

Calling on Male Allies to Promote Gender Equity in I-O Psychology

Shannon Cheng, Linnea Ng, Rachel C. E. Trump-Steele, Abby Corrington,
and Mikki Hebl
Rice University

As Gardner, Ryan, and Snoeyink (2018) state, their findings on gender representation in industrial and organizational (I-O) psychology indicate that “the profession as a whole falls into the category of ‘not walking the talk’” (p. 385). We agree that it is imperative to understand the current state of gender inequity in our field while also actively working toward achieving gender equity. This article attempts to inspire each and every individual in I-O psychology to feel a personal responsibility to engage in behaviors that reduce gender disparities in our field. Although women are normatively the focus in fights for gender equity, men should be equal partners in these efforts. In this commentary, we focus on the contributions that male allies in I-O psychology can make in fostering gender equity. To be clear, we are not claiming that women need to be rescued by men; however, we do believe that I-O psychology can achieve the greatest progress toward gender equity when both women and men engage in supportive efforts. As Emma Watson said in her 2014 United Nations speech, “How can we affect change in the world when only half of it is invited or feel welcome to participate in the conversation?” (UN Women, 2014). In times when political leaders and national laws may fail women, it is crucial that local communities—like the I-O community—adopt a clear stance in promoting gender equity. In this commentary, we define allyship, discuss the importance of male allies, suggest ways in which male allies can help promote gender equity in I-O psychology, and consider potential barriers to male allyship and ways to overcome them.

Shannon Cheng, Department of Psychology, Rice University; Linnea Ng, Department of Psychology, Rice University; Rachel C. E. Trump-Steele, Department of Psychology, Rice University; Abby Corrington, Department of Psychology, Rice University; Mikki Hebl, Department of Psychology, Rice University.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Shannon Cheng, Department of Psychology, Rice University, 6100 Main St., Houston, TX 77005-1892. E-mail: shannon.k.cheng@rice.edu

The strategies that we propose are by no means exhaustive; rather, they are suggestions for how to initiate a larger movement.

What Is Allyship?

An ally has been defined as “a person who is a member of the ‘dominant’ or ‘majority’ group who works to end oppression in his or her personal and professional life through his or her support of, and as an advocate with and for, the oppressed population” (Evans & Wall, 1991, p. 195). The empirical study of allies has largely focused on understanding how heterosexual allies support sexual orientation minorities; however, the concept of allyship can be, and has been, extended to support members of any marginalized group, such as ethnic minorities, individuals with disabilities, and, most relevant to this commentary, women (Drury & Kaiser, 2014; Sabat et al., 2014; Sue, 2017). Because allies often have dominant group power, they can draw on capital that marginalized individuals may lack and provide valuable contributions toward establishing equity—including both tangible outcomes and cultural change that support marginalized groups.

Why Are Male Allies Important?

Women face several challenges in the workplace that are unique to their gender. For example, women who pursue leadership positions may receive backlash for behaving counterstereotypically; they are often seen as equally competent but less likable and hireable than comparable men (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Nauts, 2012). Similarly, when women try to create change by championing gender equity, they can be viewed negatively; research shows that when female and ethnic minority leaders enact diversity-valuing behaviors, they are penalized in their performance reviews (Hekman, Johnson, Foo, & Wang, 2017). Facing this prejudice and discrimination, as well as actively fighting it, takes considerable resources. Particularly when discrimination is more subtle, as opposed to explicit, women must use cognitive resources to interpret and react to these more ambiguous attitudes and behaviors (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002), which can detract from time and energy put into work.

But what if men allocated more of their resources toward reaching gender equity? Male allies have unique opportunities to create change and influence others. For instance, Czopp and Monteith (2003) found that when perpetrators of sexism were confronted by men, as opposed to women, the perpetrators felt more guilt and perceived the negative reaction to be more legitimate. Male allies can also support one another as members of the movement for gender equity. It is important to note that male allies can be stigmatized as feminine, weak, and more likely to be gay than nonallies (Anderson, 2009; Goldstein, 2017; Rudman, Mescher, & Moss-Racusin,

2013); however, by creating a community of male allies, social norms can be changed such that male feminists are elevated to role models for other men. Men can demonstrate for other men, through social learning, how to act as allies to women (Bandura, 1977) and make a better workplace for not only women, but also men.

What Can Male Allies Do?

In response to Gardner et al.'s (2018) call to action to examine and improve gender equity in I-O psychology, we offer recommendations for male allies in our field along the four dimensions they identified: income, advancement, recognition, and publications and presentations.

Income

The income disparity between men and women in I-O psychology could be attributed to multiple sources, such as differences in negotiation, pay expectations, and subarea specialization (Gardner et al., 2018). Two particular antecedents to gender-based income inequity may be differences in negotiation initiation (i.e., women initiate less; Kugler, Reif, Kaschner, & Brodbeck, 2018) and negotiation success (i.e., women tend to be less successful and face more backlash when they do negotiate; Bowles, Babcock, & Lai, 2007; Stuhlmacher, & Walters, 1999). However, when negotiating is a clear situational norm, women are more likely to do so, particularly if the situation is framed as an opportunity to ask for more rather than as a negotiation or if women's abilities to negotiate are emphasized (Kray, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2002; Kugler et al., 2018; Small, Gelfand, Babcock, & Gettman, 2007). When men are in positions of influence in negotiation settings, they can serve as allies by working with women to better navigate the negotiation process. For instance, male allies who serve as hiring managers should set clear expectations regarding negotiation norms (e.g., how common it is to negotiate, the aspects of the job offer that are negotiable). Moreover, male allies who serve the roles of peers or mentors for women who are entering the job market can offer tips based on their own negotiation experiences. From an organizational standpoint, there is evidence that teaching negotiation skills to employees, including women, can lead to improvements in negotiation performance and narrow gender salary gaps (Stevens, Bavetta, & Gist, 1993). By framing negotiations as opportunities rather than as a threats, emphasizing that women are skilled negotiators, and minimizing their own and others' gendered backlash against women who negotiate, male allies can create better opportunities for women to negotiate, thereby reducing related income inequity.

When male allies are in positions of power, such as departmental heads or hiring managers, they should also monitor employee salaries to

understand how the gender wage gap manifests in their own organizations. On an organizational level, male allies in these positions of power can affect change by equalizing salaries, providing more raises for women, and increasing receptivity to negotiations initiated by women. They also can help implement pay transparency policies within their organizations, which have been found to reduce pay gaps between men and women (Castilla, 2015). These types of policies increase organizational accountability and allow women and male allies to more easily take action when they identify pay disparities. In these efforts, men should both advocate for and amplify the voices of their female peers as they strive for income equity.

Advancement

Women continue to face multiple noteworthy hurdles on their path toward advancement, such as family responsibilities, exclusion from informal networks, male-dominated work cultures, and prejudice toward female leaders, to name a few (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016; Eagly & Carli, 2007). As Gardner et al. (2018) mention, in I-O psychology, women hold more assistant professorships than men, and men hold more associate and full professorships than women. Due to men's tendency to hold higher positions, it is imperative for them to ensure that women are able to advance as well.

Particularly in male-dominated fields, women may feel unwelcome or even experience discrimination, which can deter them from further advancing in the field. Although I-O psychology seems relatively gender balanced (based on SIOP membership; Gardner et al., 2018), it is still possible for gender discrimination to occur, such as through subtle negative comments toward or about women (e.g., Lim & Cortina, 2005). In these instances, as previously mentioned, male allies can confront the perpetrator with potentially better outcomes than if women confronted the perpetrator themselves (Czopp & Monteith, 2003). This type of behavior not only addresses the inappropriate behavior, but it also demonstrates to women that they have support.

Men also can take on mentoring roles for women, but even more than just mentoring women, they should use their "blue chips" and social capital to ensure that women continue to advance. Informal social networks can often play an important role in providing opportunities for advancement (Keller, 2015; Podolny & Baron, 1997). Because social networks tend to be homogeneous (McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook, 2001), male allies should not only advocate for women in their networks but also invite women to join these networks.

Further, although men have started taking on more work at home, these responsibilities are still skewed toward women. This trend is reflected in the fact that mothers are twice as likely as fathers to say that parenting

interferes with career advancement (Pew Research Center, 2015). As a result, universities, workplaces, and conferences should all have policies and accommodations to support working parents, such as parental leave, child-care options, and flexible hours. In addition to advocating for or changing these policies, men should continue taking on more stereotypically female roles outside of work and continue pushing against traditional gender stereotypes.

Recognition

Gender stereotypes are also highlighted in the types of roles for which men and women are often recognized. As Gardner et al. (2018) note, women are more likely to receive awards for service and teaching, whereas men are more likely to receive scholarly awards. In addition to taking on more responsibilities outside of work, male allies can pay attention to how roles are distributed within their university departments and organizations. Women are still asked to assume more service- and teaching-related roles (Acker, 2006; O'Meara, Kuvaeva, Nyunt, Waugaman, & Jackson, 2017), and in order for women to be recognized more for their scholarly work, men need to help distribute the service- and teaching-oriented work more evenly by taking on such roles themselves. Men in these types of roles will also help reinforce the value of service, teaching, and mentoring within I-O psychology.

Male allies should also be cognizant that in any nomination process, such as for an award or position, they should strive for gender parity in their nominations. Everyone who is nominated should be qualified, but as previously mentioned, social networks can be very homogeneous (McPherson et al., 2001). As a result, it is important to make diversity a priority from the outset of the nomination process. Related research has demonstrated that if people are hiring from a pool that only contains one woman, they are less likely to recommend the woman, compared to if there are two or more women in the pool (Johnson, Hekman, & Chan, 2016). Because women are still often underrepresented in leadership positions, such as those involved in nomination processes, it is important for men to make sure women have a voice at the table, even if they are not physically there.

In addition, if verbal or written recommendations are required, male allies who are advocating for women should be wary of the language they use when describing women. Social role theory posits that men are expected to display agentic qualities (e.g., independence, assertiveness, self-confidence), and women are expected to display communal qualities (e.g., friendliness, unselfishness, concern for others; Eagly & Wood, 1991). These expectations can influence people to describe women in more communal and less agentic

terms than men, which has been shown to have a negative effect on hiring decisions (Madera, Hebl, & Martin, 2009). This phenomenon could extend to nominations, awards, and selections. As a result, when advocating for women, allies should use descriptors that are relevant to the opportunity and be cautious of using gender-stereotypical terms. Last, for awards and positions that require a self-nomination or application, male allies should encourage women to apply. Women tend to be less likely than men to apply for the same opportunities, particularly if they have experienced a prior rejection, so they may need encouragement to refrain from “leaning out” (Brands & Fernandez-Mateo, 2017).

Publications and Presentations

Gardner et al.’s (2018) findings in this area reinforce the need for more equal distribution of workload among male and female faculty. If women are spending more time than men on service- and teaching-related work, then they do not have as much time as men to work on publications. As men help to more equally distribute workloads, they are not only working to level the publishing playing field but also addressing the question of why publication rate may be too narrow a criterion for task performance (Gardner et al.). Publications are critical for academics, particularly those who are tenure track, but the pressure to “publish or perish” can have detrimental effects—not just on academics’ well-being but also on research quality (Lefkowitz, 2017; Miller, Taylor, & Bedeian, 2011; Motyl et al., 2017). In addition, it has been demonstrated that psychology authors who are most prolific may not even be the most remembered (Green, 2017), pushing the field to examine whether other areas could generate more impact (e.g., practice, training, policies, mentoring).

Compared to I-O psychology publications, presentations at SIOP are relatively gender balanced. However, a recent study found that, across various disciplines including psychology, men are more likely than women to be invited for colloquium talks (Nittrouer et al., 2018). Although presentations at conferences provide networking opportunities, colloquium talks not only enhance networks but also often lead to job offers. As a result, missing out on these opportunities can have important career consequences for women. The study also demonstrated that the presence of women as colloquium committee chairs increased the likelihood of women being invited as colloquium speakers (Nittrouer et al., 2018). These results emphasize the importance of having women and other minority group members on these selection committees, as well as the potential role of male allies to (a) push for more diverse representation on these committees, particularly in leadership positions, and (b) be aware of their biased tendencies to choose people who are like them (i.e., ingroup bias; Brewer, 2007; DiDonato, Ullrich, & Krueger, 2011).

What Are the Barriers to Male Allyship?

As previously mentioned, male allyship is not without its consequences. Allies can experience stigma by association, a phenomenon that suggests proximity to stigmatized individuals (e.g., women) can lead to the devaluation of nonstigmatized individuals (e.g., male allies; Hebl & Mannix, 2003; Pryor, Reeder, & Monroe, 2012). This effect has been demonstrated by the documented perception of male allies as more feminine or weak compared to nonallies (Anderson, 2009; Goldstein, 2017; Rudman et al., 2013). In addition to these potential social ramifications, other common psychological phenomena may deter men from becoming allies to women. For example, in group settings, the bystander effect may prevent men from speaking up if they expect that someone else will instead, and they may be even less likely to speak up if they believe that their peers endorse sexism (Darley & Latane, 1968; Kilmartin, Semelsberger, Dye, Boggs, & Kolar, 2015). Another common reason men may not serve as allies is that they feel it is not their place to do so (Sherf, Tangirala, & Weber, 2017), and they may worry about saying or doing “the wrong thing” (Hazler, 1996; Ji, Du Bois, & Finnessy, 2009).

Thus, there are many men who privately identify as allies to women, but these barriers prevent them from voicing their support in a more public manner. In order to encourage more men to become actively engaged in progress toward gender equity, the men and women of I-O psychology must foster social norms in which men can support women without fear of retaliation, backlash, or ostracism. We can do so in a number of ways. First, we should initiate conversations about gender inequity in ways that are inviting to both women and male allies. Second, we should recognize the men who step up and become allies to women, in order to encourage more men to follow suit. Third, to combat the stigma-by-association effect, we should emphasize the masculinity and strength of the male allies we know. Fourth, to overcome the bystander and related effects, we must generate awareness of these potential barriers and continue conducting research on how male allies can be the most effective in helping remediate gender inequity. These are just a few suggestions; organizations, university departments, and other groups can take a look at what specific barriers their allies may face and brainstorm an abundance of possible methods that extend beyond those discussed here.

Conclusion

Women in I-O psychology have made impressive gains in income, advancement, recognition, and publications and presentations over the years. However, we still have a long way to go, and male allies play an important role in bridging this gap. In addition to the previously mentioned ally behaviors, men can take daily actions to promote gender equity. Men should make

sure that women have the opportunity to speak in both formal and informal settings, acknowledge women's ideas and contributions, and actively discuss gender-related issues and how to further progress. This is not to say that women depend on men to solve gender inequity; women need to keep working as well. There are often subtle, and not so subtle, ways in which women also perpetuate systemic problems that enable gender inequity. Although women do not need to be saved or protected, they do need allies. Allyship is not always easy or simple, but as men in I-O serve as allies to women and other minority groups, they are not just working to improve the experiences of those groups, they are working to improve everyone's experience in the field as we move toward a more inclusive and supportive culture.

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I-O Psychology Has an Important Role to Play in Gender Differences in Negotiation

Chelsea D. Hightower, John-Luke McCord, Michael Hay, Brian G. Doyle, and [Jason L. Harman](#)
Louisiana State University

A major goal of Gardner, Ryan, and Snoeyink (2018) was to determine what steps are needed moving forward in examining gender representation in industrial and organizational (I-O) psychology. Specifically, on the topic

Chelsea D. Hightower, Department of Psychology, Louisiana State University; John-Luke McCord, Department of Psychology, Louisiana State University; Michael Hay, Department of Psychology, Louisiana State University; Brian G. Doyle, Department of Psychology, Louisiana State University; Jason L. Harman, Department of Psychology, Louisiana State University.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Jason L. Harman, Department of Psychology, Louisiana State University, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, 236 Audubon Hall, Baton Rouge, LA 70803. E-mail: jharman@lsu.edu