



A NEW THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTION OF VOCATIONAL INTERESTS IN THE CHINESE CULTURAL CONTEXT: THE WBCI SIX-DIMENSIONAL HIERARCHICAL MODEL

Wang Biao

"Silk Road" International University of Tourism and Cultural Heritage

ORCID: 0009-0001-6151-8001

wangbiao1717@gmail.com

Abstract. Vocational interest theory has long been dominated by Holland's RIASEC model. Although its simplicity, interpretability, and practical usefulness remain influential, its broad-band categories are increasingly unable to capture finer-grained differences in contemporary occupational structures and non-Western cultural contexts. This article proposes the WBCI six-dimensional hierarchical model, composed of six first-order dimensions and twelve second-order factors, to reflect the Chinese cultural context and occupational ecology. The model highlights functionally important distinctions that are often compressed in traditional classifications, such as influential interaction versus supportive interaction, technical construction versus normative execution, and business expansion versus transactional allocation. This purely conceptual article systematically clarifies the theoretical gaps addressed by WBCI, its construct boundaries, its comparative relationship with existing models, and its future validation path. WBCI provides a theoretically clearer, more culturally embedded, and more operational framework for vocational assessment, career counseling, major selection, and occupational matching.

Keywords: vocational interests, theory construction, Chinese cultural context, career development, hierarchical model.

XITOIY MADANIY KONTEKSTIDA KASBIY QIZIQISHLARNING YANGI NAZARIY QURILISHI: WBCI OLTI O'LCHOVLI IERARXIK MODEL

Wang Biao

"Ipak yo'li" turizm va madaniy meros xalqaro universiteti

Annotatsiya. Kasbiy qiziqishlar nazariyasi uzoq vaqt davomida Hollandning RIASEC modeli hukmronligi ostida rivojlanib keldi. Uning soddaligi, izohlash qulayligi va amaliy foydasi hanuz muhim bo'lsa-da, mazkur modelning keng toifalari zamonaviy kasbiy tuzilmalardagi va g'arb bo'lmagan madaniy muhitlardagi mayda farqlarni tobora kamroq qamrab olmoqda. Ushbu maqolada Xitoy madaniy muhiti va kasbiy ekologiyasini aks ettirish uchun olti birlamchi o'lchov va o'n ikki ikkilamchi omildan iborat WBCI olti o'lchovli ierarxik modeli taklif etiladi. Model an'anaviy tasniflarda ko'pincha siqib yuboriladigan funksional jihatdan muhim farqlarni, jumladan ta'sir ko'rsatuvchi va qo'llab-quvvatlovchi o'zaro ta'sirni, texnik qurilish va me'yoriy ijroni, shuningdek biznesni kengaytirish va tranzaksion taqsimotni ajratib ko'rsatadi. Mazkur maqola sof kontseptual xarakterga ega bo'lib, WBCI javob beradigan nazariy bo'shliqlarni, konstruktsiya chegaralarini, mavjud modellar bilan qiyosiy munosabatini va kelgusidagi verifikatsiya yo'llarini tizimli ravishda bayon qiladi. WBCI kasbiy baholash, karyera maslahatlari, mutaxassislik tanlash va kasbiy moslashtirish uchun madaniy jihatdan chuqurroq singdirilgan, tuzilmasi aniqroq va amaliy jihatdan qulayroq nazariy asosni taqdim etadi.

Kalit soʻzlar: kasbiy qiziqishlar, nazariy qurilish, Xitoy madaniy muhiti, karyera rivojlanishi, ierarxik model.

НОВОЕ ТЕОРЕТИЧЕСКОЕ ПОСТРОЕНИЕ ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНЫХ ИНТЕРЕСОВ В КИТАЙСКОМ КУЛЬТУРНОМ КОНТЕКСТЕ: ШЕСТИМЕРНАЯ ИЕРАРХИЧЕСКАЯ МОДЕЛЬ WBCI

Ванг Биао

Международный университет туризма и культурного наследия «Шёлковый путь»

Аннотация. Теория профессиональных интересов длительное время развивалась под доминирующим влиянием модели RIASEC Дж. Холланда. Несмотря на её простоту, интерпретируемость и практическую полезность, широкие категории этой модели всё хуже отражают более тонкие различия современного профессионального мира и не-западных культурных контекстов. В статье предлагается шестимерная иерархическая модель WBCI, включающая шесть первичных измерений и двенадцать вторичных факторов, предназначенная для отражения китайского культурного контекста и профессиональной экологии. Модель акцентирует те функционально значимые различия, которые часто сжимаются в традиционных классификациях, включая различие между влияющим и поддерживающим взаимодействием, между техническим конструированием и нормативным исполнением, а также между деловым расширением и транзакционным распределением. Данная статья носит сугубо концептуальный характер и системно раскрывает теоретические лакуны, на которые отвечает WBCI, границы её конструкторов, соотношение с существующими моделями и возможные пути последующей валидации. WBCI формирует более культурно укоренённую, структурно ясную и практически применимую теоретическую рамку для профессиональной диагностики, карьерного консультирования, выбора специальности и профессионального соответствия.

Ключевые слова: профессиональные интересы, построение теории, китайский культурный контекст, карьерное развитие, иерархическая модель.

Introduction.

Vocational interest theory should do more than place individuals roughly into a small number of broad categories. It should further explain why people who appear similar at the level of general interest structure eventually prefer different majors, occupations, role positions, and work environments. For decades, Holland's theory of vocational personalities and work environments, together with its six-type RIASEC structure, has supplied the dominant language for research and practice in vocational interests. Its continuing influence derives from its structural simplicity, ease of understanding, measurability, and practical utility in career counseling and educational tracking [1][2]. Yet the continued use of a model does not mean that it always remains sufficient across all cultural contexts and contemporary occupational realities.

This issue is particularly important in the Chinese context. The Chinese world of work is not a simple mirror image of the Western world of work. It is shaped not only by marketization and modernization, but also by cultural logics such as harmony, coordination, propriety, and balance; by occupational realities strongly oriented toward rules and institutions; by a deep commercial tradition; and by an occupational ecology in which agricultural, technical, academic, and business pathways have long coexisted. Under these conditions, some vocational-interest tendencies that appear secondary, marginal, or compressed in Western broad-band classifications may actually occupy a theoretically central position in China. The

distinctions between supportive and influential interpersonal activity, technical construction and normative execution, business expansion and transactional allocation, and outdoor operation and field exploration all have stable and vivid occupational prototypes. The question, therefore, is not whether classical vocational-interest theory has value, but whether a new structural model is needed to explain, more clearly, those vocational-interest functions that are compressed, mixed, or overlooked within broad-band classifications under the Chinese cultural context and contemporary occupational ecology.

Against this background, this article proposes the WBCI six-dimensional hierarchical model. It does not seek simply to negate existing theories, nor does it present itself as a mechanical substitute for classical models. Rather, it undertakes a more specific task: on the basis of respect for the contributions of existing vocational-interest theories, it proposes a hierarchical framework that is better suited to the Chinese cultural context, closer to actual occupational differentiation, and more conducive to subsequent measurement and application. This is a conceptual theoretical article. Its central task is not to report statistical results, but to explain systematically why WBCI must be proposed, where its construct boundaries lie, what additional problems it resolves relative to existing theory, and why it deserves serious empirical examination in later research.

Literature review.

Holland's theory is foundational in vocational psychology. Through the logic of congruence between six personality types and six occupational environments, it has provided an influential theoretical language for the study of vocational interests, career counseling, and vocational decision-making. Its greatest strengths lie in simplicity, clarity, and operability, which is why it remains one of the most frequently cited structural models in vocational-interest research (Holland, 1997; Nauta, 2010).

However, the strength of Holland's model also defines its boundary. Broad-band categories are suitable for high-level differentiation, but they often conceal substantively meaningful differences within categories. For example, the Social type may cover interpersonal work centered on listening, understanding, supporting, and counseling, but it may also cover interpersonal work centered on persuasion, guidance, negotiation, and coordination. The Enterprising type may refer either to growth-oriented and opportunity-oriented business activity or to business activity centered on transaction, allocation, finance, and pricing. The distinction between Realistic and Investigative also often compresses different vocational-interest functions such as technical construction, normative execution, empirical verification, and work conducted in natural settings. In other words, while broad-band classification improves the simplicity of a model, it often does so at the cost of internal visibility.

At the same time, vocational-interest research itself has increasingly shown a tendency to move from broad-band categories toward finer-grained and more hierarchical structures. Tracey's Personal Globe Inventory (2002), the dimensional reconstruction proposed by Su et al. (2019), and more recent integrative discussions of the nature, power, and multiple faces of interests (Rounds and Su, 2014; Su, 2020) together indicate that vocational interests may be represented in a more differentiated and structurally layered manner. Research in China has likewise begun to examine the fit between vocational-interest theory and the occupational realities faced by Chinese youth (Li et al., 2018). Proposing a new vocational-interest model is therefore not an arbitrary challenge to classical theory, but a natural extension of ongoing development within the field itself.

It should be noted that not all career theories operate at the same level as the present article. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) is more effective in explaining how interests, choices, and performance are formed and change over time, while the Theory of Work Adjustment places greater emphasis on the correspondence between the individual and the work environment. These theories are equally important, but they do not directly resolve the

central question addressed here: how vocational interests themselves should be conceptualized and structured (Lent, Brown and Hackett, 1994). The WBCI model proposed in this article is therefore not intended to replace these process theories; rather, it offers them a more fine-grained content structure of vocational interests.

The WBCI model is proposed on the dual basis of Chinese culture and Chinese occupational ecology. First, Chinese culture has long emphasized harmony, coordination, propriety, and balance. Interaction, coordination, mediation, and relationship maintenance have therefore occupied a central place in social operation and organizational activity, which makes interpersonal coordination a core dimension of vocational interests. Second, the Chinese occupational structure has long contained a large number of occupations that require not only technical capacity but also a high dependence on rules, procedures, standards, and institutions, especially in engineering implementation, manufacturing, institutional work, and regulation-oriented organizations. This makes it necessary to understand “technical” and “normative” as a more complete but internally distinguishable interest domain. Third, the continuity of Chinese civilization means that cultural inheritance and creative transformation are two aspects of the same historical process. Artistic creation should therefore not be reduced to pure aesthetic activity; it also includes original conception and innovation in forms of expression. Fourth, scientific research occupies a central position in China’s modern developmental logic, and research activity includes both inquiry into principles, mechanisms, and theories and verification through experiments, data, and evidence; it should therefore stand as an independent dimension. Fifth, China has a deep commercial tradition. Business activity includes both business expansion and transaction-and-resource allocation, so business operation should be established as an independent dimension and further differentiated internally. Sixth, the agrarian foundation of Chinese civilization, the need for ecological governance, and the long-term existence of occupational groups working in natural settings mean that nature-based practice should not merely be treated as an attached part of general hands-on interest.

In addition, the construction of WBCI follows five explicit principles: cultural fit, construct purity, occupational-prototype mapping, hierarchical simplicity, and testability. In other words, the model is not intended as a subjective relabeling exercise, but as a culturally grounded and empirically examinable theoretical structure.

Research methodology.

This article is a conceptual theoretical study rather than an empirical report. It adopts a design-oriented theory-construction approach, with the goal of proposing a hierarchical vocational-interest framework that is culturally embedded, structurally explicit, and open to later validation.

The research proceeded in four steps. First, the study identified the main limitation of broad-band vocational-interest classifications in explaining finer-grained differences in Chinese occupational settings. Second, it reviewed classical and contemporary vocational-interest theories in order to clarify both their contribution and their boundary. Third, it constructed the WBCI model on the basis of Chinese culture, occupational ecology, and the principle that each second-order factor should correspond to a recognizable occupational prototype. Fourth, it formulated theoretical propositions and a future validation path so that the framework could be examined through later item development, exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, discriminant validity testing, and known-groups validation.

The purpose of this method is not to replace empirical research, but to provide a clearer theoretical object for subsequent empirical testing.

Analysis and discussion of results.

For subsequent scale development, report interpretation, and theoretical proposition-building, the six first-order dimensions are represented by fixed codes: H Interpersonal Coordination, T Technical Regulation, P Artistic Creation, Q Scientific Inquiry, B Business Operation, and N Nature-Based Practice. Figure 1 presents the integrated relationship among the six dimensions and twelve second-order factors.

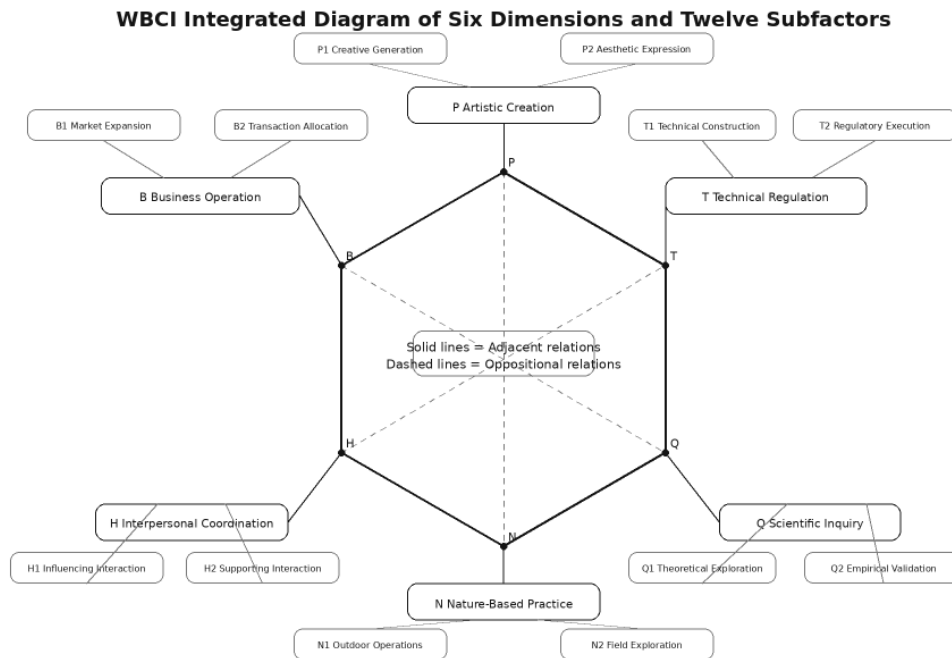


Figure 1. Integrated Relationship of the Six Dimensions and Twelve Factors in WBCI

The model contains six first-order dimensions and twelve second-order factors.

H Interpersonal Coordination. H1 Influential Interaction: a stable preference for influencing others, promoting action, or facilitating agreement through expression, persuasion, negotiation, guidance, and coordination; typical occupational prototypes include sales, public relations, business negotiation, recruitment, and training. H2 Supportive Interaction: a stable preference for supporting others through listening, understanding, soothing, counseling, and relationship maintenance; typical occupational prototypes include counseling, nursing, social work, educational support, and customer service.

T Technical Regulation. T1 Technical Construction: a stable preference for designing, building, transforming, and optimizing technical systems or tools; typical occupational prototypes include engineering research and development, software development, product design, and automation. T2 Normative Execution: a stable preference for implementing, inspecting, and controlling tasks in accordance with standards, procedures, and quality requirements; typical occupational prototypes include quality inspection, testing, process management, engineering implementation, and operations maintenance.

P Artistic Creation. P1 Creative Generation: a stable preference for proposing original ideas, new concepts, new content, and new forms; typical occupational prototypes include creative planning, screenwriting, content creation, and intellectual-property planning. P2 Aesthetic Expression: a stable preference for presenting beauty and emotion through visual form, style, performance, and design; typical occupational prototypes include visual design, directing, performance, fashion, and digital art.

Q Scientific Inquiry. Q1 Theoretical Inquiry: a stable preference for thinking about principles, mechanisms, concepts, models, and regularities; typical occupational prototypes include basic research, theoretical analysis, and mechanism research. Q2 Empirical Verification: a stable preference for analyzing problems through experiments, data, statistics,

modeling, and evidence testing; typical occupational prototypes include data analysis, experimental research, statistical modeling, and clinical research.

B Business Operation. B1 Business Expansion: a stable preference for identifying opportunities, expanding markets, driving growth, and enlarging business activity; typical occupational prototypes include market development, entrepreneurship, channel development, and brand growth. B2 Transactional Allocation: a stable preference for conducting business activity around pricing, procurement, finance, investment, exchange, and resource allocation; typical occupational prototypes include financial analysis, procurement, supply chain, trade, and investment.

N Nature-Based Practice. N1 Outdoor Operation: a stable preference for sustained operation, implementation, and site management in natural or outdoor environments; typical occupational prototypes include agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, fisheries, landscaping, on-site construction, and resource management. N2 Field Exploration: a stable preference for entering the field to conduct observation, survey, investigation, monitoring, and recording; typical occupational prototypes include ecological survey, environmental monitoring, geological exploration, and nature education.

Figure 2 presents the hierarchical structure between the six first-order dimensions and the twelve second-order factors in WBCI.

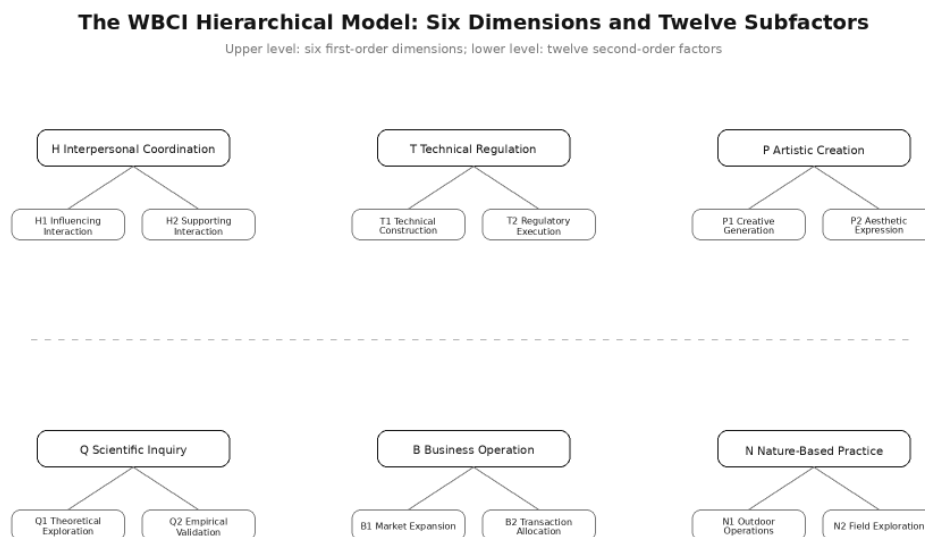


Figure 2. Hierarchical Structure of the Six Dimensions and Twelve Factors in WBCI

The key contribution of WBCI is not that it cuts vocational interests into ever smaller pieces, but that it makes visible again those vocational-interest functions that have already differentiated clearly in reality yet are often compressed by broad-band classification. Within the H dimension, influential interaction and supportive interaction are not the same kind of interpersonal interest. Within the T dimension, technical construction and normative execution correspond to two different logics of occupational activity. Within the B dimension, business expansion and transactional allocation both belong to business operation, but their activity core and occupational prototypes are not the same. WBCI therefore does not abandon a six-dimensional framework; rather, it establishes a middle-level structure within that framework that carries greater occupational explanatory power.

In a conceptual article, propositions are testable judgments about theoretical structure and relationships. To ensure that WBCI does not remain a mere classificatory description but

becomes a theoretical model open to subsequent empirical examination, the following propositions are advanced.

Proposition 1: In the Chinese cultural context and contemporary occupational ecology, vocational interests can be organized into six first-order dimensions: H Interpersonal Coordination, T Technical Regulation, P Artistic Creation, Q Scientific Inquiry, B Business Operation, and N Nature-Based Practice.

Proposition 2: Each first-order dimension is composed of two related but distinguishable second-order factors. Vocational interests are therefore better understood through a hierarchical structure of “first-order dimension–second-order factor” than through a single-layer broad-band classification alone.

Proposition 3: Compared with traditional broad-band vocational-interest models, the second-order factors of WBCI can more clearly differentiate occupational prototypes in the real world that differ in function but are often mixed together.

Proposition 4: Relative to H2 Supportive Interaction, H1 Influential Interaction corresponds more strongly to occupational prototypes such as sales, public relations, business, recruitment, and training; relative to H1 Influential Interaction, H2 Supportive Interaction corresponds more strongly to occupational prototypes such as counseling, nursing, educational support, and social work.

Proposition 5: Relative to T2 Normative Execution, T1 Technical Construction corresponds more strongly to research and development, development work, design, and system-optimization occupational prototypes; relative to T1 Technical Construction, T2 Normative Execution corresponds more strongly to occupational prototypes such as quality inspection, testing, operations maintenance, and engineering implementation.

Proposition 6: Relative to P2 Aesthetic Expression, P1 Creative Generation corresponds more strongly to occupational prototypes such as creative planning, screenwriting, and content conception; relative to P1 Creative Generation, P2 Aesthetic Expression corresponds more strongly to occupational prototypes such as visual design, performance, fashion, and digital art.

Proposition 7: Relative to Q2 Empirical Verification, Q1 Theoretical Inquiry corresponds more strongly to occupational prototypes such as basic research, mechanism research, and model construction; relative to Q1 Theoretical Inquiry, Q2 Empirical Verification corresponds more strongly to occupational prototypes such as experimental research, statistical modeling, and data analysis.

Proposition 8: Relative to B2 Transactional Allocation, B1 Business Expansion corresponds more strongly to occupational prototypes such as market development, entrepreneurship, channel development, and brand growth; relative to B1 Business Expansion, B2 Transactional Allocation corresponds more strongly to occupational prototypes such as procurement, financial analysis, supply chain, trade, and investment.

Proposition 9: Relative to N2 Field Exploration, N1 Outdoor Operation corresponds more strongly to occupational prototypes such as agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, fisheries, landscaping, resource management, and on-site engineering implementation; relative to N1 Outdoor Operation, N2 Field Exploration corresponds more strongly to occupational prototypes such as ecological survey, environmental monitoring, geological exploration, and nature education.

Proposition 10: Compared with a single-layer broad-band classification model, the six-dimension–twelve-factor hierarchical structure of WBCI has greater theoretical explanatory potential in career counseling, major selection, occupational matching, and the interpretation of vocational reports.

First, through the structural design of “first-order dimension–second-order factor,” WBCI addresses the problem of excessive internal heterogeneity within broad-band vocational-interest classifications. Second, WBCI brings Chinese cultural logics, rule-oriented occupational realities, commercial traditions, and occupational groups engaged in nature-based practice into

the core of theoretical construction rather than treating them as peripheral background. Third, WBCI is not only an academic classification framework; it is also directly oriented toward subsequent scale development, major matching, occupational matching, and report generation, and therefore carries both theoretical and applied significance.

WBCI is not only a theoretical model but also a practical framework. In career counseling, it can improve the interpretive precision of broad-band interest profiles by revealing the functional differences within each first-order dimension. In educational contexts, it can support more fine-grained major recommendations, such as distinguishing between a “technical-innovation pathway” and a “rule-execution pathway,” or between a “supportive interpersonal pathway” and an “influential interpersonal pathway.” In occupational matching, it can help explain why individuals who appear similar at the level of broad-band interests may still prefer different posts, teams, and work environments. In assessment practice, it also provides the conceptual basis for future scale development, profile interpretation, and report generation.

Although this article is conceptual rather than empirical, WBCI was designed from the outset for subsequent validation. The next stage should include the development of items around the twelve second-order factors, expert review of content validity, exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis with an independent sample, examination of internal-consistency reliability and discriminant validity, and known-groups validity testing based on occupational prototypes. WBCI is therefore not an unquestionable theory, but a structured theoretical proposal that can be systematically examined by subsequent empirical research.

Conclusion and suggestions.

The central claim of this article is that, under the Chinese cultural context, vocational-interest theory requires a higher degree of structural differentiation without losing practical interpretability. Broad-band vocational classifications still retain value, but when they can no longer explain the functional differences that are already clearly visible in career development, educational tracking, and occupational matching, they are no longer sufficient. WBCI is proposed precisely as a response to this issue. Through a six-dimension–twelve-factor hierarchical structure embedded in Chinese culture and occupational ecology, it makes visible again the differences that already exist in the real occupational world but are often compressed in traditional models.

The significance of WBCI does not lie in claiming that it has already grasped final truth, but in proposing a clearer theoretical object for subsequent research to examine. It may prove more helpful to theoretical research, vocational assessment, and career counseling, but its ultimate status should still be determined by future empirical research rather than by conceptual attractiveness alone. Accordingly, this article does not use conceptual construction to replace empirical research; it seeks to provide empirical research with a theoretical framework that is more worthy of being tested.

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