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UPJOHN INSTITUTE *Employment Research*

OCTOBER 2007

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Employment Research is published quarterly by the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research. Issues appear in January, April, July, and October.

The Institute is a nonprofit, independent research organization devoted to finding and promoting solutions to employment-related problems at the international, national, state, and local levels. The Institute is an activity of the W.E. Upjohn Unemployment Trustee Corporation, which was established in 1932 to administer a fund set aside by Dr. W.E. Upjohn, founder of the Upjohn Company, to conduct research on the causes and effects of unemployment and seek measures for the alleviation of the hardships suffered by the unemployed.

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Randall W. Eberts
Executive Director

Timothy Bartik and Susan Houseman

A Future of Good Jobs? America's Challenge in the Global Economy

Can the U.S. economy generate a healthy growth of "good" jobs— jobs that will ensure a steady improvement in the standard of living for the middle class and that will offer a way out of poverty for low-income Americans? This is the fundamental economic policy challenge facing our country in an age of intense global competition.

By some measures, the U.S. economy is performing well. GDP and productivity growth are high and unemployment is low. Beneath these aggregate statistics, however, are signs that those at the bottom and a growing number in the middle are being left behind. While rapid globalization and technological progress have provided American consumers with better and cheaper goods and services, they also have been associated with problems for American workers: job dislocation, stagnant or declining real wages and benefits, and reduced job security. The gains from recent economic growth have accrued primarily to those at the very top of the income distribution, as evidenced by increased U.S. inequality.

In the forthcoming book *A Future of Good Jobs? America's Challenge in the Global Economy* (expected publication date April 2008), leading policy analysts frame the major challenges facing U.S. labor policy:

- improving the skills of American workers so that they can better compete in a global economy;
- addressing the crisis in our system of employer-sponsored health insurance;

- minimizing the effects of dislocation due to immigration and trade;
- removing barriers to employment for older workers;
- improving the quality of jobs for low-wage workers without harming the competitiveness of American companies; and
- addressing the serious employment barriers of the disadvantaged.

Each chapter in this book tackles one of these policy challenges, identifying the key problems, critiquing current policies, and offering alternative policies. Collectively, the chapters offer a road map for future labor market policy. The book is based on a conference sponsored by the Upjohn Institute in Washington, D.C., in June 2007 to mark the 75th anniversary of the W.E. Upjohn Unemployment Trustee Corporation (see p. 3).

Signs of Trouble for U.S. Workers

The difficulty that the United States will have in generating good jobs for all Americans is readily apparent in problems already facing middle-class and low-wage workers:

Growing inequality. Income inequality has widened, with wages for the middle and lower classes rising far less than the rate of productivity growth and most of the gains going to the very wealthiest households.

Declining coverage and generosity of benefits. The fraction of the nonelderly population with employer-sponsored health insurance has dropped sharply,

while the cost to employees with employer-sponsored health plans has risen sharply. Companies' shift from traditional defined-benefit to defined-contribution retirement plans shifts investment risks to workers and typically is associated with reduced benefits.

Less job security. Long-term employment with a single company is becoming less common. American workers are more likely to experience dislocation, in part because of trade, and are more likely to have to make a late-in-life job change.

Sharp drop in employment among less-educated men. The employment rates of men of all ages with a high school education or less have declined precipitously since the 1980s.

Forces Shaping the American Workplace

These problems have multiple causes. Widespread involvement of large institutional investors in the stock market beginning in the 1980s led to greater focus on lowering costs to boost short-term profits, resulting in downward pressure on compensation and reduced job security.

Rapid technological advances have also played an important role. New health technologies have reduced mortality and improved the quality of life. But these advances have greatly increased the cost of health care and placed severe strains on our employer-financed system of health insurance.

Economists generally believe that computer technology introduced into the workplace in the 1980s and 1990s has favored more-skilled workers and helps explain growing inequality. However, the development of the Internet and other communications technologies opens up the possibility of offshore outsourcing many service jobs, potentially affecting American workers at all skill levels in the future.

Globalization reinforces pressures from financial markets and new technology. Trade agreements, lower transportation and communication costs, and political and economic reform in places like China and Eastern Europe

Steven Raphael, presenter, and Jodie T. Allen, moderator

have enabled a significant expansion of international trade. Those factors, along with financial market pressures on U.S. companies to lower costs through offshore outsourcing, have led to a ballooning U.S. trade deficit. Although Americans broadly benefit from lower-priced imports, the growth of the global economy has led to substantial worker dislocation and placed further downward pressure on many workers' wages.

While these economic forces are placing strains on middle-class and low-wage workers, institutions that historically have mitigated income inequality have been significantly weakened. Most notable are the decline in the value of the minimum wage and the decline in union representation.

Policy Action Plan

To address the problems of inequality and pressures from globalization, the contributors to this volume recommend several key reforms of labor market policy.

• Reform the Delivery of Education and Training

Virtually all agree that improving the skills of our workforce is critical to competing in a global economy. Yet Robert Lerman argues that current federal and state policies have an overly narrow focus on conventional academic credentials. Lerman urges the development of education curricula that are more closely tied to workplace

needs, that meet diverse learning styles of students, and that expand support for vocational training in high schools. High school students should be able to achieve occupational qualifications by combining school instruction with well-structured work-based learning. The K-12 system should be rewarded for raising noncognitive skills and occupational skills, even

if some students do not complete all requirements for admission to a four-year college. The federal budget allocation for apprenticeship programs should be increased. Finally, Lerman recommends changes in financial accounting rules so that firms count their workforces' human capital as assets and thereby are encouraged to invest more in worker training.

• Reform Health Insurance

Katherine Swartz explains why the current system of employer-sponsored health insurance is inefficient and is leading to a downward spiral of coverage in our country. She offers a road map for universal coverage based on three principles: 1) everyone should enroll in a health plan and pay a minimum amount, 2) additional premiums should be collected from individuals in proportion to family income, and 3) companies should contribute to financing the insurance. The system proposed by Swartz would preserve a central role for private health insurance, and she points to health insurance systems in the

Wendell Primus, moderator, and Katherine Swartz, presenter

Netherlands, Germany, and Switzerland as potential models. A reformed system could avoid inefficiencies that result from lack of insurance coverage, increase productivity by allowing individuals to switch jobs without losing coverage, increase competitiveness of U.S. companies in the global market, and reduce perverse incentives employers have to contract out work or avoid hiring older workers.

• **Expand and Revamp Return-to-Work Programs**

In their respective chapters, Lori Kletzer and Katharine Abraham and Susan Houseman present proposals for expanded employment and training programs, wage insurance programs, and better targeting of government programs to the needs of dislocated and older workers. Kletzer recommends expanding the Trade Adjustment Assistance program, currently limited to manufacturing workers, to include displaced service sector workers and to include additional monies for training. The wage-loss insurance program, started in 2002, provides trade-displaced workers over age 50 with up to half the difference between their old and new wages. Kletzer calls for evaluating this program, as stipulated by Congress, and possibly extending the program to workers in their 40s. Echoing the call for program evaluation, Abraham and Houseman emphasize the need to evaluate promising older worker initiatives being taken at the state level—including placing older-worker specialists in employment centers, instituting outreach for seniors, and providing older workers with basic computer skills—to determine their effectiveness and suitability for expansion at the national level.

• **Implement Special Policies for Low-Skilled Workers**

The growth in inequality has hit low-skilled workers hardest. Paul Osterman calls for a two-pronged approach to improving the quality of jobs at the low end. The first is improvement in labor standards: continued increases in

minimum wages, protection for unions and other forms of worker organization, and tax incentives that promote the development of good jobs. The second strategy involves programmatic assistance to employers to encourage job upgrading. Osterman proposes that the U.S. Department of Labor establish a “Low Wage Challenge Fund” to help employers improve their workers’ skills and thereby the quality of jobs. The Low Wage Challenge Fund would also provide matching funds to states for customized training programs oriented toward the low-skill workforce and provide funding to community colleges to increase their involvement with employers and the low-skill workforce.

To boost earnings of the least skilled workers, Steven Raphael proposes expansion of the successful Earned Income Tax Credit. Specifically, Raphael proposes an expanded EITC for childless adults with liberalization of benefits for the poorest married couples.

The rapid rise in incarceration rates and drop in employment rates of low-skilled men require special policies to bring this growing underclass out of the cycle of crime and poverty and into productive employment. In addition to an expanded EITC, Raphael advocates policies to reduce barriers to employment for those with criminal records, including expunging selected criminal records after a period of time and funding training intermediaries to prepare ex-inmates for employment.

Conclusion

The policies advocated in this book should be viewed as investments that will pay off in a number of ways: for most workers, in the form of higher wages, more secure health care benefits, and greater ability to transition to new jobs; for the public at large, in the form of reduced costs for social safety net programs and crime and increased effectiveness of our health care system. These policies would help the United States to compete in the global economy and provide a future of good jobs for all Americans.

Tim Bartik and Susan Houseman are senior economists at the Upjohn Institute.

W.E. Upjohn Unemployment Trustee Corporation

~ 75th Anniversary ~

This month the W.E. Upjohn Institute celebrates the 75th anniversary of its origins. The time was 1932 and the nation was plunged into the depths of the Great Depression. One out of every four workers was without a job, and in only two years wages had plummeted 40 percent. Many businesses had closed, and the images of destitute men standing helplessly in soup lines were etched in the minds of most Americans. Kalamazoo was no different. Area business owners were laying off large numbers of workers to try to save their companies. Yet, one local industrialist was trying to do more than simply sustain his business.

Dr. W.E. Upjohn was a local physician who, in the 1880s, developed the “friable” pill, which resolved the problem of pills not dissolving when ingested. With that and other innovations, the Upjohn Company had grown into one of the nation’s largest pharmaceutical firms. Now he wanted to tackle the problem of unemployment. Being a country doctor, his idea of a social safety net was the land; he believed that unemployment occurred when a person was disconnected from productive assets, such as land and equipment. So he purchased 1,600 acres of land outside of town for laid-off workers to plant a garden on and provide for their families. Fortunately, he did not lay off anyone from his own company, but hundreds of workers displaced from other local businesses used the farm. Tons of produce was grown for individual consumption, and the excess was distributed free to local individuals, relief agencies, and nonprofit groups. (*contd. on p. 4*)

(contd. from p. 3)

But Dr. Upjohn saw only the first year's harvest. He died on Oct. 18, 1932. Just three weeks before his death, Dr. Upjohn took steps to ensure that his endeavor would continue for future generations. He established the W.E. Upjohn Unemployment Trust Corporation, which included all the farmland he had purchased and some of his personal shares of Upjohn Company common stock.

The purpose of the Corporation was to manage the assets of the trust and to carry out the mission for which it was established: to conduct research into the causes and effects of unemployment, to study the feasibility and methods of insuring against unemployment, and to devise ways and means of preventing and alleviating the distress and hardship caused by unemployment.

The grand social experiment lasted only a few years. With the passage of the Social Security Act in 1935, which included the unemployment insurance system, the need for farmland to serve as a social safety net was replaced by a check in the hands of those without jobs.

After consulting with local leaders and national experts, the Trustees established a research institute in 1945 to carry out its mission. Today, with a staff of 60 research economists, analysts, support staff, and administrators, the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research carries on Dr. Upjohn's legacy by pursuing research in labor market issues around the world, publishing books, providing research grants, and administering all federal and state employment programs in the local area. We at the Institute strive to continue the work that Dr. Upjohn once called "the most important thing I ever did."

*Randall W. Eberts
Executive Director*

Duane E. Leigh and Andrew M. Gill

How Responsive are Community Colleges to Local Needs?

This article provides an overview of some of the main findings in the authors' new book, Do Community Colleges Respond to Local Needs? Evidence from California, which is available now from the Upjohn Institute. Visit www.upjohninstitute.org to read the first chapter, and see p. 6 for details on how to order the book.

Do community colleges respond to local needs? At first glance, an affirmative answer to this question seems obvious. Of course community colleges respond to local needs—after all, community colleges are community-based institutions. Upon reflection, however, the answer is not so apparent, especially when one considers the multiplicity of community colleges' missions and the variety of stakeholders they serve. In addition to the traditional missions of supplying introductory college courses to transfer-oriented students and providing occupational training, the missions of today's community colleges include adult basic education and workforce development. Adult basic education provides a foundation of basic math, reading, and language skills on which students can proceed to college-level courses. In their workforce development role, community colleges supply training programs designed to assist their communities in retaining existing employers and attracting new ones.

The primary stakeholders of a community college are students, local employers, and local government officials. The broadening of community college missions to include workforce development has meant an expanded role for the local business community and government officials in curriculum development. This broadening of missions has also been accompanied by greater diversity within community colleges' student bodies. While

community colleges have historically served "traditional" students—that is, 18–22-year-olds attending college full time—they increasingly serve a variety of "nontraditional" students enrolled part time while they combine employment with school. Nontraditional students include adults returning to school to sharpen their skills or earn a college degree, dislocated workers and displaced homemakers seeking retraining, single mothers making the welfare-to-work transition, high school dropouts taking advantage of a "second chance" to join the mainstream labor force, and immigrants seeking to improve their language skills and obtain occupational training required for better-paying jobs.

Most studies examining community college responsiveness proceed by visiting selected campuses and conducting focus group interviews with students, faculty and administrators, and representatives of the local business community. While this research strategy often yields interesting examples of linkages between college programs and the needs of local residents and employers, it may be difficult to generalize these insights. The objective in our research is to move beyond site visits at particular campuses to examine responsiveness using a comprehensive dataset that includes data supplied by all campuses in a statewide system. For several reasons, including the diversity of the state's population and the size of its economy, we choose to study the campuses in the California Community College System (CCCCS). Our dataset includes information on all first-time freshmen (FTF) students who enrolled in 1996 in any 1 of 106 CCCC campuses.

To examine community college responsiveness, one must ask what services does a responsive community college provide and to whom? To answer

these questions, we build on a definition laid out in the recent U.S. Department of Education (DoED) Community College Labor Market Responsiveness Initiative. Focusing on labor market responsiveness, the DoED definition emphasizes that a responsive community college delivers programs that are consistent with and seek to anticipate the changing dynamics of the labor market it serves, where dynamic labor markets are generated by change on both the demand side and the supply side (MacAllum, Yoder, and Poliakov 2004).

We attempt to implement this definition empirically by considering community colleges' responsiveness to major sources of change on both sides of the labor market. On the demand side, we ask whether community colleges respond to continually fluctuating demand conditions by providing occupational training programs that produce skills marketable in the local economy. On the supply side, we argue that the main source of change is a massive shift in the number and national origin of immigrants. Hence, the question we address is whether community colleges are successfully meeting the education and training needs of current and recent generations of immigrants.

Responsiveness to the Needs of Immigrants

High percentages of California community college students are of either Latino or Asian descent, and Table 1 documents that Latino students lag behind whites in terms of the three community college outcome variables we study, measured during a six-year window beginning in 1996. In contrast, Asian students typically perform better than whites. Our analysis indicates that factors important in explaining Latino-white gaps include a lower high school graduation rate (both U.S. and foreign), lower community college course loads, less initial interest in transferring to a four-year college, and poorer academic performance while attending college. We are less successful in using these student-level variables to explain the superior performance of Asians.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Community College Outcome Variables by Broad Race or Ethnicity Categories and Gender

Outcome variable	Latinos	Whites	Blacks	Asians
Males				
Transfer (%)	7.4	14.9	9.5	25.4
A.A. degree (%)	5.7	8.1	5.2	10.7
Total credits earned	21.8	24.9	17.3	35.6
Number of students	42,070	63,551	14,482	21,957
Females				
Transfer (%)	9.0	16.3	8.9	27.7
A.A. degree (%)	9.6	11.8	6.6	15.8
Total credits earned	27.2	28.1	20.0	38.0
Number of students	45,962	65,668	16,563	22,231

To extend these results, we first concentrate on the academic performance of first-generation immigrants. Recent Asian immigrants are found to perform much better on our outcome measures than other first-generation immigrant students. Indeed, we find for Asians that there is little difference in the superior outcomes observed, in comparison to white immigrants, for first-generation immigrants and for other Asians. On the other hand, first-generation Latino immigrants do less well than other first-generation immigrants and other Latinos.

Moving from the individual student level to the college level, a second extension of our basic results asks whether particular campuses are especially effective, or especially ineffective, in promoting the academic success of their Latino and Asian students. Measured across colleges, we present evidence that a concentration, or "clustering," of Latino students decreases the transfer rate of Latinos after adjusting for differences in student characteristics. At the same time, a clustering of Asian students appears to increase the transfer rate of Asians.

One of the advantages of our FTF dataset is the detailed breakdown by ethnicity available for Latino and Asian students. We exploit this advantage in a third extension of our basic results. Among Latinos, we report only small differences in outcome variables between Central American and South American students and Mexican students despite the fact that a much lower percentage of Mexicans are first-generation immigrants. Our student-specific explanatory

variables are sufficient to explain most of the Latino-white gaps in outcome variables for each of the three categories of Latinos. On the other hand, variation in outcome variables for the eight categories of Asians we can distinguish is much larger, as is variation in our success in explaining observed Asian-white gaps. We are able to substantially explain observed gaps in outcome variables for Cambodian, Filipino, Japanese, and Laotian students, while we are less successful—particularly for transfer rates—for Chinese, Indian, Korean, and Vietnamese students.

Responsiveness to the Needs of Local Employers

To measure responsiveness to the needs of local employers, we compare the quality of matches between the occupational distribution of completed credits supplied by community colleges to the occupational distribution of projected new jobs in counties in which colleges are located. We are able to pursue this matching strategy because both occupational labor demand projections and community college credits completed are classified by the same Taxonomy of Programs (TOP) classification system. Match quality is captured by a measure of responsiveness (R) that compares the occupational distribution of credits supplied with occupational demand projections. R scores range from 100 percent, indicating a perfect match between labor demand and supply across all fields of study, to 0, indicating the unlikely scenario of

all students receiving training in fields for which there is zero projected labor demand.

Not surprisingly, we find that community colleges differ considerably in terms of our measure of responsiveness. The maximum R score is 81.7 percent, indicating a highly responsive college, while the minimum is 32.4 percent. It is interesting to note that some of the colleges with the highest R scores are also those found to enroll large proportions of Asian students.

To better understand the variation in calculated R scores, we investigate intercollege differences in the external constraint measures identified by Jacobson et al. (2005) as being important in characterizing labor market-responsive colleges. Consistent with their analysis, more responsive colleges tend to have larger student enrollments, more local funding, higher per student revenue, and a suburban location. The predictive ability of our statistical model is, however, quite modest, suggesting important roles for such unmeasured factors as college leadership, organizational structure, and culture.

Since California community colleges are organized into districts, we also examine responsiveness at the district level. Most rural communities are served by a single college that comprises its own district. In urban areas, districts often include more than one campus. Our analysis carried out at the district level continues to find a positive effect of local revenue share on labor market responsiveness. But our most important result is that, holding constant the effects of external constraint variables, multicampus community college districts are more labor market responsive than single-campus districts. We find that even colleges that, by themselves, would appear to rank low in terms of labor market responsiveness are frequently combined in districts in which member colleges as a group are much more responsive.

Concluding Thoughts

Our examination of the experience in California community colleges of current and recent generations of immigrants

points to some dramatic successes and some disturbing instances of lack of success. Asian students, especially first-generation Asian immigrants, generally do very well. We are unable to satisfactorily explain the success of Asian immigrants with such student-level measures as academic background and financial need and find, holding constant the effects of these measures, a substantial positive effect of the "clustering" of Asian students. We associate this effect with a commitment to the U.S. labor market and a culture that emphasizes the importance of education. The most disturbing lack of success is found for Latino immigrants. While much of this lack of success can be explained by inadequate academic preparation and financial need, we also find a negative effect for the clustering of Latino students. These contrasting effects of our clustering variable for Asians and Latinos suggest the need for mentoring, counseling, and peer support programs targeted specifically to Latino students. We provide some general guidelines for the design of such programs and note that a comprehensive review of existing community college programs should be a research priority.

In terms of assessing community colleges' performance in meeting the needs of local employers, we introduce a novel methodology that assesses the quality of matches between the occupational distribution of credits supplied by colleges and the occupational distribution of projected new jobs in the local area. Our finding that community colleges differ substantially in responsiveness is probably to be

expected. Less expected is the result that, at least for some multicampus districts, member colleges seem to specialize in their occupational training programs, and, further, that these specializations are complementary within districts. This result suggests that district affiliation should be taken into account in evaluating the performance of individual campuses. We also raise the possibility that our methodology might lead to more evidence on the success of community colleges in providing occupational training for particular categories of students—say, first-generation Latino and Asian immigrants—that is a good fit to job opportunities in the local labor market.

Duane E. Leigh is professor emeritus of economics at Washington State University, Pullman; and Andrew M. Gill is a professor of economics at California State University, Fullerton.

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AN INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE Comparative Analysis of Enterprise Data (CAED)

Budapest, Hungary, May 22–24, 2008

The Upjohn Institute is organizing the 8th international research conference on Comparative Analysis of Enterprise Data (CAED), together with the Central European University and with the support of several national and international sponsors. Topics of interest include, but are not limited to, reallocation, productivity, ICT, innovation and R&D, competition, transition, development, labor, adjustment costs, environment, corporate governance, trade, and linked employer-employee analysis. The conference will include keynotes, plenaries, and parallel and poster sessions and will be held at the Central European University.

Deadline: December 15, 2007. Submissions: www.upjohn.org/CAED

Books on Workforce Development

Do Community Colleges Respond to Local Needs?

Evidence from California

Duane E. Leigh and Andrew M. Gill

~ NEW ~

In recent years, American community colleges have evolved as the missions facing them expanded and their constituencies changed. No longer is their role solely to prepare students to transfer to four-year institutions and to provide occupational training. Now, they must also provide basic adult education, including ESL, and serve an economic development role by implementing training programs that assist in retaining existing employers and attracting new ones.

Have these expanded efforts addressed their constituents' requirements, or are community colleges failing to be as responsive as they need to be? Leigh and Gill use data from California's community college system to address this question.

Their efforts focus on two major, policy-relevant sources of change at the local level. First, on the supply side, they examine how responsive community colleges are at meeting the needs of the growing immigrant population for education and training. Then, on the demand side, Leigh and Gill look into whether local employers' need for skilled workers is being met, an issue impacted by dynamic technological change and increased global competition.

219 pp. 2007. \$40 cloth ISBN 0-88099-328-6 / ISBN-13 978-0-88099-328-9
\$18 paper ISBN 0-88099-327-8 / ISBN-13 978-0-88099-327-2

Job Training That Gets Results

Ten Principles of Effective Employment Programs

Michael S. Bernick

Bernick organizes the operational and policy lessons he learned from his five-year tenure as California's EDD director (and from more than 25 years in the job training field) into "Ten Principles." These principles, enlightened by the successes and

failures of several training programs implemented in California before, during, and since his stint as EDD director, are aimed at policymakers and professionals who administer training programs in both the private and the public sector.

"[This book] is compelling because the principles flow clearly from three virtues rarely found in one author: an in-depth understanding of the relevant research, practical experience as a program manager, and a refreshing willingness to challenge conventional wisdom." —*Steve Crawford, policy director, National Governors Association*

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273 pp. 2005. \$40 cloth ISBN 0-88099-281-6 / ISBN-13 978-0-88099-281-7
\$20 paper ISBN 0-88099-280-8 / ISBN-13 978-0-88099-283-0

Communities and Workforce Development

Edwin Meléndez, Editor

This volume reveals how, as a result of policy reforms at the national, state, and local levels, programming by different institutions converged with innovative professional practices to transform the employment services industry. The contributors show how these reforms spurred employment service providers to substantially revamp their operations by

promoting the principles of universal access, integration of federal funding streams, devolution of policy to local authorities, and work-first as a starting point for employment services. As a result, many new programs were started by nontraditional institutions, traditional programs underwent rapid transformations, and some providers exited the industry.

The studies presented here constitute a first step towards a comprehensive assessment of the role that community organizations played in revamping the employment services industry. Most importantly, they show how a new style of labor market intermediary has evolved from focusing almost exclusively on the provision of employment services to job seekers to simultaneously addressing the needs of both job seekers and employers.

499 pp. 2004. \$70 cloth ISBN 0-88099-317-0 / ISBN-13 978-0-88099-317-3
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