriously contemplating marriage in the near and foreseeable future- excluding most adolescents who are part of the youth group. I argue that it is likely that for TI members who either uncertain about marriage or are too young to consider marriage, courtship, as identified by Myburg, is not an alternative they would easily relate to.

Another way that the sexual messaging may be seen as encouraging lifestyle alternatives is through a suggestion made by Myburg towards the end of the “avoidance strategies” talk. Myburg suggested involvement in recreational activities such as sport as a good way to divert ones attention from a focus on sex and also participate in activities that promote personal development. Furthermore, he suggested that young people who want to adhere to the abstinence message should choose friends that share the same views and convictions on the matter. Incidentally, the youth group provides both a recreational facility and likeminded peers, yet this was not flagged or emphasized by the youth pastor.
The Message as understood by TI Members

Evidence from the participatory workshops reinforces the centrality of the "no sex before marriage" message at TI. As represented below in Fig. 2, abstinence from sex before marriage considerably outranks all other messages at Teens Ignited about sexuality. Ninety-six percent of workshop participants asserted that this was the most important message communicated to them about sex at Teens Ignited, articulating the teaching as either "no sex before marriage" or "sex is only for marriage," which our enquiries indicated amounts to much the same thing in the minds of the Teens Ignited members. In the bar graph, illustrated in Fig. 2, the message abstain was kept separate from the "no sex before marriage" message at the request of the group as some participants felt that it refers to a abstaining from not only sex but other sexual acts.

Figure 2. Most important messages about sex received at the youth group (by percentage).

Contrary to what I expected based on my own observations within this Christian setting the full ABC messaging were suggested as the top three messages received at the youth group. In the reflective discussion this point was contested particularly by the more devout members, arguing that particularly the condomisation message was not part of the official teachings (which was more congruent with my observations of the teachings). However, the counter argument from those who ranked these sources was that condomisation does not form part of the official discourse, but is a message they have encountered in their interactions with other youth goers. This brought to the surface the idea that official discourse of sexuality was not the only one at work. An idea I was not able to probe further or establish a reliable pattern of.
During Exercise 3 of the workshop which examines the perceptions of the participants about sexual messaging and behaviours, 71.7% of participants agreed with the statement “sex before marriage is a sin,” suggesting that the public narrative is reaching TI members, at least on the levels of cognition and belief system. Furthermore, 91% of participants surveyed (86 out of 95) reported that the teachings of Teens Ignited on sex and sexuality were helpful to them. Due to the process of ranking messages, it is the messages with the highest frequency that are reflected here, however, many of the messages that didn’t make it onto the graph are reflective of conceptions of sex and sexuality that are display a level of detail and complexity not expressed simply by the main abstinence message. These include ideas like “respect the opposite sex” (which is on the graph); “sex is sacred; don’t be influenced by peers to have sex; even thinking about sex is crossing the line. Although less popular, these messages confirm the salience of the dominant message of abstinence and the ability of participants to recall these messages displays a high level of attention the youth goers give to the religious teachings about sex and sexuality. Thus, it is clear that the participants know and accept the dominant message, but this neither simply nor directly translates into sexual perceptions and behaviours.

It is clear that there is dominant discourse about sexuality at TI and that it is heard and understood by TI members, but is this message making the desired impact? Is this message merely moralist rhetoric or does it in fact serve as a relevant and practical tool in the pursuit of adolescent sexual wellbeing? David Harrison, addressing an HIV/AIDS researchers and religious leaders’ forum held in Durban during March 2003, emphasized the need for a broad range of information which include issues of morality by religious organizations seeking to positively impact youth sexuality. 150

However, Harrison also warned against the impositions of morals that adolescents cannot relate with, arguing that, “We need to seek moral positions rather than to be moralists.”

150 See King, J. 2003.
- and not where we expect them to be". It is the interactions between messages and lived experience on which the discourse of sexuality is constructed and the basis on which the impact of a discursive project can best be evaluated. With this in mind I agree with Harrison’s position that it is not only important for TI to have clear moral positions that underpin sexual messaging but that it is more important instead that those morals are placed in the context that the young people live and TI members are expected to convert the message into practice.

**Religious messaging about Sex: Influential or Irrelevant?**

Valuing sex and marriage as sacred may be good values, however, unless they are easily transferable by TI members to their lived experiences and the concerns they may have, the values and messages may be considered important by TI members but could be rendered contextually irrelevant. I now move to discussing the relevance of religious messaging as perceived by the young audience it meant to impact on most. Figure 2 illustrates the considerably higher ranking of the abstinence message and confirms the awareness of the dominant message. I argue that ‘indoctrination’ as put forward by Robert Garner as a feature of Pentecostalism, is present at TI as TI members are acutely aware of the centrality of this single. However, TI members simply knowing the message does not implicitly mean that they find the message relevant and are able to act in accordance with this message considering the contextual factors that impact on youth culture in South Africa. According to Garner Pentecostal churches are able to increase the extent to which religious experience extends into all spheres of the adherents life, and so able to increase pre-marital abstinence from sexual activity. Thus, for the purpose of this study the link between the acceptance of the official and dominant message of abstinence at TI and its relevance to the contexts TI members inhabit outside of the religious context must be considered carefully.

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The influence that the religious discourse of sexuality at TI may have is tempered by the fact that it is not the sole or necessarily primary source of information about sex in the lives of TI members. During the first exercise of the workshop the participants were asked to individually name the most significant sources of information about sex for young people, these answers were written down individually and then collected to compile a bar graph which indicated which sources were named most often.154

Figure 3. Most important sources about sex and sexuality for young people (by exact no of responses).

As illustrated in Figure 3, these were in level of importance, Friends (13.8%), Television (13.5%), Media (8.6%), Hormones (8.5%) and the Internet (8%). What simply did not figure in the thinking of participants were Church or Youth Group as sources of information about sex, and this is more striking because the place where the workshop took place was at Teens Ignited in the CFC church building and that I had been present at two youth evenings. Why it is that religion and Teens Ignited is not cited as an influential source of information, when it clearly is providing a message about sex and sexuality to TI members? As seen in the representation of these responses below in Figure 3, TI members report that young people are inundated by messages from a variety of spheres including the media, cellphones, music and clothes. This may make it increasingly

154 See Appendix One.
The avoidance strategies suggested by Myburg advised young people to avoid visual and audio media, including television, movies and music, as well as fashion that may be sexually provocative. Figure 3 indicates that with the exception of fashion, all of the "vices" Myburg warns against have made the list of important sources about sexuality that was compiled by TI members. When the participants were asked the basis for their selections, especially in light of the obvious absence of religion/youth group from this list, they expressed the view that the sources mentioned were not the only sources of information but were the most influential because they were more frequent and were the sources that mostly encouraged sexual behaviour and provides choices for them to make. According to the International Planned Parenthood Federation the family and traditional community networks such as religion are competing with many conflicting messages about sexuality to young people from siblings, peers and the mass media which are often more pervasive and not mediated in anyway by a trusted adult. The avoidance strategies suggested by Myburg may prove difficult for adolescents that are encountering messages encouraging sexual behaviour more often and from a wider range of sources than has been addressed directly by the religious message. For the adolescent the challenge then is a practical one of how best to implement these strategies. Religion in this case most strongly provides a message of abstinence from and avoidance of sexual acts, while their peers, the media and a host of sources listed in Figure 3 reportedly encourage these sexual acts and present opportunities for adolescents to exercise agency. The avoidance strategies are a "what not to do" guide to sexual well being, but does not explicitly provide positive ways of living as a sexual young person. Young people may learn how to avoid sex but this does not mean that they cease to be sexual beings.

On the one hand a picture of a "negative sexual life" is painted, yet no framework is provided for what a healthy approach to adolescent sexuality may look like and what actions may reflect such a sexual well-being.

The RHRU argues that the effectiveness of campaigns or initiatives aimed at shaping sexual behaviour among young people should not only be measured by the extent to which information is cognitively understood and accepted by young people but by the extent to which young people are able to convert general messages into behaviour that will positively influence their sexual health. \(^{156}\) This is congruent with the WHO definition of sexual health which encourages a more holistic and lifestyle approach to sexual health, wherein sexual wellbeing is seen as more than just a series of sexual acts or lack thereof but as a well balanced, well rounded person having social, cultural, economic and mental resources that support life choices that contribute positively to sexual health. \(^{157}\) Thus, messages such as abstinence before marriage need to be accompanied with clear practical strategies that will help them adhere to the message and that provides them with practical lifestyle alternatives which can be supported by the community and context.

**Sources of Information as Sources of Power**

The different sources as reported in Figure 3 are indicative of other social spaces wherein young people are negotiating sexuality, accumulating knowledge and experiencing their sexuality in ways that are not regulated by religion. These spaces are important as they provide insights into the influences on what Foucault refers to as "subjugated knowledge" of the less powerful. \(^{158}\) It is in these spaces that the everyday conceptions and actions of TI members develop. Moreover Scott argues that these spaces are not only the spaces in which the influence of the dominant messages are challenged, but where resistance to the power of the dominant ideas are formed and communicated. \(^{159}\)

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\(^{156}\) See Reproductive Health Research Unit. 2003.

\(^{157}\) Refer to the definition and discussion of sexual health in Chapter 2.

\(^{158}\) See Foucault, M. 1980. p.81

\(^{159}\) See Scott, J. C. 1990.
discourses of resistance can exist without tacit or acknowledged coordination and communication within the subordinate group. For that to occur, the subordinate group must carve out for itself social spaces insulated from the control and surveillance from above.\textsuperscript{160}

As stated earlier, the sources of information about sex as articulated by TI members are reflective of existing aspects of contemporary youth culture. TI members need not put much effort into carving out social spaces to develop “hidden transcripts” as those spaces already exist. In effect unless Myburg is aware of these other influences the dominant message’s impact is unknowingly subject to the counter effects of resistance being developed. Even if Myburg is aware that these other sources of information about sex exists as demonstrated by the avoidance strategies, as a man in his early thirties, his access to and engagement with sources such as friends, media and parties may exclude him from those spaces and so limit the control he has over its impact and importantly the ability to monitor the responses and actions of TI members. The competing sources of sexuality for young people thus become a latent source of power for TI members in the context of negotiating religious messages about sexuality.

The Exterior Body as a Source of Information about Sexuality

While the role of social structures in the construction and negotiation of sexuality is important a surprising finding provides an opportunity to reflect on sexuality as embodied and the ever present role of biology and the exterior body. Alongside the host of socially based sources of information about sex illustrated in Figure 3, participants suggest hormones as a source of information about sex. Upon further probing of hormones as a source of information in the reflective discussion, participants said that hormones are an important factor in sexual decision making. TI members are required to negotiate sexual choices in the face of sometimes conflicting social and natural pressures on their exterior bodies in terms of behaviour they may or may not engage in and the possible physical health outcomes thereof. However, as discussed in Chapter Three, Turner contends that the behavior of the exterior body is also related to the motivations and intentions of the interior body, both of which are regulated in terms of the social expectations set by

\textsuperscript{160} See Scott, J. C. 1990. p 118.
This supports Foucault's contention that the body for power, a struggle for power between competing social structures, individual agency and natural desires. For adolescents who are negotiating psycho-social aspects of the self like identity and intimacy these power struggles are compounded by a developmental stage characterized by uncertainty and change. The combination of these factors doubtlessly contribute to the challenges of making sense of, assimilating and acting upon religious messages about sexuality for TI members.

Regardless of the source of information, any sexual decision made is likely to affect social relationships and networks. By behaving in a way that is inconsistent with the dominant messages at TI, they step outside of the acceptable norms of the youth peer group and may believe they have put social relationships at risk. The converse could also be true, as a choice to adhere to the norms prescribed at youth group may exclude them from social interactions in other peer groups. Again, this points to tensions that are associated with the adolescent crisis of identity. It also demonstrates that the body is a site of sexual struggle.

The Relevance of the Message vs. the Power of Religion
As discussed earlier the 'no sex before marriage' message is as clearly understood by TI members as the dominant message and religious standard regarding sexuality at TI, however, whether they regard this as a realistic message within the context of contemporary youth culture is not clear. During Exercise 3 of the workshop, participants were asked to respond to the following propositions: 'It is unrealistic to think that teenagers will abstain from sex' (Proposition 9) and 'When it comes to sex the bible has unrealistic expectations for teenagers in 2007' (Proposition 12). A contradiction is evident when comparing these propositions. In Proposition 9, 97% of the participants agree that it is unrealistic to expect teenagers to abstain from sex, which is exactly what the abstinence message at the youth group expects, yet when asked in Proposition 9 about

It is unclear how to explain the discontinuity between believing that the religious abstinence message is unrealistic and determining that source of that message has realistic expectations unless we considered that it may have been difficult for TI to agree with a statement that directly challenges the authority of the bible. This demonstrates the direct yet subtle power of religion. Direct, because they are responding this way because religion is directly begin evoked, but subtle, as they may not realize that because of religion they have willfully contradicted themselves within the space of a few minutes. If this contradiction is considered with regard to the performance of public transcripts, another possible explanations arises: in Proposition 12, by answering in a way that affirms the bible, which is a source of dominant authority, TI members may be choosing what they regard the most socially acceptable position, even if they do not agree with it entirely. They are thus publically performing in line with the social expectation of the powerful, but demonstrating through the response to Proposition 9 that they may in fact be posing as a part of the hidden transcripts of non compliance with or at questioning of the dominant expectation and message.

The Relevance of Marriage

The final concern when considering the context in which the official message of no sex before marriage is that marriage itself is in crisis. Although marriage may be a taken for granted within a Christian framework, the relevance of marriage in the lives of young people is debatable and marriage may not be an obvious goal for young adults. Denis posits the following:

In western countries, since the sexual revolution of the 1960s marriage has become one option among others. A growing proportion of men and women live together without being married. Often, they have children...Similarly, divorce, however painful it may be, is socially acceptable. At least a third of married

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163 See discussion on religious power in Chapter Three.
Denis directs our attention to the instability of marriage, one of the cornerstones of the family both nuclear and more traditionally African forms on kinship. The effects of this instability on the regulation of sexuality must be noted as a context in which TI members are required to live out the proscription of engaging in sex before marriage. Add to the crisis of marriage the large number of sources about sex and sexuality other than Christianity that TI youth identified, I now will discuss the tensions that the TI members encounter in making shifts from discourse to practice.

Continuities, Discontinuities and Disjuncture

Sexual messaging at TI serves as an intuitional regulation of sexuality for TI members. However, following Foucault’s argument that sexuality is not easily subdued by structural constraints, I now turn the discussion to the ability of this message to make the desired impact on the sexual lives of adolescents at TI.167 As discussed in Chapter Three, while sexuality is socially constructed, Foucault argues that sexuality as experienced by individual persons is able to push back on the power that structures seek to exert on it.168 The inability of institutional forces to entirely subdue sexuality is illustrated in the case of adolescents at TI. The dominant theme of the official message about adolescent sexuality within TI is that sex prior to marriage is a sin yet, 34% of TI members surveyed about their sexual practice report having had penetrative vaginal sex and a further 48% report other types of sexual experiences such as sexual kissing and touching. The disjuncture between the official message about sexuality at TI and the sexual behaviour of its membership begs the question Òis this message about sexuality able to translate into practice?Ó

167 Refer to discussion about sexuality as a discursive project in Chapter 2
168 See Foucault, M. 1978.
Thus far in this chapter I have discussed dominant messaging about sexuality and situated it within the context of competing sources influencing adolescent sexuality as identified by TI members. I now will discuss the insights gained from data gathered about the perceptions and practices of TI members. It is these findings that arguably are the basis of "subjugated knowledge" reflective of the lived reality of adolescents that due to the complex constraints of religious power that underlies may not have been accounted for in the creation of the messaging sexuality at TI that shapes the "public transcripts" and power relations that the sexual perceptions and practices of TI members.

Knowledge vs. Behaviour

It seems that despite members of Teens Ignited reporting knowledge that the sex outside of marriage is prohibited by the official message about sexuality at TI, the actual sexual behaviour of TI members does not consistently reflect adherence with this message. In this section I reflect upon the findings regarding individual sexual behaviour of TI members, the continuities and complex disjuncture between the official message at TI and the behavior of TI members.

Sexual Intercourse and a range of different Sexual Behaviours

Thirty-five percent of the respondents to the questionnaire reported that they have had sexual intercourse. This suggests that for at least 65% of the group there is continuity between the abstinence message (at the level of vaginal intercourse) and behaviour. It is worth noting that while this figure is high, it is lower than the national statistics. A national study conducted by the Reproductive Health Research Unit (RHRU) in 2003, it was found that 48% of adolescents in the 15-19 year old age group alone report being sexually experience and overall, 67% in the age group ranging from 15-24.\(^\text{169}\) However, the 35% figure is high enough for a level of concern to be raised about whether or not the discourse of sexuality at TI that appears to be understood and shared by both the leaders and youth goers is being translated into practice. An additional 52% of TI members report engaging in other sexual kissing and touching, which they are ambivalent about with

\(^{169}\text{Reproductive Health Research Unit. 2003. It is also worth noting that this may support Garner's finding that church-going individuals are less likely to engage in premarital sex than non-church going youth (Garner, 2000).}
a sense of disjuncture between discourse and practice

Figure 4.1 Sexual Practices – Girls (ages 13-21) by percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual practice</th>
<th>13-14</th>
<th>15-16</th>
<th>17-19</th>
<th>20 &amp; above</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercourse (Including sexual kissing and touching)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual kissing or touching (only)</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.2 Sexual Practices – Boys (ages 13-25)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual practice</th>
<th>13-14</th>
<th>15-16</th>
<th>17-19</th>
<th>20 &amp; above</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercourse (Including sexual kissing and touching)</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>41.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual kissing or touching (only)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As illustrated in Figure 4.1 the mean age of sexual debut amongst girls was 14.71 years old (much lower than the estimated debut age of boys in previous studies). The youngest age of debut was 9 and the oldest was 22. The modes were 14, 15 and 16. The mean age of sexual debut amongst girls was higher than their male counterparts at 15.25 years old. The youngest age of debut was 12 and the oldest was 18. These findings are consistent with national statistics on age of sexual debut and are reflective of a problem facing a cross section of institutions and organisation seeking to create effective sexual behavioural interventions.\textsuperscript{170}

There are a higher percentage of boys who report having had sexual intercourse illustrated in Fig. 4.2, yet there is exactly the same percentage of boys and girls who have had some kind of sexual experience. All the girls aged 13 and 14 have had a sexual experience of some kind, and for boys in the same 43.8% report having never had any physical sexual experiences (this may be due the higher ratio of males to females). Interestingly, both female and male participants who report no physical sexual experiences all report attending the youth group “weekly” or “often” thus indicating that they share in common a high level of commitment to the group. However, 66% of participants surveyed, who have had sexual intercourse, also report regular attendance.

What the questionnaire could not establish was whether or not the sexual experiences occurred prior or subsequent to attending the youth group and whether or not being at the youth group affected any behaviour change in accordance with the abstinence teaching at the youth group.

Figure 5.1 Perceptions related to Christian teachings about sexuality – Boys (ages 13-25) by percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are the teachings about sex at Youth Group helpful to you?</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the Bible have unrealistic expectations about sex for you?</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think that God approves of your sexual life?</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think you follow the teachings of the Youth Group in your sex life?</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.2 Perceptions related to Christian teachings about sexuality – Girls (ages 13-21) by percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are the teachings about sex at Youth Group helpful to you?</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the Bible have unrealistic expectations about sex for you?</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think that God approves of your sexual life?</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think you follow the teachings of the Youth Group in your sex life?</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The perceptual questions represented in Figures 5.1 and 5.2 show three very clear patterns of thinking among TI members. First, a very high level of agreement that the messages at the youth group are helpful, however the second very clear pattern that most of the participants do not think that they are living in accordance to those messages bring into question whether the messages are not implementable, in what ways are they then helpful? Considering the message itself, which promotes abstinence from sex prior to marriage, it seems plausible that TI members find the messages helpful on the level of cognition and increased knowledge and on the moral base of belief, but encounter difficulty in implementing the more practical elements of the teaching and so are either thus unable to convert knowledge into practice consistently or unable to clearly adjudge whether their behavior is consistent with the teaching. This reinforces the point that even with a strong emphasis on practical steps for avoiding sex as a key pillar of the messaging, the messaging lacks empowering and clearly communicated knowledge.

The third pattern that emerges is the high levels of uncertainty about whether God approves of their sexual lives. When we consider this finding in relation to the WHO definition of sexuality discussed in Chapter 4, the uncertainty of Godâ€™s approval point to the participantâ€™s sense of emotional congruence that forms a part of their sexuality and in turn their sexual-wellbeing. As illustrated in Figure 5.2, amongst female respondents, who have experienced sexual kissing and/or touching but no intercourse, 63% report that they do think they are following the teachings of the youth group. However, these respondents differ on whether or not they think God approves of their sexual lives (practices), with 42% thinking God approves, 47% thinking God disapproves and 11% being uncertain. I argue that the messaging does not help female TI members know whether sexual activities other than intercourse is prohibited by the Ñ‰o sex before marriageÑŒ message, leaving them to decide by themselves the implications of their sexual conduct. This also raises questions about what constitutes Ñ‡exÑŒ within the official message about sex at TI.
Individual survey were in some ways more interesting than those obtained in the workshop exercise that probes the conceptions and perceptions held by TI members about sex (Exercise 3) not only because these are personal but they could also be cross tabulated with behavioural indicators. An example of this is the observation that none of the female respondents in Figure 5.2 who report having had sexual intercourse think that God approves of their sexual lives and 80% say that they do not think they are following the teachings of the youth group. This was in contrast to 42.8% of male respondents who report sexual intercourse also reporting following the teachings of the youth group. Thus, almost half as many male respondents (who were the majority of total respondents) either did not think of their sexual behaviour as inconsistent with the abstinence message (because they interpret the message differently) or as discussed earlier in this chapter they may have modified their behaviour after encountering the teaching. What is clear is that sexually experienced TI members may be experiencing, interpreting and responding differently from the official messaging at TI.

The evident disconnects between messaging about sexuality at TI, the conceptions about constitutes sex and sexual behaviour for TI members, raises a tension between a reportedly helpful message, the actual sexual behavior of TI members and doing what is right by the standard of the religious teaching and deity. If these tensions are analyzed on in light of (1) the WHO definition of sexual health, wherein mental and emotional wellbeing form parts of the pursuit of sexual health, and (2) the extent to which adolescence as a developmental stage is fraught with uncertainties in the quest for identity development, it seems to me that the experience of not meeting the expectations of the religious teachings and intern God arguably negatively impacts on particularly the emotional wellbeing of adolescents seeking identity formation through religion.

\[171\text{ The tension between behavior and meeting expectations is reflective of a discussion about religious power later in this chapter, where an interview with a youth member Tshidi is discussed with reference to anxieties related to not following the dominant message at TI, and thus failing to please the religious leader and God.}\]
Tapping into Belief

As discussed earlier the tensions experienced by TI members due to a perceived disjuncture between knowledge and behaviour, are not unique to religious models of sexuality messaging to adolescent (as demonstrated by messaging at TI), however, religious messaging does not only seek to contribute knowledge but in many ways relies on and taps into belief systems. It is unsurprising that belief is a central feature of TI as a religious entity, and that many observable aspects of their meetings and messaging confirm this, but none as compelling as the words of TI attendees themselves. When asked in the questionnaire to state in their own words the reasons why they attend TI youth meetings, it was clear the TI youth goers come with a very clear desire to learn. Religious organisations and youth groups are not often advertised as educational sites or places of learning, and Teens Ignited does not in its propose to be a education vehicle, but the reasons for membership demonstrate that come with a definite learning agenda. This desire to learn may make members more receptive to both the message and the messengers.

One of the key areas of learning expressed by participants was the desire to learn about God, faith and belief. In their answers they express a desire to learn about God and what to believe as a Christian, as illustrated by the following answers: 

- To learn about God
- To learn to know God
- To grow spiritually
- To learn about faith

These along with 88 responses expressing similar reasons, lead me to think that the greater majority of youth goers have a clear expectation that TI can provide them with what they consider a necessary a set of beliefs.

As discussed in Chapter Four, Turner argues that belief is central to religion. With adolescents at TI expressing a desire to learn about belief, I argue that TI and similar religious entities have an inherent quality which is able to shape the beliefs, thoughts and emotions that form part of the interior bodies of adolescents who participate in religious activities. However, in the pursuit of sexual wellbeing, it is important to recognise that belief alone may not be sufficient for shaping the sexual behaviour of adolescents. In line

the potential religious setting hold for positively impacting on sexual wellbeing, I posit that belief should be accompanied by knowledge about sex and sexuality that presents a holistic approach to sexuality that they are able to use to establish congruency between the interior body of belief and the exterior body of behaviour. ¹⁷³

What constitutes sex?

In this chapter I have already discussed some of the inconsistencies between the official message about sexuality and the perceptual and behavioural responses by TI members. One of the concerns that has already been raised but not fully discussed is the extent to which TI members really understand what is meant by 'sex' within the official message about sexuality at TI. I now turn to discuss this concern in greater detail as it relates to the expectation for TI members to adhere to the message to abstain from 'sex' until marriage.

As illustrated by Myburg's sermons the idea that sex before marriage is a sin is a message that is communicated as one that is simple to comprehend, however, one of the first things that became clear was that upon closer inspection from TI members, the very subject of the message was not well understood, thus it seems imperative that I discuss the understanding and concerns TI members expressed in relation to identifying what 'sex' referred to in the context of the religious abstinence they were encountering at TI.

Using data from the workshops and the questionnaires I uncovered a lack of clarity among members of Teens Ignited about what constitutes sex and sexual activity. While the message of Teens Ignited that no sex outside of marriage seemed understood to mean no penetrative sex, what is far more ambiguous in the minds of the participants is the degree to which other sexual activities fall under this proscription. During Exercise 3 of the workshop, 67% of the participants reported being uncertain about whether being a

¹⁷³ See Stayton, W. 1985. Also see Turner, B. 1984. Belief and knowledge are linked concepts, as belief is arguably premised on some level of knowledge, but the converse is not always true, as knowledge can be internalized without any belief. For this reason although both form parts of the interior body they should be considered distinct but connected rather than interchangeable. See Geffier, E.1963. 'Is Justifiable True Belief Knowledge?' in Analysis 23, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. pp. 121-3
is sexually pure, thus other behaviours other than intercourse is sexually deviant by the religious standard. In response to Proposition 4, 73% agree that intercourse is sex but a surprising 19% report being uncertain.\footnote{174} There was greater certainty though about what did not constitute sex, as reflected in the responses to proposition 6, where 98% disagree with the idea that kissing is sex. Another sexual act that came into question was masturbation. Exercise 4, Scenario 3 again raised the question about what constitutes the sex. When asked to consider a scenario wherein a TI member was considering masturbation in light of the official messaging about sexuality, 69% voted for option C, categorizing masturbation as a sin. \footnote{175}

In Proposition 8 of Exercise 3, participants were asked to respond to whether or not they thought young people who attended TI are sexually active- 44% agreed that there are sexually active young people and a further 43% were uncertain.\footnote{176} However, considering that there is an overwhelming uncertainty about what constitutes sex and thus being sexually active. Again, these finding reflect the ambiguity about what constitutes sex in the abstinence message.

The Crisis of Marriage

Hidden Transcripts do not only find expression in social spaces far removed from the place where the public transcripts have greatest purchase, in fact it was often during informal conversations among members held at TI after the Friday meetings that yielded ideas that where clearly counter to the dominant messages at TI. One such conversation provides insights about how marriage, a key principle embedded in the abstinence message at TI, is problematised by a TI member.

After the Teens Ignited youth meeting on the 13 April 2007 where the prohibition of premarital sex was discussed, a conversation among some of the youth goers was sparked

\footnote{174}{See Appendix One. All the exercises, propositions and scenarios referred to in this Chapter are detailed in the PIRASH Facilitators guide.}
\footnote{175}{See Appendix One.}
\footnote{176}{See Appendix One.}
Nthabiseng (19). When asked what Nthabiseng (19) thought about abstinence before marriage, she responded by asking two startling questions in return: "What is marriage anyway?" and "Would it be okay if I sign a piece of paper marring me to someone, have sex with them and end it?" These questions took the entire group by surprise, some of the young people in the group had some reservations about the ability to abstain until marriage, but they had not thought to bring marriage itself into question. Nthabiseng brought into question what constitutes marriage, the implications of not getting married and of divorce issues that studies suggest are increasingly important in the current social landscape. Although marriage may be a taken for granted within a Christian framework, the relevance of marriage in the lives of young people is debatable and marriage may not be an obvious goal for young adults. Philippe Denis argues that the Christian community has failed to address these questions.

Nthabiseng unwittingly illustrated Denis' argument how the changing nature, values and norms concerning marriage have and continue to change in contemporary South Africa and the problematic it raises for the Christian abstinence message that Myburg had devoted approximately 2 hours of the evening to explain and motivate. Nthabiseng, is not the only TI member, with interesting views and questions about marriage.

In Exercise 4 participants were presented with Scenario and Scenario 4, which both raise concerns about the nature and relevance of marriage for TI members:

Scenario 2

Siyabonga (15) and Thato (15) are both members of Teens Ignited and started dating 5 months ago. Last week Siyabonga and Thato had sexual intercourse for the first time. Thato now insists that because they are Christians they must commit themselves to getting married. What should Siyabonga’s response be?

A. God’s eyes they are already married and should start planning their future together.
B. They should break-up immediately.
C. Siyabonga disagrees with Thato and says that marriage should not be determined by sexual relationships.


178 See Denis, P. 2006.
**Scenario 4**

Samantha (16) is a Christian and very faithful member of Teens Ignited. Samantha has been abstaining from sex but has concerns about the future. First, Samantha does not believe in marriage because too many marriages end in divorce and so it doesn’t work for everyone. However, she doesn’t want to be celibate forever either. If she doesn’t want to marry must she be celibate?

What would you advise Samantha to do?

A. One day God will send you the right person; you will change your mind and get married.
B. If you want to have sex then you must get married
C. If you don’t find someone suitable to marry by the time you are thirty, God will forgive you if you have sex after that

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**Fig. 6.2. Scenario 4 – Response Index**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>Total No.</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys 16 and above</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys 13 - 15</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls 16 and above</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls 13 - 15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                | 71%       | 26% | 3%  |

In Scenarios 2 & 4 the problematic of marriage that was first raised by Nthabiseng (19) is tabled. The “no sex before marriage” message by default inextricably links sex to marriage, thus inferring that marriage makes sex sacred (un-sinful). In Figure 6.1, 64% voted for option C in scenario 2, the responses here illustrates that in the minds of the participant sex and marriage can be separated out. However, as illustrated in scenario 4, 71% voting that she will marry someday, indicates that most participants (and more especially the girls) think of marriage as highly probable.

The questions and uncertainties particularly about what constitutes sex and the relevance marriage that TI members express are not addressed by the dominant message, and
more cases of discontinuity than continuity when it comes to the conversion from knowledge to behaviour. What is clear from these findings is that discontinuity and experiences of disjuncture between messages and behaviour, as well as ambiguity about the meanings and interpretation of the messages, far outweigh the continuities and congruencies in the lives of many TI members.

**Power Relations, Religion and Sexual-wellbeing**

The crisis or states of disjuncture and ambiguity that I have signaled throughout this chapter and particularly the findings of personal perceptions of feelings of uncertainty about whether or not they are living according to the teachings and have sexual behaviour that are pleasing to God, indicates that members of Teens Ignited are keenly aware of the contradictions between teaching and behaviour, between belief and practice in their lives.

For many members of Teens Ignited disjuncture is acutely felt as lived experienced and may be expressed at various points of decision making as can be seen in Tsidi’s story. Tsidi is a 16 year old girl, a youth leader at Teens Ignited. She recounts the following experience of disjuncture. An unequivocal message communicated by Myburg at Teens Ignited is that dating (having a boyfriend or girlfriend) is wrong; it is unhealthy as a precursor to marriage and it is unbiblical. Tsidi started dating a member of Teens Ignited fully aware that this is proscribed behaviour.

Unsurprisingly, as a youth leader seeking to be faithful to the directives provided at Teens Ignited, she experienced considerable anxiety about telling Myburg about her relationship. Her concern was that by telling Myburg she would effectively be inserting him between her boyfriend and herself. Asked about God in this scenario she replied, "God is on Pastor Anton’s shoulder; He is on his side." The unique role of the Charismatic leader in Charismatic Pentecostalism and the centrality of Myburg as God’s mediator in the lived experiences of members of Teens Ignited are illustrated here. Tsidi’s anxiety is not just a product of interpersonal sense of discontinuity but about relational impacts of her behaviour. Tsidi eventually disclosed her relationship to Pastor
to find that he was happy to listen to her and did not instruct her to end the relationship but made it clear that he did not approve. Tsidi tells how Myburg told her that while he did not approve the choice was one she had to make and that he only hoped that she would consult with him if she chose to continue the relationship.

The dynamic that emerges here between Tsidi and Myburg is indicative of the power of religion on the perception and behaviour of individuals and of the masks and performances of invoked by both dominant and less powerful actors to sustain unequal power relations. Tsidi’s story raises questions about why particularly the less powerful participate in maintaining such a relationship. Scott argues that this dynamic exists because of a false consciousness that exists for the powerful due to their sense that their power is legitimate and thus necessary and for the less powerful as they rationalise their position by inflating the role of the powerful in the context of an established hegemony.

The POWERFUL, as we have seen, have a vital interest in keeping up the appearances appropriate to their form of domination. Subordinates, for their part, ordinarily have good reasons to help sustain those appearances or, at least, not openly to contradict them. What ideological domination does accomplish is to define for subordinate groups what is realistic and what is not realistic and to drive certain aspirations and grievances into the realm of the impossible, or ideal dreams.179

Both Tsidi and Myburg may be well intentioned in their desire to maintain the relationship of power it is part of a combination of hegemonic power and false consciousness that disempowers Tsidi in her ability to make choices about her sexuality.

The Centrality of Belonging

Thus far in this chapter I have shown that the members of TI know what the message dominant discourse of sexuality is at the youth group and how they are engaging this message by means of thoughts, belief and to a certain degree their actions. Sexual health approaches rely on the tenant that knowledge is a fundamental and first step toward living

179 Scott, J. C. 1990. p 70.
The responses suggest that the sexuality of TI members is on the one hand being informed by various sets of norms and values which often contradict themselves. Thinking about of sex and sexuality as related to social relationships, networks and outcomes in the ways I have described, provides insights into the implications of the existing disjuncture between the teachings about sexuality at TI and the sexual perceptions and behaviour of TI members I argued the youth members are acutely aware of both on cognitive and experiential levels. A sense of belonging is a common feature of religion as a social institution. The Christian Fellowship Church and Teens Ignited slogan ‘A place to belong’ makes clear the strong emphasis placed on belonging and social identity by the church and the youth group. Although it appeared to be central concern, I argue that not enough has been done at TI to strategically make use of a sense of belonging within for the development of sexual wellbeing among adolescents.

As discussed earlier, members of TI report that their attendance is based on a desire to learn about what they should believe however belief is not the only point that made it onto TI members agenda for learning at TI, in response to the same question about motivations for attendance, they expressed a desire to learn about behaviour acceptable by Christian standards. The desire to learn behaviour is not simply a desire to learn how to behave but also to learn how such behaviour is achievable. The day-to-day demands of creating a life and lifestyle congruent with belief in Jesus Christ and the experience of the Holy Spirit are of singular significance for members of Teens Ignited. In its most condensed form this is a desire to know how to live as a faithful Christian.

The desire to learn was most often expressed as concrete assistance - how can I live this life? ‘I come to learn to be faithful Christian’, ‘To learn about teenage situations,’ ‘Teaches me about life’ and ‘I feel I need more answers from God in my life’. These

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emphasizes the point that even if these youth goers have internalized the beliefs/knowledge on offer at TI, which many report is the case, one of their greatest struggles is knowing how to operationalise the message, how to practically move the impact of the message from the tacit experience of the interior body to the overt expression of the exterior body. The findings of this study have shown that TI provides both belief and knowledge about sexuality to direct sexual behaviour, which are important in the pursuit of sexual-wellbeing for adolescents, but gaps between belief/knowledge and behaviour still exist.

To my mind there are two explanation for this that relate particularly to “the body” (1) the content of the dominant messaging about sexuality at TI does not does n0t provide directives that recognized or account for the complex relationship between the interior and exterior bodies or (2) there exists an opportunity for mobilising the social body as a part of the learning process. Belief is not the only perceptual aspect of that could be associated with the disjuncture between discourse and practice, another is the conceptions and meanings associated with sex as framed in the dominant message.

The desire to belong to a community was the third prominent category of reasons for attendance at TI. The following are some of the reasons for attendance that illustrate this the importance of belonging: “I want to build relationships”, “To speak to trustworthy people”, “To be around people who will walk with me in God’s way”, “Friends encourage me”, “To feel I belong there” and “Fellowship- 1 John 1V7187187181”. These and the 61 similar comments confirm the centrality of belonging and social identity at TI. This emphasis on belonging expressed by TI members themselves greatly supports the argument that religion offers a sense of connectedness and belonging which people tap into. The desire to belong for adolescents can be connected very closely to the crisis of identity Eriksen suggests is a developmental need during adolescence. Belonging may play an important role in the shaping and development of sexuality and sexual identity.

181 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from sin. Interestingly this verse suggests a correlation between, desirable behaviour (walk in the light), removal of undesirable behaviour (cleanses us from sin) and social relationships (we have fellowship with one another).
of social well being as an aspect of sexual health; belonging may be a useful contributor to sexual-wellbeing in religious contexts.

Having critically discussed the key findings of this study; the official messages about sexuality at TI, the experiences of ambiguity and disjuncture between discourse and practice and the centrality of belonging to relational aspects of sexual wellbeing, in Chapter Five, I draw on these findings to make concluding arguments about the impact of religion on adolescent sexual-wellbeing and potential for strengthening positive contributions that are being made. Reflecting on the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter Three, I will address the finding outlined in this chapter by building on an understanding of adolescents as a developmental stage where young people negotiate their identity and sexuality amidst a multitude of structural influences including religion. I will argue that the findings in this chapter related to the official messages about sexuality at TI and the responses of TI members to these messages, is reflective of the Foucauldian argument that sexuality is a discursive project underscored by important power relations. Using this framework, I will argue for recommendations for addressing: 1) the ambiguity of the official message about sexuality 2) the disjuncture between the message and the practices of TI members and 3) the role of existing features of TI such as belonging, as potential assets in the construction of sexuality and the outcomes of sexual-wellbeing for TI members.
Chapter 5
Conclusions: Theoretical Considerations and Recommendations
In light of the increasingly sexualized nature of contemporary youth culture in South Africa and particularly due to HIV, the importance of understanding the role various social structures play in the shaping of adolescent sexuality cannot be stressed enough. There lack of studies that assess the role of religion in enhancing the sexual-wellbeing of adolescents, although South African adolescents report high levels of religiosity. This study has explored the impact of belonging to Teens Ignited, a Pentecostal Charismatic Youth Group, on the sexual perceptions, practices and wellbeing on adolescents. Using participatory research methods and a questionnaire have been used to gain insight into the official teachings of TI as communicated at youth meetings, as well as experience and engage responses, perceptions and ideas about sexuality that TI members hold in light of the discourse of sexuality at TI.

The key findings of this study demonstrate that TI members have knowledge of the official message about sexuality at TI, however, discontinuities and disjuncture identified between the dominant discourse and lived experiences of TI members raise concerns about negatives impacts of religion on the way TI members negotiate their sexual lives. Concerns raised by TI members about how they understand sex and marriage in the context of the dominant 'no sex before marriage message' at TI have been reflected on as some of the challenges for TI members in their ability to live according to a religious message that they agree is a potentially helpful message.

Moreover, concerns raised about the relevance of such a message in a context where youth culture comprises many mediums which inundated young people with competing sexual messages cannot be overlooked as contributes to the sense of discontinuity in messaging experience by TI members. Finally, the unequal power relations that exist at TI, particularly between Myburg and TI members, has been discussed both as a barrier to TI members being able to contribute their everyday experiences and knowledge to the dominant discourse and an obstacle to the achievement of overall sexual-wellbeing, has been critically discussed and I have argued for the need to deconstruct adverse power
Having outlined and analysed the findings of this study in Chapter Four, in this chapter I draw together the central arguments about the nature of religion as a social structure as it intersects with and constructs sexuality as a discursive project that has implications for how adolescents at TI understand and experience their sexuality and how it affects their sexual-wellbeing. Furthermore, I will make recommendations about the content of the messages about sexuality at TI and the power dynamics that underlie discourses of sexuality.

**Religious Power, Discourse and Sexual-Wellbeing**

Drawing on a broad range of arguments about sexuality, religious power and sexual health and having closely considered the empirical findings of this study of Teens Ignited, I have argued that in the South African context where religion is still a real part of the social milieu and concerns about sexual-wellbeing affect adolescents disproportionately, a need exists to not only know whether religion contributes to adolescent sexuality, but what is contributes and how that contribution is made. I have shown how sexuality is socially constructed and how both historically and in the context of this study religion have actively contributed to the creation of discourses of sexuality that seek to regulate the perceptions and practices of individuals. However, as discussed in Chapter Three, I have argued for sexuality as a discursive project and so a project of power, and that in this case religious power is being evoked. The centrality of the intersection between religious power and sexuality is analysed for the purpose of this study by a Foucauldian analysis of sexuality as a discursive project that has perceptual and behavioural consequences for TI members.

The dominant sexuality messaging at TI is a good example of the use of structural power to create a form of sexuality that relies on a combination of knowledge and power that is meant to provide ‘truths’ that should regulate the behaviour of individual persons. The message of ‘no sex before marriage’ is communicated as absolute and not subject to
and recommendations about dating and courtship are seen as emerging from a source that is at least representative of the divine and thus ultimate knowledge. Moreover, the levels of anxiety and experience of ambiguity TI members experience when they believe their behaviours are not in line with the discourse noted in the findings are evidence of the power relations the discourse is premised on. I argue that unsurprisingly the discourse is one that is constraining and restrictive in the ways that Foucault suggests are typical of the repressive hypothesis.

These outcomes are undesirable in light of the pursuit for sexual wellbeing as they denote a lack of social and emotional wellbeing. The dominant messages about sexuality are thus seen as a system that constrains individuals and reduces their sense of agency. However, as shown by the inconsistencies in sexual perceptions and practices of TI members, sexuality is not easily constrained. The reported disconnects between the dominant discourse and the practices of TI members are both evidence of competing discourse of sexuality but also of levels of agency that TI members have and exercise in their practical lived experiences.

An important aspect of this study looked at the perceptions of TI members and particularly how the discourse is understood by them. Most experiences of disjuncture experienced by TI members can be traced back to this point. Differing ideas about what constitutes sex, the centrality of marriage, the relevance of the biblical message all speak to various interpretations and meanings held by TI members, and these perceptual and conceptual differences go on to influence behaviour. In this way sexual practices are not a result of the direct impact of the discourse but rather an indirect consequence of divergent interpretations and meanings in light thereof. Social action as described here gives way to the notion of agency in the face of a dominant and direct discursive project.

Following the Foucauldian argument that sexual discursive projects are ‘technologies of dominance’ and that a need exists for less powerful individuals or groups to act in ways that does not allow construction of sexuality that may be disempowering. In light of the official message about sexuality at TI and the inconsistencies between the message and
how might TI members begin to act in ways that inform the official messages about sexuality at TI in the construction of a discourse of sexuality?

Amongst TI members there are members whose perceptual and behavioural responses reflect the official messaging at TI and can thus be regarded as compatible with these messages, but as the findings suggest there are also responses that transgress the directives of the discourse. According to Foucault these responses are important for the diffusion of power. It is here, to my mind, that the notion of ‘the insurrection of subjugated knowledges’ becomes most relevant. Foucault posits that an important means of counteracting the undesirable impacts of a dominant discourse it is necessary for the obscure knowledge and meanings held by individuals to be taken into account and leveraged in the development of the discourse. I argue that the questions, concerns, perceptions and practices of TI members that may traditionally be seen as delinquent, subversive and counter-productive may be the best resource pool for knowledge that can be used to re-imagine the dominant discourse of sexuality at TI.

In so doing the fatalistic nature of discourses as ‘technologies of dominance’ can be effectively neutralized and instead of the dominant discourse of sexuality at TI being perceived as a tool for control it can be a means for young people to enhance the ability of religion to make a constructive impact on adolescent sexuality and sexual well being.

**Holistic Sexual Wellbeing: Religion and Sexual Health**

As discussed in Chapter Two, sexual health outcomes are not only measured by physical wellbeing, but emotional, mental and social wellbeing are central to a definitive understanding of sexual-wellbeing that is supported by a setting that promotes a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships. Thus it is important that the structure and values of religious group as well as the official messaging about sexuality create a setting and approach to sexuality that addresses these aspects of sexual

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182 See Foucault, M. 1978.
183 Gane, N. 2002.
including messages regarding the adolescent body’s readiness for sexual debut, the psychosocial impacts of sex, the social labels associated with sexually active individuals and the health risks associated with various kinds of sexual activity as part of the official messaging.

The official messaging about sexuality at TI does not make direct reference to sexual health or wellbeing as central to the outcomes of the discourse, however, in some ways this discourse and setting does meet some of the requirements of both the WHO definition of sexual health and Stayton’s description of optimal messaging. By conceptualizing sex as sacred and encouraging preservation of sex for marriage, sex and sexuality are ascribed value, values that are associated with marriage, kinship and the status of primary social relationships. These values can create a stable and constant basis for sexual decision making.

Linking sexuality with religious and spiritual values adds an additional dimension to sexual wellbeing not reflected in the current WHO definition. South African adolescents report high levels of religiosity, thus the extent to which an adolescent experience spiritual wellbeing, may also impact on their sexual wellbeing. Furthermore, whether or not people affiliate with a specific set of religious beliefs or practices does not fully diminish the existence of beliefs in and practices of spirituality. In the case of TI, where sex and sexuality are presented as an expression of spiritual values, commitment and identity, deviation from sexually prescribed behaviour causes a fair amount of distress for the adolescent conversely adherence provides a sense of congruence that I argue is desirable in the context of sexual decision making. Thus, the absence of references to spiritual wellbeing in the WHO definition crucially ignores a central feature of human experience and particularly the experiences of religious individuals.

In Chapter Four I discussed the discontinuities, experiences of disjuncture and ambiguities experiences by TI members as they respond to the official and dominant message about sexuality at TI and raised concerns about the impact of these experiences impact on sexual wellbeing? In light of the WHO definition of sexual health experiences
impact quite negatively on the psycho-social aspects of
Moreover, when social relationships are also an
impacted by our sexuality, the extent to which the relational quality of our interactions is
impacted can also weigh negatively on our overall sexual wellbeing. Thus, acute states of
disjuncture undermine the development of a stable base from which young people can
build coherent and healthy sexual lives.

In a context in which a considerable degree of disjuncture exists between both official
teaching and internalised belief on the one hand, and lived reality on the other, the
question of how the message of abstinence is communicated is significance. In my
analysis I have made critiques of both the context and means of communicating the main
message abstinence at Teens Ignited. However, it is important to keep in mind that in a
time of AIDS, with young South Africans at such great risk and with the need to pursue
sexual wellbeing, the abstinence message is still an important one and churches and youth
groups like TI who purport this message do so with the intention of contributing
positively to adolescent sexual wellbeing.

Recommendations

Drawing on the findings of the study and the broader arguments I have discussed, I put
forward three practical recommendations that TI may consider in an effort to strengthen
the contributions of religious entities to the adolescent sexuality and sexual wellbeing.

The challenge for religion is in an effort to positively get their abstinence message to be
more effective is to move from the understanding of sex before marriage is a sin as a
prohibitive statement about sex toward abstinence as a discourse of sexuality that is both
comprehensive in that it takes into account a variety of contexts wherein it is situated and
also responsive in that it is malleable enough that present history, conflicting views, other
structures and most importantly the individuals it is meant to impact n opportunity to
respond it in ways that may transform it. This results in a consciously and purposively
layered set of directives and support that is also a multi-directional process wherein the
concerns of the adolescents are not only noted but reflexively used to strengthen the relevance and sexual health outputs positively.

The point here is not then to control and repress but to provide a holistic approach to sexual wellbeing not based on prohibition and promotes the ability to make healthy choices. I argue that there exists a need for the TI discourse of sexuality to become more comprehensive by better accounting for the social and contextual issues faced by adolescents in contemporary South Africa which specifically relate to sexuality and to be more responsive to the questions, concerns and possible contributions the young people themselves can make to the development of this discourse.

Making the Discourse Inclusive and Responsive

To become more comprehensive, changes aimed at broadening the range and depth of the discourse is required. In the case of TI I argue that a more comprehensive discourse requires changes to the dominant discourse in four key areas: a reassessment of the avoidance strategies toward adolescent sexual-wellbeing; defining of sex within the context of the abstinence message; the relevance of marriage light of the growing crisis of marriage in South Africa and; and the explicit communication of sexual well-being in light of the dominant abstinence message. As discussed in previous chapters youth culture in South Africa is dynamic, complex and highly sexualised. Although it is undoubtedly the case that some aspects of it are considered in the communication of the dominant messages about sexuality at TI, I contend that messages about sexuality must be communicated with a greater sensitivity to the context within TI members experience sexuality, accounting for elements of youth culture that serve as competing discourses of sexuality TI members are exposed to and questioning the relevance of the message considering the contemporary contexts. I argue that particular emphasis on the complexity of sex and the crisis of marriage are good ways to begin to address these concerns.

This recommendation serves as a starting point for re-imagining religious discourses of sexuality; however, the implementation of these recommendations for making the
Scott argues that the discourses are inherently based on unequal power relations played out as public and hidden transcripts which involved intentional performances that maintain these power relations even when the less powerful disagree with the discourse and resist the power of the dominant. I have argued that the contexts that TI members inhabit and the hidden transcripts that are enacted in those contexts are an important source of new knowledge and power that can inform and reconstruct the dominant discourse in potentially positive ways.

Foucault argues that challenging unequal power relations created by discourse and the undesirable impact it has, is a product of channeling the knowledge of individuals as they respond to this discourse, and that these responses present an opportunity to change the nature and impact of the dominant discourse. However, the influence of these responses depends on whether or not the lived experiences and knowledge of TI members are heard and considered. It is my assertion that for that discourses should be able to adapt to the changing needs of the target audience and the responses (both compatible and contrary), thus making room for the insurrection of subjugated knowledge.

The findings indicate that there are a range of responses of TI members to the dominant discourse, some perceptual and other behavioural, some of which form part of the public transcripts and others that remain obscure to the leadership of the group and thus are hidden transcripts. These included perceptions about the relevance of the message and the extent to which it can be put into practice. The need exists for these responses to be made overt and opportunities to be created for discussion about how this discourse is understood, received by the youth. This may provide a means for the discourse to be contributed positively to by the very young people who it is meant to impact.

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184 See Gane, N. 2002.
Belief

Belief is an important aspect of religious experience. Even in a seemingly secular context where organized religion is argued to be in decline, people who do not participate in religious organization, report religiosity on the basis belief.\(^1\) The findings of this study suggest that TI members come with the desire to learn about what and how to believe and that they have a clear knowledge of what they are meant to believe. While belief is seen as a product of lifelong processes that parallel general psychological and social developmental stages, it is not always consciously understood or expressed even by the person who holds these beliefs.\(^2\) For the most part belief remains at the level of the tacit, where beliefs are not consciously examined, not problematic, but inherited, accepted and acted upon to the extent that social context allow. As such the interior body is an evolving entity, but once a set of beliefs is accepted and internalized we may assume them as relatively secure.

It is clear from the findings that the members of TI have adequate knowledge about the sexual behaviour required by the official message at TI and believe that adherence to these prescriptions would be advantageous to them, yet the lack of practice amongst many of these adolescents makes questionable whether they have effectively internalize this knowledge and so their beliefs. I argue that particularly in religious settings a shift from a focus on knowledge to a focus on internalized belief may be a means to reduce this obvious gap between knowledge and practice. This assertion is supported by two existing theoretical contentions; the first being that within religious frameworks the body is seen as having at least three dimensions, the exterior body of behaviour, the interior body of belief and the social body and the second being that social action is a product of internalizing ideas through social interaction.\(^3\)

Drawing on Berger and Luckman’s\(^4\) dialectical explaining the nature of social reality, I argue that the internalization of beliefs could assist in creating greater levels of


\(^3\) In Chapter Three I discuss Turner’s (1983) account of religious conceptions of the body and how they are related to Berger and Luckman’s (1967) social dialectical of the construction of reality.
practice. TI members have been presented, with an externalized message that has been presented as the governing norm as set by God and so supported by religious power. To become meaningful and objective facts or observable behaviour these religious teachings, in this instance, those pertaining to sex have become internalized through a definite process of socialisation. This is presented as the optimal means by which socially embedded knowledge is useful as, “The individual’s knowledge of the world is socially derived and must be socially sustained.” Thus, purposive social and relational processes are required to reinforce and support the message if it is to be converted to social action.

To make the suggested shift from a focus on knowledge to internalised belief, which I have argued for is a possible means by which to increase the likelihood of bridging the gap between discourse and practice, it is necessary for the social and relational mechanisms which support the knowledge and beliefs TI members accept as useful for understanding and negotiating sexuality. This would both improve the quality of the discourse and supports the social wellbeing of adolescents which is a positive contribution to sexual health.

Mobilising the Social body
The next consideration after recognizing the need for internalised belief is drawing on appropriate social resources to facilitate the process of internalization. In the case of TI the efficacy of the knowledge/behaviour model of messaging relies greatly on religious power, which arguably could increase chances of behaviour change success. However, as illustrated by the findings of this study, another aspect of TI that already exists and TI members report as an important characteristic of TI is that it is a place where they are able to build social ties with other young people they identify with, making TI a possible source of identity development and an increased sense of belonging which are aspects associated with adolescence as a developmental stage. I argue that as the social bodies

189 See Eriksen, E. 1968.
exists at TI an opportunity to positively mobilise belonging as a resource that can support TI members as they negotiate sexuality.

When I speak of mobilising belonging, I do not refer to belonging as membership to a group but rather as a sense of connectedness that involves the social body. As the social body is the product of social interaction, TI should be designed to facilitate and strengthen peer relationships that may be a support for ensuring that difficulties experienced by the interior and exterior aspects of the individual are better understood and resolved. Considering the nature of religious structures, the social developmental needs associated with adolescence and the role of the social body in shaping and negotiating social action, I contend that group identity and belonging is a resource and existing asset at TI that may enhance the conversion rate from knowledge to behaviour in the sexual lives and wellbeing of adolescents.

It is important to note that the recommendations made in this study are particular to the case and not largely generalisable, they do reflect some key features of the broader intersection between religion and adolescent sexuality. Furthermore, they should be understood as a starting point toward strengthening the contributions that are being made by similar religious entities toward sexual wellbeing.

**Synopsis**

The primary objective of this study has been to explore the contributions made by Teens Ignited, a Pentecostal Charismatic Youth group on the sexual perceptions, practices and wellbeing of adolescents, using participatory and survey methods. In Chapter One, the research questions that set the parameters of this study is introduced and the Teens Ignited, the case study for this dissertation, is described. The background to the case is outlined as critical aspects of the social, religious and health related characteristics of Potchefstroom, the city wherein TI is located, as they relate to the intersection of religion
In Chapter 2, the rationale for this study is outlined and critically discussed. With a focus on the contexts that shape contemporary adolescence, the high levels of religiosity among South Africa adolescents is highlighted as well as the high risk behaviour that has contributed to adolescents being disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS and related sexual health concerns. The body of literature that address the issues that affect adolescent sexuality and sexual-wellbeing in South Africa are discussed and the paucity of literature that seeks to understand the religious contribution to adolescent sexual-wellbeing is highlighted as an important gap this study seeks to fill.

In Chapter Three, I have addressed key theoretical concerns that inform the conceptual and analytical tools that have been used to understand and critically assess the findings of this study. These theoretical concerns include: 1) defining sexual health broadly, 2) understanding the complexity of religious power as it intersects with the social construction of sexuality and 3) the body as a central meeting point for religion and sexuality.

In Chapter Four I have discussed the official message about sexuality at TI, by way of analysis; I have highlighted competing sources of information about sex, questions about conceptions of sex and the relevance of marriage raised by TI members in response to this discourse. I have argued that while the dominant discourse of sexuality at TI is categorically communicated as abstinence from sex outside of marriage, and it is clear that TI members know that this is the message, there remain many uncertainties about how to utilize such a message. The combination of competing sources of information about sex, the ambiguity expressed about sex and marriage by TI members as well as unequal power relations embedded in the discourse of sexuality, impact on the sexual perceptions, practices in ways that do not enhance adolescent sexual-wellbeing. Drawing on a wide range of theoretical arguments, the concerns I have identified in Chapter Four have been addressed and recommendation have been made for ways in which the content
Contemporary sexual health issues undoubtedly prioritises the need to identify and understand the contributing factors to sexuality among young people, I argue that this study has shown that whether perceived as positive or negative, religious entities such as youth groups do make a contribution to the sexual lives and experiences of the adolescents that encounter it. By outlining and analyzing the content of the dominant messages about sexuality at TI and demonstrating the links and gaps between the discourse and both perceptual and behavioural responses, this dissertation has highlighted strengths and weaknesses of religious contributions to adolescent sexuality, made suggestions toward strengthening the positive aspects thereof and using a very specific example has employed established sociological arguments to about sexuality, religion and the body to better understand these contributions.


