Article

Verification of ingroup morality promotes willingness to participate in collective action for immigrants' rights

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Abstract

Three experiments tested whether verification of ingroup morality increases engagement in collective action in favor of immigrants' rights. To that end, participants were exposed to (a) verifying, (b) negatively discrepant, (c) enhancing, or (d) no feedback about the morality of their group in general (Studies 1–2) or specifically in matters of corruption (Study 3). Results show that those who received verifying feedback of their group's morality were more willing to engage in collective action than those who received negative or no feedback. These effects seemed to be mediated by increased anger over immigrants' disadvantage and positive attitudes towards them. Critically, enhancing feedback exerted similar effects as verifying feedback, although the latter yielded more stable and consistent results across the studies. These results suggest that appeals to collective ingroup morality can be effective to promote immigrants' rights, especially when members of the host society feel that others consider them as moral as they perceive themselves.

Promoting social justice requires members of advantaged groups to become truly involved, beyond symbolic gestures, in reducing inequality (Dixon et al., 2017). Previous research suggests that moral concerns may be a mobilization factor (e.g., van Zomeren et al., 2012; van Zomeren et al., 2011), even if it is unclear whether it is more effective to question the morality of the advantaged group so that its members display moral

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compensatory responses, or to recognize their morality so that they feel compelled to act accordingly. Here, we compared the effectiveness of these two strategies. Specifically, we tested whether verifying the perceived morality of an advantaged group can lead its members to engage in collective action in favor of a disadvantaged group (i.e., immigrants) to a greater extent than moral reproach. Additionally, we explored the role of positive attitudes towards immigrants and anger over their predicament in driving such effects.

The Role of Morality in Intergroup Orientations

Social perception is guided primarily by two dimensions, warmth and competence (Fiske et al., 2002). More recently, it has been shown that warmth encompasses two qualitatively different components, sociability and morality (Leach et al., 2007). Sociability is predominantly related to cooperation and forming connections with others, whereas morality refers to the correctness of social targets (Brambilla et al., 2011). Several studies suggest that morality is more influential than sociability and competence in predicting ingroup (Leach et al., 2007) and outgroup impressions (Brambilla et al., 2012), because moral contents are key to define whether others represent an opportunity or a threat (Brambilla, Sacchi, et al., 2013). According to our evaluation of outgroup morality, we regulate our intergroup behavior exhibiting more prosocial or hostile behavioral tendencies (Brambilla, Hewstone, & Colucci, 2013; Cuadrado et al., 2020; López-Rodríguez & Zagefka, 2015).

Interestingly, intergroup orientations seem to be determined not only by the morality ascribed to outgroup members, but also by the beliefs about one's own personal or collective morality. Since morality is a central part of the self-concept and ingroup image (Leach et al., 2007), people are very sensitive to moral threats and reproach, especially among advantaged groups. While members of disadvantaged groups seek to restore their agency, members of advantaged groups are more motivated to restore their moral image

(Shnabel & Nadler, 2015). Several studies reveal that threats to the moral status of the ingroup by the outgroup often generate defensive responses rather than desire for improvement (Minson & Monin, 2012; Monin, 2007). For instance, learning that a neighboring country is more moral than one's own country evokes a defensive emotional focus that hinders individuals' strivings to improve in the moral domain (Täuber & van Zomeren, 2013). Also, feelings of being unfairly accused of harboring racial or ethnic biases lead members of advantaged groups to legitimize the social hierarchy and reduce their intentions to lessen inequality (Saguy et al., 2013).

Studies reviewed so far suggest that using moral threats to make members of the dominant group modify their intergroup behavior is counterproductive. Contrarily, acknowledging the moral status of the ingroup might promote more prosocial intergroup orientations. For instance, remembering a moral (vs. immoral) action of the ingroup increases their willingness to help a disadvantaged group (van Leeuwen et al., 2013). Exposure to narratives about moral exemplars of a perpetrator group (who acted morally in opposition to the aggression displayed by the majority of such perpetrator group) increases openness to engage in contact among historical adversaries (Witkowska et al., 2019). Furthermore, reassuring ingroup's warmth (including sociability and morality) improves outgroup attitudes and fosters willingness to change the status quo toward equality among members of advantaged groups (Shnabel et al., 2013).

Self-Evaluation and Compensatory Activity

Defensive reactions elicited by moral threats as well as improvement of intergroup orientations when ingroup moral actions or exemplars are presented could be included within a general framework of identity-related concerns. To the extent that morality is the most important factor in shaping group-based self-views (Leach et al., 2007), moral threats can be interpreted as an obstacle to fulfill identity needs, whereas reminders of

ingroup moral actions or members may satisfy those needs. Self-enhancement (Jones, 1973) and self-verification theories (Swann, 1983) are the two main approaches to identity evaluation.

People tend to display a remarkable preference for positive evaluations (Leary, 2007) and strive to increase their feelings of personal worth (Epstein, 1973; Sedikides et al., 2007). The self-enhancement motive transcends the interpersonal level, as suggested by social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). People are motivated to achieve and maintain a satisfactory concept of their group through positive social identity (Tajfel, 1978). To that end, they strive to increase the social status of their group relative to others by making favorable comparisons with respect to the outgroup. This desire for collective image enhancement is frustrated when the value of one's own group is threatened, and people experience negative feelings and exhibit different reactions depending on the dimension (e.g., morality or competence) at stake (Branscombe et al., 1999). For instance, exposure to weakly moral ingroup members elicits image threat and self-conscious emotions such as embarrassment (Brambilla, Sacchi, et al., 2013) that, in turn, could motivate avoidance rather than repair tendencies (Lickel et al., 2004).

Apart from the enhancement motive, several studies provide independent support for self-verifying motives, which is our focus of interest. Self-verification theory (e.g., Swann, 1983, 2012) assumes that people rely on their self-views to guide behavior and make predictions about their world. Therefore, people work to confirm their self-views regarding their personal (Swann, 1983), collective (shared qualities between the person and the group; Chen et al., 2004), and group identities (group qualities that do not necessarily characterize the individual; Gómez et al., 2009).

Self-verification and self-enhancement approaches predict that people who see themselves or their group positively would seek favorable evaluations. However, their predictions diverge when self-views are negative. In those circumstances, verification motives would lead to a preference for unfavorable, accurate evaluations (Swann, 2012). Although it could be perceived as counterintuitive, people may want others to confirm their negative image because identity verification satisfies their needs for control, cognition, and belonging. In contrast, enhancement would be more focused on the need for self-esteem. Having the self-concept verified induces a sense of coherence and control that is psychologically comforting and suggests that we are accepted by others despite our faults, which in turn leads us to trust them and facilitates enduring relationships (Swann & Buhrmester, 2012). Previous research suggests that people are willing to verify their negative and positive identities. For instance, Gómez et al. (2009) showed that participants prefer to interact with evaluators that verify the negative qualities of their group rather than with evaluators who enhance them. Gómez et al. (2013) also found that feeling that the positive characteristics of the ingroup were verified by immigrants improved attitudes towards them.

Despite verification efforts, some situations can challenge one's self or group knowledge globally or in a specific domain. In those cases, people usually enact compensatory activities to restore predictability and their sense of control (Stets & Burke, 2005). Individuals can counteract a threat to a specific self-view (e.g., dominance) by compensating in that same domain or within unrelated domains. For instance, participants who receive feedback that disconfirms their perceived insightfulness and social skills increase their search for self-verifying feedback within athletic and artistic realms (Swann et al., 1992). The cross-domain nature of this compensatory mechanism helps preserve one's positive self-views because threats to any aspect of the self-concept can be suppressed by validating other beliefs. Unfortunately, compensatory reactions occasionally reaffirm negative beliefs, such as preexisting bias against outgroup members who are not necessarily the source of the discrepant evaluations. For instance, Fein and Spencer (1997) found that participants who were negatively evaluated on an intelligence test exhibited a particular inclination to denigrate members of a stereotyped group. Consistently, Vázquez et al. (2018)

found that overly positive (vs. verifying) evaluations of ingroup characteristics from outgroup members (immigrants) amplified prejudice against them.

In sum, previous research suggests that verification motives remarkably influence interpersonal and intergroup orientations (Gómez et al., 2013). People display more positive attitudes toward others when their self- or group views are confirmed, even if they are negative (Gómez et al., 2013; Gómez et al., 2009). However, they exhibit compensatory reactions, not always prosocial, when their identity is challenged (Vázquez et al., 2018). This pattern is consistent with previous findings indicating that moral threats may deteriorate intergroup orientations, whereas moral acknowledgement may improve them. Yet, to gather empirical evidence for the role of verification, it should be tested experimentally how challenge or confirmation of ingroup morality affect intergroup relations. In the current research, we aim to address this issue. Importantly, we go beyond intergroup evaluation to explore whether verification motives can contribute to social justice by engaging individuals in reducing group-based inequality. In particular, we examined how concerns about the moral image of an advantaged ingroup affect collective action on behalf of immigrants' rights. We propose that feeling understood by immigrants could facilitate the recognition of their disadvantage and consequently increase the desire to end it. Indeed, previous research indicates that removing identity-related threats promotes willingness to act collectively for intergroup equality among advantaged group members (Shnabel et al., 2013). Accordingly, we expected that verifying feedback about ingroup morality will be more useful to promote collective action for immigrants' rights than discrediting the ingroup on moral grounds.

Overview

To test these hypotheses, we conducted three experiments with Spaniards (the relatively advantaged group) to check whether feedback about their morality influences their engagement in

collective action on behalf of immigrants (the disadvantaged group), as well as the potentially related variables of attitudes towards immigrants and anger over their predicament. Two sources of evaluation were examined: a neutral group of experts and the outgroup itself. We predicted that participants who received verifying feedback about their ingroup's morality from either source would feel more anger over the predicament of immigrants, show more positive attitudes towards them, and engage in more collective action than those receiving discrepant feedback.

Additionally, based on previous findings, we tested the potential mediating role of positive attitudes towards the outgroup and anger over its predicament. Verifying feedback about ingroup identity has been found to improve intergroup attitudes as compared to discrepant feedback (Vázquez et al., 2018). It remains untested so far whether it also increases anger over the outgroup's predicament. Previous research shows that positive attitudes towards the disadvantaged group (Reimer et al., 2017) and anger over inequality (van Zomeren et al., 2011), among other factors, motivate members of advantaged groups to engage in collective action to challenge the status quo. We conjecture that, as compared to discrepant feedback, verifying feedback will increase positive attitudes towards immigrants and anger over their predicament, which in turn will lead individuals to engage more in collective action for immigrants' rights.

Study 1: Verification by Experts

Study 1 was designed to test how receiving verifying feedback about ingroup morality influences positive attitudes towards immigrants, anger over their predicament, and engagement in collective action. The source of feedback was a fictitious group of international experts who provided a moral feedback. Third parties can play an important role in intergroup conflicts by questioning the actions of advantaged groups or by acting as mediators. Previous research suggests that threats to the self-system can elicit compensatory reactions that affect individuals or groups

who are not the source of the evaluation (Vázquez et al., 2018). Thus, we anticipate that being morally questioned by experts will have consequences for immigration-related behavior.

We exposed participants to verifying (confirming participant's perception of ingroup morality), derogating (underestimating ingroup morality), or enhancing feedback (overestimating ingroup morality). Based on previous research indicating that inaccurate feedback about ingroup identity increases prejudice as compared to accurate feedback (Vázquez et al., 2018), we expected that verifying the morality of the ingroup would improve intergroup orientations as compared to moral reproach. Also considering the extensive evidence on enhancement motives (e.g., Fein & Spencer, 1997), we conjectured that providing enhancing feedback might also improve intergroup orientations as compared to negative feedback.

Method

Participants. Since there were not previous data on the effect of identity verification on collective action, we could not determine the sample size of Studies 1–2. We used a snowball technique such that students from a distance learning university asked their acquaintances to collaborate in an online study. We recruited 464 Spaniards (58.8% women; M_{age} = 34.44, SD = 13.43) during the second academic semester. Assuming a significance level of .05 and 80% power, this sample size would detect an effect of f = .15.

Procedure. The research was presented as a study about morality and intergroup relations. Participants first completed a measure of perceived moral treatment by the ingroup (Spaniards) towards foreigners with five items (e.g., "Spaniards act fairly with people from other countries"; α = .92), which was necessary for the subsequent manipulation to be credible. Then, they were informed that we would compare their answers with the conclusions reached by a group of international experts who had studied the importance of morality in the definition of national identities

and had developed a morality index for different countries. Participants in the verification condition were told that the average score of their answers only deviated by 0.10 from the experts' index and that this difference was not significant. That is, experts perceived Spaniards as moral as the participant him/herself did. Participants in the derogation condition were told that the average score of their answers deviated 2 points above the experts' index and that this difference was extremely significant. That is, experts perceived Spaniards as less moral than the participant him/herself did. Participants in the enhancement condition were told that the average score of their answers deviated 2 points below the experts' index and that this difference was very significant. That is, experts perceived Spaniards as more moral than the participant him/herself did. As a manipulation check, we measured participants' feeling of being understood with a three-item scale (Vázquez et al., 2018; e.g., "Experts understand the Spaniards"; 0 = *strongly disagree*, 6 = *strongly agree*; α = .84). An ANOVA yielded a significant effect of condition, $F(2, 461)$ = 32.08, p < .001, η^2_p = .12. Bonferroni comparisons showed that participants in the verification and enhancement conditions felt more understood than those in the derogation condition, ps < .001. No differences emerged between the verification and enhancement conditions (p = 1.00).

Then, participants proceeded to the rest of the questionnaire. All measures ranged from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*) unless otherwise specified.

Anger over the outgroup's predicament was assessed with three items (e.g., "When I think about the problems that immigrants face in Spain, I feel furious"; α = .97).

Attitudes towards immigrants and Spaniards were measured by means of four feeling thermometers (Haddock et al., 1993) for each group (e.g., *unfavorable–favorable*; α = .93 and .92, respectively).

Collective action was evaluated with a seven-item scale adapted from Duncan (1999). Participants indicated to what extent they were willing to engage in different actions, such as

"Actively participate in an organization that defends the rights of immigrants" (α = .94).

Credibility of evaluators (experts) was assessed with five items such as "competent" taken from Gómez et al. (2009; α = .95).

In all studies, participants were debriefed and thanked after completing the questionnaire.

Results

Feelings of being understood, attitudes towards immigrants, anger over their predicament, collective action, and credibility of evaluators were positively and significantly interrelated (see supplemental material).

Moral treatment. A one-way ANOVA on perceived moral treatment indicated that the effect of feedback was not significant (p = .318). Therefore, we can discard the existence of prior differences between conditions. The interaction between moral treatment and feedback was not significant for any outcome variable, except for perceived competence of the evaluators, such that participants in the enhancement condition considered the evaluators as more credible than those in the control condition only if they perceived high moral treatment (see supplemental material).

Dependent variables. We conducted a multivariate analysis on the dependent variables that were interrelated: attitudes towards immigrants, anger over their predicament, collective action, and credibility of the evaluators. Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations per condition. The multivariate effect of condition was significant, Wilks's λ = .93, $F(8, 916)$ = 4.49, p < .001, η^2_p = .04.

Anger over the outgroup's predicament. The univariate analysis yielded a significant effect of feedback, $F(2, 461)$ = 4.29, p = .014, η^2_p = .02. Participants in the verification condition felt more anger over the predicament of immigrants than those in the derogation condition (p = .012). The enhancement condition did not differ from the verification and derogation conditions (ps > .194).

Attitudes towards immigrants. The univariate analysis yielded a significant effect of feedback, $F(2, 461)$ = 10.30, p < .001, η^2_p = .04. Participants in the verification and enhancement conditions expressed more positive attitudes than those in the derogation condition (ps < .007). The verification and enhancement conditions did not differ from each other (p = .482).

Collective action. The univariate analysis yielded a significant effect of feedback, $F(2, 461)$ = 6.90, p = .001, η^2_p = .03. Participants in the verification and enhancement conditions were more willing to engage in collective action than those in the derogation condition (ps < .010). The verification and enhancement conditions did not differ from each other (p = 1.000).

Evaluators. The univariate analysis on credibility of the evaluators yielded a significant effect of feedback, $F(2, 461)$ = 5.48, p = .004, η^2_p = .02. Participants in the verification condition perceived more credibility than those in the derogation condition (p = .004), and marginally more credibility than those in the enhancement condition (p = .069). The enhancement and derogation conditions did not differ from each other (p = 1.000).

Attitudes towards ingroup members. An ANOVA on attitudes towards Spaniards yielded a significant effect of feedback, $F(2, 461)$ = 4.76, p = .009, η^2_p = .02. Participants in the enhancement condition reported more positive attitudes than those in the derogation (p = .012) and verification (p = .053) conditions. The verification and derogation conditions did not differ from each other (p = 1.000).

Mediation. To assess whether the effect of feedback on collective action was mediated by attitudes towards immigrants and anger over their predicament, we used Model 4 of the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018). Since both the verification and enhancement conditions increased engagement in collective action as compared to the derogation condition, we used this latter condition as the comparison group. Dummy 1

Table 1. Means and deviations per condition: Studies 1–3.

Variable	Condition	Study 1		Study 2		Study 3	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Anger over the outgroup's predicament	Verification	3.61_a	1.65	3.79_a	1.60	4.80_a	1.10
	Derogation	3.06_b	1.79	3.29_b	1.65	4.27_b	1.45
	Enhancement	3.41_a	1.58			4.62_b	1.37
	Control			3.16_b	1.59	4.37_b	1.52
Attitudes immigrants	Verification	65.29_a	17.77	68.57_a	17.13	68.95_{ab}	16.06
	Derogation	58.67_b	21.71	61.66_b	19.71	63.57_b	17.82
	Enhancement	68.30_a	17.23			70.17_a	17.22
	Control			62.39_b	17.87	64.21_b	16.45
Attitudes ingroup	Verification	65.76_b	17.77	68.40_a	17.50	67.79_a	16.70
	Derogation	64.73_b	17.66	65.09_a	18.19	65.23_a	16.98
	Enhancement	70.36_a	15.92			70.22_a	16.56
	Control			66.61_a	16.54	68.53_a	14.68
Collective action	Verification	3.38_a	1.56	3.46_a	1.42	3.71_a	1.56
	Derogation	2.82_b	1.80	3.01_b	1.67	2.98_b	1.58
	Enhancement	3.47_a	1.56			3.41_{ab}	1.54
	Control			2.92_b	1.62	3.04_b	1.70
Evaluators	Verification	4.96_a	1.11	5.02_a	1.07		
	Derogation	4.54_b	1.29	4.50_b	1.33		
	Enhancement	4.66_{ab}	1.03				
	Control			4.59_b	1.07		
Understanding	Verification	4.31_a	0.96	4.07_a	1.06		
	Derogation	3.46_b	1.15	3.58_b	1.18		
	Enhancement	4.29_a	1.05				
	Control			3.82_b	1.18		
Verification needs	Verification					3.56_a	1.27
	Derogation					2.90_b	1.14
	Enhancement					2.72_b	1.26
Enhancement needs	Verification					2.21_b	1.43
	Derogation					1.91_b	1.20
	Enhancement					2.90_a	1.31

Note. Different subscripts indicate significant differences between conditions based on Bonferroni comparisons. [a]Highest mean.

compared the verification and derogation conditions, whereas Dummy 2 compared the enhancement and derogation conditions. Verification apparently increased engagement in collective action as compared to derogation of ingroup morality via anger over the predicament of immigrants and positive attitudes towards them (see Figure 1). However, enhancement promoted engagement in collective action as compared to derogation via positive attitudes only. We also tested Model 8 of the PROCESS macro to check whether moral treatment (or

perceived ingroup morality in Studies 2–3) moderated the mediation. None of the indexes of moderated mediation were significant (see supplemental material).

Discussion

As expected, verification of ingroup morality increased positive attitudes towards immigrants, anger over their predicament, and engagement in collective action for their rights as compared to

Figure 1. Indirect effects of the manipulation on willingness to participate in collective action via anger over the outgroup's predicament and attitudes towards them: Study 1.
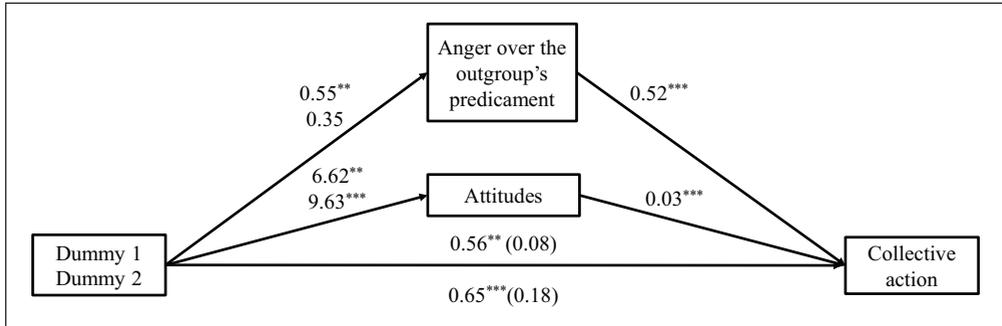
Note. Statistics in the upper row correspond to Dummy 1, whereas statistics in the lower row correspond to Dummy 2. Bonferroni correction was applied to p values.
$^*p < .025.$ $^{**}p < .005.$ $^{***}p < .001.$
$R^2 = .61.$
Dummy 1: derogation versus verification.
Indirect effect via anger: $b = 0.29$, 95% CI [0.09, 0.50].
Indirect effect via attitudes: $b = 0.19$, 95% CI [0.06, 0.34].
Dummy 2: derogation versus enhancement.
Indirect effect via anger: $b = 0.18$, 95% CI [−0.01, 0.39].
Indirect effect via attitudes: $b = 0.28$, 95% CI [0.14, 0.44].

negatively discrepant feedback. Importantly, attitudes toward the ingroup were similar in both conditions. The positive effect of verifying feedback on collective action was apparently mediated by positive attitudes towards immigrants and anger over their predicament. These results suggest that acknowledging ingroup morality is a more effective strategy than questioning it to mobilize members of advantaged groups.

Like verifying feedback, overly positive feedback also improved attitudes toward immigrants and, in turn, engagement in collective action on their behalf as compared to negatively discrepant feedback. However, it did not elicit anger over the predicament of immigrants and only increased positive attitudes towards ingroup members. Since anger is a powerful predictor of collective action (van Zomeren et al., 2004) and excessively positive attitudes towards the ingroup could turn into outgroup hate under threatening conditions (Brewer, 1999), verification might be more reliable than enhancement to promote collective action. Building on this claim, in the next study, we replaced the enhancement condition with a control condition in which no feedback was provided. Study 2 aimed to help to better understand

whether negatively discrepant feedback about ingroup morality worsens intergroup orientations or verifying feedback improves them. Also, to check whether our effects could be extended to situations in which the outgroup is the source of feedback, in Study 2 the evaluation was provided by immigrants.

A critical reader could also argue that the perceived moral treatment scale employed in Study 1 would activate a descriptive norm about intergroup care (Cialdini et al., 1990) that could have amplified the effects of the manipulation. To rule out this possibility, in Study 2 the general perceived morality of the ingroup rather than perceived moral treatment was measured. Finally, based on previous research (Gómez et al., 2009), we explored whether identification with the ingroup moderates the effect of feedback.

Study 2: Verification by Outgroup Members

Study 2 was designed to test whether receiving verifying feedback about ingroup morality from a group of immigrants (the outgroup) fosters positive attitudes towards immigrants, anger over

their predicament, and engagement in collective action as compared to negatively discrepant feedback or no feedback (control). Previous research indicates that conditions in which verifying or no feedback are provided yield similar effects because people expect to be seen in the same way they see themselves (e.g., Gómez et al., 2009). Nevertheless, it must be noted that the focal identities of those studies were negative, such that they were coherent with the negative evaluations that people usually expect from outgroup members (Vorauer et al., 1998). However, such negative expectations may be discordant with their views if neutral or positive qualities of the ingroup are highlighted. Therefore, if most individuals tend to perceive their ingroup as moderately or highly moral, verifying feedback could improve intergroup orientations as compared to a control condition with no feedback. Accordingly, we expect that verifying feedback would improve intergroup orientations as compared to negatively discrepant feedback or no feedback. Based on previous research (Gómez et al., 2009), group identification might intensify this effect. As in Study 1, we also predict that positive attitudes towards immigrants and anger over their predicament might mediate the effect of feedback on collective action.

Method

Participants. Seven hundred and seventy-five Spaniards (58.3% women; $M_{age} = 33.32$, $SD = 12.80$) recruited as in Study 1 participated on a voluntary basis. Assuming a significance level of .05 and 80% power, this sample size would detect an effect of $f = .11$.

Procedure. Participants first completed the single item ("I identify with Spaniards") of ingroup identification from Postmes et al. (2013), as well as a measure of perceived morality of the ingroup (Spaniards) by means of five items (e.g., "honest") from Brambilla et al. (2011; $\alpha = .90$). Then, they were informed that we would compare their answers to this scale with the scores obtained by a group of immigrants, who have

supposedly participated in a similar study. Participants in the verification and the derogation conditions received the same information on the comparison as in Study 1. Participants in the control condition learned that the system had failed and were asked to complete the rest of the questionnaire while the error was fixed. Like in Study 1, we measured feelings of being understood ($\alpha = .84$) as a manipulation check. An ANOVA yielded a significant effect of feedback, $F(2, 772) = 11.59$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .03$. Participants in the verification condition felt more understood than those in the control ($p = .046$) and derogation conditions ($p < .001$). The difference between the control and derogation conditions was marginal ($p = .052$).

Participants then proceeded to the rest of the questionnaire. Anger over the outgroup's predicament ($\alpha = .96$), attitudes towards immigrants and Spaniards ($\alpha = .93$ for both of them), collective action ($\alpha = .94$), and credibility of evaluators ($\alpha = .94$) were evaluated as in Study 1.

Results

Anger over the outgroup's predicament, attitudes towards immigrants, collective action, and credibility of evaluators were positively and significantly interrelated (see supplemental material).

Ingroup identification. A univariate analysis on ingroup identification yielded a nonsignificant effect of feedback ($p = .174$). Perceived ingroup identification did not moderate the effects of condition on the outcome variables, except for perceived credibility of the evaluators. We found a marginal effect of the interaction between identification and the comparison between the verification and control conditions, such that the effect of feedback was smaller for weakly than for moderately and strongly identified participants (see supplemental material).

Morality. A univariate analysis on perceived morality yielded a nonsignificant effect of

feedback (p = .138). Perceived ingroup morality did not moderate the effects of condition on the outcome variables, except for attitudes towards immigrants, such that participants in the verification condition expressed more positive attitudes towards immigrants than those in the control and derogation conditions only if they perceived moderate or low morality, but not high morality (see supplemental material).

Dependent variables. We conducted a multivariate analysis on the dependent variables that were interrelated: verification, attitudes towards immigrants, anger over their predicament, collective action, and credibility of evaluators. Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations per condition. The multivariate effect of condition was significant, Wilks's λ = .95, F(8, 1538) = 5.06, p < .001, η^2_p = .03.

Anger over the outgroup's predicament. The univariate analysis yielded a significant effect of feedback, F(2, 772) = 10.70, p < .001, η^2_p = .03. Bonferroni comparisons showed that participants in the verification condition felt more anger over the outgroup's predicament than those in the control (p < .001) and derogation (p = .001) conditions. The control and derogation conditions did not differ from each other (p = 1.000).

Attitudes towards immigrants. The univariate analysis yielded a significant effect of feedback, F(2, 772) = 11.04, p < .001, η^2_p = .03. Participants in the verification condition expressed more positive attitudes towards immigrants than those in the control and derogation conditions (ps < .001). The control and derogation conditions did not differ from each other (p = 1.000).

Collective action. The univariate analysis yielded a significant effect of feedback, F(2, 772) = 8.57, p < .001, η^2_p = .02. Participants in the verification condition were more willing to engage in collective action than those in the control (p < .001) and derogation (p = .003) conditions. The control and derogation conditions did not differ from each other (p = 1.000).

Evaluators. The univariate analysis yielded a significant effect of feedback, F(2, 772) = 14.97, p < .001, η^2_p = .04. Participants in the verification condition perceived evaluators as more credible than those in the control and derogation (ps < .001) conditions. The control and derogation conditions did not differ from each other (p = 1.000).

Attitudes towards ingroup members. An ANOVA on attitudes towards ingroup members yielded a nonsignificant effect of condition, F(2, 772) = 2.33, p = .098, η^2_p = .01.

Mediation. To check whether the effect of condition on collective action was mediated by attitudes towards immigrants and anger over their predicament, we used Model 4 of the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018). As condition had three levels, two dummy codes were created to compare the verification condition with the control (Dummy 1) and derogation (Dummy 2) conditions. All the indirect effects were significant (see Figure 2).

Discussion

Although the source of feedback was the disadvantaged group, results of Study 2 replicate those of Study 1 in that verifying feedback promoted more positive attitudes towards immigrants, anger over their predicament, and engagement in collective action for their rights as compared to negatively discrepant feedback. The positive effect on collective action was apparently mediated by positive attitudes and anger over the outgroup's predicament, as in Study 1. Study 2 extends previous findings by showing that no feedback exerted similar effects as negatively discrepant feedback, such that all outcome variables were more negative in the control condition than in the verification condition. In general, perceived ingroup morality and identification did not moderate the effects.

An important limitation of the first two studies is that the perceived morality of the ingroup is slightly over the theoretical midpoint of the scale (3). Thus, most participants have a positive

Figure 2. Indirect effects of the manipulation on willingness to participate in collective action via anger over the outgroup's predicament and attitudes towards them: Study 2.
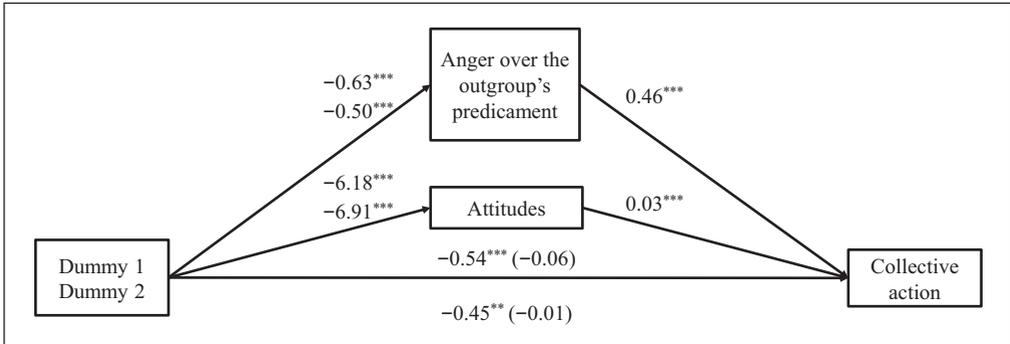
Note. Statistics in the upper row correspond to Dummy 1, whereas statistics in the lower row correspond to Dummy 2. Bonferroni correction was applied to p values.
$^*p < .025.\ ^{**}p < .005.\ ^{***}p < .001.$
$R^2 = .55$
Dummy 1: Verification vs. Control
Indirect effect via anger, $b = -0.29$, 95% CI [−0.43, −0.16].
Indirect effect via attitudes, $b = -0.19$, 95% CI [−0.30, −0.10].
Dummy 2: Verification vs. Derogation
Indirect effect via anger, $b = -0.23$, 95% CI [−0.37, −0.10].
Indirect effect via attitudes, $b = -0.22$, 95% CI [−0.33, −0.11].

opinion of their ingroup morality. However, one of the most provoking contentions of the verification theory is that people also strive to confirm the negative aspects of their personal and group identities, which distinguishes verification and enhancement approaches (Swann, 2012). Hence, to provide a more conservative test of the beneficial effects of verification it would be important to focus on domains where ingroup morality is disputed. Additionally, it could be argued that our manipulation check is too vague and does not clarify which psychological process is driving the effects. We addressed these shortcomings in a third final study that included all the experimental conditions used in the previous studies.

Study 3: Verification by Outgroup Members in a Weakly Moral Domain

Study 3 aimed to provide stronger evidence that verifying ingroup morality is more effective than moral reproach to mobilize members of advantaged groups. To that end, participants were asked to think about how Spaniards participate in and tolerate acts of corruption. Since Spaniards are evaluated as higher in corruption than other countries of the European Union (Transparency International, 2019), we anticipated that ratings of morality would be low when it comes to corruption. Then, participants received derogating, verifying, enhancing, or no feedback about the morality of Spaniards regarding corruption, and completed the outcome measures following a similar procedure as in previous studies. Importantly, in Study 3 we included different scales as manipulation checks aimed at capturing whether the feedback satisfied consistency or enhancement desires (Swann et al., 1987). We also included a measure of support from immigrants in order to rule out the possibility that such a variable drove the effect. Finally, we replaced the single-item identification measure with a multi-item scale.

Method

Participants. We determined the sample size based on the effect of feedback on collective action that we found in Study 2 ($\eta^2_p = .03$).

Assuming a significance level of .05 and 80% power, we would need a sample size of at least 360 participants to detect an effect of $f = .18$. We sent out an invitation to Spanish volunteers from previous studies on different topics and recruited 452 participants (65.9% women; M_{age} = 37.98, $SD = 12.84$).

Procedure. Participants first completed the six-item measure by Mael and Asforth (1992; e.g., "When someone criticizes my country it feels like a personal insult; $\alpha = .83$). Then, they read a text about the economic, social, and political costs of corruption globally, as well as its acceptance by the broader society. After that, participants were asked to write a paragraph explaining how big they thought the problem of corruption was in Spain and how much social tolerance Spaniards have towards this type of behavior.

Then, participants completed the same measure of perceived ingroup (Spaniards) morality used in Study 2, but focusing on the corruption domain ($\alpha = .94$). Afterwards, they were informed that we would compare their previous answers with those obtained in a similar study by a group of immigrants, and they were assigned to the verification, derogation, enhancement, or control condition as in previous studies.

Then, participants proceeded to the rest of the questionnaire. Anger over the outgroup's predicament ($\alpha = .85$), attitudes towards immigrants and Spaniards ($\alpha = .92$ for both of them), and collective action ($\alpha = .94$) were evaluated as in Study 1. We also measured perceived social support from immigrants with a single item adapted from Atroszko et al. (2015; 0 = *not at all*, 10 = *extremely*; "How satisfied are you with the support you get from immigrants?").

We substituted the manipulation check and the measure of perceived competence of evaluators used in previous studies by two measures created ad hoc to disentangle verification and enhancement motives. To capture verification needs, we asked participants whether the evaluation of Spaniards that immigrants made regarding the corruption domain "confirms that my beliefs are correct," "gives me the certainty that I am right," and "it makes me feel that I know well the social reality in which I live" ($\alpha = .89$). An ANOVA yielded a significant effect of feedback, $F(2, 332) = 15.14, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .08$. Participants in the verification condition perceived that the feedback satisfied their needs for certainty more than those in the derogation and enhancement conditions ($ps < .001$). The enhancement and derogation conditions did not differ from each other ($p = .773$).

To capture enhancement needs, we asked participants whether the evaluation of immigrants "makes me feel good," "increases my self-esteem as Spaniard," "I like it because it gives me a positive image of Spaniards" ($\alpha = .90$). An ANOVA yielded a significant effect of feedback, $F(2, 332) = 16.66, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .09$. Participants in the enhancement condition perceived that the feedback satisfied their needs for enhancement more than those in the verification and derogation conditions ($ps < .001$). The verification and derogation conditions did not differ from each other ($p = .282$).

Results

Anger over the predicament of immigrants, attitudes towards them, and collective action were positively and significantly interrelated (see supplemental material).

Ingroup identification. A univariate analysis on ingroup identification yielded a nonsignificant effect of feedback ($p = .108$). The interaction between identification and feedback was not significant for any outcome variable (see supplemental material).

Morality. As expected, participants perceived Spaniards to be weakly moral in the corruption domain, $M = 2.28, SD = 1.20, t(451) = -12.68, p < .001$. A univariate analysis on perceived morality yielded a nonsignificant effect of feedback ($p = .719$). Perceived ingroup morality did not moderate the effects of condition on the outcome variables, except for attitudes towards

ingroup members. In particular, participants evaluated ingroup members more positively in the verification and enhancement conditions than in the derogation condition, but only when the perceived morality of the ingroup was low (see supplemental material). The interaction between feedback and morality on social support was also significant for the comparison between the verification and derogation conditions. However, decomposition of the interaction did not reveal significant effects for any level of morality.

Dependent variables. We conducted a multivariate analysis on the dependent variables that were interrelated: anger over the outgroup's predicament, attitudes towards immigrants, and collective action. Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations per condition. The multivariate effect of condition was significant, Wilks's λ = .95, $F(9, 1085.60)$ = 2.50, p = .008, η^2_p = .02.

Anger over the outgroup's predicament. The univariate analysis yielded a significant effect of feedback, $F(3, 448)$ = 3.39, p = .018, η^2_p = .02. Bonferroni comparisons showed that participants in the verification condition felt more anger over the outgroup's predicament than those in the derogation condition (p = .035). No other comparisons were significant (ps > .107).

Attitudes towards immigrants. The univariate analysis yielded a significant effect of feedback, $F(3, 448)$ = 4.36, p = .005, η^2_p = .03. Participants in the enhancement condition expressed more positive attitudes towards immigrants than those in the derogation (p = .023) and control (p = .044) conditions. No other comparisons were significant (ps > .112).

Collective action. The univariate analysis yielded a significant effect of feedback, $F(3, 448)$ = 5.12, p = .002, η^2_p = .03. Participants in the verification condition were more willing to engage in collective action than those in the derogation (p = .005) and control (p = .009) conditions. No other comparisons were significant (ps > .290).

Attitudes towards ingroup members and perceived social support. The ANOVAs on these variables yielded no significant effects of feedback, $F(3, 448)$ = 1.79, p = .148, η^2_p = .01; and $F(3, 448)$ = 0.19, p = .906, η^2_p = .00, respectively.

Mediation

To check whether the effect of feedback on collective action was mediated by attitudes towards immigrants and anger over their predicament, we used Model 4 of the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018). As the condition had four levels, three dummy codes were created to compare the derogation condition with the verification (Dummy 1), enhancement (Dummy 2), and control (Dummy 3) conditions. The indirect effect via anger over the outgroup's predicament was significant only for Dummy 1 (derogation vs. verification), whereas the indirect effects via attitudes were significant both for Dummy 1 (derogation vs. verification) and Dummy 2 (derogation vs. enhancement; see Figure 3). The indirect effects for Dummy 3 were not significant.

Discussion

Study 3 focused on a domain where the ingroup morality is questioned (the average morality level was low). The results replicate those of Studies 1–2 in that verifying feedback increased engagement in collective action for immigrants' rights as compared to negatively discrepant feedback. This effect was apparently mediated by positive attitudes towards immigrants and anger over their predicament.

Regarding enhancing feedback, the results are consistent with Study 1 in that receiving enhancing information improved positive attitudes as compared to derogating feedback. However, in contrast to Study 1, there was not an effect on collective action. These findings suggest that verification has larger and more stable effects on collective action than enhancement.

Importantly, participants who received verifying feedback reported more satisfaction of consistency needs than participants in other

Figure 3. Indirect effects of the manipulation on willingness to participate in collective action via anger over the outgroup's predicament and attitudes towards them: Study 3.
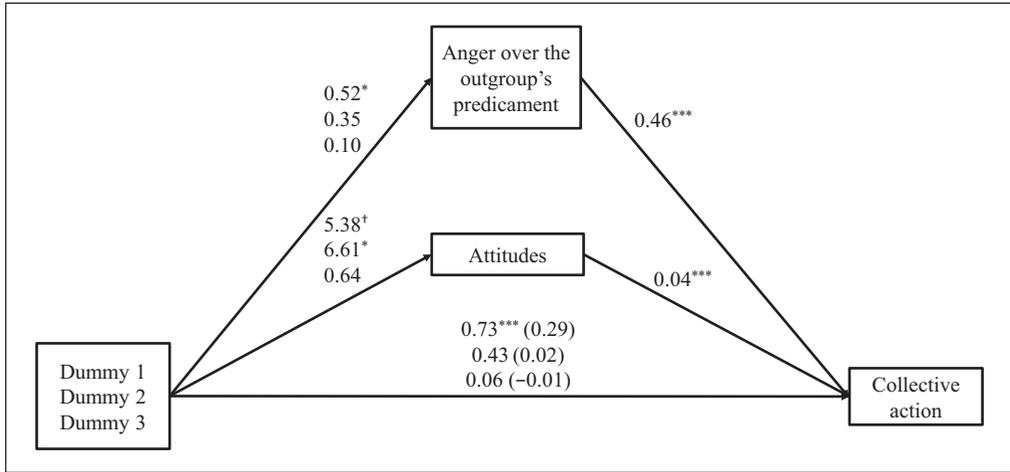
Note. Statistics in the upper row correspond to Dummy 1, statistics in the medium row correspond to Dummy 2, and statistics in the lower row correspond to Dummy 3. Bonferroni correction was applied to p values.
$^*p < .017.$ $^{**}p < .003.$ $^{***}p < .001.$
$R^2 = .45.$
Dummy 1: derogation versus verification.
Indirect effect via anger: $b = 0.24$, 95% CI [0.09, 0.42].
Indirect effect via attitudes: $b = 0.20$, 95% CI [0.03, 0.39].
Dummy 2: derogation versus enhancement.
Indirect effect via anger: $b = 0.16$, 95% CI [−0.01, 0.34].
Indirect effect via attitudes: $b = 0.24$, 95% CI [0.07, 0.44].
Dummy 3: derogation versus control.
Indirect effect via anger: $b = 0.05$, 95% CI [−0.13, 0.23].
Indirect effect via attitudes: $b = 0.02$, 95% CI [−0.15, 0.20].

conditions, whereas those who received overly positive feedback about their group morality reported more satisfaction of enhancement needs. These findings suggest that our manipulation effectively activated verification and enhancement motives. Finally, no differences emerged regarding social support.

General Discussion

Social change will be more viable to the extent that members of advantaged groups act to ensure a more equitable distribution of power by promoting the rights of disadvantaged groups. Here we explored how we can lead members of an advantaged group to get angrier about immigrants' disadvantage and act to reduce it. In particular, we tested whether either acknowledging

or threatening the perceived morality of the advantaged group are more effective to promote collective action in favor of immigrants' rights.

In three experimental studies, we found that verifying feedback about ingroup morality in general (Studies 1–2) or in a particular domain (Study 3) improved attitudes towards immigrants and increased anger over their predicament, which in turn promoted willingness to engage in collective action on their behalf as compared to negatively discrepant feedback. These positive effects of confirmatory feedback emerged regardless of whether the source was a group of international experts on morality (Study 1) or immigrants (Studies 2–3). Additional results showed that verifying feedback was more effective than no feedback (Studies 2–3) in fostering intentions to participate in collective action for immigrants' rights.

The pattern of results concerning enhancing feedback was not so consistent. In Study 1, an overly positive evaluation improved attitudes towards immigrants and promoted willingness to collectively act for their rights as compared to negative feedback, but it did not affect anger over their predicament and inflated positive attitudes towards ingroup members (Study 1). In Study 3, enhancing feedback improved attitudes towards immigrants, but it did not influence willingness to engage in collective action as compared to negative feedback. It seems therefore that enhancement of group morality can influence some aspects of intergroup relations, but verification might be more reliable to engage members of advantaged groups in the reduction of inequality.

The effects of feedback were not moderated in general by the perceived moral treatment of the ingroup toward immigrants (Study 1), the perceived morality of the ingroup (Studies 2–3), or ingroup identification (Studies 2–3). Reactions to feedback were similar among participants who considered the ingroup as weakly or highly moral. This is consistent with previous evidence that verification strivings apply to positive and negative self-views on the individual (Swann, 2012) and group levels (Gómez et al., 2009). For participants who perceived their ingroup as low in morality, verifying feedback was negative, but despite the valence they reported increased anger over inequality, more positive attitudes towards immigrants, and more willingness to engage in collective action. These findings reveal that the effects of verifying feedback are not driven by its valence but by its accuracy. In fact, this is a critical difference between verification theory and other frameworks as the needs-based model of reconciliation (Shnabel et al., 2013). This model states that members of advantaged groups desire to restore their moral image and experience an enhanced need for acceptance. Although both verification theory and the needs-based model would make similar predictions for people who consider their group as highly moral, that is, a preference for positive evaluations, the reasons for such preference will be different: consistency and accuracy in the case of verification theory,

and acceptance in the case of the needs-based model. Study 3, which focused on a domain where perceived morality was low and included different manipulation checks, allowed us to distinguish verification motives from enhancement or acceptance motives.

Regarding identification, Gómez et al. (2009) found that strongly identified individuals were more reactive to verifying feedback than weakly identified ones. In contrast, we did not find moderating effects of ingroup identification even though we used two different measures. It should be noted that Gómez et al.'s outcome measures were different, the focus was ingroup identity in general and not morality in particular, and participants themselves determined the group characteristics that were subsequently confirmed or disconfirmed. Our results suggest that weakly and strongly identified individuals are equally sensitive to information about ingroup morality, which is consistent with other studies focusing on moral threats (e.g., Brambilla, Sacchi, et al., 2013).

Our findings contribute to bring together the literature on collective action and morality, in line with recent proposals (e.g., van Zomeren, 2013). We provide a novel strategy based on morality than can help members of disadvantaged groups get involved in social change. Previous research reveals that one's own moral (van Zomeren et al., 2012; van Zomeren et al., 2011) convictions and obligation (Sabucedo et al., 2018) motivate engagement in collective action. Our results suggest that, in addition to being moral, people also want their morality recognized by others in due measure and, when that happens, they are more willing to act for equality. Our participants felt more outraged by inequality and were more willing to work collectively to correct it when they perceived that others acknowledged their morality. In contrast, discrediting the advantaged group based on moral reasons did not help improve the situation of the least fortunate. These results are consistent with previous studies demonstrating that moral threats typically elicit defensive reactions (Monin, 2007; Täuber & van Zomeren, 2013), whereas reassuring the morality of the ingroup promotes prosocial intergroup orientations (Witkowska et al., 2019). The general

mechanism underlying those different results might be identity verification.

Importantly, receiving verifying feedback about the morality of one's own group did not improve attitudes towards ingroup members as compared to negative feedback or the control condition with no feedback. This lack of effect on attitudes towards ingroup members could help discard the emergence of moral "licensing" following identity verification. Several studies have found that people are more willing to behave immorally when they are reminded of their past moral behavior (Monin & Miller, 2001; Sachdeva et al., 2009). Unlike verifying feedback, enhancing feedback about ingroup morality did improve attitudes towards ingroup members in Study 1. Future research should test whether enhancement of ingroup morality can raise moral licensing.

Our findings replicate and extend the results of previous research about ingroup identity verification (Gómez et al., 2009; Vázquez et al., 2018) in several ways. First, we showed that confirmatory feedback not only improves the evaluation of outgroup members but promotes engagement in a collective effort to reduce inequalities. Second, we provided preliminary evidence about the underlying mechanisms of such effects. Positive attitudes uch effects. Positive attitudes towards immigrants and anger over their predicament apparently mediated the effect of verifying feedback on willingness to participate in collective action. Third, although we focused on a single dimension of group identity, morality (unlike previous research that adopted a more holistic approach; Gómez et al., 2009), we obtained consistent evidence about the verification motive. People apparently react positively when their whole group identity or a specific dimension are validated. Finally, for the positive effects of verification to emerge, no correspondence is required between the source of information and the recipient of the actions elicited by the feedback. Engagement in collective action for immigrants' rights increased both when those who evaluated the group were experts and when they were immigrants themselves. This finding is important to the extent that it expands the possibilities of reducing intergroup conflict even when the parties involved are not ready to recognize the opponent's morality. For instance, neutral actors could appeal to the morality of an advantaged group to facilitate the implementation of actions to correct inequality.

Additional work could help address some of the limitations of the current research. We measured behavioral intentions rather than actual collective action for immigrants' rights, which is difficult to register in laboratory experiments. Future field studies could ensure that behavioral intentions translate into concrete actions. Another shortcoming is related to the cross-sectional nature of our data, which prevents drawing conclusions about the mediating mechanisms. Longitudinal data or the experimental manipulation of the mediators would establish the causal influence of the hypothesized explicative mechanisms. Third, we focused exclusively on morality because this dimension is most relevant for advantaged groups, which are often questioned based on their morality (Shnabel & Nadler, 2015). Future research could determine whether verification of competence and sociability exerts comparable effects as the verification of morality. Despite such limitations, these findings contribute to the study of social change by alluding to the morality of the advantaged group. Instead of reproach that could threaten ingroup image and consequently motivate defensive responses, acknowledging ingroup morality seems to motivate action on behalf of the disadvantaged.

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Supplemental material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

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