The Influence of Christian Belief on Adolescents' Moral Behaviour: An Exploratory Study.

By

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Declaration

I hereby declare that "*The Influence of Christian Belief on Adolescents' Moral Behaviour: :An Exploratory Study*" is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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SIGNATURE   DATE

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Abstract

Morals are an important aspect in any society's functioning, and can be seen as a complex concept which consists of many facets. Morals can also be seen to be influenced by variety of different factors. The present study used case studies and successive approximation content analysis to explore the influence of Christian Belief on moral behaviour in fifteen adolescents. The research found that adolescents' moral behaviour could be influenced by Christian Belief as well as authority and peers. Certain adolescents had different views and understandings of morals.

Key Words

Morals, moral development, adolescence, adolescents, Christian Belief.

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CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

South African society is known for its violence and criminal activities, so it came as no surprise when the South African Police Service (2007:1) reported that the crime statistics released for the period June 2006 to June 2007 revealed an ever-increasing rise in crime in South Africa. Murders in Gauteng alone went from 598 to 611 cases; common robberies increased from 6 134 to 6 369 incidents and hijackings from 2 112 to 2 332 occurrences. The important question, however, is what is the reason behind these increases? Is it poverty or hunger, or possibly, as Walls (2001:117) believes, is crime rising because the fear of hell is declining? Brunner (1995:51) elaborates on this when he states that without God life would have no point and morality would have no basis. This may not be true in all cases, but it does raise an interesting point.

Springsted (2005:251) states: "in all understandings of humans and ourselves, our moral nature is involved". According to the researcher, if Springsted's view is correct then these alarming statistics reveal society's need to revaluate its understanding of morality and gain a better understanding of what influences it, since the current figures paint a grim picture with regard to our society's current morals. Morals, according to Shaffer (2002:511), are "a set of principles or ideas that help the individual distinguish between right and wrong, to act on this distinction, and to feel pride in virtuous conduct and guilt (or unpleasant emotions) for conduct that violates one's standards". It is evident that society needs to find ways to improve its moral standards in general, and especially in school settings where there has been an increase in immoral acts. Manare (2000:10) states that according to the Deputy Education Minister, Father Smangaliso Mkhatshwa, there needs to be a moral rejuvenation to ensure safety and security at schools. He believes that high walls and security guards will not stop moral decay at schools, but rather a focus on a change of attitude and moral values could be seen as a solution. Feather (2005:35) states that social scientists accept that religion is a dominant force in many societies and that it can be associated with both positive and negative outcomes. Religious

belief, therefore, can come with both a light and a dark side, but can nevertheless influence people.

The researcher is therefore of the opinion that a possible contribution to the improvement of the current moral decay could come in the form of religion, specifically in the form of Christianity. Salili (2005:374) supports this, stating that Christianity is concerned with ethics and that it provides followers with moral values such as honesty, hard work, helpfulness and love. Broom (2003:176) further elaborates that all human societies have a propensity for religion (this research will focus on Christianity), for religion provides an important structure for the moral code that is valuable in those societies. A religious framework therefore seems to make it easier for an individual to understand right from wrong, and to determine, in various scenarios, what should and should not be done.

The present research will focus on the influence of Christian beliefs on adolescents' moral behaviour in a South African context, to ascertain whether religion could influence moral behaviour. The research will specifically focus on adolescents because Ring, Nash, MacDonald, Glennon and Glacy (2001:114) state that moral development suggests individuals are not born morally mature. Instead, maturity gradually develops, along with other capabilities, in particular cognition, which is used for reasoning processes to make judgements. Ring *et al.* (2001:114) elaborate on this and explain that children who are too young cannot understand religion and its influence on morality as they lack the cognitive capacity to do so. Adolescents, however, according to Newman and Newman (2003:297) are characterised by Piaget's (1967) cognitive stage of formal operations, which enables them to think about changes that come with time, gives them the ability to hypothesise logical sequences of events, and allows them to see consequences of actions.

As cognition changes, so do the moral views of adolescents. Wright (1982:120) states that morality in adolescence is a period of life that is entered into where ideological experimentation replaces and encompasses the moralities of childhood. According to Wright (1982:120), it is this search for an adequate

ideology when youths begin to sense their identity. To summarise Erikson's (1963) ethical theory, Wright (1982:120) states that the ideological stage of adolescence becomes the middle term between childhood morality and mature adult ethics and it is a vital link in which ethical views are approximated but are still susceptible to alterations of impulse judgement and odd rationalisations. As Kung (1993:113) summarises, the tasks of adolescents are to establish a flexible interrelationship between modes of moral thought, to weld them into moral principles which relate to the real world of adults, to reappraise earlier methods of moral problem solving where necessary and to adapt them to where they are applicable to adult problems which are new to the adolescent. It is for the above reasons that the adolescents' wills are used, as they not only possess the cognitive capabilities, but are also at a crucial point where they decide on, examine and experiment with what influences their view on morality.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT, RESEARCH QUESTION AND OBJECTIVES

The formulation of the problem gives the reader a value of the research and, according to Fouché (2005:115), obtains this by building an argument which links the research to the larger theoretical problem and how the research will contribute to its knowledge.

1.2.1 Problem Statement

According to Planalp (1999:161), "to behave morally is to judge right and wrong, good and bad, and to behave accordingly". Ring *et al.* (2001:97) state that morals are social and therefore one derives feelings, habits, values and codes of ethical action from the social and institutional circumstances one lives in. Jones (2000:2) states that the former Minisiter of Education, Kader Asmal, believes that South African society is in moral decay and schools and colleges are in a better position than religious institutions to lead the moral regeneration of South Africa. According to Maluleke (2000:5), however, religious leaders find it difficult to understand how moral regeneration in South Africa could be guided by schools and universities that have a secular ethos. In order to get a country onto the right moral path, the religious leaders believe that religious institutions are needed. Rosenkoetter (2005:229) states that morality depends upon

religion, supporting the view of the religious leaders. Religion therefore not only provides worldviews but also ethos, and a way of being and relating in the world. It provides its followers with a way of life that is considered to be in keeping with the ultimate ordering of life. Therefore, one's religion becomes a fundamental source of one's morals, and provides norms for both conduct and character for followers by advocating particular moral principles, laws and beliefs. Religion prescribes what people should become, thus encompassing moral doing and being.

Religion, according to Kluger (in Rosenkoetter, 2005:229), is the "moral cop walking the beat to blow the whistle when things get out of control". For this reason, parents, educators and many politicians regularly advocate religious instruction as an important foundation in the development of morality. Rosenkoetter (2005:230) states that there is a belief that a religious foundation is important in the development of morality, and that such a foundation has been a catalyst for many empirical investigations. In the research by Springsted (2002), Rankin and Cohen (2004), and Rosenkoetter (2005), it was stated that religious individuals should exhibit more moral development than non-religious individuals.

However, Rosenkoetter (2005:230) mentions research that revealed that religious individuals could not be readily differentiated from non-religious individuals when assessed on values or principles like honesty. When assessed on the value or principle of altruism, similar conclusions were drawn. Rankin and Cohen (2004:45) emphasise this by stating that religiosity has not been found to be consistently associated with behaviour like honesty and altruism when being compared to non-religious individuals.

According to Springsted (2002:216), however, a study conducted on young adolescents aged 12 to 14 showed religious influence as a good indicator of these adolescents not partaking in underage drinking. Kohlberg (1981:303), on the other hand, was steadfast in his assertion that morality is independent of religion, and that children would progress through the same sequence of moral stages regardless of religious orientation. Kohlberg (1981:303) elaborates that

the universality of the moral stages is direct evidence against the view that the development of moral ideologies depends on the teachings of a particular religious belief system.

On the other hand, Walker *et al.* (1995:371) conducted interviews with late adolescents aged 17 to 18, asking them to describe actual moral dilemmas they had confronted and how they went about resolving these dilemmas. In these interviews a common theme arose: participants used religion and spirituality in coming to terms with their problems. In addition, according to Colby and Damon (in Walker 2003:375), 80 percent of their sample attributed the values underlying their moral behaviour to their religious faith. This supported evidence, according to Walker (2003:376), that Kohlberg's (1981) reliance upon hypothetical moral dilemmas may have caused him to underestimate religion's influence on moral reflections.

Research conducted over the years has not helped significantly to answer the question of religion's influence on morality, as research conducted by Colby and Damon (1992), Walker, Pitts, Henning and Matsuba (1995), Springsted (2002), Rankin and Cohen (2004) and Rosenkoetter (2005) either supported or contradicted religion's influence on morality. Within the South African context research has also been done regarding the issue of religion and morality. Research available within the South African context was conducted by Mahlaba (2005), concerning adolescents' perceptions of morality; Mosetla (2003), who focused on facilitating adolescents' morality in an urban setting; Coetzee (2005), who explored the perceptions of secondary school learners; and Mabena (2000), who focused on morality of black adolescents in a multicultural situation. However, none of these studies primarily focused on the influence of religion on morality. The research will therefore focus on gaining an understanding of the influence of Christian belief on adolescents' moral behaviour in a South African context.

The research conducted by Mosetla (2003:42) gives support for the proposed research, as religion was seen to be a key agent in an intervention programme to promote higher moral standards, offering as it did important moral values.

Mosetla (2003:41) notes that a lack of religious values was seen as a contributing factor to adolescents' low morality in the Dobsonville township, according to the participants in the study who were Grade 11 and Grade 12 learners. According to the participants, religion could offer them self-control, which would prevent them from indulging in crime. The research indicates that religion could play a role in influencing moral behaviour in a South African context; however, the research did not stipulate a particular religion. For this reason, the present research will focus on Christianity and gain an understanding of its specific role in influencing adolescents' moral behaviour.

To determine the viability of the study, South African experts were consulted. The reverent **Minister** Neil Vels of the Methodist Church in Brackenhurst has been preaching for the past five years at that church, but more importantly has been working with the youth in the church since 1990. He is also currently involved with certain curricula regarding the youth. The second expert, Mark Russell, is a Youth Pastor from the Bryanston Methodist Church and has been working with the youth for many years. The researcher approached these individuals with the aim of firstly gaining more insight into Christian beliefs and morality, and secondly to ascertain whether Christianity could be seen as an influencing factor with regards to the moral behaviour of adolescence. These experts believe that this present study could yield important information and gain an insight into understanding Christianity's role in influencing morality, and could also provide information that could lead to different religions being promoted in their communities to improve the members' moral attitudes and values.

1.2.2 Research Question

From the problem formulation the research question can be formulated. The research question, according to Fouché and De Vos (2005:100), answers the what" question, with reference to what is it about the topic that the researcher wants to find out about.

For the purpose of this study, the research question is formulated as follows:

- How does Christian belief influence moral behaviour in adolescence?

1.2.3 Aim and Objectives

In order to answer the research question, clear aims and objectives are required. The aim of research, according to Fouché and De Vos (2005:104), is seen as "the end toward which effort and ambition is directed, an aim or a purpose", and can also be seen as something to attain or achieve (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 1991:24).

The aim of the proposed research will be to explore the influence of Christian belief on early adolescents' moral behaviour.

According to Fouché and De Vos (2005:104), an "objective denotes the more concrete, measurable and more speedily obtainable conception of such an end toward which an effort or ambition is connected". It can also be viewed as something sought or aimed at (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 1991:817). Therefore the objectives of a study are the steps one has to take within a certain time span in order to attain a specific aim.

To attain the aim, the objectives of this study are:
- To understand and explore concepts and theories that relate to Christian belief and morals, thereby obtaining a conceptual framework.
- To gain knowledge by collecting and interpreting data through semi-structured interviews with a sample of adolescents in order to transcribe and analyse the influence of Christian belief on adolescents' moral behaviour. These aspects were explored in Chapter Three.
- To analyse this data by means of a framework applicable for the analysis of qualitative data.
- To verify and interpret the research findings and describe them according to existing literature.
- To provide conclusions and recommendations for schools and parents.

1.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

1.3.1 Qualitative Research Approach

The proposed research will be conducted in a qualitative manner. Fouché and Delport (2005:74) state that qualitative research procedures are not strictly formalised, and the scope is more than likely undefined because a more philosophical mode is adopted.

Babbie (2002:20) further explains that the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research is a distinction between numerical and non-numerical data; the latter referring to qualitative. Neuman (2003:139) supports this by stating that the difference is in the nature of the data, where qualitative research uses soft data such as words, symbols and sentences; whereas quantitative research uses hard data in the form of numbers. Finally, Fouché and Delport (2005:74) conclude that qualitative research is idiographic and holistic in nature, and aims primarily to understand social life and the meaning people attach to everyday life.

Relating to the research to be conducted, qualitative research would be suitable, as the data to be gathered cannot be portrayed in numerical form. As the researcher aims to gain in-depth knowledge through semi-structured interviews, the qualitative paradigm would be more suitable within the proposed study, providing the researcher with a more holistic understanding of the concepts presented.

1.3.2 Type of Research

Research can be labelled as either basic or applied. The type of research to be conducted in this study will be applied. Applied research, according to Neuman (2003:22), is conducted to address a specific concern or to offer solutions to a problem. Fouché and De Vos (2005:105) state further that applied research "is aimed at solving specific policy problems or at helping practitioners accomplish tasks".

The objective of the study will be supported through the descriptive type of research. According to Fouché and De Vos (2005:106) "descriptive research

presents a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting or relationship, and focuses on 'how' and 'who' questions". Neuman (2003:30) further states that descriptive research begins with a well-defined subject, therefore presenting a detailed picture of the subject. The descriptive type of research will be best suited to this study, as it will be looking to gain an understanding of the influence of Christian belief on adolescents' moral behaviour.

1.4   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology of the study - consisting of the research process, the research strategy, sampling methods, data gathering and data analysis - will now be discussed.

1.4.1   Research Process

The whole research process will be illustrated comprehensively according to the framework in Fouché and Deport (2005:79):

Table 1.1.

Phase 1: Selection of researchable topic	
Step 1. Identify research problem	According to Fouché and Delport (2005:80), this is when the researcher identifies a researchable topic. In the present research, literature was consulted which led to certain questions being identified; the main question relating to the influence of Christian belief on adolescents' moral behaviour.
Phase 2: Formal formulations	
Step 2. Assess suitability of research approach	Fouché and Delport (2005:80) state that the researcher now accesses the suitability of either conducting a quantitative or qualitative research approach. For the proposed study the researcher has chosen the qualitative research approach, as the data to be gathered cannot be put into numerical form.
Step 3. Formulate the problem	Fouché and Delport (2005:80) state that if a decision has been made in Step 2 to undertake a qualitative study, then the researcher can formulate the research question carefully. Therefore the research question will be: How does Christian belief influence moral behaviour in adolescence?

Step 4. Draft the research proposal	The research, according to Fouché and Delport (2005:81), is drafted into a proposal to describe it in manageable details, with a view in the present researcher's case to get accepted by the Huguenot College Research Committee for partial fulfilment for the requirements of the Degree of Master of Diaconiologiae.
Phase 3: Planning	
Step 5. Select a paradigm and consider the place of a literature review	According to Delport and Fouché (2005:265), the researcher considers a paradigm, and then to what extent the literature will guide the proposed research. For the proposed research the qualitative approach will be used, therefore the literature review will be in the form of a literature control, so it will not be so extensive at the start of the research process.
Step 6. Select a research strategy	The researcher will now select a research strategy, according to Fouché and Delport (2005:83), which will be best designed to suite the proposed research. The research proposed will make use of the collective case study.
Step 7. Select methods of information collection and analysis	According to Fouché and Delport (2005:82) the researcher now selects certain data collection methods and measuring instruments for the proposed research. The proposed research will make use of semi-structured interviews where, according to Greef (2005:296), one uses questions in order to gain a detailed picture of a participant's beliefs or perceptions on a certain topic.
Step 8. Frame and develop the sample	The researcher will now frame and develop the sample. Fouché and Delport (2005:84) state that, as a result of it being a qualitative research, the researcher will have to take into account the identification of sources rich in information. For the proposed study non-probability sampling, using a purposive sampling technique will be used to identify South African, English-speaking males, of Christian-based religion (defined later in 6.1), within the early adolescent phase (14 years of age or Grade 8), of any particular culture, at Potch Boys high school in the North West Province during the year 2008.
Phase 4: Implementation	
Step 9. Consider applicability of elements of a pilot study	The pilot study, according to Strydom and Delport (2005:331), is usually informal and focuses on fewer participants with the same characteristics as the main investigation to be undertaken, so that certain trends, previously unclear aspects and newer questions can be tested and refined before the research takes place. The pilot study will be conducted on five participants with regard to the research proposed to access the type of questions to be asked around Christian belief and morality, and to get a better understanding of which particular area to focus the questions on.
Step 10. Collect materials, record and undertake literature study	The researcher, according to Fouché and Delport (2005:84), will now collect the materials, and record and undertake a literature study. Semi-structured interviews will be administered and will be documented through tape recordings and transcribed, as well as completed questionnaires. Information will be gathered until saturation has been reached. The literature review will then lead to a framework that will allow the research results to be interpreted in relation to

	existing theory. Therefore the proposed research will examine previous literature regarding Christian belief and morality and see the data in relation to that.
Step 11. Process and analyse data and verify the results; select additional criteria for judging adequacy	The researcher, according to Fouché and Delport (2005:84), will now process the data and analyse it according to the data analysis strategy previously chosen. With regard to the research chosen, the researcher will make use of successive approximation, and the data will be coded and analysed. To ensure that this type of analysis will reflect a true scientific and ethical representation of the intended study the researcher will make us of triangulation of theory, where according to Neuman (2003:137) the researcher will use multiple theoretical perspectives for interpreting the data.
Step 12. Plan narratives and write the report	The researcher, according to Fouché and Delport (2005:85), must now write a narrative that accurately reflects the core of the research undertaken. The researcher will therefore write an accurate and objective narrative regarding the influence of Christian beliefs on adolescents' moral behaviour. The researcher will also declare all the limitations and errors made and recommendations. A report will be finalised and sent to UNISA for evaluation.

Some of the concepts mentioned in the research process (Table 1.1), will be elaborated upon accordingly.

1.4.2 Research Strategy

The research strategy, according to Fouché (2005:268), refers to "the options available to the qualitative researcher to study certain phenomena according to certain 'formulas' suitable for their specific research goal".

The research strategy that will be used in this study will be the collective case study. Delport and Fouché (2005:272) elaborate that the collective case study as a strategy furthers the understanding of research about a social issue; while the exploration and description of the cases take place with in-depth data collection and multiple sources of information in the form of interviews, documents and observations. This research strategy best fits the type of research proposed because it will provide an opportunity to obtain a richer and more holistic understanding of the influence of Christian belief on adolescents' moral behaviour in a South African context, and will provide the researcher with the opportunity to make comparisons between case studies.

1.4.3 Universe, Population and Demarcation of Sample

The term "universe", according to Neuman (2003:217), refers to the population the researcher specifies is to be sampled. Mouton (2002:134) states that "the universe is the complete set of elements and their characteristics about which a conclusion is to be drawn on the basis of a sample". In the case of the research proposed, all Christian adolescents in North West Province are seen as the universe.

According to Mouton (2002:134), population "is a collection of objectives, events or individuals having some common characteristics that the researcher is interested in studying". Neuman (2003:214) adds that it is the specific unit, the geographical location and temporal boundaries that the researcher specifies. In the research proposed, South African adolescents in one high school within North West Province will be seen as the population.

The sample, according to Neuman (2003:215) is the unit of analysis, or case in the population that is being measured. Strydom (2005:194) defines a sample as a small portion of the total set of objects or people that together comprise the subject of the study. In the research proposed the sample will be South African, English-speaking males of Christian-based religion (defined later in 6.1), within the early adolescent phase (14 years of age) or Grade 8, of any particular culture, at Potch Boys High School in the North West Province during the year 2008.

The type of sampling method to be used in the research is non-probability sampling; according to Neuman (2003:211), qualitative researchers make use of it, because it is the relevance of the researched topic, rather than the representative, which determines the way in which people are to be studied and selected. Strydom (2005:201) further notes that non-probability sampling is utilised by qualitative researchers to seek out groups and settings where specific processes being studied are most likely to occur. This sampling method is proposed for the research as the researcher has limited knowledge about the population from which the sample is taken and with regard to what the sample size will be.

The sampling technique to be used is that of purposive sampling. Babbie (2002:225) defines purposive sampling as the researcher selecting their sample based on their own knowledge of the population and the nature of the study. Strydom (2005:202) further elaborates that the sample is based on the judgement of the researcher, in that the sample is composed of elements that contain characteristics representative of the universe of concern. In the case of the present research, the sample was selected from South African, English-speaking males of Christian-based religion (defined later in 6.1), within the early adolescent phase (14 years of age) or Grade 8, of any particular culture, at Potch Boys High School in the North West Province during the year 2008.

1.4.4 Data Gathering

According to Fouché and Delport (2005:82), certain data collection methods and measuring instruments are selected to obtain the most relevant data for the study. The proposed research will make use of semi-structured interviews, where one uses questions in order to gain a detailed picture of a participant's beliefs or perceptions on a certain topic (Greef, 2005:296). This method of enquiry will be best suited for the proposed research, as it will give the researcher a greater understanding of the influence of Christian belief on adolescents' morality, by providing first-hand accounts and detailed discussions regarding the two concepts.

1.4.5 Data Analysis

Neuman (2003:310) states that data analysis is a technique for gathering and analysing the content or text. According to De Vos (2005:333), it involves reducing the volume of raw information, identifying significant patterns and constructing a framework for communicating what the data has revealed. It is also the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the collected data. With regard to analysing the data, the researcher will make use of successive approximation for the research. According to Neuman (2003:451), this is when the researcher begins with the research question and a framework of assumptions and concepts. The researcher will then probe into the data, and asks questions of the evidence to see how well the concepts fit the evidence

and reveal features of the data. The researcher will also create new concepts by abstracting from the evidence and adjusting the concepts to fit the evidence better.

According to Neuman (2003:451), the researcher will keep on collecting evidence to address unresolved issues that appeared and repeat the whole process. At each stage, the theory and data will shape each other and eventually the evidence will be modified repeatedly until it becomes more accurate, thus moving the data towards a more comprehensive analysis with fewer generalisations.

1.5   ETHICAL ASPECTS

According to Strydom (2005:57), ethics are a set of moral principles that are suggested by a group, and serve as standards that form a basis from which the researcher is able to evaluate his own conduct. The following ethical aspects will be taken into account for the study.

1.5.1 Avoidance of Harm

Babbie (2002:57) states that the ethical concern of no harm refers to research that should never harm a volunteer in any way. In the case of the research where morality will be investigated, that would be the possibility of revealing information that would embarrass the subject or endanger their home life. Therefore, to ensure that no harm will befall the participants, the researcher will obtain informed consent from the participants' legal guardians beforehand. According to Strydom (2005:59), informed consent implies that all possible information about the goal of the investigation, its procedures, advantages and disadvantages will be explained to the participants.

1.5.2 Confidentiality

Another major ethical concern to the research would be that of confidentiality. According to Babbie (2002:58), confidentiality is when the researcher can identify a given person's responses but essentially promises not to do so in public. This relates to the semi-structured interviews in the research.

Confidentiality will be ensured in the research in the following manner: the participants will be given alias names to disguise their identity when the participants partake in semi-structured interviews.

The researcher will ensure that all the data collected will be stored in a fireproof filing cabinet to which he is the only individual who has access. The filing cabinet will be stored in his office which itself is locked and secured by burglar bars at all the points of entry.

1.5.3   Debriefing

Debriefing, according to Strydom (2005:66), is when the subjects are given the opportunity after the study to work through the experience and the researcher then assists the subject in answering questions to assist in minimising harm. This relates to the research, as it will be done for those participants who feel they require it after the interviews have been conducted.

1.5.4   Publication of Findings

According to Strydom (2005:65), the findings of a study must be introduced to the public in written format. The information presented must be formulated and conveyed clearly and unambiguously to avoid misappropriation by subjects and the general public. Therefore, the proposed research will be written in an accurate, objective and clear manner. The research will declare all its short-comings and errors made and will ensure that the subjects are informed about the findings in an objective manner.

1.5.5   Informed Consent

According to Neuman (2003:124), a fundamental ethical principle of social research is to never coerce anyone into participating; participation must be voluntary. It is not enough to just get permission; individuals need to know what they are being asked to participate in. This is done through informed consent whereby the legal guardians of the adolescents can make informed decisions about their children participating in the research. Strydom (2005:59) elaborates that informed consent implies that all possible information about the goal of the

investigation, its procedures and advantages and disadvantages will be explained to the participants.

1.6   DEFINITON OF MAIN CONCEPTS

The following section includes the definitions of the main concepts present in the research:

1.6.1 <u>Christian Beliefs</u>

Before aiming to define Christianity, belief will be defined. According to Barrett (2004:2), a belief is something arrived at through conscious, deliberate contemplation or explicit instruction. A belief can also be seen as someone's religious conviction or firm opinion on something (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 1991:100). Astley (1994:120) states that Christianity can be seen in the trusting or the commitment to Jesus as the ultimate standard for the Christian concept of God and man. Christians believe in God the Father, meaning believing in the one God. They also believe that the Son of God is the revelation of the One God in the man Jesus of Nazareth and the being Jesus Christ, not as an eternal intradivine hypostasis, but as a human historical person concretely related to God; the Ambassador, the Messiah, the Word of the eternal God in human form. Dowson (2005:22) also states that Christianity is acknowledging Jesus Christ as one's Lord and Saviour, and that through this action Christianity promises immediate reconciliation with God through Christ. Astley (1994:121) further states that the criterion for being a Christian is not the doctrine of the trinity, as gradually elaborated by the church, but rather the belief in the one and only God and the practical imitation of Christ. It also involves trusting in the power of God's Spirit, that Spirit who, in dialogue with non-Christians, as in other matters, works whenever He wishes, and will lead us wherever He sees fit. This, according to Astley (1994:120), serves as an unambiguous account of a specifically Christian element in Christianity: God's revelation in Jesus Christ through the Spirit.

McGrath (2005:xix) elaborates that the most important thing to understand in Christianity is that it is a way of living and not merely abstract ideas or values. It

is a mode of life that encompasses beliefs, hopes and commitment. Christianity can therefore be seen as having three components: a set of beliefs, a set of values and a way of life. This means that Christianity isn't just about beliefs and values; it is also about a distinctive way of life that involves everyday living being affected in certain ways as a result of one's faith. Therefore, for the purpose of this research, Christian belief will be defined as a belief in the one and only God, the practical imitation of Christ and the values and beliefs associated with it.

1.6.2 Morals

Morals, according to Shaffer (2002:511), are "a set of principles or ideas that help the individual distinguish between right and wrong, to act on this distinction, and to feel pride in virtuous conduct and guilt (or unpleasant emotions) for conduct that violates one's standards". According to Ring *et al.* (2001:97), morals are social in nature and therefore derive its values and codes of ethical action from the social and institutional circumstances it finds itself in. As such it then reflects the worldview of how things should be in that particular culture. For the purpose of this research, the definition of morals will be principles that help an individual distinguish between right and wrong, which are established from Christian ethics. When examined on an empirical level, Christian ethics hardly differ from the 'common' ethics of many non-Christians in the West. According to Jill (1995:11), this is a result of the fact that Western values are still largely the product of a Christian past; even though they may no longer be nourished by the churches, values in society at large have been mainly transposed by Christianity. However, when addressing the differences on a more theoretical level, there are a number of discrepancies. Jill (1995:12) states that when looking specifically at Christian appeals, there are certain characteristics that are practised together, which can be broken down and isolated and are seen as appeals to the Bible, to Christian tradition, Christian experience and Christian belief. According to Jill (1995:xiv), however, Christian ethics form a highly pluralistic discipline and fundamental differences are apparent in presumptions, methods and conclusions of different writers.

1.6.3 Adolescence

According to Baird (2003:4), adolescence describes the transitional period when an individual undergoes major changes in physiological, social, emotional and cognitive functioning. The hallmark of adolescent cognition is that it consists of a qualitative change when adolescent thoughts become more abstract, logical and idealistic. Baird (2003:4) elaborates that the primary change in adolescent cognition is that it is dramatically improved in the ability to think and reason abstractly; this reflects what Piaget (1954) explained, namely that adolescents are no longer limited to actual and concrete experiences and actions for their thoughts. They possess the ability to cognitively generate entirely hypothetical possibilities or strictly abstract propositions. Kung (1993:113) states that the tasks of adolescents are to establish a flexible interrelationship between modes of moral thought, to weld them into moral principles which relate to the real world of adults, to reappraise earlier methods of moral problem solving where necessary and to adapt them to where they are applicable to adult problems which are new to the adolescent.

Adolescence, according to Weiten (2001:456), is a transitional period between childhood and adulthood. The age boundaries are not exact but in our society it roughly begins at age 13 and ends at about 22. Newman and Newman (2003:290) further elaborate by stating that psychosocial theory views adolescence as a single stage unified by the resolution of the central conflict of identity versus identity confusion, and this relates roughly to ages 11 to 21. According to Santroch (1998:407), Kohlberg viewed the demarcation of adolescence as follows: early adolescence (11-14), middle adolescence (15-18) and late adolescence (18-21).

For the purpose of this study, the term 'adolescence' will refer to early adolescence and be demarcated by 14 years of age or Grade 8.

1.7   CHAPTER OUTLINE

The study consists of four chapters. The composition of the dissertation will be as follows:

Chapter One: Overview and rationale of the study

Chapter Two: Theoretical considerations on Christian beliefs and morals

Chapter Three: Method of enquiry; findings of the study; literature control

Chapter Four: Conclusion, limitations and recommendations

1.8   RESEARCH PROGRAMME

The proposed programme for completion of the dissertation is as follows:

Chapter 1   -   10 December 2007

Chapter 2   -   28 January 2008

Chapter 3   -   3 March 2008

Chapter 4   -   17 March 2008

Submission of dissertation – June 2008

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

> "Can you tell me, Socrates, whether virtue is acquired by teaching or by practice; or if neither by teaching nor practice, then whether it comes to man by nature, or in what other way?" Socrates answered, "You must think I am very fortunate to know how virtue is acquired. The fact is that far from knowing that it can be taught, I have no idea what virtue is" Sizer and Sizer (1970:11).

The aim of this research is to explore the possible influence of Christian belief on adolescents' moral behaviour, and the researcher believes that the above quotation highlights an important theme in the research. Can morals really be taught by institutions or organised religions, or do they come about through life experience? More importantly, what influence do they have on an individual's moral behaviour? Although Socrates did not have the answer he highlights an important question which, as Lickona (1976:3) states, remains the starting point of any consideration of morality: what is good and moral?

The objective of this chapter will therefore be to try to address certain questions raised in the above dialogue, including literature covering issues regarding moral development, the meaning of morals, the Christian religion, and how the Christian perspective and morality relate to Christian ethics. As the focus of this study is on adolescents, the adolescents' developmental phase will be briefly discussed and related to moral development. This chapter will conclude with a theoretical understanding of how religious beliefs could influence moral behaviour.

2.1.1 Adolescents and Adolescence

Lerner and Spanier (1980:23) state that adolescence has traditionally been defined from a standpoint of a particular attribute of change, but it has been argued that no one attribute alone can define the adolescent period.

Owens (2002:492), however, explains that adolescence has come to represent the developmental bridge between middle childhood and adulthood. There are physical, social and cognitive changes that set this period apart from childhood and adulthood. Owens (2002:492) elaborates that physically the child is transformed into an adult through the process known as puberty. Puberty, according to Lafreniere (2000:242), marks the onset of adolescence and represents the one universal aspect of adolescents' experience, found in all primitive species, in all cultures throughout history. Weiten (2001:456) also concludes that adolescence is a transitional period between childhood and adulthood. The age boundaries are not exact, but in our society it roughly begins at age 13 and ends at about age 22.

Owens (2002:492) states that adolescence is a time of transition, not just in terms of physical and sexual transformations, but also in terms of changes in cognitive and socio-emotional areas. Due to this, the following subsections will address the relative areas of development for this research, starting with cognition.

2.1.2 Cognition

Adolescents have an increased cognitive capacity, and the hallmark of adolescent cognition is that it undergoes a qualitative change and adolescent thoughts become more abstract, logical and idealistic. Baird (2003:4) elaborates that the primary change in adolescent cognition is that it is dramatically improved in the ability to think and reason abstractly. According to Piaget's (1954) theory, Baird (2003:4) explains that adolescents are no longer limited to actual concrete experiences and actions for their thoughts. They possess the ability to cognitively generate entirely hypothetical possibilities or strictly abstract propositions; this is known as formal operational thinking.

Cognitive advances associated with formal operational thinking can be summarised as follows, according to Gemelli (1996:457-458):

- The ability to reason through a hypothesis based on verbal propositions.
- The ability to combine propositions and isolate variables to test a hypothesis.
- The ability to use thoughts and increasingly believe in the power of thoughts in planning for the future.
- The ability to classify objects and people based on hypothetical reasoning.
- The ability to be increasingly creative in thinking and more sophisticated in the use of symbolic thinking.
- The ability to form personal opinions and to construct individual standards and moral values, along with an increase in the ability to separate what is theoretically possible from what is unrealistically possible.

Just as there are changes in cognitive functioning, so too are there changes in the adolescents' social domain. This is a result of the increased cognitive capacity, and these social changes can be understood as follows:

2.1.3 Social

In terms of social changes, adolescence can be seen as an important time when an individual develops a sense of identity, and this can best be understood through the psychosocial theory. Newman and Newman (2003:290) state that the psychosocial theory views adolescence as a single stage unified by the resolution of the central conflict of identity versus identity confusion. This relates roughly to ages 11 to 21.

Identity versus role confusion marks the fifth in Erikson's eight stages of lifespan sequence of developmental tasks, and comes to the forefront during adolescence (Kroger 2003:206). Erikson's theory (1968), according to Kail and Cavanaugh (2007:340), states that adolescents face a crisis between identity and role confusion. This crisis involves balancing the desire to try out many

possible selves, and the need to select a single self. Erikson (1974:16) explains that the crisis does not connotate an impending catastrophe, which at one time seemed to be the way in which the term was understood, but rather that it is being accepted as designating a necessary point and crucial moment when development must move on one way or another. There will be marginal recourses of growth, recovery and further differentiation in the adolescent. Therefore the adolescent will seek to find a resolution between these two poles, and will optimally undergo an identity formation process, whereby the ego synthesises and integrates earlier identifications into a new form.

Kail and Cavanaugh (2007:340) explain that adolescents achieve identity through the hypothetical reasoning skills of the formal operational stage of cognition proposed by Piaget (1954). This enables them to experiment with different selves and learn about possible identities. With cognitive maturation adolescents are more capable of slowly integrating various aspects of their sub-identities (gender, sexual, peer and social identities) into one overall identity (Gemelli 1996:448). Owens (2002:532) adds that with the new ability in cognition, adolescents are equipped with the ability to think more expansively and idealistically, which is referred to as idealisation. As a result, adolescents become infinitely more expansive thinkers, visionaries and idealists. Much of the testing and experimenting is career orientated, as adolescents test out possible professions. They are also romantically orientated and experiment with religious and political beliefs too.

Due to this an adolescent's identity does not extend backwards, building on earlier childhood experiences, but is rather seen to be projected forward in the form of the establishment of goals, aims, anticipated careers and lifestyles (Owens 2002:492).

With the resulting changes in identity and cognition, emotions of the adolescents begin to change, develop and take on new roles, which can be described as follows:

2.1.4   Emotions

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The process of individuation and identity exploration requires the adolescent to become emotionally independent from the parent (Lafreniere 2000:254). In considering the emotional life of the adolescent, Lafreniere (2000: 254) states that the adolescent re-enters a stage of autonomy, and struggles with the parents. Although there is a similarity with the emotional dynamics with separation individuation in the toddler period, Lafreniere (2000:254) explains that the adolescent's quest for independence is different in many aspects. In this sense, autonomy refers to an adolescent's increase in self-reliance, initiative, resistance to peer pressure and responsibility for one's decisions and actions. Lafreniere (2000:254) notes that adolescents become less emotionally dependent on their parents. As a result, they are less likely to turn to their parents in response to their emotional needs, and that they are more likely to develop complex views of their parents and view them as flawed and imperfect. They are also often emotionally invested in relationships beyond the family, and all of these cognitive and social reasons tend to pull the adolescent toward a peer culture. As such they often feel it is better to seek the advice of a peer who truly understands them, than the counsel of their own parents (Lafreniere (2000:255).

Rosenblum and Lewis (2003:284) present a list of a broad range of emotional competencies that adolescents should develop:

They must be able to:
- Regulate intense emotions.
- Self-soothe independently.
- Achieve awareness of, and successfully attend to, one's own emotions without becoming overwhelmed by them.
- Understand the consequences to self and others of genuine emotional expression versus dissemblance.
- Use symbolic thought to reframe a negative event to one that is less aversive.
- Separate momentarily emotional experience from identity and recognise that the self can remain intact and continuous despite emotional fluctuations.

- Distinguish feelings from facts to avoid reasoning based on emotion such as "I feel, therefore it must be true".
- Negotiate and maintain interpersonal relationships in the presence of strong emotion.
- Manage the emotional arousal of empathetic and sympathetic experience.
- Finally, use cognitive skills to gather information about the nature and sources of emotion.

With emotional, social and cognitive development in adolescence being summarised and important aspects highlighted, religion's place in adolescence will now be discussed.

2.1.5 Religion

Ream and Sawin-Williams (2003:52) states that adolescents are concerned with questions of who they are; not only in the context of life, not only in the context of other people, but in the context of life's meaning and reasons for being. Religion is seen as the natural medium for exploring these questions. Of all the social institutions, none but the family has existed as long as religion, according to Lerner and Spanier (1980:65). Most children and adolescents are given some instruction in religion, which is usually the faith that the parents have chosen. Ream and Sawin-Williams elaborates (2003:54) that the most consistent findings in literature on religious socialisation state that the quality of the adolescent's relationship with their parents will determine the effectiveness of parental religious socialisation.

Lerner and Spanier (1980:66) state that during adolescence many individuals begin to question and doubt some of what they have heard, and move away from religion. On the other hand, others finally find it a period of intense commitment to their religion. Religion is seen as a major part of the social context of contemporary adolescents and Lerner and Spanier (1980:66) elaborate that adolescents identify with this component of their social context and view it as important. Despite changes over time in the meaning they attach

to it, most adolescents show religious behaviour very similar to that of their parents (Lerner and Spanier 1980:66).

Lerner and Spanier (1980:68) go on to state that it is expected that adolescents remain behaviourally committed to religion, though the meaning of, and reasons for, their behaviour might change as different reasoning can underlie the same religious behaviour at successive positions of adolescence. Horrocks (1976:325) states that as children grow older, many appear to relinquish specific beliefs and adolescence has often been characterised as a period of susceptibility to doubts about religious beliefs. Horrocks (1976:328) goes on to explain that religious beliefs are susceptible to the same social influences that alter other attitudes and opinions; therefore it can be said that adolescents acquire religious attitudes and ideals much the same way as they acquire other types of attitudes and ideals.

Adolescents can also primarily convert to new religious groups for three main reasons. According to Ream and Sawin-Williams (2003:54) these are: because religion offers a new perspective on life that allows adolescents to cope with life better; because religion can be seen to provide the adolescent with new friends and a sense of belonging in a new social network; and as a result of some prior religious socialisation.

With religion being explored, the final section will discuss morals in adolescents and will be the prelude to the section on moral development.

2.1.6   Morals

Gemelli (1996:445) elaborates on the fact that adolescents begin to re-evaluate their beliefs, standards, values and ways of behaving. Gemelli (1996:455) points out that adolescents begin to examine the logic and consistency of their existing beliefs. This reviewing of their existing beliefs contributes to an adolescent developing his or her own moral values. Throughout adolescence, teenagers evaluate the moral rules and values defined by peers, teachers and other adults. Some of these are internalised and become the building blocks of conscience development. According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary

(2007:243), conscience refers to "a person's moral sense of right and wrong, viewed as a guide to one's behaviour".

Gemelli (1996:505) explains that adolescents engage in conversations with their parents about what they perceive about their conscience. Through these conversations, adolescents evaluate moral standards and are prone to overthrow rigid conciseness and accept standards of behaviour and moral values of a peer group, religions and other groups. Kung (1993:113) further adds that the tasks of adolescents are to establish a flexible interrelationship between modes of moral thought; to weld them into moral principles which relates to the real world of adults; to reappraise earlier methods of moral problem solving where necessary; and to adapt them to where they are applicable to adult problems which are new to the adolescent.

Wright (1982:120) adds that morality in adolescents is a period of life that is entered into where ideological experimentation replaces and encompasses the moralities of childhood. Welchman (2000:54) explains that ideology is seen as a defined world image by which the adolescent finds some sense of order and orientation. Smetana and Turiel (2003:248) state that in adolescence, an understanding of society's moral underpinnings is first formed, and adolescents are not seen as consistently or principally moral thinkers, nor are they confused. Adolescents can rather be seen to make autonomous moral judgements in some situations and focus on personal goals in others.

Adolescents fall under Kohlberg's conventional level, which will be further discussed in the following section. At the conventional level, adolescents look to society's norms for moral guidance; meaning that an individual's moral reasoning is largely determined by other people's expectations of them. Kail and Cavanaugh (2007:327) elaborate that stage three is when adolescents' reasoning is based on interpersonal norms; meaning the aim of the adolescent is to win the approval of other people by behaving as good boys or good girls. Kail and Cavanaugh (2007:326) go on to say that stage four focuses more on social system morality, where adolescents believe that social roles, laws and

expectations exist to maintain order within society and to promote the good of all.

Having described and explored adolescence and the developmental issues surrounding it, this study will now discuss moral development. According to Kay (1970:21), research into children's morality makes it clear that one can speak confidently of moral development - which is not an entirely original conclusion to reach. With regard to social relationships, Kay (1970:21) states that different kinds of moral conduct are expected to be seen in infants as opposed to adolescents, and behaviour towards both is modified accordingly. This does not require tedious and sophisticated controlled experiments to confirm, as Kay (1970:21) further elaborates that memories from childhood and observations of children around us every day lead us in this conclusion. Kung (1993:114) supports this idea of moral development in his statement that the notion of moral development suggests human beings are not born morally mature, but rather that their capacity for moral and ethical action develops gradually alongside other capacities as one gets older. There are many different theories on moral development, of which the most influential shall now be discussed.

2.2   MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Langford (1995:69) suggests that the most influential work done on the development of morals in the last three decades is that of Lawrence Kohlberg. Like Piaget (1932), Kohlberg was committed to a general outlook known as cognitive structuralism. Within this paradigm, reason is the most distinguishing characteristic of morals in a human being. (Compare Piaget, 1932; Rest, 1983:556-629; Turiel, 1998:863-932.) According to Arnold (2000:367), Kohlberg (1984) maintained that one truly becomes a moral person in both mind and deed as a result of moral reasoning. The primary interest in Kolhberg's research was how the spontaneous development of an individual might lead them to pass through a sequence of stages in moral reasoning.

Steuer (1994:544) illustrates this in terms of a child moving from stage one to stage two, wherein the child initially only appreciates their own view, but moves

on to start understanding the point of view of others as well. As a result of the organisation of the stages, individuals move from stage one to stage two and so forth, where the achievement of the previous stage forms a necessary foundation for the stage that follows. This substantiates what Kolhberg's research was aimed at and demonstrates when and how this happens in individuals.

Kohlberg's (1984) developmental model exemplifies the dominant models in moral psychology that have implicitly assumed the emphasis on moral reasoning (Walker 2004:547). Walker (2004:547) believes that Kohlberg's (1984) affinity for the structural tradition in moral development has led him to an account of moral functioning defined by reason and revealed through the developmental process. His theory is advocated by a vision of moral maturity that has led the featured principle of moral judgement, becoming an ideal stance involving abstract impartiality and universalisation according to Walker (2004:547). Walker (2004:548) also states that Kohlberg's conceptual, empirical and applied contributions have been monumental, and that he can be credited with legitimising moral development as a field of enquiry in psychology. To summarise, according to the researcher all individuals reason; therefore moral reasoning is universal and moral perspectives move through stages in a hierarchical order whereby individuals' reasoning of moral situations differ and become more complex the further they progress. This reasoning ability will be incorporated and used when making moral decisions and developed in correspondence with cognitive changes in an individual.

This is supported by Darley and Shultz (1990:528), who state that there is a tendency to view moral development as dependent on cognitive development, and changes in morals are evidence of changes in cognitive development. According to Darley and Shultz (1990:538), this notion of structural parallelism originated with Piaget (1932), where sophistication of moral judgement was seen as a function of cognitive developmental stages. According to the researcher, this can be understood as moral understanding developing with an individual's cognition. As cognition becomes more advanced, so does the way an individual views moral situations, which can be seen as developing in stages.

Kohlberg (1976:31) states that to understand moral stages, it is helpful to locate them in the sequence of the development of the personality. Kohlberg (1976:31) elaborates that individuals pass through one stage at a time in sequence from stage one, which lies at the bottom of the hierarchal structure, to stage six which lies at the top; as well as tracing along other stages, the most basic of which is intelligence. Examined by Kohlberg (1976:31) and studied by Piaget (1967), this notion of moral development is supported by Kung (1993:114) in his suggestion that the capacity for moral and ethical action develops gradually with other capacities as one gets older. For many, therefore, a key component of moral development is cognitive development: the reasoning process one uses to make judgements.

This is further elaborated on by Baird (2003:3), who states that the cognitive component of moral reasoning takes place following the emergence of a child's ability to reflect on the past and integrate it with the present. According to Baird (2003:3), this cognition enables the child to advance towards a new type of moral thought, one whereby the child can strive to behave in consonance within internalised standards of appropriate behaviour.

Kohlberg (1976:31) explains that after a child learns to speak, there are three major developmental stages of reasoning: the intuitive stage, the concrete operational stage and the formal operational stage. Kohlberg (1976:31) states that at around the age of seven years the child enters the stage of concrete logical thought, in which they can then make logical references and handle quantitative relations about concrete things.

Kohlberg (1976:31) goes on to explain that adolescents then enter the formal operational stage, at which point they can reason abstractly. Baird (2003:4) elaborates that the hallmark of cognition in adolescents is that their thoughts become abstract, logical and idealistic, and are no longer limited to concrete expression experiences, but can generate make–believe situations or events that are entirely hypothetical or are of strictly abstract propositions. Newman and Newman (2003:297) add that along with the ability to hypothesise logical

sequences of events, most importantly adolescents are able to see consequence of their actions. Kohlberg (1976:32) sums up the concept by stating "since moral reasoning clearly is reasoning, advanced moral reasoning depends upon advanced logical reasoning. There is a parallelism between an individual's logical stage and his moral stage".

Kohlberg (1976:32) states that after the logical development, one finds the stages of social perceptions or role–taking. These role–taking stages describe the level at which an individual sees other individuals, interprets their thoughts and effects and tries to see their place or role in society. These stages are seen to be very closely related to moral stages. However, they are more general, since they not only deal with fairness and choices of right or wrong, but also with making a judgement of fairness at a certain level. Kohlberg (1976:32) therefore explains that just as logic develops, so do the stages of social perception. However, Kohlberg (1976:32) concludes by stating that even though the moral stage is related to cognitive advancement and to moral behaviour, an identification of a moral stage must be based on moral reasoning alone. Baird (2003:11) supports this and states that regardless of context, the key factor to moral development is an individual's ability to use their own cognitive skills to elicit and assimilate the knowledge of other. According to Darley and Shultz (1990:528), Selman (1971) specified the relationship between cognitive development and peer interaction, and argued for the centrality of a child's developing capacity for role–taking. Yet, as Darley and Shultz (1990:529) state, there must be a certain cognitive development necessary for attaining perspective–taking stages, which in turn are necessary for attaining certain moral stages.

As stated previously, reason is at the heart of the cognitive developmental approach to moral socialisation, and according to Arnold (2000:366) it has only by inference been typically viewed as the most distinctive characteristic of a human's moral maturity in this paradigm. The following section will examine the theoretical descriptions of the moral stages.

2.2.1 <u>Theoretical Description of Moral Stages</u>

Arnold (2000:365) suggests that over the last 30 years, the notion of stage and sequence has dominated moral psychology. Described as the "odd duck" swimming against the tide, Arnold (2000:366) explains that Kohlberg (1984) came to revolutionise the study of morality with his moral stage theory, and that Kohlberg's theory is generally acknowledged to have dominated the field ever since. (Compare Arnold, 2000:366; Kurtiness and Gewirtz 1991; Mogil and Mogil 1986; Turiel, 1998:863 – 932). So what is this theory actually comprised of? The six moral stages Kohlberg (1976:32) mentions are grouped into three levels, and are illustrated as follows by Louw, Van Ede and Louw (1999:378):

Kohlberg's stages of moral development

Age	Level/Stage	Kind of behaviour
	Level I: Pre-conventional level	
± 5-9	Stage 1 Heteronomous morality - Punishment and obedience orientation	Children obey rules to avoid punishment.
	Stage 2 Individual morality - Instrumentational goal and interchange	Children obey rules to obtain rewards or favours.
	Level II: Conventional level	
	Stage 3 Morality of interpersonal expectations, relationships and conformity - good boy/good girl orientation	Children obey rules in order to be accepted and to avoid rejection.

Most adolescents and adults	Stage 4 Morality of social systems and conscience – Law and order orientation	Individuals accept rules because they can identify with them and perceive them as essential for preserving society.
	Level III Post-conventional level	
	Stage 5 Morality of social agreement, usefulness and individual rights	Rules are regarded as contractual agreements aimed at protecting the rights of the individual and promoting the common good.
Only a small percentage of adults	Stage 6 Morality of universal ethics	Person acts on self-chosen principles based on universal values.

According to Kohlberg (1976:32), one must understand the three moral levels to understand the stages.

Kohlberg (1976:33) states that the pre-conventional moral level is the level of most children under the age of 9, some adolescents, and many adolescent and adult criminal offenders. The conventional level is the level of most adolescents and adults of various societies, while the post-conventional level is only ever reached by a minority of adults and usually only after the age of 20. However, Turiel (in Narvaez, 2005:120), is under the impression that Kohlberg confuses the domains of convention and morality, as he is of the opinion that convention is separate from morality and that each follows a separate track of development. According to Baek (2002:376), researchers supporting this contention questioned Kohlberg's basic assumption of moral development and criticised Kohlberg's (1984) assumption that the moral stages and moral understanding that determine them, emerge from conventional understanding. (Compare Nucci

and Turiel, 1978:400-407; Turiel *et al.* 1978:75-86; Turiel and Smetana, 1984:307-332; Choi, 1997:695-766.)

According to Kohlberg (1976:33), the term conventional thought means "conforming to and upholding the rules and expectations and conventions of society or authority just because they are society's rules, expectations or conventions". Kohlberg (1976:33) concludes that the individual at the pre-conventional level has not come to the point at which he or she really understands and upholds conventional or societal rules and expectations; while the person at the post-conventional level understands to some degree and accepts society's rules. This acceptance of society's rules is based on formulating and accepting general moral principles that actually underline these rules.

Kohlberg (1976:33) explains that to understand the three levels, they should be thought of as three different types of relationships between the self and society's expectations and rules. From this vantage point Kohlberg (1976:33) elaborates: Level 1 is a pre-conventional person where rules and social expectations are something that can be seen as external to the self. Level 2 is a conventional self identified with internalised rules and expectations of others, normally those of authority. Level 3 is a post-conventional person who is actively able to differentiate self from rules and expectations of others, and defines their values in terms of self-chosen principles.

Furthermore, Kohlberg (in Ferns and Thom, 2001:2) is of the opinion that development of moral reasoning follows the same invariant stages in all cultures as a result of the universality of reason. Findings in the Bahamas, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Turkey and Yucatan largely support the universal development in morals. (Compare Edwards, 1975:505-527; Maqsud, 1980:1243-1248; 1975.)

In summary, Arnold (2000:368) states that reason "constitutes the essential core or backbone of a person's moral maturity in Kohlberg's theory. This view however has come under much criticism mainly because it disregards other

features also typically associated with moral functioning, such as emotions."
(Compare Gibbs, 1991:88-164; Hoffmann, 1987:47-80.)

Cultural relativists, on the other hand, state that morality is a concept that is relative to a specific culture. In agreement, Ferns and Thom (2001:2) add that values, norms and attitudes are provided by society. Ferns and Thom (2001:3) elaborate that theories and viewpoints postulating processes involved the end points of human development and moral development should be steered away from these. From this viewpoint, then, there should be much greater consideration given to the role of the socio-cultural-historical context of the individual. Several authors have demonstrated that there is an influence of cultural values on moral behaviour. Ferns and Thom (2001:2) state that cross-cultural research from Hong Kong, China, England and America revealed that participants from Chinese cultures were more inclined to act altruistically and keep to the law than participants from American and English cultures. (Compare Ma, 1988:201-227; Ma and Cheung, 1996:700-713.)

According to Ferns and Thom (2001:4), there is no definitive answer to about the question whether patterns of moral reasoning differ cross-culturally or are universal. Alternatively, Baek (2002:374), amongst others, elaborates that research examining Kohlberg's (1984) theory generally supports the claim of the universality of the sequence of moral stages.

Langford (1995:110) concludes that Kohlberg's (1987) theory commanded substantial support, which could be seen by contributions in Mogil and Mogil (1986), a major edited work, in which a wide range of contributors were invited to pass their views on Kohlberg's theory. According to Langford (1995:110), the majority of reviews regarding Kohlberg's work were favourable, with only a minority being scathing. Recently there has been an increased support for Kohlberg's work as Kurtiness and Gerwitzs (1991) used his contributions in their three-volume handbook of moral development research. Langford (1995:110) states that Kurtiness and Gerwitzs' (1991) book displayed overwhelmingly favourable support for Kohlberg; most views on moral development endorsed

him, with only a minority in opposition and these were seen to be brave souls. The last section will provide a brief summary and critique of Kohlberg's theory.

2.2.2 <u>Summary and Critique of Moral Development Theory</u>

To summarise Kohlberg's (1976) theory, Cecero (in Alessandro and Cecers,2003:363) states that "Kohlberg believed that will for moral action was grounded in an individual's capacity for rational understanding of social and moral issues". According to Alessandro and Cecero (2003:363), this theory changed over time and Kohlberg considered his theory to be incomplete at the time of his death, believing it lacked an articulation of the relationships of all stages of moral reasoning to personal religious experiences as sources of an individual's moral actions.

According to Walker (2003:374), Kohlberg (1967) claimed that moral and religious domains were independent of each other. This claim was perhaps based on the perceived need to establish the legitimacy of his enterprise in the antagonistic academic climate of the 1960s and 1970s that favoured a secular humanism. According to Walker (2003:374), Kohlberg (1981) later softened his position by postulating a quasi-mystical Stage 7 that was held to justify Stage 6 principles of justice through appeals to meta-ethical and religious epistemologies. This was retrenched, however, as Stage 6 from Kohlberg's theory had difficulty in obtaining the appropriate empirical evidence, causing the interest in Stage 7 (which had even less empirical evidence) to wane completely.

This can best be understood in the light of Kohlberg's words (1981:381): "indeed, it is doubtful that either Martin Luther King Junior or Socrates would have calmly faced his own death, or sacrificed his life for principles of justice, if his principles did not have some religious support".

There has been a substantial amount of interest in Kohlberg's (1984) work and Walker (2004:547) states that this was prompted by very bold empirical claims Kohlberg (1984) initially made regarding moral development. An example of this is the structural integrity of the stages, the invariant order, hierarchal structure

and the cross-cultural applicability of his model. Walker (2004:549) believes that these claims, which were substantiated earlier, have only recently been supported by empirical evidence.

Baek (2002:373) supports and elaborates that there has been a great increase in the researching of universality and cultural differences in the development of moral reasoning. According to Baek (2002:373), there is a majority of studies that support the claim of the universality of Kohlberg's (1984) theory. (Compare Nissan and Kohlberg, 1982:982-992; Walker, De Vries and Treventhan, 1987:847-858; Walker and Moran, 1991:139-155.)

Baek (2002:374) also states that there have been studies examining various cultural settings to test the universality of the theory, and considerable support has been shown for differences in end points of moral development and reasoning across cultures. (Compare Turiel, Edwards and Kohlberg, 1978:75-86; Nissan and Kohlberg, 1982:982-992; Tietjen and Walker, 1985:981-992.) Contrary to this, Narvaez (2005:124) states that there is also research support for moral thinking being more important than culture in morality, as research has shown that culture has not just overwhelmed moral thinking. (Compare Rest, 1986; Snarey, 1985:202-232). In essence the researcher understands that Kohlberg's theory is grounded in an individual's ability to reason, and that there have been studies that have correlated with this point and other studies that have been divergent and expressed differences.

Another point of criticism was Kohlberg's interviews, his interpretation of them and his scoring methods. According to Langford (1995:111), there is little doubt that Kohlberg's interviews and his method of scoring assessed an orderly and sequential development of some form of moral reasoning. Yet there are still three key questions that remain. Langford (1995:111) states them as follows:

- Did the scoring method really provide adequate descriptions of the developmental trends in replies that took place in the interviews?
- Were there other ways of describing the trends?
- What was the best way of describing such a trend?

It is evident to Langford (1995:111) that there are serious problems regarding these three questions, in a way that is not unambiguously favourable to Kohlberg's enterprise. Another point of contention is that Day (2001:175) believes that researchers should not be content with the idea that domains of development, like the moral domain, can only be characterised by a single, typical voice representing; in this case a cognitive structure. According to Day (2001:175), this challenges Kohlberg's (1984) assumptions that there is just moral reasoning. This is supported by Walker (2004:547), who remarks that as a result of the use of the cognitive developmental model, there is a skew in the morality field that yields an inadequate and incomplete depiction of moral functioning. Arnold (2000:371) states that recently several contemporary cognitive developmentalists have acknowledged that as a result of the predominant emphasis on reason, this bias has resulted in an impoverished description of the moral agent. According to Arnold (2000:369), this view resulted in the biggest criticism of the cognitive paradigm of Kohlberg (1984), with a number of critics characterising the moral reasoner in Kohlberg's (1984) model as "a cold rationalistic disembodied person out of touch with the realities of everyday life" and "personification well reflected in the gripping subtitle "how to reach stage six and remain a bastard". Walker (2004:548), on the other hand, states that Kohlberg's conceptual, empirical and applied contributions have nonetheless been monumental, and that he can be credited with legitimising moral development as a field of enquiry in psychology.

In summary, the researcher has presented one of the most influential works with regard to moral development. The researcher has explored the theory and mentioned research that either supports or contradicts Kohlberg's work. The researcher is of the opinion that cognition is necessary to some degree to understand morals and their application in moral situations. However, the researcher does not believe that reasoning alone can constitute moral understanding. This can be explained through Kung (1993:105), who draws attention to the connection between intellectual and moral development and elaborates that one appears to be saying that the most intelligent people are the most moral; in other words implying that only the clever can be good. Firstly,

this is offensive to the simple but good man; and secondly, of course, such a notion is untrue, as there are clearly people who are both clever and immoral.

As Socrates stated in the introduction, far from knowing if morals could be taught, he had no idea what they were (Sizer and Sizer 1970:11). The following section will attempt to shed some light on the concept of morals, as this section has tried to address how morality develops in individuals, without putting any emphasis on what it actually entails.

2.3   MORALS

Morals, as stated previously by Shaffer (2002:511), are "a set of principles or ideas that help the individual distinguish between right and wrong, to act on this distinction, and to feel pride in virtuous conduct and guilt (or unpleasant emotions) for conduct that violates one's standards".

It is important at this point to explain the two concepts of ethics and morals, as both will be used in the literature review. Fox and De Marco (2001:5) state that the words "ethics" and "morals" are often used interchangeably. Usually the word "morals" is used to refer to the customs or practices of a group or person, whereas the concept of "ethics" can refer to the rules or principles applied by that person or group. The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1999:1) elaborates that both the terms "ethics" and "morals" are concerned with the practise of right and wrong. Ethics can be defined as the science of morals in human conduct; meaning that morals form the basis of abstract principles, whereas ethics are applications of these principles in human activity. According to MacKlin (1982:3), morals and ethics are therefore both a set of normative principles accepted with a purpose of guiding the conduct of people.

Ring *et al.* (2001:97) further explain that morals are social and therefore one derives feelings, habits, values and codes of ethical action from the social and institutional circumstances one lives in and as such, they reflect the worldview of how things should be in one's particular culture. Religion in relation to this research provides a worldview, an ethos and away of being and relating in the

world. It provides its followers with a way of life that is considered to be in keeping with the ultimate ordering of life. To this end Ring *et al.* (2001:99) state that as a result of religious experience, one sees order in the universe and would therefore try to strive to sustain and restore that order. This means that religion becomes a fundamental source of one's morals, and provides norms for both conduct and character of its followers by advocating particular moral principles, laws and beliefs. Religion prescribes what people should become, thus encompassing moral doing and being.

According to Broom (2003:176), all human societies have a propensity for religion, as it provides an available structure for moral codes that are functioning in all of these societies. This, however, does raise the question of what exactly constitutes a religion. To this end, the following section will be devoted to examining the concept of religion.

2.3.1 Religion

Broom (2003:164) defines religion as "a system of beliefs and rules which individuals revere and respond to in their lives and which is seen as emanating directly or indirectly from some intangible power." Religion forms the basis for individuals' practices and attempts to know and conform to what is "right". Religion, according to Ring *et al.* (2001:4), is a human recognition that there is an ultimate order and meaning within the mystery of our lives. Others say religion is the human impulse to create order and meaning. Pragament (2002:240) states that religion may be a very distinctive and unique human phenomenon in some aspects, and he defines religion as a search for significance in certain ways that relate to the sacred. By sacred Pragament (2002:240) refers not only to God, but also to the higher qualities that are closely linked to The Divine such as transcendence, omnipotence and holiness. Ring *et al.* (2001:62) add that religion is a system of beliefs and practices. William (2003:168) notes that one often hears a sharp distinction made between spirituality and religion in casual conversation and in the media, so one finds quotes such as "I no longer attend church, but I do think developing a spirituality is important" or "I have my own spirituality even though I am not religious".

It is important for the comprehension of this research to have a clear understanding of the two concepts. The subjects of research conducted by Colby and Damon (1992) and Walker, *et a*l. (1995) attributed their moral actions to religious faith or spirituality, demonstrating that both religious faith and spirituality have a role in morality. It is therefore important to distinguish between religion and spirituality, as the research conducted has focused on the role of Christianity and not spirituality.

2.3.2 Religion and Spirituality

It is important to understand that religion does not mean spirituality. As explained by Miller and Delaney (2005:13), spirituality can be understood as an attribute of the individual, and as such is a latent construct with multiple dimensions. Spirituality is also notoriously difficult to limit, whereas religion describes a social entity defined by boundaries. Miller and Delaney (2005:13) conclude that spirituality is a central but not only concern of religion, as religion also involves important social, political and economic goals.

As Miller and Delaney (2005:13) state, religions have members, boundaries, prescribed and proscribed behaviours and characteristic beliefs. The aim of the next section will therefore be to identify and define what constitutes and encompasses Christianity, giving a more detailed discussion to provide greater insight into the concept.

2.3.3 Christianity

According to Burkett (2002:3), Christianity emerged as a sect of Judaism in Roman Palestine. Christianity quickly developed into various competing factions and Burkett (2002:3) elaborates that some of these factions remained Jewish, while others opened their doors to Gentiles (non-Jews). While some factions have disappeared from history, others have survived and developed into the various forms of Christianity that exist today. Burkett (2002:3) states that Christianity consists of three primary divisions, namely Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, all of which can be further subdivided into a vast amount of distinctive denominations and sects. Each of these differs with regard to their beliefs and practices.

According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions (2000:1), Christianity exists in a vast diversity of styles and organisations. Yet they are all agreed that the figure of Jesus is the disclosure of God and the means to human reconciliation with Him. Christianity, according to The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions (2000:1), lies historically in the life and ministry of Jesus, extended through His death, resurrection and ascension. Astley (1994:120) states that Christianity can be seen in the trusting of the commitment to Jesus as the ultimate standard for the Christian concept for God and man. Christians believe in God the Father, which is believing in the One God; they believe that the Son of God is the revelation of the One God in the man Jesus of Nazareth. They believe in Jesus Christ; not as an eternal intra-divine hypostasis, but as a human historical person concretely related to God: the Ambassador, the Messiah, and the Word of the eternal God in human form. Dowson (2005:22) also states that Christianity is acknowledging Jesus Christ as one's Lord and Saviour and that through this action Christianity promises immediate reconciliation with God through Christ. Astley (1994:121) further states that the criterion for being a Christian is not the doctrine of the trinity, as gradually elaborated by the church, but rather the belief in the one and only God and the practical imitation of Christ. It also involves trusting in the power of God's Spirit; that Spirit who, in dialogue with non-Christians, as in other matters, works whenever He wishes, and will lead us wherever He sees fit. This, according to Astley (1994:120), serves as an unambiguous account of a specifically Christian element in Christianity: God's revelation in Jesus Christ through the Spirit.

According to Bartholomew (2000:225), at the core of Christian belief is the idea of God who is responsible for all that exists and is active in it. Of equal importance is how Christians view human nature. According to Miller and Delaney (2005:10) there are a few basic characteristics that are fundamental to human nature:

- Reality of spirit: first and most basic is that there is more to life than the material world, and that there is an unseen spiritual dimension of reality

that we are meaningfully related to. The essence of this realm of spirit is God, the authority that created and continues to relate to humanity.

- Not God: this basically ascertains that humans are not God and are not the ultimate arbiters of morality. Rather, there is a natural law of absolute standards of good and evil against which human nature and behaviours can be evaluated.

- Sin: this relates that if there is an absolute standard of virtue and right behaviour, then there has to be the possibility of human failure even when diligently seeking to adhere to it.The Christian scriptures' view of sin is not limited to actions but extends to one's thoughts and motives.

- Agency: this implies that humans are given a choice in the tension between virtue and its opposite; therefore one's behaviour is purposive and is influenced by the choices one makes. This means humans are willing, choosing, deciding agents of their own thoughts and actions, and with these choices comes responsibility (within limits) for outcomes of one's actions.

It is important to understand that the Christian concept of sin assumes that humans know right from wrong and are able to choose. Miller and Delaney (2005:62) elaborate that writers and speakers have portrayed how to behave in ways that are good to people, and that God has ordered the universe to act morally virtuous. As a result' people can anticipate either eternal rewards in heaven or eternal punishment in hell.

Burkett (2002:4) elaborates that the New Testament has a special significance for the Christian religion, as Christianity has scriptures and sacred writings that its members consider authoritative and important. There are two divisions of Christian scriptures, and Burkett (2002:4) states that like Judaism, Christian tradition views Hebrew scriptures as sacred writings. As a result of Christianity developing out of the Jewish religion, early Christians took over these scriptures over as their own, and generally called them the Old Testament (Burkett,

2002:4). In addition, Burkett (2002:4) elaborates that Christian scriptures include the New Testament, which is a collection of 27 writings that pertain to Jesus and the early Christian churches. Together the Old and the New Testament make up the Christian Bible.

Borg (2004:vii) states that being Christian means viewing the Bible as a revelation of God; and emphasises its literal meaning, viewing Christian life as being centred in believing now, for the sake of salvation later. According to Borg (2004:xii), this means "believing in God, the Bible and Jesus as the way to heaven".

Sorley (1911:1) states:

> Two questions, distinct from one another in kind, may be asked about the moral life. One of these is a question of fact and history; the other is a question of validity or of worth. The conduct of man is distinguished from the behaviour of animals by the presence of moral ideas. These ideas appear the way in which he regards conduct and the character which issues in conduct: some things are approved by him and called good; others he disapproves of and calls bad.

As Sorley (1911:1) states, man is distinguished from animals by moral ideas, and now that a clearer picture has been formed about Christianity, the next section will look at answering the two questions proposed by Sorley (1911:1); firstly to elaborate on the fact, history, and worth of Christian ethics, and secondly to see how it views and could influence man's conduct and character, regarding morality.

2.4   CHRISTIAN ETHICS

How do Christians make moral decisions? The same way as other people, according to Williams (2001:6). That is to say, they do not have more information about moral truth in the abstract than anyone else. Williams

(2001:6) states that the difference exists in the relations in which they are involved; relations that shape a particular kind of reaction to their environment, and ones that involve them in a larger reality.

Christian ethics and normal ethics on an empirical level hardly differ at all between Christians and non-Christians in the West. According to Jill (1995:11), this is a result of the fact that Western values are still largely the product of a Christian past. Even though values may no longer be nourished by the churches, in society at large they have been mainly transposed by Christianity.

When addressing the differences on a more theoretical level, there are a number of discrepancies. Jill (1995:12) states that when looking specifically at Christian appeals, there are certain characteristics that are practised together; these can be broken down and isolated, and are seen as the appeals to the Bible, to Christian tradition, Christian experience and Christian belief. Marxsen (1993:4) explains that Christian ethics do not express the superior quality of ethics; they simply make a classification of other ethical systems.

White (1994:8) elaborates that to speak of Christian ethics implies that "the forms exhibited, the norms observed, the presumptions and ideals expressed in the behaviour which Christians approve of are directly related to what Christians believe about the world, about God, Christ, each other, the history of Christian salvation and the hope of eternal redemption". When one speaks of Christian ethics, then the question of justification and authorisation become one of epistemology (Jones, 2001:16).

Sources of authority can include the church, institution and community, and the history and traditions of one's denomination. However, Jones (2001:16) explains that the source of people's justification and authorisation of their Christian ethical decisions is very often the Bible. It is important to understand that Christians do not find ethical duties in the standard for Christians, but in the Bible (Geisler, 1989:23).

Jones (1994:7) states that the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament are seen as the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and therefore the Bible can be seen as the source and norm of Christian ethics and Christian doctrine. According to Jill (1995:xiv), however, Christian ethics comprise a highly pluralistic discipline and fundamental differences are apparent in presumptions, methods and conclusions of different writers.

The following subsections will break down the Bible into the Old and New Testaments and describe the relation of each to Christian ethics.

2.4.1 The Old Testament Ethics

The Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule are seen by most as the fundamentals of Christian morals. The Golden Rule is "Do unto others what you want them to do to you" (Matthew 7:12). The Ten Commandments are viewed in a much broader sense. The reason for this is that in the first few years Christianity was a subset of Judaism and so, as Rutgers (2007:2) explains, certain laws that were given to the Jews are used by Christians. The reason for applying these rules is that generally the moral content of Jewish law is based on God's character or moral principles on which the universe was founded. This still applies to Christians, even though writers have distinguished between moral and ceremonial laws.

Cohen and Rankin (2004:46), on the other hand, explain that different religious members disagree about what is moral and immoral and what is morally relevant. According to Rutgers (2007:3), some Christians deny the Old Testament law, because for them Jesus' teachings and Paul's letters suggest that God is primarily concerned with our intent and the quality of our relationship with Him. This is further explained by the fact that characteristic Christian doctrines emerged from the New Testament evidence, and the experience that brought it into being (The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions, 2000:1). Jesus mediated the consequence and effect of God, so that on the one hand it was God who was acting and speaking through Him, and on the other hand it was clear that Jesus addressed God as part of Himself and as Father.

According to Rogerson (2001:30), another reason behind the rejection of the Old Testament by certain Christians is the question of why Christians, in particular Christians who are not Jews, should obey laws in the Old Testament. According to Rogerson (2001:30), the matter is made worse because the congregations of the Church and the Synagogue were often rivals. This was illustrated by Paul's letters, which indicate conflicts between those who believed that Christ's death and resurrection fulfilled the law and removed Christians' obligations for the strict observance of it, and the Judaisers in the church who demanded strict observance of the Jewish law to be part of Christian discipleship (Rogerson, 2001:30). Further to this, a major stumbling block was the rise of many modern critical studies of the Bible, as scholars refused to go on justifying the questionable moral behaviour of the Old Testament characters (Rogerson, 2001:31). What further compounds this, according to Rogerson (2001:32), is that some of the actual laws contained in the Old Testament are illegal in modern society; one example being the death penalty being handed down not only for homicide (Exodus 21:12), but also for striking one's mother or father, cursing one's parents or making sacrifices to any other god other than the God of Israel (Exodus 21:15-17, 22:20). In summary, Rogerson (2001:40) states that the popular perception of the Old Testament is that it contains crude morality and operates mainly at a level of "thou shalt not".

According to Marxsen (1993:23), Jesus Christ is seen as the beginning of what we call Christianity. The New Testament scriptures appeal and relate to Jesus Christ and all its authors know that they are obligated to this beginning. A discussion will now follow regarding New Testament ethics and their relation to Jesus Christ.

2.4.2 <u>New Testament Ethics</u>

According to Lohse (1988:2), the New Testament does not know the term "ethic"; however, it does know the task of reflecting on the nature of moral life, and in some instances indicates which corresponding actions should be taken. According to Lohse (1988:2), the Apostle Paul, in the oldest document from early Christianity (Thessalonians, which was probably written in 50 C.E), urges the congregation to strive constantly to live a life more pleasing to God.

Barton (2001:63) further states that the New Testament does not present abstract reflections of a philosophical nature or grounds for moral actions. Instead, it invites its readers to a new way of life under the one true God revealed in Jesus Christ. This way invites one to take up the cross, to become followers of the way and to die with Christ in order to rise with Him (Barton, 2001:63).

This is further explained by Jones (2001 and 1994) and Lohse (1988). Lohse (1988:211) states that those who confess Christ as Lord cannot live their lives by their own rules, but must listen to the Word of the Lord. With New Testament ethics, the focus is on Christ above all else. Jones (2001:64) elaborates that the Gospel displays good in the narrative form of the life of Christ; the epistles display good in the form of strenuous arguments about fulfilment of the scriptures in Christ, and what life in Christ might mean for Christian identity and practice. Jones (1994:16) states that the apostolic witnesses point us to Christ, the definitive embodiment of moral excellence. As the writer of Hebrews (13:8) reminds us, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today and forever…."

According to Lohse (1988:211), the ethical conduct of Christians should be thought of as a living out of discipleship, which provides honour to God and by its own weak deeds seems to offer the testimony of praise to Him. According to Jones (1994:16), Christian ethics can be viewed as a study of a way of life that conforms to God's will as revealed by Christ and the Holy Scriptures, and illuminated by the Holy Spirit. According to Jones (1994:7), morals imply standards of judgement. Ends are judged good or bad by certain criteria; the question being what these criteria are and how one can come to know them. Jones (1994:7) states that from a Christian point of view the question of criteria for goals and practice of Christians comes down to one thing: what is God calling us to do?

According to the testimony of all New Testament documents, the essence of Christian ethics as summarised by Lohse (1988:218), is to be found neither in an ethical programme nor in a plan for Christian transformation of the world.

Rather, Christian ethics should be modelled on the world of meaning by following Christ as they find their distinctive form within the conditions of this world. They are guided by being alert to the constant question of what is to be regarded as the will of God here and now, in each individual situation. Jones (1994:14) states that it is God's approval that ultimately counts in ethics; called "doing what is right in His eyes" in the Old Testament (Exodus 15:26). The standard that one is called to conform to is therefore not personal law, but rather the personal will of our Creator and Redeemer.

Matera (1996:248-55) provides a basic summary of Christian ethics:

1. The moral life of believers is a response to God's work of salvation.
2. Believers live the moral life in the light of God's coming salvation and judgement.
3. The moral life is lived in and with a community of disciples who form the church.
4. The personal example of Jesus and Paul instructs and sustains believers in the moral life.
5. The moral life consists of doing God's will.
6. The moral life expresses itself in love for God, for neighbour and love for enemy.
7. The moral life is an expression of faith.

According to Jones (1994:14), Christian ethics can be summarised and defined as "the study of the way of life that conforms to the will of God - the way of life that is good, that pleases God and that fulfils human nature".

The final section of this chapter will aim to provide an understanding of how belief, in particular Christianity, could influence moral behaviour.

2.5 THE POSSIBLE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF ON MORAL BEHAVIOUR

This section does not aim to solve precisely how religion functions as a motivational agent. The researcher has simply identified the motivational perspective that could best illustrate the possible influence of Christian belief on adolescent moral behaviour. There are numerous motivational theories with regard to religion; they include expectancy value theory, psychoanalytical theory, attribution, and achievement goal theories. There are no completely right or wrong theories, and therefore the expectancy value theory shall be elaborated upon.

In order to understand the relationship between Christian beliefs and morals one must understand how they motivate each other. According to Feather (2005:43), expectancy value theory is a general approach to motivation that relates to a person's behaviour in a situation, to the expectations they hold and to their subjective evaluation of the outcome that may occur following the action. Borders, Earleywine and Huey (2004:539) state that individuals choose behaviours on the outcomes they expect, and the values they associate to those expected outcomes. The expectations or likely consequences for a given action result from the individual's learning history, which then becomes the basis for future individual choices.

The outcome can be attractive, aversive, or mixed, and the expectations encompass beliefs about whether the person can perform the action to some standard that defines a successful outcome. Also necessary is a belief that the action will be instrumental in achieving the outcome and that positive and negative consequences will follow the outcome. Karabenick and Maehr (2005:3) state that within the expectancy value theory the strength and form of religious commitment depends on the expected outcome of faith-related activities. Therefore the religious tradition in Christianity's case stipulated the practices by which the faithful can achieve the desirable and avoid the undesirable.

Vansteenkiste, Lens and De Witte (2005:270) go on to explain that expectancy value theory represents a cognitive motivational theory that relates to an individual's level or strength of motivation to strive for a certain goal, the expectation to attain the desired goal, and the incentive value of that goal.

There have been slight differences in the expectancy value models developed by different researchers, but the present model is based upon the work of Feather.

Expectancies can be viewed as comprising two different types of expectations, as used within the expectancy value theory (Vansteenkiste *et al.* 2005:270). The first type is efficacy expectations, which can be described as the conviction that one can successfully execute the required behaviour to produce the outcome. The second type is outcome expectancies, which relate to a person's estimate that a given behaviour will lead to a certain outcome.

Along with expectancies, a person's needs and values are considered to be determinant of motivated action. Vansteenkiste *et al.* (2005:271) elaborate that needs and values are assumed to affect a person's definition of a situation, so that some objects and potential outcomes are perceived as having positive valence (they become attractive) while others have negative valence (they become aversive).

Feather (2005:37) describes values as "general beliefs about desirable ways of behaving or about desirable general goals". He elaborates that they are held by people, are abstract, and transcend situations. Feather (2005:40) goes on to explain that they possess a prescriptive quality, involving basically what action should or should not be performed, and what general goals should or should not be preferred. Values vary in their importance to self, and people use them as guiding principles in their lives.

According to Dawson (2005:17), it can be broken down as follows:
a). Is "it" worth "it"? This means is the outcome worth the cost of engaging in the behaviour, thereby defining its value?
b). Is "it" likely to result in an outcome? that is, asking whether the behaviour will meet the expectation.
c). Am I capable of completing the behaviour, so outcome is achieved? This suggests self-efficacy.

From this, Christian belief can be explained as motivating a person through the expectancy value theoretical framework. According to Dawson (2005:19), Christian belief provides a highly valued outcome (heaven). It provides certainty with respect to designated behaviours that will result in the valued outcome. It provides processes and mechanisms by which designated behaviours may be achieved by the believer and also provides a very low probability that the desired outcome will occur if no action is taken. According to Dawson (2005:20), religion (Christianity) also defines a low operating cost for engaging in designated religious behaviour, and finally defines a very high cost of not achieving the believed desired outcome (hell). In summary, Christianity is motivational. As Dawson (2005:32) states, Christianity creates a psychological environment that motivates religious commitment and behaviour.

2.6   CONCLUSION

To conclude, this chapter has attempted to address the question put to Socrates, and in so doing has attempted to explain and elaborate on adolescence, issues of moral development, the meaning of morals, religion, and how religion (Christianity) ties in with Christian ethics. The chapter concluded with a theoretical framework that made an attempt to explain how religious belief (Christianity) could influence an individual's moral behaviour. In reviewing the literature and examining the various points of view and evidence, the complexity of morals becomes especially clear when examining the concept itself and the different influences, origins and development of morals in individuals. The following chapter will focus on the research methodology.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1   INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapters have firstly provided an orientation and an overview of the research process. Secondly, they have dealt with the theoretical orientation in an attempt to review literature that is relevant to the research. The following chapter firstly reviews the research approach and methodology of the study; secondly, it describes in detail the means and method of data collection; and thirdly, a detailed account of the data collection and analysis of data is provided.

Research methodology, according to Fouché and Delport (2005:71), is simply a term that describes the way in which to solve a problem, for example the research process. Therefore, the present research methodology will focus on how the research will be planned, structured and executed. This, according to Mouton and Marais (1990:7), will highlight the methodology applied in the research, which will result in a number of conclusions based on effective data processing and analysis.

Henn and Weitten (2006:157) elaborate that research methodology situates the researcher in the empirical work and connects the research question to the data. It is seen as the basic plan for the research, according to Henn and Weitten (2006:157), and includes four main ideas: the strategy, the conceptual framework, the "who" and "what" that will be studied, and the tools and procedures that will be used for collecting and analysing the material.

The research strategy to be employed in this research is that of qualitative research. For this reason, the following sections will aim to comprehensively define qualitative research and the procedures and concepts encompassed by it.

3.2   QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research has attracted increasing interest in the academic field . Darlington and Scott (2002:2) state that research methods such as in-depth interviewing and participant observation are particularly well- suited to exploring questions in the human sciences, which relate to the meaning of human experiences and the complexity of human behaviour.

Qualitative research, according to Neumann (2003:139), differs from quantitative research in respect of the nature of the data. Fouché and Delport (2005:74) state that qualitative research procedures are not strictly formalised, and its scope is more than likely undefined, as a more philosophical mode is adopted.

Babbie (2002:20) further explains that the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research is that between numerical and non-numerical data. Neuman (2003:139) supports this by stating that the difference lies in the nature of the data: qualitative research uses soft data such as words, symbols and sentences, whereas quantitative research uses hard data in the form of numbers. Finally, Fouché and Delport (2005:74) conclude that qualitative research is idiographic and holistic in nature, and aims to mainly understand social life and the meaning people attach to everyday life.

Marshall and Rossman (1999:2) state that qualitative research is intrigued by the complexity of interactions as explored in everyday life, and by the meaning that the participants attribute to those interactions. Qualitative research, therefore, according to Marshall and Rossman (1999:2), is a pragmatic interpretive and grounded in the lived experience of people. Certain characteristics summarise qualitative research: it can be seen as naturalistic; it draws upon multiple methods with respect to the humanity of the participants in the study; it can be seen as emergent and evolving; it views the social world as holistic; and it is sensitive to people whose personal biographies and stories shape the study. Qualitative research can then be defined as "a broad approach

to the study of social phenomena; its various genres are naturalist and interpretive, and they draw on multiple methods of enquiry" (Marshall and Rossman, 1999:2). Qualitative research is best suited for this research because the data that has been collected could not be portrayed in numerical form, as the researcher gained knowledge about Christian beliefs' influence on adolescents' moral behaviour through the use of semi-structured interviews.

Research can be labelled as either basic or applied. The type of research to be conducted in this study is applied. Applied research, according to Neuman (2003:22), is conducted to address a specific concern or to offer solutions to a problem, in this case, to address whether Christian beliefs could influence adolescents' moral behaviour.

3.2.1 Research Design

Marshall and Rossman (1999:2) state that qualitative methodologists have historically described three major purposes of research: to explore, to explain or to describe phenomena of interest. Many qualitative studies, according to Marshall and Rosmann (1999:2), make use of descriptive studies, as the research looks to build a rich description of the complex circumstances that are unexplored in the literature. Although a given study can make use of more than one purpose, the descriptive research design will be described here as this design relevant to this research (Mouton, 1998:84).

The objective of the research will be supported by the descriptive type of research. According to Fouché and De Vos (2005:106), "descriptive research presents a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting or relationship, and focuses on 'how' and 'who' questions". Neuman (2003:30) further states that descriptive research begins with a well-defined subject, and conducts research to describe it accurately, thereby presenting a detailed picture of the subject. The descriptive type of research is suited for this research, as the researcher is aiming to gain an understanding of the influence of Christian beliefs on adolescents' moral behaviour. By employing descriptive research, the researcher has been able to begin with well-defined concepts regarding Christian beliefs and morals, and through this has been able to

present a more detailed picture of the relationship between Christian belief and moral behaviour. By employing this type of research the researcher has been able to examine "how" Christian belief could or could not have an influence on moral behaviour.

3.2.2 Strategy of Inquiry: Case Studies

The research strategy, according to Fouché (2005:268), refers to "the options available to the qualitative researcher to study certain phenomena according to certain 'formulas' suitable for their specific research goal".

The research strategy that will be used in this study will be the collective case study. Delport and Fouché (2005:272) explain that the collective case study as a strategy furthers the understanding of research about a social issue. The exploration and description of the cases take place with in-depth data collection and multiple sources of information in the form of interviews, documents and observations. This research strategy best fits the present research because it will provide an opportunity to obtain a richer, more holistic understanding of the influence of Christian beliefs on adolescents' moral behaviour in a South African context. It will also provide the researcher with the opportunity to make comparisons between case studies. For this research, fifteen cases were studied in order to examine the possible influence of Christian belief on adolescents' moral behaviour in a South African context.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

During the study, the following procedures were followed:
- The researcher approached the school two months prior to the study and discussed the research with the school principal.
- The principal had no objections and agreed to the research.
- The researcher addressed the sample age group to explain the project and answer any queries.
- The principal selected 20 individuals for the study and consent forms were sent out; 18 of the 20 consent forms were returned and 15 individuals were used for the purpose of this study.

- The interviews were conducted individually at the school premises to accommodate all participants. The duration of all interviews was 10 to 20 minutes.
- Tape recordings of the interviews were made and personal notes were also taken during the interviews.
- The interviews were transcribed and analysed for emerging themes.
- These themes were compared and discussed, and a literature control was conducted to integrate all themes with relevant literature.

3.3.1 Study Population

Corbetta (2003:210) states that in most cases social research cannot be carried out in a social reality in its entirety, and therefore the researcher has to usually settle for a subset of reality. This subset of reality is referred to as a sample. The following section will therefore discuss issues relating to the sample in terms of universe, population, demarcation of sample and sampling method.

3.3.2 Sample

Sampling, according to Corbetta (2003:211), is "the procedure through which we pick out, from a set of units that make up the object of the study (the population), a limited number of cases (sample) chosen according to criteria that enables the results obtained by studying the sample to be extrapolated to the whole population".

May (2001:93) states that it is important that the characteristics of the sample be the same of those as the population; a sample is thus - according to May (2001:93) - "a portion or a subset of a larger group called the population. The population is the universe to be sampled".

The term "universe", according to Neuman (2003:217), refers to the population the researcher specifies to be sampled. Mouton (2002:134) states that "the universe is the complete set of elements and their characteristics about which a conclusion is to be drawn on the basis of a sample". In the case of the proposed research, *all Christian adolescents in North-West Province are seen as the universe.*

According to Mouton (2002:134), population "is a collection of objectives, events or individuals having some common characteristics that the researcher is interested in studying". Neuman (2003:214) adds that it is the specific unit, the geographical location and temporal boundaries that the researcher specifies. In the present research, *South African adolescents in one high school within North- West Province will be seen as the population.*

The sample, according to Neuman (2003:215), is the unit of analysis or case in the population that is being measured. Strydom (2005:194) defines a sample as a small portion of the total set of objects or people that together comprise the subject of the study. In the research proposed, the sample will be *South African, English-speaking males of Christian-based religion, within the early adolescent phase (14 years of age) or Grade 8, of any particular culture, at Potch Boys High School in the North- West Province during the year 2008.*

The type of sampling method to be used in the research is that of non-probability sampling. According to Neuman (2003:211), qualitative researchers make use of non-probability sampling, as it is the relevance of the researched topic, rather than the representative, which determines the way in which people are to be studied and selected. Strydom (2005:201) further notes that non-probability sampling is utilised by qualitative researchers to seek out groups and settings where the specific processes being studied are most likely to occur. This sampling method is used for the present research as the researcher has limited knowledge about the sample size and the population from which the sample is taken.

The sampling method that has been employed is that of purposive sampling to select Christian-based adolescents. Babbie (2002:225) defines purposive sampling as the researcher selecting their sample based on their own knowledge of the population and the nature of the study. Purposive sampling, according to May (2001:95), is a selection of those to be researched according to known characteristics. In the present research, participants were chosen for being adolescents and Christian.

In qualitative sampling, Henn and Weitten (2006:157) state that the primary goal is an understanding of social processes rather than obtaining a representative sample. The method of data collection will be discussed accordingly.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

According to Fouché and Delport (2005:82), certain data collection methods and measuring instruments are selected to obtain the most relevant data for the study. For the purpose of the research conducted, interviewing was selected as the method of data collection. This can be described and explained as follows.

3.4.1 Interviewing

The research will make use of interviews. According to Greef (2005:296), one uses interviews in order to gain a detailed picture of a participant's beliefs or perceptions on a certain topic. Corbetta (2003:264) states that qualitative interviews attempt to collect data by asking people questions; however, the typical goal of interviewing is that of exploring the interviewee's individuality and seeing the world through his eyes. Qualitative interviews can be seen as a verbal counterpart to participant observation. Corbetta (2003:264) elaborates that although the interview cannot offer the same depth of penetration as participant observation, its basic objective remains that of grouping the participant's perspective and by doing so understanding the mental categories, interpretations, perceptions, feelings and motives underlying his actions.

Darlington and Scott (2002:49) state that in-depth interviews give the researcher the advantage of face–to-face interviewing, and this immediacy and relational quality afford considerable flexibility to the data collection process. The advantage and critical value of this is that it allows both parties to explore and clarify the meaning of the questions and answers involved there and then (Darlington and Scott, 2002:49).

Furthermore, according to Darlington and Scott (2002:49), in-depth interviews are particularly useful when the phenomena under investigation cannot be

observed directly, and are therefore an excellent means of finding out how people feel in relation to a given topic. In research's case, this involves finding out how the participants feel about Christian beliefs influencing their moral behaviour.

3.4.2 Semi-structured Interviews

May (2001:123) explains that the questions used are normally specific, but the interviewer is free to probe beyond the answer in a manner that would appear prejudicial to the aims of standardisation and comparability. Semi-structured interviews allow people to answer more on their own terms; May (2001:123) goes on to explain that semi-structured interviews permit freedom, but still provide a great structure of comparability over that of focused interviews.

When conducting semi-structured interviews, Corbetta (2003:265) explains, the interviewer makes reference to an outline of the topics to be covered during the course of the conversation. Within each topic, the interviewer is free to conduct conversation as he thinks fit and therefore can ask questions he deems appropriate in the words he considers best to give explanations and ask for clarification of the answer if the answer is not clear. The checklist contains varying degrees of specifics and details (Corbetta, 2003:270).

Significant latitude, according to Henn and Weitten (2005:162), is given to respondents in shaping the interviewing agenda, as they are free to be provided free to discuss the agenda, using their own…with the opportunity to discuss using the respondent's own frame of reference, own language and own concepts.

3.4.3 Data Analysis

Neuman states that data analysis (2003:310) is a technique for gathering and analysing the content or text. According to De Vos (2005:333), it involves reducing the volume of raw information, identifying significant patterns and constructing a framework for communicating what the data has revealed. It is also the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the collected data.

With regard to analysing the data, the researcher will make use of successive approximation for the proposed research. This is when, according to Neuman (2003:451), the researcher begins with the research question and a framework of assumptions and concepts. The researcher will then probe into the data, and ask questions of the evidence to see how well the concepts fit the evidence and reveal features of the data. The researcher will also create new concepts by abstracting from the evidence and adjusting the concepts to fit the evidence better.

The researcher will, according to Neuman (2003:451), keep on collecting evidence to address unresolved issues that appeared and repeat the entire process. At each stage the theory and data will shape each other and eventually the evidence will be modified successively until it becomes more accurate; in so doing this will move the data towards a more comprehensive analysis with generalisations.

The most fundamental operation in the analysis of data, Marshall and Rossman (1999:151) point out, is that of discovering significant classes of things, persons and property which categorise them. In this process, which continues throughout the research, the researcher names classes and links one with another; at first with simple statements that express the linkage and then later with more complex statements. Marshall and Rossman (1999:151) state that the process continues until the statements fall into statements of ever increasing density of linkages.

The research question is used and related to the literature to provide guidelines for data analysis, which is used to suggest several categories that can serve to code the data intakes or subsequent analysis (Marshall and Rossman, 1999:150). Newman (2003:441) states that coding has different meanings and roles in qualitative data; the data is organised into conceptual categories and inserted into themes or concepts. Coding is seen as an integral part of data analysis, which is guided by the research question and leads to new questions; this enables the researcher to be free from entanglement in the details of the

raw data and encourages higher levels of thought. This process moves the researcher towards theory and generalisation.

3.5 FINDINGS

Chapter Two was introduced with a quote that dialogued Socrates and a student, and questions were asked whether morals could really be taught by institutions, organised religions or by life experience itself. But more important was the question of what influence these might have over an individual's moral behaviour. This section will therefore examine and explore themes along the lines of morals, Christianity, Christian belief and other influences on adolescents' moral behaviour. Taken from the transcribed interviews, the following themes and important ideas emerged. The respondents' comprehension of morals will be discussed accordingly.

3.5.1 <u>Understanding of Morals</u>

This subsection will discuss what the participants understood about morals. The question asked by the researcher was "Do you know what morals are?" In response to the question only two participants had a vague idea as they responded:

Participant 4: "*Morals and values are like things like maybe your attitude.*"

Participant 5: "*Morals I think, morals are my values and beliefs what I have to follow in my culture.*"

The rest of the participants did not understand and therefore a practical example was given to clarify. The participants were given an example of a stranger walking down the street and them witnessing his wallet fall out of his pocket. They were then asked what they would do. Upon which most of the participants answered in a similar manner:

Participant 2: *"I would pick it up and give it to the person."*

Participant 6: *"I just take it and give it back to him."*

Participant 14: *"I would call him back to give him the wallet."*

The participants were then asked why they would give it back, upon which most responded:

Participant 2: *"Because it is the right thing to do."*
Participant 3: *"Because it is the right thing to do."*

The researcher then explained to them that that was a moral, and that morals could be seen as something that helps an individual make a decision between what was right or wrong. All the participants then understood, and to verify that they did totally understand, the researcher asked them if they would explain other things that were amoral or wrong. To which they responded with the following:

Participant 2: *"Hurting people, racism."*
Participant 3: *"Swearing at teachers, disrespectful, raping and killing people."*
Participant 4: *"Smoking, drugs, stuff like that."*
Participant 6: *"Robbing and killing."*
Participant 8: *"Stealing, killing, breaks things, hurting people."*
Participant 9: *"Killing somebody, raping."*
Participant 15: *"Shouldn't steal, lying."*

The researcher then also enquired what qualities good or moral people have, to which they responded with the following:

Participant 2: *"They would be kind; they would respect other people's decisions and choices."*
Participant 5: *"Respect, dignity."*
Participant 8: *"They are kind, friendship."*
Participant 9: *"Hmm… kind and good."*
Participant 14: *"Respectful, educated, well disciplined and honest."*
Participant 15: *"Respectful, honest, stuff like that."*

The researcher, as a final way of testing the participants' understanding of morals, asked the following questions "Do you think that we need morals in society?" Are they still relevant and helpful?"And:"Can, and can you explain why?" All participants responded that society does need morals, with responses similar to the following:

Participant 2:   *"They help us by helping people, in a way that, because almost everyone commits sin right?"*
Researcher: *"Okay."*
Participant 2:   *"But then if we can follow our morals, then we know what is wrong and don't do it."*
Participant 5:   *"Yeah, they help us."*
Researcher: *"Okay, what would happen if we don't have morals?"*
Participant 5:   *"Actually, I won't be here because I will be killed."*
Participant 9:   *"I think we need them."*
Researcher: *"Okay, what would happen if we don't have morals?"*
Participant 9:   *"Hmm… if we didn't have them, I don't think we would live."*
Participant 10: *"Yeah, they are helpful, they keep us in place."*
Participant 12: *"Yes, they are helpful for us."*
Researcher: *"In what way are they helpful to us?"*
Participant 12: *"If people don't have morals, they will just do whatever they want."*

From the response from the participants it can be understood that they have an understanding of what morals are, or the difference between right and wrong behaviour, as they were able to identify good and bad qualities in individuals. This correlates with Gemelli (1996:455) as he notes that adolescents begin to examine the logic and consistency of their existing beliefs. The reviewing of their existing beliefs contributes to the adolescent developing his or her own moral values. This is evident from the participants' responses, as they could both identify right and wrong and define the relevance of morals from their point of view.

3.5.2   Where Participants Learned Their Morals

This section will discuss where the participants were taught their morals. The responses can be broken down into four sections, namely: parents or other family members, teachers, religious institutions, or a combination of the above. The following participant responded with regard to teachers:

Participant 2: *"I learned it at school."*

The following acquired it from their parents or other family members, as participants 3, 5, 9 and 14 all responded:

Participants: *"My parents."*

The following participants stated particular parents, and other family members:

Participant 6: *"My mother and my uncle."*
Participant 8*: "Mom and Grandmother."*
Participant 10: *"Parents, people I live with."*
Participant 15: *"My parents and people I grew up with."*

The following participant learned it from a religious institution as he stated:

Participant 4: *"Most of the stuff, I learned it from church."*

The last section of the participants learned about morals from a mixture of the above, as the following participants stated:

Participant 1: *"I go to youth meetings at my church, and they told me, and my parents."*
Participant 7: *"Parents, teachers, people I grew up with."*
Participant 11: *"My teachers and my parents."*
Participant 12: *"At church, and my parents told me."*
Participant 13: *"My mother, and my teachers."*

From the participants' responses, there is a wide array of sources from which the participants draw their moral understanding. According to Gemelli (1996:505), throughout adolescence teenagers evaluate and draw their moral rules and values from peers, teachers and other adults, as is evident from some of the participant's responses above. Adolescents also evaluate moral standards and are prone to overthrow rigid conciseness and accept standards of behaviour and moral values of peer groups, religions and other groups, which is evident from the participants' responses regarding church and people they grew up with.

Ring *et al.* (2001:99) elaborate that as a result of religious experience, one sees order in the universe and would therefore try to strive to sustain and restore that order. This means that religion becomes a fundamental source of one's morals, and provides norms for both conduct and character of their followers by advocating particular moral principles, laws and beliefs. This is evident from the responses of participants 4 and 12.

3.6   CHRISTIANITY

This section will discuss how the participants viewed themselves as Christians, the Bible, and the influence each had in their understanding of what is right and wrong. The findings of this section can be broken down into two categories namely: Christian attributes, and the influence of Christianity and the Bible on their understanding of right and wrong.

3.6.1   Christian Attributes
The participants' responses were based on two questions asked by the researcher. Firstly, "Are you a Christian?" and secondly, "What makes you a Christian?" All participants replied "yes" to the first question and responded with the following to the second question:

Participant 2:   *"I go to church, I read the Bible."*
Participant 3:   *"I go to church and pray."*

Participant 4:	*"I think the thing that makes me Christian is believing what the Lord has said in the Bible."*
Participant 5:	*"The way I dress, I respect myself, and that way I also respect Jesus."*
Participant 9:	*"I don't swear and I don't steal."*
Participant 13:	*"I believe in God, I go to church, I don't go to church every Sunday but I do go to church now and then, and I read my Bible."*
Participant 15:	*"The way I behave towards people. Church, I go to church. I wouldn't say reading the Bible as it has been a long time."*

Most of the participants' responses were based on activities that they did, for example praying, going to church and reading the Bible.

3.6.2 The Influence of Christianity and the Bible

This subsection will discuss how participants viewed being Christian and both the Bible's and Christian belief's influence on their understanding of what is right and wrong. This is based on four particular questions that the researcher asked:

- "Do you think that being Christian influences your understanding of what is right and wrong?"
- "How has being Christian influenced your understanding of what is right and wrong?"
- "Do you think that what you have read in the Bible influences your decisions about what is right and wrong?"
- "How did the Bible influence your understanding of what is right and wrong?"

All the participants responded that "yes", both being Christian and reading the Bible did influence their understanding of what is right and wrong. In response to *how*, the participants had the following replies:

| Researcher: | *"Okay, can you give me an example of how it influences you?"* |

Participant 1: *"Don't sin."*

Participant 2: *"I abide by the Christian rules."* And *"The Bible has its own set of morals."*

Researcher: *"Okay, can you explain?"*

Participant 2: *"Because you think at the back of your mind, is this right or is this wrong, and what does the Bible say?"*

Participant 5: *"Well, if you read the Bible, you get to know more about God."*

Researcher: *"Okay."*

Participant 5: *"Then you know if you have read the Bible, you shall see if it is right or wrong."*

Participant 6: *"You respect the Ten Commandments, and you learn to worship The Lord."*

Participant 6: *"In church, they explain some things that are bad, and some things that are good.*

Participant 7: *"The Ten Commandments."*

Researcher: *"Any favourite book or verse in the Bible?"*

Participant 9: *"Yes, I do in Revelations, I think Chapter 4, Verse 34."*

Researcher: *"Okay, what is it about?"*

Participant 9: *"It is usually about how we live, and what things we need to do."*

Researcher: *"Okay, well that leads me to my next question: do you think that the Bible influences your understanding of right and wrong?"*

Participant 9: *"Yes it does."*

Researcher: *"Okay, how did it do that, in what way?"*

Participant 9: *"Hmm… knowing the Ten Commandments."*

Participant 10: *"Yeah, because of the Ten Commandments and about, hmm, things like that."*

Researcher: *"Okay, so it would influence you, like you say the Ten Commandments anything else that would influence you?"*

Participant 10: *"Yeah, because of Noah's Ark, He made a flood, because people were fighting each other, and the good people went on the ship, went away."*

Participant 12: *"Yeah, like disrespecting your parents."*

Participant 14: *"By just knowing how to treat people and God doesn't like you to be lying, hmm respecting your mother and father."*

Participant 15: *"The Ten Commandments, you must follow them."*

Researcher: *"Okay."*

Participant 15: *"They tell you what is right and wrong, and what not to do."*

Most, if not all of the participants could identify that Christian beliefs, Christianity in essence, did have an influence on what they perceived as right or wrong. Lerner and Spanier (1980:66) state that during adolescence many individuals begin to question and doubt some of what they have heard and move away from religion, while on the other hand others find it a period of intense commitment to their religion. Religion is seen as a major part of the social context of contemporary adolescents. Lerner and Spanier (1980:66) elaborate that adolescents identify with this component of their social context and view it as important, and from the participants' responses this is evident as they perceived it as influencing their understanding of what is right and wrong.

In addition, Jones (2001:16) explains that very often the source of people's justification and authorisation of their Christian ethical decisions is the Bible. It is important to understand that Christians do not find ethical duties in the standard for Christians, but in the Bible (Geister, 1993:23).

Jones (1994:7) states that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are seen as the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and therefore the Bible can be seen as the source and norm of Christian ethics as well as Christian doctrine. The Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule are seen by most as the fundamentals of Christian morals, and this was evident from the participants as their most common replies referred to the Bible and particular, "The Ten Commandments" and what they entail.

3.7   INFLUENCES ON MORAL BEHAVIOUR

This section will discuss the influences on adolescents' moral behaviour. The findings in this section can be broken down into three sections, namely Christian belief, Kohlberg's theory on moral development, and tradition. The participants were asked questions relating to moral situations. The first described a smaller moral indiscretion, such as whether they would attend a party that their parents had forbidden them to go to (if they knew they could sneak out and their parents would never know), or any other small indiscretion they could think of that was similar to this in nature. Secondly, they were asked about a bigger moral indiscretion such as stealing, or other bigger indiscretions. In both cases they were asked how they would come to their final decision.

The following subsections relate to their responses.

3.7.1 Christian Belief

Although almost all participants explained that either the Bible or their Christian belief influenced their understanding of what was seen as right or wrong, only a hand full of participants were actually influenced by their Christian belief, as indicated by participants 2, 9, 14 and 15 when it came to the moral situations, in their following responses:

Participant 2:   "*Because I should not steal from other people.*"

Researcher: "*And why shouldn't you do that?*"

Participant 2:   "*Because I follow the Christian morals.*"

Participant 9:   "*Hmm… I wouldn't go.*"

Researcher: "*Could you explain why?*"

Participant 9:   "*Because when I read the Bible is says listen to your parents.*"

Participant 14: "*I wouldn't go. In the Bible, it says respect your mother and father.*"

Participant 15: "*I won't, I think I won't because in the Ten Commandments it says you should not steal.*"

The above participants correlate with research done by Walker *et al.* (1995), who asked their participants to describe actual moral dilemmas they had

confronted and how they went about resolving these dilemmas. In these interviews a common theme arose - participants used religion and spirituality in coming to terms with their problems. In addition, research done by Colby and Damon (1992) also found that participants in their sample attributed the values underlying their moral behaviour to their religious faith. This was also found to be the case in the participants' answers in this research.

According to Cohen and Rankin (2004:45), the ways in which people reason about moral dilemmas may be strongly influenced by the level of fundamentalism. The researcher is of the opinion that the reason Christian belief had an influence in these participants' moral behaviour is that they could possibly be more fundamental in their religious faith than the other participants. As previously stated by Lerner and Spanier (1980:66), during adolescence many individuals begin to question and doubt some of what they have heard and move away from religion, while on the other hand others find it a period of intense commitment to their religion which is evident from the participants' responses.

3.7.2 Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development

The majority of the participants' responses correlated with Kohlberg's theory of moral development. Kohlberg (1974:73) states that individuals at level 2 are seen as conventional individuals, in whom the self is identified with or who have internalised the rules and expectations of others, especially those in positions of authority. Shaffer (2002:518) elaborates that individuals now strive to obey rules and social norms in order to win others' approval or to maintain social order. This correlates with the participants' responses from the moral dilemmas. Firstly, participant 6 response to the moral dilemma about the party follows:

Participant 6:   *"Uh, I wouldn't go."*
Researcher: "*Okay, why wouldn't you go?"*
Participant 6:   "*Because I listen to my parents."*
Researcher: "W*ould being Christian influence your choice at all?"*
Participant 6:   "*No, I listen to my parents."*

Even when the researcher asks the participant about being Christian and its possible influence on his decision, the participant responds with a "no". This is in line with Kohlberg's (1974) theory as he states that individuals now strive to obey rules and the expectations of others.

Secondly, when the participants were asked about bigger moral indiscretions, the majority of the participants responded with the following as their reason for not committing the indiscretion:

Researcher: *"So if someone asks you, why you are not going to do it?"*
Participant 3:   *"Because it is wrong."*
Researcher: *"It's wrong, but what makes it wrong?"*
Participant 3:   *"The Government makes it wrong."*
Researcher: *"So what would make you decide whether or not you are going to steal? How would you come to your decision?"*
Participant 4:   *"The consequences."*
Researcher: *"The consequences?"*
Participant 4:   *"The consequences of the action, maybe I can, and maybe someone saw me, then I can go to jail."*
Participant 11: *"Hmm… obey the law."*
Participant 15: *"Maybe, even go to jail."*

The responses correlate with Kohlberg (1974:73), as he states that individuals at level 2 are seen as conventional individuals, in whom the self is identified with or who have internalised the rules and expectations of others, especially those in positions of authority.

Kohlberg's theory (1981:303) also states that the universality of the moral stages is direct evidence against the view that the development of moral ideologies depends on the teachings of a particular religious belief system. This was evident in the following participants' responses to why they would not steal, showing the possible influence of Christian belief:

Researcher:	*"Will the consequence of a religious point of view come in at any stage?"*
Participant 4:	"*Sometimes, sometimes **I like do not steal**.*"
Researcher:	*"Okay, so you come here and see a wallet or a cell phone and no one will ever know. No one will ever know, only you will know. Will you take it or not?"*
Participant 4:	*"Sometimes, there is maybe let me say, certain times I will go for it, because no one will know, but sometimes you think twice."*
Researcher:	*"Well, what make you think twice?"*
Participant 4:	*"As I told you, consequence."*
Researcher:	*"Okay, besides consequence of the law, would being Christian come into your mind?"*
Participant 4:	*"It won't come into my mind, it won't!"*
Researcher:	*"Okay, would you steal?"*
Participant 12:	*"No, I wouldn't."*
Researcher:	*"Why not?"*
Participant 12:	"*I haven't got the guts to steal something that big.*"
Researcher:	"*Okay, would being Christian influence your decision in choosing whether to steal or not?*"
Participant 12:	*"No, it won't."*
Participant 11:	*"Does being Christian influence your choice there or not?"*
Participant 11:	*"No."*

3.7.3 Peer Pressure

In the majority of the cases the participants' peers had a great influence on their moral behaviour as they responded with the following regarding the party or smaller indiscretions:

Researcher:	*"If someone tells you to lie about something, how would you decide whether to lie or not?"*
Participant 1:	*"I would say, if it is a really good friend, and he is in a really bad situation…"*
Researcher:	*"Yes?"*

Participant 1: *"…and he said I should lie for him, I would."*

Researcher: *"Okay, so peer pressure. Does being Christian influence your choice at all?"*

Researcher: *"Okay, but you still did it, why did you still do it?"*

Participant 3: *"Pressurised!"*

Researcher: *"You were pressurised, okay. Did your religion come in at any time in influencing your decision?"*

Participant 3: *"Hmm… no."*

Participant 4: *"Cause like some of us follow what our friends say, and we want to be in a specific group."*

Researcher: *"Does being Christian influence your thinking in any way when deciding what to do?"*

Participant 4: *"No, no, hey, you don't think about religion or being Christian, you just think about the party."*

Participant 7: *"Maybe, I think peer pressure may make you go."*

Participant 11*: "Hmm… should I go and chill with my friend so that they don't think I am a loser?"*

Participant 12: *"Ja, I would go, because of friends."*

Researcher: *"Would being Christian influence your choice at all?"*

Participant 12: *"No."*

Participant 13: *"Because I am probably trying to impress somebody or something like that."*

Participant 15: *"To be honest, I would."*

Researcher: *"Okay, so you would."*

Participant 15: *"For my friends."*

Researcher: *"So your reason for going…?"*

Participant 15: *"Peer pressure."*

Baird (2005:11) states that the role of the parent and family, while not unimportant, pales in comparison to the critical contribution of peers to moral development in adolescence. He elaborates that developmental psychologists have asserted that as a result of the equal developmental status and reciprocal nature of their relationships, peers are thought to provide the necessary scaffolding for moral development. Baird (2005:11) states that teenagers focus

more of their energy on their peer groups, and within their peer group they learn to talk, walk and act. Baird (2005:10) also states that teens desire validation and approval from various groups and people in their lives, such as parents, adults and especially peers.

Research by Sawin-Williams and Bendt (1990) found that friends have coercive power over adolescents, by giving reinforcement for socially approved behaviours and punishment for non-compliance with group standards. The coercive power is likely to be achieved through a number of manipulations like interpersonal relationships and portrayal of an imagined audience. For instance, they could encourage, as in "everyone thought you were amazing in the game", or conversely they could use this coercive power to pressurise their friends into sneaking out, drinking alcohol or taking drugs.

The responses of the participants are in line with the research of Sawin-Williams and Bendt (1990), and it can be seen that peer pressure plays a role in the way the participants are influenced.

3.7.4 Cultural Variation in Morals

In some instances, when using the wallet example to display a situation to assist the participant in understanding morals, certain participants saw no problem in taking the wallet if it fell out the stranger's pocket, whereas the rest of the participants would to give it back. This can be seen as participants 4 and 11 stated the following in response:

Participant 4: *"Yeah, you like* (smiling)*, if you don't really like need the money, or like in a place where each and everyone moves."*

Researcher: *"Okay?"*

Participant 4: *"Then you can call him and say," Sir, your wallet fell, but if it is only you and him, then you are not going to call him, instead you keep quiet, you just go by and pick it up."*

Researcher: "*So you are just going to take it?"*

Participant 4: ***"Obviously!"***

Participant 11: *"I'll take it."*

Researcher: *"So you will take it, hmm, even though you know it is not yours?"*

Participant 11: *"Yes."*

These participants saw nothing wrong in taking the wallet, and did not conform to Kohlberg's theory, which gives rise to cultural variation in what is seen as right and wrong. Cultural relativists state that morality is a concept that is relative to a specific culture. In agreement Ferns and Thom (2001:2) add that values, norms and attitudes are provided by society. Several authors have demonstrated that there is an influence of cultural values on moral behaviour. (Compare Ma, 1988:201-227; Ma and Cheung, 1996:700-713.) This could possibly explain the participants' response to the situation.

3.7.5 Punishment by God

This section relates to the researcher asking the participants what would happen to them as Christians if they did something wrong. In most cases the participants responded that they would in some way be punished by God, as shown below:

Researcher: *"Influences and stops your swearing, okay, how does it do that, or should I say why do you think that you stopped swearing after giving your life to Christ?"*

Participant 1: *"Because I want to go to heaven when I die, I don't want to go to hell."*

Participant 2: *"I think I will have bad luck, and God will punish me."*

Researcher: *"How do you think He will punish you?"*

Participant 2: *"Like if you are writing a test and study hard, you would forget."*

Participant 3: *"You get punished."*

Researcher: *"Okay, you get punished. How do you think you get punished?"*

Participant 3: *"You won't go to heaven."*

Participant 5: *"Obviously judgement day will come."*

Participant 5: *"I believe, that if you steal something, you will get punished."*

> Researcher: *"Okay, how do you get punished?"*
>
> Participant 5: *"Might be that I will be in a car accident or something."*
>
> Participant 6: "*Hmm… God will punish you."*
>
> Researcher: *"Okay, how do you get punished?"*
>
> Participant 6: *"He would make you suffer."*
>
> Participant 11: "*I will get hurt or something, or get sick."*
>
> Participant 14: "*Maybe you will be in an accident, or maybe get bad luck."*

Of real interest, however, is that although almost all of the participants believed they would get punished in some way by God if they committed a moral indiscretion, this did not influence their moral behaviour in most situations as previously shown. The researcher - through literature examination - is of the opinion that it could be a result of the following causes:

Firstly, Nisan (in Rosenkoter 2005:224) argues that it is naïve to expect a one-to-one correspondence between moral behaviour and moral judgement. Moral judgement is affected by the question of whether the behaviour in question is morally right or wrong. It is also affected by the fact that in real life, moral standards do not always override other considerations, and the judgement of choice is the individual's subjective decision as it relates to a particular occasion.

Secondly, Gemelli (1996:506) states that adolescents enter a stage of confused consciousness. The adolescent struggles with the intermediate "grey" of what is right and wrong and this confusion occurs on behalf of moral growth as the adolescent's moral world expands to include the challenges of their peers' culture (as previously discussed) and popular culture. The adolescent in the midst of moral growth also seems very inconsistent regarding moral thinking and behaviour, as though they are talking out both sides of their mouths at once. Their behaviour and emotional responses are likewise unstable, so they might say or do one thing in one occasion and do or say the complete opposite in another.

Thirdly, Lafreniere (2000:24) explains that one aspect of adolescent egocentrism is the sense of personal uniqueness, called a personal fable. This, according to Lafreniere (2000:24), refers to the ongoing personal narrative the adolescent is crafting in which they are in the lead role. The adolescent is of the opinion that no one has ever had, or could ever have, the same kind of thoughts and feelings that they are experiencing. This leads to the conviction that tragedies can happen only to other people and this gives rise to feelings of invulnerability to well-known risks and dangers. Therefore, although they perceive the punishment of God, the participants might still perceive themselves at those moments of indiscretion to be invulnerable to those punishments of God.

3.8   CONCLUSION

This study has used a qualitative, applied, descriptive design; and in Chapter Three the researcher has given a detailed framework of this study and the methods of data collection and analysis used in conducting the research.

In analysing the findings of the transcribed semi-structured interviews, seven broad themes were found. The participants could identify and describe morals, and all of the participants found that Christian belief did influence their understanding of right and wrong. However, in moral situations only a few of the participants' moral behaviour was influenced by their Christian beliefs, while the other participants' responses linked up with Kohlberg's theory of moral development, and still other participants' responses were linked with peer pressure. Cultural differences were also found in terms of moral understanding, and while all participants believed that God would punish them in some way if they committed amoral actions, many would still transgress.

In conclusion, Smetana and Turiel (2006:248) sum up the research findings best when they state that adolescents are not seen as consistently or principally moral thinkers, nor are they simply confused. Adolescents can rather be seen to make autonomous moral judgements in some situations and focus on personal

goals in others. In the final chapter, conclusions and recommendations resulting from the research will be provided.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 OVERVIEW

Springsted (2005:251) states that "in all understandings of humans and ourselves, our moral nature is involved". From this perspective, morals can be seen as an important aspect to explore and understand in human beings. Many individuals have questioned and argued how and where individuals derive or learn their morals from. As stated in Chapter Two, others, like Socrates (in Sizer & Sizer, 1970:11), were unsure about the essence of morals and whether morals could be taught. Still others believe that morals may stem from parents, institutions or life experience. This remains a controversial issue.

Another ongoing debate revolves around the question whether a correlation exists between morals and religion. Rosenkoetter (2005:229) states that morality depends upon religion, as it not only provides worldviews but also ethos, and a way of being and relating in the world. It becomes a fundamental source of one's morals, and provides norms for both conduct and character for followers by advocating particular moral principles, laws and beliefs. Religion prescribes what people should become, thus encompassing moral doing and being. Kohlberg (1981:303), however, believed that the universality of moral stages in his theory was direct evidence against the view that the development of moral ideologies depends on cultures or teachings of particular religious belief systems.

Kung (1993:113) states that adolescents have to establish a flexible interrelationship between modes of moral thought, which they must weld into moral principles that relate to the real world of adults. Adolescents also need to reappraise earlier methods of moral problem solving and, where necessary, adapt these methods to ensure applicability to the adult problems that are new to the adolescents. Within this context, this study has been conducted to attempt to explore and understand the possible influence of Christian belief on adolescent moral behaviour. Adolescence is viewed as a pivotal point in terms

of moral foundations for later life and can therefore be seen as a prime point of departure to explore influences on moral behaviour.

4.2   AIM AND OBJECTIVES REVISITED

The aim and objectives are revisited to see whether the research has achieved what it has set out to accomplish. In this research, the goal was to explore the possible influence of Christian belief on early adolescents' moral behaviour.

The objectives that followed from this were:
- To understand and explore concepts and theories that relate to Christian belief and morals, thereby obtaining a conceptual framework. These topics were thoroughly discussed and explored in Chapter Two.
- To gain knowledge by collecting and interpreting data through semi-structured interviews with a sample of adolescents in order to transcribe and analyse the influence of Christian belief on adolescents' moral behaviour. These aspects were explored in Chapter Three.
- To analyse this data by means of a framework applicable for the analysis of qualitative data.
- To verify and interpret the findings of the research, and to describe them according to existing literature. The analysis and interpretations of the research findings were discussed in Chapter Three.
- To make recommendations for future research on the influence of Christian belief on adolescents' moral behaviour. The recommendations and suggestions for future research will be discussed later in this chapter.

This research has achieved its aim of exploring the possible influence of Christian belief on adolescents' moral behaviour, as it has accomplished the objectives and goals it set out to. The following section will provide a brief summary of the research findings.

4.3   SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

A detailed discussion of the research's findings has been provided in Chapter Three, where the transcribed interviews were analysed and examined. The following summary is provided so that the reader can identify and examine how the recommendations and areas of suggested further research can be obtained.

4.3.1   The first thing that became clear was that participants could not initially identify the concept of morals. However, after the researcher used a practical example, the participants were able to identify what morals entailed.

4.3.2   The participants could distinguish between and describe right and wrong behaviour, which is the essence of morals.

4.3.3   The participants could describe the relevance of morals in society.

4.3.4   The main areas where the participants learned their morals can be divided into the following:
- parents
- teachers
- church
- or a combination of some of the above.

4.3.5   The participants all identified themselves as Christians, and believed that activities they were engaged in such as praying, going to church, reading the Bible and believing what was written in the Bible made them Christian individuals. In some instances, some participants believed that the way they behaved towards other people and not committing immoral acts such as swearing or stealing made them Christian.

4.3.6   All of the participants believed that their Christian belief and what was written in the Bible had an influence on what they understood as right and wrong. The majority of the participants' responses correlated with

what the Ten Commandments state, with the most common responses relating to respecting one's parents and not lying or stealing.

4.3.7   Although almost all participants explained that either the Bible or their Christian belief influenced their understanding of what was seen as right or wrong, only a handfull of participants were actually influenced by their Christian belief in respect of their moral behaviour when it came to moral situations they were faced with.

4.3.8   The majority of the participants' responses correlated with Kohlberg's theory of moral development. Kohlberg (1976:73) states that individuals at level 2 are seen as conventional individuals, in whom the self is identified with or has internalised the rules and expectations of others, especially those impositions of authority. This was seen in the participants' responses relating to the government and the law, which were perceived to be influencing their moral behaviour. Furthermore, Kohlberg (1976:73) states that individuals strive to obey rules and expectations of others, which was evident in this study by the participants' responses with regard to listening to their parents. This, too, was perceived to influence their moral behaviour.

4.3.9   The moral behaviour of many participants was influenced by their peers.

4.3.10   In two instances, when using the wallet example to display a situation to assist the participant in understanding morals, certain participants saw no problem in taking the wallet if it fell out the stranger's pocket, whereas the rest of the participants would to give it back. These two participants did not confirm to Kohlberg's theory of moral development, which gives rise to possible cultural variation in what is seen as right and wrong.

4.3.11   The last major theme analysed was that although all of the participants believed that they would be punished by God in some way if they committed a moral indiscretion, many of them would still commit the indiscretion.

From the researcher's findings it can be concluded that the majority of participants were not influenced in their moral behaviour by their Christian belief, although they claimed that it influenced their understanding of right and wrong. However, there were participants who were actually influenced by their Christian belief in terms of their understanding of right and wrong as well as in their moral behaviour, while other participants displayed cultural variations in terms of their moral understanding. These do not correspond with Kolhberg's theory of moral development which offers the opportunity for further exploration regarding these aspects.

4.4   LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTED AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The study may have had the following limitations:

- De Vos (2005:346) states that in qualitative studies transferability or "generalisability" to other settings may be problematic, and this can be seen as a weakness of qualitative studies. The research conducted was of a qualitative nature and therefore the sample obtained, which came from the North-West Province in South Africa, may only be generalised to that population.

- Greef (2005:29) states that a limitation to using interviews in research is that the interviews involve personal characteristics and cooperation. To this end participants may be unwilling to share, or give their input in response to the researcher's questions. In this study, the questions posed may not have appropriately elicited the participants' responses regarding moral situations, as the questions may not have been posed in a manner that created a response in the participant.

- Bailey (1982:166) states that in research there could be interviewer bias where the participants' answers could be affected by their reaction to the interviewer's sex, race, social class, age, dress, physical appearance or accent. This could have been present in the research, as the researcher was older than participants, dressed in a different manner and looked physically different as well.

- Greef (2005:299) also explains that research responses at times might be untruthful. This could have been present in this research as the participants were asked about their moral behaviour, they may have been untruthful when answering questions on such a personal topic.

From the findings, the following recommendations can be made and areas for further research indicated:

- Although all of the participants stated that their Christian belief did influence their understanding of what was right and wrong, only a small portion of the participants were actually influenced by their Christian belief in respect of their moral behaviour. The reason as to why the latter Christian beliefs had a greater influence on their moral behaviour than that of the other participants, who also claimed to be Christian, leaves room for further exploration.

- Kolhberg (1984:303) saw the universality of stages in moral development as direct evidence against the development of moral ideologies depending on cultures or teachings of particular religious belief systems. When using the wallet example to display a situation to assist the participant in understanding morals, however, certain participants saw no problem in taking the wallet if it fell out of the stranger's pocket. The rest of the participants, on the other hand, would prefer to give it back. This divergence could be a result of a difference in cultural variations in terms of the understanding of morals. The possible differences as regards

moral understanding in different cultures could therefore be an area for further research.

-   Other avenues of possible research include those of different religions, as this research has only focused on Christianity. Different age groups, as well as a larger sample could also be further researched, as this research has made early adolescents its primary focus and has only sampled fifteen individuals.

4.5 CONCLUSION

This research has shown that morals are a complex concept to understand and consist of many facets. Morals can also be seen to be influenced by a variety of different factors.

The present study has identified that adolescents' moral behaviour can be influenced by authority, peers, and Christian belief, and that certain adolescents have different views and understanding of morals from others. From this research, as stated in the introduction, it has been found that Christian belief could influence moral behaviour, although *how* it actually influences adolescents' moral behaviour needs to be researched in much greater depth in order to be understood.

This research has explored one moral star in a universe of possibilities and influences, and for society as a whole to continue to function and sustain itself, other moral stars need to be explored and investigated to gain greater understanding. To conclude, the researcher will leave an afterthought from Sorely (1911:1), who states: "The conduct of man is distinguished from the behaviour of animals by the presence of moral ideas."

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Appendix I: Consent Form

Informed Consent for Dissertation: The Influence of Christian Belief on adolescents' moral behaviour: An exploratory study.

Dear Student,

I am a postgraduate student who is currently studying for my Masters Degree in Gestalt Play Therapy through Unisa. I would like to invite you to participate in this study that aims to understand the influence of Christian belief on adolescents' moral behaviour.

The research is a requirement for my degree and a dissertation of limited scope will be written on this topic. Your participation will include being interviewed for a certain period of time and you will be required to answer certain questions about morality and morals, Christian belief and questions regarding moral situations and moral individuals. The interview will last for approximately 15-20 minutes and will take place at Potch Boys High School. Once the data has been collected, analysed and conclusions made you will receive feedback with regard to the research. The interview will be recorded on tape and transcribed. Your identity will be protected and you will remain anonymous. This study will be shared with my supervisor and co-supervisor as they will also have access to the data. The dissertation that results from this work will be published in hard copy, which will be housed in the Library on the Unisa campus in Pretoria. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, and are free to ask any questions and clarify any issues regarding the study and the interview at the end of the interviewing session.

I appreciate you giving me your time for the study.

Thank you
John Swart

Please sign below if you are willing to participate in the dissertation research outlined above.

SIGNATURE _____DATE _____

SIGNATURE OF PARENT/GUARDIAN _____DATE _____
(Only in the case where client is under 18)

WITNESS _____DATE _____

Appendix II: Question List

QUESTIONS

1. Can you tell me what morals are?
   Example: seeing a stranger drop his wallet on street…etc.

2. How/where/whom did you learn the difference between right and wrong/making the right choices?

3. What kind/type of person is as moral/good person?

4. What do you think of morals? Are they helpful, useful do they exist/are they real etc

5. What makes you a Christian, what do you do, say or believe that people/you know that you are a Christian?

6. Do you think that how Christians are taught to live their lives influences the choices or what they think is right and wrong?

7. How do you think it does that?

8. Do you read the Bible? If so, do you think the Bible suggests or tells you ways to live your life that influences the choices you make, or what you think is right and wrong?

9. Can you think of two occasions where you have been in a situation where you found it really hard to decide how to behave or what to do?

9a) You wanted to wear an outfit to a party and your parents said NO. What would you do?

9b)   Asked by friends to smoke/shoplift etc?

10. Explain a situation when you had to decide which was the right or wrong thing to do, and what made you decide to act the way you did?

10. Name two people you look up to who are good or moral, and explain why.