

Articulations of Indigenous Allyship in Higher Education in the Northern Territory: a phenomenological exploration of the in-between spaces

Abstract

Indigenous Allyship (IA) has become an unqualified anthropomorphism: a zeitgeist of racial identity re-claiming and the power dynamics of othering. Without evidence-based qualification to date, multiple iterations of Indigenous Allyship: performative allyship, optical allyship and allyship activism (Kalina, 2020; Ibrahim, 2020; Phillips, 2020; Rudhuran, 2020; Hadley, et al. 2024; Hesford, 2021), have infiltrated the higher education landscape locally, nationally and internationally. This research will provide the first phenomenological and evidence-based research on articulations of Indigenous Allyship (IA), in the Northern Territory higher education context. This imported language is positioned as the phenomenon to be studied. The qualitative methodology applies Anzaldúa's Borderlands Theory, providing a language and conceptual framework of marginalised populations, to explore the in-between places and crossing of borders. Borderlands Theory is partnered with a variation on phenomenography, to de-centre the participants as objects of research, and to map their perceptions and interpretations of the phenomenon. The findings will reveal the qualitatively different ways Indigenous students and academics experience and conceptualise IA. New data may inform policy and practice, in the Indigenous higher education sector. The data's early findings counter the consistently negative and polarising narrative of Indigenous disadvantage in education in the Northern Territory, providing a new language of agency and process in academic mobility. This research will contribute to an international body of knowledge on Indigenous Allyship and begin conversations about articulations of Indigenous Allyship in higher education in the Northern Territory. It is expected that this critically relational social research will have local, national and international implications.