Perceptions of the Bisexual

Although gays and lesbians have made significant progressive movements, such as the legalization of same-sex marriage, they are still the victims of stigmatism. Even more so are the people who are not gay, lesbian, or heterosexual, but are bisexual. A bisexual, as defined in the dictionary, is a person who is “sexually responsive to both sexes,” male and female. Since they do not have a preference for either gender over the other, both heterosexuals and even homosexuals often target them. Heterosexuals often tend to group bisexuals with homosexuals because of the fact that they could choose to be with someone of the same sex. However, homosexuals such as gays and lesbians are often hesitant to include bisexuals because they could choose to be with someone of the opposite sex. This hesitation stems from the fact that homosexual, as defined in the dictionary, describes “a person who is sexually attracted to people of their own sex.” This definition does not include the possibility of having an attraction for both sexes. These ideas often create tension for bisexuals because they are attempting to balance both heterosexual ideas and homosexual ideas while not being accepted socially by either.

Resulting from some of the struggles bisexuals face listed above, I would like to do my research about bisexuality as a sexual orientation and how members of our society view bisexuals. In researching this topic, I intend to explore how bisexuality is perceived by other sexualities such as heterosexuals, lesbians, and gays. I would also like to investigate how bisexuals are described by those orientations compared to how they are in turn described. There are many different views about bisexuals, and usually these views are misguided by the fact that members of our society do not know where to place bisexuals when it comes to labeling them as homosexual or “other.” This confusion of where to place bisexuals has caused people to just ignore bisexuality as an identity in general. However, we are beginning to shed some light on bisexuality with the increasing tolerance and rights that are being given to gays and lesbians. Using studies performed by Leah R. Spalding, Letitia Anne Peplau, and Gregory M. Herek, to name a few, I will investigate the different ways in which heterosexuals and homosexuals describe bisexuals and the perception that they each have with respect to bisexuality as a sexual orientation. I will like to look at both negative views and positive views made about bisexuals. I will then proceed to compare these views with the views that heterosexuals have about homosexuals and how they are similar to or different from.
Annotated Bibliography


The chapter in this book illustrates some of the reasons for why lesbian feminists are against the idea of accepting bisexuality as a genuine sexual orientation. The chapter describes three examples that portray the effect of lesbian feminists invalidating bisexuality as a sexual orientation. These examples include personal relationships, lesbian/gay and bisexual politics, and academic life. These descriptions will assist me during my research by providing information about how lesbian feminists perceive bisexuals and the troubles that arise with these perspectives.


This journal proposes that bisexuals have the ability to contribute to feminist and lesbian theorizing and shows how the examination of bisexuality can draw out implications of work from lesbian ethics. It suggests that there are advantages in assuming bisexuality as a perspective. This journal will assist me in my research by giving me a positive perspective on bisexuality.


This book examines the different ways in which bisexuality is attacked by both heterosexual and homosexual ideals. It describes how and why heterosexuals and homosexuals are hesitant about the inclusion of bisexuals and how this creates internal barriers for bisexuals and interpersonal barriers between lesbians, gays, and bisexuals. I can use this book to examine the struggles bisexuals face in relation to how they are perceived.


This journal describes research performed in order to investigate how heterosexuals view bisexuals in comparison to other groups including lesbians and gays. It explains how there is a greater amount of hostility towards bisexuals than lesbians and gays because bisexuals are believed to be non-monogamous, regarded as vectors of HIV infection, and a source of anxiety because of how bisexuals challenge the heterosexual and homosexual dichotomy of sexuality.

This article lists five different perceptions that many heterosexuals and homosexuals have of bisexuals. These include monogamy, sexual riskiness, trust, sexual talent, and relationship quality and a description of what heterosexuals and homosexuals believe bisexuals beliefs are about each of them. These perceived descriptions mostly shed a negative light on bisexuality as a sexual orientation. This article will be useful for my research because I can talk about these negative perspectives. It will also help me explain why heterosexuals and homosexuals believe that bisexuals have these ideas.
Gender performance and sexual ambiguity in Young Thug’s lyrics and self-presentation

Hip-hop has long had a fraught relationship with issues of gender and sexuality: critics have repeatedly condemned the genre for (among other things) sexist and homophobic lyrics, a tendency dating back at least to the rise of “gangsta rap” in the 1990s. Of course, things were never that simple (how do we reconcile Tupac’s more inflammatory verses with the socially conscious “Brenda’s Got a Baby,” or the fact that Ice Cube’s virulently misogynist “You Can’t Fade Me (JD’s Gafflin’)” appears on the same album as “It’s a Man’s World,” where he and female rapper Yo-Yo go toe-to-toe?), but the fact remains that hip-hop has been historically hostile to many groups, particularly women and the gay community.

Enter Young Thug (real name Jeffrey Lamar Williams), an Atlanta-based rapper who seems to occupy (at once) all the liminal spaces in today’s hip-hop sphere. His oeuvre is unabashedly experimental, and—perhaps more than anything else—is characterized by a deep sense of ambiguity that permeates all aspects of Young Thug’s persona, from vocal timbre (Jon Caramanica, music critic for The New York Times, writes that Thug “raps, sings, whines, cries, croons, barks, slurps, shivers, [and] belts”\(^1\) to dress (his style is exuberantly flamboyant) to lyricism. Since coming to prominence after appearing on a number of successful singles in 2014, Young Thug has been scrutinized especially closely for aspects of his self-presentation that suggest either (as some have claimed) homosexuality or at least a kind of sexual multivalence or ambivalence that is perhaps unprecedented in mainstream hip-hop.

In my research, I plan to examine the ways Young Thug inhabits these boundary spaces by approaching his persona through a number of vectors: namely, his lyrics, dress, and photographic/descriptive self-presentation (via his much-commented-upon Instagram account, @thuggerthugger1). In particular, my analysis aims to place Young Thug in the continuum of hip-hop’s gender relations. Is his sexual ambiguity an honest and groundbreaking reflection of changing social mores, an acknowledgement of the profound (but latent) influence of gay culture on hip-hop culture? Is it a co-opting of certain forms of self-expression? Or is it a complex dissimulation—a subtle type of doublespeak (what Henry Louis Gates, Jr. calls “signifyin(g)”\(^2\)) that ultimately places Young Thug firmly back into the familiar, heteronormative realm of power dynamics that has characterized mainstream hip-hop for the past two decades?

Bibliography
[Note: items in blue are hyperlinks.]


\(^2\) To cite one historic example, The Notorious B.I.G., in “Dead Wrong,” describes acts of sodomy as a means of establishing dominance over a (male) rival.
One of Young Thug’s more outrageous music videos, “Best Friend” is notable for its enigmatic opening: it begins (as Pitchfork’s Evan Minsker writes) “with Young Thug walking in on Young Thug, who’s in the process of hooking up with Young Thug.”

Ludicrous? Yes, but also a potentially revealing jumping-off point for addressing questions of Young Thug’s self-identification and self-representation. (A possible point of comparison: Nicki Minaj’s “Feeling Myself,” a paean to self-love (in all senses of the word).)


A video interview in which Young Thug responds to rumors of homosexuality, based largely on his use of sexually suggestive language (“lover”) in referring to male friends in Instagram posts. True to form, he doesn’t reveal much (though it will be worth looking at his response in more detail). “It’s the way we talk, it’s the way we live,” he says, while dismissing allegations of homosexuality: “there’s nothing stupid or fruity going on.”


Recommended to me by a friend, I anticipate that this book will be a critical tool in analyzing Young Thug’s sexual ambiguity. I can’t yet speak much to the specifics of her argument (all copies of her book have been checked out at the library, though I’ve put in a loan request) but her ideas of “performing” gender seem eminently applicable here; as I’ve noted, Young Thug constantly “performs” varying or antithetical roles at once. But does his brand of “troubling gender” fit in with Butler’s theories?


Gadley’s dissertation is complex and technical; I plan only to draw on some of his broader conclusions vis-à-vis the larger trends he outlines in hip-hop lyrics, particularly those concerning the relationship between increasing materiality and a so-called “hybridization” of sexual identities.


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I’m particularly interested in bringing Gates’s idea of “signifyin(g),” a practice that might be loosely defined as “saying one thing and meaning another,” to bear on Young Thug’s lyrics and self-expression. There’s an established tradition of signifyin(g) in hip-hop (though Gates focuses on African-American writing), and identifying aspects of the practice in Young Thug’s oeuvre could be (very) revealing.

The lyrics-aggregating website Genius, started in 2009 (initially rap-specific, though it has since branched out), remains the most comprehensive and reliable source for hip-hop lyrics, particularly Young Thug’s, which often border on indecipherable. Though most lyrics have been annotated and analyzed by its community of users, I plan to use this resource only for lyrical content (coupled, if need be, with my own aural findings, should my listening uncover any discrepancies in the Genius versions). Some songs to be (potentially) explored:
   i. Low Pros, “Jack Tripper” (ft. PeeWee Longway & Young Thug).
   ii. Jamie xx, “I Know There’s Gonna Be (Good Times)” (ft. Popcaan & Young Thug).
   iv. Travi$ Scott, “Mamacita” (ft. Rich Homie Quan & Young Thug).

This interview, with Young Thug’s stylist, is surprisingly revealing, and indicates (among other things) the extent of Young Thug’s seeming disdain for traditionally gendered clothing—we learn, for example, that he routinely used to wear (before Zarur came along) women’s and kid’s clothing.

Randolph explores the “construction of Black masculinity in rap music” through the “playa rap” paradigm (a subgenre that, insofar as it focuses on “consumption, adornment, and sensual pleasure,” is more or less in line with Young Thug’s lyrical content). In this essay, Randolph looks at whether or not an ostensible espousal of “hegemonic goals” (i.e., controlling women and achieving financial success) is truly borne out in hip-hop lyrics and narratives—surely a valuable resource in examining the nature of Young Thug’s own relationships with materiality and femininity.

9. Williams, Jeffrey [Young Thug]. @thuggerthugger1 [Instagram account]. Web.
Young Thug’s Instagram account is a perpetual locus of attention over his seeming gender and sexual fluidity. His photos and captions routinely
capture examples of flamboyant dress and ambiguous phrasing (ex., referring to male friends as “baes” or “lovers”) that many point to as evidence of latent (or not-so-latent) homosexuality.


Wood’s dissertation, a look at the role of vocality in rap music, is a potentially critical resource in understanding Young Thug’s music—his bizarre, unhinged and (in some ways) sexually neutral voice is, I think, as emblematic of Young Thug’s core ambiguity as his lyrics or dress.
Research Proposal

“Use Your Words,” Fighting Gender Inequality in Tanzania Through Education

In this research paper I will begin by examining the gender structure that exists in Tanzania. To further my understanding on the way in which girls and women live in Tanzania I will use an article Gender Inequality 'A Big Challenge,' which highlights the fact that Tanzania has the most gender inequality among the East African community states. I will also tie in a few of the many other problems women are facing, which are making it harder for them to succeed. One of these problems is HIV and I will draw information from Neema Jangu’s study on HIV in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. After this I will begin to address the question I have formulated- What is the best way to empower women in Tanzania and is aid from a foreign country or organization beneficial to the change? While I am not necessarily set on the fact that education is the answer, I do think it is one of the most important things so I will begin by researching the Tanzanian education system and how women have responded to education in the past. In order to look at educating women I will use Gender Equality Initiative Needs Sustainable Firm Applications, which touches on the idea of educating women. I plan to take quotes and facts from I Am Malala to add more support and a real-life perspective on females struggling to attend school. Elliot Ross’s Write for a Change will be helpful in examining the real evidence of creating schools in Tanzania that focus on empowering women. Lastly, I will examine international aid in the past and if that is what the future for women in Tanzania needs. This information will be drawn from Godfrey Osmond’s thesis Foreign Aid and Economic Development of Tanzania. To combat gender inequality one can not simply look at the world as a whole, for every continent, every region, and every country finds itself struggling with its unique obstacles. The government, the education system, the role of international countries within the country, and the county’s society itself must be examined. However, there is also no one answer to solving the injustice because no one thing will address every issue that is brought forth. Therefore, I hope to find where exactly the females in Tanzania struggle to maintain or even gain their power and how the country and the world should go about helping.


While the story takes place in Pakistan, Malala retells her story of what it was like growing up in country where women’s rights were near nonexistent and where her father was the only one supporting her education. She details the story that girls around the world are experience and her voice and honesty serve as a moving primary source. The autobiography also contains many facts detailing the number of women without jobs, the literacy rates of countries, and the global failure in providing girls with a means of education, which would support the idea that for women to make an impact they must be educated.

Even though I was unable to read the entire study, the author made herself clear that women were vulnerable due to a lack of education and gender inequality. Her study was based on examining HIV in Africa and Tanzania in particular and she highlighted that women accounted for 50% of those with HIV and it was because they were so vulnerable in a heterosexual world. I am hoping to use her idea of vulnerability and research on a lack of education adding to their vulnerability and in turn making them more at risk of receiving HIV. A girl or woman with HIV is just another girl or woman prevented from being educated and prevented from moving forwards in their life. The source was found on ProQuest and it was a case study published in Jangu’s Dissertation Abstracts International in 2015.


This article discusses the idea of educating men and having them work with women to help prevent gender inequality. It is a good source to examine how international groups have made attempts at helping Tanzania. The idea of educating men to help women is also one that is very important, because men and women were meant to live in society together and for women to fully have full liberty men will have to come to their senses as well. This was an article published in November, 2014 in an African periodical.


This thesis is about foreign aid and and how it has affected Tanzania. A major concern in foreign aid for helping women receive education is that the aid is used the wrong way or that women never ever benefit from the financial aid. The thesis shares that Tanzania has been one of the top countries that receive foreign aid and that while their GDP is increasing, their entire economy is reliant on the income from foreign aid. This is something that should be noted in the importance of education- men and women should be able to hold their economy together and their success should not be celebrated if it is due to the gifts of others. Most important, it mentions how crucial it is that all foreign aid is given with a purpose and that it is watched closely to prevent it from being misused. Osmund’s thesis was written at Morgan State University and while written in 2004, his research and insight on Tanzania will be relevant and critical.

The article talks about a school in Tanzania called Tuseme, which means “speak-out” and its goals are to enable female empowerment and gender awareness. It discusses the school systems in Tanzania and how they hope to have an equal ratio of boys to girls, but as the children get older the number of girls drop because families keep them out of school due to gender prejudices. In response to the prejudices, the school has also begun to educate parents in the fact that they exist. It states that the top four issues keeping girls from school are childhood pregnancy, gender discrimination in the classroom, lack of girls’ counseling, and overloading girls with chores. These are the exact issues that a foreign country must realize and understand before determining their plan of action. While only a article written in The Guardian, it informs the public on the success Tuseme has had when educating its children and provides a possible reason for why supporting education is going to be the one of the next steps to fighting gender inequality.


While only a very brief article on gender inequality it contains they key fact that in a study conducted in 2011, Tanzania experienced the most gender inequality among the East African Community member states. This is crucial to arguing that women’s rights is an essential thing to fight for and that Tanzania must be assisted, but the assistance must be well thought through and controlled. The article was written in 2011 and published on AllAfrica.com. While it is not a thesis or a case study, it includes the results of the 2011 global Human Development Report (HDR) on gender index, which serve a very big purpose in showing the gender inequality in Tanzania.