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Can Ally Work Mobilize Voice? Male Leaders' Ally Work on Women's Pro-Group Voice

Carolyn T. Dang[1] | Soojin Oh[2] | Aparna Joshi[3]

[1]Smeal College of Business, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania, USA | [2]The University of Hong Kong, Pok Fu Lam, Hong Kong | [3]Ross School of Business, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA

Correspondence: Carolyn T. Dang (czd184@psu.edu)

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ABSTRACT

Organizations rely on members from relatively advantaged social groups to act as allies. Yet, whether these individuals' ally work enables or inhibits those from relatively disadvantaged social groups to engage in social change efforts remains unclear. We focus on male leaders' ally work and draw on intergroup relations research to theorize its consequences. We expect that the type of ally work male leaders engage in can differentially impact female employees' pro-group voice. Specifically, we expect self-focused ally work (or when male leaders critically examine themselves) to be more effective in promoting women's pro-group voice when compared to relational-focused ally work (or when male leaders focus on building supportive relationships with women). Across three studies—a field study with working female employees (Study 1) and two experiments (Studies 2 and 3)—we test this prediction and find some support that the indirect effect of male leaders' self (vs. relational) ally work is mediated by female employees' increased feelings of hopefulness. Moreover, we theorize and find full support for our prediction that the indirect effect is stronger when female employees hold fixed (vs. incremental) theory about intelligence. Implications for theory and practice are discussed.

Over the past several decades, there has been an incessant rallying cry for the disadvantaged to engage in efforts to combat their marginalization. The education scholar Freire (1970), for example, claimed that the great "humanistic task" of the marginalized was to liberate themselves from their social exclusion. More recently, to help the disadvantaged achieve this task, there has been a growing call for those from advantaged groups to act as allies to the disadvantaged. Allies are defined as individuals belonging to relatively advantaged social groups who engage in actions to support those belonging to less advantaged social groups (Dang and Joshi 2023). To address gender inequity, in particular, numerous organizational initiatives have engaged male leaders to act as allies to women at work. For example, Chevron and P&G have participated in the Men Advocating Real Change initiative, which inspires "men to leverage their unique opportunity and responsibility to be advocates for equity" (Catalyst 2023). However, it is unclear whether male leaders' ally work mobilizes women towards their self-liberation or deters them from engaging in these efforts.

Extant research provides partial clues to this question and suggests that male leaders' allyship may, albeit unintentionally, detract from women's own social change efforts. This research has primarily taken a unidimensional view of allyship, as the distinct types or behavioral dimensions of ally work have yet to be fully considered. Extant research has also mostly drawn from social cognition—in particular, variants of stereotype theory—to suggest that women assess men's ally work in terms of person-perception dimensions such as warmth and competence (Fiske et al. 2007; Park et al. 2022), which then affects women's

overall perception of ally work. For instance, research suggests that male allyship may trigger negative stereotypes about men as domineering and hence dampen support from women (Park et al. 2022; Radke et al. 2021).

Although valuable, stereotype theory is itself part of the broader literature on intergroup relations (for reviews, see Iyer and Leach 2008 and Yzerbyt and Demoulin 2010), which suggests that when an individual interacts with someone from a different social group (e.g., a female employee interacting with a male leader), individuals are likely to experience emotions, which then impact their actions. Moreover, an indirect or implicit implication of a stereotype-focused approach is that any behavioral consequence that may arise from a male leader's ally work is attributable, in part, to (perceived) attributes of the male leader. That is, when a male leader engages in ally work, the implication is that women perceive the leader as having (or not having) certain characteristics (e.g., warmth, agency), which then drive women's behaviors (e.g., their pro-group voice). This emphasis on male leaders and their attributes, however, may overlook how women's *own* emotional experiences are a source for their social change efforts.

In this paper, we adopt an emotions-focused perspective—specifically as it is developed within theory and research on intergroup relations—to theorize how a male leader's ally work can galvanize women's own social justice efforts at work. As noted, an emotions-focused perspective prioritizes female employees' emotional experiences as the critical lynchpin to their social change efforts. Indeed, emotions have been shown to be a pivotal mechanism that explains people's inclinations to engage in social change efforts both within society at large (Jasper 2011) and within the context of work (Meyerson and Scully 1995). In taking an emotions-focused lens, we highlight how female employees' emotional experiences following their male leaders' ally work can empower women's social change efforts at work.

Drawing from intergroup relations research (Tajfel and Turner 1986), our main prediction is that a male leader's ally work elicits feelings of hopefulness, defined as a positively valenced emotional state emerging from an appraisal of attainable positive changes in the future (Cohen-Chen et al. 2014), among observing female employees. Hopefulness then drives female employees' engagement in a particular type of social change effort at work: pro-group voice or when women advocate on behalf of their social group (Leigh and Melwani 2019). Crucially, integrating recent research that categorizes ally behaviors into distinct modalities (Dang and Joshi 2023), we suggest that the *type* of ally behavior a male leader enacts impacts women's felt hopefulness. Our prediction is that a male leader's *self-ally work* (or when male leaders engage in actions to acquire new knowledge and, in so doing, challenge and change core aspects of themselves) will be associated with higher levels of women's felt hopefulness than *relational ally work* (or when male leaders focus on creating positive interpersonal relationships with their female counterparts). This prediction is based on research suggesting that in the context of intergroup relations, feelings of hopefulness emerge when individuals appraise that significant changes are possible within a current situation (Cohen-Chen et al. 2014). From this insight, we reason that a male leader's self- (vs. relational) ally work is signifying of deep-level substantive changes to the leader's core nature—for example, changes to the leader's knowledge about himself and his standing in society—which is why women should feel more hopeful and, subsequently, engage in higher levels of pro-group voice. We also integrate implicit theory (Dweck et al. 1995; Ross 1989) to suggest that women's views of intelligence being fixed (vs. malleable) can strengthen the effect described above.

Our primary theoretical contribution is to diversity research, particularly research on allyship. In a tangential line of inquiry, research has examined how disadvantaged group members evaluate the diversity efforts undertaken by those in leadership positions. This research has relied predominantly on theories of stereotype content and stereotype threat to explain perceptions about these leaders' behaviors (Hekman et al. 2017) or the impact of these behaviors on intended beneficiaries (Harrison et al. 2006; Leslie et al. 2014). As mentioned, we shift the focus away from male leaders themselves—e.g., who are they, what are their characteristics?—to highlight how women's emotional experiences are a personal resource for their own social change efforts. That is, while a male leader's ally work may be an initial trigger for female employees' subsequent change efforts, our primary theoretical mechanism operates through female employees' own emotional experiences (their felt hopefulness). In so doing, we also bridge research on allyship with existing social change research, which suggests that emotions are powerful predictors of people's social justice engagement (Heucher et al. 2024).

To this latter point, we also contribute to the research streams on social change efforts within organizations, which suggests that organizational "insiders" (i.e., employees) may engage in efforts at work to address social inequality (e.g., Meyerson and Scully 1995). While research suggests that leaders may play a key role in mobilizing employees' own social justice efforts, research has yet to examine how leaders' *specific actions* can mobilize disadvantaged group members. In our research, rather than assume that females will invariably experience a male leader's ally work positively, we theorize that female employees' positive emotional experiences are dependent on the modality of ally work that is enacted (self vs. relational). In this way, we extend theorizing in the domain of social change by drawing attention to how the specific actions of leaders can actually motivate the disadvantaged to engage in their task of self-liberation (Freire 1970).

1 | Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

1.1 | Male Leader's Ally Work: Self- vs. Relational-Focused

Drawing from an embedded view of the self, which conceptualizes the individual along multiple levels—the personal, relational, and collective level, each with "different identity properties, loci of agency and motivational preferences" (Brewer and Chen 2007, 137)—recent research suggests that the foci or target of ally work can likewise be directed towards three modalities: the individual self, the individual's relationships with others, and/or a collective entity in which the individual is embedded (e.g., one's workplace) (Dang and Joshi 2023).

Regarding gender-based allyship in particular, self-ally work refers to male leaders' engagement in efforts to change core elements of their individual selfhood so that they can better support and advocate for female employees. That is, in the self-focused modality of ally work, men act as allies towards women by changing aspects of who they are internally. This change is accomplished through a critical self-evaluative process, where male leaders seek out new knowledge and information about themselves and their advantaged place within the social hierarchy. For instance, male leaders may seek a greater understanding of their own advantages and, with this new knowledge and information, actively transform and change their thoughts, behavioral responses, or consumption patterns to better support women. It is important to note that although the locus of change is internal, self-work is reflected in the opinions and views an employee may offer in the course of formal and informal communications at work. In the relational modality, the focus of change is not on the self per se but on one's relationships with others. In the case of a male leader's allyship, male leaders engage in relational work when they focus on forming supportive and positive relationships with female employees (Radke et al. 2020). In this modality, men act as allies by improving the quality of their relationships with the disadvantaged. Relational ally work is also nonreciprocal insofar as men might perceive their objective as providing support to women rather than receiving support from them (cf., Heaphy and Dutton 2008). And lastly, in the collective modality, the focus is on changing features of an organized collective in which the individual is embedded. For instance, men might enact ally work by changing policies, practices, and/or norms that directly and/or indirectly contribute to women's disadvantage. Because collective-focused ally work seeks to change elements of a system, empirical research by Dang and Joshi (2023) suggests that the base rate for this modality is lower compared to self and relational work. It seems, then, that self and relational ally work may constitute more accessible forms of ally work and are thus the focus of this study.

In focusing on self vs. relational ally work, we note several important points. First, we note the distinctiveness between these two forms of ally work. While self and relational ally work are likely positively related to one another, they are also distinct types of ally behaviors that have different targets of change: the self vs. relationship with others. And second, at a given point in time, we believe that employees are able to observe both types of ally work. Compared to self-work, the visibility of relational work may be less contested given that observers may be able to see their managers engaging in relationship-building actions with the disadvantaged. Regarding self-work, as noted above, while this type of ally work is focused on changing elements of the individual's personal self, individuals may nonetheless convey and signal to observers that they are engaging in self-work. Indeed, Dang and Mitchell's (2025) research showed that observing employees are able to see their managers' self-ally work and react to it.

1.2 | Intergroup Relations and the Importance of Emotions

At its core, a male leader's ally work represents a distinct form of intergroup behavior (Louis et al. 2019; Uluğ et al. 2024), where members of a relatively advantaged group (e.g., men) interact with and support those from a disadvantaged group (e.g., women). Decades of research on intergroup relations suggest that once group boundaries have been set, individuals tend to be more skeptical of outgroup members compared to their own ingroup members (Tajfel and Turner 1986). Building on this foundation and drawing from the stereotype content model (Cuddy et al. 2008), extant research suggests that women's reactions to men's allyship may be attributable to stereotypes women form about men who enact ally work. For instance, research has shown that beneficiaries tend to form impressions of male allies' internal traits (e.g., their agency), and these cognitive assessments then impact how beneficiaries respond to male allies' efforts (De Souza and Schmader 2024; Iyer and Achia 2021; Kutlaca and Radke 2023; Park et al. 2022). An implication of this research is that a male leader's ally work impacts female employees primarily via the stereotypes women form about the male leader.

While valuable, a stereotype-focused explanation overlooks the critical social function that emotions play in intergroup relations. Indeed, intergroup relations research suggests that individuals' "[emotional] experiences within inter-group situations" are particularly important to study for at least two reasons (Yzerbyt and Demoulin 2010, 1051). First, given that the individual is interacting with someone who differs from them in surface- and/or deep-level characteristics, emotions arise almost automatically in intergroup contexts (Mackie et al. 2004). Second, emotions are associated with specific action tendencies that promote individuals experiencing the emotion to behave in certain ways (Yzerbyt and Demoulin 2010). These insights suggest that when male leaders engage in ally work, female employees are likely to experience some emotional reaction, which then inclines them to act in certain ways. Below, we adopt an emotions-lens and examine the role of women's felt hopefulness as a key theoretical mechanism linking male leaders' ally work to women's subsequent pro-group voice.

1.3 | Women's Felt Hopefulness

When individuals interact with members from different social groups, they may experience various emotional reactions (Iyer and Leach 2008). The specific emotion that arises depends, in part, on the outgroup member's behavior and how observers appraise the behavior. That is, a "distinctive combination of appraisals" arises, which is simultaneous with the emergence of a distinct emotional experience (Ellsworth 2013, 126).[1] It is important to note that because appraisals occur rapidly, research on appraisal theory assumes that the emergence of an emotional experience indicates that an appraisal co-occured simultaneously with the emotion (Cohen-Chen and Pliskin 2024). In the case of a male leader who enacts ally work, we theorize that the nature of ally work behaviors is likely to elicit a specific emotional reaction among female employees: hopefulness.

Hopefulness is conceptualized as a discrete emotional state emerging from positive anticipation that desired future outcomes are attainable (Cohen-Chen et al. 2014; Lazarus 1999). Unlike more stable dispositional traits like optimism, hopefulness represents an emotional response to specific situational

appraisal (Cohen-Chen and Pliskin 2024). Research suggests that hopefulness is an emotion rooted in cognition; hopefulness thus integrates both an affective element (positive feelings associated with anticipated desirable changes) and a cognitive appraisal element (the assessment that positive changes are genuinely possible) (Bruininks and Malle 2005; Roseman and Evdokas 2004). This affective-cognitive nature of hopefulness, which combines emotional experience with forward-looking cognitive assessments, makes hopefulness particularly relevant for intergroup contexts.

In the context of intergroup relations, when individuals interact with those belonging to a different social group—for example, a female employee interacting with a male leader—hopefulness emerges when individuals believe that a positive change that would benefit the individualis possible (Cohen-Chen et al. 2014). At a baseline level, we expect female employees will feel more hopeful when male leaders engage in any form of ally behavior (whether self or relational) compared to when male leaders engage in no ally work. This is because both self and relational work are change efforts that can benefit women. In seeking to transform elements of their individual selfhood (through self-work), and in seeking to change their relationships with female employees (through relational work), the goals are to better support female employees and improve their experiences within organizations (Kossek et al. 2024).

Crucially, however, we expect variance in feelings of hopefulness, such that female employees are likely to experience higher levels of hopefulness when male leaders engage in self- (vs. relational) ally work. This prediction necessitates us unpacking what exactly is changed or transformed vis-à-vis self and relational ally work, and why a leader's self-work may be a jarring manifestation of positive change. To unpack this argument, we return to existing research on intergroup relations, which suggests that when individuals interact with those from different social groups, they tend to "ascribe an invisible shared essence" to outgroup members (Yzerbyt and Demoulin 2010, 1036). Stated differently, individuals tend to view outgroup members as having inherent and chronic features and to essentialize outgroup members. Given that individuals tend to essentialize outgroup members and assume they have some "chronic features," research has also shown that hopefulness becomes heightened when individuals appraise that "the outgroup [member] can change themselves" (Cohen-Chen et al. 2017, 210). Stated differently, hopefulness emerges when individuals appraise that a change to an outgroup members' "chronic features" is possible.

Based on these insights from intergroup relations research, we argue that women should feel more hopeful when male leaders engage in self- (vs. relational) ally work. When male leaders engage in self-work, the focus is on changing core elements of themselves so they can support female employees. Through a critical process of self-evaluation and critique, male leaders who engage in self-work seek to acquire new information and knowledge about themselves, and how aspects of themselves (their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors) can be improved upon to better support their female colleagues. Indeed, rather than viewing themselves as standing separate from a problematic social landscape that *others* have constructed, self-ally work is the acknowledgment that the self has been complicit (whether intentionally or not) in perpetuating inequalities. In implicating the self, male leaders are subject to critique and scrutinize aspects of themselves that can be changed to better support their female counterparts. In contrast, relational ally work does not directly implicate the self as problematic and in need of reformation. To be clear, this is not to suggest that relational ally work does not have its benefits. Rather, our focus is to contrast self-work (which focuses on substantive changes to one's selfhood) with relational work (which focuses on changing one's relationship with social others). And because hopefulness is more likely to be elicited when individuals appraise an outgroup member's behavior as signifying deep changes to one's essence or chronic selfhood features (Cohen-Chen et al. 2014; Cohen-Chen and Pliskin 2024), we expect women will feel more hopeful when male leaders engage in self- (vs. relational) ally work.

Hypothesis 1. *Female employees will feel higher levels of hopefulness when a male leader engages in self- (vs. relational) ally work.*

1.4 | Women's Pro-Group Voice

Appraisal theory and other theories of emotions (e.g., social functionalist, affective events) have coalesced around the proposition that emotions engender action tendencies or behavioral responses (Frijda 1987). Hopefulness is an emotional reaction that signals to individuals that positive benefits are likely to accrue to them in the future. Feelings of hopefulness have thus been associated with a host of proactive actions, such as enacting coping strategies to deal with stress (Breznitz 1986), generating creative solutions to problematic situations (Chang 1998), and risk-taking (Lazarus 1999). Scholars have also found an association between hopefulness and individuals' engagement in social justice efforts, showing that hopefulness promotes support for social change (Greenaway et al. 2016) and collective action intentions (Wlodarczyk et al. 2017).

While the research reviewed above suggests that hopefulness motivates action-oriented support for social change, management research also acknowledges the difficulty of engaging in social justice efforts at work given that these actions are risky and disruptive to organizations (Briscoe and Gupta 2016). Indeed, as organizational insiders, employees depend on their organizations for valued resources (e.g., pay) and may thus be more restrained in their social justice efforts (Meyerson and Scully 1995). We thus focus on pro-group voice as a specific type of social justice action at work that women's felt hopefulness should promote. Pro-group voice occurs when women "speak up on behalf of one's group" to raise concerns about gender inequities and provide suggestions for change that can uplift the social positionality of their disadvantaged group (Leigh and Melwani 2019, 567). Pro-group voice represents a relatively less disruptive and more accessible form of social change effort within organizations compared to other efforts like sit-ins or boycotts.

Existing voice research suggests that leaders can indirectly promote employee voice through their actions when they signal that voice could lead to actual changes (Tangirala and Ramanujam 2012). As predicted above, when leaders engage in self- (vs. relational) ally work, employees feel hopeful that

change is possible on account of the leader's willingness to transform key aspects of their personal selfhood. If women feel hopeful that leaders can change fundamental aspects of themselves, they may sense that the leader is a prochange advocate in general and willing to amend key aspects of the organization itself. This hopeful expectation that change is feasible—that is, women's feelings of hopefulness—should then promote them to speak on behalf of their social group and voice suggestions for improving conditions for female employees. Overall, we argue that a leader's self- (vs. relational) ally work can be an indirect resource for women's own pro-group voice and that feelings of hopefulness due to the leader's self- (vs. relational) ally work are a key theoretical mechanism that explains this effect.

Hypothesis 2. *Female employees' felt hopefulness mediates the indirect and positive effect of a male leader's self- (vs. relational) ally work on female employees' pro-group voice.*

1.5 | The Moderating Role of Implicit Theories About Intelligence

Research on intergroup relations further suggests that an individual's emotional reaction to outgroup members' behaviors may depend on the implicit theories individuals hold (Cohen-Chen et al. 2017). This suggests that women's felt hopefulness—which constitutes the causal core of our model—may be influenced by their implicit theories. Research from Dweck and colleagues (e.g., Dweck et al. 1995; Ross 1989) suggests that individuals have underlying beliefs about their social surroundings being either static and unchanging (fixed or entity theorists) or dynamic and malleable (incremental theorists). Specifically, individuals can be fixed or incremental theorists with regard to human intelligence (Chiu et al. 1997). Human intelligence is a broad concept that captures individuals' abilities (Mueller and Dweck 1998) and, in particular, their abilities to acquire and apply new knowledge and skills (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/intelligence). Individuals who are fixed theorists believe that humans are limited in their capacity to acquire new knowledge, improve their skills, and apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills to different situations (Dweck et al. 1995). Conversely, incremental theorists believe that humans can acquire new information, develop new skill sets, and use these competencies in various situations. While these theories are implicit (individuals do not explicitly articulate them), decades of research have shown that individuals' implicit theories become benchmarks against which others' behaviors are appraised (Molden et al. 2006).

Research further suggests individuals are generally motivated to believe that their implicit theories are accurate—for example, fixed theorists are motivated to verify that intelligence is static. As a result, when individuals observe a person engaging in behavior that violates their implicit views, this is disorienting and should trigger negative reactions towards the person (Plaks et al. 2005). And yet, research has clarified that not all behavioral violations threaten individuals' implicit views. Importantly, a person whose behavior is counter to an individual's implicit views but whose actions facilitate goal attainment is evaluated positively overall (Dweck et al. 1995).

Integrating these insights, we suggest that the positive effect of self- (vs. relational) ally work on women's felt hopefulness will be more pronounced among women who are entity theorists (i.e., women who hold a fixed view of human intelligence). However, among women who are incremental theorists (i.e., women who hold a less fixed view of human intelligence), the difference between self- (vs. relational) ally work will not be as pronounced.

For women who are entity theorists, they tend to believe that individuals are limited in their capacities and motivations to develop new knowledge, skills, and abilities. By definition, self-work occurs when male leaders seek to change themselves through the acquisition of new information about themselves and their status within a society hierarchy (i.e., acknowledge that they might be recipients of certain advantages). In so doing, these male leaders are expanding their intelligence insofar as they are acquiring new knowledge and information that would substantially challenge their sense of self and lead to self-critique and self-evaluation. Simply put, at its core, when male leaders engage in self-ally work, it is akin to the acquisition of a particular set of knowledge and skills, namely, knowledge and skills around the gender hierarchy and one's position of relatively higher status within the hierarchy relative to others. Among women who hold a fixed view of intelligence, a male leader's self-work is counter to these women's operating beliefs that people are unlikely to develop new bases of seeing and knowing. As such, the deviation is likely to trigger greater variation in felt hopefulness among these women. Specifically, because this deviation seeks to disrupt gender-based social injustices and to improve the condition of women, these women may feel more hopeful about the deviation. Relational work, in contrast, is not so explicit about the development of knowledge and skills. Of course, it is conceivable that a male leader who forms positive interpersonal bonds with his female colleagues may also, as a result, develop new knowledge and skills. But, these outcomes are not necessarily the primary focus of relational work. So, because relational ally work is not necessarily indicative of male leaders' knowledge acquisition, the female employees who hold fixed views about intelligence may not necessarily see this behavior as a positive deviation from their operating beliefs.

For women who are incremental theorists, the belief is that humans can acquire new knowledge, skills, and competencies. For these female employees, a male leader's development of new knowledge bases and skills through self-work may not be particularly noteworthy and transformative. To put it another way, for these incremental theorists, a male leader's self-work may be part and parcel of the natural course of human nature, which is to develop and acquire new knowledge and skills. So, while self-work should lead to higher levels of hopefulness when compared to relational work (Hypothesis 1), female employees who hold a less fixed view of human intelligence may not be as impressed with a leader's self- (vs. relational) work.

Hypothesis 3. *It is among female employees who more strongly endorse a fixed (vs. incremental) view about human intelligence that the indirect and positive effect of a male leader's self- (vs. relational) ally work on female employees' pro-group voice will be strongest.*

Our full model is depicted in Figure 1.

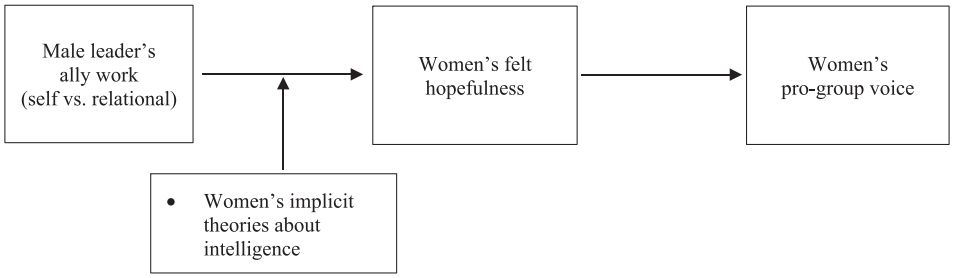


FIGURE 1 | Theoretical model.

2 | Overview of Studies

We tested our hypotheses across three studies. Study 1 was a recall study with working female employees to test the indirect effect of male leaders' ally work on employees' pro-group voice. Studies 2 and 3 were experiments where we manipulated male leaders' ally work to better isolate the effects of self- vs. relational ally work on our focal constructs of interest. Participants for all studies were recruited using Prolific, an online sample provider. There were no overlapping participants between the three studies, as we used Prolific's screener to exclude participants who participated in previous studies. Our sampling plan, data exclusions, manipulations, measures, and the statistical software packages used to analyze the data are detailed in each study's respective sections. Experimental stimuli are detailed in Appendix A, and study measures are in Appendix B. All studies received approval from one of the authors' Institutional Review Board. Outputs from analyses are posted here: https://osf.io/q69yw/?view_only=a91b9a33667947599980d934d17eadc2.

3 | Study 1: Field Study Testing Indirect Effect of Ally Work on Women's Pro-Group Voice

3.1 | Participants and Procedures

We recruited cisgender female participants through Prolific using a two-stage process. First, we created a short screener survey to identify participants who met our eligibility criteria: cisgender female, 18+ years of age, US residency, full-time employment in organizations working 35+ hours a week, and working under a male supervisor. Four hundred participants completed the screener survey, of which 177 met our eligibility criteria. Second, we then invited the 177 participants to complete the main study in exchange for $2.00. We received completed surveys from 116 participants ($M_{age} = 39.20$, SD = 11.62, 63.9% White). These participants were employed across a variety of industries (with the largest being educational services [15.9%]), and the majority worked in for-profit companies (74.5%). Participants were informed that the study would examine their workplace experiences. Participants were then asked to provide their direct managers' initials and then completed measures for their perception of their managers' ally work, their feelings of hopefulness, and their pro-group voice behaviors. We also collected demographic information at the end.

3.2 | Measures

3.2.1 | Manager Ally Work

We measured managers' ally work using Dang and Mitchell's (2025) a recall approach for assessing employees' perceptions of their leaders' ally work. Participants were instructed to recall the extent to which their manager engaged in ally work directed towards female employees within the last 6 months. Participants were then presented with the 7-item self ($\alpha = 0.96$) and 6-item relational ($\alpha = 0.95$) dimensions from Dang and Joshi's (2023) ally work measure and asked the degree to which their manager enacted the listed behaviors at work (1, *Never*; 5, *Always*).

3.2.2 | Felt Hopefulness

Hopefulness has been conceptualized as an emotional response stemming from positive cognitive appraisals regarding the attainment of future outcomes (Lazarus 1999). Consistent with prior research that integrates both affective and cognitive appraisals within the emotional experience of hope (Cohen-Chen and Pliskin 2024), we measured hopefulness with two complementary dimensions. First, we adapted Iyer and Achia's (2021) nine-item hope measure to assess participants' affective reactions towards their male manager (e.g., to what extent do you feel the following towards the manager: hopeful, inspired, etc.; $\alpha = 0.97$). We then supplemented this emotional measure with a cognitive dimension capturing participants' forward-looking expectations about personal growth in their relationship with the manager. Specifically, we adapted items from Colbert et al.'s (2016) personal growth measure ("Pushes me to become a better person," "Help me grow and develop as a human being"; $r = 0.88$; see Appendix B for the full list of items). Exploratory factor analysis using maximum likelihood extraction and varimax rotation revealed one distinct factor, explaining 76.2% of the variance. The items loaded strongly onto this one factor, which we refer to as an overall hopefulness factor, with loadings ranging from 0.80 to 0.93. We thus averaged all items into an overall index of hopefulness ($\alpha = 0.97$).

3.2.3 | Pro-Group Voice

To assess pro-group voice, participants were first instructed to think about gender diversity issues at their workplace (i.e., issues dealing with women at work). We adapted the three highest

loading items from Van Dyne and LePine's (1998) voice measure to assess whether participants approached others in their organization with suggestions for improving female employees' workplace experiences in the last 6 months (e.g., Approach your team manager to discuss gender diversity issues; 1, *No and I do not plan to*; 2, *No but I plan to*; 3, *Yes I have*). We averaged the three items together to create an overall pro-group voice measure, with higher scores indicating a higher likelihood of having engaged in the three different pro-group voice behaviors.

3.2.4 | Controls

We controlled for several factors that could influence our focal constructs of interest. First, given that participants' own racial identities may affect their responses to others' ally work (Iyer and Achia 2021), we controlled for participants' racial/ethnic identity (White: 0, *Other*; 1, *Yes*). Second, we controlled for political ideology (1, *Strong Democrat*; 7, *Strong Republican*, Roth et al. 2020), given research showing participants' ideology could impact their perceptions of their managers' ally work (Dang and Mitchell 2025). Third, given that allies' own advantaged social group status may affect how observers perceive allies (Park et al. 2022), we controlled for participants' perceptions of their male leaders' race (0, *Other*; 1, *White*). Fourth, we controlled for variables that could impact participants' hopefulness ratings of their managers. This included how long participants worked under their male manager (in months), and how much they liked their manager using a 3-item liking measure ("I like this person very much," 1, *Strongly disagree*; 5, *Strongly agree*; $\alpha = 0.87$). Fifth, we controlled for a variety of workplace characteristics. Specifically, we controlled for participants' personal experience with gender discrimination, given that experiences of discrimination could impact felt hopefulness as well as pro-group voice. To do so, we used Redman and Snape's (2006) three-item age discrimination measure because the measure assessed whether experiences of discrimination were attributable to a person's specific demographic characteristic (see Dhanani et al. 2018). We adapted the measure so that the items were about discrimination due to gender (e.g., "The people I work with treat me less favorably because of my gender"; $\alpha = 0.86$). We also controlled for organization type given research suggesting that enacting social action (e.g., engaging in pro-group voice) may be more likely in organizations that are social movement oriented (i.e., SMOs; Scully et al. 2018). Because for-profit organizations are less likely to be typified as SMOs, we controlled for whether participants' organization was a for-profit company (Is your organization for-profit: 0, *Other*; 1, *Yes*). We conducted results without controls, and the results remained unchanged.

3.3 | Results

Correlations and descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1.

3.3.1 | Measurement Model Test

We conducted confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) using the open-source R package "lavaan" (Rosseel 2012) to assess the

TABLE 1 | Study 1: Correlations and descriptive statistics.

	Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.	Self-ally work	2.67	1.11	—									
2.	Relational ally work	3.68	0.97	0.72**	—								
3.	Hopefulness	3.50	1.12	0.71**	0.75**	—							
4.	Pro-group voice	1.40	0.60	0.08	−0.09	−0.03	—						
5.	Participant race	0.65	0.48	−0.12	0.02	−0.10	−0.02	—					
6.	Political ideology	2.84	1.70	−0.24**	−0.20*	−0.16	−0.14	0.04	—				
7.	Manager race	0.74	0.44	−0.06	−0.06	0.03	0.07	0.31**	−0.06	—			
8.	Tenure under manager (log)	3.67	1.12	0.10	0.10	0.06	−0.07	0.07	−0.08	0.04	—		
9.	Liking	3.58	1.13	0.61**	0.72**	0.89**	−0.19*	−0.10	−0.21*	0.02	0.02	—	
10.	Gender discrimination	2.54	1.18	−0.39**	−0.53**	−0.49**	0.30**	0.00	0.01	0.08	−0.03	−0.55**	—
11.	For-profit organization	0.74	0.44	−0.07	−0.14	−0.03	0.05	−0.07	0.21*	−0.03	0.03	−0.02	−0.01

Note: $n = 116$. Participant race/ethnicity: 1 = White, 0 = Others. Manager race/ethnicity: 1 = White, 0 = Others. For-profit organization (0 = Others, 1 = Yes). All tests are two-tailed. $^{*}p < 0.05$. $^{**}p < 0.01$.

distinctiveness of our study variables. We specified a four-factor model including self-work, relational work, hopefulness, and pro-group voice. Given the large number of item-level indicators for the self, relational, and hopefulness constructs, and given the relatively small sample size, we used the parceling method to reduce the indicator-to-sample size ratio and increase reliability in predicting the factor structure for these constructs (Little et al. 2013). For the self- and relational ally work, parcels included two to three items with high and low-loading items; for the hopefulness scale, parcels included three to four items. The four-factor model demonstrated a reasonable fit ($\chi^2[48] = 82.56$, $p < 0.001$, CFI = 0.98, TLI = 0.97; RMSEA = 0.08, SRMR = 0.06) and was superior to a one-factor model ($\chi^2[54] = 528.60$, $p < 0.001$, CFI = 0.67, TLI = 0.60; RMSEA = 0.28, SRMR = 0.13), a two-factor model (where ally work types were combined into one factor, and hopefulness and pro-group voice were combined into a second factor; $\chi^2[53] = 381.42$, $p < 0.001$, CFI = 0.77, TLI = 0.71; RMSEA = 0.23, SRMR = 0.13), and a three-factor model (where ally work types were combined into a single factor; $\chi^2[51] = 289.06$, $p < 0.001$, CFI = 0.83, TLI = 0.79; RMSEA = 0.20, SRMR = 0.09). These results confirmed the distinctiveness of our measured variables.

3.3.2 | Effect on Hopefulness

Regression analyses revealed that self-focused ally work significantly predicted hopefulness ($b = 0.24$, SE = 0.06, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.12, 0.36]) after controlling for covariates and relationship-focused ally work. In contrast, relationship-focused ally work showed no significant relationship with hopefulness ($b = 0.13$, SE = 0.08, $p = 0.125$) when controlling for covariates and self-focused ally work. These findings supported Hypothesis 1.

3.3.3 | Mediation Analysis

We conducted mediation analyses using the PROCESS Macro with 10,000 bootstrap samples (Hayes 2012). The results of the mediation analysis are presented in Table 2. Self-focused ally work demonstrated a significant and positive indirect effect on pro-group voice through hopefulness (indirect effect = 0.07, SE = 0.03, 95% CI [0.01, 0.14]), controlling for covariates and relationship-focused ally work. Relationship-focused ally work showed no significant indirect effect (indirect effect = 0.04, SE = 0.03, 95% CI [−0.01, 0.11]) when controlling for covariates and self-focused ally work. These results supported Hypothesis 2.

TABLE 2 | Study 1: Mediation results.

	Mediator: Hopefulness			DV: Pro-group voice		
	B	**SE**	**95% CI**	**B**	**SE**	**95% CI**
Constant	−0.41	0.37	−0.14, 0.32	1.34*	0.44	0.48, 2.21
Participant race	−0.04	0.10	0.12, 0.36	0.00	0.12	−0.23, 0.24
Political ideology	0.04	0.03	−0.01, 0.10	−0.06	0.03	−0.13, 0.00
Manager race	0.10	0.11	−0.11, 0.31	0.07	0.13	−0.18, 0.32
Tenure under manager	0.01	0.04	−0.06, 0.09	−0.06	0.05	−0.16, 0.03
Liking	0.69**	0.06	0.57, 0.81	−0.34*	0.11	−0.56, −0.13
Gender discrimination	0.04	0.05	−0.05, 0.13	0.13	0.05	0.02, 0.24
For-profit org	−0.01	0.10	−0.21, 0.20	0.14	0.12	−0.10, 0.39
Relational ally work	0.13	0.08	−0.04, 0.29	−0.03	0.10	−0.10, 0.39
Self-ally work	0.24**	0.06	0.12, 0.36	0.12	0.07	−0.03, 0.26
Hopefulness				0.29*	0.11	0.06, 0.51

Direct effect of self/relational ally work on pro-group voice

	Effect	SE	95% CI
Self-ally work	0.12	0.07	−0.03, 0.26
Relational ally work	−0.03	0.10	−0.22, 0.16

Indirect effect of self-ally work on pro-group voice via hopefulness

	Effect	SE	95% CI
Self-ally work	0.07	0.03	0.01, 0.14
Relational ally work	0.04	0.03	−0.01, 0.11

Note: $N = 116$. Participant race: 1 = White, 0 = Others. Manager race: 1 = White, 0 = Others. For-profit organization (0 = Others, 1 = Yes). Tenure under the manager was log-transformed.
*$p < 0.05$.
**$p < 0.01$.

3.4 | Discussion

Study 1 suggests that when female employees perceived their male managers engaging in self-ally work, this heightened feelings of hopefulness, which then positively related to their engagement in pro-group voice. Perception of managers' relational work, however, was unrelated to hopefulness and pro-group voice. There were several strengths to this study, including the working sample and context of our study, which enhanced the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, while our pro-group voice measure was self-reported, we were able to capture whether female employees had engaged in pro-group voice in their respective organizations. There were, however, some limitations to the study. The study design was cross-sectional and used one source for data, which may promote common method variance bias and limit causal inferences (Podsakoff et al. 2003). Also, while theory and results from the CFA suggest that self- and relational work are distinct, in line with previous studies (Dang and Joshi 2023), the correlation between self- and relational work was high in our study (r = 0.72), which suggests that there may be individuals for whom their leader enacted both self- and relational work. Thus, in the next studies we adopted experimental designs to enhance causal inferences, isolate the effects of self- and relational work, and explore the moderating effect of implicit theory.

4 | Studies 2 and 3: Experiments Examining the Moderating Role of Implicit Theory

We conducted two experiments to replicate our proposed mediation model and to test the moderating role of implicit theory. Studies 2 and 3 utilized the same multistage virtual team interaction task described below. However, in Study 2 (preregistration: https://aspredicted.org/rbjh-r3zh.pdf), all measures were assessed at a single time point. We sought to improve upon this design in Study 3 by time-separating the measures and assessing our moderator variable (implicit theories about intelligence) at Time 1 and then having participants complete an experimental task about 3 weeks later at Time 2.

4.1 | Participants

Participants from Studies 2 and 3 were recruited from Prolific. Eligibility criteria for both studies were cisgender female, 18+ years of age, US residency, and full-time employment in organizations working 35+ hours a week. For Study 2, 350 participants were recruited to participate in the study in exchange for $1.50. After excluding participants who failed attention checks or who did not meet our eligibility requirements, our final sample was 314 participants (M_{age} = 38.94, SD = 10.42; 66.9% White, non-Hispanic). For Study 3, we first recruited 300 participants to complete the Time 1 survey in exchange for $2.00. Three weeks later, these same participants were recruited to complete the Time 2 experiment in exchange for $2.00. A total of 177 participants completed both study waves. We included the same attention check and eligibility questions listed in Study 2. After excluding participants who failed attention checks or who did not meet our eligibility requirements, this yielded a final sample of 167 participants who had complete data across Study 3's two waves (M_{age} = 39.19, SD = 11.93; 73.1% White, non-Hispanic).

4.2 | Procedures

We used a team task (completed at Time 2 for participants in Study 3) that had been used in previous manager–employee experimental studies (Dang et al. 2017; Dang and Mitchell 2025). Participants in Studies 2 and 3 were told that they were completing a multipart study on virtual teams. Participants were then instructed to write a short essay about a time they were a leader. This was done to set up the leader–follower simulation, where participants were told they were going to participate in a team task and that one of the participants in the study would be randomly chosen as the team leader. In actuality, all participants were assigned the role of team member and told that another participant was assigned the role of leader. To familiarize themselves with their leader, participants received what they believed was their manager's personal essay about their past leadership experience. We manipulated the leader's ally work by varying the statements in the leader's essay so that they reflected our study's definitions of ally work (see Appendix A for full manipulation). Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. In the self-focused ally work condition (Study 2: n = 106; Study 3: n = 56), the leader described engaging in behaviors that focused on changing aspects of himself to support female colleagues (e.g., "so I focused a lot on trying to change and improve aspects of myself to better serve my female colleagues"). In the relationship-focused ally work condition (Study 2: n = 103; Study 3: n = 58), the leader described behaviors focused on improving their working relationship with female colleagues (e.g., "so I focused a lot on trying to change and improve aspects of my interpersonal working relationship with my female colleagues"). In the control condition (Study 2: n = 105; Study 3: n = 53), the essay described typical managerial behaviors (e.g., "so I focused on fulfilling the responsibilities specified in my job descriptions"). To enhance realism, we included minor grammatical errors to create the impression that the leader had written the essay in the same timeframe as the participants. We kept the leader's gender consistent across conditions, with the phrase "as a man ..." in the early part of the essay.

After reading the leader's essay, participants were told that they would complete a team task about a contemporary organizational issue chosen by the leader. While supposedly waiting for the task selection, participants were asked to imagine working under the manager in an organization and complete a hopefulness measure. Participants then received a message from the manager explaining that this task would involve creating recommendations for workplace gender equity. Participants then responded to questions about whether they would engage in pro-group voice. We measured participants' demographics at the end of the study. This simulation design allowed us to manipulate the type of ally work while providing an appropriate context for participants to consider speaking up about gender issues (Sherf et al. 2017).

4.3 | Measures

Unless otherwise noted, all items used a 5-point Likert scale (1, *Strongly disagree*; 5, *Strongly agree*).

4.3.1 | Hopefulness and Pro-Group Voice (Measured at Time 2 in Study 3)

These constructs were assessed with Study 1's measures. Specifically, participants were asked how hopeful they felt about the leader (Study 2: $\alpha = 0.98$; Study 3: $\alpha = 0.97$). For pro-group voice (Study 2: $\alpha = 0.84$; Study 3: $\alpha = 0.74$), participants were asked their intent to engage in pro-group voice.

4.3.2 | Implicit Theory About Intelligence (Measured at Time 1 in Study 3)

Participants were first asked to think about intelligence, which we defined as the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills. In Study 2, we assessed participants' implicit theory about intelligence using Dweck's (1999) 4-item implicit theory scale ($\alpha = 0.93$), which asked participants whether they thought intelligence was fixed (an entity view of intelligence) or malleable (an incremental view of intelligence. For example, "No matter who you are, you can significantly change your intelligence level (i.e., your knowledge/skills)."") We reverse-coded the original measure so that higher scores indicate a stronger fixed (i.e., entity) view. In Study 3, due to survey length constraints in the time-separated design, we employed Chiu et al.'s (1997) shortened 3-item scale (e.g., "Your intelligence is something about you that you can't change much"; $\alpha = 0.95$). Both measures were derived from the same theoretical foundation (Dweck 1999). We maintained consistent scoring across studies, such that higher values represent a stronger fixed (i.e., entity) view about intelligence.

4.4 | Results

Correlations and descriptive statistics for Studies 2 and 3 are presented in Table 3.

4.4.1 | Manipulation Checks

To verify our manipulation's effectiveness in Study 2, participants were asked to rate their managers' ally work using Study 1's self- and relational ally work measure taken from Dang and Joshi (2023). Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) results indicated a significant effect of condition on the set of manipulation measures (Wilks' $\Lambda = 0.259$, F [4, 620] = 149.67, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.49$). A follow-up ANOVA to assess pairwise comparisons suggest there was a significant effect of condition on the self-ally work measure (F[2, 311] = 165.23, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.51$), such that participants in the self-ally work condition ($M = 4.57$, SD = 0.44) rated the manager engaging in more self-ally work compared to those in the relational ($M = 3.23$, SD = 1.08; t[311] = 9.70, $p < 0.001$) and control conditions ($M = 2.08$, SD = 1.28; t[311] = 18.16, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, there was a significant effect of condition on the relational ally work measure (F[2, 311] = 176.41, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.53$), such that participants in the relational work condition ($M = 4.31$, SD = 0.70) rated the manager higher on relational work than those in self-work ($M = 3.72$, SD = 0.85; t[311] = 4.44, $p < 0.001$) and control conditions ($M = 1.91$, $SD = 1.24$; t[311] = 17.99, $p < 0.001$).

We tested the effectiveness of our manipulation in Study 3 in two different ways. First, we conducted a supplemental study with 103 participants recruited from Prolific. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the three conditions described above (self $n = 35$, relational $n = 33$, control $n = 35$). After reading the description of the leader's behavior, they were then given Dang and Joshi's (2023) self- and relational ally work measures described in Studies 1 and 2. A MANOVA with planned contrasts showed that participants in the self-work condition perceived the leader as engaging in more self-ally work ($M = 4.47$, SD = 0.57) compared to those in the relational ($M = 3.85$, SD = 0.75) and control conditions ($M = 2.88$, SD = 1.00; F [2, 100] = 35.45, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.42$). Also, participants in the relational work condition perceived the leader as engaging in more relational ally work ($M = 4.74$, SD = 0.38) compared to those in the self ($M = 4.30$, SD = 0.82) and control conditions ($M = 3.27$, SD = 0.72; Wilks' $\Lambda = 0.38$, F [2, 100] = 43.13, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.46$). Second, in the present Study 3, participants were presented with three questions with each question containing three different statements. For each question, participants were asked to choose the statement that best described the leader's actions. For example, for Question #1, participants were asked to choose one of the following statements that best described the leader's behavior: "a. thinks critically about his advantaged position in society," "b. develops close work relationships with female colleagues," or "c. focuses on fulfilling his job responsibilities" (see Appendix B

TABLE 3 | Study 2 and Study 3: Correlations and descriptive statistics.

		Study 2		Study 3							
	Variable	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Self-ally work	0.34	0.47	0.34	0.47	—	−0.52**	−0.48**	0.36**	−0.00	0.18*
2.	Relational ally work	0.33	0.47	0.35	0.48	−0.50**	—	−0.50**	0.06	−0.14	0.00
3.	Control condition	0.33	0.47	0.32	0.47	−0.51**	−0.50**	—	−0.42**	0.15	−0.18*
4.	Hopefulness	3.75	1.07	3.39	1.04	0.22**	0.08	−0.30**	—	0.16*	−0.00
5.	Pro-group voice	3.69	0.96	3.61	0.82	0.01	−0.01	−0.00	0.35**	—	−0.23**
6.	Implicit theories about intelligence	2.19	0.91	2.50	1.08	0.02	−0.09	0.07	−0.20**	−0.15*	—

Note: $N = 314$ (Study 2) and $N = 167$ (Study 3). Correlations for Study 2 appear below the diagonal (lower triangle); correlations for Study 3 appear above the diagonal (upper triangle). All tests are two-tailed. *$p < 0.05$. **$p < 0.01$.

for full items). A series of chi-square tests on showed that for each of the three questions, participants in each condition disproportionately chose the statement about the leader's actions that most aligned with the condition: self-focused ally work (item #s 1, 2, 3: 75.0%; 83.9%; 67.9%), relationship-focused ally work (item #s 1, 2, 3: 87.9%; 63.8%; 87.9%), and control (item #s 1, 2, 3: 69.8%; 75.5%; 79.2%) conditions (X^2[4, $N = 167$] = 157.89, $p < 0.001$; X^2[4, N = 167] = 132.78, $p < 0.001$; X^2[4, $N = 167$] = 161.16, $p < 0.001$). As an example, returning to Question #1 above, 75.0% of participants in the self-work condition correctly chose statement "a"; 87.9% in the relational work condition correctly chose statement "b"; while 69.8% in the control condition correctly chose statement "c." In all, the results provided support for the effectiveness of our manipulation.

4.4.2 | Effect on Hopefulness

Across Studies 2 and 3, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed a significant effect of condition on hopefulness (Study 2: F[2, 311] = 16.67, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.10$; Study 3: F [2, 164] = 21.42, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.21$). However, results were mixed in terms of the pattern of findings across Studies 2 and 3. In Study 2, there was a significant difference in hopefulness when comparing the self ($M = 4.08$, SD = 0.76) and control conditions ($M = 3.30$, SD = 1.20; t[311] = 5.57, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.31$), and the relational ($M = 3.88$, SD = 1.05) and control conditions (t[311] = 4.10, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.23$); suggesting that leaders who engaged in self or relational ally work (vs. no ally work) generated more hopefulness among female employees. However, contrary to expectations, there was no difference in felt hopefulness when comparing the self- and relational conditions (t[311] = 1.44, $p = 0.151$, $d = 0.08$). In Study 3, participants in the self-ally work condition ($M = 3.91$, SD = 0.69) reported higher levels of hopefulness than both those in the relational ($M = 3.46$, SD = 0.94, t(164) = 2.55, $p = 0.012$, $d = 0.20$) and control conditions ($M = 2.75$, SD = 1.12, t(164) = 6.50, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.50$). Additionally, participants in the relational condition reported higher levels of hopefulness than those in the control condition, t(164) = 4.04, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.31$. Overall, there was mixed support for Hypothesis 1.

4.4.3 | Mediation Analysis

Using the PROCESS macro described in Study 1, we tested the indirect effect of ally work on pro-group voice through hopefulness. To facilitate the interpretation of mediation coefficients, we used the relational ally work and control conditions as reference categories. In Study 2, the mediation model was significant when comparing the self- and control conditions, suggesting that managers' self-work indirectly promoted women's pro-group voice via an increase in felt hopefulness (indirect effect = 0.27, SE = 0.06, 95% CI [0.16, 0.41]). However, given that in Study 2, there was no significant difference in hopefulness between the self- and relational ally work conditions, we did not find support for our hypothesis that managers' self- (vs. relational) ally work is positively related to women's pro-group voice via hopefulness (indirect effect = 0.07, SE = 0.04, 95% CI [−0.02, 0.16]). In Study 3, we did find support for our mediation hypothesis: participants in the self-ally work condition reported a higher intention for pro-group voice through their increased level of hopefulness compared to those in the relational ally work condition (indirect effect = 0.09, SE = 0.05, bootstrapped 95% CI [0.02, 0.21]) and control condition (indirect effect = 0.25, SE = 0.09, bootstrapped 95% CI [0.09, 0.44]). Hypothesis 2 received mixed support.

4.4.4 | Moderated Mediation Analysis

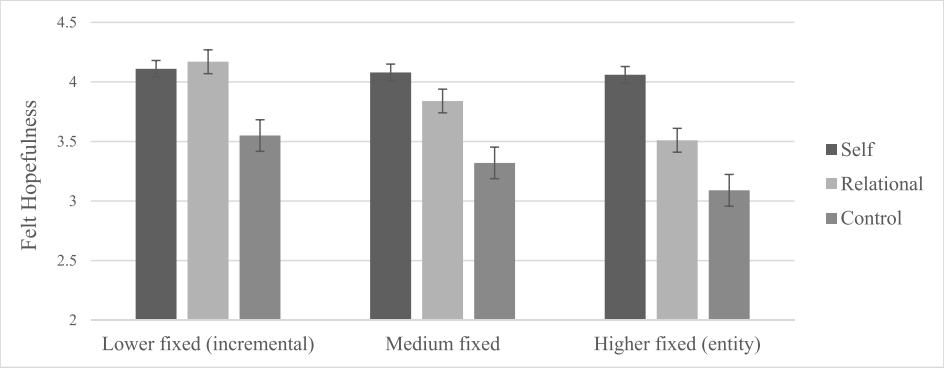
We conducted moderated mediation analyses using the PROCESS macro described above with 10,000 bootstrapped samples. First, moderation analyses showed that the positive effect of managers' self- (vs. relational) ally work on hopefulness was moderated by participants' implicit theory (Study 2: $b = 0.33$, SE = 0.16, $p = 0.031$, 95% CI [0.03, 0.64]; Study 3: $b = 0.37$, SE = 0.16, $p = 0.022$, 95% CI [0.05, 0.68]). Specifically, the positive effect of managers' self- (vs. relational) ally work on hopefulness was more strongly positive when participants had a more fixed view of intelligence (+1 SD) (Study 2: $b = 0.55$, $t = 2.71$, $p = 0.007$, 95% CI [0.15, 0.95]; Study 3: $b = 0.82$, $t = 3.58$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.37, 1.28]). When participants' fixed view of intelligence was weaker (−1 SD), meaning they held a more incremental view of intelligence, this did not increase the positive effect of managers' self- (vs. relational) ally work on women's felt hopefulness (Study 2: $b = -0.06$, $t = -0.32$, $p = 0.746$, 95% CI [−0.44, 0.32]; Study 3: $b = 0.03$, $t = 0.11$, $p = 0.909$, 95% CI [−0.48, 0.54]). These interaction patterns are depicted in Figure 2a,b.

Second, moderated mediation analyses confirmed our expectation that the indirect effect of self- (vs. relational) ally work on pro-group voice, through hopefulness, is stronger when women's fixed views of intelligence are stronger (vs. weaker). Specifically, as reported in Table 4, when women held a stronger fixed view about intelligence (+1 SD), the indirect effect of self- (vs. relational) work on pro-group voice was stronger (Study 2: indirect effect = 0.19, SE = 0.07, 95% CI [0.05, 0.35]; Study 3: indirect effect = 0.18, SE = 0.08, 95% CI [0.04, 0.34]). When women held a weaker fixed view about intelligence (−1 SD), the indirect effect was weaker but not statistically significant (Study 2: indirect effect = −0.02, SE = 0.06, 95% CI [−0.14, 0.09]; Study 3: indirect effect = 0.01, SE = 0.06, 95% CI [−0.10, 0.14]). Across both Studies 2 and 3, there was a significant index of moderated mediation confirming that these coefficients were significantly different from one another (Study 2: index = 0.12, SE = 0.06, 95% CI [0.02, 0.24]; Study 3: index = 0.08, SE = 0.04, 95% CI [0.01, 0.17]). Overall, Hypothesis 3 was supported in both Studies 2 and 3.

4.4.5 | Exploratory Analyses

We explored whether other implicit theories might moderate the relationship between ally work and hopefulness. In both Studies 2 and 3, we used Chiu et al.'s (1997) measures to assess participants' implicit theories about general phenomena (e.g., "Though some phenomena can be changed, it is unlikely that the core dispositions of the world can be altered"; Study

a: Moderation Effect of Implicit Theories about Intelligence at Lower (-1 SD), Mean, and Higher (+1 SD) Levels, Study 2



b: Moderation Effect of Implicit Theories about Intelligence at Lower (-1 SD), Mean, and Higher (+1 SD) Levels, Study 3

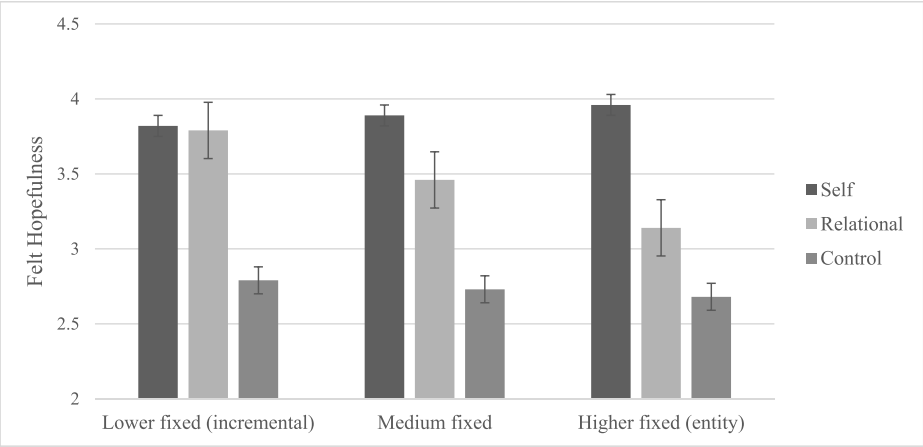


FIGURE 2 | (a) Moderation effect of implicit theories about intelligence at lower (−1 SD), mean, and higher (+1 SD) levels, Study 2. (b) Moderation effect of implicit theories about intelligence at lower (−1 SD), mean, and higher (+1 SD) levels, Study 3.

2 $\alpha = 0.91$; Study 3 $\alpha = 0.91$) and morality (e.g., "A person's moral character is something very basic about them and it can't be changed much"; Study 2: $\alpha = 0.92$; Study 3: $\alpha = 0.91$). Moderated mediation analyses using PROCESS Model 7 revealed that neither implicit theories about general phenomena (Study 2: index = −0.03, SE = 0.04, 95% CI [−0.11, 0.05]; Study 3: index = 0.02, SE = 0.04, 95% CI [−0.08, 0.09]) nor morality (Study 2: index = −0.00, SE = 0.04, 95% CI [−0.08, 0.08]; Study 3: index = 0.02, SE = 0.04, 95% CI [−0.06, 0.09]) moderated the indirect effect of managers' self- (vs. relational) ally work on women's pro-group voice through hopefulness. That is, among women who viewed moral character and general phenomena to be relatively fixed, male leaders' self (vs. relational work) was not perceived to be more positive.

In Study 3, we also explored whether domain-specific implicit theories about male leadership might moderate the relationship between ally work and hopefulness. Drawing from leadership research suggesting that individuals hold implicit theories about prototypical leader behaviors (Lord et al. 2020), we measured participants' expectations about male leaders' self-awareness and humility. At Time 1, participants were asked to visualize a typical male supervisor in today's workplace and completed two measures: a 9-item scale assessing expectations of leaders' self-criticism (adapted from Scheier and Carver 1985; for example, "Be inclined to take a hard look at himself"; $\alpha = 0.78$) and a 5-item scale measuring expected leader humility in handling gender diversity issues (adapted from Owens and Hekman 2016; e.g., "Admit one's weaknesses when it comes to managing diversity"; $\alpha = 0.88$). Moderated mediation analyses revealed that neither implicit theories about leader self-criticism (index = 0.03, SE = 0.06, 95% CI [−0.08, 0.15]) nor leader humility (index = 0.02, SE = 0.06, 95% CI [−0.09, 0.14]) moderated the indirect effect of ally work on pro-group voice through hopefulness. Collectively, these null effects support the unique moderating role of implicit theories about intelligence. The null effects seem to suggest that self-work appears specifically linked to beliefs about whether people can develop new capabilities and knowledge, rather than beliefs about morality, general changeability, or leadership traits.

4.5 | Discussion

Studies 2 and 3 extended Study 1's findings in key ways. Using an experimental design, we isolated the independent effect of male managers' enactment of self- (vs. relational) ally work on our focal outcomes of interest. Results also showed that the indirect and positive effect of male leader's self- (vs. relational) work was stronger when female employees' implicit theory about intelligence was more fixed (an entity view).

TABLE 4 | Studies 2 and 3: Conditional effects of condition on hopefulness and pro-group voice at low, mean, and high levels of implicit theories about intelligence.

Path	−1 SD below moderator (incremental view)		Mean level on the moderator		+1 SD above moderator (fixed view)	
First stage effects	**Study 2**	**Study 3**	**Study 2**	**Study 3**	**Study 2**	**Study 3**
Self vs. relational × implicit theory about intelligence → hopefulness	−0.06 (−0.44, 0.32)	0.03 (−0.48, 0.54)	0.24 (−0.03, 0.52)	0.43* (0.08, 0.77)	0.55* (0.15, 0.95)	0.82* (0.37, 1.28)
Self vs. control × implicit theory about intelligence → hopefulness	0.56* (0.16, 0.95)	1.04* (0.54, 1.53)	0.76* (0.49, 1.03)	1.16* (0.80, 1.51)	0.97* (0.59, 1.34)	1.28* (0.76, 1.80)
Relational vs. control × implicit theory about intelligence → hopefulness	0.62* (0.24, 1.00)	1.01* (0.54, 1.47)	0.52* (0.24, 0.79)	0.73* (0.38, 1.08)	0.42* (0.03, 0.80)	0.45 (−0.09, 1.00)
Second stage effects						
Hopefulness → pro-group voice	0.35* (0.25, 0.45)	0.21* (0.08, 0.34)	0.35* (0.25, 0.45)	0.21* (0.08, 0.34)	0.35* (0.25, 0.45)	0.21* (0.08, 0.34)
Conditional indirect effects						
Self vs. relational × implicit theory about intelligence → hopefulness → pro-group voice	−0.02 (−0.14, 0.09)	0.01 (−0.10, 0.14)	0.09 (−0.00, 0.17)	0.09* (0.01, 0.21)	0.19* (0.05, 0.35)	0.18* (0.05, 0.35)
Self vs. control × implicit theory about intelligence → hopefulness → pro-group voice	0.20* (0.06, 0.35)	0.22* (0.06, 0.45)	0.27* (0.16, 0.39)	0.25* (0.09, 0.45)	0.34* (0.18, 0.53)	0.27* (0.09, 0.51)
Relational vs. control × implicit theory about intelligence → hopefulness → pro-group voice	0.22* (0.07, 0.39)	0.21* (0.07, 0.40)	0.18* (0.07, 0.32)	0.16* (0.04, 0.30)	0.15 (−0.04, 0.34)	0.10 (−0.05, 0.28)

Note: $N = 314$ (Study 2) and $N = 167$ (Study 3). Parameter estimates are unstandardized path estimates at the moderator's low, mean, and high levels. Values in parentheses are 95% confidence intervals from 10 000 bootstrapped samples.
*95% confidence interval did not include zero.

5 | General Discussion

5.1 | Theoretical and Practical Implications

5.1.1 | An Emotions-Focused Perspective

Our study contributes to the growing body of research on ally work. Ally work research builds on a stream of research examining how intended beneficiaries react to diversity-enhancing and nondiscriminatory practices (Leslie 2019). In taking a predominately cognitive perspective, this research has relied on variants of person-cognition research and theory (e.g., stereotype content, stereotype threat) to explain beneficiaries responses to these practices (Harrison et al. 2006; Hekman et al. 2017; Leslie et al. 2014).[2] We build upon and extend extant research by focusing on the critical role of emotions in impacting female employees' reactions to male leaders' ally work. As discussed, ally work represents a type of intergroup behavior where advantaged group members support those from a relatively disadvantaged social group. Decades of research on intergroup dynamics suggest that these intergroup interactions generate emotions that can empower and motivate specific actions.

Drawing from intergroup relations research, we identify hopefulness as an important emotional reaction that women experience following male leaders' ally work. In Studies 1 and 3, we theorize and find a direct effect of male leaders' enactment of self- (vs. relational) work on women's felt hopefulness. While this direct effect was not significant in Study 2, the pattern was consistent with our prediction that self-work would generate higher levels of felt hopefulness than relational work. One potential reason for the mixed finding may be that the positive effect of male leaders' self (vs. relational) on hopefulness is contingent on women's own beliefs and worldviews (a point we discuss below). Moreover, an important implication of Hypothesis 1's mixed finding is that women do not necessarily recoil from their male leaders' relational work. Rather, when presented with both types of ally work, women may under certain conditions react more positively (i.e., feel more hopeful) when the leader's self- (vs. relational) work is salient.

Overall, by focusing on women's felt hopefulness, our research highlights the emotional process that unfolds following leaders' ally work. While we emphasize the role of emotions (specifically hopefulness), it is important to clarify that an emotions-focused perspective does not discount the role of cognition (e.g., stereotypes or other beliefs) in predicting outcomes. Rather, the perspective is explicit in foregrounding emotions as the "main focus" (Yzerbyt and Demoulin 2010, 1041) through which ally work mobilizes change efforts. Returning to our paper's motivating question, our study thus suggests that women's emotional experiences are crucial in linking male leaders' ally work to women's engagement in pro-group voice. That is, women's emotional experiences can be the "beating heart"[3] of their social change efforts and motivate them to advocate for gender equity in organizations.

5.1.2 | Implicit Theory

A novel contribution of our research lies in demonstrating how women's implicit theory about intelligence shaped their reaction to their male leaders' ally work. We find across Studies 2 and 3 that the positive effect of male leaders' self- (vs. relational) work on hopefulness is more pronounced when women hold a more fixed (vs. incremental) theory about intelligence. This pattern generalizes when comparing self vs. typical managerial behavior (i.e., control condition), such that women who endorsed a more fixed view responded more positively to self-ally work compared to the control condition as well. We believe the same theoretical argument explains the findings for the self vs. relational and self vs. control comparisons: when women believe intelligence is fixed, they are more likely to feel hopeful towards male leaders when these leaders are willing to acquire new knowledge of themselves (e.g., engaged in self-work) than when leaders engage in relational work or typical managerial work. That is, a male leader's self-work challenges entity theorists' core assumptions about the immutability of knowledge and capabilities. These results suggest that women's implicit beliefs about a specific attribute of human nature—human intelligence—affect how they react to different forms of ally work. By definition, self-work is when individuals engage in actions to change key aspects of themselves, including their knowledge and skills—that is, their competencies and skills around gender diversity, and their privilege awareness. Although individuals strive to maintain their implicit theories, when women endorse fixed beliefs about intelligence, they may find men's display of self-reformation via self-work a positive expectancy violation (Dweck et al. 1995), which is why it elicits feelings of hopefulness from women. In contrast, among women who held a less fixed view of human intelligence (i.e., incremental theorists), the positive effect of self- (vs. relational) work on hopefulness was not significant. For these women, the acquisition of knowledge may be part and parcel of the natural course of human development. Thus, while a male leader's self- (vs. relational) work tends to be more positively associated with hopefulness, women who are incremental theorists may not view the male leader's actions as a significant departure from what is typical of humans to do anyway: to develop and acquire new knowledge.

Overall, these results suggest several implications about the ally work modalities. First, as we have emphasized throughout the paper, our argument is not that relational work is "bad" or a worser type of ally work compared to self-work. Rather, our argument has been that women tend to feel more hopeful and engage in pro-group voice when their male leaders enact self- (vs. relational) work. Second, our findings suggest that there is an important boundary condition, such that for some women (i.e., those who are entity theorists), the difference between self- and relational work is especially pronounced. For other women (i.e., those who are incremental theorists), the differences between self- and relational work are less pronounced, and relational work may be seen as just as "good" as self-work.

5.1.3 | Mobilizing Effect of Leaders' Self-Work

Our research also advances our understanding of how leaders can mobilize social change in organizations (Heucher et al. 2024). Prior work has mainly examined high-visibility leader actions such as leaders' activism (Briscoe and Gupta 2016; Hambrick and Wowak 2021; Solinger et al. 2020) or focused on

how manager–employee working relationships (e.g., leader–member exchange) may be pivotal in galvanizing employees' social change efforts (Morrison 2014). To reiterate, our research does not suggest that such relationship-oriented styles of management are ineffective or even unwelcome by female employees. Indeed, the relatively high correlation between self-work and relational work in Study 1 is suggestive of the complementarity of these dimensions of ally work. Instead, we draw attention to a potentially overlooked catalyst: leaders' engagement in self-critical and self-transformative ally work. While self-work may appear less transformative and disruptive than other leader behaviors like activism, our research suggests that if self-work is observable, it could under certain conditions effectively mobilize female employees' change efforts via their pro-group voice. This is because self-work challenges women's fundamental assumptions about outgroup members (male leaders) as being reluctant to critique key aspects of themselves (i.e., their knowledge, skills, and competencies). By engaging in self-work, however, male leaders demonstrate a willingness to be self-critical, which we argue is a transformative act in and of itself that could galvanize women's pro-group voice.

5.2 | Limitations and Future Directions

Future research may extend our findings in several ways. First, given managers' positional status and power within organizations, we focused on the effects of male managers' ally work. However, our findings may extend to male employees who are not in managerial positions but who enact ally work towards their female counterparts (Sherf et al. 2017). Future research could focus on nonmanagerial male employees' ally work, and the consequences that arise from enacting different types of ally work. Per our theorizing, we would expect that among nonmanagerial male employees, women should also perceive these employees' self (vs. relational ally work) more positively. However, when there is no status or power imbalance, female employees may respond more positively to male employees' relational (vs. self-) ally work. A basis for this conjecture is that when there are no power differentials, people tend to adopt a more communal orientation focusing on collective improvement (Rucker et al. 2012). Thus, among peers, women may find a male ally's relationship-building efforts more meaningful in improving the community overall.

Second, our framework could inform the understanding of other forms of ally work, such as racial or disability-centered ally efforts (Chu and Ashburn-Nardo 2022). Future studies could examine whether beneficiaries from different marginalized groups respond similarly to self- versus relational ally work and whether group-specific implicit theories shape these responses. For example, research could explore whether racial minority employees perceive White allies' self- vs. relational ally work differently and if their implicit theories about intelligence or morality moderate their reactions.

Third, while we focused on implicit theories about intelligence, future research could examine other relevant implicit theories in intergroup contexts. Intergroup relations research suggests that other implicit theories could impact intergroup dynamics (Cohen-Chen et al. 2014). For example, research suggests that people hold implicit theories about the malleability of emotional experiences. People who are entity theorists view emotions as long-lasting, whereas incremental theorists view emotions as changeable (Tamir et al. 2007). It could be that beneficiaries who are entity theorists regarding emotions expect the emotions they experience upon observing ally work (hopefulness) to remain unchanged and may thus be even more likely to respond positively to self- (vs. relational) ally work.

Fourth, we encourage future research to examine the temporal dynamics of leaders' ally work and pro-group voice. It is possible that over time female employees may evaluate male leaders' ally work in terms of its developmental progress. For instance, beneficiaries may initially welcome male advocates who express their commitment to changing themselves (self-work). While these initial self-focused efforts may spur feelings of hopefulness, beneficiaries' support can gradually shift to suspicion if male allies fail to connect their self-work to concrete, actionable agendas in the organization (Iyer and Achia 2021). Future research could thus employ a field study with longitudinal or qualitative designs to test the temporal dynamics of male leaders' ally work and how beneficiaries' reactions and voice engagement evolve over time.

Fifth, while we captured pro-group voice through self-report measures, future research should consider employing objective measures of provoice behavior. Future research can obtain supervisor or peer ratings of voice behavior, archival records of formal suggestions made to improve gender equity, or observational data of actual voice episodes in meetings. Such measures can help establish the robustness of our findings.

6 | Conclusion

While existing diversity initiatives often emphasize relationship-building between advantaged and disadvantaged groups, our findings indicate that male leaders' commitment to personal growth and self-transformation may be an overlooked but crucial catalyst for women's workplace pro-group voice. As organizations continue developing strategies to advance gender equity, they should recognize that encouraging and supporting male leaders' self-focused ally work can create ripple effects by empowering women to voice their perspectives and advocate for positive change.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Endnotes

[1] Because appraisals occur rapidly, research on appraisal theory assumes that the emergence of an emotional experience is indicative of an appraisal. That is, most research does not measure appraisal, per se, but rather infers appraisal occurred on account of an experienced emotion.

[2]We note here that in a pretest, we did examine whether leaders' self (vs. relational) ally work activated stereotypes among observing employees. Results are detailed in full in the Online Supplement. Briefly, results showed no significant differences between self vs. relational ally work in predicting women's felt stigma consciousness, or their perception of the leader's warmth and competence.

[3]The term "beating heart" has been used to emphasize the important role of emotions in institutional theory (e.g., Creed et al. 2022; Voronov and Weber 2016).

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section. **Table S1.** Means and standard deviations of dependent variables in conditions.

Appendix A

Studies 2–3 Experimental stimuli

(control, self, and relational conditions all received this same introductory prompt):

As we previously explained, we are presenting you with your assigned team leader's essay. To get to become acquainted with this leader, please read the essay carefully. Thank you!

Control condition:

Well once I was put in charge of my team at my company. As a man, I really tried to focus on ways to act like a manager to these people. So I focused on fulfilling the responsibilities specified in my job description. Some specific things I did was seek out a bunch of books, articles, and podcasts about being a good manager. I also reflected a lot on my past experience and how it could be used to be a manager to the people I was leading. I also thought critically about my job responsibilities and how to be a manager. I also did my best to constantly be aware and behave according to performance expectations of a team manager.

For example, I helped creating people's schedules answered questions if they had scheduling conflict, and made sure everyone completed the job tasks that were assigned to them.

In short: As a man, I really just did my best to be a good manager.

Self-ally work condition:

Well once I was put in charge of my team at my company. I really tried to focus on ways to support the women in my team. So I focused a lot on trying to change and improve aspects of myself to better serve my female colleagues. Some specific things I did was seek out a bunch of books, articles, and podcasts about the experiences of women in society.

I also reflected about my privilege as a man, and how it can be used to advocate for women I was leading. I also thought really critically about my advantaged position in society, and how it can used to support my fellow female colleagues. I also did my best to constantly be aware and change my thoughts, feelings, actions to reduce my implicit bias that may have prevented women from opportunities. For example, because I'm privileged and people like me are privileged, I took time to learn from women and share their experiences to the overall group.

In short: I really just did my best to be an ally.

Relational ally work condition:

Well once I was put in charge of my team at my company. I really tried to focus on ways to support the women in my team. So I focused a lot on trying to change and improve aspects of my interpersonal working relationship with my female colleagues to better serve them. Some specific things I did was work to develop positive professional interactions with them that support the work experience of women in society. I also looked at my working relationships and tried to develop a strong professional network with my female colleagues where they could feel supported and cared for. I also focused on making sure the connections were ones in which I could offer advice, support, and care for the female colleagues to help them gain access to resources that could help them succeed. I also did my best to build high quality working relationships with female colleagues where I focused on providing support to them, in ways that might benefit them professionally. For example, I tried to be approachable and be a sponsor to try to support women in my group. In short: I really just did my best to be an ally.

Appendix B

Measures

Ally work manipulation check (Study 3).

Question 1:

- Thinks critically about one's advantaged position in society.
- Makes it a point to develop a close work relationship with female colleagues.
- Meets the require performance expectations.

Question 2:

- Focuses on improving one's knowledge of female colleagues' experiences.
- Focuses on creating positive professional work relationships with female colleagues.
- Focuses on fulfilling one's job responsibilities.

Question 3:

- Thinks about one's privilege and how it can be used to advocate for female colleagues.
- Seeks out opportunities to network and engage with female colleagues while at work.
- Performs what is expected as part of one's job description.

Pro-group voice (Studies 1–3).

To what extent would you ...

- Approach your manager [the team manager] to discuss gender diversity issues.
- Approach higher ups in the organization to discuss gender diversity issues.
- Approach others in the organization to discuss gender diversity issues.

Felt hopefulness (Studies 1–3).

The first nine items were adapted from Iyer and Achia (2021) and the last two items from Colbert et al. (2016).

Read each item, and indicate whether you feel the following about the team manager ...

- Hopeful, Inspired, Optimistic, Excited, Thankful, Confident, Appreciative, Pleased, Grateful, Help me grow and develop as a human being, Push me to become a better person.

Implicit theories about intelligence (Studies 2–3).

Study 2 (Dweck 1999).

- No matter who you are, you can significantly change your intelligence level.
- You can always substantially change how intelligent you are.
- No matter how much intelligence you have, you can always change it quite a bit.
- You can change even your basic intelligence level considerably.

Study 3 (Chiu et al. 1997).

- You have a certain amount of intelligence and you really cannot do much to change it.
- Your intelligence is something about you that you cannot change much.
- You can learn new things, but you cannot really change your basic intelligence.