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HELPING OR HURTING?: UNDERSTANDING WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF MALE ALLIES

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ABSTRACT

In the past decade, organizational scholars have begun to explore the role of allies in mitigating workplace discrimination toward women and members of minority groups. However, this nascent literature has, to this point, failed to consider the perspective of targets of ally behavior. That is, we do not yet know how targets of discrimination experience others' intervention or advocacy. To begin to understand these issues, we examine target perceptions of allyship through a qualitative critical incident approach, asking women to describe experiences in which a man has effectively and ineffectively acted as an ally to them in the workplace. Our findings from surveying 100 women provide new insights regarding who engages in ally behaviors, what behaviors these allies enact, when and where the behaviors take place, and why participants believed their male ally engaged in this behavior.

KEYWORDS

allies, discrimination, women

Discrimination toward women remains omnipresent in many modern organizations. Despite efforts toward its reduction, the number of sex-based discrimination charges filed with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has remained relatively stagnant over the past 2 decades and even peaked in recent years at just over 30,000 claims (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2017). Previous research has identified a number of strategies that women can enact to remediate the discrimination they face, such as providing individuating information to reduce others' reliance on stereotypes (Botsford Morgan, Hebl, Singletary, & King, 2013). However, placing the burden of remediation solely on the shoulders of its targets is insufficient in producing broader cultural change. Thus, the current research brings into question the role of *allies*, or individuals from a majority group who support or advocate for targets of discrimination (Evans & Wall, 1991), and examines their role in mitigating discrimination and empowering women in organizations.

Although researchers have begun to examine the role of allies in mitigating workplace discrimination (see Sabat, Martinez, & Wessel, 2013), this research is still in nascent stages. Social psychological research has indicated that when men (versus women) confront sexism, they receive less negative reactions than their female counterparts and may even cause the perpetrator of the sexism to feel great-

er guilt and perceive that the complaint is more legitimate (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010). Moreover, these findings extend to a workplace context: Women who engage in diversity-supportive behaviors receive lower performance and competence ratings, whereas men who do so receive a boost in these areas (Hekman, Johnson, Foo, & Yang, 2016).

Although male allies play an important role in remediating negative attitudes and behaviors toward women at work, their behaviors do not unequivocally lead to positive outcomes. For example, behaviors motivated by benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996) may inadvertently hinder women's self-efficacy (Jones et al., 2014) and advancement (King et al., 2012). In order to better understand these complexities, we define and situate the construct of allyship and

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present a qualitative investigation examining women's perceptions of male ally behaviors in the workplace.

Defining Allyship

As a nascent research area, the theoretical definitions and boundaries surrounding allyship are not fully developed. For the purposes of this study, we centered ourselves around a broad and popular definition of allyship, which describes an ally as "a person who is a member of the 'dominant' or 'majority' group who works to end oppression in his or her personal and professional life through his or her support of, and as an advocate with and for, the oppressed population" (Evans & Wall, 1991, p. 195). Although allyship has been studied across a number of contexts, most research has focused on heterosexual allies to lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) individuals (e.g., DiStefano, Croteau, Anderson, Kampa-Kokesch, & Bullard, 2000; Ji, 2007). However, allyship can extend to a wide variety of marginalized groups, such as racial and ethnic minorities and individuals with invisible disabilities (Casey & Ohler, 2012; Sabat, Martinez, & Wessel, 2013). Building on previous research, the current work focuses on allyship as it pertains to men supporting and advocating for women (Drury & Kaiser, 2014; Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Nauts, 2012).

Ally behaviors include both support and advocacy (Ji, 2007; Sabat et al., 2013). Supportive behaviors provide psychological and/or tangible resources for individuals with stigmatized identities; these include being present and listening to the unique struggles faced by these individuals, participating in ally trainings, attending educational or social events held by minority groups, and receiving disclosures of invisible stigmas (e.g., sexual orientation, mental illness) with acceptance and understanding (DiStefano et al., 2000; Ruggs, Martinez, & Hebl, 2011). In contrast, advocacy behaviors involve more outward displays of support for stigmatized groups, such as directly confronting instances of prejudice or discrimination, educating peers, calling for better organizational policies and resources that support stigmatized groups, and actively engaging in advocacy organizations (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Ruggs et al., 2011).

Consequences of Allyship

Allies can work alongside targets to fight workplace discrimination and in reducing pervasive workplace inequity. The burden of discrimination remediation has largely been placed on targets (Hebl & Kleck, 2002; Singletary & Hebl, 2009); however, there is evidence that allies can be more effective than targets of discrimination in remediating discrimination (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010). Indeed, many allies possess influence that is beyond the scope of the targets they seek to aid. Leaders, in particular, are important as allies who hold power and influence over other members of an organization. Female leaders, as opposed to male leaders, are evaluated more

negatively when they confront sexism publicly (Gervais & Hillard, 2014), indicating that male leaders have the ability to publicly endorse gender equity without incurring the same backlash a female leader would. For marginalized groups in general, researchers have posited that leaders are able to create organizational policy change, model ally behaviors for employees, best establish cultural norms, and push for larger legislative changes promoting equality (Martinez, Ruggs, Sabat, Hebl, & Binggeli, 2013; Schneider, Wesselmann, & DeSouza, 2017).

Although existing literature has provided valuable insights into the impact of allies in the workplace, researchers have almost exclusively focused on allies' impact on perpetrators of discrimination. Importantly, this literature has failed to consider the perspective of targets of discrimination. These missing perspectives can shed light on what, beyond perpetrator reactions, constitutes effective allyship and how allies might alter their behaviors to ensure they are perceived as supportive. It is possible that some ally behaviors have unintended consequences for targets, such as undermining efficacy or increasing the salience of discrimination. Thus, in order to understand target perceptions of allyship and capture the complexity of these incidents, we used an exploratory approach: the critical incident technique. The critical incident technique uses direct observations or participant descriptions of specific instances to better understand the content and context of the phenomena to be studied (Flanagan, 1954). Multiple studies in management research have utilized the critical incident technique due to its utility in better understanding job roles and people's thoughts and behaviors (e.g., Druskat & Wheeler, 2003; Schmid, Verdorfer, & Peus, 2017; Taggar, 2002). In this study, drawing from Flanagan's (1954) interview procedure, we prompted participants with and frame our results through questions surrounding *who* engaged in these ally behaviors, *what* the ally did, *when* and *where* the ally enacted the behavior, and *why* the woman believed the ally acted in this way.

METHOD

Participants

One hundred female participants ranged in age from 19 to 69 years old (*M* = 37.6, *SD* = 11.3). The majority of the participants were White (82% White, 10% Black/African American, 3% Other, 2% East Asian, 2% South Asian, 1% Middle Eastern). Most participants were currently employed (45% employed full-time, 31% employed part-time, 13% unemployed and seeking work, 11% unemployed and not seeking work). Although not all participants were currently employed, we included only participants who had at least one year of work experience so that they would have experiences to draw on retrospectively. Participants had total work experience ranging from 1 to 50 years (*M* = 17.9, *SD* = 10.6). Their current industries of employment varied;

the most represented industries were educational services (12%) and health care and social assistance (10%).

Procedure

Participants were recruited to complete an on online survey via Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) titled, "Perceptions of Interactions" in exchange for 5 cents for completing a screening survey and an additional 95 cents for qualifying for and completing the full survey. The screening survey contained demographic questions and excluded any women who did not have any work experience. After completing the screening survey, participants recalled instances of male ally behavior in the workplace, in the style of critical incidents (Flanagan, 1954). First, they were asked to reflect on an instance of effective male ally behavior: "Think of an instance in which a man has **effectively** been an ally (i.e., an advocate or supporter) to you as a woman in the workplace." They were then asked to describe the incident in further detail in a series of nine additional questions asking participants to describe *who* was involved, *what* happened, *when* the incident happened, *where* the incident happened, and *why* they thought the ally was motivated to act. Second, they were asked to reflect on an instance of ineffective male ally behavior "Think of an instance in which a man has **ineffectively** attempted to be an ally (i.e. an advocate or support) to you as a woman in the workplace" followed by the same set of nine additional questions (see Appendix A).

Analyses

The data were analyzed using directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Based on Flanagan's (1954) critical incident technique, our questions were framed around a *who, what, when, where,* and *why* framework to better understand the context surrounding ally behaviors. These categories served as the organizational structure for the codes, and the specific content coded in each of these categories was derived both deductively and inductively, from both examining prior research on ally behaviors and noticing repeated themes in an initial reading of participant responses (e.g., coworker and boss for "who," confrontation and acknowledgement for "what," meeting and break for "where"). Following the development of an initial codebook, two independent raters coded the first 10 responses. They then met to gain consensus on the coding scheme for these responses, by discussing any discrepancies and refining the codebook, and split up the rest of responses to code separately as interrater agreement was high. That is, for the first 10% of responses, interrater agreement was 93.8% overall, 95.6% for "who" codes, 93.7% for "what" codes, 95.0% for "where" codes, 78.8% for "when" codes, and 94.5% for "why" codes. The remaining responses were divided among the raters and independently coded.

RESULTS

Defining "Effective" Allyship

On the whole, women described experiences of effective allyship in a variety of ways. When characterizing effective experiences, some women reflected on tangible and career-related outcomes, whereas others characterized effective experiences as those that elicited positive affective responses. In general, effective allyship often included outcomes that advanced a woman's career, stopped a precipitating behavior, or simply made the target feel supported. For example, one participant noted, "I had a boss for a few years who was a great ally. He always tried to promote me, giving me more and more responsibility as time went on… nominated me for management training opportunities within the company." However, an ally didn't necessarily have to achieve their goal for the action to result in positive affect from women's perspectives. Women described a number of positive affective states related to allyship, which included feeling grateful, happy, confident, empowered, supported, and more comfortable in their workplace. For example, one participant described, "[The ally's behavior] made me feel valued and 'heard,'" and another described feeling "good, [as] it was nice not to have to just 'suck it up' or advocate for myself for once."

Conversely, many participants described ineffective incidents as those with outcomes in direct opposition to the outcomes of effective incidents. For example, women most frequently described allyship as ineffective when it had no impact on precipitating behavior and/or organizational culture more broadly, or when the ally or target experienced backlash due to the action. One participant noted how when a coworker tried to call out someone about sexual harassment, "[the perpetrator] didn't stop harassing me, but several other staff members took to giving me [a hard time] about it instead." Others described ineffective incidents as those that hindered, rather than supported, their career success. For example, one participant wrote about how a colleague's negative reputation in the company influenced the effectiveness of his attempted allyship, as "initially [his mentioning of my accomplishments during meetings] supported me in getting a raise. Eventually it contributed to my contract not being renewed." Although some behaviors were clearly characterized as ineffective as a result of negative affective outcomes (e.g. angry, embarrassed, frustrated, or uncomfortable), other women described ambivalent reactions that characterized ineffectiveness. For example, one woman mentioned an instance in which a male coworker was ineffective in confronting sexual harassment in the workplace. She explained that the behavior was ineffective in part because, "I understood that his heart was in the right place, but to be honest, it was pretty embarrassing."

Who Are Allies?

Allies were equally as likely to be coworkers (41% of all instances) or bosses (48%); however, there were fewer subordinate, customer, friend, or nonwork ally allies (11%). Out of the incidents in which the ally was a boss, 81% of the incidents were effective; in contrast, when the ally was a coworker, only 56% of the incidents were effective. As a result, it seems that allies are more likely to be effective when they have higher power, such as when they are in a supervisory role. This phenomenon was highlighted when one participant described how the same behavior was effective when enacted by the owner of an organization ("from then on out, the parents listened to us and treated us with respect") and ineffective when enacted by a coworker ("he was not taken seriously because he was very young"). In addition, ally behaviors were more likely to be enacted in front of a public audience (84% of all instances) compared to a private audience (i.e., in front of only the target; 16%). There was no strong pattern regarding who perpetrators of sexist actions were, as there were few reported incidents that described perpetrators (25 instances). Of these instances, perpetrators included customers, coworkers, bosses, and nonwork individuals.

What Did Allies Do?

Based on the critical incidents reported, precipitating events included some type of conflict, sexual harassment, or undermining of the target. Many of the critical incidents (33%) also did not include a precipitating event, such as when an ally advocated for the target to get a higher position, served as a mentor for the target, or provided work-related information or opportunities for the target. For example, one participant noted, "One of the older teachers who is not formally my mentor had allowed me to sit in on some of his classes for English as a second language in order to take notes and see how he interacts with his students in motivating them. He allowed me to take part in the lesson with the students prior to taking over my own class. He sat down with me after the class to provide me with tips and constructive criticism." Consequently, ally behaviors can be a reaction to some type of precipitating event or can be a proactive action the ally initiates himself.

Allies also enacted many different types of behaviors. Based on the behaviors we found, three themes emerged: advocacy, instrumental support, and emotional support (see Table 1 for full list of ally behaviors). The most common behaviors across both effective and ineffective incidents were advocacy, helping, confrontation, kindness, providing opportunity, backup behavior, and mentorship. Looking at these behaviors and how often they appeared in effective and ineffective incidents, it is clear that ally behaviors, even the best-intentioned ones, do not always have positive outcomes. In addition to context (further described in the Discussion section), other aspects of ally behaviors can impact effectiveness, such as appropriateness and strength of the action. As an example of an inappropriate action, one participant provided, "In trying to 'help' locate patient data he took longer than I had ever taken and flustered the already agitated customers." As an example of the importance of strength of action, one participant noted, "[The ally] wasn't convincing enough to make the HR person change her mind." These examples demonstrate that ally effectiveness is not just dependent on the behavior but also how the behavior was enacted.

When Did Men Behave as Allies?

When providing critical incidents of allyship, most instances were framed as either single actions or continual efforts to support or advocate for women. Although single actions certainly had the power to be effective and remained salient in women's minds, continual actions tended to be described as more effective on the whole. In addition to the duration of ally behavior, of those confrontations that occurred in reaction to a precipitating event, participants reported a larger number of ally behaviors that occurred in the moment (75% of instances) than after the incident occurred (25%). However, this timing did not seem to have a strong impact on effectiveness. Other aspects of timing did impact women's perception of effectiveness; for example, in some situations, the ally demonstrated support in the wrong setting or enacted behaviors too late. For example, one participant noted that "[the ally's confrontation] may have been more effective if he had talked to the [perpetrator] privately," instead of publicly, perhaps to minimize the number of people involved when a confrontation (such as this instance) does not go well. Therefore, although timing can play a role in effectiveness, it did not emerge as particularly salient in relation to effectiveness compared to, for example, the enacted behavior.

Where Did Men Behave as Allies?

Women most frequently reported incidents in the workplace as a general category (64% of all instances). It was common for ally incidents to occur in a meeting (22%) and less common for ally incidents to occur in a less formal space, like a break (8%) or social event (2%). It appears that ally incidents in the office or a meeting were more likely to be effective (71% of office and meeting incidents) than during a break or at a social event (38% of break and social event incidents). Overall, ally incidents were both more common and seemed to be more effective in formal workspaces, as opposed to informal ones.

Why Did Men Act as Allies?

By far, the most commonly perceived motivation, across both effective and ineffective incidents, was that the ally was a good person who acted with morals and character. This was followed by having respect for the target,

TABLE 1.
Ally Behaviors

Behaviors (# of effective instances/# of ineffective instances)	Examples
Theme: Advocacy • Advocacy (35/15) • Confrontation (14/6) • Providing backup for an idea or stance (8/2) • Acknowledging or giving credit to ideas or work (5/0) • Providing an opportunity to speak (3/0)	Effective: "When I was competing for a managerial position, my male boss at the time vouched for my work ethic, my drive, and my commitment to my job. He made sure that I was given a fair opportunity for the position." Effective: "I was treated inappropriately by a superior and my supervisor stuck up for me and immediately asked if I wanted to ignore it or report it. He let me decide how to proceed and backed me up entirely." Effective: "I was having difficulty in persuading the decision makers to invest in hearing and analyzing my ideas. My colleague was aware of the resistance and took many opportunities to create awareness of my ideas and research and to encourage that I have an opportunity to present." Ineffective: "A fellow waiter tried to stand up for me at a restaurant once when a group of diners because bellicose [sic] over the food wait. The group ignored us and continued to act like jerks." Ineffective: "I had a male coworker who tried to help me with a customer who was being extremely gender biased towards me. This customer was telling me not to lift heavy items because I would hurt myself. A male coworker overheard the conversation and came over to help. However, rather than helping me, he took the items and lifted them himself. I know that the coworker was trying to help me avoid conflict but he also didn't speak up in my defense either, since he knew that I could handle the items and the situation."
Theme: Instrumental support • Providing job- or task-related information (5/2) • Providing opportunities (17/0) • Mentorship (11/1) • Creating or supporting policies (4/0)	Effective: "He phoned me to notify me that a negotiation meeting had been set up with the [client]. The other agent had deliberately not notified me...and the ally knew if I didn't show at the meeting, it could have been damaging to my ability to get a commission." Effective: "A supervisor in my current position pointed out an area on my resume that I was not giving myself enough credit for. He suggested adding in a recent positive review and raise and then offered to look back through the rest of my resume to offer several instances where I needed to give myself more credit." Effective: "My first principal stood up for the female educators and got us the ability to take a restroom break. He understood we needed classroom coverage in order to leave and made sure we got it. He specifically came to my room to see if I needed a quick break several times when not asked." Ineffective: "[A coworker] somewhat frequently attempted to explain why my personal goals and aspirations were 'not feminist enough.' He took it upon himself to explain to me how I needed to do things the way he thought I should do them." Ineffective: "One of the older male teachers allowed me to sit in his class and provided me with activities to perform with the students. He did not give me the materials beforehand and so I was unprepared. I stumbled on my words and didn't understand the activities which wasted time. He wanted me to cope with sudden stress and unpreparedness but it took a toll on the class, making me look unqualified, and put me into a very stressful situation."

TABLE 1 (CONTINUED).

Behaviors (# of effective instances/# of ineffective instances)	Examples
Theme: Emotional support • Helping (24/11) • Social support (20/6) • Providing a male presence (3/0)	Effective: "I work at a tire store doing the accounting and as a vehicle inspector. It is a man's world. They all treat me with respect and courtesy. They are helpful in many ways. There have been times for instance when I couldn't get a manual transmission car in reverse because I'd never driven that specific kind of car even though I can drive a manual transmission and they taught me how rather than make fun of me." Effective: "I was feeling very overwhelmed [during a busy time at work]. My supervisor called me to his office and gave me his support. He let me know how well I was doing and that he was more than satisfied with my performance and couldn't ask for me from me." Effective: "I was working in a bar, and I encountered a scary customer. The bartender got the manager, and the manager told me he would escort the customer out if he got out of line. The manager stood in the doorway for some time, and the customer saw him and calmed down." Ineffective: "A coworker attempted to try and empathize with me while I was going through my divorce. He tried to make me feel better by discussing when his marriage broke up, but his story wasn't related to mine at all and it felt more like he wanted the attention than he was actually trying to make me feel better."

having a social justice orientation, perceiving an obligation or job role, personal gain, and a desire to protect the target (see Table 2 for full list of ally motivations). Similar to ally behaviors, even the best intentions and motivations did not always result in positive outcomes. However, there were some ally motivations that had a greater likelihood of being perceived as ineffective, such as having a superiority complex (100% of these instances were ineffective), wanting to save or protect the target (90% ineffective), or acting for personal gain (64% ineffective).

DISCUSSION

In this study, we collected and analyzed women's descriptions of critical incidents that represented both effective and ineffective instances of male allyship in the workplace. Participants defined effectiveness in different ways, ranging from tangible results (e.g., promotion) to affective responses (e.g., feeling proud to know their coworker). We coded ally incidents using a framework of *who, what, when, where,* and *why* (see Table 3 for a summary of results). Our findings provided evidence for two potential boundary conditions of effective allyship: ally power (high or low) and setting of ally behavior (public or private, formal or informal). In general, our findings indicated that power was a salient theme in determining which behaviors were more effective and suggest that *more powerful allies will be more*

effective (Proposition 1). Due to their increased influence and resources within organizations, allies in positions of higher power (e.g., managers, organizational leaders) may be more effective than those in positions of lower power when engaging in advocacy and instrumental support behaviors (see Table 1). This finding aligns with previous research that leaders are particularly important as allies of marginalized groups and individuals (Martinez et al., 2013; Schneider et al., 2017), and organizations should be mindful of leaders when designing ally interventions; leadership buy-in and support are central to ally success. That being said, allies in positions of lower power (e.g., coworkers) may be more effective when engaging in emotional support behaviors, due to their more consistent interactions with targets.

In our data, there was also some evidence that the setting of the ally behavior, such as how public or private the behavior is, may impact its effectiveness. *The likelihood of a behavior having the desired effect may inform how public or private the behavior should be (Proposition 2)*. For example, if a behavior is more likely to have the desired outcome (e.g., a person of higher power confronting a person of lower power), it may be more effective to be public, because this will demonstrate model behavior and help set norms. However, if a behavior is riskier (e.g., a person of lower power confronting a person of higher power), it may be more effective to choose a private setting in order to

TABLE 2.
Perceived Ally Motivations

Motivation	# Effective instances	# Ineffective instances	Example
Good person, morals, or character	26	10	"He was a genuinely nice guy and treated his associates with respect and concern."
Respect for the target	24	5	"He had seen me work and knew I was fully capable."
Social justice orientation	10	1	"He believed in my idea and was aware of the bias against women."
Obligation or job role	6	4	"[He engaged in this behavior because] he was my supervisor."
Personal gain	0	6	"He wants to be viewed as understanding"
Savior syndrome	0	6	"He thinks I am undereducated and he, being HIGHLY educated, is responsible for saving me from myself."
Superiority complex	0	5	"[He engaged in this behavior because] he wanted to show dominance."
To protect the target	2	3	"[He engaged in this behavior because] he was trying to be protective of a friend."
Female relative	4	0	"He has two daughters around my age and he sympathized with [my situation]."
Organizational culture	2	0	"Coworkers support coworkers."
To belong within the organization	0	1	"[He engaged in this behavior because] he was trying to feel included."

TABLE 3.
Contextual Framework Results

Question	Summary
Who are allies?	● Allies with more power (e.g., supervisors, managers) tended to be perceived as more effective, because these allies often have the means to most effectively create positive change for marginalized groups.
What did allies do?	● Ally behaviors can be a reaction to some type of antagonistic or discriminatory event or can be a proactive action the ally initiates himself. ● Often, the same behaviors could be perceived as either effective and ineffective, depending on the context. ● There are also many different types of ally behaviors enacted; based on the behaviors we found, three themes emerged: advocacy, instrumental support, and emotional support (see Table 2 for full list of ally behaviors).
When did men behave as allies?	● Behaviors occurred in both one-off instances and habitually. Although single actions certainly had the power to be effective and remained salient in women's minds, continual actions tended to be described as more effective on the whole.
Where did men behave as allies?	● Ally behaviors occurred more often in formal workplace environments (e.g., the office) and were perceived as more effective in formal contexts as opposed to informal ones (e.g., work social events).
Why did men behave as allies?	● There was a variety of different perceived ally motivations (see Table 2 for full list). Similar to ally behaviors, even the best intentions and motivations did not always result in positive outcomes; however, there were some ally motivations that have higher proportions of being perceived as effective or ineffective.

minimize potential backlash against both the male ally and the woman.

Another aspect of setting that may impact ally effectiveness is formality. Our participants more frequently reported ally behaviors that occurred in formal workplace environments rather than outside of the workplace or at work events, and ally behaviors were generally reported as more effective in formal contexts as opposed to informal ones. That is, *although ally behaviors may take place both inside and outside of the workplace, behaviors enacted in a formal setting may be perceived as more effective (Proposition 3).* Compared to informal work settings (e.g., social events), formal work settings tend to have more regulations for acceptable behaviors. Regulations may help ally behaviors be more effective if existing organizational policies protect against prejudice and discrimination in the workplace. In order to better understand how these boundary conditions may impact perceptions of ally effectiveness and help individual allies and organizations better engage in allyship, future research should empirically test these propositions.

The present research adds to extant research by defining allyship and describing why allies matter. More specifically, this study focuses on male allies of women, who have not been studied with the same depth as other allies, such as heterosexual allies of LGB individuals. Much of the previous ally literature has focused on allies in the context of counseling and advocacy. This study adds to a growing literature on workplace allies and contributes to theory on allyship in the workplace by providing a more comprehensive view of allyship. Previous research has focused almost exclusively on capturing the perspectives of allies or the perpetrators of discrimination (e.g., Czopp & Monteith, 2003). This study has begun to generate and advance theory by incorporating the perspectives of individuals who are targets of discrimination. Targets' perspectives are crucial because allies intend to support and advocate for marginalized populations; however, the current findings confirm that ally actions are not always seen as effective by the targets of these actions. In order to generate better theory and practice surrounding ally effectiveness, scholars should have a deeper understanding of the perspective of targets.

The findings should be interpreted in light of limitations of the sample and methods. In this sample, we only discussed the perspectives of targets of allies rather than the perspectives of both targets and allies. This was an intentional choice to study an underrepresented perspective; however, it does provide a limited perspective of ally incidents as we do not include male perspectives. For example, our participants may not have seen all of the actions of a male ally. Future research might also benefit from examining the male perspective of allyship supporting women. For example, it would be interesting to conduct interviews with the male allies mentioned in the women's interviews to examine how their perspectives overlap with and differ

from the women in specific ally instances. Another potential research design could be an experimental study in which men and women observe the same ally behaviors to better understand if and how men and women may perceive these behaviors differently.

In addition, our sample was predominantly White, which limits our ability to generalize our results, as women of color may have different experiences due to their intersectional minority identity. The double jeopardy hypothesis suggests that women of color experience the discrimination that both racial minority men and White women face, receiving both gender and racial prejudice (Beal, 2008; Reid, 1984). As a result, due to the greater salience of their racial minority identity, women of color may be more attuned than White women to the race of male allies. Perhaps the more demographically similar the ally is to the target (e.g., same racial identity), the more the target will perceive the allyship as effective in providing support due to shared identity. In contrast, it may be possible that women of color would perceive allies from dissimilar demographic groups (e.g., White men) to be more effective because these allies could hold greater relative power and status, which can help generate change. Additionally, dissimilar allies could be more surprising advocates whose actions may be perceived as less self-serving by others. Furthermore, women of color are subject to different stereotypes than are White women (e.g. aggressive Black women, submissive Asian women), and consequently, the treatment they receive and allyship they require may differ (Ghavami & Peplau, 2013; Rosette, Koval, Ma, & Livingston, 2016). Beyond racial identity, the double jeopardy hypothesis extends to other intersectional identities, including women who are LGBT+ or have disabilities, among other stigmatized identities; their experiences are unique and merit further investigation beyond this study.

The lack of racial diversity in our sample may be partially due to our smaller MTurk sample size. However, we purposefully chose to limit our sample to 100 participants, because the critical incident technique and other qualitative methods do not determine sample size by number of participants but rather base sample size on thematic saturation (Flanagan, 1954; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006), and we determined that 100 participants would provide thematic saturation. However, future research should include more diverse samples to better understand how intersectionality may impact ally experiences. Our methods are also limited by self-reported and retrospective data, rather than observed behavior or an experimental manipulation. That is, the perceptions of ally incidents were limited to the perspective of the participants, and these perspectives may have changed over time. Because of the nature of the qualitative retrospective data, we are also unable to infer causality in our observations. Despite these limitations, we are still able to gain a better understanding of the variety of experiences of

women in the workplace and directions for future studies.

Based on these findings, there are also a number of practical implications for male allies and organizations. For example, men who would like to serve as allies to women in the workplace should be aware that not all of their behaviors are perceived as effective, and as a result, they should consult with the women that they are trying to help to make sure they are providing support that is actually helpful to the women. In addition, as previously mentioned, it is important for men in positions of power to understand that they have additional influence in creating potential change. Regardless of power status, it is important for all male allies to be aware of the different contextual aspects that influence ally effectiveness. Our recommendation to keep these aspects in mind is not meant to discourage ally behavior, for fear of not being effective, but rather to encourage engaging in these behaviors in a more thoughtful manner. Organizations can emphasize these points during diversity trainings, as well as implement zero-tolerance antidiscrimination policies, to engender organizational cultures that simultaneously support women and denounce sexism. Although individual employees should be stepping up to support each other, organizations should also create environments where it is normative to do so.

In conclusion, this qualitative study examines women's perceptions of male ally behaviors in the workplace. Using the critical incident technique, we were able to gain insight into multiple aspects of male allyship, such as who women identified as allies, in what behaviors allies engaged, and what made these behaviors effective or ineffective. Allyship is a complex endeavor, and this research lays a foundation for better understanding the nuanced experiences of women as targets of male allyship in the workplace.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

Think of an instance in which a man has **effectively (ineffectively)** been an ally (i.e., an advocate or supporter) to you as a woman in the workplace.

1. What did the ally do in this instance? What prompted their support or advocacy for you?
2. Where did it occur? (e.g., office, break room, social gathering, meeting)
3. When did it occur? (e.g., during, immediately after)
4. Who was the male ally? (e.g. coworker, supervisor, subordinate)
5. Who else was there?
6. What was the outcome of the ally's behavior?
7. In what ways was their behavior effective (ineffective)?
8. Why do you think they engaged in this behavior?
9. How did their behavior make you feel?