

Project Title

Discourse, Gender, and Sexual Agency in Youth (2011-2013)

Funding Source and Amount

FRG II \$60,000

Description

This research attempts to answer questions relating to sexual agency and constraint: Why do some young people assertively and reflectively pursue what they want in intimate and sexual relationships while others put up with unwanted sexual activity? Why do some young people develop a growing sense of agency over time while others do not? Over the past two decades, a proliferation of sexual discourses in the domains of law, religion, health, and education, as well as popular culture, has emerged. Intimately linked to identity and practice, these discourses provide varied and even contradictory meanings on gender and sexuality, and offer diverse subject positions for those who inhabit them. Using a multi-method design comprising discourse analysis of documents, participant observation, focus groups, and individual in-depth interviews, this research ascertains how youths position themselves within these discourses and how these discourses constitute young people's sexual subjectivities and sense of agency. It will investigate youth experiences of both heterosexual and same-sex encounters and address how sexuality is cross-cut by gender and sexual orientation.