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# Toward Distributive Classroom Management: Cogenerative Dialogue and Cooperative Inquiry

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## Abstract

The strict classroom control philosophy often adopted within public schools can have counterproductive effects on students, especially African Diaspora and Latinx students. Public schools should ideally provide quality instruction for all students. Unfortunately, teacher-centered practices reinforce stereotypes that African Diaspora and Latinx students are unruly and need institutionally imposed discipline and management, thereby undermining the mission of equitable educational achievement. Students, especially diverse urban students, would benefit from a shift in classroom management from strict control and discipline to student-centered inclusion and cooperative inquiry. We recommend distributive classroom management and examine the practice in the context of its enactment by stakeholders in one social studies classroom in the East New York Alternative Learning Center. Under this model, students demonstrated distributed classroom management actions that fostered improved classroom behaviors and expressions of group solidarity. Students maintained a fertile learning environment by proposing a distributive management practice during the research period. Additionally, students enacted the same approach in the classroom. The study's findings suggest that teachers and students can integrate standard classroom management rules with transformative stakeholder-directed practices to benefit all participants.

**Keywords**

cogenerative dialogue, classroom management, cooperative inquiry, distributive management

## Introduction: Classroom Control and a New Model

Wun (2018) and Deckman (2017) described teacher-centered urban classrooms in which instructors—primarily middle-class teachers from dominant social groups—often attempt to control the behaviors of diverse students. However well-intentioned, these attempts to exercise control can have damaging effects. For example, Huang (2018) reported that urban African Diaspora (AD) and Latinx students are disciplined more frequently than their White and Asian peers. The disproportionate suspension of AD and Latinx students often means missed classroom instruction time, which interferes with this population's educational success. This work focuses on AD and Latinx students in New York City (NYC) schools, the largest and most diverse school system in the United States, serving more than one million students. Framing this research site's populations as Black, minorities, or students of color results in a poor heuristic and flattens representations of these student populations (Johnson & Lehner, 2021).[1] Consequently, this research uses AD in nearly all cases and employs different descriptors, such as African American, Black, or students of color, only if the cited authors employed such terms (Johnson & Lehner, 2020; Ziegler & Lehner, 2017; Lehner & Ziegler, 2019a).

Prior generations of scholarship underscored the complicated problems that arise when teachers from dominant groups attempt to control diverse urban populations (Delpit, 1995; McNeil, 2013). Unfortunately, many large urban high schools focus classroom management practices on controlling students. The pedagogy mirrors the depictions of McNeil and Delpit, highlighting a form of strict classroom control. Public schools should ideally provide quality instruction for all students. However, teacher-centered practices can reinforce stereotypes that AD and Latinx students are unruly and need institutionally imposed discipline and management. Such representations undermine the mission of equitable educational achievement. Students, especially diverse urban students, may benefit from a shift in classroom management from strict control and discipline to student-centered inclusion and cooperative inquiry.

In urban school systems like NYC, administrators and teachers often overly focus on specific classroom management behaviors as an indicator of whether or not a teacher is performing well and if learning is taking place. This focus on classroom management occurs in place of attention to meaningful student enactments of content-based or curricular knowledge. By excessively focusing on the teacher's ability to enact classroom management, classroom control reduces teaching practices containing negative student behaviors. However, these negative behaviors are ingrained in students' ways of knowing and can be utilized as tools for transformative learning experiences. For example, the disposition of diverse urban youth to expect respect from others and a degree of control over their immediate surroundings are attributes that can be central to either the success or failure of the classroom.

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[1] See also Lehner (2007) and Lehner et al. (2017) on the complexities of racially and linguistically diverse student populations.

Furthermore, Boykin (1986) argued that Black students face forces in American schools that inhibit how they approach learning core curricula. Boykin points out that schooling in America is rooted in Euro-American values and culture. As a result, African American students frequently struggle because their cultural experiences differ from those of their White peers. Boykin's work is more than 30 years old, and current understandings may be nuanced; nonetheless, Boykin's initial framing usefully describes the misalignment between these urban dispositions and classroom goals. For example, Lehner (2011) noted that when diverse urban students fully engage in content inquiry and discussion practices, the administration may disapprove of the teacher's variance from the preferred classroom management style. Although, to the untrained eye, active urban students seem disruptive. For example, many energetic students move their seats to engage in discussion about the day's content actively—however, such actions depart from a Eurocentric, linear, and control-oriented pedagogy. Liou et al. (2017) describe how pedagogy and the practices that support a control-centered classroom are frequently at odds with such diverse urban student dispositions within the learning process.

In light of the plight of urban youth and the lack of pedagogical alternatives, this research examines student perspectives on implementation and maintaining classroom control in urban high schools. In addition, this study focuses on exploring classroom practices centered on behavioral control. Finally, new research foci often afford new pedagogical approaches, which may lead to more support for diverse urban youth. Additionally, this research conceptualizes learning on a continuum. Learning can begin with micro-level practices and progress to meso- and macro-level enactments. Specifically examined are questions relevant to developing urban teaching and learning practices in the context of micro-, meso-, and macro-level implementations of cultural production in cogenerative dialogue and a high school social studies classroom. Through this framework, we examine whether demonstrations of micro-level culture develop into meso- or macro-level learning culture. We theorize that creating aligned classroom practices may culturally transform the quality of teaching and learning—and, cogenerative dialogue may provide a space for producing new, culturally aligned classroom practices.

## Factors Influencing Classroom Management

Classroom management practices within urban school environments often operate within ideologies of control and deficit-focused views of students (Delpit, 1995; McNeil, 2013; Weinstein et al., 2004). Despite the problems rooted in this approach, the school administration often strongly reinforces the teacher-controlled classroom management perspective. However, AD and Latinx students may be significantly disadvantaged when teachers create a classroom culture governed by middle-class language and learning assumptions without accommodating student needs and dispositions. Okonofua and Eberhardt (2015) argued that this type of instruction often results from a teacher-centered and student-controlled pedagogy that frequently stifles learners who may perform best with approaches to learning that foster student inclusion. However, even teachers who are part of the African diaspora may embrace such practices. For example, Kevin Clarke (a pseudonym), a tenured Guyanese American teacher at the East New York Alternative Learning Center (ENYALC) illustrated this point when questioned about his classroom management model and how he interacts with his students. “The students need somebody to be in charge and tell them what to do. I am that guy” (K. Clarke, personal communication, 2017).

Often, teachers think of classroom management as solely their responsibility. In addition, many educators understand that controlling their respective classrooms and attempting to contain student behavioral outbursts remains the only method of classroom management. Teachers or administrators rarely discuss alternative forms of classroom management. Controlling pedagogy is, at best, hard to implement and, at worst, impossible to execute if students do not collaborate in such practices. Moreover, teachers can face untenable management issues when conflicts arise unless such situations resolve peaceably. Therefore, many teachers gravitate toward classroom practices predicated on control, first taught during teacher training and reinforced by school administrators.

Additionally, the philosophical assumptions behind such strategies do not adequately model democratic methods and do little to enhance autonomous student enactment of leadership. Students and teachers often hold opposing perspectives regarding classroom teaching and learning. For example, Rasheen (a pseudonym) articulated the dysfunction of the teacher-controlled management model. He underscored how such education propagated negative emotional energy and student disinterest in the classroom. Moreover, Rasheen noted how "the teacher can't just have it his way, [because] there are 30 other students in the class who want things their way."

These frameworks influence urban classrooms in multiple ways. First, teacher-directed methods leave many teachers feeling that there is little pedagogical choice beyond instructor-directed classrooms. Secondly, a teacher-controlled discipline model often fails to sustain student engagement. Finally, teachers often possess ardent desires to help students advance academically, yet they feel support from school policies to create a sense of comfort and security. As a result, teachers become ensconced in such practices even though such top-down approaches often disadvantage students and may adversely affect the teachers (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). In addition, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) emphasized how such frameworks undermine teacher retention in the profession, causing burnout and other stress-related conditions.

Lemov (2010) received wide praise for his teaching guide. However, Green (2010) underscored that such "solutions" often abide only in the form of well-intention, but impractical self-help advice (see Figures 1, 2, 3, & 4 below). However well-intentioned, these solutions diverged from the teaching profession's ontological realities and lived teaching experiences, failing to address the fundamental challenges of teaching. Furthermore, his work was crafted outside urban school systems, envisioning schools where teachers aspire to orderly classrooms where students patiently wait in line.

We find these traditional frameworks problematic for classroom control advocated in the scholarly literature and deployed in urban classrooms (Lemov, 2010, 2015; Lindt et al., 2018). We instead advance Kincheloe's (2012) framework for engaging the authentic voices of teachers as researchers. Additionally, this research incorporates student voices to understand the multiple pathways for implementing effective classroom management. Lemov’s (2010) *Teach Like a Champion*, hailed by *The New York Times* as a very successful guide for teaching (Green, 2010), demonstrates the issues with teacher-centered approaches, offering solutions to the difficulties of education in the form of bromides, catchphrases, and illustrations reflective of the self-help genre. In addition to praise, Green's enthusiastic *New York Times* review provided little more than cheerleading images that may be viewed by those who teach in urban environments as impractical. The reader need not be Roland Barthes (1972; 1993) to understand the fine points of the hardships of teaching. However, such difficulties likely cannot be compacted into neatly framed images, such as the four images below, which cheerily depict elements of successful teaching (see Figures 1, 2, 3, & 4) and contrast the portrayals of actual teaching, as seen in Delpit (1995), Kozol (1991), or Emdin (2017).

**Figure 1**

*A Mood Gauge to Understand Student Feelings*

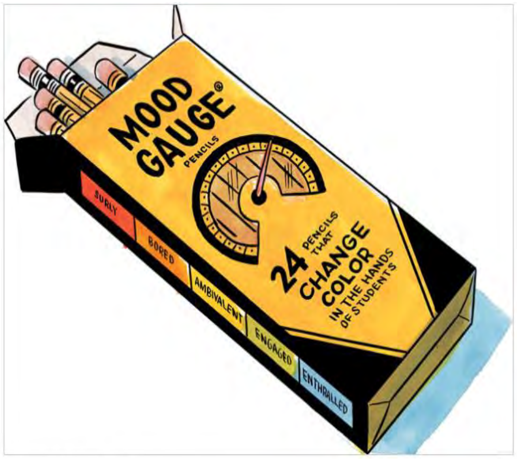

MOOD GAUGE®
PENCILS
24 PENCILS THAT CHANGE COLOR IN THE HANDS OF STUDENTS
SURLY
BORED
AMBIVALENT
ENGAGED
ENTHRALLED

Illustration by R. Kikuo Johnson

**Figure 2**

*Gallons of Endless Enthusiasm Paint*

Endless®
ENTHUSIASM
ONE GALLON

Illustration by R. Kikuo Johnson

**Figure 3**

*Teacher Vitamins for Patience, Stamina, and Cheerfulness*

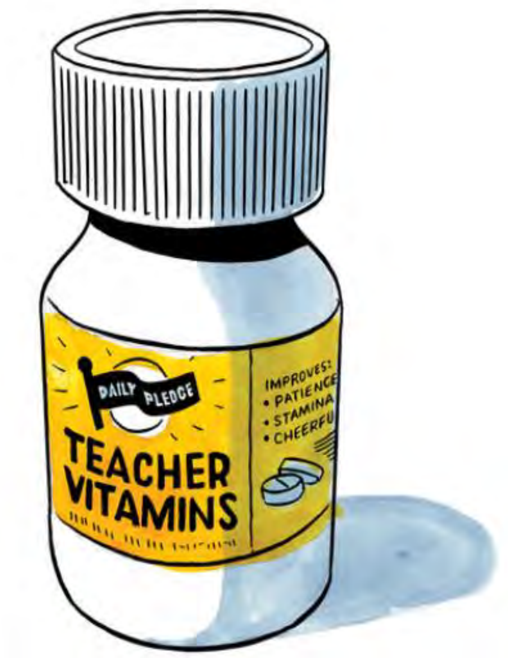

DAILY PLEDGE
TEACHER VITAMINS
IMPROVES:
• PATIENCE
• STAMINA
• CHEERFU

Illustration by R. Kikuo Johnson

**Figure 4**

*Apples for Teacher Confidence, Assertiveness, and Iron*

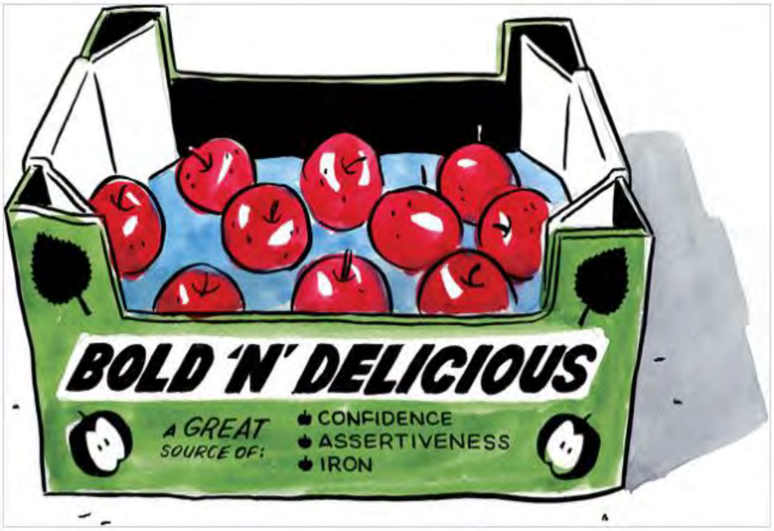

BOLD 'N' DELICIOUS
A GREAT SOURCE OF:
CONFIDENCE
ASSERTIVENESS
IRON

Illustration by R. Kikuo Johnson

## Problem Statement and Research Questions

We explore an alternative to control and deficit management approaches to classroom management. We aimed to analyze the cultural production of micro- and macro-level enactments of distributed classroom control. We used Sewell's (1992) conception of agency to examine how students access resources, focusing on three research questions:

1. What does distributive classroom management look like?

2. Can a distributive management culture, learned as a schema or practice in cogenerative dialogue, be reproduced in another field?

3. Does enacted distributed classroom management knowledge follow a specific pattern or a ritualized enactment process.

## Literature Review

While students may view robust instructor-focused methods as an insult, teachers often view their control-centered pedagogy as a means to better classroom instruction. "If one student gets out of hand, then the whole class gets crazy," said Kevin Clarke (K. Clarke, personal communication, 2017). However, Clarke continued, "I want them to know upfront, I am the teacher, and you are the student. If the student knows that, we can get along." Clarke's view of classroom control is in line with that of many teachers who view their ability to maintain control over the classroom as the key to successful teaching. For example, a new first-year ENYALC teacher, hired mainly because of her classroom management skills observed when substituting at the school, reported, "I am in charge of my class, the only person in charge. My kids know that."

However, Tefera et al. (2017), citing and expanding on research by Losen and Orfield (2002), described how the intersection of classroom-control issues, race, and underachievement often resulted in a disproportionate number of non-White students in special education. Rios (2011) noted that AD and Latinx students are more likely to be placed in special education, suspended, or expelled than White and Asian students. Harris (2006) argued that too much disciplinary attention displaces pedagogy and misaligns the human capital that could develop through teacher-student conversations.

### *Cultural Reproduction and Enactment*

Sewell (1992) defines agency as "the actor's capacity to reinterpret and mobilize an array of resources in terms of cultural schemas other than those that initially constituted the array" (p. 19); this provides a framework for examining a student's inter-field agency. Using this theoretical perspective enables one to discuss a student's actions in one field and explore how these actions reproduce as enacted, learned culture in another area. This framework also allows for the study of peer interaction—their effect on a student's ability to enact learned culture, demonstrations of micro-level enactments of distributed classroom management culture, and how these small actions lead to macro-level demonstrations of distributive management. Studying practices and schema that afford coherence is essential to enact distributed classroom management. Beyond studying patterns of coherence, this methodology also searches for contradictions to our hypothesis to acknowledge the complex factors involved in cultural enactment (Roth & Tobin, 2002). By noting these contradictions, practitioners and researchers can better understand how practices facilitate distributed classroom management.

McAfee (2014) argued that race tended to be constructed within micro-enactments and posited the "Kinesiology of Race," a theoretical framework for understanding race as a process rather than a state. She suggested that daily routines, patterns of speech, and social practices eventually construct racially inflected hierarchies of the student experience. McAfee astutely observed that successful facilitation of student learning necessitates the engagement of many skills. However, McAfee's work, like those of her peers (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 1999, 2001, 2009; Oakes, 2005), has yet to influence the scholarship that informs classroom management significantly. McAfee's framework stands in contrast to traditional frameworks that emphasize a teacher’s ability to plan for and orchestrate student behaviors to manage the classroom (Emmer et al., 2003; Haibach et al., 2011; Lindt et al., 2018; Magill, 2007; Marzano, 2011). These outdated frameworks demonstrate how the heuristics of control often inadequately address the complexities of the urban high school. McAfee highlighted how the teaching environment often leads to pedagogical disappointments. The underlying social and emotional assumptions accompanying these outdated frameworks go unquestioned, creating classroom environments that may appear conducive to education but, in reality, limit opportunities to foster critical questioning and the fluid exchange of ideas.

We conceptualize teacher-centered classroom control and administrative methodology as cultural production since a teacher's enactment of classroom control is a form of cultural reproduction. Student-enacted distributed classroom management is a form of cultural transformation. We further conceptualize how a seamless transition from creating and recreating student-aligned teacher practices can be produced in cogenerative dialogues and reproduced in classrooms.

### *Oppositional Behaviors*

Downey and Ainsworth (2002) argued that the disproportionate number of Black youths serving suspensions is related to resistance to White-controlled educational structures. Similarly, McGrady and Reynolds (2013) posited that African Americans align with aspects of oppositional culture where students display dispositions other than simple compliance. McGrady and Reynolds underscore how institutional justifications for opposing resistance culture justify applying extreme measures. Ivaniushina and Alexandrov (2017) built on the work of Farkas et al. (2002) in contending that oppositional behaviors live as acts of agency. In particular, urban youth enact agency in ways that defiantly resist their status as marginalized youth. For example, in NYC high schools, students can display high levels of oppositional culture when they view teachers as attempting to exercise extreme control over their classrooms.

A large portion of academic scholarship tends to underscore that oppositional behavior often disadvantages students, especially male students (Losen & Orfield, 2002). However, other scholars have argued that oppositional culture is essential for African-American boys (Butler-Barnes et al., 2017; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Harris, 2006; Irving & Hudley, 2008). Students find a voice in such resistance behavior in complicated educational settings. Miscommunication and dispositional misalignment between teachers and students create many classroom problems. For example, full-fledged discipline issues and suspensions emanate from some escalating interactions. For example, when a student, especially an AD or Latinx student, resists a teacher's comments or perceived disrespectful actions, that student tends to be perceived as rude.

Furthermore, high school students may expect teachers to share classroom authority, or at least for the teacher to have earned the right to exhibit control. Often, teacher attempts at forceful control did not play out as envisioned and created classroom tensions. For example, some students assess the teacher in terms of their "street cred," almost like a rival rather than a potential educational ally. In addition, students often construe a teacher's behavior as personal disrespect and thus revert to behavioral mechanisms utilized to challenge disrespect outside the classroom. This reversion can result in the student trivializing a teacher's attempt at control by entirely ignoring that teacher's request and, in extreme cases, disregarding anything the teacher does. For example, a first-generation Jamaican American, Kennedy, described an incident in a math class that led to his suspension from a Brooklyn high school. Kennedy, a junior at ENYALC, challenged, "The teacher can't talk to me like that. I'm looking at him like please, you're nobody; you're a teacher."

Similarly, Anderson (1999) noted that students adhere to an urban code in which respect remains a very tangible resource where any indication of disrespect often meets with immediate resistance. At ENYALC, participants involved in this study often conceptualized the reasons for their school problems as an unreciprocated lack of respect from teachers. In one interview, Romelo, a bright, well-dressed 11th grader whose family was from Saint Kitts and Nevis in the Caribbean, spoke about the reason for his suspension. In a quiet tone, Romelo noted, almost remorsefully:

> The teacher totally disrespected me in front of the class and screamed on me. . . I don’t play like that. My family don’t play like that. . . so, I push the teacher, and if it weren’t for my mans [a friend of Romelo’s], I would have hit him. (long pause) I wish I could have that back. To play it back one time—let the disrespect go.”

At ENYALC, stories like Romelo’s are familiar, including the reflective remorse. Nonetheless, students remain firmly entrenched in garnering respect and resisting authority.

Building on Anderson’s framing, Mears et al. (2017) described the vast chasm between such a code and typical, normed school behavior, observing that this disconnect exacerbates classroom management concerns that result in student discipline. NYC's Department of Education has enacted a justice system model for classroom and school control to varying degrees, ranging from school-based disciplinary measures to full-year suspension at one of NYC's suspension centers. Implementing the crime and punishment model parallels the practice of the legal justice system. It compounds the issues of power and control in the classroom by mirroring the dysfunctional relationship between diverse urban youth and the justice system.

## Methods

We contextualize the problem of classroom management in diverse urban schools by focusing on how student-initiated practices can play a role in navigating a level of distributed classroom management (Deckman, 2017; Lehner, 2007; Ziegler & Lehner, 2020). In exploring the topic of classroom management, we deploy a catalytic authenticity framework to examine the difficulties that students and teachers have in negotiating the dominant model of classroom control (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Finally, we explore distributive classroom management as an alternative to the teacher-centered framework and study the implications of such a change to existing practice.

This study suggests that cogenerative dialogue provides stakeholders with a field to generate distributed classroom management by aligning student and teacher needs for control and creating practices that reflect the needs of all participants (Higgins & Moeed, 2017; Tobin, 2006). Our consideration and subsequent analysis of distributive classroom management situate into one classroom in ENYALC. Students in this classroom began demonstrating distributed classroom management actions that fostered improved behaviors and expressions of group solidarity.

We aim to provide a practical, research-based rationale for incorporating the needs of urban teachers and students who share a learning environment. We argue that many disciplinary actions against students can be avoided by cooperatively creating new practices that build classroom solidarity. The findings of this study suggest that teachers and students can integrate standard classroom management rules with transformative stakeholder-directed practices to benefit all participants.

### *Micro-, Meso-, and Macro-Level Enactments as Practice*

We understand learning as a leveled progression of enactments towards full engagement in the curriculum. Facets related to learning include motivation for achievement and engagement toward academic success. Micro-level enactments are engaged learning actions with little course-based discourse (e.g., participating in lessons, attending classes, taking notes, and respecting teachers and fellow students). Meso-level enactments create an engaging learning environment and demonstrate individual commitment to learning the course's discourse (e.g., student-initiated learning strategies, suggestions to improve learning and teaching, or attempts at hybridization that conjoin course-specific discourse with vernacular speech). Macro-level enactments are full engagement with the canonical curriculum.

Student learning enactments (i.e., micro-, meso-, and even macro-level) can be described as hybridized practices since students are demonstrating learning practices or articulating concepts in their life-world discourse. Micro- and meso-level forms become virtual gateways to macro-level enactments of learning culture. We focus on understanding how culture produced in one or more fields can structure social life in other fields.

## Research Settings and Participants

This qualitative research study focused on how four AD or Latinx student-researchers at ENYALC used cogenerative dialogue to teach and learn social studies. It documents how they met to co-plan, co-author, and co-implement learning and teaching strategies.

ENYALC is a public suspension center high school in the borough of Brooklyn in NYC, serving 400 students: 43% are AD students, and 56% are Latinx students. In addition, the school includes special needs populations: 40% receive free or reduced lunch; 30% are English language learners; and 25% are in special education or have Individual Education Plans. Because of the unique needs of ENYALC students, all course sections were capped at 15 students, and many classes had fewer than ten students. The classes met daily for one semester.

The researchers extend invitations to all students ($N = 15$) wishing to participate in the voluntary study. Fourteen students reported interest, and all 14 were selected to participate. Related to the IRB, all students and parents signed assent forms; their parents signed consent forms.

The research purposefully aligned with Roth and Tobin's (2002) notion of establishing the practice of cogenerative dialogue as a way for students and teachers to talk about learning and teaching practices in classrooms. Each week, we supported the practice of cogenerative dialogue.

### Data Collection

This study results from a longitudinal critical ethnography at ENYALC over two academic years. We were concerned with how students identified as or disassociated from being social studies learners. This work focused on creating a transformative learning culture so students could use their produced (i.e., reproduced and transformed) culture to improve their educational experience. The research described here took place over two 20-week semesters spanning six months of the school year. We adhered to the Belmont Report's (National Commission, 1978) recommendations to minimize potential harms, maximize participant beneficence, and develop a sense of justice for all involved.

We focused on authenticity criteria, focusing on student-researchers understanding the research efforts to positively structure their learning. The student-researchers needed to make learning social studies more comprehensible. Students exposed to pedagogy for inclusive education often adopt new learning roles. They often act as "cultural brokers," mediating between dominant discourses and their urban life-world experiences.

The authors and student-researchers also focused on educative authenticity by privileging students' voices. Researchers consistently asked each student, "How can we describe this process so that everyone in the class could more easily understand it?" This practice promoted rich learning exchanges in which student researchers suggested new ideas. Catalytic and educative authenticity created life-world methods that may facilitate learning for all members. The student-researchers and authors analyzed everyday classroom interactions and later re-analyzed similar learning situations after implementing a collective plan of action by using cogenerative dialogue. We deliberately endeavored to generate learning opportunities by encouraging all students to participate. As a result, students engaged in the work and enacted expanded roles, a marker of catalytic authenticity demonstrating that this cooperative work was a form of authentic research.

At each stage of the research, author field notes, student-researcher interviews, group discussions with student-researchers, student-researcher notebooks, and digital videos of the cogenerative dialogues and classes provided the data for the study (Elmesky, 2015). In addition, researchers and student-researchers viewed videos in iMovie or QuickTime Player on a Macintosh PowerBook. Digital video was an essential part of this research; researchers found that the videos served as artifacts for cogenerative dialogues and interviews with participants.

## Data Analysis

The student-researchers and authors analyzed how students interacted with new classroom topics and re-analyzed similar learning interactions after cogenerating ways of integrating the material into their lived worlds. By attempting to create more student learning opportunities and empowering in-class learning experiences, participants in this research became engaged in many distinct roles.

Throughout this ethnographic study, we examined learning and teaching practices on the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels. First, micro-interactions were studied using software to slow down interactions captured on digital video, replaying portions and speeding up the video to examine exchanges or the fine points of activity. Next, we looked at meso-level interactions that occurred in real-time as social life played out. Finally, we explored macro-level themes enacted by multiple participants over the semester, evident in the video recordings, individual interviews, classroom notes, and periodic tests. This inquiry into these distinct layers of social life sought to understand the dynamic elements of classroom interactions.

Informed by Elmesky and Seiler (2007), this critical ethnography examined all the data points with the student researchers. As noted above, data resources included video and audio digital recordings, interviews, and student-shot videotapes. Yet, more importantly, researchers often reexamined these sources in order to understand the more complex factors associated with classroom management.

## Findings

This research began by questioning how, when, and to what extent teachers and students could create aligned classroom management practices that respect all participants and privilege academic discourse and standards-based learning. In addition, we wanted to know if the creation of such techniques had patterns of coherence in their product and implementation. Students in this classroom began demonstrating distributed classroom management actions that fostered improved behaviors and expressions of group solidarity, initiated by one student, Anthony (a pseudonym). During the research period, Anthony exerted tremendous efforts to maintain a fertile learning environment in his social studies classroom. He consistently proposed a distributive management practice in cogenerative dialogue. He used the ideas from the small session in the school. Anthony's effort to assist in classroom management constitutes a salient example of how establishing a distributed control model may improve classroom management and learning outcomes. The research focused intently on Anthony's interactions with his peers as he seemed to implement primary mechanisms to enact his version of classroom control.

*Observation #1: Cogenerative Dialogue Session*

In a cogenerative dialogue session, Anthony, a first-generation student from Dominica, and Keon, a second-generation student from Haiti, discussed how the class members could collectively improve their learning. Numerous ideas were shared, resulting in students starting to create and co-create possible strategies. The emotional energy was high throughout the 16-minute meeting, as evidenced by the two students' mutual focus, shared mood, and detailed attention to the topic. Similar responses were evident in other conversations at ENYALC as students discussed ways to improve their learning.

Reviewing the encounter video a few days later, we again noticed Anthony's focus and keen attention to the issues covered in the meeting; these were micro-level enactments. Anthony's attentiveness demonstrated a peripheral demonstration of cogenerative dialogue leadership and learning. We hesitate to call Anthony's actions here distributed classroom management because there was no class present and his actions only occurred in cogenerative dialogue. Concerning Anthony's non-verbal participation, his posture was upright, leaning slightly forward, and his eyes directly focused on the speaker. Such attentive behaviors signal interest in developing better ways to manage the classroom.

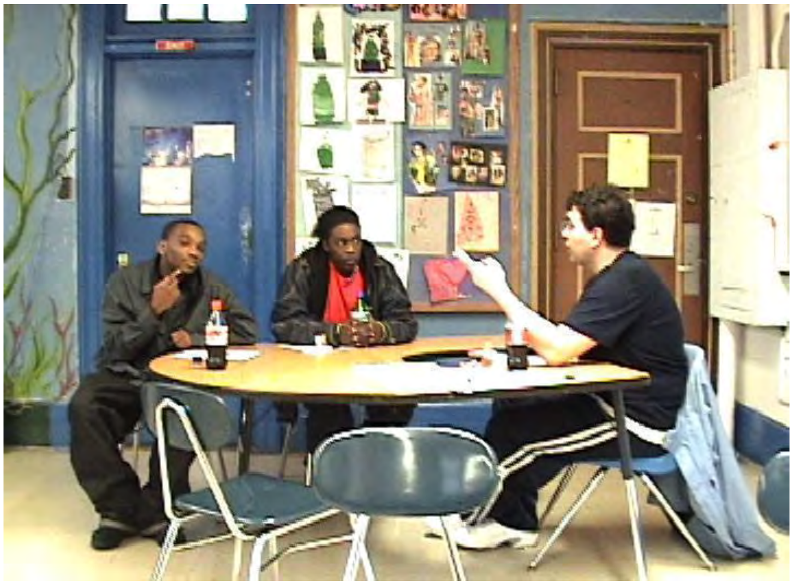
Beyond his non-verbal actions, Anthony demonstrated critical enactments of cogenerative dialogue leadership and learning by becoming one of the main speakers during the meeting, taking the initiative to comment on topics raised and introduce new ones. Upon close review, we saw how his enactments aligned with the group’s high emotional energy and extended mutual focus. This knowledge included taking on the role of 1) peer adviser as he imparted important feedback on classroom practices and 2) learning adviser when he detailed how future classes could run. As we continued to replay the video at average speed, they were impressed by the fluency of his leadership skills and how effortlessly he transitioned between the roles of student and cogenerative dialogue adviser.

***Microanalysis of Anthony’s Non-Verbal Communication.*** Using Macintosh's iMovie or Quicktime Player, we reduced the speed of the video to perform further microanalysis of Anthony's non-verbal behaviors. The footage showed that Anthony rarely fidgeted; he maintained eye contact with the speaker and synchronously nodded in approval of Keon's or the teacher's comments (see Figure 5 below). In addition, Anthony was incredibly alert and followed the changing directions of the conversation by laughing appropriately or responding verbally. Upon close second-by-second micro-analysis, it was clear that he made eye contact, wrote notes, or talked during the sixteen-minute meeting.

Anthony’s Focused Peer Exchanges and Peer-Initiated Dialogue. Anthony was actively involved in the non-verbal aspects of the meeting and all aspects of this cogenerative dialogue. In our video examination, they also saw how enthusiastically he verbally interacted with Keon and the teacher during the entire session. During many sections of the meeting Anthony abided as the main speaker and often directed the flow of our conversation by introducing new but related issues. He also responded effortlessly to questions he asked in a timely, appropriate, and anticipatory manner to the topic of discussion (Tobin, 2006). We analyzed this cogenerative dialogue by timing Anthony's talk throughout the session. He talked for six minutes (37.5%) of the 16-minute session, suggesting new classroom practices, an approach toward peer tutoring, and feedback for the teacher.

**Figure 5**

*Anthony's Attentiveness, Which He Afforded Participants Throughout a Meeting*

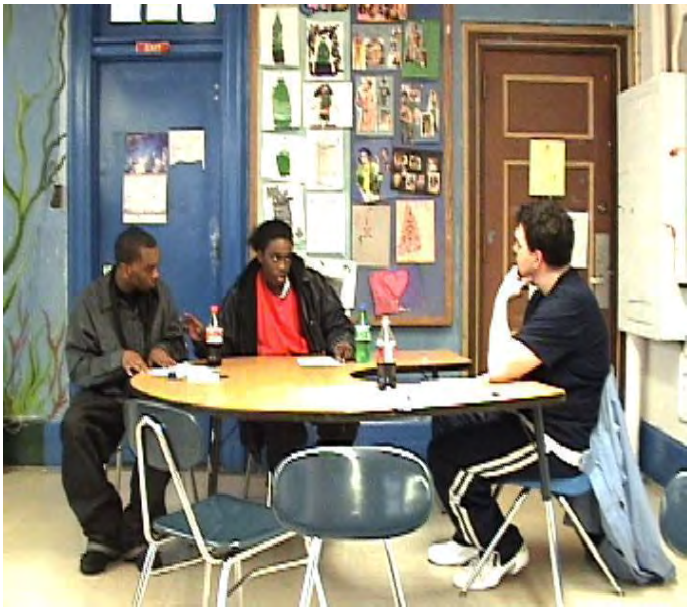


*Note.* The picture above shows Anthony's attentiveness to a cogenerative dialogue.

***Student-Initiated Classroom Practices.*** In addition to the energy and focus Anthony brought to the group, he demonstrated central elements of cogenerative dialogue leadership and learning by providing valuable feedback on classroom teaching processes and suggestions for implementing peer-learning checks (see Figure 6 below). These constituted meso- and potentially macro-level enactments.

**Figure 6**

*Anthony's Demonstration to Implement Peer-to-Peer When Students are Off-Task*



*Note.* This picture captures Anthony's demonstration of the distributive classroom management to implement peer-to-peer when students are off-task.

For example, Anthony suggested a strategy to ensure that his peers would stay on task and involved in the lesson:

> Anthony: I think. . . I need to be more focused. . . ya know, I need more focus.
>
> Teacher: Is there anything we can do as a class to help that?
>
> Anthony: Well, when one of the students is not as focused as the rest of the classmates, we should pull him to the side. And we should tell him, "you have to get this, you know, finished, everyone else is done"
>
> Teacher: Okay. So, you mean someone who is not focused. You want someone to pull him to the side?
>
> Anthony: Like. . .
>
> Teacher: (Motioning to Anthony) Go ahead. . .
>
> Anthony: Say I am talking, and all you are like doing your work. It is time for the Regents, and we have to start prep. You could be like this (tapping Keon on the shoulder). And say "come on son, it is time to do your work." (motioning with his hands)
>
> Teacher: Okay, so kind of a way to get him focused.
>
> Anthony: Yeah, without disturbing the other students. Y'all can get be back on track and ready for the test.

As seen in his comments above, Anthony suggested a peer-implemented approach to ensure that his classmates would collectively succeed. Anthony expressed his ideas with verve and an overt concern for his peers, a display of culture in line with Boykin's (1986) dimensions of Black culture. This demonstration indicates that his suggestion was partly an act of cosmopolitanism (Emdin & Lehner, 2006; Lehner, 2006; Lehner & Ziegler, 2019b). Anthony expressed how the group could achieve and recommended a method to accomplish this goal. Keon's reaction resonated with Anthony's idea, showing that he also valued the importance of collective achievement.

Using cogenerative dialogue, we discovered Anthony's and Keon's group orientation, and the importance of collective achievement, a meso-level enactment. Once provided this feedback, Anthony and Keon moved to implement practices that mutually benefit all participants, macro-level enactments. Additionally, since we would be planning the lesson collectively, they could use this type of response to inform the planning and implementation of new topics, a form of cultural production.

The class took significant steps to address the need to align classroom teaching and learning. For example, Anthony suggested a need for classroom connection by creating shared authority. In this case, cogenerative dialogue allowed Anthony and Keon to function outside the normal parameters of classroom life and rethink their current cultural practices and roles. In this social field, where rules and goals were not pre-structured, Anthony brought to the group's collective understanding the need to ensure peer learning. When the group collectively considered implementing such a practice to follow up on Anthony's suggestion, possibilities for alignment occurred in real-time by actors within the field.

Cogenerative dialogue afforded a social space where the roles of teacher and student expanded and aligned, sharing authority and granting students agency. This collaborative space potentially restructures the culture and climate of the learning environment for diverse urban students. Concerning classroom management, Anthony saw how a participant-implemented alignment and the space for student agency and enactments could triumph over other outside influences to create classroom change. In the session where the social actors were actively involved and vested with the needed power to suggest and implement change, it took very little time for the stakeholders to develop aligned methods. Furthermore, although we did not implement the practices at that time, it was apparent that alignment could become a fundamental practice despite significant differences in race, age, and respective positions of authority in the school culture.

***Group interaction rituals as a forum for distributed classroom management.*** Microanalysis suggested that the cogenerative dialogue produced the ritual ingredients to build positive emotional energy. This positive emotional energy resulted in Anthony’s focus, animated involvement, and elevated mood. Moreover, the ritual process coincided with Anthony's increased group membership and higher degrees of solidarity with Keon.

The ritual ingredients started to come together when our group assembled at the same table, and our mutual focus was shared by discussing how to improve learning in the class. In time, Anthony, Keon, and the teacher shared a collective sense of purpose and a common focus on ways to improve the learning outcomes in the classroom. Also, Anthony's suggestion to keep peers on task and involved in the class reflected a pattern of collective dispositions, a micro demonstration of his individual goals merging with more significant group goals, and the possibility of meso- and macro-level enactments (Boykin, 1986).

Finally, in terms of ritual responses, Anthony's demonstration of how to keep students involved was a precursor to more significant action. At that moment, although he was only describing what he meant, Anthony started to envision what it would be like to keep his classmates engaged in the lesson. Anthony began "member-checking" rituals to keep group members on task and focused on group tasks, and, later, we saw this practice enacted on a much larger scale.

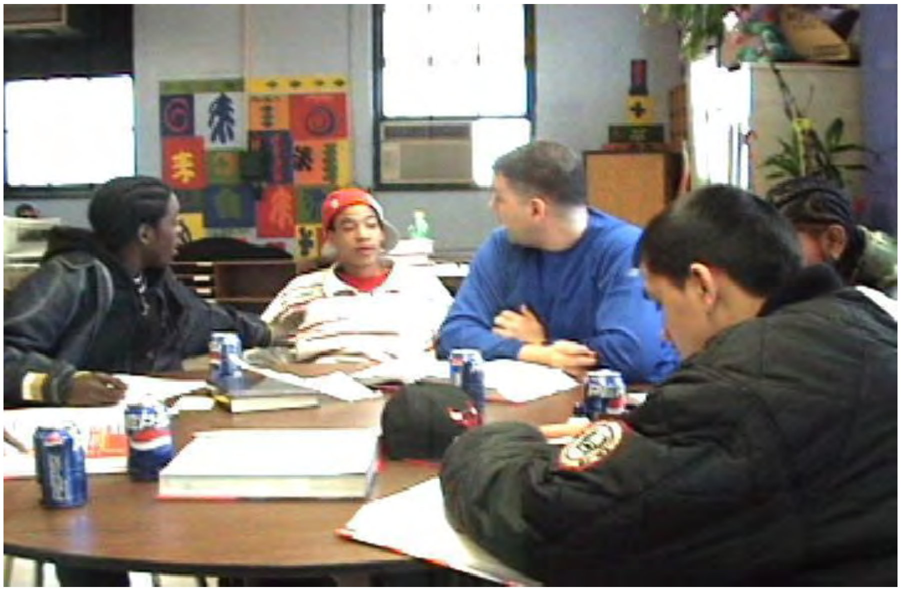
### *Observation #2: Anthony’s Enactment of Distributed Classroom Management*

A few days later, we had a class together; both Keon and Anthony were unmistakably alert and invested in the results of our lesson. This investment manifested in a high degree of verbal participation, increased attentiveness, and peer assistance for other students who seemed to be having trouble with the lesson. In particular, Anthony seemed primarily concerned with whether or not his peers were learning the material.

Just three minutes into class, Savier, a peer, was off-task and signing gang-related descriptors into the camera. Anthony noticed what Savier was doing and immediately intervened by tapping him on the shoulder, encouraging him to focus on the lesson (see Figure 7 below). What was particularly fascinating about this vignette was the peer symmetry that Anthony used to intervene in Savier's off-task behavior. However, at the same time, he wisely maneuvered to keep the emotional energy high and group solidarity intact.

**Figure 7**

*Anthony Intervenes to Refocus Savier on the Lesson*

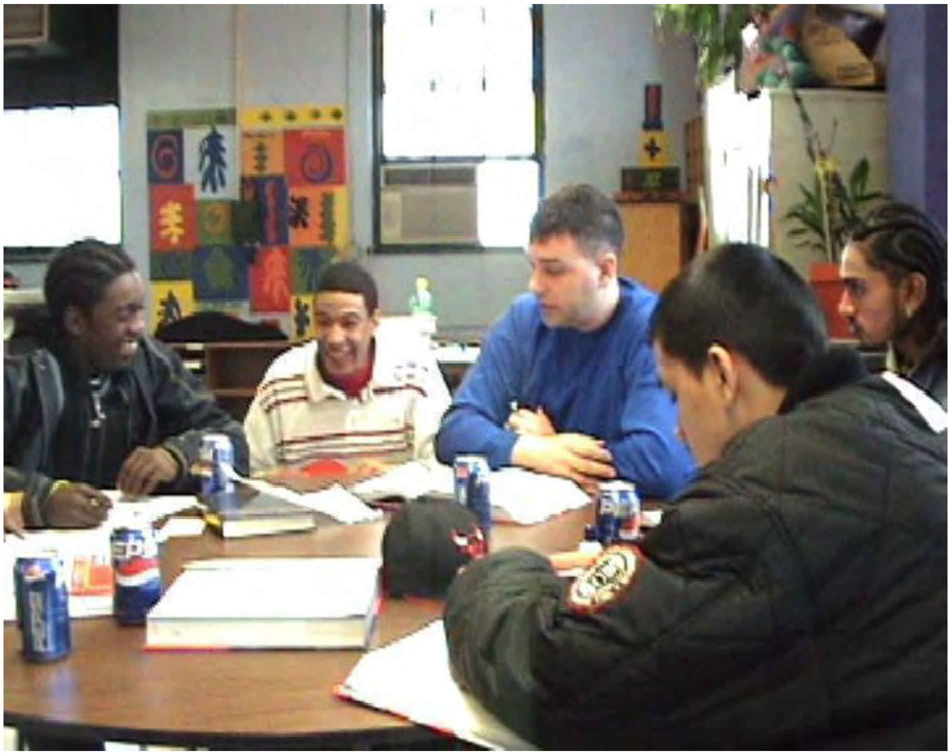


Anthony's intervention was so effective that he and Savier laughed before refocusing their attention on the lesson (see Figure 8 below). Olitsky (2017), building on the work of Collins (2010), underscored how high levels of solidarity impact mood and, ultimately, classroom outcomes. In this episode, cohering to Collins's notion of an interaction chain ritual, Anthony excitedly reproduced the culture he manifested in cogenerative dialogue but finessed his initial idea, transforming it into an opportunity to connect with Savier. Here, Anthony practiced Lehner's (2011) notion of distributed classroom management in his ability to recognize the needs of his peer and simultaneously create an aligned practice to intervene.

As seen in Anthony's interactions with Savier, some students could benefit from peer-initiated classroom management actions. For some urban students, classroom behaviors, such as paying attention and remaining on task, are important learning actions because they situate students to be central to the learning environment. When students are on task in class, learning content-related skills becomes more accessible as more class time focuses on curriculum-related material.

**Figure 8**

*Anthony and Savier Share a Laugh, and Both Turn their Concentration to the Lesson*



## Discussion of Findings

We contextualized the problem of classroom management in diverse urban schools by focusing on how student-initiated practices can play a role in navigating a level of distributed classroom management (Deckman, 2017; Lehner, 2011). Anthony provided a powerful example of what distributive classroom management looks like. The process of cogenerative dialogue empowered Anthony with shared authority and agency; such actions potentially support not only Anthony's learning but the development of his human capital (Harris, 2006).

Anthony gained a sense of personal agency and expression of authentic voice (Kincheloe, 2012), often denied to AD young men, especially in high school classrooms. This classroom engagement provides a foundation for him to offer more attention in class. Sewell (1992) noted the "capacity to reinterpret and mobilize an array of resources in terms of cultural schemas other than those that initially constituted the array" (p. 19). Ideally, this will support Anthony in an inter-field agency, applying his experiences in the classroom to his life-world outside of school.

In *Kinesiology of Race*, McAfee (2014) underscores how the enactment of race may be interrupted by new experiences and ways of being. Anthony seemingly experienced the cogenerative dialogue as this type of novelty and interruption. Anthony’s distributed leadership shifts his ontological experience of race, agency, and power. These classroom processes dismantled Anthony's and Keon's resistance to White-controlled educational structures and oppositional behaviors by creating a space for agency, authority, and autonomy (Downey & Ainsworth, 2002).

## Implications for Practice

Teachers often assume that classroom management methods will best serve their students' needs in urban high schools; nevertheless, teachers rely on students to co-implement them. Learning behaviors that promote a sense of collective classroom management are intellectually rigorous and intensely social. In addition, students often want to learn a distributive classroom management culture specific to the classroom. As this study demonstrates by Anthony's deep engagement, there are micro-, meso-, and macro-level manifestations of distributive classroom management.

We strongly recommend that more teachers, especially those in urban high schools with a diverse population, commit to cogenerative dialogue and distributed classroom management. There are clear benefits for teachers and students alike, often creating meaningful change for individual students, classroom culture, and school culture and climate. Anthony's various enactments with peers showed that positivity, engagement, and student leadership are contagious. New classroom practices have the potential to begin to close the achievement gap by creating mindset shifts and increasing the sense of agency for underserved and underachieving AD and Latinx students.

## Limitations

This study revealed promising implications for practice, but it is limited in its generalizability. NYC has an exceptionally diverse population; results might differ in other urban school systems. Our study was small, so we could not address differences between people (i.e., AD and Latinx). Finally, our research focused on one classroom for social studies; it is possible, if not likely, that more rigidly structured disciplines in the sciences might yield different results.

## Conclusion

Informed by Sewell (1992), this research was rooted in an understanding that students and teachers enact classroom practices and schemas as culture (Emdin, 2007; Lehner, 2007; Tobin, 2006). Our method, particularly the close analysis of video (Jarrett & Liu, 2018), allowed for investigating the nature of that produced culture. As evidenced by Anthony's actions in cogenerative dialogue and the distributed classroom, he created culture—schema and practice—in one field and reproduced it in another. By understanding classroom culture, Anthony demonstrated that cogenerative dialogue exists as a field where culture is produced. If necessary or when the opportunity arises, this same culture transports to other areas. Put differently, Anthony built a form of culture in cogenerative dialogue and later reproduced and transformed those practices in the classroom. Anthony's creation of classroom culture was a function of cogenerative dialogue in that it afforded the development of skills and resources in the school (Tobin, 2006).

This research viewed cogenerative dialogue as a field separate from the classroom (Tobin, 2006). Additionally, this work sought to uncover the emergence of distributed classroom management and its consequent permanence as a functional element of the cogenerative dialogue culture. Finally, this empirical work examined whether new culture could be transferred into the classroom, replacing models that rely on strict teacher control (Emdin, 2017; Lehner, 2010). Culture functions within porous boundaries (Alexakos, 2015) and transfers across fields. We identified how a specific culture in one place crosses into another area. The permeable boundaries of fields of culture enable cogenerative dialogues to create and transform classroom culture potentially. This transformative nature of cogenerative dialogue may allow the development of distributed control.

We conclude that creating opportunities for student development by implementing distributed classroom management improves teaching and learning in diverse urban schools. Anthony's interactions with Savier showed that some students benefit from peer-initiated classroom management. Understanding classroom management as cultural enactment, Anthony's actions should demonstrate cultural production and transformation. This research underscores that urban schools may transform existing classroom management models for the benefit of all stakeholders. Our research incorporates student voices to understand the multiple pathways for implementing effective classroom management. We explored the constraints of existing classroom management structures deeply rooted in modern urban school systems and found that they can indeed be shifted and transformed. Moreover, such transformation was not even complex with commitment and an open mind. New learning culture opens up tremendous possibilities for every teacher and every student in every classroom.

## Implications for Future Research

Future research should look to expand our work to create more generalizable knowledge. For example, future studies could replicate our work across geographically diverse school systems. For example, it could explore differences between students (i.e., AD versus Latinx) and differences within these populations (i.e., native-born versus recent immigrants). Future research might also explore differences across gender or location (i.e., northern urban areas versus southern urban regions).

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