

Bridging cultures in Europe: exploring language and shared values in interactions



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Abstract The importance of intercultural communication is particularly significant in today's globalised world, given the continuous growth of cultural diversity and interactions among cultures at various levels, from personal relationships to global political processes. It is crucial to understand the mechanisms that facilitate or hinder effective intercultural exchange for the development of inclusive, tolerant, and respectful societies. This study analyses the impact of governance structures, digitalisation, and emotions on intercultural communication, using the theoretical framework of the theory of communicative action. The research focuses primarily on the European context. Governance structures and social hierarchies significantly shape conditions for intercultural dialogue, often creating barriers to equal exchange of ideas and hindering the voices of marginalized groups from being heard. Digitalisation provides new opportunities for intercultural exchange. However, it is important to ensure equal access to digital technologies and the development of digital literacy. Emotions have been found to influence intercultural communication strongly. Adequate expression and interpretation of emotions can contribute to greater mutual understanding and empathy among representatives of different cultures. The research findings suggest that it is necessary to integrate various strategies to overcome existing barriers in intercultural communication. These strategies include actively involving marginalized groups in dialogue, developing inclusive digital platforms, and focusing on the development of emotional intelligence. The study's conclusions emphasise the importance of a comprehensive approach to understanding and practically applying the principles of intercultural communication. This approach aims to build open, tolerant, and respectful intercultural relations. The results of this study have practical implications for educational institutions, international organisations, governmental structures, and other stakeholders seeking to promote intercultural interaction at various levels.

Keywords: intercultural communication, governance structures, digitalisation, digital literacy, cultural differences, inclusive strategies

1. Introduction

In the contemporary European context, language and shared values are crucial for intercultural communication. When discussing cultural interactions in Europe, it is important to identify the invisible connections that unite the diverse cultural and linguistic fabrics of the continent, forming the mosaic of European identity. Drawing on Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action, we aim to explain how language and shared values, through understanding and interaction, serve as bridges between cultures and construct social reality in Europe. Language is not just a communication tool, but a fundamental mechanism that promotes cultural integration and mutual understanding (Semenets-Orlova et al., 2022).

Language serves as the central arena for communicative action. It provides a platform for exchanging ideas, expressing values, and sharing experiences, contributing to the formation of pan-European values. These common values include ideals of democracy, human rights, tolerance, and solidarity, and they lay the foundation for intercultural communication and interaction. This indicates the possibility of achieving understanding and consensus among different cultural groups (Dai & Chen, 2022).

Affirming intercultural communication to achieve harmony and understanding in a multicultural European society requires careful consideration of potential challenges. These challenges include language barriers, cultural divergences, and the risk of cultural homogenisation. Given these challenges, analysing the role of language and shared values in intercultural communication can help overcome differences and promote cultural pluralism while maintaining unity in diversity, a characteristic of the European Project (Monti et al., 2022).



Thus, the aim of this study is to explore how language and shared values can facilitate intercultural communication, promoting the development of a more integrated and cohesive European society. The research examines these processes to determine how dialogue and mutual understanding can lead to deeper unity that reflects the true spirit of European identity.

2. Literature review

In the contemporary globalised world, where cultural boundaries are becoming increasingly permeable, the study of intercultural communication is particularly relevant. This research is significant not only in examining the mechanisms of interaction between different cultures, but also in seeking ways to facilitate effective dialogue that fosters mutual understanding and social integration. The literature review below focuses on scholarly sources exploring various aspects of intercultural communication.

E. Holliday's work (2021) is a foundational piece in this field and serves as a leading resource for students studying intercultural communication. Holliday analyses basic concepts and theoretical approaches, emphasising the importance of a profound understanding of cultural diversity. His work complements the research by E.F. Adanlawo, M.M. Reddy, and H. Rugbeer (Adanlawo et al., 2021), which focuses on the impact of language barriers on intercultural business communication. The authors highlight the issues of linguistic obstacles and their influence on communication effectiveness in international business, requiring participants to exert additional efforts to achieve mutual understanding.

Expanding on this perspective, V. Baker (2022) suggests transitioning from intercultural to transcultural communication. This emphasises the necessity of creating more inclusive communicative spaces that go beyond traditional understandings of cultural differences. Such an expansion of perspective allows for a better understanding of adaptation and integration processes in the globalised world. In this context, the work of J. Braslauskas (Braslauskas, 2021) is particularly significant as it focuses on developing intercultural competencies and creativity as the foundation for successful intercultural communication. Braslauskas emphasises the importance of a creative approach in teaching and practising intercultural communication, which facilitates deeper mutual understanding and effective cultural exchange.

The research conducted by M. Mosed, M. Periorde, and M. Kaboral-Stevens (2021) provides valuable insights into the concept of intercultural communication. Their analysis of key elements and mechanisms enhances our understanding of how communication between cultures impacts the development of interpersonal relationships and social cohesion. In the context of epistemological diversity, H. R'boul's work (R'boul, 2022) highlights the significance of acknowledging and incorporating diverse knowledge and perspectives into intercultural communication. This promotes greater openness and flexibility in intercultural interactions.

The investigation managed by L. Harvey, G. Tordzro, and J. Bradley (Harvey et al., 2022) expands the understanding of intercultural communication by including the analysis of creative practices and art as means of indirect communication. The authors demonstrate how art can serve as a universal language that transcends cultural barriers and promotes deeper mutual understanding. The research conducted by N.A. Baires, R. Catrone, and B.K. May (Baires et al., 2022) highlights the significance of active listening and intercultural communication in addressing racism. The study aims to develop effective communication strategies that promote mutual understanding and respect among diverse cultures. This approach is supported by J.U. Sattorovich's research (Sattorovich, n/d), which explores the concept, essence, and theories of intercultural communication. Sattorovich's work provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the key mechanisms and principles of intercultural interaction.

Continuing the theme of epistemological diversity, H. R'boul (2022) sheds light on postcolonial interventions in knowledge about intercultural communication. The focus is on meta-intercultural ontologies, decolonised knowledge, and epistemological polylogue. This work is connected to J. Ferri's analysis (Ferri, 2022), which argues that the tools of the metropolis do not dismantle the house of the metropolis. Ferri calls for the decolonisation of intercultural communication and the development of new, more just approaches to cultural interaction. In their work, F. Dervin and A. Jacobsson (2022) explore education in intercultural communication, highlighting the gaps between reality and idealistic aspirations for integration and understanding between cultures. Their analysis demonstrates the complexity of teaching and practicing intercultural communication in the contemporary educational context.

Y. Liu, J. Liu, and B. King (2022) examine intercultural communicative competence in the hospitality industry and education, highlighting its significance for successful professional activity in an international setting. The authors' research demonstrates how cultural sensitivity and adaptation can improve interaction and cooperation in the tourism and hospitality sectors. Finally, in his 2021 work, I. Kecskes investigates intercultural communication and its relationship with language. He argues that language plays a central role in intercultural communication and is a key element for understanding and interpreting cultural meanings. This work highlights the importance of language as a means of navigation and negotiation in intercultural spaces.

Z. Hua, R.H. Jones, and S. Jaworska (2022) analyse acts of boundary-drawing in times of crisis as an epistemological challenge for the study of intercultural communication. Their work reveals the complexity of identifying and analysing cultural differences during periods of social upheaval, emphasising the need for a flexible approach to studying intercultural interactions. In their edited volume, S. Dai and G.M. Chen (Dai & Chen, 2022) emphasise conflict management and intercultural

communication as the means to achieve intercultural harmony. They stress the importance of resolving conflicts through dialogue and mutual understanding, echoing Habermas's ideas of communicative action to achieve consensus.

B.F. Fernández et al. (Fernández et al., 2022) investigate the preparation of students for successful online intercultural communication and collaboration in virtual exchanges. The authors emphasise the importance of education and training in developing the communicative skills necessary for effective intercultural interaction in the digital age. A. Royka et al. (Royka et al., 2022) find that people make inferences about communicative actions based on expectations of effective communication. Their findings align with Habermas's idea of the importance of rational dialogue and mutual understanding in communication.

The research conducted by I.I. Hilabi, A.R. Saputra, C. Sa'diyah, and S. Nurhasanah (Hilabi et al., 2021) and N. Azizah (Azizah, 2021) examines communicative action in the context of the leadership principles of Muhammad Rasulullah and Habermas, as well as the phenomenon of the post-public sphere. These works contribute significantly to the understanding of the ethical and philosophical aspects of intercultural communication. They emphasise the significance of dialogue and ethical comprehension. Finally, several studies have applied Habermas's theory of communicative action to analyse various aspects of social interaction, from political marketing to recognition of prior learning. These studies include those by R. Irshaidat and H. Borgebund (Irshaidat, R., & Borgebund, H., 2021), H. Haili (Haili, 2022), J.O. Victor and A.S. Sandra (Victor et al., 2021), and F. Sandberg (Sandberg, 2022). These studies confirm the significance of communicative action and rational dialogue in achieving understanding and social integration in an intercultural context.

A.Y. Çamlı, F.O. Virlanuta, B.T. Palamutçuoğlu, N. Bărbuță-Mișu, Ş. Güler, and D. Züngün (Çamlı et al., 2021) developed a scale for rational communicative action, which quantifies and measures communicative processes in the context of sustainable development. This work presents new perspectives for evaluating communication effectiveness in different areas of life. M. Li and I. Li (2022) investigate gender differences and the development of pragmatic identity through stylistic markers in business speeches, using communicative action theory to demonstrate how language reflects underlying social and cultural structures. In his doctoral dissertation, R. Liu (2022) examines the perception and production of communicative actions, deepening our understanding of the mechanisms and processes underlying effective communication.

Athayde et al. (2022) examine Habermas's theory of communicative action in the context of public administration, questioning the unity of the consensus theory. Their work highlights the potential and limitations of applying this theory in governance and the public sector. S. Balakrishnan (2021) analyses the dynamics of the status of values through the lens of communicative action theory (CAT), offering a new perspective on the relationship between communication, values, and social order.

Monti et al. (2022) examine the language of opinion change in social media through communicative action, emphasising the significance of dialogue in shaping public opinion. Ho et al. (2021) and E. Weizman and A. Fetzer (2021) further the understanding of communicative actions through experimental research and media discourse analysis, respectively, highlighting the importance of responsibility and transparency in communication.

Piejka et al. (2022) investigate the impact of response bias and sensitivity on the detection of communicative actions, offering insights into how individuals interpret and respond to non-verbal signals in communication. G. Bosse (2022) examines the moral authority of the European Union from the perspective of communicative action theory, analysing the effectiveness of sanctions as a diplomatic tool and reflecting the importance of dialogue and consensus in international relations.

Da Costa and de Araujo (2021) examine restorative justice as a communicative action, emphasising the balance between the system and the lifeworld, which is a key aspect of Habermas's theory. Filho et al. (2021) investigate the role of education in shaping rational and communicative action among leaders of social movements, highlighting the significance of education in developing critical thinking and effective communication.

V.O. Jeko (2021) analyses communicative action as the basis of radical democracy and social order in Jürgen Habermas's political philosophy. The author emphasises the importance of open dialogue in ensuring justice and equality. Christmann et al. (2022) investigate communicative constructions and the reconfiguration of spaces, expanding the application of communicative action theory to the analysis of social space and its transformation.

Oliveira et al. (2022) examine the primary models of communicative action in the global "Fridays for Future" movement, highlighting the significance of communication strategies in mobilising society for ecological change. M. Nouri (2021) provides a critical analysis of the underpinnings of Habermas's theory of communicative action, prompting reflection on its relevance and applicability in current conditions.

In conclusion, this review examines studies that shed light on cultural differences in communication styles, the influence of history and culture on current conflicts, the strategic approach of communication professionals in Europe, and the effects of information and communication technologies on European society.

S. Park and B. Kim (Park & Kim, 2008) investigate cultural values and communication styles among Asian American and European American college students, revealing significant differences that underscore the importance of cultural context in interpersonal communication. F. L. Casmir (Casmir, 2012) analyses communication in Eastern Europe, highlighting the role of history, culture, and media in contemporary conflicts, reflecting the complexity of intercultural interaction in the region. P. Verhoeven, A. Zeffass and others (Verhoeven et al., 2011; Verhoeven et al., 2018) conducted a study on the strategic

orientation of communication professionals in Europe. The study focused on the profession's response to societal changes and increasing hypermodern values. The authors found evidence of dynamic development within the field.

H. Just (2009) and S. Stolton (2009) studied media concentration and diversity, as well as the communication of values and benefits of protected areas in Europe. They emphasized the importance of effective communication in preserving natural and cultural heritage. Thornton et al. (2001) and Dalum et al. (1999) investigate the effects of information and communication technologies on European society, including high orbit communication and economic growth during the ICT revolution.

The literature review reveals significant advancements in comprehending the intricate connections between cultural disparities, communication methods, and the impact of technology on society. However, despite the variety of studies and depth of analysis, there are gaps in research that require further investigation within our chosen topic.

Specifically, there has been insufficient exploration of power dynamics in intercultural communication. In the context of the theory of communicative action, it is important to examine how power relations and social hierarchies influence opportunities for rational dialogue and mutual understanding between cultures. Power structures can often determine whose voices are heard and whose are suppressed, impacting communication processes and knowledge integration.

Another significant gap is the need for further research into transcultural communication in the digital age. Although some studies have examined the effects of ICT on intercultural interaction, a more systematic approach is required to analyse how digital technologies transform communication practices, create new forms of public sphere, and influence identity formation.

The third significant area for research is the role of emotions and irrational elements in intercultural communication. The development of theoretical frameworks that consider the emotional aspects of communicative action and their impact on rational dialogue and consensus is necessary. Emotions play a key role in shaping attitudes and beliefs, but their role in intercultural interaction remains insufficiently explored.

Finally, a more in-depth analysis of intercultural communication in the context of global migration processes is necessary. Migration presents new challenges and opportunities for intercultural interaction, necessitating the development of novel approaches to integration, tolerance, and multiculturalism.

In conclusion, our literature review has identified significant progress and directions in the study of intercultural communication, while also highlighting areas that require further attention and analysis. Addressing these 'blank spots' is not only an academic task but also a necessity for building a more inclusive, tolerant, and rational global society.

3. Aims

The aim of the proposed research is to investigate the role of language and shared values in intercultural communication, with a focus on the European context. To achieve this goal, we will analyse the impact of power structures and social hierarchies on communicative opportunities. Specifically, we will examine how power relations restrict or facilitate intercultural dialogue and identify mechanisms to ensure fuller participation in the communicative process. Subsequently, this text will explore the transformations of intercultural communication in the digital era. Specifically, it will examine how digitisation affects the forms and methods of intercultural interaction, including the creation and dissemination of cultural identities. Finally, this paper reflects on the role of emotions in intercultural communication. It attempts to identify how emotions influence rational dialogue and consensus, and formulates strategies for integrating emotional aspects into communicative action processes.

4. Methods

The analysis proposed is based on Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action. Therefore, our research methodology should focus on understanding and analysing communicative processes in an intercultural context. This includes paying particular attention to the interaction between rationality and emotionality, power relations, the influence of digital technologies, and migration. To achieve our goal, we will use a combined methodological approach that includes analysis, synthesis, and common logical procedures such as moving from the concrete to the abstract and vice versa. Based on the data obtained, we will initiate a critical dialogue among researchers, practitioners, and representatives of different cultures to develop inclusive strategies for intercultural interaction that promote rational dialogue and consensus.

This methodology will enable us to gain a profound understanding of intercultural communication in the contemporary world. It will also help us develop practical recommendations for improving it, based on the principles of rationality, mutual understanding, and respect, which are fundamental to the theory of communicative action.

5. Results

I. In the field of intercultural communication research, the study of power relations is crucial in understanding how social hierarchies and power structures impact communicative processes. The theory of communicative action posits that the goal of communication is to attain mutual understanding among participants, which can be achieved through rational dialogue.

However, power relations can create asymmetries that limit individuals' ability to articulate their interests and participate in this dialogue on equal terms.

Social hierarchies and power relations determine whose voices are heard in the public sphere. In an intercultural context, this is particularly relevant as cultural differences can be interpreted through the lens of power advantages, potentially leading to the marginalisation of certain groups. To overcome these barriers, it is necessary to establish mechanisms that ensure equal access to the communicative space.

Achieving equality in intercultural communication involves creating conditions that allow every individual to express their thoughts and be heard. This can be achieved by developing inclusive communication platforms that consider the needs of diverse cultural groups, providing educational programs to enhance communication skills and understanding of cultural diversity, and implementing equal opportunity policies that promote equitable representation in communication processes (Shytyk & Akimova, 2020). To effectively address power imbalances in intercultural communication, it is crucial to raise awareness of the existence and impact of power asymmetries on communicative processes. Additionally, promoting the active participation of marginalized groups in public discussions and decisions, as well as using mediation and other forms of facilitation, can ensure equal dialogue between cultural groups (Shytyk & Akimova, 2020).

Power relations and social hierarchies have a profound impact on intercultural communication, making it difficult to achieve rational dialogue and mutual understanding. Developing strategies and mechanisms to overcome these challenges is crucial in creating a more equitable and inclusive communicative space where everyone has the opportunity to be heard.

II. In the era of rapidly developing information and communication technologies, digitisation affects all aspects of human life, including intercultural communication. Digital media create new opportunities for interaction between cultures, but also pose challenges related to the digital divide and cyber-segregation. In the context of the theory of communicative action, it is important to understand how digitisation transforms the conditions of communicative dialogue and mutual understanding between different cultural groups.

Digitisation changes traditional ways of intercultural communication, providing individuals with access to a wide range of information and cultural products. This opens up new opportunities for cultural exchange and mutual enrichment. However, it is important to note that digital technologies can also worsen existing inequalities, as not everyone has equal access to digital resources, even within Europe (Lupak, 2020).

On the other hand, digital media can facilitate intercultural interaction, promoting greater understanding and tolerance. Platforms such as social networks, blogs, and forums enable users from different cultures to exchange ideas and experiences. Europe's experience over the past two decades has shown that the digital space can be an arena for cultural conflicts and misunderstandings. Therefore, effective intercultural dialogue strategies must be developed to address these issues. Adapting intercultural communication to the digital age requires ensuring equal access to digital resources for all cultural groups to counteract the digital divide. Additionally, it is important to develop digital literacy among participants in intercultural interaction so that they can critically evaluate information and navigate the digital space safely. In our opinion, digital platforms that promote constructive dialogue and mutual understanding between cultures are crucial in this process (Monti et al., 2022).

Digitisation is a powerful tool for transforming intercultural communication, offering new opportunities to expand communicative space and interaction between cultures. However, to fully realize this potential, it is necessary to address several challenges related to the digital divide, cyber-segregation, and the need for the development of digital literacy. The use of digital technologies should be based on the principles of rationality, openness, and mutual respect, which are the foundation of the theory of communicative action, to promote genuine intercultural understanding and cooperation (Just, 2009).

III. In the context of the theory of communicative action, emotions are often considered peripheral to rational dialogue. However, contemporary understanding of intercultural communication indicates the necessity of integrating emotional aspects into the process of mutual understanding. Emotions can influence the perception of messages, interpretation of others' intentions, and the ability to empathise, which is critically important in an intercultural context.

Effective intercultural communication requires the development of emotional intelligence to understand and express emotions in different cultures. Emotional intelligence involves recognizing, understanding, and respecting others' emotional states, as well as reacting appropriately to emotional signals in the context of intercultural dialogue.

Emotions can both facilitate and complicate intercultural communication. Shared emotional reactions can form the basis for empathy and mutual understanding. However, misunderstandings in interpreting emotional signals can lead to conflicts and alienation. It is important to pay special attention to cultural differences in the expression and perception of emotions (Semenets-Orlova et al., 2022).

Therefore, it is evident that emotions have a significant impact on intercultural communication, affecting the comprehension, empathy, and interaction among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Integrating emotional aspects into the process

of communicative action, based on an understanding and respect for cultural differences, can contribute to a deeper intercultural understanding and more effective dialogue.

6. Discussions

The field of intercultural communication is centred around the debate on the most effective approaches to achieving mutual understanding between different cultures. One argument is to focus on understanding cultural specifics and avoiding ethnocentrism. Another belief is that emphasis on universal human values and communicative principles is the key to effective intercultural interaction.

The cultural relativist perspective argues that successful intercultural communication depends on a deep understanding and respect for the cultural particularities of others. Advocates of this viewpoint believe that each culture has a unique set of norms, values, and communicative styles that require detailed study and understanding for effective interaction (Irshaidat & Borgebund, 2021; Monti et al., 2022).

In contrast, the universalist perspective emphasises the existence of universal human values and principles that can serve as the basis for intercultural dialogue. According to this viewpoint, focusing on aspects common to all humanity, such as a desire for justice, freedom, and equality, can help overcome cultural barriers.

Both of these perspectives are important and have their place in intercultural communication. Considering cultural specificities is essential to avoid ethnocentrism and misunderstandings. Additionally, emphasising universal values and principles can help create a common ground for dialogue and mutual understanding (Nouri, 2021).

To achieve success in intercultural communication, it is essential to integrate both perspectives. This involves combining an understanding of cultural differences with the principles of rational dialogue grounded in mutual respect and a quest for consensus. It is crucial to recognise that cultural differences should not be a barrier to communication but rather a starting point for deeper mutual understanding. In this context, the use of communicative action theory as a methodological approach enables us to establish connections between cultures based on principles of rationality, mutual respect, and mutual understanding.

7. Conclusions

This study explored the interrelationships between culture, power, digitization, and emotions in the context of intercultural communication, drawing on communicative action theory. The results highlight the importance of integrating various approaches to achieve mutual understanding and effective interaction between cultures.

To achieve effective intercultural interaction, it is essential to understand the cultural particularities that influence communication processes. This requires a deep immersion into the values, beliefs, communicative styles, and contextual frameworks that shape the individual and collective identity of each culture. Participants must be able to recognize and interpret these cultural codes underlying communicative acts. Cultural understanding goes beyond mere etiquette or language learning. It involves comprehending the deep cultural narratives that influence the way people from different cultures think and perceive the world. Interacting with another culture without considering these aspects can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts.

Communicative styles differ across cultures, including variations in verbal and non-verbal communication, levels of directness, and preferences for context- or person-oriented styles. It is essential to comprehend these differences to establish effective intercultural communication. In this context, digitisation presents unparalleled opportunities for intercultural exchange, facilitating immediate communication between individuals and groups separated by vast distances. These opportunities are accompanied by the promise of greater mutual understanding and cooperation between cultures through shared platforms and social networks. However, to fully realise this potential, it is necessary to overcome a range of challenges related to digital literacy and access to technology.

In the context of intercultural communication, emotions are fundamental as they extend beyond simply influencing individual reactions and interactions. They play a key role in developing deep empathy and understanding, which are critical components of effective intercultural communication. Emotions accompany communicative acts and influence the creation of meanings, interpretation of messages, and establishment of relationships between individuals from different cultural contexts.

Europe is a diverse region with a variety of cultures, each with its own unique characteristics and historical context. It would be an oversimplification to classify the entire continent as either high-context or low-context culture, as there are significant differences within it. However, many Western European countries, including Germany, Switzerland, and Scandinavian countries, are often considered representatives of low-context cultures. In some societies, communication relies heavily on directness, clarity, and verbal expression to convey information. This emphasis on direct communication and message clarity is particularly important in business, academic, and everyday contexts. In contrast, Southern European countries such as Italy, Spain, and Greece may exhibit signs of a high-context culture, where non-verbal communication cues and context play a more significant role. In some cultures, comprehending messages relies on contextual knowledge, the relationship between speakers, and non-verbal cues. Therefore, it is difficult to categorise Europe as a high-context or low-

context culture, as it encompasses a variety of cultural practices and communication styles. The European cultural space is characterised by its diversity, which demands flexibility, open-mindedness, and adaptability from those engaging in intercultural interactions.

Societal organisation is based on power structures and social hierarchies, which influence all aspects of interpersonal relations, including intercultural dialogue. They determine whose voices will be heard and whose will be ignored or suppressed, which in turn affects the possibility of achieving mutual understanding between cultures. Power structures play a crucial role in defining the boundaries and conditions of intercultural dialogue. These structures may limit access to resources, information, and public platforms for certain cultural groups while privileging others. Social hierarchies based on ethnic background, class, gender, religion, or other social markers deeply influence intercultural communication, creating unequal conditions where some voices dominate while others remain on the periphery of social attention. These hierarchies can lead to distrust, stereotypes, and conflict-preconditions, complicating the process of mutual understanding. To overcome barriers created by power structures and social hierarchies, conscious efforts are required to develop inclusive communication strategies.

Ethical considerations

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Conflict of Interest

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