How to Manage Person-Role Conflicts: Differential Effects of Transformational Leadership Dimensions and the Moderating Role of Individual Cultural Orientation

By Veronika L. Selzer, Jan H. Schumann, Marion Büttgen, Zelal Ates, Marcin Komor and Julian Volz

The purpose of this paper is to identify effective leadership behaviour that reduces frontline employees’ person-role conflicts, a hitherto rather neglected sub-dimension of role conflicts that strongly differs from externally originated role conflict dimensions which have been examined in existing research. Moreover, the study aims at identifying individual cultural orientation as important contingency factor for the effects of transformational leadership respectively person-role conflicts on frontline employees’ job performance. Structural equation modelling using data from 373 retail bank employees reveals that charisma-related transformational leadership dimensions promote the job performance of frontline employees while intellectual stimulation has a negative effect on job performance. Additionally, individual cultural orientation dimensions collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance moderate the effects of transformational leadership on job performance. Findings imply that service firms should train managers in the use of charisma-related leadership dimensions and highlight the importance of employees’ individual cultural orientation when leading frontline employees.

1. Introduction

Frontline employees in service occupations are key for firms to retain successful customer ties (Di Mascio, 2010). They represent the organisation to its customers and their performance guarantees customer satisfaction and the firm’s success in the long run (Di Mascio, 2010). However, due to their boundary-spanning role in the triad of themselves, the organisation, and customers (Bettencourt and Brown, 2003), frontline employees likely perceive greater role conflicts than other employees (Liao and Chuang, 2004; Singh, 2000). Particularly in services in which customers can freely choose their provider, frontline employees often experience person-role conflicts (PRCs; Shamir, 1980). Competitive pressure to win new customers and satisfy and retain existing customers often pushes frontline employees to suppress their own needs to meet customer needs (Shamir, 1980). Thus, PRCs arise when frontline employees’ internal understanding of their roles and external expectations are incompatible (Miles and Perreault, 1976; Rizzo et al., 1970). Frontline employees may feel needless or compelled to perform tasks that contradict their values (Rizzo et al., 1970). Furthermore, they are often urged to conceal their feelings of inequality or experienced PRCs to customers which, ultimately, intensifies perceived PRCs (Sha-
For example, the Eurofound reports that 30% to 36% of service sector employees indicate that they always have to hide their own feelings during work (Eurofound, 2012). Such emotional labour, also referred to as surface acting, is associated with emotional exhaustion and job burnout (Grandey, 2003).

Despite the high relevance of PRCs though, prior (service) researchers have neglected the topic, instead mostly focusing on the intrasender or intersender conflicts created by incompatible external expectations and requirements from management or customers (Bettencourt and Brown, 2003; Zablah et al., 2012). We maintain that internal role conflicts instead may have similarly powerful demotivating effects on frontline employees’ job performance. The strong likely negative effect on job performance leads us to posit that research should identify appropriate leadership behaviour to address PRCs. A promising approach for reducing PRCs is transformational leadership (Bass and Riggio, 2006; Judge and Piccolo, 2004). Prior research has already shown its partly positive effects on externally originated stress (Diebig et al., 2016; MacKenzie et al., 2001; Podsakoff et al., 1996). However, the effectiveness of the different transformational leadership dimensions in lessening perceived stress varies strongly between the studies. Examining transformational leadership effects on PRCs closer seems highly recommendable as existing results are not helpful to draw any conclusions.

PRCs involve personal attitude; thus, individual characteristic differences (like individual cultural orientation) between frontline employees should also determine the extent to which PRCs affect frontline employees’ job performance. Chan et al. (2010) argue that frontline employees’ individual cultural orientation is important in determining their job expectations. These expectations imply inner beliefs about the contact with customers or colleagues. As research does not show homogeneous results on role conflict effects on frontline employees’ job performance, we examine individual cultural orientation manifested by collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance as important contingency factors of this relation.

In summary, this study pursues four research goals: (1) showing the negative impact of experienced frontline employees’ PRCs on job performance while controlling for the effects of intrasender and intersender conflicts, (2) establishing transformational leadership as an effective behaviour to mitigate frontline employees’ internal PRCs, (3) clarifying the differential effects of the various transformational leadership dimensions by exploring their effects on internal PRCs, and (4) investigating collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance as important contingency factors for the effects of transformational leadership dimensions respectively PRCs on frontline employees’ job performance.

To achieve our research objectives, we conducted a study with 373 retail bank employees in France, Germany, and Poland who were engaged in retail banking focusing on consulting services. Our results contribute to service research, research on role conflicts, and transformational leadership research. First, our study extends research on the severe effects of PRCs (Latack, 1981) in that PRCs are at least as important as other role conflict dimensions in reducing frontline employees’ job performance. Second, by extending transformational leadership research (Bass, 1985; Bass and Riggio, 2006), we empirically reveal that frontline employees actually adapt their internal and personal values when led with transformational leadership. Third, this study contributes to prior research showing varying differential effects of transformational leadership on other stress dimensions (Diebig et al., 2016; MacKenzie et al., 2001; Podsakoff et al., 1996). Fourth, findings show that individual cultural orientation is an important contingency factor for frontline employees’ ability to handle experienced PRCs to sustain their job performance and extend research on the effects of individual cultural orientation on service-related factors that hitherto mostly focused on the customer side (Zhang et al., 2008).

In the following sections, we first develop our hypotheses and research model by outlining the specific conditions of service occupations that promote PRCs. The next section explains the differential impact of transformational leadership dimensions, followed by details on the moderating effects of individual cultural orientation. Next, we explain the study’s context, sample, and measures. We then describe the results of the reliability tests and analyses of direct, mediating, and moderating effects. Finally, we highlight both research and managerial implications and identify directions for further research.

2. Hypotheses Development

2.1. Person-Role Conflicts in Service Occupations

Singh (2000) conceptualizes frontline employees as being trapped in a position in which they must meet conflicting expectations of their customers (who request courteous, high-quality service), their own organisation (which demands high performance), and themselves (including their own understanding of sufficient performance). Thus, it is not unusual that frontline employees experience role conflicts derived from their unique position in an organisation (Schmitz and Ganesan, 2014).

The concept of role conflict refers to the incompatibility of an actual role with the requirements of the corresponding predefined role; discrepancies between reality and this predefined role thus foster role conflicts (Rizzo et al., 1970). According to extant literature, such incompatibility can result in a conflict when the predefined role diverges...
from (1) employee’s internal standards (PRCs), (2) the available resources (intrasender conflicts), (3) other roles the employee must occupy (interrole conflicts), or (4) expectations of or demands from others (intersender conflicts; Rizzo et al., 1970).

In service occupations frontline employees’ predefined roles may conflict; for example, a required number of sales or customer contacts per day may cause role conflict when frontline employees perceive this number as too high according to their own understanding of how to perform at work (PRCs). In addition, frontline employees may not be able to hold to this standard due to a lack of time or adequate equipment (e.g., technical devices, intrasender conflicts). They may also have other requirements to fulfill in other roles (e.g., family member) and may not be able to meet all the conflicting expectations, such as being home early every day (interrole conflicts or role overload). Finally, they may feel stressed if customers expect more time or effort from them than their position permits (intersender conflicts).

Previous research on role conflicts examining the antecedents or consequences of role conflicts mostly focuses on intrasender or intersender conflicts (Schmitz and Ganesan, 2014; Singh, 2000; Zablah et al., 2012). Some studies even equate intersender conflicts and overall role conflict (Zablah et al., 2012), though other research argues that the sources of role conflict types must be explicitly separated (Latack, 1981; Miles and Perreault, 1976; Rizzo et al., 1970). Whereas PRCs originate from frontline employees’ internal values that conflict with external demands, the other three role conflict types are created by conflicting external requirements (e.g., management demands conflicting with customer demands drives intersender conflict).

Latack (1981) emphasizes the importance of PRCs and their effects on job outcomes, noting that a person-environment mismatch is relatively difficult to change compared with external expectations. As a more fundamental form of role conflict, PRCs lead to a more stable and chronic form of job stress that can have severe long-term consequences such as depression (Latack, 1981). In addition, Shamir (1980) argues that especially in service occupations in which customers are not bound to a service provider but are free to choose and frontline employees must compete to win new and retain existing customers, PRCs become more evident. Shamir (1980) states that the inequality of frontline employees’ and customers’ needs urges frontline employees to act in opposition to their own values or understanding of their role to fulfill external expectations, which stresses them. PRCs further intensify with the frequent admonishments that frontline employees avoid revealing the inequality or resulting PRCs to customers (Shamir, 1980).

2.2. Person-Role Conflicts Effects on Job Performance

Despite the high theoretical relevance of examining PRCs, they remain rather unexplored in empirical research (Latack, 1981). In fact, since Latack’s (1981) and Shamir’s (1980) studies and notwithstanding they emphasize the importance of this topic, research has not continued to explore the phenomenon of PRCs. For example, decreasing job performance maybe an important negative outcome of PRCs, in that job performance can affect employee job satisfaction and turnover intentions (Singh, 2000), and even customer satisfaction (Liao and Chuang, 2004) and customer loyalty (Liao and Chuang, 2004). Nonetheless, research has not examined whether PRCs indeed lead to lower levels of job performance yet, and, hence, have to be addressed by service firms’ management.

Moreover, the available research on overall role conflict shows ambiguous results: Some studies point to a negative effect on job performance (Gilboa et al., 2008; Singh, 2000), while others indicate a positive effect (Zablah et al., 2012) and some even propose an inverted U-shaped relation (Singh, 1998). We surmise that frontline employees experiencing internal values that diverge from their duties may be less motivated to satisfy management and customers, so they perform at a lower level. Following the argumentation of Latack (1981), we argue that PRCs’ effects on job performance should be at least as strong as the impact of intrasender and intersender conflicts.

H1: Person-role conflicts negatively affect frontline employees’ job performance.

2.3. Transformational Leadership Effects on Person-Role Conflicts

Prior research on stress shows that transformational leadership is partially effective in lessening experienced stress caused by outside demands (Diebreg et al., 2016; MacKenzie et al., 2001; Podsakoff et al., 1996). However, results of existing studies differ in which dimensions are effective in lessening stress and which dimensions even increase perceived stress. While Diebreg et al. (2016) find that idealized influence and inspirational motivation increase stress and individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation decrease stress, MacKenzie et al. (2001) reveal an enhancing effect of intellectual stimulation and a lessening effect of idealized influence on role ambiguity. Another study by Podsakoff et al. (1996) shows that idealized influence and individualized consideration significantly reduce overall role conflict, while inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation have positive effects. Summarizing, effects of specific transformational leadership dimensions on stress vary strongly and seem to depend on the measured stress dimension. Thus, examining the impact of single transformational leadership dimensions on PRCs seems to
be vital to identify effects of transformational leadership on this specific role stress dimension.

Existing results cannot be transferred easily to internally generated stress, because the underlying mechanisms of internal and external role conflicts should differ considerably (Latack, 1981). To reduce role conflict caused by managers’ behaviour towards frontline employees, managers can change their behaviour towards frontline employees and directly reduce the source of stress. Stress arising from frontline employees’ internal values cannot be changed so easily, because moral role expectations are stable and difficult to change externally (Latack, 1981). Nevertheless, transformational leadership may affect frontline employees’ internal values (Bass, 1985, 1997). Bass (1985) bases transformational leadership on the assumption that it is possible to lead employees to perform beyond their leader’s initial expectations, by means of (1) idealized influence, (2) inspirational motivation, (3) individualized consideration, and (4) intellectual stimulation.

Idealized influence provides an ideal role model for the employee, accompanied by admiration, respect, and trust for the leader (Bass and Riggio, 2006). To achieve this influence, leaders often show high levels of consequent behaviour and ethical or moral standards that can transfer to their employees (Bass and Riggio, 2006). In service occupations, managers can serve as role models by behaving properly during customer contacts to show employees how to handle daily difficulties. Frontline employees led by idealized influence receive guidance about how to behave at work, giving them more security and belief in the correctness of their supervisors’ assignments. Seeing that their supervisor is confident and successful by following predefined role instructions, they might adapt own expectations and shift their values closer to the predefined role. Therefore, they should perceive that the predefined role matches their own role understanding, leading to less PRCs.

H$_2$: Idealized influence results in lower person-role conflicts perceived by frontline employees.

Leadership through inspirational motivation provides a vision and shows appreciation for the employee’s work, resulting in higher team spirit and shared goals (Bass, 1985; Judge and Piccolo, 2004). Optimism and enthusiasm spread in the team (Bass and Riggio, 2006). In service settings, the shared vision of the leader may be aimed at achieving high-quality customer contacts and customer satisfaction (Bass, 1997). When a service manager communicates this shared goal and is enthusiastic about reaching it, this positive mood itself should result in lower stress levels. Moreover, the shared goal of frontline employees and their manager should lead to a common understanding of the employee’s role. Converging the frontline employee’s internal values with the predefined role by emphasizing a shared vision should decrease PRCs.

H$_3$: Inspirational motivation results in lower person-role conflicts perceived by frontline employees.

Individualized consideration means that the leader focuses on every employee’s individual needs and problems (Bass and Riggio, 2006). By coaching employees, the leader aims to develop their individual skills at their own speed (Judge and Piccolo, 2004). This coaching is accompanied by two-way communication, personal contact, and increased attention (Judge and Piccolo, 2004). In service occupations, frontline employees can be coached to handle stressful situations more effectively. In addition, employees can talk to their managers individually when they are in conflict with the expectations set by the management. This individual contact should decrease PRCs. On the one hand, the personal contact with frontline employees might lead to a shift of the supervisor’s demands in direction of the frontline employees’ communicated expectations. On the other hand, the individual coaching might help frontline employees to better adapt to the predefined role.

H$_4$: Individualized consideration results in lower person-role conflicts perceived by frontline employees.

Intellectual stimulation describes the degree to which managers lead employees by focusing on creativity and innovativeness (Judge and Piccolo, 2004). Leaders address unsolved problems by focusing on finding new solutions and questioning general beliefs (Bass and Riggio, 2006). According to Bass (1985), intellectual stimulation is often accompanied by high performance expectations. In contrast with the other transformational leadership dimensions, intellectual stimulation may be less effective in enhancing frontline employees’ job performance, because managers give no clear direction and offer no distinct specification of the predefined role; rather, they push their employees to be creative and think of new solutions in many different ways. This behaviour will incite frontline employees to develop their own understanding of the role and lead to an even larger divergence of the predefined role and frontline employees’ expectations. More precisely, without clear role definition or leadership direction, PRCs should increase.

H$_5$: Intellectual stimulation results in higher person-role conflicts perceived by frontline employees.

According to the preceding arguments, PRCs represent a mediating factor in the relationship between transformational leadership dimensions and job performance. Hence, we propose that frontline employees led by different transformational leadership dimensions will first perceive different levels of PRCs and, subsequently, show diverse extents of job performance.
2.4. The Moderating Role of Individual Cultural Orientation

Marketing and especially service research recognize the importance of culture in service settings and its influence on service outcomes such as job performance (Chan et al., 2010; Soares et al., 2007). In line with the theory of individual cultural orientation, Chan et al. (2010) reason that frontline employees’ individual cultural orientation is an important aspect determining their beliefs and expectations about their job duties and their interactions with others. Nonetheless, as research focuses more on the effects of culture on the customer side of the service encounter (Zhang et al., 2008), studies examining effects of employees’ cultural orientation are still sparse. Moreover, cultural effects on the relation of PRCs on job performance have hitherto not been examined. We suppose that individual cultural orientation as a form of frontline employees’ stable personal characteristics will play an important role when it comes to how severe PRCs, ultimately, affect frontline employees’ job performance. We expect that especially collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance will influence this effect. Chan et al. (2010) argue that collectivism and power distance mainly refer to the own perception of role perspectives. Moreover, uncertainty avoidance is strongly related to rules and the need to stick to regulations set by the outside, i.e., frontline employees’ predefined roles (Donthu and Yoo, 1998; Yoo et al., 2011).

Hofstede (1980) defines collectivism as a form of “we” consciousness. Collectivism is, hence, characterized by the extent of loyalty and self-abandonment towards a group or an organisation (Hofstede, 1980; Yoo et al., 2011). This implies strong group orientation and, consequentially, high emotional involvement of individuals in the group (Hofstede, 1980). Moreover, having diverging beliefs from their related group’s beliefs is not tolerated by highly collectivistic individuals (Hofstede, 1983). We, hence, suppose that frontline employees, that perceive a mismatch between own and their organisations’ expectations (i.e., PRCs) and, simultaneously, have a rather collectivistic orientation, will suffer more from this mismatch as individualistic-oriented individuals. The impression of not meeting expectations of their own organisation will demotivate highly collectivistic frontline employees to a greater extent. Thus, the negative effect of PRCs on job performance will be stronger for highly collectivistic frontline employees.

H7: High collectivism strengthens the indirect effects of (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) individualized consideration, and (d) intellectual stimulation over person-role conflicts on job performance by strengthening the negative effect of frontline employees’ perceptions of person-role conflicts on job performance.

Power distance reflects the acceptance of general inequality in society (Chan et al., 2010; Donthu and Yoo, 1998; Hofstede, 1980). Hence, large power distance includes that subordinates consider superiors as different than themselves and vice versa (Chan et al., 2010; Donthu and Yoo, 1998; Hofstede, 1980). Moreover, large power distance individuals tend to tolerate hierarchies and control by superiors (Donthu and Yoo, 1998). Large power distance individuals even favour to be dependent on people that are higher in the hierarchy (Hofstede, 1983). We propose that frontline employees high in power distance will not suffer from PRCs as much as ones low in power distance because they rather tend to accept control and obligations from supervisors even if they are not conform to these preconditions. Thus, they can better postpone their own beliefs that lead to PRCs which helps them to be still motivated to perform at work and impress their supervisor. The negative effect of PRCs on job performance will be weaker for frontline employees high in power distance.

H8: Large power distance weakens the indirect effects of (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) individualized consideration, and (d) intellectual stimulation over person-role conflicts on job performance by weakening the negative effect of frontline employees’ perceptions of person-role conflicts on job performance.

Uncertainty avoidance is the extent to which people require regulation, rules, and predefined structure to avoid feeling threatened by uncertainty (Hofstede, 1980; Yoo et al., 2011). People who internalize high levels of uncertainty avoidance strive to act according to predefined behavioural codes (Hofstede, 1980; Steenkamp et al., 1999). In service settings, behavioural codes reflect frontline employees’ predefined roles. Therefore, uncertainty avoidance should determine the extent on how strongly mismatches between internal values and behavioural codes affect job-related outcomes. PRCs mean that frontline employees disrelish the predefined rules or behavioural codes which conflicts with the need of highly uncertainty-avoidant frontline employees to stick to these rules and, thus, causes higher discomfort for them. Hence, highly uncertainty avoidant frontline employees will additionally suffer from high PRCs, because they perceive counteracting their need for rules as more severe. This discomfort drives demotivation and ultimately results in lower levels of job performance. Therefore, the negative effect of PRCs on job performance will be stronger for highly uncertainty-avoidant frontline employees.

H9: High uncertainty avoidance strengthens the indirect effects of (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) individualized consideration, and (d) intellectual stimulation over person-role conflicts on job performance by...
3. Methodology

3.1. Study Context

To test the hypothesized model, we conducted a study in the banking sector in France, Germany, and Poland. This sector represents an adequate research setting, because banking services are international and standardized to a great extent, such that they are comparable across countries (Schumann et al., 2010). Financial products also imply high involvement for employees, management, and customers, such that they are representative of services that likely generate higher levels of PRCs (Bettencourt and Brown, 2003). We focused on retail banking counsellors whose consulting services included account management and investment consulting, which further ensured high involvement. These responsibilities and duties were similar for all bank employees in all three countries. According to Yoo et al. (2011), individual cultural orientation varies both within and between countries; therefore, comparing three countries should provide enough variance in participants’ individual cultural orientation, even if the countries belong to the same greater cultural area (Europe).

3.2. Sample and Sampling Procedure

After quantitatively pretesting the questionnaire with 69 retail bank employees and some minor scale refinements, we collected data from 373 new bank employees of retail banks in France (24 %), Germany (31 %), and Poland (45 %). The managers at all branches contacted their employees about the study before introducing the research team, which instructed them to fill out paper-and-pencil questionnaires anonymously in the bank. Participation was voluntary and without incentive. The final sample included 70 % female and 30 % male respondents. Participants were 20 to 63 years of age ($M = 37.23$, $SD = 9.73$). The majority had graduated from university (57 %) or high school (42 %). Furthermore, participants had worked an average of 13 years for their bank ($M = 152.91$ months, $SD = 121.77$ months). Almost all employees worked full-time (97 %) in nonmanagement positions in their retail bank. In total, employees included in the survey worked in six different banks, split into 91 branches ranging in size from 1 to 12 employees per branch. We additionally selected branches in rural and urban areas and in economically well-off and difficult neighbourhoods to ensure that the sample included various organisational climates (different banks), regional areas within countries, and performance levels (different branches).
3.3. Measures

The questionnaire included an evaluation of managers' transformational leadership dimensions according to the validated German translation of the MLQ Form 5x Short by Bass and Avolio (1995) from Felfe (2006), with each dimension measured by two items. We selected all items in the study because of their high factor loadings in prior studies on similar topics. Thus, the scales were easy to adapt to the context of this study. Felfe (2006) previously used the German version of this questionnaire in the financial services sector.

Respondents rated their PRCs (three items), intrasender (four items), and intersender conflicts (three items) with measures taken from the questionnaire developed by Rizzo et al. (1970). Previous research investigating role conflicts in the frontline employee context has often implemented these measures (Bettencourt and Brown, 2003; Schmitz and Ganesan, 2014).

We measured collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance using three items (collectivism) or four items (power distance and uncertainty avoidance) from Yoo et al.'s (2011) CVSCALE. Yoo et al. (2011) define a person’s individual cultural orientation as a form of self-awareness regarding his or her culture. They also empirically show that people’s own understanding of their individual cultural orientation varies strongly within one country. This is why the use of measuring cultural orientation at an individual level is more and more acknowledged in recent research (Schumann et al., 2010; Soares et al., 2007).

Finally, employees evaluated their own job performance with one item assessing their perceived goal attainment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (Abbr.) and Source</th>
<th>Items</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Idealized influence (II) (Felfe, 2006)</td>
<td>My supervisor talks about his or her most important values and beliefs.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>My supervisor specifies the importance of having a strong sense of purpose.</td>
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<td>Inspirational motivation (IM) (Felfe, 2006)</td>
<td>My supervisor talks optimistically about the future.</td>
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<td>My supervisor talks enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished.</td>
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<td>Individualized consideration (IC) (Felfe, 2006)</td>
<td>My supervisor helps me to develop my strengths.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>My supervisor considers me as having individual needs, abilities, and aspirations from others.</td>
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<td>Intellectual stimulation (IS) (Felfe, 2006)</td>
<td>My supervisor suggests new ways of looking at how to complete assignments.</td>
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<td>My supervisor gets me to look at problems from many different angles.</td>
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<td>Person-role conflicts (PRC) (Rizzo et al., 1970)</td>
<td>I have to do things that should be done differently.</td>
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<td>I work on unnecessary things.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I perform work that contradicts my values.</td>
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<td>Intrasender conflicts (ITC) (Rizzo et al., 1970)</td>
<td>I do not have enough time to complete my work.</td>
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<td>I receive assignments that are not within my training.</td>
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<td>I receive an assignment without the capability to complete it.</td>
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<td>I receive an assignment without adequate resources to execute it.</td>
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<td>Intersender conflicts (ISC) (Rizzo et al., 1970)</td>
<td>I receive incompatible requests from two or more people (e.g., expectations about terms and conditions from customers vs. manager).</td>
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<td>I do things that are apt to be accepted by one person (e.g., manager) and not accepted by others (e.g., customers).</td>
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<td>I work under incompatible policies and guidelines (e.g. customers vs. manager).</td>
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<td>Collectivism (CO) (Yoo et al., 2011)</td>
<td>Group welfare is more important than individual rewards.</td>
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<td>Group success is more important than individual success.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Group loyalty should be encouraged even if individual goals suffer.</td>
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<td>Power distance (PD) (Yoo et al., 2011)</td>
<td>People in higher positions should make most decisions without consulting people in lower positions.</td>
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<td>People in higher positions should not ask the opinions of people in lower positions too frequently.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>People in higher positions should avoid social interaction with people in lower positions.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>People in lower positions should not disagree with decisions by people in higher positions.</td>
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<td>Uncertainty avoidance (UA) (Yoo et al., 2011)</td>
<td>It is important to closely follow instructions and procedures.</td>
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<td>Rules and regulations are important because they inform me of what is expected of me.</td>
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<td>Standardized work procedures are helpful.</td>
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<td>Instructions for operations are important.</td>
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<td>Job performance (IP) (self-developed according to the findings of Gilboa et al. (2008))</td>
<td>How likely do you think it is that you will achieve all set goals in the current planning horizon?</td>
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Tab. 1: Measurement Items
This measurement approach should result in reasonable employee evaluation, considering that a meta-analysis of self, manager, and objective performance measures indicates no significant differences in role stress studies (Gilbo et al., 2008). We also followed the argumentation of Rossiter (2002), stating that simple, unambiguous constructs that can be easily judged by all raters should be measured by single items.

Because our study was cross-national, the questionnaire and scales were translated from English into French, German, and Polish with a back-translation method (Brislin, 1970). The only exception was the validated German translation of the MLQ Form 5x Short from Felfe (2006), which was translated from German into English, French, and Polish using the back-translation method (Brislin, 1970). Respondents rated all items on 7-point scales ranging from “never” to “always” (transformational leadership dimensions, PRCs, intrasender, and intersender conflicts) or “totally disagree” to “totally agree” (collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance), except for the performance measure, which participants assessed on a 10-point scale ranging from “totally unlikely” to “totally likely”. Table 1 contains an overview of all items and factors used in the study.

For the final model, all the items entered into direct reflective indices, except the role conflict scales, which form direct formative indices according to Edwards and Bagozzi’s (2000) definitions. We argue for the use of direct formative indices for all role conflict scales to align with previous research that has used other stress scales, such as the Social Readjustment Rating Scale (Holmes and Rahe, 1967), to measure life stress in a direct formative model.

4. Analysis and Results

4.1. Reliability Tests

We tested the reliability of the scales with confirmatory factor analysis. Overall, the results provide support for the assumption of reliability, as well as convergent and discriminant validity. They show that the measurement model with factor structure indicates reasonable fit, with \( \chi^2 = 396.57, \text{df} = 179, \chi^2 / \text{df} = 2.22, \) confirmatory fit index (CFI) = .95, normed fit index (NFI) = .91, and root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA) = .06. All factors provide acceptable Cronbach’s \( \alpha \) values, above Nunnally’s (1978) recommended level of .70. In line with Eisinga et al.’s (2013) recommendation to calculate the Spearman-Brown coefficient to assess the reliability of a two-item scale, we calculated this coefficient for all four transformational leadership dimensions. Although Cronbach’s \( \alpha \) tends to underestimate the reliability of two-item scales, our results show that the Cronbach’s \( \alpha \) values and Spearman-Brown coefficient values are the same for our data. We thus proceed with our further analysis, assuming tau-

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Notes. II = idealized influence, IM = inspirational motivation, IC = individualized consideration, IS = intellectual stimulation, PRC = person-role conflicts, ITC = intrasender conflicts, ISC = intersender conflicts, CO = collectivism, PD = power distance, UA = uncertainty avoidance, JP = job performance; AVE = average variance extracted, FR = factor reliability, = Cronbach’s , SB = Spearman-Brown coefficient; numbers on the diagonal in italics show the squared root of the AVE; because we included person-role conflicts, intrasender conflicts, and intersender conflicts as direct formative factors (range: 3-21), we calculated no AVE-, FR- and -values for these factors; because job performance was measured by one single item we calculated no AVE-, FR- and -values for this factor.

*** p < .001, ** p < .01, * p < .05, " p < .10.

Tab. 2: Descriptive Statistics, Intercorrelations, Validity, and Reliabilities
equivalence in our data (Eisinga et al., 2013). The factor reliability values also are all above the suggested levels of .70 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Only for power distance the average variance extracted is slightly below the recommended level of .50 (Baggozzi and Yi, 1988). To include Fornell and Larcker’s (1981) criterion, we tested whether the highest intercorrelation with another factor is smaller than the squared root of the average variance extracted of the respective factor. All scales fulfil this criterion. The results thus show acceptable intercorrelations and confirm discriminant validity for all scales (see Table 2).

Because correlations between all transformational leadership dimensions and role conflict dimensions are high, we tested for multicollinearity (O’Brien, 2007). We calculated the variance inflation factors (VIF) of all role conflict and transformational leadership dimensions by estimating two linear regression models in SPSS. The first model contained idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation as independent variables and job performance as the dependent variable. All the VIF values are below the critical level of 4.00 (idealized influence (II) 1.81; inspirational motivation (IM) 2.29; individualized consideration (IC) 2.66; intellectual stimulation (IS) 2.72; O’Brien (2007)). The second model included PRCs, intrasender, and intersender conflicts as independent variables and, again, job performance as the dependent variable. Similar to the results of the first model, all VIF values are less than 4.00 (PRCs 1.63; intrasender conflicts 1.46; intersender conflicts 1.73). Hence, multicollinearity is not an issue in our data.

4.2. Common Method Variance

Because participants rated themselves, and we measured the dependent and independent variables at the same time, the data might suffer from common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). To minimize the likelihood of this bias, we used items with different scales and different anchors when conceptualizing the study. In addition, the questionnaire directed all respondents to answer as spontaneously and honestly as possible and assured them that there were no wrong answers. Moreover, we guaranteed that all data would be treated anonymously and confidentially. To control for common method variance afterward, we extended the measurement model of the confirmatory factor analysis by a common method factor (Lindell and Whitney, 2001). We included an additional factor in the model constrained to weight the impact on all observed variables equally, which resulted in a level of \( \beta = .00 \). Fit indices of the common variance model are worse than in the original model (\( \chi^2 = 971.64, \text{df} = 212, \chi^2/\text{df} = 4.58, \text{CFI} = .82, \text{NFI} = .78, \text{RMSEA} = .10 \)). Therefore, we consider the influence of a common method factor negligible.

4.3. Test for Measurement Invariance

Because we conducted the study in three countries, we tested measurement invariance across the countries according to Steenkamp and Baumgartner (1998). To test for configural invariance, we used the measurement model with factor structure from the reliability analysis. Following Steenkamp and Baumgartner (1998), we split the original measurement model with the factor structure into three groups to estimate the model on the country level. This unrestricted model indicates good fit (\( \chi^2 = 699.52, \text{df} = 393, \chi^2/\text{df} = 1.78, \text{CFI} = .92, \text{Tucker-Lewis index (TLI)} = .89, \text{RMSEA} = .05 \)). In addition, all standardized factor loadings are significant across all three countries, and nearly all items exceed the level of .50 (cf. one collectivism item in France; (van Birgelen et al., 2002)). Next, we tested for metric invariance by constraining the factor loadings of each factor in the measurement model split into three groups to be equal across all three countries. The model fit indicated that the data did not support the condition of full metric invariance. We subsequently tested for partial metric invariance by comparing the complete constrained model with different models in which respectively one factor loading was not constrained to be equal across all countries (Steenkamp and Baumgartner, 1998). Comparing these models with the constrained model showed that four of the seven scales fulfilled the condition of full metric invariance (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and power distance), whereas three scales revealed at least partial metric invariance (individualized consideration, collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance). We then established one model with all constraining paths constrained and the unconstraining paths extracted estimated freely. This partial metric invariant model showed reasonable model fit (\( \chi^2 = 718.45, \text{df} = 409, \chi^2/\text{df} = 1.76, \text{CFI} = .91, \text{TLI} = .89, \text{RMSEA} = .05 \)), in support of partial metric invariance. We did not test for scalar invariance, because we did not execute comparisons of mean values in our hypotheses tests.

4.4. Hypotheses Tests

4.4.1. Test of direct effects

To test the direct effects of the hypothesized model, we used structural equation modelling including all direct effects and four controls (gender, age, tenure, and country of origin). Additionally, we added intrasender and intersender conflicts and the three individual cultural orientation dimensions collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance as covariates to the model. We estimated the results with the maximum likelihood procedure. In general, the model shows reasonable fit, with \( \chi^2 = 532.77, \text{df} = 239, \chi^2/\text{df} = 2.23, \text{CFI} = .94, \text{NFI} = .90 \) and RMSEA = .06. The results support \( H_1 \), in that PRCs have a significantly negative effect on job performance (\( \beta = -.24, p < .001 \)),
even after controlling for the effects of intrasender ($\beta = .02$, $p = .81$) and intersender conflicts ($\beta = -.08$, $p = .27$). We also controlled for a quadratic effect of PRCs on job performance by adding a quadratic term of PRCs to the structural model after analysing all direct effects, results point to a linear effect though ($\beta = .01$, $p = .79$).

Supporting $H_a$, $H_b$, and $H_c$, we found that leadership by idealized influence and inspirational motivation significantly reduces PRCs ($II: \beta = -.26, p = .01; IM: \beta = -.40, p < .001$), while the results show a significant positive effect of intellectual stimulation on PRCs ($IS: \beta = .38, p < .01$). The data do not support $H_d$ however; we found a non-significant effect of individualized consideration on PRCs ($IC: \beta = .20, p = .16$).

### 4.4.2. Test of mediating effects

The model contains four mediated relationships ($H_{abcd}$); therefore, we tested these mediations according to Preacher et al. ‘s (2007) bootstrap method and classified them according to Zhao et al. (2010). In support of $H_{a}$, $H_{b}$, and $H_{c}$, results show significant indirect effects of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation over PRCs on job performance ($II: \beta = .06, p = .03; IM: \beta = .10, p = .01; IS: \beta = -.09, p = .04$). The findings indicate that only $H_{a}$ cannot be supported as there is no significant indirect effect of individualized consideration over PRCs on job performance ($IC: \beta = -.05, p = .22$).

To classify the mediations according to Zhao et al. (2010), we also tested for the direct effects of all transformational leadership dimensions on job performance, but we did not find any significant effect ($II: \beta = -.18, p = .23; IM: \beta = .04, p = .84; IC: \beta = .04, p = .80; IS: \beta = .22, p = .37$). We, hence, can conclude that the indirect effects of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation through PRCs on job performance are indirect-only mediations (Zhao et al., 2010). The indirect effect of individualized consideration can be classified as no-effect nonmediation (Zhao et al., 2010).

### 4.4.3. Test of moderating effects

To test the moderating effect of collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance on the effect of PRCs on job performance ($H_{d}$, $H_{e}$, and $H_{f}$), we used the moderated mediations procedure recommended by Preacher et al. (2007). With PROCESS in SPSS (model 14) we calculated twelve models with each including one transformational leadership dimension as independent variable and the other three transformational leadership dimensions as covariates plus gender, age, tenure, country of origin, intrasender, and intersender conflicts as control variables. Job performance was our dependent variable. In addition to using PRCs as mediator, we either added collectivism or power distance or uncertainty avoidance as moderating factor. The other two individual cultural orientation dimensions remained as control variables in the respective models. With these models we can determine whether the individual cultural orientation moderates the indirect effects of transformational leadership dimensions over PRCs on job performance by affecting the relation of PRCs on job performance.

Our findings do support $H_{d}$, $H_{e}$, and $H_{f}$ as we find significant moderated mediation indices for the indirect effects of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation over PRCs on job performance moderated by collectivism ($II: ab = .02, BCa CI [+0.00, +0.05]; IM: ab = 0.03, BCa CI [+0.00, +0.07]; IS: ab = -0.02, BCa CI [-0.06, -0.00])

In support of $H_{d}$, $H_{e}$, and $H_{f}$ the indices of moderated mediation are significant for the indirect effects of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation over PRCs on job performance moderated by power distance ($II: ab = -0.02, BCa CI [-0.06, -0.00]; IM: ab = -0.03, BCa CI [-0.09, -0.00]; IS: ab = 0.03, BCa CI [+0.00, +0.08]). Findings do not support $H_{g}$ as the index of moderated mediation is not significant for the indirect effect of individualized consideration ($IC: ab = -.01, BCa CI [-0.05, +0.00])

Supporting $H_{d}$, $H_{e}$, and $H_{f}$ we found significant indices of moderated mediation for the indirect effects of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation over PRCs on job performance moderated by uncertainty avoidance ($II: ab = 0.03, BCa CI [+0.00, +0.09]; IM: ab = 0.05, BCa CI [+0.00, +0.13]; IS: ab = -0.04, BCa CI [-0.12, -0.00]). $H_{g}$ cannot be supported. The index of moderated mediation is not significant for the indirect effect of individualized consideration ($IC: ab = -.02, BCa CI [-0.07, +0.00])

### 5. Discussion

#### 5.1. Review of Empirical Findings and Research Implications

Our findings contribute to service, role conflict, and transformational leadership research in four main ways. First, adding to research on the effects of frontline employees’ role conflicts (Schmitz and Ganesan, 2014; Zablah et al., 2012), this study is the first to investigate job performance outcomes of internally generated PRCs as separate dimension of role conflict. Our results show that PRCs are at least as important as other role conflict dimensions such as intrasender and intersender conflicts in lessening the job performance of frontline employees. Moreover, our
data do not support an inverted U-shaped relation of PRCs and job performance (as proposed by Singh (1998)), meaning that already low levels of experienced PRCs lead to lower job performance. These findings support and expand existing theoretical research that identifies PRCs as important in chronic and severe job stress (Latack, 1981).

Second, our results add to transformational leadership research (Bass, 1985; Bass and Riggio, 2006) by showing that transformational leadership can reduce perceived PRCs. Our findings imply that transformational leadership can affect not only externally originated stress factors but also conflicts derived from internal values and conflicting external expectations. Furthermore, the results support Bass’s (1985) theory that transformational leadership changes employees from the inside and has a deep effect on employees’ personality. Bass’s (1985) original idea determined that transformational leadership effectiveness can be attributed to employees’ transformation and their personal development. Our findings indicate the novel result that this assumption is valid for transformational leadership in service settings, by showing its impact on internally generated stress.

Third, results clarify conflicting findings of existing research on transformational leaderships’ differential effects in the specific context of service occupations (MacKenzie et al., 2001; Podsakoff et al., 1996). Not all transformational leadership dimensions are equally effective in lessening PRCs and enhancing frontline employees’ job performance. Whereas charisma-related leadership dimensions (idealized influence and inspirational motivation) reduce PRCs effectively, intellectual stimulation actually increases perceived PRCs. These findings extend prior studies showing varying differential effects of transformational leadership on different stress dimensions (Diebig et al., 2016; MacKenzie et al., 2001; Podsakoff et al., 1996) by expanding this knowledge to PRCs.

Findings show that transformational leadership leads to two different PRCs results. On the one hand, charisma-related dimensions seem to pull frontline employees toward their leader, meaning that frontline employees adapt their values to those of their leaders. This adaption decreases perceptions of PRCs and enhances job performance. On the other hand, intellectual stimulation has the opposite effect, by pushing the frontline employees to act self-determined (e.g., stimulation of creativity). This type of leadership dimension assumes the risk that frontline employees are prone to focus on their own values and may shift them away from their leaders’ expectations. When the discrepancy between own and leaders’ expectations grows, it ultimately promotes PRCs and lowers frontline employees’ job performance. Transformational leadership dimensions lead to either pull or push effects that respectively temper or foster frontline employees’ PRCs and job performance, ultimately.

The missing effect of individualized consideration might be clarified by a paradox that Avolio and Bass (1995) explain: while charisma-related transformational leadership is related to organisations’ interests, individualized consideration is related to maximum development of an individual per se. Hence, supervisors leading frontline employees by individualized consideration may only aim at developing their subordinates which rather motivates them to focus on their self-interest (Avolio and Bass, 1995). Individually developed frontline employees might, thus, not change their own values towards their organisation’s ones, while supervisors nonetheless keep in mind common goals. This missing convergence of their values, hence, does not lead to lower PRCs even if problems are discussed and frontline employees are supported individually.

Fourth, findings indicate that individual culture orientation affecting frontline employees’ role perceptions is crucial for how severe PRCs ultimately affect frontline employees’ job performance. Thus, we contribute to research on effects of individual cultural orientation in service settings (Chan et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2008). To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first to show that collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance, as individual cultural orientation dimensions noted by Yoo et al. (2011), moderate the link between perceived PRCs and job performance. Moreover, these moderating factors also affect the indirect effects of transformational leadership over PRCs on job performance. While collectivism and uncertainty avoidance strengthen the indirect effects and, thus, drive divergence of push and pull effects, power distance converges push and pull effects of transformational leadership by weakening the indirect effects. Hence, the effect of managers’ transformational leadership dimensions on frontline employees’ job performance is determined by the frontline employees’ individual characteristics (i.e., individual cultural orientation).

The divergence as well as the convergence of the effects may explain prior studies’ differing results on transformational leaderships’ differential effects on stress (Diebig et al., 2016; MacKenzie et al., 2001; Podsakoff et al., 1996). On the other hand, results contribute to earlier service research that found different effects of overall role conflicts on frontline employees’ job performance (Gilboa et al., 2008; Singh, 1998, 2000; Zablah et al., 2012). According to our results, the levels of frontline employees’ collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance can determine the effect size of PRCs on job performance, which offers a possible explanation for inconsistencies in prior research. Summarizing, our findings show that individual cultural orientation as type of personal characteristic should not be
neglected – neither in role stress nor in transformational leadership research.

5.2. Managerial Implications

Our study contributes to practice in two major ways. First, contrary to prior results on externally generated role conflict dimensions (Diebig et al., 2016; MacKenzie et al., 2001; Podsakoff et al., 1996), service organisations should introduce special leadership programs to train service firm managers to lead frontline employees by creating visions and shared goals as well as providing role models. In essence, they should learn to create stable conditions in which frontline employees know their responsibilities and how they can act to fulfil their duties. Service managers should be sensitized to which tools are most effective in leading their service staff. This training should highlight that, in highly stressful occupations such as frontline service, fostering creativity is not effective in reducing PRCs. Managers should learn implementable behaviour that transmits the intended leadership dimension to their employees. Such sessions could, for example, contain lessons in which managers learn how to share their visions with their employees, how to act as helpful role model, and how to avoid challenging tasks in search of new ways and solutions when they want to reduce PRCs.

Second, our findings on individual cultural orientation suggest that service firms should hone their hiring procedures to identify individual cultural orientation profiles. Questionnaires assessing candidates’ personalities could measure individual cultural orientation. Knowing the orientation of collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance can help managers direct frontline employees more effectively. In the first place, managers of frontline employees can better understand how and why their employees might react differently to the same level of PRCs. Managers might provide different methods to support employees that are at risk that PRCs affect their job performance to a higher degree, namely, those with a rather collectivistic orientation, small power distance, and higher uncertainty avoidance. In addition, study’s results show that, while collectivism and uncertainty avoidance strengthen the particular effect of transformational leadership dimensions on job performance, a high level of power distance weakens all effects. Hence, frontline employees’ managers could use this knowledge to either leverage the effects of their adapted effective charisma-related leadership dimensions or mitigate the negative effects of intellectual stimulation. Doing so should ultimately produce higher levels of job performance.

5.3. Limitations and Further Research Directions

This study has some limitations that point to further research opportunities. The model only includes transformational leadership dimensions, but the influence of transactional leadership dimensions or laissez-faire leadership could be another worthwhile topic to explore. The effectiveness of those dimensions in service settings might also change in ways contrary to general assumptions such that leadership dimensions like contingent reward might be less effective in reducing PRCs that in lessening, e.g., role ambiguity (MacKenzie et al., 2001).

In addition, we measured all transformational leadership dimensions with only two items, for two reasons. First, previous research has used the transformational leadership scale and its German translation often enough that we could assume that the items would be valid and reliable when we chose those with the highest factor loadings. Our reliability tests affirm this assumption. Second, to ensure reasonable sample size, we designed the questionnaire to be as short as possible. The study demanded long preparation and was only executable once, so we sought to minimize the risk of incomplete questionnaires due to length or complexity. Nonetheless, further research should validate the results of our study using the complete, original number of items available to assess all transformational leadership dimensions.

Finally, uncertainty avoidance shows a high mean value and small standard deviation. The variance of this factor within our sample thus is not very high, which actually offers stronger affirmation for the moderating effect, in that it is significant even when uncertainty avoidance is high and its variance is low. We expect that with more variance of uncertainty avoidance in a sample, the moderating effect would grow even stronger. However, we conducted our study in three countries belonging to the same broad cultural area (Europe). It would be worthwhile to investigate countries outside Europe.

References


Erfolgreich durch Veränderungen führen.

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Managing Transitions

Aus dem Inhalt
■ Veränderungen sind nicht das Problem ■ Die Bereitschaft zur Veränderung prüfen ■ Loslassen lernen ■ Einen Neubeginn initiieren ■ Übergänge, Entwicklung und Erneuerung ■ Übergänge planen und ein Transition Monitoring Team aufbauen ■ Wie wir mit ständiger Veränderung umgehen können

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