

# **Towards a Moral Conception of Allyship**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis strives towards a moral conception of allyship rooted in respect in order to address rising critiques that regard allyship as a morally bankrupt and ineffective practice. The thesis proceeds by first examining the pragmatic institutional understanding of allyship and how such an understanding justifies the critiques of re-centering that are raised against allyship. In an effort to address these concerns, this thesis raises concerns about the roles of beneficence and love in allyship and proposes an understanding of allyship rooted in respect where that respect is best understood as respecting the right to self-determination of oppressed communities.

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## INTRODUCTION

The soul of America sits at a crossroads, now more than ever. Indeed, America's history is wrought by its original sins that should invoke the deepest horror possible, and looking back it seems that surely we are better now than we were then. But, the simple truth is that we are not. Perhaps, we are even worse because we have seen the light and chosen otherwise. Often it felt that for every step forward oppressed communities take they are knocked back two, and now, with the brazen reinvigoration of racists, sexists, homophobes, ableist, and even neo-Nazis, those most vulnerable have been knocked back miles. In some ways it is almost unfathomable to think that we seem to have made so much progress for the moral good, and, yet, so many people, misled by fear, could abandon our march towards the moral good when we ought to have doubled down. Those of us in places of privilege must recognize that lives *do* hang in the balance and that we must do everything in our power to continue our march towards the moral good. For this reason, it is essential to understand how we may work to bring about the moral good by working with oppressed people and communities to restructure oppressive systems. One way to do this is through allyship. It is this possible moral foundation of allyship that is the concern of this thesis.

This thesis will take allyship to be a collective attitude that motivates individuals of dominant social communities to act on behalf of oppressed communities to overturn oppressive systems that have harmed those groups and bestowed unearned privileges on dominant social communities.<sup>1</sup> Attitudes are dispositions, opinions, ways of thinking that become manifest in our actions. Acting as an ally stems from internal beliefs about others outward in the hopes of achieving some end. The white northerner who joined the freedom rides in hopes of challenging Jim Crow laws was moved to action by his attitudes, his moral evaluations of the situation. Similarly, the friendly co-worker who speaks with management at a restaurant regarding its poor layout for those with mobility impairments is moved equally by her moral attitudes regarding her co-worker's best interest. Allyship proper, as an attitude, is rooted in a collection of values and

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<sup>1</sup> I modeled this definition after one developed by E.M. Broido in "The development of social justices allies during college: a phenomenological investigation" (2000). This is an elementary definition of allyship that washes over some of the dimensional complexities of allyship, but this definition is one that is often deployed in real world institutions (like universities). For the sake of this paper, I will be using this kind of definition because it is a commonly understood and accessed definition of allyship.

dispositions. It is through a careful examination of these constitutive values that a wholesome picture of allyship may be garnered.

Many theorists, who are seeking a more powerful, collective social justice movement, have turned their attention to evaluating allyship. The actual practice of allyship has fallen short, and some have emphasized a need to move away from the allyship model because they believe it to be beyond correction. One of the most central critiques levied against allyship is that allies fail to decentralize their dominant culture. This phenomenon can present in many different ways, but it is commonly united by the fact that an ally attempts to lead the movement by advocating for those who are oppressed to take on the roles and expectations of the majority.

When faced with these objections, one cannot help but think that allyship needs to either be abandoned in pursuit of a more effective framework or that it needs to be radically reformulated. It seems clear, though, that allyship is, at least in part, justified by its concern for others. Allyship, as a model of social activism, has come under fire from many individuals who see it as failing to fulfill its goals and has become a sort of self-serving practice. I will, broadly, attempt to show that one of the moral attitudes that might motivate allyship can make it a valid form of social activism and largely immune to the criticisms that are levied against the practice. Ultimately, I believe that with a more precise understanding of proper allyship, it can be reclaimed and implemented at a time when it is of the utmost importance to be effective in fighting against authoritarian oppression on local, state, and national levels.

In chapter one, I will begin by looking at some of the prominent work on the allyship model. I hope to clarify what allyship is most often taken to be in the literature. From that, I will present some possible moral attitudes that plausibly motivate allyship. In chapter two I will set out to explain in more detail a facet of the critique on ally re-centering. After clarifying what the critique I am focusing on means, I will expound on how that critique affects the moral efficacy of allyship. Chapter three will constitute the bulk of my argument; I will first be attempting to explain why allyship rooted centrally in beneficence or love would be problematic and how these attitudes would fail to address the critique raised in chapter two. I ultimately present an argument that respect, specifically negative respect, is the necessary moral foundation for allyship in moving forward and addressing the issue of re-centering. In the last chapter, I attempt to sketch a more concise picture of allyship rooted in negative respect and then take up possible concerns that may arise in conceptualizing allyship in such a way.

The ultimate goal of this project is to bring light to issues in allyship. If we are to continue marching towards moral good, then those of us who benefit from these systems and who are alienated from its oppressive effects must know how to relate ourselves to oppressed communities effectively. Just as importantly, we must learn how we can assist in dismantling these oppressive systems and creating just institutions.

## CHAPTER 1: What is Allyship

### Introduction

In late June 1964 three men, Michael Schwerner, James Chaney, and Andrew Goodman, went to Philadelphia, Mississippi to register black voters. Working with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the men were seeking to assist the oppressed Blacks in the south access the ballot box. By working to register voters, these activists were seeking to improve the systemic oppression that people of color experienced in the post-reconstruction south. On August 4 the FBI unearthed the bodies of these three men. During the investigation, the FBI had also found the bodies of eight other black men, two of whom were also confirmed to have been working with CORE.<sup>2</sup> These men working for CORE exhibited the attitude of an ally in seeking to empower oppressed communities to strike at the heart of the oppressive system that created the inequality.

There are ready-to-hand countless examples of allies who have worked both on individual levels and larger, more systemic levels to address the inequality that many communities face. From those who advocated for access to fair pay to those who marched in the streets following Stonewall even to those who traveled to North Dakota to help protest against the government-sanctioned encroachment of private companies on native lands. Social Justice activism is not a novel phenomenon; however, the institutionalization, study, and theorizing of what constitutes allyship is. The social sciences are researching the characteristics of allies and what traits are most relevant in training someone to be an ally. As these social scientists have codified the necessary attributes of allyship, they have deployed policies and initiatives that seek to train allies throughout various organizational entities.

Allyship is a vast attitude that is constituted by internal dispositions and external practices that covers numerous relationships between ever-shifting groups of people. As such it is necessary to begin looking at some of the prevalent understanding of allyship in order to get a starting point. From that starting point we can examine what possible moral attitudes run through

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<sup>2</sup> Public Broadcasting Station Freedom Summer Article, "Murder in Mississippi," Public Broadcasting Station, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/freedomsummer-murder/> (accessed May 1, 2018).

the existing frameworks as well as allow us a way to begin examining where these frameworks fall short.

According to the widely cited article on Social Justice Allyship by E.M. Broido (2000) allies are defined as, “members of dominant social groups who are working to end the system of oppression that gives them greater privilege and power based on their social-group membership.”<sup>3</sup> Broido’s definition of allyship is an example of allyship definitions often given within institutional settings such as schools and universities. Broido’s definition is a very typical definition of allyship, but it seems to conflict with the understanding of allyship as being this complex phenomenon of attitudes and practices. Keith Edwards sees this and takes Broido’s definition as a starting point but then develops a systemic framework that begins to explore the different stages allies go through in developing practices and attitudes. Using this model as a jumping board, I will then to show how specific moral attitudes underlie each stage of ally development.

### Identity Development Model

Keith Edwards article “Aspiring Social Justice Ally Identity Development: A Conceptual Model,” published in NASPA Journal in 2006, has become a staple in ally training initiatives, especially in higher education and captures the general pragmatic essence of writing about allyship.<sup>4</sup> In this article, Edwards is attempting to conceptualize the different ways someone develops an ally identity. For Edwards, allyship is an identity, what someone is, and not an attitude that one possesses. His bases for claiming that allyship is an identity is that it holds many of the same properties associated with leadership, which is generally taken to be an identity feature. Edwards, in fact, draws analogies between the development of leadership identities and the development of social justice ally identities. In doing so he conceptualizes an allyship development framework that is divided into three distinct stages. Edwards does advocate for an identity conception of allyship whereas I am advocating for an attitudinal approach. However, Edwards’ overall theoretical framework can be highly informative in helping to delineate the

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<sup>3</sup> Ellen M. Broido, “the Development of Social Justice Allies During College: A Phenomenological Investigation,” *Journal of College Student Development* 41, no. 1 (2000): 3.

<sup>4</sup> Edwards currently runs a massive educational program that centers on social activism, including activism against sexual assault and toxic masculinity. He tours the country giving speeches and holding workshops on developing social justice allies.

stages one might develop an attitude of allyship. One's attitudes often play a fundamental role in their identity development, maintenance, and revision. In thinking of the connection between attitudes and identity in this way, it seems clear to say that Edwards' identity model would be underpinned by attitudes of various sorts, including moral attitudes. While Edwards himself takes an amoral approach to writing about allyship, much of the research that is the bases of Edwards framework assumes that certain preexisting moral values are necessary for the creation and development of an ally identity.<sup>5</sup>

Edwards divides the ally developmental process into three stages. Each stage is characterized by a group of assumptions and dispositions held by the ally regarding the ally themselves, those they are seeking to advocate on behalf of, and the system of oppression as a whole. These stages are not meant to be linear or self-contained, i.e., Edwards states that often an ally may move fluidly between the stages depending on environment and is situationally contextual. Edwards is also clear to state that most allies probably have blended motivations thus blurring the distinctions between stages.

Aspiring ally for self-interest is the first stage in Edwards' Aspiring Ally Identity Model. This stage is characterized most by the ally's focus on themselves. Allies at this stage are only concerned for those they care about. This kind of allyship is very common in movements like gender equality. For example, We can think of cases of fathers who may not have been allies against sexism, and who may have even perpetuated sexism, but who are worried about their daughters not being hired if they do not "look pretty," as being in this first stage.<sup>6</sup> Ideally the father begins to become aware of the effects of the system on his daughter even though he may miss the larger systems at work as well as the fact that other women are subject to the same sort of oppressive schemas.

Allies in this stage are characteristically not concerned about individuals beyond those who they have deep relational connections with, nor do they believe that the troubles their loved ones' encounter are the product of an oppressive system, but rather the product of some individuals acting in a bad way. This beginning stage of an allyship is the most easily taken on because we often are already in some sort of advocate type orientation with our close relations

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<sup>5</sup> This research includes work by Broido (2000), Fabiano, Perkins, Berkowits, Linkenbach, and Stark (2003), and Goodman (2000).

<sup>6</sup> This example comes from Edwards, p. 46.

outside of typical social justice ally work. This can most easily be seen in the case of a parent and a child. Parents often seek, especially in younger, formative years, to be a sort of cheerleader for their child; they are constantly working to support their child and create an environment that will best help their child to develop. This kind of caring relationship is constitutive of most of our close relations. We want to see those we care most about flourish in every possible way available to them.

Given then this general understanding of our closest relations, we can see how the first, and easiest, allyship attitude to take on would be allyship from self-interest. Again, it is important to state that allies at this stage do engage in limited ally work but not for the work itself or some large concern for a community of people, but rather for a specific person that the ally cares about. Of course, there very well may be other attitudes that motivate this stage of allyship, but the most prominent attitude appears to be love. Take for example the father of a Trans daughter who wants to be able to use the correct bathroom. Her father writes the principle to try and work out a plan for his daughter. The father is not advocating for a large-scale change in the school or the school board's policies. He is acting as an ally on behalf of his daughter for her needs because he loves her. He is not trying to advocate for all Trans students nor is he trying to advocate for Trans issues themselves; he is simply trying to help his daughter.

The father is advocating for his daughter because he loves her and wants her world to be the best it can be for her. His motives stem from the relationship and feelings of love that he has for his daughter because she is his daughter. It seems unclear whether or not the father could be moved to advocate for someone he does not have the same connection with nor is it the case that he sees a larger problem in the system itself that is putting his daughter's happiness in jeopardy in the first place.

The second stage of Edwards' model, aspiring ally for altruism, is significantly different from aspiring ally for self-interest in many ways. First and foremost, allies in this stage are beginning to develop understandings of their unearned privilege. They see that whole groups rather than just specific persons face oppression. It is this maturing understanding of systemic oppression and privilege that motivates these allies. However, allies in this stage often feel a sense of shame for their privilege and so seek to correct that by helping those who are oppressed. Allies in this stage believe that oppressed peoples need their help to change the system. These allies are most likely to take on the idea of being a savior to the oppressed. The allies attempt to

help, but often fail because they are focused on other members of the privileged population as the sole perpetrators rather than the system as a whole. Allies from altruism appear to have the beginnings of what an ally should be. They are motivated by a concern for people who face oppression. However, the paternalistic nature of the stage seems to emphasize an attitude that seeks to help oppressed communities out of a sense of charity.

It is possible to begin developing an understanding of others disadvantages within the society without truly understanding their own privilege. For example, we can imagine a work colleague speaking on behalf of her co-work at a restaurant that is not well suited for individuals with mobility impairments. The colleague may be aware that individuals with certain handicaps are at a disadvantage in certain places but may not understand her own privilege for being able-bodied. Another example, though, of an ally from altruism where the ally begins to understand their own privilege might be a teacher who is aware of his own privilege in studying a predominantly white canon attempts to incorporate works by People of Color specifically to help make his class more comfortable for Students of Color.

Both of these example allies are acting out of some concern for the recipients of their acts similar to allies from self-interest, however these example allies are concerned with the oppression that other people face regardless of the relation between the ally and the person receiving their help. The colleague and the teacher both hope to make life a little easier for those they encounter by doing small deeds for them. Allies in this stage see themselves as being in a position to help those in need. Our colleague sees her co-worker struggling to get through a restaurant, and the teacher believes his students of color are affected by not seeing their perspectives reflected in the work the class is reading. It is this concern for another's wellbeing and a drive to help those in need that suggest that an attitude of beneficence overrides the allies in this stage.

Allyship from altruism is different from the first stage and the attitude of love that I claim motivates it because the allies in this stage need not have a close relation to those they help, for example, an ally talking to a bystander who is being harassed for her hijab in order to discourage the harassers as well as encourage and support the bystander.

The final stage in Edwards model is the ally from social justice. Two main features characterize allies in this stage. The first is that allies in this stage do not seek specifically to help the oppressed out of beneficence or love, but they are motivated by respect for those who are

oppressed. This is a major contrast between both the ally from self-interest and the ally from altruism. The first two stages of allyship see ally work as helping those who cannot in some way help themselves through acts of love or charity, while allies from social justice believe that those they seek to work with are equally equipped to advocate on their own behalf.

The other different characteristic of the ally from social justice is that these allies are, to a greater extent, allies to causes rather than to particular people. These allies see their goals and work as addressing specific, systemic problems that do in fact have positive effects on people who are oppressed. Overall, allies' actions are concerned with people but targeted at larger systemic functions and not solely on oppressed individuals. One such example of this final stage of allyship might be a young man who works with a local National Organization for Women chapter to address local to national issues such as paid maternity leave, equal pay, and healthcare access. He is not solely advocating just on behalf of someone close to him that he loves nor is he simply helping individuals that he sees are in need, but rather seeking to correct a larger system that failed to take proper account of others' worth. In this way, the young man has an attitude of proper respect for the dignity of persons and sees injustices as an affront to that very dignity, and so works to correct the system.

### Conclusion

Social justice allyship is a vast phenomenon of attitudes and practices held by an array of people in an even wider, diverse sets of relations to each other. Keith Edward's model makes great headway into understanding the characteristics of different kinds of allies in their development in ways that the Broido definition and others like it have not quite done. Edwards lays out a very convincing and well received framework that has been employed by a large range of institutions for training. However, it is this kind of generic framework of allyship that has come under scrutiny in recent years as failing to be robust and effective enough in creating and sustaining social justice change. Most importantly is that such a model cannot place the necessary value on allies decentering themselves from these movements and work in solidarity with those who are oppressed.

So, in hope of finding morally justifiable grounds for maintaining an allyship model, we have spent this chapter clarifying the characteristics of different allies in different stages of the model. Each stage's characteristics can be understood as being motivated by possible moral

attitudes. The first stage, ally from self-interest, are allies who are motivated to help and advocate on behalf of those closest to them. These allies are most likely moved by their attitudes of love for those they are helping. The allies in the second stage, ally from altruism, are not as concerned with having close relationships with those they help. These allies seem to be motivated to help and offer charitable assistance to those they see in need. These allies seem to most likely be motivated by beneficence. The last stage of ally, ally from social justice, are often motivated by a sense of respect and see injustice as an affront to the dignity of all persons.

## CHAPTER 2: Critiques of Allyship

### Introduction

While Edwards' model on the development of social justice allyship is effective in laying a plausible and widely accepted foundation for the practice of allyship, it too is subject to the critiques brought against the idea and practice of allyship. The most troubling, damning, and recurrent critique in the literature draws attention to an ally's inability to decentralize their own dominant culture. In essence, allies, while attempting to dismantle these systems of oppression are, in fact, reinforcing them through various mechanisms. In this chapter, I will first survey one of the main critiques raised in the allyship literature. From there I will attempt to show that these objections raised against allyship are valid and have deeper philosophical interest, relating specifically to the development of one's identity as an actor in their own life under oppression as well as the idea of proper respect between persons.

### Allyship and Re-centering

The most troubling critique that has been raised about allyship is that allies fail to properly relate themselves in their allyship towards oppressed communities. Often this improper relation is expressed in allies' actions such as ally theater or ally paternalism. These critiques draw attention to the root of these issues; specifically, that allies of a dominant community while attempting to change the existing power structures actually reinforce the existing oppressive power relations by failing to de-center themselves.

One explication of this problem is found in Lori D. Patton and Stephanie Bondi's paper "Nice White Men or Social Justice Allies?..." Patton and Bondi, focus on anti-racism allyship, and discuss how often white allyship is only productive when it aligns with the interest of whites. It is also often the case, they claim, that white allies take on the "white savior" attitude in their ally work; they often attempt to lead anti-racism movements and to dictate what issue need to be addressed and how to do so, e.g. "we [People of Color in protest] cannot destroy property or stop traffic." This recentralizing of the dominant population, whiteness for Patton and Bondi, stems from the allies focus on themselves rather than focusing on those they are attempting to help; focusing on relieving their white guilt instead of the need to dismantle white supremacy for the

sake of those who have suffered and died, either directly or indirectly, under the fist of white supremacy.

Anti-racist allyship is often motivated, at least in the beginning, by feelings of guilt that white allies experience when becoming aware of the systemic oppression that exists and continues to be reshaped in modern society in institutions from the prison industrial complex to the use of color-blind language used in policies and law. However, other forms of allyship, such as Queer allyship or disability allyship, lack the same sort of negative motivation towards allyship that anti-racism does. Often people who come to allyship around queer, disabled, or even female populations are motivated by personal relationships to individuals within these communities. There are many examples of how relationships can play a role in someone becoming an ally from the parent who becomes an active member of PFLAG because their daughter comes out a queer to the brother who takes up advocacy for neural diversity because his sibling has Downs Syndrome. Does allyship that is motivated in other ways, targeting other populations, still find itself the proper subject of these critiques raised against anti-racist “allies?”

Matthew Grzanka, Jake Adler, and Jennifer Blazer in their research on empirical characteristics of Queer activism discuss the difference in motivation to allyship amongst queer allies and allies for anti-racism movements.<sup>7</sup> Often, they claim, the main antecedent to anti-racism allyship is white guilt or emotional response to the perceived plight of people of color. Research has shown that Queer allyship, however, is most often predicated on positive exposure to Queer individuals throughout childhood and into young adulthood.<sup>89</sup> This relational feature of allyship for queer communities is not entirely unique. Similar relational motivators exist for disability allies as well. Perhaps too often people are motivated towards allyship aimed at dismantling ableism only once someone close to them is or becomes differently-abled.

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<sup>7</sup> I am choosing to use Queer in place of LGBTQIAA+, or any variation on the LGBT abbreviation, because the term Queer is powerfully broad. It allows for a collection of identities that are often forgotten, miss categorized, or even purposefully excluded from allyship for differing reasons. In addition, the positive reclamation of the word Queer to the community’s lexicon and use of the term merely helps to reinforce the autonomy and power of the community as well as its resilience in the face of oppression.

<sup>8</sup> See also Russel and Bohan 2016.

<sup>9</sup> While it is outside of the scope of this current project, I believe that a closer analysis of the differing predications of allyship between Queer allyship and Anti-racism allyship might have interesting conclusions in regards to the overall acceptance and success of these movements amongst the society at-large.

While there are indeed differing catalysts for, say, Queer or ablest allies and Anti-Racism allies, it seems that the critique of allies recentralizing their own dominance continues to resurface. Grzanka, et al. discuss some of the ways that heteronormativity is often re-centered by allies in Queer allyship.<sup>10</sup> This re-centering comes in the form of what Grzanka calls “neoliberal sexual politics.” Front-and-center in this neoliberal sexual politics within the Queer movement has been the focus on marriage equality. Uptake of and emphasis on the marriage equality issue amongst straight allies is rooted in the reinforcement of the capitalist constructed nuclear family. Allies preached that “love is love” and, so, should be treated the same, i.e. treated as straight love. However, this mantra that “love is love” has significant repressed assumptions that are in themselves worthy of reevaluation as well as blind spots to what exactly the queer movement is. The movement itself seems to say that as long as the relationship can mirror a typical heterosexual relationship then it is worthy of all the privileges that come with the heterosexual relationship. The queer movement, however, began with the goal to overturn the entire system of sexual privilege to begin with.

Unfortunately, this re-centering takes place across the board in allyship. In some disability scholarship and advocacy there is the idea that disability is a mishap in the lives of differently abled individuals. The medical model takes this idea to heart, that the goal of disability allyship has to work on changing differently abled people so that they conform with this dominant cultural ideal of functioning. Organizations like Autism Speaks epitomize this push by allies to define and control the conversation and the solution.

Re-centering is seen in gender equality movements as well. It occurs when the male ally “mansplains” feminism or the role of oppression on the lives of women to the silencing of women infinitely more qualified and deserving of the space to speak than he is. Recentring occurs when the experiences of Black or Latina or Latinx or other Women of Color are equated unequivocally to the experience of white women, thus erasing the intersecting nature of oppression.

The phenomenon of allies, who are entrenched in their own dominant culture, to re-center, to prioritize, that dominant culture within the space of ally work seems to occur in ways

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<sup>10</sup> Patrick Grzanka, Jake Adler, and Jennifer Blazer, “Making Up Allies: The Identity Choreography of Straight LGBT Activism,” *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 12 (2015): 168.

that are unrelated to what populations they are seeking to assist want. Given that this issue in allyship occurs regardless of which oppressed populations the allies are working with, the critique raised strikes at an issue about allyship in general.

### Re-centering, Identity, and Autonomy

Given that allies tend to re-center the dominant culture that they are supposed to be dismantling, it is worth discussing in a little more depth what the process of re-centering is and attempting to draw out why this re-centering might undermine the entire enterprise of allyship. While it is true that the refocusing of dominance by allies undermines any progress that allies can make, that is not what makes recentralizing problematic. Understanding the severity of re-centering requires one to understand one of the most troubling features of oppression on people. Oppression fundamentally molds the identities that come to exist under it.

This fact has come into focus within the past couple of years with discussions such as Rachel Dolezal's claim to be transracial. Dolezal believes, to whatever actual extent, that she is actually a Black woman even though she is the white daughter of two white parents. Dolezal's exploits, book, and Netflix documentary have brought the idea of Transracialism into discussion across a swath of professions and mediums. I reference this story to draw attention to a response written by Denene Milner for NPR in which Milner discusses Dolezal and her claims to transracialism.<sup>11</sup> Milner, in response to the idea of transracialism, draws directly on the feature of oppression that makes recentralizing most problematic, namely the phenomenon that oppression molds existence. Milner uses a beautifully constructed metaphor in which she states: "...like diamonds, blackness is created under extreme pressure and high temperature, deep down in the recesses of one's core." Milner is explicating the phenomenon of how oppression molds, perhaps even creates, one's identity. This phenomenon is also discussed by Tommie Shelby.

Shelby in *We Who Are Dark* puts forward a theory of how the African Diaspora in the United States can come to develop a collective identity without relying on a race essentialist narrative. One such feature that Shelby posits as developing this collective identity is the shared

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<sup>11</sup> Denene Milner, "Why Rachel Dolezal Can Never Be Black," *NPR*, March 3, 2017. <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/03/03/518184030/why-rachel-dolezal-can-never-be-black>

effects of oppression perpetrated against Black Americans.<sup>12</sup> Franz Fanon's chapter entitled, "Negro and Recognition" in his work *Black Skin, White Mask* seeks to explain this very phenomenon as it happened in the colonial Caribbean. Fanon, himself drawing from the Hegelian Dialectic, seeks, in part, to detail the ways in which living under oppression models one's identity as a person and actor in the world. Fanon discusses the French slaves of the Caribbean and their emancipation in comparison to the American slave ultimately concluding that the French slaves continued to be the object of their oppressors even in their emancipation. The French slaves, while being free, were still the Other; they were being acted upon instead of acting while the American slaves had the opportunity to fight, to act, for their freedom.<sup>13</sup>

While Fanon couches his discussion of this invasive molding of one's identity in the language of Othering, or alterity, and such language has its baggage, it still conveys the overall effect that I am attempting to draw to the forefront. When a group of people are oppressed, they come to understand themselves and their identities as a relational matter to those who are oppressing them. The identity of the oppressed becomes the output of the dominator. The oppressed are acted upon instead of being able to actively act for themselves. Simply, they are the object not the subject of an action regarding their own lives within an oppressive schema.<sup>14</sup>

Ultimately, allies often enough, either knowingly or unknowingly, fail to fully understand their power and privilege and in failing to do so reinforce that oppressive power structure with their allyship ultimately mitigating any progress that allies may be able to assist in making and ultimately undermining the purpose of allyship. So, when allies, who are supposed to be working to overhaul oppressive systems, instead continue to reinforce these oppressive systems by re-

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<sup>12</sup> Tommie Shelby, "The Political Morality of the Black Solidarity," in *We Who Are Dark*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 244-246.

<sup>13</sup> Frantz Fanon, "The Negro and Recognition," in *Black Skin, White mask*, (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 216-222.

<sup>14</sup> The effects of oppression on identity development may seem like a hard concept to generalize across different forms of oppression. It may very well be that the effects of racist or sexist oppression may have an earlier effect on identity development than other forms of oppression. However, I think that it is perfectly logical to argue for a general idea that oppression, in whatever form it takes, has some kind of effect on how one perceives themselves and their being in the world. For example, we can imagine someone who becomes paralyzed after an accident; their identity while change and part of that change will come from the effects of an ablest society. The idea of an oppressed minority seems to theoretically require both a statistical norm and a societal norm.

centering their own cultures those who are oppressed are still then being acted upon by the ally instead of being supported in their own self-determination free of undue coercion by oppression. This practice of re-centering is morally questionable because in treating oppressed people as something to be acted upon, no matter the intention, and failing to recognize the autonomy of these oppressed peoples have to be self-determining undermines the inherent value of the people that allies are seeking to work with.

### Conclusion

One of the main goals of allyship is to work towards dismantling oppressive systems with the overall effect of creating a society in which everyone can live free from undue oppression. As I have attempted to emphasize in this chapter, many modern thinkers have turned a light of reflection on allyship. These theorists have explicated that allies when attempting to work on behalf of oppressed peoples often instead engage in re-centering the dominant culture, e.g., through advocating for oppressed people to fit into certain ideals in order to not be oppressed. We have explored why such a practice by allies is counter to the overall goal of allyship and that such practices are deeply troubling moral phenomena that need to be confronted and resolved. If allies fail to recognize that oppressed people are rational beings worthy of respect and capable of determining *their* own courses of action to fight *their* oppression, then such people are not allies and instead are merely creating another face for the oppressive systems that are already in place.

Allyship, at its core, is a moral endeavor to create a world in which power is not unduly used to oppress people. It is the case that allyship is infected with a practice, re-centering, that is immoral and poisons the work that allies engage in. Many theorists who have brought forth evidence of this issue have not concluded though that allyship need to be wholly abandoned. Some hold that while this problem threatens the very core allyship, a reframing of allyship such that allies would become more accountable could possibly weed out this horrific practice.<sup>15</sup> I believe that a moral conception of allyship is the answer to a new framework and provides a rich understanding of what the goal of allyship is as well as the accountability necessary to weed out the pervasive practice of re-centering.

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<sup>15</sup> For such proposals see S. Hunt and C. Holmes p. 162 as well as L. Patton and S. Bondi p. 509

In Chapter one, I explored the popular allyship model created by Keith Edwards and I attempted to explicate possible moral attitudes that might underlie allyship. If we are to take allyship to a moral endeavor, then we must better understand what about allyship's moral attitudes are morally justifiable, specifically which of these possible moral attitudes of allyship can be the bases of this new conception. In the following chapter I will argue that in framing allyship as a moral endeavor we can turn to a discussion of respect so as to create a new effective conception that addresses the critiques raised against allyship.

## CHAPTER 3: Allyship and Moral Attitudes

### Introduction

As Edwards's model is laid out, we get a clear picture of the general, descriptive understanding of allyship. However, such a framework is miles from understanding about whether or not such a framework ought to be accepted or rejected. Obviously, as with most sorts of sociological models of this sort, it seeks to simply explain a series of human phenomena and actions. One may very well say that Edward's model has done just that by describing a set of actions that humans perform under the guise of allyship. However, any work on allyship has set before itself as a goal the development and achievement of allyship in general, i.e., the dismantling of oppressive power structures and establishing in society the equal worth of all peoples. Therefore, we must ask further of Edwards's model, and of allyship in general, if the practices and the attitudes that underlie them are achieving the goal of furthering the betterment of those who are oppressed.

As I discussed in Chapter two, many theorists have raised very powerful objections that allyship is actually detrimental to the goals of overturning oppressive systems, and that allyship must experience a revival or be abandoned. I posited that a moral conception of allyship may provide the necessary framework for allyship to be accountable and to address these critiques.

In chapter one I attempted to clarify some plausible moral attitudes that might constitute the differing stages of allyship in order to establish a clear starting point in evaluating the moral merits of allyship, if there are any. Again, we simply cannot stop by stating what attitudes might be motivating allyship, but we must go further in asking if these attitudes are a proper attitude to take for effective, just allyship, i.e. if these attitudes are morally justifiable.

Chapter three will start by examining the attitude of love that underlies allyship from self-interest. I will then discuss the attitudes of beneficence and respect that motivate allyship from altruism and social justice respectively. With each attitude I will take a similar approach. I will begin by offering a brief and hopefully uncontentious account of the attitudes. After which I will begin working through different examples of allyship to draw out concerns about the attitudes that may be troublesome for a sustainable new conception of allyship.

### Allyship and Love

Much has been written about the role of love in moral life. Yet, without a doubt, love is a foundational emotion of the human condition. Love is primitive. Love is in that initial connection between a mother and her newborn. However, even with that in mind the literature on what love is and its role in moral life is vast, and it is beyond the scope of this thesis to add or adjudicate any of what has been said. Rather, I hope to simply start the discussion about allyship and love by trying to find an uncontroversial, constitutive feature of love.

It is not hard to imagine paradigmatic cases of love. We can imagine a parent who picks up weekend shifts in order to afford tutoring for his child so that they may be able to do well in school. Or we can imagine the wife who puts her game tickets up for sale so that they can help their Husband's parents after a house fire. It seems to go hand and hand with our ideas of what love is that when you love someone, you will generally go above and beyond to try and help those that you love for their own sake.<sup>16</sup> If we take a central component of love to be this deep concern for the well-being of the beloved because they are your beloved, often called the robust concern account of love, then it seems that, at least initially, we might be able to square allyship form self-interest with this morally justifiable attitude<sup>17</sup>.

Allies from self-interest are motivated to advocate for those that are closest to them, those they care about. It is because of that caring relationship that the ally is motivated. For example, take a father who is coming to terms with his Trans daughter. The daughter tells her father that she feels very unsafe using the bathroom at school because she has to use the bathroom that matches her assigned gender in her school records rather than the bathroom that matches her true gender. The father loves his daughter and wants the best for her life because it is her life in particular. Because of his love for his daughter, the father writes the principal asking for his daughter to be able to use the restroom that makes her feel comfortable and safe. Luckily the

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<sup>16</sup> Velleman, in his paper "Love as a moral emotion," draws some attention to this point by saying that there are those people we do love but cannot stand to be around or do anything for, like a distant family member. I find myself skeptical of such relations as being loving in a proper sense, but it is unnecessary for the paper to discuss those sorts of relations.

<sup>17</sup> I model this account of love similar to an account offered by Frankfurt in his chapter "necessity, volition, and love" in his book *Necessity, Volition, and Love* as well as his discussion of love in the chapter entitled "On Love, and Its Reasons" in *The Reasons of Love*.

principal makes an exception for his daughter and allows her to use the unisex bathroom in the school's administrative office.

It would seem that the father's allyship seems to be a morally acceptable practice in this case. He was moved by his love and the concern for the beloved, his daughter, to help make her life the best it could be. The daughter no doubt benefited from her father's advocacy on her behalf. She can use the restroom at school with at least some reduced concern about having to deal with her classmates when going to the restroom.

But what if we reimagined the case to be that the daughter had not asked her father to speak with the principal, but rather had just confided in her father about the struggle that she has to deal with on a daily basis when she is at school. Her father is still motivated by his love and concern for her and so reaches out to the principal. In this example, the daughter still gets the benefit of being able to use the restroom free of harassment because her father, motivated by his love, advocated for her to be able to use the restroom in peace at school. The father's action may seem to be equally as effective and so perhaps equally justifiable as an act of allyship, but it seems to be problematic in that the father failed to respect his daughter's wish about whether or not she wanted him to speak on her behalf to the principal. The validity of the father's actions becomes a little less clear then, but it still seems possible given our first example for someone to be a morally justifiable ally motivated by love.

### *Love and morally justified allyship*

Allyship that is motivated by an attitude of love at first seems unproblematic and a plausibly good reason to keep with the practice of allyship. However, there seems to be issues that would make allyship from love a troublesome account to accept. One such reason is the singularity of the relationship between the lover and the beloved. My loving someone means that I have a special relationship to that person that makes their needs and concerns more pressing than others who may make a claim on my time and resources. This is because love is often stronger the closer the relation and the stronger the love the more likely I am to be drawn to the object of that love and their needs. As Frankfurt discusses in regard to Bernard Williams' drowning wife, "The fact that he loves her *entails* that he takes her distress as a more powerful reason for going to her aid than for going to the aid of someone about whom he knows

nothing.”<sup>18</sup> It may very well be the appropriate moral reaction for the husband to save his drowning wife without any thought to whether or not he should save her or the stranger. The concern, however, is that such favoritism seems counter to the overall goal of allyship.

In the example of the father advocating for his daughter’s ability to use a bathroom and feel comfortable, he is motivated by his love and his concern for his daughter. Had the case been that it was simply a friend of his child who was Trans and uncomfortable using the restroom, or even a stranger that he did not know, it seems that the father would be less motivated to advocate on their behalf, if he would even advocate at all. While the father may be advocating for his Trans daughter, he is not advocating for Trans students in general who face oppressions that stem from a sexist, transphobic society, and he is not working to change those structures. Rather he is simply trying to solve a symptom of the systemic oppression that his daughter is facing because he wants her to be happy, not because the system is unjust. It seems then that an ally acting from love would not act on behalf of the interest of oppressed people in general for their own sakes, but rather just for those that the allies happened to care about.

Another concern with grounding any moral justification for allyship in an attitude of love is that love is not always the best guide in doing what is best for a person. Often enough we find ourselves doing things for those we love that are not good for their overall well-being simply because we want them to be happy. We assume that our loving them makes our actions on their behalf a good thing. Again, it is not that such actions themselves are morally troublesome, even though they may be; it is rather that rooting a morally justified allyship practice in love might lead to allies doing things on behalf of oppressed people simply because they believe it to be what their loved ones who are oppressed want without checking with the beloved. This is what happened in our example where the father spoke to the principal without the permission and consent of his daughter. It may be that his daughter would still be allowed to use the restroom in the administrative office, but she now is the subject of unwanted attention by administrators that may only worsen her lived experiences at school due to the extra attention.

It seems then that framing allyship as a moral practice rooted in love would fail to provide the necessary foundation to address the worries about allyship that already exist, most importantly re-centering. Thinking about love as an attitude that causes one to care about what

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<sup>18</sup> Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, 37.

happens to those that they love does not seem to necessarily entail that the lover while always act in a way that is consistent with the autonomy and rationality of their beloved. In fact, as the above example attempts to show, it is perfectly consistent to act from love on behalf of one's beloved in a paternalistic manner.

It is also troublesome that acting from love would only lead me to act to address the issues of a small amount of people. I would not be acting to change entire systems, nor would I care at all about anyone beyond those I love. Allyship, as a practice, seeks to establish the equality of all persons as a matter of fact in regard to sociopolitical power relations. Love, as an attitude, also seems to allow for the ability to favor some people over others due to matters of luck regarding one's relation to another person. While this privilege is different than existing systemic privilege, any privilege is counter to the equality central to allyship.

### Allyship and Beneficence

Let's now sketch some examples of what we might typically consider beneficent actions with a social justice orientation. While walking around campus, I see a young woman being harassed that her shorts are too short especially since she is a larger woman and so she should not be wearing them. I interject to explain that he has no business telling her what to wear and that she has every right to wear whatever she wants regardless of what he thinks. Later on, as I am walking through the store, I hear an individual making comments to a gay couple about how it is inappropriate for them to be holding hands in the store. Again, I offer my assistance without being asked, but assume that my help is wanted. I start talking to the couple about mundane things to draw attention away from the comments. They smile and continue down the aisle with me. In these cases, I am acting out of general goodwill and concern for my fellow persons. I believe that I am doing something good by helping them. All of these examples appear *prima facie* to be motivated by doing good for someone else for that person's sake. Allyship, it seems, appears to be a form of beneficence.

For another example, consider Jane, who works in an office where they have recently hired a new team member, Sue, who is in a wheelchair. Jane takes Sue out for lunch on her first day to a local restaurant as a way to welcome Sue to the office. Sue had never been to the restaurant, and Jane was excited because the eatery was one of her favorites. Once at the restaurant, Jane notices for the first time that the restaurant is not set up in a way that makes it

easily accessible for patrons with mobility issues. Jane, wanting to show that she cares about Sue, takes it upon herself to speak with the manager about how the restaurant ought to be better equipped for customers, like Sue, who have mobility impairments. Jane is concerned for Sue and hopes that by speaking to the manager, things might change so that Sue may feel more comfortable at the eatery in the future. It seems that Jane is acting as an ally for Sue and that Jane's actions are acts of beneficence. Jane sincerely acts out of care for Sue, and Sue is in fact benefitted by Jane's actions because, say, the restaurant does take steps toward a more universal design.

Given that Jane's actions were beneficial to Sue because they helped change something to better accommodate Sue's mobility impairments, and that Jane was acting out of concern for Sue Jane seems to be an ally given the general definition that comes from Briodo. We can further imagine that later that day in a staff meeting Jane made it a point to state that a PowerPoint is not the best form of presentation considering that another colleague, Alice, is visually impaired even though Alice herself made no comment or mention about the PowerPoint. Through Jane's announcement about what is best for Alice, the office manager who had previously not thought anything about the PowerPoint sought to find better ways of dispensing information that was not visually dependent. Alice, just as was that case with Sue, now finds herself better off at work.

In both of these examples, it seems that Jane has good intentions in trying to help both of her colleagues by making their environments easier for them to navigate. While Jane gives us good reason to think that allyship is a form of beneficence there may be reason to think that even if a person, attempting to act like an ally from beneficence may, in fact, fail to be an ally.

We can reimagine the example of Jane speaking up for Alice in order to get the Office Manager to stop relying on PowerPoints because Alice has a visual impairment. It might still be the case that the Office Manager moves away from using PowerPoint presentations which is helpful to Alice. However, the manager may become overly suspicious of Alice, believing that if her impairment makes it hard to see a PowerPoint than she must be getting assistance from her colleagues to get some of her assignments completed. If this increased scrutiny on Alice turns up even the smallest infractions, ones that have nothing to do with her disability, she may very well find herself being reprimanded or terminated. In this case it would seem that Jane's actions are not entirely beneficial, if they are at all. Indeed, even in the less dramatic imagining, where Alice

is still the subject of increased scrutiny, but such extra attention turns nothing up it seems that Alice is being harmed by the well-intentioned actions of Jane.

Sadly, our beneficent acts go wrong more often than we would like. Just as with the reimagined case of Jane and Alice, Jane has all good intentions to help improve Alice's work environment when she raises the concern in the meeting, yet Alice ends up losing her job. Of course, we live in a society where Alice may have legal redress to the actions taken by her supervisor. We might even wish that Alice had been aware enough to bring her supervisor's actions to HR long before Alice lost her job. However, the fact is that Jane's actions simply failed to be beneficial to Alice, no matter how good her intentions. Because of this it seems that we must say that cases of failed beneficence cannot serve as moral justifiers for allyship.

On the other hand, there are cases in which someone acts beneficently towards another, actually helps that person, but does so in at least partial hopes of advancing their own ends. Sometime the intent to advance themselves by being beneficent is a key motivating factor in acting. Other times someone may be consciously unaware of the fact that they are benefiting from their own beneficence as well.

For example, we could think that Jane is mentioning the restaurant's ill-layout in part to make her appear more sensitive about Sue's mobility in order to head off the office gossip about her insensitivity. In this case Jane is benefiting Sue by raising the issue to the restaurant staff because they do work to move the set up towards a universal design. However, Jane was seeking to receive a certain emotional reaction/ evaluation of herself from Sue that would then help to repair her office image.

Similarly, the critique of ally theatre falls into this category. Often times, according to many theorists, allies fail to engage in true allyship and, rather, perform ally theatre. The nice white guy is a perfect example of this sort of ulterior beneficence. Lori Patton and Stephanie Bondi discuss an all-too-common phenomenon where white faculty members were viewed as being anti-racist allies while not significantly engaging in actual ally work. In fact, the individuals that were interviewed admitted to failing to address the systemic racism that they came across in higher education but were reaping the social benefits of being seen as socially forward and educated. These faculty members were being beneficent to their students and coworkers by acknowledging the oppression that they faced. One participant that was interviewed by Patton and Bondi stated that he believed it to be beneficial that he used

“marginalized source such as *The Journal of Negro Education*.”<sup>19</sup> Students and colleagues of these individuals received benefits from at least feeling that they had an ‘ally’ in their surroundings, but it is most definitely that case that these nice white men, no matter how unknowingly, were benefitted by their own actions.

Even when thinking of these examples when beneficence may go awry, there is a pull to think that allyship can be justified by being rooted in an attitude of beneficence. After all, when someone acts from beneficence, as we have defined it, they are seeking to help those in need of help. However, even though beneficence is a moral virtue, there may still be good reasons to be hesitant about finding moral justification for allyship in beneficence.

### *Why Effective Beneficence falls short*

First, acts of beneficence appear to place debts of gratitude on the recipients of those acts. If I were to cook dinner every night for a friend who is tight on money, they should show appreciation or gratitude for doing so by at least thanking me or perhaps cooking dinner for me if my power goes out. One reason we may think that such debts of gratitude exist is that, when others do not show us gratitude for our beneficent actions towards them, they may simply have used us in disrespectful ways.

If we think of Jane’s action as an ally as being an act of beneficence, then it would seem correct that Sue is now under an obligation to be grateful to Jane even though Sue made no demand on Jane to speak for her mobility needs at the restaurant. Often, we are more than pleased to fulfill our duties of gratitude to others, but, as Adam Cureton argues, one of the potentially troubling features about owing gratitude is that by owing gratitude one becomes a moral unequal with their benefactor.<sup>20</sup>

Being differently abled, especially in a visually obvious way, already puts Sue at a societally unequal position due to overt and covert forms of ableism prevalent throughout society. Jane believes that she is performing a beneficent action that will help improve, at least in a very small way, the environment that Sue must navigate. If we think that Jane is acting out of beneficence, it seems that she is, on the one hand, trying to help Sue, but on the other, she is,

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<sup>19</sup> Patton and Bondi, “Nice White Men or Social Justice Ally,” 500.

<sup>20</sup> Adam Cureton, “Offensive Beneficence,” *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 2, no.1 (2016): 74-90.

consciously or not, creating more inequality on top of what Sue already faces because her beneficent action will impose an extra duty on Jane.<sup>21</sup> The problems of inequality are compounded for communities that often find themselves the subjects of apparently beneficent actions. As Cureton states, “current social circumstances and abilities make people who are differently abled more likely than others to receive optional beneficence and less likely than others to be in a position to give it.”<sup>22</sup> In this way, people who are already vulnerable to societal inequality become even more unequal in comparison to able-bodied individuals by consistently being the subject of others’ beneficent actions and so owing far more debts of gratitude than others have toward them.

There are, of course, many ways in which people are unequal and, in some cases, that inequality is not a significant concern. My ability to play guitar is unequal to that of Eric Clapton, but such inequality is socially insignificant. However, the inequality that comes for debts of gratitude incurred by oppressed communities is a salient inequality because it not only adds to the already existent social inequality but also reinforces the perception of these communities as needy or politically weak, thus further encouraging the societal inequalities that allyship seeks to eliminate. If allyship is an act of beneficence, then allyship creates debts of gratitude on individuals belonging to the oppressed communities that those actions seek to help. In doing so, allyship is creating inequality while supposedly trying to end inequality.<sup>23</sup> While it may very well be the case that Jane’s actions were, all things considered, good for Sue, Jane’s actions may be disrespectful because of the effects that her actions have on her and Sue’s social and moral standing with regard to each other and even with regard to the world.

While the fact that beneficence can create unequal moral standing between persons is enough to raise our concerns about beneficence being the sole attitude to underlie allyship, it does give enough reason for hesitation. In addition, though, beneficence also raises two other

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<sup>21</sup> One might state that this thinking seems to imply that we ought not do beneficent things for people who already face societal inequality. I have yet to completely work out a response to such a concern.

<sup>22</sup> Adam Cureton, *Offensive beneficence*, 13 (online pagination)

<sup>23</sup> Perhaps allies ought to discharge debts of gratitude as a way of eliminating the inequalities arise from those debts. Discharging the debts would be consistent with the ally’s goal of pursuing equality. However, the concern that the debt is even created as well as the concern of the voluntariness of discharging the debt is still enough reason to want to conceptualize of allyship as predominantly something other than acts of beneficence.

concerns. The first is that beneficence seems to take a very individualized focus; by which I mean that when someone acts beneficently they are doing so with an individual or group directly in mind. To further explicate the point, when we think of typical acts of beneficence they are person centered, almost by definition. Beneficent actions have a subject to whom the benefit is intended. Jane is acting beneficently *for* Sue. I held the door open *for* the student behind me. Of course, there are more general targets of beneficence; for example, I donated clothing to the homeless shelter *for* the homeless of my city. Even in these kinds of examples, though, my act has a real and specific target that is, at least in theory, benefiting from my actions. While it is true that these points do not seem at all contradictory to what allyship appears to be, there is again at least some reason to take a second thought about the matter.

The idea that beneficent actions require someone to benefit from the actions does not at first seem to be problematic for an account of allyship. Obviously, allyship has as a goal to improve the lives of those that are oppressed. However, Allyship that is focused solely on helping those in need of help misses part of the larger goal of allyship, which is to change the system and, so, thus making lives better for those who were oppressed by the system. Perhaps, in summary, one could simply say that allyship's goal is to make the world such that the need for allyship would never come about. Simply focusing on remedying individual symptoms of a rotten system through acts of beneficence while creating valuable outcomes in the lived experiences of those who are oppressed still seems to fall short of an important part of allyship.

The concerns so far raised regarding beneficence as a moral attitude that constitutes allyship have not offered definitive conclusions against the role that a beneficence. It is not entirely clear that we would want to strip a beneficent attitude from allyship. However, there is a troubling conclusion that comes from maintaining that beneficence is the sole attitude that underlies allyship. When we act beneficently towards someone, we are acting from a place of goodwill out of concern for someone by seeking to help them in some way. We are, essentially, performing an act of charity, an act that we do not owe, for the person we are hoping to help. If we think of allyship as being a species of beneficence, then, it seems, that we are saying that allyship is, in some ways, simply an act of charity. Thinking of allyship as charity is problematic for many reasons. Some of these reasons have been mentioned above, debts of gratitude and unequal moral standing. Another reason that equating allyship with charity is problematic is that charity is an imperfect duty that is left up to the performer to decide when to act. Acts of charity

can also undermine the recipient's rationality if the benefactor believes that they know better than the recipient what the recipient needs.

Beneficence is a morally worthy attitude for one to hold in life, and it seems that beneficence, at first take, can explain what it is that an ally does. While I think that beneficence may indeed play a role in allyship I have sought to show in this section that there may be reasons not to conceptualize allyship as solely some species of beneficence. The issue at heart with the phenomenon of allyship re-centering is that allyship of that kind does not deconstruct the power relations that brought about the oppression that, in turn, brought about revolt and allyship. Acts of beneficence, in some ways, leave this unequal power relation intact, if not stronger than before. In addition to that concern, to think of allyship as an act of charity seems to mischaracterize exactly what allyship is supposed to be; an imperfect duty. And thinking of allyship as charity that is bestowed on those who need it can undermine the rational nature of oppressed persons if allies believe that they know what oppressed people need or simply act without listening to oppressed communities and people. For these reasons, I think it safe to conclude that while beneficence may have a role in allyship, allyship is not rooted in beneficence.

### Allyship and Respect

If the points raised in the previous sections are correct, there seem, then, to be good reasons to think that love and beneficence are not the central moral bases for allyship. Neither one can appropriate address the issue of re-centering and raise additional worries about what allyship might entail should we develop a conceptual framework around those attitudes. Perhaps we might start the search for allyship's moral foundations again by trying to think about what are some actions that are paradigmatic of allyship. From the viewpoint of the dominant culture, allyship is thought of as taking a stance of educating oneself about others' struggles and oppressions, properly acknowledging the oppression and struggle of oppressed communities, advocating for change on behalf of these communities, and attempting to change negative attitudes about these communities within the dominant culture. Allies are concerned with the wellbeing of those who face oppression in society at large, and they strive to correct the injustices that marginalized communities face. When thinking of what to expect from an ally of varying social movements, it is someone who genuinely cares about those they are advocating

and goes out of their way to learn about the culture and lived experiences of that group. Allies care about the mistreatment and lack of welfare that a group experiences as a result of oppression. Allies help construct safe spaces and communities for the oppressed as well as help to construct a narrative within the dominant culture about the struggles these communities face. This commitment to epistemic justice helps bring marginalized discourses into dominant discourses and creates spaces where this repressed knowledge can work to reframe the established epistemologies of the dominant culture.<sup>24</sup> Allies also create platforms for and advocate on behalf of those marginalized as a matter of justice. More or less succinctly, allyship is based on a proper respect for another community that is oppressed. Allies, out of respect for these communities, work to improve society and deconstruct the systems that have oppressed that community. All of these conceptions about what the role of an ally is stems from the belief that allies respect these communities in a certain way. Specifically, it seems, that these paradigmatic actions of allyship stem from a proper respect for oppressed people.

What it means to respect someone is in many ways very unclear and it is even more unclear as to why we ought to respect anyone beyond those we chose to respect. No doubt the overuse of the idea of respect has led to these kinds of confusion, and so something must be said as to what I mean here by a proper respect for people and what the respect might stem from. These initial remarks will be rather vague themselves but will hopefully give enough context to make this discussion worthwhile. First and foremost, it seems correct to say that all persons are equal as members of a moral community. This equality comes from the agency of each person in that each person has a capacity to set their own ends, acknowledge others in this community as also setting their own ends, and act as they determine to act in a certain kind of way. Respect then is the correct relational disposition to take towards other persons by acknowledging these same rational capacities in them. When we say that we respect someone it is to say that we see them first as moral equals and that we will work to develop these capacities that make them moral equals, we will allow others to exercise their capacities for end-setting, and that we should make sure to hold certain dispositions towards others as a matter of respect.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> I use epistemologies here in a way that I have encountered in feminist and critical theory work. I use it to mean the collective knowledge and ways of think within a specific culture. Epistemologies in this way are very influenced by society and are subjectively created.

<sup>25</sup> Hill 1980, 2000, and 1991

Given this brief discussion of respect, we can think about the example of Jane and Sue going to the local eatery for lunch, we might be able to say that Jane is acting from a place of proper respect for Sue and not as a matter of beneficence. Jane speaks with the manager in the hopes of improving the environment for Sue similarly to what she hoped for when she acted from beneficence. But, more importantly, Jane is speaking with the manager because she properly respects Sue as being a person that deserves equal treatment, even in the ability to freely move, and not simply as something that needs help or charity to express their needs. This short example helps to begin to draw out what makes allyship rooted in respect importantly different from allyship rooted in beneficence.

The one of the concerns with allyship motivated primarily by beneficence or love mentioned earlier is whether or not one would perform acts of allyship whenever such actions are required seeing as allyship motivated by love appears to require some personal relation and beneficence are acts whose performance are left to the choice of the actor. When we think about say Jane speaking up for Sue and other differently-abled persons or the stranger who comforts and removes someone from the random racial tirade of some passerby on the street we think that such acts are owed as a matter of respect and that we should, if the circumstance do not put one into a certain level of distress, always engage in acts of allyship.

Imagine seeing a Person of Color being verbally attacked by a group of White Supremacist. To claim in such cases that to assist the individual being attack is merely an imperfect duty of beneficence misses, I claim, the gravity of the situation. If we were to think that I could have, without the chance of great harm to myself, have interjected in the situation but chose simply to look the other way, then would I not seem to be a proper candidate of negative reactive attitudes? The individual being verbally assaulted is a person of equal moral standing, a person of incomparable worth, who is being unduly attacked. Such an attack is an attack on that person's being. As a matter of properly respecting that person, we owe it to do all in our power to stop attacks on the person as a matter of respecting their worth.

Allyship though is not always concerned with blatant attacks on another's dignity. Often these attacks come in very minute and obscure ways; through institutional policies that deem certain hair as "unprofessional" to policies that deny Trans persons the ability to change their sex on their birth certificates. While these kinds of policies and events seem to fall outside of our understanding of what it means to attack someone's worth, such policies may in fact be even

more catastrophic in their effects on oppressed people than overt oppressive aggression. An ally motivated by love or beneficences may never see these policies effect someone's life and so may not be moved to address them. An ally motivated by respect for persons seems more likely to see these policies as being inconsistent with that respect regardless of whether or not the ally sees the policy actually harming someone, and so seems more likely to address these larger systemic issues.

Where Beneficence and love appear unable to capture the full breadth and nature of allyship and also fail to be able to offer an account that would address the issue of allies re-centering their privilege in their ally work, respect seems to have been able to address these issues. Allyship rooted in respect would be able to motivate ally work on behalf of all individuals regardless of personal relation to the ally. Such allyship would also be able to make sense of the compulsory nature of allyship. In addition, Allyship based in respect would not place more burden in the form of gratitude on those whom are already oppressed. Respect, then, seems most appropriate as a moral foundation on which to frame what an ally is and what an ally ought to do.

While it may be that a moral conception of allyship grounded in the kind of respect that we have so far explicated can account for many of the positive actions that we think of as paradigmatic of allyship such "positive" respect appears unable to completely address the central criticism that leaves allyship morally bankrupt. Positive respect is understood as respect that motivates someone to engage in actions for the sake of someone. As we discussed earlier respecting someone means understanding, acknowledging, and valuing the equal worth of that person. Allyship motivated by respect entails then that an ally would see those who are oppressed as equals, and, yet, even at this stage it seems that an ally can re-center their power.

An ally may respect those whom they are seeking too ally with and still manage to re-center themselves and their privilege. A conception of allyship solely from positive respect can motivate an ally, in a seeming paradox, to preform acts that re-center the ally's privilege and power. The ally who advocates for someone out of respect may in fact still disrespect the person they are seeking to advocate for by not allowing those who are oppressed to lead *themselves*, to control *their* narratives, and to decide how to protest *their* oppression. The fact that an ally could be acting out of a positive respect for oppressed people and still disrespect those communities is why even the last stage of Edward's Allyship model is vulnerable to the critique raised against allyship in general. That being the case then we must either reformulate our conception of what

respect is and entail or we must concede that respect also fails to provide a necessary framework for allyship.

### Negative Respect

If we revisit the Jane and Sue example from the previous section, it is possible to say that Sue may not want or need Jane to speak to the management about better arranging the restaurant. When Jane does, in fact, speak with management without expressed consent from Sue, Jane is in some ways violating Sue's dignity and autonomy. Generally, we would agree that Sue has the right, as a rational being, to decide what actions she takes and what actions should be taken on her behalf. Sue, simply put, is an agent in the world who has certain capacities that make her actions relevantly free in certain ways. As such then Jane, as a matter of respect must relate herself and her actions in certain ways to Sue. When Jane speaks on behalf of Sue without Sue's approval, then Jane has used her privilege to act on behalf of Sue and yet also on Sue as if Sue is unable to advocate for herself. Given the very real possibility of these kinds of case, it would appear that a moral conception of allyship based in respect fails. However, there is good reason to think that our understanding of respect can offer an explanation as to why such actions are disrespectful in some way and how allies might be able to act from respect without re-centering their privilege.

Adam Cureton, in "The Limiting Role of Respect for People with Disabilities," parses the ways that one might properly respect an individual with a disability.<sup>26</sup> Specifically, Cureton draws out the idea that respect calls for someone to become more involved in another's life so to make it better, but that respect also gives us competing reasons to keep our distance from one another. This other face of respect, negative respect, seems to call for respecting others privacy, autonomy to act, and acknowledging their goals and prerogatives in such a way as to distance ourselves from each other. If being an ally is based on proper respect for marginalized and oppressed people, then it seems that there is a tension between the role of an ally based in positive respect and the role of an ally based in negative respect. Allyship that stems from positive respect seeks to incorporate the ally in the lives of marginalized communities in many ways while allyship stemming from negative respect requires that allies give privacy and

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<sup>26</sup> Adam Cureton, "The Limiting Role of Respect for People with Disabilities," Forthcoming.

distance to these communities so that they may act on their own accord. So perhaps a better understanding of negative respect can help explain some of the discomforts felt because of Jane's actions.

In the Sue and Jane example, there are at least a couple of ways to explain our uneasiness through the lens of negative respect. First, it could be that Sue had no intention of making mention of the poor physical layout at the restaurant. Perhaps Sue may have decided to downplay her disability as much as possible in work and social settings, and by trying to advocate on Sue's behalf, Jane brought her disability front-and-center, and in doing so completely trumped her colleagues' goals and prerogatives. Second, Jane might be making assumptions about what Sue can or cannot do or access (ease finding a seat in a restaurant, or Sue's ability to speak up for herself). In doing so, Jane seems to devalue the agency of her colleagues because they are unable to act freely in either expressing or not expressing their protests or needs for assistance.

Another possible way that Jane is not acting in accord with negative respect is by not allowing Sue a chance to sort of "stand up for" herself. As I discussed in chapter two oppression has deep effects on individuals' identities and their self-understanding. Systems of oppression work to reinforce the system in part by weaving into the societal dialogue that those whom are oppressed are oppressed because they deserve it in some way. This internalization of oppression can manifest in many ways, one such way is for those who are oppressed to take on an air of servility. Thomas Hill discusses some of the effects of this servile attitude and how it corrupts one's ability to properly understand their own moral worth and so they see themselves as deserving of being oppressed and devalued as moral equals.

Say that Sue is experiencing this sense of servility. As such she does not properly respect herself and so she will not speak up when a social circumstance is unfairly structured because she believes herself to be less worthy than able-bodied individuals. In such an example, it appears that Jane denies Sue the chance to respect herself through self-advocating because Jane told Sue's narrative instead of creating a space encouraging Sue to share her *own* narrative. Or, it could even be that Sue does respect herself, but was still unable to speak up for her *own* worth before Jane did. In either case, it seems that Sue had her right to affirm her own beliefs and values regarding her disability denied by Jane's actions that sought, out of respect, to advocate for Sue.

Even when considering why our ally's actions might be inappropriate, it is still possible to think about where Jane came from in her actions. Perhaps in the case where Sue does not properly respect herself, Jane might feel that her actions will both bring to the forefront of Sue's and others' minds that Sue is owed respect and so is owed reasonable accommodation. Our ally is merely trying to respect her colleague's worth as a human being, as something valuable in its self. Maybe even Jane is aware that by advocating in the restaurant that she is trumping Sue's prerogatives, but Jane believes that ultimately, for future persons the greater good wins out. When considering these thoughts, one might be led to think that Jane did not stray far from correct allyship.

A moral conception of allyship rooted in respect where respect is understood as both a motivational force for positive action to do things for others and a negative motivational force for restraining that positive action, thus keeping it from running over the line of being disrespectful or re-centering of the privilege of the ally, seems able to both account for our general understanding of allyship while also answering the critique raised. Grounding allyship in the moral attitude of respect also allows for the accountability of allies to each other and to the communities that allies seek to work with.

### Conclusion

Chapters one and two have attempted to lay out the pragmatic framework of allyship as well as the troubling critique of allyship that calls allyship work into question as being effective and properly relating individuals with privilege to those who are oppressed. In this chapter I have examined possible moral attitudes, love, beneficence, and respect, that are popularly taken to align allyship and that seem to best fit with the pragmatic framework of allyship. With further analysis, though, it seems that there are reasons to think that love and beneficence are unable to ground allyship so that allyship may be able to weed out the practice of re-centering in addition to other entailments that might come with framing allyship as acts of love or beneficence. I have concluded that within the scope of my analysis that allyship rooted in positive respect is richer in its ability to explain the paradigmatic actions of allyship. In addition, a fuller understanding of respect understood negatively provides a necessary piece in understanding allyship that addresses the phenomenon of re-centering and thus providing a sound moral conception on which allyship may be reframed. It is worth clarifying, though, that I am not attempting to give a

theory that will adjudicate conflicting attitudes within allyship such as love, beneficence, or even between negative and positive respect. All of these attitudes are extremely important in a rich moral life and to begin to adjudicate between them will require a sound judgement and moral sensitivity depending on the circumstances. I am merely attempting to illustrate the necessary foundational role of negative respect as it relates to a moral conception of allyship.

## CHAPTER 4: Allyship, Negative Respect, and Looking Forward

### Introduction

In chapter three I examined possible moral conceptions of allyship based on the moral attitudes that seem to accompany different stages of allyship. I presented arguments for why it seems that love and beneficence, contrary to our initial reactions, seem to be concerning moral attitudes on which to build a moral framework for allyship. It seems that respect, as I discussed earlier, would be able to serve as a proper foundation in that it can both address the pitfall of re-centering in allyship and that respect can capture, in broad strokes, the general actions and ideas that are the core of allyship. In this final chapter, I want to begin by briefly summarizing the conceptual understanding of allyship I have so far attempted to sketch. After which I will examine cases and concerns in which we might be tempted to abandon the framework and to offer reasons why we would want to continue with the conception so far.

### Toward a Moral Conception of Allyship

Allies seek to create positive change in the world around them and for those who are oppressed through a plethora of actions. Specifically, allies are concerned with challenging and changing oppressive power structures and systems within society that bestow privilege on them while unduly robbing others of necessary resources and rights. I assumed from the start that allyship is at its core a moral practice however only empirical understandings and theories about allyship have grown in popularity. During this growth in popularity, the practice of allyship has found itself the subject of increasing scrutiny, especially from oppressed communities. While allies may have good intentions, they have notoriously engaged in a practice that is troubling and damning of the entire enterprise of allyship.

This practice is the phenomenon of re-centering. Re-centering, recall, involves such things as when an ally engages in ally work that emphasizes the allies understanding of oppression, what oppressed communities ought to do or how they ought to change in order not to be oppressed. It is basically when an ally believes that they themselves are more equipped to understand and to lead oppressed persons out of oppression. This practice is most troubling because it simply changes the face of oppression instead of actually overhauling the oppressive system. This practice morally bankrupts allyship because ally work which is by nature a moral

endeavor, i.e., allyship's emphasis on recognizing the equality of all, is robbed of its moral significance by seeing oppressed communities as things to be acted upon instead of fully equal rational beings. Therefore, a moral conception of allyship is needed that can hold allies accountable for committing such morally speculative behavior while fully capturing the nature of allyship.

We understand that allyship is a set of attitudes that motivate someone of privilege to action addressing the systems that bestow that privilege and oppress others along with the actions that are produced by those attitudes. Love and beneficence are important moral attitudes and seem to be in line with the actions an ally might perform, and the way allies seem to relate to those they are attempting to assist, and yet there are many reasons to think that allyship should not solely be rooted in either beneficence or love. Overall, it seems that the first step in constructing an effective, moral framework of allyship must be to understand allyship as being rooted in respect. This respect must be both a positive respect that calls us to action in order to protect the rational value of persons as well as a negative respect that calls us to distance ourselves in order to respect the rational value of persons. It is this understanding of respect that makes sense of the need for allies to above all other things respect the self-determination of oppressed communities.

In working towards a moral conception of allyship, allies must properly understand what it means to allow oppressed communities to self-determine. Allies should provide resources to these communities so that they can organize the way that they need to advocate for their rights. Allies should provide themselves as the bodies necessary to help get the ground work done. Allies should follow the direction of those who are oppressed and follow through with how community leaders determine to protest. Respecting the rational powers of oppressed people means acknowledging that they are capable of determining their own avenues of action, and if allies are truly committed to helping these communities, then allies ought to follow. This is not meant to be a blanket statement that allies should blindly follow whatever action oppressed communities might decide to engage in. It does mean recognizing that allies have systemic power and so may be able to provide some input but recognize that they are at an epistemic disadvantage in understanding what exactly it means to be oppressed in certain ways.

One might claim that there may be legitimate times in which an ally should take on leadership on behalf of oppressed communities. Let us imagine that a straight ally may be able to

detail an extensive plan that would achieve every possible queer movement goal imaginable, but it would require that the queer leaders and community fall behind this straight ally. Would it not be in the best interest of the queer community to allow and even encourage such straight leadership if it meant achieving all of the community's goals?

This example seems comparable to the case of the Fanon's slaves who were merely freed by the dictate of the government without any uprising. At first, such happenings appear desirable, wished for even, in that to those who are the oppressors there is no loss of money or blood or resource and peace is kept, yet for those who are oppressed nothing seems to change truly. The system that oppressed them before still acts upon them as an object. If the system truly acknowledges the equality of the oppressed, then the system would acknowledge that the oppressed know best how the system operates to keep them oppressed and about how to make them equal. And such acting upon does not properly relate the ally to the oppressed communities that they are seeking to assist. No matter how much good an ally may believe themselves to be doing, freedom from oppression must come at the work and leadership of the oppressed, or it seems merely a token awarded by the oppressor.<sup>27</sup>

Allyship must put self-determination as a matter of proper moral respect front and center. The benefit of such a framework, besides the value it may hold if it is in line with the moral law, is that it provides a sense of accountability and pushback against possible condescending or pitying attitudes that allies may have. Such a framework would also entail that allyship is a moral duty of proper respect.

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<sup>27</sup> The suggestions for a moral conception I have offered in this thesis rest on some major assumptions about the sort of society that we live in. First, I assume that this conception on allyship rooted in respect emphasizing self-determination can only truly work in a society in which those who are oppressed have some semblance of access to resources and organizational ability. Counter cases can be imagined or dredged up from history in which certain oppressed peoples are beyond the ability to self-determine and fight their own oppression and must rely solely on the work of the dominant population to bring about just change in favor of those who are oppressed. These cases and what they would require of allyship are worth examining but are beyond what this project seeks to explore or explain. I dare say that often enough in modern, Western societies these recommendations for effective, moral allyship can capture the scenarios that are occurring in our government, academics, and other institutions.

### Concerns

Every proposal must be cautious in what it proposes for action and equally cautious of objections that might be raised against it. Thinking of allyship as rooted in respect where that respect requires allies to first and foremost encourage self-determination of those who are oppressed is not above conscientious objections.

#### *Requiring too much*

One may be concerned that having a moral duty to be an ally might place a great burden on people and that such a duty would be impossible to fulfill. Such a duty would require many tasks including individuals with privilege educating themselves on the issues facing oppressed communities so that they can fulfill their moral duty properly. It would require an unyielding vigilance in everything from common day conversations with family and friends to the highest levels of policymaking. Even with all that could possibly be required of someone if we were to think of allyship as a moral duty, the only response that seems fitting to the worry about such a duty requiring too much is to say that it pales in comparison to the hell that oppressed persons have to exist in due to unequal power systems and that no price can even counterbalance what is owed someone as a matter of respecting their dignity.

#### *Aloof Allyship*

One key objection to what has been presented is that such a conception appears to make allyship a cold and distant practice that may, in fact, discourage allies from actively engaging with oppressed people to help them in certain situations. Some people may even feel that allyship motivated by beneficence or love is more important because it shows that allies see and acknowledge the struggle of oppressed people by helping them in certain situations. The question of whether to act beneficently or to respect another's autonomy at first appears to be a tough question. However, allyship motivated primarily by respect may not be as aloof as first thought. Thomas Hill in his chapter entitled "The Importance of Autonomy" discusses an understanding of autonomy where autonomy is seen not as opposing compassion or beneficent but seen as enriching the acts of compassion and beneficence. When the actor recognizes the receiver's autonomy, and so the moral importance and equality of the receiver the actor's beneficence or compassion are not given at the actor's wishes but rather at the request of the receiver.

Respecting others in their ability to be self-determinant means that I would not assume to know when someone needs help and so would not interject with assistance *without being asked* but that does not mean that I would not assist at all. If anything, my respect for someone would make me more aware of their needs and more responsive to their calls for assistance. One can both respect the autonomous nature of others and still be compassionate, if not more compassionate.

### *Permission from one or from all*

In the discussion of the Sue and Jane case, I mention that Jane seems to act against Sue's interest by not receiving some sort of permission to speak for Sue. It would seem impossible for any person to engage in ally work if it were the case that they always need permission to act. This concern while worth examining may be ill-framed. One point of this project is to emphasize that allyship ought to be targeting policies, rules, and beliefs that codify oppression and not directly focused on those who are oppressed. So, when an ally is seeking to call out say a restaurant for not being accessible to all people, then the ally should do so from an objective sort of standpoint rather than as the spokesperson for any one individual. If any ally is seeking to advocate for some person directly, then they ought to have that person's permission to speak for them as they should when speaking for anyone any other time.

If allies are supposed to speak against oppressive policy etc. from a sort of objective standpoint, then that assumes that the oppressed communities have some unified standpoint to advocate from. No oppressed group has one unified vision for how to fight their oppression and what issues they want to address and in what order, so it seems that if allies are to follow the lead of these communities in advocating against oppressive policies, then that allyship comes to a grinding halt.

While I reject the idea that there is some static answer to this concern I think there are features of this view that might help lay the groundwork towards resolving this larger issue. Allies engaging in allyship rooted in respect would constantly be listening to the leaders of social justice movements and their proposals instead of trying to lead themselves. In listening and taking a back-seat, allies would be able to gather knowledge about a variety of issues that oppressed populations face. While there may be debate say around how to protest police violence against People of Color, it is beyond doubt that police violence is an issue. In this way, allies can listen for a harmonizing around issues and then address them. Allies will mess up, but allies who

understand that their actions must be rooted in respect will keep their ears open to critique from oppressed communities because the allies recognize that most importantly these communities have the right to determine how we are to advocate on their behalf.

Allies then would have some education on these issues from listening to those who are actually experiencing them. From there, in theory, allies would then be able to speak on these issues from an objective point of view. Allies should though always acknowledge that are merely echoing the voices of those who are oppressed. Allies do not own the narrative of those who are oppressed.

### *Allyship and Severe Cognitive Disabilities*

The last objection that I take up here is focused on the outcomes that follow from basing allyship in respect where respect is relational to the rational agential powers of persons. Individuals who are born with severe and profound cognitive disabilities have always been oppressed and cast down in society. People with such disabilities are extremely vulnerable and are in extreme need of individuals to advocate on their behalf to protect them from harm. Yet, a conception of allyship where allyship is rooted in recognizing the inherent value of persons via their rational agency seems unable to account for how to ally for individuals with cognitive disabilities. One may then be tempted to say that this conception of allyship as rooted in respect for the rationality of persons must be rejected.

Such an objection should not be taken lightly. It seems correct to conclude that the conception of allyship I have so forth supported would entail that one could not be an ally to individuals with severe cognitive disabilities because they are unable to be rational agents in the ways that ground respect and so allyship. Initially, I also think that it is not incorrect to say that we, strictly speaking, cannot be allies with severely cognitively disabled individuals. Someone who is severely cognitively disabled one is unable to set and pursue ends in any way. We can advocate on their behalf and represent what we believe to be in their best interest, but we cannot build movements of solidarity with them.

This is not to say that individuals of such cognitive functioning are not deserving of moral awareness and can be treated in ways that are inhumane. Society, as a matter of justice, say, must address the issues that face people with severe cognitive disabilities. Perhaps there are ways in which we owe respect to individuals with severe cognitive disabilities, and maybe that

respect is not different from the respect that is owed to rational agents. These are concerns and questions that must be addressed and they are deserving of their own projects. These remarks are simply initial reflections on the matter.

## CONCLUSION

I began this thesis by saying that our society sits at a crossroads where we must either continue to bend the moral arc towards justice or face the turning back of all the progress that has been made so far. Now more than ever, a moral revival is needed. A small part of this revival is the work that allies do in solidarity with oppressed communities. Allyship, however, has found itself the center of many critiques that seem to leave the practice itself morally bankrupt. In this thesis I have attempted to propose a possible step towards a reframing of allyship that can address one of these critiques.

In the first chapter I laid out Keith Edward's Model for Social Justice Allyship as an example for how allyship is often framed and discussed. After which I proposed possible moral attitudes that may play motivating roles in allyship. Chapter two takes up the issue of re-centering by surveying the literature on how this practice takes place in allyship. The goal of chapter two was to clarify exactly what it meant for an ally to re-center their privilege and then to offer an argument for why such a phenomenon is problematic to allyship. Chapter three has the crux of the thesis. I sought to first explain why allyship motivated by either beneficence or love would be problematic and unable to address the issue of re-centering. I attempted to refrain from wholly denouncing any role for these attitudes in allyship but concluded that whatever role they might play it is not the most central. Ultimately it appeared that only respect could capture both our paradigmatic understanding of what allyship was as well as providing a framework that would address the issue of re-centering. Chapter three concludes with a discussion of how the respect that motivates allyship is best understood as being both a positive respect and a negative respect. The final chapter presents a brief and hopefully clearer picture about allyship rooted in respect. After which I took up possible concerns to this proposed conception of allyship.

In the end I must state that give all of this discussion being an ally is a complex role, and it is something that one cannot easily navigate. For the individuals who live lives of oppression and marginalization, allies are invaluable to reforming systems and cultures, but these allies are interacting with peoples' lives and cultures, and they are complex. Some individuals live their lives proudly, educating and fighting at every turn, while some choose to hide. It is this diversity that makes allyship difficult to navigate. Allies seek to respect those they are trying to help and doing so requires both positive respect and negative respect. Being an ally requires appreciating those who society typically doesn't, sharing their stories, and creating spaces for communication.

Being an ally also requires not intruding on those marginalized individuals who may not want to speak about their lived experience, it also involves not intruding on these individuals' prerogatives, or violating their privacy. Given all of this, though, surely, we can be united in the idea that there is work to be done on our march towards a better tomorrow.

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## **VITA**

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