NOT ALL ALLIES ARE CREATED EQUAL: A RELATIONAL EXAMINATION OF ALLIED RELATIONSHIPS FOR WOMEN OF COLOR AT WORK

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Abstract

In recent years, allyship has been lauded as a solution to support marginalized individuals and dismantle oppressive structures, illustrated by increasing discourse around being a "good ally" in workplaces. While allyship research suggests having work allies can help marginalized employees such as women of color navigate the workplace, traditional allyship scholarship has tended to frame allyship as a general set of overarching behaviours without delineating the nuances of different forms of ally behaviours. Further, allyship has been defined as a relationship between a marginalized person and a demographically dissimilar individual with a dominant identity who advocates on behalf of the marginalized person. This definition may not reflect the reality of marginalized group members as it does not explain how they forge beneficial ally relationships within or outside of their social groups, especially with members of other marginalized groups. Integrating scholarship on positive relationships at work (PRW) with critical intersectional perspectives on allies for women of color, I examine allyship from a relational perspective to uncover what constitutes a "good ally" and what kind of allyships women of color forge at work. Through an inductive qualitative examination of allyship using interviews with 30 dyads of women of color and their workplace allies (for a total of 60 informants), I provide a framework of intersectional allyship that challenges traditional notions of allyship and moves our understanding forward by proposing four key dimensions of allyship behaviours and three types of allied relationships at work. This framework also explicates gaps that exist between allyships expected by women of color vis-à-vis allyship as enacted by allies, thus highlighting challenges in allied practices and relationships.

Lay Summary

This dissertation aims to examine allied relationships forged and held by women of color in workplaces. The term ally has typically been used to refer to an individual who belongs to a dominant group (e.g., men) providing support to a marginalized individual. My findings illustrate that allied relationships can be formed between two individuals who both belong to marginalized groups, and such allied relationships can be especially effective in creating positive experiences for the beneficiary of allyship. Further, I identify four key dimensions of allyship and motivations of allies, which help me develop three types of allied relationships that exist for women of color in workplaces.

Preface

This dissertation was developed, designed, collected and analyzed by Barnini Bhattacharyya under the supervision of Professors Jennifer L. Berdahl and Lingtao Yu at the University of British Columbia, Brent Lyons at York University, and Laura Morgan Roberts at the University of Virginia. The research is original and unpublished. Data was collected under UBC Human Ethics Certificate H20-03150.

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A PhD does not happen in isolation. For me, it took a village to undertake this journey, and I am endlessly grateful to my ancestors and the universe for bringing such abundance into my life. I hope to do justice to this privilege as I move forward in this journey.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my late grandfather, Sunil Bhattacharjee (Thadda), who believed in me, loved me deeply and held space for me as nobody else has ever done. Thadda had a brilliant mind, and excelled academically, but had to stop studying after his Bachelor's degree to start working to take care of his family, who had lost everything during India's partition due to their forced displacement. Thadda had the biggest heart I have ever known, and his generosity of spirit was known by everyone in our community, which helped our family establish deep roots in a new country, the benefits of which I continue to reap. Thanks to him and my grandmother, who built our family up from scratch, I received the opportunities and privileges that allowed me to achieve this milestone.

Thadda, this is for you. I hope you are proud.

1 Introduction

A 2018 Forbes article[1] noted that allyship was the key to "unlocking the power of diversity" in organizations. It listed what allyship is, and how one can be a good ally. It noted that anyone has the ability to be an ally – white people can be allies to people of color, able-bodied people to disabled people, cis people to trans people, and so on. This mirrors what extant research defines as an ally – a member of a dominant group who works to end oppression through behaviours that support or advocate on behalf of a marginalized group or group member (Sabat et al., 2013; Washington and Evans, 1991). Certain groups or members of groups have been historically treated as powerless and insignificant due to their location in larger structures of power and oppression (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989), thus positioning them as marginalized in these structures. In opposition, certain groups or members of groups have been conferred power and privilege due to their location in these structures of power and oppression, positioning them as dominant. The term "ally" therefore refers to someone who uses their power to support a marginalized person through their actions and behaviour (Rosette and Thompson, 2005). Specifically, allies are motivated to move beyond an acknowledgment of prejudice to take meaningful action to disrupt it (Brown and Ostrove, 2013). Erskine and Bilimoria (2019) have noted the potential of white allyship as transformative in creating positive and meaningful relationships in organizations and alleviating race- and gender-based biases.

This understanding of allyship work as advocacy by a person who belongs to a dominant group *on behalf* of a marginalized person (e.g. men as allies to women, Fabiano et al, 2003; white women to Black women, Johnson and Pietri, 2022; able-bodied individuals to disabled

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[1] Atcheson, S. (2018). Allyship - The Key To Unlocking The Power Of Diversity. Forbes. Retrieved from https://www.forbes.com/sites/shereeatcheson/2018/11/30/allyship-the-key-to-unlocking-the-power-of-diversity/?sh=51ef90cb49c6

individuals, Sabat et al, 2014; heterosexual individuals to LGB individuals, Washington and Evans, 1991) limits our understanding of allyship and the powerful scope of what it entails, both in terms of the people who are allies and their impact. Moreover, limiting the concept of allyship and its behaviours to members of dominant groups ignores the very real work around allyship undertaken *within* marginalized groups, such as relationships of mutual support between women of color (e.g., hooks, 1986), to dismantle inequality.

Further, the sparse literature on workplace allyship tends to present an uncritical view of allyship behaviour (Russell and Bohan, 2016), positing allyship as unequivocally beneficial for marginalized groups. This does not reflect the complexity that exists in allyship behaviours, such as "performative allyship," wherein dominant group members profess support for a marginalized group, but in a way that is not helpful, or even damaging (Kalina, 2020; Phillips, 2020). For example, in the aftermath of George Floyd's murder in 2020, non-Black allies posted Black squares on their social media to express outrage and profess support (Wellman, 2022), but not only did this not benefit the Black community, it led to valuable information posted on social media harder to access for protestors and community members because they used the same hashtags. Such actions do not dismantle oppression and can become an exercise in signalling that one is a good ally instead of providing tangible support, thus giving rise to ineffective allyship behaviours. Ineffective allyship does not focus on what the marginalized group members desire and need, generating a gap between what marginalized groups expect from allies and what allies actually do (e.g., people of color expect allies to engage in racial issues, which white allies are less willing to do, Brown and Ostrove, 2013). Such allyship actions can therefore also serve to reinforce systems of oppression instead of dismantling them. In workplaces, in particular, allyship can become diluted to be more palatable, and it becomes a badge to be worn.

In this dissertation, I define allyship as a relationship rooted in shared goals of equity and inclusion held between allies and their intended beneficiaries, and corresponding actions and behaviours toward meeting those goals. "Good" allyship involves working together towards these shared goals. Thus, I also argue that allyship is inherently relational in terms of its intended impact and outcome, and therefore, allied relationships become sites of power, where the ally is positioned as powerful or dominant, and the intended beneficiary is positioned as less powerful or marginalized. Relationality within allyship can exist at multiple levels: at the individual level, at the group level, or at the institutional level. Adopting a relational lens helps us understand and situate allyship within existing structures of power and oppression. Thus, a full understanding of allyship requires an examination of allyship from a relational perspective, from the viwpoint of both the ally as well as the target of the ally.

This begins with identifying marginalized individuals who are part of allied dyads at work, and targets of allyship behaviours in the relationship. The target who is in such an allied relationship would be able to identify the other person in the dyad as an ally based on their own definitions and understanding of who an ally is. Research has found that marginalized individuals can accurately identify supportive peers (Livingston et al., 2007). Thus, we would gain insight into what targets of allyship think about their allies, what allyship behaviours they interpret as supportive and what as not, as well as what the ally considers effective allyship behaviours, and why they engage in allyship behaviours. A relational lens also allows us to evaluate the effectiveness of allies and their behaviours as ultimately defined by the beneficiaries of allyship, thus giving them more agency in an inherently imbalanced relationship.

In sum, I argue that allyship is best evaluated from a relational perspective that integrates the perspective of the marginalized group or group member that the ally is trying to support, as

well as the ally's own perceptions and motivations. This dyadic-level construction of allyship helps to shed light on the complex behaviours and motivations that I suggest influence the extent of its effectiveness. Based on these two underlying theoretical arguments, I undertake an examination of allyship through a dyadic lens to shed light on what constitutes a good ally. I focus on allied relationships held by women of color at work, who are among the people most in need of allies due to their marginalized racial and gender identities. Such dual marginalization subjects women of color to magnified and unique forms of mistreatment and discrimination (e.g., double jeopardy for workplace harassment, Berdahl and Moore, 2006; lowest wages, Cusick, 202; intersectional invisibility, Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach, 2008).

My approach to studying allyship departs from and adds to prior scholarship, much of which to date has examined allyship only from the perspective of allies, which can present an uncritical view of allyship, lead to inaccurate conclusions about the impact of allyship, overestimate the positive consequences of allyship in supporting marginalized individuals and challenging oppression, and overlook or underestimate the negative impact of allyship on marginalized individuals (Kutlaca et al., 2020; Russel & Bohan, 2016; Selvanathan, Lickel, & Dasgupta, 2020). A few studies have examined allyship from the perspective of beneficiaries of allyship (e.g. Ashburn-Nardo, 2018; Cheng et al., 2019; Ostrove & Brown, 2013; Ostrove & Crawford, 2006; Warren et al, 2021), finding that routine superficial interactions between allies and marginalized group members can be disempowering for marginalized individuals, and that allies may not understand what creates beneficial interactions and outcomes for marginalized individuals (e.g., Dixon, Levine, Reicher, & Durrheim, 2012; Rattan & Ambady, 2014; Saguy et al., 2009; Wright, 2001).

The goal of this dissertation is to examine allied relationships held by women of color in workplaces, the characteristics of these relationships in terms of allyship behaviours and expectations, and how different types of allied relationships influence women of color's experiences at work. Women of color are likely to be in allied relationships with coworkers who hold egalitarian beliefs and want to take action to support marginalized groups, creating the opportunity for allied relationships to truly be transformative for women of color. As noted earlier, however, it is possible that not all allyship behaviours are helpful, and some may even be damaging. I thus ask the following questions with the current research: (a) what is effective allyship, (b) how does expected allyship overlap or differ from experienced allyship for women of color, and why, (c) what kinds of allied relationships do women of color have at work, and (d) how do these allied relationships relate to the gap between expected and enacted allyship. Thus, I examine allied relationships through the perspectives of the members of self-identified allied dyads to uncover behaviours, expectations, and motivations in allyship.

To answer these questions, I integrate scholarship on positive relationships at work (PRW) (Ragins and Dutton, 2007) with critical perspectives on allyship (Erskine and Bilimoria, 2019) to extend our understanding of allied relationships by focusing on the motivations, attributes, and outcomes of allied relationships for women of color within and between marginalized groups. PRW directs our focus to the mutually beneficial relationships between people at work. I posit that one such relationship is that of allyship between women of color and their allies at work and examine allyship through a positive relational lens.

To reap the benefits of positive relationships at work, marginalized employees are encouraged to "lean in" and integrate themselves within their organizations by participating in organizational activities such as going to drinks or spending time with colleagues outside of

work (Ensari and Miller, 2006; Pratt and Rosa, 2003; Sandberg, 2003). However, Dumas et al. (2013) have shown that such one-sided integration behaviours can be ineffective. Marginalized group members often experience discomfort in many workplace situations, for various reasons, such as a heightened awareness of their own differences (Bacharach, et al., 2005), fear of experiencing microaggressions, or feeling excluded (Cha et al., 2019; Chaudoir and Fisher, 2010; Sue et al., 2007). Thus, assimilation strategies by marginalized employees have limited efficacy, and may even encourage superficial and instrumental relationship-building (Ibarra, 1995).

I suggest that allyship is one type of positive workplace relationship which can engender positive workplace experiences for women of color without requiring them to put themselves at risk or engaging in integrating behaviours, since it is uniquely supposed to challenge marginalization and discrimination. Therefore, I put forth that allyship goes beyond a typical positive workplace relationship through its focus on dismantling inequality and supporting the needs of the focal person – the individual the ally is trying to support - in the relationships. However, I also argue that allyship behaviour may not always be effective, even if well-meaning, and that allies may not necessarily have insight into what the focal person needs. Thus, a gap can exist between expected and enacted allyship. Finally, I argue that allied relationships exist on a broader scale and can develop between individuals who are both marginalized to encompass deeper connections and forms of support. These reasons make allyship an important workplace relationship to study.

I adopt an intersectional lens and philosophical approach to this research (Crenshaw, 1989, Collins, 2000; Settles and Buchanan, 2014), to understand the unique allyship experiences and challenges for women of color. Intersectional research shows that gender and race interact in qualitative, rather than quantitative, ways to shape a person's social experiences and outcomes.

In keeping with this, I consider the complexity of women of color's identities and experiences due to their multiple marginalization as I study their allied relationships. Finally, I focus on individuals already embedded in positive ally relationships, or women of color who have allies who also identify as allies.

I conduct an inductive qualitative study through in-depth interviews with 30 dyads of women of color and nominated allies, for a total of 60 informants. My findings suggest that, contrary to my expectations as well as what extant literature on allyship would predict, effective allied relationships occur most effectively *between* women of color, and not between a woman of color and a person from a higher status social group. Although my sample includes allies nominated by women of color, and who were thus perceived as allies by their nominators, I nevertheless identified differences in effectiveness and impact of different types of allied relationships. Importantly, over one-third of my informants nominated another woman of color as their ally, and noted that they did not have an ally who belonged to a higher-status social group (e.g., men, White folks). In other words, women of colors' definitions and experiences of allyship differ from prior definitions and characterizations of allies in the literature. I thus reposition the construct of allyship by challenging historical notions of allyship, and showing how non-traditional allied relationships are critical to current anti-oppressive work in organizations.

In my analysis, I identify four key dimensions of allied relationships, based on what women of color expect from their allies and what they receive from those allies: (1) Who is centered (the target of allyship or the ally), (2) What is the focus (the impact of allyship behaviours or the intent of allyship behaviours), (3) Whether the ally has an affective connection with the target or an instrumental one, and (4) Whether there is reciprocity in allyship between

the parties. These dimensions either reinforce status quo or challenge status quo. The extent to which relationships vary on each of these dimensions leads to different types of allied relationships which give rise to variable support to women of color. Based on this, I develop a typology of allied relationships: (a) paternalistic allyship, (b) imbalanced allyship, and (c) holistic allyship. I also identify differences in perceptions of allyship between focal women of color and allies and find that the type of relationships forged within ally dyads also relate to the extent of difference in these perceptions, so that dyads with aligned perceptions are most effective. Finally, my analyses suggest that allyship is differentially experienced based on motivations for and tangible outcomes of the allied relationship, as well as overlapping identities within a dyad. Therefore, emergent from my findings, I argue that allyship is a positive workplace relationship in which an effective ally works to dismantle inequality and supports the focal person the way that person needs, and, importantly, the ally does not need to be a person who belongs to a demographically different and higher status social group.

With this study I broaden the scope of theory and research on allied relationships at work. My inductively derived categories of allied relationships enhance our understanding of PRW by centering the relational allyship experiences of women of color. I further develop insights on racial relations outside of the U.S, in the country of Canada, a context whose racial issues are understudied in management and often subsumed within narratives of race relations in the U.S. Historic systems of oppression operate differently in different contexts to affect the formation of ally relationships at work. I anticipate that my dissertation will also shape the practice of allyship to foster more inclusive and equitable workplaces for marginalized employees.

This paper contributes to the literature on positive relationships at work by centering the analysis around allyship as a means for demarginalization. I uncover the potential for positive

workplace experiences through allyship for women of color at work from a relational perspective, as well as the potential for negative experiences and outcomes. By focussing on individuals already embedded in positive relationships, in that they are recognized as allies by women of color, and themselves identify as allied, and thus are likely to have longer-term impact on reduction in prejudice (Lindsey et al., 2015), I highlight the necessity of moving beyond good intentions to tangible actions. I thus critically engage with the experience of workplace allyship and broaden my understanding of what it means to be a "good" ally. In doing so, I expand the scope of theory and research within positive organizational scholarship and PWRs (Cameron and Dutton, 2003; Dutton, Roberts, and Bednar, 2010). This offers insight into effective strategies for dismantling inequality and demarginalizing certain identities at work. More generally, this research provides direction about *how* allies and organizations can make workplace environments more inclusive and creating spaces for positive, affirming experiences for women of color to allow them to succeed and live up to their potential at work.

1.1 Allyship at Work

The term "ally" originates from advocacy work on LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual) issues, and referred to heterosexual, cisgender individuals who supported and advocated on behalf of members of the queer community (Washington and Evans, 1991; Sabat et al., 2013). In keeping with this, a large majority of allyship research has focussed on heterosexual allies to LGB individuals (e.g., Clark, 2010; DiStefano, et al., 2000; Fingerhut, 2011; Grzanka et al., 2015; Ji, 2007). Currently, "ally" is used to refer to any individual in a demographically dissimilar relationship who belongs to a higher status social group than the other person in the relationship and uses their relative status to dismantle inequality (Erskine and Billimoria, 2019; Phillips et al., 2009; Rosette and Thompson, 2005).

Dismantling inequality can occur in various ways, ranging from educating the self or members of one's own dominant social group about inequality and how to dismantle it (intra-group allyship), positive or supportive interactions with non-dominant group members (inter-group allyship), to activism and advocacy (structural allyship) (Brown and Ostrove, 2013; Case, 2012). Extant research has focussed on four broad themes when studying allyship – the allyship identity, allyship motivation, allyship behaviours, and allyship impact. I review each theme below.

1.1.1 The Ally Identity

As noted above, an ally has been defined as a member of a dominant group who engages in action to reduce inequality. Specifically, an ally aims to promote social justice, as well as provide support to marginalized group members. Some scholars have distinguished allies from individuals who are merely non-prejudiced, highlighting that allies are willing to take action (Craig, Badaan, and Brown, 2020; Ostrove and Brown, 2013), thus orienting allyship as an action-focussed phenomenon. This action can be aimed at intragroup change, occurring by a member of a dominant social group with other members of that dominant group, or at intergroup change, in the form of support for marginalized group members, or structural change, aimed at social activism. Such allyship action necessitates going beyond expressing non-prejudice to understanding what the marginalized individual or group needs. This is most likely to happen through meaningful relationships with the marginalized individuals or groups who the ally is seeking to help (Goodman, 2001; Kivel, 2002). Some scholars have also suggested that to be considered an ally, an individual must also be willing to challenge structures and systems from which they themselves benefit (Goodman, 2001; Rosenblum and Travis, 2006). This might include support for reducing wealth held by dominant groups, for instance. This implies that

allyship intentions and support need to exist even when marginalized individuals are not present (Kivel, 2002).

A key aspect of being an ally is being "power-cognizant" (Craig et al., 2020) – acknowledging one's own privilege by virtue of being a member of a group that holds unearned privilege and power (Ostrove and Brown, 2018). For example, awareness of straight privilege is a component of LGB activism (Montgomery and Stewart, 2012) and awareness of white privilege is part of fighting racism (Smith and Redington, 2010). Awareness of privilege has been shown to motivate action to support marginalized groups and challenge unequal power structures, which are essential elements of allyship. For an awareness of privilege to occur, allies may need to maintain some level of identification with their dominant identity. At the same time, identification with their dominant identity without being power-cognizant can undermine allyship. Importantly, the development of such power-cognizance may entail painful self-reflection and reckoning, as well as perspective-taking (Sue et al, 2019). Being an ally requires a continual process of perspective-taking – imagining the other person's thoughts and feelings from their perspective – and reflection (Case, 2012; DeTurk, 2011; Longmire and Harrison, 2018; Roberts, 2007). Perspective-taking is related to empathy and concern for others (Parker and Axtell, 2001), as well as reduced stereotyping others (Galinsky, Ku, and Wang, 2005; Galinsky and Moskovitz, 2000; Ragins and Ehrhardt (2020).

The above discussion highlights that the terms ally and allyship refer to members of dominant groups (e.g., heterosexual individuals, White individuals), their intentions, and their behaviours. Thus, the allyship literature has centered the perspectives and agency of dominant groups and tended to exclude the perspectives and agency of individuals who hold marginalized identities. Leaving members of marginalized groups out of the definition and conversation

around allyship, itself contributes to their marginalization, and overlooks actions and behaviours they themselves may take that fall under the ambit of allyship (Kutlaca, Radke, and Iyer, 2020).

1.1.2 Allyship Motives

Researchers have theorized three general motives for members of dominant groups to engage in allyship: self-interest, social justice, and moral values. Allies motivated by self-interest typically engage in allyship only for marginalized individuals with whom they have personal relationships (Edwards, 2006). They can lack awareness and understanding of structural inequality, as well as of their own privilege. They may see themselves as protectors or saviours who shield a specific individual from harm, even if the individual has not asked for such help. Typically, such help is conditional on the ally's position not being negatively affected (Radke et al, 2020). In extreme cases, such allies may even be motivated to see oneself in a good light and be perceived as a good person, and not hold egalitarian motivations at all (Lous et al., 2019; Warren and Warren, 2021). In fact, allies incur rewards for being perceived as "good" people when engaging in allyship behaviours, irrespective of their reasons for doing so or their impact (Patton and Bodni, 2015), and these personal rewards could motivate them to be an ally. Such allies are unlikely to undertake allyship behaviours when the focal individual(s) is absent (e.g., speaking up for them, or against racism, when among other dominant group members). They may also unwittingly engage in behaviours that reinforce structures of oppression by undertaking allyship behaviours in a patronizing or paternalistic way, without consulting with or fully respecting the marginalized individual.

Even when an ally is power-cognizant, an ally motivated by self-interest may engage in allyship behaviour to alleviate their own guilt instead of supporting marginalized groups. Research has found that dominant group members experience strong guilt and shame when they

become cognizant of their privilege (Tatus, 1992). Again, a way to manage this guilt is to take on the role of protector or saviour for marginalized individuals. Allies who are motivated by self-interest may even demand gratitude and deference from the marginalized individual (Halabi, Nadler, and Dovidio, 2013) or try to take over from the marginalized group or community (Droogendyk et al., 2016). Thus, intergroup helping behaviours are not always benign (Nadler and Halabi, 2015), but can reinforce status differences in various ways.

On the other hand, allies who are motivated by social justice tend to have an in-depth understanding of the structural nature of inequality and oppression, as well as their own positionality in such structures (Bell, 1997; Broido and Reason, 2005; Craig et al., 2020). Such allies aim to work hand-in-hand with marginalized individuals and communities to challenge inequality. They aim not to *help* marginalized individuals per se, but to create a more just world that benefits marginalized individuals and groups overall (Waters, 2010), such as challenging systems such as classism, racism, or sexism (Kendall, 2006).

Finally, a small body of scholarship has theorized and found that allies are motivated by their own values (e.g., justice, religious beliefs, morals) (Ostrove and Brown, 2017; Radke et al, 2020; Russel, 2011). In such cases, allyship behaviour and action is driven by a moral imperative to engage in certain behaviours, such as helping. However, this may or may not align with the needs of marginalized groups.

Such varied motivations highlight that although allies can hold altruistic motivations, there are allies that are not always motivated by a wish to support a marginalized individual or group. Motivations for allies can be mismatched, or even self-serving on occasion. What this scholarship also does not touch upon is whether these motivations exist in allies exclusively, or if they can co-exist. For example, one might expect that social justice motivations can occur

alongside self-interest if being perceived as a person who cares about social justice is valuable to the ally and validates their own desire to be a “good” person. Similarly, moral value motives can overlap with social justice motives, as caring about social justice can be a moral imperative for an ally.

1.1.3 Allyship Behaviours

Thus far, researchers have primarily focussed on allyship by dominant group members and how they enact allyship. As noted earlier, allyship encapsulates behaviours ranging from protesting (Radke et al, 2020; Wright et al, 1990) to sponsorship to bystander interventions in the face of discrimination (Baumert et al, 2013; Collins et al. 2021Erskine and Bilimoria, 2019). However, empirical research on allyship behaviours and actions remains limited.

Some studies have shown that allies can be more effective than targets of mistreatment are in combating and calling out bias. For example, male leaders receive more support than women for endorsing gender equity (Gervais and Hillard, 2014; Hekman et al., 2016) and white speakers are perceived as more persuasive than Black speakers when confronting bias (Rasinski and Czopp, 2010). Dominant group allies have been found to be effective in improving diversity climates in workplaces (e.g., Lindsey, King, McCausland, Jones, and Dunleavy, 2013; Ruggs, Martinez, and Hebl, 2011; Sabat, Martinez, and Wessel, 2013). Allies have the potential to educate perpetrators (Czopp and Monteith, 2003) and to model appropriate behaviour to support marginalized individuals and groups (Warren, Bordoloi, and Warren, 2021).

Because allies who belong to dominant groups are deemed more effective than targets of discrimination in calling out discrimination, researchers have suggested that allies should intervene in situations of mistreatment of a marginalized group member (e.g., to combat microaggressions through micro-interventions, Sue et al., 2019). Although researchers recognize

that intervening as an ally can be challenging (Warren, Sekhon, and Waldrop, 2022), interventions by dominant group members incur lower penalties and greater benefits compared to interventions undertaken by targets themselves.

On the other hand, some scholars have called on dominant group allies to follow the leadership of marginalized individuals and communities and build relationships and coalitions with them to understand and engage in allyship behaviour (e.g., Brown and Ostrove, 2018; Crowfoot and Chesler 2003; Fingerhut, 2011). Allies who approach allyship behaviours from such a framework are more likely to display allyship that benefits marginalized groups, and to bring a structural understanding of inequality to their allyship. However, Patton and Bondi (2005), in their study of white male faculty, found that allies often construct allyship work at the individual level instead of at an institutional level, and perform allyship behaviours that are focussed on individual protection and support rather than structural change, which suggests self-interest or moral value motivations.

1.1.4 Allyship Impact

Finally, some allyship researchers have examined the outcomes and impact of allyship behaviours. As the previous sections highlight, the majority of scholarship studying allies, especially studies that are focussed on race, have been conducted from the perspective of dominant group members. These studies shed light on the allyship experiences of dominant group members, but do not offer much insight into how their allyship behaviours are perceived by and affect marginalized individuals. This focus on allies can present an uncritical view of allyship. It can lead to inaccurate conclusions about the impact of allies, overestimate the positive consequences of allyship in supporting marginalized individuals and challenging oppression, and overlook or underestimate the negative impact of allyship on marginalized

individuals (Kutlaca et al., 2020; Russel and Bohan, 2016; Selvanathan, Lickel, and Dasgupta, 2020).

For example, research showing that confronting prejudice is more effective from a dominant group member than a marginalized individual (e.g., Czopp and Monteith, 2003; Rasinski and Czopp, 2010) might convince us that confrontation by dominant group allies is unequivocally good. However, this would lead us to overlook the potential negative consequences of confrontational behaviours that are motivated by self-interest. For example, confrontation by male allies that is motivated by benevolent sexism (Glick and Fiske, 1996) can negatively impact women's self-efficacy and advancement (Jones et al., 2014; King et al., 2012). In fact, Drookendyk and colleagues (2016) argue that dominant group allies can center themselves in their allyship work, which can undermine the goals of marginalized groups. ltimately, however, good allyship is and should be determined by the intended beneficiaries (Ashforth, Schinoff, and Rogers, 2016).

To address this gap, researchers have started focussing on understanding the impact of allyship through the perspective of the targets of allyship. Multiple researchers have found that routine superficial interactions between allies and marginalized group members can be disempowering for marginalized individuals, and that allies may not understand what creates beneficial interactions and outcomes for marginalized individuals (e.g., Dixon, Levine,; Reicher, and Durrheim, 2012; Saguy et al., 2009; Wright, 2001). For example, one study found that queer folks wanted an explicit call for social change, while allies typically only offered social connection (Rattan and Ambady, 2014). Brooks and Edwards (2009) interviewed 12 LGBT employees to understand what they want from allies, finding three expectations: inclusion, safety, and equity. Similarly, Ostrove and Crawford (2006), in their studies of disabled people,

found that disabled people characterized allies as respectful, knowledgeable, accommodating, not condescending, and willing and able to treat them as they would anyone else. In a study of men as allies to women, Cheng and colleagues (2019) found that more powerful male allies were described as more effective by women because they had the means to effect change. However, Warren et al., (2021) found that men's perceptions of their own allyship was only weakly associated with women's perceptions of men's allyship.

Studies of interracial allyship have also highlighted gaps between what is needed and what is provided by white allies. Ostrove and Brown (2013) found that people of color perceive white allies to be problematically unmotivated to engage with racial issues. Ashburn-Nardo (2018) found that Black individuals view white allies more positively when those allies acknowledge the unique marginalization experienced by Black people and actively challenge these structures. However, Black individuals who are more cognizant of discrimination may struggle to trust white allies (Mendoza-Denton et al., 2002) and more easily discern their insincerity (Dovidio et al., 2002). Chu and Ashburn-Nardo (2022) found that white allies who confront prejudice in a way that signals intrinsic motivations (e.g., values) are perceived as less suspicious than white allies who confront prejudice in a way that signals extrinsic motivations (e.g., image concerns).

These studies, which have centered the perspectives of the targets of allyship, show that the impact of allyship may not necessarily align with or benefit marginalized communities. They highlight the need for allies to reflect on how their motivations for allyship and allyship behaviours influence the marginalized group members the ally is ostensibly attempting to support and uplift. This research also calls for effective communication, perspective-taking, and relationship-building between allies and targets of allyship. Gardner and Alanis (2020) have

found that ally training programmes may be effective in developing the ally identity, but may not address the pitfalls associated with allyship discussed above.

1.2 Allyship as a Positive Workplace Relationship

This review of the allyship literature points to two important gaps in the literature to date. First, allyship research across the board has not accounted for the possibility that allies to marginalized individuals and groups may themselves belong marginalized group(s), and not just to dominant ones. Thus, the allyship literature has centered the agency and allyship of members of dominant groups, itself a problematic practice that overlooks agency and allyship of members of marginalized ones. Second, although some scholars have studied allyship from the perspective of allies and others have studied allyship from the perspective of targets of allyship, none have studied the allied relationship itself. To fully understand the complexity of the connections and disconnections between allies and their targets of allyship, one needs to study both the ally and the target simultaneously and examine the relational foundations of allyship.

Thus, I depart from extant conceptualizations of allyship and argue that our understanding of who an ally is needs to be expanded. Rather than limiting allyship as a relationship between an individual who belongs to a higher status social group and a marginalized individual, I posit than allies may themselves come from marginalized groups. This also implies that both allies and beneficiaries of allyship are embedded in larger structures of power and oppression, which can influence the allied relationship, and behaviours within it. I also argue that to fully understand allyship, one must study it from a relational perspective, and simultaneously understand the expectations and behaviours of both members of an allied dyad. This is also in keeping with organizational scholars who have recognized the importance of dyadic relationships as a building

block to group-level and organization-level constructs (Kenny et al., 2006; Phillips et al., 2009), and who have called for studying dyads in workplaces to understand workplace dynamics.

I integrate this body of research on allyship with scholarship on positive workplace relationships and positive organizational scholarship to argue that allyship is a specific type of positive workplace relationship that is specifically focussed on anti-oppressive work. I also suggest that allyship behaviours may not always be helpful, even if they are well-meaning. Positive workplace relationships (Ragins and Button 2007) are defined as mutually beneficial relationships in which each individual feels a sense of relatedness and being understood (Golden-Biddle et al., 2017 Roberts, 2007). In work organizations, individuals seek to form and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with peers, superiors, and subordinates to gain instrumental assistance and social support (Gersick et al. 2000; Higgins and Thomas 2001). Positive workplace relationships influence important organizational outcomes, such as work group performance (Gruenfeld et al. 1996, Harrison et al. 2002, Jehn and Shah 1997), organizational citizenship behaviours (Kidwell et al. 1997, Podsakoff et al. 2000), attendance (Sanders and Nauta 2004), turnover (Iverson and Roy 1994), life satisfaction, and positive emotions at work (Colbert et al. 2016). Creary, Caza, and Roberts (2015) have highlighted how positive manager-subordinate relationships, especially when the subordinate employee possesses multiple marginalized identities, are crucial to organizational success because they engender positive employee attitudes, greater performance, and higher organizational citizenship behaviours.

Caza and Caza (2005) have suggested that positive organizational scholarship, which studies positive workplace relationships, allows researchers to develop research with practical and actionable implications for allyship at work rooted in the experiences of informants and their own interpretations of these experiences. However, traditional positive workplace research

uses a top-down approach to diversity and inclusion, by focusing on how organizational leadership can maximize the benefits and minimize the challenges of diversity among its employees and constituents (e.g., Cox and Beale, 1997; Thomas and Ely, 1996). Yet scholars have shown that bottom-up tactics, such as positive workplace relationships with peers, are frequently used by employees to effectively deal with the diversity they encounter daily in their work environment (e.g., Dutton and Ragins, 2017; Lyons, Pek, and Wessel, 2017).

Thus, researchers have called for more scholarly attention to such bottom-up tactics such as positive workplace relationships instead of individual behaviour alone (Dutton and Ragins 2007). Human beings are driven to create and maintain positive personal relationships and a sense of belonging, which can lead to happiness and personal growth (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). This occurs in the workplace as well, where employees seek to build such positive relationships with coworkers (Gersick, Bartunek, and Sutton, 2000). Relationships between coworkers are increasingly important in today's organizations, particularly given the collaborative nature of service and knowledge-based work. However, the growing importance of workplace relationships is complicated by the increasing demographic diversity of today's workforce. Although there are benefits to such relationships, people who are demographically different from one another may face challenges in developing high-quality relationships in organizations (Phillips et al., 2009), and can experience higher conflict, lower cohesion, and lower-quality communication (e.g., Hoffman, 1985; Pelled et al., 1999; Tsui and O'Reilly, 1989).

I posit that developing a high-quality relationship with a coworker who serves as an ally is important to addressing relational challenges related to marginalization. In particular, I propose

that effective allied relationships, as identified by the intended beneficiaries – in this case, women of color – are key to addressing inequality in workplaces.

I examine this claim by studying allied relationships forged and held by women of color, and how these relationships create positive workplace experiences for them. Drawing on the theoretical framework of positive organizational scholarship (Cameron and Dutton, 2003), I suggest that micro-level behaviours in the form of positive one-on-one interactions between coworkers plays a fundamental role in creating positive visibility for women of color. Thus, I suggest that a high quality, or positive, workplace relationship between the focal informant and their nominated ally is key to creating effective allyship. As part of this, I aim to identify micro-level interactions between women of color and their allies that are particularly effective in engendering positive outcomes for women of color at work. At the same time, I also focus on identifying behaviours and interactions that create gaps between expected and enacted allyship, which do not lead to positive outcomes, and may even create negative experiences for women of color at work.

1.3 Intersectionality and Multiple Marginalization for Women of Color

I adopt an intersectional lens for this study because it is particularly suitable in understanding how multiple marginalized identities impact people's lived experiences. Kimberlé Crenshaw first coined the term 'intersectionality' to draw attention to the complex experiences of oppression that Black women face in the United States due to their unique position at the margins of race and gender (Crenshaw 1989). She used the term to refer specifically to how legal framings of discrimination omitted unique forms of discrimination against Black women, because neither solely race discrimination nor solely gender discrimination captured their experiences, causing them to fall through the cracks of accessing legal recourse. Recently,

organizational scholars have also drawn on intersectionality to draw attention to the importance of examining the intersection of multiple identities at work (e.g., Buchanan and Settles 2019; Creary et al. 2015; Hall et al. 2019; Ramarajan 2014; Rosette et al. 2019).

The intersectionality paradigm recognizes that being a woman of color is a singular identity in itself, not decomposable into separate identities of gender and race (e.g., Collins 2000; Hurtado and Sinha 2008; McCall 2005; Settles 2006). This paradigm fundamentally opposes the artificial separation of social identities. For example, Black women may think of themselves in terms of a combined identity "Black-woman," which supersedes their individual identities as Black and as women. Others may also perceive "Black woman" as a social category unto itself. Because Black women possess two marginalized identities, they fit neither prototype of their gender and racial groups, and are thus omitted from narratives of race and gender (Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach, 2008). Further, Rosette, Koval, Ma, and Livingston (2016) show that Black and white women are subject to distinct stereotypes that affect how they are evaluated.

Yet, most scholarship on race and gender, especially in the workplace context, has treated the categories of gender and race as separate and homogenous, focusing on white women to study gender and on Black men to study race. But the experiences of white women differ in important ways from the experiences of other women due to white women's shared racial identity with white men, for example (Calvert and Ramsey 1996) and the experiences of men of color differ from the experiences of women of color due to gender (Rosette and Livingston, 2012). Despite this, the category "woman of color" has typically been treated as cumulative in empirical research – a summation of racial and gender disadvantage, or of "double jeopardy" (Almquist, 1975; Beale, 1970; Berdahl and Moore, 2006).

The small body of intersectional research examining discrimination against women of color underscores results that differ from what would be predicted by extant models. For instance, one study demonstrated that Black women receive less backlash for exhibiting dominance compared to white women (Livingston et al., 2012), while another study found that Arab men were rated less favorably than Arab women during resume screening (Derous, Ryan, and Serlie 2015). Extant models of discrimination, such as the double jeopardy framework (Beale 1970; Berdahl and Moore 2006), would instead predict that Black women face more backlash than white women and that Arab women are rated lower than Arab men. In contrast, research shows that gender and race interact in qualitative, rather than in quantitative, ways to shape a person's social experiences and outcomes.

A unique challenge experienced by women of color at work is the experience of intersectional invisibility. Because women of color are systematically marginalized as non-prototypical members of their social groups, they are likely to be rendered socially invisible, go unseen and unheard, and stay under the radar in conversations of discrimination, which often focus on white women or Black men (Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach, 2008; Remedios and Snyder, 2018; Sesko and Biernat, 2010; Settles et al., 2019). Invisibility has been defined as 'an absence of, or erroneous representations of, marginalized groups and/or individuals' (Fryberg and Townsend, 2008). Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach (2008) argue that androcentrism and ethnocentrism lead us to see men as the prototypical members of their ethnic groups and whites as prototypical members of their gender groups. The non-prototypicality of people with multiple subordinate group memberships, such as women of color, can render them socially invisible (Sesko and Biernat, 2018). Such categorization and consequent invisibility for women of color occurs quite automatically, with people expending minimal energy to form first impressions

(Fiske 1998; Fiske and Neuberg 1990), triggering bias (Dovidio et al. 2007; Saguy et al. 2009), that leads to subconscious behaviours that reproduce status differences and inequality.

Bhattacharyya and Berdahl (under review) extend this work to examine intersectional invisibility, and develop a model of four types of intersectional invisibility and response pathways to them. They find that invisibility experiences at work are painful for women of color and can trigger responses that are often ineffective, risky, or demand high levels of emotional resources and social support. Women of color report limited response options when dealing with invisibility, from shutting down (making them more invisible) to active resistance (risking backlash). Response options tended to reinforce women of colors' marginalized status at work, with one exception: radical honesty, which requires explaining one's experience to the perpetrator and is only made possible in safe work environments and with adequate emotional and cognitive resources. This illustrates the risks and often futility of women of color engaging in image management behaviours because it demands emotional and cognitive resources that may come at the cost of well-being or productivity.

When visibility does occur for women of color, it often takes the form of hypervisibility (McCluney and Rabelo 2019), or unwanted scrutiny, and is disempowering. Failures are magnified, stereotypes are reinforced, and women of color lose control over how others perceive them (Buchanan and Settles, 2018). Further, the perceived image for the ideal professional is typically that of a white, male, heterosexual, middle class employee (Acker, 1990; Kanter, 1977) and perceptions of women of color are affected by these ideals. Expanding on prior research and adopting a critical intersectional view on allyship, I posit that allyship, when transformative, can challenge and disrupt these experiences of distortion of how one is seen, but when ineffective, can reinforce these experiences.

Thus, I integrate scholarship on positive workplace relationships and critical intersectionality theory, and frame allyship is a relationship between two individuals with the shared goal of demarginalization, or dismantling inequality. Next, I discuss how I conducted this research and the methods employed.

2 Method

2.1 Sample

I conducted an inductive qualitative study to examine allyship from a relational perspective. I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews from a dyadic lens with 30 dyads of women of color and workplace allies they identified and nominated to participate in the study (studies suggest that marginalized group members are accurate at identifying supportive peers, e.g., Livingston et al., 2007), for a total of 60 informants (see details in Appendix A).

Focal informants (the women of color who nominated allies) were recruited via online sources - advertisements were posted on online groups for people of color (e.g., Vancouver POC Community and Events). Informants were asked in the email if they could "think of one person from work whom you could nominate to participate in the study as well, who had supported you at work". Although this was a dyadic study, interviews were conducted individually, with the focal informant interviewed first, followed by the nominated ally. This was done to collect data on perspectives on allyship from both the target of allyship and their ally independently, and then to be able to compare their perspectives on this dyadic relationship.

I recruited informants from a variety of professions. Forty percent worked in the public sector (education, healthcare, universities), 22% worked in the corporate sector (engineering, management, technology), and 37% worked in non-profits. Of the focal informants, seven identified as Black or African Canadian, six as Chinese or Chinese Canadian, four as Indian or Indian Canadian, three as South Asian, two as Pakistani or Pakistani Canadian, one as Ismaili & South Asian, one as South-East Asian, one as Syrian, and five as mixed race (three Indian-White Canadian, one Black-Indian Canadian, and one Chinese-Vietnamese Canadian). Of the 30 nominated allies, there were 22 women (equal numbers of white women and women of color),

seven men (five white men and two men of color), and one white non-binary ally (see Appendix A for sample details).

2.2. Data Collection and Analysis

Fifty-eight interviews were conducted over Zoom and two were conducted over the phone. Interviews with focal informants lasted 1 hour on average, and ranged from 22 minutes to 2 hours 10 minutes. Interviews with nominated allies lasted 47 minutes on average, and ranged from 22 minutes to 1 hour 20 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded with permission, and transcribed verbatim, generating 53 hours of audio and 771 pages of transcribed data. Figure 1 outlines my research process, showing the concurrent and iterative process of data collection, data analysis and coding, and how my analysis evolved over time, drawing from Rouse and Harrison's (2014) template.

Inductive qualitative research allows the researcher to capture the insider's perspective of the phenomenon of interest (Marshall and Rossman, 1995), making it suitable for this study since I aim to unpack ally relationships from the perspectives of the focal person and the allied person. Specifically, I use a grounded theory approach to collecting and analyzing my data because it is particularly suited to building new theory on underdeveloped concepts and relationships (Glaser and Strauss, 2017; Locke, 2001; Locke and Golden-Biddle, 1997; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). This involved moving iteratively between data collection, analysis, and the literature to build and develop my overall theoretical model. Iterativity is an integral part of theory building in qualitative research (Locke-Feldman and Golden-Biddle, 2020), which allows for rethinking assumptions that exist in the current literature and examining possible differences that arise in data (Locke and Golden-Biddle, 1997; Pratt et al., 2020). Furthermore, my positionality as a South Asian immigrant woman of color helped to inform my analysis and study design. I identify

with and am situated as the marginalized in traditional allied relationships, but also as an ally to peers and others who are marginalized in different ways, which offers the opportunity for greater nuance through reflexive data analysis and interpretation.

I followed principles of triangulation to strengthen the trustworthiness of my findings. I relied on two data sources (in-depth interviews with focal informants, and in-depth interviews with nominated allies) to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of allyship and strengthen the validity of my overall theoretical model. It also helped me identify perspectives of the same phenomenon from two different lenses – the marginalized focal informant and the ally – which allowed for a more complex and holistic examination of allyship, as well as a comparison and subsequent identification of gaps between the two perspectives.

To minimize any distortion of the data (Pratt, 2008), summary tables as well as in-line quotations are provided to accurately present the accounts of informants' experiences of invisibility. Below I include a "thick" description of how I coded and analyzed data to demystify my iterative analysis and process.

2.2.1 Core Research Question

I began my dissertation with the core research question, what is effective allyship? Given that my theoretical framing of the concept demanded that I examine allyship from a relational perspective, I conducted a dyadic study of focal women of color and their nominated allies. Dyadic analysis is particularly useful in triangulating different accounts of the same phenomenon and situations (DiBenignio, 2020), making it ideal to study perceptions of effective allyship. I developed my interview protocols based on this research question and prior research. Two different protocols were developed for focal informants and nominated allies (see Appendix B).

2.2.2 First Round of Data Collection and Analysis

I conducted data collection in two phases. I began my study with in-depth semi-structured interviews with 10 dyads of focal informants and nominated allies, for a total of 20 interviews. I began by asking focal informants their name and background information, followed by detailed questions about their workplace experiences of support from others, and what support they would like to receive. I then focussed on the allied relationship, and asked questions about the ally, why they had nominated that ally, why they considered that person an ally, what did the ally do well, and so on. Similarly, the nominated ally was asked about their name and background information, followed by questions about their workplace experiences and their allied relationships, why they think they were nominated as an ally, what kind of support they provided to the focal informant, why they did so, and so on. These interviews were purposefully detailed in scope to gather broad data.

In the first stage of data analysis, I read through the interviews to generate preliminary in-vivo codes (codes that stayed close to the data). I also wrote in-depth reflective memos during and after each interview about emerging ideas and key insights (Charmaz, 2003), which also formed part of the data analysis. At this stage, what emerged was that gaps existed between what focal informants were expecting from allies, and what nominated allies were enacting as allyship behaviours. Further, these gaps were related to the overlap of identity that existed between the focal informant and the ally, and other relational characteristics of the ally dyad itself.

2.2.3 Additional Research Questions

These gaps gave rise to further research questions: How does expected allyship overlap with or differ from enacted allyship by allies, and why?; How do types of allied relationships differ for women of color at work based on this gap between expected and enacted allyship? At

this stage, the interview protocol was modified to incorporate the initial themes that were emerging and to explicitly gather information on possible gaps in the allied relationships.

2.2.4 Second Round of Data Collection and Analysis

In the next stage of data collection, I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with 20 additional dyads of focal informants and nominated allies, bringing the total number of additional interviews to 40 and the total number of interviews to 60. The second set of interviews focussed on gathering information about the allied relationship, particularly around unmet expectations, challenges with enacting good allyship, and characteristics of the allied relationship. I added questions about negative experiences with allyship, unmet expectations from the ally, shared experiences and identity with the focal informant/ally, and challenges with being an ally (see Appendix B). For example, I added the question, 'what more would you have liked the ally to do?,' for interviews with focal informants, and the question, 'What do you struggle with in providing support?' for allies.

I continued to write detailed memos during and after each interview. After the data were collected and transcribed, I open-coded the data (staying close to the data, often in the exact words of informants), keeping an eye out for gaps in the allied relationships. At this stage, I began to develop first-order concepts and started identifying overarching themes that tied these concepts together or set them apart. This was followed by axial coding (moving across first-order concepts) to identify thematic relationships and reveal differences (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Open coding began with descriptive categorizations of concepts, which were re-examined and grouped based on their similarities and differences (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). At this stage, 396 open codes were identified. During open coding, I identified what actions focal informants

and nominated allies categorised as allyship behaviours. I also coded for negative experiences with allyship or allies, motivations for allyship by allies, as well as challenges experienced in being a good ally.

During axial coding, I compared and contrasted these first-order concepts, and aimed to find linkages between different concepts and between perceptions of allyship by the focal informants and the nominated allies. At this stage, I was able to systematically identify gaps between expected allyship and enacted allyship, and identify thematic causes for different types of gaps. I also started grouping first-order concepts allyship behaviours which were similar in quality and content into overarching themes or allyship dimensions which were more abstracted theoretically. At this stage, I created a detailed codebook based on my final codes and definitions.

2.2.5 Final Data Analysis

In the final data analysis stage, I started conducting dyadic analyses of my data. Using the codes and themes identified in the previous stages of data collection, I analyzed each dyad in my data against the dimensions of allied relationships identified. Based on this, I analyzed causes for differential gaps in enacted and expected allyship in different dyads, and found that it was linked to an ally's motivations for allyship as stated in interviews, as well as the overlap of racial identities between the focal informant and the ally. Finally, I developed a typology of three allied relationships that emerged from the four dimensions of allied relationships and the three types of motivations for enacted allyship. Below, I present my findings.

3 Findings

"One of our board members, he's an Asian man, I met him and another board member to talk about future plans around diversity for the organization. They asked me for my opinion. I said it's kind of hard being the only person of color in the office. So, this other white board member starts talking about other axes of oppression like some people are immigrants and some are queer. And the Asian board member, he was like, 'no wait I want to hear what she says.' At that moment I was like, wow. That moment really stuck, because it was like, you are giving me the space to talk without being interrupted."

- Meg, 25, Chinese, Program coordinator in non-profit

Literature on workplace allyship presents allyship as a relationship between a person with a marginalized identity and a demographically dissimilar individual who belongs to a higher-status social group (e.g., queer person-straight person). My interviews revealed that, contrary to expectations and what extant literature on allyship would predict, the most effective allied relationships occur between two women of color. Over one-third of the focal women of color (11 out of 30, or 37%) in the study nominated *other* women of color as their allies, and allyships with other women of color were marked by the most support, as explained below. Five of these ally dyads between women of color matched on racial identities (2 dyads between Black women, and 3 dyads between Asian women), and six dyads were between women of color who held different racial identities. Over one-third of focal informants nominated white women as allies (11 of 30, or 37%), five focal informants nominated white men (17%), two nominated men of color (7%), and one nominated a white non-binary person (3%). Seven ally dyads were between junior focal informants and senior allies (23%).

Drawing from my findings, I argue that effective allyship is a positive workplace relationship in which the ally works to dismantle inequality and provide support to the focal person that reflects their needs, and, importantly, the ally need not belong to a demographically different and higher status social group.

I identified four key dimensions of allyship behaviour as expected by focal informants and enacted by their allies: (1) Centering the focal informant (versus centering the ally), (2) Focus on impact on the focal informant (versus intent of the ally), (3) Affective connection with the ally (versus instrumental connection), and (4) Egalitarian reciprocity (versus a one-sided relationship). Despite nominating their allies, some focal informants had some negative experiences with these allies, wherein their allies' behaviour lay in the bracketed sections of the dimensions above (e.g., centering the ally and focusing on their intent). In particular, many of the nominated allies sometimes enacted allyship that was harmful to the focal informant, or their expectations went unmet. This implies that most focal informants encountered some negative experiences in their overall positive allied relationships. Based on this, I identified systematic gaps between expected and enacted allyship. Some gaps were known to the allies, creating scope for change within the dyad, while others were blind spots, leaving little to no scope for change without external intervention. Focal informants also experienced unique challenges in their relationships with white allies, and experienced larger gaps with these allies between expected and enacted allyship. Emergent from my findings, differences in stated allyship motivations by nominated allies tended to align with different enacted allyship behaviours, which then affected the extent of gaps between expected and enacted allyship. Finally, based on the extent to which relationships varied on each of the dimensions of expected allyship and motivations of enacted allyship, I developed a typology of allied relationships, consisting of three types of allied dyads: (1) paternalistic allyship, (2) imbalanced allyship, and (3) balanced allyship. I begin by outlining the four dimensions of allyship behaviours.

3.1 Dimensions of Allyship

3.1.1 Centering the Focal Person (versus Centering the Ally)

Focal informants consistently described and explained allyship as actions, behaviours, and intentions that are driven by the needs of the focal person. They expected allies to pursue the overarching goal of centering the focal informant's needs in their allyship efforts and behaviours. There were three aspects to centering the focal informant: creating space for the focal informant, not speaking on their behalf, and standing up for them when required. As focal informant Valerie, a 29-year-old Chinese-Vietnamese Canadian woman working as a program manager in a non-profit explained,

> "It's this delicate balance between making space for the other person, and also speaking up when necessary. They are there to uplift and support and step aside, in order to amplify racialized people's voices over their own. It's that learning to step aside. It's a balance because it requires people to also not speak on behalf [of the target of allyship]. That's the big caveat, because there are a lot of people that want to consider themselves allies, but they're not quite getting it right. Because it's that speaking on behalf of, but not necessarily realizing that I'm right there. Like, I could say something right? Or like, do you want to say anything Valerie? Or like, can I say something? It's making space. That is missing in a lot of allyship conversations."

To be able to find this balance, an ally had to actively engage with the focal informant about their needs, treat them as a person with agency, and work hand-in-hand with them to support them. A good ally allowed the focal person to take the lead in deciding what they need from their ally. This required the ally to hold themselves accountable and sublimate their own perceptions if the situation demanded it, and create autonomy and opportunity for the focal person, trusting their judgement of a situation, and responding in a way the focal person wanted.

Vera, a 27-year-old Indian-White community engagement specialist with a non-profit, explained how her ally trusted her and made space for her intentions when she experienced discrimination at her work:

"I told Trevor, who was my supervisor at the time, thinking of it just as like a debrief. And I was scared he wouldn't see it as racist. And he was like, 'that's problematic. We're going to change that. I'm so sorry that happened to you'. And he got so mad about it, which was not the best. I told him, have your anger elsewhere, and then come and support me. And he got it. He told me all the things he was willing to do, and he's like, you can choose at any stage, which one do you want me to do, or which one you want to do and I will be there with you for that. And I was like, I don't want to do any of those, Trevor. Please, calm down. But knowing that he was so open I could then say, OK, no, none of those, but this is what I need support on. And I'd like to talk to you before and after, or just after."

In essence, this implied treating the focal person as an individual with agency, an expert on their lived experiences, trusting that they know best, and following their lead in one's allyship behaviour and response. Trevor, a 34-year-old white British man and manager in the same non-profit shared his perspective on learning how to follow Vera's lead on supporting her:

"I've learned a lot. I remember her talking me through one specific situation. And I got angry about it, because I was angry that she had to deal with that. I think I reacted with anger on her behalf. And I don't know how helpful that was for Vera. And that was coming from a place of privilege. Like, she doesn't have the opportunity to get angry about these things, because then it definitely wouldn't get sorted. And I don't know if my anger at that point was beneficial in any way, shape or form. So that really made me reassess and think about what support looks like and how to work in that way."

Finally, it required the ally to accept the focal person for who they are and support them in their goals and endeavours as they choose.

Charlotte, a 38-year-old Black-Indian Canadian project manager in government, speaking about her ally, explained how her ally centered her experiences and needs, saying, "She wants to know what it is that you're going through. What it is that you want to change? What do you need? She did that. She's someone who understands that they walk in the world with privileges that are different from mine." Her ally, Violet, a 29-year-old Chinese-Vietnamese Canadian woman working in non-profit, explained her experience of doing so:

"I have my own lived experience of dealing with racism, sexism. But her lens is not the same as mine just because we're both women of color. It's much more complex. It's much more nuanced than that. I wanted to focus on her experiences. because her experiences of racism look very different from mine. I saw the trauma, I saw how it impacted her. I saw how it broke her

down on a day-to-day basis and how it was a different level. It just looked different. It felt different and it just felt like this needs attention. It's not like I'm ignoring my racism. I just felt I had to deal with that, needed to understand it, speak to it. To support her, listen to her in her moments that she needs someone to listen to, someone to lean on."

3.1.1.1 Centering Gaps Between Informants and Their Allies

Unfortunately, focal informants did not always receive this type of allyship from their allies. Informants often felt that allies either did not know or understand what they needed, or they imposed their own perceptions of what the focal person needed and enacted allyship from that perspective. As Tina, a 37-year-old Black Canadian manager in a hospital noted,

"The challenge with an ineffective ally is that they don't necessarily know if what they're doing is what the person they're trying to help needs. We can't just have a bunch of white people in the room, saying that this is marginalization, or this is oppression, and then try to fix things because the fixes are never going to be what is actually needed to be done. So it's not always an act of solidarity. Sometimes it's an act of saviorship."

Such ineffective allyship, which centered the ally, included telling the focal person what the ally thought they needed. Mehr explained this eloquently, saying, "This person walks into a room and they're there to buy a pen and you say, 'No, I don't think you need a pen, you need a book. Because I am the expert. And I've decided that you need a book, you don't need a pen'."

Occasionally, focal informants felt that allies not only did not center them, but rather centered the ally's own feelings in situations. For example, Radha, a 44-year-old Indian Canadian woman working with the state school board, shared a story:

"I had organized a presentation for teachers who wanted to be allies, and I brought in just these really amazing speakers. These two Black women, they were doing just so much work in the community. So they were very passionate, and very knowledgeable, obviously, about racism. And she [ally] just started crying. And so I spent the whole lunch hour trying to make her feel better. To me an ally would be someone who understands that they walk in the world with privileges that are different from mine."

Situations like this, in which the ally centered their own feelings over the needs of the informant, created challenges for the focal person because it drew attention away from their

experiences of marginalization to that of the relatively privileged ally in that context. Focal informants expected effective allies to understand dynamics of power and privilege and operate from that understanding.

Some allies expressed awareness of their own centering of themselves, such as Summer, a 29-year-old white Canadian woman working as a coordinator at a non-profit, saying, “What I've really been trying to work through is around the tears and fragility, especially as a white woman. And the many histories that comes along with my tears”. However, Summer went on to express that she herself felt unheard and dismissed in conversations about race and marginalization, and that she found solidarity with other white female allies, saying, “There's been times where I’ve been dismissed. And having other white female allies to talk about it and debrief and hash it out was really positive.” Summer’s awareness of her own fragility, and at the same time, her feelings of being dismissed in conversations on race and the need to alleviate her own discomfort, indicated blind spots regarding finding a balance between centering one’s own feelings and the needs of the focal person.

3.1.2 Focus on Impact versus Intent

The second dimension of expected allyship involved a focus on tangible support and action from the ally, and not on mere intent. Focal informants expected allies to take action that was directed toward positive outcomes and real change for the focal person, and to exhibit commitment to challenging marginalization and discrimination. This required a genuine understanding of what the focal person needed, as well as a commitment to take steps to support those needs which could be risky. For example, this included actions such as speaking up in front of others to support the focal person, which could create backlash, as well as validate them, and

create tangible opportunities for them. Ariana, a 22-year-old Black Canadian program coordinator in a non-profit, speaking about her ally, explained,

"The thing that I like about her is that she is a champion of me. When I do something, right, she makes sure that everybody knows it. Championing me in front of people who don't believe in me and in front of people who do believe in me…my boss was taking credit for a thing that I had done. And she was like, that has nothing to do with him. That was all her. And she doesn't like confrontation. And I felt like that was just an incredible show of integrity and character and she was standing up for me."

Thus, this included traditional allyship behaviours of actions of advocacy and championing, but also going beyond, and creating tangible opportunities for the focal person. For example, Leah, a 25-year-old Indian Canadian woman working in a government organization, explained how her ally created opportunities for her at work, which allowed her to exhibit her skills and receive credit. She said,

"She'll come to me when she needs support in a research project. I always feel very validated when she comes to me and asked me for important things like that. She'd come to me with a project a couple of months ago. I came back to her with what I had found, and she goes, 'that's super great, you're going to present this to the team'. It was really great to have her set up a session where I got to present what I'd found and be given credit where credit is due for the work that I'd done. She makes she makes me feel very seen as a woman of color. She always speaks up when things are not right."

Her ally, Sofia, a 42-year-old senior Black woman in the same organization, explained her motivations for speaking up:

"I strive to support her in whatever her goals are. If we want to see more women of color in management positions, then we have to encourage women of color and give them the resources to be in management positions. I'm willing to go to bat for her. I am there for her if she needs my support. I listen, and I amplify voice and I take things seriously when somebody says they've experienced harm. So I'm trying to make as best a workplace as I can. And I try to be as supportive as I can. And I hope that's what she feels."

To be able to do this well and in a way that met the needs of the focal person, it required the ally to be willing to learn, make mistakes, and be open to feedback. Sara, a 36-year-old Black

manager in an organization, speaking about her ally's openness and commitment to ongoing learning, said,

"She's really explicitly supportive and willing to learn. She is someone who's willing to admit when you know, like, 'I think I missed a mark there. I'm going to just make changes in the future and keep trying to be a little bit better. And then if I make a mistake, they can tell me' She has stood out as being someone who really is trying to become anti-racist."

Her ally, Jane, a 42-year-old white Canadian woman working with Sara, explained how she wanted to learn in order to understand what action to take to support Sara, saying,

"I'm continuing to learn, but also, more than just learning, because learning is so nebulous, it's like, oh, I'm just collecting info, but I want to know how to act. Obviously collecting knowledge is important, but what's the step after that? Because it's not enough to just be passively learning. You have to know, what can I do? I think, well, if I'm not being an ally, then I'm just leaving it to bipoc people to do the work."

Thus, allyship had to be action-focussed and effective allies enacted behaviours that would lead to change. In particular, this meant that the ally needed to be anti-racist in their overall approach to allyship, which included their beliefs and actions.

3.1.2.1 Impact Gaps Between Informants and Their Allies

An ally's focus on intent over impact was an aspect of allyship that focal informants experienced challenges with. They expected allies to take a stand for them and create visibility and tangible change, but often felt their allies fell short of this. Allies may have held the right intentions, but this did not always translate to tangible action that benefitted the focal informant. My data revealed that this was either because of lack of understanding about what the focal informant needed, or because the ally had fears about speaking up or taking action.

For example, Liz, a 29-year-old white Canadian woman working with the BC School board, spoke of her allyship behaviours, saying, "I've been trying to extend offers, if she [Chioma, focal informant] feels like joining, to go to a demonstration, and I'll be there. She's always welcome to so I tried to let her know that."

However, her focal informant, Chioma, a 37-year-old Nigerian Canadian woman who worked with her, noted that Liz would attend protest marches and rallies, but she would have appreciated it if Liz could speak up for her in front of others, saying,

> "I would like it if she told our boss that Chioma came and presented and shared her experience with us, because we view talking about and learning about antiracism as important, so that he knows what it is that we're doing. I don't think she [ally] would go to her boss and do that advocacy. I mean, she participates in things like marches and rallies and stuff like that. That's not really my way of advocating."

Chioma's ally Liz, also spoke of a time when she felt she should have stood up for Chioma in front of her peers but got scared, saying, "I think I just got really scared in that moment. I feel like I should have said more or done more to support her. But I did get scared in that moment."

This echoed what other nominated allies also experienced, saying that they did not speak up because they did not feel educated enough, did not feel it was their place, or were worried about backlash.

Such fears created situations where allies would support the focal informant one-on-one, but would not say anything publicly. This led to unmet expectations for the focal informant. As Valerie, a 29- year-old Chinese-Vietnamese Canadian woman working in a non-profit shared, her ally was supportive and understanding of Valerie's experiences of marginalization, but would not speak up for her. She said,

> "There was a social event that we were having. And we're supposed to think of a team name, and a themed outfit. The suggestion from one of the white people that worked there was like, 'oh, let's be gangsters. We'll wear chains. we'll wear jerseys, do a grill on our teeth. And I'm like, 'so the subtext of everything you're saying is you trying to culturally appropriate Black culture, doing Blackface. So I'm like, okay, I'll be that person again. I can't let this happen. I said it in a very gentle way. And it was met with white silence. And it was just so infuriating and frustrating. And then afterwards, Summer [ally] came up to me and was like, 'I didn't know what to say in the moment. But I agree with you'. I feel like she could have said something in the meeting. There's a lot of energy involved in having to be the only person of color that brings up any sort of race and racism issues when a white person is perfectly capable of doing that."

Others, such as Amy, a 30-year-old white Canadian woman working as a teacher, who was an ally to Radha, a 44-year-old Indian Canadian teacher, felt scared to speak up because she felt that she was not knowledgeable. Amy said, “I feel uncomfortable because I feel like talking about race is something very new to me. And I think I might feel discomfort about worrying that I'm not saying the right thing, or saying the wrong thing.” Such reluctance on the part of allies to take action to support their focal informants or fear of making mistakes created a challenge, because often, focal informants did not feel comfortable or safe telling their allies, particularly white allies, when they were making a mistake or when they needed to speak up. This was due to a fear of backlash or fear of offending the ally. It also sometimes required the focal person to manage the ally’s feelings. As Chioma, a 37-year-old Nigerian Canadian woman, explained

> “When I'm having a conversation with her [ally], and something has been said that makes me feel uncomfortable. Or that's offensive and I call her out, then she becomes so emotional. And then face it, you spend all of your time managing that, telling them that like they're not racist and like consoling them. So I’m careful, because I don’t want to offend.”

Similarly, focal informants felt that they were expected to speak up and educate others, including their allies in difficult situations. In particular, white allies would listen, ask questions and learn, but focal informants felt they needed to go beyond listening. They also felt fatigued and exhausted with having to educate their ally, and noted that there were resources available to their allies to learn. This made the focal informants feel alone and unsupported. Further, focal informants noted that many allies were well-informed and knew about issues of marginalization, but still would not take action. As Suhana, a 27-year-old Indian engineer, explained, “When it comes to tangible action, it's limited. And so it's like, ‘we're reading, we're listening, and learning’. But there's only so much you can listen and learn. Eventually you'll have to do stuff.” This led to situations like Tina, a 37-year-old Black manager, found herself in: “I was in this

room with predominantly white people, almost exclusively white people, and it was my voice that was pointing out what was wrong."

The two dimensions of who the ally is centering and the tension between impact and intent presented a dilemma for the ally. One the one hand, focal informants expected that the ally should center them and build understanding of their lived experiences and needs. However, they also experienced fatigue and exhaustion with having to educate their allies, and hoped that they would also learn on their own and educate themselves, and take action accordingly. This created a challenge for the ally in terms of finding a balance between being a burden on the focal informant and being a saviour to the focal informant, and identifying the sweet spot between the two roles.

3.1.3 Egalitarian Reciprocity (versus One-Sidedness)

The third dimension of expected allyship was that of egalitarian reciprocity. I define this as a mutually beneficial relationship that is characterised by egalitarianism, learning from and supporting the other, and mutual respect. This required that the nominated ally see the focal informant as an equal and whole human, and not someone who required help or was feeble or helpless.

Nabila, a 25-year-old Pakistani Canadian project manager in a firm, spoke of her ally Brandan, a 40-year-old mixed-race Pakistani-White Canadian man, saying,

"One of the people who's never overstepped his boundaries or ever given me any impression that I'm different because of my culture or being a woman is Brandon. He's always treated me equally. It's been really nice to experience that from someone who's in a position much higher than me. There was no power dynamics. He looks up to me for what I can do well, just as I look up to him for what he can do well."

Brandon explained how he viewed Nabila as an equal, saying,

"She is an engineer with two degrees and she should be respected as such. And I want her to succeed. I will gladly take you, and show you, and mentor you for success. Because the more

she knows, the better off the work is going to come to me. Because in the future, she's going to be my boss."

Focal informants also expected the relationship to be characterised by mutual learning, support, and respect. This included supporting each other's work and non-work related goals and interests, providing emotional support, and accepting each other.

Joy, a 30-year-old Chinese Canadian woman working as a coordinator in a non-profit spoke about her allyship towards her focal informant, saying, "[Mehr] empowers me at work. And she is aware fully that I am there for her if there's anything that goes on. I want to strike that nice balance between being there silently in the background, and she knows that she can always reach out. And also knowing when to actually step in"

In focal informant Mehr's words, a 39-year-old Pakistani woman manager in a non-profit, this meant being an "accomplice" to her and sharing in their hopes and dreams:

"I would call Joy [ally] an accomplice. We've both worked towards being accomplices for each other. We do we realize that allyship can sometimes be passive, and we don't want to play passive roles in each other's lives, we want to play an active role, not just in each other's lives, but in a lot of the social justice work that we do. So having that active role means being an accomplice."

Egalitarian reciprocity was also characterized by holding the focal person accountable and being held accountable by the focal person. Mehr, a 39-year-old Pakistani program manager in a non-profit, shared how her ally would hold her accountable and call her out if needed. She said,

"She is always ready to call me out. She does not let me get away with stuff. She's exactly the person that I turn to when I want a real answer. I know that her intentions when she's telling me something is not to make me feel bad. And to help me get through it in a way that I'm not being able to do on my own. And I do the same for her."

Thus, this dimension of allyship was characterized by reciprocal support, which required that the nominated ally saw the focal informant as an equal. Mehr went on to explain how that made her feel, saying, "It made me feel so heard, valued, seen, respected, and appreciated and

accepted. I felt seen as a whole person. So you genuinely feel a sense of worth and value in all aspects of who you are".

Her ally Joy, a 30-year-old Chinese Canadian program manager, explained her perspective, saying,

"I always feel like Mehr supports me so much. She has this wisdom about her. And she's always able, and you probably noticed that when you spoke with her, how when you talk to her, she relates to you exactly on your level. And it's just super amazing to just talk to her. So I feel like the fact that she gives me so much of her, her support, her attention. her time. I want to do the same for her."

Thus, egalitarian reciprocity for a focal informant in an allied relationship entailed being seen as a full person, and being seen for who one was. As Sara, a 36-year-old Black manager said about her ally Jane, a 42-year-old white American woman, "I felt seen by her, and I felt that she heard my situation. In spaces where people wouldn't take me seriously because I was a woman of color, and Jane was more respected in the space, she always brought me along and backed me up." Egalitarian reciprocity therefore required that the allied relationship be characterized by openness to each other and each other's similarities and differences, and supporting each other through differences.

3.1.3.1 Reciprocity Gaps Between Informants and Their Allies

Unfortunately, focal informants did not always experience egalitarian reciprocity. They felt that they were sometimes condescended to, and allies did not understand them and treated them unequally. Brianna, a 40-year-old Chinese-Canadian senior manager in a firm, said,

"They listen, they care, but they're sorry for me. It's not the same as just letting me be. They don't really get it. And they treat me with kid gloves. If I discuss something with you, and you gave me a response, like, 'okay, sure'. I hate that more than if you were just to be honest with me and tell me you don't think it's a good idea."

Further, focal informants experienced being perceived as problems for being open or raising issues of marginalization. For example, focal informant Zainab, a 28-year- old Pakistani

Canadian social worker, shared how she felt she was perceived as dangerous by her white ally Amber when she voiced concerns about race at work, saying,

> "As a woman of color, I tried to bring this up with her as much as I could, but I always felt that when I did, I was making a problem or that I was becoming dangerous to her. Even if you're trying to be really well-meaning about it, sometimes people are more defensive if you're a woman of color trying to teach them these things".

Some allies also shared that they felt that they were doing all they could, and that they had holistically addressed issues of discrimination. David, a 34-year-old white Canadian man working as a Director in his organization, on biing asked if there was anything else he thought he should do for his focal informant Ria, said, "no". He went on to say,

> "Being an ally has been ingrained in me. Of course, Black Lives Matter, and stuff like that. There's no question. But there haven't been specific issues I've encountered related to minority employees on my team. And 10 out of the 16 identify as Bipoc. I've never actually looked at the team makeup like that, but just picked the best candidate."

On the contrary, his focal informant Ria, a 30-year-old Indian project planner, shared that she felt that David's understanding of racial issues and discrimination were limited, saying,

> "David has a really good understanding of mental health. But it's not from a racialized lens. A lot of the people on our team are folks of color. When the graves of indigenous children were found, there wasn't an understanding of the trauma that people went through. And he never acknowledged it. It is uncomfortable to be in the position of having to bring stuff up. And white folks, they feel awkward and uncomfortable. And I have to deal with that. This is labour I don't want to do to teach him".

Such an ally also could not be held fully accountable or be informed of gaps because they believed that they were being good allies and that there was nothing else they needed to do. For instance, Steven, a 31-year-old white British man working with the government, on being asked what more he wanted to do for his focal informant Kamala, said, "At the end of the day, the fact that we're having this conversation means that I must have done something right. So it's great for me to be like, hey, at the end of the day, I know I did right." However, as Kamala, a 29-year-old Indian woman working with the government and focal informant to Steven, pointed out, such

allies were not open to suggestions, saying, “I feel like some allies feel like they've arrived and so are less open to suggestion or correction”. This left no room for learning from the focal informant, making mistakes, or becoming a better ally.

3.1.4 Affective Connection (versus Instrumental Connection)

Finally, focal informants expected allied relationships to be characterised by friendship, connection, and validation. Many allied pairs spoke of having a lot of warmth and compassion for each other, as well as genuine admiration. Violet, a 29-year-old Chinese-Vietnamese Canadian woman working in non-profit, spoke of the focal person she was an ally to, saying,

> “All the things that I want to know how to do myself like I saw in her. I did a lot of learning from her just by observing her and her radiance and her light and her grace and how she's able to really help people, how she feels. Unapologetically herself. That’s the solidarity that I see. It's those beautiful moments that…I'm so thankful that I have these beautiful women of color in my life that show up for you on a daily basis. Listen to you, validate you, are here for you. And when you can't show up for yourself, they help you.”

The focal person, Charlotte, a 38-year old Black-Indian Canadian woman working as a project manager in government, reciprocated this:

> “We're friends. We're not just colleagues. We're friends. We care about each other. We take care of each other. We're silly with each other. We also have these deep academic conversations about equity and inclusion and justice and diversity. I am a better person for knowing her. And I have a better idea of who I am.”

This included validating and affirming the focal informant, both in terms of their inherent selves, their experiences, as well as their work. Mehr described this about her ally, saying,

> “She made me believe in myself in such a way that I felt safe to be able to start displaying authenticity. So really making me look at myself with a lens that I didn't before. She showed appreciation for parts of me that I wouldn't have thought were actual strengths of mine. And by doing that she made me feel safe enough to start displaying those parts of me to others, and thus being able to be more authentic. She made me feel valued for who I am. My sense of self has changed in a way where I've learned to appreciate things about myself that I wouldn't appreciate before. She's shown me strength of mine that no one in my life has pointed out.”

This type of connection and warmth helped the focal informant express themselves more openly and feel safer at work. They were able to present themselves more authentically because they felt validated by someone they trusted and felt close to. Many informants said that this connected made them feel that someone had their back and cared about their well-being.

3.1.4.1 Connection Gaps Between Informants and Their Allies

Some focal informants felt that they did not consistently have affective connections with their allies, and that the relationship sometimes felt instrumental. This led to the focal informant feeling alone in the relationship, and unsupported by the nominated ally. Anya, a 24-year-old Indian-White woman working as a teacher explained this, speaking about her ally Jessa, a 25-year-old white Canadian woman and colleague at work, saying,

> "Sometimes I feel like she is the opposite of an ally. There are people who appear to be a friend, or who appear to be a supporter, but are doing it for their own benefit to be able to use your vulnerabilities against you, to be able to compete and be better than you at things rather than supportive. It's showing to other people in the room that like, 'oh, I'm such a wonderful person'."

This type of instrumental connection created situations where the focal informant felt nervous and uncomfortable around the ally, and felt that they could not be open and had to hide aspects of themselves. Many informants noted that instrumental connections with others felt more dangerous than someone being openly discriminatory because it was difficult to discern true intentions and beliefs. As Anya went on to note, "you don't know when you're not in a space that's not necessarily safe for you".

Naina, a 29-year-old Indian Canadian project manager on government explained her fears regarding such relationships, saying,

> "I think that a performative ally is more damaging than somebody who's indifferent. Because a performative ally, if you don't look at their actions critically, you might believe that you are safe with them, believe that you will be supported by them, and then the illusion will

come crashing down and you will find yourself having gone from feeling supported to then feeling betrayed."

3.2 Motivations for Allyship

To understand the gaps that emerged between expected and enacted allyship, I examined the motivations of allyship held by nominated allies, and mapped them onto behaviours and outcomes related to specific motivations. I identified three overarching motivations for allyship and consequent behaviours, or enacted allyship, which I discuss below.

3.2.1 Self-Image Motives

The first motive for allyship that emerged from my data was related to an ally's desired self-image, whereby they wanted to uphold their personal identity as a good person. Such allyship motivations typically emerged from the ally's own experiences and/or values. I identified two self-image motives for allyship: being exposed to a distressing incident of discrimination which then influenced ally's beliefs and actions, and their own personal values and belief systems.

Motivations that were driven by upholding one's self-image, either based on single events or the ally's beliefs and values created gaps between enacted and expected allyship. Such motivations often led to allyship behaviours that were more centered on the self. It also led to enacted allyship that focussed on the ally's intentions instead of tangible impact that benefitted the focal informant. These motivations could lead to a mix of affective and instrumental connections. Finally, such motivations tended to lead to one-sidedness instead of egalitarian reciprocity in allied relationships because the focal informant did not feel supported by their nominated ally.

Single event trigger: Some allies in my data were motivated to enact allyship after witnessing or being exposed to an episode of discrimination. Such single event triggers typically

led to a shift in the ally's perceptions of marginalization and their own role in address marginalization, and elicited motivations to adopting allyship roles within some of their relationships, particularly with marginalized others. For example, Liz, a 29-year-old white Canadian woman working with the BC School Board, explained her motivations for becoming an ally to Chioma, saying that it was George Floyd's murder that prompted her to take on an active allyship role. She said,

> "After the murder of George Floyd, some of the discussions with her on race became a bit more personal. I think that lit a fire under me. I have made a concentrated effort to read up on different things so that I feel more informed. We recently have been hosting professional development opportunities. I'd suggested that we refocus our first few this year on antiracism. If I'm not being an ally, then I'm just leaving it to Bipoc women to do the work. I was uncomfortable with that."

Such single event triggers served the important purpose of making discrimination and oppression salient and visible to the ally, which motivated allyship behaviours. However, on occasion, such motivations encouraged allyship behaviours that were driven by positive intentions, but were not necessarily helpful to the focal informant. As Chioma, a 37-year-old Nigerian Canadian woman who was the target of Liz's allyship, noted, speaking about Liz's allyship behaviours, Liz would participate in protest marches and offered to start a book club on anti-racism to learn and educate, which stemmed from her intentions to support Black employees at work. However, Chioma felt that her actions were not making a tangible difference to Chioma's or other Black employees' experiences.

Therefore, although allyship motivations rooted in single event triggers drew the ally's attention to the need to address inequality, and inspired action, such motivations could also lead to behaviours that missed the mark when it came to providing appropriate support. This was because single event triggers could lead to behaviours that were more focussed on alleviating the ally's own discomfort around the event or one's own position in systemic oppression, instead of

behaviours that were focussed on tackling the cause of the event or prevention of similar events in the future for the targets of one’s allyship.

However, such events could also serve as a wake-up call for the ally, and motivate learning around discrimination, which could create greater understanding of what the focal informant needed and corresponding allyship behaviours. As Liz went on to say, “I want her to know, it's not just those first couple of months after George Floyd's murder that I'm happy to be ongoing [support] here.

Ally beliefs and values: Some informants were motivated to enact allyship because they held certain beliefs and values about what it meant to be a good person. This motivated allyship behaviours which aligned with one’s value system and allowed the ally to uphold their self-image of a good person. For example, some allies held beliefs around helping, such as Amy, a 30-year-old white Canadian woman, who said,

> “I am so motivated by helping people. If Radha needed to talk to me and I didn't have time for it, I would never say no, because I just can't. Like, I actually can't say no to people about that kind of thing. In religion I learned a really strong sense of what is good and bad. And then you have this really strong sense of punishing yourself when you're bad.”

However, her focal informant Radha, a 44-year-old Indian Canadian woman, said that she knew that Amy cared, but felt that sometimes she did not have a clear understanding of Radha’s marginalization experiences or did not acknowledge that a certain experience was identity-based mistreatment in the face of professional networks. She said, “I know that she, in theory, cares. And that was why I was labeling her as an ally. But in practice, when they see it happening, they're so ready to dismiss any racism, any homophobia, especially when it's people that they know.”

Such value-system driven motivations could also shift focus to the ally. Jade, a 23-year-old white Canadian woman working as a program manager in a non-profit, described her motivations

for being an ally: “I’m outwardly white. But I also strongly identify with my intersectional values of being a woman and the first person in my family to go to university. I feel like I can’t always be my full self at work So I’ve always been the biggest proponent for change.”

3.2.2 Support motives

Allies’ motivation for allyship also emerged from their desire to support the focal informant. Some informants wanted to support the focal informant because they felt that she was special in some way, and therefore deserving of opportunities and allyship. Others were motivated by the desire to alleviate the focal informant’s pain, and support her well-being. Overall, motivations that were support-focussed led to many positive enacted behaviours by the ally, thus reducing the gap between enacted and expected allyship. However, there were gaps in the form of not always centering the focal informant, or not taking action that focussed on tangible impact. Allies motivated by support motives could also lead to one-sided allyship behaviours, instead of egalitarian reciprocity.

Focal informant characteristics: Many allies chose to take on the allyship role for their focal informants because they believed that the focal informant held unique capabilities and skills that should be encouraged and supported. Patrick, a 73-year-old white Australian man who was a founder of a non-profit, spoke of his focal informant Phoebe as brilliant and explained that he was motivated to be an ally to her to support her brilliance. Patrick said,

> “I knew in a moment that this was an exceptional person. The more I heaped on Phoebe’s shoulders, the more I learned that she was never fazed. Phoebe was a fabulous presenter. We would have to present to ministers within the government and at international conferences. I was always so thrilled to be able to hand those over to her. Because Phoebe was so much more enchanting to be the face of the organization, and young and smart. She’s one in a million.”

Allies who were motivated in this manner enacted tangible impact-focussed allyship behaviours, and made sure to support the focal person and create opportunities for them. In

particular, they made sure to give the focal person career and work-oriented guidance and support, and were committed to their success. Such allies also had strong affective connections with their focal informants, held high opinions of them, and made the focal informant feel valued and appreciated.

However, such motivations also reinforced model minority (Osajima, 2005; Prasad, 2022; Shams, 2020) expectations from women of color, requiring them to be "exceptional" to be worthy of allyship. It is questionable whether nominated allies like Patrick would continue to support the focal person unless they were "exceptional," which places pressure on women of color to be twice as good to receive support.

When allies held motivations to enact allyship that were shared with the focal informant, it created effective allied relationships with little gap between enacted and expected allyship. These relationships were typically characterised by enacted allyship that centered the focal informant, were focussed on impact, had egalitarian reciprocity, and had strong affective connections between the ally and focal person.

Focal informant pain and well-being: Some allies were motivated to enact allyship towards their focal informants because they were driven by the desire to alleviate the focal person's challenges and pain, and improve their well-being. Tim, a 32-year-old West Indian Canadian man who ran a non-profit, described his motivations for being an ally to Leila, a 20-year-old Syrian woman working with him, saying,

"People like her are invaluable because they're able to shed light on the reality of what other people are facing. So when you think that you have it the worst, you can only imagine what other people are going through. We were able to talk about some of the adversities she has faced coming from a country like Syria. The things that she has had to face in her life…And that's what really keep me going and I wanted to be there for her."

Such motivations led to enacted allyship in the form of work-related support as well as emotional support. Allies were motivated to improve the focal person's overall well-being and shield them from harm. Leila explained how Tim supported her, saying,

> "He cares about your personal life as well as your work life. So if you need a mental health day, he knows exactly why you need that mental health day. And I once had a donor be racist, and he would comfort me saying, 'these people are ignorant, they don't know what they're talking about."

Such allied relationships were characterized by strong affective connections, and were centered on the focal informant and her needs. They were also high in egalitarian reciprocity. However, they did not always translate into tangible action by the ally in the form of speaking up for the focal informant or creating important opportunities for them. Much of the support received by the focal person was in the form of emotional support.

3.2.3 Structural motives

Finally, some informants were motivated to enact allyship to challenge structural systems of marginalization. These motivations created shared goals between the ally and the focal informant. Some informants, particularly those who were racialized women, had shared experiences with the focal informant due to their own experiences of marginalization, which motivated them to enact allyship. Other informants, particularly those who were white or men, engaged in ongoing learning about the experiences of marginalization the focal informant, and constructed shared values and goals with them, which motivated their allyship.

Shared experiences of marginalization: Nominated allies who were themselves racialized women felt deeply motivated to support and uplift the focal person because of their shared experiences of marginalization, which created a deep understanding of the challenges experiences by the focal informants. This also created a desire to create structural change, which implied supporting the focal person but also going beyond and practising allyship and

demarginalization in other spheres. They felt that they were part of something larger, they themselves had been supported by other marginalized folks, and they wanted to do it for the next generation. Sofia, a 42-year-old Black African woman and senior manager at her firm, when asked what motivates her to be an ally, said,

> "What motivates me is that I was one of those employees. I came to a country where I didn't know I didn't know anyone. And I was there trying to navigate a new language system, a new culture, a new school, I was like trying to find my way. And I wouldn't have been able to do that if somebody hadn't taken the time to say, 'I believe in you'. So I think it is a requirement to build the community. If we want to see more Black women, women of color in management positions, then we have to encourage them and give them resources. I want to shield them from what I've been through. I think someone who hasn't gone through something similar might find it difficult to empathize or sympathize, as much as you can try to explain something to somebody."

Her focal informant Leah, a 25-year-old Indian Canadian Program Coordinator at the same firm echoed this, and shared how she felt that Sofia understood her experiences and cared about making larger changes, saying,

> "Immediately, when I saw your email, I knew that the person that I would want to nominate would be Sofia. She makes she makes me feel very seen as a person of color. She speaks a lot about being a person of color. And she brings up conversations about her experiences and I really respect her for that. For creating space for those conversations to be had. She makes me feel like I have a voice. And in hearing how she speaks of herself, and how she speaks of the workplace, I want to make sure that I'm being more of an ally than I have been in the past. I think she's been a really good role model in that sense."

Such motivations led to strong allied relationships overall, because there was deep understanding between the focal informant and the ally, which led to centering the focal informant and her needs and the ally was strongly motivated to support the focal informant in a holistic way, which motivated impact-oriented enacted allyship. There was genuine empathy and concern, leading to affective connections. Finally, shared experiences typically led to egalitarian reciprocity in allied relationships and genuine equity in the relationship.

Learned experiences and understanding: Some nominated allies were motivated to engage in allyship behaviours because of their ongoing learning about the focal informant's experiences of marginalization, which led to a deeper understanding of structural systems of marginalization and the development of shared goals of demarginalization. This made an especially impactful difference for allies who were white or men, or those who only shared one marginalized identity with the focal informant, since they did not have adequate shared experiences with the focal informant, and thus lacked an experiential understanding of their marginalization, but could develop learned experience. Such informants also engaged in ongoing reflection about and unpacking of their own privilege and identity, especially relative to the focal informant. This helped build understanding of the focal informant's experiences without having undergone it, thus leading to learned understanding for allies. Violet, a 29-year-old Vietnamese-Chinese Canadian woman working in non-profit, explained her motivations for supporting her ally Charlotte, saying,

"I learned this concept a while ago, and it really resonated with me, especially when you're talking about anti-Black racism that exists. There's a difference between lived experience and learned experience, and I've learned her [ally] experience through her and seen her deal with things in a different way. The learned experience that I witnessed from being around her, supporting her, listening to her, in her moments that she needs someone to listen to and someone to lean on. That it's different. And it's important to validate. I wanted to address it. But we were able to connect over shared experiences. We grew very close over shared trauma."
Her ally Charlotte also echoed this, saying, "we share real, authentic values."

One the other hand, Trevor, a 34-year-old white British man working in non-profit, who had no identity overlap with his focal informant, explained his motivations to be an ally to his focal informant Vera, saying,

"I have had privilege for being a straight white male. Completely get that. But we can't continue the way that our society is structured. I couldn't sit here and say, yeah, I want to stay in this structure that benefits me, but doesn't benefit my friends. Can I sit here and say that I'm comfortable in this world where I get advantages and others don't? I can't say that. So it's a moral imperative. We see eye to eye on that."

Vera, a 27-year-old Indian-white woman working with Trever, agreed. She said,

"We see eye to eye on a lot of things, we understand issues in similar ways. If I have any insecurities, especially identity-based, he would be there. And he'll come to me too. So it's reciprocal. There are no power dynamics. He's an older white man. But he looks up to me just as I look up to him."

Both Vera and Trevor held values and beliefs that aligned with their focal informants, despite not having had shared experiences. These shared values and beliefs led to a shared understanding about allyship behaviours. Many allies in my sample, however, did not have such understanding of the focal informant's experiences, which created gaps between enacted and expected allyship in ally relationships.

3.3 Typology of Allied relationships

Based on the four dimensions of allyship identified, and three motivations for enacted allyship, I developed three types of allied relationships: paternalistic allyship, imbalanced allyship, and holistic allyship (see Figure 2). In this figure, grey indicates that expected allyship was not met by the ally, blue indicated that expected allyship was met, and light blue indicated that there was variance in expectations being met by allies. I identified 8 dyads as paternalistic (of which allies were 4 white men, 3 white women, and 1 woman of color), 8 dyads as imbalanced (of which allies were 7 white women, 1 white man), and 14 dyads as holistic (of which allies were 10 women of color, 1 white woman, 2 men of color, and 1 non-binary person) (see Figure 3).

3.3.1 Paternalistic allyship

I define paternalistic allied relationships as allied dyads where social identity differences exist between the focal informant and the ally, with the ally typically belonging to a relatively more dominant social group. Thus, paternalistic allyship typically existed between identity-

dissimilar pairs: such as women of color and white men, or women of color and senior white women. Paternalistic allies were motivated to enact allyship through support motives. Specifically, they either saw the focal informant's brilliance and wanted to support and uplift the focal person, and/or they wanted to alleviate the focal informant's pain and improve their well-being. Thus, paternalistic allyship, anchored by support motives, were typically characterized by corresponding dimensions of enacted allyship. Paternalistic allies were strongly focussed on impact, and enacted allyship behaviours that led to tangible outcomes for their focal informants. Many paternalistic allied relationships were also strong in affective connection, whereby the ally and the focal informant held friendships with each other. However, paternalistic allies often centered their own selves over the focal informants in their allyship, such that their allyship behaviours stemmed from their own perceptions about what the focal informant needed. This, in turn, could create paternalistic allied relationships which were one-sided and not reciprocal or egalitarian I nature.

In certain dyads, the focal informant themselves characterised the relationship as parental. Phoebe, a 39-year-old Trinidadian Canadian woman and Director of an educational institute, speaking about her ally Patrick, a 73-year-old white Australian man, described the relationship as extremely close and visibly teared up as she said, "He gave me a lot of fatherly advice. My dad actually passed away, like, right after I met Patrick. I just didn't have that paternal support as a young adult going into the world. Patrick, was that for me."

These relationships were high in affective connection. Allies held strong positive opinions about their focal informants. Patrick, speaking about Phoebe, said, "It was my good fortune to work with somebody who was so talented, capable. such an amazing work ethic. It's now a

lovely friendship. When she's coming to visit her mom, we say, come and drop in and have a meal with us,"

Focal informants in paternalistic allied relationships also held the ally in high esteem, felt valued by the ally, and gave tremendous credit to the ally for their own success and well-being. As Phoebe went on to say,

"He's been the best boss of my career to date. He was just such a supportive and warm and caring person. I always felt like he had my back. He was very generous with his knowledge with me. He invited me to lunch out. He always remembered my birthday. He respected my professional opinions. He asked for my input. He really saw my value. And at such a formative time in my career. As a young person who's a Black woman, it's easy to be dismissed by others. It [receiving a big project] was one of the highlights of my career. And that really set me up for success."

Further, paternalistic allied relationships were high in impact, and exemplified tangible impact and support. Paternalistic allies were motivated to take action to support their focal informants. Phoebe explained, saying,

"I'm getting emotional just thinking about how he supported me. They had received a grant of a million dollars. He just handed me the reins and was like, go for it. Being a white person in that space, he just approached it from a really ideal, exemplary way of how to navigate that space because he was willing to approach things from a place of humility. We had the best time working together."

Patrick echoed this, saying, "We had an offer from Bruce publishing, a million-dollar donation. And I just handed that project to Phoebe because I knew I could trust her to do that."

In some paternalistic relationships, however, there could be a centering of the ally instead of the focal person or group the ally was supposedly trying to support. Thus, many paternalistic allies were motivated to engage in allyship and create tangible change because of how exceptional the focal woman of color was, whom they felt was deserving of support and patronage. Steven, speaking of his focal informant Kamala, said,

> "You're super smart, you're super organized, you're more than capable. So why wouldn't we do everything we can to put you in a position where you can do more for us? She can

do the job. Why wouldn't I put her in lots of positions. Then I don't have to do that work, right? I definitely think that's the reason I want to support her. The more things I gave her to do, the more it got done. And it got done to a great standard. And then you start realizing that this person could be really good."

Steven was focused on this relationship to accrue benefits through what Kamala could contribute to the company and how it could make his job easier. This attitude centered his own needs and decentered Kamala's, as well as reinforced Kamala's exceptionalism. . For many paternalistic allies, although their explicit motivations were focussed on the focal informant, the ally's perspectives on allyship and what the focal informant needed shifted from enacted allyship towards a centering of the ally. This led to enacted allyship behaviours and actions that did not take into account what the focal informant wanted or needed, and what would help them. For example, Vera, a 27-year-old Indian-White woman, speaking about her ally Trevor, a 34-year-old white British man, whom she described as being very supportive and encouraging, explained her frustrations with Trevor not understanding how women of color had different experiences in workplaces:

"When I spoke to him about bringing up that comment [a discriminatory remark by a coworker], he was like, trust the system. He told me to go to HR. And I was like, the system works for you. The system doesn't work for us. I'm not going to trust it. What would have helped is knowing what I needed."

Thus, actions were driven by what the ally felt was suitable for the focal informant. For example, the ally may only provide emotional support, but not speak up on behalf of the focal informant. For example, Selena, a 34-year-old Chinese Canadian woman working as a coordinator with the government, spoke about her ally Marion, a 31-year old white European woman working with her, saying, "Having a sounding board was really nice. But I can't think of any specific examples where she stood up for me in the sense that she told people that they were being wrong."

Thus, paternalistic relationships could lead to the formation of instrumental connections with the focal informant. This could create situations where, at worst, the ally could extract labour and effort from the focal person through creating work opportunities which did not align with what the focal informant wanted. Allies would also receive prestige from a focal informant who would achieve visible success. In such relationships, allyship behaviours were also typically solely focussed on the focal person, and did not translate into allyship in other spheres. Mehr, a 39-year-old Pakistani program manager in a non-profit, described the pitfalls of such narrow allyship, saying,

"If I see a person practicing allyship, I would be paying attention to their behaviours, seeing their inclusive nature or watching if they're using equity as their lens. To understand allyship from an aspect of, you know, if I'm not here, are you still supporting another woman of color? Or you're just supporting me? Because you like something specific about me? Then that's not an ally, to whom justice means nothing, to whom success is equivalent to money and prestige. That's a selfish, self-serving kind of person"

3.3.2 Imbalanced allyship

The second type of allied relationship identified was imbalanced allyship, which I define as one-sided allyship dyads, with the ally interpreting the relationship as stronger or better than how the informant interpreted the relationship. Such relationships typically consisted of dyads between focal women of color and racialized men, white men, and white women. These allied relationships were typically motivated by self-image concerns, elicited by exposure to a discriminatory event, or by one's own values around being a good person.

These allied relationships were typically centered on the ally instead of the focal informant, because self-image motivations led to allyship behaviours focussed on reinforcing one's own self-image as a good person. They were also focussed on intent over impact. Allies had genuinely supportive intentions but at the same time, they were typically fearful of stepping on toes or risking backlash for themselves, which made them reluctant to speak up for the focal

person. Such fears typically arose from external forces and structures that created real risks for the ally. Such relationships were also more one-sided and not reciprocal. Some one-sided relationships could have affective connections, but they were weak and typically weaker on the side of the focal informant.

In such relationships, the ally believed that they were closer to the focal person and provided more support to them than the focal person thought. Suhana, a 27-year-old Indian woman working as a civil engineer, spoke about her ally Natalie, a 26-year-old white Canadian woman working with her, saying,

> "She assured me that this [her allyship] wasn't perfomative. I mean When I speak with her, I think I'm just more cautious of the words I use. And I think sometimes she still doesn't get it. And I feel very anxious because I'm trying to be careful. So she receives a more filtered version."

Natalie, on the other hand, described the relationship as being close, saying,

> "Discussions of race and racism are something that we have had in the past and maybe she needs me as someone who's a safe space to talk about them. Because I am willing to engage in and listen. I think we have a positive relationship."

Similarly, Clara, a 40-year-old white Canadian woman and Director in her organization, spoke about her own allyship, saying, "I feel like I'm an approachable person to talk to. If I make a mistake, she [focal informant] can tell me. I am willing to admit when I've missed the mark." This contrasted with what her focal informant Namrata, a 29-year-old South Asian project manager, said: "When I'm speaking with Clara, it's just a little bit more delicate."

3.3.3 Holistic Allyship

Finally, holistic allied relationships, which I define as allied dyads characterised by mutual respect, shared goals, and equity, were most supportive for focal informants. Allies in such relationships were typically motivated by structural goals, which focussed on challenging structural systems of inequality and marginalization, which they shared with the focal informant,

and emerged from a deep understanding of the lived experiences of the focal informant either through shared or learned experience. Holistic allyship most commonly existed between two women of color, and were high on all four dimensions of allyship. What made these relationships especially powerful was the shared lived experiences, which gave rise to a deeper commitment to alleviating the focal woman of color's challenges and the structures that contribute to these challenges. These relationships were risky because one was actually challenging systems and structures of inequity, challenging powerful people, and challenging long-established hierarchies, including one's own position in that hierarchy. However, allies in these dyads were willing to take these risks to disrupt existing structures and provide support to the focal informant. In fact, risk-taking was a fundamental aspect of effective allyship. As Keya, a 26-year-old Black program manager in government, noted:

> "When I think of her [ally], I think of going beyond. Because they [ally] are putting themselves at risk. When she rallies support or speaks to people for me. When she focuses on what I need. When she stands up for things, when she sees an inequity and names it, even if it might put her at risk, discipline or job loss, there's so many repercussions for standing up."

Partial overlap of ethnic-racial identities also created shared cultural experiences, which led to strong affective connections and possibility for holistic allied relationships. Nabila, a 25-year-old Pakistani Canadian woman working as a project manager in an engineering firm, spoke of her connection with her ally Brandon, who was mixed race (Pakistani and white), saying,

> "My dad's Ismaili. And so I was active in the Ismaili community quite a bit. And Brandon just randomly comes up to me and was like, 'are you Ismaili?' And I was like, that is the weirdest question because nobody would know that I'm Ismaili looking at me. And I was like, how do you know this? And he was like my mom is Ismaili. So he's half Brown half white. And so we bonded, obviously, because it's such a specific culture. We just bonded going to Saturday school together. And talked about a bunch of stuff like at the mosque. And how our childhoods were spent learning about this community."

On the other hand, white allies who were described by their focal informants in holistic terms were rare, and were typically the only white person they experienced safety with and

support from. Sara, a 36-year-old Black manager, speaking about her ally Jane, a 42-year-old white Canadian woman working with her, said, “She’s that unicorn. She understands the culture and the spaces which we occupy. She has taken real risks for me. She’s almost like a sister to me. I think she’s my only white friend. She’s the safe space that I’m hoping others can be.”

3.4 Whiteness and Masculinity in Allied relationships

In general, focal informants were cautious with white allies, and experienced repeated disconnect between expectations and enacted action from white allies. They expressed fear about trusting white allies, and the experience of a lack of safety about being open with them. Shanaya, a 25-year-old Chinese Canadian project manager in technology, shared her thoughts about caution with white allies, saying,

> “I think in the whole reward and punishment spectrum, I've been punished too many times. It's like slowly boiling you and gradually you were cooked and you don't even realize it. So even with those that I trust as my allies, they've had their Wwhite privilege their entire life. So I still double and triple think everything that I say and do.”

Paternalistic and one-sided allied relationships in particular, which typically consisted of status dissimilar allied relationships, often faltered when it came to the lack of shared experiences and therefore a lack of understanding and genuine commitment to demarginalization. This created challenges around issues such as advocating for the focal woman of color and focussing on tangible impact, or taking up space and not realizing when to stay silent and let the focal women of color speak for herself. Being a good ally also required risk-taking, speaking up in unsupportive environments, or challenging status quo. This became possible when the ally held values of equity and justice. Part of this was grappling with one’s own privilege as white allies and figuring out how to use that to further the cause of supporting equitable outcomes for the focal person. Although the allies who participated in this study ostensibly had the focal informant’s best interests at heart because they were already embedded

in positive workplace relationships in the form of allied dyads with women of color, many white allies were unable to demonstrate holistic allyship that minimised gaps between enacted and expected allyship. As Sara, a 36-year-old Nigerian African program manager in a non-profit exclaimed in frustration,

"I'm tired of nice, white people. The people in the middle who believe that they're not racist, but then are of the perpetrators perpetuate harm everywhere they go and not knowing they're causing harm. They've just been around for so long and done things the same way, those are the people that we need to reach, and the question is, how do we reach them and have these conversations. And I don't have the answer to that."

When it came to masculinity, focal informants who nominated male allies were in primarily paternalistic allyships. Most male allies were motivated to engage in allyship because they were motivated by individual positive characteristics of the focal informant. They felt that the informant was deserving of support and patronage. As Steven, a 31-year-old white British man, speaking of his focal informant Kamala, a 29-year-old Indian manager said,

"You're super smart, you're super organized, you're more than capable. So why wouldn't we do everything we can to put you in a position where you can do more for us? She can do the job. Why wouldn't I put her in lots of positions, and then I don't have to do that work, right? I definitely think that's the reason I want to support her. The more things I gave her to do, the more it got done. And it got done to a great standard. And then you start realizing that this person could be really good."

However, as we saw above, this could create instrumental connections as well as a centering of one's own self instead of the focal informant, where Steven was focussed on what more Kamala could contribute to the company and how it could make his job easier.

Paternalistic allied relationships could also create power imbalances and the ally thrusting their ideas and beliefs onto the focal informant. Ria, a 30-year-old Indian project planner, on being asked why she nominated her ally David, a 34 year old white Canadian man, said,

"I've been having mixed feelings about it to be honest. White men have a lot of learning to do. For example. Derek talks about sports a lot to certain people on the team, and they have a

great friendship about it. But I don't care about sports. I'm not going to suddenly start watching sports to be friends with him. He tried to mansplain things to me a few times".

Whiteness and masculinity combined created more potential for allies to have blind spots about their own relative power vis-à-vis their focal informants, and more scope for ineffective enacted allyship behaviours to take place.

3.5 Matched Pairs in Allied relationships

In general, focal informants expressed receiving greater support and solidarity from other women of color. This included those who had nominated white people or men as their allies. For example, Meg, a 25-year-old Chinese program coordinator in a non-profit, who had nominated a white woman as her ally, on being asked what more support she would like to receive, said,

> "I want to shout out to my women of color allies. I know I focused on somebody who wasn't one of those people. But that's a whole other level of support. Sometimes you don't even have to say things to them. And they're my backbone. They're the ones who keep me going."

Many focal informants echoed this sentiment, and noted that other women of color were better able to understand their experiences, and therefore were able to provide stronger support. They also expressed feelings of comfort and safety with other women of color allies, which they did not experience with other allies. Tina, a 37-year-old Black Canadian woman working in hospital management, explained this, saying,

> "I feel like other women of color get that balance between speaking up and making space. I'm thinking of allies who are not white, and they're probably doing that. It's interesting that it doesn't happen when it comes to white allies. I feel like with Rita [Indian Canadian woman friend], I am more direct because she's experiencing the same thing. I can say anything. But we both acknowledge that when we're speaking with white colleagues, it's more delicate."

3.6 Overview of Allied Pairs

Analysing the 30 dyads based on enacted allyship behaviours and motivations, I categorized each dyad into a type of allied relationship. As figure 2 shows, both paternalistic and imbalanced allied relationships were positive in some ways, and negative in other ways. This

highlighted that allied relationships did benefit focal informants, but there was scope for improvement and moving towards holistic allyship. This could happen through embracing more enacted allyship behaviours that aligned with expected allyship behaviours as identified in this study. It could also occur through reflecting on one's motivations for allyship, and trying to shift from personal motivations to those that focussed on the focal informant and then eventually shared motivations. My analyses thus suggest that allyship is differentially experienced based on motivations for allyship and tangible outcomes of the allied relationship, as well as overlapping identities within an allied dyad.

Further, my findings suggest that allyship does not occur in a vacuum, but exists within larger structures of power and oppression. These structures influence and limit the allyship behaviours enacted by allies, who might find themselves fearful of engaging in certain behaviours due to risks posed by challenging overarching systems. Thus, although allies may sometimes hold just motives, and desire to support the focal informant, they may feel unable to do so. This dissertation thus highlights the structural nature of interpersonal relationships, and how interpersonal relationships may mirror structural inequalities.

4 Discussion and Conclusion

"There's this saying in Korea that talks about how love is top down. It needs to flow top down, like the water flows. It has to flow down. And I have personally also received that love from like the generations and ancestors that have gone past me, gone before me. There's that beauty of love, in an ally. For her [focal informant] to say how I have been such a big ally to her, there's a kind of acceptance and validation that you get. That I've made something better. And that's motivation for the allies to continue on."

- Gabrielle, 30, Korean Canadian woman, manager in non-profit

Through this dissertation, I broaden the scope of theory and research on allyship at work. By examining allyship from a relational perspective, I uncover tensions within existing allied dyads, and identify allyship dimensions which highlight gaps between expected allyship by focal women of color and enacted allyship by nominated allies. I also find that allies have different motivations for allyship, which influences their enacted allyship behaviours and consequently affects the gap between expected allyship with their focal informants and their enacted allyship. Based on the dimensions of allyship behaviours and motivations for allyship, I inductively develop three types of allied relationships for women of color at work.

This dissertation expands our understanding of positive workplace relationships (Ragins and Dutton, 2007) through centering the relational experiences of women of color and examining allyship experienced by women of color at work. My findings highlight the potential for allies to support demarginalization, but also draws attention to possible negative outcomes of a relationship that is constructed from a positive lens. In particular, I find that even when marginalized individuals themselves identify allies, they can have negative experiences in the relationship and their expectations from the ally can go unmet. The ally can also be motivated to be an ally for reasons other than to merely support the focal informant or challenge marginalization, but may hold motives that are not altruistic. Thus, I uncover the potential for challenging structural systems of marginalization through allyship for women of color, as well as

the potential for negative experiences and outcomes within the allied relationship. I also find that these structures can constrain allyship behaviours as well because they create risks for the ally, who are also embedded in larger structures of inequality.

By focussing on individuals already embedded in positive relationships, in that they are recognized as allies by women of color, and themselves identify as allied, I highlight the necessity of moving beyond good intentions to tangible actions. For example, informants note the importance of specific actions such speaking up for them in front of others, advocating for them with higher-ups, amplifying their voice by creating space for them to share their work and themselves, addressing problematic behaviours by others, and treating them as equal, to name a few. This provides direction for organizations on how to approach DEI, as well as for researchers to examine the efficacy of these behaviours under various conditions and contexts.

Further, an examination of allyship from the perspective of the relatively marginalized individual in the allied relationship, and contrasting that with that of the ally, deepens our understanding of inter-group relationships across and within demographic differences in important ways. It allows me to build theory based on positive workplace relationships that already exist within individuals and is characterized as allyship by the participants themselves. It also extends research on PWRs by shedding light on relationships constructed and interpreted as positive, but that nonetheless exhibit unexpected negative characteristics. Finally, it emphasizes the significance of the ally's motivations and enacted behaviours in creating positive allyship experiences and outcomes for women of color.

This dissertation also draws attention to negative outcomes in relationships framed as positive. In particular, I find the beneficiaries of these relationships experience a power imbalance, negative emotions, and their expectations go unmet. Although prior research suggests

that allies are likely to have a longer-term impact on prejudice reduction (e.g. Lindsey et al., 2015), I find that ally motivations influence allyship behaviours and thus the type of support women of color receive and the type of allied relationship they are part of. In fact, ally motivations are seemingly more salient than the needs of our women of color participants in influencing the allied relationship. Some allies may have motives that are not altruistic and center their own needs for recognition or prestige. This illuminates how relationships that are constructed and interpreted as positive may include negative characteristics. I thus critically engage with the experience of workplace allyship, and broaden our understanding of what it means to be a "good" ally. By identifying four dimensions of allyship, I illustrate how enacted allyship does not necessarily correspond with what focal informants expect and need from allies. This complicates our understanding of "good allyship" because it centers the needs of the beneficiaries of allyship, and describes "good" from their lens.

With this research I expand the scope of theory and research within positive organizational scholarship and PWRs (Cameron and Dutton, 2003; Dutton, Roberts, and Bednar, 2010). In particular, I find that relationships that are constructed as positive are not always beneficial and desirable to both parties in the relationship. This offers insight into effective strategies for dismantling inequality and demarginalizing certain identities at work. Furthermore, this dissertation suggests that gaps between expected and enacted allyship may exist because allies don't have insight into what their intended beneficiaries need. This implies that organizations and allies need focus on perspective-taking (Boland and Tenkasi, 1995) with respect to their beneficiaries and what they need. Scholarship on perspective-taking (Parker and Axel, 2001) finds that it is an effective strategy to understand people's needs and take action to support their needs. Thus, my dissertation calls for interventions and mentorship programs that

explicitly focus on perspective-taking through facilitating open conversations and relationship building. At the same time, it highlights that the burden to make change should not rest with those who are marginalized, and a collaborative approach may address both issues.

In addition, this study contributes to the literature on multiple marginalized identities at work by centering the analysis around demarginalization. We know little about how negative workplace experiences are mitigated, and what possible positive experiences people with marginalized identities may encounter at work. Thus, research to date leaves us with little direction about *how* allies and organizations can make workplace environments inclusive, beyond nominal changes. This study systematically examines how allies can create positive experiences for women of color at work, as well as engage in behaviours that can hinder positive experiences, which helps shed light on what behavioural and structural changes are needed to create inclusive workplaces.

Furthermore, focussing on behaviours and actions that allies can take to enhance positive experiences of marginalized group members illuminates more clearly how structural inequalities might be corrected by those who can more effectively raise their voices against mistreatment of others with less risk of retaliation. This contributes to mistreatment and workplace inequality research by shedding light on what dominant group members can do to prevent mistreatment and engender positive workplace visibility for marginalized group members.

This study also contributes to the literature on multiple marginalized identities at work by centering the analysis around demarginalization. We know little about how negative workplace experiences are mitigated, and how positive experiences can be encouraged for people with marginalized identities. Thus, research to date leaves us with little direction about *how* allies and organizations can create positive workplace experiences for marginalized employees, beyond

nominal changes. This dissertation outlines how individuals can enact effective allyship in organizations to engender desirable experiences and outcomes for women of color at work. Specifically, I find that allied relationships do benefit focal participants in various ways but may also reinforce power differences. However, my findings also suggest that there is scope for improvement and moving towards holistic allyship by embracing allyship behaviors that align with expected allyship behaviors as identified. This could also occur through reflecting on one's motivations for allyship, and shifting from self-image motivations to support motivations and eventually structural motivations.

Finally, I develop insights on relationships across racial groups in Canada; a context whose racial issues are understudied in management scholarship and often subsumed within narratives of race relations in the U.S. Historic systems of oppression operate differently in different contexts, which also affects the formation of allied relationships at work.

More generally, this research provides direction about *how* allies and organizations can make workplace environments more inclusive and create spaces for positive, affirming experiences for women of color to allow them to succeed and live up to their potential at work. Specifically, I find that aligning one's actions and behaviours with what beneficiaries need from allies is critical to create positive outcomes. Thus, it highlights the importance for individuals and organizations to focus on marginalized individuals and communities to guide anti-inequality efforts and actions. This requires centering their needs, and following their lead in challenging status quo. Thus, I anticipate that this study will shape the practice of allyship to foster more inclusive and equitable workplaces for marginalized employees. Research shows that organizational cultures are hard to shift, and can persist even if policies change (e.g., Nicholson, 1984; Schneider, 1987). Thus, policy changes may not effect the changes necessary for

marginalized group members to access positive outcomes at work unless organizational cultures and beliefs and behaviours of organizational members change. This study offers one way to start creating change for marginalized individuals through interpersonal relationships and behaviours.

Further, this study examines how positive workplace relationships for women of color influence women of color's experiences at work, thus taking a bottom-up approach to demarginalization rather than a traditional top-down approach, such as diversity efforts by organizations. This becomes especially important considering research that suggests that traditional diversity training programs may not be as effective as originally thought. Although organizations spend billions of dollars on diversity training every year (McKinsey, 2018), especially on the currently popular "implicit bias training," research has highlighted the ineffectiveness of training programmes when addressing issues of power and status (Anand and Winters, 2008; Chang et al., 2019; Chavez and Weisinger, 2008; Devine and Ash, 2022; Fujimoto and Hartel, 2017; Moss-Racusin et al., 2014). On the other hand, focussing on individuals already embedded in positive relationships, in that they are recognized as allies by marginalized group members may have longer-term positive impact on reduction in prejudice (Lindsey, King, Hebl, and Levine, 2015).

Therefore, this dissertation offers important opportunities for future research on PWRs and allyship at work. Future directions for research would be to examine how non-traditional interventions can be an effective approach for organizations managing diversity. Drawing from the findings of this research, researchers will be able to study effective ways to encourage employees with allyship intentions to understand what creates effective allyship for marginalized individuals at work, and how gaps between expected and enacted allyship can be bridged. Future researchers would be encouraged to also explore possible contingent factors that affect the

effectiveness of training employees to adopt such alternative approaches to inclusion, thus identifying factors that may affect the extent to which structures of marginalization can be challenged and marginalized individuals supported through learned techniques.

Future research should also examine temporal aspects of allyship motivations and behaviours. Specifically, could there be potential to move across types of allied relationships, as allies learn and build understanding of structures of marginalization and their own position within those structures? For example, an imbalanced ally may find that through their relationship with the focal informant, they gain insight into their lived-experiences and develop learned experience. This may expand their motivations for allyship beyond personal reasons, and encourage enacted allyship that is centered on the focal informant, focussed on impact, and is more equal and reciprocal. This highlights the need for future research to also focus on temporal aspects of allied relationship building. In particular, allied relationships are likely to be built and develop over time, as well as change and evolve over time, such that one may begin a relationship that is imbalanced, which may over time become holistic. Research should examine the specifics of the process of allyship, particularly, who initiates the process, and how does that determine the type of allied relationship forged?

Finally, more research is needed on how allied relationship develop with a focus on the emergent processes that influence this. For example, a few informants noted that they grew close over “shared trauma”. Future research should examine whether trauma bonding leads to the development of allied relationships, and if so, how, and what type of relationships emerge from such shared experiences.

4.1 Conclusion

When organizations focus on diversity only for a desire to "look diverse", they employ marginalized group members without understanding the challenges that they may face at work. This not only hinders the well-being and performance of marginalized employees, but also defeats the purpose of creating a diverse organization. It also prevents employees with demographic differences from developing relationships with one another because dominant employees do not understand challenges faced by marginalized employees Therefore, the "business case" for diversity is hugely dependent on how employees are treated and perceived. Merely hiring marginalized group members may not be enough, but proactively creating conditions for them to thrive and succeed is needed. This dissertation aims to understand allyship as a route to addressing some of these organizational challenges in managing diversity and creating conditions that may support marginalized members of workplaces flourish. Enhancing allied relationships offers organizations an opportunity to move beyond top-down diversity efforts through mere numerical diversity and expectations of assimilation by marginalized employees, to centering the needs of marginalized individuals and taking a bottom-up approach to equity and inclusion.

5 Tables and Figures

TABLE 1. Representative Quotes About Dimensions of Allyship

Dimensions of Allyship	Illustrative quotes: Focal Informant	Illustrative quotes: Nominated Ally
Centering the Focal Person	She is someone who understands that she walks in the world with privileges that are different from mine, She is there to uplift and support and step aside, in order to amplify racialized people's voices over hers. So she's willing to step back for it. [Valerie, 29, Chinese-Vietnamese Canadian woman]	I want to be an ally. I recognize that's taking some give and take as I keep doing this as well as knowing when being an ally means listening and when it means stepping up. [Summer, 29, white Canadian woman, Coordinator in non-profit]
	She's really introspective and has a really good social justice lens on things. She has a lot of empathy built into the way that she sees the world. She sees things the way I see things. I wouldn't be empowered to speak up as much without her insight. [Meg, 25, Chinese-Malaysian, Program coordinator in non-profit]	I feel like white allies feel like they need to say more or do and say a lot and take up a lot of space on our channels. I don't want to be that person. Because I don't think that's I don't think that's my role, I don't think it should be my role. [Jade, 23, white Canadian woman, Program manager in non-profit]
Centering the Ally	Sometimes when I'm sharing an experience, she jumps in and says, Oh, my gosh, that totally reminds me of that time when I was traveling, and I was the only white person there. [Radha, 44, Indian Canadian, Teacher, Vancouver School Board]	I just wanted her to feel like she could talk about the things that were hard for her. I sometimes struggle with that, because I'm like oh, I want to show her that I get it on some level, but I don't want to like minimize it, or make it seem like I understand, when really I don't. [Amy, 30, white Canadian woman, Speech language pathologist, Vancouver School Board]
	I know she will say things like, 'I don't even see Chioma as Black.' That is not active listening. And trying to instead of just listening and accepting my experience for what it is, trying to relate. But the way that I move through life will be different. So, yeah, I think some people aren't willing	She was the one who reached out right after that, not me. And I felt like that's she shouldn't have to reach out to her work stuff about this. And I think I was just uncomfortable, because I wasn't sure what the professional boundary and the friendship boundary was there, because I

	to acknowledge that, who aren't willing to listen and grow try to do better. No one's perfect. I'm not perfect. I'm growing and learning and evolving. So I just hope that she doesn't feel like they need to be perfect or say the perfect thing. Coz then you're thinking about yourself. It's like not saying anything is in some instances worse. I think just stand up and to speak out whenever they see things that don't seem right. feel right. [Chioma, 37, Nigerian Canadian, Speech language pathologist, Vancouver School Board]	think we see each other more in a workplace capacity. I feel like I'm wondering if I'm saying the right thing, I try to monitor my language in most settings. But I'm always worried that if I say something slightly insensitive, or you know… [Liz. 29, white Canadian woman, Speech language pathologist, Vancouver School Board]
Focused on Impact	When she did hiring for me, she told this to me afterwards, she added a layer into that process to ensure extreme equity that she hid our names from the application. That kind of stuck with me. To be able to recognize those biases, and do something about it, right? Take action. So that stuck with me. She took action, something that's real. And I know she cares about equitable hiring practices. [Naina, 29, Indian, Project manager, BC Works]	I see a lot more action needed as an ally. I can give you an example. I was on the panel that hired her. I want to be clear that we have fair and equitable hiring practices. One of the things we talked about was communication skills that are needed for the work that we do. And in my opinion, our work-- we don't put people on the spot very often. And so I don't find that surprising them with questions in an interview is worthwhile. I try to send the questions quite a long time in advance so that people can come prepared. I want them to do their best. And I'm not interested in someone stumbling through an interview. I think that's important for people with disabilities, people for whom English is maybe not their first language. There's a number of folks who benefit from having a bit more time to think about the questions and show up as best as they can. [Clara, 40, white Canadian woman, Director of Corporate Sustainability, BC Works]
	For people that were mean, and that were racist, and that were judgmental, Tim helped me with that. Because he wouldn't allow that to happen to me. Like, he would say something about it. He would know how to handle the situation. He would	At the end of the day, we respected each other and we were there for each other at the end of the day. Whatever you need, I'll be there. There were things that I've seen in those situations that I just didn't like. And I wanted to create an inclusive environment for her.

	always speak up for me. Before I met Tim, I did not feel like I had an ally. [Leila, 20, Syrian, Charity Sales]	[Tim, 32, West Indian-Canadian man, Charity Sales]
Focused on Intent	There are people in the middle who hold those values and if they went one step further,….It takes sacrifice and courage, like sometimes it will impact them badly. But the really sad thing is if they don't let it impact them badly, and then they say that they believe in these things. It's easier to post on social media about how much you care about this. But why when it was in the room didn't you say something? I mentioned to Amber [about a discriminatory event]. And nothing happened. And I felt so alone. [Zainab, 28, Pakistani Canadian, Social Worker]	I think I have lots of blind spots. I know there's times when I'm not aware of them. Zainab is soft spoken. I think sometimes people feel they're silenced, and they don't get an opportunity… don't feel that there's a space for them to say something. So I think being a better listener, making space for people just to be able to speak some of these things. Who don't feel that that they have the space or power, to say that. But also making sure that I'm asking the questions. And responding to that, and not just going oh, okay. [Amber, 50, white Canadian woman, Manager of programs, Non-profit]
	I think we've passed a point recently of being like, oh, if you just have good intentions, you're an ally, to being like, you need to do something because good intentions are not changing the existing way that the world works. I see an ally as someone who does not just say, 'oh, that's wrong', but are like, 'hey, what should we do about it'. Someone who is like, 'what do we do next?' Being willing to put yourself into that position. I have realized that some people are just all talk and then won't put their neck out for anybody. [Billy, 22, Half-Indian, Half-White, Resident advisor]	I feel like Billy and I have had a lot of conversations about race and gender in the workplace, mainly because we work together in a lot of different contexts. And it was very much about our experiences and our feelings. I think the main support that I'm able to provide to Billy has been through conversations. Most the time, it's been in the aftermath, where we'll go to lunch or something, and they'll be like, all right. Here's what's going on. What do you think I can do? What do you think I should do? Or, I just want to vent about this. [Devon, 20, white Canadian, non-binary person, Resident advisor]
Affective Connection	Julia is my closest friend at work. I just really like her. She's fun. She's friendly. We just got along. Actually, we became friends because it was like trial by fire. Within her first month on the job And I think that trauma just bonded us. Because it was just like, hey, welcome to the company. This sucks.	Ava and I, we met in office, but we've become extremely close in the last four years we've known each other. She was actually a bridesmaid in my wedding. And so it's a friendship that's grown. She's definitely someone that I can rely on, depend on.

	[Ava, 33, Chinese Canadian, Senior client care officer]	[Julia, 27, Chinese-Canadian woman, Licensed strata agent]
	Amy is lovely. She and I have great conversations. She is a very humble, compassionate person. Some of those dark days when I needed a shoulder to lean on, I was able to, in those moments of extreme stress-- I would see Amy and I would get that comforting feeling. We connected pretty quickly, and I have that nice, familiar, comfortable feeling with her. [Radha, 44, Indian Canadian, Teacher, Vancouver School Board]	She was going through a lot of stuff. A lot of things were happening to her at work that really were unjust. And I wasn't able to help her solve her issue. But I think that I was there to listen, and be a sounding board, and talk to her about what was going on. So I think just being there to listen, and talk to her, and tell her that the way she was feeling was valid. [Amy, 30, white Canadian woman, Speech language pathologist, Vancouver School Board]
Instrumental Connection	Sometimes it's more of a showing to the other people in the room that like, oh, I'm such a wonderful person. [Kamala, 29, Indian, Case Manager, Worksafe BC	I want to be perceived as someone who could be relied upon and can be trusted. [Steven, 31, white British man, Manager, Worksafe BC]
	Sometimes someone appears to be a friend, or appears to be a supporter, but is doing it for their own benefit to be able to use your vulnerabilities against you. To be able to compete and be better than you at things rather than supportive.	
Egalitarian Reciprocity	She's always very supportive. It doesn't matter if it's a work thing. It doesn't matter if it's a personal thing. I can go to her. And she'll always take the time to listen. Even if she's in the middle of something, If I'm having a breakdown, she stops and she listens. And I'll do the same for her. She's young. She's attractive. She's Asian. She's small. And I can see people probably don't take her seriously. So I also help her. She calls me “work mom”. [Ava, 33, Chinese Canadian, Senior client care officer]	I do think that being an ally to each other and in the workplace has really played an extremely large role in us becoming so incredibly close. I think one of the reasons why she sees me as an ally, and vice versa is, we do have very similar kind of values, and thought processes, and experiences as well. Julia, 27, Chinese-Canadian woman, Licensed strata agent

	I recall incidents where people were making comments about my hair or asking to touch it, and Jada was in close proximity. And she right away interjected and was like, ‘hey that's not appropriate’. And I would do the same. I felt like I had somebody who saw me for me and not just my Blackness but like a person. She’s a person of color too. She's rubbed off on me, seeing that will and that determination to own yourself, to own your stuff, and just like ‘grrr!’ Every time I work with her, we joke, we laugh, we tag team with all the workload duties, and we swap shifts with each other. We have each other’s back. [Tina, 37, Black Canadian, Hospital management]	Being a woman of color, I understand what it’s like for Tina. And she gets me. With her, I can be vulnerable, but still be able to be light and to joke and stuff in the workplace. I feel pretty comfortable being able to come to her. [Jada, 32, Latina Canadian woman, Nurse]
One-sidedness	Even with the people that I fully trust as my allies, I still double and triple think everything that I say and do. [Shanaya, 25, Chinese Canadian, Project management, Technology]	With Shanaya, I formed that bond. And we probably have a closer relationship. But I'd hate to white knight for her and cause some trouble at work. [Miles, 31, white Australian man, IT infrastructure manager]
	Sometimes I have to do all this teaching for her. And I’ve found that people get more defensive if you’re a woman of color. I’m viewed as threatening. People think you’re a troublemaker And they say, I don’t feel safe with you. [Suhana, 27, Indian Canadian, Civil engineer]	I think we are quite close and I am able to talk to her about most things. We have a lot of conversations about race and identity. [Natalie, 26, white Canadian woman, Engineer]

TABLE 2: Representative Quotes About Motivations for Allyship

Motivations	Illustrative Quotes
Self-Image Motives	Last year, we had an in-depth conversation because -- with all the Black Lives Matter movement, a lot of people decided to talk about their own experience with racism. And she said that no one from work had reached out. She also talked about this one incident she experienced… and was told that she would just have to deal with it. It made me so mad. I had to reach out to her. Otherwise how can I be an ally? [31, white European woman, Photographer]
	I do know I have really poor boundaries. I work in a helping profession, and I am so motivated by helping people. So I think it's probably along the same lines, even though the help I do is different in my work. I think that I have a hard time saying no. I see myself as a helper. [Amy, 30, white Canadian woman, Speech language pathologist, Vancouver School Board]
Support Motives	I think Naina is just an outstanding employee, outstanding human being, outstanding co-worker. She's fun to work with. She's very intelligent, very capable. She deserves to be supported [Clara, 40, white Canadian woman, Director of Corporate Sustainability]
	As soon as I saw Keya, I said, there is a bright, shining, active, lovely, young Black woman who's excited and ambitious, and I want to make sure she knows, because I don't want that light to go out. I don't want to see that light go out. [Daniella, 60, Black Canadian woman, Clinical information systems design instructor, Technology company]
Structural Motives	That awareness of the barriers when you walk into a room as a woman of color. Like immediately, like when people ask what the barriers are, it's like my barrier is that if it's a white man and me and a white woman that walk into a room in any given circumstance, who is going to be assumed has the authority, the power, the knowledge, and why? I understood what it's like when you're dealing with dynamics of whiteness. So we wanted to support each other. [Jackie, 42, Filipino Canadian woman, Curator, facilitator, and consultant]
	When I'm in a workplace, I'm always being treated differently than my friends who are people of color or different, marginalized identities. The ways that white people benefit from white supremacy-- for example, I will probably get jobs easier than my friends who are people of color, or people won't yell racist things at me in the street. I don't want me benefiting from it because they are losing from it. Understanding that and using the privilege that comes with that is one of the most important things. I want to be someone who is challenging shittiness in the workplace. [Devon, 20, white Canadian, non-binary, Resident advisor]

TABLE 3. Representative Quotes About Types of Allied Relationships

Allied relationships	Illustrative quotes	
Paternalistic Allyship	Sally was ahead of me in her career. And she supported me in so many formal and informal ways. She made every effort to give me professional visibility at a very young age and continually affirmed me. At some point she told me why - she saw potential in me. And this was such a refreshing change from feedback I had received from a senior person who said, 'You come across as intellectually arrogant". [Yana, 43, Black African-Canadian, Chief Diversity Officer]	I hope that she knows how much I care about her and believe in her and that I'm here for her. I think sometimes I drive her nuts. I've definitely pushed her in areas that was maybe even offensive. There were occasions where I would say to her, OK, you know twice as much than anybody else in the room about this and you're not talking, and I need you to stand up. And she would say later that would be almost offensive. It's like telling a person of color they need to speak up. And I'm going, 'well, I'm sorry it's offensive but I want you to speak up.' I've never said this to her, but she probably figured it out. I really went to bat against somebody pretty strong for her. I went all out to see Yana elevated to an executive level position because as we worked together and she applied for different roles, she was not successful and it made me so angry. I do think systemic racism and sexism played a role. [Sally, 60, white Canadian woman, Director, Provincial Health Services Authority]
Imbalanced Allyship	It's like if you want to be like a flaming racist, or like, outwardly shamanistic, or an asshole, like, then I can be like, hey, you were being an asshole. But if you're going to be the diffuser of radical change, then it's very hard to be like, you're doing something wrong here. It's not enough to just listen and say this is wrong. You have to do something about it. [Meg, 25, Chinese, Program Coordinator, Non-profit]	I can obviously support in the emotional labor part, I think being a supportive ally has a lot to do with being there to hear. I can be that type of person to hear you and, you know, tell you that you're being heard. [Jade, 23, white Canadian woman, Program manager, Non-profit]

Holistic Allyship	I remember there was a contract that came to us that was in Kentucky. I have had so many bad experiences in the South that I refuse to go there. My CEO is like, you should take this contract. And I refused to. And Jane was like, you don't understand. The South can be pretty hostile and you're talking about going to this really small rural towns. She really was advocating for me and she did that contract with somebody else. And I was just so grateful for that because she understood the context of the fear--where the fear was coming from [Sara, 36, Nigerian-African, Program manager, Non-profit]	Being an ally involves being cognizant of the dynamics of that situation and thinking about ways in which, either based on identity more directly or other factors at play, where someone might be putting into a situation where they're being undervalued or marginalized. And using the power that you have in a way that broadens their access to whatever is they need in that context. As well as looking for those opportunities to step back so that the other person can have more of the attention when they need it and the recognition. I would see, for example, that she was being overwhelmed with too many of these extra responsibilities from the boss or something like that. And I made a point to check in with her and say what do you have on your plate and just proactively see if there was something I could pick up. [Jane, 42, white American woman, Co-founder, Non-profit]

Figure 1: Data Collection and Analysis

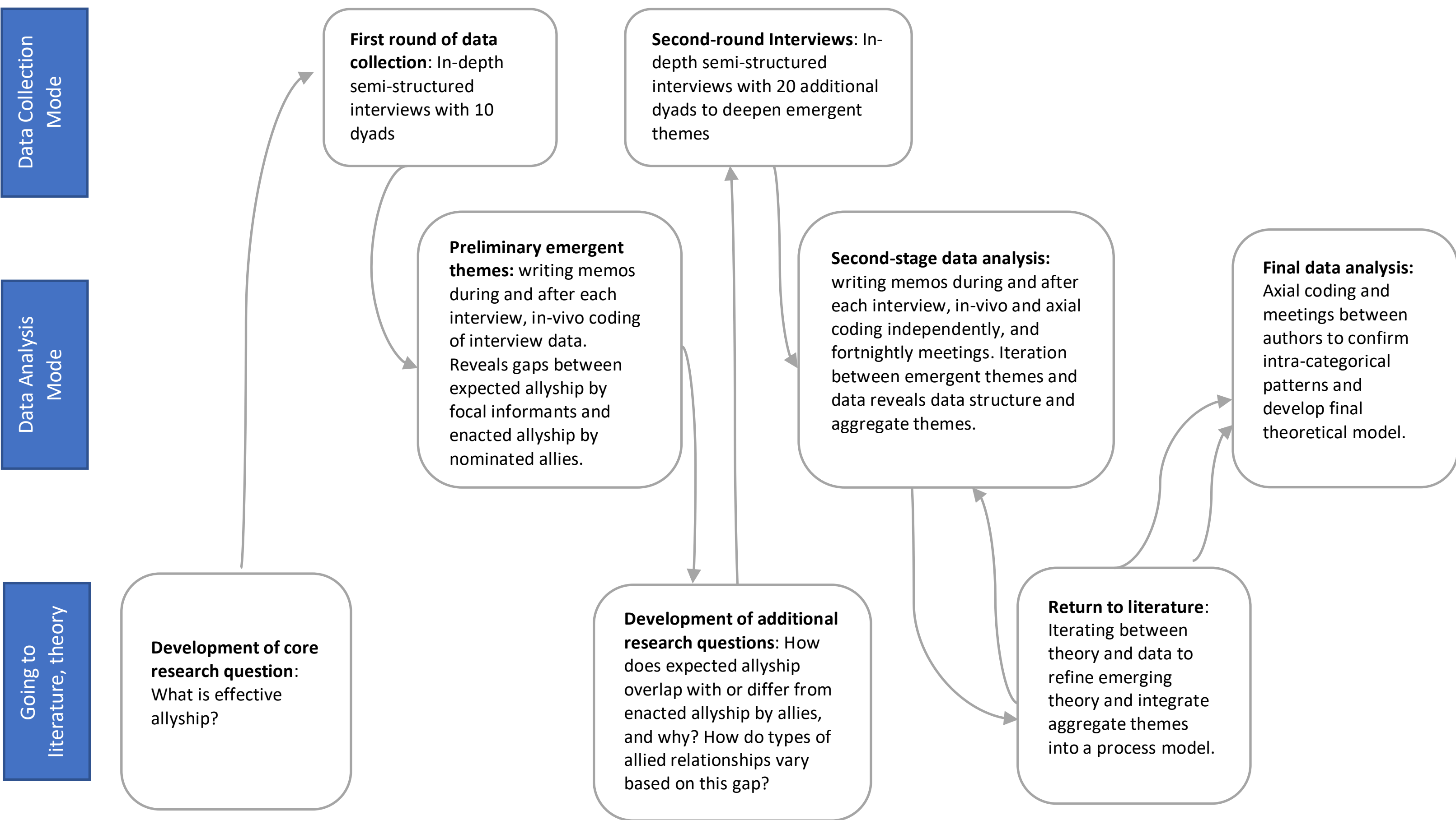
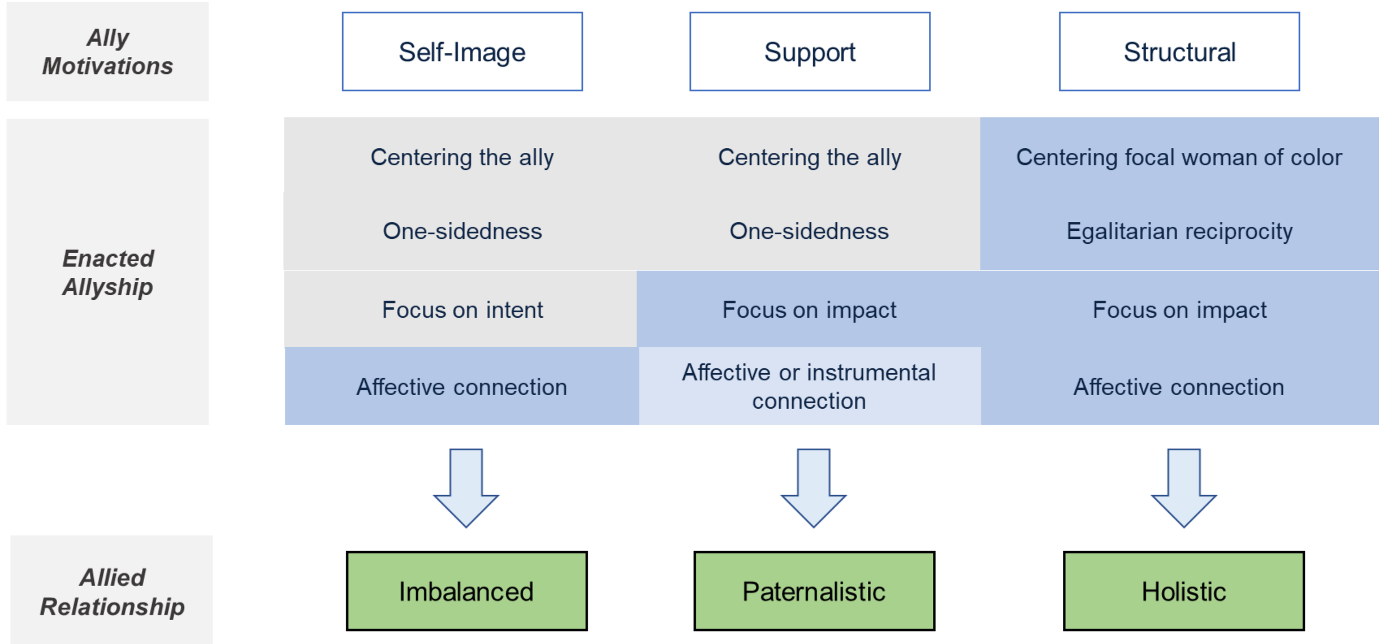


Figure 2: Theoretical Model of Allied Relationships at Work



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Appendix A: Details of Allied Dyads

Focal Informant				Nominated Ally			
Codename	**Age**	**Ethnicity**	**Profession**	**Codename**	**Age**	**Ethnicity and Gender**	**Profession**
Leah	25	Indian Canadian	Research and Program Coordinator, BC Lung	Sofia	42	African woman	Senior manager of engagement and integration, BC Lung
Keya	26	Black Canadian	Project manager, Vancouver Coastal Health	Daniella	60	Black Canadian woman	Clinical information systems design instructor
Mehr	39	Pakistani	Program manager, Non-profit	Joy	30	Chinese Canadian woman	Coordinator of the migrant workers program, Non-profit
Ava	33	Chinese Canadian	Senior client care officer	Julia	27	Chinese Canadian woman	Licensed strata agent
Charlotte	38	Black-Indian Canadian	Project manager, Ministry of Education	Violet	29	Chinese-Vietnamese Canadian	Program manager, non profit
Talia	26	Chinese Canadian	Political candidate	Allison	26	Filipino Canadian woman	deputy campaign manager.
Janvi	28	Ismaili Pakistani	Program Coordinator, Non-profit	Gabrielle	30	Korean Canadian woman	Manager, signature events and endowments, Non-profit
Ariana	22	Black Canadian	Program Coordinator, Non-profit	Amelia	25	Latina Canadian woman	Program coordinator, Non-profit
Tina	37	Black Canadian	Hospital management	Jada	32	Latina Canadian woman	Nurse
Luna	26	Chinese	Office manager	Sabrina	33	South Asian woman	Office manager
Brianna	40	Chinese Canadian	Senior manager, communications & marketing	Jackie	42	Filipino Canadian woman	Curator, facilitator, and consultant
Leila	20	Syrian	Charity Sales	Tim	32	West Indian Canadian man	Charity Sales
Nabila	25	Pakistani Canadian	Project manager, Engineering	Brandon	40	Pakistani-White Canadian man	Mechanical Leader
Phoebe	39	Trinidadian Canadian	Director, education	Patrick	73	White Australian man	Co-founder, Non-profit
Shanaya	25	Chinese Canadian	Project management, Tech	Miles	31	White Australian man	IT infrastructure manager
Zainab	28	Pakistani	Social Worker	Amber	50	White woman	Manager of programs, Non-profit

Sara	36	Nigerian African	Program manager, Non-profit	Jane	42	White American woman	Co-founder, Non-profit
Kamala	29	Indian	Case manager, WorkSafe BC	Steven	31	White British man	Manager, Worksafe BC
Vera	27	Indian-White Canadian	Community Engagement Specialist, Non-profit	Trevor	34	White British man	Community engagement specialist, Non-profit
Ria	30	Indian	Project planner, CST Project	David	34	White Canadian man	Director, Project Management Office, CST Project
Anya	24	Indian-White Canadian	Teacher	Jessa	25	White Canadian woman	Florist
Chioma	37	Nigerian Canadian	Speech language pathologist, Vancouver School Board	Liz	29	White Canadian woman	Speech language pathologist, Vancouver School Board
Meg	25	Chinese	Program Coordinator, Non-profit	Jade	23	White Canadian woman	Program manager, Non-profit
Naina	29	Indian	Project manager, BC Works	Clara	40	White Canadian woman	Director of Corporate Sustainability
Radha	44	Indian Canadian	Teacher, Vancouver School Board	Amy	30	White Canadian woman	Speech language pathologist, Vancouver School Board
Suhana	27	Indian	Civil engineer	Natalie	26	White Canadian woman	Engineer
Valerie	29	Chinese-Vietnamese Canadian	Program manager, Non-profit	Summer	29	White Canadian woman	Communications and development coordinator, Non-profit
Yana	43	Black African Canadian	Chief Diversity Officer	Sally	60	White Canadian woman	Director, Provincial Health Services Authority
Billy	22	Indian-White Canadian	Resident advisor	Devon	20	White Canadian, non-binary	Resident advisor
Selena	34	Chinese	Coordinator, Aquarium	Marion	31	White European woman	Photographer

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Focal informants

- What is your age?
- What is your ethnicity?
- What does a typical work week look like for you?
- Can you share any positive experiences from such a week?
- Can you think of any other positive experiences that have stayed in your mind?
- How do you want to be seen at work?
- Do you feel acknowledged and seen the way you want to be seen at work? Can you share when you feel this way?
- Can you also tell me about situations or circumstances where you are NOT seen the way you want to be seen?
- Can you tell me how, if at all, others have helped you in being seen for the way you want to be seen?
- How would you describe your true self? Is this different or similar to how you want to be seen?
- What actions or behaviours by others make your work life better? Can you give examples?
- What kind of support would you like to receive from others at work?
- Do you receive some of it? Can you give an example?
- What kind of relationship do you have with the person who supports you?
- What would your ideal workday or week look like? What would your ideal workplace look like?
- Can you think of things that you would not include?
- What do you think others can do to make this happen?
- Why did you nominate X as an ally?
- How do you identify allies at work?
- How are allies different from friends or mentors?
- What have they done to make you feel positively seen at work?
- How do you think your sense of self has changed in your relationship with X at work?
- What is the opposite of an ally for you?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

Questions added after first round of data collection

- What more would you have liked your ally to do? What did they not do?
- What type of additional support do you want or need?
- What kind of challenges, if at all, do you experience in your relationship with your ally?

Nominated Allies

- What is your age?
- What is your ethnicity?
- How do you want to be seen at work?
- Do you feel acknowledged and seen the way you want to be seen at work? Can you share when you feel this way?
- Can you also tell me about situations or circumstances where you are NOT seen the way you want to be seen?
- How would you describe your true self? Is this different or similar to how you want to be seen?
- You have been nominated by X as someone who is supportive of them at work. Why do you think you were nominated?
- How would you describe the relationship you have with X?
- How do you think your sense of self has changed in your relationship with X at work?
- Can you tell me how you support them (or others) through your behaviour or actions?
- What motivates you to engage in this behaviour?
- What do you think are positive workplace experiences for X? How are you able to support them in creating or facilitating these experiences?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?
- How would you define an ally?

Questions added after first round of data collection

- What do you struggle with in providing this support? Why do you think so?
- What more do you think you would want to do?
- Is there anything you would like to do but don't do because it makes you uncomfortable or nervous? Why?
- What motivates you to challenge inequality?