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THE CONTINUING SIGNIFICANCE OF RACISM Discrimination Against Black Students in White Colleges

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In the last few years we have seen a growing concern among academic administrators and educational researchers about Black student enrollment and attrition rates. A number of survey studies (Astin, 1977, 1982) have found that college enrollment and graduation rates for Black Americans have declined in many programs. In a recent major review of the literature, George Keller (1988-1989), professor at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education and recipient of the Casey Award in education planning, examined nine books, reports, and special journal issues devoted to assessing the problems of minority access and achievement in higher education. Keller's analysis (pp. 50-54), representative of much social science and policy analysis of minority problems, notes the extensive discussion of minority student attrition and suggests 10 reasons that are documented in the literature he reviewed:

1. The campus subculture is hostile to Blacks at many institutions, and the faculty and deans remain insensitive.
2. A growing number of Blacks are enrolling in the military, in part because of the more hospitable environment there.
3. Financial aid has been declining.
4. The decline is mainly among Black males; something is wrong with Black men, probably drugs, prison, and unemployment.

5. Poor preparation for college work, as seen in SAT scores, is a major factor.
6. With more jobs available, many Blacks go to work rather than college.
7. The deterioration of the Black family means a lack of discipline and emphasis on education.
8. The high incidence of drug use inhibits study.
9. Attitudes of Blacks, such as a lack of effort, are a problem.
10. There is a lack of adult leadership emphasizing education.

Keller (1988-1989) notes traces of racism in the college subculture, but plays down the importance of this factor in explaining student attrition and the lack of Black advancement in higher education. Like most of the authors he reviews, Keller emphasizes individual and family factors, including Black attitudes toward education and the lack of Black leadership. He concludes with the argument that no one knows with certainty what to do about attrition; he prefers the interpretive analysis of Glenn Loury, who argues that middle-class Blacks bear the "responsibility for the behavior of black youngsters" and are failing to encourage young Blacks to study hard (Loury & Anderson, 1984, p. 5). Keller then makes this point:

White educators and do-gooders outside academe must move beyond their naive pieties onto the treacherous, unknown ground of new realities. Petulant and accusatory black spokespersons will need to climb off their soapboxes and walk through the unpleasant brambles of their young people's new preferences and look at their young honestly. . . . They will need to encourage, lift up, and argue with those youths who do not see the urgency of education in a scientific, international, and information-choked world . . . where knowledge is the principal sword and shield against decline, poverty, and inferiority. Critics will need to stop the fashionable practice of lambasting the colleges as if they were the central problem. (p. 55)

The burden is on Black leaders and adults to encourage Black youth to view education as the main way to overcome poverty and inferi-

ority. Keller argues in effect that college subcultures no longer play a central role in the problems of Black students.

An alternative perspective. Much of the recent educational literature has picked up on this old theme in the analysis of Black Americans: the emphasis on racial group deficits in personal, family, intellectual, and moral development as explanations for Black problems, in this case college achievement and attrition problems. But there are important exceptions. Some researchers still place racial discrimination near the top of the list in explaining problems of minority student achievement and attrition. For example, in *The Color Line and the Quality of Life in America*, Reynolds Farley and Walter R. Allen (1989) ground their analysis of educational differentials in demographic data and statistical assessments. They present detailed Black-White data on educational attainment and SAT scores. The data, which reveal major gaps between White and Blacks, are interpreted as supporting what the authors term the two prevailing interpretations: that "American society has historically discriminated against blacks, and blacks over time come to expect such discrimination as normative," with this mutually reinforcing system undercutting Black educational progress (Farley & Allen, 1989, p. 208). This conclusion is plausible in light of the Farley and Allen data showing gaps in Black and White educational achievements, but their assessment reads discrimination (behavior) out of data on discrimination's consequences, especially SAT and grade data.

A few research studies have examined the alienation and other attitudinal responses of minority college students, another type of outcome measure suggesting the negative impact of college settings on Black attrition and achievement. A study by Loo and Rolison (1986) surveyed 109 minority and 54 White students at a California campus and found that the minority students were more socioculturally alienated than White students, as measured by a 4-point alienation scale. The Black and Hispanic students reported the greatest isolation and social alienation in the campus subculture (pp. 64-67). Suen's (1983, pp. 117-121) study of Black and White students at a Midwestern campus found that Black students scored

higher on an alienation scale and dropped out more often than White students. Coupled with the Farley and Allen (1989) study, these reports on attitudinal outcomes suggest the need to gather in-depth interview data on the situational barriers, including discrimination, that may lead to the alienation and lack-of-achievement outcomes in higher education.

A field research study. The purpose of this research project is (a) to provide a detailed description of the barriers faced by Black college students in predominantly White colleges and universities, (b) to suggest a typology of kinds of discrimination, and (c) to offer a tentative theory of cumulative discrimination. The study draws on in-depth interviews with two dozen college students, administrators, and faculty members in a larger sample of 180 middle-class Black Americans interviewed in 14 cities, from Boston and Baltimore to Houston, Dallas, and Los Angeles. The interviewers were Black graduate students, undergraduate seniors, and professors. The first respondents were known to the Black interviewers as members of White college communities, known to the author, or recommended by knowledgeable informants. Snowball sampling was then used. Those quoted here were interviewed, on average for one to one-and-a-half hours, between July 1988 and October 1989.¹ This type of in-depth interviewing has recently provided much insightful analysis of U.S. race relations (see, for example, Blauner, 1989; Collins, 1983; Rollins, 1985).

A preliminary overview. Discrimination can be defined as the "differential practices carried out by members of dominant racial groups that have a negative impact on members of subordinate racial groups" (see Feagin & Eckberg, 1980, p. 2). Beyond this general definition, one can distinguish an array of different types of discriminatory treatment. Although a detailed typology will be developed later, the following breakdown along the important dimension of potential discriminators will be used to organize the presentation: (a) White students, (b) White faculty members, (c) White administrators and staff members, (d) White alumni. Black students face numerous blatant and subtle discriminatory barriers from these four groups.

SPECIFIC CAMPUS BARRIERS: WHITE STUDENTS

Racist comments and racial awareness. Several students discussed in interviews how they became fully conscious of being Black only when they entered a White college. In talking about what made her conscious of being Black, one student answered:

I don't remember in high school being called a "nigger" before, and I can remember here being called a nigger.

[When was this?]

In my freshman year, at a university student parade. There was a group of us, standing there, not knowing that this was not an event that a lot of Black people went to! [laughs] You know, our dorm was going, and this was something we were going to go to because we were students too! And we were standing out there and [there were] a group of White fraternity boys — I remember the Southern flag — and a group of us, five or six of us, and they went by us, before the parade had actually gotten under way. And one of them pointed and said, "Look at that bunch of niggers!" I remember thinking, "surely he's not talking to us!" We didn't even use the word *nigger* in my house. . . .

[How did you feel?]

I think I wanted to cry. And my friends — they were from a southwestern city — they were ready to curse them, and I was just standing there with my mouth open. I think I wanted to cry. I could not believe it, because you get here and you think you're in an educated environment and you're dealing with educated people. And all of this backward country stuff . . . you think that kind of stuff is not going on, but it is.²

This Black student's first memory of being called a "nigger" comes from her college years in the 1980s. In this case White fraternity members in a college parade pointed her and her friends out as "bunch of niggers." Note that she first could not believe what they were saying. She gave these White male students the benefit of the doubt. Her sense of fairness is evident. Perhaps because she was inadequately prepared for her encounters with campus racism, she at first did not want to believe that she was being labeled in a derogatory way.

Racist jokes. The student quoted above also commented on the racist jokes that are part of the White campus subculture:

I hate to say that I've gotten bitter, but I've gotten bitter . . . last summer, I can remember people telling jokes, that's what I remember most, everyday there was a racial joke. And they found it necessary to tell me. It might be funny and then I'd laugh, and then I thought about it while reading that book [*Black Power*]. Even if they didn't mean any harm, how can they not mean any harm? How can they not, these people who are your classmates. And supposedly some of them are your friends. How can they not mean any harm? What do you mean they don't mean any harm? Why am I making excuses for their actions? I think that's what I was doing a lot of times was making excuses.

[Why do you think you were doing that?]

I think probably that's just the kind of person I am, just really very passive.

[Do you think it's necessary to be that way as a Black person?]

No, I don't think so. Before I did: Don't make too many waves. And I still think sometimes there's a right way and a wrong way to get certain things accomplished. But if we're talking about [racism] . . . how do I deal with it, let me think, on a day-to-day basis? I don't wake up and give myself a pep talk, "You're Black, you're proud!" [laughs] I don't do that, but I think that . . . I feel it now. Maybe there was a time when I didn't feel it, but I feel it now. And yes, I never thought about it, but I don't have to say it because I feel it.

[What makes you feel Black and proud?]

This university! Every time I had to go across some kind of barrier, whether it was White America-related or not, then that made me stronger, and strengthened one area. This is it. This is the learning tree.

Here we see another aspect of the college subculture: the racist jokes that White students like to tell. Some White students may not realize how offensive and troubling such jokes can be, while others may intentionally tell them because they know the jokes cause pain. For the latter, racial humor is probably an outlet for passive aggression. What makes the jokes even more painful is the experience of

a regular diet of them. The student just quoted at first assumed that the joke tellers did not "mean any harm." But on reflection she changed her mind. And her recognition that the White students often do mean harm has made her both bitter and stronger. Note also her interesting description of the White campus climate as "the learning tree" for Black students.

Racial aggression against Black students is not uncommon across U.S. campuses. And it has escalated beyond individual epithets and jokes. According to Baltimore's National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence, there were published reports of at least 175 racial incidents on college campuses in 1986 and 1987 alone; and 78 additional incidents were reported for the spring of 1988 (Magner, 1989, pp. A27-A29). The campus incidents have involved anti-Black graffiti, fraternity parties and parades with racist themes, racist literature passed out on campus, violent attacks on Black students, and interracial brawls.

Student opposition to things Black. Another undergraduate student explains some one-way integration features of the campus subculture:

It's a constant battle dealing with racism. It is so much a part of everything. To integrate means simply to be White. It doesn't mean fusing the two cultures; it simply means to be White, that's all. And we spend so much effort in passing into the mainstream of American society. They have no reason to know our culture. But we must, in order to survive, know everything about their culture. Racism is simply preferring straight hair to an Afro; that's certainly more acceptable in our society today. Black vernacular, it's not seen as a cultural expression, it's seen as a speech problem.

When you look at something as simple as just a group of people talking, Black people are given much more, a much higher regard if they are seen in an all-White group than they would if they were to be seen in an all-Black group. If you're seen in an all-White group laughing and talking, you're seen as respectable, and probably taking care of something important. You're not wasting time. You're all right. But if you're in an all-Black group, regardless if they can even hear your conversation, White people think you're trying to, you're congregated, to take over the world. It's just that basic . . .

you're just punished for expressing your Black culture . . . you're just constantly forced to take on the culture of White America.

This student expresses a reflective concern with the Procrustean bed aspects of the White campus subculture. Integration has not meant the fusing of two subcultures. Blacks must learn the White subculture, but Whites learn little or nothing about Black American subculture. So integration, in practice, means racial discrimination. Campus racism means preferring the straight (like-White) hair style to a natural Afro hair style. Campus racism means a preference for White English and slang over Black slang. White preferences in these matters provide great pressure on Black students to conform.

Particularly insightful is this student's discussion of the group behavior of university students. She suggests that to be respectable as a Black student at this large White university involves mostly being seen with, and listening to, Whites. One's presence in an all-Black group may be taken by Whites as a sign of aggressiveness. Whites may feel threatened. Black students quickly get the message that congregating in all-Black groups is undesirable behavior. There is the constant reminder of one's racial group distinctiveness.

Seeing Blacks as "all alike." A student at another university suggested that many White students see Black students as "all alike":

That's the first question they'll ask you: "Are you an athlete?" Professors, students, everybody here will ask you, "Are you an athlete?" When you say, "No," they're like, "Oh!" And it's like you got here because you're Black.

In many cases Black students were assumed to be athletes. She commented further on her experiences in the dorm:

Here in my dorm, there are four Black girls. Me and my roommate look nothing alike. And the other two are short, and I'm tall. They [White students] called me by my roommate's name the whole semester, and I didn't understand that. [Maybe] I understood it, but I didn't want to have to deal with that whole thing. That's really

upsetting. It's like they put their shutters on when they see a Black person coming. And the few Black people that do get along with the other students, they seem to sort of put on a facade. They pretend to be something they're not.

Noted here is the failure of White students to see very different Black students as individuals.

Some White students also assume that Black students are not intelligent. One young lawyer in an East Coast city noted this about her law school days:

In law school, there were some Whites who were offended because I was smart. The teacher would ask the question and point to me, and they didn't think I should have an answer. And I would have a correct answer. But then they started to respect me for it, and they would tell me that: "Hey, you beat us on that," "we knew you would have known that;" or "What happened? Did you study all night?"

After she proved herself to be a good student, these White students changed their minds and treated her with respect.

The difficulty of socializing on a White campus. In part as a result of this stereotyping, making close friendships with White students is difficult for Black students. Another student with whom we talked had this to say about a question asking, "Do you feel that you can trust White people?":

I'm sure you could. But I just haven't been in a situation where I could find out, because most of the White people that I've met here at college all seem to be reacting on a superficial basis. . . . People that I've met living in the dorm — you know most of the time there's a majority of people who are White in the dorm, and most of the people who really develop a close friendship are just White. People I start out knowing, though, I usually get phased out with toward the end of the year. I still don't know why. I've tried to figure it out. But lately I try not to bother with it, because it will just cause me mental anguish, and I don't want to do that to myself.

Now when I was in high school, it was different. We hung out with a lot of different people. We had a lot of Orientals, Mexicans — it was just a whole rainbow of friends I had in high school. I didn't

think much of it, but when I came to this university, it seemed to change. I don't know if it was just me, or the environment, but somehow my view of intimacy with other people, especially White people, has soured since then.

This student had a rainbow of friends in his multiethnic high school, but at the White university he has found it difficult to make White friends. In his experience most White students react on a superficial friendship basis; most do not want to become long-term friends with Black students.

The ostracism behavior of some Whites is illustrated in this report by an attorney in her mid-20s on her predominantly White college:

I had an incident with discrimination, which really, basically took me by surprise . . . I lived in the dorms for a couple of years. And you sit around in the dorms and eat food with the girls, eat popcorn and watch the soaps when you don't have classes. And I remember this particular incident, this girl, we had just socialized the night before, watching T.V., having popcorn, et cetera, and I saw her on campus the next day. And she turned her head to make sure she didn't have to speak to me.

And I had that happen more than once. And I think that was a bout with discrimination which just slapped me in the face, because it doesn't feel real good to be a friend to someone, or an associate to someone at seven o'clock, and then at eight o'clock, or eight-thirty, when they're around friends of their race, they don't know who you are or what you are, and don't even give you the consideration of acknowledging your presence or speaking to you.

A suggested reason here for the socially isolating behavior of some White students is the unwillingness to let other Whites see them befriending Black students.

PROFESSORS

Seeing Blacks as representatives of their race. Much analysis of the attrition rate of Black students from White universities and colleges neglects the role of key college actors, especially faculty

members and administrators, in that attrition rate. An important aspect of the White campus subculture is the chronic inability, not only of students but also of many White faculty members and administrators to see Black students as individuals. Like the students discussed above, many White faculty members view Black students in stereotypical group terms. One graduate student described such an experience.

A Black undergraduate in my department is doing some research on Black and White achievement in college, and one of her advisers was once the head of a rather prestigious organization in my field, not to mention [being] chair of the department. Apparently she assumed that this one undergraduate somehow spoke for all Black people. And this professor would ask her things like, "Well, I don't know what you people want. First you want to be called Negro, then you want to be called Black. Now you want to be called African American. What do you people want anyway? And why don't Black people show up in class more? Why is it that I can't get enough Blacks to sit in on my classes?" So every now and then that sort of racist mentality comes out.

Attempting to do research on Blacks and Whites, this student went to one of her advisers, but she was treated by this White professor as a spokesperson for her racial group. In this case, the Black student was not seen as an individual but rather as a source to explain what Black people "want." A common complaint among Black students at predominantly White colleges is that they are often not seen as individuals.

Another undergraduate at a major public university echoed this point and set it in a broader context in commenting on what angers her about Whites:

Probably the thing that angers me the most about White people is their insensitivity and their total inability to see you as an individual. You're always seen as a Black person. And as a Black woman, you're seen as a Black person before you're seen as a woman. It's just a constant struggle. You're always trying to assert your personality, or your style, your individuality. If you want recognition you practically have to go overboard to get people to see that you are

unique with your own style and your own goals, and your own way of thinking about things.

White people always assume that Black people think the same way. I remember this one professor in the sociology department. He was trying to explain something to me about the church, and he said, "Because you're Black you'll understand this." And he was saying something about the church, and from what I understood it sounded like the Baptist faith that he was trying to describe.

Well, I didn't understand, primarily because I'm not Baptist. I'm Episcopalian. And he didn't think for a moment that maybe I wasn't Baptist. I had to be Baptist, I was Black. I was Black and in the South. Of course I'm Baptist. It's that, and the idea that people don't really listen. They always assume what you're going to say, or they'll perceive it a certain way. It's just they act as if they know you already, like there's nothing new to know about you.

In her college experience she has encountered much insensitivity from White people, including this White sociology professor, who assumed that all Black people were Baptists. She notes that "you practically have to go overboard" to get many Whites to see you as an individual and to hear what you have to say.

The White model. One Black college student described how a college English professor told her that she should not write essays about the Black people she liked to write about because those experiences were not universal. She said that he told her

If a White person, for example, picked up one of my stories he would not understand what the hell was going on. So therefore I shouldn't write about these things. But I should write about [other] things, and he quoted William Faulkner quite liberally. I should write about things that appeal to the human heart, that everybody can appeal to and can relate to. And, see me, in my nice trusting self, I said no, he's not saying that Black people aren't people enough to be termed as universal. He's not saying that, he's meaning something else. He couldn't possibly be saying this to my face. I was very, very confused. I did not understand what the hell he meant by it, not just the racial implications, but the whole statement.

The professor regarded her stories about the distinctiveness of the Black experience as somehow not as universalizable as classical

stories about the White experience. Moreover, by citing Faulkner liberally he was clearly suggesting that the model for good writing is not only White but also male and Southern.

In an East Coast city a male banker reported on a recent experience in an English course:

The only thing that hurt me was certain White institutions. Instead of helping you and educating you, they will browbeat [you] and downplay the educational level that you have. I turned in a paper one time at a college, and I had an instructor tell me that I was speaking Black English. I was the only Black in the class, and it was a freshmen writing class. And she told me that I was speaking Black English. And it kind of, in one sense, made me not want to be Black, and, in another sense, wonder what was Black English. Because, I had gone to White schools from the sixth grade on, and I had been speaking, not speaking but writing White English all my life.

I couldn't understand what she was talking about . . . if I remember right, she gave me a D in the course. She had given me Ds and Cs on all my papers. And I know for a fact that certain people did less research, less work than me, but she was very hard on me. That really woke me up, because that really taught me to take a lot of English writing workshops. Where now, I guess you could say, my writing skills are above average. And that's great because by her hurting me, and telling me that I was speaking Black English, now I'm able to speak Black English in a White format, where I can get my point across and be understood.

This student describes the strong sense of inferiority that came from his teacher stereotyping his English writing patterns as Black English without providing him the necessary framework for understanding the racism of making White English the standard. As a young student who had been to integrated schools, he thought he spoke English. Her White bias and insensitivity to the fact that there is not an independent scale for evaluating spoken language — all language is equally valid if it communicates — resulted in the teacher hurting this Black student. Interestingly, his reaction was to become an expert in the standard English expected in the White-conformity perspective of such teachers.

A subtle example of the White model being applied to minority students can be seen in the common emphasis on conventional standards such as SAT test scores and on attendance at certain high schools. One student commented on her recent experiences:

When I got here it was an ignorance, a closed-minded ignorance that I didn't know how to handle. One of my professors -- I went to him as a freshman asking for help, and he asked me my SAT scores. And I told him. And [he said], "I don't know why they let you in, you're not expected to do well. There are so many people like you here that aren't qualified, and I can try to help you and find a tutor." I [said], "Thanks!"

In this case her score on the SAT test, historically developed as a measure of White middle-class culture and education, was considered to be an excellent measure of a student's quality. The professor also asked her what high school she had gone to. When she told him that she had gone to an elite private White high school, "his face just went every which way, [his] eyes went big, and then he said, 'Well, I'll help you get a tutor, and we'll study, because I know you're prepared for this.' " The student was surprised at the professor's change in attitude toward her when he learned that she had gone to a prominent White high school not a Black high school. She reported that she had similar experiences with several of her professors. One professor even offered to help her with her homework over lunch, after she told him what high school she had gone to. Apparently, the fact that she was tracked through an elite White school meant to these professors that they should take her more seriously.

Stereotyping and the White male model. This practice of holding up the White (or White male) model to nontraditional students can be seen in professional schools as well. A Black professional in a New England city recounted the recent experience of her sister:

My sister is a surgical technician, and she's just completed getting her master's degree in nursing. And she's talked about as an older student -- again the expectation, being from a Black community in

the inner city, that she would not be able to sit in the classroom with younger White students and do as well as they could.

But she's proven differently. [I talked] . . . to her about her struggles with her professors, about what she is capable of doing, the course load she is capable of handling, and [her] trying to convince them that she can take on this course load, as opposed to them being supportive and saying, "Whatever you think you can do is fine, and I'll see that you get the kind of guidance and support that you need."

[What exactly did they do?]

Well, limit her course work . . . they said, "You can't take this course." And she got into a fight with the dean.

Another misconception that many White professors and administrators have is that Black Americans from "ghetto" communities are not able to handle difficult course loads and educational requirements in the same way that White, or White male, students can. This misconception is probably magnified in this case because not only was this student Black, but also she was an older woman returning to school.

The lack of feedback and reinforcement. A problem that many students, Black and White, have with their college professors is a lack of appropriate feedback on course performance. But this lack of feedback, and reinforcement is doubly difficult for a Black student at sea in a White world. A business executive in a mid-Atlantic city commented on his daughter's experience with two predominantly White universities and a Black university:

My daughter, who graduated from Texas Southern University [TSU] in Houston, initially began her college training at an Oklahoma university . . . she moved back to Houston to be with us, with my wife, and went to a White university there. [She] then decided she needed a little more exposure and went to Texas Southern University.

The thing that was so interesting to her was that at the Oklahoma university and the White Texas university, both good schools, there was a night and day difference on how you were treated by the faculty. The faculty at TSU was interested in you as a person, wanted to ensure that you were successful in completing courses and getting your degree. And at the Oklahoma university and the White Texas

university they could care less about you as an individual; you're more or less a number. . . .

She decided in a number of instances that there were some assumptions made by her faculty at these universities that she would not be able to comprehend some of the information they were giving her. Just on an assumption! Of course, she was able to do that, had no problem. But it was just that "Well, I know the university is here, and Black students are competing with the White students, and we're really not going to expect you to do too well."

He notes the significant difference among faculty members at the White universities and the Black university, not only in the stereotyped assumptions about what the Black students could comprehend and attain but also in the feedback provided to students on their progress in higher education.

One graduate student described his undergraduate experiences this way:

And I can think of several courses where I honestly feel that I was very much discriminated against. One class was an honors course in social science. And it just so happened that the criteria for getting in the course was to have made a certain grade in a previous social science course, which I did. So I took the course, which I enjoyed very much.

But when it came time for grades, the grade that I got was not the grade I earned . . . and the professor actually never even respected me enough to sit down and talk to me about my grades. The only feedback I got from the guy was when I approached him after I got the grade. And he talked to me only the amount of time that it took him to walk out of his office and go to where he had to go, and I stood there as he walked through his door. And except for that he wouldn't even give me any feedback.

And essentially what he told me was that, first of all, my attendance was poor in class. And secondly he told me that some work which he gave as optional work—that I had done—was . . . poor work. So what I understood him to say was that he took off of my regular grade for extra credit work. And as far as attendance goes, he said that I never attended class. But in fact I only missed two classes the entire semester, and the only reason I missed those two classes was because I was required by the military to be out of town on those two days. And I think, it seemed like he had, he only

had the practice of taking attendance on Fridays. And those were two Fridays because those were the two scheduled times, and I guess he assumed that if you weren't there that Friday that you weren't there that week. But I personally always felt that for a college professor to take attendance was a little bit ludicrous anyway. But that was the explanation that he gave me, that my class attendance was poor, and that my extra credit work was poor. And I think that was no evidence to support the grade.

He gave yet another example:

Another case was in organic chemistry, which in fact I failed. Throughout the semester I would go to the professor, especially before the exams, to see if I could get some help and input for things I expected to encounter on the test. And the professor literally, literally, on several occasions kicked me out of his office, and said he didn't have time to talk to me, and for me to go study with some other students in the class. And so I really think that was racially motivated also. And actually there's probably a million other examples I could give you like that.

And to be real honest, I felt real lucky, because I think a lot of the things I encountered in college were pretty mild and subdued compared to the few Black males I knew in college. Some of those guys took a hell of a beating. And to this day, I say, I don't know why they let me finish college, because in fact a lot of guys that I went to college with never even finished.

In some cases a White professor's style may be brusque for all students, Black and White, but this cold style brings an especially heavy burden to minority students in a setting that is already difficult for them. In the first case given by the graduate student, the professor did not fairly evaluate the student's attendance record or extra-credit course work. The second case involved a chemistry professor who had no time for the student and ushered him out of the office. Perhaps these professors would have done the same with White students; however, this insensitivity and lack of feedback can have a very negative impact, whether or not it was intentional. A persistent diet of this professorial behavior, as this student notes, is a factor in the dropout rate of Black males from college.

Black students become especially sensitive to negative feedback from faculty members, as yet another graduate student reported:

After a while, I think that you become real sensitive to certain kinds of feedback, and I think that becomes self-defeating. Like, if the message that you receive from someone or some institution, from a school or a class, or a professor is that you're not quite as good, or you're not good enough, or your performance is not up to standard—whether or not that happens to be true—you tend to internalize that. And to the extent that you internalize that, I think that really affects your actual performance. You know, the self-fulfilling prophecy. If you really think that you're dumb, you'll act as a dumb person will.

And so I think that it's only in recent years that I've begun to realize that . . . I think things are starting to surface where I'm beginning to realize that when I got a bad grade and I didn't deserve it, or somebody really gave me a tough time in school, that affected me more than I really realized at the time. But I don't think that's a chronic problem for me, but I certainly think it's something to consider, even if I didn't consider it before, I think it's something that I consider all the time now. Just how valid that kind of feedback is. And I'm making a special effort to distinguish between [when] my performance really is not up to par, and when somebody says it's not up to par, but it really is.

Black students in predominantly white colleges and universities generally seem sensitive to the character and quality of the feedback they receive. This is true for most people. Most of us have trouble assessing the feedback we get about our performance. Is the feedback fair or unfair? Is our performance really poor, as negative feedback suggests, or is the evaluator biased? And failure to read the feedback correctly can be a very serious liability in coping with college, and especially with graduate school. This general problem becomes very difficult for Black students in a predominantly White college where there is a significant probability of racial bias. The above-quoted graduate student notes that if you are treated as dumb, you may come to see yourself that way. He has realized that he must distinguish between the situation where his performance is good, but not recognized as such, and the situation where his performance

is actually subpar. Moreover, a lack of professorial feedback can be particularly devastating to minority students because they have often suffered denigration and discrimination in many other areas of college life.

Replying to a question about what you would most like to see changed in the dominant society, one Black graduate student made a plea for White faculty members to recognize the differences in resources between Whites and Blacks:

On the one hand, I'd like to see an acknowledgment that people bring with them differences in terms of culture, differences in terms of economic advantages, differences in terms of educational advantages. So, if anything, I'd like to see on the part of White Americans some acknowledgment that Blacks and other racial minorities bring differences with them into various situations.

Even if those situations are supposedly integrated, the attitude among Whites is, "Well, you've made it. You're the epitome of success, you've showed that it can be done, and apparently it's by one's own initiative that things change, there's no need for hand-outs." That Blacks ought to be given nothing more than what Whites or anyone else should be given.

And my response to that would be that I don't know of any Blacks who are asking for anything more than a fair shake. So, I guess, at a very philosophical type level, I'd just like to see not only an acknowledgment of differences, but also an acknowledgment that we still are not equal, and that it will take more than lip service to achieve equality. It takes active involvement on the part of White America, and right now I don't see that.

Another part of the subculture of White campuses is the failure of many Whites there to recognize that minority students who "make it" in the White college world typically do not have the resources of the average White student. Many Black students may appear to be middle class in background, but often they are the first generation to attend a White college, and they are less likely to have the deep-pocket resources of typical White students. Most Whites inside and outside colleges do not understand the historical background and significance of this resource problem. In our society's

educational and economic institutions an individual, whether White or Black, does not succeed or fail solely on her or his own merits. Our meritocratic ideology is contradicted by the fact that inherited privileges and wealth provide a leg up the ladder for some, but not for others. Family economic resources are critical in shaping one's educational opportunities — and thus one's educational achievements.

Lack of receptiveness to minority research and issues. Another student, a graduate student in the social sciences, commented on subtle discrimination he has faced from his professors:

If I go back to my first few days as a graduate student, I came in having done some work on stereotypes as an undergraduate. At my undergraduate school, my professor was really supportive and in fact the whole department was supportive of me doing that sort of work. When I got here, literally [on] the first day of class, the very professor who I had been referred to took a look at the work I'd done, and said, "Well, that was fine as an undergraduate, but you're in graduate school now."

And what I didn't realize was that that sort of work basically wasn't done in the department. . . . The example I just gave you where I would be hard-pressed to say well, that's discrimination in itself. But what I found once I began graduate school four years ago was that it was quite difficult to match not only personal interests, but also personalities. . . .

My whole experience of the past four years has been one of pursuing research that isn't tied specifically to ethnicity, and in fact, although I got into social science largely to try to be of some help to other people, especially other Black people, I had to pursue that desire outside of the classroom. I guess when I think of opportunity in the way that it's normally presented, academics as being a haven for expressing oneself, that opportunity hasn't been there as far as I can see.

He added this in a similar vein:

I do remember my first year here being a bit disillusioned. A few faculty within my area were basically up-and-coming types who again gave lip service to notions of equality; [they] seemed not to

really take my opinion as seriously as I thought they should have, just in terms of the research we were doing. And in fact, I received some rather negative feedback at the end of that year from those individuals. I thought, wait a minute, I haven't heard anything like this before, nobody confronted me with anything like this my whole first year.

In terms of grades, they didn't have that to complain about; in terms of my involvement in the research they didn't have that to complain about. But there was the notion that what I was doing wasn't quite good enough. It didn't conform enough to what they expected. . . . And this was a person who took a very narrow view of what my field ought to be about, and specifically shied away from ethnic type issues. So, he was ignorant and didn't know how to deal with them. So, yes, that was a bit of a rude awakening.

This graduate student came to the university with enthusiasm for social science research on racial and ethnic issues, for at his undergraduate college he had been encouraged to do research on stereotyping. But he quickly got the message in his graduate department that there was little support for such race-related research. He had gone into this social science field to be of help to Black people, but now he has had to go outside the university classrooms to pursue that goal.

The same graduate student noted that his problem was not isolated. He commented on some of his classmates who did not feel welcome in the department:

I know of people who have been in my department who have left. I can think of a Black woman, who I never actually met, who left the year before I got there, who felt that the department was so constricting in terms of not only the types of research that she could do, but in terms of attitudes. Apparently, she was told at one point [that] she wasn't thought of as a Black person, largely because she was doing so well. She was outperforming the White students in a class. And apparently a faculty member told her something like, "Well, we don't think of you as one of them anymore."

And I also know someone who was in my department, who received a very cold reception, not only in terms of the type of research he wanted to do, but also in terms of basic politeness. . . .

That individual ended up switching departments, he got his doctorate, but never felt at home in that department.

Here we see another reason for the Black attrition rate at predominantly White graduate schools. When White faculty members, in blatant or subtle ways, rule out research that minority students consider especially important, they are also likely to force some of those students out of their programs. Another graduate student also talked about the difficulties of doing research on Black Americans:

I guess the other thing that I would say is that obviously I have a vested interest in my heritage, so, although this is not my exclusive focus, there are times and places when I really would want to do some research specifically related to Black issues. And my experience to this date is that in the larger educational community, there really is not that much of an interest in that kind of research.

So to the extent that one of my goals is to do research related more to Black issues, I can see other obstacles, just because I don't think I'll have the resources and support systems that I would have if my focus were on some other topic. And I guess what I mean by that is in terms of institutions I don't think there's a whole lot of major institutions that are doing a lot of research on Black issues.

So what I'll probably wind up doing is going to a predominantly Black university. Or universities who have a tangential interest in Black research to do any kind of work like that. And I think that's particularly a handicap because I really don't think the resources, research resources, at traditional Black schools and smaller minority programs in major universities compare to what the resources are in other research deals.

This student reiterates the point that White professors are not sensitive to the need for research on issues of direct importance to Black Americans. In fact, he has come to the conclusion that he will probably have to take a position at a predominantly Black university in order to pursue his reasonable research goals.

One Black assistant professor recounted her recent experiences with her primary professor in a top West Coast graduate school. The latter pressured her to specialize in a certain period of White literature, not in Afro-American literature, because she would thus be

doing something he didn't consider most Black people did. And that job offers would come in for that reason. And further that doing Afro-American literature was not in and of itself important intellectual work. Well, I insisted . . . and he finally gave in and gave me permission. He never stopped thinking that it was important for me not to do Afro-American literature as evidence that I was a real scholar. You couldn't do Afro-American lit and be a real scholar at the same time. And I ran into that attitude when I was on the job market.

One signal that college and university subcultures are not integrated is the downplaying of research on Black Americans. Such research is suspect and not considered to be truly scholarly — an attitude that signals institutionalized discrimination.

Fear of student organization. In talking about effective ways to deal with racial discrimination, one Black graduate student commented that

We set up a meeting of grad students to discuss the recruitment and retention of minorities in the department. And a few of the faculty members there who were pretty much of the old school. . . . We had agreed that the meeting would be open and candid. Their idea of open and candid was that it would be closed to everyone else except those who had been invited to be part of the discussion.

So, in that sense, the department has been quite reactionary. It seems to be acting in good faith now in terms of recruitment, but only because it has been pressured to do so. . . . But it is frustrating to realize how, not only insensitive, but ignorant, a lot of supposedly intelligent White people are. I think [of] the faculty especially in that regard. There seems to be an attitude that things are well enough now for Blacks and other minorities that there's no need to rock the boat.

I've certainly seen that in my own department, but I think it extends beyond that department. Indifference to a variety of issues, whether it's investment in South Africa, or faculty recruitment. . . . And when people come along who want to set things right so to speak, they're the ones that are confronted, they're the ones that are met with everything from excuses, such as divesting from South Africa would be making a political statement where obviously remaining invested is a political statement in itself.

Organizing on campus will often get Black students labeled as malcontents or militants by White faculty members and administrators. Ironically, such supportive organizations often keep Black students in college and graduate school.

PROBLEMS WITH ADMINISTRATORS AND STAFF MEMBERS

Insensitivity and unwillingness to learn. A Black administrator described the insensitivity of a senior White administrator, her supervisor:

One problem that I do have also is that he expects me to be a spokesman for all Black people. And that's very difficult, because I've never had to quite deal with someone that closely that has a mind set like that—where they say, "Why do Black students do this?" And I'm like, I would never ask you, "Why do White students do this?" because you can't generalize or put them in a group like that. Well, why do Black students and White students have different kinds of parties? And I'm like, have you ever been to one? It would help you if you would just go to one. It would help you if you would just go to find out. And I'm looking at this person and thinking, why are you in this position if you don't already know these things?

I've tried very hard, I think. I purchased a video called *Racism 101* and it took me a year to get this man to watch this little one-hour video. . . . I think mostly I have to justify myself and that's our relationship, one in which I'm constantly justifying what I do, constantly trying to educate and enlighten someone I feel should already be at that stage if he's going to supervise my office.

Note this White administrator's tendency to treat the respondent as a Black spokesperson and his unwillingness to face his own stereotypes by learning more about the Black students whose presence at his university is relatively recent. The tendency to view or treat Black students in a stereotypical way is not limited to students and faculty members.

Campus police. Some of the most serious harassment faced by Black students at predominantly White colleges and universities has come from the police. At one campus, a student reported that a number of Black students had been harassed by White police officers. She has had spotlights put on her by the police; and some male friends, including her boyfriend, have had guns drawn on them. She commented:

As far as my boyfriend. . . . This past year there have been some incidents, some attacks on campus. And he was at the gym playing basketball; and he was going to the gas station. He got out of the car at the gas station down the street. The [police] guy tells him to put his hands up, and he pulled a gun. It wasn't the campus police, but I feel they called him. Their reason was that they saw him leaving the gym, and they thought they heard a woman screaming at him. He said, there was no woman.

That doesn't make sense. I think they should be punished, it's just not right. But see, incidents happen to them, especially Black men, incidents like this happen to them all the time. Have they written a letter? Have they done anything? No. They [the police] haven't bothered me [physically], but when they do, I will write a letter, and it will be publicized. I will make sure it is. I'm not going to take that. There's no reason that I should have to.

Do you want to see my ID? Give me a reason. You can't just ask me for my ID when I'm just walking down the sidewalk. There are 50 billion other White people walking on the same sidewalk and you didn't ask them for their ID. . . . You don't want to have your friends come here sometime because they'll be harassed. So, it's kind of bad. But I've heard a lot of campuses are like that, White campuses.

In addition to the problems created by White students and faculty members, Black students — especially Black male students on White campuses in cities with significant Black populations — are sometimes treated differently by the campus and local city police. Police officers are trained, formally in classes or informally by older officers, to look for demographic cues or attributes that distinguish potential criminal offenders from other people. High on the list of

these attributes are *Black* and *male*. Black men often do make up a disproportionate percentage of urban criminals, but in most White areas they are not the majority of criminals. And recent research has demonstrated that in general Whites tend to exaggerate greatly the role of Blacks in crime (see Graber, 1980). The consequence of this distorted White perspective is that many innocent Blacks, such as Black students on White campuses, will be stopped unnecessarily by the police. This differential treatment is clearly discriminatory on campuses, like the above, where there are only a few Black students, whose faces could easily be memorized by the campus police.

Other staff members. A Black psychologist and counselor at a major university commented on her experience and that of a student treated by a university physician:

In the nine years that I've been here, there have been a couple of times when I've been seated with a client that I'm working with, an Anglo White client, and I've been called a "nigger," or "nigger" has been used in the context of some discussion that the client is making in my office to my face. I've also had clients get up and leave my office. One woman told me she didn't want to work with me because I was Black, that she had never worked with, or lived with, or gone to school with Blacks, and she just had great difficulty with it.

Another time, I was working with a student at the health center in crisis, a young Black student, female. And the student was [getting] a physical exam by a physician. And the physician came out of the examining room after talking with the student and examining her for the physical complaints, and the first thing that the intern asked me was, is she intelligent? Now, it had no connection with the physical exam he had just completed. And it felt very much inappropriate. It was just out in left field. There have been a few others.

She documents the fact that White students verbally harass Black staff members as well as Black students. And she notes that this White physician operated with a stereotypical conception of a Black student as well.

OTHER BARRIERS: THE ALUMNI

A former Black faculty member at one of our largest universities commented on the weak commitment of the alumni to facilitating the mobility of the Black students there:

When I first came to the university . . . [I] was on the advisory committee to the vice president for student affairs, and we met with a member of the alumni association who talked to us about opportunities for graduates, saying that there are so many of our graduates all one needs to do in a particular town is say, "I'm a graduate of your university, can you help me get a job?" My response was, "That's wonderful. [What] if a Black student should do this, should go up to one of the White graduates of the university, and say, I'm a university graduate, can you help me." This person who made the presentation said, "I think the person might be insulted." And so I got off the committee.

[The person might be insulted?]

That's right. So, I knew then that was not meant for the benefit of Black students, so I resigned from the committee, and yet some of the people on the committee couldn't understand why I resigned. I didn't go back. Those are some of the kinds of things I have faced, but I have not said anything about it, because sometimes you find more difficulties as a result of it. You don't know how many situations that you'll face that are based on what you did at that particular time. Things that you need, opportunities to work for yourself or for somebody else, are denied because they are very angry about what you did, but it's done in another context.

This comment points up the tokenism of the Black student and faculty presence at many White colleges and universities. Black students are admitted, but once they graduate they cannot expect much help from the predominantly White alumni. This faculty member was angry about the response to his question about Black graduates, so angry that he resigned as the token Black faculty member on that committee. He also notes his more common strategy of keeping quiet in similar situations in order to work more effectively in later contexts. Eventually, however, this Black professor retired early from the university; a major reason was the racial discrimination he endured.

CONCLUSION: TOWARD A THEORY OF CUMULATIVE DISCRIMINATION

A typology of discriminatory practices. In *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Jürgen Habermas (1984, pp. 305-387) views macrostructures such as bureaucracy and capitalism as burdensome integrating mechanisms for microlevel human action; in a capitalist society, for example, the macroeconomic structures intrude on the microworld; they thus "colonize the lifeworld." Similarly, the daily White-on-Black interactions that involve differential treatment for Black college students exemplify the way the macrolevel system of racial inequality and stratification colonizes the everyday micro-lifeworld of Black Americans. As we have seen, Black students on White college campuses report a different world from that described by scholars and commentators like Keller. In their lifeworlds Black Americans face a broad continuum of discriminatory practices and barriers. In his classic study *The Nature of Prejudice*, Gordon Allport (1958, pp. 14-15) traced out five types of acting out negative prejudice, which he termed antilocution (talking against), avoidance, exclusion (segregation), physical attack, and extermination. Allport was writing at a time (1950s) when exclusion, segregation, and physical attack were the major problems facing Black Americans. Today his array of actions and practices needs to be revised to describe discrimination more accurately within formally integrated settings such as White colleges and universities.

In order to describe this contemporary discrimination more accurately, several salient dimensions should be considered. One dimension is the *location* of the discriminatory action. The experience of discrimination and hostility, and thus a Black person's vulnerability, varies from the most private to the most public spaces: (a) home with family and friends, (b) work and school settings, (c) stores and public accommodations, (d) streets. If a student is in a protected site, such as with friends at home, the probability of hostile treatment is low. If that same person is in a moderately protected site, such as a Black student in a setting within a predominantly White university, then the probability of experiencing racial hostility and discrimination increases. And as that

TABLE 1
Barriers in the White Campus World

	<i>Aggression</i>	<i>Exclusion</i>	<i>Dismissal</i>	<i>Typecast</i>
White Students				
Racist epithets	X			
Racist jokes	X			
Denigrating hair, dress, groups			X	
Treating students as athletes or special students				X
Rejection as friends		X		
White Professors				
Treating students as spokespersons for the group (as all alike)				X
Accenting White model for writing			X	
Cursory treatment of students		X		
Rejection of minority research			X	
Rejection of protest organization		X		
White Staff				
Unwillingness to learn about students		X		
Police harassment	X			
Quizzing intelligence of students				X
White Alumni				
Weak support for placement		X		

student moves into the public places outside the university, such as stores and streets, the dangers increase.

A second dimension is the type of actor doing the discrimination. There are four classes that we have identified: students, faculty members, administrators and other staff members, and alumni. These make up one dimension of Table 1. A third dimension is the type of hostile or discriminatory action directed against Blacks. We find the following continuum of practices: (a) aggression, verbal and physical; (b) exclusion, including social ostracism; (c) dismissal of subculture, including values, dress, and groups; (d) type-casting, including assuming Blacks are all alike.

By way of summary, the major instances of differential treatment uncovered in the interviews, classified by the perpetrators and the four general types suggested above, are listed in Table 1. Some campus obstacles are created mostly by the White students. These

include the range of possibilities: verbal aggression, exclusion and ostracism, dismissal of black subculture, and typecasting. Another line of barriers is provided by faculty members. Interviews for this project did not uncover the racist-epithets aggression, but there were examples of exclusion and ostracism, dismissal of Black interests and models, and typecasting. Also documented are the common barriers — ranging from physical aggression and exclusion to typecasting and stereotyping — that administrators, staff, and alumni create. Each barrier can take different forms. Sometimes the discrimination is blatant and overtly racist. At other times the discrimination is subtle or covert — that is, hidden behind the scenes. Each discriminatory obstacle can vary in its harmful impact, but even one instance can be quite harmful.

Cumulative discrimination: A broad impact. Perhaps most importantly, Black students experience the sustained obstacle of *cumulative discrimination*. Discrimination for most of these Black students does not mean just the occasional or isolated discriminatory act in one of the enumerated categories, but rather a college career or lifetime series of blatant and subtle acts of differential treatment by Whites which often cumulates to a severely oppressive impact. Some particular instances of discrimination may seem minor, or even misperceived, to outside (White) observers, especially if considered one at a time. But when blatant actions combine with subtle and covert slights, and these cumulate over weeks, months, years, and lifetimes, the impact is likely to be far more than the sum of the individual instances.

The cumulative impact of aggression, exclusion, dismissal, and typecasting can be seen in the more general comments of the students about the college environment. One Black honors student at a predominantly White college was asked, "What is it like being a Black person in White America today?" Situated in her White college environment, she replied:

Everything, everywhere I look, everywhere I turn, right, left, is white. It's lily white, it's painted with white. And it's funny, because I was reading this article about how America is synonymous with White people. I mean, I'm sure when Europeans — or Asians or

Africans for that matter—think of America they think of White people, because White people are mainstream. White people are general. “White is right,” as my daddy tells me. White is right, at least they think it is.

So, if you’re a Black person trying to assert yourself, and express your culture, there’s something wrong with you, because to do that is to be diametrically opposed to everything this country stands for. And everything this country stands for is what is White. I’m sorry. I mean, I hate to be that simplistic about it . . . you’re a fool if you don’t realize that, to a certain degree. I’m not saying that White people are all out to get us, because I don’t think they think about us that much, where they sit down and actually plot, in some dark smoke-filled room, how they’re going [to] stomp on Black people. They don’t have to because it’s ingrained in the system.

So things are like that. And White people call me paranoid and stuff, because I guess they look at things in regards to like the sixties when Black people were like being beaten up every damn day, and crosses [were burned] in front of yards, and it was so blatant. But, now it’s changed. And just because it’s not blatant anymore doesn’t mean it’s not there. In fact, I think it’s worse.

Ensclosed in a large public college with a student body 97% White, she feels hemmed in by the omnipresent White student body and White subculture. When this student asserts herself, she implies, Whites ask what is wrong with her. For this honors student the racial discrimination is not less burdensome because it is embedded in the institutional patterns of the society and the subculture of the college and therefore is often less blatant than cross burning or beatings. This student knows that she is expected by some to fail and to leave and by others to conform to the surrounding college subculture, to become, as another student put it, “Afro-Saxon.” When she says *white* is an omnipresent problem, she is not just talking about a color or racial identification. When she and other students talk about everything around them being “lily white,” they are reporting being at sea in a strange and hostile environment of White ways of being and of thinking.

When asked to comment on the Black student’s general situation, one Black professor responded as follows:

When a Black student walks into a predominantly White environment, that student gets the same feeling that I get when I walk into a predominantly White situation. I immediately become fearful and defensive: fearful that someone will openly show hostility, that someone will openly show that I'm not wanted there; defensive, trying to set myself up so that if I face that, I can deal with it. Students don't have all of the kinds of coping mechanisms held by adults and professional adults; therefore this is more difficult for them.

I still find myself uncomfortable if I walk into a strange environment where there are only Whites and I'm the only Black. And unfortunately, usually someone, at least one person in that environment or in that situation, will say or do something that's negative, if it's no more than just ignore you. So, you come in defensive . . . your fear is reinforced.

That's what happens to so many of these youngsters on these campuses, they're dealing with kids who are sons and daughters of bigots. And as soon as they find a friend who accepts them, and they feel real good and start to relax, they run into this young bigot who brings back all the pain, all of the hurt, and it almost erases all of the good that's there.

So, they're constantly in a state of stress. There's not a time when they feel that they can afford to let down. And when they let down, they're hurt. They are constantly in a situation where people don't understand, don't know. They don't know Black people, they don't know Black kids, so you're constantly answering questions.

And everything is predicated on a White norm, so that when the student is in the environment, he is in a situation where the norm is the thinking, the philosophy, the feelings, the attitudes of Whites, and if you deviate from that norm, you're wrong.

From this perspective the college subculture is White-normed; discrimination is reinforced by the everyday, unstated assumptions about the priority of Whiteness. As a result, Blacks must be on guard; they regularly find themselves, even subconsciously, on the defensive. This array of barriers, ranging from aggression and social exclusion to dismissal of subculture and typecasting, combines to create the White campus subculture and subsociety that daily confront those Black students courageous enough to enter the predominantly White colleges.

NOTES

1. This project was supported in part by a grant from the Will C. Hogg Foundation. Sections of this report are drawn from a position paper prepared for the Center for Research on Minority Education at the University of Oklahoma.

2. This and later quotations have been edited lightly for grammar and clarity. For example, filler words like "you know" and "uh" have been deleted. The locations and names have been disguised or deleted to protect the anonymity of the respondents.

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