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Gender Issues in Business

Despite the universal agreement on gender equality women are still in disadvantageous position in contemporary society. The gender gap between man and women can be seen across many fields of life including business.

Mainstream economics is male-biased as it presupposes an androcentric conception of the human person. With its exclusive focus on productivity today's businesses tend to undervalue female characteristics such as care and compassion. However, they like to use women as sex objects in marketing and advertising.

Based on the moral experience of women Carol Gilligan describes feminist ethics as an ethics of care. For women the self is constructed in relationships and their typical problem-solving strategy is communication. Insights from feminist ethics induce a new model of corporate governance where the key issue is to maintain and manage relationships of the firm in a mutually satisfying way.

The postindustrial economy is more congenial to women than to men. Today's companies require more-feminine management style. Gender equality and feminist ethics are not only important for their own sake. They increase the performance of businesses and economies while contribute to the quality of life of men and women alike.

keywords: gender gap, feminist ethics, changing role of men, women-oriented companies

8.1 The Women's Disadvantage

Despite the growing advancement of women coupled with international agreements declaring gender equality as a fundamental human right research evidence suggests that women are still being disadvantaged across different fields of life including business.

The World Development Report (World Bank 2011) recognizes that numerous developing countries display significant gender inequalities in employment, education and health outcomes. These disadvantages have, and will continue to have far reaching implications for these countries. Moreover, women who live and work in more affluent societies still experience gender disadvantages. This is more evident among those likely to suffer social exclusion due to for instance, their race, color, sexual orientation, or disability.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) commissioned the independent publication of Human Development Report (HDR) with the first one launched in 1990. These reports examine migration with regards to changing demographics in growth and inequality trends that relate to the movements of peoples within societies and across the globe. It appears that migration occurrence is primarily instigated by the global unequal distribution of capabilities (UNDP 1990 – 2011). Furthermore, the disadvantages that are often experienced by women and girls are seated at the crux of inequality. The discrimination endured in various sectors, such as education, health, and employment, is evidence of these disadvantages, which in turn can lead to negative repercussions for women's wellbeing, sense of belonging and freedom.

The Human Development Report presents an innovative way to measure development. This was via a combination of life expectancy, educational attainment, and GDP per capita into a composite Human Development Index, referred to as the HDI. Nonetheless, the Inequality-adjusted HDI (IHDI) measure that focuses on the human development of people in society that give account for inequality, was introduced in the 2010 HDR report. A new measure of inequalities due to the disadvantages faced by women and girls has now been introduced. This latter measure is based on the HDI and IHDI framework, with the intention of depicting any differences in the distribution of achievements between women and men.

The Gender Inequality Index (GII) is based on three dimensions namely, the labor market, empowerment, and reproductive health. This is an addition to five indicators that is, labor force

participation, educational attainment, parliamentary representation, adolescent fertility, and maternal mortality (UNDP 1990 – 2011).

There are various differences in inequality across countries. The ensuing losses in achievement particularly those which are gender related range from 4.9 to 76.9 percent. Furthermore, societies with unequal distribution of human development, tend to experience high inequality between the sexes and vice versa, that is, countries where there is high inequality among men and women, experience unequal distribution of human development (UNDP 1990 – 2011).

Table 8.1 presents Below is a Gender Inequality Index and its related indicators, such as labor force participation rate, and the population of men and women aged 25 and over, with at least secondary education. The table depicts the top ten countries where human development is either very high, high, medium, or low, therefore giving insight to those societies where unequal distribution of human development is likely to be greater. (See also Box 8.1)

Table 8.1 Gender Inequality Index and Related Indicators

HDI rank	Gender Inequality Index		Maternal Mortality Ratio	Adolescent Fertility Ratio	Seats in national Parliament (% female)	Population with at least Secondary Education (% aged 25 and over)		Labour Force Participation rate women ages		Contraceptive Prevalence rate, any method (15-49)	At least one antenatal (%)	Births Attended by skilled Health (%)	Total Fertility Rate	
	Rank	Value				Female	Male	Female	Male					Personnel
	2011	2011	2008	2011a	2011	2010	2010	2009	2009	2005–2009b	2005–2009b	2005–2009b	2011a	
VERY HIGH HUMAN DEVELOPMENT														
1	Norway	6	0.075	7	9.0	39.6	99.3	99.9	63.0	71.0	88.0	—	—	2.0
2	Australia	18	0.136	8	16.5	28.3	95.1	97.2	58.4	72.2	71.0	100.0	100.0	2.0
3	Netherlands	2	0.052	9	37.8	86.3	89.2	59.5	72.9	69.0	5.1	—	100.0	1.8
4	United states	47	0.299	24	41.2	16.8 c	95.3	94.5	58.4	71.9	73.0	—	99.0	2.1
5	New Zealand	32	0.195	14	30.9	33.6	71.6	73.5	61.8	75.7	75.0	95.0	100.0	2.1
6	Canada	20..	0.140	12	14.0	24.9	92.3	92.7	62.7	73.0	74.0	—	98.0	1.7
7	Ireland	33	0.203	3	17.5	11.1	82.3	81.5	54.4	73.0	89.0	100.0	—	2.1
8	Liechtenstein	—	—	—	7.0	24.0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
9	Germany	7	0.085	7	31.7	91.3	92.8	53.1	66.8	75.0	7.9	—	—	1
10	Sweden	1	0.049	5	6.0	45.0	87.9	87.1	60.6	69.2	—	—	—	1.9
HIGH HUMAN DEVELOPMENT														
1	Uruguay	62	0.352	27	61.1	14.6	56.6	51.7	53.8	75.5	78.0	96.0	100.0	2.0
2	Palau	6.9..	—	—	—	13.8	—	—	—	—	21.0	100.0	100.0	—
3	Romania	55	0.333	27	32.0	9.8	83.8	90.5	45.4	60.0	70.0	94.0	99.0	1.4

4	Cuba	58	0.337	53	45.2	43.2	73.9	80.4	40.9	66.9	78.0	100.0	100.0	1.5
5	Seychelles	51.3	—	—	—	23.5	41.2 d,e	45.4 de	—	—	—	—	—	—
6	Bahamas	54	0.332	49	31.8	17.9	48.5 d,e	54.5 d,e	68.3	78.7	45.0	98.0	99.0	1.9
7	Montenegro	—	—	15	18.2	11.1	79.7 d,e	69.5 d,e	—	—	39.0	97.0	99.0 g	1.6
8	Bulgaria	40 ..	0.245	13	42.8	20.8	69.1	70.6	48.2	61.2	63.0	—	100.0	1.6
9	Saudi Arabia	135	0.646	24	11.6	0.0 f	50.3	57.9	21.2	79.8	24.0	90.0	91.0	2.6
10	Mexico	79	0.448	85	70.6	25.5	55.8	61.9	43.2	80.6	73.0	94.0	93.0	2.2
MEDIUM HUMAN DEVELOPMENT														
1	Jordan	83	0.456	59	26.5	12.2	57.1	74.2	23.3	73.9	59.0	99.0	99.0	2.9
2	Algeria	71	0.412	120	7.3	7.0	36.3	49.3	37.2	79.6	61.0	89.0	95.0	2.1
3	Sri Lanka	74 5.3	0.419	39	23.6	56.0	57.6	57.6	57.6	75.1	68.0	99.0	99.0	2.2
4	Dominican Republic	90	0.480	100	108.7	19.1	49.7	41.8	50.5	79.8	73.0	99.0	98.0	2.5
5	Samoa	3.8	—	—	—	28.3	4.1	64.2 d,e	60.0 d,e	37.9	75.4	25.0	—	100.0
6	Fiji	2.6	—	—	26	45.2	—	86.6	88.6	38.7	78.4	35.0	—	99.0
7	China	35	0.209	38	8.4	21.3	54.8	70.4	67.4	79.7	85.0	91.0	99.0	1.6
8	Turkmenistan	—	—	77	19.5	16.8	—	—	62.4	74.0	48.0	99.0	100.0	2.3
9	Thailand	69	0.382	48	43.3	14.0	25.6	—	65.5	80.7	77.0	98.0	97.0	1.5
10	Suriname	2.3	—	—	100	39.5	9.8	—	—	38.5	66.0	46.0	90.0	90.0 g
LOW HUMAN DEVELOPMENT														
1	Solomon Island	—	—	100	70.3	0.0	—	—	24.2	50.0	27.0	74.0	70.0	4.0
2	Kenya	130	0.627	530	100.2	9.8	20.1	38.6	76.4	88.1	46.0	92.0	44.0	4.6
3	SãoTomé and Príncipe	—	—	—	66.1	18.2	—	—	44.5	76.0	38.0	98.0	82.0	3.5
4	Pakistan	115	0.573	260	31.6	21.0	23.5	46.8	21.7	84.9	30.0	61.0	39.0 g	3.2
5	Bangladesh	112	0.550	340	78.9	18.6	30.8	39.3	58.7	82.5	53.0	51.0	24.0 g	2.2
6	Timor-Leste	—	—	370	65.8	29.2	—	—	58.9	82.8	22.0	61.0	18.0	5.9
7	Angola	5.1	—	—	610	171.1	38.6	—	—	74.5	88.4	6.0	80.0	47.0 g
8	Myanmar	96	0.492	240	16.3	4.0	18.0	17.6	63.1	85.1	41.0	80.0	64.0	1.9
9	Cameroon	134	0.639	600	127.8	13.9	21.1	34.9	53.5	80.7	29.0	82.0	63.0	4.3
10	Madagascar	134.3	—	—	440	12.1	—	—	84.2	88.7	40.0	86.0	44.0 g	4.5

Source: Human Development Report 2011

Box 8.1 *Minorities in the UK and the Need for Respect*

In various communities in the UK with high concentration levels of Pakistani, Black African and Bangladeshi residents, the women-folk were more likely than their white female counterparts to be unemployed (Innovations Report, 2006). Furthermore, there has been a significant rise in the number of female graduates of working age particularly, among those of Black Afro-Caribbean, Pakistani and Indian origins, yet their positions in the labor market fail to reflect this. This scenario could lead to feelings of discontent, discrimination, resentment and disrespect.

Recent research evidence based on findings of a study conducted over two research phases (2007- 2008 and 2008 – 2009), suggests that respect is a common value for all, not least women. One could therefore argue that to develop a milieu of respect locally, nationally and globally, could have a ricochet effect across businesses yielding benefits for organizations and their employees. One might therefore ask, is this not something worth doing?

The study was conducted among ethnically diverse male and female business students at Middlesex University's Business School. These students chose to share their stories of respect and disrespect as it affected them, from differing life perspectives in weekly focus group sessions. These groups comprised of four to six students of mixed gender, ethnicity, age, and cultures, from various business degree disciplines.

The study revealed that for some students, respect had at least five different meanings or at most thirty three. Respect was also a common and significant shared value for those of cultural difference that meant the same, similar, and dissimilar things to the same or culturally different students. Furthermore the study disclosed that there was an underlying assumption that everyone knew what respect meant; that is until individual students made explicit their true meaning of respect. This had a marked effect on their perceptions, attitude and behavior towards each other creating an ambience of respect among them that improved team relationships and learning outcomes. The findings also showed that respect was culturally situated and that one person's meaning of respect was in some instances another's disrespect.

It is useful to explore in greater detail the disadvantages experienced by many women across the world. According to the United Nations of Public Information Department for every 100 men in the world there are 98.6 women. Nonetheless, they have not yet achieved equality compared with men in any society. Furthermore 70% of the worlds reputed 1.3 billion poor people are women, yet they produce in excess of 55 percent of all food that is grown in rural areas in developing countries. It is plausible to assume that most people think soldiers are the primary victims of war today, but this differs from the reality. Civilian women and their children are the main victims of world combat, many of whom are subjected to the degradation of rape, a warfare weapon that devastated the lives of many women leaving them feeling disrespected and violated. In twelve months of conflict from April 1994 to April 1995, it was alleged that in Rwanda, between 150,700 and 250,000 women and young girls were raped (United Nations, 2011).

Nevertheless, progress has been made to address gender inequality for the betterment of women. For instance, in countries such as the USA, Canada, Norway, Finland and Sweden, women's educational achievements and annual income tends to be higher in comparison with that of other women living and working in other parts of the world (United Nations, 2011). Despite this promising evidence, in some other countries the opposite is taking place, showing instead a widening decline in gender equality. The Global Gender Gap Report 2011 reports the slight decline in gender equality ranks for Spain, Sri Lanka, South Africa, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Nonetheless, improvements in gender equality was evident in societies such as Tanzania, Turkey, Qatar, Ethiopia and Brazil (Global Gender Gap Report, 2011)

8.2 Male-biased Economics and Business

Feminist scholars disclosed the essentially male-biased nature of modern mainstream economics. They criticize mainstream economics for presupposing an androcentric, male-biased conception of the human person. (England, P. and Stanek Kilbourne, B. 1990; Ferber, M.A. and Nelson, J.A. (eds.) 1993).

Mainstream business value and pay the efforts of human persons according to the narrowly defined concept of productivity. Productivity means the creation of marketable goods and services, that is, one's contribution to the money-generating capability of companies and other

organizations. While mainstream businesses often neglect feminine values as care and compassion they prefer to use women as sex object in marketing and advertising. (Box 8.2)

Box 8.2 *Lynx Deodorant*

In November 2011 The Guardian reported a case of internet advertisement campaign for Lynx deodorant which features model and reality TV star Lucy Pinder in a series of provocative poses.

Lucy Pinder has been featured in Lynx internet advertisements that provoked complaints to the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) in the UK. The five internet advertisements, for the Lynx Dry deodorant brand, featured Pinder undertaking activities including washing a car, jogging and playing with a light sabre. (See Figure 8.1)



They used lines including "What will she do to make you lose control?", "Play with Lucy" and "Put premature perspiration to the test". The ASA received complaints that the campaign was

offensive, degraded and objectified women, and ran on websites where it was too easily able to be viewed by children.

The majority of the complaints to the ASA were that the ad campaign was offensive because it was sexually suggestive, indecent, provocative, glamorized casual sex, and objectified and demeaned women.

Unilever said that the target market for Lynx – young men – had "come to expect, and were comfortable with the typical narrative, tone and content seen in advertising for the brand". The company added that although the model was scantily clad "she was not undressed to an extent that would be in any way unusual in that location [the beach]".

Adapted from Mark Sweney "Lynx's Lucy Pinder ads banned by ASA" *The Guardian* 23 November 2011

Women comprise of 31 percent of the labour force in developing countries and approximately 46.7 percent worldwide, why then are they most inclined to be paid less for doing the same of similar jobs as their male counterparts?

The World Development Report 2012 recognizes that closing the gender gaps is crucial as gender equality is a key for smart economics. Therefore, a pledge to pursue gender equality is a quest for enhancing development outcomes, harmonious working relationships, multicultural team effectiveness and business sustainability.

8.3 Feminist Ethics

Feminist ethics explores the moral experience of women. The most important contribution was made by *Carol Gilligan* her best-selling book "In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development" (Gilligan 1982).

Conducting empirical studies at Harvard on the moral experience of women, Gilligan found that the morality of women is strikingly different from the morality of men: “Relationships, and particularly issues of dependency, are experienced differently by women and men. (...) The quality of embeddedness in social interaction and personal relationships that characterize women’s lives in contrast to men’s” (Gilligan 1982: pp. 8-9.).

Gilligan characterizes the morality of women as an ethic of care. “The ideal of care is thus an activity of relationship, of seeing and responding to need, taking care of the world by sustaining the web of connection so that no one is left alone.” The ethic of care “is the wish not to hurt others and the hope that in morality lies a way of solving conflicts so that no one will be hurt.” Women consider the inflicting of hurt as “selfish and immoral in its reflection of unconcern, while the expression of care is seen as fulfillment of moral responsibility” (Gilligan 1982: p.62., p.65., and p.73.).

Identity is defined differently by women and men. For women “identity is defined in a context of relationship and judged by a standard of responsibility and care. (...) Morality stems from attachment.” For men “the tone of identity is different, clearer, more distinct and sharp-edged. (...) Thus the male ‘I’ is defined in separation” (Gilligan 1982: pp. 160-161.).

Gilligan states that men and women represent two different moral ideologies: the ethic of rights and the ethic of care, respectively. Separation is justified by an ethic of rights while attachment is supported by an ethic of care. The morality of rights is predicated on equality and centered on the understanding of fairness, while the ethic of responsibility relies on the concept of equity, the recognition of differences in need. While the ethic of rights is a manifestation of equal respect, balancing the claims of other and the self, the ethic of responsibility rests on an understanding that gives rise to compassion and care (Gilligan 1982: p.165.).

Table 8.2 shows the contrasting features of male and female morality.

Table 8.2 *Male versus Female Morality*

	Male morality	Female morality
concept of the self	separate self	related self
problem-solving method	focusing on rights	communication
main driver	goal-rationality	caring for others

It is not to argue for the superiority of women’s morality. Gilligan emphasizes the complementarity of male and female ethics. The two disparate modes of moral experience are connected in mature morality: “While an ethic of justice proceeds from the premise of equality - that everyone should be treated the same - an ethic of care rests on the premise of non-violence - that no one should be hurt. (...) [In maturity] both perspectives converge in the realization that just as inequality adversely affects both parties in an unequal relationship, so too violence is destructive for everyone involved” (Gilligan 1982: p. 174.).

Inspired by feminist ethics Silke Machold, Pervaiz K. Ahmed and Stuart S. Farquhar developed a governance model which views the firm as a web of relationships rather than a nexus of contracts. (Machold, Ahmed, and Farquhar 2008)

Their feminist governance model recognizes a multiplicity of actual and potential relationships with varying degrees of asymmetry of power distribution, within which there is an obligation of care. In that sense, are shareholders privileged in caring terms over other stakeholders? It depends on whether there is a relationship or the potential of a relationship. In addressing the issue of who counts, a feminist model prioritizes all those individuals with whom a relationship has been, or could in future be established, regardless of whether that relationship is enshrined in legal or economic terms. Moreover, these relationships are with concrete others, taking into consideration their individuality and identity. Thus, in the feminist model governance is not about abstract relations between anonymous and homogenous stakeholder groups in an

organization, but the contextual relationships between concrete individuals belonging to one or several stakeholder groups

In the feminist view the universal principle underpinning the governance relationships is the obligation to care, a sense of responsibility in individuals within and outside the organization to nurture others. Individuals within governance relationships engage in a continuous process of care with the aim towards empowerment of each other. That involves managers learning about the background and identity of those within their immediate care, understanding the individual's need for job satisfaction or a work-life balance and empathizing with it. The practice of care is not equal to mollycoddling, satisfying every whim that the cared-for has. Attending to somebody's needs often means pointing out the dangers associated with a particular course of action, with a particular form of behavior. Care does also not mean sacrificing the self in the process, the ability of individuals to care is circumscribed by their competences and the responsiveness of the cared-for.

Additionally, the organization needs to embed the values of care in internal and external systems and procedures. It also ensures that caring is not limited to a select group of individuals, such as management. Caring does not take place at the cost of replacing justice considerations, rather the obligation to care is in tandem with the duty not to harm individual stakeholders and a duty not to exploit or take advantage of unequal relationships.

The feminist model addresses some of the issues identified with a stakeholder governance perspective. It recognizes that webs of relationships exist in and around the firm, and that the nature of these relationships differs. Some relationships are prescribed by law, others are not; some are explicit, others are implicit; some are based on high power distance, others are relations between individuals of equal power. Care ethics obligates individuals to govern these relationships with respect to their particular context and specificity. Our individual identity and context lead to the creation of specific relationships that we seek to care for and in which we want to be cared about. Prioritizing stakeholders in the feminist model is about caring for those individuals close to us. (Machold, Ahmed, and Farquhar 2008)

The ethic of rights and the ethic of care possibly reflect two distinct but evolutionarily stable strategies. Both strategies are viable and have their own worth. The early Chinese Yin & Yang

polarity depicts both male and female principles as necessary for the health and good functioning of the microcosms as well as the macrocosms. An advanced concept of responsibility should integrate the reverence for rights represented by men and the nonviolence of care represented by women.

Jane J. Mansbridge offers an alternative theory of choice that integrates feminine and masculine values. She differentiates among three forms of motivation—duty, self-interest, and love. Starting with her own case, she writes the following: „I have a duty to care for my child, and I am happy by his happiness, and I get a simple sensual pleasure from snuggling close to him as I read him a book. I have a principled commitment to work for women’s liberation, and I empathize with women, and I find a way to use some of my work for women as background to a book that advances my academic career. Duty, love (or empathy), and self-interest are intermingled in my actions in a way I can rarely sort out”. (Mansbridge 1990, p. 134.).

Mansbridge favors the coincidence of duty and love with self-interest. She says that both forms of non self-interested motives (empathic feelings and moral commitments) are embedded in a social context, which makes them susceptible to being undermined by self-interested behavior on the part of others. Arrangements are required that generate some self-interested return to non self-interested behavior to create an “ecological niche” for sustaining such behavior. Arrangements that make non self-interested behavior less costly, in self-interested terms, increase the degree to which individuals feel that they can afford to indulge their feelings of empathy and their moral commitments (Mansbridge 1990, pp. 136-137.).

8.4 The End of Men

In her provocative article "The End of Men" Hanna Rosin asks: "What if the modern, postindustrial economy is simply more congenial to women than to men?" (Rosin, H. 2010)

She argues that the postindustrial economy is indifferent to men’s size and strength. The attributes that are most valuable today—social intelligence, open communication, the ability to sit still and focus—are predominantly male. In fact, the opposite may be true. Women in poor

parts of India are learning English faster than men to meet the demands of new global call centers. Women own more than 40 percent of private businesses in China, where a red Ferrari is the new status symbol for female entrepreneurs.

In the USA men dominate just two of the 15 job categories projected to grow the most over the next decade: janitor and computer engineer. Women have everything else—nursing, home health assistance, child care, food preparation. Many of the new jobs replace the things that women used to do in the home for free. None is especially high-paying. But the steady accumulation of these jobs adds up to an economy that, for the working class, has become more amenable to women than to men. The list of growing jobs is heavy on nurturing professions, in which women, ironically, seem to benefit from old stereotypes and habits. Theoretically, there is no reason men should not be qualified. But they have proved remarkably unable to adapt.

According to Rosin the economic and cultural power shift from men to women would be hugely significant even if it never extended beyond working-class America. But women are also starting to dominate middle management, and a surprising number of professional careers as well. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, women now hold 51.4 percent of managerial and professional jobs—up from 26.1 percent in 1980. They make up 54 percent of all accountants and hold about half of all banking and insurance jobs. About a third of America's physicians are now women, as are 45 percent of associates in law firms—and both those percentages are rising fast. A white-collar economy requires communication skills and social intelligence, areas in which women have a slight edge. Perhaps most importantly it increasingly requires formal education credentials, which women are more prone to acquire, particularly early in adulthood.

In his book "Enlightened Power: How Women Are Transforming the Practice of Leadership" David Gergen writes that women are knocking on the door of leadership at the very moment when their talents are especially well matched with the requirements of the day. (Gergen 2005)

The old model of command and control, with one leader holding all the decision-making power, is considered hidebound. The new model is sometimes called "post-heroic," or "transformational". The aim is to behave like a good coach, and channel your charisma to motivate others to be hardworking and creative. The model echoes literature about male-female differences.

A 2008 study attempted to quantify the effect of this more-feminine management style. Researchers at Columbia Business School and the University of Maryland analyzed data on the top 1,500 U.S. companies from 1992 to 2006 to determine the relationship between firm performance and female participation in senior management. Firms that had women in top positions performed better, and this was especially true if the firm pursued what the researchers called an “innovation intensive strategy,” in which, they argued, “creativity and collaboration may be especially important”. Innovative, successful firms are the ones that promote women. (Dezsó and Ross 2008).

8.5 Conclusions

Gender equality and feminist ethics are not only important for their own sake. They increase the performance of businesses and economies while contribute to the quality of life of men and women alike.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) devised the Gender, Institutions and Development Database, which measures the economic and political power of women in 162 countries. With few exceptions, the greater the power of women, the greater the country’s economic success. Aid agencies have started to recognize this relationship and have pushed to institute political quotas in about 100 countries, essentially forcing women into power in an effort to improve those countries’ fortunes. (OECD 2006)

Klaus Schwab, Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum rightly concluded that "Low gender gaps are directly correlated with high economic competitiveness. Women and girls must be treated equally if a country is to grow and prosper. We still need a gender equality revolution, not only to mobilize a major pool of talent both in terms of volume and quality, but also to create a more compassionate value system within all our institutions."

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