

IN PLANTA workshop at ICAR 2022-Belfast

Tuesday, 21 June, 4:30-6 pm



Topic: Acting as an Ally, an Advocate, or an Accomplice

Facilitator: Madelaine Bartlett

Scribe:

Definitions

From the Oxford English Dictionary:

ally, a person or organization that supports the rights of a marginalized group (typically a racial, ethnic, or gender minority) without being a member of it.

advocate, a person who pleads for or speaks on behalf of another; a person who supports, recommends, or speaks favorably of another.

accomplice, A person who helps another commit a crime; a partner in wrongdoing

Moore & Cox, 2021:

[Allies, Advocates, and Accomplices](#)

[Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex – Indigenous Action Media](#)

'Allies, advocates and accomplices enter into power systems and dialogue in ways that increase their own risk and vulnerability; allies have little vulnerability and risk where accomplices become vulnerable with their multiply marginalized accomplice. One problem that emerges from the ally industrial complex is that allies have much to gain from their allyship, but they have very little at stake.'

	Power Relationship	Central Dialogue	When a Black Woman gets cut...
Ally	Ally maintains power over and doesn't engage the power structure meaningfully.	Ally is in dialogue with others in power.	An ally cries.
Advocate	Advocate maintains power over but engages the power structure meaningfully.	Advocate has two separate dialogues: one with those in power and one with those who are oppressed.	An advocate calls 911.
Accomplice	Accomplice shares power and works with the oppressed to engage the power structure meaningfully.	Accomplice listens to and with those who are oppressed and both takes risks in moving dialogue outside of the accomplice relationship.	An accomplice bleeds.

Table 1 (from Moore and Cox, 2021). Differences between Allies, Advocates, and Accomplices in Terms of Their Power Relationship, Central Dialogue, and What's at Risk

Being an Accomplice is Subversive

[I Know Why the White Lady Cries: Growing Pains of an Antiracist Cleft Habitus](#)

In acting as an accomplice, you are working against the dominant paradigm. This is not just difficult, but often feels uncomfortable, and can lead to feelings of alienation in other contexts (Ball, 2022).

'[rejecting the dominant paradigm] isn't any less uncomfortable than wearing the wrong outfit to a place with a dress code.'
-Jenny Odell, How to Do Nothing

Prompts for Discussion and Reflection

1. Think of an example of a time you were an ally to, advocate for, or accomplice of a minoritized person in a professional environment (modified from: [Reflections for Diversity Accomplices | Dr Monica Cox](#)).
 - a. What did you do well?
 - b. What could you have done better?

2. Think about your position in the organizations and communities you are part of (e.g. workplace, grad student cohort, TA, mentor, supervisor, committee member, teacher, writer, speaker).
 - a. In which settings/positions do you hold power?
 - b. How can you act as an ally, advocate, or accomplice in these settings?
 - c. What might the potential costs to you be of being an accomplice in these settings?

After reflecting on these examples, consider the following questions:

1. What does acting as an ally, advocate, or accomplice mean?
2. What skills are needed to act as an advocate or accomplice?
3. What are the first steps to engage colleagues to act as allies, advocates, or accomplices?
4. What practices do you/your lab/your institution follow to create a just and inclusive environment (i.e. to minimize the need for allies, advocates, and accomplices)?