

Trans People in Argentine Graduate Studies: Initial Discussions for a State of the Knowledge

ARTICLE

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Resumo

Este artigo investiga as experiências de pessoas trans Pretas, Pardas e Indígenas (PPI) no Ensino Superior argentino. O objetivo geral é mapear e discutir a produção acadêmica existente, identificando avanços e lacunas, sobretudo quanto a estudos interseccionais sobre pessoas trans PPI na pós-graduação. Fundamenta-se em Paul Preciado (2017; 2019), Letícia Nascimento (2021) e Jack Halberstam (2020), que compreendem a transexualidade como dissidência de gênero. A análise adota a perspectiva interseccional de Patricia Hill Collins e Sirma Bilge (2020), considerando a articulação entre gênero, raça e outros marcadores sociais. Trata-se de pesquisa bibliográfica, exploratória, com abordagem quali-quantitativa. O *corpus* foi constituído no repositório do *Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas* (CONICET), utilizando os descritores *persona trans* e *posgrado*, resultando em quatro publicações entre 2021 e 2024. Os achados indicam que as investigações sobre o tema são incipientes, reforçando a necessidade de ampliar a produção científica.

Palavras-chave: Pessoas Trans. Pós-graduação. Estado do Conhecimento.

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Abstract

This article investigates the experiences of Black and Indigenous trans people in Argentine Higher Education. The objective is to map and discuss the academic production, identifying advances and gaps, especially about intersectional studies. The study is anchored in Paul Preciado (2017; 2019), Letícia Nascimento (2021), and Jack Halberstam (2020), who understand trans identities as forms of gender dissidence. The analysis also draws on Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge's (2020) intersectional perspective, which considers the articulation of gender, race, and other social markers. Methodologically, it is a bibliographic, exploratory research with qualitative and quantitative approaches. The *corpus* was built from the repository of the *Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas*

(CONICET), using the descriptors *persona trans* and *posgrado*, resulting in four publications between 2021 and 2024. The findings indicate that research on this topic remains incipient, reinforcing the need to expand scientific production.

Keywords: Trans People. Postgraduate. State of Knowledge.

1 Introduction

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This article is part of the research project entitled *Black, Brown, and Indigenous Trans People in Graduate Programs: Histories of Access, Permanence, and Success*, funded by Call No. 16/2023 of the Abdias Nascimento Academic Development Program, under the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES). The project, which began in 2024, aims to conduct the first national mapping of the presence of Black, Brown, and Indigenous (BBI) transgender people in master's and doctoral programs, seeking to understand the strategies these individuals adopt to access, remain, and succeed in graduate education.

The study, developed in partnership with the *Facultad de Filosofía y Letras* at the University of Buenos Aires (Filo UBA, Argentina), intends to engage in dialogue with the Argentine reality, which serves as the focus of this article. Therefore, its objective is to map and discuss Argentina's academic production regarding the access and presence of trans people in higher education, identifying progress and gaps, particularly in relation to intersectional studies on BBI trans individuals in graduate programs. Based on this scope, we question to what extent existing institutional policies and practices, even in legally progressive contexts such as Argentina's, are sufficient to mitigate the structural and symbolic barriers faced by racialized trans people.

We consider that the “trans” and “BBI” markers expose individuals to contexts of vulnerability that may affect their academic trajectories in graduate studies. Data collected by the *Associação Nacional de Travestis e Transexuais do Brasil* (ANTRA) show that approximately 78% of trans people murdered in Brazil between 2017 and 2024 were Black (Black and Brown), while 21% were White and 1% Indigenous or Asian (Benevides, 2025). These figures reveal the presence of racial inequality and racism combined with

transphobia, urging us to reflect on strategies to combat these forms of violence and ensure a better quality of life for BBI trans people in Brazil and worldwide.

Argentina stands out for its advances in recognizing the rights of trans populations, especially through the Gender Identity Law (Law No. 26.743/2012), which has inspired other Latin American nations in the struggle for the dignity of the group in focus. According to María Dellacasa (2023), this legal milestone enabled gender self-determination without the need for medical diagnoses or judicial authorization. However, challenges remain, such as barriers to accessing healthcare, education, and the labor market. Discrimination still reflects a gap between legally guaranteed rights and their effective application in everyday life, highlighting the need for continuous efforts and further theoretical development.

It is significant to survey existing studies in Argentina concerning BBI trans graduate students, considering that investigating this topic in a country that has achieved certain advances in trans rights would contribute to the epistemological field of education and transgender studies in Brazil. Strengthening Latin American research networks and valuing knowledge produced in the Global South are of utmost importance.

This research is structured into four main sections. First, we discuss our theoretical understandings of the categories addressed, including intersectionality and the challenges faced by racialized trans populations in higher education. Next, we detail the methodology employed to conduct the state-of-knowledge review. Subsequently, we discuss the findings, and finally, we present the concluding remarks, which summarize the results and suggest directions for the continuation of the larger project of which this article is one of the products.

2 Theoretical Framework

When addressing transsexuality, it becomes necessary to define what we mean by "trans person", a foundational concept for the development of the text. We take as a reference the philosopher Paul Preciado (2019), a trans theorist and activist, for whom transsexuality is a dissidence from the sex/gender system, a construction of the body that

moves away from the rituals of normality and signals the multiplicity of life. Preciado (2017, p. 23), drawing from his readings of Teresa de Lauretis, develops the notion that sex and gender are "devices inscribed in a complex technological system," meaning they are human technologies and not "natural" destinies of the body. Sex can be denaturalized as countless technologies, such as clothes and haircuts, serve for the sexual identification of human beings in society, making genital observation obsolete in many moments.

Trans people are those who, having been assigned a sex at birth (female or male), go through a process of disidentification (total or partial) with what that sex/gender represents in society. Regarding the different terms used to designate these individuals, transfeminist Letícia Nascimento (2021) emphasizes that the word *trans* encompasses dissident identities, including trans women, trans men, transgender people, transmasculine people, *travestis*, and non-binary individuals. Certain political positions, such as that adopted by Nascimento (2021), reinforce the *travesti* identity by granting it visibility beyond the "umbrella term," given the intense marginalization this group faces in society. For the purposes of this state-of-knowledge study, we adopt a broad understanding of trans identities, without separate distinctions.

Accordingly, throughout this article, terms such as "trans people" and "trans population" are used to refer to subjects of transsexuality and their "possibilities of new styles of existence" (Peixe; Morelli, 2018, p. 415). The term transsexualism, on the other hand, has been rejected for its pejorative and pathologizing connotation. As André Oliveira (2020, p. 19) explains, "to classify transsexuality as 'transsexualism' [...] is not merely to codify a pathology. It is heterosexual normativity at work." Concepts such as transsexuality or transgenderism, conversely, promote greater ethical treatment at the discursive level.

Our research, by integrating issues related to BBI people, examines the trajectories of trans individuals through an intersectional perspective, considering social markers of difference that extend beyond gender. According to sociologists

Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge (2020), this analytical approach investigates power relations in societies marked by diversity, demonstrating that categories such as gender, race, sexual orientation, and ethnicity are interrelated within human experience. As a result, the intersectional debate we undertake interweaves racial and gender issues, while also incorporating the academic dimension, since our goal is to examine the inclusion of this population in graduate programs (*stricto sensu*).

Italian researcher Teresa de Lauretis (1994) emphasizes that, although power is productive, it does not necessarily have positive effects and may result in violent oppression of certain groups. According to the author, gender construction takes place through power relations within institutional discourses and gender technologies. However, it is also possible to construct marginal genders outside the heterosexual contract, as a form of resistance to oppressive norms. Donna Haraway (1991), in turn, argues that scientific discourses are powerful instruments for the imposition of meanings, which are constantly changing. Thus, both Lauretis and Haraway show that gender discourses not only regulate and normalize identities but also open possibilities for contestation and the reinscription of meanings upon the body, a dynamic present within social institutions, including universities.

To discuss the trajectories of trans people in higher education, it is fair to consider not only the institutional barriers commonly imposed by the academic system, marked by a culture of limited access. It is relevant to analyze other crossings that influence these experiences, since transphobic, racist, colonial, and classist discourses are not separate from higher education institutions (HEIs). In this context, intersectional thought aids in developing an analysis that reflects on the exclusion of BBI trans bodies. Collins and Bilge (2020) argue that even as an increasing number of students who diverge from whiteness and cisnormativity enter HEIs, the power relations embedded in social structures continue to negatively impact the creation of more equitable spaces.

The queer theorist Jack Halberstam (2020), when discussing academic structures, points out that they often privilege life trajectories aligned with cisgender, heterosexual,

white, and Eurocentric norms, thereby excluding subjectivities that deviate from these models. Thus, in relation to the norm, BBI trans people are seen as failed bodies, though this does not mean they are unqualified to produce knowledge. Michel Foucault (2005, p. 12), in his course *Society Must Be Defended*, delivered at the Collège de France in 1976, asserts the importance of fostering “subjugated knowledges”, those historically disqualified and considered hierarchically inferior, in order to promote a critical rupture with the hegemonic structures perpetuated within academia.

3 Methodology

Regarding the research pathways, this study is situated within both qualitative and quantitative paradigms and is exploratory in nature. According to Antônio Gil (2017), this methodological approach seeks to generate familiarity with a specific theme, enabling the recognition of existing scientific production and a deeper understanding of the issues investigated, which may serve as a basis for future studies.

Furthermore, this article is classified as a “state of knowledge” or “state of the art” study, which, according to Norma Ferreira (2002), encompasses bibliographic research whose main challenges lie in mapping and problematizing academic production across different fields. Such studies make it possible to inventory, systematize, and describe which aspects have been emphasized and prioritized in the literature during a given period. We selected materials published between 2014 and 2024, considering that gathering recent research on the topic would be particularly relevant.

The corpus of the study was built from the database of the institutional repository of the *Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas* (CONICET), a free and open-access platform of the Argentine government that makes available research developed in the country. We chose this platform due to its national significance, as CONICET is the main Argentine organization for the promotion of science. The search encompassed dissertations, theses, book chapters, and scientific articles, using the descriptors *persona trans* + *posgrado*, which correspond to the Spanish translations of the

Portuguese terms “*peessoa trans*” and “*pós-graduação*” (“*trans person*” and “*graduate studies*”).

We identified the available publications in the repository through the intersection of these descriptors. Next, we selected the works that fit the scope of our research, as the initial results were diverse and included studies that did not align with our objectives. The inclusion criteria considered works that directly addressed trans issues in connection with access to and permanence in higher education. Conversely, we excluded studies that discussed trans identities without considering intersections with the university context.

The final stage involved organizing the collected data. For this purpose, we created a table using the free online tool *Google Sheets*, which allows the creation, visualization, editing, and analysis of data through spreadsheets, tables, and dynamic charts. In this table, we recorded the authors’ names, titles, electronic addresses for text access, year of publication, type of work (scientific article or book chapter), keywords, methodological approach, objectives, and summaries of the selected studies.

3 Results and Discussion

When initiating the search in the repository, we included descriptors related to ethnicity (*afrodescendiente*, *negro*, *indígenas*, *pueblos originarios*). However, to ensure the continuity of the research, these terms were later discarded due to the absence of results that articulated them with the topic of trans people in higher education. We also searched for keywords that could yield the largest possible number of studies on trans people, testing the terms *transgénero* and *transexual*, but without success. The variation in terminology used to refer to trans individuals can be explained by the inconsistency in the use of categories encompassing this population, given the wide diversity of identities included under the “trans” umbrella term, as previously mentioned. For this reason, we chose to adopt a broader approach before defining the specific use of *persona trans*. Below, we present the research corpus, composed of the selected works:

Table 1: Search Results in the CONICET Institutional Repository

Academic works on trans people in Higher Education in Argentina				
Author	year	Type of work	Title	Keywords
NEWTON, Camila.	2024	Article	<i>Travestis y trans en la universidad: conquistas y desafíos institucionales (2020-2021)</i>	<i>Travestis y Trans; Itinerarios biográficos; Universidades</i>
GODOY, Gabriel Cesar; ALLER, Camila Dordoni; BROZ, Mariana Álvarez.	2021	Book chapter	<i>Experiencias trans en el ámbito universitario</i>	<i>Sociabilidad; violencias; erotismos; universidad</i>
BOY, Martín Guillermo; RODRIGUEZ, Maria Florencia; NEER, Anahí Farji; NEWTON, Camila.	2021	Book chapter	<i>Lo que las Jornadas nos dejaron: saberes, cuerpos y territorios en tensión</i>	<i>Travestis y Trans; Conurbano Bonaerense; Territorio; Universidad</i>
BLANCO, Rafael.	2021	Book chapter	<i>Territorios del saber y espacio universitario: apuestas y límites de la cis-academia</i>	<i>Saberes; Cis; Género; Universidad</i>

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The Table 01 indicates that, among the four findings—one article and three book chapters—all were published in the last five years, that is, in a short period of time. The authorship of these texts comprises eight different individuals, with Camila Newton standing out as the only author appearing more than once in the sample. The social scientist is responsible for the individually authored article *Travestis y trans en la universidad: conquistas y desafíos institucionales (2020–2021)* and is also a coauthor of the chapter *Lo que las Jornadas nos dejaron: saberes, cuerpos y territorios en tensión*.

According to Newton's profile on the CONICET website, her research revolves around gender-related themes. Specifically, she focuses on understanding the life-production strategies developed by trans people in the northwestern region of Greater Buenos Aires, which includes the experience of university life, as reflected in the topics of

the works found. In her 2024 article, she reports that the presence of trans people in Argentine universities is a recent and scarcely documented achievement.

Among the selected book chapters, *Territorios del saber y espacio universitario: apuestas y límites de la cis-academia* and *Lo que las Jornadas nos dejaron: saberes, cuerpos y territorios en tensión* are part of the same volume, *Experiencias Travestis y Trans: diálogos entre la organización colectiva, el territorio y la universidad*. Meanwhile, the chapter *Experiencias trans en el ámbito universitario* is included in the book *Sociabilidad, violencias y erotismos en el ámbito universitario*. It is worth highlighting that both books were published by university presses in 2021. They resulted from research projects developed, respectively, at the *Universidad Nacional de General San Martín* (UNSAM) and the *Universidad Nacional de José Clemente Paz* (UNPAZ), both public institutions located in the Buenos Aires metropolitan area. Newton's 2024 article also stems from her master's research conducted at UNPAZ.

The fact that all the studies were produced at public universities in Greater Buenos Aires suggests a concentration of research on trans experiences in these institutions, possibly reflecting a commitment to gender and sexuality agendas. The absence of studies from other regions of Argentina indicates a lack of geographic distribution in this type of research, while the recent publication dates (2021 and 2024) reveal that discussions on the presence of trans people in academia are still in an incipient stage. However, the small number of findings prevents any statistically grounded inferences, implying a certain limitation in the scope of conclusions.

The relationship between social issues and academia also stands out, as both universities promote debates on human diversity, particularly on gender issues. For example, UNSAM has a *Dirección de Género y Diversidad Sexual* (DGyDS), which is responsible for organizing and participating in activities on the topic, in addition to offering a course on *Gender and Sexual Diversity Policies from a Human Rights Perspective*. UNPAZ, in turn, hosts the *Instituto de Estudios Sociales en Contextos de Desigualdades* (IESCODE/UNPAZ), which coordinates programs promoting equity and research projects focused on gender and sexuality. These initiatives can be partly explained by the

institutional changes that emerged after the implementation of the Gender Identity Law, which aimed to promote the inclusion of trans people in different spaces.

Furthermore, there is a clear gap in academic production concerning Black and Indigenous trans populations and trans individuals in graduate education, as the identified works addressed mainly the undergraduate or broader university context. No studies were found that specifically addressed the intersectionalities targeted by this research. This silence may be understood in light of the structural conditions of academia, which has historically excluded marginalized and minority groups. According to Foucault (2005), we must resist totalizing and homogenizing discourses that have produced a biased and uncritical version of history. This perspective reinforces how challenging the lack of intersectional research in the Argentine database is, as it hinders the legitimization of subjugated knowledges.

The latest census conducted by the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos* (INDEC) in 2022 includes Indigenous and Afro-descendant populations (*población indígena* and *población afrodescendiente*, in the original language) in specific chapters of the document, without providing a separate classification for the white population, a detail that denotes a somewhat discriminatory approach in the census itself. It is estimated that there are 1,306,730 Indigenous people and 302,936 Afro-descendants out of a total of 45,892,285 Argentines (INDEC, 2025); in other words, approximately 3.5% of the population, a small proportion compared to the 96.5% classified as white. This makes the PPI trans community, which represents an even smaller number of people, easily marginalized in scientific production due to its level of specificity. Nevertheless, these figures represent more than statistics; they stand for lives whose rights are constantly violated.

Camila Newton's (2024) article *Travestis y Trans en la Universidad: Conquistas y Desafíos Institucionales (2020–2021)* explores the experiences of travesti and trans women who entered university in Argentina, based on interviews conducted during her master's research. The study focused on the impact of the Gender Identity Law as a turning point in the interviewees' lives, particularly regarding access to higher education. Newton

(2024) pointed to the need for more inclusive institutions to welcome trans people, as the interviewees reported not feeling respected in these spaces. She also highlighted the importance of building institutional trust through the sharing of memories and lived experiences within the trans community.

Meanwhile, the study conducted by Gabriel Cesar Godoy, Camila Dordoni Aller, and Mariana Álvarez Broz (2021) analyzed the academic inclusion and adaptation of trans people, emphasizing the stigmatization and challenges faced in social and administrative interactions within universities. The research also examined the material living conditions of trans individuals, showing that they are directly related to barriers in accessing and remaining in higher education. Like Newton (2024), the authors suggested the need for institutional policies and pedagogical strategies that go beyond respect for gender identity to also address socio-educational vulnerabilities and the specific knowledge produced by this population.

In the text *Lo que las Jornadas nos dejaron: saberes, cuerpos y territorios en tensión*, the authors underscored the importance of universities in addressing issues related to trans bodies, a topic discussed during a scientific event at UNPAZ. They also highlighted the responsibility of cisgender individuals in dismantling oppressive logics, moving beyond the notion that only trans people bear the duty of defending their identities. The publication included contributions from various members of the trans community, aiming to democratize knowledge and promote social inclusion of trans people within the Buenos Aires academic context.

The fourth and final chapter presented here, by Rafael Blanco (2021), criticizes what he called the "cis-academia", arguing that, despite the advancement of gender perspectives in Argentine universities, something he illustrates with the initiative of gender-neutral restrooms, there are still significant limitations in inclusion and accessibility for trans people, who do not feel they belong to higher education. According to the author, the institutionally cisgender academy does not have resources that sufficiently impact the lives of the trans university population for their knowledge to be properly valued and cultivated.

Thus, the studies analyzed portray a scenario of underrepresentation and devaluation of trans bodies and experiences in Argentine universities. The four findings presented in Table 01 indicate that higher education reproduces cisnormative exclusions and that gender-dissident bodies, therefore, challenge institutional and epistemic boundaries. To access and remain in universities, these studies show that trans people have developed their own strategies of resistance, such as demanding the enforcement of the Gender Identity Law, valuing trans epistemologies and knowledge derived from their trajectories, and promoting the decentralization and de-hierarchization of knowledge through more inclusive pedagogical practices. These strategies are only possible through collaboration with others, requiring cisgender people to critically examine and revise the cisnormative structures that govern the university.

5 Final Considerations

Consulting the CONICET institutional repository provided us with a sample of the academic discussions emerging in Argentina regarding the education of trans people. We were able to access four productions—one article and three book chapters—that focused on the trans population and their presence in universities. Additionally, we identified that the favorable legislative landscape promoting the professional training of trans individuals has not resulted in a significant increase in research on trans experiences in higher education. In addition to the small number of studies found, the existing ones are restricted to the undergraduate context, with no explicit concern for graduate-level education.

Argentine research on trans issues in the university setting is still at an early stage, with developments concentrated in public universities located in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires. The localization and recency of these works suggest, to some extent, a growing institutional commitment to trans agendas in major urban centers, while also revealing a significant geographical gap in such investigations. The absence of studies addressing Black and Indigenous trans people, as well as the lack of research focused on the reality of graduate programs, indicates an open field for further exploration. Studies

developed in regions with higher concentrations of Indigenous populations, for instance, could yield valuable insights into the presence of Indigenous and Afro-descendant trans individuals in higher education.

The studies identified revealed that, despite the progress and achievements brought by affirmative policies such as the 2012 Gender Identity Law, universities still reproduce cisnormative and exclusionary practices that cause discomfort for trans bodies, thereby hindering their permanence. The resilience demonstrated by trans people, who develop their own strategies to continue their studies, highlights the urgent need to revise academic structures toward the creation of more inclusive spaces that truly value trans presence and its potential for knowledge production within academia. The pursuit of trans epistemologies and the appreciation of knowledge that transcends the boundaries of the university point to the necessity of a deep transformation in pedagogical processes and teaching methods, a transformation that would benefit not only trans individuals but also other marginalized and excluded groups.

It is important to recognize that discussions on gender diversity within academia are fundamental to promoting equity. The current limitations in academic production, combined with the underrepresentation of historically silenced groups such as Indigenous and Afro-descendant trans populations, must be overcome to ensure the expansion of these debates. Universities play a crucial role in social transformation, yet the open access to Argentine institutions contrasts with the shortcomings in support for student retention. Increasing the number of studies that adopt intersectionality as a guiding principle for understanding society, and that amplify diverse voices, especially trans voices, as active subjects in knowledge construction, is a viable path against the racist and transphobic oppressions perpetuated across various institutions.

Finally, we emphasize that the internationalization of Latin American knowledge on the experiences of trans people in higher education plays a significant role in strengthening discussions on inclusion and diversity. The research conducted within the Argentine context aligns with the country's legislative and social advances, while also highlighting the ongoing challenges in producing scientific knowledge about Indigenous and Afro-

descendant trans realities, particularly at the graduate level. This study not only contributes to understanding the Argentine context but also encourages reflection on the need to address trans issues through an intersectional lens, a perspective increasingly adopted in Brazil and other Latin American countries. Collaborative research networks across the Global South can be essential in intensifying the fight against racial and gender-based violence and discrimination within different nations and educational systems. Such collaboration fosters the exchange of knowledge that enables a more effective transformation of higher education institutions into plural, critical, and counter-hegemonic spaces.

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