

## Government grant for athletic scholarships in the Federal District: economic profile, athletic information and academic status of the recipients

**Bolsa atleta do Distrito Federal: perfil econômico, esportivo e educacional dos beneficiados**  
**Beca deportista del Distrito Federal: perfil económico, deportivo y educativo de los beneficiarios**

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### Keywords:

Dual sports career;  
Student-athlete;  
Sport;  
Education.

### ABSTRACT

This study outlined the profile of athletes participating in the Athlete Scholarship Program of the Federal District to conduct a processual analysis of factors composing the holistic dual career model. The research sample included 25 athletes who benefited from the program in 2014. Data were collected through an online structured questionnaire about the topic under discussion. The main results indicate that the athletes present no educational delay, have high educational expectations, and that most belong to the highest socioeconomic class. Sporting and educational institutions must stimulate the organization of public policies, increasing public investments in high performance sports.

### Palavras-chave:

Dupla Carreira  
Esportiva;  
Estudante-atleta;  
Esporte;  
Educação.

### RESUMO

O objetivo deste estudo foi de traçar o perfil dos atletas do Programa Bolsa-Atleta do Distrito Federal a fim de realizar uma análise processual dos fatores que compõem o modelo holístico da dupla carreira. A amostra da pesquisa compreendeu 25 atletas beneficiados em 2014 e os dados foram coletados por meio do preenchimento de um questionário estruturado online, com perguntas sobre o tema em discussão. Os principais resultados mostram que os atletas não apresentam atraso escolar, têm alta expectativa educacional e a maioria pertence aos estratos socioeconômicos mais altos. As instituições esportivas e educacionais devem assumir um papel ativo para estimular a organização de políticas públicas potencializando o investimento do Estado para a promoção do esporte de alto rendimento.

### Palabras clave:

Carrera dual  
deportiva;  
Estudiante  
deportista;  
Deporte;  
Educación.

### RESUMEN

El estudio tuvo como objetivo identificar el perfil de los atletas del Programa Bolsa-Atleta del Distrito Federal para realizar un análisis procedimental de los factores que conforman el modelo holístico de la carrera dual. La muestra estuvo compuesta por 25 atletas beneficiados en 2014 y los datos fueron recolectados mediante un cuestionario estructurado en línea. Los principales resultados de la investigación muestran que los atletas no presentan retraso escolar, tienen altas expectativas educativas y en su mayoría pertenecen a estratos socioeconómicos más altos. Las instituciones deportivas y educativas deben desempeñar un papel activo en el fomento de la organización de políticas públicas, potenciando la inversión del Estado en la promoción del deporte de alto rendimiento.

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## INTRODUCTION

The context of education in high-performance sports requires the athlete, in addition to other demands inherent to sports training, to pursue with dedication a basic education or university degree, and this double affiliation is defined by the specific literature as a dual-career (EC, 2012). Based on the holistic model proposed by Wylleman et al. (2013), the student-athlete's training process involves three bases: psychological development (corresponding to childhood, adolescence, and adulthood); social relationships (engagement with family members, coaches, teammates), and financial investment. The latter being fundamental for success in elite sports, defined as the first pillar of the Sport Policy factors Leading to International Sporting Success model (De Bosscher et al., 2006).

In Brazil, financing opportunities for careers in sports usually are provided by one of the following: by signing a contract (especially for men's soccer); (or) by private funding (especially for modalities with more media influence); (or) by government scholarship programs for athletes (at federal, state, or district level) (Soares et al., 2011; Teixeira et al., 2017). However, for most sports, the initial costs of high-performance athletes' training fall upon the family. As an athlete becomes successful in their modality, public or private financing opportunities may be provided by their respective market (Costa et al., 2021; Lopes and Nunomura, 2007; Peres and Lovisolo, 2006).

The government of the Federal District, in an effort to assist the funding of careers in sports, created the Athletic Scholarship Program – ASP/FD (or the PBA/DF in Portuguese, acronym for Programa Bolsa Atleta do Distrito Federal) supported by the State Secretariat of Sports and Leisure. The program's purpose is to ensure the “[...]minimum conditions for allowing athletes to dedicate themselves freely to training, as well as to preparing for local, South-American, Pan-American, international, olympic and paralympic competitions”<sup>1</sup> (SELDF, 2020).

With that in mind, this study aims to analyze the profile of high-performance athletes<sup>2</sup> of the Federal District (FD) selected in 2014 by the Federal District Secretariat of Sport as recipients of the ASP/FD grant. The goal is to conduct a processual analysis of the factors that compose the dual career's holistic model, highlighting its athletic, academic, and economic aspects.

<sup>1</sup> Available on <https://www.sport.df.gov.br/scholarship-athlete/>, access on Sept. 09. 2021.

<sup>2</sup> We regard as high-performance athletes those involved in systematized training process and participating in either national or international competitions.

## METHODOLOGY

Our survey sample encompassed 25 athletes (13 males and 12 females) who reported receiving an Athletic Scholarship in 2014 and still maintained sport activity during the time of the data collection (from September 2017 to January 2018). The athletes were distributed between 16 different modalities (in teams and individually) and five scholarship categories: Student, District, National, International, and Olympic (Table 1). Considering the demanding athletic performance required to be granted with a national/international scholarship, we consider these athletes as being part of the Federal District's sports elite at different moments of their trajectories.

The list of recipients<sup>3</sup> of the ASP/FD 2014 has been made available online by the government of the Federal District (GFD), with the publication of the athletes' names and the contact information of their coaches. In order to invite them to participate in the research, the sampling procedure encompassed the following steps: a) contact with coaches and/or governing bodies to identify the athletes; b) phone call with the athletes to explain the research objectives and invite them to be part of the survey; c) sending of the questionnaire link to the SurveyMonkey site via WhatsApp or email, and d) repetition of the collection process as from phase “b”, upon delayed response to the questionnaire or possible mistakes that could be corrected by resending the questionnaire. The diagram (Figure 1) below illustrates the sampling procedure for the selection of the 25 athletes participating in this study:

Data collection was performed after the signing of an Informed Consent Form for subjects over 18 years old, and an Informed Consent for Minors for the underaged subjects. The questionnaire was organized based on the following four main topics a) Athletic Trajectory;

<sup>3</sup> There was some difficulty finding consistent information on the program, with discrepancy in the lists provided on the website of the State Secretariat of Sport and Leisure, body visited to confirm the information. Due to logistic and time issues, we followed the first list found encompassing 70 athletes, who should confirm in the data collection instrument to have been recipients of the ASP/FD in 2014. We reinforce here the complexity of finding reliable data regarding the Athlete's scholarship (Guimarães, 2009). Subsequently, the Secretariat of Sports sent us other data introducing 107 athletes who were recipients of the PBADF in 2014, with two absent respondents (M3 and M25), other four athletes who appeared in the list as recipients starting in 2015 (M5, M13, M15, and F22). Upon such inconsistency, we decided to maintain the athletes assuming the veracity of the affirmation and highlighting the issue on Table 1. The secretariat data allowed to advance in the discussion regarding the maintenance of the athlete's condition as recipient of the PBA/DF.

**Table 1.** Sample Characteristics.

Athlete	A.R. grouping according to average income <sup>4</sup>	ASP/FD in 2014	ASP/FD in 2015	ASP/FD in 2016	ASP/FD in 2017	ASP/FD in 2018	ASP/FD in 2019	ASP/FD in 2020	ASP/FD in 2021	Sports/School Balance	Educational Stage	Parents with Complete Higher Education	Age
F1	U	Sta	Sta	-	-	-	-	-	-	Pst	IHE	F	19
F2	U	Sta	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Pst	IHE	F/M	20
M3*	U	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Psp	IHE	F/M	19
M4	U	Dist	Nat	Internat	Nat	Dist	Dist	Nat	Nat	Psp	IHE	F/M	20
M5	U	-	-	-	-	-	Dist	Dist	Dist	Psp	IHE	F/M	20
F6	U	Nat	Nat	Internat	Internat	Nat	-	Nat	Nat	Psp	IHS	F/M	16
M7	U	Olympic	Olympic	Olympic	Olympic	Olympic	-	-	-	Igual	CHE	F/M	33
M8	UM	Dist	Nat	-	Dist	-	-	-	-	Igual	CHS	--	24
F9	UM	Sta	Sta	-	-	-	Dist	-	-	Igual	IHS	--	18
M10	UM	Dist	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Pst	IHE	F/M	22
F11	UM	Est	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Psp	IHE	F/M	20
M12	UM	Nat	Dist	-	-	-	-	-	-	Pst	CHE	F/M	36
M13*	UM	-	Nat	Nat	Nat	-	-	-	-	Psp	IHE	F/M	31
M14	UM	Nat	Dist	-	Nat	Nat	-	Dist	Nat	Psp	IHE	--	23
M15**	UM	-	Dist	Dist	Nat	Nat	Dist	Dist	-	Igual	CHS	--	20
F16	UM	Sta	Sta	Dist	Nat	-	-	-	-	Igual	IHS	F/M	18
F17	UM	Nat	-	Nat	-	Dist	Nat	Nat	Dist	Psp	IHE	--	33
M18	UM	Internat	-	Internat	Internat	Internat	Internat	Internat	Internat	Psp	CHE	--	48
M19	UM	Internat	Internat	Internat	Internat	Internat	-	-	-	Psp	CHS	--	18
F20	LM	Sta	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Igual	CHS	--	20
F21	LM	Sta	Sta	-	-	-	-	-	-	Pst	IHS	M	17
F22**	LM	-	Sta	Dist	-	-	-	-	-	Pst	IHE	--	18
F23	LM	Sta	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Psp	IHS	M	19
F24	LM	Sta	Sta	Sta	Nat	-	-	-	-	Psp	IHE	--	18
M25*	Abroad***	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Psp	IHE	F/M	19

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the survey data. Caption: M: male; F: female; U: Upper class; UM: Upper middle class; LM: Lower middle class; Pst: prioritizes study; Pspo: prioritizes sport; IHS: Incomplete High School; CHS: Complete High School; IHE: Incomplete Higher Education; CHE: Complete Higher Education; F/M: father and mother; F: father; M: Mother. \*Athletes who reported receiving a national athletic scholarship; \*\*Athletes who reported receiving a state athletic scholarship; \*\*\*Athlete living abroad at the moment of the questionnaire application.

<sup>4</sup> Upper Income (average domestic income of R\$15,635.00); upper-middle income (average domestic income de R\$7.321,00); Middle-low income (average domestic income of R\$ 3,123.00.).

b) Academic Trajectory; c) Balance between Sports and School, and d) Family Relationship with Sports and Education, with a retrospective approach. Anonymity was guaranteed to all participants, as well as to the institutions concerning future publications and public presentations of this study. During the second phase of the research, in 2020, we emailed the Federal District Secretariat of Sports and Leisure, requesting information regarding the athletes who received the ASP/FD grant, in order to analyze their continuity in the program, qualifying for the present investigation. The data generated a table containing information derived from the questionnaire (residence, dedication to sports, age, athlete’s and parents’ educational stage), along with the athlete’s continuity in the ASP/FD, in addition to the level specification of the granted scholarship.

All data collected herein was processed according to the literature, in compliance with the Research Ethics Committee protocol of the Health Science School of the University of Brasília, under Presentation Certificate for Ethical Consideration number 40152814,1,0000,0030.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### FINANCING

According to the District Survey made by the National Household Sample Survey of 2018 (Company of

Planning of Federal District, 2019), most of the ASP/FD grant recipients reside in Administrative Regions (AR) of upper class neighborhoods (n=7) or upper middle class neighborhoods (n=12) – Table 2. Most of the lower middle class athletes were not able to maintain the ASP/FD and were classified for the student-athlete’s scholarship category – a crucial phase that is particularly demanding early in a career in sports, requiring financial investment from the athletes’ family in order to make a headway. In the cases of athletes residing in AR with upper-class family profiles, we infer that their families were able to contribute economically for their children’s continuity in high-performance sports careers (showing relevant results), thus allowing availability for public funding.

Therefore, regarding the importance of financing to maintain the continuity in sporting activities, Camargo (2020) outlined several errors and issues related to the Athletic Scholarship Program of the Federal Government, including the following: a) impossibility of accrual of the grant and other funding sources; b) grant concession conditional to previous performance results, reducing opportunities of training athletes, which “[...] could encourage athletes to quit the sporting activities, as a consequence of the need to search opportunities in the job market” (Camargo, 2020, p. 75); c) waiting time between application and payday, which reached up to 417 days in 2015; d) stagnation of the offered value, among further problems. Thereby, it can become difficult to maintain sporting activities while trying to achieve a better performance and remaining eligible as recipient for other categories, in cases of lower-income athletes that rely on family financing. This scenario was observed in the present research, where there was a noticeable difficulty to maintain continuity in the program and to reach larger figures. Only one athlete with the aforementioned economic background was able to keep up with the program throughout two contract renewals (2014-2017, athlete F24) and to overcome the student scholarship level, receiving a national scholarship, no longer being part of the program in the following years. In this sense, in addition to reaching the required results, it is fundamental to understand that funding is an aspect to be considered for the development of a career in sports (Reis et al., 2015). This was reinforced by the data

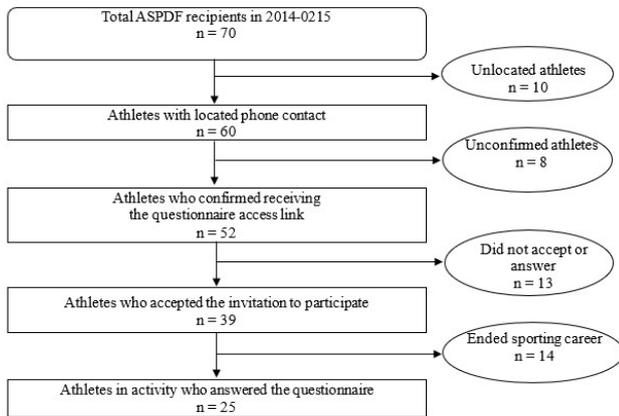


Figure 1. Composition of the sampling procedure. Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Table 2. Maintenance of ASP/FD x Average Income of RAs.

	Abroad	Upper class	Upper middle class	Lower middle class	Total
<b>Scholarship continuity (2018)<sup>5</sup></b>					
Yes	0	3	5	0	<b>8</b>
No	1	4	7	5	<b>17</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>25</b>

<sup>5</sup> We based on the year 2018 since it was the moment of the questionnaire application aiming to minimize possible data inconsistencies.

collected from the trajectories of athletes M4, F6 (upper class), M7, M18, and M19 (upper middle class), who were able to remain for at least one Olympic cycle (4 years) being part of the upper social stratification of the ASP/FD.

Such information leads us to reflect upon the athletes' family economic conditions as a factor that allows the career development, and to ponder whether the scholarship money is indeed enough to be sustainable for the athlete to keep a career in sports. It is equally important to analyze the demands of each sports modality, along with the estimated and achieved peak performances, the improvement of sport management, as well as the development of public policies in the country (Camargo and Mezzadri, 2017; Reis et al., 2015), maximizing results with the adjustments required for efficiently implementing this type of program.

## ATHLETIC AND ACADEMIC PROFILE OF THE ATHLETES

The interviewed group did not show poor academic performance, which might suggest that the sporting activities' demands have not impaired the student-athlete's school flow. Such issue is yet to be further clarified, since most of the modalities analyzed here have no well-established market to refer to for the provision of financial aid and legal protection to athletes according to the current Brazilian labor laws. This highlights the importance of education to ensure further economic autonomy and a place in the common market. However, in the absence of a legislation to support the dual-career condition of the student-athlete, efforts to establish such balance with relative success becomes the responsibility of the athletes and their families (Correia, 2018; Rocha et al., 2020, 2021). Rocha et al. (2021) indicated that student-athletes in soccer tend to show a regular school flow, despite the fact that sports routine activities affected the athletes' permanence time in school, either due to additional training or traveling for competitions. Our study shows that shorter school permanence time of student-athletes are also caused by the institution's poor organization and predictability, especially regarding night school, affected by a series of contingencies.

Another issue that may influence these student-athletes' career management is associated with the perception of financial return possibilities within the heterogeneous and unfair market of sports modalities. Therefore, to consider getting an university degree as a way to enter the job market (Balassiano et al., 2005; Costa et al., 2021) may reflect on the type of investment made in their education and their career in sports considered to be less professionalized or with no prospects of financial return.

Organizing well-balanced routines that tend to the demands of both training and studying is a fundamental factor for achieving athletic or non-athletic career transitions more dynamically and positively for the student-athletes (Costa and Figueiredo, 2021).

Category transitions can generate an unbalance that may affect performance results, placing the athlete in a tense and conflicting routine. The same occurs when passing from the basic education cycle (Aunola et al., 2018; Peserico et al., 2015) to higher education (Álvarez Pérez et al., 2014; Miró Moyá et al., 2017; Miró et al., 2018). In some cases, whenever a transition period in training coincides with an academic transition, it can highly influence the athletes' prioritization and their career project, where they may choose to continue with the athletic career to the detriment of their education, or vice versa (Rocha et al., 2021).

Our data show that many athletes (13) prioritize investing in sports instead of in education. Such conflict faced by athletes reinforces the need to develop public policies that encompass the demands of a dual-career, allowing the successful management of both academic and athletic careers, thus seizing all opportunities available in both areas of development (Costa et al., 2020; Costa and Figueiredo, 2021).

Although the data indicate that 13 out of the 25 athletes reported being in a phase where they prioritized sports over study, the other participants can be equally divided into two groups: those who reported being worried about reconciling both careers (6) and those who prioritized studying (6). Such difference in investment priorities while balancing both careers may be related to (a) the expectation level of some athletes regarding a successful career in sports, (b) the financial return of the referred successful career in sports, and (c) the possibilities of professional activity after the end of said career (Kerstajn et al., 2018; Lopes and Nunomura, 2007).

Another point that is worth highlighting is that sporting achievements are associated with the pleasure and the satisfaction of training and competing (Soberlak and Côté, 2003). Such feelings are able to motivate the continuity in the pursuit of a career in sports, even if financial return opportunities may not be really feasible (Baron-Thiene and Alfermann, 2015).

The temporality of a career in sports rushes some decisions that cannot be delayed, which can be seen in the case of the many athletes that achieve their peak athletic performance at the same time they are starting university. The problem being that a career in sport does not wait, but university education can be delayed. For this reason, for those who had completed mandatory education (20 athletes), further education could be achieved at a slower pace or even postponed (Aunola et al., 2018; Costa et al., 2021). Being able to give full dedication to athletic activities increases the possibility of being successful in sports, which could be severely compromised if it does not occur at this stage of life (Azevedo et al., 2017; Costa et al., 2021).

Conversely, out of the 17 athletes who no longer received the grant (in 2018, time of questionnaire application), five were still trying to balance sports and

education but prioritizing the former, three were trying to reconcile both careers equally, and six were trying to balance by prioritizing education. Such reconciliation strategies indicate the dilemmas and difficulties of maintaining the student-athlete condition with the need to search for further job alternatives in the common market (Kerstajn et al., 2018; Soares et al., 2011). In Brazil, the longer the time spent on the school system along with a degree of higher education will ensure a better job and better conditions for professionalization (Neri, 2009); which means that the athletes who try to balance a dual-career, often privileging their studies, do act rationally and according to their social context (Araújo and Barbosa, 2008).

International research has indicated the need to encourage a harmonious reconciliation between the several demands in the athlete's routine (Costa et al., 2020; Miró et al., 2018; Torregrosa et al., 2016; Wylleman et al., 2013). In addition, a balanced routine is clearly important to prevent athletes from having either their academic or athletic careers jeopardized, or being penalized in their transition to the job market after the end of their career in sports (López de Subijana and Equiza Vaquero, 2018). Thus, it is necessary to contemplate the creation and improvement of devices, by both schools and universities (Álvarez Pérez et al., 2014; Costa and Figueiredo, 2021; Mateu et al., 2020) to allow, for example: (a) an individualized education plan, (b) distance tutoring, (c) a special calendar, indispensable resources to provide athletes with the proper conditions for balancing their career in sports with their education (Bjornsen and Dinkel, 2017; Navarro and McCormick, 2017).

In the case of athletes with complete education, another challenge is imposed: the issue becomes balancing the dedication to training and participation in competitions with their professional occupation. Such conflict can be even more intense due to the fact that employees have specific economic and laboral interests, which is very different from the academic institutions who are committed to educating people (Guirola Gómez et al., 2018; Pallarès et al., 2011; Selva et al., 2013).

## PSYCHOSOCIAL ELEMENT: PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL STAGE

The psychosocial factor and influence of the parents' educational stage on the dual-career phenomenon may help us understand how athletes in our sample group decided to invest in their respective careers. According to our data, the configuration of athletes' families describes the sociocultural reality of the Federal District as the state with the higher academic instruction level and, in parallel, with the best monthly income rates in Brazil (IBGE, 2019). Accordingly, there were 14 mothers and 13 fathers of the 25 athletes with complete higher education or with

an academic degree, such as a specialization, master's degree, or doctorate<sup>6</sup>.

Parents with high instruction levels are a strong indication of family support that can influence the enrollment in universities and encourage academic progress (Neri, 2009). Costa (2012) found a similar context indicating that parents with a high educational stage appear to be the main influencing factor for the prioritization of education by futsal female athletes of Santa Catarina, who were part of a market that allowed neither an exclusive dedication to the sport nor a financial return to ensure autonomy.

We acknowledge that the social origin and academic support provided by the families are crucial factors in various successful or unsuccessful trajectories; however, these very same factors may affect the type of dedication and investment in sports for athletes in a dual-career condition. School surveys have demonstrated that family investment in education ends up exerting strong influence on the trajectory and continuity of children in the school system. Expectations regarding degrees (Barbosa and Sant'Anna, 2010) or maintaining the children's occupational status in line with the parents (Ribeiro, 2009, 2011) are part of the reproduction mechanisms of social classes. The participants in our research demonstrated that such mechanism is present when the search for higher education by the athlete is part of the reproduction of the family *ethos*, and even the high-performance sport is part of these middle-class families' lifestyle. Indeed, regardless of the possibly significant investment in a career in sports, most athletes plan to enter a qualified job market with higher level professionalization after ending their athletic career.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is noteworthy that the State engagement with direct funding of sports should not replace the participation of the private sector, civil society or means of communication, all factors that can help to subsidize sports in different levels and forms. Aside from the financial aspects, school institutions (either public or private) should have an active role in developing strategies to meet the special needs of student-athletes and stimulating the organization of public policies aimed at promoting dual-career in sports. We observed the following profile characteristics for athletes in the Federal District: a) had a good academic performance; b) most of them met the requirements for the national scholarship; c) were residents of upper or middle-upper class administrative regions. This may suggest that the

<sup>6</sup> According to the 1st National Quarterly Research of Continuous Housing Sample 2019, the following states have the highest levels of instruction: 1<sup>st</sup> Federal District; 2<sup>nd</sup> São Paulo; 3<sup>rd</sup> Rio de Janeiro, respectively with 24.5%, 17.5%, and 16.3% of the population with complete high education.

consequent continuity in the program depends on an economic structure and a family that supports training and access to competitions. This data corroborates some literature findings, both national and international, regarding an effective reconciliation approach between sports and education.

Finally, the ASP/FD is a relevant factor for the continuity of athletes in training. However, it should be associated with other strategies for athletic development, such as (a) extensive human resources training and (b) investment in the production of scientific knowledge and technologies applied to sports according to the Brazilian reality. As for financing, the ASP/FD must be the object of a thorough assessment of results in order to, as part of the Organic Law of the FD, become a mandatory action for the State Secretariat of Sports and Leisure in the FD, and not only a governmental program subject to discontinuity.

## STUDY LIMITATIONS

This study was limited by the reduced sample size and predominantly descriptive instruments, given the variability of the group's specific characteristics. For a further investigation, including for performing a qualitative analysis with a larger diversity of athletes and their respective affiliations, the group sample should be expanded and interviews and/or case studies conducted. The strategies established by the family environment, along with the barriers and enablers created by the academic and sports institutions are fundamental points of analysis and discussion for future studies.

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## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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