

Behavioral Outcomes of Grievance Activity

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Using individual employee data from four unionized organizations over two 3-year periods, this study analyzes the effects of grievance filing and settlement activity on post-grievance settlement outcomes. The results show that performance ratings, work attendance rates, and promotion rates declined and turnover rates increased for grievance filers compared with nonfilers following grievance settlement, in contrast to the absence of significant differences between the two employee groups on any of these measures before or during grievance filing and settlement. Similar findings emerged for the supervisors of grievance filers relative to the supervisors of nonfilers. The evidence suggests that employers exercise retribution against grievance filers and their supervisors, although a "true performance" explanation of these findings cannot be ruled out.

Introduction

Recent reviews and assessments of research on grievance procedures in unionized settings conclude that the vast bulk of the published studies focus heavily, indeed, almost exclusively, on the factors influencing grievance filing and settlement (Lewin and Peterson, 1998; Bemmels and Foley, 1996; Labig and Greer, 1988; Gordon and Miller, 1984). A few studies have linked grievance filing rates to one or another measure of plant-, firm-, or industry-level performance (Kleiner et al., 1995; Ichniowski and Lewin, 1987; Norsworthy and Zabala, 1985; Katz et al., 1983). Two recent studies include formal grievance procedures in indices of high-performance work systems, which are then analyzed for their effects on organizational-level performance measures, e.g., rate of return

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on assets (Huselid, 1995; Mitchell et al., 1990). But only a handful of studies have addressed the behavioral outcomes of grievance processing and resolution for the direct parties to grievances, namely, grievants and their immediate supervisors.

Lewin and Peterson (1988) were the first to study post-grievance settlement outcomes. Results of their research in four unionized organizations showed that compared with matched samples of employees who did not file grievances, grievants had lower performance ratings, promotion rates, and work attendance rates and higher turnover rates in the post-grievance settlement period. Similar findings were reported by Lewin (1987, 1992, 1998) in his research on grievance systems in several nonunion organizations. In a single organization study, Klaas and DeNisi (1989) found that unionized employees who filed grievances over disciplinary actions were significantly more likely to have lower performance ratings in subsequent years than employees who filed grievances over management policies. Klaas et al. (1991) studied the relationship between grievance activity and employee absenteeism over an 8-year period in a unionized public-sector organization and found that the filing of grievances over discipline, but not grievances over management policy, was significantly positively related to subsequent employee absenteeism. Each of these studies suggests that employees are to some extent punished for filing grievances. In a related laboratory study, Olson-Buchanan (1996) found that employees who filed grievances had significantly lower job performance in the post-grievance period compared with employees who did not file grievances. She concludes, however, that while employees may be punished for filing grievances, it is also plausible that grievants may have systematically lower job performance than nongrievants.

In sum, while there is a small body of work on the behavioral outcomes of grievance activity, this work pales in comparison with the vast literature on determinants of grievance filing and with the equally large literature on grievance settlement. This gap in the grievance literature means that we know relatively little about what happens to those who are directly involved in grievances cases, especially the extent to which employees who file grievances are punished for doing so or the extent to which employees who file grievances are poorer job performers than employees who do not file grievances. Further, because grievance-like procedures are becoming more common in nonunion organizations (Delaney et al., 1989), a study of the behavioral outcomes of grievance activity in the (declining) unionized sector may have implications for and be extended to research on grievance systems in the (growing) nonunion sector of the U.S. economy.

This article reports the findings of a study of post-grievance settlement outcomes for unionized employees *and* first-line supervisors in four large organizations: a steel manufacturing firm, a retail department store, a nonprofit hospital, and a local public school district.¹ The article is organized as follows: The section to follow describes the research design, analytical procedures, and key variables used in the study. The next two sections present empirical findings based on analyses of post-grievance settlement data for samples of employee grievance filers and nonfilers and supervisors of grievance filers and nonfilers drawn from the four organizations. In the last section, the study's main conclusions are summarized and interpreted in the context of prevailing theories of the grievance process.

Research Design and Procedures

An ex post facto control group design was used in this longitudinal study, which began with the researchers securing the cooperation of management and union officials in the steel manufacturing firm, retail department store, nonprofit hospital, and local public school district. For unionized employees in each of these organizations, the relevant collective-bargaining agreements specified a four-step grievance procedure culminating in binding arbitration.² Then grievance activity data for selected plants, facilities, and locations in the four organizations were obtained for two periods, 1981-1983 and 1991-1993. These data were examined to determine grievance filing rates, levels of settlement, and employer and employee win-loss rates.

The head human resource or industrial relations officer in each organization then provided alphabetized lists of employees who did and did not file grievances in 1982 and again in 1992, and the researchers drew randomly from these lists to construct samples of grievance filers and nonfilers. The randomization procedure was a straightforward application of the every *n*th name rule. Personnel records were then obtained and matched to the samples of grievance filers and nonfilers in 1982 and 1992 for the purpose of extracting demographic data as well as data on employee job performance, promotions, work attendance, and turnover.

¹Because of confidentiality requirements imposed on the authors as a condition of gaining access to grievance files and personnel records, we are unable to provide additional information about these organizations.

²These agreements covered production workers in the steel firm, retail clerks in the retail department store, nurses in the nonprofit hospital, and teachers in the local public school district. Grievance activity that involved other unionized employees in these four organizations was excluded from the study.

These procedures yielded total employee samples of 7617 grievance filers and nonfilers for 1981–1983 and 5847 grievance filers and nonfilers for 1991–1993. Virtually identical procedures were used to obtain samples of supervisors of grievance filers and nonfilers in the four organizations (in 1982 and 1992, respectively). These procedures yielded samples of 1056 supervisors of grievance filers and nonfilers for 1981–1983 and 764 supervisors of grievance filers and nonfilers for 1991–1993.

In essence, and from a research design perspective, 1982 and 1992 are the focal or “treatment” years in this study. Correspondingly, 1981 and 1991 are the “pretreatment” years and 1983 and 1993 are the “post-treatment” years, respectively.³ The research is intended to determine if the behavior and/or employer treatment of grievance filers and their supervisors differ significantly from the behavior and/or employer treatment of grievance nonfilers and their supervisors prior to, during, and following grievance filing and settlement.

Post-Grievance Settlement Outcomes: Employee Analysis

To conduct this analysis, we first assembled 1981–1983 and 1991–1993 job performance, promotion, work attendance, and turnover data for 1982 and 1992 grievance filers and nonfilers in each of the four organizations; these are presented in Table 1.

The data show that in the pre-grievance filing years, 1981 and 1991, (subsequent) grievance filers had slightly higher performance ratings, substantially higher work attendance rates, and markedly higher promotion rates than nonfilers. Chi-square tests indicate that these differences were statistically significant for promotion rates in all four organizations in 1981 and in three organizations (all but organization B, the retail department store) in 1991, insignificant for performance ratings in all four organizations in 1981 and 1991, and statistically significant for work attendance rates in organizations A (the steel manufacturing firm) and C (the nonprofit hospital) in 1981 and 1991. On the whole, grievance filers in 1982 and 1992 were significantly more upwardly mobile and significantly less likely to be absent from or late to work than nonfilers in the periods immediately preceding grievance filing (1981 and 1991).

³This is a field study rather than an experimental study. Nevertheless, the concepts of “pretreatment,” “treatment,” and “posttreatment” years, which are drawn from experimental-type research designs (Campbell and Stanley, 1983), are helpful for focusing attention on the question, “What happens to grievance filers and their supervisors once grievances are settled?”

TABLE 1
 PERSONNEL MEASURES FOR GRIEVANCE FILERS (GF) AND NONFILERS (GNF)
 IN FOUR ORGANIZATIONS, 1981-1983 AND 1991-1993

Year and Personnel Measure	Organization A, Steel Mfg. Firm		Organization B, Retail Dept. Store		Organization C, Nonprofit Hospital		Organization D, Local School District	
	GF	GNF	GF	GNF	GF	GNF	GF	GNF
1981								
Performance rating	3.3	3.2	3.4	3.3	3.8	3.5	3.6	3.7
Work attendance	7.6*	8.2*	6.2	6.7	4.7*	5.3*	6.8	7.2
Promotion rate	4.6**	3.5**	6.3*	5.8*	5.1*	4.6*	10.3**	9.4**
1982								
Performance rating	3.4	3.5	3.5	3.3	3.6	3.4	3.5	3.5
Work attendance	6.9	7.3	5.9	6.4	4.6	5.0	6.5*	7.0*
Promotion rate	3.1	2.7	4.9	4.7	4.3	4.5	7.3	7.9
Turnover rate	6.6*	6.1*	7.6*	7.0*	8.5	8.1	6.9	6.5
Voluntary	3.3	3.3	4.3	4.2	6.0	5.8	4.0	3.9
Involuntary	2.8*	3.3*	3.3*	2.8*	2.5	2.3	2.9	2.6
1983								
Performance rating	3.2*	3.6*	3.3*	3.7*	3.4	3.6	3.3	3.6
Work attendance	7.3	7.1	6.0	6.2	4.9	5.1	7.1	6.8
Promotion rate	1.6**	2.8**	4.2**	5.6**	3.8**	4.6**	6.6*	7.3*
Turnover rate	6.9*	6.4*	7.9*	7.3*	8.6	8.4	6.8*	6.3*
Voluntary	5.2**	3.5**	5.8**	4.3**	6.9**	5.7**	4.8**	3.8**
Involuntary	1.5**	2.9**	2.1*	3.0*	1.7**	2.7**	2.0*	2.5*
N	427-535	317-397	362-416	335-408	262-319	341-405	321-386	346-421
1991								
Performance rating	3.5	3.4	3.6	3.4	3.6	3.5	3.5	3.4
Work attendance	6.6*	7.1*	6.2	6.5	5.1*	5.6*	6.4	6.6
Promotion rate	4.2*	3.7*	5.9	5.7	5.0*	4.5*	6.8*	6.2*
1992								
Performance rating	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.5	3.3	3.4
Work attendance	6.4	6.7	5.7	6.0	4.3*	4.8*	5.9	6.2
Promotion rate	2.8	2.6	4.2	4.1	4.0	4.2	5.8	6.0
Turnover rate	5.7*	5.2*	6.1	5.8	7.4	7.2	6.1*	5.6*
Voluntary	3.1	3.2	4.0	3.8	4.9	4.7	3.9	3.6
Involuntary	2.6*	2.0*	2.1	2.0	2.5	2.5	2.4*	2.0*
1993								
Performance rating	3.2**	3.7**	3.3**	3.8**	3.5	3.7	3.1*	3.5*
Work attendance	6.9	6.6	6.0	5.7	4.4	4.6	6.2	5.9
Promotion rate	2.3*	2.9*	3.5**	4.6**	3.0**	4.2**	5.0**	6.2**
Turnover rate	6.1**	5.2**	6.5*	5.7*	8.0**	7.1**	6.2*	5.5*
Voluntary	4.1*	3.4*	4.7*	4.2*	5.8*	5.0*	4.4**	3.4**
Involuntary	2.0	1.8	1.8	1.5	2.2	2.1	1.8	2.1
N	413-519	308-382	347-409	319-402	254-314	327-389	316-401	332-412

NOTES: Performance rating is mean rating with 1 = low, 5 = high; work attendance is percentage of days absent and late; promotion rate is percentage promoted to higher step, grade, or position from prior year; voluntary turnover is percentage quit; involuntary turnover is percentage laid off and terminated for cause.

* Difference between means in columns GF and GNF significant at $p < 0.05$.

** Differences between means in columns GF and GNF significant at $p < 0.01$.

These differences changed somewhat in 1982 and 1992, the years of grievance filing, in that promotion rates for grievance filers were no longer significantly higher than for nonfilers, and work attendance rates were significantly higher for grievance filers than for nonfilers only in organization D, the local school district, in 1982 and in organization C, the nonprofit hospital, in 1992. Further, employee turnover rates in 1982 and 1992, especially involuntary turnover rates, were consistently lower among grievance nonfilers than among grievance filers. Chi-square tests show that these differences were statistically significant in the steel manufacturing firm and the retail department store in 1982 and in the steel manufacturing firm and the local school district in 1992.

By 1983 and 1993, the situation changed markedly, according to the data in Table 1. Compared with grievance nonfilers (in 1982 and 1992), chi-square tests show that grievance filers had significantly lower promotion rates in all four organizations in both years, significantly higher turnover rates in three organizations (all but the nonprofit hospital) in 1983 and in all four organizations in 1993, and significantly lower performance ratings in two organizations (the steel manufacturing firm and the retail department store) in 1983 and in three organizations (all but the nonprofit hospital) in 1993. Work attendance rates were higher for grievance nonfilers than for grievance filers in two organizations (the steel manufacturing firm and the local school district) in 1983 and in three organizations (all but the nonprofit hospital) in 1993. While these differences were not statistically significant, they contrast notably with the higher work attendance rates for grievance filers than for nonfilers that existed prior to and during the grievance filing period(s).

How did the level of grievance settlement and the decisions in grievance cases (i.e., who won and who lost the cases) affect post-grievance settlement performance ratings, promotion rates, and work attendance rates of grievance filers in these four organizations? To answer this question, the data for grievance filers (in 1982 and 1992) were reassembled to take account of the grievance settlement step and decision in favor of the grievant or employer; these data are shown in Table 2.

In each of the four organizations, performance ratings in 1983 and 1993 were higher for grievants whose cases were settled (in 1982 and 1992) at the first step of the grievance procedure than at subsequent steps of the procedure. These differences were statistically significant in 1983 in the retail department store and the local school district. In all four organizations, 1983 and 1993 performance ratings were significantly higher for grievants whose cases were decided in favor of the employer than for grievants whose cases were decided in favor of the employee (in 1982 and 1992).

TABLE 2
PERSONNEL AND GRIEVANCE SETTLEMENT MEASURES, 1983 AND 1993, FOR 1982 AND 1992 GRIEVANCE FILERS IN FOUR ORGANIZATIONS

Year and Personnel Measure	Organization A, Steel Mfg. Firm				Organization B, Retail Dept. Store				Organization C, Nonprofit Hospital				Organization D, Local School District			
	Grievance Settled at		Decision in Favor of		Grievance Settled at		Decision in Favor of		Grievance Settled at		Decision in Favor of		Grievance Settled at		Decision in Favor of	
	Step 1	Steps 2, 3, 4	G	E	Step 1	Steps 2, 3, 4	G	E	Step 1	Steps 2, 3, 4	G	E	Step 1	Steps 2, 3, 4	G	E
1983																
Performance rating	3.4	3.1	3.0*	3.5*	3.5*	3.1*	2.9**	3.6**	3.6	3.3	3.1*	3.7*	3.5*	3.1*	3.0*	3.6*
Work attendance	7.0	7.6	6.8**	7.8**	5.6*	6.3*	5.5**	6.4**	4.6*	5.3*	4.4**	5.5**	6.9	7.3	6.8	7.4
Promotion rate	2.0*	1.1*	0.7*	1.2*	4.5*	3.8*	3.3**	4.9**	3.9	3.6	3.2*	4.3*	5.8	5.4	4.7**	6.5**
Turnover rate	6.7	6.9	6.5**	7.8**	7.6	8.2	7.5*	8.4*	8.3	8.7	7.9**	9.4**	6.5	7.1	6.3**	7.4**
Voluntary	5.1	5.5	4.6**	6.0**	5.7	6.0	5.4**	6.7**	6.7	7.1	6.4**	7.7**	4.6	5.0	4.4*	5.2*
Involuntary	1.6	1.4	1.9	1.8	1.9	2.2	2.1	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.7	1.9	2.1	1.9	2.2
<i>N</i>	368	167	281	254	282	134	214	202	209	110	152	167	234	142	192	184
1993																
Performance rating	3.3	3.1	3.0*	3.5*	3.4	3.2	3.0*	3.6*	3.5	3.2	3.2*	3.7*	3.4	3.3	3.1*	3.6*
Work attendance	6.8	7.2	6.5*	7.3*	5.9	6.2	5.6*	6.3*	4.5	4.7	4.3**	5.2**	6.3	6.6	5.9	6.4
Promotion rate	2.3*	1.5*	1.4*	2.1*	4.1*	3.3*	3.7**	4.8**	4.6	4.2	4.3*	3.6*	5.4	5.0	4.8**	6.0**
Turnover rate	6.0	6.2	5.6**	6.5**	6.4	6.8	6.2*	7.0*	7.6	7.9	7.7**	8.8**	6.0	6.3	5.8**	6.8**
Voluntary	4.2	4.4	3.9*	4.6*	4.8	5.1	4.4*	5.3*	5.9	6.2	5.6**	6.7**	4.3	4.5	4.2**	5.3**
Involuntary	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.9	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.5	1.7	1.9	2.1	1.7	1.8	1.6	1.9
<i>N</i>	344	158	268	247	271	145	209	196	189	102	144	155	222	131	180	173

Note: G = Grievance decision settled in favor of the grievant; E = grievance decision settled in favor of the employer.

* Differences between means in pair of columns "Grievance Settled at Step 1" and "Grievance Settled at Steps 2, 3, 4" and pair of columns "Decision in Favor of G" and "Decision in Favor of E" significant at $p < .05$.

** Differences between means in pair of columns "Grievance Settled at Step 1" and "Grievance Settled at Steps 2, 3, 4" and pair of columns "Decision in Favor of G" and "Decision in Favor of E" significant at $p < .01$.

Work attendance data show that the incidence of employee absenteeism and lateness in 1983 and 1993 was lower in all four organizations for grievants whose cases were settled at the first step of the grievance procedure than for grievants whose cases were settled at the three subsequent steps (in 1982 and 1992). These differences were statistically significant only in 1983 in the retail department store and the nonprofit hospital. In three of the four organizations (all but the local school district), employees who won their grievances (in 1982 and 1992) had significantly higher work attendance rates in 1983 and 1993 than employees who lost their grievances.

Promotion rates in 1983 and 1993 were uniformly higher for grievants whose cases were settled (in 1982 and 1992) at the first step than at subsequent steps of the grievance procedure, and these differences were statistically significant in the steel manufacturing firm and the retail department store in both 1983 and 1993. Additionally, in all four organizations in both 1983 and 1993, promotion rates were significantly higher for grievants whose cases were decided in favor of the employer than for grievants who won their cases (in 1982 and 1992).

The turnover data in Table 2 show that voluntary turnover in 1983 and 1993 was lower in all four organizations among grievants whose cases were settled (in 1982 and 1992) at the first step of the grievance procedure than among grievants whose cases were settled at higher steps, but these differences were not statistically significant. For grievants who lost their cases (in 1982 and 1992), however, voluntary turnover in all four organizations, both in 1983 and 1993, was significantly higher than among grievants who won their cases.

To summarize, the data in Table 2 indicate that for the four post-grievance settlement outcome measures employed in this study—job performance ratings, work attendance rates, promotion rates, and turnover rates—relatively more negative outcomes resulted for grievants whose cases were resolved at higher rather than lower steps of the grievance procedure, especially for grievants who won rather than lost their grievance cases.

In order to examine these post-grievance settlement outcomes more systematically, several regression equations were specified and tested on pooled data from the four organizations and two time periods covered in this research. In these equations, each of the four post-grievance settlement outcome measures served as a dependent variable.⁴ The main independent

⁴One of the organizations used a 9-point performance rating scale in 1981–1983 and a 5-point scale in 1991–1993, another organization used 7-point scales in the two time periods, and two organizations used

variables include grievance activity, measured by grievance filing, level of settlement, and "winner" of grievance decision (grievant or employer). The control variables include selected employee personal (demographic) characteristics and selected organizational characteristics, specifically size of organization and size of the employee's work unit/department.⁵

To illustrate, the performance rating equation took the following functional form:

$$PSPR = PSPR(C_0 + GF_1 + A_2 + S_3 + R_4 + ED_5 + WE_6 + SO_7 + SU_8 + e_9) \quad (1)$$

where

PSPR = post-grievance settlement job performance rating (in 1983 or 1993)

*C*₀ = a constant term

*GF*₁ = written grievance filed (in 1982 or 1992), with filing = 1, nonfiling = 0

*A*₂ = age, in years

*S*₃ = sex, with male = 1, female = 0

*R*₄ = race, with minority = 1, white = 0

*ED*₅ = education, in years of schooling

*WE*₆ = work experience, in years with present employer

*SO*₇ = size of organization (employer), in number of employees

*SU*₈ = size of the employee's work unit/department

*e*₉ = an error term

5-point scales in both periods. All these data were recategorized into 5-point rating scales. Work attendance, promotion, and turnover data also were adjusted to ensure consistency across the four organizations and time periods covered in this study.

⁵Inspection of the zero-order correlation matrix for these variables and tests for multicollinearity showed no significant covariance among them. Logistic regression analysis in which grievance filing served as the dependent variable (with 1 = filing, 0 = not filing) found that, in the four organizations and two time periods studied, the probability of filing a grievance was significantly higher for young, male, minority employees, more educated employees, and employees in large work units than for other employees.

The results from tobit regression estimates of this equation are shown in column 1 of Table 3.⁶ Among the control variables, the only significant positive coefficient is on work unit size. The coefficient on grievance filing is significantly negatively associated with post-grievance settlement employee job performance rating. Recall that prior to and during the grievance filing periods (1981–1982 and 1991–1992), there were no significant differences in job performance ratings between grievance filers and nonfilers. This implies that it is the act of grievance filing that results in lower job performance ratings for filers compared with nonfilers. This interpretation is further supported by the results from estimating equation (1) using level of grievance settlement (*LS*) and winner of grievance decision (*GD*), respectively, in place of grievance filing (*GF*) as the main independent variable. The coefficients on *LS* and *GD* in columns 2 and 3 of Table 3 are significantly negatively associated with post-grievance settlement job performance rating.

Grievance filers are unlikely to be random samples of all employees, however. Stated differently, there is potential selection bias in analyzing data on grievance filers in the four organizations. Such filers may in fact be poorer job performers than nonfilers despite the descriptive statistics showing no significant differences between these two groups in this respect (Olson-Buchanan, 1996). To “test” for this potential problem, equation (1) was reestimated using the pre-grievance filing job performance rating (*PFPR*, 1981 and 1991) for (subsequent) grievance filers and nonfilers as an independent variable, together with grievance filing (*GF*) and the aforementioned control variables. The results from estimating this revised equation are presented in column 4 of Table 3. They show that pre-grievance filing job performance rating is not significantly associated with post-grievance settlement job performance rating and that grievance filing remains significantly negatively associated with post-grievance settlement job performance rating. When equation (1) is again reestimated using level of grievance settlement (*LS*) and winner of grievance decision (*GD*), respectively, in place of grievance filing (*FS*), pre-grievance filing job performance rating is again insignificantly

⁶ A tobit estimator is used here due to the ordinal nature of the performance rating data. This estimator is also used to test the work attendance equations, since we grouped the work attendance data into ordinal categories. Logit estimators are used to test the promotion and turnover equations in which the dependent variables are binary. Note that we also conducted ordered probit tests of the performance, promotion, and turnover equations and ordinary least squares tests of the (uncategorized) work attendance data. The results of these tests did not differ quantitatively or qualitatively from the results presented in the article. A complete set of these results is available from the authors on request.

TABLE 3
REGRESSION ESTIMATES OF EMPLOYEE POST-GRIEVANCE SETTLEMENT OUTCOMES, 1983 AND 1993
(Tobit Regression Coefficients for *PSPR* and *PSWA*; Logit Regression Coefficients for *PSPRO*, *PSTO*, and *TERM*)

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable											
	Job Performance (<i>PSPR</i>)						Work Attendance (<i>PSWA</i>)					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
Constant (<i>C</i>)	+59*	+51*	+52*	+50*	+58*	+59*	+67*	+69*	+71*	+72*	+70*	+73*
Age (<i>A</i>)	+71	+68	+66	+56	+54	+50	+64	+62	+59	+60	+57	+55
Sex (<i>S</i>)	+43	+42	+40	+32	+30	+28	+32	+30	+29	+33	+30	+28
Race (<i>R</i>)	-.38	-.35	-.32	-.42	-.38	-.34	-.22	-.21	-.23	-.19	-.17	-.16
Education (<i>ED</i>)	+89	+84	+80	+96*	+92*	+89*	+43	+40	+37	+41	+40	+37
Work experience (<i>WE</i>)	+62	+58	+55	+57	+54	+52	+24	+22	+20	+23	+21	+19
Organization size (<i>SO</i>)	+38	+36	+34	+44	+42	+39	+36	+35	+32	+30	+29	+27
Work unit size (<i>SU</i>)	+74*	+71*	+68*	+85*	+82*	+77*	+69*	+67*	+64*	+71*	+68*	+65*
Grievance filed (<i>GF</i>)	-.67*			-.72*			+81*			+62		
Settlement level (<i>LS</i>)		-.74*			-.80*			+74*			+59	
Grievance decision (<i>GD</i>)			-.92**			-.96**			+87*			+79*
Prefiling performance rating (<i>PFPR</i>)				+33	+39	+40						
Prefiling work attendance rate (<i>PFWA</i>)										+68*	+64*	+62*
Intercept	+56	+54	+53	+49	+47	+46	+48	+46	+45	+44	+42	+41
Sample size	4024	3967	3723	3987	3872	3641	3954	3866	3594	3865	3786	3513
Pseudo- <i>R</i> ²	+11	+12	+14	+15	+14	+16	+09	+11	+10	+14	+12	+15
-2 log likelihood	+77**	+75**	+74**	+82**	+80**	+83**	+68**	+66**	+63**	+73**	+70**	+74**

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable											
	Promotion (PSPRO)						Turnover (PSTO)			Termination (TERM)		
	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)	(20)	(21)	(22)	(23)	(24)
Constant (C)	+ .68*	+ .66*	+ .67*	+ .64*	+ .63*	+ .62*	+ .70*	+ .72*	+ .73*	+ .74*	+ .70*	+ .69*
Age (A)	+ .56	+ .55	+ .52	+ .48	+ .46	+ .44	-.82*	-.79*	-.81*	-.21	-.19	-.20
Sex (S)	+ .43*	+ .41*	+ .44*	+ .40*	+ .34	+ .38*	-.51*	-.48*	-.50*	+ .28	+ .26	+ .25
Race (R)	-.19	-.17	-.20	-.16	-.15	-.18	+ .23	+ .21	+ .22	+ .23	+ .22	+ .19
Education (ED)	+ .47*	+ .41	+ .46*	+ .45*	+ .39	+ .43*	+ .29	+ .25	+ .26	-.19	-.17	-.18
Work experience (WE)	+ .38	+ .34	+ .36	+ .29	+ .26	+ .28	-.44*	-.40	-.43*	-.11	-.09	-.12
Organization size (SO)	+ .31	+ .28	+ .30	+ .24	+ .22	+ .26	+ .34	+ .31	+ .33	+ .15	+ .13	+ .17
Work unit size (SU)	+ .46*	+ .43*	+ .45*	+ .42*	+ .37	+ .40*	+ .31	+ .33	+ .35	+ .21	+ .18	+ .19
Grievance filed (GF)	-.62*			-.57*			+ .72**			+ .54**		
Settlement level (LS)		-.56*			-.51*			+ .35			+ .16	
Grievance decision (GD)			-.58**			-.55**			+ .66**			+ .25
Prefiling promotion rate (PFPRO)				-.25	-.23	-.26						
Intercept	+ .64	+ .62	+ .65	+ .58	+ .55	+ .56	+ .47	+ .43	+ .45	+ .43	+ .41	+ .44
Sample size	3897	3782	3715	3804	3699	3645	3508	3402	3384	1684	1546	1611
Pseudo-R ²	+ .15	+ .13	+ .16	+ .17	+ .14	+ .18	+ .10	+ .11	+ .13	+ .12	+ .14	+ .13
-2 log likelihood	+ .74**	+ .72**	+ .76**	+ .81**	+ .79**	+ .82**	+ .68**	+ .65**	+ .70**	+ .66**	+ .63**	+ .65**

* Significant at $p < 0.05$.

** Significant at $p < 0.01$.

related to post-grievance settlement job performance rating (columns 5 and 6 of Table 3).⁷

Turning to other outcome measures, the results from tobit estimation of a version of equation (1) in which post-grievance settlement work attendance (*PSWA*), measured by the percentage of annual work time per employee lost due to absenteeism and lateness, replaces the post-grievance settlement job performance rating are presented in columns 7 to 9 of Table 3. Among the control variables, work unit size is shown to be significantly positively associated with lost work time. For the key variables of interest, the coefficients indicate that grievance filing (*GF*), level of grievance settlement (*LS*), and grievance decision in favor of the employer (*GD*), respectively, are significantly positively associated with lost work time in 1983 and 1993. When the pre-grievance filing percentage of lost work time (*PFWA*) is entered into the equation, however, the coefficients on grievance filing and level of grievance settlement become insignificant, although the coefficient on grievance decision remains significant (columns 10 to 12 of Table 3). In all three equations, the pre-grievance filing percentage of lost work time is shown to be significantly positively associated with post-grievance settlement percentage of lost work time. On balance, grievants are somewhat more likely to be absent from or late for work than nongrievants following grievance filing and settlement.

Concerning employee promotions, the results from logit estimation of a version of equation (1) in which the post-grievance settlement employee promotion rate (*PSPRO*) served as the dependent variable are presented in columns 13 to 15 of Table 3. Among the control variables, they show that males, more educated employees, and employees in large work units are significantly more likely to be promoted than other employees. As to the main independent variables, grievance filing (*GF*), level of grievance settlement (*LS*), and grievance decision in favor of the employer (*GD*), respectively, are significantly negatively associated with the post-grievance settlement promotion rate (in 1983 and 1993). Moreover, these results hold when the pre-grievance filing promotion rate is included as an independent variable in the estimating equations (columns 16 to 18 of Table 3). Observe that the pre-grievance filing promotion rate is not

⁷In another test for selection bias, the independent and control variables in column 4 of Table 3 were regressed on pre-grievance filing job performance rating (*PFPR*) to determine if employees who subsequently file grievances have lower *PFPR* values than employees who do not file grievances. In this test, the coefficient on grievance filing (*GF*) was a nonsignificant +0.22, indicating that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

significantly associated with the post-grievance settlement promotion rate in any of the equations.

The final outcome measure analyzed here is employee turnover. Logit estimates of a version of equation (1) in which the post-grievance settlement annual employee turnover rate (*PSTO*) served as the dependent variable and grievance filing (*GF*), level of grievance settlement (*GS*), and grievance decision in favor of the employer (*GD*) served as the main independent variables are presented in columns 19 to 21, respectively, of Table 3. Results for the control variables indicate that older male and more experienced employees are significantly less likely to turn over than other employees. For the main independent variables, the coefficients on two of these variables, *GF* and *GD*, are significantly positively related to the post-grievance settlement turnover rate. This implies that employees who file grievances and who lose grievance decisions experience a "deteriorated state" in terms of their subsequent employment relationships, which leads to higher turnover rates than for employees who do not file grievances and employees who win grievance decisions, respectively.

To examine this matter further, the turnover data were decomposed into voluntary and involuntary categories, and the latter was further decomposed into layoffs and terminations. Results from logistic regression analyses (not shown here) in which post-grievance settlement annual voluntary and involuntary employee turnover rates served, respectively, as the dependent variables indicate that all three of the grievance activity measures (*GF*, *LS*, and *GD*) are significantly positively associated with voluntary but not involuntary employee turnover. Separate regression analyses were then performed in which post-grievance settlement annual layoff and termination rates served as the dependent variables.

The results from these logistic regression estimates indicate that none of the grievance activity variables is significantly associated with the post-grievance settlement layoff rate.⁸ However, and as shown in column 22 of Table 4, one of these variables, grievance filing (*GF*), is significantly positively associated with the post-grievance settlement termination rate. Thus compared with employee nonfilers, employees who are involved in grievance activity apparently experience deterioration in their employment relationships, resulting in both higher voluntary turnover

⁸The nonsignificant coefficients on the grievance activity variables in the layoff equation were +0.19 for grievance filing (*GF*), +0.11 for level of settlement (*LS*), and +0.23 for grievance decision (*GD*). The control variable organization size (*OS*) was significantly negatively related to layoffs (e.g., -0.45, $p < 0.05$, in the layoff equation that included *GF*), and the control variable work unit size (*SU*) was significantly positively related to layoffs (e.g., +0.33, $p < 0.05$, in the layoff equation that included *GF*).

(i.e., quits) and higher involuntary turnover, specifically in the form of termination.

Post-Grievance Settlement Outcomes: Supervisor Analysis

What, if any, are the behavioral consequences for supervisors who are directly involved in grievance activity? On the one hand, some research on the job performance and promotion of supervisors in relation to supervisory exercise of employee discipline implies that supervisors will benefit from direct involvement in grievance activity (O'Reilly and Weitz, 1980). On the other hand, some other research suggests that supervisors who are directly involved in grievance activity may suffer from such involvement, notably in the forms of restricted upward mobility within their organizations and increased involuntary separation from their organizations (Lewin and Peterson, 1988; Lewin, 1987, 1992, 1997, 1999).

To examine this issue more fully, we assembled 1983 and 1993 job performance, promotion, work attendance, and turnover data for samples of supervisory personnel in the four organizations who were and were not directly involved in grievance activity in 1982 and 1992. By *direct involvement*, we mean that a supervisor was the first-line "manager" of an employee who filed a written grievance or had a grievance settled in 1982 or 1992—and often the supervisor's action was the subject of the grievance. Unfortunately, we were not able to obtain longitudinal data for 1981-1983 and 1991-1993 for supervisors in the way that we were able to obtain these data for employees. Nevertheless, the more limited data for supervisors that were obtained are presented in Table 4 for each of the four organizations.

These data indicate that supervisors against whom grievances were filed or settled in 1982 and 1992 had higher turnover rates, better work attendance rates, and lower job performance ratings and promotion rates in the year(s) following grievance settlement (1983 and 1993) than supervisors against whom grievances were not filed (in 1982 and 1992). In the case of job performance ratings, these differences were statistically significant in three of the four organizations, with the local school district (organization D) being the exception in 1983 and 1993. With respect to work attendance rates, the differences between the two groups of supervisors were significant only in the local school district (organization D) both in 1983 and in 1993. Concerning promotion rates, the differences between the two groups of supervisors were statistically significant in three of the four organizations in 1983 and 1993, with the steel manufacturing firm (organization A) being the exception in both years.

TABLE 4
PERSONNEL MEASURES, 1983 AND 1993, FOR SUPERVISORS OF GRIEVANCE FILERS
(SGF) AND NONFILERS (SGNF) IN 1982 AND 1992 IN FOUR ORGANIZATIONS

Year and Personnel Measure	Organization A, Steel Mg. Firm		Organization B, Retail Dept. Store		Organization C, Nonprofit Hospital		Organization D, Local School District	
	SGF	SGNF	SGF	SGNF	SGF	SGNF	SGF	SGNF
1983								
Performance rating	3.6*	4.1*	3.3*	3.9*	3.5*	4.0*	3.4	3.8
Work attendance	4.4	4.7	5.2	5.5	5.9	6.1	5.6*	6.2*
Promotion rate	1.7	2.0	2.2**	2.9**	3.1*	3.6*	2.4*	2.9*
Turnover rate	3.3**	2.0**	4.1*	3.1*	5.2**	3.9**	3.4*	2.7*
Voluntary	1.4**	0.7**	1.8	1.4	1.6	1.3	1.6	1.2
Involuntary	1.9**	1.3**	2.3*	1.8*	3.6**	2.6**	1.8	1.5
N	212	203	93	86	117	123	109	113
1993								
Performance rating	3.5*	4.0*	3.2*	3.9*	3.3*	3.9*	3.5	3.8
Work attendance	4.2	4.5	5.0	5.2	5.5	5.8	5.4*	5.9*
Promotion rate	1.4	1.6	2.0*	2.5*	2.6	2.9	2.5*	3.0*
Turnover rate	3.0**	2.0**	3.7*	3.0*	4.8**	3.9**	3.2*	2.6*
Voluntary	1.0*	0.5*	1.3	1.1	1.3	1.0	1.1	1.0
Involuntary	2.0*	1.5*	2.4*	1.9*	3.5**	2.9**	2.1*	1.6*
N	198	192	89	81	112	118	103	107

NOTE: Performance rating is mean rating with 1 = low, 5 = high; work attendance rate is percentage of days absent and late; promotion rate is percentage promoted to higher step, grade, or position from prior year; voluntary turnover rate is percentage quit; involuntary turnover rate is percentage laid off and terminated for cause.

* Differences between means in columns SGF and SGNF significant at $p < 0.05$.

** Differences between means in columns SGF and SGNF significant at $p < 0.01$.

With regard to supervisor turnover, when considered on an aggregate basis, the differences in 1983 and 1993 turnover rates between supervisors who were and were not directly involved in grievance activity were statistically significant in all four organizations. When turnover was decomposed into voluntary and involuntary types, however, chi-square tests show that in three of the four organizations (all but organization D, the local school district) in 1983 and in all four organizations in 1993, post-grievance settlement involuntary turnover rates were significantly higher among supervisors against whom grievances had been filed than among supervisors against whom grievances had not been filed. The voluntary turnover rate of supervisors in the post-grievance settlement years (1983 and 1993) was significantly greater for supervisors of grievance filers than for supervisors of nonfilers only in organization A, the steel manufacturing firm.

Replicating the procedures that were used to analyze the post-grievance settlement outcome differences between employee grievance filers and nonfilers, we proceeded to match personnel file data to grievance records for samples of supervisors who were and were not directly

involved in grievance activity in the four organizations (in 1982 and 1992). Also as before, the data were pooled across the four organizations and two time periods, the four post-grievance settlement outcome measures served as dependent variables in separate regression equations, supervisor grievance procedure involvement (*GPI*) served as the main independent variable, and selected personal (demographic) and organizational characteristics served as control variables. The results from tobit estimates of the performance (*PSPR*) and work attendance (*PSWA*) equations and logit estimates of the promotion (*PSPRO*) and turnover (*PSTO*) equations are presented in columns 1 to 4 of Table 5.

The coefficients on the control variables show that age is significantly positively associated with promotion rates and significantly negatively associated with turnover rates among supervisory personnel in the four organizations; male supervisors are significantly more likely to be promoted than female supervisors but also to have significantly higher turnover rates than female supervisors, education is significantly positively associated with promotion rates among supervisors, and work unit size is significantly positively associated with supervisor job performance

TABLE 5
REGRESSION ESTIMATES OF SUPERVISOR POST-GRIEVANCE SETTLEMENT
OUTCOMES, 1983 AND 1993
(Tobit Regression Coefficients for *PSPR* and *PSWA*; Logit Regression
Coefficients for *PSPRO*, *PSTO*, *VT*, *IVT*, *LAY*, and *TERM*)

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable							
	Job Performance (<i>PSPR</i>) (1)	Work Attendance (<i>PSWA</i>) (2)	Promotion (<i>PSPRO</i>) (3)	All Turnover (<i>PSTO</i>) (4)	Voluntary Turnover (<i>VT</i>) (5)	Involuntary Turnover (<i>IVT</i>) (6)	Layoff (<i>LAY</i>) (7)	Termination (<i>TERM</i>) (8)
Constant (<i>C</i>)	+0.59*	+0.68*	+0.65*	+0.70*	+0.68*	+0.71*	+0.66*	+0.71*
Age (<i>A</i>)	+0.35	-0.31	-0.52*	-0.49*	-0.46*	-0.29	-0.37	-0.17
Sex (<i>S</i>)	+0.19	+0.25	+0.48*	-0.52*	+0.44*	+0.24	-0.20	+0.25
Race (<i>R</i>)	-0.23	-0.18	-0.21	-0.26	-0.22	-0.17	+0.28	+0.16
Education (<i>ED</i>)	+0.37	+0.26	+0.58*	+0.24	+0.19	-0.11	-0.17	-0.19
Work experience (<i>WE</i>)	+0.21	+0.28	+0.31	+0.26	+0.23	+0.24	-0.19	+0.09
Organization size (<i>SO</i>)	+0.09	-0.16	+0.23	+0.29	+0.18	+0.19	+0.40*	+0.15
Work unit size (<i>SU</i>)	+0.43*	-0.22	+0.45*	+0.33	+0.22	+0.28	+0.25	+0.18
Grievance procedure involvement (<i>GPI</i>)	-0.73**	-0.34	-0.84**	+0.87**	+0.31	+0.70**	+0.32	+0.74**
Intercept	+0.51	+0.49	+0.52	+0.55	+0.53	+0.56	+0.55	+0.58
Sample size	1327	1289	1323	1295	1294	1247	1269	1251
Pseudo- <i>R</i> ²	+0.13	+0.11	+0.14	+0.15	+0.14	+0.12	+0.11	+0.15
-2 log likelihood	+0.66**	+0.64**	+0.67**	+0.69**	+0.67**	+0.64**	+0.68**	+0.70**

* Significant at $p < 0.05$.

** Significant at $p < 0.01$.

ratings and promotion rates. The most consistent finding reported in Table 5, however, is for the grievance involvement variable (*GPI*). The coefficients on this variable show that supervisors who were directly involved in grievance activity (in 1982 and 1992) had significantly lower job performance ratings and promotion rates and significantly higher turnover rates in 1983 and 1993 than supervisors who were not directly involved in grievance activity.

To examine more deeply the relationship between supervisor involvement in grievance activity and post-grievance settlement supervisory turnover, separate regression equations were estimated for voluntary and involuntary turnover among the supervisors in the four organizations and two time periods. The findings from these logistic regressions are presented in columns 5 and 6 of Table 5.

The coefficients indicate that supervisors who were directly involved in grievance activity in 1982 and 1992 were significantly more likely to have been separated from their organizations in the 1-year post-grievance settlement period (1983 and 1993) than supervisors who were not directly involved in grievance activity. Involuntary turnover was further decomposed into the categories of layoff and termination; columns 7 and 8 of Table 5 present the results of regression analyses in which these two categories of involuntary turnover served, respectively, as dependent variables. Observe that grievance procedure involvement (*GPI*) is significantly positively associated with the termination rate but not with the layoff rate among supervisors in the four organizations. Taken as a whole, these findings suggest that employers exercise retribution against supervisors who have had grievances filed against them by unionized employees.

This conclusion is further supported by the results (not presented here) of analyses of the level of grievance settlement and the winning party in grievance decisions for a small sample of supervisory personnel ($n = 53$) in the four organizations who were directly involved in grievance cases (in 1982 and 1992). These analyses showed that involuntary turnover as a whole and termination in particular were significantly higher among supervisors whose direct subordinates won their grievance cases and/or whose cases were settled at the top steps of the grievance procedure than among supervisors whose direct subordinates lost their grievances and/or whose cases were settled at the lower steps of the grievance procedure.

Conclusions and Interpretation

This study analyzed post-grievance settlement outcomes for unionized employees and their direct supervisors in four organizations during

1981–1983 and 1991–1993. The key finding from the study is that grievance filers and their supervisors had significantly lower job performance ratings and promotion rates and significantly higher turnover rates in the immediate post-grievance settlement period than employees who did not file grievances and their supervisors, respectively. Decomposition analysis of the data showed that both voluntary and involuntary post-grievance settlement turnover was higher among grievance filers than nonfilers, whereas the higher post-grievance settlement turnover among supervisors of grievance filers than among supervisors of nonfilers was primarily involuntary in nature. In particular, supervisors of grievance filers were significantly more likely to be terminated from their jobs than supervisors of nonfilers.

The analysis also showed that unionized employees who took their grievances to the higher steps of the grievance procedure and especially employees who won their grievance cases were significantly more likely to leave their employers in the year following grievance settlement than employees whose cases were settled at the lower steps of the grievance procedure and employees who lost their grievance cases, respectively. Similar findings emerged from the analysis of post-grievance settlement turnover among supervisors of grievance filers and nonfilers, although once again the higher post-grievance settlement turnover among the former group of supervisors primarily took the form of involuntary termination.

On the whole, the results of this study appear to provide stronger support for organizational punishment–industrial discipline theory (Sheppard et al., 1992; Arvey and Jones, 1985; O'Reilly and Weitz, 1980) than for either industrial relations–due process theory (Lewin and Peterson, 1988; Peach and Livernash, 1974) or exit-voice theory (Hirschman, 1970; Freeman and Medoff, 1984) of the employment relationship. The empirical findings for both employees and supervisors indicate that those who are directly involved in grievance activity are subject to deterioration of their employment relationships and to retribution by their employers.

For grievants, such deterioration takes the form of higher voluntary turnover rates than nongrievants in the immediate post-grievance settlement period. For grievants and the supervisors of grievants, such retribution takes the form of lower job performance ratings and lower promotion rates than for nongrievants and the supervisors of nongrievants, respectively, in the immediate post-grievance settlement period. In addition, for supervisors of grievants such retribution also takes the form of higher involuntary turnover (i.e., termination) rates than for the supervisors of nongrievants in the immediate post-grievance settlement period. In sum, grievants and their supervisors have considerably less viable employment

relationships than nongrievants and their supervisors after grievances have been filed and settled. This conclusion is consistent with findings from other research showing that "whistle blowers" in U.S. enterprises experience retribution after they blow the whistle (Ewing, 1989), that British workers who are reinstated in their jobs under that nation's unfair dismissal statute subsequently fare poorly in their organizations (Dickens et al., 1984), and that reinstated Canadian and Italian workers report high levels of postreinstatement unfair treatment and have significantly higher turnover rates than other employees (Barnacle, 1991; Roccella, 1989). It is also consistent with research showing that substantial proportions of employees who experience unjust treatment at work nevertheless choose to remain silent due to fear of employer retribution for filing grievances (Boroff and Lewin, 1997; Lewin and Boroff, 1996).

An alternative explanation of this study's findings is that grievance filers and their direct supervisors are less competent performers than nongrievants and their direct supervisors but that this is not systematically discerned until after grievances are filed and settled (Olson-Buchanan, 1997). This reasoning closely parallels the theory that unions "shock" management into improving organizational performance (Rees, 1977). That is, grievance filing and resolution spur employers to assess more carefully and accurately the performance of employees and supervisors; once this is done, the assessments reveal systematically lower job performance among grievants and their supervisors than among nongrievants and their supervisors. Such an explanation also takes account of potential selection problems in a study of this type in that employees who file grievances (and their supervisors) are unlikely to represent random samples of all employees (and their supervisors).

There is reason to doubt this alternative explanation, however. Comparisons of employee grievance filers and nonfilers in the four organizations included in this study found no significant differences in job performance ratings between these two groups in the year(s) prior to and during grievance filing/settlement. It is possible that the absence of relatively low pre-grievance filing performance ratings for employees who subsequently file grievances reflects the effects of "perverse incentives" whereby supervisors rate their subordinates highly (rather than at the mean of the rating scale) and are reluctant to report instances of misconduct until they become severe in order to avoid making trouble for themselves (Lewin and Mitchell, 1995). If so, the relatively low post-grievance settlement performance ratings for grievants reflect their "true performance" rather than employer retaliation for filing grievances. Alternatively, it may be argued that some employees come to have differences with management

over the way in which an organization should be run. They register their disagreement and attempt to resolve these differences by filing grievances, but management policies remain unchanged (even if grievants win their cases), and the job performance of these grievants subsequently declines.⁹ This reasoning is consistent with the longitudinal pattern of nonsignificant followed by significant (post-grievance settlement) differences in job performance ratings between grievance filers and nonfilers reported here and with empirical research by Klaas and DeNisi (1989) and Klaas et al. (1991).

However, we also found significant differences in promotion rates between grievance filers and nonfilers in the year(s) prior to grievance filing/settlement, and it was grievance filers who had the higher rates. Similarly, grievance filers had higher work attendance rates than nonfilers in the year(s) prior to and during grievance filing/settlement. Going further, regression analyses showed that pre-grievance filing/settlement job performance ratings and promotion rates for employees were not significantly associated with post-grievance settlement job performance ratings and promotion rates, respectively. And grievance filing remained significantly negatively associated with post-grievance settlement job performance ratings and promotion rates when account was taken of pre-grievance filing/settlement job performance ratings and promotion rates.

While we were not able to conduct similar analyses for supervisors of employee grievance filers and nonfilers, perusal of personnel records for small samples of supervisors as well as interview data with managers in each of the four organizations suggested small or no differences in pre-grievance filing/settlement job performance ratings and promotion rates between supervisors of grievance filers and supervisors of nonfilers—in contrast to the significant differences in post-grievance settlement job performance ratings and promotion rates between these two groups of supervisors. On balance, therefore, and recognizing the possibility of an alternative explanation, we nevertheless judge evidence from this study to support an employer redistribution explanation of, and thus an organizational punishment-industrial discipline perspective on, grievance procedure outcomes.¹⁰

⁹ We acknowledge an anonymous referee who suggested this argument in reviewing an earlier version of this paper.

¹⁰ This conclusion also suggests that, over time, grievance filing in organizations will decline due to employee fear of employer redistribution for filing grievances. For evidence that employees (and supervisors) do in fact "learn" from prior grievance experience, see Knight (1986).

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