**Going beyond good colleagues: Men's and women's perspectives on allyship behaviors
toward women faculty in male-dominated disciplines in academia**

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Abstract

Allyship is increasingly viewed as a crucial practice to address social and economic inequities faced by marginalized groups. However, little research explores how dominant group members can behave as allies and what marginalized group individuals consider as valuable. Research shows that women faculty in male-dominated academic disciplines regularly experience gendered microaggressions and sexism. In this study, using qualitative narratives from 202 women and men faculty in male-dominated academic departments, we explore women's experiences as recipients of allyship, and men's experiences engaging in allyship. Further, we compare narratives about and from men considered 'good colleagues' versus 'exceptional allies.' The findings reveal that good colleagues engage in an array of interpersonally supportive allyship behaviors (e.g., active listening). In contrast, exceptional allies go beyond them by undertaking consequential and conspicuous actions on behalf of women (e.g., impression promotion), a set of behaviors we term as visible advocacy. By exploring the range of allyship behaviors engaged in by men and viewed by women as valuable, we highlight implications for literature on gender equity and allyship. This study carries practical implications for men who desire to become better allies to women.

Keywords: allyship behaviors, gender equality, diversity and inclusion, equity, men as allies, prejudice reduction, gender in organizations, women in academia, discrimination

Going beyond good colleagues: Men's and women's perspectives on allyship behaviors toward women faculty in male-dominated disciplines in academia

In the last decade, greater public consciousness of sexism has highlighted the role of men in standing up as allies for women (e.g., #MeToo, UN HeforShe campaign). Allyship is likely to be particularly consequential in workplaces where men makeup a significant numerical majority, and disproportionately occupy positions of power (Moser & Branscombe, 2021; Nash et al, 2021). One such context is the academic workplace in which there is known to be a chilly climate for women faculty (Maranto & Griffin, 2011), further reinforcing gender inequity.

Research on higher education trends by the American Association for University Professors (AAUP) found that “women face more obstacles as faculty in higher education than they do as managers and directors in corporate America” (West & Curtis, 2006, p. 4). This obstruction causes stalling of career advancement and high attrition which lead to inadequate representation of women faculty in higher and visible leadership ranks (AAUP, 2020; Callister, 2006; Xu, 2008). Such obstacles are intensified in male-dominated (i.e., more than 50% men¹) academic disciplines such as science, technology, engineering, math (STEM) and business, and especially in the elite institutions that are the training grounds for future leaders (Nelson, 2017). Despite significant investments in identifying solutions to improving gender equity (e.g., NSF funding), and growing enrollments and graduation rates of women students in these disciplines, disparities in faculty positions have remained largely unchanged (Casad et al., 2020).

¹In some academic disciplines, men make up more than half of the faculty, for example in the U.S., 88% men in the physical sciences or engineering (National Science Foundation, 2010), 69% in philosophy (Paxton et al., 2012), 69% in religion (American Academy of Arts and Sciences, n.d.), and over 62% in business schools across the world (Brown, 2016). Further, Taylor (2010) uses the term occupational minority to denote a worker who is a numerical rarity in their occupation, regardless of the actual sex composition of their particular workplace.

Male allyship in academia holds promise for helping alleviate this sticky problem, although scholarship and practice in this area remains nascent (Bilimoria et al., 2008; Lau et al., under review; Warren et al., 2019). We contribute to this literature by exploring the forms of support women faculty find useful and those in which men engage to improve gender equity. We highlight areas of congruence between women's needs and men's efforts, and areas of opportunity as well-intentioned men devote time and effort toward gender equity.

Applying Acker's theory of gendered organizations in academia

Acker (1990) identified multiple ways in which gender inequalities manifest in organizations. First, gendered divisions of labor, behavioral norms, and institutionalized power place men in the highest positions. Within academia, women are overburdened with care-giving 'invisible labor' such as student advising and service (Social Sciences Feminist Network Research Interest Group, 2017), while men disproportionately occupy visible leadership positions (Callister, 2006). Second, symbols, language, and imagery reinforce gendered divisions. In elite research institutions, for example, the professional prototype of a successful academic is that of a male scientist (Danbold & Bendersky, 2020). Third, interactional processes between individuals within the organization reify gendered social structures and reproduce patterns of dominance and submission. The gendered norms for men's behaviors are aggression and achievement-orientation while women are expected to be passive, facing backlash (Fisher et al., 2019) if they violate those norms. Fourth, as a result of such processes, actors begin to reflect gendered ways of thinking about work in their presentation of self, where women either perform a variety of stereotypical feminine roles (Lester, 2008) or struggle with appropriate modes of self-presentation (Donaghue, 2017). Fifth, organizational logic in the form of written and unwritten work rules create systems of job evaluation that favor men and marginalize women,

for example, where women are expected to take on more teaching and service -- activities that have a deleterious impact on their professional trajectory (Carrigan et al., 2011). Women are also penalized by job evaluation systems when they attempt to maintain work-life balance (Mason & Goulden, 2002). Such gender inequities are heightened in disciplines where men faculty represent a numerical majority, such as STEM and business (Nelson, 2017).

The labor, work experiences, and outcomes of women within academia are also highly dependent on their intersectional identities. Neimann (2012) noted that apart from gender discrimination, queer and trans faculty of color (QTPOC) are likely to encounter “the quadruple threat of racism, sexism, homophobia, and class-based subordination...combination of ‘isms’ [which] can be lethal to their careers, bodies, and spirits in the culture of the predominantly white, male, heterosexual, and upper-middle-/upper-class academy” (p. 446). Further, possessing intersectional identities in STEM academia consistently position individuals outside the norm and negatively impact their career trajectories and work-life balance (Kachchaf et al., 2015). For instance, despite an overall relative increase in the percentage of women faculty in STEM, the percentage of women of color faculty has decreased and the ‘leaky pipeline’ is a result of the absence of intersectional interventions (Liu et al., 2019).

In the absence of men as allies problematizing unequal norms within academia and taking steps to address such injustices, the burden falls on women to advocate for themselves in an environment that already undermines their voices in a structural manner. Further, research shows that women in male-dominated contexts run the risk of incurring backlash when they stand up for themselves and others (Von Bergen & Bressler, 2019). Such risks are heightened for women with intersectional identities (Settles et al., 2014, 2020). Male allyship has the potential to help shift structural norms, while also offering instrumental and emotional support to bolster women’s

efforts within institutions. However, limited research (see exception, Cheng et al, 2019) brings together allyship behaviors that are practiced by male allies which are valued by women.

Allyship behaviors

A growing body of conceptual scholarship considers the role of male allyship in changing androcentric systems (e.g., Almassi, 2015; Flood & Ertel, 2020; Ghabra & Calafell, 2018; Johnson & Smith, 2018), however, much less empirical research considers male allyship within the workplace (see review, Lau et al., 2021). Yet, some empirical parallels are found in allyship research in other domains. Jones et al. (2014) suggest that LGBTQ+ allyship consists of actively supporting and standing up for marginalized individuals. Sue et al. (2019)'s review reveals that White allies make invisible transgressions more visible, disarm microaggressions, educate perpetrators, and seek external reinforcements. Carlson et al. (2019)'s review of activists' and academic literature noted that a key aspect of allyship behavior is amplifying marginalized voices. Social psychological research based on college student samples has examined confrontation as a primary form of allyship (e.g., Czopp et al., 2006, Gulker et al., 2013).

Of note is that a preponderance of studies examine allyship from the perspective of the dominant group allies (e.g., DuBow & Ashcraft, 2016; Eichler, 2010), barring a few exceptions (e.g., Brown & Ostrove, 2013). Cheng and colleagues' (2019) empirical paper is one of the first to consider male allyship in the workplace, and its effectiveness from women's perspective. They identified three themes - advocacy (confrontation, backing up an idea, giving credit, providing opportunity to speak), instrumental support (providing job/task related information, providing opportunity, mentorship, creating/supporting policies), and emotional support (helping, social support, providing a male presence). Madsen et al. (2020) examined men's and women's perspectives on male allyship in a variety of organizations and found that while men and women

identified similar strategies, there were differences in frequency, tone, and emphases, suggesting that men and women perceived the *effectiveness* of the strategies differently.

Integrating Acker's theory and allyship

Acker's theory (1990) provides a framework to describe and identify the ways in which women are marginalized in academia, but it offers limited guidance for solutions (Clavero & Galligan, 2020). We argue that for each element of the framework, male allies have the capacity to be instrumental in initiating or boosting change toward gender equity, at the individual, relational, and structural levels, through their active support and advocacy of women faculty. For example, the amplification of women's voices by male allies can help women combat the 'imposter phenomenon' (Hutchins & Rainbolt, 2017) that they often experience as a result of gendered ways of working and presenting oneself. Emotional support from male allies can buffer the backlash women face when they are perceived to have violated gender norms. The advocacy of male allies within the job evaluation process of tenure and promotion can interrupt the written and unwritten organizational logic that marginalize women's careers in academia. In this study, we empirically explore, based on both women's and men's perspectives, the ways in which male allyship can fulfill this potential for moving gendered institutions toward greater gender equity.

Men's versus women's perspectives of allyship

Although men have the potential to enact allyship around issues highlighted by Acker's theory, such allyship presupposes men's recognition of women's experiences and need for allyship. Yet, as organizational practices, structures, and cultures tend to favor men and devalue women, the experiences, concerns, and feedback from women about gender inequities are also likely to go unheard or dismissed. Indeed, a study shows that women faculty perceive greater gender inequality than men; these differences hold across tenure levels and in private as well as

public institutions, and are particularly strong in STEM (García-González et al., 2019). Similarly, a meta-analysis of 62 studies of gender differences in perceptions of sexual harassment showed that compared to men, women identify a broader range of behaviors as harassing (Rotundo et al., 2001). As the nature and extent of gender inequities are perceived differently by men and women (Basford et al., 2014), it is likely that the nature of, need for, and usefulness of interventions to combat gender inequity, such as, male allyship behaviors, may also be viewed differently by men and women. Yet, much past research examines either the women's or men's perspectives, but not both (e.g., Anicha et al., 2015; Cheng et al., 2019). Understanding allyship simultaneously from both men's and women's perspectives allows insight into strategies that carry appeal across both, and identify strategies that are favored by one and not the other, expanding our understanding of gender-based preferences and norms in allyship.

Allyship versus collegial behaviors

As we deepen the work on male allyship in the workplace, a critical question that arises is: how do everyday allyship behaviors differ from collegial behaviors? For instance, dominant group members regularly engage in mentorship (e.g., Reis & Grady, 2020; Richard et al., 2019) and intergroup prosocial behaviors which benefit marginalized group members (e.g., increased job satisfaction, reduced anxiety, Griffith & Hebl, 2002). In higher education contexts, collegiality also consists of collaborative and constructive cooperation (Schimmel et al., 2013). These everyday behaviors seem to align with what it means to be a good colleague. Although well-intentioned good colleagues provide such cross-gender collegial support, they may recreate paternalistic dynamics (Christman, 2003) and may be inattentive to the particular needs that arise from sexism (Chesler & Chesler, 2002). For instance, Patton and Bondi (2015) found that true allies as compared to 'nice colleagues' engaged in intentional reflective work (e.g., considering

sacrifices involved) and structural work (e.g., challenging institutional status quo) geared to improving gender equity. We extend this work by examining how exceptional male allies versus good male colleagues advocate for and offer interpersonal support to women while attending to issues of sexism, and what women perceive to be behaviors of good colleagues versus exceptional allies.

Method

This multi-source qualitative study draws on men's self-reports and women's other-reports of men. We sought to understand 1) how exceptional allies differ from (or converge with) good colleagues in allyship behaviors within gendered academic institutions, and 2) how women's perceptions differ from (or converge with) men's perceptions of allyship behaviors.

Participants and Procedures

Data were collected as part of a larger online 20-minute survey. In this study, we focus on answers to two open-ended survey items described later. Participants were recruited from faculty in male-dominated disciplines of STEM, philosophy, religion, business, and law in 64 elite research-intensive universities in the U.S. and Canada. These institutions were chosen because gender inequality has been found to be most intense at elite, high-pressure research-intensive institutions (Ceci & Williams, 2010; Nelson, 2017; Özbilgin, 2009).

Women faculty were invited to nominate two men who are colleagues: (1) with whom they work regularly ('good colleague'²), and (2) who show extraordinary commitment to supporting women faculty (exceptional ally), to participate in the study. Similar to past studies on exceptional individuals (e.g., Matsuba & Walker, 2005), rather than offering specific criteria

² A person with whom the woman works regularly should have yielded a 'typical colleague,' who could be anywhere on the spectrum of good, neutral, or bad. Yet as we discuss later, women were inclined to nominate only those with whom they have relatively positive relationships, so we term this nominee as a 'good colleague.'

to identify exceptional allies, 'folk conceptions' of exceptional allyship that represent common perceptions within the institutional context were captured by asking nominators to provide brief explanations for their nominations. In this study, data are used from matched pairs of women's other-reports and the self-reports of their nominated 'good colleague' or 'exceptional ally.' To avoid non-independent data, in cases when women nominated both an exceptional ally and a good colleague, only one pair of data are used. The dropped cases did not deviate significantly from the norm in any of the demographic characteristics of the sample.

Participant recruitment was carried out using multiple avenues. Using publicly available information (university websites), a list of major research universities from the U.S. and Canada was developed and department chairs of their male-dominated disciplines were asked to distribute the study invitation to their women faculty. A list of women faculty was also developed and they were invited directly. Women who agreed to participate were then invited to nominate a colleague to complete an open-ended survey, and also complete an open-ended survey themselves that focused on the nominee (serving as women's other-reports) as well as their own experiences (women's self-reports). Upon completion of the nomination process, an email was sent to men nominees informing them that one of their colleagues (who was not identified by name) had nominated them to participate in a study on collegial relationships in higher education, and inviting them to complete a brief survey (men's self-reports). The responses of all participants (women and men) were kept confidential and women were not informed about whether their nominees participated in the survey. As an incentive, all participants were offered a \$5 gift card to complete the survey.

Overall, the response rate was less than 4% (841 department chairs were requested to share the survey with the women faculty in their department and 3843 women were directly

invited). Past survey recruitment studies suggest that the typical response rate for a short online survey administered to STEM university faculty is about 12%, and over 20% when offered cash incentives (Dykema et al., 2013). In the current study, this low response rate may not be accidental. Many women non-participants (over 50) wrote detailed emails to the first author sharing their reasons for seriously considering and then, deciding not to participate, even though they were glad such a study was being conducted and asked to receive a copy of the published findings. Some of their reasons included experience of sexism, lack of safety to freely share their voices, and lack of adequately pleasant relationships with men colleagues such that they might feel safe to nominate them for a study (see Warren, 2021). Therefore, nominations of 'colleagues they work regularly with' in this study might have yielded men participants who are more inclusive and supportive of women than is truly typical, and this study may represent a positive end of the spectrum. While all nominated men did not participate (112 out of 355 nominated men participated), the first author received no emails from men who chose not to participate.

Participants. 101 matched male-women dyads, that is, 202 respondents participated in the survey. Among the 101 women faculty ($M_{age} = 45.66$, $SD = 10.44$, 7% missing), 51% were tenured faculty, 17% were tenure-track, and 18% held non-tenure track appointments (adjunct or clinical faculty), while 15% did not respond. Racial/ethnic composition of the women sample was: 9% reported identifying as Asian or Asian American, 3% Black or African American, 0% Hispanic/Latino or Hispanic/Latino American, 78% White or European American, 4% mixed race, 3% preferred not to respond, 3% did not report. The women faculty worked in the following academic disciplines: 21% science, 6% technology, 39% engineering, 9% math, 16% business, 2% law, 2% religion, 1% philosophy, 1% political science, rest were missing.

Among the 101 men colleagues ($M_{age} = 52.04$, $SD = 11.87$), 72% were tenured faculty, 11% were tenure-track, and 16% held non-tenure track appointments (adjunct or clinical faculty), 1% were missing data. The racial/ethnic composition of the men sample was: 3% Asian or Asian American, 1% Black or African American, 1% Hispanic/Latino or Hispanic/Latino American, 56% White or European American, 2% other, 1% mixed race, 2% preferred not to respond, 34% did not report. The men faculty worked in the following disciplines: 26% science, 6% technology, 31% engineering, 11% math, 18% business, 2% law, 3% religion, 2% philosophy, 2% political science.

Measures. Adapted from an item of the Life Story Interview (McAdams, 1995), women nominators were first asked: “Please identify a male colleague you work with regularly at your institution (please enter his email so he can be asked to complete a complementary survey).” Next, they were asked “In some detail, please share an incident that stands out in your memory as a time when [your nominee] supported, advocated for, or empowered you in some way. What was that experience like for you? What aspects about the incident or his actions were most impactful?” Later they were asked, “Now please nominate a male colleague who shows extraordinary and sustained commitment to championing women faculty (e.g., supporting, advocating for, and empowering women) at your institution. In some detail, please share an incident that stands out in your memory as a time when [your nominee] championed for (i.e., supported, advocated for, or empowered) you. What was that experience like for you? What aspects about the incident or his actions were most impactful?”

Men nominees were similarly asked: “Please write about an incident at work that stands out in your memory as a time when you went out of your way to support, empower, or advocate for a woman colleague. Perhaps, you did something when she was being treated unfairly, or you

stood up for her, or you did something that was supportive of her. Please think about the incident and describe it in vivid terms. Please share exactly what happened. Who was involved? What were your thoughts and feelings? Why is this significant for you?"

Data Management. To organize the data, the male-women dyads were matched by nominator-nominee. Although the original intention was to compare exceptional allies versus good colleagues who were nominated by the same women, there were only 9 pairs of such cases in the data. Since the 9 pairs of cases violated assumptions of independence, the 9 cases of good colleagues that had men in the exceptional ally condition nominated by the same women were dropped. As such, in the final sample, all dyads are independent (i.e., no two men were nominated by the same woman). Also, in some cases, in the first prompt, a woman had nominated a man as one they worked with regularly (i.e., coded initially as a good colleague), and in the second prompt, they simply indicated that the 'exceptional ally' was the same person who had been nominated in the first prompt. In such cases, this nominee was re-coded as an exceptional ally instead of a good colleague. Thus, our final sample of 101 men consists of 50 'good colleagues' and 51 'exceptional allies'.

Researcher as Instrument. The first author's positionality as an immigrant woman faculty of color in a male-dominated academic discipline allowed for insider knowledge about the unique challenges and experiences of women faculty (Chavez, 2008). The second author is an immigrant male faculty of color in a numerically women-dominated academic discipline, was not involved in the data collection process and did not have access to any demographic information, ensuring greater reliability in the data analysis process.

Data analysis. Thematic analysis was the primary method of organizing and reporting the data from this study. As noted by Clarke & Braun (2017), thematic analysis allows for

“flexibility in terms of research question, sample size and constitution, data collection method, and approaches to meaning generation” (p. 297).

The analysis was guided by the research questions, namely, how exceptional allies differ from good colleagues³ in allyship behaviors in male-dominated disciplines, and how men and women differentially view and construct allyship. Therefore, coding was conducted after first identifying the responses that related to these questions. Based on Pratt's (2009) recommendation that researchers articulate a basic set of steps utilized in the analysis process within each set of stories, we developed provisional categories and first-order codes using open coding, which begins with no a priori assumptions. First level data analysis was carried out by both authors independently. The authors discussed similarities and differences in emerging codes before reaching agreement on a coding guide (Rapp et al., 2010), which was then used to code all data. The guide was continually revised, and new codes were added as they emerged.

The codes were then consolidated into meaningful thematic categories. The thematic dimensions underlying the categories were identified to understand how the categories fit together (see data structure in Figure 1). Following Nowell et.al (2017), throughout the process we used “diagramming as a way to make sense of the connections between themes and further interrogate the themes” (p.9). Based on Gioia and colleagues' (2012, p. 20) recommendations, we paid particular “attention to nascent concepts that don't seem to have adequate theoretical referents in the existing literature.” For example, we moved from identifying words/phrases such as ‘supported me publicly’ and ‘advocated for me in front of our Dean,’ to creating the concept of ‘voicing support’ and to developing the high-order construct of ‘visible advocacy’ (see Supplementary analyses). All coding and data analyses were conducted using Atlas.ti 8 software.

³ In the data analysis, nominees were categorized as “good colleagues” or “exceptional allies” based on the category for which women nominated them.

Trustworthiness. A reflexive journal was used to document the data analysis process; memoing was used to “elaborate processes, assumptions and actions” (Charmaz, 1995, p. 42) and categorize the data rooted in the codes. Trustworthiness was also maintained by researcher triangulation which “involves the use of two or more researchers to provide multiple observations and conclusions” (Carter et al., 2014, p. 545).

Limitations. The findings must be viewed in light of certain limitations. The stories were gathered through written responses and not face-to-face interviews. While the written response format reduces social desirability and increases honest responding, it did not enable us to capture tone, verbal or non-verbal behaviors, ask follow-up questions, or capture thick, rich descriptions that could lend depth and breadth to the stories. Further, we provided women participants no criteria for selecting allies, therefore the data capture conceptualizations that typify the norms within male-dominated disciplines (e.g., STEM, business), which may be different from what it means to be an exceptional ally in the humanities or other disciplines in higher education.

Finally, the study is reflective of the experiences of predominantly white middle class women and their white men colleagues and allies because women of color in elite male-dominated institutions are fairly limited. Further, many non-participants may have felt burdened or concerned about participating in a study on collegial relationships (see Warren, 2021), and women faculty of color may have felt additionally burdened or fearful to participate.

Findings

The two objectives of this study were to understand male allyship from the perspectives of women and men (see Figure 2), and to undertake comparisons between good colleagues and exceptional allies. Below, F or M are used to denote the self-identified sex of the participant, and X or G to denote exceptional versus good colleague (for example, FX4 denotes a woman

participant referring to an exceptional colleague, FG61 denotes a woman participant referring to a good colleague and MX9 refers to a man participant identified as an exceptional ally and MG101 refers to a man participant who was identified as a good colleague).

The allyship themes fell within two broad categories, namely, visible advocacy and interpersonal support. According to the women, the prominent themes of allyship that emerged within visible advocacy were voicing support, impression promotion, investing time and effort, and giving credit and deference. Within interpersonal support, the prominent themes were active listening, being a cheerleader, helping navigate double-binds and impossible choices, offering reassurance, and serving as reflection partners. According to the men, the main visible advocacy themes were confrontation, voicing support, and impression promotion, and the key interpersonal support themes were active listening, and helping navigate double-binds and impossible choices. The difference in the number of themes identified by women versus men suggests that men may be familiar with, or practice fewer allyship strategies or consider fewer behaviors to be part of allyship. Each of these themes are described below, from women's and men's perspectives.

Women's Experiences and Perceptions

Visible advocacy

Although women were asked to share a story about a time when they were supported or advocated for (or empowered), most narratives about exceptional allies distinctly fell into the category of visible advocacy. Based on women's stories, we define visible advocacy as any consequential action undertaken by a man colleague in which they advocate for the woman's career and well-being in ways that are visible to others, for example, as FX12 shared "K heavily advocated for me to come to my current institution, and he helped me secure an impressive start up package along with important long term support that is critical to the success of my research

program.” Within this category we identified four sub-themes: voicing support, impression promotion, investing time and effort, and giving credit or deference.

Voicing support. Women’s narratives, predominately about exceptional allies, emphasized their recognition of men who advocated in individual instances or generally for gender equity. This typically occurred as a *reaction* to a concrete issue faced by the participant or a systematic problem faced by women in the institution. As FX15 observed, “He supported me in front of my dean who was questioning my research area despite the numerous PhD students I have graduated [sic].” By actively voicing support for women, allies efface organizational silencing, serve as role models for solidarity with women, and help reduce women’s sense of isolation in their pursuit of equity and justice. Furthermore, exceptional allies displayed an *awareness* of the structural issues that impacted gender disparities and were willing to visibly speak about them as a way to voice support for women. For instance, FX50 noted, “Even though he is a junior colleague, he has pointed out studies that show that women routinely receive lower teaching evaluations from students than men do. He has encouraged us to take this into account in our faculty reviews.”

Impression promotion. The women’s stories revealed that men, often exceptional allies, engaged in intentional acts that go out of their way to boost the image or reputation of women, which we term ‘impression promotion.’ While men routinely engage in self-promotion (Bolino et al., 2014), women face backlash when they engage in self-promotion (Guadagno & Cialdini, 2007). Women’s stories revealed that men’s nominations of women for awards and professional recognition (FX21 “he spoke to the Dean about my new approaches and I was invited to present my plans to the entire college directors to share best practices and radical approaches”) was typically a career-supportive, proactive behavior.

Investing time and effort. Cheng and colleagues (2019, p. 392) argue that men need to go above and beyond to “use their ‘blue chips’ and social capital to ensure that women continue to advance.” The women’s stories supported this argument and showed that it was memorable when men, predominately exceptional allies, visibly invested time and effort to support women or engage with issues impacting women. For FX34 this translated to securing a tenure-track position: “He helped me to get the position I currently have. He had to fight for it at the college level.” In other situations, men spent meaningful time to express support such as FX30 “he even came to the conference - several states away - simply to attend the banquet where the award was given and show support for his female faculty members.”

Giving credit and deference. The women’s narratives captured exceptional allies’ acknowledgement of women’s competence in their professional domain and the men’s deference to the women’s expertise. Women are less likely to get credit for their expertise and contributions, especially in male-dominated environments where men are viewed as having higher status and are stereotyped as the experts (Guillén et al., 2018). Redirecting misplaced credit to women and sharing deserved credit is important, not only in doing justice to women, but also in shifting gendered, institutionalized norms and perceptions. As FX 32 noted, “One action that was very impactful was that (he) publicly deferred to me on a particular domain. That is, he was clear that he was trusting me to steer a particular project.” Women’s stories demonstrated that they considered this behavior practically significant because it provided greater visibility and reinforcement of their professional standing (FG 77: We wrote a grant together and he insisted that I should be the PI on the grant instead of him. This made me feel appreciated and pushed me to work even harder and to excel so that I could meet the expectations that he had set for me.).

Interpersonal support

Here we share findings from those stories that represent women's experiences of being provided interpersonal support. Three main themes emerged within the stories - active listening, being a cheerleader for women, and helping navigate double-binds and impossible choices.

Active listening. Women found it useful when their men colleagues - exceptional allies and good colleagues - actively listened to their concerns and were fully present for them. Active listening involves listening for the content, intent, and feeling of the speaker and offering verbal encouragement (Jahromi et al., 2016). For women, active listening can feel affirming and is a simple but critical first step toward greater inclusion. FX14 noted that when she faces professional struggles "he is always here to listen and support me when I need to talk to someone." Similarly, FX38 shared that when faced with challenging first few years of teaching, "He listened to me for countless hours as I related all the problems I was having teaching, and supported me the entire time, reminding me constantly I could do it and that this experience was something most first-time teachers also encounter."

Being a cheerleader. A new insight that emerged within the stories of women about both exceptional allies and good colleagues, is that women appreciate men cheering them on to undertake ambitious professional opportunities and in the face of challenges. This theme emerged both in situations when men cheered on the study participant and when men were cheerleaders for women in general. As FX35 observed, "He has been very positive and excited about my work. His attitude towards me makes me feel valued." Typically, while men are viewed as and are expected to be provocative, agentic leaders, women are viewed as and are expected to be "cheerleaders," i.e., staying on the sidelines and playing enthusiastic but supportive roles to men (Doldor et al., 2019). In a role reversal, the women's stories display how *men* can serve as cheerleaders to women and for women's careers. For FX20 such cheerleading

was instrumental in her decision to take on a leadership role “J. was extremely supportive of my applying for and ultimately taking on the role of chair of my department. In the end I decided to accept the offered position because I knew that he and several others would support me and help me grow into the position.”

Helping navigate double-binds and impossible choices. Women typically face double-binds relating to perceptions of their workplace behaviors. For example, women are viewed as overly aggressive when they are assertive, yet unsuitable for leadership when they are *not* (Carli & Eagly, 2011). Women may be placed in positions wherein they need to make impossible choices, such as choosing between career progression and motherhood (Huopalainen & Satama, 2019). Women's stories, more often about good colleagues than exceptional allies, depict two sub-themes of men supporting women through navigating double binds and impossible choices: 1) offering reassurance and 2) serving as reflection partners.

Offering reassurance. Women faculty deal with the ‘imposter’ phenomenon (Danahauer et al., 2019) wherein they (wrongly) question their abilities, because of the high scrutiny and lack of affirmation experienced in male-dominated arenas. In this regard, male allyship in the form of reassurances can be particularly effective. As FX5 noted, “I am working on a promotion. Dr. J has been very supportive of this move and has made me feel like I have earned it. His continued support has spurred me to seek promotion.” Oftentimes, these reassurances came from administrators (e.g., chairs) or senior faculty who had the power and institutional knowledge to provide meaningful votes of confidence in their abilities and professional choices. As FG61 noted, such actions are especially encouraging for new faculty “he also coached me through some of my first grant proposals. This greatly reduced my anxiety about the tenure and promotion process and ensured that I advanced at as fast a rate as I could.”

Serving as reflection partners. Women shared stories about how men colleagues joined them in thinking through complex problems (what felt like impossible choices) and brainstorming solutions. As such these men served as what we term as 'reflection partners.' Given the adverse impact of motherhood on academic advancement (Huopalaainen & Satama, 2019), it is helpful for women faculty to receive support from mentors or senior colleagues about making choices that support work-life balance. As FX34 shared, "As chair, he was very supportive of my maternity leave, and made sure I knew all of my options." Reflective partnership was also useful as women carefully navigate departmental cultures that do not recognize women's achievements, and cast them as uncollegial or punish them when they confront biased systems (Pertnoy, 2004; Haag, 2005). FG84 shares her story where her department committee voted against her tenure case but supported a less qualified man colleague (who was also a "drinking buddy" of the committee members):

M. coached me through this very difficult period, giving me advice on how to navigate the tenure system, how to properly refute the misleading report the committee wrote to support their decision, and how to keep my head down and continue being productive despite being furious, panicked, and disenchanted by what had happened. By following his suggestions, I was able to compose some strong, objective documents and ultimately received full support from every step of the review process above my department committee.

Men's Experiences and Perspectives

Paralleling findings from women's stories, two main themes emerged from men's stories - visible advocacy and interpersonal support. However, there are a few differences in the ways these themes were discussed, especially across exceptional allies and good colleagues. Some

additional sub-themes such as confrontation emerged and some sub-themes that came up in the women's stories such as investing time and effort, giving credit and deference, and being a cheerleader did not emerge in men's stories. These differences are discussed below.

Visible advocacy

Confrontation. One theme that did not emerge in women's stories but was prominent in men's stories was confrontation of sexist attitudes or gender discrimination. This strategy, although seemingly involving higher social cost, was the most common form of visible advocacy used almost as often by exceptional allies as good colleagues. As MX13 shares:

When we were interviewing faculty candidates, I strongly felt that one of the female candidates was not being treated fairly in that her qualifications were not being fairly compared to those of the male candidates. I called out my male colleagues by saying at a faculty meeting that they were exhibiting unconscious bias in favor of the male candidates, and as Chair I then changed the candidate assessment process to ensure proper objectivity on decision-making.

Interestingly confrontation, a strategy that is among the most favored in men's stories and is heavily represented in academic literature and practice of allyship (Mallett & Monteith, 2019) almost to the point of being synonymous with allyship, was not identified as useful by women.

Voicing support. As witnessed in the women's stories, a common form of visible advocacy among men's stories, especially exceptional allies, was voicing support for women. Men were likely to engage in this strategy when they encountered gender bias. MX21 shares how he voiced support for a woman colleague: "I voiced strong support for a female colleague in a meeting of our colleagues when I felt that she had substantial merits and was being, in part, judged from biased perspectives due to her gender." Men also leveraged these opportunities to

drive systematic change, as depicted by MX24, where he felt a woman colleague was being unfairly penalized:

She had been encouraged by her Chair to take on a number of obligations, many related to promoting women in STEM, and then those activities had counted against her when she was being evaluated.... I had a role on a committee that gave me an opportunity to raise the concerns with someone in the Dean's office and advocate on her behalf. This resulted in changes to the evaluation process of the department.

Impression promotion. Impression promotion occurred when men colleagues, predominantly exceptional allies, promoted women's status within and outside of the institution. There seem to be two settings in which impression promotion manifests - bolstering women's status in general and promoting women in consequential circumstances. For instance, MX5 routinely bolstered junior women's status across various stakeholders:

When first meeting a patient, I introduce female residents as Dr. so and so to the patient for two reasons. One to make clear to the patient that I respect the resident as a colleague and two to make clear to the resident that I regard her as a capable young physician who deserves to be treated at the same level as other physicians.

Opportunities for public recognition such as nominations for awards or candidate evaluations for tenure and promotion offer spaces for proactive impression promotion. This can even be used to combat biased evaluations, as witnessed in this story by MX12 where a woman colleague from another department was planning on quitting her job due to lack of promotion and pay parity despite excellent performance and recent major research contributions:

We debated this at some length as the female colleague did not want to cause trouble and was worried about political fallout if outside colleagues intervened. After several

discussions we settled on an approach that she liked. *Instead of complaining to her department we went to them praising her and her role in the department and asking if we could help. This strong offer of outside support helped raise the profile of the female faculty in her department. The outside recognition led to a direct promotion. She now has a senior role in the department and is very happy.* [emphasis added]

Interpersonal strategies

Active listening. Men colleagues who are engaged in some form of allyship, shared stories of active listening. Among stories of exceptional allies, listening served as the first step to engaging in further action; in contrast, among stories of good colleagues, listening was the key and only intervention. For example, MX29 shared the following:

A clinical decision made by my knowledgeable female colleague was challenged and initially overruled by a male administrator. My colleague confided to me how frustrated and hurt she was by this decision. I practiced active listening with her to both empathize with, and better understand her situation... With her permission I began by empathizing with her feelings and shared that I would have, and have felt the same way in similar situations. I learned that the administrator was someone without clinical experience and only superficial knowledge of the clinical population being treated. ... we discussed ways she could educate this individual to help him recognize and respect her authority on the matter, and then how to request that he defer to her decision. She was ultimately able to 'make her case' with this individual and have her decision respected.

Helping navigate double-binds and impossible choices. Men's stories also depicted their efforts in helping women navigate double-binds and difficult choices. As with women's stories, men's stories also showed two forms - offering reassurance and serving as reflection partners.

MX3 noted how a woman colleague was viewed as “being cold and impersonal” by support staff in the department. He worked with her to find a solution that did not reinforce the double-bind:

(We) discussed strategies for her to address this with the support staff, while recognizing that this unfair scenario does not have an easy solution i.e. if she continues behaving the same way and places blame on the support staff it will not change their attitude but if she alters her behavior to be more warm and approachable then it will propagate the bias; we decided to try a middle road, hoping that she can slowly budge the staff's interpretation of her behavior while continuing to demonstrate professional excellence.

Women faculty often face a dilemma with regard to balancing the desire to start/support a family with the demands of a tenure-track position (Mason & Goulden, 2004). Men offered reassurance that women could make choices that were healthy and that made them happy:

MX9: Recently, one of my female assistant professors mentioned that she was waiting to start a family until after tenure. When I asked why, she responded that she thought it would look bad if she had a baby while going through tenure. I thoroughly enjoyed helping her to realize that what I wanted as her chair was for her to make life choices that made her feel happy and that we, as a department, would accommodate any of those life choices. She and her husband are now trying to have a baby instead of waiting until she is biologically too old (possibly too old) to have children. She was so concerned about not appearing "female" and I was so pleased to be able to support her as she made decisions based on her life desires and not just her job.

Discussion

The current study sought to explore men faculty's allyship behaviors in academia. We considered two questions - what allyship behaviors were identified as meaningful by women

versus men, and how allyship behaviors differed across those considered by women to be exceptional allies versus good colleagues. Through these analyses, our research contributes to the literature on the theory of gendered organizations. In doing so, it offers implications for enhancing gender inequity in academia via male allyship.

Acker's theory (2006) of gendered organizations suggests that men and women differ in their perceptions of inequities faced by women. Our research extends this by demonstrating that in addition, men and women also differ in their perceptions of allyship strategies that can be utilized to address inequities suffered by women. Findings revealed that men's stories were often about discussions they had in private with women. Cheerleading, a strategy that counters gender norms, emerged as a theme in women's but not men's stories. Importantly, one of the primary allyship categories, visible advocacy, is valued most by women but not by typical colleagues. Indeed, investing time and effort and giving credit to women did not emerge as themes in men's stories (see Figure 2). Our research demonstrates that women value strategies associated with visible advocacy because they bring to the forefront structural inequities faced by women and through allies' concrete actions impact women's career trajectory and institutional standing.

The women in our study did not identify confrontation on their behalf as a viable strategy (see Figure 2), yet, men showed a strong inclination to confront, likely because of its fit with male stereotypes (e.g., savior syndrome, Cheng et al. 2019; men taking the lead, Koenig et al. 2011). This aligns with Acker's (1990) observation that the interactional processes inherent within gendered institutions reproduce patterns of dominance and submission. Thus, despite the popularity of confrontation as an allyship strategy in the broader literature (e.g., Czopp et al., 2006), our research raises the question whether confrontation may be the best strategy. Women may be reluctant to identify confrontation as a viable strategy because confrontation by allies

may intensify backlash against the victim (Warren, Sekhon, et al., 2021). Within an academic setting where long-term relationships are essential, and longevity of employment is associated with tenure and job security, women might be reluctant to live with the after-effects of confrontation even if it brings short-term benefits. Confrontations may reinforce perceptions of women as 'liabilities' to the institution - who appear to be difficult to be around and inconvenient to have around, reinforcing gendered ideologies and inequities.

Acker (1990) noted that within gendered institutions, individual identity begins to reflect gendered ways of thinking about work and presentation of self, with the assumption that men must occupy prominent positions and women must play supportive roles. Yet, exceptional male allies engaged in allyship strategies such as promoting women's impression in front of others, giving credit or deferring to women in their areas of expertise, and serving as a cheerleader for women, all of which are counter to gender roles and norms.

Drawing from Acker, Clavero and Galligan (2020) observe that academic culture is masculine and the existing structures privilege men's experiences. Our work demonstrates that these cultures and structures can be challenged by the purposeful actions of male allies. In androcentric systems, men's voices are more likely to be taken seriously at all levels, and this privilege can be leveraged to support women (Anicha et al., 2015). Furthermore, women faculty feel isolated in their battle against prejudice, which is an important predictor of women's turnover in academia (Gardner, 2012; Smith & Calasanti, 2005). By voicing support for women, and promoting women's accomplishments in a visible manner, men can make a positive contribution towards their career. By boosting women as 'assets' to the institution, men can disrupt the gendered organizational logic (i.e., written and unwritten rules regarding service, tenure, promotion etc.) within academia (Acker, 1990) and shift gendered norms.

Our study extends Cheng et.al. (2019)'s work on instrumental and emotional support and Madsen et.al.'s (2020) work on developmental relationships by identifying the role of interpersonal support as encompassing a set of allyship strategies to counter gender inequities within academia. Both women's and men's stories emphasized the importance of active listening by men in helping women feel respected in male-dominated settings. In addition, when men offered reassurance in the face of processes that undermined women and served as reflection partners as women navigated the complexities of sexist structures, women felt affirmed and better positioned for success. This was particularly useful as women faced challenges in balancing work and family commitments and faced double-binds such as prioritizing motherhood versus tenure, a reflection of gendered practices (Acker, 1990). Interpersonal support as an allyship strategy is more individually-oriented and enables understanding of the experiences of individual women as they navigate a male-dominated space. It is important to note that while women identified and acknowledged the value of interpersonal support in their own careers, as a strategy, it might not have the same ability to change institutional norms.

Our research extends the literature on workplace allyship (Cheng et.al. 2019; Madsen et.al. 2020) within gendered institutions by drawing comparisons between exceptional allies and good colleagues. Findings from both men's and women's stories reinforce that what distinguishes exceptional allies from good colleagues is knowledge and awareness of structural issues that their women colleagues face, and the courage to engage in concrete, counter-stereotypical, and yet, visible actions that have the potential for the greatest impact for women. For instance, findings show that exceptional allies possess the willingness to be a visible advocate for women and therefore, challenge gender disparities such as pay gaps or hiring biases within their institutions (e.g., Rabovsky & Lee, 2018). Similarly, exceptional allies' use of

impression promotion can have significant payoff for women as they navigate advancement and leadership opportunities. Faculty regularly work (e.g., conduct research, teach, advise students) outside of the visibility of their supervisors, and are evaluated by administrators and peers who may be unable to precisely evaluate their achievements (e.g., a chair may not be familiar with a junior colleague's research impact on their sub-field), intensifying the usefulness of impression promotion. Importantly, while men do not identify this as a key strategy, the women's stories show that exceptional allies go beyond good colleagues by investing time and effort. By making meaningful investments of effort and time, men likely improve the quality of their allyship, thereby becoming exceptional allies over time. Similarly, although men do not discuss this, women's stories show that exceptional allies are willing to give due credit or defer to the expertise of women (Cheng et al., 2018). This is a critical step toward adequately rewarding women's achievements, placing women in positions of authority, and making the goals of equity possible. These strategies are also important in combating gendered institutional logic that undermine women's contributions and growth and force women to work harder for fewer benefits (e.g., Johnson & Taylor, 2019).

Finally, although self-motivated allies can serve an important role in providing support and ensuring women faculty's professional success, it is not a foolproof measure. Allies find that there are limits to how effective their efforts are in buffering women faculty against gendered norms and expectations within academia. Further, even the most successful of ally interventions are limited to individual circumstances and unlikely to result in structural changes. If academic institutions truly value what they espouse in terms of gender equity within faculty ranks, academic leaders and administrators should support the systematic development of allies and leverage it to push for institutional change rather than rely on the courage of individual actors.

Implications for Future Research

The current study captures stories from men's and women's perspectives about times when men were successful as allies. Extending this work, future research should explicitly capture stories of times when men attempted but failed in their allyship efforts and explore the barriers that make it difficult for men to sustainably engage as allies. These insights might help scholars more thoroughly understand the landscape and unpack the complexities of allyship, and offer institutions guidance on how to adequately and systematically support male allyship.

One observation is that past scholarship has suggested allyship should comprise of behaviors such as acknowledgement of power and privilege and commitment to systemic change (Reason et al., 2005). Yet, these features did not emerge in the current study of everyday behaviors of male faculty who were nevertheless viewed as allies by women. Future research should explore this seeming disconnect between scholarly conceptualizations of allyship versus the allyship behaviors that are engaged in by lay men and valued by lay women.

Implications for Practice

This study offers implications for practice at the individual level and policy and practice at the institutional level. Men who are relatively new to allyship and are uncomfortable in engaging in visible advocacy can still make a significant difference by providing instrumental and emotional support to women. Such support is particularly helpful as women faculty attempt to find work-life balance within gendered institutions that often undermine their efforts.

Male allies who are eager to expand their allyship skillset can utilize these findings to learn about concrete strategies underused by men yet reported by women to be helpful. For example, women and exceptional allies identify strategies that constitute visible advocacy and demonstrate how their use during crucial junctures of the academic trajectory (hiring, tenure and

promotion) can boost women faculty's success and well-being within gendered academic institutions. Male allies who aim to contribute to changing gendered norms within academic institutions may find strategies such as impression promotion on behalf of women and deferring to women faculty's expertise can go a long way. A particularly important implication is the need for current and would-be male allies to acknowledge the perspective of women faculty around confrontation as a strategy to counter gendered norms within academia. While confrontation might fit stereotypical male modes of behavior, they can create backlash for women faculty and undermine efforts towards change by reifying gendered behaviors and structures.

Importantly, our study emphasizes the need for higher education administrators and leaders such as chairs, deans, and policy makers advocating for and creating sustainable environments that promote allyship. Current structures provide little incentive to men faculty to act as allies on behalf of women faculty, even though research shows psychological and social benefits of such actions to men themselves (Warren et al., 2021). There are few institutional rewards for men serving as allies; in fact allyship often comes with little structural recognition and at the cost of time and even professional reputation (Warren & Bordoloi, in press).

While institutions may invest in diversity training initiatives around gender, these are often one-size-fits-all programs meant to educate about the institutional laws and policies around discrimination and sexual harassment. These rarely offer guidance on how to raise the bar and be effective as allies towards women faculty. Allyship training and mentoring initiatives based on strategies from this study can provide structured support to systematically develop male allies.

Conclusion

This paper offers important insights for men faculty interested in allying with women faculty, and administrators committed to developing a culture of allyship and gender equity.

Given that men continue to be the numeric majority, male allyship can be powerful resources in changing gender dynamics and androcentric structures within academic institutions. Our study offers suggestions for the types of support that women faculty value in male-dominated departments categorized as 1) visible advocacy consisting of voicing support, impression promotion, investing time and effort, and giving credit and deference, and 2) interpersonal support, consisting of active listening, being a cheerleader, helping navigate double-binds and impossible choices, offering reassurance, and serving as reflection partners. Thus, going beyond simply well-meaning intentions, self-adhesive labels, or performative allyship (Erskine & Billimoria, 2019), our study offers a range of concrete allyship strategies that men can adopt.

Via an exploration of exceptional allies versus good colleagues, this study provides strong pointers for an allyship trajectory of development and reinforces that allyship goes beyond one good action, but instead, involves investment in a committed collegial relationship. While interpersonal support for individuals can be valuable, visible advocacy may hold the capacity to shift gendered institutional norms and systems. Yet, for colleagues who are taking their first steps toward allyship, this study offers concrete directions one can undertake immediately as well as aspire to do in the future. The range of strategies allows individuals to begin their allyship journey by choosing their preferred form of allyship behavior based on their own level of comfort. However, it is clear that to become an exceptional ally, and challenge gendered institutions, men have to go beyond what is comfortable to them and ally in visible ways that are valuable and impactful to women.

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Figure 1. Example of the Data Structure: Women's Stories

Figure 2. Allyship Behaviors of Men

Note: The shaded boxes indicate the allyship behaviors that were common in women's and men's stories.

Supplementary Analyses

Table S1. Women's Stories of Supportive Behaviors by Good Colleagues and Exceptional Allies

	Instances of Good Colleagues engaging in supportive behaviors according to women	Instances of Exceptional Allies engaging in supportive behaviors according to women
Visible Advocacy		
Voicing support	4	27
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voicing support based on intimate familiarity of women's issues 	3	14
Impression promotion	1	8
Investment of time and effort	3	15
Giving credit or deferring to women's expertise	0	8
Interpersonal support		
Active listening	4	10
Being a cheerleader	6	6
Navigating double binds: Offering reassurance	4	3
Navigating double binds: Reflection partners	6	4

Note: Total number of women = 101, good colleagues = 50, exceptional allies = 51

Table S2. Men's Stories of Supportive Behaviors by Good Colleagues and Exceptional Allies

	Instances of Good Colleagues engaging in supportive behaviors according to men's autobiographical narratives	Instances of Exceptional Allies engaging in supportive behaviors according to men's autobiographical narratives
Visible Advocacy		
Confrontation	9	10
Voicing support	8	13
Impression promotion	2	8
Interpersonal support		
Active listening	7	4
Navigating double binds	4	5

Note: Total number of good colleagues = 50, exceptional allies = 51

Figure S1. Complete Data Structure

Women's Stories

Men's Stories

Figure S2. Allyship Behaviors of Exceptional Allies and Good Colleagues

Allyship behaviors