

# **Evidence Problems and Materials**



# Evidence

# Problems and Materials

SEVENTH EDITION

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*In loving memory of my mother, Frances Friedland, and aunt and uncle,  
Lillian and Bernard Friedland*

*For my parents, Geraldine and George, my wife, Joann, and our children,  
Mandakini and Anish—for making every day special!*



# Contents

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Preface	xvii
<b>Chapter 1 · Introduction to Evidence</b>	3
§ 1.01 The Meanings and Uses of Evidence	5
§ 1.02 The Rules of Evidence	6
[A] History	6
[B] The Objectives of the Rules	9
§ 1.03 Evidence in Action	10
A Criminal Case: <i>United States v. Wayne Gillis</i>	10
<i>United States v. Wayne Gillis</i>	13
§ 1.04 Elaborating on the Meanings of the Term “Evidence”	17
§ 1.05 Types of Evidence	20
[A] Real, Representative, or Testimonial Evidence	20
[B] Direct and Circumstantial Evidence	20
§ 1.06 Mixed Problem	22
§ 1.07 Relevant Ethics Rules	22
§ 1.08 Summary and Review	24
<b>Chapter 2 · The Functions of Judge, Jury, and Attorneys at Trial</b>	25
§ 2.01 Introduction	27
§ 2.02 The Judge’s Role	31
[A] Questions of Admissibility	31
[B] The Standard of Review on Appeal	34
§ 2.03 The Jury’s Role	35
§ 2.04 The Attorney’s Role	36
§ 2.05 Case Supplement	37
[A] <i>Ohler v. United States</i>	37
§ 2.06 Mixed Problems	40
§ 2.07 Relevant Ethics Rules	41
§ 2.08 Summary and Review	44
<b>Chapter 3 · Relevance [FRE 401, 402]</b>	45
§ 3.01 The Importance of Relevance	46
§ 3.02 Defining Relevance	47
[A] What Does “Probative” Mean?	47
[B] What Is a “Fact of Consequence”?	48

[C] Identifying Relevant Evidence	52
[1] Constructing Inference Chains	52
[2] Understanding the Conceptual Breadth of Relevance	53
[3] Identifying the Line between Relevance and Irrelevance	55
§ 3.03 Conditional Relevance	60
§ 3.04 Mixed Problems	63
§ 3.05 Cases and Rules	65
[A] <i>Franchina v. City of Providence</i>	65
[B] <i>United States v. Campbell</i>	67
[C] Rules Comparison	69
§ 3.06 Relevant Ethics Rules	69
§ 3.07 Summary and Review	69
<b>Chapter 4 · Unfairly Prejudicial Evidence [FRE 403]</b>	<b>71</b>
§ 4.01 Introduction	72
§ 4.02 Probability Evidence of Guilt in a Criminal Case	77
§ 4.03 Evidence of Excessive Violence	78
§ 4.04 Scientific Evidence	81
§ 4.05 Similar Occurrences, Happenings, and Events	85
§ 4.06 Mixed Problems	89
§ 4.07 Cases and Rules	93
[A] <i>People v. Collins</i>	93
[B] <i>Old Chief v. United States</i>	97
[C] <i>Eisenhour v. County</i>	99
[D] <i>Sprint/United Mgmt. Co. v. Mendelsohn</i>	100
[E] Rules Comparison	102
§ 4.08 Relevant Ethics Rules	102
§ 4.09 Summary and Review	104
<b>Chapter 5 · Character and Habit Evidence [FRE 404–406]</b>	<b>105</b>
§ 5.01 Introduction	108
[A] What Is Character Evidence?	108
[B] The Three Forms of Character Evidence	109
[C] Character vs. Credibility Evidence	110
§ 5.02 Propensity Character Evidence	110
[A] Propensity Evidence Defined	110
[B] Why Offer Propensity Evidence?	110
[C] Why Exclude Propensity Evidence?	111
[D] Exceptions: Admissible Propensity Evidence	111
[1] For a Person Accused of a Crime	111
[2] To Attack a Witness’s Veracity	111
[E] Forms of Admissible Propensity Evidence	112
[F] Problems	112
[1] Identifying Propensity Character Evidence	112



§ 5.03 Character Evidence Exception: The Criminal Defense Offers Evidence First	115
§ 5.04 Character Evidence on an Essential Element in a Case	117
[A] Problems Involving Character as an Essential Element of a Case	118
§ 5.05 Mixed Character Evidence Problems	119
§ 5.06 Other Acts Evidence: Offered for Non-Character Purposes [FRE 404(b)]	120
§ 5.07 Res Gestae: Completing the Story	124
§ 5.08 Cases and Rules	126
[A] <i>People v. Zackowitz</i>	126
[B] <i>Michelson v. United States</i>	130
[C] <i>Rex v. Smith</i>	135
[D] <i>Dowling v. United States</i>	136
[E] <i>Huddleston v. United States</i>	140
[F] <i>People v. Chambers</i>	143
[G] Rules Comparison	148
§ 5.09 Character Evidence Review	149
[A] Mixed Character Evidence Problems	149
[B] Character Evidence Summary and Review	150
§ 5.10 Habit Evidence [FRE 406]	151
§ 5.11 Relevant Ethics Rules	153
§ 5.12 Habit Evidence Summary and Review	154
<b>Chapter 6 · Other Exclusions of Relevant Evidence [FRE 407–415]</b>	155
§ 6.01 Introduction	161
§ 6.02 Subsequent Remedial Measures [FRE 407]	162
§ 6.03 Offers to Compromise, Pay Medical Expenses, and Pleas of Guilty or Nolo Contendere [FRE 408–10]	165
§ 6.04 Liability Insurance [FRE 411]	171
§ 6.05 Rape Cases [FRE 412]	172
Steven I. Friedland, <i>Date Rape and the Culture of Acceptance</i>	173
§ 6.06 Prior Acts by Sexual Battery Defendants [FRE 413–15]	176
§ 6.07 Cases and Rules	177
[A] <i>Moe v. Avions Marcel Dassault-Breguet Aviation</i>	177
[B] <i>United States v. Paulus</i>	179
[C] <i>Charter v. Chleborad</i>	181
[D] Rules Comparison	181
[1] Rule 407	181
[2] Rule 408	181
[3] Rule 409	182
[4] Rule 410	182
[5] Rule 412	182
§ 6.08 Mixed Problems	183

§ 6.09 Relevant Ethics Rules	184
§ 6.10 Summary and Review	186
<b>Chapter 7 · The Examination and Impeachment of Witnesses [FRE 607–615]</b>	<b>191</b>
§ 7.01 The Examination of Witnesses [FRE 607–615]	196
[A] Overview	196
[B] General Principles	197
[C] Witnesses—Testimony <i>Viva Voce</i>	198
[D] The Stages of Witness Testimony	199
[1] Direct Examination	199
[2] Cross-Examination	201
[3] Redirect Examination	202
[E] Testimonial Objections	203
[F] Refreshing the Witness’s Memory	207
§ 7.02 The Impeachment of Witnesses [FRE 607–613]	208
[A] Introduction	208
[B] Intrinsic Impeachment	210
[1] Methods of Impeachment	210
[2] Contradiction	212
[3] Bias	213
[4] Convictions of Crime [FRE 609]	214
[5] Prior Untruthful Acts [FRE 608(b)]	217
[6] Testimonial Capacities	218
[7] Prior Inconsistent Statements [FRE 613]	219
[8] Mixed Intrinsic Impeachment Problems	221
[C] Extrinsic Impeachment	223
[D] After Impeachment: Rehabilitating the Impeached Witness	227
[E] Cases and Rules	228
[1] <i>Clarett v. Roberts</i>	228
[2] Rules Comparison	231
§ 7.03 Mixed Problems	233
§ 7.04 Summary and Review	236
<b>Chapter 8 · The Competency of Witnesses [FRE 601–606]</b>	<b>237</b>
§ 8.01 Competency: Who May Testify	239
[A] Presumption of Competency	239
[B] “Dead Man’s” Statutes, a Common State Barrier to Competency	240
[C] Understanding the Obligation to Be Truthful	241
[D] Requirement of Personal Knowledge	243
[E] Testimony by Juror, Attorney, or Judge	244
[F] Hypnotically Refreshed Testimony	246
§ 8.02 Competency Problems	247
§ 8.03 Cases and Rules	252
[A] <i>United States v. Meehan</i>	252

[B] <i>Sims v. Hyatte</i>	254
[C] <i>Falwell v. Flynt</i>	258
[D] <i>Turbyfill v. International Harvester Co.</i>	258
[E] <i>Washington v. Texas</i>	259
[F] <i>Pena-Rodriguez v. Colorado</i>	260
[G] Rules Comparison	263
§ 8.04 Mixed Problems	264
§ 8.05 Relevant Ethics Rules	266
§ 8.06 Summary and Review	268
<b>Chapter 9 · Opinions and Expert Testimony [FRE 701–706]</b>	269
§ 9.01 Lay Witness Opinions [FRE 701]	273
[A] When Lay Opinion Helps the Trier of Fact	274
§ 9.02 Expert Witnesses [FRE 702–706]	278
[A] Introduction	278
[B] Qualifying the Expert	281
[C] Expert Witnesses and Novel Scientific Evidence	285
[D] Specialized Knowledge and Expertise: Limits on the Subject Matter of Expert Testimony [FRE 702, 704]	287
[1] When Specialized Knowledge Helps the Trier of Fact	287
[E] The Bases of Expert Testimony [FRE 703, 705]	290
[1] What Experts Reasonably Rely Upon	291
§ 9.03 Cases and Rules	292
[A] <i>Frye v. United States</i>	292
[B] <i>Daubert v. Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals, Inc.</i>	294
[C] <i>People v. Chambers</i>	299
[D] <i>Kumho Tire Co. v. Carmichel</i>	302
[E] <i>United States v. Lopez</i>	306
[F] <i>Smart v. City of Miami</i>	307
[G] Rules Comparison	309
§ 9.04 Mixed Problems	310
§ 9.05 Relevant Ethics Rules	313
§ 9.06 Summary and Review	315
<b>Chapter 10 · Hearsay [FRE 801–807]</b>	317
§ 10.01 Introduction	325
§ 10.02 Definition of Hearsay [FRE 801]	327
[A] Out-of-Court	327
[B] Statement	327
[C] By a Declarant	328
[D] Offered for the Truth of the Matter Asserted	328
[E] Problems	331
[F] Cases	334
[1] <i>Sir Walter Raleigh’s Case</i>	334

[2] <i>Zippo Manufacturing Co. v. Rogers Imports, Inc.</i>	336
[3] <i>Wright v. Doe D. Tatham</i>	337
[4] <i>United States v. Zenni</i>	339
[5] <i>United States v. Alosa</i>	343
[G] Review Problems	345
§ 10.03 Statutory Non-Hearsay [FRE 801(D)]	349
[A] Prior Statements of Witnesses [FRE 801(d)(1)]	349
[B] Opposing Party Statements [FRE 801(d)(2)]	351
[C] Cases and Rules	355
[1] <i>United States v. Day</i>	355
[2] <i>United States v. Flecha</i>	357
[3] <i>Mahlandt v. Wild Canid Survival &amp; Research Center</i>	359
[4] <i>Bourjaily v. United States</i>	359
[5] Rules Comparison	362
[D] Review Problems	363
§ 10.04 Hearsay Exceptions [FRE 803, 804]	364
[A] Introduction	364
[B] Problems—Availability of Declarant Immaterial [FRE 803]	365
[1] Present Sense Impressions, Excited Utterances, Present State of Mind, Statements Made for Purposes of Medical Diagnosis, and Prior Recollection Recorded	365
[2] Business Records	371
[3] Other Hearsay Exceptions	377
[C] Hearsay Exceptions—Declarant Must Be Unavailable [FRE 804]	378
[1] Introduction	378
[2] Requirement of Unavailability [FRE 804(a)]	378
[3] Former Testimony [FRE 804(b)(1)]	379
[4] Dying Declarations [FRE 804(b)(2)]	381
[5] Statements Against Interest [FRE 804(b)(3)]	382
[6] Statement of Personal or Family History [FRE 804(b)(4)]	384
[D] Attacking and Supporting the Credibility of the Declarant	385
[E] Residual Exception	385
[F] Cases and Rules	386
[1] <i>Miller v. Keating</i>	386
[2] <i>United States v. Iron Shell</i>	387
[3] <i>Mutual Life Insurance Co. v. Hillmon</i>	387
[4] <i>Shepard v. United States</i>	390
[5] <i>United States v. Pheaster</i>	392
[6] <i>Palmer v. Hoffman</i>	393
[7] <i>Beech Aircraft Corp. v. Rainey</i>	394
[8] <i>Dallas County v. Commercial Union Assurance Co.</i>	397
[9] <i>United States v. Salerno</i>	399

[10] <i>United States v. MacDonald</i>	401
[11] <i>Horne v. Owens-Corning Fiberglas Corp.</i>	402
[12] <i>Williamson v. United States</i>	404
[13] Rules Comparison	409
[G] Review Problems	410
§ 10.05 Miscellaneous Hearsay Issues [FRE 805, 806]	411
§ 10.06 Summary and Review	412
<b>Chapter 11 · The Confrontation Clause</b>	<b>415</b>
§ 11.01 Introduction	416
§ 11.02 <i>Crawford</i> and Its Progeny	419
[A] The Basic Rule	419
<i>Crawford v. Washington</i>	419
[B] What Is a “Testimonial Statement”?	429
[1] Distinguishing Testimonial Statements from Statements Made for the Primary Purpose of Resolving an On-Going Emergency	429
<i>Hammon v. Indiana; Davis v. Washington</i>	429
[2] Further Distinguishing Testimonial Statements from Statements Made for the Primary Purpose of Resolving an On-Going Emergency	437
<i>Michigan v. Bryant</i>	437
[3] Statement about Child Abuse to Person Other Than Police Officer	445
<i>Ohio v. Clark</i>	445
[4] Is a Redacted Confession by a Nontestifying Defendant in a Joint Trial an Impermissible Testimonial Statement?	447
<i>Samia v. United States</i>	447
§ 11.03 Problems	455
§ 11.04 Experts and Confrontation	457
[A] <i>Melendez-Diaz v. Massachusetts</i>	457
[B] <i>Bullcoming v. New Mexico</i>	465
[C] <i>Williams v. Illinois</i>	467
§ 11.05 More Problems	473
§ 11.06 Waiver of Confrontation Rights	474
<i>Giles v. California</i>	474
§ 11.07 Prong #2 of Confrontation Clause Analysis: Face-to-Face Confrontation for Sexual Assault or Child Abuse Witnesses	475
<i>Maryland v. Craig</i>	475
§ 11.08 Summary and Review	477
<b>Chapter 12 · Privileges [FRE 501, 502]</b>	<b>479</b>
§ 12.01 Relevant FRE: Enacted and Proposed (but Rejected) Rules	482
§ 12.02 Introduction to Privileges	487
[A] The Definition of Privileged Evidence	488
[B] Federal and State Privileges	489

[C] Sources of Privilege	489
[1] Common Law	489
[2] Statute	489
[3] The United States Constitution	490
[D] The Operation of Privileges	491
[E] Confidential Communication Privileges	492
[F] Public Policy-Based Privileges Generally	493
§ 12.03 The Federal Rules of Evidence Approach to Privilege	493
§ 12.04 Some Specific Privileges	494
[A] The Marital Privileges: Adverse Spousal Testimony and Confidential Communications	494
[1] The Adverse Spousal Testimony Privilege	494
[2] The Confidential Communications Privilege	495
[B] The Attorney-Client Privilege and Work-Product Protection	497
[1] Elements of Privilege	497
[2] The Attorney-Client Privilege and the Corporate (Entity) Client	500
[3] Work-Product Protection	502
[4] Limitations on Waiver of the Attorney-Client Privilege and Work-Product Protection	504
[C] Other Privileges	506
[1] Psychotherapist-Patient Privilege	506
[2] Physician-Patient Privilege	508
[3] The Fifth Amendment Privilege against Self-Incrimination	508
§ 12.05 Cases and Rules	510
[A] <i>Upjohn Co. v. United States</i>	510
[B] <i>Federal Trade Commission v. Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals</i>	513
[C] <i>Nix v. Whiteside</i>	515
[D] <i>Jaffee v. Redmond</i>	518
[E] <i>Trammel v. United States</i>	519
[F] <i>State ex rel. Sowers v. Olwell</i>	520
[G] <i>South Fifth Towers, LLC v. Aspen Insurance UK, LTD</i>	520
[H] Rules Comparison	523
§ 12.06 Mixed Problems	525
§ 12.07 Relevant Ethics Rules	526
§ 12.08 Summary and Review	528
<b>Chapter 13 · Authentication, Identification, and the Original Writings             (Best Evidence) Rule</b>	529
§ 13.01 Authentication and Identification	535
[A] Requirement of Authentication	535
[B] Procedures for Authentication	536
[C] Problems	537

§ 13.02 The Original Writings (Best Evidence) Rule	541
[A] The Production of Original Document Writing	541
[B] Exceptions to Requirement of Original	543
[C] Problems	544
§ 13.03 Cases	547
[A] <i>Seiler v. Lucasfilm</i>	547
[B] <i>United States v. Duffy</i>	551
§ 13.04 Summary and Review	552
<b>Chapter 14 · Proof Issues: The Allocation of Proof, Judicial Notice, and Presumptions [FRE 201, 301, 302]</b>	555
§ 14.01 Introduction	556
§ 14.02 The Allocation of Proof	557
Edward W. Cleary, <i>Presuming and Pleading: An Essay on     Juristic Immaturity</i>	557
§ 14.03 Judicial Notice [FRE 201]	563
[A] Introduction	563
[B] Problems	565
[C] Rules Comparison	567
§ 14.04 Presumptions [FRE 301, 302]	568
[A] Introduction	568
[B] Rebuttable Presumptions in Civil Cases	569
[C] Conclusive and Permissive Presumptions in Civil Cases	569
[D] Presumptions in Criminal Prosecutions	571
[E] Problems	572
[F] Cases and Rules	575
[1] <i>Vlandis v. Kline</i>	575
[2] <i>Sandstrom v. Montana</i>	576
[3] <i>County Court of Ulster County v. Allen</i>	578
[4] Rules Comparison	583
§ 14.05 Summary and Review	583
<b>Chapter 15 · Review Problems</b>	585
§ 15.01 Mock Trial	585
§ 15.02 Problems	592
<b>Appendix</b>	599
Federal Rules of Evidence	599
<b>Index</b>	631





# Preface

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This new edition of *Evidence Problems and Materials* builds on and refines the editions that preceded it. While at one time using problems in Evidence Law courses was a novel idea, it is fairly common today. What makes a difference with this book—and how it still breaks with tradition—is that it focuses on using the evidence rules, not just learning what they mean in a vacuum. The book offers numerous short problems that illustrate and isolate elements of rules, provides real-world examples to promote relevance to readers, and explores the many nuances in the rules. Lastly, and certainly not least, it combines evidence issues with ethics.

From the start, assigning a label to this book was difficult primarily because it has not been a traditional law school text. To call it a “casebook,” one that revolves around evidentiary judicial appellate decisions, would be in error. In fact, appellate case reports comprise only a small fraction of the book’s contents. Yet, the book is not entirely a “problem” book either. While the “problem” label is accurate, such a label is unduly narrow. The book uses problems and illustrations for different purposes: to connect students with the practice of Evidence Law, meaning how evidence issues might arise in the real world; to trigger the processes required to work one’s way through an evidence question; and to provide the opportunity to consider pertinent federal and state rules of evidence and their associated legislative history. Thus, the problems are central to the students’ understanding of what the rules mean and how they work.

The conceptualization of the book as an evidence text is derived from one of the book’s premises: understanding the rules of evidence can occur effectively and directly through cognitive learning methods. The book is predicated on the belief that an understanding of evidence law will be promoted if the reader is actively engaged in the learning process, particularly through solving problems. The delivery of information to the learner is only a small part of that process.

Thus, in light of the book’s premises, case reports are not the “text” of this textbook. Rather than presenting an orderly recitation of cases followed by questions, this book inverts, and then expands on, a traditional casebook ordering. The book is structured so that each section commences with brief explanatory comments about a particular area of evidence law, including an illustration of the subject matter. It then proceeds with a wide variety of problems intended to test the reader’s understanding of the evidentiary rules and their intended meaning. (The problems are primarily designed to be answered using the Federal Rules of Evidence and the associated Advisory Committee’s Notes. The text is sufficiently generic, however, to allow the use of applicable

state evidentiary rules as well.) Immediately prior to the conclusion of each section, cases and other statutes are presented for comparative purposes. Since “muscle memory” requires that knowledge be imprinted, each section concludes with a summary and review.

To further promote the learning process, an attempt is made to “thicken” the problems with the real world contexts that often confront trial lawyers. These contexts include: (1) the courtroom (some problems are presented in transcript form); (2) lawyering skills (some areas of the book include a discussion of skills, such as qualifying an expert, distinguishing and comparing statutes, and conducting a cross-examination of a witness); and (3) the inclusion of identifying characteristics that may significantly affect evidentiary rulings, such as race, gender, sexual preference, and ethnicity (some problems seek to discern the relevance of these characteristics by probing the values and ideology underlying the evidentiary analysis).

The inclusion of these contexts is intended not only to make the book more useful to integrating the rules with lawyering skills, but also to place legal analysis where many commentators argue that it belongs—within the social sciences. By recognizing the significance of social science contexts, readers may observe a closer connection between the application of the evidence rules and the experiences of everyday life.

We also broke with tradition by melding Evidence and Ethics—adding the ethical implications of evidentiary issues that often arise in every chapter. While the legal education agenda is stocked with concerns about incorporating skills into the curriculum in addition to legal analysis, the discussion of professionalism remains an important and primary topic. By weaving evidence and ethics together, we offer a more realistic approach—the two often arise together in the real world, after all—and allow students to better understand the larger picture of practice, where legal issues are often a mosaic. This approach reflects some of the recommendations contained in two major reports examining legal education—*Educating Lawyers* by the Carnegie Foundation and *Best Practices for Legal Education* by the Clinical Legal Education Association.

Of course, the ethics components are such that they can be treated as supplemental issues or bypassed completely, if desired. The primary focal points of this book remain evidence law and its application, and we took care not to let the ethics problems overshadow or obscure the evidence questions.

This edition also includes new “practical tips” and “background boxes” material that help students apply the rules. Another feature is the outline at the beginning of each chapter to help students organize and synthesize the rules and related material.

If the primary learning mechanism used in the book is problem solving, the primary context within which the problem solving occurs is the courtroom. A courtroom orientation offers several pedagogical advantages. The courtroom setting facilitates role playing and encourages simulations and active participation. Role playing, in turn, allows students to consider different perspectives and to focus on how to persuade others to adopt those perspectives. In reenacting the courtroom “drama,” the students

also engage in a narrative discourse. Studies have found that the narrative is an effective learning tool. Additionally, the courtroom context elevates the significance of issues relating to fact determination. The determination of fact, so important to the resolution of trials and cases, is all too often minimized in the legal education process. By using the courtroom setting, fact determination issues can be studied directly.

In addition, the courtroom backdrop allows lawyering skills to be woven into the basic fabric of the evidence course. The inclusion of lawyering skills provides a view of the “big picture” of evidence law as it is applied. Skills training also permits instructors to provide a broader critique of students, including feedback on courtroom performance as well as on the students’ understanding of the evidence rules.

By incorporating identifying characteristics in the problems such as race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual preference, and socio-economic factors, the book seeks to highlight the potential relevance of these factors to evidentiary determinations. In particular, these factors suggest that evidentiary determinations often depend on interpretive theories of human behavior. These theories may be sufficiently important to consider and discuss in class.

The book breaks with tradition in one other way. There are occasional visual illustrations accompanying the problems. The reason for this inclusion is simple—people learn differently, and visual imagery can be as important as a multiplicity of words. As many trial attorneys who regularly use photographs, charts, and diagrams will attest, a single picture can greatly promote and enhance the audience’s attention.

We hope that you have as much fun in puzzling over the problems and in sorting out the values and ideology upon which the conclusions rest as we have had in putting the book together. We further hope you find that the book facilitates a deep understanding of the evidence rules and their constitutive frameworks, as well as synthesizes a broader perspective of how the rules relate to lawyering, legal theory, and human nature.

As with most books, this one was the product of the diligent work of people too numerous to mention. We would, however, like to acknowledge and thank our families and close friends for their unconditional support, as well as Hannah McCabe, Zachary Robeson, Craig Arnold, Natalie Rothenbuecher, Lindsay Casile, and Alarra S. Jordan for their research assistance.

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