Learning Allyship: Insights from a Men-Only Allyship Training Program

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Abstract

Purpose

Men's allyship is essential for sustainable progress toward gender equity. However, men often lack clarity on how to contribute effectively, leading to inaction.

Methodology

To encourage men's effective advocacy for gender equity, I co-developed a men-only allyship training for 4 cohorts of men ($N = 55$). Data were collected from observations, responses to pre-, post-, and in-training surveys, and interviews with trainees.

Findings

The men-only allyship training developed here provided a safe space for men, supporting their knowledge gain, practice of skills, and reflection on their allyship role. Despite these positive aspects, transfer of learnings to the trainees' workplace appeared to be limited—especially with regards to introducing or transforming organizational practices.

Originality

Existing research on allyship training focuses on evaluating training outcomes. By taking a more in-depth examination, this study contributes to the understanding of how trainees experience the different training components. I also identify and provide preliminary insights for the psychological mechanisms fostering trainees' learning, reflection and transfer.

Keywords: Allyship, Gender Equity, Training, Male Privilege

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Increasingly, men are training to become allies for gender equity. They read books on allyship (e.g., Arata, 2022), watch informative videos (e.g., TED, 2018) and attend conferences (e.g., Better Man Conference) and workshops (e.g., MARC by Catalyst; Catalyst, 2023). Such learning can help them attain knowledge and awareness about allyship behaviors (Gardner and Alanis, 2020; Kossek *et al.*, 2024; Silver *et al.*, 2024). However, rich insights on men's allyship learning process are still lacking. Given the increasing interest in allyship (Van Laar *et al.*, 2024) and in training men to contribute to gender equity (Ferry, 2025), more nuanced knowledge is needed to better understand how men, receive, react and learn from the different training materials and exercises. Doing so, will help us have all "hand of deck" to work for gender equity.

This paper investigates trainees' reactions on an allyship training held in central Europe (4 cohorts, $N = 55$). Building from in-training observations, responses to pre-, post-, and in-training surveys and interviews with the trainees, I examine how participants experienced and perceived the training context, content and activities. A better understanding of trainees' reactions can provide insights to allyship scholars and practitioners to understand the dynamics created in such trainings.

The findings contribute to the allyship and broader diversity training literatures. Examining the experiences of men as they gain knowledge and skills is critical to see how majority members can be encouraged to reflect on and use their privileges without feeling defensive or paralyzed by fear of backlash or fear of making mistakes. Previous research has mainly focused on assessing the outcomes of trainings, for instance examining survey data from participants (e.g., Kuntz and Searle, 2023). However, greater attention is needed to unpack the different components of the allyship training, understanding how trainees react to these components and theorizing the mechanism through which the training supports men's learning,

reflection and transfer. Thus, I expand our theoretical understanding on how allyship can be effectively cultivated, by shifting analytic attention from training outcomes to training mechanisms and processes. At the same time, knowledge on the mechanisms and accounts of participants' reactions on the different training modules can help practitioners design and implement more effective allyship programs.

Theoretical Foundation

Men's Involvement in Gender Equity Efforts

Support from advantaged or dominant group members to tackle inequities and provide opportunities to individuals that have relatively less advantages, is often referred to as *allyship*. While there are different definitions of allyship (for a review see Tedder-King *et al.*, 2025), here I focus on allyship taking place when members of a dominant or privileged group (e.g., men) support, promote and advocate for employees with relatively less privileges (e.g., women; Dang and Joshi, 2023; Salter and Migliaccio, 2019). That is, allies locate and use their privilege to support others who lack them. Focusing on gender, this paper examines men's allyship in support of workplace gender equity, with particular attention to how men can interrupt bias and influence organizational policies. While recognizing, from an intersectional perspective, that not all men hold the same level of privilege at work—given differences in race, social class, migrant status, sexuality, or ability, among other social positions—I build on the assumption that men can nevertheless draw on their male privilege to advocate for their women colleagues.

Washington and Evans (1991) describe four basic levels of becoming an ally: (1) awareness about oneself and how one is similar/different from the minority group they support, (2) knowledge and education about the experiences of minority individuals, (3) skills to communicate learned knowledge, (4) action. In order to achieve these levels, men need to

overcome internal barriers, such as (willful) ignorance, fear of making mistakes or fear of retaliation (Catalyst, 2009; Haynes-Baratz *et al.*, 2022; Huang, 2026). Indeed, aspiring allies need to be aware that not all allyship is effective (Bhattacharyya et al., 2024; Collier-Spruel and Ryan, 2024) and tread with care not to engage in performative, dependency-oriented or benevolent support (Barreto and Ellemers, 2005; Hideg and Shen, 2019; Kutlaca and Radke, 2023)—which harms rather than support minorities (Droogendyk *et al.*, 2016). Gaining knowledge and training skills is necessary for members of majority groups to overcome these barriers and take effective allyship action. Allyship training can facilitate awareness, provide knowledge and offer a space for practice such allyship skills.

Mechanism of Men-Only Allyship Trainings

How could a men-only training facilitate men's learning and action? First, allyship is not easy and requires critical reflection. Effective allyship involves recognizing men's (invisible) privileges and understanding how well-intentioned actions can still cause harm (Silver *et al.*, 2024; Yoon *et al.*, 2023). Thus, a space for group reflection can help aspiring allies *examine their assumption,* and *think critically* about their behaviors and their role as allies. This reflection can be enhanced in a voluntary, men-only training that focuses on growth potential rather than shame and blame. While members of dominant groups identify less with their in-group and feel more guilt and distress when confronted by their privileges (Miron *et al.*, 2006), men-only spaces can support both awareness of privilege and constructive *processing of difficult emotions* (e.g., identity-threat) promoting sensemaking and learning (Crosina *et al.*, 2023). Indeed, recognizing discomfort, and potentially discussing it with other allies, can help men be better advocates to women (Collins and Chlup, 2014).

Second, allyship trainings that emphasize interactivity and time to practicing skills on the training can help strengthen *self-efficacy* (i.e., confidence in one's ability to enact the trained

skills effectively, Bandura, 2012). Specifically, in-training experimentation can support learning and developing self-efficacy (Roberson *et al.*, 2024). Third, aiming for training transfer, setting implementation intentions—akin to goal setting and behavioral intentions in Silver et al. (2024)— increase the likelihood that trainees will enact newly learned strategies in their workplace, thereby improving training transfer (Greenan, 2023).

Finally, diversity training frames can increase men's cognitive, motivational and affective readiness to engage in allyship (Robertson et al., 2024). Framing gender equity as relevant for men's wellbeing signals that men's participation is valued and appropriate, thereby enhancing men's *psychological standing* (i.e., subjective sense of legitimacy to perform an action), in turn increasing their allyship engagement (Sherf *et al.*, 2017). That is, allyship trainings should highlight that men, too, are constrained by restrictive gender roles and that gender equity can improve their well-being. However, they need to do so while maintaining the focus on women and systems change—the target of allyship—to avoid recentring men's interests. A similar tension characterized pro-feminist men's organizations in the 1970s (Messner *et al.*, 2015; Pease, 2000). As the authors explain, pro-feminist men struggled to reconcile self-oriented work to liberate men from masculine norms with outward-facing action to challenge men's power.

In framing men as part of the solution (not only part of the problem), trainees might more likely to perceive gender equity efforts as congruent with their role and potential *ally identity* (Gardner and Alanis, 2020). As such, allyship trainings must avoid framing allyship through guilt or blame, and instead position men as capable of being part of the solution. However, they should also help men acknowledge the privileges and benefits they hold as a group, requiring the uncomfortable work of *accountability* for one's own behavior and complicity in gender inequality. Messner and colleagues document how violence-prevention

groups in the 80s grappled with this challenge by developing curricula that moved away from guilt-based approaches and toward "guy-friendly" strategies, such as bystander interventions, which emphasized men's capacity to intervene in rape culture while still naming male privilege. In a similar manner, allyship trainings should be designed no to blame men but encouraging the inner self-allyship work that leads to an understanding and responsible use of privileges.

Current Study: Men-Only Allyship Training

Six empirical papers have previously examined allyship trainings (e.g., Kossek *et al.*, 2024; Ro *et al.*, 2024; Silver *et al.*, 2024; see training comparison on Appendix 2). In line with these other trainings, the goal of this training was to encourage allyship behaviors towards minorities. However, the training here developed was different in that it only targeted men, aiming to create a safe space for them.

I co-developed and coordinated a men-only allyship training composed of five modules (two online modules and three face-to-face, see Appendix 1 for details on the Open Science Framework [1]). In line with similar trainings (Kossek *et al.*, 2024; Metinyurt *et al.*, 2021), it aimed to increase awareness, knowledge and skill-building. It offered knowledge about gender bias, privileges and effective allyship actions at the inter-personal and organizational level. Moreover, the training encouraged reflections and peer-learning via group discussions, and practicing allyship skills via embodied exercises. The allyship training was conducted for four different cohorts between 2023 and 2025 (see Table I).

Insert here Table I

In developing the training format and teaching methodologies, I followed recommended best practices of DEI trainings (Devine and Ash, 2022; Kossek *et al.*, 2024; Moss-Racusin *et al.*,

2014; Roberson *et al.*, 2024; see content in Appendix 1). The content was developed considering the latest allyship and DEI literature. Aiming for continuous improvement (Devine and Ash, 2022), small content adjustments were made after each interaction to improve clarity (changes noted in Appendix 1).

Method

To examine the training, multi-source data were examined. Data were collected from five sources: observations of the onsite modules, written answers to training exercises, reflections of the trainers, survey responses (ratings and open text) and semi-structured interviews with trainees (for guiding questions see Appendix 3). I, sometimes together with the second trainer, conducted online interviews after the training (n = 35), and, in a few cases, before the training (n = 9). Interviews were recorded and later transcribed—with one exception in which the trainee preferred that I take notes. Anonymized data was uploaded on Atlas.Ti for analysis. Passages were coded and organized into categories (e.g., group dynamics, training activities). Within each category, I analyzed the data to identify salient positive and negative elements, which are described below. Exemplary quotes have been edited to improve readability (e.g., remove repetition, hesitations), without altering the meaning of participants' responses. Information on methods is available on Appendix 3 and the codebook is available on Appendix 4.

Trainings were delivered either as part of an executive education program (cohorts 1 and 2) or through a university association (cohorts 3 and 4, see Table I). My role and that of the other trainers is described in Appendix 3. My role as researcher was clear to trainees.

Findings

Training Evaluation

Course ratings from the post-training survey (n = 35) show that trainees valued this training highly (Table II). In the open-text post-training survey, trainees shared that they enjoyed

"The time to discuss openly and within small groups", and "The nuanced way that the theme was presented." During the post-training interviews, this positive evaluation was also highlighted. For instance, M55 shared: "What I liked was how [the trainer] managed to combine, to communicate things in a practical matter, in action oriented, and easily understandable matter, but have it based on scientific research. That's probably one of the strengths also for [a] training coming from an academic institution." However, trainees also shared improvement points (e.g., M5 suggested adding more quantitative data; M3 suggested inviting previous trainees to share their allyship experiences).

Insert here Table II

Training Context

Group Composition. Participants (age range: 24-60) were currently living in Central Europe. Participants were in different career stages and levels of seniority (work experience ranged from 1 to 35 years) and in different stages of their allyship journey (from being new to the topic to actively volunteering in feminist organizations). Around one third of participants (31%) were parents. While we did not ask for their race or ability, a few participants disclosed that they were not White (n = 3) and one shared having a disability.

The first two cohorts included participants from diverse industries, which participants seemed to appreciate (M20 shares "what I liked most about the day is the possibility to exchange with other people who are not necessarily in a similar stage of awareness, but kind of in the same way that they committed to think about it in a group, what it means to be an ally."). In the last two cohorts, where all participants were working in the same academic institution, participants valued the fact that people in diverse roles (staff, PhDs and senior's scholars) or diverse

departments were attending. However, one detriment of trainee role diversity could be that trainees with more experience or higher in the organizational hierarchies lead the class discussion. This was sometimes appreciated (e.g., "I enjoyed the context of being in a group and also listening to the stories maybe of more senior people than me and what they had to say…it felt like [professors] had like more, like, actual situations where they needed to be careful, whereas I feel like I had limited situations where I was in charge or in power to make this kind of influence" M31), but not always (e.g., "I think I have like ambivalent feelings because on one side it's super important that the person who is in charge and who is in power, e.g. the professor, that they are aware and to raise awareness, but then at some point, like from time to time, I have the feeling that there's also a hierarchy in between this group, and the professors where talking a lot" M46).

Onyeador et al. (2024) recommend to tailor diversity trainings "to different audiences based on their motivations or perspectives on diversity (e.g., beginner, intermediate, or advanced motivation to reduce inequality)" (p. 405, see also Martinez *et al.*, 2023). However, for an already focused audience (i.e., men), having background and role diversity enriched the conversation. Critically, younger trainees, were motivated by the examples of senior participants: "I felt like I was the most junior person there by a lot, and so I don't really have much responsibility in terms of I'm not leading any other people and not organizing any meetings or stuff like that, so it was quite nice to see sort of the other side and them sharing stories" (M36). But because senior participants also wished to connect with people with similar responsibilities (e.g., "it would have been perhaps more useful for me had there been a higher participation from the professors in the room", M40), it appears important that trainees are distributed across hierarchical levels.

Training Atmosphere and Group Dynamics. During the training, trainees were attentive, listening and participating in the activities. Only in a few instances, I observed participants not paying attention (e.g., looking at the computer) or getting defensive (e.g., shifting the topic to men's issues).

Participants interacted with each other in an animated way during the exercises and breaks. The atmosphere was lively but also warm. After the training, M36 said: "I thought it was a very open and pleasant atmosphere and everybody was there to learn from each other and very open to hear other opinions and experiences". Similarly, M8 recalled: "to me it was really nice to see that so many other men in that room and in this training are on the same journey or also engaged and outspoken even… part of doing something or giving a training or so is that you realize, there are allies out there and you can connect with them if you want."

Trainees reported feeling safe during the training (e.g., M11, M27, M50). This safety was observed when participants shared vulnerable experiences, admitting when they had made mistakes (e.g., M34, M54) or sharing a close relation being a victim of sexism (M8). Participants also asked questions (e.g., "when can men support without being patronizing?"; M33), and in addition to listening to the trainers' answers, trainees also answered each other's questions, creating lively discussions. For instance, when a participant (M52) asked how to encourage women's participation without giving them an unfair advantage, others (M5, M6, M20) shared ideas on practices that could be done. In some instances, participants' diverging opinions let to debates. In two trainings, when participants raised the topic of boys getting behind is school, others explained how feminist action also supports boys. After the training, M1 commented about these discussions: "I thought it was good to have these discussions because I felt like some people weren't quite on board what I think, and I think it's always good also to practice discussing with other people about their views. And I didn't share the opinions of some people,

but, I think it's good that's kind of this discourse happening in this kind of, also safe space." In sum, this training provided a safe space to have conversations across different points of view, fostering reflection among participants.

Training Materials

Responses to Online Content. Online, each module included recommended readings, an anchoring image and a song. During the on-site training, M38 playfully said to me that he had enjoyed the song included for Module 2. During the interviews, few participants commented on the elements of the online materials. With regards to the images, M19 commented that the image for Module 4 (i.e., superhero with a question mark) was helpful, and that the picture "sticks". M48, an academic, would have wished to have texts to read beforehand and discuss in depth with the group. I hesitated to make readings mandatory but acknowledge this could be valuable for more advanced allies. M44 shared that he enjoyed the videos as he "likes to learn through videos, like this Ted talk style or maybe animated videos whatever any of these kind of things work very well". Participants also noted limitations: M53 appreciated most resources but felt one video relied too heavily on personal anecdotes, while M6 found a practitioner's article unhelpful because it focused on mistakes rather than constructive guidance. Overall, as trainees arrived with different levels of knowledge and prefer consuming information in different formats, providing extra materials online (songs, videos, academic articles) seemed useful to suit different needs and learning preferences. However, trainees highlighted the value of having modules on-site (e.g., M1, M46).

Reactions to the On-site Content and Activities. The participants expressed that they enjoyed the content provided, the examples shared, the structure and pace and the opportunities to discuss in small groups. For instance, with regards effective vs. ineffective allyship, M26 shared: "we tend to think of [allyship] as being quite clear cut, right? Quite black and white, but

all of those examples, even though there was often a party that was probably in the wrong, were a lot more nuanced than what you would think, so I liked having the fact that the examples are quite nuanced." Participants also valued the fact that the content was backed by research and references where provided (M11), as well as the opportunity to move beyond the typical classroom teaching and engage in exercises where feelings and emotions are evoked.

Participants found different exercises useful. Some participants (e.g., M30) really enjoyed the listening exercise, M40 even described this exercise as "a wake up call for me because I recognized lots of the mistakes that I commonly make and I've thought about it since, so that's a good thing and I'm sure it will help me in the long run". However, others found this exercise less useful. M13 explains how "for me, it was very alien, like it was very removed from reality, very removed from what you would want to have from a healthy conversation between two people."

Some trainees related less with the role-play (i.e., "the role-playing exercise itself didn't resonate as much with me, I understood why it's important … but yeah, the example situations where a bit hard for me to grasp", M24). Conversely, others found the role-play was the best part of the training (e.g., M30). The conversations around the different scenarios and discussing how to tackle the microaggressions were perceived as supportive of their learning journey. Trainees thought it was valuable to see microaggressions out of context (M13) and see how other trainees find solutions ("I very much enjoyed the roleplay sessions and brainstorming different intervention methods", post-training survey). For the role-play M6 valued discussing the problems, and M20 wanted to talk more about the different solutions.

The privilege walk helped some participants become aware of their (hidden) privileges (e.g., M15, M24, M28) with easy visualization. M36 explained "I quite liked the privilege walk, that was quite interesting. I quite liked how easy you visualize these different things, so you may have thought of individually, but never really as a whole." While our aim was for participants to

reflect about the steps *they* take forward or backward, a few participants (e.g., M50) mentioned that they would have preferred to do this exercise with a more diverse group to see where others are standing.

Trainees reflected that the exercises were not always comfortable. When asked about the training exercises, M13 reflects: "I guess the common point of all of these exercises, I would say, is that they are meant to be a tiny bit uncomfortable… it's not just like a thing in a blackboard where it's theoretical, but it kind of wants to allude to more visceral feeling, of now you really feel something which is not academic."

Training Transfer

Recognizing that applying training learnings to real-life situations can be challenging, the training included three tasks where participants wrote implementation intentions. As part of the first task, participants selected one allyship fear they experience and wrote down how they would reduce it; one participant wrote: "If I fear doing something wrong, I will try to approach my female colleagues and start by asking questions". Interesting, just being in the training could help reduce these fears, one participant wrote "Participating in this allyship training is also helping by giving us more knowledge on the topic and help make us feel more legitimate". For the second task, participants chose a bystander action they would do when they next encountered bias (e.g., "When I encounter a situation in which a person is left behind despite being crucial to the project/discussion, I will redirect the attention/questions to that person"). Third, after practicing active listening, they had to choose when and with whom they would try active listening. To make the exercise more tangible, they were asked to write what they would ask. One participant aimed to "asking female colleagues about what they think is the most urgent thing to improve at our working place."

Post-training interviews revealed that some trainees implemented their "intentions". For instance, M19, M27, and M46 implemented the third task by discussing with their women colleagues. However, that was not the case for all, sometimes a situation where they could practice had not occurred (e.g., "I haven't had the chance because the one I wrote [about interactions in conferences], I haven't had this interaction, … next month we're going in the conference, so maybe I'll have a chance to do that there.", M44), they did not have time (e.g., when asked if he had implemented the tasks, M35 shared "In all honestly no, I have, I'm at the moment writing my thesis, and I have just no capacity at the moment"), or because they forgot (e.g., when asked about the tasks for training transfer, M3 admitted: "I remember doing that during the training, but honestly, I would say rather have not followed up on it so far").

Transfer was also limited for organizational action, while Module 3 highlighted practices that trainees could try to apply in their organizations to promote equity (e.g., structured interviews, task rotation in meetings), only a minority of participants intended to suggest such changes. Most participants did not mention this aspect during the interview or explained that it would not be possible for them to make these changes (e.g., being in a junior position without decision-making ability; see also Ro *et al.*, 2024). The role of organizational structures and practices is an aspect often overlooked in trainings (Onyeador *et al.*, 2024). Given the effect of practices in reproducing inequality (Amis *et al.*, 2020), it would be important that future research investigates how to help aspiring allies reflect on practices they have the power to transform.

Overall, despite our efforts to allow for training-to-workplace transfer by asking for implementation intentions, post-training interviews revealed that applying the training learnings is difficult. As described above, participants described memory fading, limited (perceived) opportunities to enact allyship in their workplaces and diminished motivation (e.g., "when I sit in these workshops, I get more motivated of course. But then you go back to reality", M5).

Training Learnings.

Post-training interviews revealed that participants gained valuable knowledge. For instance, they got a better understanding on key concepts ("intersectionality" M6; "asking to ask", M44). M5 explains: "[before the training] the general mindset was there, but I had no clue where to go and I basically walked out with a list of things I could do and be aware of." Importantly, some participants used what they learned in the training at work (e.g., M30 used humor as a way to counteract gender bias).

Participants shared having reflected about the content of the training on their own and with work colleagues. The training helped some participants reflect about *how* allyship can be done (e.g., "when you hear like the word ally, you very much think of someone who very actively stands on a pedestal and in the open public does this and this, you know, very openly, but what, from the training came across [is] that that doesn't necessarily have to be the case, that you can, in principle be it in silence", M26), and about useful vs. detrimental forms of allyship (e.g., "… was really good to discuss during the allyship training, and that's something that I've considered as well, like is it always best to abruptly stand up and say something and potentially create additional conflict or embarrassment? or, you know, uncomfort?, or is it better to, you know, consider the context of exactly what's going on?" M22).

Framing of Training

The two quotes below illustrate the difficulty of striking this balance in allyship trainings.

> *"…sometimes I feel that in many of those trainings and materials and presentations, there's always a slight undertone of [his name] you should have a bad conscience because you're a privileged male and…. And this undertone, sometimes I feel makes it really difficult to sort of meet eye to eye…. I mean, there is inequality, there is pay gap, I mean, all understood, all acknowledged. But if the male audience continuously gets the feeling of… it's all your fault and you're oppressing us, yada, yada, yada. I know it's very subtle. I know it's very difficult to sort of get these this right, but I would rather… I would rather really start to look at it from a clean slate point of view to start freshly and just simply look into hey how it can be create equal opportunities at work." (M54, pre-training interview)*

> *"I felt during the talk/listen exercise that "I" might be the problem. I felt like despite what I thought of myself, I might not be such good a listener, I had the urge to interrupt. This was a good realisation. Because I felt for rest of the workshop we focused on how to best react when "other" people were victim, and not what to do if you are the perpetrator. I felt like just by taking part in this workshop participant will reinforce their idea that they are a "good man", who never persecute women. And even though, having people capable of calling out others on their wrong behaviour is necessary, I find more important they make every men much more aware of their flawed behaviours" (post-training survey)*

The first participant expressed discomfort with trainings that he experienced as guilt-inducing, suggesting that such framing can make engagement more difficult. By contrast, the second participant welcomed moments that encouraged self-reflection and accountability, noting that a focus on responding to others' victimization may allow men to leave feeling like "good men" without examining their own harmful behaviors. As Pease (2000) reflects, "by focusing on other 'bad' men, we [men] project the problem and fail to acknowledge our own complicity". Taken together, these accounts suggest that allyship trainings need to be carefully framed, fostering awareness of privilege and personal accountability without relying on guilt that may alienate participants.

Insert here Table III

Which training mechanisms supported participants learning, reflection and transfer? While the observation methods do not allow me to make causal claims, Table III describes the preliminary support I found for mechanisms that appeared to facilitate learning, reflection, and transfer. In particular, the training appeared to increase psychological standing and sense of agency, greater self-efficacy, dialogue across perspectives and challenging of existing beliefs. Future research should test with different research designs whether and how allyship training features support learning.

Limitations and Future Research

This research is not without limitations. First, as the training included voluntary, self-selecting participants from one single region, the findings should be interpreted as contextually situated. The study cannot predict how men in other regions or men who are skeptical of or resistant to DEI initiatives would experience the training. Moreover, social desirability or potential non-response from participants who did not enjoy the training might have biased the positive evaluations. However, efforts to reduce social desirability (i.e., anonymized surveys, asking for improvements for future trainings) appear to have been somewhat successful, as trainees openly communicated aspects of the training they would improve.

Second, while I described the potential mechanism underlying the trainees learning, I do not make causal claims. For instance, I observed that in this men-only format a safe environment was created for men to voice their allyship-related fears. However, as I did not compare a men-only allyship training vis-a-vis other diversity training, I cannot determine whether this characteristic (i.e., men-only format) facilitated this reflection. Future research should examine with experimental and/or longitudinal designs via which mechanisms the training characteristics influence participants' learning and transfer (see research recommendations on Table III).

Finally, aiming to understand the trainees' reactions, I went beyond typical survey-based evaluations of allyship trainings and collected in-depth qualitative data (i.e., observations, interviews), which provided rich insights on trainees' experiences. In doing so, in this paper I described the training and short-term trainees' reactions, but I did not examine the long-term outcomes for the allies nor women in their organizations. Future research should look at the consequences via multi-source field experiment where: (a) male trainees (vs. control group) answer questions about their privilege awareness, limiting fears and allyship behavior; (b)

women colleagues of trainees (vs. control group) report their inclusion and experiences of exclusion (e.g., microaggressions).

ENDNOTES

[1] Appendixes 1-4 are available on: https://osf.io/qcf3b/?view_only=55400e96c62342bfa6aacfd0fb1254f2

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Table I

Overview of Trainings

	Time	Participants	Training type	Duration
1	Fall 2023	9 men at varied industries	5-module allyship training as part of executive education program	2 self-paced modules online (approx. 2h) 6h face-to-face
2	Spring 2024	10 men at varied industries		
3	Spring 2025	18 men working at a European university	5-module allyship training organized by university association	2 self-paced modules online (approx. 2h) 5h face-to-face
4	Spring 2025	18 men working at a European university		

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Table II

Descriptive Statistics for Course Evaluation Items

	M	*SD*
The course communication was accurate and helpful.	4.41	0.61
The lecturers were skilled and engaging.	4.65	0.49
The information provided was up to date and useful.	4.38	0.65
The course met my expectations.	4.00	0.82
Overall, the course was effective.	4.24	0.74

Note. $N = 35$. Items rated on a scale from 1 to 5.

Table III.

Training Mechanism that Support Learning, Reflection, and Transfer.

Training components	Potential mechanism	Findings from this field work	Research recommendations for validation
Safe space for reflection	Structured reflection encourages participants to *examine their assumptions, behaviors,* and to *think critically* about their roles. This can be facilitated in voluntary and non-accusatory learning environments, which allow participants to reflect on privilege without triggering defensiveness. By *minimizing identity threat* and highlighting that men can be part of the solution, their *self-efficacy* can increase.	Safe space and diversity among trainees broadened perspectives in the class discussion, fostering *dialogue across perspectives* and participants' *examination of their beliefs*. Examples of (in)effective allyship helped participants reflect about when allyship can go wrong and reinforced the importance of centering the needs of the allyship target.	Following a longitudinal design, researchers could examine whether beliefs (e.g., male privilege), attitudes (e.g., self-efficacy) and behaviors (e.g., effective and ineffective allyship action) change across time (pre-training, immediately after the training, 3 months after)
Activities to practice	Embodied exercises to practice skills (e.g., role-plays) allows participants to strengthen *skill acquisition, self-efficacy* and *recall* in real-world situations.	The diverse exercises supported participants *self-efficacy*, the tools provided and skills trained helped them feel they could apply the learned behaviours in the workplace.	A multi-source field experiment could compare: (a) allyship behavior of male trainees (vs. control group); (b) inclusion and exclusion experiences (e.g., microaggressions) of women colleagues of trainees (vs. control group); or (c) iniciated HR policies and practices by former trainees (vs. control group). Diary studies where participants reflect about their daily action would allow researchers to validate if training practice increases behaviors in real world.
Implementation intentions	Transfer is reinforced when participants *form clear intentions* about how to apply new knowledge at work.	Completing implementation intentions during the training helped –albeit to a limited extent—participants' reflection and task implementation on the job.	
Allyship framing	A men-only training that frames men as legitimate actors for gender equity can increase men's *psychological standing*. This, along	While I did not directly observe if the training influenced *allyship identity*, I observed that the men-only training provided a safe space to discuss typical	Using an experimental design, researchers could compare post-training fears to act, psychological standing and ally identity, across

	with framing that men can be part of solution can support men's *allyship identity*.	allyship fears (e.g., lack of legitimacy, fear of making mistakes). Discussing men's fears helped increase *psychological standing* and supported the *identification of ways to enact allyship*.	different allyship framing: men allyship training framing men as problem, men allyship training framing men as solution, mixed-gender allyship training, standard DEI training, or wait-list control.