JSSA-SV-005
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Perceptions of Sexuality and Gendered Sexual Roles among Students at a South African University: Exploring Heteronormativity on Campus

Letitia Smuts[1], Josien Reijer[2] and Tessa Dooms[3]

University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, Auckland Park, South Africa, 2006,

E-mail: [1]<lsmuts@uj.ac.za>,[2]<j.m.reijer@gmail.com>, [3]<tessa.dooms@youthlab.org.za>

KEYWORDS Heterosexism. Homophobia. Heterosexual Privilege. Gender. South African Students

ABSTRACT The aim of this paper is to investigate the extent to which university students are likely to hold heteronormative and normative gendered views. Data was obtained through a quantitative survey. A total of 1214 undergraduate students were interviewed in an urban university in South Africa. Low levels of homophobia were reported, with women being more accepting towards homosexuality. It was found that heteronormative (possible heterosexist) views are at play when asked whether homosexuality should be portrayed positively on campus, which raises questions of heterosexual privilege. While students are generally willing to interact with homosexual students, they have an aversion towards same-sex relationships being given a positive, and perhaps equal, status to heterosexual relationships. Religion and family are the most influential factors which shape the views of the respondents. Findings suggest marked differences in the views of religious and non-religious students with regard to gender norms and acceptance of homosexuality. Fields of study appear to be a significant determinant of students' views on sexual and gendered norms. Ultimately, the paper is explorative in nature, and starts to address a phenomenon that is under-researched within this context.

INTRODUCTION

In August of 2012, South African president, Jacob Zuma, commented on women and marriage during an interview with television personality Dali Tambo in his TV series, *People of the South*. In the interview President Zuma stated that it is 'not right' for women to be single, and that having children is 'extra training for a woman, to be a mother' (Pillay 2012). He further stated that being single is not 'right' and that it is a problem in South African society. Over the years Jacob Zuma has been vocal about his opinions on gender roles as well as sexual orientation.[1] Interestingly, these views are held in a context of a constitutional democracy which is often recognised as progressive and inclusive. The South African constitution highlights the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms to persons of any gender, race, or sexual orientation (to name a few), and prohibits any discrimination on this basis. Yet, patriarchy and homophobia still subsist within the larger South African context, which raises questions of whether public discourses on gender and sexuality norms are embedded in heteronormative views that reinforce dominant masculinities and femininities (see for example: Smuts 2011; Morrell et al. 2013). Moreover, discourses about heterosexuality and gender roles also reflect implicit views held about homosexuality. It can be argued that President Zuma's comments raise an interesting tension between traditional sociocultural norms and values about sexuality and gender, and the progressive and inclusive values put forward by the Constitution. It calls for a further exploration into the different ways in which structural inequalities and institutions contribute to heteronormative ideals, as well as how different cultural groups may or may not hold heteronormative and gender-biased attitudes and perspectives.

The paper takes Zuma's normative statements as a point of departure to investigate laden heteronormative views among young South African people. It does so by drawing on the views that students from a South African university located in an urban area hold of sexuality

Address for correspondence:
Letitia Smuts
Cnr. Kingsway and University Road,
Auckland Park, PO Box 524, 2006
C-Ring 627A
Telephone: +27 11 559 2071
Fax: +27 11 559 3787
E-mail: lsmuts@uj.ac.za

and gender, taking into consideration where they receive the messages that inform their perceptions and experiences regarding sexuality and gender. The premise of the paper is that young people are largely socialised within a space where they learn and practise heteronormative expectations of sexuality and gender. The paper will address three main themes which are tied to the concept of heteronormativity, namely views on sexuality, views on gendered sexual practices, and agents of socialisation. Heteronormative views among university students have not been the focus of much research projects in South Africa; the paper thus addresses a much needed research topic and is exploratory in nature.

Heteronormativity in Society: Socialising Agents Developing Discourses of Sexuality and Gender Norms

Heteronormativity is a concept which is used to describe a specific discourse surrounding sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender roles. Tamale (2011: 640) defines heteronormativity as 'the sociocultural system that assumes the existence of only two sexes/genders and views human sexual relations between a man and a woman as being natural and normal, with no other possibilities'. As such, within a heteronormative environment, it is deemed that there are no other alternatives than being heterosexual (Pease 2010). The consequence of this is that heterosexuality is made hegemonic through the process of normalisation (Yep 2003), which creates a hierarchal relationship between hetero- and homo-sexuality. Pease (2010) claims that this hierarchy constructs homosexuality as deviant and in the process privileges heterosexuality. This form of sexual hegemony, thus, also has an impact on how certain sexual behaviours are classified. Rubin (2006: 152) speaks of a sexual value system in which 'good', 'normal', 'natural', privileged sexuality (located in what she refers to as the 'charmed circle' of sex) must be 'heterosexual, marital, monogamous, reproductive, and non-commercial.' Those who conform to this ideology, enjoy privileges and material benefits from society. And those 'outside' of the 'charmed circle' are seen as 'bad', 'abnormal', and 'unnatural', such as 'homosexual, unmarried, promiscuous, non-procreative, or commercial' (Rubin 2006: 152). Yet another consequence of heteronormativity is that it reinforces gendered power relations. These power relations fall within the traditional patriarchal sphere which tends to give precedence to men and dominant masculine identities (Ratele 2011). As such, a gender binary is employed which regulates and specifies the roles of men and women in society. This binary is often unequal and heterosexist in nature. In this paper, then, the relationship between sexuality and gender is considered and treated as a product of heteronormativity.

Heteronormative ideals are communicated through various mediums. Values around, and information on, sex, gender, and sexuality are largely informed by agents of socialisation (Anarfi and Owusu 2010). The agents of socialisation usually include the family, friends and religion. The heteronormative nature of a lot of these messages communicated to contemporary youth creates numerous pressures and complexities for young people to construct their sexual identities. For instance, a link exists between culture and how gendered sexualities are shaped (Ofusu-Amaah et al. 2009). Religion also remains a pervasive socialising agent with reference to discourses of sexuality and gender (Anarfi and Owusu 2010). In popular culture the media is often one of the most influential contemporary cultural vehicles. In her chapter on the politics of sexuality and nation-building in post-apartheid South Africa, Posel (2011) focuses on the conversations about sex and sexuality in the public media. The first noteworthy feature of the politics of sexuality post-1994, is the extent to which sexuality has been thrust into public prominence – something that was unthinkable during apartheid (Posel 2011). Messages about sex and sexuality have, thus, become more visible in the recent post-apartheid years by means of circulation through television, movies, magazines, online social networking and pornography.

Student Attitudes toward Homosexuality: The Significance of Gender and Faculties

Evidence suggesting that homophobic views within university communities are present are rife in Western scholarship (Kerns and Fine 1994; Louderback and Whitley 1997; Hopwood 2008). The differences in views on homosexuality, highlighted by these studies, relate to students' gendered identities, as well as their chosen fields

of studies. The literature suggests that university faculties have different pedagogical approaches which results in different kinds of thinking amongst individual students.

It was found that female students hold more positive attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women, and that male students hold more negative attitudes toward homosexual individuals. This was true for all the studies referred to above. Kerns and Fine (1994) attributed these views to the parental socialisation of gender norms which impacts on the way in which young people view the roles of men and women. This type of socialisation falls within a heteronormative setting. Louderback and Whitley (1997) attributed this difference in opinion to the erotic value that both sexes place on gay men and lesbian women. Male students attached a high level of erotic value to lesbians, whereas women did not. Erotic values among both genders showed that men rated lesbians as erotic to some degree, but that men's ratings were more negative than women when rating *both* gay men and lesbian women (Louderback and Whitley 1997).

International research has also highlighted the homophobic views expressed by university students according to the faculty in which they are registered (Engstrom and Sedlacek 1997; Schellenberg et al. 1999). Engstrom and Sedlacek's (1997) study provides evidence that homosexual students often hide their sexual identities if they are registered in Engineering courses due to the male dominance within this field and the fear of being rejected and/or discriminated against by their peers. This is suggestive of hegemonic masculine and heteronormative patriarchal values at play within this study field. Homosexual students in Arts faculties such as film, fashion and journalism, reported feeling more comfortable to reveal their sexual identities within their field of study due to it being more gender neutral (Engstrom and Sedlacek 1997). A study conducted by Schellenberg et al. (1999) at a Canadian univer-sity, found that students in the faculties of Art or the Social Sciences had more positive attitudes towards homosexuals, compared to Science or Business students. The results further revealed that women within the Arts and Social Sciences portrayed more positive attitudes towards homosexuality than their male counterparts (Schellenberg et al. 1999). Hopwood (2008) compared the attitudes towards homosexuality of a number of students from two faculties – Humanities and Business – at a rural university in Australia, and found that business majors were significantly more homophobic than humanities majors.

The above discussion shows that the intersections between gender and faculty cannot be ignored. Faculties are often gendered in their very nature, and therefore certain gendered views will be associated with specific faculties. Furthermore, student views also exist within varied pedagogies according to the faculties to which they belong. A recent study by Trenshaw et. al (2013), for instance, found that students from a university in the United States consider Engineering to be hetoronormative in nature and exclusionary towards sexual minorities on campus. Participants in this study listed various examples of how professors' manners of teaching and the examples they use in class are heteronormative (Trenshaw et al. 2013).

As mentioned, similar research on heteronormative attitudes among university students in South Africa is limited and needs further exploration. Worth mentioning is a study conducted at the Stellenbosch University in South Africa which focussed on gay and lesbian individuals' views and experiences on campus, and it was found that the campus is not homosexual-friendly (Graziano 2004). The findings suggest that these homophobic experiences perpetuate heternormativity on campus, making it difficult for gay and lesbian groups to express themselves freely. Graziano (2004: 281) explains the consequence of this by stating: 'Gay and lesbian students are rendered mute and the community overall continues to maintain the status quo'. Heteronormative discourses are thus a means through which this status quo is maintained.

METHODOLOGY

This paper drew on data collected by means of a larger survey which focused on student communities on a South African university campus. The quantitative questionnaire was extensive in trying to obtain demographical information of undergraduate university students. The survey asked of students to indicate their views and attitudes about various issues in their student lives. A section of the

questionnaire addressed issues pertaining to sex, sexuality and gender which are the focus of this paper. In particular, students were asked to state their views surrounding these issues on a number of Likert scales so as to determine the extent to which they hold heteronormative attitudes. A total of 1214 undergraduate students were interviewed during October and November 2011.

Survey data provided us with information regarding the students' demographic background, as well as a number of attitude (Likert scale) responses. All the Likert-scale questions used in this paper have the same five-scale answer category, namely: 'to no extent', 'to a small extent', 'to a medium extent', 'to a large extent' and 'to a very large extent'.

The first part of the results section looks at what informs students' views. This was explored by investigating the following question: 'How do you decide what is wrong and right? I decide predominantly on the basis of…' Students were then asked to indicate on a Likert scale to what extent they agreed with the following statements: 'what I pick up from the media', 'what my closest friends are saying', 'what my family members are saying' and 'my religious convictions'. Following this are two sections that looked at views on sexuality and views on gendered sexual practices. Students were asked 'to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:'. In this paper the following four statements were considered, of which two relate to views on sexuality and two focus on gendered sexual practices. The first category considered the statements: 'I avoid contact with homosexuals' and 'Same-sex relationships should be portrayed positively on campus'. In terms of gendered sexual practices, following statements were taken into account: 'It is ok for women to initiate sexual activity' and 'It is ok for men to have multiple sexual partners'. The next section will provide an overview of the demographic questions that were used.

Description of the Sample

Of the 1214 students who were interviewed, 569 (47%) were male and 645 (53%) were female. The majority of the students interviewed were black (80%), 12% were white, and the rest were coloured (2%) or Indian/Asian (6%). Approximately 90% of respondents reported that they have religious affiliations. The majority of the students (83%) were of Christian affiliation, 6% had no religious affiliation, 4% were Muslim, and 7% were part of another religion. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of the students reported to 'strongly agree/agree' with the statement 'I consider myself a religious person'[2], 20% of the students were 'neutral' and 12% 'strongly disagreed/disagreed'.

The university has nine faculties. Almost one quarter (24%) of the students were part of the Faculty of Management, followed by the Faculty of Economic and Financial Sciences (20%), Engineering and the Built Environment (17%), Humanities (14%), Education (6%), Management (6%), Health Sciences (5%), Arts, Design and Architecture (5%), and Law (3%). While we recognise that the field of study alone may not be very significant indicators of value-driven questions, the gendered characteristics within faculties often have interesting implications for values, as will be explored in this paper. It would also have been interesting to know how race and class mediate these perceptions, but this fell outside the scope of this particular paper. It is, however, an area that needs further exploration.

RESULTS

What Informs Students' Views?

In this study participants were asked about the extent to which media, close friends, family and religious convictions shape their views and behaviour. More traditional agents of socialisation, such as family and religion, as well as friends and the media, are often the main sources of information for young people. The values taught through these sources of information often overlap and reinforce each other. The researchers were interested in assessing the role different sources of socialisation have on student views, as this provides a lens through which to understand the origins of the views they hold about gender norms, sexuality and sexual orientation, which are issues often experienced as moral judgements and naturalised worldviews.

Students were asked to indicate on a Likert scale to what extent they decide what is 'wrong' or 'right' based on a number of categories (media, closest friends, family members, and religious

convictions). Students at this university report low levels of influence on their views by the media, with 56% of the students indicating that the media 'to no extent/to a small extent' influenced their views on what is wrong or right. Thus, for more than 50% of all respondents the media's influence was limited. Considering relatively easy access to media sources, students are either actively or passively not factoring media when shaping their views. This finding should be approached with caution, as media consumers are, at times, not aware of the ubiquitous way in which the media operates, which may lead to consumers not noticing the impact that the media has on their lives and decisions. This is an aspect that could be explored more fully in an in-depth qualitative study.

The same pattern emerges for the influence of friendships. Only 22% of the students reported that 'what my closest friends are saying' impacted their view on what is wrong or right 'to a large extent/a very large extent', and 41% said it influenced them 'to no extent/to a small extent. This contradicts literature that posits that mediums such as the media and peers are influential forces in contemporary contexts among the youth. It is rather the more traditional socialising forces that are reported to be the sources of their decision-making, as 52% of the students reported that 'what their family members were saying' influenced them to a large extent /a very large extent and only 7% reported that it affected them 'to no extent'. The biggest influences on students' decision making processes are their 'religious convictions' with 56% of the students reporting that their religious convictions 'to a large extent/to a very large extent' influenced what they felt was wrong or right. Only 11% of the students reported that their religious convictions influenced them 'to no extent'.

A summative presentation of the three combined responses (see Table 1) clearly shows that students' views are least likely to be informed by the media and their closest friends. Influences in this regard are to a small or medium degree. Communication from family members and students' religious convictions were thus found to be the most influential as to how they shape their views in general. Here we can see almost all the students are influenced to some degree, and more than 50% are influenced to a 'large/very large extent'.

Exploring Heteronormativity on Campus: Homosexuality and Hetero-privilege

As discussed earlier, negative views on homosexuality as a concept and same-sex relationships in practice are not only indicators of what is commonly thought of as homophobia, but also indicative of the privileged space heterosexual relationships hold in socio-cultural and religious frameworks that often form the basis for the implicit societal sentiments about sex and sexuality. This paper attempts to make a distinction between perceptions about homosexuality as it relates to same-sex identifying people, and same-sex relationships. In many ways, views about same-sex identifying people fit well into a rights-based framework, where people's evaluation of what is right or wrong centres around individual rights to choice and dignity. For example, students were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement 'I avoid contact with homosexuals'.

Table 1: 'What informs student's views?'

	What I pick up from media		*What my the closest friends are saying*		*What my family members are saying*		*My religious convictions*	
	N	*(%)*	*N*	*(%)*	*N*	*(%)*	*N*	*(%)*
To no/a small extent	676	(55.9)	497	(41.0)	217	(17.9)	235	(19.4)
To a medium extent	379	(31.3)	448	(37.0)	362	(29.9)	294	(24.3)
To a large/very large extent	154	(12.7)	266	(22.0)	631	(52.1)	680	(56.2)
Total	1209	(100.0)	1211	(100.0)	1210	(100.0)	1209	(100.0)

I Avoid Contact With Homosexuals

Overall, 27% of the students reported that they 'agree/strongly agree' with this statement, while more than 50% of the students 'strongly disagree/disagree'. When looking at the differences between the male and female students, it can be seen that female students disagree with the statement more than men (Chi2 test; p=0.000). Sixty-eight percent (68%) of the female students 'strongly disagree/disagree' with the statement compared to 31% of the male students (see Table 2).

Table 2: 'I avoid contact with homosexuals' by sex

	Male		*Female*	
	N	*(%)*	*N*	*(%)*
Strongly Disagree	79	(14.0)	232	(36.1)
Disagree	95	(16.8)	204	(31.7)
Neutral	168	(29.7)	110	(17.1)
Agree	103	(18.2)	49	(7.6)
Strongly Agree	121	(21.4)	48	(7.5)
Total	566	(100.0)	595	(100.0)

For the purposes of this part of the quantitative inquiry, the variable 'Faculty' was recoded to include the following three groups, namely 'female dominated faculties', 'male dominated faculties', and (theoretically) 'gender-neutral faculties'[3]. The female dominated faculties include all faculties wherein more than two- thirds of the students were female, namely Education (73%), Humanities (72%), and Health Sciences (71%). The Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment accounted for the male dominated faculty (70% male). Finally, the gender neutral faculties included the remaining faculties namely: Economic and Financial Sciences (59% male), Science (60% male), Arts, Design and Architecture (48% male), Law (46% male), and Management (53% male). Not only is there a statistical basis for this recoding, but also a theoretical merit to recoding in that it adds an element for exploration based on the literature which states that faculties are gendered in nature. This also allows for further analysis into the diverse gendered responses within different faculties.

In total, 40% of the students from male dominated faculties 'agree/strongly agree' that they avoid contact with homosexuals. This is higher than the 26% of both male and female students in gender-neutral faculties and the 18% of students in the female dominated category. Engineering students particularly agree with the idea of avoiding contact with homosexuals. 40% of the engineering students say the 'agree/ strongly agree' with the statement and only 32% 'disagree/strongly disagree'. This finding raises the question of possible hetero-privilege sentiments within certain disciplines of studies. As Trenshaw et. al (2013) points out, Engineering is mainly dominated by straight men, similarly this mentality creeps in in the pedagogical positionings of the educators which could indirectly also influence the views of students within this Faculty. All of the students in the other faculties more frequently disagree with the statement than agree with it. The Faculty of Engineering also has the highest percentage (28%) of students who neither agree nor disagree ('neutral') with the statement. In contrast, the Faculty of Arts, Design and Architecture and the Faculty of Education have the highest percentage (67%) of students who 'disagree/ strongly disagree' with the statement.

Comparing the views of male and female students in these categories provides us with a similar pattern: male dominated faculties have the highest percentage of students who 'agree/ strongly agree' that they avoid contact with homosexuals. However, there is a stark difference between the male and female responses. Within male dominated faculties, male students report that they 'agree/strongly agree' with the statement 46% of the time, compared to 25% of the female students. In female dominated faculties the percentage of male students who 'agree/strongly agree' is 32% and for female students this is 12%. The gender-neutral category shows a similar trend: 39% of the male students report that they 'agree/strongly agree', compared to 15% of the female students.

While male students, overall, score highest on 'agree/strongly agree' with the statement, it should be noted that this does change depending on which faculty category they fall into. Male students 'agree/strongly agree' more when they are in male dominated faculties than when they are part of female dominated faculties or gender-neutral faculties. However, it should be noted that the percentage of male students who 'agree/strongly agree' always remains higher for the male students, compared to the female students. This corresponds with the literature which states that male students show

more homophobic attitudes than female students. Differences in responses also vary between faculties, in the sense that some faculties are more prone to reject homophobic and patriarchal thinking than others.

Overall there is not an overwhelming homophobic sentiment expressed through these responses. This may be due to two factors: 1) the constitutional imperative of allowing people the freedom of sexual orientation and 2) an ability to differentiate between their own views and that of others. It could be argued that students are able to respect the identities of their peers, even if these identities are different from their own.

Same-sex Relationships Should be Portrayed Positively on Campus

Same-sex relationships, however, go beyond the individual. These relationships, to some extent, represent an 'institution' that if allowed to thrive, could become accepted as socially legitimate. The legitimacy of relationships indicates, sometimes incorrectly, the level of value placed on the sexual and gendered practices associated with those relationships. In this paper it is thus argued that the judgements about people identifying as same-sex differ from judgements about same-sex relationships, in a move away from classic homophobia towards heterosexism. This shift is illustrated when analysing the responses students gave when they were asked about the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement: 'Same-sex relationships should be portrayed positively on campus'. The question was asked in order to establish the extent to which students at this university felt that homosexuality should be more (positively) visible on campus, which provides us with some insight into the heteronormative forces that might be at play within this environment. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of the students said that they 'agree/strongly agree' that same-sex relationships should be portrayed positively on campus, while 40% of the students instead 'disagree/strongly disagree' with the statement.

Comparing this to responses given to the previous statement, we can see that while the majority of the students either disagree or remain neutral regarding the idea that they avoid homosexuals, they at the same time would rather not have same-sex relationships portrayed positively on campus.

This statement too is answered differently by male and female students. Female students more often than male students say that they agree that same-sex relationships should be portrayed positively on campus (chi2 test, p=0.000). They also disagree less frequently than their male counterparts (see Table 3). Thirty-five percent (35%) of the female students compared to 19% of the male students 'agree/strongly agree' that same-sex relationships should be portrayed positively on campus. While 29% of the female students 'strongly disagree/disagree' with the statement compared to 52% of the male students.

Table 3: 'Same-sex relationships should be portrayed positively on campus' by sex

	Male		*Female*	
	N	*(%)*	*N*	*(%)*
Strongly Disagree	189	(33.3)	111	(17.4)
Disagree	108	(19.0)	74	(11.6)
Neutral	164	(28.9)	232	(36.3)
Agree	77	(13.6)	142	(22.2)
Strongly Agree	29	(5.1)	80	(12.5)
Total	567	(100.0)	639	(100.0)

When comparing this question to the previous question, it is interesting to see that while female students are quite outspoken regarding their views on whether or not they avoid homosexuals, 36% of the female students remain 'neutral' when asked about whether or not same-sex relationships should be portrayed positively on campus. Male students appear to be more strongly opposed to same-sex relationships being portrayed positively, than what they feel about whether or not they avoid same-sex identifying people. This gender divide is further emphasised when analysing the results by faculty, with 54% of the students in male dominated faculties saying that they 'disagree/strongly disagree' that same-sex relationships should be portrayed positively on campus. In female dominated faculties (for both male and female) this is 35% and in gender-neutral faculties (both genders) it is 38%.

Analysing the differences in responses between male and female students provides us with a similar trend: students from male dominated faculties 'disagree/strongly disagree' more frequently with the statement that same-sex

relationships should be portrayed positively on campus. Within male dominated faculties male students report that they 'disagree/strongly disagree' with the statement 59% of the time, compared to 43% of the female students. In female dominated faculties the percentage of male students that 'agree/strongly agree' is 51% and for female students this is 28%. The gender-neutral category shows a similar trend: 50% of the male students reported that they 'agree/ strongly agree' compared to 27% of the female students.

The differences between the male and female students continue to exist. Similarly to what was seen for the previous statement ('I avoid contact with homosexuals'), it can be seen that the male students hold more heteronormative views (possibly heterosexist or homophobic) within a male dominated faculty. Relating back to Graziano's (2004) study, this has some implications on the homosexual students on campus, seeing that knowledge about homosexuality is kept 'hidden' or underplayed. Ultimately, then, a heteronormative status quo is maintained, which is not inclusive of *all* sexual identities on campus.

Religious affiliation also produces interesting results on this question. This is illustrated by 25% of participants reporting that they 'strongly disagree' that same-sex relation-ships should be portrayed positively on campus. Of those who strongly disagreed 16 percent were not religious, showing a significant difference between religious and non-religious students regarding the extent to which they would be accommodating of equal rights to the expression of different sexual orientations on campus. Between religious groups, students affiliated to African Traditional Religions (ATR) and Islam were less accepting of the positive portrayal of same-sex relationships, with 50% and 41% respectively saying they 'strongly disagree' with the idea. Only 25% of Christians 'strongly disagree', while more than half of Jewish and Hindu students reported being 'neutral' on the question.

An Exploration into Normative Gendered/ Sexual Practices

The interplays between patriarchal power relations and heteronormativity (and perceived hetero-privilege) are explored in this paper by looking at responses to questions about gendered sex roles and practices. If the influence of more traditional family and religious values holds, it would follow that the responses about the roles and practices of men and women would align with a male dominant bias in presumably heterosexual relationships. These views would include an understanding of men as the dominant decision-makers in sexual interactions, and 'in many societies there is a culture of silence that surrounds sex that dictates that 'good' women are expected to be ignorant about sex and passive in sexual interactions' (Gupta 2000: 2).

It is Ok for a Woman to Initiate Sex

It is interesting to note that when students were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that 'it is ok for a woman to initiate sex', the responses showed that students were largely in favour of women taking on the role of initiating sex. Forty percent (40%) of the students said they 'agree/strongly agree' with this statement, while 27% said they 'disagreed/strongly disagreed'. When looking at the difference between the male and female students, it was found that the views differed (Chi2; p=0.000). Table 4 shows that men answered more positively than women: 50% of the male students said they 'agreed/strongly agreed' with the statement, compared to 31% of the female students. A large proportion of the female students neither agreed nor disagreed and remained 'neutral' (37%). Women said they 'disagreed/strongly disagreed' more often than men: 32% compared to 21%.

Table 4: 'It is ok for women to initiate sexual activity' by sex

	Male		*Female*	
	N	*(%)*	*N*	*(%)*
Strongly Disagree	38	(6.7)	95	(14.8)
Disagree	80	(14.1)	111	(17.3)
Neutral	163	(28.7)	236	(36.8)
Agree	159	(28.0)	130	(20.3)
Strongly Agree	127	(22.4)	69	(10.8)
Total	567	(100.0)	641	(100.0)

Similarly, data on gender roles and sexual behaviour by faculty was captured in order to establish the perceptions of students (see Table 5). In total (inclusive of both male and female students) 52% of the students in the male

dominated faculty reported that they 'agree/strongly agree' that it is ok for a woman to initiate sex. Furthermore, 38% of the students in gender-neutral faculties and 36% of the students in female dominated faculties reported this.

Comparing the male and female responses a similar pattern can be seen: both male and female students in male dominated faculties 'agree/strongly agree' more often that it is ok for a woman to initiate sex, compared to students from female dominated faculties or gender-neutral faculties. Within male dominated faculties male students report that they 'agree/strongly agree' with the statement 59% of the time, compared to 36% of the female students. In female dominated faculties the percentage of male students who 'agree/strongly agree' is 49%, and for female students this is 31%. The gender-neutral category shows a similar trend: 47% of the male students reported that they 'agree/strongly agree' compared to 30% of the female students. In particular, male students on the whole are more positive compared to female students when asked if it were ok for a woman to initiate sex. However, within the male dominated faculty both male and female students made positive remarks about women initiating sex. For this question, there are only minor differences between students within a female dominant faculty or students in gender-neutral faculties. Overall, the students' responses suggest that they do not consider women having sexually passive roles in relationships, indicating a deviation from traditional societal norms often advocated by religious and family institutions.

Is it Okay for Men to Have Multiple Sexual Partners

Another question designed to test whether students hold similar views about gendered sex roles was to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement: 'it is ok for men to have multiple sexual partners'. The question stems from 'dominant notions of masculinity [which] often encourage men to seek a variety of partners' (Ofusu-Amaah et al. 2009: 231). This notion of masculinity is dictated by cultural norms and practices relating to sex which can be found in many African societies (Ofosu-Amaah et al. 2009). This, however, does not apply to women, thus creating a double standard whereby women with multiple sexual partners are viewed as deviant and promiscuous. The question allows us to explore the discrepancies between normative and more liberal views about gender and sexual practices.

The majority of all students (both male and female) and in all faculties indicated that they 'disagree/strongly disagree' that it is acceptable for men to have multiple sexual partners. Male and female students differ in their responses in terms of the degree with which they disagree or agree with the statement (Table 6). Furthermore, female students 'disagree/strongly disagree' more often than male students, which suggests that this is a taboo for women, far less than for men. In total, 85% of the female students 'disagree/strongly disagree' with the statement, of which 56% say they 'strongly disagree'.

Table 6: 'It is ok for men to have multiple sexual partners' by sex

	Male		*Female*	
	N	*(%)*	*N*	*(%)*
Strongly Disagree	157	(27.7)	418	(65.2)
Disagree	162	(28.6)	126	(19.7)
Neutral	138	(24.4)	37	(5.8)
Agree	58	(10.2)	21	(3.3)
Strongly Agree	51	(9.0)	39	(6.1)
Total	566	(100.0)	641	(100.0)

The highest percentage is found in female dominated faculties (76%), followed by gender-neutral faculties (72%), and finally male dominated faculties (63%).

Table 5: 'It is ok for women to initiate sexual activity' by Faculty type

	Gender neutral		*Female dominated*		*Male dominated*	
	N	*(%)*	*N*	*(%)*	*N*	*(%)*
(Strongly) Disagree	200	(28.3)	79	(27.1)	45	(21.3)
Neutral	236	(33.4)	106	(36.4)	57	(27.0)
(Strongly) Agree	270	(38.2)	106	(36.4)	109	(51.7)
Total	706	(100.0)	291	(100.0)	211	(100.0)

Table 7 depicts a breakdown of male and female student responses according to faculty types. Within male dominated faculties, female students 'disagree/strongly disagree' with the statement 83% of the time, compared to 55% among male students. Looking at the female dominant faculty it can be seen that female students 'disagree/strongly disagree' 84% of the time and male students 59% of the time. Finally, in gender neutral faculties female students 'disagree/strongly disagree' 86% of the time and male students 56% of the time.

The data shows that male students in male dominated faculties more often say that it is ok for men to have multiple partners. Twenty-three percent (23%) of male students in this faculty say that they 'agree/strongly agree' with this statement. In gender neutral faculties this is 18%, and in female dominated faculties this is 16%. Still, female students strongly oppose this statement regardless of faculty.

CONCLUSION

The paper explores how discursive heteronormative structures in society and on campus, shape students' views on sex, gender and sexuality, which often has exclusionary effects on those who fall outside of the 'norm'. The paper set out to explore the ways that students at an urban university in South Africa respond to questions about sexuality and gendered norms, through the lens of what informs their life views. The results indicate that students' views are mostly informed by their religious convictions and family socialisation. More than half of the students claimed that their religion plays a significant role in deciding what is right and what is wrong, and a great percentage also mentioned family as a source of their decision-making. Influences by friends and the media were less of a factor when asked how decisions between what is right and wrong are made. The findings suggest two central tensions that students hold in balance regarding sexuality and gendered norms. Firstly, the discussion of perceptions and attitudes towards same-sex persons and relationships raises the tension between accepting diversity in sexual identities by not avoiding interactions with same-sex identifying people, while expressing ambivalence at the notion of having same-sex relationships being portrayed positively on campus. This creates a tension that uncovers a thin line between an anti-homophobic attitude and a preservation of heterosexual privilege. Secondly, in examining the responses about gendered sexual roles and practices, we see students holding views that are seemingly progressive in terms of gendered power relations in sexual encounters, while being influenced by a sociocultural context of family structures and religious norms that draw on heteronormative patriarchy. Reflecting on the statements of President Zuma, these tensions expose the need to negotiate between the explicit imperatives of our socio-political make-up as a country, and the implicit sociocultural make-up we carry through our socialisation. The differences in faculty responses could be explained by the different kinds of pedagogy at play within each faculty. Students from the Humanities and Arts faculties tend to provide more liberal responses, as can be seen in their tendencies to be more open to less patriarchal thinking, as opposed to such faculties as Business and Engineering. Within these faculties, clear distinctions can also be seen between male and female responses.

Table 7: 'It is ok for men to have multiple sexual partners' by faculty type and sex

		Gender neutral		*Female dominated*		*Male domi ted*	
		N	*(%)*	*N*	*(%)*	*N*	*(%)*
(Strongly) Disagree	N	190	317	48	175	81	52
	%	56.4%	85.9%	59.3%	83.7%	54.7%	82.5%
Neutral	N	85	17	20	15	33	5
	%	25.2%	4.6%	24.7%	7.2%	22.3%	7.9%
(Strongly) Agree	N	62	35	13	19	34	6
	%	18.4%	9.5%	16.0%	9.1%	23.0%	9.5%
Total	N	337	369	81	209	148	63
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study are exploratory but highights the need to explore further what these tensions implicate for the day-to-day experiences of South African students. Moreover, recognising that religious and family socialisation remains an important shaper of views of students, the paper raises questions about the particular content embedded in dominant cultural and religious discourses about sexuality and gender in a country where a range of diverse ideological positions on these issues exists. Finally, this paper suggests that in order to fully understand societal attitudes about diverse sexual orientations and normative gender roles that young people hold, a variety of heteronormative mechanisms needs to be interrogated.

NOTES

1. President Zuma stated that homosexuality goes against his traditional cultural beliefs 'as a man', and that same-sex marriage is 'a disgrace to the nation and to God'. He subsequently apologised for his statements, but was criticised by a number of activist organisations for not being sincere (Pillay 2012).
2. Students were asked a number of questions to measure the extent to which certain statements apply to them. The statement 'I consider myself a religious person' had the following possible answer categories: 'Strongly disagree', 'Disagree', 'Neutral', 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree'.
3. The term 'gender-neutral' is used in this study to refer to faculties where there is not a dominance of one gender, but rather a more equal distribution of men and women within these faculties.

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