



Education for Collective Wellbeing and Global Harwell in the Age
of AI and Social Media

The COURAGE Project: Educating And Empowering Students Towards A Conscious Use Of Social Media

Presenter: Dr. Johanna Börsting





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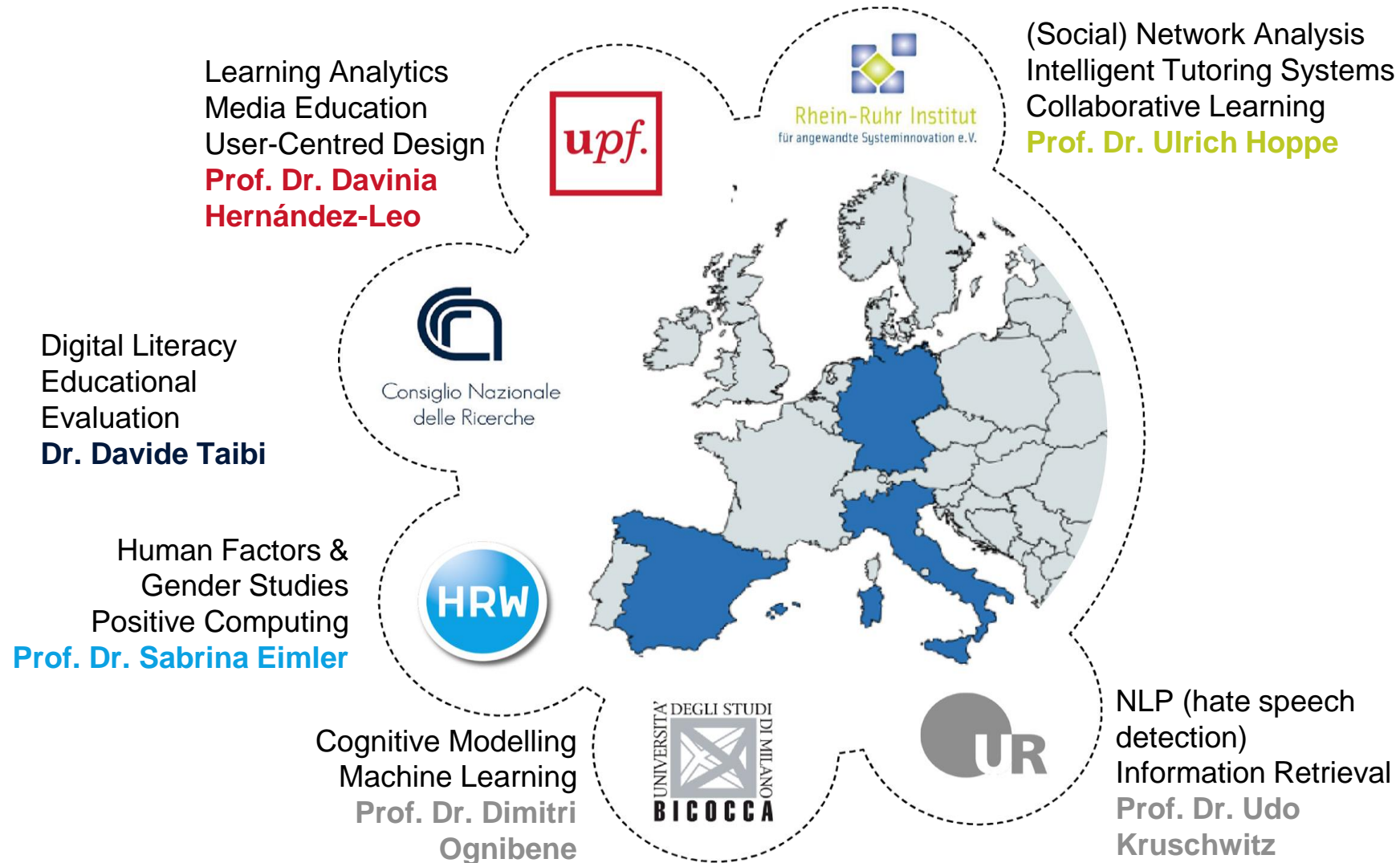




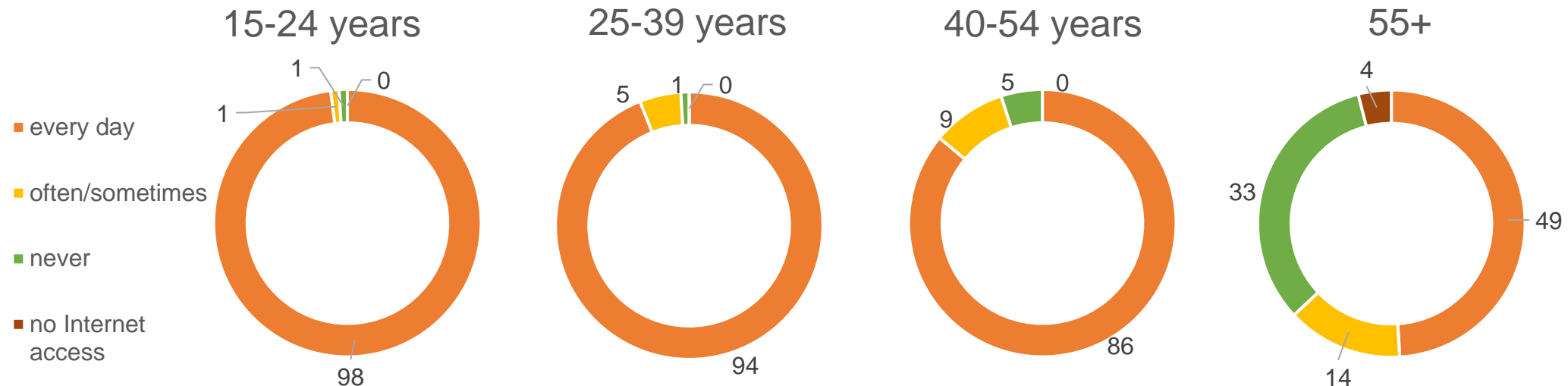
COURAGE Team

Interdisciplinary and international perspectives

International and interdisciplinary team



Internet use in EU depending on age



- Using **online social networks** is the most mentioned activity in six countries of the EU
- Overall, using **online social networks** is one of the three most mentioned activities in 17 countries (European Commission, 2020)

Challenges of social media...



AI generated content

Cyberbullying & cyberhate

Manipulation

Fake news

Spiral of silence

Discrimination

Confirmation bias

Machine learning

Challenges of social media...



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... and it's consequences

Cyberbullying & cyberhate



Somatic complaints

Depressive symptoms

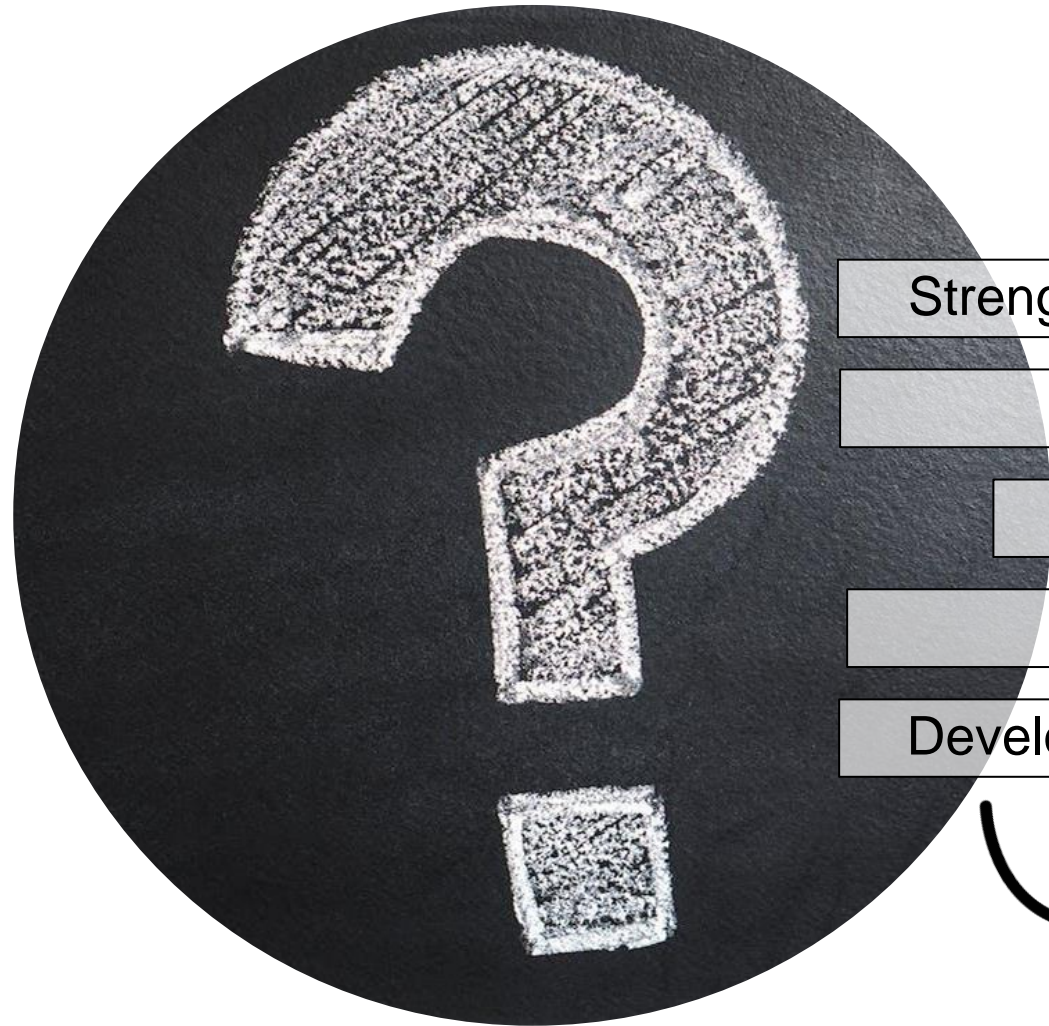
Suicidal symptoms

Poorer academic performance

Less innovation, less creativity

Post-traumatic stress symptoms

So, what do we need?



Strengthen **self-protection skills** among young users

Increase **awareness** of potential threats

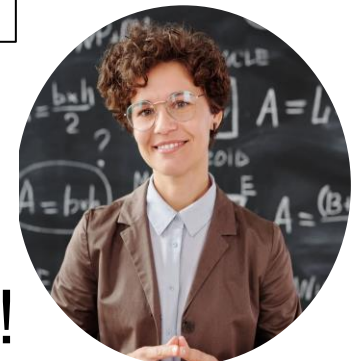
Help users counter the spread of toxic content

Improve digital **literacy**

Develop **educational interventions**



Enable educators
to support students!



Aims of the COURAGE project

- ✓ Develop **digital interventions** that provide hands-on experiences to learn about threats of social media
- ✓ Integrate **educational interventions** within a social media environment
- ✓ Use **virtual learning companions** (VLCs) that transfer knowledge and reinforce skills
- ✓ Provide **teachers** with VLCs and trainings for their students

The VLC

- Takes the role of **knowledgeable peer** rather than an expert (Pezzullo, 2017)
- Is beneficial for **affective learning** and raising **learning curiosity** (Woolf, 2021; Wu, 2012)



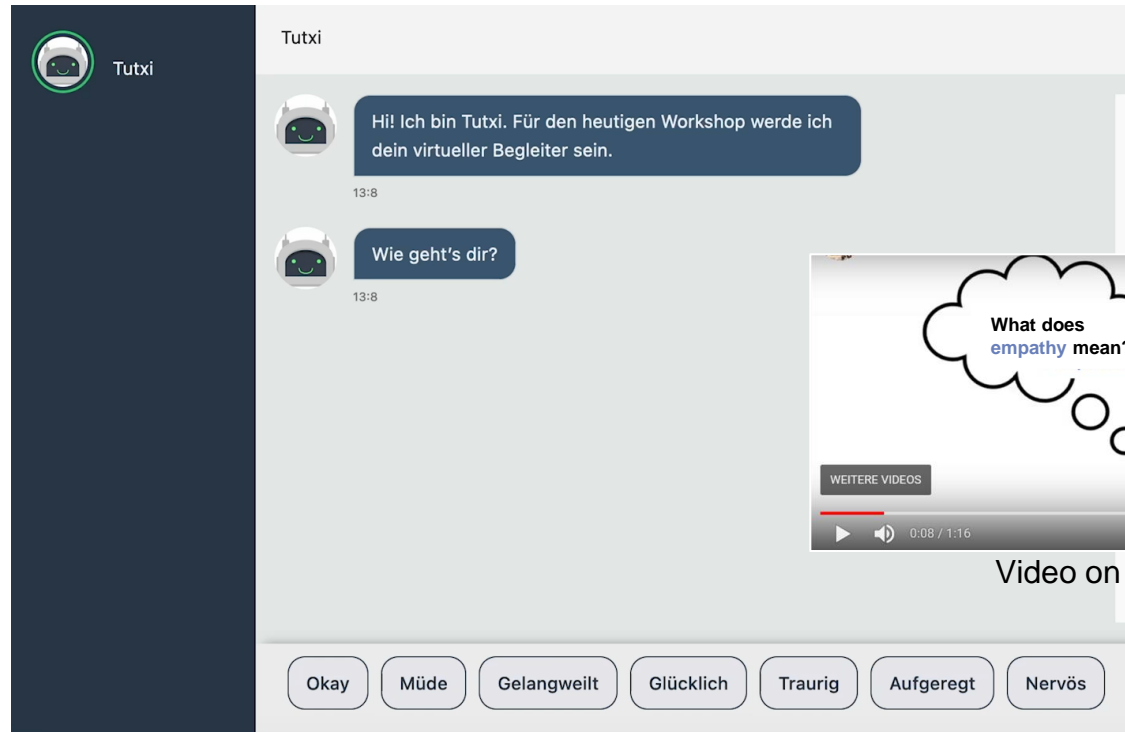
Empirical Approach

Developing and testing interfaces for educators to empower students and
educatively reshape social media

Empathy training by a VLC



The VLC "Tutxi"



Social media environment for empathy training



Cyberbullying scenario

Activates **cognitive features** like recognizing, evaluating, and naming feelings as required in an **empathic process** (Sahin, 2012)

Empathy training by a VLC: Hypotheses

Hypotheses:

- Students show fewer **cyberbullying intentions** after taking the empathy training than before
- Students taking the empathy training, show ...
 - Higher levels of **cognitive and affective empathy**
 - Higher **intentions to help the victim** in the cyberbullying scenario
 - Less **intentions to reinforce the perpetrator** in the cyberbullying scenario... compared to students not taking empathy training

Research Question:

- Are there **differences** in dependent variables between students from **Brazil, Germany, Italy, and Spain**?

Empathy training by a VLC: Procedure

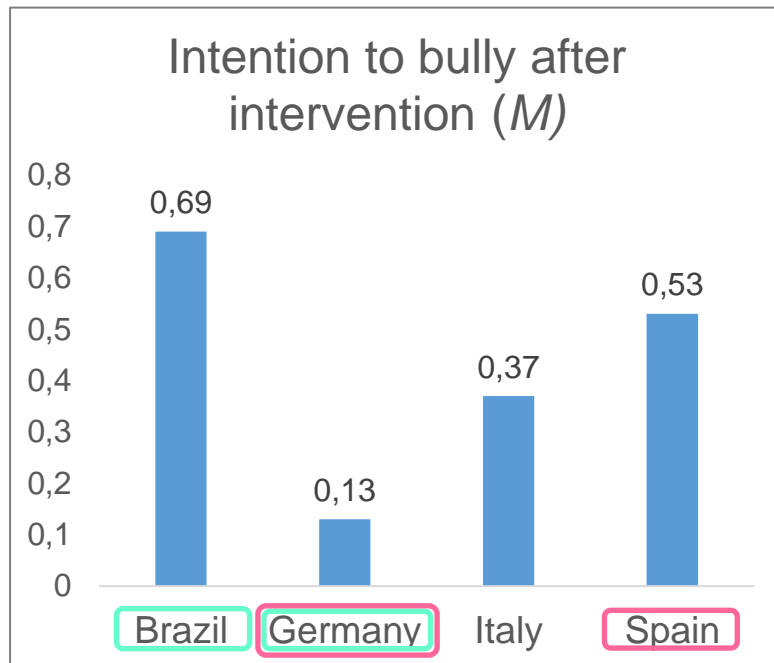


Sample:

- $N = 332$ students
- From Brazil ($n = 54$), Germany ($n = 104$), Italy ($n = 77$), and Spain ($n = 97$)
- 11 – 17 years ($M = 13.63$, $SD = 1.97$)
- $n = 165$ female, $n = 161$ male, $n = 5$ divers/non-binary, $n = 1$ did not specify their gender

Empathy training by a VLC: Results

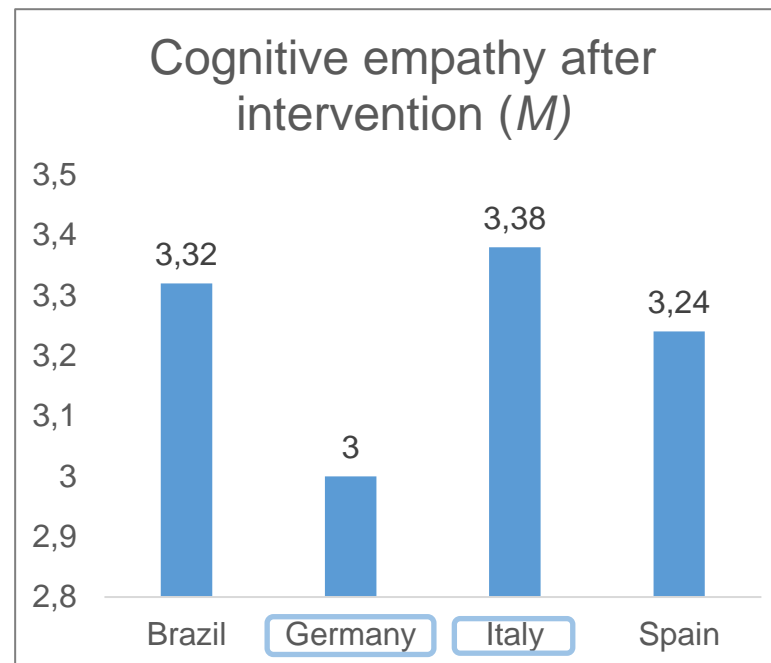
- No significant change in cyberbullying intentions, overall empathy, intention to help and reinforce the perpetrator after taking the empathy training, but **significant differences between countries**:



0 = never - 4 = several times per week

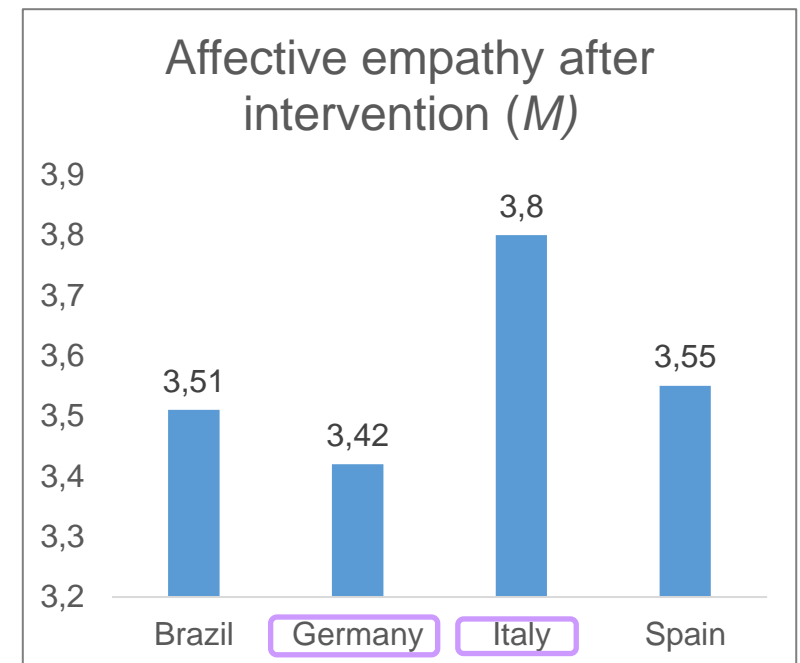
$p < .001$

$p = .002$



1 = does not describe me well - 5 = describes me very well

$p = .034$



1 = does not describe me well - 5 = describes me very well

$p = .049$

not yet published

Empathy training by a VLC: Conclusion

- **Early interventions** are needed, even before bully intentions arise
- We need an even **more holistic** empathy training
 - Long-term study
- Empathy training **at school as a starting point**, ongoing intervention afterwards
- Focus more on **country-specific differences!**

Overall...

COURAGE supports:



Educators



Students

COURAGE is a **contribution** to:



Digital media
literacy



Awareness
& well-being

THANK YOU

Project coordination: Hochschule Ruhr West – University of Applied Sciences Prof. Dr. Sabrina Eimler, Human Factors & Gender Studies



www.upf.edu/web/courage



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