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Published in:
Personal Relationships

DOI:
10.1111/pere.12247

Publication date:
2018

Received: 22 May 2017 | Revised: 5 January 2018 | Accepted: 15 January 2018

DOI: 10.1111/pere.12247

WILEY Personal RELATIONSHIPS

ARTICLE

Mate preferences in Argentinean transgender people: An evolutionary perspective

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Transgender people provide a unique opportunity to examine the effect of biological sex versus gender identity on mating preferences. This study aimed at identifying the mate characteristics that are most and least valued by transgender people and at examining to what extent their biological sex or their gender identity determined their mate preferences. A convenience sample of 134 male-to-female (MTF) and 94 female-to-male (FTM) individuals from Argentina rated Buss's list of 18 mate attributes. Compared to FTM, MTF individuals placed significantly more emphasis on attractiveness and socioeconomic status, whereas FTM, more than MTF individuals, valued partners with a dependable character. Although biological sex differences were present in both groups, providing support to the evolutionary theory, MTF individuals valued the same characteristics as both biological male and female individuals do.

KEYWORDS

Argentina, evolutionary psychology, gender identity sex differences, mate preferences, transgender

1 | INTRODUCTION

In recent years, an increasing number of transgender people have been willing to identify themselves openly as such. *Transgender* is an umbrella term used to describe people whose gender identity—the sense of themselves as male or female—or whose gender expression differs from that usually associated with their sex at birth, regardless of which, if any, medical interventions they have undergone or may desire to undergo in the future (American Psychological Association [APA], 2009). Research among transgender people has mainly been conducted in the field of public health, particularly on HIV (e.g., De Santis, 2009; Socías et al., 2014). From a psychological perspective, studies have centered on psychiatric assessments before and after medical interventions for sex reassignment

(e.g., World Professional Association of Transgender Health, 2011) and on topics such as stigma and discrimination (e.g., Bockting, Miner, Swinburne-Romine, Hamilton, & Coleman, 2013; Mizock & Mueser, 2014). Consequently, very little is known about this minority group on topics such as personal relationships and intimacy (APA, 2009; Operario, Buron, Underhill, & Sevelius, 2008).

Given that the gender identity of transgender persons is different from their biological sex (APA, 2009), and that most transgender people have partners of the opposite gender identity but same biological sex (Arístegui & Zalazar, 2014; Operario et al., 2008), this population provides a unique opportunity to examine aspects of mating, such as the effect of biological sex versus the effect of gender identity on mating preferences, and to understand whether mate preferences vary as a function of one's sex or the preferred partner's sex. Therefore, this research studied transgender people's mate preferences and examined to what extent one's biological sex or one's gender identity determines one's mate preferences.

1.1 | Evolutionary psychology and mate preferences

Although Darwin (1871) suggested, in his theory of sexual selection, the issue of discriminative choice of mating partners, this issue has only been widely explored in the past decades. According to most evolutionary psychologists, reproductive success in the evolutionary past may be the force behind many sex differences in mate selection strategies (Buss, 1989; Symons, 1979). These evolved mate choice strategies are assumed to result from individuals choosing mates who might contribute to their reproductive success by bearing and rearing viable offspring, as apparent from these mates' potential level of parental investment (Trivers, 1972) and reproductive potential (Geary, Vigil, & Byrd-Craven, 2004). As a result, men and women tend to use different sexual strategies and to value different characteristics in potential mates (Buss & Schmitt, 1993).

As female fertility peaks in their mid-20s and sharply declines in their 30s, and women need to invest more time and effort to produce viable offspring, such as their own bodily nutrients, men would prefer young and physically attractive partners as these characteristics would indicate fertility and the opportunity to maximize one´s reproductive potential (Buss, 2005; Geary et al., 2004; Symons, 1979; Trivers, 1972). In contrast, as a male's fertility declines at a slower rate across the life span, there is less pressure for women to select partners with youthful features, and women would be more likely to prefer men with the ability to provide indirect resources for the survival of their offspring, such as food and protection, favoring features related to social status and ambition.

In the past decades, cross-cultural studies have indeed provided evidence for the universality of such sex differences (Buss, 1989; Buss et al., 1990; Hatfield & Sprecher, 1995; Shackelford, Schmitt, & Buss, 2005; Ubillos et al., 2001). Although the assessments of ideal mate characteristics have shown that men and women rate, in a similar order, preferences such as mutual love and personality dispositions like a dependable character and a pleasing disposition, these studies have also consistently revealed two key sex differences: Men, more than women, value physical attractiveness, youth, and health for potential partners. On the other hand, women prefer, more than men, attributes related to a partner's resources—for example, financial prospects, ambition, industriousness, social status, and power—and to a mate's character traits—such as emotional stability, maturity, education, and intelligence. The relative importance of attractiveness for men and status for women has been shown to apply to various populations and replicated in many countries and cultures, including Argentina (Casullo, 2004), Brazil (Souza, Conroy-Beam, & Buss, 2016), China (Chang, Wang, Shackelford, & Buss, 2011), Jordan (Khallad, 2005), Netherlands (Buunk, Dijkstra, Fetchenhauer, & Kenrick, 2002; Ha, van den Berg, Engels, & Lichtwarck-Aschoff, 2012), Portugal (Neto, Pinto, &

Furnham, 2012), Serbia (Todosijević, Ljubinković, & Arančić, 2003), Spain (Ubillos et al., 2001), and Russia (Hatfield & Sprecher, 1995).

Although male and female differences in mating psychology have been traditionally explained from an evolutionary perspective as the result of physical specialization of the sexes (Buss et al., 1990; Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Geary et al., 2004), sociocultural theorists argue that many of these sex differences and variations in the importance placed on some partner preferences are the result of the economic and social structural aspects of societies, as well as the sex role socialization process (for a review, see Buss & Barnes, 1986; Eagly & Wood, 1999; Wood & Eagly, 2002). For instance, in countries with high socioeconomic development, individuals tend to place more importance on features such as attractiveness, trust, and sociability, whereas in countries with low socioeconomic development people tend to value attributes such as social status and good health more (Ubillos et al., 2001). Moreover, the value that women place on men's capability for emotional intimacy and kindness have been considered by some authors as luxuries rather than necessities as these preferences are more frequent in affluent Western cultures than in poorer and traditional cultures (Li, Bailey, Kenrick, & Linsenmeier, 2002).

Despite the sex differences in mate preferences, researchers have consistently found that when it comes to long-term relationships, men and women generally agree on which characteristics are the most important in desirable partners: love, trust, emotional maturity, and sociability (Buss, 1989; Buss et al., 1990; Khallad, 2005; Shackelford et al., 2005; Todosijević et al., 2003; Ubillos et al., 2001). Perhaps these characteristics are highly valued as they serve as cues for future investment in committed relationships. In addition, the studies cited here also showed that attributes such as chastity and similar religious and politic opinions are the least sought in a potential mate, likely because these traits do not feature a potential mate's reproductive or relationship investment capabilities.

1.2 | Gays and lesbians

Given that gay and lesbian people seek partners of their same sex, the study of sex differences in gay and lesbian intimate relationships has rapidly grown, exploring, for example, if they exhibit different mate preferences than their heterosexual counterparts (Bailey, Gaulin, Agyei, & Gladue, 1994; Bailey, Kim, Hills, & Linsenmeier, 1997; Gonzales & Meyers, 1993; Lawson, James, Jannson, Koyama, & Hill, 2014; Lippa, 2007; Russock, 2011; VanderLaan & Vasey, 2008). Regarding the attributes valued in ideal partners, gay and lesbian individuals appear to be quite similar to their heterosexual counterparts as they also value, as the most important characteristics in a potential mate, attributes such as intelligence, humor, honesty, kindness, good looks, and dependability (Ha et al., 2012; Li et al., 2002; Lippa, 2007).

Considering that gay men are feminized and lesbian women masculinized in some regards (Bailey et al., 1994; Bailey et al., 1997), researchers have questioned whether gay and lesbian strategies of mating psychology are intrinsically sex typical or opposite-sex typical in terms of partner preferences (Lawson et al., 2014). In line with Symons's (1979) conclusion that gay and lesbian people do not necessarily differ from heterosexual individuals in any way other than their sexual orientation, there is considerable evidence that gay men and lesbian women resemble their same-sex heterosexual counterparts in the emphasis placed on partner physical attractiveness relative to partner personality (Bailey et al., 1994; Gonzales & Meyers, 1993; Lawson et al., 2014). Like heterosexual men, gay men rank looks and facial attractiveness as more important overall (Ha et al., 2012; Lippa, 2007; Russock, 2011). In contrast, like heterosexual women, lesbian women tend to place more emphasis on character traits, emphasizing partners' personality traits and taking a person- and relationship-centered approach to mate choice, such as expressive traits (Gonzales & Meyers, 1993) and dependability

(Lippa, 2007). In addition, research has found that gay men often show male-typical mating behavior, including a focus on partners' youth (Kenrick, Keefe, Bryan, Barr, & Brown, 1995), a visually orientated style of sexual selection (Bailey et al., 1994), an interest in casual sex (Bailey et al., 1994; Gonzales & Meyers, 1993), and specific mate retention tactics, such as derogation of competitors and threats to punish infidelity (VanderLaan & Vasey, 2008). Lesbian women, on the other hand, also display female-typical sexual behavior such as less interest in casual sex (Bailey et al., 1994) and more interest in commitment (Russock, 2011).

Although sex has a considerably greater impact on mating psychology than sexual orientation, gay men and lesbian women differ from same-sex heterosexuals in the importance assigned to specific traits (Lawson et al., 2014; Lippa, 2007). For instance, in studies that analyzed gay and lesbian personal advertisements, it was observed that gay men tend to emphasize physical characteristics like body attractiveness and youth, as well as sexuality, more than heterosexual men do (Bailey et al., 1994; Gonzales & Meyers, 1993; Kenrick et al., 1995; Russock, 2011), whereas in those advertisements, lesbian women tend to offer physical attractiveness and seek resources and status in a mate less than heterosexual women do (Gonzales & Meyers, 1993; Ha et al., 2012; Russock, 2011; VanderLaan & Vasey, 2008). Moreover, some sex-atypical behavior has been observed in lesbian women. For example, in personal advertisements, to attract potential partners, lesbians offer commitment and instrumental traits and display resources more often than heterosexual women do (Gonzales & Meyers, 1993; Russock, 2011; VanderLaan & Vasey, 2008). This type of findings suggests that some *gay and lesbian* strategies of mating might be more a function of the sex of one's partner (sex of the targeted partner) rather than of one's own sex (sex of the chooser).

1.3 | Purpose of this study

Besides all the outlined differences based on the interaction of sex and sexual orientation, evidence strongly suggests that, independent of sexual orientation, evolutionary mechanisms underlying adaptive mate choices tend to operate similarly for all humans. However, very little is known about transgender experiences in intimate relationships, and no study has been conducted from an evolutionary perspective particularly in this population. Therefore, as previously stated, the aims of this study were to identify the mate characteristics that are most and least valued by transgender people and to examine to what extent their biological sex or their gender identity determines their mate preferences.

2 | METHOD

2.1 | Participants

The convenience sample consisted of 228 transgender people who—based on the Kinsey scale (Chivers & Bailey, 2000)—considered themselves heterosexuals based on their gender identity. There were 134 (58.8% of the sample) male-to-female (MTF) individuals who mated with men (e.g., a male-born participant with male partners) and 94 (41.2% of the sample) female-to-male (FTM) individuals who mated with women (e.g., a female-born participant with female partners). As a requirement of the study, all participants had to self-identify as a transgender person—that is, to have a gender identity different from their biological sex—and to be over 18 years old (range = 18–61), with a mean age of 29.21 years ($SD = 7.99$). MTF individuals were significantly older than FTM individuals, $t(223.65) = -4.74$, $p < .001$, $d = .62$ (Table 1).

TABLE 1 Demographic information by gender identity

	FTM individuals *n* (%)	MTF individuals *n* (%)
Age, mean (*SD*)	26.46 (6.51)	31.13 (8.38)
Age of awareness transgender identity, mean (*SD*)	8.77 (5.16)	8.47 (3.87)
Age of transformation, mean (*SD*)	18.44 (4.26)	15.98 (3.15)
Body interventions		
Hormone therapy	72 (76.6)	111 (82.8)
Sex reassignment surgery	9 (9.8)	8 (6.3)
Industrial silicone injection	—	73 (56.2)
Top surgeries (mastectomy/breast implants)	34 (36.6)	72 (54.5)
Education		
Some or completed elementary	3 (3.3)	46 (36.5)
Some high school	37 (39.8)	55 (43.7)
Complete high school	25 (26.9)	22 (17.5)
Some or completed college/tertiary	28 (30.1)	3 (2.4)
Sex work		
Currently	—	51 (40.8)
In the past	6 (6.7)	60 (48)
Never	84 (93.3)	14 (11.2)
Relationship status		
Single	46 (48.9)	59 (44.4)
Casual relationship	6 (6.4)	21 (15.8)
Stable relationship (not cohabitating)	16 (17)	25 (18.8)
Cohabitation	21 (22.3)	22 (16.5)
Married	5 (5,3)	6 (4.5)

Note. FTM = female-to-male; MTF = male-to-female.

Table 1 displays demographic information and the status of hormones and surgeries. As shown in this table, regarding gender identity, on average, participants reported that they became aware before the age of 9 of having a sense of being a man or woman different from the sex assigned at birth (FTM: $M = 8.77$, $SD = 5.16$; MTF: $M = 8.47$, $SD = 3.87$) and began their process of transformation to have an appearance congruent with their gender identity during adolescence (FTM: $M = 18.44$, $SD = 4.26$; MTF: $M = 15.98$, $SD = 3.15$). MTF individuals began that process significantly earlier than FTM individuals, $t(160.27) = -4.67$, $p < .001$, $d = -.65$. In terms of body interventions, less than 10% of the sample had undergone any type of sex reassignment surgery (FTM: 9.8%, $n = 8$; MTF: 6.3%, $n = 8$), but half of the MTF (54.5%, $n = 72$) and slightly more than a third of the FTM (36.6%, $n = 34$) participants reported top surgeries, such as mastectomies and breast implants. Interestingly, most people in the sample had taken or were taking hormones at the time of the study (FTM: 76.6%, $n = 72$; MTF: 82.8%, $n = 111$), demonstrating that this is a widely spread practice within the community.

FTM participants were better educated, in general, than their MTF counterparts, with at least some level of high school being the modal level for both groups (Table 1). As shown, there was a significant difference between MTF and FTM individuals in terms of sex work. The vast majority of MTF individuals reported being involved in sex work at some point in their lives (88.8%, $n = 111$), whereas only a few FTM individuals had done this type of work (6.7%, $n = 6$). Finally, in terms of

relationship status, almost half of the sample was single at the moment of the study, and the rest was in some kind of relationship.

2.2 | Materials

Elements of the questionnaire were drawn from previous published research in this area. Based on 12 try-out interviews, and after consultation with transgender activists, the questionnaire was adapted to make the questions more comprehensible to the respondents, and the language of certain scales was modified where necessary to make them appropriate for the transgender population.

2.2.1 | Mate preferences

Participants valued 18 attributes (e.g., good health, sociability, good looking) that might be desired in a potential intimate partner on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (*unimportant*) to 3 (*very important*). These items were originally developed by Hill (1945) and were introduced by Buss (1989) in the evolutionary literature on mating. The Spanish version, adapted by Ubillos et al. (2001) and applied in Argentina by Casullo (2004), was used. Following Casullo, and considering the importance of sexuality in adult intimate relationships, an additional item was incorporated: "satisfying sexual relationship."

Additional demographic information was also collected, including birth sex, age, hormone and surgery status, education, work, location, sexual orientation, and relationship status.

2.3 | Procedure

As transgender people belong to a very rare population, usually hidden due to stigma and discrimination, participants were recruited by a snowball sampling technique, a widely used method to recruit "hard-to-reach" and vulnerable populations (Magnani, Sabin, Saidel, & Heckathorn, 2005). Community-based organizations and specialized health care services were contacted in order to ask for referrals. Self-identified transgender people were recruited by outreach efforts coordinated by two transgender interviewers who were hired in order to reach potential participants who do not feel comfortable talking with nontransgender researchers.

The objectives of the study were explained to the participants, and they were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time with no explanation. Acceptance of participation was considered informed consent. An incentive of ARG$150 (US$10 approximately) was given per participation. Data collection occurred continuously for a period of 6 months in 2014.

All data were analyzed with SPSS (version 21.0). As the sample only consisted of transgender individuals, results were compared to the results from previous studies with nontransgender heterosexual and gay and lesbian samples (refer to Table 2 for a summary of prior studies).

3 | RESULTS

Mate preferences for the total sample were ordered based on the mean obtained for each attribute (Table 3). As shown, the overall ordering suggests that the most valued mate characteristic was mutual attraction–love. The following most valued preferences were related to personality characteristics, including having a dependable character and a pleasant disposition as well as being sociable. Interestingly, the additional item for this study, *satisfying sexual relationship,* was highly valued by transgender people, who rated this characteristic in the second place of the ranking.

TABLE 2 Summary of results from previous studies on mate preferences

Sample type	Author	Title	Sample size	Method	Findings	Location
Men and women[a]	Buss (1989)	Sex differences in human mate preferences: Evolutionary hypothesis tested in 37 cultures	10,047 individuals (4,601 men, 5,446 women)	Mate questionnaire based on Hill (1945). Preferences concerning potential mates questionnaire from Buss and Barnes (1986).	Women valued good financial prospect, ambitious–industriousness more than men did, whereas men valued physical attractiveness more than women. Men preferred younger mates, and women preferred older mates. Cultures varied in the valued places on chastity. South American, North American, Asian, and African samples valued earning capacity more than Western European.	37 cultures on six continents
Men and women[a]	Buss et al. (1990)	International preferences in selecting mates: A study of 37 cultures	9,474 individuals (4,360 men, 5,114 women), mean age (25.27, men and 25.83 years, women)	Hill (1945) survey to assess mate preferences and preferences concerning potential mates (Buss & Barnes, 1986)	Good financial prospects and good earning capacity are the largest sex difference: Women value these characteristics and ambitious–industriousness more than men. Men value appearance (good looks and physical attractiveness) more than women. Of small magnitudes, women more than men value educational background, emotional stability, favorable social status, and education and intelligence. The ordering of the rated mate values is highly similar for men and women. Mutual attraction–love is the most valued, followed by personality dispositions—kind and understanding, intelligent, exciting personality, and healthy—and the least valued are chastity and similar religious background and political background. The effect of culture is more important than the effect of sex on mate references.	37 cultures on six continents
Men and women[a]	Casullo (2004)	Elección de pareja en adolescentes y jóvenes	900 teens and young adults 13–30 years old (450 women, 450 men)	Mate Preference Scale (Buss, 1989) adapted, including an item called "satisfactory sexual intercourse"	The four principal preferences are the same for both men and women: Attraction–love, trustworthy, sociability, and maturity and emotional stability. Men place fifth physical attractiveness and women the desire to have a family. Chastity and similarity of political and religious beliefs are less important across all ages.	Argentina

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Sample type	Author	Title	Sample size	Method	Findings	Location
Men and women[a]	Chang et al. (2011)	Chinese mate preferences: Cultural evolution and continuity across a quarter of a century	1,560 individuals. 500 from 1,980 samples (265 men, 235 women) and 1,060 modern samples (475 men, 585 women)	Preferences Concerning Potential Mates Scale (Buss & Barnes, 1986). Factors in choosing a mate (Hill, 1945)	Men preferred younger and women older spouses. College graduate rose in importance from 1983 to 2008, especially in woman. Dependable character rose for both sexes from 1983 to 2008, being indispensable. Chastity, good heredity, pleasing disposition, ambition, education, and intelligence decrease in value with time. Women place more importance on good earning capacity, good financial prospects, social status, ambition and industriousness, education, and intelligence than men. Men preferred good looks and physical attractiveness. Women prefer emotional stability and maturity pronouncedly more than men, but also place greater value on exciting personality, sociability, and dependable character.	China
Men and women[a]	Shackelford et al. (2005)	Universal dimensions of human mate preferences	9,809 (4,499 men, 5,310 women) ages 17–30	Hill (1945) survey to assess mate preferences	Men score higher on love versus status/resources, whereas women score higher on dependable/stable versus good looks and education/intelligence versus desire for home/children.	37 cultures
Men and women[a]	Souza et al. (2016)	Mate preferences in Brazil: Evolved desires and cultural evolution over three decades	1,816 (630 from 1984 Brazilian sample, 355 women, 275 men) and 1,186 modern sample (719 women, 467 men)	Mate Preference Scale (Buss, 1989)	Men prefer younger spouses, whereas women prefer older spouses. Women put more importance on good earning capacity, good financial prospect, social status, ambition, and industriousness than men in both samples. Men value good looks more than women in both samples.	Brazil
Men and women[a]	Todosijević et al. (2003)	Mate selection criteria: A trait desirability assessment study of sex differences in Serbia	127 (74 women, 53 men), 80% teens (ages 17–19)	Closed-end list of un/desirable traits in potential mates (Buss, 1989; Townsend, 1989; Wiederman & Allgeier, 1992)	Men perceived thinness, aggressiveness, self-pity, fragility, and beauty as more desirable than women. Women value strength more than men. With less difference, men value good looks, attractiveness, seriousness, independence, enterprising, and sincerity more than women.	Serbia

(Continues)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Sample type	Author	Title	Sample size	Method	Findings	Location
Men and women[a]	Ubillos et al. (2001)	Amor, cultura y sexo	1,667 psychology and education students (162 Argentina, 97 Angola, 105 Belgium, 240 Brazil, 112 Cape Verde, 133 Spain, 267 France, 101 Mozambique, 306 Portugal, 144 Switzerland)	Self-reported mate selection priority criteria (18 attributes from Buss 1990)	Love and mutual attraction is the first and good health the second most valued criteria in mate selection. Love positively correlates with physical attractiveness. High social development negatively correlates with social status in mate selection criteria. Men preferred love and health and women social status as a mate criterion. Less developed societies preferred good health. Most developed countries have love as a requirement of mate criteria and value less social status, chastity and good health	10 countries
Men and women[a]	Hatfield and Sprecher (1995)	Men's and women's preferences in marital partners in the United States, Russia, and Japan	1,524 university students (970 United States, 327 Russia, 227 Japan)	Traits desired in a partner questionnaire	Across cultures, the most desirable traits were personality attributes, particularly those that contribute to a long-term maintenance of marriage (kind, understanding, expressive, open). Men rated physical attractiveness as more important than did women. Women preferred intelligence, ambition, potential for success, money, status and position, kindness, and understanding.	United States, Russia, Japan
Men and women[a]	Khallad (2005)	Mate selection in Jordan: Effects of sex, socio-economic status, and culture	288 college students (121 men, 167 women)	Buss (1990) list of 17 traits important to choose a mate (chastity was removed)	Men indicated greater preferences for attributes associated with reproductive capacity (youth and good looks) than women. Women put greater emphasis than men on qualities indicative of resources acquisition and commitment, such as good financial prospects, favorable social status, and dependable character. Mutual attraction was the most valued characteristic. Dependable character, pleasing disposition, and good health were rated as highly valued attributes. The least important was similar political background.	Jordan

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Sample type	Author	Title	Sample size	Method	Findings	Location
Men and women[a]	Neto et al. (2012)	Sex and culture similarities and differences in long-term partner preferences	402 social sciences students (187 Brazilians: 92 women, 95 men; and 215 Portuguese: 121 women, 94 men)	Modified Furnham (2009) questionnaire with 14 mate traits plus additional items	The most desired traits were related to personality (conscientiousness, agreeableness, emotional stability, ambitiousness, and extraversion) and to abilities (emotional intelligence, cognitive ability). Women valued personality, abilities, and resources more than did men, and men valued physical attractiveness more than did women in both countries. More sex than cultural differences emerged.	Brazil and Portugal
Men and women[a]	Li et al. (2002)	The necessities and luxuries of mate preferences: Testing the tradeoffs	S1: 71(37 women, 34 men); S2: 178 psychology students (95 women, 83 men); S3: 58 psychology undergraduates (32 women, 26 men)	Mate design page to design ideal marriage partner, with different "budget"; in S3, they added a cover-up story	S1: Women's and men's differential preferences primarily stemmed from women's emphasis on resources and men's emphasis on physical attractiveness, especially when budgets were more constrained. S2: Women emphasized social level and kindness, whereas men preferred physical attractiveness. S3: Women most often checked social level first, although kindness was a close second. Men most often checked physical attractiveness first.	United States
Heterosexual men and women	Buunk et al. (2002)	Age and gender differences in mate selection criteria for various involvement levels	137 (70 men and 67 women)	Questionnaire based on Kenrick, Gabrielidis, Keefe, and Cornelius (1996)	Independent of age, women desired a mate with higher income and education than themselves. Men more than women preferred mates who were more physically attractive than themselves. Preference for physical attractiveness increased as relationship involvement become lower. Men and women preferred self-confident mates. Women, regardless of relationship level, preferred men who are more intelligent, and men's preference for intelligence decreased as relationship involvement lowered. Women preferred a more dominant partner with a higher social position than themselves.	United States, Netherlands

(Continues)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Sample type	Author	Title	Sample size	Method	Findings	Location
Heterosexual and gay men	Gobrogge et al. (2007)	Homosexual mating preferences from an evolutionary perspective: Sexual selection theory revisted	804 (439 gay, 365 hetero)	Personal ad	Higher proportion of gay men placed an ad for sexual encounters. Heterosexual men looking for sexual encounters were less selective in age preferences.	United States, Canada
Heterosexual men and women, gay, and lesbian	Bailey et al. (1994)	Effects of gender and sexual orientation on evolutionarily relevant aspects of human mating psychology	283 (69 lesbians, 71 hetero women, 72 gay men,71 hetero men)	Scale written by authors and Sociosexuality scale (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991)	Lesbian women were more interested in visual stimulation and less concerned about partner's status. Gay men weighted sexual jealousy less and put less emphasis on partner youth than hetero men. Gay men scored higher on sociosexuality. Lesbian and hetero women had similar scores on a psychological and behavior subscale about uncommited sex. Gay men ranked higher than hetero men on the behavior uncommited sex scale but identical in the psychological subscale.	United States
Heterosexual men and women, gay and lesbian	Bailey et al. (1997)	Butch, femme, or straight acting? Partner preferences of gay men and lesbians	S1: 2,729 gay men, 782 lesbians; S2: 2,225 hetero men, 1,434 hetero women; S3: 144 gay men, 96 lesbians; S4: 80 lesbians	Personal ad. questionnaire about desirability of two hypothetical dating partners with a target photo and description	S1: Gay men's self-descriptors and description of preferred partner were masculine and did not want feminine attributes. Lesbians prefer partners biased to feminine descriptions and do not want masculine attributes. Lesbians, more than gay men, describe themselves and prefer partners androgynously. S2: Compared to gay men, hetero men, were less likely to describe themselves as masculine or to request a masculine partner.	United States
Heterosexual men and women, gay and lesbian	Gonzales and Meyers (1993)	Your mother would like me: Self-presentation in the personals ads of heterosexual and homosexual men and women	300 (75 gay men, 75 hetero men, 75 hetero women, 75 lesbian)	Personal ad	More gay men mentioned hair or eye color than the other three groups. Hetero women mention hair color more than lesbian and hetero men. More gay men mentioned height more than hetero men. Men specified weight more than women and homosexual more than hetero men. Men indicated race more than women. In men, more heterosexual than	United States

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Sample type	Author	Title	Sample size	Method	Findings	Location
					homosexual individuals offer financial security. Hetero women were more likely to express desire for a financially secure partner. More women than men seek expressive traits and sincere partners. Homosexual individuals were more likely than hetero to mention sexual topics.	
Heterosexual men and women, gay and lesbian	Ha et al. (2012)	Effects of attractiveness and status in dating desire in homosexual and heterosexual men and women	1,586 (840 gay men/ lesbians, 746 heterosexuals)	Online questionnaire; 21 characteristics about social status and attractiveness (Buss, 1989; Buston & Emlen, 2003). Dating desire was measured with 10 photos of potential partners	Attractiveness and ambition were rated more important for older homosexual and heterosexual men and women. Gay men rated attractiveness to be more important than lesbians but less important than hetero men. Hetero men rated attractiveness more important than hetero women. Gay men and hetero women emphasized ambition more than hetero men and lesbians. For gay men and women, education is more important than for hetero men. Gay men rate salary as more important than the other groups. Lesbians and gay men show less dating desire than hetero men. Lesbians and gay men show more date desire than hetero women.	Netherlands
Heterosexual men and women, gay and lesbian	Kenrick et al. (1995)	Age preferences and mate choice among homosexuals and heterosexuals	783 (486 heterosexual, 297 homosexual)	Personal ad	Lesbians prefer younger partners as they age, but hetero women remain constant in age acceptance. Both hetero and gay men prefer progressively younger partners as they age. For lesbian and hetero women, older partners are acceptable at all ages.	United States

(Continues)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Sample type	Author	Title	Sample size	Method	Findings	Location
Heterosexual men and women, gay and lesbian	Lawson et al. (2014)	A comparison of heterosexual and homosexual mating preferences in personal advertisements	1,733 total (649 gay men, 412 hetero men, 325 lesbian, 347 hetero women)	Personal ad	Ads written by men contain a higher proportion of traits related to appearance than personality; describing the ideal partner, ads written by women display the opposite condition. Lesbians advertise and seek resources more than the other groups.	United Kingdom
Heterosexual men and women, gay and lesbian	Lippa (2007)	The preferred traits of mates in a cross-national study of heterosexual and homosexual men and women: An examination of biological and cultural influences	185,780 (102,961 men, 91% hetero, 5% gay; and 82,819 women, 90 hetero, 3% lesbian)	Internet survey. Reporting gender, sex orientation, and preferred traits in relationship partner (23 traits including age)	Nine traits were the same for all participants: Intelligence, overall good looks, humor, honesty, face, attractiveness, kindness, values, communication skills, and dependability. Sexual orientation differences in trait rankings are smaller than sex differences. Men ranked good looks and facial attractiveness to be more important than women did. Gay men, similar to hetero men, ranked attractiveness relatively high. Lesbians, similar to hetero women, ranked attractiveness relatively low. Hetero women and men rank religion, parenting ability, and fondness for children more highly than gay men and lesbians. Gay men, more than hetero men, emphasized partners' age and appearance as well as money, prosperity, and honesty. Hetero men, more than gay men, valued partners' intelligence and domestic skills. Lesbians, more than hetero women, emphasized partners' intelligence. Hetero women emphasized partner ambition, dependability, prosperity, and money more than lesbians did. Sex differences in the rankings of good looks were consistent across nations.	United Kingdom, United States, Canada, Australia, Western Europe, Latin America, New Zeland, Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, India

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Sample type	Author	Title	Sample size	Method	Findings	Location
Heterosexual men and women, gay and lesbian	Russock (2011)	An evolutionary interpretation of the effect of gender and sexual orientation on human mate selection preferences, as indicated by an analysis of personal advertisements	800 (200 men seeking women, 200 men seeking men, 200 women seeking men, 200 women seeking women)	Personal ads	55%–76% of the ads in each group include at least one term offering physical attractiveness and 31%–37% seek attractiveness. 22.5%–33.5% of the ads in each group contained at least one term offering resources and 5.5%–27.5% seek resources. 56.5%–62.5% offered commitment and 59%–64% seek commitment. Hetero women look for older partners and resources more than the other groups. Hetero men look for younger partners and offer resources more than other groups. Gay men looked for physical attractiveness more than the other groups; lesbian women offered attractiveness less than the other groups. Hetero men and lesbian women offered commitment more than the other groups.	United States
Heterosexual men and women, gay and Lesbian	VanderLaan and Vasey (2008)	Mate retention behavior of men and women in heterosexual and homosexual relationships	355 individuals (83 hetero and 73 lesbian women; 120 hetero and 79 gay men)	Mate retention inventory questionnaire	Heterosexual men and women differed significantly in 6 of the 19 mate retention tactics considered. Homosexual men behaved in a sex-typical manner for 5 of the tactics, whereas homosexual women behaved in a sex-atypical manner for all 6 tactics.	Canada

[a] Sexual orientation not reported; it is implied to be heterosexual.

TABLE 3 Means and standard deviations for the total sample and by gender identity and ordering of mate preferences for the total sample

Ranked value	Mate characteristics	Complete sample		FTM individuals		MTF individuals			
		M	*DE*	*M*	*DE*	*M*	*DE*	*F*	Partial η^2
1	Mutual attraction–love	2.57	0.70	2.64	0.61	2.52	0.75	1.81	.01
2	Satisfying sexual relationships	2.57	0.66	2.35	0.73	2.72	0.57	17.99***	.07
3	Dependable character	2.54	0.67	2.66	0.50	2.46	0.76	4.87*	.02
4	Pleasant disposition	2.29	0.71	2.21	0.67	2.34	0.73	1.81	.01
5	Sociability	2.21	0.75	2.15	0.75	2.25	0.74	.30	.00
6	Education and intelligence	2.09	0.76	1.99	0.80	2.15	0.73	2.54	.01
7	Refinement and neatness	2.07	0.82	1.88	0.85	2.20	0.76	8.72**	.04
8	Ambition and industrious	2.06	0.80	1.86	0.82	2.20	0.75	10.16**	.04
9	Emotional stability and maturity	2.03	0.90	2.02	0.84	2.03	0.94	.01	.00
10	Good looks	1.97	0.93	1.52	0.90	2.28	0.81	44.60***	**.17**
11	Good financial prospect	1.96	0.98	1.43	0.99	2.33	0.79	59.16***	**.21**
12	Good health	1.92	0.97	1.63	0.97	2.13	0.92	15.50***	.06
13	Good cook and housekeeper	1.44	1.08	1.43	0.96	1.46	1.16	.05	.00
14	Favorable social status	1.43	1.06	1.00	0.89	1.73	1.07	29.51***	**.12**
15	Desire for home and children	1.42	1.05	1.40	1.06	1.43	1.05	.02	.00
16	Similar education	1.40	0.96	1.26	0.85	1.50	1.03	3.48	.02
17	Similar political background	0.79	1.03	0.79	0.99	0.78	1.06	.00	.00
18	Similar religious background	0.70	0.94	0.70	0.89	0.70	0.98	.00	.00
19	Chastity	0.32	0.76	0.29	0.65	0.35	0.83	.33	.00

Note. Moderate to high effects are in bold (Cohen, 1988). FTM = female-to-male; MTF = male-to-female.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

When analyzing the characteristics with the lowest ratings (from 17th to 19th in the ranking), chastity was the least valued mate preference, which is consistent with the importance given to satisfying sexual relationships. In addition, attributes such as sharing religious beliefs or political backgrounds, as well as having similar educational levels, which are features related to family of origin or cultural backgrounds, were of little relevance to selecting a partner.

To determine if there were gender differences in the most valued mate characteristics, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed using subject gender identity as a grouping variable and the 19 characteristics as dependent variables. Box's M statistic was 338.52, $F(190, 123631.64)$, $p < .001$, suggesting a violation of covariance matrix equivalence. Although we had unequal numbers of MTF and FTM individuals in our sample, suggesting a less robust test, it is possible that this statistic is an artifact of the many dependent variables involved in the analysis. The MANOVA showed a multivariate effect of gender (Wilks's $\lambda = .036$), $F(19,208) = 6.08$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .36$, indicating that FTM and MTF individuals differed significantly in their mate preferences. It should be noted that the effect size was large, providing evidence of substantial gender differences.

As per Table 3, separate univariate analyses showed that 8 of the 19 characteristics studied reached conventional significance levels. FTM individuals considered it more important than MTF individuals to have a partner with a dependable character, $F(226) = 4.87$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$, whereas MTF individuals valued, more than FTM participants, satisfactory sexual relationships, $F(226) = 17.99$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .07$; good looks, $F(226) = 44.60$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .17$;

and good health, $F(226) = 15.50$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$. Furthermore, MTF individuals placed more emphasis than FTM individuals on having a mate who exhibits refinement and neatness, $F(226) = 8.72$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$. Finally, more than FTM, MTF individuals valued mate characteristics related to socioeconomic status—such as being ambitious and industrious, $F(226) = 10.16$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$; having a favorable social status, $F(226) = 29.51$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .12$; and having good financial prospects, $F(226) = 59.16$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .21$. The mate characteristics that showed the largest effect sizes were good financial prospects, good looks, and favorable social status.

In addition, in order to examine the effects of hormone use on mate preferences, MANOVAs were performed, separately for FTM and MTF individuals, using subject hormone use as a grouping variable and the 19 mate characteristics as dependent variables. It should be noted that the high percentage of the sample that have received hormone treatments might lead to a less optimal statistical analysis; therefore, these MANOVAs were conducted only for exploratory reasons. Although a significant effect was not found for the MTF subsample, $F(19, 111) = 1.09$, $p > .37$, a multivariate effect of hormone use was found among FTM participants (Wilks's $\lambda = .673$), $F(19, 69) = 1.76$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .33$, indicating that FTM individuals who had used hormone therapy differed significantly in their mate preferences from those who had not used hormones. Separate univariate analyses showed FTM individuals who had used hormones valued, more than those who had not used hormones, having satisfactory sexual relationships, $F(87) = 9.10$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .10$, and partners with good financial prospects, $F(87) = 6.88$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .07$; a favorable social status, $F(87) = 5.44$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$; and with similar political background, $F(87) = 6.22$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .07$.

4 | DISCUSSION

In this study, mate preferences were examined in a sample of transgender people. Overall, transgender people valued as the most important attributes in a potential mate the same features as heterosexual and gay and lesbian people: mutual attraction–love, having a dependable character, having a pleasant disposition, and being sociable. Moreover, they also resembled heterosexual and gay and lesbian people in the least desirable attributes in a mate: chastity, sharing religious beliefs, or having a similar political background and educational level. In addition, it was found that FTM individuals, compared to MTF individuals, placed significantly more emphasis on having a partner with a dependable character, whereas MTF individuals, more than FTM individuals, valued having satisfactory sexual relationships, as well as attributes related to attractiveness (good looks, good health) and socioeconomic status (ambitious, industrious, favorable social status, financial prospects).

By exploring gender differences among transgender people, this study could provide initial evidence for the distinct influences of biological sex and gender identity on mate choices. Our result, that FTM individuals tended to emphasize personality over appearance in a potential mate whereas MTF individuals did the converse, parallels previous findings on sex differences in mate preferences in heterosexual (Buss, 1989; Buss et al., 1990; Casullo, 2004; Chang et al., 2011; Ha et al., 2012; Hatfield & Sprecher, 1995; Khallad, 2005; Neto et al., 2012; Shackelford et al., 2005; Souza et al., 2016; Todosijević et al., 2003; Ubillos et al., 2001) as well as gay and lesbian (Bailey et al., 1994; Gonzalez & Meyers, 1993; Lawson et al., 2014; Lippa, 2007; VanderLaan & Vasey, 2008) people. To be more specific, transgender people displayed a number of sex-typical mate preferences: Female-born individuals preferred personality and character traits, whereas male-born individuals valued good looks and good health. Taken together, these results are similar to the findings of Buss

et al. (1990) among heterosexuals, not only in the direction but also in the magnitude of the effect sizes, suggesting that the mate preferences of transgender people are, in part, influenced by their biological sex, providing support for the hypothesis of evolutionary psychologists that the mating strategies of men and women have evolved in response to selective pressures and adaptive problems that lead people to seek for cues of parental investment and reproductive potential (Buss & Barnes, 1986; Shackelford et al., 2005).

The finding that MTF, more than FTM, individuals place importance on having satisfying sexual relationships is in line with studies that demonstrated that male-born individuals are more concerned with sex in general (Bailey et al., 1994; Gonzales & Meyers, 1993; VanderLaan & Vasey, 2008), also providing support for the evolved determinants of sex differences. However, it might also be expected that, due to the high rate of sex work, having satisfying sexual relationships in a caring environment may have become a very important aspect of a romantic relationship for MTF individuals.

The finding that transgender people preferred mutual attraction and love, as well as dependable, pleasant, and sociable, personality traits in a potential mate replicated previous research among heterosexuals (Bailey et al., 1994; Buss, 1989; Buss et al., 1990; Casullo, 2004; Hatfield & Sprecher, 1995; Khallad, 2005; Lippa, 2007; Shackelford et al., 2005; Todosijević et al., 2003; Ubillos et al., 2001). Regarding the least valued mate characteristics in transgender people, the results fit well with the idea that, although important in some cultures (e.g., Khallad, 2005), and more among heterosexual than among gay and lesbian people (Lippa, 2007), chastity and political and religious ideas are the least important features valued in a preferred mate (Buss, 1989; Buss et al., 1990; Casullo, 2004; Ubillos et al., 2001). It would be interesting to see if this pattern persists among transgender communities from other cultures. The traits considered highly desirable and undesirable by transgender people resembled the choices of heterosexuals and gays and lesbians by prioritizing mate characteristics that serve as cues of interest or ability for long-term mating and establishing a committed relationship. That is, overall, the participants in this study valued important features for interpersonal functioning, mate maintenance, and retention.

4.1 | Interestingly, satisfying sexual relationships

This additional item seems to have a more important place in the ranking of mate preferences of transgender people (first place) than in the ranking of heterosexual young adults (14th in Casullo, 2004). Unfortunately, this comparison could not be carried out with gay and lesbian people as this same item has not been included in studies in these latter populations. Nevertheless, studies have demonstrated that gay and lesbian people are overall more focused on sexuality and casual relationships than their heterosexual counterparts (Bailey et al., 1994; Bailey et al., 1997; Gobrogge et al., 2007). Thus, it seems important to see if there are similarities between gay and lesbian and transgender groups in the rating of this item. A possible explanation for the importance given by transgender people to having satisfying sexual relationships is the relevance of sexuality in their lives considering that, in many cases, this population undergoes body modifications through hormone therapy and surgeries in order to adjust their physical appearance (particularly sexual features and genitalia) to their gender identity (APA, 2009; Arístegui & Zalazar, 2014). These characteristics are fundamental for a sexual relationship, not only to attract mates but also to experience satisfying sexual relationships.

It is noteworthy that MTF individuals also seemed to value some attributes in potential mates based on their feminine gender identity, showing that not only biological sex is important in mate choice. That is, our data consistently showed that MTF individuals, more than FTM individuals, valued mate attributes related to socioeconomic status—such as being ambitious and industrious, having a favorable social status, and having good financial prospects. This result is consistent with

preferences of heterosexual women (Buss, 1989; Buss et al., 1990; Hatfield & Sprecher, 1995; Khallad, 2005; Neto et al., 2012; Shackelford et al., 2005; Souza et al., 2016; Todosijević et al., 2003) and also with Lippa's (2007) findings among gay men, who value in their male mates the ability to obtain or provide resources. From an evolutionary point of view, one possible explanation for this strong gender identity difference in our sample could be the effect of the partners' sex (sex of the person being chosen) rather than the biological sex of the person choosing, as has been postulated in some studies with gay and lesbian samples. However, as that conclusion particularly derives from results on personal advertisements, where what people offer to attract potential mates was analyzed (Bailey et al., 1994; Russock, 2011), and studies on mate retention strategies (VanderLaan & Vasey, 2008), and considering that, in our sample, partners' sex tends to affect only attributes related to socioeconomic status, another explanation such as the concept of domain-specific or modularity of psychological processes (Kenrick et al., 1995) might better explain these results. It might be that although both are involved in reproduction, gender identity and mate preferences are independent modules, controlled by independent mechanisms.

Like some authors have suggested (Buss & Barnes, 1986; Eagly & Wood, 1999; Ha et al., 2012; Khallad, 2005; Lippa, 2007; Ubillos et al., 2001), cultural factors might have a relatively greater impact on people's ranking of certain, but not all, traits. For example, in countries with low economic development and in marginalized groups, as in the case of transgender people in Argentina, regardless of their biological sex, people tend to value partners' resources as a way to move economically upward in the society. Perhaps, as Wood and Eagly (2002) proposed, the origins of sex differences in mate preferences are best understood from a biosocial perspective that gives priority to the interaction between the bodily specialization of each sex (evolution) and the attributes of societies' economy, social structure, and ecology (culture). In this line, and following Li et al.'s (2002) study on necessities and luxuries, it would be interesting to examine how these characteristics of mate preferences work in transgender people.

In line with some evolutionary theorists who emphasized the importance of sex hormones on mating motivations and behaviors (Gangestad & Grebe, 2017; Wood, Kressel, Joshi, & Louie, 2014), the effect of hormone therapy on mate preferences was found but only for FTM individuals. Those who had used hormones placed relatively more value on attributes such as satisfying sexual relationships, good financial prospects, favorable social status, and similar political background. It is worth noting that as the majority of the sample had used hormones, this analysis was only conducted for exploratory reasons. Still, the results highlight the need to properly analyze the moderating effect of hormones on the mate preferences of transgender people.

4.2 | Limitations and recommendations for future studies

As with any research, this study suffered from several limitations that are worth noting. First, as participants were self-selected, this was not a probabilistic sample and may be biased toward a group that has "come out of the closet" and that may not be representative of the transgender community as a whole. Second, only transgender people who identified themselves as heterosexual were incorporated in the study, and the comparisons with heterosexual and with gay and lesbian people were drawn from comparison with results from previous studies. Future research would benefit by incorporating gay and lesbian transgender participants based on their gender identity, as well as heterosexual and gay and lesbian nontransgender people, in order to better distinguish the effect of biological sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation on mating preferences. Third, although widely used, the list of traits used to explore preferred characteristics in a potential mate has been questioned for consisting of a restricted set of items that has been mainly used with young college students (Schwarz &

Hassebrauck, 2012). Subsequent studies should examine the generalizability of the data to a more general transgender population by using more naturalist designs, as some researchers have done with advertisements in gay and lesbian samples (Gobrogge et al., 2007; Gonzales & Meyers, 1993; Russock, 2011; VanderLaan & Vasey, 2008), in which participants are not aware they are being studied and, thus, can consider the most salient characteristics for a real-life relationship with potential real consequences.

4.3 | Contributions

A major strength of this study is that it examined for the first time the mate preferences of transgender people in a large sample of both MTF and FTM individuals. Simultaneously, the study could test several evolutionary and sociocultural notions within a community that had not been previously examined. Overall, in terms of a trade-off between physical attractiveness and personality as preferred partner traits, transgender people of either biological sex are behaving in the same way as their heterosexual and gay and lesbian counterparts, indicating an overall trend toward biological sex-typical mate preferences in transgender people. Although biological sex differences as an evolved mechanism are present in both groups, providing some support to an evolutionary perspective, MTF individuals also seemed to value attributes in line with their gender identity, which could be better explained from a sociocultural perspective.

In addition, the results presented here offer new evidence for both powerful cross-cultural consistencies and systematic cross-cultural variations in men's and women's mate preferences. Our findings add to the evidence that evolved dispositions contribute to men's tendency to assign more importance to physical attractiveness where women place more importance on personality traits. However, social structural forces also seem to influence the importance that men and women assign to other partner traits, suggesting that, rather than choosing between evolutionary and social structural theories, researchers who study sex differences in mate preferences, and transgender people in particular, should instead systematically explore each theory's valid domains of application.

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How to cite this article: Arístegui I, Castro Solano A, Buunk AP. Mate preferences in Argentinean transgender people: An evolutionary perspective. *Pers Relationship*. 2018;25:330–350. https://doi.org/10.1111/pere.12247