Introduction

In this final contribution, the authors of the Special Issue reflect collaboratively on the work gathered in the Special Issue. Our reflections address genres of scientific writing, the need for networks to support oppositional or critical research, the sociopolitical context of the work written over the period during which the Special Issue was developed, and the role of personal biographies and friendships in such work.

Graham V. Crookes

There is a small genre in writing, or more specifically, in writing pedagogy, called “writer’s memo”. I (Graham) only encountered this term after most of the following pieces had been written, but I think it captures the simple intention our group of authors has here. Critical language pedagogy certainly includes critiques of the genres of written academic language and should be open to the use of a wider variety of genres than usual, including deploying less common ones to supplement or challenge more accepted ones. Up until now, we have used a fairly conventional academic article writing style and structure in this Special Issue; here in the final paper, we take advantage of a more personal way of writing to share with the readership what, in a broader sense, we think we have been doing and intend to do; and variously locate ourselves with respect to our personal professional trajectories, the field, and the immediate sociopolitical contexts of this work, as well as allude to the processes we have used and the goals we still have. We step away from the conventional genre to emphasize, above all, the importance, for critical language pedagogy, of a collective of real people (embodied, jointly-acting group members with individual personal voices), of collaboration, of shared but differing perspectives interacting, and of a network, something particularly needed to maintain and sustain oppositional stances and states of mind.

Priscila Fabiane Farias and Leonardo da Silva

Our interest in critical language pedagogy derives primarily from our experience as English teachers who felt like teaching for communication purposes did not suffice. That is so because, based both on our personal trajectories (in which education and peer influence have played a major role in our critical consciousness development process)
and on our observance of the Brazilian educational scenario, we believe a commitment to critical education is not only an option—it is actually urgent and necessary.

For us, critical (language) pedagogy has to do with one’s understanding of what the role of education actually is. Additionally, perhaps one of the greatest challenges when teaching from a critical perspective—since it is not a method or a technique—is that it requires the reexamining of concepts and paradigms of teaching, learning, and language. It is not surprising, thus, that even though Brazil is the home of Paulo Freire, our system of education—at least generally speaking—is still pervaded by banking education principles. How can that change? We believe it is of utmost importance that teachers have the opportunity to develop their reflection–action so as to understand their role as agents of social change through praxis. We emphasize, thus, the relevance of initial and continued teacher education that fosters educators’ agency and critical consciousness development. In other words, we need teacher education that discusses critical teaching from a theoretical perspective but that also follows critical pedagogy principles in practice. Moreover, at the level of educational policies, instead of the implementation of initiatives that focus on control (dictating what should be taught and how), we also need to have teachers’ practices being recognized, valued, and trusted. Most importantly, in these challenging times, it is imperative that we defend the right to public education for all and, by promoting critical education, continue the fight for democracy and social justice.

Through our work as critical educators who work in different levels of education (that is, university and basic and technological levels), we mostly aim at creating spaces for reflecting on possibilities, and perhaps principles, that may elucidate/encourage viable paths for critical language development. There is still much to be done and much to fight for, but we argue that the way to move towards a critical project for education is by promoting horizontal and non-hierarchical relations that involve not only researchers but also teachers, students, parents, and the community as a whole. In this sense, to end our piece in this final paper, we highlight our gratitude for having the chance to be part of this community of critical educators and thinkers, with whom we were able to learn, share and continue developing our own critical consciousness.

Sávio Siqueira

In my many years of experience as an English teacher and teacher educator, I have heard many times from colleagues from other areas that we comprised a group of elitist, alienated, acritical, and apolitical teachers who would barely think of our profession and practice from a critical and political perspective. It took me some time to grasp and finally understand the tone and dosage of such criticisms. For someone born and raised in Paulo Freire’s home country, Brazil, it was exactly my contact with his educational philosophy that made me realize that my duty as a language educator was to go far beyond the teaching and learning of a new linguistic code affiliated with cultural aspects of a dominant and stereotypical target culture. That process indeed was much more complex than I had ever imagined and it was my personal initiative of delving into the developments of critical pedagogy that made me come to terms with the social relevance of my job as an ELT professional.

Once aware of that condition, the road from critical pedagogy to critical language pedagogy was a natural one, and among the different possibilities I could envision for my career from that point on, the consolidation of my position as a researcher and teacher educator appeared to be irreversible, culminating in my work as a PhD candidate. My work was overtly a study that sought to establish a solid dialogue between critical pedagogy and ELT, envisioning results that could be multiplied within my context and thus foster critical language awareness in my fellow teachers, especially the novice teachers I was responsible for educating under a perspective in many ways very different from the one that had accompanied me for a greater part of my professional development.

The invitation to participate in this collective work has served as a great stimulus to revisit a work conducted some years ago and that has taken me to places I had never imagined to working with colleagues I had never conceived of sharing the same floor with
in order to share and discuss ELT practices under a critical perspective. It was a great (re)visit, as I could see from that point of departure the professional I was, the quality of that pioneer work, and, through an important update, evaluate and realize the contributions I was humbly able to bring to the field in my local context. As Crookes (2013) [1] (p. 8) would pose, “critical language pedagogy emerges from the interaction of theories and practices of language teaching that foster language learning, development, and action on part of students, directed towards improving problematic aspects of their lives, as seen from a critical perspective on society.” It is in this interaction of theories and practices that this Special Issue is founded, and where it lies its whole potential to bring together CLT experts and researchers from different countries and of different ages and backgrounds, each sharing a bit of their interest and experience to bring to the surface topics of great importance for the contemporary language classroom.

We live in a superdiverse world where mobility, voluntary or forced, has come to the forefront of our lives in practically all corners of the world. Expectedly, such a scenario has posed innumerable challenges to education in general and language education in particular. In this current landscape, we have been talking about language disinvention (Makoni and Pennycook 2007) [2], endorsing perspectives that supplant the idea of language as a system of rules and norms, thus affiliating with those of language as a social practice, a social construct, and intersectional, to name but a few aspects. Inevitably, this has brought many implications to the process of language teaching and learning that, in my view, cannot be carried out uncritically whatsoever. In other words, critical language pedagogy has simply become *sine qua non* to teaching practices that have social justice as their main and overall objective. The papers in this issue, in one way or another, reflect such an attempt.

**Gordon Blaine West**

At the time at which the articles in this Special Issue were written, several governments around the world (including countries in which some of us are based) were controlled by extremist, right-wing political parties. Additionally, we are writing in the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic. These two conditions have served to threaten education generally with budget cuts and shifts to virtual platforms where the inequalities are heightened by a digital divide between students. They are a particular threat to language education, and particularly critical language pedagogy, which seeks to challenge inequality. Right-wing governments have advanced nationalist agendas that demonize foreign others and immigration at a time when we are more isolated and unable to act collectively due to the pandemic. In the United States, this has meant years of anti-immigration policies and discourse from the government that had shrunk the enrollment of international students even prior to COVID-19, pushed asylum seekers out, and most egregiously separated children from their parents at the border. At the same time, teaching itself has transformed during this pandemic. From where I write in Madison, Wisconsin, in-person classes at all levels (kindergarten–university) ceased in March 2020 and have not resumed as of December 2020. While in some ways, this has opened up possibilities—I have been able to work with classes where students have joined from around the world that might not otherwise have been able to join—there have been many challenges, with isolation being one of the primary difficulties. It is difficult to make deep connections and work toward a common understanding from computers, let alone when we are dealing with poor or unstable internet connections, different time zones, and limited time.

In this context, this Special Issue on *Critical Language Pedagogy* is more vital than ever. This is not just because we need a critical language pedagogy to fight against injustices that have grown in our education systems, but also because we as critical language pedagogues need to come together and form a community of ideas to sustain ourselves. To write these papers, we shared drafts and workshopped ideas over the course of several months. This process was unique compared to other experiences of writing for a Special Issue, in which one either sends an abstract and later a paper if invited but never communicates with the other authors or even knows who they are or what their papers are about until the issue is published. The version of my paper that appears in this issue is not only my own, but was
shaped by the ways in which I learned and was inspired by ideas put forth by others in our group (this is not to say that anyone but myself is responsible for any errors). Our process also, for me, connects with a tradition in critical scholarship of collective work and writing. As an undergraduate, I was introduced to the work of a group of Argentinean scholars whose work came out of the economic collapse in Argentina in the early 2000s, Colectivo Situaciones. Their collective work (e.g., Colectivo Situaciones, 2007) [3], was a model for me of how critical scholarship might be done in a collective way that emphasizes the ways in which our ideas grow from experiences and interactions with each other rather than being our own, sole possessions. It serves as a stark counterpoint to the ways in which research is produced and valued in neoliberal universities where solo authored publications and citation metrics are used to measure the value of individual contributions.

Those neoliberal policies and measurements build on what Foucault (2008) [4] termed an idea of humans as homo economicus, or entrepreneurs of themselves. In this conception, as academics, our work holds value in publications that can be either individually attributed or parsed out for individual attribution (as in cases where more credit is given to the first author of multi-authored work), and becomes a form of human capital logged on our CVs and used to increase and prove our individual worth. Before right-wing governments came to power, and before the COVID-19 pandemic, this system had primed us to work as isolated individuals. For me, the current environment has served to help me realize just how acutely isolated we have been. This neoliberal value system stands as an impediment to critical work that values community building, not only in the classrooms that we have described in these papers, but also in the production of critical scholarship that then builds beyond our individual classrooms. For me, that is the true value of the collaborative work around the articles in this Special Issue; they represent a process and work that connects us at a time when we are isolated and our work is more difficult than ever. Knowing that we are connected in our shared pursuit of social justice, despite our different paths and the physical distance between us, brings hope, and as Freire said, “we need critical hope the way a fish needs unpolluted water” because “without hope there is little we can do” (2004) [5] (pp. 8–9). We can find hope in each other, and the continued hope in this work is that others will find this Special Issue and in it a sense of that hope and inspiration for continued critical work in language teaching.

Hayley Anne Cannizzo

All of us writing for this Special Issue recognize that we work within a larger academic system we hope to subvert. A system where your merit is often reduced to the number of papers you publish and your value is measured in capital. A system whose structures were historically built to cater to wealthy, white, cis-gender, heterosexual men—and largely continue to do so. A system that is not welcoming to all and accepts few. The rules of this system are not equally accessible or available to everyone and yet, if you do not have access to them, the system will say this lack of access is your own fault and failure. Such is the reality of the neoliberal institutions in which we work, live and teach. Therefore, we resist because we know the survival of those who do not belong to the dominant group depends on change, because we believe in compassion, in shared humanity, and because we know we can and must do better.

I cannot stop sadness from overtaking me as I reflect on the world that surrounds us as we teach, write., and live. The year 2020 has been a year of continued trauma and upset. Like many, I am tired, I am scared, and I am angry, but this Special Issue has given me renewed hope. How our writing materialized is itself an act of resistance. It was not done in isolation, but in collaboration. It is the product of many meetings, feedback, and readings of each other’s work. We have considered and highlighted the ways our pieces connect, as well as the strength, uniqueness, and necessity of their diversity. Through these unprecedented times, we have not let the world keep us divided, but instead collaborated and held each other up. We would have never succeeded in completing this issue without each other. Despite what we are told by the academy, the value of our work will not be measured in the number of citations we receive, but in the connection, collaboration, and
radical compassion we have shown each other. Through our writing and friendship, we continue to resist and challenge the systems in which we work and live—to redefine their value and recreate what it means to be successful.

I now turn to feminist language pedagogy. No defining moment led me to become a feminist teacher. I was always drawn to the work of feminist activists and scholars, to their critiques and analysis, the way they were able to make sense and explain the world in a way I felt but could not articulate. Feminist theory is like a friend I take with me to help make sense of what I am fighting for and against. I challenge you, dear reader, and I challenge my fellow educators and collaborators to explore feminism, and apply it to your life and work. Many still see the word “feminism” and think only of white women, of the glass ceiling, and of paid maternity leave. This could not be further from the truth. While feminism is those things, it is also so much more. Those that take the time to explore it will see that there is a home for everyone in feminism, for women, men, trans people, non-binary people, people of color, indigenous people, old people, young people and any other person there may be. Like our writing, feminism redefines value by validating ways of being in this world that are delegitimized by dominant, oppressive groups. It creates kinships and gives us all a home. Is not that understanding, that compassion, and that humanity what we want for everyone? For our families? For our friends? For our students? For ourselves? If so, then I challenge you to look beyond what you know and live a more feminist life. Explore what being a feminist means to you, and if you feel so inclined, take a moment to write or speak about it. We need more feminism in the literature, in our classrooms, in our lives, and in this world. I hope that moving forward, it gives you the hope that it has given me.

Jayson Parba

Whenever I am asked about the relevance of Critical Language Pedagogy (CLP), I often respond by saying that it will transform not just teachers’ classroom practices but also the way they see the world. Perhaps it is easier for me to respond in such a manner as someone who has embraced critical language teaching in my work, specifically in the teaching of Filipino, a language spoken by a racialized and marginalized population in the U.S. Perhaps it is also much easier for me to engage in this type of work because of my critical ideological leanings (e.g., poststructuralist, anti-linguicism, anti-racist, anti-homophobic, anti-war, anti-poverty, and feminist), and the relatively safe space afforded me by my current position in academia. I do realize, however, that not all teachers may be critically inclined or that given the institutional constraints in their educational milieu (i.e., surveillance by the state and standardized curriculum and testing) they may be limited in their ability to adopt critical perspectives and create curricular changes. Thus, I hope that my contribution and those of others in this Special Issue on Critical Language Pedagogy in Educational Sciences will create possibilities of hope, if not change, for other teachers who are curious about various ways by which to incorporate critical perspectives into their teaching.

Personally and professionally, I have experienced a sense of contentment by adopting critical perspectives and implementing—to some extent reinventing—CLP in my work. I often tell friends and colleagues that when I first started teaching Filipino at a university in Hawai‘i, I noticed that my students were not that engaged. I could sense it in the way they talked about the topics, in the quality of their work and their repeated silence during discussions. I had always wondered why. This slowly changed, however, when I negotiated the syllabus with my students in order to foreground their experiences and lived realities in the curriculum, as there was obviously a gap between home and school. By doing so, my students and I engaged in reframing my teaching practices and their learning experiences. In other words, my students became active participants in disrupting the status quo discourses of language learning and in reinventing the Filipino language curriculum. Additionally, by legitimating their knowledge and experiences with me they became “critical agents in the act of knowing” (Freire, in Shor and Freire, 1987) [6] (p. 33). The negotiation was transformative. The materials that my students were reading, or
learning, became about them, and not just about the Filipino experiences in the Philippines. Relevant topics about Filipino migration to the U.S., Filipino American students’ identity development, Filipino representation in mainstream American media, and Filipino Americans’ struggle against racism and discrimination, among others, became a core part of the Filipino Upper Intermediate curriculum.

In this Special Issue, the focus of my contribution on teaching critical vocabulary springs from my daily encounters with Filipino heritage students (e.g., generation 1.5 and second and third generations). They expressed to me explicitly their desire to name important and critical concepts and ideas in Filipino or to be able to participate in conversations that matter to them or those that impact their identity development or abilities to challenge raciolinguistic ideologies. For instance, a student once told me that our Filipino 300 classes were:

... a big jump from the 200 level because we were learning conversational Filipino and then suddenly these big words. We’re like, “Oh what does that mean?” It’s important culture and language wise cause in conversational Filipino we did not learn those big words that we say all the time.

By “big words,” I believe, my student is referring to critical vocabulary, which I have tried to describe and theorize in my contribution to this Special Issue. I hope that my initial attempts here will draw more attention to this important ingredient in the development of students’ critical consciousness, and then ripple into transformative actions on behalf of the Filipino community or for any marginalized members of the society. Until students are able to identify, name, and disrupt homogenizing, everyday discourses in the target language, they might continue to feel voiceless, vulnerable, and hopeless. Thus, I am reminded of James Baldwin’s (2000) A Talk to Teachers, and I am sharing this in the hopes that this statement will resonate with teacher audiences of this journal: “The obligation of anyone who thinks of himself as responsible is to examine society and try to change and fight it—at no matter what risk. This is the only hope that society has. This is the only way societies change” (p. 124).

Graham V. Crookes

As Gordon has already written, in developing the articles for this issue, most of us were able to meet and discuss overall what could be done, and then to meet again (on about as many occasions as there were papers) to discuss and provide each other with feedback, or in some cases just to provide written comments on various of the papers. The pandemic provided an environment in which videoconferencing had become almost a way of life, so this long-distance relationship seemed natural, though I should point out that it built on pre-existing relationships made mostly in past in-person visits (a form that now seems antiquated but to which surely we hope to return). Additionally, in setting up this arrangement, I wanted to emphasize to us all, and am doing so again here for any reader, that building and maintaining relationships for teacher-researchers and young scholars is important. That is so obvious it seems ridiculous to have to say it. However, it is doubly important for those of us who have, and wish to maintain, an oppositional stance. Unless we seek out and maintain connections with those who have something of a critical consciousness, we may not be able to maintain and develop our own. Going further still with remarks that are self-evident, teachers cannot make change alone. Scholar-activists who are inherently marginal through their espousal of critical disciplines have to develop and draw on a network of peers; since not a lot of our education will have modeled this, we should look for opportunities to try it out and learn it through doing it, while naming what we are doing; doing it consciously may allow for reflective development of the skills and dispositions needed for this kind of practice.

I am grateful to the editors of this journal, Education Sciences, who approached me out of the blue with the suggestion for a Special Issue, and for their patience as we have put this together (at a time in the world when many things have been delayed and made
more challenging by the collective pain the world is suffering; pains that are not uniformly distributed, incidentally).

I am grateful to my fellow authors for being willing to put in the extra time to gather, discuss, and gently and respectfully critique each other’s work. I know that this is different from how articles are normally developed and sent off (individually, to an editor one probably does not know, to be reviewed by anonymous if well-intentioned reviewers). Our work demonstrates what we know: that science, teaching, and indeed the “education sciences” do not have to be individualist exercises in abstraction, but can rather be collaborative engagements with the real world and contribute to making it, with all its imperfections, a better world.

**Priscila Leal**

Please allow me to disrupt the academic writing genre and “speak” candidly with you, reader. The reader might be unaware that this section has been written openly and chronologically. By chronologically, I mean that the names on the top reflect the authors who wrote their entries first with new contributions being added to the bottom of the page. By openly, I mean that we used a shared google doc and were able to read the previous contributions before adding our own. As you can see, I am one of the last ones and I have spent the last few days pondering what I could share that has not already been said. I echo my colleagues’ messages of hope, resilience, and community.

One of the greatest personal benefits of doing research in the area of critical applied linguistics is meeting others who share similar goals. I met Angela, Jayson, and Gordon when we were graduate students attending a seminar on critical pedagogy facilitated by Graham. On an individual level, there was a lot to process from the texts and group discussions in this seminar and it felt like class time was never enough to fully engage in deep, open, and sometimes vulnerable, conversations. I found myself seeking to continue these conversations outside the classroom and, before I knew it, Angela, Jayson, Gordon, myself and a few others were the critical pedagogy group (except we did not call ourselves that then). Our impromptu gatherings in the hallways, cafeteria, and reading room became weekly meetings on the tables outside the cafeteria, with assigned readings and rotating facilitators. It was a safe space to share our processes, questions, struggles, small victories, and desire to learn more about our roles and possibilities as we attempted to become/be agents of social change in language education. These were invaluable opportunities to engage in a dialogical, sustained process of reflection and reflexivity. Years have passed, the original members have graduated, and the group continues. The work of an educator for social justice is hard. There are times when I ask myself if I have made any difference and Priscila Farias kindly reminds me that some of these effects may not happen until later and that I might not even get to witness them. We need each other, we need the support of others who understand the heavy load we carry. If you cannot find your community, create one (or join me). There are others out there seeking it, just like you.

The kids are done doing school from home today and are playing a massively multiplayer online game (MMOG) happily and loudly next to me. Before I can ask them to play quietly—I am trying to work (from home, for the last 10 months, because of COVID-19); they are trying to have fun (at home, without their friends for the last 10 months, because of COVID-19)—they ask me to join in their game. After a moment of hesitation (on my part), one of them asks, “How come you cannot have fun while you are working?” I smile, “I can and I am.” “Look at all these names,” I say as I show them my computer screen and scroll all the way to the top of the page. They smile too as they read the names and recognize (most of) them. “You are lucky you get to work with your friends.” Yes, I know.

**Angela H. Häusler**

The world around us has been shaking and changing during this past year. Amidst this experience of intensifying health, environmental, governmental, and humanitarian crises, it has been a cherished constant to meet virtually with a group of friends and mentors who share an unwavering commitment to critical pedagogy, social justice, and language
activism. When our mentor Graham Crookes first launched the Critical Pedagogy Group nearly ten years ago, I recall that we often would gather in outdoor spaces, experimenting with different meeting locations around campus. Unlike other student interest groups in the department, we did not have a fixed or assigned locale. Where we would end up next was always a surprise: It could be under a fragrant plumeria tree protecting us from the blazing Hawaiian summer sun or a table exposed to the elements with the occasional drips of ua (‘rain’) passing by.

Personally, I loved the nomadic character of our group. It escaped some of the institutionalized gravity and defining structure of a university classroom. The meetings-in-motion generated a spirit of spontaneity and resisted in a physical and symbolic way the sedentary logic of drawing boundaries around places, knowledge, identities. What to the outside eye may have looked a little messy, in important ways echoed the eternal tension that any social movement, any revolutionary, and any critical language teacher faces sooner or later: How can we build alternative ways of engaging in conversations and collaborations without replicating the same registers, roles, and infrastructures we are hoping to change? “Reading the world precedes reading the word,” Freire emphasized repeatedly throughout his work. Where could this tenet of critical pedagogy be better articulated than in places where the open sky is the limit to our engagement with the world?

While there were no ceilings and walls in our surroundings, the meeting agendas mirrored this wide-open setup. One week, we were a reading group that engaged in discussions over the relationship between critical pedagogy and poststructuralism; at the next meeting, we morphed into a language teacher support group that weighed in on how a friend’s classroom activity could become more critical and relevant to his students; and at times, we simply acted as a soundboard to each other when university politics or national news made us anxious about life. Our group was in a constant “state” of becoming, a community charged with possibility rather than predefined by form and objectives. Similarly, although our experimentation with outdoor locations never made it onto a meeting agenda for discussion and reflection, there are seemingly infinite possibilities for critical language teachers to work with the sensations, emotions, and memories that learning in the more-than-human world evokes. Clearly, where we read the word matters a great deal if we seek to facilitate meaningful and critical engagement with environmental justice, settler colonialism, and other place-based challenges of our time.

I am immensely grateful to Graham Crookes, my CLP friends of the first hour, Priscila, Gordon, and Jayson, and the constantly growing network of critical pedagogy researchers and practitioners who came together in this special issue at a time when our personal worlds appeared to grow smaller and smaller and only physical distance could keep us safe. Meeting virtually and connecting from different parts of the world ensured that we would still think big about social justice and societal change, and that we would not lose sight of the horizon behind the computer screen.

Nicole Ziegler

My goal in contributing here is to consider the past, current, and future work that the fields in which I am situated as a scholar have taken (or not taken, as is sometimes the case) a holistic view of how language learning can be fostered concurrently with a focus on topics of importance to learners and the world at large. Although I consider myself to be an applied linguist—someone interested in taking what we know (or what we think we know) from research and applying it to the classroom to improve not only learning outcomes, but the language learning experience—there are certainly a range of ways that I might better serve both the participants in my research as well as those who may be affected by any lessons learned from the outcomes. For example, although I have considered the difficulty and complexity of tasks I’ve used in research, I have not always given thought to the many factors addressed by CLP and how this might be another layer at which to engage and support learners’ educational processes and experiences.

I am grateful to my fellow contributors and colleagues on this Special Issue, as I have learned a great deal from them about how I might take steps to consider critical perspectives
in my ongoing work. As others have highlighted above, the need for continued critical work in language teaching is crucial, and bringing this perspective to a relatively established pedagogical framework (TBLT) offers scholars and educators opportunities to leverage one with the other. In other words, I hope that this issue will encourage continued work using TBLT to inform CLP as well as increased use of critical perspectives in task-based and instructed SLA classrooms. If we wish for our work to have greater meaning, then it is necessary to reflect on how we might reframe our research and teaching practices to incorporate opportunities for challenging power structures or systems of oppression and to also consider how we might use our relative positions of power to make a difference where we can. I have learned a great deal from the authors of these articles, and I am grateful for their patience and guidance as I learn how I might bring a more critical and reflective stance to my own research and the implications it may have for the classroom. It has been an honor to be a part of this scholarly endeavor, and I hope to continue to build my understanding of how CLP and TBLT might combine their strengths to better serve learners in our changing world.

Author Contributions: All authors contributed equally to this editorial. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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