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## Learning motivation of the university students (comparative Chinese-Russian study)

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### Abstract

Learning motivation is the basis for good education. Success of training and mastering profession largely depends on student's learning motivation. With the development and strengthening of economic relations between China and Russia the number of international students enrolled in new countries is increasing. The article represents the results of comparative research of learning motivation of university students in China (Hunan province) and in Russia (Moscow and Moscow region). Some peculiar features were identified and compared; they can be attributed to the cultural differences of the two countries. Also there were separately analyzed the differences between students of medical and non-medical specializations in China and Russia. The research samples consisted of students from Changsha (Hunan, China) and students from Moscow and Moscow region (Russia). This sample with restrictions can represent general totality of Chinese and Russian students. For the measurement of students' motivation there were used Russian research methods. These methods are widely used in Russian samples, and the results of this research are comparable with results of other studies. But these methods are used for the first time for the studying the sample of Chinese students. Therefore, some further study of using these methods for the Chinese sample is needed.

### For citation

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### Keywords

Learning motivation, study motivation, academic motivation, motivation, pedagogy.

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## Introduction

The effectiveness of education and training of an individual is determined by many factors; however, motivation is of particular importance among them. The success of training and mastering profession largely depends on it. The peculiarities of learning motivation in the university are denoted by a variety of factors: the prestige of university or this very specialization, the individual's desire to obtain a diploma or to acquire additional knowledge, to raise his social status, to develop his personality. The specifics of the individual's learning motivation is closely related to his sense of values as the representative of specific ethnic or cultural community.

However, there are not so many cross-cultural studies, involving the comparison of several countries on the basis of learning motivation of students, while the request for such research is rather big: in many countries there are a lot of international students; it requires adjustment of educational plan to maintain their learning motivation at a sufficient level.

## Main part

Modern psychological theories view motivation not as a static, but as a dynamic system, resulting from the needs and goals of the individual, the level of his needs and values, life conditions, activities and beliefs, identity and value orientation of the society he lives in.

The norms and values of the traditional culture influence the reflection on the man himself, his activities, relationship with other people. Surely, nowadays the modern trend of globalization and the international integration of social processes have a significant influence on the psychology of the individual.

College Xiang Ya of the Central South University (Hunan, Changsha) is one of the best medical universities in China. The high level of medical professionals attracts more and more international students, including those from Russia. Nevertheless, the system of the education for the international students is similar to the one for the Chinese students.

At the same time, a number of Russian medical schools start to accept more and more Chinese students (for example, Sechenov First Moscow State Medical University of the Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation, Pirogov Russian National Research Medical University and other). In these universities the system of the education for the Chinese students is similar to the one for the Russians.

Therefore, because of the alleged differences in the motivation of students from different countries, perhaps, there is a trend of decreasing of learning motivation of international students in both countries as the result of the failure to adapt to the new educational system. The first step to improve the quality of education for international students could be research of the basic differences of learning motivation of Chinese and Russia students.

Definitely, the context of higher education differs considerably from the context of secondary education. Most American and European authors claim, higher education students are expected to be more independent and work almost absolutely autonomously. Nevertheless, should the gap between mostly direct instruction method of the secondary education and mostly autonomous study in the course of the higher education be so great? Can a yesterday's school student adapt to a completely different teaching and study strategy in one day?

Some recent studies confirm the increase in autonomous motivation within higher education. The results show that this increase has already started within the final year of secondary education and is the strongest across the transition to higher education. But the same study also shows that students' controlled motivation increases during the transition to higher education [Kyndt, Coertjens, 2015, 121]. Thus we cannot assume that only autonomous motivation matter in the course of the high education.

At the same time the Chinese longitudinal study identify a decrease in autonomous motivation from Year 1 to Year 2 within higher education [Pan, Gauvain, 2012, 95].

The research conducted by the Russian Union of Rectors indicate that excellent secondary school graduates almost lose their interest to study by the end of high education [Korzinkina, www]. In Belgium 35% of freshmen fail the freshmen year and 25% leave higher education. The same pattern of results is reported across Europe (OECD 2013) [De Clercq, Galand, 2017, 40].

Probably, this statistical data could indicate, the widely popular conception of students' autonomous learning motivation cannot be applicable to all university students. Some bright ones still are in need of the external stimuli to instigate the growth of their motivation to study, the latter being not the teacher's approval and criticism, but the teaching method that gives the growth to the student's interest to study.

### Aim of the research

Undertaken research aimed to clarify the key differences of learning motivation of Chinese and Russian university students, as well as to compare the students' motivation of Russia and China, depending on the fields of their professional specialization. On the one hand, this will clarify the peculiarities of the students' learning motivation and promote to develop a common understanding of its structure and mechanisms, on the other hand, the current work has a practical significance, as far as the patterns discovered by the current research can be used in the design of educational programs in order to improve the quality of education.

### Structure of samples

The study samples consisted of the sample of 153 Russian students and the sample of 133 Chinese students. The main characteristics of the samples you can see in the following Tables № 1-4.

**Table 1 – Frequencies of characteristics in the sample of Russian students**

	Major (nonmedical/medical)	Gender (M/F)	Siblings (yes/no)	Birthplace (City/village)	Nationality (Russian/minority)
1	89 (58,2%)	41 (26,8%)	55 (35,9%)	124 (81%)	118 (77,1%)
2	64 (41,8%)	112 (73,2%)	98 (64,1%)	29 (19%)	35 (22,9%)

**Table 2 – Descriptive statistics of characteristics of the sample of Russian students**

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
Age	16,00	29,00	20,0458	2,62914
Year of education	1,00	5,00	2,7582	1,48690
Academic performance	3,00	5,00	4,4314	,66654
Amount of exam retakes	1,00	4,00	1,4248	,63549

**Table 3 – Frequencies of the characteristics in the sample of Chinese students**

	Major (nonmedical/medical)	Gender (M/F)	Siblings (yes/no)	Birthplace (City/village)	Nationality (Han/minority)
1	67 (50,4%)	66 (49,6%)	59 (44,4%)	69 (51,9%)	120 (90,2%)
2	66 (49,6%)	67 (50,4%)	74 (55,6%)	64 (48,1%)	13 (9,8%)

**Table 4 – Descriptive statistics of the characteristics in the sample of Chinese students**

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
Age	16,00	24,00	20,2707	1,68383

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
Year of education	1,00	5,00	3,0977	1,36994
Academic performance	2,00	5,00	3,6090	0,76707
Number of exam retakes	1,00	3,00	1,3008	0,49213

### Description of methods

The present research was based on the two widely used in Russia methods of studying learning motivation among the university students: 1) Questionnaire for diagnostics of students' learning motivation by A. Rean and V. Yakunin, modified by N. Badmaeva (Russia) and 2) Questionnaire for studying learning motivation by T. Ilyina (Russia).

These methods are usually used together, one after another.

The choice of these methods was based on the fact that, firstly, the methodological framework of the research is based mainly on contemporary works of the Russian psychological school, secondly, the fact that these questionnaires are widely used in the studies of similar orientation and have proven reliability.

The method of N. Badmaeva was developed from the Questionnaire written by A. Rean and V. Yakunin [Badmaeva, 2004, 151-154].

Learning motives in this questionnaire are divided into 7 groups:

- Communicative motives,
- Avoidance motives,
- Motives of prestige,
- Professional motives,
- Motives of creative self-realization,
- Learning and cognitive motives,
- Social motives.

Students are asked to evaluate using the 5-point approval system some statements that are a direct reflection of the written above certain motives. Evaluation is made according to the importance: 1 point corresponds to the minimum value of motive, 5 points is the maximum. Further the average score is calculated. It indicates the domination of a certain group of motives.

Questionnaire for studying learning motivation by T. Ilyina [Ilyin, 2002, 433] determines the nature of learning motivation on the three scales: «Obtaining of knowledge» (he desire to acquire knowledge, curiosity, the cognitive needs); «Mastering the profession» (to master the professional knowledge and form important professional qualities, to view education as the source of the development of professional career); «Getting diploma» (the desire to acquire a diploma while the learning knowledge is formal, the desire to find detours at exams to get credits). The maximum score that can be obtained on the first scale – 12,6; on the two others – 10.

The data was summarized using medians for quantitative variables and count and percentages for qualitative variables. Comparison of data was performed using the Mann-Whitney test. Values with  $p < 0,05$  were considered statistically significant. Analysis was performed using IBM SPSS 18.0.

### Results

**Table 5 – Descriptive statistics of motivation scales for Chinese students**

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
Questionnaire for diagnostics of students' learning motivation by A.Rean and V.Yakunin, modified by N. Badmaeva				

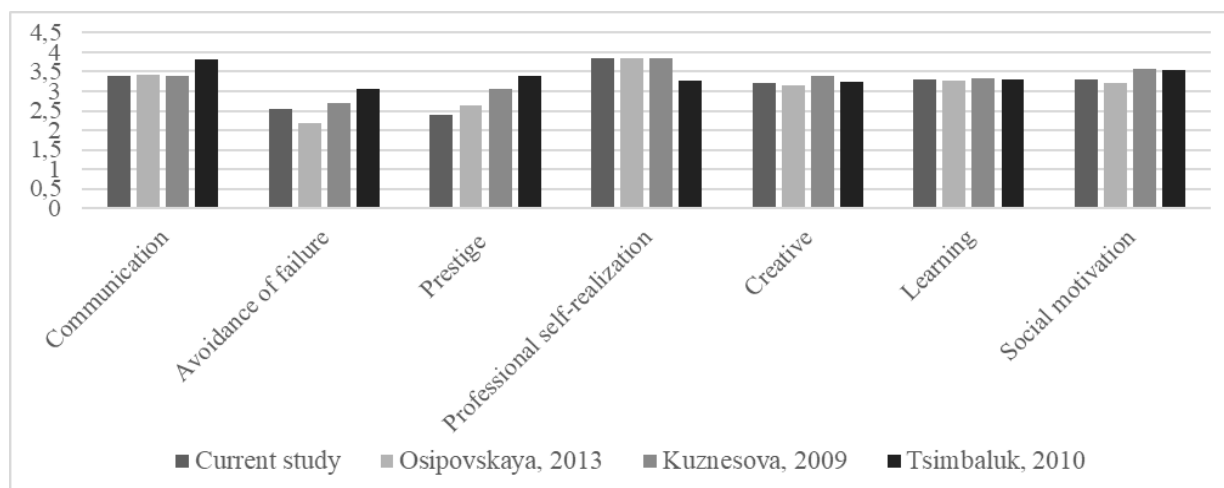
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
Communication	1,50	4,75	3,6992	,62292
Avoidance of failure	2,00	4,60	3,4632	,61367
Prestige	1,40	4,80	3,2466	,66964
Professional self-realization	1,83	4,83	3,6167	,60756
Creative	1,00	5,00	3,4549	,75242
Learning	1,86	4,43	3,3202	,54819
Social motivation	1,60	4,80	3,7744	,65801
Questionnaire for studying learning motivation by T. Ilyina				
I.Knowledge	,00	12,60	5,7023	2,92415
I.Profession	,00	10,00	4,6842	2,48745
I.Diploma	3,50	10,00	8,4962	1,79488

**Table 6 – Descriptive statistics of motivation scales for Russian students**

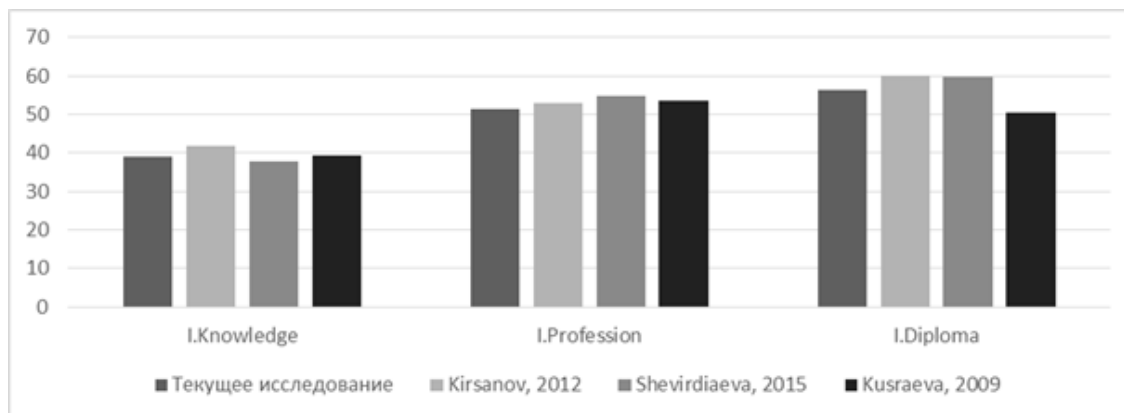
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
Questionnaire for diagnostics of students' learning motivation by A.Rean and V.Yakunin, modified by N. Badmaeva				
Communication	1,25	5,00	3,4036	,81168
Avoidance of failure	1,00	4,80	2,5556	,79048
Prestige	1,00	5,00	2,4078	,88552
Professional self-realization	1,17	5,00	3,8582	,82335
Creative	1,00	5,00	3,1993	1,11264
Learning	1,57	5,00	3,3173	,76100
Social motivation	1,20	5,00	3,2980	,78174
Questionnaire for studying learning motivation by T. Ilyina				
I.Knowledge	,00	12,60	4,9059	3,75969
I.Profession	,00	10,00	5,1503	2,36134
I.Diploma	,00	10,00	5,6209	2,92282

### Evaluation of the results of the study

Firstly, the motivation was identified separately for the samples of Chinese and Russian students. We compared the results of the sample data of Russian students with major Russian studies applying this method. The result can be observed in Figure 1.



**Figure 1 – Comparison of the results for Questionnaire for diagnostics of students' learning motivation by A. Rean and V. Yakunin, modified by N. Badmaeva (Russia)**



**Figure 2 – Comparison of results for Questionnaire for studying learning motivation by T. Ilyina (Russia)**

As we can see in Figures 1 and 2, the results of the current research in general, are consistent with the data from other Russian studies.

### **Gender and Academic Motivation**

In the sample of Russian students there were found significant differences of the values on the scales R.Avoidance and R.Prestige according to the gender of the student. The results for female students on both scales are higher. This data is consistent with the result of the other research, conducted by E. Semenova: the motives of prestige and avoidance of failure are more often mentioned by girls, while male students more often have the motive of achievement of success [Semenova, Chopuk, 2014, 336].

In the research of Turkish scientists Karatas Hakan and Erden Münireb [Karatas, Erden, 2014, 712] was also mentioned that Turkish female students more often than male students are inclined to a motivation and higher level of extrinsic motivation.

It is necessary to note that in the sample of Chinese students no gender differences were found. Perhaps, this situation may be related to the fact that in China girls along with boys aim at getting education and career development.

### **Academic Performance and Learning Motivation**

There were found significant differences on the scales R.Avoidance, R.Prestige, R.ProfReal, R.Creative, R.Learning, R.Social, I.Profession in the sample of Russian students depending on the level of academic performance. The motivation values on these scales are changed in direct proportion to the rise of academic performance.

Therefore, we can see that both intrinsic and extrinsic motives can affect academic performance. This is consistent with the western research: intrinsic motivation was associated with greater subjective well-being, meaning in life and academic performance. Extrinsic motivations showed few relationships to academic performance, while demotivation was consistently associated with poor outcomes [Bailey, Phillips, 2016, 201-216]. The results of S. Goodman's study imply that students, who are generally intrinsically motivated, have an inclination to apply effort and thus perform well academically. This study also found that effort mediates the relationship between extrinsic motivation and academic performance. Students who feel extrinsically motivated may, therefore, be inclined to exert effort and perform well [Goodman, 2011, 380].

Nevertheless, the current research found no any kind of this relation in the sample of Chinese students. It can be caused by several reasons: firstly, academic performance can depend not on the motivation of a, but on his intellectual abilities. In general, Chinese culture is characterized by a greater control of students by their families [Su, 2016, 520], therefore disregardable to different motivation level, students get prepared to classes and spend quite a big amount of time studying. Secondly, this result can be attributes to a higher competition to enter universities in China. For example in the Russia Moscow Lomonosov State University the average competition to enter the university is 6,5-7 for one student place, whereas the entrance competition to the Chinese university is much higher. This version also can be confirmed by the fact that Chinese students generally have higher level of motivation in comparison with Russian students.

### **Academic Year and Learning Motivation**

As it can be seen, the values on the scale R. Communicative change together with the changing of the academic year. Gradual decrease of the scale values is characteristic for Russian students, in the sample of Chinese students, the most high values have the students of the first, the fourth and the fifth academic years.

Some other researchers obtained the same results of rather high values on communicative motivation scale for the students of the first year [Osipovskaya, 2013, www; Tsymbaluk, Kryazheva, 2010, 134]. This phenomenon can be attributed to the age characteristics of the students of the first academic year, as they are usually teenagers from 16 to 18 years old. The leading activity for a teenager is peer communication, and emergence of a new collective, emergence of new more free (in comparison to secondary school) conditions for communication increases the need for communication.

The difference between the samples of Russian and Chinese students is that in the sample of Chinese students the values on the scale R. Communicative rise to last academic year in contrast to Russian students.

This can be explained in the context of better integration of Chinese university students in the professional community. In Russia no more than 50% of university graduates work according to their university specialization [Lutovina, 2017, 70], this means that at least one half of last academic year students are not integrated into the professional community. As a result of this situation, characteristic for the Chinese sample increasing of values on the scale cannot be observed in the Russian sample.

### **Specialization and Learning Motivation**

Significant differences between Russian and Chinese medical and non-medical students can be observed on the scales можно наблюдать по шкалам «Avoidance», «ProfReal», «Creative». Whereas the values on the scales «Avoidance» and «Creative» are higher for non-medical students, while values on the scale «ProfReal» are higher for medical students.

These findings may be explained by existence of the image of a physician among medical students, existence of clear perceptions about doctoral purposes and functions. Clearly stated and perceived by students activities of physician, reduce values on the scale Creativity.

Image of a physician and his work conditions show this profession is not the most attractive and may be even dangerous. For example, Zeng, J., Zeng, X. X. [Zeng, Zeng, 2013, 382] write about the frequent attacks on doctors, difficult working conditions. Therefore, medical students more rarely than non-medical students, could have extrinsic motivation. Usually medical students are quite clear about the purposes of their professional realization [Liang, Tang, 2016].

There are no significant differences observed in the samples of Russian medical and non-medical students. This can be attributed, on the one hand, to the fact that image of a physician is incomplete, and on the other hand, students' lack of self-perception as a future doctor [Habarova, 2014, 146].

Also the samples of medical and non-medical students in Russia and in China were separately compared. In both samples Chinese students have higher values on the scales R. Communicative, R. Avoidance, R. Prestige, R. Social and I. Diploma, and more low values on the scale R. ProfReal.

The significant feature of the medical students is the difference on the scale R.Creative, the values on this scale are higher for Chinese students. Chinese non-medical students have higher values on the scale R. Creative, than Chinese medical students. But the latter still have higher values than Russian medical students. This result can be explained by the fact that Russia students have less detailed perception of the image of their future profession. Perhaps, Chinese students have a larger number of hours of practice that provides them not only with theoretical understanding of the profession, but also give them practical experience. While Russian students have rather fail understanding of the future profession [Feldman, 2011, 404-412].

### **Comparison of the samples of Russian and Chinese students**

Values on the scales I. Knowledge, I. Diploma, R. Communicative, R. Avoidance, R. Prestige, R. Creative, R. Social are significantly higher for Chinese students. Values on the scales R. ProfReal and I. Profession are significantly higher for Russia students.

For non-medical students there is a characteristically significant difference on the scale I. Knowledge, the values are higher for Chinese students.

Existence of differences on so many scales can, in general, be explained, firstly, by the different cultural background and, secondly, by differences in educational systems of the two countries.

Firstly, comparing with China there is more individualism in Russia. Afonassenko and Varlamova [Varlamova, 2012, 31-34; Afonassenko, 2013], claim that social motives are more essential for the Chinese people – to be a dutiful son, to get a good position in the society etc. While for Russia individualistic motives are more characteristic – self-improvement, career etc. The results of the current study prove the written above thesis: all scales, values on which are higher for Chinese students, are related to the society. Scales, values on which are higher for Russian students, are related to individual self-improvement.

As far as comparison of educational systems is concerned, the main benefits of the situations in China and Russia were described [Yufen, Kotlyarova, 2014, 110-118]. The main benefits with regards to students are: the better proportion for practical studies in Russia, long practice periods in China, more students' freedoms and knowledge about schedule and the program, opportunities for self-control in Russia, rational proportion between restoring information learnt and study process in China. As for teachers, the Russia's advantages are: Doctor's degree of many university professors, providing high level of education and science, scientific freedom in choosing the direction of the research. The benefits of the organization of the university activities in China are: rational proportion between teaching and scientific activities and rational proportion between restore and teaching process in China.

### **Conclusion**

Learning motivation is the basis for good education. With the development and strengthening of economic relations between China and Russia the number of international students enrolled in new countries is increasing. The aim of this research was to identify the characteristics of the students'



learning motivation in China and Russia, as well as to compare the data of the samples and to identify the similarities and differences of their learning motivation.

In the sample of Russian students significant differences were observed on the scales R. Avoidance and R. Prestige depending on the student's gender. There are significant differences on the scales R. Avoidance, R. Prestige, R. ProfReal, R. Creative, R. Learning, R. Social and I. Profession depending on the student's academic performance.

Significant differences for Chinese medical and non-medical students can be seen on the scales «Avoidance», «ProfReal», «Creative». While values on the scales «Avoidance» and «Creative» are higher for non-medical students, values on the scale «ProfReal» are higher for medical students. In both samples of Chinese students the values for the scales R. Communicative, R. Avoidance, R. Prestige, R. Social and I. Diploma are more high, while the values for the scale R. ProfReal are more low. Characteristic feature of the medical students is the significant difference on the scale R. Creative, values are higher for Chinese students. Motivation on the scales R. Communicative, R. Avoidance, R. Prestige, R. ProfReal, R. Creative, R. Social, I. Knowledge, I. Profession and I. Diploma significantly differs for the samples of Chinese and Russian students. Values on the scales I. Knowledge, I. Diploma, R. Communicative, R. Avoidance, R. Prestige, R. Creative, R. Social are significantly higher for Chinese students.

The obtained results can be attributed to the cultural peculiarities of the two countries, firstly to the difference of interrelationship of collectivism and individualism.

The research samples consisted of students from Changsha (Hunan, China) and students from Moscow and Moscow region (Russia). This sample with restrictions can represent general totality of Chinese and Russian students. For the measurement of students' motivation there were used Russian research methods. These methods are widely used in Russian samples, and the results of this research are comparable with results of other studies. Although these methods are used for the first time for the studying the sample of Chinese students. Therefore, some further study of using these methods for the Chinese sample is needed.

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## Сравнение учебной мотивации русских и китайских студентов

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### Аннотация

Мотивация к обучению – основа хорошего образования. Успех обучения и овладения профессией во многом зависит от мотивации ученика. С развитием и укреплением

экономических отношений между Китаем и Россией число иностранных студентов, обучающихся в обеих странах, растет. В статье представлены результаты сравнительного исследования мотивации к обучению студентов университета в Китае (провинция Хунань) и в России (Москва и Московская область). Определены и сопоставлены некоторые специфические особенности, которые можно отнести к культурным различиям двух стран. Также были отдельно проанализированы различия между студентами медицинских и немедицинских специализаций в Китае и России. Выборка состояла из студентов из Чанши (Хунань, Китай) и студентов из Москвы и Московской области (Россия). Выборка с ограничениями может представлять общую совокупность китайских и российских студентов. Для измерения мотивации студентов использовались российские методы исследования.

#### Для цитирования в научных исследованиях

Телегина Т.Д., Дэн Юньлун. Сравнение учебной мотивации русских и китайских студентов // Педагогический журнал. 2018. Т. 8. № 2А. С. 66-77.

#### Ключевые слова

Мотивация к обучению, учебная мотивация, академическая мотивация, мотивация, педагогика.

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