Introduction to the Special Issue:
Bringing Status to the Table—Attaining, Maintaining, and Experiencing Status in Organizations and Markets

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Introduction

Status issues permeate social and organizational life (e.g., Chen et al. 2003, Fiske 2010, Phillips 2005, Podolny 2005, Ridgeway et al. 2009, Peterson and Harvey 2009). As sociologists and anthropologists have long noted, whenever social actors gather, a status hierarchy among these actors emerges, and through that process, some actors are afforded higher esteem and social worth than others (Blau 1964, Emerson 1962, Homans 1961). The impact of these status differences cuts across all levels of analysis, from an individual actor's position within a group (Tyler and Lind 1992), to a division's standing in an organization, to an organization's network and status position in an industry or a market (Granovetter 1973, Podolny 2005). In each case, the actor's status influences the opportunities and constraints that the actor experiences (Fiske 2010, Ridgeway et al. 2009).

From an investment banking firm seeking to hire star traders in the market, to an executive jockeying for influence in the boardroom, to a senior employee experiencing threat from a highly competent junior employee, organizational actors are deeply concerned with social evaluation and esteem. For this reason, most domains of management research are directly related to the status concerns that individuals, groups, and organizations share in their social contexts (Chen et al. 2003, Pearce 2011). For individuals, status concerns are foundational to issues of one's standing in the group (Tyler and Blader 2003) and the resources that the individual is able to marshal in aid of a favored cause. For organizations, the concern of decision makers being viewed as legitimate or prestigious actors in their industry or market leads them to strategically display and react to status-related signals that affect their legitimacy and market standing (Podolny 2005, Saunder 2006).

Despite its prevalence and importance in individual, organizational, and market dynamics, and its long-standing prominence in disciplinary domains such as sociology and social psychology, the notion of status has not achieved its deserved "status" and attention in management journals. For example, explicit empirical or theoretical examination of the status concept is scant in leading management journals. A search among leading management journals under the keyword of or with a title containing the word "status" at Business Source Premier showed a total of 34 (0.5%) articles in the period of February 2000–February 2011. In contrast, there are 149 (1.6%) and 647 (5.2%) articles examining status in leading social psychology and sociology journals, respectively, in that same period.[1] Fortunately, there

appears to be increasing interest in "status" in management research, evidenced by multiple "status" symposia at recent Academy of Management conferences and an increasing number of published articles on status (Blader and Chen 2011b, Bunderson and Reagans 2011, Menon and Phillips 2011).

We have two objectives for this special issue. First, group, organizational, and market contexts are all settings in which status-related concerns are central to the social dynamics that take place. Each of these settings operates as a stage upon which the construction (and reconstruction), maintenance, and experience of social standing and status are played out on a daily basis. For this reason, research on status in these settings should not only inform management theory and research but should also contribute to existing perspectives and research on status in disciplines. Second, although existing perspectives in basic disciplines have provided important knowledge and insights on status dynamics, many do not incorporate perspectives from one another. As such, we hope that a special issue on status will begin to address this gap by encouraging a multidisciplinary view of status.

Disciplinary differences in the focus of status and status dynamics suggest that different traditions regarding the nature of status and definitions of status are at work. For example, the "status" distinction between an in-group and an out-group concerns a state of one's membership condition (Brewer 1979, Tyler and Lind 1992), a very different meaning from the hierarchical status notion of our focus here. More importantly, findings from primate research, anthropology, sociology, and social psychology have long made a convincing case that there are two routes to social status—dominance and prestige (Jost and Banaji 1994, Henrich and Gil-White 2001, Sidanius and Pratto 1999, Ridgeway and Diekema 1989)—that often map on different intellectual traditions. Whereas dominance-based status is obtained through behaviors such as aggression and coercion (Moors and De Houwer 2005, Sapolsky 2005), prestige-based status is attained through perceived competence (Ridgeway 1991), prosocial behaviors (Flynn et al. 2006, Willer 2009), and association with high-status others who enjoy high social regard (Von Rueden et al. 2008). Thus, a broader multidisciplinary definition of status should not only include a prestige-based status as involving respect, admiration, and deference (e.g., Magee and Galinsky 2008); this broader definition should also include an understanding of status as obtained or achieved through dominance means (e.g., Henrich and Gil-White 2001). If dominance-based, status in fact elicits fear and compliance. Regardless of its bases, status reflects an individual, a group, or an organization's publicly acknowledged social esteem and social worth relative to other individuals, groups, and organizations in a social hierarchy— a definition that we believe encompasses both types of

status. All of the papers in this special issue focus on prestige-based status. Although not covering the entire scope of status dynamics, such a common focus reflects the scholars' belief about the relevance and importance of prestige-based status to organizational and market settings.

Some other common features of status that are characterized by the set of papers composing this special issue include the following. First, status is a "meso" concept, integrating microlevel psychological processes and group dynamics with macrolevel organizational and market arrangements (House et al. 1995). Status hierarchy can occur at an interpersonal level (Hogan and Hogan 1991), at an intragroup level (Phillips 2005, Ridgeway 1991), at an intergroup/interfirm level (Chen et al. 2003, Tajfel and Turner 1986), and at a market level (Phillips and Zuckerman 2001, Podolny 2005). Second, although relatively durable and persistent, status hierarchies are nevertheless more dynamic and fluid than some perspectives assume (Jost and Banaji 1994, Magee and Galinsky 2008, Tilly 1998). Third, as the authors of this special issue demonstrate, status is simultaneously related to many individual, group, and organizational factors, including individual characteristics, performance, upward mobility, workgroup composition, and organizational contexts. Together, the papers in this special issue echo the pervasive nature and effects of status in organizations and markets. Finally, there are multiple causal roles in which status exercises its effects—as an independent variable, a dependent variable, or a moderating variable.

To advance our understanding of status, we suggest that the concept of status may be better understood along its evolutionary phases, and thus, we structure our discussion of the papers herein based on their contribution to our knowledge concerning the dynamics of attainment, maintenance, or consequences of status. It is important to note that almost all the authors in this special issue recognize multiple phases of status, even though the primary focus of an author's paper is often more on a particular phase than the others. In addition to enhancing our knowledge of status dynamics, these papers also make worthy contributions to management theory and research by extending, challenging, or integrating existing knowledge with the theoretical perspective of status (Wagner and Berger 1985).

Dynamics of Status Attainment

Past research has consistently shown that the quest for status is a fundamental human motive (Barkow 1975, Frank 1985, Hogan and Hogan 1991). Indeed, status opens doors and brings immediate advantages and benefits that accrue to status holders across levels, from individuals, to groups, to organizations (Bunderson 2003, Fiske 2010, Podolny 2005). People attain status through

various means and status characteristics, including behavioral assertiveness (Anderson and Kilduff 2009), anger expression (Tiedens 2001), perceived competence (Ridgeway 1991), perceived confidence (Tormala et al. 2007), favor exchange (Flynn et al. 2006), and access to high-status allies and valuable networks (Thye 2000).

Four papers in this special issue advance our knowledge with regard to status attainment dynamics. First, whereas past research tends to focus on the benefits and advantages of status, much less attention has been paid to the downside of status attainment. Two papers by Bendersky and her colleagues (Bendersky and Hays 2012, Bendersky and Shah 2012) provide valuable insights for the downside of status attainment for individual status seekers and groups in which status conflicts/contests among multiple status seekers occur. The paper by Bianchi et al. (2012) on status evaluation in an open source community suggests how organizational contexts may provide a particularly suitable setting for examining construction and diffusion processes of newly emergent status characteristics as well as deactivation of diffuse status characteristics such as age from external societal contexts. Finally, the George et al. (2012) paper demonstrates how the notion of perceived upward mobility—i.e., perceived likelihood of future status attainment in one's organization—could have a profound influence on the relationship between temporary and standard workers in blended workgroups and their organizational commitment and identification. Both papers by Bianchi et al. (2012) and George et al. (2012) show how unique features of modern organizational contexts (such as an open source community) and arrangements (such as blended workgroups of temporary and standard workers) may create fertile grounds for examining attainment dynamics. In the following, we give a brief introduction to each of these four papers.

Downside of Status Attainment on Individual Performance
In examining the performance effects of gaining or losing status in a task group over time, Bendersky and Shah (2012) posit that the process of moving up in the hierarchy can be quite costly because it requires status seekers to allocate valuable and scare resources toward status-oriented goals and away from task goals, which in turn leads to lower individual performance. Results from two longitudinal studies among part-time MBA participants confirm that overinvestment in status-enhancing activities such as increasing assertive communication (Anderson and Kilduff 2009) and favor exchange (Flynn et al. 2006) detracted individuals from their own performance over time, even though those status-enhancing behaviors did successfully help individuals attain status. The findings of these studies also shed light on the dynamic processes of status order evolution.

Downside of Status Attainment Contest on Group Performance
In contrast to the focus on the downside of status attainment on individual performance, Bendersky and Hays (2012) examine the negative effects of status conflict—defined as disputes over people's relative status positions in their group's hierarchy—on group performance. Their results show that status conflict, a type of group conflict rarely considered in past organizational literatures, exerted a negative effect on group performance; furthermore, status conflict hurt group performance by undermining information sharing more than any other types of group conflict. In addition to calling attention to the downside of status attainment on group outcomes, the introduction of the status conflict concept is important for several theoretical reasons. First, it suggests that although status may be attained based on an individual's characteristics and behaviors, as we discussed above, status as a resource may be contested and negotiated. Thus, status hierarchies should be thought of as dynamically evolving social constructions, open to manipulation through efforts of the parties involved rather than as linear relationships between individual characteristics and individual status attainment. Second, consideration of status conflict expands the scope of consideration of conflict types and suggests that it may produce more competitive processes than process conflict, task conflict, and relationship conflict (Jehn and Mannix 2001), which have garnered much attention in past group research.

Impact of Organizational Norms on Selection of Status Characteristics
Bianchi et al. (2012) use status characteristics theory (Berger et al. 1977, Wagner and Berger 1993) to add to our understanding of social status within organizations by explaining why organizations matter in determining which status characteristics will be activated to affect individual status attainment within task groups. By analyzing status rankings within an organization of open source software programmers, they find that the organization develops its own unique shared belief system, which inculcates actors with beliefs about status characteristics that are potentially unique within the boundaries of the organization. Specifically, they find that through the process of status construction and diffusion (Ridgeway and Balkwell 1997), members of the open source organization created new status markers, such as location, that are only meaningful for the organization and selectively nullify societally meaningful diffuse status characteristics, such as education and age. To our knowledge, their study is the first study in the expectations state tradition to demonstrate an outcome for an organization-level selection process for status characteristics. This paper adds to status characteristics theory by demonstrating the powerful impact of organizational

contexts on activation and deactivation of status characteristics and suggests organization contexts as fertile grounds for such processes.

Impact of Perceived Upward Mobility on Workgroup Relationship and Employee Attitudes

George et al. (2012) integrate perspectives from social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986) and self-categorization theory (Turner et al. 1987) to predict the moderating influence of perceived upward mobility in the work relationship between temporary and standard workers in workgroups. Specifically, they propose that when employees perceive a high potential for upward mobility—and thus, a high possibility of future status attainment—the greater proportion of temporary workers in the group will be negatively related to employee attitudes and behaviors such as organization identification and commitment. This is because a higher proportion of temporary workers expands the potential pool of qualified applicants for high-level jobs, thus diminishing one's high perceived potential for upward mobility and status attainment. In contrast, the authors predict and find that when employees perceive the potential for upward mobility and status attainment to be low, they were more likely to focus on the positive relationships in their group and saw each other (either temporary or standard workers) as helping hands as opposed to competitors. This research identified a critical variable—perceived upward mobility—as a powerful moderating factor that specified when and why positive versus negative outcomes associated with blended workgroups would emerge, reconciling previous findings in this domain.

Dynamics of Status Maintenance

One clear conclusion from past research on status maintenance is that once a status hierarchy is established, it tends to remain and be self-sustaining (Blader and Chen 2011b, Chen et al. 2003, Fiske 2010, Magee and Galinsky 2008). Several ideological beliefs have been identified that contribute to the stability of extant status hierarchy. The first is the powerful shared belief across all people in the society (including both those occupying high status and those occupying low status) that hierarchy is an appropriate, inevitable, and even desirable social organization and arrangement (Jost et al. 2004, Hofstede 1980, Sidanius and Pratto 1999). Underlying the acceptance of hierarchy is people's basic need for safety and social order (Leavitt 2003). Other beliefs that provide legitimacy of the hierarchy include the belief that people get what they deserve (Lerner 1980) and the belief that those at the top are "of course" more competent than those at the bottom (Humphrey 1985). So even though those of high status endorse extant hierarchy more than those of low status, studies have shown that those of low status also show acceptance and internalization of hierarchy (Jost and Banaji 1994, Jost et al. 2004).

Furthermore, as much as people would like to believe that competence leads to status, the causal direction, in fact, goes more from status to perceived competence than the other way around (Fiske 2010). Thus, once a status hierarchy is established, shared expectations about who is more competent and more deserving are set in motion across all status levels, which in turn lead to differential opportunity and resource distribution that provide mechanisms to further sustain extant status hierarchy (Merton 1968, Ridgeway and Correll 2004).

In addition to the important effects of ideological beliefs on the dynamics of status maintenance, past research also shows the important role of high status holders in such processes. Specifically, in social encounters with lower-status others, high-status individuals have been shown to express great concerns about maintaining their existing high status (Chen et al. 2003, Jackman 1994, Sidanius and Pratto 1999). Two papers in this special issue further our understanding of dynamics underlying high-status individuals' concern for maintaining their existing status. They make such contributions from the unique angle of organizational leaders with low diffuse status characteristics (e.g., women or young leaders in organizations). The combined results suggest that those in organizational leadership positions who defy low social expectations about their competence in their early careers may be particularly sensitive to threat to their existing status and, hence, more likely to show status defense/maintenance responses—responses to subordinates whose diffuse status characteristics is the opposite of theirs (e.g., men subordinates working for women leaders or older subordinates working for young managers) as well as to subordinates who share the same diffuse characteristic as they do. Pearce and Xu's (2012) paper demonstrates how women and young supervisors were particularly negative when evaluating the performance of men or older subordinates, respectively. Duguid et al. (2012), on the other hand, provide a theoretical framework that explains when and why women or minority leaders may more acutely experience various types of threat to their existing status, which in turn adversely affects their ability and willingness to support demographically similar others. The tendency of those leaders to show such status defense/maintenance patterns, however, may be moderated by their overall sense of internal security, such as their level of self-esteem, need to belong, or general concern about status, according to recent findings by Blader and Chen (2011b). Moreover, Duguid et al. (2012) also suggest that the less these leaders identify with their diffuse social category, or the more their group tenure increases (thus gaining more individuating information about their subordinates), the less they may experience threat to their existing status.

Status Maintenance/Defense in Response to Demographically Dissimilar Others

In their attempt to provide an alternative for the dominant homophily explanation in supervisors' skewed ratings of subordinates' job performance, Pearce and Xu (2012) draw from social dominance and status characteristics theories and posit that status maintenance and defense might better explain and perhaps reconcile past findings. Specifically, they propose that status maintenance and defense exhibited by supervisors with a low diffuse status characteristic, such as women or young adults, might be particularly sensitive to the potential status threat in their relationships with subordinates high on the same diffuse status characteristic (i.e., men or more mature adults), which might then lead to lower performance ratings of subordinates as a way to defend and maintain their existing status. Thus, it was predicted that women or young supervisors would be more likely to give lower performance ratings to men or older subordinates, respectively, relative to any other combinations of supervisor–subordinate dyads. The findings from 10 organizations involving 358 supervisor–subordinate dyads provide strong evidence in support of the status defense explanation. None of the general homophily preference hypotheses was supported. Their paper provides a fairly strong case for how status theories and perspectives can enrich our understanding of organizational behavior in particular and management theory and research in general.

Status Maintenance/Defense in Response to Demographically Similar Others

Although there is a popular assumption that women and racial minorities in leadership positions in organizations will advocate for a demographically similar other in selection and promotion decisions, Duguid et al. (2012) argue that there are critical forces that may impede these individuals from fulfilling this expectation. They propose a value threat framework in which they identify three important factors that interact to exert influence on those individuals' motivation in advocating for a demographically similar other in the selection and promotion decisions: low-status characteristic from the general societal environment (e.g., women or minorities), numerical representation of similar others in the workgroup, and relative prestige/status of their workgroups. Specifically, they argue that the individuals' concern for being seen as valued members, thus maintaining or defending their existing status in organizations, should become most prominent for those individuals when the prestige/status of their workgroup is high (rather than low) and when representation of similar others is low (rather than high) in their workgroup. Under those situations, they posit that women and racial minorities may be more likely to experience three forms of value threat when facing personnel decisions: collective threat, favoritism

threat, and competitive threat. This model makes important contributions to status, women/minority leadership, and diversity literatures and should stimulate avenues for future research in those domains.

Dynamics of Status Consequences

Research on status has focused a great deal on the benefits that high status brings to those possessing it in social interactions (Fiske 2010)—benefits that are largely bestowed to them by their lower-status counterparts. For example, compared with those of lower status, high-status individuals are listened to and accorded more influence (Nelson and Berry 1965, Masling et al. 1955), enjoy more interaction partners (Hardy and Van Vugt 2006), receive more help and support (Van der Vegt et al. 2006), have greater opportunities to develop their skills (Blau 1955), and receive more praise or credit for their performance and successes (Fan and Gruenfeld 1998, Podolny 2005). Relatively less work has considered how people's high status affects their own attitudes and behaviors such as future performance and how it may affect the behaviors and attitudes of those around them. Two papers in this special issue provide insights for such consequences. Whereas Bothner et al. (2012) examine the effect of high status on one's own subsequent performance, Flynn and Amanatullah (2012) explore how high status can raise or lower a coactor's performance level. Both shed light on when and why high status may benefit or undermine the status holder's own performance or a coactor's performance.

Impact of High Status on One's Own Future Performance

Bothner et al. (2012) test two competing perspectives about the effect of an individual's high status on his or her subsequent performance. One perspective posits that status serves as an asset to the status holders, as high-status holders benefit from greater access to tangible and intangible resources than low-status holders and thus enjoy greater chances to continue past success (Frank 1985, Merton 1968, Phillips 2001, Podolny 2005, Stuart and Ding 2006). The other perspective, however, suggests that high-status holders tend to perform worse than their lower-status counterparts as the complacency and lack of focus that tend to accompany privileged positions would ultimately undermine their capacity to maintain their success (Burt 2009, Malmendier and Tate 2009, Pareto 1991). Testing these two opposing views in the panel data on the PGA tour and on NASCAR's Winston Cup Series, Bothner et al. (2012) find curvilinear effects of status in both empirical settings. That is, existing high status leads to high performance until a very high level of status is reached, after which performance wanes. While providing support for both perspectives, these results provide new insights about status

dynamics—pointing out the possibility that shifts in vertical orderings of the status hierarchy may occur endogenously as a function of status itself!

Impact of High Status on a Coactor's Performance

Flynn and Amanatullah (2012) argue that individuals with high status command greater attention from their peers and enjoy more influence than those with lower status. For this reason, performing alongside a higher-status performer should heighten one's aspiration level and lead to a performance improvement. Indeed, using different methodologies in three studies, including having laboratory participants solve anagrams to examining professional golfers in the Masters Tournament, the authors found that people got psyched up and improved their performance in the presence of a high-status, rather than a low-status, counterpart. However, the positive effect of performing alongside a high-status coactor was only true when coaction was independent. People got psyched out and performed poorly when they competed directly with a higher-status counterpart. Thus, performing alongside a higher-status counterpart may not always elevate one's performance and status in the existing hierarchy. It depends on whether the individual is performing independently from or in direct competition against a higher-status other.

Implications and Future Research Directions

The eight papers in this special issue highlight at least the following five areas that might act as focal points or themes for future research on the role of status in management theory and research.

The first is the fuller explication and examination of both the benefits and detriments of status to the status seekers and holders, and others, such as coworkers or workgroups, in their immediate social environment. Past research on status tends to focus on benefits of status to the status holders and pays much less attention to the detriments and downsides of status. Several papers in this special issue (e.g., Bendersky and Hays 2012, Bendersky and Shah 2012, Bothner et al. 2012, Flynn and Amanatullah 2012) demonstrate the importance and usefulness of examining the negative aspects of status as well as when and why they may occur.

Second, the papers by Duguid et al. (2012), George et al. (2012), and Pearce and Xu (2012) all suggest the important consideration of status and status distribution in increasingly diverse settings in organizations. Research on work diversity in the past has mainly focused on how the degree of heterogeneity in a group or an organization with respect to race, nationality, gender, and age may affect individual and group outcomes such as performance and cohesion (van Knippenberg and Schippers 2007), yet status and status distribution among individuals of such diverse settings are often omitted in the examination or confounded with these measures of heterogeneity. Results in work such as this compels one to ask, "How many of the results in diversity research may be better explained by just examining heterogeneity in status?" As those authors demonstrate, sources of diversity such as gender, age, and the temporary versus full-time distinction are always accompanied by status distinctions, which have a profound influence on people's evaluations of one another and commitment to the group. Future research in the diversity domain and the cross-national/multinational domain should benefit from systematic consideration of multiple sources of status as well as when and why status distinctions may have positive or negative effects on individual and group outcomes.

Third, the findings of Duguid et al. (2012) and Pearce and Xu (2012) suggest the unique psychological challenges faced by women and minority leaders in the workplace. Unlike their men and majority leader counterparts, women and minority leaders appear to share acute concerns about their legitimacy as high-status individuals in their workgroups, which in turn adversely affects their ability and motivation to objectively evaluate both demographically similar and dissimilar subordinates. How such challenges might differ between leaders with a socially diffuse high-status versus low-status characteristic will be worth exploring in the future. Moreover, it will also be fruitful to explore moderating factors that may strengthen or weaken such tendencies for each type of leaders.

Fourth, as we noted above, all the papers in the special issue focus on antecedents, maintenance, and consequences of prestige-based status, not dominance-based status. Clearly, all the scholars contributing to this special issue seem to believe that prestige-based status is highly relevant and important in organizational and market settings. However, behavioral dominance and aggression are not uncommon in work organizations (Glomb and Liao 2003, LeBlanc and Barling 2004), and thus, it may be important and useful to examine dynamics associated with dominance-based status in future management research. Explicit comparison and contrast between the two will also contribute to social science literatures on the differentiation between dominance-based and prestige-based status.

Finally, in addition to clarifying differences in dynamics between dominance-based status and prestige-based status, future research on status should consider a clearer differentiation from its closest sister construct of hierarchy—power. Despite decades of conceptual discussion on the differentiation between status and power (e.g., Emerson 1962, Fiske 2010, Goldhamer and Shils 1939, Ridgeway and Walker 1995, Sachdev and Bourhis 1985), scant empirical efforts have been devoted to examining the differences and similarities between the two—see a

recent exception by Blader and Chen (2011a). In fact, much of past empirical research on social hierarchy often uses status and power interchangeably as if they were the same. As such, significant questions remain about their differences, such as how status and power may differentially affect the behaviors and attitudes of those holding them toward their lower-ranked counterparts. Moreover, for status research to fully achieve its distinct "status" and make meaningful progress in social sciences and management research, it is important that we begin to gain a better understanding, both empirically and conceptually, of the unique dynamics that status or power renders.

Conclusion

Together, the scholars who have contributed to this special issue have undertaken the challenge to examine fundamental issues surrounding attaining, maintaining, and experiencing status consequences in organizational and market settings. We applaud Linda Argote and *Organization Science*'s support for this special issue, and we deeply appreciate the scholarship and efforts of the authors who have stepped up to further the objectives that this special issue hopes to achieve. These papers attest to the fact that the study of status and status dynamics is essential to the understanding of organizations and management. It not only informs but also modifies and expands theories and research of management and status dynamics. The collective effort here should stimulate further inquiry regarding the role of status in organizations and markets.

Endnote

[1]Included in our search were eight leading management journals: *Organization Science, Administrative Science Quarterly, Academy of Management Journal, Academy of Management Review, Management Science, Strategic Management Journal, Organization Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, and the *Journal of International Business Studies*; eight leading social psychology journals: *Psychological Review, Annual Review of Psychology, Psychology Bulletin, American Psychologist,* the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin,* and the *Journal of Applied Psychology*; and eight leading sociology journals: *American Sociological Review,* the *American Journal of Sociology, Social Forces, Social Problems, Demography, Social Science Research, Sociology of Education,* and *Social Psychology Quarterly*. Selections of these journals were made based on journal ranking information in these respective fields.

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