

Challenging the Model Myth—Fostering Success for AANHPI CTE Students:

An Environmental Scan Exploring a Strategic Framework for Holistic Student Success

Overview

“Asian America, so long ignored and forcibly excluded from creative participation in American culture, is wounded, sad, angry, swearing, and wondering, and this is his AIIIEEEEE! It is more than a whine, shout, or scream. It is fifty years of our whole voice” (Chin et al., 1974). Frank Chin’s 1974 preface to *AIIIEEEEE!: An Anthology of Asian American Writers* encapsulated for the first time the collective dissonance of Asian America from dominant White culture. *AIIIEEEEE!* illustrated the trauma of the United States’s collective xenophobia of east Asians and the effects of colonialism in the Philippines, the unconditional surrender of the Japanese to close World War II, the uneasy ceasefire of the Korean War, and the failure of American might in the Vietnam War. In 1974, *AIIIEEEEE!* depicted an east and southeast geographic bias to the Asian American experience. Throughout the close of the 1970s and into the 1980s, the United States’s view of Asian Americans began to shift from an undereducated, exotic scourge to a hyper-educated internal competitor for white-collar science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) careers formerly held by White Americans.

On August 13, 1987, *Time* magazine released on its cover “Those Asian-American Whiz-Kids” highlighting David Brand’s “The New Whiz Kids: Why Asian Americans Are Doing So Well, and What it Costs Them.” Brand highlighted the surge of Asian Pacific Island students into elite postsecondary STEM and health care programs. “The New Whiz Kids” reframed the exoticism and otherliness grounded in the systemic White supremacy of orientalism. In the 13 years that separated *AIIIEEEEE!* and “The New Whiz Kids,” Asian Americans also included South Asians, Micronesians, Pacific Islanders, and Native Hawaiians and turned a perception of Asian Americans as unskilled or hyper-sexualized laborers to one that portrayed all Asian Americans as socially and economically mobile (Brand, 1987). The hidden narrative of “The New Whiz Kids” was a White adjacent racism that set Asian Americans as superior to African Americans and Latinos. The model minority myth that Brand brought to public consumption shifted the icons of dragon ladies and hop-sings to a different standard further amplifying the inherent racism of “all Asians are successful and have access.”

What the 20th century did for Asian Americans was to differentiate caricatures of intersecting race, ethnicity, language, gender, and access. The 1980s gave the United States Short Round and the exotic jungles of India from “Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom,” Long Duk Dong from “Pretty in Pink,” and a multitude of Vietnamese sex workers from “Full Metal Jacket” in contrast to “The New Whiz Kids.” The 1980s taught a generation of Asian Americans that images have consequences and that “the pen, the podium, the screen, and the stage could be mightier than the Louisville Slugger” (Yang et al., 2022).

Nationally, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islanders (AANHPIs) grew faster than any other ethnic minority group between 2010 and 2019. The Pew Research Center highlighted an 81% increase in AANHPIs documented by the U.S. Census, a jump from 10.5 million to 18.5 million (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). Conversely, in Oregon, the 2020 U.S. Census reported a 37.6% growth in AANHPIs since the 2010 Census. The growth in Oregon’s AANHPI population outpaced that of that state’s Hispanic/Latino (30.8%) and Black/African American

(21%) populations (Jung, 2022). At a statewide level, Oregon reflects a demographic shift to a minority majority nation by 2045. Arthur Levine and Scott Van Pelt identify this demographic shift as the “Rise of the New Majority.” Between 2012 and 2021, Asian Pacific Islanders saw a modest 25% increase in high school graduation rates, while Latinx students saw a significant jump of 52%. By 2060, Whites under the age of 18 will constitute 31.9% of the U.S. population while 68.1% of the population will identify as non-White or multiracial (Levine & Van Pelt, 2021). The minority majority shift has become a trigger point for the eruption of White nationalism in K–12 education from the beginning of the Obama administration through the present as punctuated by the heated debates on critical race theory, the hyper-politics of K–12 school boards, school shootings, and access to basic student needs, all of which have been amplified by the coronavirus pandemic (Zamani-Gallaher, 2017).

Despite revisions in Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins V) funding to intentionally serve and recruit special populations in Career Technical Education (CTE), data do not suggest significant national or statewide growth (Hyslop, 2018). Alisha Hyslop, senior director for public policy for the Association for Career and Technical Education, summarized more than 200 years of CTE in the United States by stating, “We have a lot to do. . . . [T]here are a lot of historical challenges” (Butrymowicz, 2021). Historically, secondary and postsecondary CTE courses and programs have been oversaturated by White-identifying students. In recent data, Whites represented 50% of students enrolled in secondary and postsecondary CTE programs. White students represent 64% of those enrolled in at least one secondary CTE program in Oregon, far more than what is represented nationally. After Whites, Latinos represent 22% of students in secondary CTE, African Americans/Blacks 2%, AANHPIs 5%, and Native Americans 1%. Oregon amplifies the percentages of Whites enrolled in secondary CTE courses from 56% to 63%, with similar data for Latino, AANHPI, and Native American students, but a significant disparity in serving African Americans/Blacks in CTE (Butrymowicz, 2021). Oregon’s history as a state founded in systemic racism has had a profound effect on the education and advancement of people of color.

While CTE programs are based on certifying academic and training programs targeting high skills, high demand, and high wages, history suggests systemic and internalized racism barring students of color from CTE programs and overrepresenting students of color in lower paying CTE pathways. “Stereotyping, discrimination, constraints imposed by self and family, low career aspirations, lack of confidence and initiative, and lack of sponsors are causes for low participation of [students of color]” (Gordon & Schultz, 2020). CTE has a long history of being the “dumping ground” for students not deemed “college material”—a two-tiered education system that withheld access to economic and social mobility intersecting race, language, and social class (Butrymowicz et al., 2020). AANHPI CTE students are significantly represented in the highest paying, most financially lucrative, and fastest growing CTE clusters nationally and in Oregon: Health Sciences (10%), Information Technology (10%), Hospitality/Tourism/Recreation (7%), Marketing (7%), Human Services (2%), Law Enforcement (1%), and Agriculture/Food/Natural Resources (1%) (Butrymowicz, 2021). Oregon’s AANHPI students in CTE are enrolled in degree programs that lead into an emerging knowledge economy.

Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in Oregon experience higher rates of economic instability as demonstrated in the attainment of postsecondary credentialing and its impact on monthly earnings. For Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders 25 years and older in Lane County, 85% identified “high school graduate (GED)” or “some college/associate degree” as their highest level of education while 77% of Asian Americans identified “some college/associate degree or bachelor’s degree/higher” as their highest level of education. In 2021, 41% of enrolled Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders participated in a CTE program of study at Lane Community College (LCC) compared to 35% of Asian American students. CTE is rooted in high-demand, high-growth, and high-wage careers; there is a strong correlation between postsecondary credentialing and access to CTE programs that is not met as Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders earn less (\$4,000 monthly) compared to all Lane County residents (\$4,287 monthly) and Asians (\$5,256 monthly).

Thirty years removed from Brand’s work, the impact of *IIIIIIIIII!*, and the early Asian American organizers, Asian America has begun to address the sociopolitical and socioeconomic rifts among Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, refugees, and recent immigrants within the AANHPI diaspora (Yang et al., 2022). Collective research into access and structural gaps for postsecondary AANHPI CTE has not been conducted. Within communities of color in the West, a heavy focus on access for Latino CTE coincides with the sharp increase of Latinos and the emergence of Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) to meet their academic, career, and cultural aspirations. The negative impact of years of the model minority myth and conglomeration of *Asian America* has exacerbated rifts within the AANHPI diaspora. While Asians in Lane County collectively earn 20% more than any other ethnic and racial minority, there is a yawning divide between Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders and other communities within the AANHPI diaspora. The AANHPI collectively demands access to economic, social, and community vitality that is inextricably interwoven with postsecondary opportunities in CTE.

LCC: An Exploratory Study

LCC has made decisions that have had significant impacts on serving Asian Pacific Island students globally. In 2007, LCC shifted away from a Career Services center that included employer outreach, job search skills, and placement services to one focused on early career planning and advising that included a strategic partnership with the Oregon Department of Employment and Oregon Department of Human Services, which provided job search coaching and referrals to state and federal programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. Internally, employer engagement fell upon the shoulders of two full-time faculty and a cadre of part-time faculty overseeing cooperative learning.

Compounding LCC’s decision to shift the focus of Career Services was the decision to staff a full-time faculty coordinator role with a part-time interim faculty coordinator to oversee the Asian Pacific Island Student Union (APISU) while retaining full-time faculty coordinators to oversee the Black Student Union (BSU), Native American Student Association (NASA), and *Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán* (MEChA). Through the coordination of full-time

faculty coordinators, BSU, MEChA, and NASA have grown culturally responsive first-year experience and transfer/career-focused programming connecting students to resources and experiences that have had a significant impact on retention, completion, and success (National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education, 2021). Students engaging the LCC's Multicultural Center are invited into a welcoming and culturally responsive space.

LCC's Multicultural Center serves ethnically and racially diverse students, and its student affairs programming correlates with changing trends in online CTE and transfer programs. "Racial and Ethnic Equity Gaps in Postsecondary Career and Technical Education" reported that prior to the coronavirus pandemic 46% of postsecondary students had taken at least one CTE course online, many of which were in business and education programs (Anderson et al., 2021). The growth of online programs and especially CTE programs from 2016 to the present correlates with a significant drop in on-campus student affairs-led programming. Levine and Van Pelt (2021) reported that 80% of community college students never attended academic or professional meetings and 57% never attended social events. Students, especially after 2020, are shifting away from in-person, fixed-location programming and education. LCC hosts three separate Rites of Passage programs individually targeting specific racial/ethnic student diasporas: Latine/x, African American/Black, and AANHPI. Between 2017 and 2020, Rites of Passage programs enrolled 160 high school students from LCC's service district. Of the 160, 21% earned dual credits through LCC's College Now-sponsored dual credit program, 28% went on to enroll as full-time degree-seeking students, and 16% completed degrees/certificates during that period.

The historical data show that the largest cohort of students served in Rites of Passage programs attended during the height of the pandemic: 64 students, which constitutes 40.0% of the four-year program enrollment. This 2020 cohort is up significantly from the previous high of 59 (36.8%) due to many factors reported by students that coincide with larger scale conclusions made by Levine and Van Pelt (2021) that "digital natives preferred anytime, anyplace access to education" and that the majority of the student participants in the Rites of Passage program (54%) identified as women between 2017 and 2020. While Rites of Passage has a considerable impact on the recruitment and engagement of Latine/x students (46% served), African American/Black students (18% served), and AANHPI students (8% served), students entering LCC are particularly supported in early career planning and college readiness. However, second-year students and nontraditional-age students are not centered in Multicultural Center-led programming. This gap in accessible and organized holistic student support services is embedded in LCC's Academic Affairs Division.

Many of LCC's career development programs and skills are developed in collaboration with regional employers and the faculty in the Cooperative Education Program and in career development/human relations courses. Cooperative education integrates on-the-job work experiences with academic studies. Students have an opportunity to earn academic credits and a wage through cooperative education courses. Students also receive industry-specific skills development, experiences, and mentorship from both industry professionals and faculty. Similarly, career development/human relations courses are taught by academic and career counselors focusing on personal work styles, communication skills, and the issues of a culturally diverse workplace. Many of LCC's CTE programs and career pathways certificates require a minimum of a three credit hour (90 hours) cooperative education course. All of LCC's CTE

programs require a minimum of three credit hours of human relations courses to complete a degree. Cooperative education and career/human relations courses close the opportunity and achievement gap for students.

Cooperative Education 206: Internship Seminar

Students will increase their understanding of industry expectations while developing job search tools and skills. Students will learn and practice presenting themselves to employers in a competent and professional manner in preparation for a cooperative education internship and, ultimately, a professional career. Coursework is delivered online.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Communicate orally and in writing using proper and current business etiquette, format and content.
2. Develop an understanding of and be able to effectively communicate business skills and abilities, orally and in writing.
3. Develop foundational workplace competencies and workplace culture.
4. Critically think in relation to job search and on-the-job performance practices and topics.

Engineering 280D: Drafting

Gain on-the-job learning experience as a drafter in local business, industry and governmental sites. Develop skills, explore career options, and network with professionals and employers while earning college credit. Meet with the co-op coordinator the term before (if possible) to set up the internship.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Integrate classroom learning with field experience.
2. Describe their work experience in their career field and growth in knowledge of the career field.
3. Demonstrate and explain advanced skills and knowledge gained at the workplace.
4. Demonstrate foundational job search and workplace competencies.
5. Describe understanding of workplace culture.
6. Demonstrate college core learning outcomes in communication and use of technology.

Career Guidance 203: Human Relations at Work

This course presents the interpersonal “people skills” that are important in the modern workplace. Topics are varied. Focus includes awareness of individual work styles and how to work effectively with people with different styles in a diverse workplace. May be offered online.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Identify their individual work style and personality (i.e., where they like to focus their attention, the way they like to take in information and the way they like to make decisions) and the strengths and weaknesses of that style.
2. Describe and utilize appropriate communication skills including non-verbal communication and active listening. Describe barriers to communication and how to overcome them. Recognize, describe, and demonstrate Assertive behavior and describe how it differs from Passive and Aggressive behavior.
3. Describe the characteristics of an effective work team, the typical stages of team development, and how to be a capable team member.

4. Understand the issues involved in working with people from different cultural backgrounds and how to work effectively in a diverse workplace.
5. Describe and demonstrate the rules of “principled negotiation” and conflict resolution.

Students enrolled in an articulated cooperative education course have access to valuable academic and career skills to enter the workforce; students have the opportunity to grow social capital to advance in their careers. The advantage that cooperative education lends students is the ability to gain academic skills and social capital directly tied to workplace settings. Human Relations at Work creates opportunities to grow a deeper understanding of working with others from different cultural backgrounds and in diverse workplaces. LCC’s charge in its Associate of Applied Sciences and Career Pathways Certificates is to empower degree and certificate completers with the skills, experiences, and social capital to enter the workforce. Unfortunately, only 15 out of the 631 students who completed cooperative education courses between 2017 and 2021 identified as AANHPI students. AANHPI students are significantly underrepresented in cooperative education experiences.

Data Collection Methods and Analysis

Data were collected through the internal [Asian American Pacific Island Student—Career Readiness Survey](#) built in conjunction with leadership from Kumu Raes, APISU faculty coordinator; Carl Yeh, dean of student engagement and director of the Multicultural Center; and Cathy Thomas, institutional researcher. The survey was sent to 1,185 students enrolled within the past four academic terms (fall 2021–fall 2022) who identified as Asian American, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander. Sending the Asian American Pacific Island Student—Career Readiness Survey to a much broader population allowed multiple access points for students who may have completed or stopped out of programs and enrolled dual credit students. Coinciding with an electronic survey, two student listening sessions were conducted in early October 2022—one in person and one virtual.

Within LCC’s AANHPI communities, 44% identified themselves primarily as multiracial intersecting with Caucasian/White, Latine/x, and Native American. The students who identified as multiracial also viewed themselves as connected to racial and ethnic identities within Central, Southeast, South, and Eastern Asia as well as the Pacific Islands and Hawaii. Questions on racial and ethnic identification led to revealing insights from students ranging from marginalization to outrage. In response to the question, “What are specific barriers to your academic and professional success that you are navigating at LCC?” students responded with “It’s super annoying to be reminded of my [racial] differences, and it’s doubly insulting when it’s literally ‘othered.’ As in: Hawaiians, Asians, oh—and you other Pacific Islanders. Also, being Asian and being Pacific Islander are two very different things.” An aspect that the survey intended to address was the intersections of multiracial identities within the in-person and virtual listening sessions. The model minority myth that pervades U.S. postsecondary education and culture seeks to homogenize all Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders into “this” or “that” without properly addressing the points of racial and ethnic intersection and the implications of colorism, native language, country of origin, gender, ability, and religion on access.

Of the AANHPI-identifying students surveyed, 25.9% were enrolled in a CTE program pursuing 2-year Associate of Applied Sciences (14.8%), career pathways certificates (7.4%), or a 1-year certificate (3.7%). The majority of the students surveyed had utilized academic advising (63%), financial aid (55.6%), and tutoring services (25.9%). For the CTE enrolled in CTE programs, the same three college services were utilized. Multiple college services and departments were minimally engaged by the surveyed AANHPI students at LCC. Of note, only 7.4% of the surveyed students had engaged the Multicultural Center. The 7.4% of students did not engage in the Rites of Passage program targeting high school students enrolling in LCC as described in later listening sessions. LCC's AANHPI students followed trends prior to the coronavirus pandemic described by Levine and Van Pelt. Community college students do not traditionally engage in Student Affairs programs and events; their engagement of the community college outside of the classroom is primarily transactional as displayed in their engagement of specific, just-in-time academic advising, financial aid, and tutoring services.

The two listening sessions were designed as a 90-minute introduction to the project and follow-up conversations on the questions, "What specific LCC academic, career, heritage, or professional development programs have helped you to navigate your next steps?" and "How would you like to see the Multicultural Center partner with your program of study to develop culturally responsive student success programs?" APISU led outreach and marketing for the two listening sessions. The in-person listening session was attended by two students. One student identified as a biracial female and the other as a Latina student who had earned dual credits as a high school student in business CTE courses and transfer core courses. One student stated, "This is the start of my second year at LCC. I moved to Eugene from Portland during the summer of 2021 and took all of my classes online while I worked 30–35 hours." Additionally the APISU and Student Affairs leadership reported that "the listening sessions were the first time in the recent history of the Multicultural Center [that] 'the classroom' was flipped. Usually, it is the Multicultural Faculty Coordinator delivering academic content knowledge for our students. Our Rites of Passage programs have not focused on second-year students transitioning from LCC."

Barriers

AANHPI CTE students face multiple barriers to their success as CTE students at LCC that have been amplified due to the coronavirus and access to linguistically and culturally responsive academic and career advising. Forty-eight percent of the AANHPI students surveyed identified as biracial and at odds with being lumped into specific racial and ethnic groups. Some of the students surveyed felt as if they belonged in multiple racial and ethnic groupings as can be correlated in the small percentage of students engaging the Multicultural Center of APISU.

Underlying many of the experiences of AANHPI students is a deep connection to family, elders, and community. Seventy-nine percent of the surveyed students reported that they chose a program of study based on the input of a parent, spouse, or friend, while a significantly smaller percentage of students (44%) identified an academic advisor or college/university college and career advisor as having a significant impact of selecting a program of study. These data suggest potential gaps in culturally responsive academic and career advising that could exacerbate barriers to accessing CTE programs of study. Common themes reported by students surveyed

included a perceived lack of rigor and career mobility in CTE programs; a knowledge gap in scaffolding secondary CTE experiences into postsecondary programs of study; and the oversaturation of people of color (especially Native Hawaiian and Pacific Island students) in highly volatile careers, especially in advanced manufacturing.

Compounding the gaps in culturally responsive academic and career advising is the impact of the coronavirus on student affairs programming for AANHPI students at LCC. As noted in the AANHPI Career Readiness Survey, 2% of students surveyed utilized the Multicultural Center or engaged APISU. Prior to 2022, APISU and the Multicultural Center's strategic vision was centered on affinity group building with club meetings and credit-bearing courses in . The Rites of Passage program hosted six students in 2021 and was canceled due to low enrollment in summer 2022. APISU's interest in partnering with career services and cooperative education opens avenues to expand culturally responsive advising and programming as well as opportunities for AANHPI students to gain social capital.

Summary

The model minority myth has had lasting negative effects on the AANHPI diaspora. Rooted in anti-Black racism, the model minority myth has consequently left large segments of Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, and English language learners at the whim of a volatile post-coronavirus economy. Exacerbating the model minority myth are gaps in holistic student supports and culturally responsive career and college programming.

Considerations for Future Research—Discussion and Conclusions

LCC has committed to developing culturally responsive holistic student services targeting students as they enter postsecondary studies. The services include opportunities for dual credit as high school students, CTE-focused career days, CTE summer camps, Rites of Passage, and early career and college advising. Students finishing a CTE degree or certificate rely on cooperative education courses embedded within their programs of study for career success. Students pursuing a transfer program often seek career and transfer guidance from LCC's Counseling Center or directly from their intended transfer institution. The survey highlights the need for a paradigm shift for LCC and many small and mid-sized predominantly White institutions. Prior to the coronavirus, racial and ethnic affinity programs such as Rites of Passage had been successful in building awareness and group identity among students entering postsecondary education. A longitudinal study on its effectiveness for the retention, completion, and success of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) students at the community college level has not been conducted. The data are inconclusive to its effectiveness for BIPOC students enrolled in CTE programs is incomplete; the focus on precollege ethnic and affinity group programs are often led by faculty members in the core transfer programs and not by faculty or staff with a broad range of knowledge in careers, workforce development, or CTE. Often, CTE carries the stigma of being less rigorous, reaffirming barriers to high-wage, high-demand, and high-growth careers for students of color.

Levine and Van Pelt outline a changing American population entering the workforce through postsecondary education and highlight the long-lasting effects of systemic racism as exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic. "The nation's education system has not been

successful with today’s emerging majority, and the pandemic put these students further behind” (Levine & Van Pelt, 2021). The coronavirus forced low-income Americans, less educated populations, and people of color to bear the burden of unemployment, inflation, disproportionate death rates, and the lack of access to technology to fully participate in online and remote education. Levine and Van Pelt posit that the coronavirus has set back education 20 years for low-income Americans, less educated populations, and people of color. To address the gaps in access to postsecondary training, institutions such as LCC have to be intentional in how they can maximize resources for high-growth and dense populations of color. Many postsecondary institutions across the United States have focused their institutional efforts to become emerging HSIs to address the growing number of Latine/x students enrolled in K–12 education. In fall 2021, 451 HSIs were located in 24 states serving more than 2 million undergraduate students. Three areas that HSIs seek to address are developing institutional capacity to serve Latine/x undergraduates through the Developing HSI Program, creating pathways into STEM education through the HSI STEM and Articulation Program, and closing postsecondary attainment gaps through the Promoting Postbaccalaureate Opportunities for Hispanic Americans Program. Becoming an HSI requires a full-time equivalent enrollment of 25% Latine/x undergraduate students in the year prior to designation (U.S. Department of Education, 2022b). While Oregon reports a 12.8% Latine/x population, LCC’s Latine/x student population is not near the 25% threshold for an HSI designation.

In 2019–20, LCC reported that 3% of its for-credit students identified as Asian American, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander. Similar to an HSI designation, an Asian American, Native American, Pacific Island Serving Institution (AANAPISI) designation centers the gaps in educational attainment for students from Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Island ethnic and racial backgrounds. Eligibility is defined by a 10% full-time equivalent enrollment in the year prior to award (U.S. Department of Education, 2022a). One of the fundamental issues that AANAPISIs seek to address are the wide-brush strokes with which the model minority myth has been painted for AANHPIs for access to educational attainment and economic vitality. In light of the Lane County’s exponential growth in AANHPIs between 2010 and 2020, a more developed and wide-ranging community needs assessment led by LCC and other culturally based organizations could offer powerful insights on college choice and program of study.

Ultimately, an intentional investment to pursue an HSI or AANAPISI designation is a major task for any postsecondary institution—one that should not be taken lightly, nor under the premise of securing Title III or Title V federal funding (National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education, 2021). Pursuing an HSI or AANAPISI designation will require a shift in campus culture not only in student demographics but also in the conditions that these students will enter, engage, navigate, and learn in an environment. For postsecondary institutions to prepare to pursue Title III or Title V funds, three conditions must be addressed: the cultural capacity of faculty, employees, administration, and board; the humility to work outside of a “traditional” framework of how postsecondary institutions engage communities; and a fiscal responsibility to build sustainability to support students of color.

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