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PREFERENCE

Adult Temperament: Lesbian Identity and Partner Preference

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to determine if temperament had an effect on how lesbians identified themselves and if temperament had an effect on lesbian partner preferences. Another goal of the study was to determine if ethnicity had an effect on lesbian identity as well. The study tested the hypothesis that temperament may have an effect on lesbian identity and partner preferences. The second hypothesis tested was that ethnicity does have an effect on lesbian identity. There were 44 lesbian participants who participated in completing a survey regarding their identity and partner preferences as well as completing the EAS Temperament survey. Results indicated that temperament had no effect on lesbian identity nor partner preference. However, results did indicate there was significance in the term lesbian's identified as and partner preference. Results also indicated that there was significance in ethnicity and the term lesbian's identified themselves as. The lesbian terms are: stud, butch, femme, soft stud, stem, and dike. Limitations include sample size and not assessing SES of the sample size. Overall, although results did not indicate that temperament had an effect, there was still significance that relates lesbian identity and ethnicity and lesbian identity and partner preferences.

The Effect of Temperament: Lesbian Labels and Partner Preference

Stereotypes dictate that lesbian women are considered to be somewhat masculine but, contrary to stereotypes there are some lesbians who are feminine. Lesbians have many different terms they consider themselves and for the most part it has a lot to do with how masculine or how feminine the individual is. For example, a very masculine lesbian woman may identify herself as a butch or a stud, and a very feminine lesbian woman may identify herself as a femme. Is this choice preprogrammed within lesbians at birth, similar to temperament? According to Rothbart, Ahadi, and Evans (2000), temperament is defined as an individual's characteristic mode of responding to environment and is the foundation and building blocks to personality development. The goal of this paper is to better understand if temperament has any relationship how a lesbian identifies herself as and to see temperament has any relationship with the identity of a lesbian's partner preference. Another goal of this paper is to see if ethnicity has any association to the lesbian term that they use to identify themselves with.

Previous research conducted in 1997 by Bailey, Ki, Hills, and Linsenmeier in an attempt to find what the partner preferences were in gay man and lesbian woman. To find the answer, the researchers looked at many online ads or newspaper ads to see who posted the ad and how they described themselves, as well as what they were looking for in a partner. The results showed that those lesbians who described themselves as masculine tended to prefer masculine, rather than feminine partners. They also found that gay men who described themselves as masculine tended to prefer masculine as well. Therefore, it appears based on this study that the people who posted these ads were looking for someone who was basically just like themselves. A disadvantage to this study is the fact that it was conducted in 1997. Today, nearly 16 years later, a lot has changed as far as the LGBT community is concerned and now there is a lot more

acceptance and a lot more equality and a lot more people out of the closet. It would be interesting to see this study duplicated today since there has been an increase in technology and the internet is a major place where people, gay or straight, go to seek partners and seek casual sex. Another disadvantage of this study is that it did not reveal the ethnic backgrounds of the participants, which could be helpful with understanding partner preferences.

In another study by Basset, Pearcey, & Dabbs (2001), the purpose of the study was to understand lesbian partner preferences, similar to the previous study and examine the differences between partner preferences among lesbians who identified themselves as butch or femme. To collect the data the researchers went to Atlanta, Georgia during Gay Pride and handed out questionnaires for the voluntary questions to fill out. After analyzing the data, the results showed that all participants preferred feminine partners over masculine partners. In other words, regardless of if the lesbian was a butch or femme, the majority preferred feminine, femme partners. By looking at just these two studies that were mentioned thus far, there is an obvious difference of partner preferences from one study to another. The previous study showed that the majority preferred masculine partners while this study conducted only 4 years later showed the opposite where the majority preferred feminine partners. Each study failed to leave out the ethnic background of those participants which may be a reason as to why the results are so different. An advantage of this study was that it was at a gay pride event, which is an amazing location to get participants for a study such as this one. When collecting data it's important and makes the process easier if the participants can be found in one particular location.

The purpose of another previous study by Legenbauer, Vocks, Schafer, Schutt-Stromel, Hiller, Wagner, and Vogele (2009) was to assess whether characteristics of one's own body image influences preferences of attractiveness in a partner. This study included heterosexuals as

well as lesbians and gays. The study was conducted using an internet study pertaining to questions about weight, body image, and attractiveness. The results showed that lesbian woman did not have any high expectations regarding preferences attaining to body image, weight or attractiveness for their partner as compared to men or gay men. Heterosexual woman and lesbian woman both had the same results. This study has an advantage for the current study being researched because this shows that physicality is not highly considered while selecting a partner for lesbians. This may reveal that lesbians seek more of an emotional quality than physical attributes. A disadvantage to this study was that ethnicity was not an important role in conducting the study.

Previous research on temperament by Rothbart, Ahadi, and Evans (2000) shows that temperament traits follow children into adulthood and can possibly be a good indication of what an individual's personality will be in adulthood. Temperament is commonly determined as infant or child and is based of characteristics which will determine how difficult or how easy a parent/caregiver will have raising you (Evans, 2000). A 7 year longitudinal study by Rothbart, Ahadi, and Evans (2000) showed that the participants who they had been assessed in a laboratory when they were between 3 to 6 months old, showed the same temperament characteristics, such as fear, at age 7 years old. This is an advantage for the current study being done because if there is a relationship between temperament and lesbian identity and partner preference we will know that it was something they were born with since temperament is innate.

To determine what an adult's temperament is an EAS (Emotionality, Activity, and Sociability) Temperament scale is used. Prior research by Aerde, Roysamb, & Tambs in 2004 was done to assess the EAS temperament scale to see if it is a valid tool to use to assess temperament. To do this, the researchers found participants in the country of Norway, who

participated in the study and took the assessment test continuously over a period of 3 years. This is similar to the test-retest method. The researchers then did statistical analyses of the data to see how accurate the results were each time the assessment was completed. The results found that EAS Temperament survey was reasonable, however the researchers suggested it should be changed because some of the items on the assessment are very similar and due to cultural difference the meaning of a certain word could be used differently from one participant to another. This study was an advantage because it helped with the reliability and validity of the actual assessment so the EAS Temperament assessment could be used in the current study.

The current study being conducted will test the hypothesis that temperament may have an effect on the lesbian term that an individual may identify with. Another second hypothesis being tested will determine if temperament has an effect on type of lesbian partner preference. The third hypothesis being tested will see if ethnicity has any relevance to lesbian identity or partner preference. Currently, there is not much research that suggests what causes a lesbian to be identified as butch, stud, femme, etc. This study will build on the past studies that are already printed because currently there is no about why individuals label themselves as butch, femme, etc and what type of lesbian they look for in a partner and there are no studies which ties in ethnicity.

Method

Participants

Participants included 44 lesbian adult women who ranged between the ages of 18 and 59 years old. The mean age was 32. There were seven Caucasian American women, twenty-four African American women, seven Hispanic American women, two Asian American women, and

four ethnicity who were mixed race who participated. The participants were selected from the Metropolitan State University of Denver campus as well as at LGBT entertainment events at club Eden and club Tracks. The researcher also handed out the survey to family members and friends who were lesbian or knew people who were lesbians. There was a \$25 gift VISA card compensation for one participant who was randomly selected as an incentive to people to take the survey.

Materials

All forty-four participants completed a survey regarding the study. The survey included ten questions in which the participants were asked to circle the best answer from the multiple choice questions, and fill in the blanks to open ended questions. For example, some of the questions included: Which term closest fits who you are? When seeking a partner, which term or type of lesbian do you seek? The lesbian terms were: Stud, Femme, Butch, Stem, Soft Sud, Stem and Dike. The second part of the survey was the EAS Temperament Scale, which had a total of 20 statements which they were asked to rate from a scale of one to five. If they were to rate the statement with a one, that meant the statement was not at all characteristic of them, and if they rated the question a five, it meant very characteristic of them. The following is a few examples of the statements the participants were asked to rate: I like to be with people; my life is fast-paced; it takes a lot to make me mad. See the appendix for a copy of the survey.

Design

The design was a descriptive survey study design. The independent variable was the temperament and the dependent variable was the lesbian identity term and partner preference. The study is a descriptive study because there was a lot of descriptive words used to describe the

terms and since there was open-ended questions, the participants had a chance to be descriptive and define the terms in their own words.

Procedure

The researcher arrived on campus during the weekdays and arrived to LGBT entertainment events on the weekends and handed out the survey to participants. The researcher briefly explained what the study was about and those who were interested were given the survey and asked to fill it out to the best of their ability. There was a box where participants could place their survey once completed so they would remain anonymous. The researchers also advised the participants of dates and times in which that the researcher would return so they could come back at their convenience and return the survey anonymously. There was also a sheet next to the drop off box where participants could leave their email address if they wanted to be entered for a chance win the compensation prize of a \$25 VISA gift card if they wanted information about the results of the study. Once the participants returned the survey, they could take a debriefing form next to the drop-off box. The procedure took approximately five or ten minutes to complete the survey.

Results

To examine whether temperament has any relationship to the term a lesbian identifies as, a Chi-Square was computed. Results indicate that temperament had no relation with the type of lesbian partner preference, $X^2(44) = 6.11, p = .800$

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To examine whether ethnicity has any relationship to the term lesbians identify themselves as, a Chi-Square was computed. Results indicate that ethnicity and the term lesbians identify themselves has a significance difference, $\chi^2(44) = 35.47, p = .018$.

To examine whether the term that the lesbian identifies with and the type of lesbian partner they prefer has any relationship, a Chi-Square was computed. Results indicate that the term the participant was and the partner they preferred has a significance difference, $\chi^2(44) = 35.79, p = .002$.

Discussion

The main goal of the study was to determine if temperament had an effect on the term a lesbian identified as and to see if there was any effect on the type of partner they preferred. The results and data were collected and analyzed from the survey that was given to lesbian women at GLTB weekend entertainment events. A Chi-Square test was used to obtain the results. The results showed that temperament did not have any effect on the type of lesbian they identified as nor did it have an effect on the type of partner they preferred. However, there were two results that did have significance. The first result showed there was significance in the ethnicity of the participants and the term they selected to be identified as. For example, the majority of African American lesbians identified themselves as a stud, femme, or soft stud. According to the survey, the participant's definition of the term stud meant dominant, leader, masculine, head of household, compassionate, aggressive and prefers male clothing over female clothing. The African American participants who identified with the word femme defined the term as, girly, traditional feminine style, independent and more emotional. The participants who identified themselves as soft stud defined that as mostly dominant like a stud but have a hint of femme

within them. For example a soft stud may wear a dress to a graduation ceremony or dress up for church. The participant who identified herself as a stem described herself as in the middle between masculinity and femininity. They described themselves as a tomboy, with girly tendencies. The Caucasian/White lesbians identified themselves as Butch, Dike, and Femme. The participants who identified themselves as butch described themselves as, man-like, masculine, shorter type hair, strong, tough, and dominant in relationship. The Caucasian participants who identified themselves as femme described themselves as, dainty, feminine, lipstick lesbian, sensitive, and emotional, strong willed. The participants who identified themselves as dike defined it as, similar to butch, or just another word for being gay or lesbian but primarily masculine. The Hispanic participants identified themselves as stud, femme, soft stud and dike. The definitions were similar as above. The Asian/Pacific Islander participants identified themselves as femme, and the mixed raced lesbians identified themselves as stud, femme, and soft stud. The second result that demonstrated that there was significance was with the lesbian term they identified as and the type of partner preference. For example, the majority of those lesbians who identified as stud preferred a femme partner. The majority of femme lesbian's preferred both stud, butch or femme partners. Butch, soft stud, and dike lesbians preferred femme. The stem lesbian preferred a soft stud. There were a few butch or stud lesbians who actually preferred a stud or butch partner. A majority of the participants who considered themselves a stud or butch indicated themselves as masculine or very masculine on the survey, and a majority of those who considered themselves femme indicated themselves as femme or very feminine. All ethnicities that were feminine used the term femme to identify themselves regardless of which race they were. Since the results did generate a true difference and it was not due to chance it's safe to conclude that the majority of masculine lesbians prefer

feminine partners, however, feminine partners prefer either masculine or feminine partners. Also since ethnicity had a significant different it's evident that cultural differences play a part in lesbian identity.

This leads to a study conducted by Barrow and Kuvalanka (2011) where cultural differences such as the Jewish religion and lesbian identity were examined. The purpose of the study was to become culturally diverse in the Jewish culture and to explore how lesbians navigate their life and relationships within Judaism. The process to gain the results was through an interview process where ten lesbians participated. They were asked detailed questions regarding their religion and lesbianism and how it affects their relationship and day to day life. The results indicated that each of the women has experienced discrimination but that discrimination helped them accept their sexual identity and stand up for it. The advantages of this study is that it helps one understand that regardless of the term a lesbian may choose to identify themselves, they may still have to deal with discrimination and have to at one time or another come to terms with who they are and accept it.

As stated previously, there was no significance with temperament on the type of lesbian the participant was or what type of lesbian they preferred. The EAS Temperament Survey was used to help determine the temperament of the participants. I confined the types of temperaments into three main ones which included: easy, slow-to-warm up, and difficult. I defined easy temperament was defined as easygoing, positive mood, open to new experiences and predictable personality. Slow to warm up temperament was defined as inactive, moody, slow to adapt, and having mild reactions type personality. Lastly, difficult temperament was defined as having an active, irritable with intense reactions type personality. The majority of the participants had slow to warm up or easy temperaments but there were no relation or significance

as to which type of lesbian had a certain temperament. “Temperament is a domain particularly well suited for life span analysis because it is based on constitutional aspects the individual and can be used to describe individuality in the young infant as well as the older child and adult (Derryberry, D., & Hershey, K. , 2000).” This statement is true based of the longitudinal study by Derryberry & Hershey (2000), where the purpose of the study was to see the changes of temperament across a life span based on parents self-report of their infant’s characteristics of temperament. The results of the study showed that there was stability as well as instability with the child’s temperament from infancy into middle childhood. However, for the most part temperament remained relatively the same for the child. Since the results of the current study did not show any significance of temperament to lesbian identity and partner preference, perhaps in the future study one may be able to research another aspect of personality that remains the same across a lifespan and see if it has an effect on lesbian identity or partner preference.

There were a few limitations from the research conducted that could have negatively impacted results. One limitation was with the amount of the participants that were involved. Although, 44 participants participated in the study, more participants could have been helpful with perhaps finding a true difference between the type of lesbians they are and help determine if temperament truly did have any effect on that or on partner preference. Another limitation of the study was with the collection of the data. The participants were sought out at GLBT entertainment weekend events. Perhaps seeking out participants in other different environments, such as in different cultural areas could have made a difference in the results as far as in partner preference or with lesbian identity. Another limitation was with the way their temperament was determined. Within the survey, the participants were asked to complete a temperament scale by answering several questions. The researcher then had to tabulate the participants score and

compare it a temperament chart. Based on the participants score, the researcher selected which temperament group the participant would best fit under. The tabulating of the individual temperament scores could lead to possible calculation errors. Also comparing the participants scores to the temperament chart could be seen as subjective in that the researcher had to determine their temperament based on which was the closest fit. Lastly, another limitation was that socioeconomic status (SES) was not a factor used in the study. There could have been some significant data used if perhaps learning what SES the participant was in and if that impacted the type of partner preference or impacted the type of lesbian they are.

Future research could include conducting interviews instead of having participants fill out a survey because it may be more insightful for the research and more fulfilling answers may help discovered about how lesbians identify themselves and how they select their partners. Perhaps by conducting interviews there could be a key indicator similar to temperament that may be a key component to the research. Also future research could include SES or the type of financial status the participant is in and see if that affects the type of lesbian they identified as. For example, it would be interesting to see if femme lesbians were in a higher SES than butch or stud lesbians due to appearance. If a workplace may pay a femme lesbian a higher salary since they appear to be heterosexual versus a stud/butch lesbian who may appear to be openly gay and may be placed in a lower paying position. It would be interesting to see if that is the case, and if it is if those participants are willing to change themselves while at work just to get in a higher paying position. Another idea for future research would be if lesbian partners prefer to adopt versus to have a child biologically out of one of their bodies. It would be interesting to see which types of lesbians couples i.e., stud and femme couples, or femme and femme couples etc. preferred which option and why.

Although the results from this research did support the notion that if temperament had effects of partner preference and with what type of lesbian one is, the research did find there is a relationship between partner preferences and the type of lesbian they are. Results indicated that a majority of the stud, butch, and dike lesbians preferred feminine partners and that a majority of the femme lesbians preferred more masculine lesbians such as stud, butch or dike lesbians. Some people outside of the GLTB (Gay, Lesbian, Transgendered, Bi-sexual) population may see these labels or terms as just a way to negatively stereotype lesbians, but from the results and responses to the questions from the survey, these labels truly define who they are and how they identify themselves and show some indication as what type of partner they want. Overall, there are a lot of benefits to conducting research about the GLTB and lesbians in general, because this community is largely discriminated against and if more research and understanding is put out into the world then it may help decrease discrimination and help promote equality for all.

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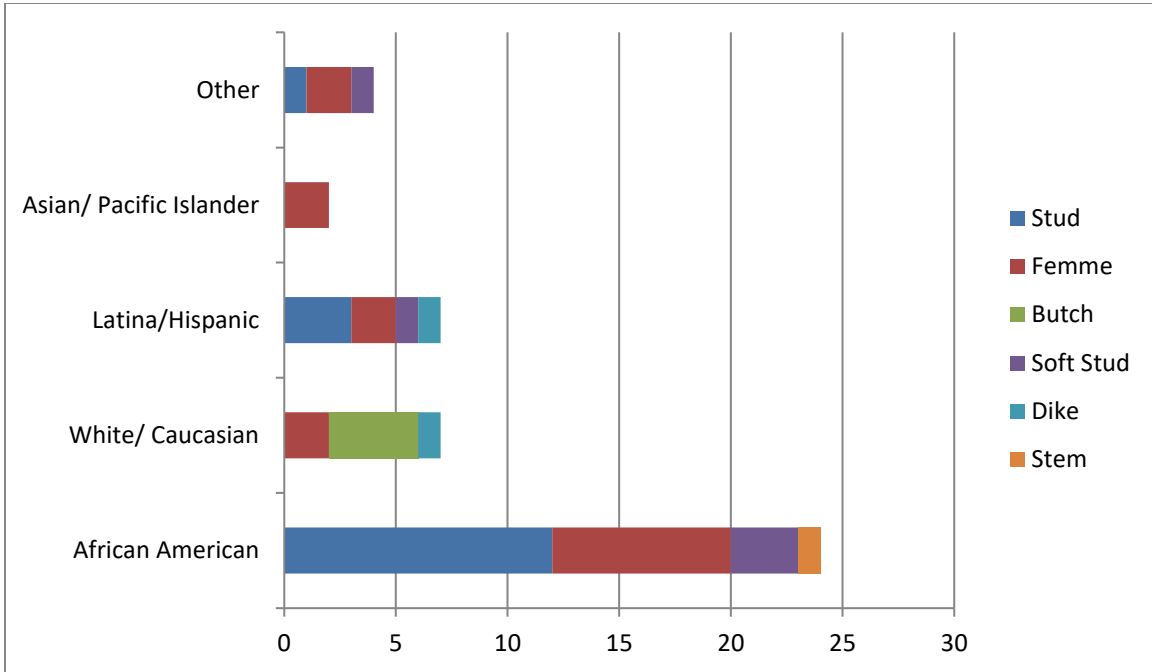
Table 1

PARTNER PREFERNCE

T E M P E R A M E N T		Stud	Femme	Butch	Soft Stud	Total
	Stud	0	15	0	1	16
	Femme	8	5	1	2	16
	Butch	0	3	1	0	4
	Soft Stud	0	5	0	0	5
	Dike	0	2	0	0	2
	Stem	0	0	0	1	1
	TOTAL	8	30	2	4	44

Figure Captions

Ethnicity & Lesbian Identity



Feminine-----Masculine

1 2 3 4 5

8. When seeking a partner, which term or type of lesbian do you seek?

- a. Stud
- b. Femme
- c. Butch
- d. Stem
- e. Soft Stud
- f. Dike
- g. Other, please explain _____

9. Define in your own words your meaning of the answer you selected above in number 8.

10. From what you remember or from what you were told about your infancy/childhood, what was your temperament? Please circle.

- a. Easygoing, positive mood, open to new experiences, predictable (Easy)
- b. Inactive, moody, slow to adapt, mild reactions (Difficult)
- c. Active, irritable, irregular habits, intense reactions (Slow to Warm Up)
- d. A combination of the above, or other _____

11. Please rate each of the items using the following scale.

- 1 = Not at all characteristic of me**
2 = Somewhat uncharacteristic of me
3 = Neither characteristic nor uncharacteristic of me
4 = Somewhat characteristic of me
5 = Very characteristic of me

- _____ 1. I like to be with people.
- _____ 2. I usually seem to be in a hurry.
- _____ 3. I am easily frightened.
- _____ 4. I frequently get distressed.
- _____ 5. When displeased, I let people know it right away.
- _____ 6. I am something of a loner.
- _____ 7. I like to keep busy all the time.
- _____ 8. I am known as hot-blooded and quick-tempered.
- _____ 9. I often feel frustrated.
- _____ 10. My life is fast-paced.
- _____ 11. Everyday events make me troubled and fretful.
- _____ 12. I often feel insecure.
- _____ 13. There are many things that annoy me.
- _____ 14. When I get scared, I panic.

- _____ 15. I prefer working with others rather than alone.
- _____ 16. I get emotionally upset easily.
- _____ 17. I often feel as if I'm bursting with energy.
- _____ 18. It takes a lot to make me mad.
- _____ 19. I have fewer fears than most people my age.
- _____ 20. I find people more stimulating than anything else.