

**DETERMINANTS OF MARGINALIZATION OF WOMEN IN THE KENYAN MUSIC
EDUCATION SPACE**

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ABSTRACT

Women music educators in Kenya have, for long-time, experienced inequalities while navigating the music education space. As pointed out by various feminist scholars in the west and Africa, the oppression of women is experienced in multiple ways on the basis of patriarchy, race, class and sexuality. Thus, this paper explores the determinants of marginalization of women music educators in the Kenyan music education spaces. It focuses on the experiences of women music educators to bring forth discourses of gender, class, western ideologies and sexuality within the music education field. The paper perpetuates two assertions. One, that women music educators are marginalized within the music education field and two, that these inequalities are differently experienced amongst them. Through the Foucauldian concept of power, the paper demonstrates how a dominant identity produces discourses that define the women music educators as subordinate.

Key Words: Gender Inequalities, Musicing, Music Education Space, Power, Patriarchy, Class, Music Education, Marginalisation

INTRODUCTION

Gender inequalities in the music education field have perennially permeated various areas which include teacher training, choice of instruments, learning activities, music performances and curriculum content (Lamb et al., 2002). With regard to teacher training, it is argued that women in the west had different educational experiences from men. In fact, they suggest that the gendering of music education began long ago as women were trained privately for centuries until Nineteenth Century when they received formal training in the teacher training institutions and conservatories just like their male counterparts. In addition, men were musically trained in the

military while women did not have a chance until the second half of the twentieth century. The musical experiences of women in the African context were limited as the professional musicians in the royal courts were predominantly male (Nketia, 1992). According to Nketia (ibid), women experienced their music within domestic spaces while the instrumental training was passed from father to son, or by a relative or through apprenticeship. Within the domestic spaces, women engaged in vocal music as they taught game song and sang lullabies to their children. In the Kenyan context, Ongati (2010) posits that female performers are limited by some African cultural norms from performing instruments like the lyres and drums. In this case then, it is clear that historically, gender inequalities have constantly been experienced in the music education field and that these experiences, have largely informed gender stereotypes and biases that are present in the music education field even to date. Though affected by gender disparities, experiences of women music educators in the music education spaces have received negligible scrutiny. Kamau (2010) observes that oppression of African women is layered as it follows the contours of gender, race and class. It is in view of this that this study was carried out to explore the experiences of secondary school women music educators in Kenya in an effort to interrogate the determinants of their marginalization.

Gendered Roles in the Music Education Space

Works on gender from music education scholars in the global arena have tended to focus on different aspects of music performance, choice of instruments among the students, preference for music learning and teaching and representation of women and girls in the music education scenes (Roulston & Misawa, 2011; Hallam, Rogers and Creech 2008; Jorgensen, 2006; Gould, 2004; Green, 2002; Lamb et al., 2002; Koza, 1994; Morton, 1994). A significant area that has been

touched is how women have been excluded in music education space. In respect to exclusionary practices, Koza (1994) analyses illustrations used in middle school textbooks in music education in America. On the other hand, Roulston and Misawa (2011) examine American music teachers' perceptions of gender in relation to their work as elementary music educators. Although their work focuses on these differences as experienced by music learners through the eyes of elementary music educators, the current study deviates as it intends to interrogate the determinants of marginalization of women in the Kenyan music education space.

Scholarship trends on music education in Kenya have majorly focused on the curriculum, teaching resources and pedagogical practices hence having negligible interest on gender practices (Agak, 2002; Andang'o, 2009; Ondieki, 2010; Mbeche, 2010; Akuno, 2012; Mochere, 2014; Chokera, 2016). In respect to gender, Agak (2002) compares girls' and boys' Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) performance between the years 1991 and 1995. Basing on the KCSE music marks that were drawn from Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC), she observes that girls outperformed boys in the music practical and in the average music performance. This study deviates from Agak's in three aspects. First, this study adopts a qualitative approach. Second; this study focuses on the participants' experiences and finally, the participants are the music educators. However, it is important to note that the current study adds to Agak's in respect to gender discourses in the field. Specifically, this study fills the existent gap as it intervenes in the ongoing discourses of femininity in music education space in Kenya.

In a study carried out on women's participation in political leadership in Kenya, Kamau (2010) argues that the exclusion of women in leadership and political decision making is the result of the patriarchal structures in Kenya for both colonial and independent state. According to her, it is

within these structures that the role and place of women was defined by specific ideas of gender roles, whereby women occupied the private realms while men dominated the public arena. Kamau (ibid) notes a myriad of factors hindering women from active participation in leadership: poverty, lack of equal access to health, education, training and employment; cultural barriers; political structures and institutions that discriminate against women.

Focusing on the experiences of women music educators, this study partly draws from Connell (2005) arguments that men are the gatekeepers to equality between men and women in various ways. According to Connell (ibid), men have a lot to lose from gender equality as they collectively benefit from the patriarchal dividend. Crenshaw (1991) states that many women experiences are not only shaped by patriarchy but also other dimensions of their identities such as race and class. Here, it is established that women`s experiences are multifaceted, and they face inequities in different dimensions. Although she establishes the concept of intersectionality and defines it in three levels, the current study draws from the concept of structural intersectionality that brings forth the differences in multiple forms of marginalization. In this paper, the focus on how different the experiences of women music educators are based on gender, class, western discourses and sexuality are interrogated.

Foucauldian Theory of Power

Foucault`s theory of discourse and power focused on how discursive practices are dominated by power. Specifically, it helped to analyze how a dominant identity produces discourses that define the women music educators as subordinate. This was done through considering the following questions:

- In what ways are women portrayed as subordinate in patriarchal discourses?
- How are women music educators oppressed by class and western influences?
- In what ways do sexuality discourses invent women's sexuality as a source of pleasure for the benefit of men?

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study was informed by a qualitative approach that seeks to understand subjective experiences of individuals. The study adopted the phenomenological design which tasks itself with drawing meanings from personal experiences (Hitzler & Eberle, 2004, p.69). This design has the ability to derive an understanding and meanings of a phenomenon from subjective experiences of research participants hence its appropriateness for this study.

Study Location

The study was carried out in Bungoma County, Kenya. The location is the researcher's area of operation and her experiences while engaging with various music spaces coupled with informal interactions with fellow women music educators from this County revealed a pattern of issues pertaining to gender inequality. These experiences served as the motivation of this study.

Population of the Study

The study's accessible population is secondary school women music educators in Bungoma County. However, since the number of women music educators in Bungoma County is eight, including one of the authors, all of them were sampled for the study. The sample for this study

therefore consisted of seven women music educators. Purposeful sampling technique was used to settle for women alone.

Data collection

This study employed the use of semi-structured interviews for data collection. For Bloom and Crabtree (2006, p. 315), semi-structured interviews entail a set of predetermined open-ended questions with other questions emerging from the dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee, hence its appropriateness. The study was carried out in the month of May 2020. The researcher encountered the risk of COVID- 19 as its transmission occurs through social interactions. In an effort to ensure minimal risk, the interviews took place in a safe and conducive environment. Specifically, the interview venue was spacious to ensure safe distance between the researcher and the participants. The study applied thematic analysis method.

Ethical Considerations

This study endeavored to protect the identities of the informants by ensuring confidentiality and anonymity throughout the research process. To hide their identities, the respondents were represented by pseudonyms. It was also noted that the identities of the participants could be derived from their profiles. Therefore, the study refrained from providing the profiles of the participants in the reference section.

The Music Education Space and Patriarchy

The observations drawn from this study characterized what Green (1997) terms as musical patriarchy. According to Green (ibid) the term musical patriarchy points to the division of women and men`s musical works into male public sphere and female private sphere respectively.

In regard to these music spaces, Green (ibid) argues of the existence of the two spheres. However, she states that women in the west have been tolerated in the paid, public realm of musical work.

The practices of the respondents in this study confirms Green`s suggestion that women are also tolerated in the public sphere of musical work. In fact, the presence of women music educators in this study is its own right evidence of their efforts to occupy the paid, public sphere. Were (2017) however notes that women have faced and still continue to face discrimination despite being tolerated in the public space. The system of musical patriarchy in this context is felt at two levels. First, that the works by men composers are valorized at the expense of women. Although some of them may participate in training activities, it was realized that women`s experiences differ from those of their male counterparts. Secondly, there exists immense influence of patriarchal power on women`s practices in music composition. Green`s assertion that music composition has historically been associated with masculinity corroborates the findings in this study in various ways. In the area of music composition and choral training at the Kenya Music Festival (KMF), it was observed that women music educators` contributions to this area are influenced by roles played by male musicians. While women do actively engage in these activities, they still experience some degree of inequalities which are linked to what can be termed as male indirect control and dominance.

Participant 1 states, “you will find that those that seek help from prominent male composers get ahead in the KMF because they always win.” This is also evident from the views of other participants as all of them agreed that having a male composer gives them an upper hand in the competitions. For example, Participant 7 revealed that choirs without male composers are always

disadvantaged, “I used to fail at the County levels until I got a trainer for the choir and his compositions enable us to participate in the special composition classes which take us to the nationals.”

It is evident from this study that the culture of seeking assistance from male composers is a pervasive phenomenon within the KMF space. The male composers and trainers are sought after for the purpose of helping women music educators compose and train music for KMF. The genesis of this practice can be tied to the competitive nature of the KMF where different institutions present music items with the aim of emerging winners. However, as Monte and Kiguru (2018) allude, the ultimate goal for such performances is to be selected and present the music at State House where the President of Kenya is the chief guest. The practice of winning and “prestige” further cascades from the high expectations from the school principals who exert pressure on the women music educators with their anticipated victory. The provision of resources for co-curricular activities such as participation at the KMF is evaluated through winning at the music competition. Consequently, the head teacher looks up to the winning performance as a mechanism of raising the profile of the school.

The necessity to affirm their capabilities to their students who also take part in the KMF drives the desire to win over their competitors and save image. In an effort to recreate their public space and sustain their status, women music educators seek help from male composers as they are aware that competing without their support can have negative implications on them. In that, they may fail to clinch the top positions in the competitions.

Green (1994), states that women through history have been discouraged from composition activities due to the fact that it threatens the patriarchal definitions of femininity. Clearly, the statement by Participant 1 that, “You can imagine when you present a composition that you have worked on versus one that has been composed by the likes of composer A and B [your piece may not] stand a chance” is a testimony that women find themselves competing for recognition against a male dominated and controlled space that requires validation from men. The male dominance observed in this space then, manifests the historical inequalities that have always discouraged women from taking part in these activities. Additionally, Participant 2 and 3 revealed that their achievements are trivialized by their colleagues even when they participate in training of their teams. Specifically, participant 2 noted, “I had also done a lot of work from the process of auditioning the singers, training and conducting [and] some people even said that I would be nowhere if I did not get the support I got from the composer [of the song].”

It is clear that the efforts by this specific woman music educator are subdued by male’s contribution to the performance. While the study acknowledges that the composer of the song is male, the time and skills put into the overall performance by the female educator cannot be interpreted without the male tag. It therefore implies women cannot thrive without a male point of reference and need him to validate their achievements. Therefore, the efforts of the women in this context are disguised by the male composers as it is the name of the male composer that dominates, hence masking the efforts of the woman educator who takes the time to audition, train and conduct the choir. In other words, the victory that could be achieved through the contribution of the male colleague is given undue prominence in the discourse hence sidelining the woman music educator. Therefore, the idea that this specific educator cannot thrive without

the eye of a man is a representation of some of the effects of patriarchy and is reminiscence of how women have historically been defined and subordinated within different professional fields.

The field of adjudication was revealed as being encompassed with various exclusionary practices. Also, in the instances where women music educators were appointed to evaluate music and dance performances for the KMF, they were met with resistance and questions regarding their eligibility in those positions. Three participants in this study attested to experiences of exclusion and resistance from the stakeholders and colleagues in the field. For example, participant 5 talked of it being difficult for women to be appointed to adjudication, participant 2 recounted an instance of what she termed as disrespect when she attended sub county adjudication: “some were even saying that I didn’t know what I was doing, to me it seemed like they were used to seeing male adjudicators.”

As mentioned earlier, adjudicators are appointed having gone through training. Consequently, it is assumed that the female appointees have requisite skills to judge a performance objectively. It is important to point out that such appointments accord women music educators with the platform not only to exercise and practice their knowledge and skills but also to uplift the women’s position with men. According to Kidula (1996), the opportunity for music educators to augment their power is presented to them through adjudication positions. Granted, it is here that the judges hold the power to assess the performances, rank the teams and offer recommendations through an adjudication report. However, the participants in this study revealed that the reactions from members of the audience are two-fold in their influence. One, that a female judge may not be objective in her judgment and therefore the resistance to embrace the position and authority of the female adjudicator. The disregard of female adjudicator is seen through the demeanor of the

audience when they don't pay attention to her remarks. Secondly, although women music educators' presence as adjudicators can be seen as an attempt to carve their niche in the music education space, audience's reactions reflect regulatory behavior that stands to affect the confidence of women as they navigate through such spaces. Raccah and Ayalan (2002), observe that women face more obstacles in their workplace while moving up the hierarchy. This is attributed to the conflict that emanates from the assumed secondary position of a woman and her position of authority. In this context then, the "loudly" responses as narrated by Participant 2 can also be understood as 'shouts' from the audience and are interpreted here as an attempt to challenge and subdue the voice and place of the female adjudicator who at the moment occupies a position of authority.

Within the music classroom space, Participant 6 recounted instances of male control through surveillance by a male colleague. This was, however, not the case among other women music educators. She notes, "He thought that I could not teach even after I confirmed I had previously worked as a teacher on board [Board of Management] terms in another school. He used to supervise me during the lessons." The response above highlights the experiences of a female music educator in her first posting. It is important to point out that the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) posts qualified teachers after a successful interview. The panelists in the interview include, among others, the subject specialists, in this case, music. For this particular case, it is possible that the subject specialist was the male teacher from the same school, which participant 6 was posted. It is interesting therefore to observe the kind of surveillance and monitoring within the music classroom space exhibited by the male educator, yet he may have been part of the panel who interrogated participants 6's eligibility to teach the subject in the

school. This surveillance can be understood at two levels. One, it is possible that the male teacher is not confident with what he might have been teaching, and if the female teacher is given the free space to interact with the students, the male teacher's weakness might be exposed. Two, the surveillance is evidence that the male educator was not convinced with this participant's capability as a music educator and he wanted proof within the classroom setting, outside the job interview session. It can be argued that the policing mechanism ensures his position is not threatened and his character remains silent. Therefore, the surveillance serves as a tool to curtail the female music educator's possible positive role in the classroom space. By instilling self-doubt through continuous supervision, the male educator manages to diminish her influence over the music students hence protect his position and power. In this scenario however, the surveillance works for both the male and female educator. On one hand, the male educator is compelled to view his teaching activities in retrospect since his surveillance act may reveal his inadequacies as a music educator. On the other hand, the female music educator regulates herself as a result of being subjected to close observation. While this section has interrogated patriarchy as a determinant of gender inequality, the next section examines the relationship between class dynamics and gender inequality in the music education space.

Class domination in the music education space

It was apparent in this study that class struggle and domination recreate other oppressed groups within the marginalized women music educators. Admittedly, the oppression of the participants in this study is further compounded by class dynamics in multiple ways. It was observed that the music composition skills are mostly commoditized during the KMF. Here, the male composers and women music educators are contained in antagonistic groups. Secondly, it was realized that

this skill produces dominant discourses that elevates the male music composers hierarchically. Third, class domination of high-status schools in both curricular and co-curricular activities reflected the different positions occupied by music educators in this hierarchy. The manifestation of social structures is reflected in the music education field through the dimensions that are reported below: Participant 2 noted that teachers who come “from small schools” are looked down upon. This was also reiterated by participant 5 who stated that, “my school is not capable of purchasing the band instruments and this affects activities we can take part in the KMF”. Here, it was discovered that the small status schools rarely learn to play the western instruments in the music classroom because such instruments are expensive to buy and maintain. Participant 2 further stated that within the classroom, their activities are limited to singing and playing the descant recorder.

It is evident that low status schools do not enjoy the privileges associated with big schools. It is also important to note that the category of the elite schools is a product of colonial influence. According to Odwar (2005), the European schools existed during the colonial period. These schools were later preserved for the top performers in the country hence the notion “elite schools”. This influenced the current classification of Kenyan schools to represent a hierarchy that follows the order of national, extra-county, county and sub-county schools. Admission of students to the schools occupying the top positions in this hierarchy is based on merit. Therefore, top students compete for the coveted slots in the national and top extra-county schools. As reported, the respect accorded to music educators in the so-called big schools reflects the class domination amongst the music educators in that, the name of your school equals to your status in the music education field hence the kind of treatment you will receive from your peers. This

depicts that, even though women music educators face inequalities, their experiences are different. Therefore, the marginalization of women music educators teaching in small schools is further compounded by the status of the schools they teach.

Although the posting of music educators to these schools follows a transparent criterion by the TSC, it is important to note that the high-status schools enjoy the privilege of hefty funds compared to the small schools. This implies that the “big schools” capability to pay for the services of well renowned music composers exceeds that of “small schools” hence cannot compete favorably in the KMF space. Here, it was noted that it is difficult for small schools to participate in the technical composition classes hence opt to take part in the African folk music categories. In addition, as pointed out by participant 5, the high-status schools may also be comfortable purchasing variety of instruments as opposed to the case in small schools thus affecting the learning of music and eventually the performance in KCSE as earlier suggested by participant 5. Participant 7 noted the practices of teachers in big schools as one that discriminates against their counterparts in smaller schools. She recounts instances of a female counterpart bragging about her bright students and variety of music instruments anytime they meet. She further states that, “well, it is not our fault that we don’t have the privilege of having school bands, I think sometimes they forget we are all teachers”.

From the above, it is evident that the music educators are profiled in line with the schools they teach. It is observed that the desire to be tagged with the name of their schools is common among the music teachers in the “big schools”. It is notable then, that the schools post excellent performance which can be tied to various factors, including the students’ entry behavior and the facilities in the school. However, the high position occupied by these music educators brings

forth a general assumption that teachers in the big schools are better than their counterparts. Participant 7's acknowledgement that teachers in the big schools are privileged can be understood at two levels. One, that her situation is circumstantial and teachers in high status schools are not better than her. Secondly, it is an indirect lament of the unnecessary regard that their counterparts accord themselves.

It is also important to note that the excellent performance in academics and co-curricular activities yields other positions for these music educators. They may, for example, be appointed to adjudicate and facilitate music teachers' workshops. Secondly, one of the criteria employed by the TSC in promotion as stated in the code of regulations is pegged on students' results. In view of this, it can therefore be stated that the subordinate positions held by teachers in the low status schools may as well be an impediment to their career advancement.

Although various scholars have observed the influence of gender on choice of instruments, it is important to note that the choice, in the current context, is compounded by availability. Therefore, a woman music teacher in a school that lacks instruments is doubly affected by her gender as well as the capability of her school. In this case then, the prestige that is associated with the "big schools" not only allows a specific sect the power to control the music education space but also intensifies the demarcation between the two groups of music educators, where one is subordinate to the other. This therefore proves that the women music educators in this study are marginalized differently, both on the basis of their gender and school's status. The observation by Participant 6 that, "Some teachers started saying that my students pass because our school selects bright students" shows efforts of disapproving this teacher's performance by other colleagues. While it may be argued that the music educators' efforts are paramount in the

production of good results, the statements made by their counterparts can be seen as an argument that any teacher can produce good results if given bright students. Therefore, the statement, “it is not difficult to handle students from my school” proves an attempt to discredit the teacher who may own students` academic performance as an achievement of their own. The silencing of their voices can not only be viewed as a disruption of this social structure but also power struggle between music educators in the two categories.

The presence of social structures among women in their workspaces has been cited by various scholars. For instance, Acker and Dillabough (2007) observe the presence of different categories of women academics in their study as there were newly recruits and also accomplished academics. In this study, participant 1 noted that the newly recruited women music educators face harassment from the experienced music educators in the field. She further notes that, “It surprises us who are young that the women advanced in the field are threatened by our presence.”

Here, it is evident that work experience and influence becomes a marker of class. This implies that, in this context, the music educator enjoys a higher status as a result of work experience which can be equated to more knowledge, financial stability and social capital as compared to the newly recruited teacher. Though women music educators are collectively marginalized, the social classes within their group recreates another group of the marginalized. In this context, the dominant class is the experienced women music educators. Working in a male dominated field, the expression that they are threatened shows their role as gatekeepers to equality, as they are unwilling to welcome other women music educators to share their space. Their image, as portrayed in this context, is that they are at the helm of their career. However, their acts to

suppress their counterparts prove an ambition to maintain the status quo. This is evidence that the accustoming to attention and admiration that is tied to their social class and the title, the "chosen few" can only yield a desire to protect their status. Participant 2 noted that it is normally their fellow women music educators that are disturbed by their dressing. She recounted an instance that led to a female colleague sent to warn her friend of her dressing in the field. While it is known that the TSC code of ethics regulates the dressing of both men and women educators, it is important to note that participant 2 clarified that the particular mode of dressing adhered to the outlined regulations. It can therefore be argued that this regulation emanates from the urge to suppress the young women music educators. Since the perpetrator of this is a woman, it can also be understood that the influence of patriarchy within this space is evident as both men and women music educators become perpetrators of gender inequalities. The suppression of women by women therefore serves to uplift the male counterparts. In this case then, men benefit both directly and indirectly from this act. Therefore, it is evident that other women music educators have the power over the newly recruits hence the surveillance act. While the new recruits put efforts to fit in the field, they are monitored by both men as well as other women colleagues, hence compounding their experiences. It can be stated therefore, that the newly recruited women educators are doubly affected by their gender and status. This instance not only proves the role of women as gatekeepers that protect patriarchal institution, but it is also a testimony that the women music educators have subconsciously embraced the second position in this space.

The music education space and sexuality

Observations in the current study corroborates Green's (1997) arguments that when we listen to a woman sing or play, we become aware of her discursive position in connection with her gender

and sexuality. This implies that any musicing activity is judged in the context of her sexuality. According to Green (ibid) , the most common institutionalized form of display and the most normal deployment of gender roles within relationship of display in the west involve an explicitly and implicitly sexual display in which the displayer is coded as feminine and the spectator as masculine. Viewing the music education space in the current study from this perspective, it is notable that women music educators have experienced sexual harassment in various ways. For example, it was revealed that some of the women music educators in this study are subjected to the male gaze as reported by participant 2, “The men expect women conductors to present a sexy image. They want us to appeal to their eyes and they forget that you are there as a teacher. Personally, I shiver while conducting on the stage.” From this statement, the impact of the constant surveillance is seen through the shivering that is reported by participant 2. It can therefore be observed that the expectation on women educators` appearance affects the choir which in this case picks fear from the conductor, hence affecting their overall performance. Participant 5 also agreed that women are expected to put on a show, and they have pressure to present more of their beauty. Here, it was also noted by participant 4 that the dressing of women music educators on the conducting stage attracts more interest than their musical performance.

From the response above, it is evident that the audience bears expectations on how a female conductor should present their image. Here, the assertion of O`Toole (2000) that performances of female performers are judged differently is corroborated. The body of the female conductor is objectified as she is expected to present a “sexy image”. In this regard, her sexuality is tied to her performance. The respondent`s statement to “appeal to their eyes” further connotes the desire of the men to control and manipulate the bodies of women music educators. In the same token,

participant 1 noted that men make fun of women's movements on the stage. She stated that "they say we swing our behinds while on stage so that we can win". This observation is evidence of issues related to music conducting in the KMF platform. While the music educators' may adopt various conducting techniques, the scenario stated above depicts close surveillance of women music educator's activities. The accusation of "swinging their behinds" to get ahead of their competitors can be understood as a regulation of women music educators' activities by their male counterparts who may use this as a justification to their performance and continual suppression of women music educators in this space.

CONCLUSION

This study analysed patriarchy, class, western discourses and sexuality as determinants of the marginalized state of women music educators. It was clear that women music educators experience different forms of inequalities in the music education space. In addition, the importance of the music composition and choral training skills was realized as it is applied as a tool for control. The study also established that the inequalities experienced by the study participants are compounded by the status of the schools in which they teach. It was also evident that the women music educators have experienced instances of sexual harassment within the music education space. Based on these findings, it is recommended that men and women music educators should engage in discourses of gender for the purpose of sensitization. There is need to ensure that all schools are equipped with adequate facilities for the teaching and learning of music. Additionally, in-service workshops can be carried out for the purpose of equipping women music educators with the requisite skills for navigation of the music education spaces.

This will help empower the women music educators as they have been historically marginalized hence counter the narrative of male dominance in the music composition activities.

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