ISSUE #13 MARCH 2022

Newsletter

North American Federation of Adapted Physical Activity

President's Message

Dr. JoonKoo (JK) Yun, East Carolina University

I cannot believe we are already approaching the end of the 2021-2022 academic year. We are all busy taking care of everyday business, but I hope you will take a bit of a moment to relax and enjoy this newsletter.

I am really excited about this upcoming 2022 NAFAPA conference. I have attended every single NAFAPA meeting since 1994, and I truly missed it in 2020. However, when I communicate with Dr. Connelly and Ms. Lappano for this upcoming meeting, we will be back with a much more exciting conference. There will be three outstanding keynote speakers, including Dr. Øyvind Førland Standal, Dr. Tim Fletcher, and Dr. Meghann Lloyd.

- Dr. Øyvind Førland Standal is a professor at the Institute for Primary and Secondary Education at Oslo Metropolitan University. He has been particularly concerned with teaching and researching inclusion in physical education, embodied learning, and adapted physical activity. He has also written the research monograph Phenomenology and pedagogy in physical education.
- Dr. Fletcher is an Associate Professor in the Department of Kinesiology at Brock University, Canada. Dr. Fletcher's research interests are broadly in teacher learning and self-study of practice methodology. His recent work has focused on how teachers learn to prioritize meaningful experiences in physical education.
- Dr. Lloyd is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Health Sciences at Ontario Tech University. Dr. Lloyd is the director of the Motor Behaviour and Physical Activity Lab at Ontario Tech, and she is a Research Associate at Grandview Children's Centre. Please check more detailed information about keynote speakers and conference programs from the following link: https://brocku.ca/applied-health-sciences/kinesiology/nafapa/.

I look forward to seeing you at Brock this coming October.

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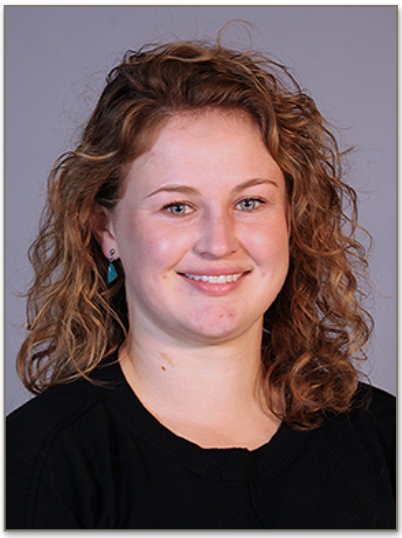
Dr. Samantha Ross | West Virginia University | Morgantown, WV.



Dr. Samantha M. Ross (she/her/hers) is an Assistant Professor in the Physical Education Teacher Education Program in the Department of Coaching and Teaching Studies within the College of Physical Activity and Sport Sciences at West Virginia University.* Dr. Ross completed her B.S. in Human Physiology and Psychology at the University of Oregon. Following this, Dr. Ross continued to pursue her graduate programs at Oregon State University, completing an M.S. in Exercise and Sport Science, and M.P.H. in Epidemiology, and PhD in Kinesiology with a certificate in Adapted Physical Activity. In 2021, Dr. Ross was awarded the *Dr. G Arthur Broten Young Scholar Recognition Award* from the Western Society of Kinesiology and Wellness. Dr. Ross is a faculty member of the Multi-Institution Adapted Physical Activity Mentorship Consortium, funded by the Office of Special Education Programs. Learn more at https://mamc.info.

**On July 1, 2022 the College of the Physical Activity and Sport Sciences and the College of Education and Human Services will join to form the new College of Applied Human Sciences.*

Dr. Ross' overarching research goal is to enhance the participation experiences of individuals with disabilities in physical activity and sport. Her current work supports this goal through (1) evaluation of population-level measurement practices to effectively identify and monitor health behaviors of individuals with disabilities; and (2) assessment of effective teaching practices to prepare pre-professionals to facilitate inclusive physical activity opportunities for individuals with disabilities. These two programs of research are highlighted by Dr. Ross below:

1. **Measurement of population-level health behaviors.** The emergent 24-hour movement framework recognizing the multiplicative effects of sufficient sleep and physical activity and minimized sedentary behavior. Recent literature is establishing 24-hour movement behavior profiles for children and youth, primarily in Canada. In a multi-university collaboration project, Dr. Ross conducted two secondary analyses of nationally representative dataset to establish baseline estimates of 24-hour movement behaviors (and target areas for improvement) among US adults with disabilities, broadly defined (Ross, Haegele, Abrahamson, Schram & Healy, 2022) and among US adults with visual impairments (Ross, Haegele, Schram & Healy, 2022). The former was featured by the *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, and free to access, in May 2022.

Positive well-being measures were relatively absent from national surveys until 2018 when 'flourishing' items were added to the National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH). Shortly thereafter, Hilton and colleagues reported autistic youth are significantly less likely than peers to flourish and thus are at greater risk for decreased wellbeing. Yet, flourishing items are not validated for autistic youth creating a critical barrier to

effective health surveillance, and programmatic evaluation of services for this population. In **preliminary work,** Dr. Ross evaluated the assumptions underpinning this conclusion and found evidence that group differences are attributable to measurement bias in social competence survey items. As a follow-up, Dr. Ross is currently examining the perceptions of autistic youth and their caregivers on the relevancy of flourishing measures. This work is funded by an *Autism Intervention Research in Physical Health (AIR-P) Network Scholars & Pilot and Feasibility Funding Program* award. The project's overarching goal is to establish guidelines for use and interpretation of flourishing measures with autistic youth.

2. **Pre-professional development strategies.** Undergraduates are increasingly using mobile devices and related technologies as their primary mode of course engagement. Nation reports suggest 81% of undergraduates report that digital learning technologies such as educational applications help improve their learning experience. In parallel, physical activity professionals use digital platforms for health promotion messaging and marketing. Unfortunately, educators and professionals increasing use of digital tools has exposed barriers to learning and physical activity promotion that is acutely experienced by individuals with disabilities. To address this gap, Dr. Ross, alongside co-authors, presented guidelines for kinesiology educators to evaluate and integrate app accessibility features within their teaching practices at SHAPE 2021 (Ross, Ross & Wyant, 2021). Their aim was to increase educators' familiarity and use of accessibility features to ensure all students have equitable access to curriculum and shared learning communities.

As a teacher-research, Dr. Ross is engaged in **Scholarship of Teaching and Learning** to evaluate the impact of instructional materials on student learning within physical education teacher preparation courses. Dr. Ross developed an assignment requiring undergraduate students to evaluate and create inclusive, accessible digital physical activity promotion materials. She was awarded the *Western Society of Kinesiology and Wellness Dr. G. Art Broten Young Scholar Award* for an original manuscript on the evaluation of student learning outcomes related to this assignment.

At the institutional level, Dr. Ross serves as a faculty member for West Virginia University Center for Excellence in Disability Country Roads Program, a post-secondary education program for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She extended prior membership as a voluntary advisory board member, to facilitate curriculum development for health and well-being. In partnership with two courses in the College of Physical Activity and Sport Sciences, Dr. Ross coordinated a peer-mentor physical activity and health course for enrolled Country Roads students. Undergraduate kinesiology students are assigned as peer-mentors to Country Roads students and meet once per week for 10 weeks at the Student Recreation Center. Peer-mentor groups rotated activities weekly and included (A) introduction to Paralympic and disability sports (Boccia, Sitting Volleyball, Wheelchair Basketball, Beep Baseball and Goalball); and (B) "Your choice activity" (rock climbing, frisbee, football, ping pong, soccer, volleyball).

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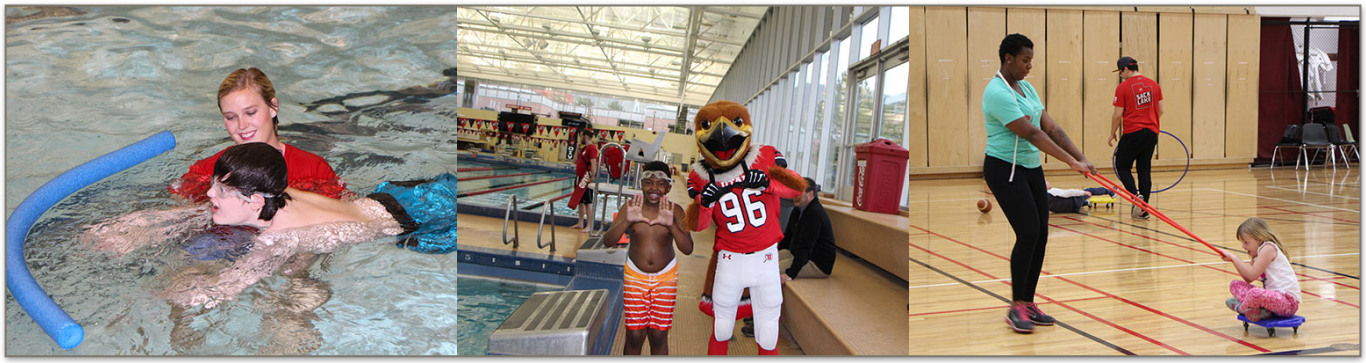
Community Spotlight

U-FIT | University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah | Dr. Wesley Wilson

Dr. Wesley Wilson is the Director of U-FIT, an adapted physical activity service-learning program housed within the Department of Special Education at the University of Utah. Being involved in such programming for over 12 years, he strives to make U-FIT a space for not only *community outreach*, but *teacher education* and *research* as well.

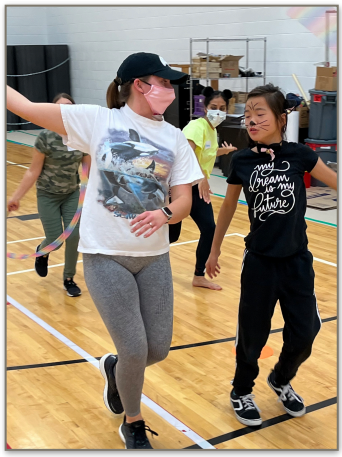
Through *outreach*, U-FIT has been providing adapted physical activity and recreational services to the disability community in the greater Salt Lake City area for over 20 years. Initially founded by Dr. Hester Henderson, Dr. Wilson now oversees the development and implementation of U-FIT, which is currently piloting *UDance* and *USwim* subprograms. Whether through dance or swim, or more traditional sports and recreational activities, these services are typically provided to approximately 100 participants with disabilities and their siblings, ages 3-18, each semester. However, with the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, U-FIT leadership has been forced to pivot, providing virtual programming (and $500 of free equipment) for each family in 2020-2021 and in-person programming at a greatly reduced capacity in 2021-2022. Further, registration fees remain low at less than $5 per contact hour and scholarships are available to reduce barriers for families in need.

Through *teacher education*, U-FIT can only function because of its many volunteers, most of whom are from teacher preparation programs such as physical education, adapted physical education, and special education. These volunteers work one-on-one with the participants in a variety of physical activity and recreational settings and are encouraged to put into action what



they learn in the classroom. Under normal circumstances, over 100 volunteers participate each semester in this form of experiential learning.

Through *research*, the impacts of U-FIT are being evaluated. Such scholarly activities explore a co-construction of experiences among lead teachers, volunteers, and the participants themselves. A reflexive process, program experiences of each of these stakeholders are examined together to identify convergent or divergent perspectives. Are volunteers and lead teachers misinterpreting the experiences of the participants? Do lead teachers assume volunteers' experiences are educative or may they be miseducative? Do participants understand their roles in the service-learning process and feel like equal partners? More generally, what are the points of connect and/or disconnect in these co-constructed experiences? Addressing these questions forms the basis of program evaluation and may inform the larger scientific community.



The ability of U-FIT to work toward any of these service, teaching, and research activities is a direct result of its university, community, and state support. The University of Utah, and the College of Education in particular, has provided not only in-kind contributions but human resources to help propel the program forward. Further, grants from community foundations and the State of Utah have been leveraged to improve programming and hire graduate research assistants to support ongoing research of U-FIT. These grantors include the Sorenson Legacy Foundation, the Daniels Fund, the Autism Council of Utah, and the Utah Commission on Service & Volunteerism.

Contact Information: U-FIT Website: https://special-ed.utah.edu/u-fit/index.php / ufit@utah.edu

Student Highight

Thi Nancy Huynh I Doctoral Student I University of Toronto

Thi Nancy Huynh is a first year PhD student at the University of Toronto in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education. Nancy began her university career at the University of Toronto, where she received her Bachelor of Kinesiology. Since then, Nancy completed her Bachelor of Education and Master of Education at York University in Ontario.

Nancy's Masters research project examined implementation barriers to physical education for secondary students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in high ranked learning opportunities index (LOI) schools within the Toronto District School Board. Students who attend higher ranked LOI schools face external challenges (e.g., median family income, level of education of adults in the household) that affect their success in education. Nancy's findings highlighted the need for adequate staff training, access to gym spaces and equipment, and a well-defined adapted physical education curriculum to optimize participation of students with IDD. Nancy's current dissertation will build off these findings and work to co-create, implement, and evaluate a mixed abilities school-based program within a high ranked LOI school.

Currently, Nancy works in a project coordinator role alongside her supervisor, Kelly Arbour-Nicitopoulos, and Archie Allison and Dave Sora on a project tilted: Return to Play, No Child Left Behind. The project focuses on understanding the gaps within grassroots community sports organizations for children with disabilities that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The project team hopes to explore innovative and novel ways to alleviate those gaps.

Nancy grew up in the Jane and Finch community in Toronto, which has been historically understood as a low income and high crime rate community. It was through her upbringing in Jane and Finch that inspired her to become a secondary school teacher and community advocate as well as a role model for youth in her community. For several years Nancy taught within high ranked LOI schools within the TDSB. As a secondary school educator working in marginalized communities, Nancy developed strong affiliations towards issues of injustice within public education, particularly surrounding quality physical education opportunities for students with disabilities. Currently, Nancy works as an occasional teacher within the TDSB which allows her to stay up to date on what is occurring within secondary schools, as well as build partnerships with staff and students which continues to inspire her on-going research.

Academically, Nancy has excelled since beginning her graduate career, being awarded the Patrick Solomon Memorial Award in Urban Diversity in 2017, and a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Canadian Graduate Scholarship for her Masters work in 2020.

Nancy has participated in many community activities including public lectures, organizing school-based community programs, and external projects. The lectures Nancy has conducted surround topics such as women empowerment within disenfranchised communities, culturally relevant evaluation, as well as adapted physical activity lesson planning. Nancy also led school-based community initiatives, such as a mentorship program with the Dalla Lana School of Public Health and a school located within the Jane and Finch community. The program worked to develop youth's knowledge on the social determinants that effect their health, the systematic injustices within scientific communities, as well as built connections between students and scholars in the field of Public Health. During her Masters studies, Nancy developed the Jane and Finch Narrative project to deconstruct negative perceptions of the Jane and Finch community. You can check it out here: https://jnfnarrativeproject.wixsite.com/voices

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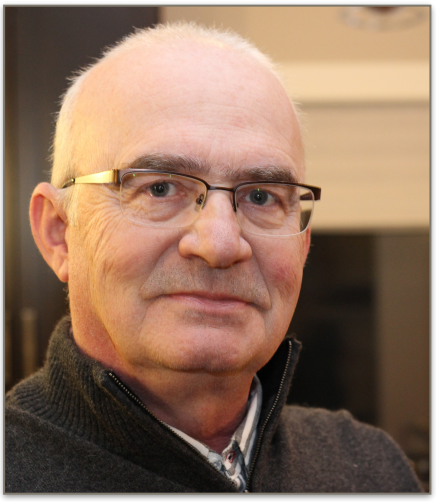
Tips for Young Scholars

Dr. Marcel Bouffard | Emeritus Professor, University of Alberta

I retired from the University of Alberta in 2014 and I was asked to provide "**Tips for Young Scholars**" in our field. This is a challenging task. The world has been changing rapidly since my retirement. The rises of authoritarian regimes, COVID 19 and the present invasion of Ukraine by Russia have added anxiety, fear, and uncertainty about the future. To provide "tips" in this context requires a degree of stability of context, and I cannot assume this. I will, however, makes some comments for you to ponder. Hopefully, you will read them as well intended and an



opportunity to add to the many ideas and perspectives you are learning about.

Our field is embedded within universities which, in turn, are embedded in the world we live in. There is an interaction among all these "level of analysis." I think that my comments could be applied to our field, universities and the world we live in. To me, this seems reasonable given that academic work cannot be divorced from the broader context and trends we observe in our world now.

I am limited by space. In the paragraphs below, I only provide a snapshot of ideas I consider important. All of them require elaboration for a more adequate and comprehensive treatment.

I am concerned by the ascendance of some dangerous trends (e.g., propaganda, disinformation, fake news, trolls) as well as questionable thinking. Briefly, I submit that some key university traditions can alleviate some of them such that we live in a better world. In the below paragraphs, I will mainly focus on information presented in the media and a number of personal bias that lead to unreasonable beliefs. I still think that it is often possible to differentiate reasonable beliefs from those that are unreasonable. Briefly, I will argue that information and knowledge claims need to be checked whenever possible by whatever mean available. This requires vigilance and constant effort. I suggest that we maintain or create a social environment that differentiate between justified beliefs from those that are not reasonable.

1. Be ready to argue for information we can trust. I assume you are either working toward a graduate degree or already have one. Typically, universities require a Ph.D. (or its equivalent) to obtain an academic position. Stated differently, universities require that you become an expert before you can become a member of the institution. However, nowadays in our society we often observe a rejection of expertise. Information of all kinds is often easily available around the world. You insert a few keywords in a search engine and you get something about your search. Both good and questionable information spreads easily. This makes it possible to get information, from reliable to unreliable, about almost anything. Knowing something about almost everything allow some people to claim that they are on equal footing with experts. To claim otherwise is dismissed as "undemocratic elitism" and, hence, expert opinions are sometimes brushed aside. One needs to remember the prescient words of Francis Bacon: "Man [sic] prefers to believe what he wants to be true" (*Novum Organum,* 1620/1994). It is a difficult task to question people who have a strong opinion, but I submit that unfettered and respectful debates can help to alleviate this problem. Universities are places for the types of debates and this discussion model should be emulated in society at large. These debates challenge you, your ideas and your thinking. Some people may refuse to engage in debate and close their minds. However, you will find some people who will listen and consider your argument.

2. Be ready to discuss complex matters with persons of other disciplines. Adapted physical activity and adapted physical education are multidisciplinary fields (Bouffard & Spencer-Cavaliere, *Quest*, 2016). However, most of our graduate preparations are guided by a disciplinary focus (e.g., exercise physiology, sociology of sport, exercise psychology, etc). I suggest that we need more multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary work in our field and it is rare to see a multidisciplinary specialist. Consequently, you will need to work with people from different disciplines and this will be a challenge. You are a specialist and you will need to expand your appreciation and understanding of related disciplines. This is a demanding task, but also one that I hope you will enjoy.

3. Scientific theories do not produce certainty. Many people believe that researchers and science produce certainty. This is incorrect! As argued by Karl Popper, theories are never proven and can only be falsified. At the most, scientific theories are corroborated. Researchers can only provide arguments for knowledge claims and these claims may be temporary. Given that researchers "change their minds" some people reason that the results of research cannot be trusted any more than personal beliefs of anyone. Consequently, anyone can be an expert. To argue otherwise is to argue that you are superior; an examplar of "undemocratic elitism". This myth about the production of certain knowledge must be counteracted by a broader education about how researchers work by eliminating possibilities. Universities and their graduates can play a central educational role in this regard.

4. Although it might be impossible to eliminate all bias, it is worthwhile to reduce bias whenever possible. During your education you have probably learned that your arguments should be supported by facts or evidence. You should try to alleviate bias as much as possible. As argued by Peers (*NAFAPA Newsletter, 2020*) numerous factors affect your thinking such as your assumptions, your perspective, your knowledge base, your beliefs, your culture, what you want to hear, your emotions, etc. I concur that the elimination of bias is a difficult endeavor which might be impossible. However, to me, this represents an ideal to pursue. It is like the attainment of justice - a direction worth pursuing. I concur that positionality affects your research and can play a key role in helping to understand the world. However, at the same time, I am more confident of the results of inquiry if the same claim is made irrespective of positionality. Researchers are often looking for the convergence of evidences. A single study is rarely the end of inquiry.

The best resource we probably have to pursue this direction is, most likely, a product of human evolution: consciousness. Keep thinking about your thinking and interacting with people who have different perspectives. I see university debates as "consciousness raisers" where ideas are screened and evaluated. Academic debates have raised my awareness during my academic life and I have enjoyed them. They have consistently challenged whatever idea I had. In fact, I miss these stimulating discussions. I hope you really appreciate them.

5. Be vigilant; be critical thinkers. We are constantly bombarded with information from the media other groups and people. Unfortunately, some of this information is wrong, deceitful, incomplete, and/or demonstrably false. Ideology, self-interest, and financial gains may lead to a biased presentation of information. We need to be critical consumers of information

We need to carefully monitor bias to decide what to think. Confirmation bias is lurking everywhere: People may resist claims that they do not want to hear, endorse ideas they like, reject evidence that is dissonant with their beliefs, etc. Instead of relying on objective facts, thinking could be guided by appeals to emotion and personal beliefs. We need to remain aware and vigilant about the possibility of bias. To do this, we need to remain critical thinkers of available information, as well as of our own thinking. Universities are good places to develop these important skills. Daily interactions with colleagues, and the general public, will present new viewpoints and perspectives, that may lead you to reconsider your own ideas.

Listen carefully to the argument presented, its logic and internal coherence, the evidence supporting it, the distortions, etc. I submit that the central idea of unfettered debates in universities is critical to university work and is critical to protect us against attempts to distort the truth. Remain calm and respectful while conducting these debates. An aggressive attitude during discussion can backfire.

6. Be trusted. People are unlikely to listen to you if they do not trust you. Trust is one of the most powerful argumentation tools. To remain a trusted person requires daily effort and it could easily be lost. To be respected in debates you need to use rules of evidence, logic, internal

coherence, and be respectful in discussions with others. You build trust by carefully listening to people, and helping them feels they are respected and valued. Be able to honestly look at yourself in a mirror on a daily basis (no moral injury).

7. Take care of yourself. Do the best to maintain or improve your physical wellbeing. As much as possible take care of your body. In addition, attend continuously to your mental wellness. The state of the world is challenging in so many ways. It is critical to cultivate your relationships with your family, your friends and your colleagues. In order to address the global challenges outlined above, we need to be diligent about our care for ourselves and those around us.

Briefly, I submit that your university education has prepared you well to cope with beliefs of various kinds. Do not hesitate to use it to evaluate claims and find those that are justified. This will require hard work from you and the broader community.

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Announcements

North American Federation of Adapted Physical Activity 2022 Conference

- Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada
- Tuesday - Thursday, October 11-13, 2022
- Conference Theme: *Communities of practice*
- Click here for more information

NAFAPA is calling for nomination and application for NAFAPA Awards

- **The Patricia Austin Graduate Student Award** is offered for outstanding graduate student research in adapted physical activity. Deadline: July 15, 2022. Click for specific requirements or contact Dr. Justin Haegele.
- **The Allen W. Burton New Investigator Award** recognizes a new investigator who has begun and is very likely to continue making significant scientific contributions to the field of Adapted Physical Activity. Deadline: June 30, 2022. Click for requirements or contact Dr. Joonkoo Yun.
- **The Dale Ulrich Leadership Award** is the most prestigious award offered by NAFAP. The award recognizes a distinguished career of outstanding professional contributions to the field of Adapted Physical Activity. Deadline: June 15, 2022. Click for requirements or contact Dr. Stamatis Agiovlasitis.

Graduate Research Assistant Position

- Position open for Fall 2022 with the Center for Rehabilitation and Independent Living at Georgia Southern University.
- Interested students are asked to submit a CV and a cover letter to cril@georgiasouthern.edu.
- Click for more information for contact Sarah Creveling.

Opportunity to Submit Announcements

Do you have an announcement to be featured in the November 2022 issue of the NAFAPA Newsletter? If so, please contact the editors today!

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