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Shannon Radford

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Conceptualizing Allyship as an Actionable Construct in Higher Education

Shannon Radford

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Dr. Castagna Lacet, Thesis Advisor

Dr. Jing Tan, Committee Member

Dr. Wendy Williams, Committee Member

Abstract

This research intends to re-conceptualize allyship as an actionable construct. Previous research conducted on allyship primarily focuses on development and motivation. Although action is often identified as a component of allyship, previous research has only briefly touched upon this topic. In such a tumultuous political climate, this gap in research is distressing. With hate groups on the rise, it has become increasingly important for allyship to become synonymous with action. As institutions of higher education can play a crucial role in providing an actionable definition of allyship and fostering it in campus communities, this study focuses on identifying actions exhibited by self-identified faculty/staff allies from six different institutions in Massachusetts. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants over the phone and then transcribed and coded using grounded theory. In recounting experiences related to allyship, all participants eluded to a similar process. A theoretical model was created to illustrate this process. This model could prove useful in further developing diversity practices in institutions of higher education that focus on the retention of faculty/staff and students from marginalized groups.

Conceptualizing Allyship as an Actionable Construct in Higher Education

Although the term ally was first popularized in the civil right's era of the 1960s, it has only recently entered the field of academic research. Previous studies looked at allyship in higher education settings with a primary focus on the costs and contributions of the ally role and allyship development models. This study builds on previous allyship research by identifying the behaviors and actions exhibited by self-identified faculty/staff allies at institutions of higher education in order to provide an actionable model of allyship. This research answers the question: based on the experiences of self-identified allies in higher education settings, how can we define allyship as an actionable construct?

Introduction of Terms

An understanding of privilege and oppression is integral to the delineation of allyship. The term privilege refers to unearned advantages afforded to members of dominant social groups at the expense of non-dominant social groups. As noted by Monohan (2014), privilege “might be best understood as the limitation of what should be universal human rights to an exclusive elite that all the while publicly denies its status as elite” (pg. 76). In this way privilege can be defined as a systematic exclusion of marginalized social groups from the norm (Monohan, 2014). Oppression, a form of injustice used to exclude and minimize opportunities for certain disadvantaged groups, results from a society built on an unequal distribution of power preserved through competition, separation, and hierarchy (Bishop, 2002).

In the social sciences the term social location refers to a group that an individual belongs to because of their place or position in history and society. Social locations are used to help individuals conceptualize their place on the privilege/oppression spectrum. Intersectionality allows individuals to consecutively have social locations that cause them to experience both

privilege and oppression. This term, coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, was utilized to address the unique challenges experienced by women of color. Intersectionality provides a framework in which to view the outcomes resultant from the interaction of different social identities.

Research literature has thus far identified an ally as an individual from a dominant social group willing to forego their privileged status to support the activism of a marginalized group with the intent of dissolving oppressive systems in a society (Mizock & Page, 2016; Munin, 2010). Both benefits and shortcomings of the ally role have been studied. Mizock and Page (2016) identify “privilege awareness, support and resource access, and power sensitivity” as benefits of the ally role (pg. 18). While privilege awareness and power sensitivity provide the grounding for engagement in social action, the ability of privileged group members to “access and mobilize external resources” that may be unavailable to members of marginalized groups makes the ally role worthwhile (Mizock & Page, 2016, pg. 19). Alternatively, well-meaning allies can often undermine a movement by weakening collective action engagement. As evidenced by Droogendyk, Wright, Lubensky, and Louis, “the kind of positive cross-group contact most likely to reduce prejudice can simultaneously undermine disadvantaged group members’ collective action participation” (2016, pg. 317). In addition, individuals may enter into a movement under the guise of allyship with venal motives. These pseudo-allies often contribute to the reinforcement of the hero-victim narrative by attempting to shift focus from the marginalized group to themselves (Mizock & Page, 2016). The distinctions of allyship will be further explored in the literature review.

Scope of the Issue

The Southern Poverty Law Center, a non-profit civil rights organization, characterizes hate groups to “have beliefs or practices that attack or malign an entire class of people, typically for their immutable characteristics” (Southern Poverty Law Center [SPLC], 2018). In 2017 nine hundred fifty-four active hate groups were recorded in the United States with activities ranging in severity from leafleting to criminal activity. Although the highest number of recorded hate groups capped at one thousand eighteen in 2011, the most recent estimate represents a sharp increase from the seven hundred eighty-four active hate groups recorded in 2014 (SPLC). A rise in groups intent on marginalizing individuals due to their social locations necessitates an increasing need for allies.

In offering emerging members of society opportunities to grow intellectually, morally, and socially, institutions of higher education play a crucial role in providing an actionable definition of allyship and fostering it in campus communities. The character development experienced by students’ in their collegiate years is indicative of the kind of life they will lead post-graduation. Astin and Antonio (2004) conducted a longitudinal study measuring factors that contributed to college students’ character development from freshman to senior year. The 9,792 subjects were from 167 different colleges and universities and participated in surveys developed by the Higher Education Research Institute in 1993 and 1997. The researchers found college experiences that proved critical to character development included leadership education, interracial experiences, volunteer work, participation in religious activities, and exposure to interdisciplinary courses. Despite the outdated nature of this study, it can be assumed that many of these college experiences would still prove relevant to character development today. Having a strong concept of allyship at the collegiate level could influence the level of allyship exhibited post-graduation. Because student interactions with faculty/staff members have proven to be a

strong predictor of student outcomes (Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004), this project focuses on the professional allyship of faculty/staff members at higher education institutions.

The presence of actionable allyship in campus communities could also contribute to the retention of faculty/staff members of color. In 2015 the National Center for Education Statistics identified the racial makeup of full time faculty at degree-granting postsecondary institutions in the United States to be 77% White, 10% Asian/Pacific Islander, 6% Black, 4% Hispanic, and less than 1% of two or more races and American/Indian/Alaska Native. Of these faculty, only 9% identified as women of color (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). SooHoo, a tenured Asian American faculty member, and Monzó, an early career Latina faculty member, used duo ethnography to bring attention to the importance of mentoring women faculty of color in Academia. SooHoo leveraged her intersectionality by using the power and privilege afforded to her by tenure to serve as an ally to Monzó. SooHoo displayed allyship by “validating, strategizing, and helping her white colleagues and administrators understand” Monzó’s position and views (2014, pg. 161). As noted by SooHoo and Monzó, “the knowledge that someone else was there to stand with us was the encouragement we needed to resist the invisible yet systemic erasure of our epistomes” (2014, pg. 160). Although both faculty members were women of color in this allied relationship, SooHoo and Monzó note the importance of White faculty allies in “translating the system” (2014, pg. 163). Reflecting on the success of SooHoo and Monzó’s allied relationship, fostering actionable allyship among faculty members seems to be a way to contribute to the retention of more faculty members of color at institutions of higher education.

Literature Review

Models exploring allyship development emerged in the 1990s and early 2000s. Washington & Evans (1991) published an essay focusing on heterosexual allies to LGBT

individuals. The authors identified the successive levels of allyship as awareness, knowledge/education, skills, and action (Washington & Evans, 1991). Ten years later Bishop created a model for becoming an ally using her own experiences and available literature as a guide. Unlike Washington & Evans's model, Bishop created a model applicable to allies of all marginalized groups. Bishop (2002) identified the steps in sequential order as: understanding the nuances of oppression, understanding different oppressions and how they interact with one another, developing consciousness and healing, becoming a worker in your own liberation, becoming an ally, and maintaining hope.

Around the same time that Bishop's model was published, the development of social justice allies in college became an emerging area of study in student affairs literature. Whereas the previous models of allyship development were based on individual expertise and relevant literature, Broido (2000) interviewed six undergraduate students at the University Park campus of Penn State to create her model. The subjects consisted of three men and three women- all traditionally aged college students who identified as white and heterosexual. All six subjects exhibited their first ally behaviors in college and "were currently engaged in identifiable ally behaviors" at the time of the study (Broido, 2000, pg. 5). Broido found that all subjects identified "increased information in social justice issues, engagement in meaning-making processes, and self-confidence" as integral to their development as allies (2000, pg. 7). Broido also noted that five of the six participants engaged in their first allied behavior by being recruited into an action or by being placed in a position "where ally behavior was fostered or expected" (2010, pg. 13). Although Broido provides data that could be useful to universities in developing better resources for social justice student allies, the focus of her study remained on pre-cursors to action rather than action itself.

Edwards (2006), conducted a literature review in order to discern “how those who already aspire to be allies can be more effective, consistent, and sustainable and how student affairs professionals can encourage this development” (pg. 41). Using Helm’s model of White racial identity development, Edwards conceptualized a model of aspiring social justice ally development. With each status marked by motivation, the model intends to be fluid rather than sequential, as individuals can exhibit different motivations in different instances. The three statuses defined by Edwards include: ally for self-interest, ally for altruism, and ally for social justice. An ally for self-interest is “primarily motivated to protect those they care about from being hurt,” and may only confront oppressive behavior when the individual they care about is present (Edwards, 2006, pg. 46). An ally for altruism is often driven by guilt and often puts blame on other members of the dominant group rather than recognizing the way that they participate in the system of oppression themselves. Although allies for altruism generally have good intentions, they often reinforce a power-over dynamic by speaking for the oppressed as opposed to with them (Edwards, 2006). The ally for social justice status serves as an aspirational identity in which the ally works in collaboration with oppressed groups in order to end systemic oppression. Edwards states that “by working towards social justice, [these] allies are seeking not only to free the oppressed but also to liberate themselves and reconnect to their own full humanity” (2006, pg. 51). Intended to spur self-reflection, this framework could prove a useful tool for those already exhibiting allied behaviors.

Although the previous named models have helped to progress the current understanding of allyship, there remains a significant gap in research concerning the actionable component. Each model recognizes that action is expected, but primarily focuses on motivation and

preparation. This grounded theory study intends to explore this gap in research in order to conceptualize allyship as an actionable construct.

Method

This research used an exploratory qualitative research method by employing semi-structured interviews. Qualitative research is an inductive approach that focuses primarily on individuals' observations and experiences. Semi-structured interviewing exhibits a commitment of the researcher to "learn about people in depth, in their own terms, and in the context of their situation" (Engel & Schutt, 2014, pg. 217).

This study addressed the following research question: what are the experiences of higher education faculty/staff acting as allies to those from less privileged groups? Its answer helps form a model of actionable allyship.

Recruitment

Following IRB approval, the researcher utilized both purposive and snowball sampling to obtain participants. In purposive sampling, participants who are deemed experts on the proposed subject matter are recruited (Engel & Schutt, 2014). Using this method of sampling, the researcher sent emails to faculty/staff members engaging in diversity work at institutions of higher education in Massachusetts. The researcher worked off the premise that faculty/staff members actively engaged in diversity work would be more likely to exhibit actionable allied behaviors. The individuals contacted were encouraged to refer the researcher to any colleagues they deemed appropriate, thus utilizing snowball sampling methods. These recruitment methods yielded a total of eight diverse faculty/staff participants from six different higher education institutions in Massachusetts.

Interviews

The researcher used e-mail to schedule interviews with participants. After connecting with the participants at the scheduled interview time, the researcher reviewed the purpose of the study and obtained the participants' informed consent. As the interviews were being recorded, audio levels were tested to ensure proper volume. Following the confirmation of audio levels, the semi-structured interview commenced. The researcher utilized the same basic interview guide with each participant, relying on open-ended and follow-up questions to get all of the desired data. Each interview lasted between thirty and sixty minutes and was reviewed and transcribed by the researcher. During the transcription process, the researcher utilized pseudonyms and removed any identifiable information to protect participant anonymity.

Data Analysis

The researcher used grounded theory methods to code and analyze the interviews. Grounded theory is a flexible inductive research approach in which theories are formed from the data. This theory has proven valuable in qualitative research as it allows researchers to analyze data from the outset (Charmaz, 2014). Initial codes were reviewed by the researcher's thesis mentor for reliability. Following review and discussion of these codes, the researcher engaged in memo-writing to develop codes into categories. Because grounded theory requires the researcher to consistently interact with their data, categories continued to grow and evolve throughout the entire research process.

In reviewing the eight transcriptions resultant from interviews conducted with self-identified faculty/staff allies at institutions of higher education, it was discovered that all participants alluded to a similar action process. In constant consultation with her mentor, a theoretical model was developed to illustrate this process.

Findings

In recounting experiences related to allyship, all participants eluded to a similar process. Each participant described educational processes that led them to better understand the area of oppression they wished to tackle. Through education, participants became attuned to potential risks that could hinder action. At this stage, participants either overcame hindrances and participated in general and/or specific action or avoided action all together. All participants either exhibited or emphasized the importance of consistency in reference to action.

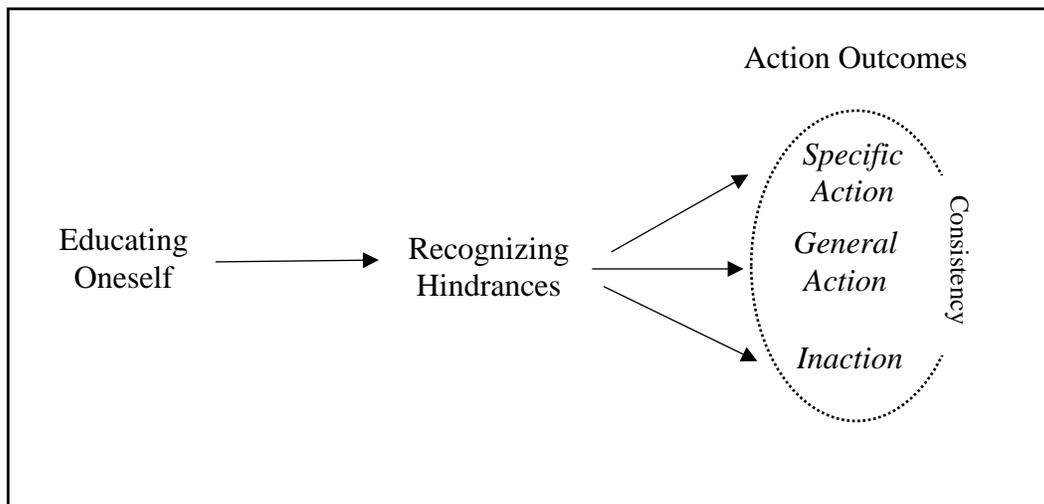


Figure 1: Theoretical Model of Action Process

Educating Oneself

Each participant alluded to educational processes that allowed them to participate in actionable allyship. Participants employed different methods to increase their knowledge surrounding their area of focus and consequently where and how they could best utilize their skills.

In her interview, LC reflected on her own college experience and how that impacted her education: “my school was very...was very much a hub and I have to thank it for, again, also where... being able to learn and advocate for, for people that may not be as privileged as I am.”

Two other participants specifically referenced their college experiences in relation to their allied journey. CM identified her college experience as a watershed moment:

When I went to college, undergrad... I... had a real...just like a very eye-opening experience as I'm sure a lot of kids do...to kind of all of these different issues...about oppression and... kind of my own privilege.

Similarly, JT referenced how the education she received in the higher education setting helped to cement her identity as an ally:

I feel like I've been kind of on the path, ever since like learning about the stuff in sociology classes in undergrad ...by the time I went to grad school...I began to engage more in feminist theory, and sort of to understand...more things related to...intersectionality theory... different types of diversity theories...different social economic con- contextual factors that kind of helped me understand why different groups are treated certain ways, and so that's when it started to become more of my, part of my professional identity in terms of the type of research that I did, in terms of the type of service opportunities...that I might seek out... on campuses and things like that.

The higher education experience referenced by these participants helped to start off their educational journey surrounding actionable allyship.

Other participants mentioned the importance of referring to relevant literature and research. GW emphasized this concept, "I think that, if you're doing that work, you're ... reading... you're learning more about... race, discrimination, oppression." TB referenced one particular book as integral to her education as an ally, "one of the... one of the books that informs so much, just my thinking about allyship is really... Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*." In referencing her educational journey, GW identified that, "I definitely think it's

good to listen, even... listen to any kind of, story, their feedback... to the, to the people around you and...even if it's uncomfortable, and for me it's helpful to read and to participate in, any kind of groups or classes that are offered." GW additionally emphasized the importance of listening:

Hearing from my students of color, how they have felt marginalized... African-American students, international students... Asian-American students, first-generation students...how they feel marginalized... by their peers sometimes...by their, clinical instructors, or by faculty, I knew that from our dean when I first started teaching that this was an issue in the school, but then, it took a while, and it was, I don't usually hear it from the students directly, unless they've graduated, that's when they tell me more... but I do hear it from my colleague, I share the office with...my faculty colleague who is from Zimbabwe...she definitely, hears a lot from the students of color...so I hear things from her.

In helping her learn more about individual students' situations, GW started asking questions:

I was speaking with... I had an African-American student and a Vietnamese-American student...we were chatting at the end of school...I don't know if they'd already graduated, but they had finished all of their work, and we were chatting after they had finished a special project, and I-I said, 'You know, I'm conc-', I forget even how I started the conversation of telling them that I was, have heard, maybe that other, there were issues and I, what was it like for them?

Asking these questions helped to increase her knowledge concerning the marginalization these students face and better equipped her to act. In working with an individual experiencing issues do to her immigration status, AD asked questions in order to help her increase her knowledge

surrounding the student's situation, "why is this happening?...what about this is kind of...typical of how the process works and what isn't and why now?" In finding the answers to these questions, AD came up with a plan on how to best serve as an ally to this student. When HP first began working with individuals experiencing food insecurity and/or homelessness, she went to her church and asked about the resources the church already offered, increasing her knowledge of where she could be most helpful.

Being a part of groups that were discussing and addressing issues of marginalization and oppression created a space for learning. Individuals were able to explore their own viewpoints and learn from others, at times working collaboratively to find a solution. LC was part of a group in college that worked collaboratively with undocumented students to ensure their position at the university:

We as a group, would meet... including these undocumented students, ...and bring these items out of the shadows... and talked about it and talked about how we can help them within the university because they were already in the university...and it was like what were they gonna do if... the school found out they were undocumented, what were we going to do, were we gonna do anything, were we gonna stand for them, stand up for them, how, how were we gonna help our, our peers, our, our friends?

RW and JT both credited their participation in a white persons' accountability group in helping to increase their knowledge of privilege and oppression. RW described this assembly as, "a group of white people who, come together to discuss ...systemic racism, to discuss their own struggles... with deconstructing...their racism, with-with dealing with the... structures of our institutions in society that are systemically racist." JT discussed the way the group was founded:

We started it after... after we all went to this white privilege conference and... realized that the experiences of folks of color...in particular two black colleagues of ours who went, is very different from the white folks' experience... so we started this group to, to... create an affinity space where we can work on our stuff... free of the white fragility that stops us from, speaking up and making breakthroughs.

This group provided both JT and RW a space to learn and reflect, giving them a chance to educate themselves on the best utilization of their skills.

TB acknowledged the importance of observing others acting as allies in acting as an ally herself. TB discussed how observing positive ally mentors educated her on what an ally should be:

Having seen other people engage in good allyship... that's powerful and that those people have really created quite a, a, a road map for me, and as I think about, the people in my life who I've considered mentors, and...people who over years and years are, you know, close, close, friends... all of those people have been... models of really strong...positive allies, for me and for other communities.

Observing positive allies helped to lay the groundwork for how TB practiced allyship herself.

Another way that participants educated themselves on how to best serve as allies was through experiential learning. Through engaging in actionable allied behaviors, individuals learned more about how to best work with the population they were focusing on. Another form of experiential learning occurred in exposing themselves to the same conditions experienced by the population being served. HP participated in experiential learning while working with individuals experiencing homelessness in D.C.:

We slept in sleeping bags on the floor of the church fellowship hall and, learned what it was to be, limited with our food and to actually work in, different agencies and serving the homeless and the hungry.

This experience helped to educate HP about the experiences of the population she was trying to serve, allowing her to better empathize with those experiencing homelessness.

All participants referenced acquisitional knowledge in relaying situations in which they acted as allies.

Recognizing Hindrances

In describing their experiences, participants recognized barriers that hindered their ability to act as allies. Five of the participants acknowledged risk as a hindrance to action. In her work with those experiencing food insecurity and/or homelessness, HP acknowledged concerns in interacting with individuals experiencing homelessness on the street. She cited evidence to back up this concern:

I've been yelled at, you know, you've seen people who are, mentally challenging with yelling and cussing out people on the streets so you know, I have always had a very defensive, protective...demeanor when I'm out, because I'm a single woman or I'm with a group of people and I don't want anything to go wrong.

Despite her desire to work with individuals experiencing food insecurity and/or homelessness, HP did not want to put her physical self at risk. RW acknowledged both physical and social risk that would accompany his participation in a march:

I was initially kind of nervous about participating in that, march, I thought, well, 'What if someone takes a picture and shows it to the administration, is there a chance that I'll get arrested? Will there be a conflict with the police?'

In this quote, RW identified potential physical risks in the form of getting arrested or being involved in a conflict with the police and social risks in the form of losing his job or getting in trouble with the administration. TB acknowledged social risk as a potential hindrance to action for potential allies:

Sometimes I think there are people who in their hearts of hearts really want to step up, but they don't want to be looked at as the rebel rouser, they-they don't want to be looked at as the person who's gonna correct their supervisor, they don't wanna be, you know, a troublemaker, and so I think they mediate their behavior...and decide in those moments, 'Oh no, I can't say anything.'

In her own work, TB acknowledged the social risk that she undertook and how she moved beyond that risk to serve as an effective ally:

I mean there were conversations that I had with that student off the record...that could've gotten me fired...but to me, were essential...for her to know, one, that I understood her experience, that I saw her as a full human being, and that I cared enough about, her and her experience and justice...to step outside of my role.

In her interview, CM acknowledged social risk as well as her introverted personality as a hindrance to action:

To this day, it's still difficult for me to be confrontational, about things...that's something that, I'm, I've not been asked or called upon to do very much, but it's something that I struggle with a lot...just in terms of my personality. So especially...kind of before, what I would call my feminist awakening...you know, I'm not sure I would've put my neck out...in any kind of considerable way, out of fear, for...repercussions for myself.

JT identified social risk for white people hoping to serve as allies to people of color:

In terms of risk, like me talking about race...kind of 'puts me at risk,' because it's not something that a lot of white people do, or think that they have to do, or feel any ownership over...I mean most white folks don't even think they have a race...and so what is the risk that I'm willing to assume...in order to be an ally, or an accomplice to folks.

JT referred to social risk as a barrier that individuals wishing to serve as allies needed to overcome in order to act effectively.

In GW's interview, she recognized willful ignorance as a hindrance to action, "in a...white, liberal, academic setting...where everyone thinks that they already are...informed about...all of the -isms...it's surprising to me how many people...don't realize there's an issue." In this quote, GW commented on the fact that most individuals located in academia are familiar with issues of marginalization and oppression, but often fail to notice it in their own institutions. This inability to recognize issues of marginalization and oppression represents a hindrance to action, individuals cannot act on behalf of an issue they are unaware of.

LC recognized her lack of privilege as a hindrance to her ability to act. When she first started at her institution, she often had to rely on those with more power and privilege to help get her agenda across. Recalling this time, she mentioned, "I really had to count on, other people and sadly it had to be white...males, older males." In a similar regard, AD recognized she lacked certain resources that were necessary to serve as an ally to an individual student. She recognized this hindrance and emphasized the importance of collaborating with others who have the necessary expertise, "if you don't have that knowledge, finding them another expert who has."

Both LC and AD recognized the importance of involving others with more power, privilege, and/or expertise to overcome hindrances when necessary.

Action Outcomes

Recognizing hindrances led participants to one of three action outcomes. Participants either engaged in a general allied action, a specific allied action, or no action. General outcomes embodied actions that participants took that served an entire marginalized group while specific outcomes embodied actions that participants took that served specific individuals or groups experiencing marginalization. Participants also recognized times where recognizing hindrances led to inaction.

In her work with individuals experiencing homelessness, HP recognized that she did not want to risk interacting with those who were homeless on the street. This influenced her decision to participate in general actions that helped bolster the resources. She participated in general action by coordinating food drives, serving in food kitchens, and collecting clothes and Christmas toys for homeless families in shelters. Her participation in these actions allowed her to work with those experiencing homelessness in pre-structured settings which addressed her discomfort in serving those experiencing homelessness on the street. In this way, HP was able to overcome hindrances and participate in a general action. TB recognized general actions she carried out every day to make her campus more accessible to students:

Almost everything I do...every day, all of my work, gets focused on that, so whether it's creating vehicles for access... for... first generation students... or... students of color, or students who come from low... socio-economic backgrounds, or advocating for... gender inclusive bathrooms on campus... and we actually made progress, which was good... or looking at the... diversity of our faculty, staff, and student communities. I mean, every

single day, every single meeting that I'm in, I'm actually doing some advocacy work on folks who are...in communities that are historically underrepresented or marginalized.

By participating in these general acts of allyship, TB worked to create equal access to opportunities for not one specific individual but for all those in the campus community from marginalized groups. CM participated in general action by ensuring representation in her course materials:

I think about that a lot with my teaching...I know that I have... students who identify in lots of different ways in my classrooms, and ... you know, part of my teaching philosophy is to... include a diversity... wide range of resources to students... in the classroom ...in terms of... looking at my syllabus and seeing what kinds of readings I'm assigning, I wanna make sure that I have a diversity of voices... and perspectives being taught and told in a class. When I use examples in a classroom, I try to use examples from lots of different populations in terms of... race, gender, sexuality... things like that... I try to normalize, a diverse landscape in my classroom through the examples that I use... I wanna create like a safe space for my students, I want it to... open the eyes of my students who may not, maybe don't come from diverse backgrounds.

In this way, CM participate in a general action that helped all students feel represented in classroom materials. JT participated in general action in order to ensure representation in her former field of study:

One of the things that I did in graduate school, was to start, this intercultural, planning and practice group, realizing that, and this was...along with a few of my fellow students, some of whom were people of color, and we realized that ...like the planning profession in general is like pretty white... but a lot of the communities, in which planners work, are

not white, and so there are a lot of ways in which planners, just don't do a good job...

because they are not culturally competent... and so we decided to start a group, that was focused on increasing the cultural competence, of folks in our profession.

JT noticed an issue in her field and worked with other members of her professional community to improve cultural competence among her peers and contribute to a better quality of life for those in the communities they served. GW participated in a general action by adjusting her course layout based on feedback from students with marginalized social locations:

I've really... tried to figure out what I can do, to make a difference for those students and one thing that... one thing that I did after I, heard this from my students, a really specific example, is team-based learning, where one student just kept getting ignored even though she had important input, is I never put a student of color alone in a team anymore, I always put them... at least two in a team, and even if that means that another team is gonna be all white, I don't care, because I don't want to sacrifice my... students of color.

HP, TB, CM, and JT all participated in general allied actions that were targeted towards communities rather than individuals.

LC reflected on a specific allied action she participated in as a college student. Alongside a group of her peers, LC worked to ensure that an undocumented student at her university could stay in the country:

We had one student who actually got caught by ICE in Florida...and we very much, advocated for him, sent letters to the chancellor, sent letters to organizations, and...got them to write letters to advocate for the student to come back to university, and to complete his...degree, and he's now working as, oh I actually forget what his profession is, but he's now a professional in the United States legally.

LC and her peers recognized hindrances in their lack of privilege and moved beyond that by involving individuals, such as the chancellor, who held more power than themselves. AD recalls a similar situation in her position at her university where she participated in specific actions to ensure that a student facing issues with their immigration status was able to keep her scholarship and remain at the university. AD recognized that she did not have the legal expertise to assist the student, so reached out to other campus offices, “I was able to...call up our international program’s office and, go online and figure out resources for her and connect her with legal services.” AD then provided the student with the support and encouragement she needed to get through the process, “I was trying to teach her, how to advocate for herself...it had to be me encouraging her to take ownership of, this invitation she had, from an office that I reached out to.” TB demonstrated specific allied action when working with an individual student who had been a victim of sexual assault on campus. She was able to recognize that assisting this student in the capacity she did could have led to her dismissal from the university but did not let that impede her action. TB described her process:

The college has all of these systems, and... policies and... investigation processes in place... and yet sometimes...the process can be just as harmful as the original... harm... and so... just recently actually, I was in... a series of conversations...with a survivor, and actually, helping to...both translate what was happening in the institution... providing some transparency...around what was happening that other offices couldn’t provide... and doing some work on behalf of that... survivor in a manner that was consistent with what she wanted done...ensuring that... she had the support that she needed... ensuring that... the respondent in that case, the perpetrator in that case...was held

accountable...all of those kind of things to both, protect and preserve her dignity as she went through this process, that can be so, so... trying, on people.

In RW's interview, he reflected on his experiences serving as an ally to students of color at his university. He employed specific action in that he was working with a specific set of students that identified as members of the same marginalized group. He attended a march with the students to show support, and later helped them navigate the higher levels of academia to assist them in furthering their goals:

So, I was speaking with these groups, I wasn't the negotiator, but I-I was helping to, share information, across the parties because they were not in direct contact, our senior leadership had, never really sat down to talk with our black students, and they were, it was fortunate for them that I had on many occasions...and at the same time... I had to... show the students... kind of advise them on what, what I thought might be most effective in... encouraging the administration to act in ways that would further the students' goals.

LC, TB, and RW all identified specific actions they undertook in serving as allies to specific individuals and groups experiencing marginalization.

Although all the participants were able to identify instances where they exhibited actionable allyship, most identified times in their lives where hindrances led to inaction. CM reflected on missed opportunities in her interview:

I think in general, there was, there were just a lot of years where I was, just really focused on my own stuff, and doing my own thing... kind of like through high school and into college... I don't wanna say I was self-absorbed, but, I wasn't thinking much about, the larger social context... social politics...economic injustices, social justice issues, things like that... I was kind of in a bubble, and just kind of going through, I had my goals, and

I was thinking about what I wanted to do and accomplish and who I wanted to be... and that's how I'm certain that I missed opportunities in those years, to be more of an ally... to people around me.

CM reflected on her missed opportunities succinctly, although she was not alone in recalling instances of inaction in her past. The experiences relayed by all eight participants were used to create the model illustrating the actionable allyship process.

Consistency

An important quality emphasized and/or exhibited by all participants in the study was consistency in relation to action. HP recounted experiences of serving as an ally to individuals experiencing homelessness and/or food insecurity consistently across time:

I went to Maryland, for graduate school and joined a church that was very involved, in working with social service agencies in D.C., and...you know, coordinating...food drives and serving in the, in the food kitchens and...raising clothe-, you know collecting clothes and Christmas toys and gifts for, for, homeless... families in shelters and things like that...I've done that all my life.

RW also referenced a social history scattered with allied actions, "when I was in college... I was a member of the National Organization for Women, when I was in graduate school I was a social activist." JT reflected on her history with allyship in a similar manner, "I did a lot of activist work... in undergrad... anti-sweatshop work... anti-war stuff at the time cause this was during... the start of the Iraq War." CM commented in her interview about her allied evolution over time:

This friend of mine... came out as gay and, that was a big deal, it was a very courageous sort of thing for him to do in the environment that we were in, and... you know, there was a whole group of us who... had to start to kind of...take a little bit of a role as a

defender, or a supporter to him... as he kind of navigated that and, experienced... what I would call probably minor bullying around it... I guess that was probably the first time, I had to think about that, and then... as I... grew older, as I left that area, I started to kind of expand my horizons a little bit... opportunities to, engage and make friendships... with ...gay and lesbian ... students, classmates... colleagues, just-just became more commonplace, so... that felt very natural to me... and then by the time I went to grad school... it started to become more of my, part of my professional identity in terms of the type of research that I did, in terms of the type of service opportunities... that I might seek out uh on campuses and things like that.

GW similarly commented on her allied evolution over time:

Since I came back in the Peace Corps I-I was 27 when I got back... I've tried to work in places, like community health centers and with the homeless... as a nurse practitioner, where I could, make a difference, and I really enjoyed connecting with my patients, and so now, as a teacher, I... I'm in, again a privileged setting, at an expensive school, but our students are very interested in working with... all kinds of populations, and I, I also still see patients at a community health center where I see people from many different backgrounds, including, immigrants, Spanish-speaking, Haitian, Creole-speaking immigrants.

In AD's work serving as an ally to an individual student, she emphasized the importance of providing support to the student throughout the entire process. AD consistently showed up for this student, offering support even after the initial issue was resolved:

Right now, my husband and I are considering whether or not we can take her on for the summer... as kind of like, our... kid, and that would then allow her to, come with me to work every-day and then work in the office and she could, make a little bit of money.

In recounting experiences where they employed allyship over time, GW, RW, JT, CM, HP, and AD exhibited consistency in their actions.

LC and TB referenced the importance of consistency to allyship in both of their interviews. LC reflected on always being there for her peers and students, emphasizing, "that's where that consistency piece comes in, I consistently believe this, I don't, just pick and choose." TB similarly reflected on her own experiences of allyship and the importance of consistently engaging in action:

I-I would be one of those people... even in school as somebody who would stand up for the rights of somebody else... or if somebody was treated badly...in a... school system... or, on the playground for that matter, or even as a little kid, to me, the issue was not just something that was harmful to them...that in fact, that behavior is harmful to the whole community...and so... and that's just always been work that I've done, and...and then it was deepened, you know, even after I was well into my career...by some study of...non-violent social change that I did, and... and that positionality... deepens your ability to see the interconnection...interconnectivity of humanity as well as... very basic principles like, anything that harms another human being, kind of, harms me... and, anything that harms me, harms the humanity of other human beings, and so I just, I don't have a tolerance...for those, for seeing things, for observing things, without acting.

Both LC and TB referenced consistency as necessary to allyship, emphasizing that allyship is not achieved by one task, but instead remains an aspirational identity pursued by consistent engagement.

Discussion

The experiences of faculty/staff members acting as allies to those from less privileged groups were explored in this study. Despite the varying nature and degree of allied actions exhibited, a model emerged from the data that illustrated the process underwent by participants. Participants recounted numerous executions of this model with differing action outcomes. The model is intended to illustrate action processes that are implemented on an ongoing basis. Consistency emphasized that the title of ally is a continual, aspirational identity rather than an attainable status.

This research differs from previous studies by focusing on the action process employed by self-identified allies. Previous models recognized that action was expected, but primarily focused on motivation and preparation. The proposed model illustrates a process that is meant to be repeated rather than the models of Washington & Evans (1991) and Bishop (2002) whose models assume that once an individual has progressed to the final level or step, they have truly embodied the ally role.

Aspects of this research overlapped with the findings from previous studies, particularly those surrounding education. Washington & Evans (1991), Broido (2000), and Bishop (2002) all mentioned education in their respective studies. The Washington & Evans (1991) model cited awareness, knowledge/education, and skills as pre-cursors to action; Bishop's (2002) model addressed educating oneself through understanding the nuances of oppression and how they

interact with one another while Broido (2000) found “increased information in social justice issues” as a common trend among university students who identified as allies (pg. 5).

Because this was an exploratory qualitative research study addressing an understudied component of allyship, these findings primarily serve a descriptive purpose. This research highlights that allyship is more than just being informed on social justice issues. Allyship is continually moving beyond knowledge to action despite potential risk.

Limitations and Implications for Further Research

As this was a qualitative research study, the results are not generalizable to the larger population. The participants were all self-identified allies from the New England area. As New England is a liberal area of the country, it would be interesting to explore whether this research would produce similar results in a more conservative area of the country. In seeking out only self-identified allies, this study could have bypassed individuals exhibiting actionable allyship behaviors not willing to identify themselves. While the sample was ethnically diverse, only one participant was male. That being said, the women and those women of color interviewed show the importance of intersectionality is recognizing one’s privilege in one social location while also representing a less privileged group. As this study was conducted using a version of constructivist grounded theory, the researcher recognizes their role in interpreting data and constructing theory.

This model could serve as a tool of self-evaluation. Individuals who consider themselves allies could use this model to reflect on their own allied actions. It could also prove useful to individuals educated about social justice issues who are interested in becoming allies evaluate what hindrances are standing between education and action. In general, this research adds to the growing literature available on allyship, specifically addressing the gap in research on actionable

allyship. Although this study proves useful in exploring the process surrounding actionable allyship, more research is needed to substantiate the proposed model.

Conclusion

This study provides a qualitative model exhibiting the process of actionable allyship as exhibited by faculty/staff in institutions of higher education. While previous models have explored different aspects of allyship development, this research is unique in exploring the process of action in relation to allyship.

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Appendix 1

Interview guide:

Could you tell me about your social locations?

Social location: group that you belong to because of your place or position in history and society.
i.e. gender, race, class, age, ability, religion, sexual orientation, citizenship status

-Which of these social locations cause you to experience privilege/oppression?

-If you think of any other social locations throughout the interview please let me know.

Tell me about what led you to pursue allyship?

-What contributed positively/negatively to your allyship development?

Could you tell me about any experiences you have had where you were an ally to someone from a less privileged group?

-Specifically in higher education settings?

-Did any of your social locations empower you to act this way?

-Can you tell me a little bit more about the action you took?

Could you tell me about any experiences you have had where someone was an ally to you?

-Specifically in a higher education setting?

-Which social locations do you imagine empowered this person to act as an ally on your behalf?

-How did that make you feel?

Could you tell me about any experiences where you wish someone had acted as an ally on your behalf?

-Do you think that any of their social locations impeded them from reaching out?

-How did that make you feel?

Can you tell me about any experiences where you wished you had acted as an ally?

-Did any of your social locations influence your actions?

What would you say are key factors in defining allyship?

A journey towards allyship can seem overwhelming, do you have any advice for someone who is just starting out?

Is there something that you may not have thought about before that occurred to you during this interview?

Is there anything else you would like to share?