

Examining the Interplay of Coping Mechanisms and Humor Styles in High-Stress Scenarios

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the interplay between coping mechanisms and humor styles in high-stress scenarios among a sample of 100 individuals aged 18-35. Despite the large sample size, correlation analysis reveals a very weak and non-significant negative correlation between stress and coping humor ($r = -0.020$, $p = 0.845$). These findings suggest that within this specific population, humor may not be a predominant or effective coping mechanism for managing stress. However, the complexity of stress and coping processes causes further investigation, including longitudinal designs and objective measures, to comprehensively understand these dynamics. While this study contributes valuable insights, it underscores the need for continued exploration to develop tailored interventions for effectively managing stress and promoting psychological well-being.

Keywords: *Coping Mechanisms, Humor Styles, High-Stress Scenarios*

Modern life with its complexities, stress, high-stress scenarios, turned into an inevitably faced aspect, which demands adaptive reactions such as emotional regulation and resilience. Today, the contemporary human experience is defined by continuous waves of stressors, which vary from individual problems to dramatic social changes, thus, one of the critical issues for understanding how people can deal with the challenges that life is offering. Though most theories have dwelled on the coping mechanisms, the humor role during the coping process is speculative.

The central aim is to bring attention to the complex processes, the way of coping with stress and sense of humor interacts in situations of high stress. A through observation and emphasis of humor as a coping tool, the study contributes to the understanding of the adaptive strategies that promote resilience. Additionally, the research will shed light on the cognitive and emotional processes that mediate the interactions between coping strategies and humor styles to gain deep awareness into the mechanisms underlying human reactions during stressful times.

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To guide this exploration, the study poses the following research questions:

How do people perceive and react to the emotional parts of jobs full of high-stress situations in cognitive and emotional ways? What coping strategies are adopted by the individuals in face of different stressors, and how different the strategies are for different people and across different environments and situations? What kind of humor reveals itself during the moment of stress, and what are the basic forms of these jocularities? How do these socio-cultural factors in the choice of humor as the coping mechanism and how effective is it?

It is these queries that summarize the complexity of the studies; they provide a guide for an examination. Humor is a well-recognized human ability to perceive or express humorous elements in a particular situation. Consequently, when patients confront stressful circumstances or events, the application of humor should be considered as an effective method for stress reduction and for increasing positive affect. Humor being an adaptive coping strategy means that it has been confirmed that it is an effective method to manage stress in situations of stress. Humor is as well as another means of increasing psychological well-being and decreasing psychological symptoms. In this matter, it is used as a therapeutic strategy in many interventions in the field of positive psychology. This characteristic of being humorous contributes to general well-being a lot. Many people see it as a type of coping mechanism that aids in relieving stress caused by emotional burdens. A suitable time or a hilarious view is bound to be accompanied by a smile, but all types of humor do not elicit the same mood.

Types of humor style

Affiliative Humor: The kind of people who are high on Affiliative Humor always make it a point to share their humor with others. They use the opportunities like jokes and funny stories to please others and make them laugh, at the same time they smell the fun and laughter as much as others do. They are not so self-conscious, and they can laugh not only at themselves, but even at other people's mistakes. Studies confirm that a person who gets high on affiliative humor is happy, outgoing, and friendly, and most often has fulfilling and joyful nature with others.

Self-Enhancing Humor: The people who continually show the self-enhancing type of Humor are mostly able to remain unfazed by the difficulties of life and continue to develop a humorous outlook even during the gravest of circumstances. They are always optimistic and can find even the tiniest positive aspect amongst all the greyness all around. They use jokes to cheer themselves up. The characters, even when they are alone, are often amused by the nonsensical things they see in the surrounding environment. The existing studies show that for people who put themselves above the havoc you're laughing at it cannot compare to you being the one being mocked, the more likely one will maintain a positive outlook and is less overwhelmed by negative feelings such as discouragement, anxiety, and depression. Like every person in the face of stress, they manage to cope and at the same time to be optimistic.

Aggressive Humor: People who have high Aggressive Humor, resort to joking with others when they wish to insult someone, manipulate their emotions or they are trying to tease. They do not only manage to be very funny, but their jokes also transform into jokes that mock people or criticize them. The odd one of the groups will make jokes related to whatever race or gender is in the room, and these jokes often result in pain for the people who are in the center of them. Travailing others is among the many approaches in which teens look to boost their self-esteem. An organized study shows that those ones who are more prone to aggressive and insensitive behaviors to others are high in this humor style

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according to the study. Social relationships with Extra-terrestrial beings might not result in any changes to their level of confidence or emotional health as compared to other humans. Regarding that humor style they're low on, it has been collated that their relationships are usually more satisfying.

Self- Defeating Humor: The people who dwell on Self-perpetuating Humor stand an excellent chance of being very funny, but they are in most cases beaten by their way of going overboard with the jokes that are topically self-deprecating. They are more likely to mock and make fun of target scapegoats during the process of being ridiculed. They suggest conducting new jokes by other people to be more acceptable to them. Besides, they also prefer the use of humor to hide their actual feelings – of being sad but trying to make it look, on the contrary, like everything is fine for everyone else. Research shows that people having a high capability for this type of humor are likely to be low in self-esteem and are usually unhappy as well. Often, they are not happy with relations.

The Deep Interconnection between Stress and Humor and Coping Mechanism

As life stress is an indispensable part of human life, the research proves that it may lead to deterioration of mental health and to mental health problems. Nevertheless, the most interesting aspect of the human mind is the balance of relationships between stress and humor. This link becomes a kind of improvisation that people sometimes use to oversee the difficulties of daily life. Our article goes beyond the superficial level of stress and laughter and explores how humor works in one's struggle to face challenges and become more resilient.

The Physiological Basis of Stress and Humor: First and foremost in exploring the mechanism through which the two influence each other, it is necessary that we elucidate the physiological basics of both. Stress elicits hormones like cortisol and adrenaline to be released, readying the organism for either a fight or a flight reaction. Whilst acute stress can be a sort of beneficial and adaptive response in some circumstances, chronic stress provokes negative health consequences.

On the other hand, humor may enhance areas of the brain that are related to enjoyment and rewards, releasing chemicals like dopamine in this process. This physiological response to humor returns stress hormones, in a balance, to level the negative outcome of these hormones that leads to stress-related psychological states.

Cognitive Appraisal and Coping Strategies: The way individuals consider stressors matters in how individuals manage stress. Humor may be used as an immensely powerful mind reconciling role as it helps one to change the perception of stressful situations. When people use humor to contextualize challenges, they often will get a new angle that de-escalates the perceived danger to make the situation feel less scary.

Humor as a Coping Mechanism:

Psychological Distance: Through the lens of using humor, a psychological distance is derived, which in turn helps the individual in detaching emotionally from stressors. Due to this spatial and emotional distancing, an alternative approach to viewing the situation will be apparent. This distancing will enable a reduction in the perceived severity. In such a way, this mechanism can be seen in self-deprecation humor style when a person mocked issues which they may be facing, and it is a way of easing the emotional weight of someone.

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Social Bonding: Shared mirth nurtures friendship that is grounded on the sense of shared being which results in mutual engagement and support. During challenging times, laughter can help people overcome the struggle of self-expression, to better mingle with one another and show care and compassion. An added effect to group laughter is that it could function as a group treatment tool where a shared perspective on difficulties is being created with a stroke of a joke.

Cognitive Restructuring: By using this creative thinking, humor may serve to function as a cognitive restructuring, helping to break the negative spiral of thinking a person tends to follow with stress. Hence, through perceiving a challenge as funny and creative, one interprets the situation in a more favorable way. Thus, the resilience and adaptation are highlighted.

Emotional Regulation: Laughing is so simple but so capable at the same time of making us merrily aware of endorphins which are released by our body when we feel good and to relieve our stress. These emotional-management controls through humor enable individuals to regulate their responses to stress factors, thus thwarting so long impact on their mental well-being.

Defusing Tension: Humor reinforces pressure, giving people a way of lightening the stress by laughter. Here comes the same mechanism that is manifested by different coping styles like humor to stand for the conflict of opinion or quick wit to go through tricky interpersonal dealings. By adopting light-heartedness into stressful situations, they can bring a stop to the cycle of growing nervousness.

Theories that explain coping and humor together

Incongruity Theory: Categorized by Kant and improved by Schopenhauer, incongruity theory proposes that humor is caused by two consecutive cognitive jumps where the target's understanding contrasts with the perception or the target himself, resulting in a contradiction or an incongruity. Cognitive restructuring is one of the most common coping mechanisms that relies on turning the situation upside down or reframing it. Humor may be used to achieve it by creating a sense of alienation between people and the stress inducing situation, thus reducing the tension, and promoting more effective coping.

Superiority Theory: Such theory, introduced by Thomas Hobbes and subsequently proposed by Herbert Spencer, argues that in humor, people get the impression that they are better than others or that they did well from a past point of view. When working through a demanding situation, people can use their humor as a means of asserting control over the situation or even the adversity of life itself, and this helps them to take command and feel empowered and like they can cope well.

Relief Theory: What meant was that the Freud era postulated and, in a way, proposed that the main essence of using humor is a way of psychic tensions relief and a way of having the repressed thoughts and emotions released. Humor can bring out emotional regulation, and just as much as it helps an individual express and get rid of tension or anxiety, it also helps them manage their stress in an acceptable social manner.

Social Bonding Theory: Humor is an essential tool of socializing scenario, being a catalyst of strengthening social bonding networks and easing interpersonal tensions. An integral part of stress statistics is the ability to express humor with people. It can be a source of social

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support, belongingness, and shared experiences that make it easier for people to face challenges together.

Cognitive Appraisal Theory: This idea claims that human behavior differs based on the ways people perceive and interpret different events leading to their emotional response. Humor also radiates a very warm and welcoming atmosphere. They have a variety of football jerseys to choose from and they also carry different accessories as well.

The Transactional Generation of Stress and Coping Theory: The theory devised by Lazarus and Folkman called 'theory' encompasses the stress dynamic between an individual and his/her environment in their coping behavior. Humor is sometimes perceived as both a problem- and -focused coping mechanism letting people actively deal with stress and to reevaluate the situation as well as an emotion-focused coping mechanism helping people control and-regulate their emotional reactions to stress.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Hageman (2014) study on dynamic link between stress, humor, and staff wellbeing with special focus on emergency service staff. The study, where humor incongruity theory is the basis, explores, specifically, how unique styles of humor may resolve or aggravate psychological strain. The results of 100 emergency workers indicate that for each self-enhancing humor correlation there is a negative psychological strain, while for each aggressive one positive association can be seen. It suggests that individuals using self-enhancing humor might be more likely in adaptive coping strategies with stress whereas aggression may have negative consequences. The outcome points toward workers who use on-the-job humor more affectionately than their counterparts must be well equipped to undertake high stress jobs. The research yields in-depth data that can be applied in the development of interventions meant to enhance employee wellness in stressful workplaces and gives useful guidelines for hiring in such environments.

Booth-Butterfield & Wanzer (2016) adds to the problem of how to deal with a fast-flowing urban life including workload pressure. On the one side, a job is extremely rewarding, but importantly it can also be very overloading and reduce one's satisfaction. By adding appropriate humor during work, people are allowed to relax and boost their happiness; however, when it comes to communication via humor, it is exceedingly difficult. In this, the authors go on to discuss humor as a stress modulator and how it is an influencing factor in workplace stress response.

Oortmerssen (2020) address knowledge lacunas towards finding consensus between stress demands concerning challenge versus hindrance and arousal states, such as work-related flow. In addition, they probe how coping mechanisms, especially humor and cynicism, affect this communication. As a result, they research the difference between emotional and logical decision-making patterns and leadership style. Although the use of data from 265 employees across a Dutch financial service organization involved in the study, the researchers discovered that the flows positively associate with challenge stress demands, whereas the hinderance stress demands have a negative association. Moreover, they conclude that there are two main factors that result in a negative correlation between pressure challenges and flow. As a result, hindrance demands made worse by cynical behaviors lead to the conclusion that cynicism - hindrance demands are the solid three-way interaction. Overall, these results relate to both challenge-hindrance stressors (cynicism,

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frustration, tension, leading to the creation of favorable and productive conditions) and flow theory and offer innovative solutions to challenge-hindrance stressors.

Chen (2016) has been researching the effect of humor on the health of individuals. The aim of this study was to go further than the previous ones by investigating the role of humor on emotional health in connection with words selected by reappraisal techniques and received support from others. The research team comprised of 83 undergraduate and graduate students at a university in the southeast region of the country asked to answer a questionnaire online about the examples when they had used humor to confer with others about stress. The results can be expressed as that there exists a context where emotion improvements are highly linked to both reappraisal and received social supports which act as mediators.

Fritz et al. (2017) examined the association of humor to stress response using three different studies. In the first study patients with fibromyalgia were chosen. There it was discovered that a humorous temperament could be associated with a decrease in the distress level and less physical manifestations. The investigation No 2, the sample having been undergraduates, demonstrated a lot of contradiction in humor types, with the most important mediators being the face-to-face interaction and reappraisal. In study 3 during post 9/11, affirmative humor made the immediate distress of the respondents bearable, whereas the social interaction and the reappraisal mediated various humor styles' effects on the distinct time factor inherent in the survey.

Mallya et al. (2019) the cognitive aging, emotional regulation, and humor, provided a theoretical frame for the positive emotional benefits of humor in cognitive aging. Elderly individuals often develop some level of cognitive decline (which results in limitations of functional activities, less independence, and finally lower quality of life). These losses give the individuals great practiced stress, which is felt daily, and long-term. The present article articulates a case for what older people may utilize with regards to a coping mechanism for stress reduction and brain protection and that is the use of humor. This kind of humor contains mental restructuring of everyday stressors. In this case, it can play the role of cognitive reappraisal in older individuals. Moreover, it is thought that this effect may come from the fact that over the long time of permanent activation of the stress response systems (cardio-vascular) by humor, these systems lose a certain power of influence over functional integrity of the hippocampus and prefrontal cortex. As seniors fall short in dealing with complex jokes, so we recommend that soft, emphasizing self-humor would be more appropriate for the oldies.

Fritz (2020) analyzed two studies dealing with the impact of humor styles on one's well-being, in the year 2020. Study1 (N =108) by Antony et al revealed that both self-enhancing and affiliative humor positively impacts health, mediated through reappraisal and social support. This, in turn, demonstrated that those with self-defeating sense of humor possessed greater level of distress, with similar mediation. Study 2 (N = 193) proved to be almost identical to study 1, with humorous coping, social support, and reappraisal claiming relevant roles in explaining the associations between humor styles and distress. Along those lines, the use of such aggressive sense of humor was related to difficulties in communication issues and health problems, especially those with communication problems. This remained even when the correlation in humor styles was held constant in such a way that it would not bias the rest of the variables.

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Rogowska et al. (2021) aimed to identify the correlation between stress, life satisfaction and students' coping styles outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic university students. They surveyed 231 students and statistically established that trouble to overcome stress and coping styles, as well as life satisfaction and specific coping strategies were reduced from the pandemic resumption to its peak. The source stated that coping types of partially mediated stress and the level of life satisfaction in both phases of the COVID-19, which lays down the path how they work. The results showed unmistakable evidence that it is essential for individuals to have mixed strategies in dealing with stress and promoting their well-being during trying out times.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

To investigate the complex relationship between coping mechanisms and humor styles under high- stress conditions.

Objective

To investigate the relationship between the use of humor to cope in stressful situations and stress levels.

Hypothesis

There will be meaningful relationship between Humor and Coping mechanisms in high-Stress scenario.

Sample

The snowball method was used in a cross- sectional study to select a sample of 100 adults aged between 18 to 35 from various regions of India. The sample consisted of 56 females and 44 males. The snowball sampling method initially involved taking a small number of participants who met the inclusion criteria and then asking them to refer other eligible individuals from their social networks. This process continued until the desired sample size was achieved.

Research Variables

Independent variable

- Humor style

Dependent variable

- Coping mechanism
- Stress

Tool Description

- **Perceived Stress Scale (PSS):** It is a self-report questionnaire used to assess the stressfulness of life over the past month. A key source in the study of perceived stress is the Perceived Stress Scale developed by Sheldon Cohen, Tom Kamarck and Robin Mermelstein in 1983. It consists of 10 items. Reliability: The Cronbach's alpha of the PSS-10 was evaluated at $\geq .70$ in all 12 studies in which it was used. The test-retest reliability of the PSS-10 was assessed in four studies, and met the criterion of \geq Validity: High Construct Validity
- **Coping humor Scale (CHS):** The CHS constitutes 7 cells consisting of both the variables Humor style and Coping mechanism developed by Rod A. Martin &

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Herbert M. Lefcourt in 1990. Each of them is self-descriptive sentence about the function of humor in using it as a way for stress reduction. A rating scale provided to participants by researchers indicates from a 1 to 4 interval, the extent to which they agree with each statement, with 1 denoting “strongly disagree” and 4 meaning “strongly agree.” Reliability: Test -retest reliability - 0.80. Validity: Evidence of validity includes significant correlations with peer ratings of humor, rated funniness of humorous monologues created in stressful situations, and scores on other self-report measures of humor, self-esteem, psychological well-being, coping, etc.

Procedure

The subject of primary research was chosen as the first step of the process. Before starting participation, participants will get the informed consent forms, which clearly mention the aim of the study, description of the study tools, process of involvement as well as confidentiality issues. Participants were selected using a snowball sampling technique from a pool of adults aged 18-35 years. After the informed consent, we will ask Participants to perform a set of self-report measures such as the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and Coping Humor Scale (CHS). Data will be collected in a manner that guarantees confidentiality of the participants. Once the dataset was collected for scoring, followed by the statistical measures to achieve statistical significance based on the scores obtained.

Statistical Analysis

Pearson Correlation The data is evaluated by using the software IBM SPSS statistics. In this research correlation method is used to find the relation between the three variables that are, internet addiction, self-esteem, and life satisfaction.

RESULTS

Table No. 1 Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Stress	100	20.21	5.842
Coping Humor	100	19.74	3.711
Valid N (listwise)	100		

Table No. 2 Correlations between Variables

		STRESS	COPING HUMOR
STRESS	Pearson Correlation	1	-.020
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.845
	N	100	100
COPING HUMOR	Pearson Correlation	-.020	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.845	
	N	100	100

In Table 2, this study was intended to look at the relationship between STRESS and COPING HUMOR. The study examined these two aspects together. Therefore, the recommended analysis was based on the widely applied Pearson correlation coefficient, a measure containing both the strength and the direction of the linear connection between two factors. The results of the study fill the gap in literature on stress management and bush techniques by contributing a trial on humor as a stress coping element.

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The computed correlation coefficient (-0.020) between STRESS and COPING HUMOR indicates a negligible negative correlation with a weak number. This points out that there is almost no simple correlation between the two variables and clearly no relation. Although one should keep in mind the fact that correlation coefficient is remarkably close to zero, strong fundamental challenges should be presented during this interpretation exercise. A small correlation coefficient value, which may yield a corresponding meaning of the absence of any meaningful relationship between STRESS and COPING HUMOR is misleading. Some other factors not referred to in this study might have alarming effect regardless of the correlation, so that the result of the study requires additional investigation.

The p-value attached to the correlation coefficient which is 0.845 either proved or denied the correlation between the two variables. By utilizing such a p-value, one can establish the possibility of obtaining a correlation coefficient more extreme or at least as extreme as the correlation coefficient that has been observed in the given situation, assuming that the null hypothesis, which is about no correlation of variables, is assumed true. In this case, $p=0.845$ does not have enough strength to reject the null hypothesis and neither the existing relation can be held responsible, at least the coincidence. That translates to no statistical relationship between STRESS and HUMOR COPING in this group of Fs.

The fact that the sample size for this study(size) was comparatively large with a hundred in the analysis is worth noting. These show that the research is dependable and representative of all the participants. Falling under the viewpoint, I would like to note that study has certain restraints. The sample of experts was drawn from a given population, so the results cannot be generalized to other or different contexts or populations. Moreover, the study had used the self-assessed responses for stress and coping humor techniques which can give rise to prejudices and inaccuracies. Future studies should plan subsequent replications with different populations since varied results were there.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to investigate the complex relationship between coping mechanisms and humor styles under high-stress conditions among young adults, aged 18-35 years, utilizing the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) developed by Cohen et al. (1983) and Coping Humor Scale (CHS) developed by Martin & Lefcourt (1990).

Research by Perez et al. (2021) that does not directly correlate the variables of Humor, Stress, and Coping mechanism is "Effectiveness of a Humor-Based Training for Reducing Employee's distress. "

Table 2 found that the result from the correlational analysis of stress and self-effacing humor in this study, are evidence to a very weak and negligible correlation ($r = -0.020$, $p > 0.01$). The fact that a bigger group of 100 participants was selected does not take away gravity of the absence of a statistically significant relationship between those two variables illustrates that the relationship between these variables within the studied population is mostly not linear.

The latter is, however, the epitome of the fabled glass half-full, and while these results may seem at first bizarre, they must be investigated within the general context of stress and coping mechanisms. It is an intricate phenomenon whereby its efficacy as a coping strategy could be broad in terms of the variation of individual factors, situation of the moment and cultural influences. Missing the big relationship between the groups may indicate that humor

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has not been an important or effective mechanism to manage stress in this specific sample of people.

However, having not shown relevance between stress and coping a sense of humor in this study does not mean that they are not correlated at all because maybe some social aspects have not been paid attention. Also, there are other intangible factors or unknown factors which could be different in this study thus compromising the actual relationship observed. Next, subjective assessment of stress and coping with humor might introduce the chance for response bias or measurement mistake that would affect conclusions.

Nonetheless, a deeper understanding of the intricate interactions of 'stress and coping' mechanisms including use of humor is essential, through further studies which span across socio-cultural and contextual landscapes. Studies which are scheduled in future could employ the longitudinal designs to get the changes coping strategies to happen with the passage of time and use the objective measures of stress and coping to provide us with the whole picture of the coping mechanisms. Furthermore, open-ended approaches could tap into subjects' feelings, mindset, and their individual experiences of humor as a coping mechanism in highly nerve-wracking circumstances. Furthermore, though this study is important, it still implies that further examinations and shaping of our comprehensions prevail.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the research sought to find out the several ways in which people's coping mechanisms and humor styles are interrelated in high high-stress scenarios. It is surprising to note that although we had a large sample of participants, we had weak and non-significant negative correlation ($r = -0.020$, $p = 0.845$) between stress and coping humor. This leads us to conclude that wit carries a low probability of being the main or reliable adaptation process utilized by this population to oversee emotional strain.

However, these observations might appear incredible. Which again shows the realities of stress and coping to be more complicated. Humor is a complex and varied construct but is also dependent on both individual differences and contextual factors as well as cultural norms. The humorousness-stress correlation alone does not outweigh the contribution of humor as a coping strategy, it gives reasons for further investigation on the game level of all these things; be it with stress or some coping mechanisms.

Subsequent studies should examine these relationships for melting pot of people or contexts, randomized designs and real or non-objective measures for the sake of an in-depth comprehension of stress and coping habits. As pointed out, qualitative methodologies could provide data about what kind of subjective feelings and thoughts people have related to the usefulness of humor for coping with stress.

Therefore, this study has made significant contributions to our comprehension of the mechanisms involved in stress and coping, yet it sheds light on the fact that we still need more research to gain a full understanding of these processes. It will be possible through the exploration of such nuances to develop specific modalities for stress management and psychophysical well-being at the same time.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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