

To Help or Not to Help? Personal Value for Diversity Moderates the Relationship Between Discrimination Against Minorities and Citizenship Behavior Toward Minorities

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ABSTRACT. Using the scope of justice perspective (Deutsch in *J Soc Issues* 31(3):137–149, 1975; Opatow in *Conflict, cooperation, and justice: essays inspired by the work of Morton Deutsch*, 1995, *J Soc Issues* 52:19–24, 1996), we examined whether and how the relationship between perceived discrimination against minorities at work (i.e., racial minorities and females) and citizenship behavior toward minorities can be modified by personal value for diversity. Based on a survey of 173 employees, unexpectedly, we found a negative relationship between perceived discrimination against minorities at work and citizenship behavior toward minorities. However, consistent with our expectations and the scope of justice, we found that the negative relationship was attenuated for those high in personal value for diversity.

KEY WORDS: value for diversity, discrimination, minorities, scope of justice, citizenship behavior, OCBI

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and in the aggregate, promotes the efficient and effective functioning of the organization” (Lee and Allen, 2002; Organ, 1988, p. 4). OCB has gained much attention from both academia and practice since it may influence the effectiveness of a variety of organizational outcomes, such as coworker, managerial, and team productivity, and organizational success and performance (see Podsakoff et al., 2000, for a review). Much research has investigated predictors of OCB directed toward both individuals (OCBI) and organizations (OCBO) including dispositions (e.g., conscientiousness, agreeableness, and

positive affectivity), attitudes (e.g., satisfaction, fairness, affective commitment, and trust in leader), and ability (Podsakoff et al., 2000). However, in spite of what we do know about OCB, we still have very limited knowledge about how the mistreatment of others influences citizenship behavior.

In particular, we focus on discrimination, defined as denying individuals proper treatment because of their demographic characteristics (Allport, 1954), as an important form of mistreatment. While empirical evidence shows that the victims of perceived discrimination are less likely to exhibit OCB toward the organization (Ensher et al., 2001), the literature is silent on how witnessing the discriminatory treatment of minorities may influence OCBI toward those minorities. We examine whether and how observers may react to discrimination against minorities at work by directing helping behaviors toward these minorities (OCBI). We have two major objectives in this research. First, we examine how employees’ perceptions of discrimination against minorities (i.e., racial minorities and females) in their organizations are related to their OCBI toward those minorities. Second, we investigate how *personal value for diversity*, defined as the importance a person places on having a diverse group of individuals in the workplace, may modify the relationship between perceptions of discrimination against minorities and OCBI (Mor Barak et al., 1998). It is important to examine personal value for diversity, because this individual difference will likely modify a person’s willingness to extend help to others.

This study makes two important contributions. First, it makes a theoretical contribution because it is

the first to use the scope of justice (Opatow, 1987, 1995, 1996) to examine personal value for diversity as a moderator of the relationship between perceived discrimination against minorities at work and citizenship behavior toward minorities. The scope of justice perspective maintains that people's responses to the mistreatment of others will be dictated by whether or not they include those others in their moral community of persons about whom they care (Opatow, 1987, 1995, 1996). The present research proposes and tests that the tenets of the scope of justice can be extended to behaviors directed at minorities at work.

Second, our study is important practically because we examine how to diminish the effects of discrimination against minorities in organizations, which is illegal (EEOC, 2010) and morally wrong (Demuijnck, 2009; Dipboye and Colella, 2005). Discrimination against minorities sends a signal to other employees about the integrity of the organization and its leaders (Goldman et al., 2008; Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978). In addition, minorities tend to have the strongest racial identities, experience the most discrimination, and have higher turnover rates (McKay et al., 2007; Phinney, 1992; Robinson and Dechant, 1997; Utsey et al., 2002). If minorities perceive that they are being discriminated against at work and no one comes to their aid, they may conclude that the entire work environment is prejudiced and may resort to legal redress (Goldman, 2001). Our findings suggest that having employees who value diversity matters because they will be more likely to help those who have been mistreated.

Theoretical background and research hypotheses

We begin by proposing that perceived discrimination against minorities should be positively related to OCBI. This is based on the deontic justice perspective (Cropanzano et al., 2003; Folger, 2001; Folger et al., 2005) and research on helping behavior (Schein, 2009). The deontic justice perspective (Cropanzano et al., 2003; Folger, 2001; Folger et al., 2005) states that people focus on what is morally correct when they make decisions about the fairness of others' treatment. This perspective would predict that perceived discrimination against minorities will

be viewed as a moral wrong. Discrimination against minorities should generally be considered a moral wrong because there is a social consensus (Jones, 1991) that it is wrong (e.g., Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 forbids race and sex discrimination in employment; U.S. National Archives, 2010). To discriminate against minorities in an organization is to deny them proper treatment, which should prompt a desire to redress the moral wrong by helping the victims. Helping others in response to seeing a moral wrong committed toward them is a natural human response, because helping is fundamental to human relationships (Schein, 2009). Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1: Perceived discrimination against minorities will be positively related to OCBI toward minorities.

The moderating role of personal value for diversity

The personal value for diversity construct is based on the work of Mor Barak et al. (1998) who state that personal value for diversity involves an individual's views toward people who are different from themselves, which can affect attitudes and behaviors toward others in the organization. We expect that people who are high in personal value for diversity will react more negatively toward discrimination against minorities in their organization and thus be willing to help them more than will those who are low in personal value for diversity. We rely on the scope of justice to make this prediction (Opatow, 1987, 1995, 1996). While the deontic justice perspective (Cropanzano et al., 2003; Folger, 2001; Folger et al., 2005) maintains that people use their moral compasses to determine the fairness of others' treatment in any given situation, the scope of justice perspective states that the rules of fairness and appropriate treatment only apply to those people about whom the observer cares.

The scope of justice maintains that we all have a notion of who we consider to be in our "moral community" (Opatow, 1996, p. 20). For those within our scope of justice, "moral rules and values govern our conduct (Deutsch, 1985; Opatow, 1987, 1990, Staub, 1990) and we care about their rights and fair treatment" (Opatow, 1996, p. 20). For

those outside of our scope of justice, concerns about their treatment do not apply (Opatow, 1996). The scope of justice argues that when others are in one's moral community, one is more likely to believe that fairness and consideration should be afforded to these others, and one is more willing to make personal sacrifices and share resources with them (Opatow, 1987, 1993, 1995). Those with a high personal value for diversity place more importance on having a diverse workforce and want to foster an inclusive environment (Mor Barak et al., 1998). For this reason, we propose that people high in personal value for diversity will have a broader scope of justice that includes minorities and will, therefore, react more strongly to discrimination against minorities than will those with a low personal value for diversity. This is consistent with a theoretical model of third-party reactions to the mistreatment of others which states that the individual personality traits of the observer should moderate reactions to the observed mistreatment (Skarlicki and Kulik, 2005). In a related line of research, empirical evidence shows that school leaders with high personal racial awareness of problems faced by minorities are less likely to blame minorities' performance and more likely to blame an inhospitable school culture for minority faculty shortages (Buttner et al., 2007). This further suggests that individual differences may modify the way that observers react to situations that are problematic for minorities. Therefore, based on theory and related empirical evidence, we propose the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: The relationship between perceived discrimination against minorities and OCBI toward minorities will be moderated by personal value for diversity. Those with a high personal value for diversity will help minorities more than will those with a low personal value for diversity.

Method

Participants and procedure

The study was conducted in two phases in order to establish temporal priority between the independent and dependent variables (Shadish et al., 2002). Employed participants were recruited from Master of

Business Administration (MBA) classes and upper division undergraduate business courses at two large public universities in the south and on the west coast of the United States. These universities are known for having an older than average student body, most of which is employed. Respondents were recruited during class time to participate in a two-phase study. In exchange for their participation, they received extra credit in their class. Participants were emailed the survey link for the Phase 1 survey by their instructors. Perceived discrimination against minorities, personal value for diversity and demographic variables including sex, race, employment status, and work experience were collected during Phase 1. Two weeks later, participants again received an email from their instructor with a web link to complete the Phase 2 survey which included the measure of OCBI toward minorities.

Of the 203 participants, 22 were removed because they were not employed and eight were removed because they did not completely answer both portions of the two-phase survey. Thus, 173 employees provided a full set of data and these participants constituted the sample. Sixty percent of the respondents were female. Twenty-six percent of participants were Caucasian, 40% were Hispanic, 26% were Asian, 7% were African-American, and 1% were Native American. The average age was 30 years, and 100% of the participants were currently employed. Average full-time work experience was 10 years.

Phase 1 measures

Participants were asked to think about their current employer and answer the questions.

Perceived discrimination against minorities

We used the one item from James et al.'s (1994) Workplace Prejudice/Discrimination Inventory which describes discrimination against minorities, "At work minority employees receive fewer opportunities". In addition, we wrote two items: "Members of traditionally underrepresented groups (females and minorities) are welcome in my organization" and "My organization strives to retain employees who are members of traditionally underrepresented groups." These two items were reverse-scored. Participants

indicated the extent to which they agreed with each item on a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree*). The reliability for this scale was $\alpha = 0.70$ (Cronbach, 1951).

Personal value for diversity

We used the Personal Diversity Value measure from Mor Barak et al.'s Diversity Perceptions Scale (1998). One item is "I think that diverse viewpoints add value." In addition, we wrote one item, "I value diversity in the workplace." Participants indicated the extent to which they agreed with each item on a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree*). The reliability for this scale was $\alpha = 0.81$.

Control variables

We controlled for minority status (coded as 0 = non-minority and 1 = minority) as well as sex (coded as 0 = male and 1 = female) because minorities and women have lower social status and tend to perceive more discrimination than majority group members (Goldman et al., 2006; Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). Since we collected data at two different universities, we also included a data source control variable coded as 0 = university on the west coast and 1 = university in the south.

Phase 2 measure

OCBI

Lee and Allen's (2002) 8-item OCBI measure was used. Items were worded such that the referent was "minority employees". A sample item is "I willingly give my time to help minority employees who have work-related problems." Participants indicated the extent to which they agreed with each item on a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 6 = *Strongly Agree*). Reliability for this scale was $\alpha = 0.93$.

Preliminary analyses

Since we collected multiple scales in our survey, we ran a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in LISREL (8.80) to establish the convergent and discriminant

validity of those measures. The results indicated that a three-factor solution (perceived discrimination against minorities, personal value for diversity, and OCBI) was a good fit for the data ($\chi^2 = 188.75$, $df = 87$, CFI = 0.96, IFI = 0.96, SRMR = 0.05; Kline 2005). A three-factor solution was a better fit to the data than a two-factor solution where personal value for diversity and OCBI were combined onto one factor ($\chi^2 = 474.07$, $df = 89$, CFI = 0.85, IFI = 0.86, SRMR = 0.13). A three-factor solution was also better than a one-factor solution ($\chi^2 = 561.75$, $df = 90$, CFI = 0.82, IFI = 0.82, SRMR = 0.14).

Results

See Table I for means, standard deviations, and inter-correlations for all variables. We conducted a hierarchical multiple regression analysis to test the hypotheses. Following Aiken and West (1991), the variables in the interaction term were centered to test for moderation. The regression analysis consisted of three steps (see Table II for the results). In Step 1, the control variables sex, minority status, and data source (i.e., which university) were entered. This step was not statistically significant ($R^2 = 0.04$). In Step 2, we added perceived discrimination against minorities and personal value for diversity. The results of this step were significant ($R^2 = 0.14$; $\Delta R^2 = 0.10$) but contrary to our hypothesis. Perceived discrimination against minorities had a significant negative relationship with OCBI toward minorities ($\beta = -0.18$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was not supported. In Step 3, we added the interaction between perceived discrimination against minorities and personal value for diversity. The interaction was significant and explained an additional 3% of the variance beyond the controls and main effects, which is common for interaction terms (McClelland and Judd, 1993; $R^2 = 0.17$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.03$). The plot of the interaction is shown in Figure 1. Consistent with Hypothesis 2, the negative relationship between discrimination against minorities and OCBI toward minorities was attenuated by personal value for diversity, showing that those high in personal value for diversity help minorities more than those low in personal value for diversity.

TABLE I
Means, standard deviations, and inter-correlations

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Sex	0.60	0.49	–					
2. Minority	0.74	0.44	–0.01	–				
3. Data source	0.32	0.47	–0.16*	0.27**	–			
4. Discrimination against minorities	2.55	1.00	0.19*	0.17*	–0.23**	–		
5. Personal value for diversity	4.90	0.86	0.19*	0.26**	0.15*	–0.14	–	
6. OCBI toward minorities	4.94	1.32	0.08	0.03	0.15*	–0.23**	0.30**	–

Note: *n* = 173.

Sex was coded as 0 = male, 1 = female.

Minority was coded as 0 = non-minority, 1 = minority.

Data source was coded as 0 = university on the west coast and 1 = university in the south.

p* ≤ 0.05, *p* ≤ 0.01.

TABLE II
Regressing OCBI toward minorities on perceived discrimination against minorities and personal value for diversity

Step	Variable	<i>b</i> (SE)	B	<i>R</i> ²	Δ <i>R</i> ²
1	Intercept	4.65 (0.23)		0.04	
	Sex	0.28 (0.21)	0.11		
	Minority	–0.04 (0.24)	–0.01		
	Data source	0.49 (0.22)*	0.18*		
2	Intercept	4.81 (0.24)		0.14**	0.10**
	Sex	0.21 (0.21)	0.08		
	Minority	–0.09 (0.24)	–0.03		
	Data source	0.27 (0.22)	0.10		
	Discrimination against minorities	–0.24 (0.11)**	–0.18*		
Personal value for diversity	0.39 (0.12)**	0.26**			
3	Intercept	4.83 (0.24)		0.17**	0.03**
	Sex	0.18 (0.20)	0.07		
	Minority	–0.07 (0.24)	–0.02		
	Data source	0.32 (0.22)	0.11		
	Discrimination against minorities	–0.24 (0.10)**	–0.18*		
	Personal value for diversity	0.39 (0.12)**	0.26**		
Discrimination against minorities × Personal value for diversity	0.24 (0.09)**	0.19**			

Note: *n* = 173.

Sex was coded as 0 = male, 1 = female.

Minority was coded as 0 = non-minority, 1 = minority.

Data source was coded as 0 = university on the west coast and 1 = university in the south.

p* ≤ 0.05, *p* ≤ 0.01.

General discussion

The results of the study show mixed support for our hypotheses. Contrary to our expectations, the rela-

tionship between perceived discrimination against minorities and OCBI toward minorities was negative. However, personal value for diversity attenuated that negative relationship such that those with a

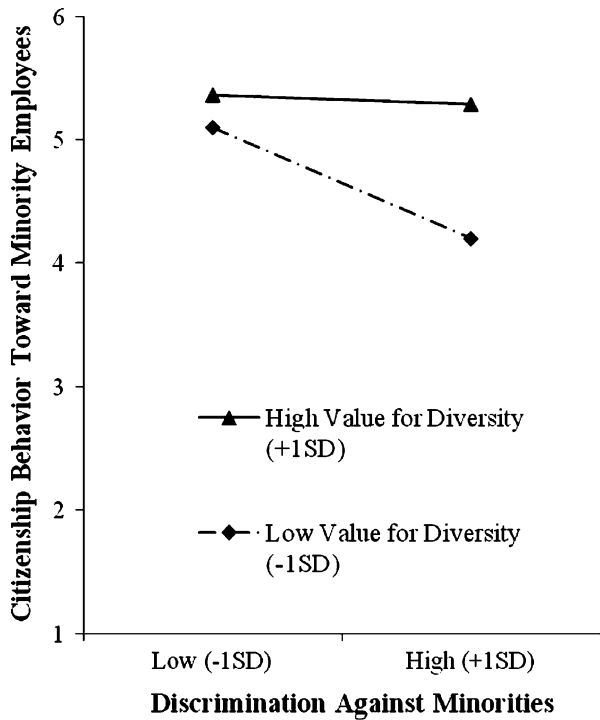


Figure 1. Interaction of perceived discrimination against minorities and personal value for diversity on OCBI toward minorities.

high personal value for diversity exhibited more OCBI toward minorities than did those with a low personal value for diversity.

Implications for theory and practice

Theoretically, our findings support the scope of justice because people with high personal value for diversity care about diversity in the workplace (Mor Barak et al., 1998) and are more likely to respond to discrimination against minorities by trying to help them. Theorizing on the scope of justice (Deutsch, 1975; Opatow, 1995, 1996) maintains that one's ideals about fairness only apply to those within our scope of justice, or those we deem worthy of just treatment. Our findings suggest that the scope of justice can be applied within the setting of discrimination against minorities at work. Opatow (1995) maintains that to have others within one's scope of justice means that one would willingly make sacrifices to foster their well-being. Citizenship behavior would certainly be one way of fostering another's well-being.

However, in our sample we also found a negative main effect from discrimination against minorities to OCBI toward minorities. It was only when the participants scored high on personal value for diversity that this negative relationship became weaker. Because of this, our findings show mixed support for the deontic justice perspective (Cropanzano et al., 2003; Folger, 2001; Folger et al., 2005). The negative relationship between discrimination against minorities and OCBI toward minorities is contrary to deontic justice.

However, the moderating effect of personal value for diversity supports deontic justice because those who care the most about diversity are more willing to help others. Thus, our findings suggest that the deontic justice perspective may be extended to take into account the individual differences of the observers. While observers do seem to apply their moral compass in deciding how to respond to a situation, these principles are not applied evenly to all people. The decision to act seems to be driven by one's scope of justice *vis-à-vis* personal value for diversity. In this respect, our results also provide empirical evidence for theoretical work proposing that third-party observers' individual differences (e.g., personality traits) will influence their reactions to the perceived mistreatment of others (Skarlicki and Kulik, 2005).

Our findings are also consistent with diversity research which shows that individual beliefs about the value of diversity in teams influence attachment to diverse teams (van Dick et al., 2008; van Knippenberg et al., 2007). For example, van Dick et al. (2008) and van Knippenberg et al. (2007) found that when the members of diverse teams believe that diversity is good for teams and adds value, team identification is higher. Along with those two studies in the literature, the present study implies that individual belief in the value of diversity is an important personal value that affects the way people perceive and react to their work environment.

One possible explanation for the negative main effect of discrimination against minorities on OCBI would be the bystander effect (Darley and Latane, 1968; Latane and Darley, 1969). Several studies have shown that in emergency situations (e.g., a violent attack, a room gradually filling with smoke) people often do not rush to act or take responsibility, especially if there are other onlookers present

(Darley and Latane, 1968). In the words of Darley and Latane (1968, p. 378), when other observers are present “the pressures to intervene do not focus on any one of the observers; instead the responsibility is shared among all the onlookers.” As a result of this diffusion of responsibility, sometimes no one comes to the victim’s aid (e.g., the infamous Kitty Genovese murder where 38 witnesses saw the event but none came to her aid or called the police; Latane and Darley, 1969). It is possible that if others at work are aware of the discrimination against minorities, then the responsibility to act has been diffused and the mistreatment of minorities may be met with a bystander effect. This is important from a practical perspective, because it implies that if employees know that there is discrimination against minorities at work but they also see that others witness the discrimination and take a passive approach, they may also do nothing to help the victims. In summary, our study is important from a practical perspective, because our results imply that having employees high in personal value for diversity may minimize the occurrence of the bystander effect under the situations where knowledge of discriminatory treatment against minorities at work is shared.

Another explanation for the negative relationship between discrimination against minorities and citizenship behavior toward minorities may be that it is an attribution error (McAuley et al., 1992), whereby the observer attributes the failures of the target to the target person’s own character flaws. Since negative stereotypes tend to be associated with minority groups (Benokraitis and Feagin, 1995; Feagin and Sikes, 1994; Sidanius and Pratto, 1999), our findings may be indicative of discrimination toward minorities. In fact, studies on the bystander effect have shown that White observers (especially those high in prejudice) helped Black victims more slowly than they helped White victims when other observers were around to assist (Gaertner et al., 1982). Pettigrew (1979) referred to a phenomenon known as the ultimate attribution error which is a form of attribution error whereby if the perceiver harbors biases and stereotypes about a particular group they are more likely to react negatively to targets from those groups. Since we did not measure levels of prejudice in this study, we cannot say for certain whether our participants exhibited the ultimate attribution error (we discuss this more in the limitations and future

research). As a practical matter, it is important to note that biases and stereotypes may be held by all members of society, regardless of their personal minority status (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). In fact, our sample was 74% minority (Hispanic, Asian, African-American, and Native American). This has practical implications for organizations because it suggests that the motivation to help minorities is not necessarily driven by minority status but by value for diversity. This suggests that companies may be most successful in their diversity management if mentors and others in positions to help minorities have a high personal value for diversity.

Practically, our findings suggest that organizational actions toward minorities may set an example for others, because discrimination against minorities by the organization was negatively related to observers’ own OCBI toward minorities. What was most disturbing about our findings was that discrimination against minorities was negatively related to OCBI toward minorities. Contrary to the idea that discrimination should be considered morally wrong and should inspire people to help the victims, our results support the bystander effect. Although unfortunate, our findings are realistic, because if people always did the morally correct thing, how could slavery have happened, why would we need maximum-security prisons, and “how can genocides occur?” (Opatow, 1995, p. 347). Understanding who is more or less likely to help minorities at work may help organizations understand how discrimination against minorities can influence both the victims and the other observers. This is important because research shows that the nature of interactions and information shared among employees at work is related to whether employees who have been mistreated will resort to legal claiming behavior (Goldman, 2001).

Strengths, limitations, and future research

One strength of this study is that 100% of the participants were currently employed. The sample of working adults answers calls for discrimination research to utilize employees drawing from real-world interactions (Dipboye, 1985; Dipboye and Colella, 2005; Goldman et al., 2006) rather than imagined scenarios. The sample of mostly minority employees

also allowed us to understand the experiences of lower status group members (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). This is important because lower status group members are more likely to experience discrimination than majority group members (Benokraitis and Feagin, 1995; Feagin and Sikes, 1994; McConahay, 1983) and because minorities are a growing part of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007, 2008). Another strength of our study design includes data collection across two points in time which helps lessen common method variance, a problem common in discrimination research (Goldman et al., 2006). This also helps establish a temporal precedent between the independent and dependent variables (Cook and Campbell, 1979; Shadish et al., 2002).

A limitation of this study is that because we did not measure levels of personal prejudice against minority groups, we cannot say for sure what caused our predominantly minority sample to report a negative relationship between discrimination against minorities and OCBI toward minorities. Future studies may measure individual difference variables such as social dominance orientation, defined as support for the “domination of ‘inferior’ groups by ‘superior’ groups” (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999, p. 48). High levels of social dominance orientation are related to hierarchy enhancing beliefs which represent actions that help endorse the current social structure/order where some groups have power over others. Two other individual differences that would be fruitful to explore are ambivalent sexism (Glick and Fiske, 1996) and modern racism (McConahay et al., 1981). These three traits could help explain why participants may withhold help from other group members, even those from their own group.

Another limitation is that we did not assess participants’ motives for their choice to provide (or not provide) help to minorities. One possible explanation for the negative relationship between discrimination against minorities and OCBI toward minorities is that if employees see there is an anti-minority sentiment at work, they may be afraid to provide discretionary help to minorities. Doing so might put them at risk of standing out for behaving counter-normatively which could lead to retaliation. This effect may be even stronger for those with minority status, which may explain why they might not speak up on behalf of those they see mistreated.

Future research could delve into the reasons why employees choose to help or not to help others.

Conclusion

Our results are consistent with the scope of justice. While the relationship between discrimination against minorities and OCBI toward minorities was negative, personal value for diversity attenuated this negative relationship. Findings suggest that personal value for diversity is an important variable that modifies the way observers react to the mistreatment of minorities in the workplace. Our results provide support for the scope of justice perspective, which maintains that people are willing to look the other way when those outside their scope of justice are mistreated. Results also suggest that individuals with a high personal value for diversity have a broader and more inclusive scope of justice and are thereby more willing to extend help to minorities who have been mistreated.

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