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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine Asian American conceptualizations of parenting, focusing on socialization goals, parenting style, and parenting practices related to schooling, aspects of parental influences discussed by D. Darling and L. Steinberg (1993). It was suggested that the standard conceptualizations of parenting style, those of D. Baumrind, are not as meaningful for capturing the styles of East Asians as some alternative conceptualizations. Thirty-six East Asian (Chinese, Japanese, and Korean) parents of elementary school students and 35 European American parents from the Los Angeles area (California) completed surveys about parenting, with translation provided where needed. The study demonstrated that standard parenting concepts such as the parenting styles conceptualization of Baumrind, the idea of authoritarian parental control, and the direct/managerial style of parental involvement in school of Steinberg and others (1993) are not adequate for describing the practices of East Asian parents. The alternative style of "training" was more endorsed by the East Asians than the European Americans. Family-based parental control was more common among East Asians, and indirect involvement in schooling was more often endorsed by East Asians. (Contains 2 tables and 28 references.) (SLD)

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Beyond Authoritarianism:
A Cultural Perspective on Asian American Parenting Practices

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Beyond Authoritarianism:

A Cultural Perspective on Asian American Parenting Practices

Recent studies have explored the relationship between Baumrind's parenting styles and children's academic achievement. These studies have found some very conflicting results for ethnic minorities, especially for Asian Americans (Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992; Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987): Whereas within the European-American sample, being authoritative was most predictive of higher achievement scores, the relationship was weak within the Asian-American sample; also, across the samples, the Asian Americans, scored highest on the *authoritarian* parenting style and yet their children had the highest academic achievement. However, some caution is due with the over-generalizations involving "Asian American" academic achievement because researchers have reported great disparities for the different ethnic sub-groups: The students primarily from the major traditional sub-groups such as, Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans (i.e., designated below as "East Asian") tended to perform better than students from the other ethnic groups such as, Southeast Asians and Filipinos (Bradby & Owings, 1992; Olson, 1988). Thus, while the focus of the current study is on East Asians, the review of the research has been expanded at times to include Asian Americans since these broader issues and findings not only include but also specifically apply to East Asians.

In order to resolve the paradoxical findings for parenting style, Chao (1994) has argued that Baumrind's (1971a) original conceptualizations were not relevant for capturing Asian American parenting and an alternative parenting style conceptualization (i.e., *chiao shun* or "training") was offered and tested on Chinese. This concept may also be relevant for other East

Asians such as, Japanese and Koreans, because of their Confucius traditions and emphasis on filial piety. "Training" does emphasize obedience and a set standard of conduct, just as Baumrind has described for the authoritarian parenting style. Hence, the "training" concept may overlap with the authoritarian concept, explaining why Chinese and other Asian Americans score high on the authoritarian parenting style. However, there are also important differences between the authoritarian concept and the *chiao shun* concept. With the *chiao shun* concept, these standards are not to dominate the child, but rather to foster the cultural values emphasizing harmonious relations with others and the cohesiveness of the family unit. Specifically, *chiao shun* involves training children early to be self-disciplined and hard working, and providing children with a familial investment, concern, and support. Thus, although there may be some overlap between Baumrind's (1971a) authoritarian concept and the concept of *chiao shun*, the authoritarian concept does not capture the most important features of the East Asian parenting style, and thus may be misleading.

Since studies in the past have also found Chinese and other East Asians as "restrictive", "controlling", or "domineering" (Lin & Fu, 1990; Chiu, 1987; Yee, 1983; Kriger & Kroes, 1972; Sollenberger, 1968), further clarification of the specific domain of parental control is also needed for East Asians. Based on Lau and Cheung's study (1987) clarifying the "organization control" emphasized by Chinese families, the current study is also proposing a more "family-based" parental control--in other words, control for the purpose of maintaining family harmony and the integrity of the family unit rather than control for the purpose of dominating the child as in the "authoritarian" parental control. Also, the distinction between "family-based" parental control versus just "parental" control represents an extension beyond the parent-child dyad to

other family members (e.g., older siblings, grandparents, or other relatives) who may also exert authority over the child and in turn, influence the authority of the parents.

In order to resolve these conflicting findings for ethnic minorities, in general, Darling and Steinberg (1994) have proposed an integrative model for understanding the processes through which parenting style influences child development. They argue that parenting style must be "disentangled" from other important aspects of parenting and they then differentiated three aspects of parenting--the socialization goals, parental practices used to reach those goals, and the parenting style or "emotional climate within which socialization occurs" (p. 488). The socialization goals then are proposed to influence both parenting practices and parenting style. Then Darling and Steinberg also argue that parenting style influences developmental outcomes primarily through its moderating influence on the relationship between specific parental practices and developmental outcomes. They clarify that parenting style represents the emotional tone or quality of the parent-child relationship, or what Darling and Steinberg (1993) depict as the "parenting milieu" through which the parenting practices are expressed. Examples of these emotional qualities apparent in parent-child interactions involve "tone of voice, body language, inattention, bursts of temper, and so on" (p. 493). Thus, they clarify, "Parenting style is thought of as a *contextual* [italics added] variable that mediates the relationship between specific parental practices and specific developmental outcomes" (p. 493).

By proposing the processes through which parenting style influences developmental outcomes, Darling and Steinberg (1993) may have found an important and perhaps viable way of explaining the variable effects of parenting style that were found for the ethnic-minority groups. That is, the socialization goals of the family may represent one way of assessing or

measuring the influence of culture in relation to developmental outcomes. This model also offers important clarifications for the operationalization of Baumrind's (1971a) parenting style conceptualizations. However, although this model offers important clarifications for the processes through which parenting style influences developmental outcomes, it may not fully capture the importance of culture. In order to explore the importance of parenting style and other related parental influences that are also important for predicting children's school achievement, these parental influences must be conceptualized in a way that fits with or makes sense for the cultural group being studied. That is, all three aspects of this parenting model must be more culturally relevant or meaningful in order to explain outcomes such as academic achievement as they apply to ethnic minorities in the U.S.

Specifically, parental involvement in the child's schooling has also been conceptualized in ways that may require some clarification for Asian Americans. For example, in the study mentioned above by Steinberg et al. (1992), Asian-American parents were also found to be the least involved in their adolescent's schooling. These results are surprising but telling. Specifically, parental involvement was conceptualized in terms of working directly with children as tutors or "managers" of their schooling (e.g., "I check over my child's homework") or as participators in school programs (e.g., "I attend school programs for parents"). However, this conceptualization of parental involvement may not be applicable for Asians. Because these were high school students, Asian American parents would not be acting as managers for this *older* age group. In particular, immigrant parents may be less able to help their older, more advanced children with schoolwork because of both language and cultural barriers.

Just as important, Asian-American parents, in general, may feel that by the time their

children are in high school they should already know how to study (Chao and Sue, in press; Choi, Bempechat, & Ginsburg, 1994). Research by both Choi et al. (1994) and Shoho (1994) have found with Korean and Japanese parents that "academic involvement tended to decrease as their children became older" (p. 309). Asian Americans, particularly East Asians, may be more involved with their children's schooling at a much younger age than European American parents. Thus, different parental approaches to the child's schooling may depend upon the child's age or grade level.

However, in addition to this age-related explanation of parental involvement, there may also be substantive qualitative distinctions between the involvement of Asian Americans and European Americans that may or may not be related to the child's age or grade level. That is, studies have found that East Asian parents may be offering other more *indirect* types of support or involvement: These involve such practices as controlling their children's use of time outside of school, providing a desk or study area, assigning extra homework problems or purchasing extra workbooks, enrolling them in supplemental courses including private music, language, or arts courses, hiring a tutor or arranging for someone to help with homework--in general, monitoring the child, and providing a stable and educationally nurturing home environment (Hieshima and Schneider, 1994; Shoho, 1994; Schneider and Lee, 1990; Mordkowitz and Ginsburg, 1987; Yao, 1985). Schneider and Lee (1990) argue that these indirect types of practices may be more important for describing East Asian parental involvement than the type of support in which parents act as managers of their schoolwork (i.e., directly tutoring them), or as participators in school programs or other activities, such as sports. Thus, this more indirect type of parental involvement in schooling may be more culturally relevant for describing East Asians and may

therefore, explain the findings mentioned above by Steinberg et al. (1992).

The type of involvement parents provide for their children's schooling may be dependent upon the type of socialization goals that parents hold for the child. In other words, these qualitative distinctions of parental involvement in schooling are largely determined by the socialization goals that parents hold. Since succeeding in school is often regarded as the primary or most important socialization goal, parental involvement in schooling would of course be extremely important. For East Asians, socialization for academic achievement involves building academic skills in the child, skills for succeeding in the school environment (Stevenson and Lee, 1990). Building academic skills may best be fostered by a type of parental involvement that focuses on the child's abilities to manage his/her own schooling as early as possible.

This initial pilot study was conducted in order to establish alternative, more relevant East Asian conceptualizations for parenting, focusing on the three different aspects of parental influences discussed by Darling and Steinberg (1993)--socialization goals, parenting style, and parenting practices related to the child's schooling. In addition, the specific domain of parental control was also included in this study. In summary then, this study is proposing that the "standard" conceptualizations for parenting style (i.e., Baumrind's conceptualizations), parental control (i.e., authoritarian or restrictive control), as well as Steinberg's parental involvement in school (i.e., more direct "manager" type of involvement) will not be as meaningful for capturing East Asians as the alternative parenting conceptualizations proposed in this pilot study.

Alternative concepts for describing parenting style (i.e., training or "chiao shun"), parental control (i.e., a "family-based" control), and parental involvement in school (i.e., more indirect forms of involvement) are offered and tested against the standard concepts used in the

past studies. In order to test the importance of the alternative concepts this study must first be able to (1) replicate findings from the previous studies--that is, while the European Americans must score higher on the authoritative parenting style and Steinberg et al.'s (1992) "parental involvement in school" (i.e., direct, managerial involvement), East Asians must score higher on the "authoritarian" parenting style as well as the "authoritarian" parental control; (2) demonstrate however, that the East Asians, in comparison to the European Americans, will score higher on the alternative parenting concepts, the "training" parenting style, "family-based" parental control, and the "indirect" parental involvement in school; (3) and then also demonstrate a relationship or correlation between the standard parenting concepts and the alternative concepts, indicating that the standard and alternative concepts do overlap conceptually.

With this last point, as mentioned earlier, the authoritarian parenting style may share common features with the "training" style (i.e., emphasis on obedience), explaining why East Asians and other Asian Americans score high on the standard concepts. Indeed, this same argument should apply to the other areas of parenting (i.e., parental control, and parental involvement in school): The standard concept for parental control (i.e., authoritarian parental control) that Asian Americans have typically scored higher on, shares features with the alternative, "family-based" parental control; and the standard concept for "parental involvement in school" (i.e., Steinberg et al.'s "direct/managerial" involvement), shares features with the alternative concept, "indirect" parental involvement in school.

However, ultimately, this study is interested in demonstrating that although there may be some relationship between the standard and alternative concepts, there are also important aspects of East Asian parenting that cannot be entirely captured by the standard parenting

concepts. That is, this study is interested in demonstrating the importance of the alternative parenting concepts for East Asians *above and beyond* the standard concepts. Thus, both ethnic groups will, in a sense, be statistically matched for their scores on the standard measures; in other words, these scores will be used as covariates. This study then hypothesizes that even after controlling for their scores on the standard measures, the East Asian parents score significantly higher than the European-American parents on the "training" parenting style concept, the "family-based" parental control, as well as the "more indirect" type of parental involvement in school.

In addition, although the above hypotheses primarily involve cross-cultural or across-group comparisons, part of the goal of this pilot study was to begin to explore within-group explanations for the alternative parenting concepts. However, these results are not reported in this presentation.

Method

Subjects

Thirty-six East-Asian (i.e., Chinese, Japanese, and Korean) and 35 European-American parents were recruited from local elementary schools and churches in the Los Angeles area. All the parents had children that were either in the kindergarten, first, or second grades. Both samples had the same number of mothers (i.e., 29) and almost the same number of fathers (i.e., seven East Asian and six European American). The parents' ages ranged from 29 to 49 with a mean of 36.28 for the East Asians and 38.34 for the European Americans, $p > .05$. The children ranged in age from five to nine years of age; however, the East Asian children were significantly older ($M=7.49$) than the European American children ($M=6.47$), $p < .00$. There

were also differences in the parents' education levels with the East-Asian parents ($M=4.78$) significantly higher than the European-American parents ($M=4.14$), $p < .01$ -- a score of "4" indicates "finished college", while a score of "5" indicates "some graduate/law/medical school". However, there were no significant differences on the other background variables including the education levels of the spouses, the number of older and younger siblings of the child, and the number of parents who were employed full-time, $p > .05$.

Measures and Procedures

The surveys were either directly given to the parents or were sent home with the children. Parents were asked in a cover letter to return the surveys to the contact persons used at the schools or churches. All the surveys were in English and consisted of the measures described in the following paragraphs. Also, with some of the Korean and Japanese parents, research assistants who were fluent in these languages helped translate some of the items that the parents found difficult.

Standard measures. (1) The *Parental Authority Questionnaire* by Buri (1989) was used as the measure for the three parenting styles, authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. There were 10 items created for each style and scales were created using mean scores. (2) Then the *Authoritarian Parental Control factor* taken from Block's (1981) Child Rearing Practices Report was also used to depict a more domineering or restrictive type of parental control, mentioned earlier. (3) In addition, Steinberg et al.'s (1992) items for *parental involvement in school* were used for capturing parental behaviors related to the child's schooling. Scales for the Authoritarian Parental Control factor as well as Steinberg's "parental involvement in school" were also created using mean scores.

Alternative measures. (1) The items for the *"training" parenting style* concept, reported in Chao (1994) mentioned earlier, were used in this study. (2) Fourteen items were also constructed to depict the idea of a more *"family-based" parental control* for East Asians as opposed to a more domineering or authoritarian parental control. (3) Ten items were created to capture the more indirect types of parental involvement in school mentioned earlier. (4) Thirty-four items were created to capture the *socialization goals*--the cultural distinctions between East Asian and European American socialization. These distinctions were based on the study by Chao (in pressa), mentioned earlier, in which mothers were interviewed regarding their child-rearing goals. Twenty-two items were designed to depict the socialization concerns of East Asians. These involved such things as (1) doing well in school and being studious, (2) having a pleasant and adaptable character, (3) being concerned about others, (4) caring for the family and succeeding for the family, (5) respecting elders and being obedient to parents, and (6) being self-reliant and acquiring the skills to "be useful and successful individuals". In addition, 12 items were designed to depict the socialization goals of European-American parents that included (1) building self-esteem, (2) being explorative/adventurous and creative/imaginative, (3) being unique, their own individual, (4) being self-expressive, and (5) being very independent. Factor analyses were conducted on the above sets of items in order to determine the scales that comprised each alternative parenting measure. Scale scores were computed using mean scores and analyses to determine internal consistency of the scales (α) were conducted and were found to be acceptable.

Results

Tests Involving the Standard Parenting Concepts

In order to replicate findings from previous studies, the first set of analyses involved whether East Asians would score higher on the standard measures of the authoritarian parenting style, authoritarian parental control, but lower on the more direct type of parental practices related to schooling (i.e., Steinberg et al.'s, 1992, "parental involvement in school"). Thus, three separate t-tests were conducted on the scores for each of the three standard measures with ethnicity as the groups (i.e., East Asians and European Americans). Indeed, just as past studies have shown, the East Asians ($M=3.09$) were found to score significantly higher than the European Americans ($M=2.76$) on the authoritarian scale, $t(1,70)=2.91, p<.01$; also, as past studies have shown, the European Americans ($M=4.36$) were significantly higher on the authoritative scale than the East Asians ($M=4.06$), $t(1,70)=2.91, p<.00$. Then for the authoritarian parental control scale, the East-Asian parents ($M=2.81$) were also significantly higher than the European American parents ($M=2.01$), $t(1,70)=6.38, p<.00$.

Also, on the scale for Steinberg et al.'s (1992) "parental involvement in school", the European Americans ($M=4.61$) were significantly higher than the East Asians ($M=4.29$), $t(1,70)=2.96, p<.00$. An additional analysis of covariance was run to test whether the European Americans would still score significantly higher on Steinberg's "parental involvement in school" measure even after controlling for parent's education and child's age, since these demographic variables were found to be significant, as reported in the sample section. The ethnic group differences were still significant even after controlling for parent's education and child's age, $F(2,65)=3.84, p<.01$.

Tests Involving the Alternative Parenting Concepts

The second set of analyses dealt with whether East Asians would also score significantly

higher on the alternative scales designed for conceptualizing East Asian parenting--(1) the "training" parenting style, (2) the "family-based" parental control scales (i.e., Concern and Respect for Family, and Involvement with Family), (3) the more indirect "parental involvement in school". East Asians ($M=4.50$) did score significantly higher on the "training" parenting style concept than the European Americans ($M=3.51$), $t(1,70)=2.96$, $p < .00$. In addition, the East Asians ($M=3.65$) also scored significantly higher than the European Americans ($M=2.74$) on the Concern and Respect for Family scale (i.e., the first factor of the "family-based" parental control), $t(1,70)=5.38$, $p < .00$; however, the East Asians ($M=4.03$) were not significantly higher than the European Americans ($M=4.15$) on the Involvement with the Family scale (i.e., the second factor), $p > .05$. Lastly, the East Asians ($M=3.82$) were significantly higher than the European Americans ($M=3.54$) on the scale depicting the more indirect parental involvement in schooling, $t(1,70)=2.09$, $p < .04$.

Correlation among the Measures

Preliminary analyses, involving Pearson's correlations, were also conducted separately for the East Asians to test the relationships between the standard concepts (i.e., authoritative/authoritarian parenting style, authoritarian parental control, the direct/managerial parental involvement in school) and the alternative concepts (i.e., "training" parenting style, "family-based" parental control, and the "indirect" parental involvement in school). As mentioned earlier under the hypotheses, this study was interested in demonstrating a relationship or conceptual overlap between the standard parenting concepts and the alternative concepts.

The significant correlations, $p < .05$, are listed in Table 2 (refer to Table 2): Specifically, for the East Asians, the training scale correlated with the scales for the authoritarian parenting

style and the family-based parental control factor, Concern and Respect for the Family; the factor, Concern and Respect for Family, not only correlated with the training scale, but also the scale for the authoritarian parental control; whereas the second factor, Involvement with the Family, correlated with the scales for authoritative parenting and for the more indirect form of parental involvement in school; the scale for the indirect parental involvement correlated with Steinberg et al.'s (1992) parental involvement in school; in addition, Steinberg et al.'s parental involvement in school scale correlated not only with the alternative scale of parental involvement (i.e., indirect involvement), but also with the authoritative parenting style; lastly, the authoritarian parenting style scale correlated with the authoritarian parental control scale.

 Insert Table 1 about here

Tests Controlling for the Standard Measures

The last set of analyses comprised the focus of this study. This involved whether the alternative parenting concepts would still be important for East Asians in comparison to European Americans *above and beyond* the standard parenting concepts. In other words, although there may be a relationship or conceptual overlap between the standard and alternative concepts (i.e., demonstrated above with the correlations), East Asians may still be higher than the European Americans on the alternative parenting concepts (i.e., "training" parenting style, "family-based" parental control, and "indirect" parental involvement), even after controlling or accounting for their scores on the standard parenting concepts. Thus, an overall test of

significance was conducted using a multivariate analyses of covariance (MANCOVA) with ethnicity as the groups that included all the dependent variables (i.e., the scale scores for the alternative parenting concepts) just mentioned in the previous section. The covariates were the scores from the standard parenting measures--authoritative, authoritarian, authoritarian parental control, and Steinberg et al.'s (1992) "parental involvement in school". In addition, the covariates, parent's education and child's age, were also included, because as reported above, there were significant differences found on these demographic characteristics. Indeed, the results from the MANCOVA do indicate that the overall model was significant, $F(4,28)=3.04, p < .00$.

Then separate univariate analyses of covariance were conducted, however, some of the analyses did not include all the covariates as they were not relevant or part of the research questions. A brief listing of the following analyses, including covariates, as well as brief summary of the results, (i.e., F statistic and p values) are provided in Table 3 (refer to Table 3). Specifically, for the analysis involving the training scale, the scores on the authoritative and authoritarian parenting style scales were used as the covariates along with the two demographic variables just mentioned. Even after controlling for the parenting style measures and the demographic variables, East Asians were still significantly higher than the European Americans on the alternative parenting style concept, "training". For both the analyses involving the factors for the family-based parental control, Concern and Respect for Family, and Involvement with the Family, the scores from the authoritarian parental control measure and the two demographic variables were included as covariates. After controlling for these covariates, East Asians were still significantly higher on the Concern and Respect for the Family factor. However, with the second factor, Involvement with the Family, after controlling for the covariates, there were no

significant differences between East Asians and European Americans. Therefore, this finding is similar to what had been reported with the initial t-tests. Then lastly, after controlling for the scores on Steinberg et al.'s "parental involvement in school" scale, as well as the two demographic variables, East Asians were found to score significantly higher than the European Americans on the indirect form of parental involvement.

Insert Table 2 about here

Discussion

This study was able to systematically demonstrate that standard parenting concepts such as (1) Baumrind's (1971a) parenting styles, (2) "authoritarian" parental control, and (3) Steinberg et al.'s (1993) "direct/managerial" parental involvement in school may not be adequate for describing East Asian parenting. Indeed, because these standard concepts may not be culturally relevant or meaningful for East Asians, they may be misleading, especially for predicting child outcomes such as academic achievement. In order to demonstrate this, first, initial analyses were conducted that involved (a) replicating past findings for the standard concepts, (b) demonstrating the saliency (i.e., higher endorsement) of the alternative concepts for East Asians, and then (c) also demonstrating that the alternative and standard concepts are related to each other, or overlap. After establishing these three prerequisites, for the final analyses, this study was able to demonstrate that even though these two sets of concepts may conceptually overlap, after "statistically matching" both groups of parents on their scores for the standard concepts, the alternative concepts were still more endorsed by the East Asians. Thus,

this finding indicates that these alternative concepts have distinctive features that more adequately describe East Asians, beyond the standard concepts used in the past.

Specifically, even after controlling for Baumrind's (1971a) parenting styles, the alternative parenting style concept of "training" was more endorsed by the East Asians than the European Americans. This was also found with the specific domain of parental control. After controlling for their scores on the standard "authoritarian" parental control, the Concern for the Family factor (i.e., part of the "family-based" parental control) was still endorsed more by the East Asians than the European Americans; however, just as reported above with the initial analyses, after controlling for the standard "authoritarian" parental control, the East Asians still did not endorse the factor of Involvement with the Family more than the European Americans, and the explanation for this has been discussed above. In addition, the test for the last alternative parental concept, the "indirect" parental involvement in school, did support the predictions. That is, even after controlling for their scores on Steinberg et al.'s more direct type of parental involvement in school, the alternative indirect type of involvement was still more endorsed by East Asians than by European Americans.

Therefore, East Asian parents may not feel that they should need to act as managers of the child's schooling, or as participators in school programs or activities; in addition they may not be *able* to provide this type of tutorial as well as participatory types of support. Instead, even during the early elementary school years, parents are emphasizing more indirect types of support that focus on *building academic skills* in the child--purchasing extra workbooks or other materials, and then assigning them extra homework from these purchased materials, enrolling them in supplementary academic courses, having them involved in some type of study group or

other tutorial support, supplying them with a desk or study area, having them involved in language, music, or other outside lessons, and structuring their after-school time. Building academic skills in children may then enable them to be managers of their own schooling. In fact, in the study mentioned earlier with Chinese immigrants (Chao, in pressa), the mothers that stressed building self-reliance in children often related this to having academic skills.

Table 2.

MANCOVAs for Scales Involving Alternative Parenting Concepts

<u>Scale</u>	<u>Covariates</u>	<u>F Statistic</u> <u>d.f. (3, 65)</u> <u>Significance level</u>
Training	Authoritative, Authoritarian, & 2 demographic	6.13 .00
First factor of "family-based" parental control:		
Concern for Family	Authoritarian Control, & 2 demographic	12.66 .00
Second factor of "family-based" parental control:		
Involvement with Family	Authoritarian Control, & 2 demographic	1.90 .12
Indirect Parental Involvement in School	Steinberg's "direct" Parental Involvement in School, & 2 demographic	9.98 .00

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