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What should allies do? Identifying activist perspectives on the role of white allies in the struggle for racial justice in the United States

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Abstract

The present research examined the perspectives of both White and Black racial justice activists on the roles of White allies in the struggle for justice for Black people in the United States. Study 1 used Q methodology, a mixed-methods approach, which identified four distinct perspectives about the role of White allies from a sample of activists (33 White and 22 Black Americans): (1) mobilize to support Black leadership, (2) interpersonal activism, (3) avoid dominating Black people's efforts, and (4) lifelong learning. In Study 2, we interviewed activists (22 White and 12 Black Americans) to understand their evaluation of, and preference for, each of perspective identified in Study 1. Thematic analyses showed that each perspective had its pros and cons regarding considerations of how to best use ingroup advantages without dominating the movement. Our findings contribute to our understanding of potential tensions in solidarity-based social movements.

KEYWORDS
allies, intergroup relations, Q methodology, racial justice, social change, social movements

1 | INTRODUCTION

The Black Lives Matter movement in the United States has reinvigorated debates about the role of White allies in collective efforts toward racial justice. Considerations about how White people can support racial justice have surfaced in activist circles, academic scholarship, and broader contemporary culture. Numerous guidelines have been produced on how White people can be effective allies to Black people (e.g., Ariel, 2017; Utt, 2013), such as by actively listening to Black people's experiences and strategically using one's privilege to confront racism. Scholars and activists have also discussed how White allies might at times cause more harm than good when they engage in activism without acknowledging their privilege (Droogendyk et al., 2016). These

discussions indicate there may be a range of views about the role of White allies. The goal of the present research was to begin identifying different perspectives that Black and White activists hold about the role of White allies in racial justice efforts in the United States.

Considering how advantaged group members can be involved within a movement—from the perspective of *both* advantaged and disadvantaged group members—is important because intergroup solidarity for social change ultimately involves White allies working together (either directly or indirectly) with racial minorities. Evaluating the perspective of both sides may help movements address and ameliorate potential tensions that can arise during intergroup solidarity and subsequently promote more successful solidarity-based collective action by making explicit any assumptions people have about the role

of allies. It may also illuminate the ways in which intergroup power dynamics in society may surface within activist spaces and how it matters for a movement to negotiate the involvement of allies that hold greater privilege in society.

It is important to point out that the participation of White people within a racial justice movement is not straightforward. First, there are legitimate reasons for excluding allies when their involvement is not in line with the goals of a movement. After all, an important first step to collective action is having a strong consensus within a group on the interpretation of their shared disadvantage (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). The priority may be to focus on intragroup (i.e., between Black people) rather than intergroup solidarity (i.e., between Black and White people; see Hamilton & Ture, 2011). However, regardless of whether White people *should* be involved in racial justice activism, we start with the observation that White Americans *are* already involved in this manner (e.g., Brown, 2002; Kivel, 2017). Second, although we examine the perspective of both Black and White activists, we must note that the views of both sides cannot, in practice, be equally weighted in minority-led movements (Robinson, 2013). With this in mind, in the following sections, we review relevant literature on the involvement of advantaged group members within social change efforts.

1.1 | Involving advantaged group members in social change efforts

Various social psychological models on social change have argued that the process of achieving social change in part involves a disadvantaged group seeking to mobilize support from the broader population, and this includes advantaged group members (Mugny & Perez, 1991; Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Subašić et al., 2008). Achieving the goal of intergroup equality and justice calls for advantaged group members to give up at least a portion of their status and power, just as much as it involves disadvantaged group members gaining in these respects. Focusing on the involvement of advantaged group members in social change efforts also avoids the assumption that disadvantaged group members should be the primary agents in solving problems of inequality and injustice, and instead highlights the need to understand the roles and responsibilities that advantaged group members have in this task.

Traditionally, a large portion of the literature thus far has focused on understanding the psychological factors that mobilize advantaged group members to advocate for social change (e.g., Leach et al., 2006; Selvanathan et al., 2018; Thomas et al., 2009). More recently, there is emergent research on the impact of ally involvement, in terms of how disadvantaged group members perceive (e.g., Brown, 2015; Brown & Ostrove, 2013; Burns & Granz, 2022) and respond to the involvement of allies within social movements (Iyer & Achia, 2020; Kutlaca et al., 2022; Park et al., 2022; Wiley & Dunne, 2019). This work has shown that disadvantaged group members tend to prefer allies who help in a way that empowers their beneficiaries, take on supportive roles rather than leadership roles, and do not exert high degrees of influence within a movement. What this suggests is that people's views about how allies should ideally be involved within a movement (i.e.,

what sort of behaviors they should or should not engage in) is sensitive to the fact that allies come from a high-power group and should be wary not to reproduce power imbalances within activist spaces.

The inclusion of advantaged group allies in social change efforts can have its drawbacks, even when their actions are well-intentioned. Advantaged group members may (intentionally or not) take over or co-opt resistance movements that are led by disadvantaged group members, for example, by imbuing the advantaged group's identity, values, and goals in a movement meant to serve the interests of a disadvantaged group (Droogendyk et al., 2016; Ufkes et al., 2016). A key concern among activists from disadvantaged groups is that advantaged group members should not "speak for" the disadvantaged group that they seek to support (Alcoff, 1991; Spivak, 1988). Relatedly, advantaged group members may seek to solve problems faced by disadvantaged groups, without ultimately challenging unequal status relations in society (Nadler & Halabi, 2006; Wiley & Dunne, 2019). Seemingly prosocial behaviors can sustain group-based hierarchies if they fail to empower disadvantaged group members to advocate for their ingroup interests.

Furthermore, advantaged and disadvantaged group members typically approach intergroup relations in divergent ways (Dovidio et al., 2009; Shelton et al., 2006) due to their different levels of group-based power and privilege. This can have important implications for perspectives on the role of advantaged group allies in social change efforts (Droogendyk et al., 2016; Selvanathan et al., 2020). Advantaged group allies may also have different motivations to participate in actions for the disadvantaged group, some of which can contradict the goals of a movement—such as seeking to assuage feelings of group-based guilt or to protect the ingroup's moral image (Radke et al., 2020). Thus, advantaged and disadvantaged groups may have unique concerns that can shape their approach to social change. Beyond identifying group-based differences, there is also a need to examine whether there are perspectives that advantaged and disadvantaged group members share. Examining the possibility of shared viewpoints beyond racial divides may help us understand how effective coalitions can form within a racial justice movement. Our approach is therefore complementary to prior research on divergent intergroup perspectives (Saguy et al., 2008).

1.2 | The present research

In response to Black people being disproportionately targeted by the police in the United States, the Black Lives Matter movement emerged in 2013 to fight for the rights and dignity of Black people. Within this context, we explored Black and White activists' perspectives about the role of White allies in the ongoing struggle for justice for Black people in the United States. It is important to note that our research was not comprehensive of all potential White allyship roles. We explicitly focused on roles commonly acknowledged and discussed in activist circles, social media, and academic scholarship. Further, our samples were largely female, well-educated, left-leaning activists from Western Massachusetts. This is certainly not representative of White and Black

activists in the racial justice movement across the United States. However, there is evidence that young, highly educated women tend to be at the forefront of such progressive movements (Horowitz, 2021).

Our goal was to identify and elaborate on the socially shared perspectives that exist about the role of White allies within racial justice movements. In doing so, we examined similarities (if any) across perspectives, as well as any differences within and across Black and White people's perspectives. In Study 1, we used Q methodology, an exploratory technique that combines qualitative and quantitative approaches to identify socially shared viewpoints on an issue (Brown, 1993), to identify the different perspectives on the role of White allies among both White and Black racial justice activists. Q methodology allows participants to represent their perspective holistically as it requires simultaneously evaluating different views on the topic and rank-ordering them (Watts & Stenner, 2005; Webler et al., 2009). From this, we developed narratives to capture the different perspectives (see Baker et al., 2010; Danielson, 2009). In Study 2, we conducted interviews with Black and White racial justice activists to understand their attitudes toward these different narratives. Data and study materials are openly available on the Open Science Framework at https://osf.io/jk5mr/

2 | STUDY 1

2.1 | METHOD

2.1.1 | Participants

Several recruitment methods were employed to identify participants who met two eligibility criteria: (1) self-identified as either a White or Black American, and (2) were involved in the struggle for racial justice (e.g., participated in at least one racial justice protest). Participants were recruited via local activist organizations, the university research participation pool, personal contacts, and referrals from other participants. Through this process, 55 participants (33 White Americans and 22 Black Americans) active in racial justice efforts were recruited from the Western Massachusetts area between December 2016 and November 2017. Our sample size was in line with the recommendation to have 40–60 participants for Q method studies (Shinebourne, 2009). Participants' age ranged from 18 to 78 years old ($M = 23.00$, $SD = 11.36$). Most participants identified as female (51 females, three males, and one did not specify gender). On average, participants were on the left side of the political spectrum ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 1.36$, on a scale from 1 = *Left* to 10 = *Right*). Participants were slightly above the midpoint on levels of activist identification (four items; $\alpha_{Black} = 0.82$; $\alpha_{White} = 0.87$; $M = 3.91$, $SD = 0.68$, on a scale from 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*). Most had participated in racial justice efforts at least several times (5 items; $\alpha_{Black} = 0.70$; $\alpha_{White} = 0.72$; $M = 3.15$, $SD = 1.16$, $Mo = 4.00$) and rated their participation on a scale from 1 (*never*), 2 (*at least once*), 3 (*two or three times*), 4 (*four or five times*), and 5 (*more than five times*).
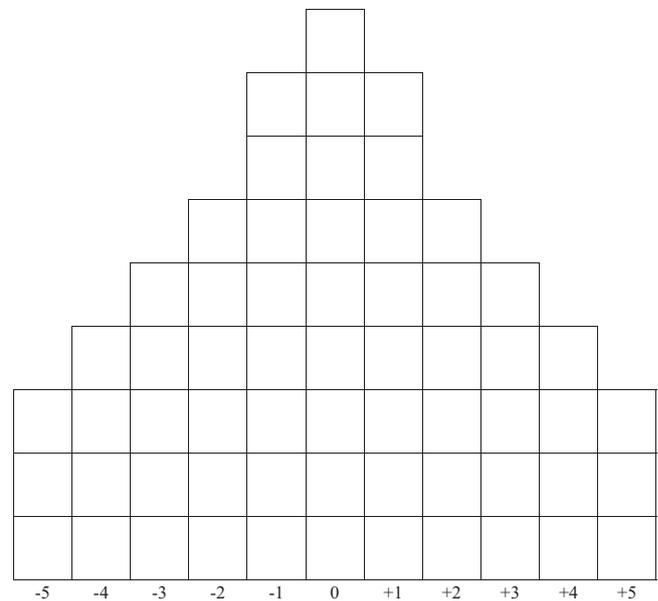
FIGURE 1 Normally distributed pattern used for the sorting task in Study 1

2.1.2 | Materials

As a first step, we developed statements on the desired roles of White allies in efforts for racial justice based on various sources that came from diverse perspectives: (1) research articles about activism, intergroup solidarity, and White privilege; (2) books on the experiences of Black and White activists in racial justice efforts; (3) blogs, commentaries, or opinion articles discussing White people's responsibilities; (4) mission statements from racial justice organizations; (5) news reports on racial justice protests; and (6) social media discussions about White people in racial justice efforts. Drawing on these sources, we first compiled 50 statements about the various recommended or desired roles of White allies. To avoid researcher bias in deciding which statements to keep, we consulted five experts who were academics and/or activists and had conducted research on racial justice. We asked them whether the statements were comprehensive, clear, and distinct from one another and to nominate any potentially missing issues. After expert evaluations, we added additional statements resulting in a total of 61 statements, which is consistent with the recommended amount of 40–80 statements (Shinebourne, 2009).

For the sorting task, we numbered and printed each statement on a small card. We also created a large board with a normally distributed sorting pattern ranging from −5 (most unimportant) to +5 (most important), with the 0 (neutral/neither unimportant nor important) as the midpoint (see Figure 1) with the following instructions printed: "In your opinion, when thinking about what White people should do in the struggle for justice for Black people, how important or unimportant are each of the following roles?" Using this distribution, participants sorted the statements along a continuum with pairs of opposites on each end (see Shemmings, 2006).

2.1.3 | Procedure

Each data collection session, which was with one participant at a time, took between 45 and 60 min and was conducted either in the psychology lab at the university or at a convenient public place chosen by the participant (e.g., café, library). All but one research assistants were White and female. The main researcher who interacted with participants was neither White nor Black (i.e., a racial outgroup member for all participants).

First, participants were asked to read each statement and make three piles based on whether they found the role to be important, unimportant, or felt neutral/unsure about them. The researcher encouraged participants to verbalize any reactions they had to the statements. Participants then placed specific statements from each pile on the board and were free to rearrange the statements at any time until they were happy with the placement of all 61 statements.

After participants were satisfied with their sorting pattern, they completed a paper-and-pencil survey, while the researcher recorded the participant's sorting pattern. All participants except one (who could not complete the survey because they were in a rush) completed the survey. On the survey, participants were asked the following open-ended questions to aid the interpretation of their Q sorts: "Why did you sort these three specific statements on the most important part of the cardboard?" "Why did you sort these three specific statements on the most unimportant part of the cardboard?" and "Do you want to include any perspectives that are not represented in the study but make your personal view on this issue clearer?" After completing the survey,[1] participants were thanked and compensated with either a $10 cash reward or extra credit for undergraduate courses.

2.1.4 | Analyses

In Q methodology, factor analyses are conducted on participants' Q sorts, such that each extracted factor represents a perspective that is shared among participants who load onto that factor. While there are a number of factor rotation techniques, Varimax rotation is the most common as it aims to produce the most informative solution (mathematically) that tends to ease the interpretation of factors (Akhtar-Danesh, 2017). Another form of factor rotation includes manual/theoretical rotation, which aims to accentuate the differences between factors (Watts & Stenner, 2005) and is typically used when there is an underlying theoretical framework informing the factor structure (Akhtar-Danesh, 2017).

It should be noted that in Q methodology, the factor loadings do not have the same meaning and implications as a typical factor analysis (see Cuppen et al., 2010). Since each Q sort represents a person's viewpoint on the topic and not specific characteristics or traits as in ordinary factor analyses, an inverted form of factor analysis is conducted (i.e., a by-person factor analysis; see Newman & Ramlo, 2010). The analysis involves determining the correlation between Q sorts, which is then subjected to factor analysis. The factor loadings represent participants' viewpoints, and as such, the factor analysis identifies "people factors" rather than "variable factors."

In this study, each completed Q sort was entered into PQMethod, a software that is used to analyze Q sorts (Schmolck & Atkinson, 2014). We used Principal Components Factor Analysis (PCA) which considers both particularities and commonalities among individual Q sorts, and Varimax rotation which allows the researcher to produce a simple structure, maximizing the eigenvalue for each factor (Akhtar-Danesh, 2017). Finally, the idealized Q sorts, z-scores for each statement, and distinguishing statements were inspected to determine the final number of factors. Webler et al. (2009) recommended four criteria for determining the final number of factors: It is better to have (1) fewer factors to represent different viewpoints (i.e., simplicity), (2) individual Q sorts that load highly and uniquely onto one factor (i.e., clarity), (3) relatively low correlations between factors, and (4) participants who tended to load onto the same factor when different number of factors were extracted (i.e., stability). Following these four criteria, we decided that a four-factor solution was ideal.

2.2 | Results

In Q methodology, an acceptable level of explained variance is generally considered to be 35%–40% or above (Kline, 1994). In our study, the four-factor solution explained 50% of the variance, with 26 participants loading onto one of the four factors (see Table 1 for the factor loadings). In Q methodology, each factor should have at least two defining Q sorts to qualify as a socially shared viewpoint (Webler et al., 2009). Most participants' Q sorts that did not load clearly onto one factor had multiple loadings. This suggests that some participants subscribed to a mix of the viewpoints described below (e.g., participants 10W & 15W, see Table 1). Only two participants did not have any factor loading of at least 0.40, which suggests idiosyncratic views. We made sure that there was at least 0.20 difference between the loadings of a Q sort on different factors (i.e., clarity; Webler et al., 2009).

The correlations between the factors are presented in Table 2. Some of the factors were highly correlated but this is not uncommon in Q methodology (see, e.g., Uluğ & Cohrs, 2017a), and it should be noted that Varimax rotation does not guarantee that the resulting factors are uncorrelated. Below, we interpreted and discussed each factor based on the (1) most important and most unimportant statements, (2) distinguishing statements, and (3) participants' verbal or written survey comments (see Table 3 for the z-scores for each statement across factors). In Q methodology, a distinguishing statement is a statement for which its score on that factor is significantly different from its score on any other factor (Akhtar-Danesh et al., 2008; see also Shemmings, 2006). This score can be at the opposite ends (e.g., +5, −5) or in the middle of the distribution (e.g., 0) depending on how that item was sorted in the idealized Q sorts. When quoting participants, we refer to them with a unique participant code consisting of a number and letter to indicate their race (i.e., B = Black, W = White). Within each factor, only

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[1] See Online Supplemental Materials for additional analyses of close-ended measures describing our sample.

TABLE 1 Factor loadings and participant characteristics in Study 1

ID	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Race	Age	Activist identification	Activism behaviors
1	0.22	**0.70X**	0.08	−0.06	Black	19	4.50	3.00
2	**0.62X**	0.18	0.19	−0.02	Black	20	4.00	4.67
3	0.27	−0.13	0.41	**0.64X**	Black	20	5.00	4.00
4	**0.68X**	0.04	0.26	0.26	White	19	4.50	3.33
5	0.24	0.40	0.11	0.47	Black	19	4.25	3.00
6	0.29	−0.10	0.26	0.31	Black	20	5.00	5.00
7	0.11	**0.62X**	0.16	0.23	White	21	3.25	2.00
8	0.43	0.11	0.41	0.39	Black	19	4.25	4.33
9	0.36	0.17	−0.08	**0.65X**	White	54	3.75	4.00
10	0.48	0.08	0.27	0.39	White	43	4.00	4.33
11	0.08	0.12	**0.47X**	0.23	White	18	5.00	5.00
12	**0.67X**	0.07	0.28	0.29	White	37	2.75	4.33
13	0.09	0.03	0.10	**0.81X**	White	78	3.75	4.67
14	0.20	0.52	0.13	0.39	Black	18	4.75	2.67
15	0.24	0.48	0.29	0.29	White	63	3.25	4.33
16	0.17	0.09	0.40	0.33	White	19	4.25	4.00
17	**0.65X**	0.45	−0.04	0.11	White	21	5.00	3.33
18	0.11	0.49	0.50	0.17	Black	20	4.75	2.67
19	0.29	0.33	0.38	−0.01	White	18	4.00	5.00
20	0.41	0.44	0.18	0.12	White	19	5.00	4.33
21	0.41	−0.03	**0.69X**	0.17	Black	19	3.50	2.67
22	**0.76X**	0.32	0.07	0.18	White	20	4.00	4.33
23	0.50	0.43	−0.02	−0.02	White	22	4.00	3.33
24	−0.14	0.16	0.51	0.58	White	27	3.50	2.67
25	0.17	**0.57X**	0.29	0.03	Black	20	3.50	1.33
26	**0.57X**	0.33	0.32	0.22	White	20	3.75	3.33
27	0.57	0.49	0.18	0.22	White	–	–	–
28	0.11	0.04	0.27	0.44	Black	19	4.50	1.67
29	0.29	0.40	0.04	0.17	Black	21	4.00	2.67
30	0.20	0.46	0.34	0.03	White	18	3.50	4.00
31	−0.07	**0.59X**	0.22	−0.13	Black	18	3.25	1.33
32	0.32	0.49	−0.18	0.45	White	20	4.75	2.67
33	0.35	0.14	0.21	0.51	White	19	5.00	3.33
34	0.56	0.11	0.43	0.33	White	22	3.50	4.00
35	0.25	**0.69X**	−0.05	0.23	Black	18	3.50	1.33
36	−0.00	**0.44X**	0.00	0.15	Black	20	3.00	2.33
37	0.14	**0.72X**	0.11	−0.00	White	19	4.00	1.00
38	0.25	**0.66X**	0.07	−0.17	White	20	4.00	2.67
39	0.46	0.59	−0.17	0.14	White	19	3.25	2.33
40	0.21	0.53	0.42	0.26	White	19	4.00	5.00
41	**0.63X**	0.11	0.04	0.41	White	21	4.00	3.67
42	0.41	0.54	0.23	0.05	White	18	3.25	1.00
43	0.45	0.24	0.06	0.44	White	19	3.00	4.00

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

ID	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Race	Age	Activist identification	Activism behaviors
44	0.24	0.22	**0.50X**	−0.14	White	18	3.00	2.00
45	0.31	**0.53X**	0.17	0.32	White	20	4.00	2.33
46	0.15	0.07	**0.68X**	0.15	Black	18	3.75	2.33
47	0.01	**0.53X**	0.19	0.05	Black	23	3.50	3.00
48	−0.11	0.41	0.47	−0.10	White	19	2.00	1.00
49	0.51	0.19	0.36	0.30	White	20	5.00	3.33
50	0.36	0.33	0.05	0.50	Black	23	3.50	5.00
51	0.13	**0.65X**	−0.06	0.34	White	21	4.50	3.33
52	**0.64X**	0.24	0.24	0.17	Black	20	3.75	2.00
53	0.45	0.17	0.25	0.38	Black	19	4.00	2.67
54	0.26	0.08	0.44	0.34	Black	19	3.00	2.67
55	0.09	0.62	−0.05	0.56	Black	19	3.25	2.00

Note. Factor loadings marked with X indicates that the participant loaded onto that factor.

TABLE 2 Correlations between the factors (idealized Q sorts) in Study 1

Factor	1	2	3	4
1	–			
2	0.52	–		
3	0.52	0.29	–	
4	0.47	0.22	0.35	–

quotes from participants whose Q sort significantly loaded onto that factor were used to help interpret the distinguishing statements.

2.2.1 | Factor 1: Mobilize to support Black leadership

Factor 1 explained 14% of the variance. Of the eight participants who loaded onto this factor, two identified as Black, and six identified as White. According to this perspective, it is important for White people to take various actions to support Black people, both at the interpersonal and at the collective levels. Interpersonally, when witnessing racist incidents, they should intervene (statement 25) and offer support to those targeted by racism (statement 26). Taking such actions was deemed important because White people hold greater power and privilege in society compared to racial minorities. It was viewed as important for White allies to collectively use their power and privilege by attending protests for racial justice (statement 28) and voting for political candidates who support justice for Black people (statement 30). In contrast to the other factors, Factor 1 emphasizes taking various actions alongside Black people.

Additionally, from this perspective, Black people are recognized as the *leaders* of efforts for social change, whereas White people should be *followers*. As such, it is *not* important to be equal partners with Black people (statement 20). One of the White participants explained that they would take a larger role if asked by Black people, but until then, they would show up and follow Black people's leadership. Further, it is *not* important for White people to lead racial justice efforts together with Black people (statement 21), criticize strategies proposed by Black people (statement 22), or suggest ideas to Black people on ways to address racial injustices (statement 57). This underscores the importance of actively listening to the experiences and perspectives of Black people (statement 10).

Beyond the emphasis on supporting Black people, this perspective also focuses on engaging with other White people to build a strong support base in the movement. It is important to put pressure on White people to be accountable (statement 27) and teach other White people about their responsibilities to address racial issues (statement 6). For example, participant 27W said, "if we don't hold ourselves and each other accountable then we won't get far." In line with this, it is *not* as important to distance oneself from other White people who are denying racial discrimination (statement 47) or to call out White people who are engaging in racist rhetoric (statement 37). Participant 4W explained her view: "I can use my privilege to start conversations with these people and just ignoring them only perpetuates the problem." Thus, this perspective focuses on critically engaging with White people in a way that will educate and hold them responsible for acting against racism, without alienating or reprimanding them for their mistakes. Taken together, Factor 1 is about White people taking various actions to support Black people as leaders of the movement while simultaneously reaching out to other White people to include them within the movement.

2.2.2 | Factor 2: Interpersonal activism

This factor explained 16% of the variance. Of the 11 participants who loaded onto this factor, seven identified as Black and four identified as

TABLE 3 Z-scores of the statements for each factor in Study 1

Statements	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
1. Participate in classes, seminars, discussion groups, and workshops that focus on racial issues	−0.47	−0.19	−0.51	**1.59**
2. Read articles, books or watch films/documentaries about racism	−0.28	**−0.75**	0.09	**1.28**
3. Learn about what Black people want from White people's involvement in the struggle for justice for Black people	0.58	0.86	**2.01**	0.45
4. Learn about the history of Whiteness and racism	**0.09**	0.80	0.83	**1.85**
5. Work among White communities to encourage more White people to be involved in efforts for racial justice	0.23	−0.48	−0.82	0.36
6. Teach other White people about their responsibility to confront racism	0.75	0.42	**−0.98**	**1.38**
7. Engage with other White people in conversation about race	0.03	−0.46	−0.24	**1.14**
8. Refer other White people to reputable sources for learning more about racial justice issues (e.g.: websites, articles, books)	−0.28	−0.00	**−1.41**	**0.92**
9. Stay silent and try not to be the bigger voice when it is not White people's place to speak	−0.08	**−1.87**	**1.91**	0.27
10. Actively listen to the experiences and perspectives of Black people, rather than sharing White people's own opinions and experiences	1.57	**0.15**	2.15	1.95
11. Be aware of White privilege in different contexts in everyday life	**0.45**	1.04	1.24	1.27
12. Verbally acknowledge White privilege in different situations	0.29	**−0.39**	0.48	0.67
13. Follow the resistance strategies decided by Black leaders, without questioning them	−0.70	−1.65	**0.24**	−1.20
14. Avoid taking up too much space during protests for racial justice	**0.04**	**−2.04**	**1.10**	**−0.73**
15. Stand behind Black people during protests for racial justice	0.24	−0.42	0.33	−0.38
16. Always follow non-violent strategies, even if Black people do not	−1.37	**0.18**	−0.81	−0.64
17. Avoid talking to people in the media during a protest, and instead direct media attention to Black leadership	−0.59	**−2.09**	0.09	−0.08
18. Make joint decisions with Black people on strategies of the movement	−1.38	**-0.34**	−1.15	−1.27
19. Be a spokesperson on racial justice issues only when a Black person is a spokesperson on the same issue too	−1.40	−1.79	−1.65	−1.20
20. Be equal partners with Black people in protests, without having White people play a lesser or different role	−1.85	**0.40**	**−0.27**	−1.54
21. Lead the racial justice protests together with Black people	**−1.67**	**0.52**	−0.62	−0.92
22. Be able to criticize strategies that are proposed by Black leaders	**−2.16**	**−1.13**	**−1.35**	**−1.54**
23. Confront the racist incident(s), not the person(s) who committed the racist behaviors	**−1.37**	0.92	**0.06**	−0.61
24. Report racist incidents to the authorities	0.98	0.96	0.41	**−1.10**
25. Intervene when witnessing racial prejudice or discrimination (e.g.: jokes, conversations, actions)	1.38	1.63	0.83	0.48
26. When witnessing racist incidents against Black people, offer support to Black people who are targeted	**1.67**	**1.13**	−0.07	0.00
27. Put pressure on White people to be accountable if they make a mistake	**1.29**	−0.26	−0.07	**−0.94**
28. Attend demonstrations, protests or rallies about racial justice issues	1.09	0.45	0.59	0.96
29. Boycott products or services that are racist	**0.45**	−0.53	−0.51	0.52
30. Vote for political candidates and support policies that advance racial justice	1.51	1.20	0.58	0.85
31. Sign online petitions or signature campaigns related to racial issues	−1.37	−0.28	−0.82	−1.63
32. Share content supporting racial justice on social media (e.g.: videos, photos, articles, hashtags)	−0.65	−0.56	−0.56	**0.53**
33. Follow or subscribe to Black activists on social media pages or websites (e.g.: Facebook, Twitter, blogs)	**−1.29**	−0.67	−0.25	−0.13
34. Call out or report White people who are posting racist content online (e.g.: comments, videos)	**0.44**	**0.93**	−0.74	−0.97
35. Work on overcoming personal prejudices, biases and ignorance	0.90	2.21	2.01	0.62
36. Reflect on personal experiences of oppression to connect with the oppression that racial minorities face	**−1.70**	0.01	**−2.35**	−0.49

(Continues)

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Statements	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
37. Recognize the mutual interests that White and Black people have in fighting for racial justice	−0.56	**0.83**	−0.57	−0.89
38. Engage in risky acts of protests and confronting racism, even when it is difficult (e.g., stand between the police and Black people during a demonstration)	**0.40**	−0.96	−0.54	−0.70
39. Show up at incidents where Blacks are likely to be targets of discrimination or violence (e.g., when Black people organize a protest)	**0.79**	−0.13	**−1.08**	−0.09
40. Organize other White people to participate in racial justice efforts	0.01	−0.23	−0.68	0.36
41. Join a group or an organization committed to ending racism	0.91	−0.14	−0.11	1.06
42. Help Black people in racial justice efforts, without just picking and choosing the actions that are the most convenient	0.51	1.03	1.09	0.34
43. Commit to anti-racism as a lifelong process	1.62	0.30	0.32	1.59
44. Deliberately join institutions (workplaces, schools, organizations) that have anti-racist values	0.29	−0.35	−0.19	**0.97**
45. Consciously choose to live in racially-integrated neighbourhoods	−0.75	−1.27	−1.59	−0.56
46. Build accountable and trusting relationships with Black people	0.52	0.92	0.65	0.88
47. Distance oneself from other White people who are denying that racism is a problem	−0.49	−0.08	−0.13	**−1.99**
48. Provide emotional support to Black friends who are targets of racism	0.92	1.30	0.69	0.48
49. Interact with Black people in a respectful manner	1.05	1.61	1.45	**0.39**
50. Apologize for mistakes made during interactions with Black people (e.g.: engaging in racist behaviors or making offensive comments)	0.56	0.94	**−0.33**	**−1.49**
51. Avoid getting defensive if Black people question White people's motivations	−0.19	−0.39	**0.51**	−0.26
52. Avoid getting defensive if Black people question White people's motivations	**−0.49**	−1.76	**0.28**	−1.49
53. Learn about White activists who have worked for, or who are currently working for racial justice	−1.19	−0.72	−1.09	**0.42**
54. Learn about Black activists who have worked for, or who are currently working for racial justice	−0.27	−0.51	0.32	0.65
55. Avoid assuming what strategies or solutions are best for Black people	**−0.09**	**−0.57**	**1.19**	**0.46**
56. Learn about racial issues without expecting Black people to educate White people	**−0.12**	0.36	1.40	0.83
57. Able to suggest ideas to Black people in addressing racial injustice (e.g.: protest strategies, policy recommendations)	−1.83	**0.02**	**−1.03**	−2.03
58. Use politically correct or inclusive language in daily life	1.03	**1.76**	0.75	0.20
59. Create safe spaces within the community for Black people	1.58	1.70	**−0.84**	**0.05**
60. Donate money to an organization dedicated to fighting for racial justice	−0.39	−0.60	**−1.44**	0.14
61. Show alliance with Black people in public when necessary	0.79	0.76	1.17	**−0.04**

Note. Z-scores in bold were significantly different from other z-scores ($p < .05$), indicating distinguishing statements for that factor.

White. This perspective emphasizes taking actions that focus on the needs and well-being of Black people. One way to do this is by creating safe spaces within the community for Black people (statement 59), as participant 1B said, "it is very important for Black people to feel safe wherever they are or in whatever they do." Similarly, it is important to intervene in potentially racist situations (statements 25 and 24) and provide support to Black friends who are targets of racism (statement 48). When interacting with Black people, White people should be respectful (statement 49), use politically correct language in everyday life (statement 58), and apologize for any mistakes made during these interactions (statement 50). From physical space to everyday interactions, it was viewed as White people's responsibility to be sensitive about the needs of Black people.

Complementing the focus on Black people's needs, this perspective prioritizes self-reflection among White people. People should work on overcoming their own personal prejudice and ignorance

(statement 25) to advance social change. Similarly, participant 46W explained that building accountable relationships with Black people (statement 46) is important because "one of the best ways to combat your own biases is to immerse yourself in the world of another," and friendships with Black people can also "send a message to bystanders that this polarized society can be broken." Self-change was viewed as closely connected to creating broader societal change.

This perspective is also cognizant of White people's privilege (statement 11) and advocates using this privilege to shed light on Black people's struggles. People who loaded highly on this factor generally did *not* advocate for limiting the roles that White people may have during efforts for social change. For example, it is *not* important to avoid taking up space (statement 14) or stay silent when it is not White people's place to speak up (statement 9). Similarly, participant 36B said that the role, avoiding talking to the media during protests (statement

17), was seen as unimportant because White people "have such an influential voice, they shouldn't stay quiet."

In addition, this perspective is more focused on building relationships with Black people rather than with White people. In terms of engaging with White people, it is important to monitor their potentially harmful behaviors by calling them out (statement 34). Yet, it is not as important to engage White people in discussions about race (statement 7) or mobilize them to be involved in such efforts (statements 5 and 40). This perspective is similar to Factor 1, in that both factors focus on taking actions to support Black people. Even though the correlation between these two factors is high ($r = 0.52$; see Table 2), these perspectives diverge in the relative importance placed on whether and how to engage with White people. Factor 1 views educating and mobilizing White people as a more central role for White people, while Factor 2 emphasizes minimizing the negative consequences of White people's racist behaviors.

2.2.3 | Factor 3: Avoid dominating Black people's efforts

This factor explained 9% of the variance. Of the four participants who loaded onto this factor, two identified as Black and two identified as White. In this perspective, the key focus is on understanding what Black people need from White people (statement 3). In line with this, there is a strong emphasis on listening to the experiences and perspectives of Black people (statement 10) and interacting with Black people in a respectful manner (statement 49), as participant 47W said, "the first step to social justice is respect." In contrast to the other two factors, Factor 3 is characterized by *avoiding* actions that may be harmful to advancing racial justice. For example, White people should *not* assume the strategies or solutions that are best for Black people (statement 55), *not* take up too much space during protests (statement 14), and *not* be the bigger voice (statement 9).

Yet, this perspective does not suggest that White people should be passive. Rather, this perspective emphasizes the importance of learning about racial issues without expecting Black people to educate White people (statement 56). In line with this, participant 21B asked, "how can you expect to help promote justice if you haven't educated yourself on the important issues?" In addition, White people should intervene in racist situations (statement 25), show public alliance with Black people (statement 61), and attend protests for racial justice (statement 28). These statements imply that White people must not only avoid harmful actions, but also participate in actions that help advance the cause.

Still, there are limits to White people's involvement in racial justice efforts. It is *not* important for White people to be able to criticize (statement 22) or suggest ideas to Black people about the strategies to address racial injustice (statement 57). As participant 45W explained, "it is not a White person's place to make a decision on something that [White people] will never be able to relate to." Several participants also expressed how it could be offensive to try to relate White people's experiences to that of a Black person (state-

ment 36). Overall, this perspective is about listening to Black people and avoiding White people's domination during efforts for social change.

This perspective shares some similarities and differences with Factors 1 and 2. In this perspective, there is a strong emphasis on avoiding undesirable or harmful behaviors. Both Factor 1 and Factor 2 focus on taking direct and immediate actions to support Black people (e.g., intervene in racist situations), however, in Factor 3, actions should be taken with an eye towards preventing White people from dominating racial justice efforts. In terms of engaging with other White people, this factor is similar to Factor 2 in that mobilizing White people is not considered to be a critical part of activism.

2.2.4 | Factor 4: Lifelong learning

This factor explained 11% of the variance. Of the three participants who loaded onto this factor, one identified as Black and two identified as White. In this perspective, there is a strong emphasis on learning about racial issues (statement 4) through various ways, such as participating in classes, discussions, or workshops about racial issues (statement 1) and reading articles/books or watching films/documentaries about racism (statement 2). The element of learning is also reflected in the importance of committing to anti-racism as a process of continuous growth (statement 43), as participant 13W stated, "learning has no end, (it) is lifelong." It is also important for White people to educate themselves about racial issues without expecting Black people to do so (statement 56). For example, participant 3B explained, "[Black people] should not bear the responsibility of sacrificing their emotional and mental health to educate [White people]."

Additionally, this perspective holds that White people should not be the centre of attention during racial justice efforts. It is *not* important to constantly try to prove White people's alliance to Black people (statement 52), as this can draw attention to White people's concerns about appearing prejudiced, rather than Black people's experiences as targets of discrimination. To explain why they sorted this statement as unimportant, participant 9W shared that advantaged group members should "not need reassurance that they are different" from other members of their group. Interestingly, it is also *not* important for allies to pressure other White people to be accountable if they make mistakes (statement 27), or to apologize to Black people for their offensive behaviors (statement 50). These actions may seem less important because they focus on alleviating White guilt rather than drawing attention to the plight of Black people.

Still, in Factor 4, White people should be the ones to engage with other White people on racial issues. As such, it is important for White people to refer other White people to various sources to learn about racism (statement 8), and to engage with White people in conversations about race (statements 7 and 5). In line with this, it is *not* important to distance oneself from other White people who are denying racism is a problem (statement 47). The involvement of White people "shifts the conversation from a Black issue to a *people* issue," as participant 29B remarked.

It should be noted that Factor 4 shares some similarities and differences with the other factors. Both Factor 1 and Factor 4 emphasize mobilizing White people. However, in Factor 4, this is viewed as a critical part of solidarity, whereas Factor 1 views supporting Black people as relatively more important. Factor 2 and Factor 4 also differ in the relative emphasis placed on directly engaging with Black people. Whereas Factor 2 prioritizes building close, accountable relationships with Black people, Factor 4 prioritizes educating and mobilizing the White community. Additionally, although both Factor 3 and Factor 4 focus on learning about racial issues, they differ in the importance placed on reaching out to other White people to educate them. Factor 4 emphasizes engaging with and teaching other White people about racial issues; however, Factor 3 is more concerned about being proactive to educate oneself.

2.3 | Discussion

Using Q methodology, Study 1 identified four different perspectives on the role of White allies in efforts for justice for Black people: White people should (1) adopt an active role in mobilization efforts to support Black people as leaders of a movement, while also mobilizing other White people; (2) engage in activism on an interpersonal level, through their everyday actions and interactions with Black people; (3) participate in the movement without dominating Black-led efforts; and (4) engage in lifelong learning by viewing activism as a process of continuous growth.

Factor 1 on mobilizing to support Black leadership appears to fit traditional concepts of collective action in the literature whereby people participate in direct efforts to push for social change (e.g., Simon & Klandermans, 2001). Factor 2 on activism at an interpersonal level points to changing norms by having allies challenge racism among White people and communicate anti-racist norms to Black people. While most research on collective action has examined protests and collective mobilization, this form of activism appears to be more of the day-to-day kind that changes the normative climate of a society, akin to bystander intervention and confronting prejudice (Nelson et al., 2011). Factor 3 which is on avoiding dominating Black people's efforts is primarily focused on being careful about not centering themselves or attracting too much attention—which is in line with research that has shown how ideal allies should have little influence within a movement (Park et al., 2022). It is also possible that participants want to avoid being seen as a White saviour. Further, Factor 4 on lifelong learning is consistent with the finding that White allies may be viewed as having insufficient knowledge of systemic racism (Brown & Ostrove, 2013), and educating themselves is viewed as an important first step.

Descriptively, the first viewpoint appeared to be mostly shared by White participants, and the second viewpoint tended to be espoused by mostly Black participants. However, as Q studies are often conducted with small purposeful samples, we cannot make general conclusions about the relationship between race and the viewpoints presented here; a broader quantitative survey of activists may allow for such comparisons. However, it is noteworthy that each perspective was shared by both Black and White activists, suggesting there was not a uniquely "Black perspective" or a "White perspective." This reflects heterogeneity in people's viewpoints and implies that we may need to look beyond group-based differences to understand the intricacies of how to effectively build majority–minority solidarity (e.g., by examining intragroup differences).

We also observed strong correlations between Factor 1 and each of the other factors. While this does not mean that all four viewpoints have the same understanding of White allyship, it appears that Factor 1 includes substantive elements from the other factors. For example, Factor 1 has a focus on (1) being responsive to Black people's needs (as does Factor 2), (2) emphasizing White people as followers and Black people as leaders (as in Factor 3), and (3) calling out or educating other White people (similar to Factor 4). Furthermore, even though only a small number of participants loaded onto Factors 3 and 4, we opted to keep these factors in the final solution because they appeared to tap into unique perspectives that were not clearly captured within Factor 1 or Factor 2 alone. Within Q methodology, if a perspective is shared by at least two participants, it can be considered a socially shared viewpoint because these participants have produced Q sorts that have similar configurations. To validate and understand each perspective in further detail, as well as to further distinguish between the four perspectives, we conducted Study 2.

3 | STUDY 2

The main question of Study 2 was to understand the similarities and differences between the four perspectives identified in Study 1 to determine the underlying considerations that participants had when thinking about the role of White allies. For Study 2, we developed short narratives (see Table 4) that summarize each perspective identified in Study 1. The goal was to evaluate activists' agreement and disagreement with each of the four perspectives (i.e., reasons for endorsing or not endorsing each perspective; the pros and cons of each perspective). This would give us insight into the reasons why some roles might conflict with others, as well as the potential challenges of building consensus on the role of White allies.

3.1 | Method

3.1.1 | Participants

Recruitment methods were the same as in Study 1. Specifically, 34 participants (22 White Americans and 12 Black Americans) active in racial justice efforts were recruited from the Western Massachusetts area between September and December 2019 via local activist organizations, the university research participation pool, personal contacts, and referrals from other participants. The sample size was determined based on reaching data saturation (i.e., newer participants were repeating points mentioned by earlier participants). The data was considered saturated in line with prior research indicating that saturation may

TABLE 4 Four Q sort narratives for Study 2

Perspective	Q sort narrative
Perspective 1: Mobilize to support Black leadership	In my opinion, the most important thing White allies must do is to **take action to support Black people**. These actions include intervening in racist situations, attending demonstrations, and voting for political candidates that support racial justice. During efforts for racial justice, I believe that White allies should **be followers rather than leaders**. It is not White people's place to criticize the strategies of Black leaders. Rather, White people should be **listening to the perspectives of Black people**. Also, I feel it is important for White allies to **educate and hold other White people accountable** to do something about racism.
Perspective 2: Activism on an interpersonal level	In my opinion, the most important thing White allies must do is to focus on **supporting the well-being of Black people in everyday life**. One way to do this is by creating safe spaces within the community for Black people. When racist incidents happen, White allies should intervene and **offer support to those who are targeted** by racism. Likewise, it is important to **use inclusive language** and **build accountable relationships** with Black people. I believe White allies should also work on **overcoming their own personal biases** and **use their privilege** to advocate for racial justice.
Perspective 3: Careful not to take over Black people's efforts	In my opinion, the most important thing White allies must do is to **learn about what Black people want** from White allies. This involves listening to Black people and staying silent when it's not White people's place to speak up. I believe White allies should **follow the strategies decided by Black people**, **without assuming what strategies might be best** for Black people. However, this does not mean that White allies should wait for directions before acting. White allies need to **be proactive** in educating themselves about racial issues and showing up to protests, while being careful **not to dominate efforts** for social change. The important thing is that White people **should not make it about them**.
Perspective 4: Lifelong learning	In my opinion, the most important thing White allies must do is to **continuously learn about racism**. Learning can happen in many different ways, including taking classes or workshops, consuming media resources, and referring to other White anti-racist activists who could be potential role models. It's not Black people's responsibility to teach White people about racism. I believe White allies should be the ones to **reach out to other White people** to educate them and get them involved in racial justice efforts. So we should not distance ourselves from other White people who are denying racism – instead, we should engage with them. Being an ally is a **life-long journey** that requires long-term commitment.

Note. Bolded statements are unique within each narrative.

occur within the first twelve interviews (Guest et al., 2006). Participants' age ranged from 18 to 71 years old ($M = 28.65$, $SD = 17.88$). As in Study 1, most participants identified as female (27 females, six males, and one non-binary) and on average, participants were on the left side of the political spectrum ($M = 2.47$, $SD = 1.54$, measured from *Left* to *Right* on a scale from 1 to 10).

3.1.2 | Materials

There are several ways of developing measures from Q methodological findings (e.g., Baker et al., 2010). We used the approach of creating short narratives that represent the core ideas of the perspectives identified in Study 1 (see Uluğ & Cohrs, 2017b, for a similar approach). The authors developed four brief narratives (see Table 4) based on the statements that loaded onto each factor and distinguishing statements of each perspective in Study 1.

3.1.3 | Procedure

Individual interview sessions took between 30 and 70 min and were conducted either in the psychology lab at the university or at a convenient public place chosen by the participant. The interviewer was either a White female, a White male, or a female person of colour. First, participants were shown all four narratives printed on a paper and were

asked to select one narrative that most closely resembled their own opinion about the role of White people in the struggle for justice for Black people. Participants were then asked to elaborate on the narrative they selected to explain how it was similar to their own opinion and to explain why they would prioritize these specific roles. Next, participants were asked to evaluate the unselected narratives about how these narratives differed from their own opinion. Participants were also asked other interview questions that do not pertain to the research questions addressed in this article.[2] After the study, participants who were undergraduate students received extra credit for their courses, and participants who were community members received no compensation.

3.1.4 | Analysis

We used thematic analysis to analyze participants' responses (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The audio recordings were transcribed and later analyzed in a multi-step process. In the first step, the authors organized participants' responses into two main categories for each perspective: (1) reasons why a perspective was selected by the participant, and (2) reasons why a perspective was *not* selected by them. All authors familiarized themselves with the interview transcripts (60 single-spaced

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[2] As in Study 1, participants also completed a brief survey. See Online Supplemental Materials for additional analyses of close-ended measures describing our sample.

pages). Each author independently developed initial codes on the reasons for selecting or not selecting a perspective. The first author then reviewed the initial codes and organized the codes into specific themes that clustered around common patterns. Codes that were not supported enough by the data (i.e., represented idiosyncratic views mentioned only once) were removed or condensed into larger themes. Next, the themes were checked by the second and third authors, who provided feedback about further condensing the themes or introducing new sub-themes. The first author subsequently integrated these changes and finalized the themes. The first author wrote a first draft of the results section which also involved checking the raw data to ensure the themes were clear and sufficient. Finally, the second and third authors read and provided feedback on the results write-up to ensure accuracy (i.e., each theme reflected the data well, no themes were excluded, participants' viewpoints were well-represented, the most illustrative quotes were selected). The first author finalized the write-up by making changes in line with the second and third author's feedback. As noted in Braun and Clarke (2006), this last step of producing the report with illustrative quotes provides a final opportunity for analysis. As in Study 1, when quoting participants, we refer to them with a unique participant code consisting of a number and a letter (i.e., B = Black, W = White).

3.2 | Results

Study 2 found that participants endorsed the four perspectives to varying degrees. Specifically, 41% (n = 14; 10 White and 4 Black) endorsed Perspective 1 (Mobilize to support Black leadership), 26% (n = 9; 5 White and 4 Black) endorsed Perspective 2 (Activism on an interpersonal level), 21% (n = 7; 5 White and 2 Black) endorsed Perspective 3 (Avoid dominating Black people's efforts), and 12% (n = 4; 2 White and 2 Black) endorsed Perspective 4 (Lifelong learning). Below we describe the reasons participants cited for endorsing or not endorsing each perspective.

3.2.1 | Perspective 1: Mobilize to support Black leadership

First, a main reason that Perspective 1 resonated with participants is because it was proactive about engaging in direct action such as demonstrations (theme 1.1; see Table 5 for all themes). There was a concern that well-intentioned White people who may spend time educating themselves (as in Perspective 4) or overcoming personal prejudices (as in Perspective 2) are not creating lasting changes unless they collectively act to support Black people. Relatedly, participants who selected Perspective 1 also believed that this role helps address systemic racism (theme 1.2) compared to Perspectives 2 and 4, which were more focused on interpersonal racism and education, respectively. For example, participant W21 expressed how voting is at an "institutional level of doing something immediate" and could have "long-lasting implications."

Since Perspective 1 explicitly emphasized following the direction of Black leadership, participants viewed this role as White people critically understanding their place in the movement (theme 1.3). White participants explained how the movement was not 'theirs' to claim. For example, participant W20 observed, "it's important for us to step back and to not let our voices drown out the persons' of color voices." Relatedly, Perspective 1 emphasized strategically *using* White privilege to challenge injustice (theme 1.4), because White people can at times have more leverage when mobilizing people for racial justice. Participant B11 reasoned that because White people have more institutional power, they can use this to "serve as allies to help mobilize [for] different events or tell other White peers to help … and to also educate their friends."

By contrast, participants who did *not* select Perspective 1 argued that White people should not necessarily limit themselves to be followers in the movement. They reasoned that supporting Black leadership does not prevent White people from also taking on a leadership role (theme 1.5), as participant W8 noted, "we can be followers and leaders." Several participants also thought the movement might be more effective by having White people also take on leadership roles alongside Black people. Some participants however noted a very different reason for not selecting Perspective 1: they were concerned that there was too much emphasis on White people's actions (theme 1.6). For example, participant W22 expressed that having "too much action into your own hands can almost take away from what Black people feel might be the best strategy." Relatedly, a few participants also thought that this strategy was "too aggressive" or "radical," which could inadvertently discourage White people from becoming involved (theme 1.7). Some participants also did not think that White people should be the ones to educate other White people about racism because they lacked first-hand experience and knowledge (theme 1.8).

3.2.2 | Perspective 2: Activism on an interpersonal level

Participants who selected Perspective 2 explained that building meaningful interpersonal relationships across racial divides serves as a foundation of the struggle for racial justice (theme 2.1). Since this perspective emphasized the need to "build actual relationships between both races," as participant W7 said, building inclusive relationships was viewed as the bedrock of interracial solidarity to advance racial justice. Relatedly, Perspective 2 underscored the idea that one-on-one interactions can help address personal biases (theme 2.2). As participant W11 explained, close interracial relationships were important for White people to "try and understand what [Black people] want, and [how] not to use your biases to make decisions for [Black people]."

Participants who endorsed Perspective 2 also liked that it emphasized leveraging White privilege and group-based advantages to support the efforts of Black people (theme 2.3). Participant W13 said that they liked the focus on "using our power" and likewise participant W11 shared that they supported the idea of "using their privilege to advocate for racial justice." By framing privilege in this way, participant

TABLE 5 Themes on reasons for selecting or not selecting the different perspectives on the role of White allies in Study 2

Perspectives on the role of white allies	(1) Mobilize to support Black leadership	(2) Activism on an interpersonal level	(3) Avoid dominating Black people's efforts	(4) Lifelong learning
Frequency	14 (41%)	9 (26%)	7 (21%)	4 (12%)
Reasons for selecting this perspective	(1.1) It is proactive about participating in direct action (1.2) Focuses on addressing systemic racism (1.3) White people should know their place in the movement (1.4) Strategically uses White privilege to challenge injustice	(2.1) Builds the foundation of interracial solidarity for racial justice (2.2) One-on-one interactions help address personal biases (2.3) Leverages White privilege and advantages	(3.1) Stands firmly against a White savior dynamic (3.2) Not taking over Black efforts should be the starting point of activism (3.3) Acknowledges that White people cannot truly know the experiences of Black people	(4.1) Learning is the starting point for all other roles (4.2) There is always something more that can be learned
Reasons for not selecting this perspective	(1.5) Supporting Black leadership shouldn't absolve White people from taking leadership (1.6) Direct actions by White allies can quickly overpower Black people's efforts (1.7) Aggressive strategy may push people away from the cause (1.8) White people should not be the ones educating others about racism	(2.4) Emphasis on personal dynamics is insufficient to address structural racism (2.5) Creating safe spaces should not be monopolized by White people (2.6) Risks superficial relationships that reinforce inequality	(3.4) Risks justifying White passivity out of fear of making mistakes (3.5) Burdens Black people with responsibility to determine the role of White allies (3.6) Proscriptive framing of White ally roles sounds too commanding	(4.3) Learning seems passive if it does not lead to action (4.4) White people should not (or cannot) always be anti-racism guides (4.5) Communication between White and Black people is required for learning

B7 also thought that Perspective 2 showed how "privilege is not a bad thing" in and of itself, especially if it can be harnessed to advance equality.

On the contrary, one of the main reasons Perspective 2 did not resonate with participants is because personal dynamics were viewed as insufficient and ineffective to address structural racism (theme 2.4). Building interpersonal relationships did not particularly stand out as activism because "interpersonal relationships aren't going to affect systemic racism because that's outside of our interpersonal relationship" (participant W18). Participants also criticized Perspective 2 because they believed that creating safe spaces for Black people should not be monopolized by White people (theme 2.5). As B12 explained: "[Black people] are able to find a way to get ourselves together and have our own safe spaces."

In addition, White allies attempting to build interpersonal relationships with Black people risk being superficial and end up reinforcing inequality (theme 2.6). Participant B1 explained that this perspective may result in "unrealistic bending over backwards" for the sake of building a relationship, which can be viewed as patronizing or paternalistic. Relatedly, some thought that offering support to Black people in the aftermath of racist incidents was too reactive in nature. As a case in point, participant B9 described how their university responded to racist incidents on campus by organizing trainings and workshops. Although these efforts were meant to support Black people, they came too late—only in the aftermath of racist incidents rather than as a pre-

emptive measure. White people's actions should therefore be more preventative by "actively trying to make the situation better before it gets worse" (Participant B9).

3.2.3 | Perspective 3: Avoid dominating Black people's efforts

Perspective 3 appealed to some participants because it stood firmly against White saviorism (theme 3.1). Participant W4 made a comparison to lessons from the past: "I feel like there is so much history of White people, even with well intentions, taking the spotlight as being the White savior and we don't need any more of that." Participant W9 liked Perspective 3 because they thought "a White ally should never become the symbol of Black liberation." Relatedly, participants thought that not *taking over* Black people's efforts should be the starting point of activism (theme 3.2). Participants believed that working from a White perspective was insufficient because it could be ineffective and unwanted by Black folks.

Many participants also cited that Perspective 3 should be a priority because White people cannot truly know the experiences of Black people (theme 3.3). Illustrating this point, participants W6 explained: "If you are a White person, you can't know what it is like to be a Black person and to live in their everyday life, so how can we tell them what to do? How can we know the strategy that is helpful?"

As these responses illustrate, participants thought that White allies should de-centre themselves in efforts for racial justice.

On the other hand, one of the key reasons some participants did not endorse Perspective 3 was because it risked justifying White people's passivity out of fear of making mistakes (theme 3.4). Participant B10 explained why they preferred Perspective 1 over Perspective 3, saying that while Perspective 3 was "all about supporting the efforts," Perspective 1 was "not only supporting the efforts but being proactive." Relatedly, a few participants remarked that White people should take more initiative and do more than simply educating themselves on what Black people wanted or need from White allies. Participant W21 shared that: "White people can organize amongst themselves to do something and challenge racism on a personal or institutional level, even if a Black person is not in the room." Participant B6 similarly believed allyship should be about working together, rather than waiting for Black people to lead.

For others, Perspective 3 seems to put the burden on Black people to educate White people, when in fact White people also need to take the initiative in defining their own roles in advocating for racial justice (theme 3.5). As participant W13 shared, "it is completely the responsibility of White people to end white supremacy because it is something we've created." Participant W3 also felt that there needed to be more collaboration and communication between both groups. Further, a few participants thought the negative framing (i.e., what not to do) sounded too forceful and off-putting (theme 3.6). Participant B4 noted that it sounded "commanding," which could make people "defensive." In this way, the proscriptive language in Perspective 3 was viewed by some as one-sided commands rather than reflecting genuine solidarity.

3.2.4 | Perspective 4: Lifelong learning

Most participants who endorsed Perspective 4 believed that learning about structural racism was the starting point for other roles since learning allowed people to take informed actions (theme 4.1). Participants thought that without proper knowledge of anti-Black racism and white supremacy, White people are not able to be sincere allies. For example, participant B5 said: "Unless a White person knows that racism exists, and how it manifests, and how they are contributors to it, and how they have learned the subconscious patterns of racial superiority, it will be difficult to do the other things."

Lacking knowledge and awareness on racial issues could prevent people from becoming allies. Participant B2 explained that if people grew up without typically interacting with racial minorities, then meeting people from diverse backgrounds can push a person into a positive process of "learning and unlearning."

In addition, participants also believed that learning never stops because there was always something more to learn (theme 4.2). Participant W4 put it aptly by saying: "I have been an activist for a long time and my eyes continue to be opened." This participant further explained that reaching out to other White people about race needs to "be done so carefully and is a whole skillset" that White allies need to develop. Further, participant B5 also underscored the commitment to life-long learning, noting that "learning doesn't mean going to a workshop one year and saying, 'I got this,' but it means to be continually, on an ongoing basis, learning new things."

By contrast, one of the main reasons for not choosing Perspective 4 was that learning seemed passive if it does not lead to action (theme 4.3). Learning alone was not considered activism because it does not directly lead to social change, as participant B6 said, "you can learn all you want … but if you don't act on it, you're not doing anything to help other people." Participants also felt that self-education or even educating others was a basic step that everyone should do rather than something unique to an ally.

Participants also expressed that White people should not (and cannot) always be the guide for anti-racist action (theme 4.4). Some participants stated that the lack of first-hand experiences can make White people ineffective educators in the domain of racism. White allies needed to have close contact and genuine relationships with Black people to truly learn about their experiences as a group (theme 4.5). A few participants felt that Perspective 4 did not emphasize the importance of communication between White and Black people, which they felt was necessary for true learning to take place.

3.3 | Discussion

Building on Study 1, Study 2 found that Black and White American activists endorsed the four perspectives to varying degrees. The findings from Study 2 validate the four perspectives identified in Study 1 by showing that people's diverse opinions about the role of White allies in racial justice efforts can be captured by these perspectives. Further, in line with what we found in Study 1, Study 2 once again showed that there were both Black and White activists who endorsed each of the four perspectives.

A recurring concern in describing the pros and cons of each perspective was the tension between using White privilege for good while at the same time not overpowering Black people's efforts. Across the four perspectives, this tension was at the forefront of participants' responses, and it came up in different ways. For one, participants grappled with concerns about whether it was White people's place to engage in a particular action. For example, the perspective on mobilizing to support Black leadership (Perspective 1) and lifelong learning (Perspective 4) drew criticisms because participants thought White people should not be the ones to educate others about racism since they lack the lived experiences. Having White allies as followers rather than leaders in the movement were important to the perspectives on mobilizing to support Black leadership (Perspective 1) and avoid dominating Black people's efforts (Perspective 3). In fact, the former perspective was more about how to act in tandem with Black activists (e.g., as supporters/followers) while the latter perspective was characterized by a general rejection of harmful forms of White allyship and explicitly denouncing White saviorism.

On the flipside, participants also discussed the various ways of using group-based advantages and privileges to promote racial justice. In particular, participants who endorsed Perspective 1 on mobilizing to

support Black leadership and Perspective 2 on activism on an interpersonal level felt that these perspectives allowed for White allies to effectively leverage the social, political, and material resources that they have by virtue of being members of a privileged, high-status group. There was also a concern about not using one's ingroup advantage enough. This was seen in criticisms of Perspective 3 on being careful not to dominate Black people's efforts, and Perspective 4 on lifelong learning, which some participants thought were too passive.

4 | GENERAL DISCUSSION

Social movements striving for intergroup equality and justice often face the crucial question of *how* to appropriately involve advantaged group members in their collective efforts for social change. In the context of the ongoing Black Lives Matter movement in the United States, the present research aimed to identify the different socially shared perspectives about the role of White allies in this movement, from the perspectives of both Black and White racial justice activists. Studies 1 and 2 showed that there were at least four distinct key perspectives on the most important role of White allies: White allies should (1) actively mobilize in support of Black leadership, (2) engage in interpersonal activism by building genuine relationships with Black people, (3) engage without dominating or taking over the efforts of Black people, and (4) be lifelong learners striving to improve themselves as effective allies. For each perspective on the role of White allies, participants identified its pros and cons, that is, the reasons why each role was appropriate and beneficial, as well as the shortcomings and problems that it raises. Notably, there were no clear patterns with regard to racial differences in perspectives on the role of White allies; this suggests that the perspectives of Black and White activists on this topic were not clearly distinguishable based on race.

4.1 | Theoretical and practical implications

This research contributes to the literature on social change in several ways. While prior research has largely investigated *why* advantaged group members are motivated to engage in social change efforts (e.g., Radke et al., 2020; Thomas et al., 2009), the present research extends this work to consider perspectives on *how* advantaged group members should participate in social change efforts. This work also sheds light on the factors that can contribute to tensions within solidarity-based social movements that often grapple with building sustainable alliances (see also Droogendyk et al., 2016; Selvanathan et al., 2020). This includes different perspectives about the relative importance placed on White allies avoiding potentially harmful and paternalistic behaviors, or whether avoiding these actions was viewed as failing to utilize one's racial privilege to draw attention to the cause. There may also be disagreements about the extent to which White allies should focus on mobilizing other White people or whether that time and energy is better spent on coordinating with other White allies to address Black people's needs. In addition, these results also suggest why White peo-

ple who are otherwise committed to racial justice may shy away from allyship due to concerns about the appropriate actions to take.

On a practical level, while the four factors identified in this research reflect four different approaches or philosophies that may resonate with White allies who are interested in becoming involved in racial justice efforts, it is clear that including allies within a movement comes with certain risks. Not only is there a need for negotiating their involvement, it may also inevitably center the perspectives of allies at the expense of Black people. As such, simply seeking to increase the involvement of White people within racial justice efforts is not sufficient without first making clear the expectations of allies to circumvent potential intergroup tensions within solidarity movements.

As the research moves towards considering how disadvantaged groups members perceive advantaged group allies (e.g., Burns & Granz, 2022; Kutlaca et al., 2022; Park et al., 2022), there is a need to consider and differentiate between the range of behaviors allies may engage in as well as its consequences within a movement (see Selvanathan et al., 2020). In particular, delineating leadership and followership roles as well as their respective scope of influence may be central to the distinction between disadvantaged and advantaged group activists (Park et al., 2022), as well as how activists are perceived by broader society (Burrows et al., 2021). In addition, recognizing heterogeneity within allyship behaviors may encourage more people to become involved with a cause, especially those who may disagree with specific strategies of a movement or are afraid of being associated with "extremists" who undertake confrontational actions (e.g., Stuart et al., 2018).

4.2 | Limitations and directions for future research

In the present research, we asked White allies about what other ingroup members should do, and at the same time, we asked Black activists about what outgroup members should do within a movement for racial justice. Decades of research has shown that different standards of behaviors tend to be applied in thinking about ingroup versus outgroup behaviors (e.g., Hornsey & Imani, 2004). For example, some White allies might be more critical of ingroup members and have high expectations from fellow White allies. Thus, it becomes important to ask: who was the prototypical White ally that both Black and White participants were thinking about? Future research is needed to delve into how allyship perceptions may be differentially influenced by intragroup versus intergroup dynamics.

Further, in both studies, we recruited participants who were active in racial justice efforts. However, we limited our focus to the Western Massachusetts area given constraints in access and resources. Our recruitment method resulted in participants who were mostly women, well-educated, and very liberal. This similarity may have accounted for the strong positive relationships observed between the perspectives we identified. It is possible that we may have identified additional perspectives that are more conflicting if we sampled more broadly to include people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, with more moderate political views, or from regions in the country where race relations are more hostile. It is also important to note that Q

methodology does not aim to document all views on an issue nor to generalize findings to a population (Brown, 1993; Watts & Stenner, 2005), which is therefore a constraint on our research as well. Further, our study was conducted before the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests sparked by the murder of George Floyd and it is not clear whether we would find similar results if the study was conducted again.

The present findings are generative of future research. It is unclear whether different motivations and ideologies underpin people's preferences on allyship roles. It is possible, for example, that motivations to appear non-prejudiced may promote support for engaging in racial justice efforts without dominating it (LaCosse & Plant, 2019). As we could not claim any generalizability due to the nature of our data, future studies could use the findings of our Q methodology study by investigating the distribution of these viewpoints, the relationships between them, and participants' characteristics using larger samples (e.g., profile correlation; Danielson, 2009).

Further, our findings suggest that people may impact social change in different ways. Prior work has shown that social change can occur at the individual, group, or systemic level (Uluğ & Acar, 2018). Future research may consider the impact of different roles or strategies on various levels of social change, for example, in terms of changing the hearts and minds of other White people at the individual level, influencing interracial interactions or cooperation at the group level, and pushing for policy or legal reforms at the systemic level. We hope that the present research offers a starting point for critically considering the role of advantaged group allies' involvement in social change efforts as well as the consequences of their involvement in these efforts.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This research received ethics approval from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and all participants provided informed consent prior to taking part in the study.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data and study materials are openly available on the Open Science Framework at https://osf.io/jk5mr/

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