

In the past two decades, questions about sexual health have become of pressing concern in light the global rise of the HIV epidemic. Statistics show that young people in sub-Saharan Africa make up the largest percentage of the African population infected with HIV and heterosexual sex is argued as the predominant mode of transmission. There is a growing body of research seeking to understand social determinants such as poverty, gender inequality and violence that contribute broadly to the sexual-wellbeing of young South Africans, however, the impact of religion on the sexual lives of adolescents, despite an overwhelming majority of adolescents reporting close religious affiliation, is not enquired about much nor is it well understood.

This study is an exploration and investigation of the intersection of religion and the sexual perceptions, practices and wellbeing of adolescent South Africans. Using a case-study of Teens Ignited (TI), a Charismatic Pentecostal Youth Group in Potchefstroom, a town 100 kms West of Johannesburg, this study in an exploration of the impact of the discourse of sexuality identified at TI, as well as the power relations that impact on the way members of TI understand and experience their sexuality.

Using participatory research methods and a survey questionnaire, the perceptual and behavioral sexual patterns reported by the membership of TI is examined and critical insights about the positive and negative contributions of religion to the sexual-wellbeing of the participants of this study are discussed. Drawing largely on Foucauldian understandings of sexuality as a discursive project, the religious messages and power present at TI are analysed. 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 negative impacts of religion on the way TI members negotiate their sexual lives. The aim of this study is to provide theoretical frameworks related to sexuality and religion as a basis for understanding how the negative contributions of religion to adolescent sexual-wellbeing due to inadequate messaging and unequal relations of power can be redressed and positive contributions such as the sense of belonging TI members experience can be strengthened.



I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

Tessa Gilda Dooms

30th day of September 2010



PDF
Complete

*Your complimentary
use period has ended.
Thank you for using
PDF Complete.*

[Click Here to upgrade to
Unlimited Pages and Expanded Features](#)

Dedication

To Elliot and Irene Dooms,
any success I have or will ever have
is a tribute to you.

Thank you my God, Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the one who has granted me the time, ability and desire to do this research. I love You.

Mr. Paul Germond, you are a dedicated scholar and you have proven to be a supervisor who is as committed to the student behind the project as you are to the scholarly exercise. Your input in this project has been invaluable and your support of me has been remarkable. I have been able to count on you every step of the way, at even the most difficult times in your own journey and for this I remain grateful. You have my love and respect always.

To Dionne Klein, Aidan Mosselson, Kieth Pietersen and Sepetla Molapo who so willingly volunteered time as research assistants in the field. Your commitment shown to this project is testament of your love for knowledge; desire to make an impact in the world, your love for young people and the sincerity of your friendship. To my ARHAP colleagues who have shown interest in this project and are in your own work contributing to bodies of knowledge related the intersection of religion and health; you have supported and inspired me. Thank you. To my friends and church family at MCM, you have supported and celebrated me more than I could have imagined. Thank you all for being continuing to believe in my work.

To Professors Johan Zaaïman and Freek Cronje and the rest of my colleagues and friends at the NWU School of Social and Government Studies, you have provided me with a wonderful opportunity to teach but also the even greater gifts of time, understanding and support while I undertook this study. I take this opportunity to extend my sincere love and appreciation to you.

Finally, to my family who has been the greatest support system anyone could ask for, I love you all. Ma and Dad, every success I have had and will ever attain is not my own, but yours. You have motivated and selflessly enabled me to reach goals I had never imagined possible. I love you both dearly and thank God for the blessing of wonderful parents. To Ruth, Phoebe, Dean and Stephan, you are my siblings and friends and believe in me more than I have believed in myself. Thank you. To my nieces and nephews, I love you and trust that what I do with these studies will impact on your lives profound ways.

Declaration	i
Dedication	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Figures	v
	vii
 Chapter 1 Introduction	 1
Research Question	2
Background	4
Teens Ignited	4
Potchefstroom	6
Methodology	10
Participatory Research Methods	10
The Workshops: Participatory Inquiry into Religion and Adolescent Sexuality (PIRASH)	12
Access and Limitations	16
Outline of Chapters	17
 Chapter 2 Rationale: Youth Culture, Sexuality and Religion in South Africa	 20
Contemporary Adolescence	21
Defining Adolescence	21
Negotiating Identity, Religion, Intimacy and Sexuality during Adolescence	23
Sexual Behaviour and HIV Risk	27
A culture of risky behaviour	28
Religiosity among Adolescents	30
Policy and the role of Religion in HIV messaging	32
Sexual Regulation through Law	33
Youth Religion and HIV Policy	34
Overview of Literature: Adolescent Sexuality in S.A	36
Youth Sexuality and Sexual-wellbeing	37
 Chapter 3 Conceptual frameworks toward Understanding Sexual-Wellbeing, Discourse, Religious Power and the Body	 40
Defining Adolescent Sexual-wellbeing	41
Sexuality, Religion and Power	44
Sexuality as a discursive project	44
Religion setting the sexual agenda	49
Religious Power: Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity and Teens Ignited	53
Religious Power, Sexuality and the Body	58
Exterior and Interior Body	58
The Social Body	60
Religious Bodies	61

and Discontinuity:

The Relationship Between Messaging and Practice	65
Understanding the dominant discourse	67
No sex before marriage	67
Religious messaging about sex: Influential or Irrelevant?	73
Competing Discourses	74
Sources of Information as Sources of Power	76
The Exterior Body as a Source of Information about Sexuality	77
The Relevance of the Message vs. the Power of Religion	78
The Relevance of Marriage	79
Continuities, Discontinuities and Disjuncture	80
Knowledge vs. Behaviour	81
What constitutes Sex?	87
The Crisis of Marriage	88
Power Relations, Religion and Sexual-wellbeing	91
The Centrality of Belonging	92
 Chapter 5 Conclusions: Theoretical Considerations and Recommendations	 96
Religious Power, Discourse and sexual wellbeing	98
Holistic Sexual Wellbeing: Religion and Sexual Health	100
Recommendations for Teens Ignited	102
Making the discourse Inclusive and Responsive	103
Internalisation: From Knowledge to Belief	105
Mobilising the Social Body	106
Synopsis	107
 Bibliography	 110
 Appendix One	
Participant Inquiry into Religion and Sexual Health: Version 2. Facilitators Guide	125

Figure 1. People living with HIV, by region end 2007.	28
Figure 2. Most important messages about sex received at the youth group by percentage.	71
Figure 3. Most important sources about sex and sexuality for young people (by exact no of responses).	74
Figure 4.1. Reported sexual practices of female participants (ages 13-21 by percentage).	82
Figure 4.2. Reported sexual practices of male participants (ages 13-21 by percentage).	82
Figure 5.1. Reported perceptions related to Christian teachings about sexuality ñ Male participants (ages 13-25).	83
Figure 5.2. Reported perceptions related to Christian teachings about sexuality ñ Female participants (ages 13-25).	84
Figure 6.1. Exercise 4. Scenario 2 ñ Response index by gender and age.	90
Figure 6.2. Exercise 4. Scenario 4 ñ Response index by gender and age.	90