

Racism, xenophobia, discrimination and health

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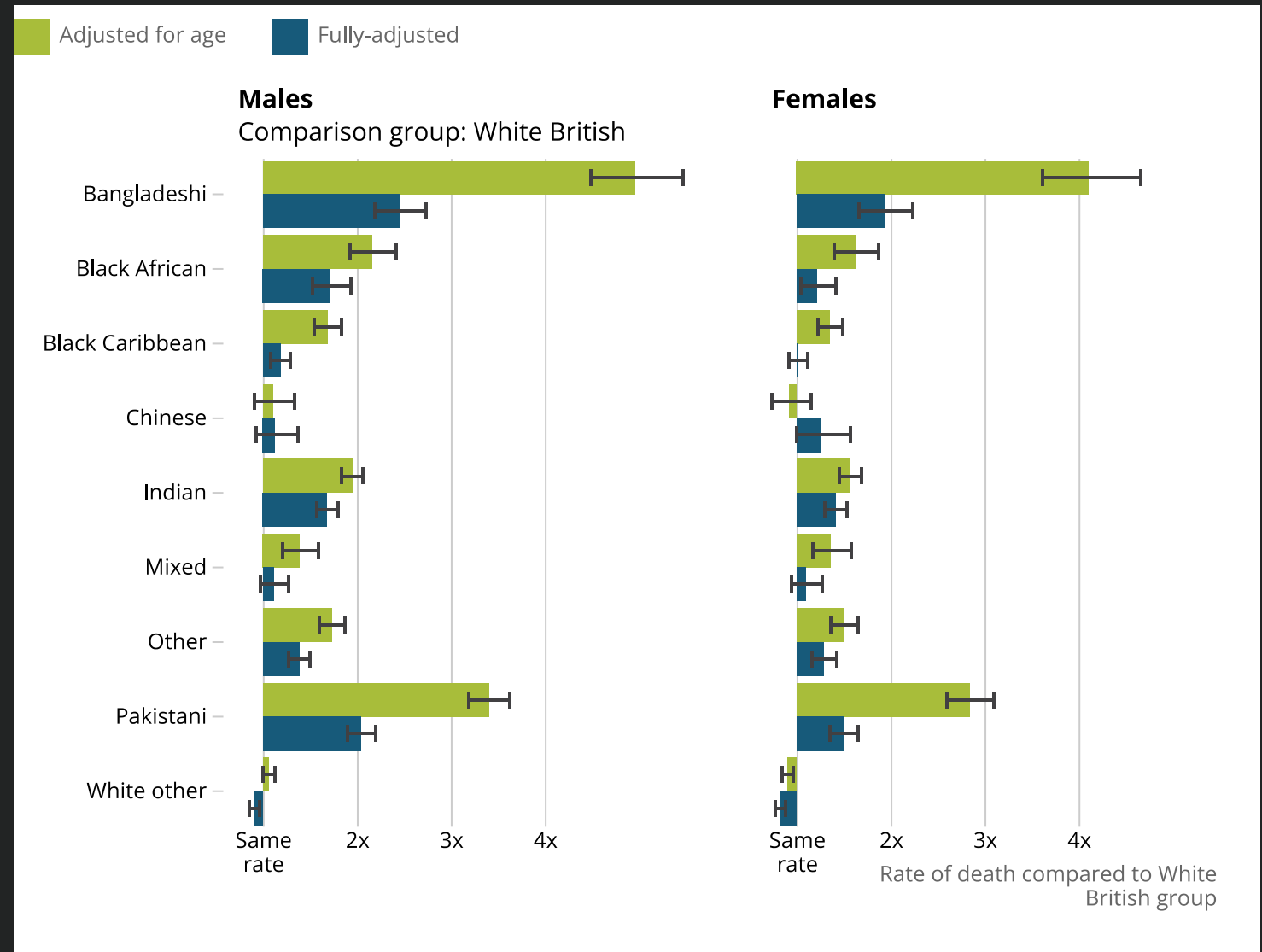


Lisa Wool-Rim Sjöblom

George Floyd mural on the Berlin wall and Banksy, UK

COVID-19

“Racism kills, and this is a public health crisis we can no longer ignore.”



ONS - Ethnic contrasts in deaths involving the coronavirus (COVID-19), England: 10 Jan 2020 to Mar 2021

What is racism?

Racism

An organised system that affords power and privilege according to an established hierarchy based on racial categories. Racism operates to protect the rights, power, and livelihoods of those at the top of the hierarchy.

Xenophobia

The fear or hatred of, or discrimination against, those who are considered to be foreigners.

Discrimination

Differential treatments or outcomes that are unfavourable towards a group or an individual based on some aspect of their actual or perceived identity.

Racial categorisation

Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, 1795

- Caucasian white
- Mongolian yellow-brown
- Malayan black-brown
- Ethiopian black
- American copper-red

Carolus Linnaeus, 1735

- *Americanus*: reddish, choleric, obstinate, merry, regulated by customs
- *Asiaticus*: sallow, melancholy, haughty, ruled by opinions
- *Africanus*: phlegmatic, relaxed; women without shame, crafty, indolent, negligent; governed by caprice
- *Europaenus*: white, sanguine, muscular, inventive, governed by laws

Eugenics

“Eugenics deal with what is more valuable than money or lands, namely the heritage of a high character, capable brains, fine physique, and vigour... It aims at the evolution and preservation of high races of men.” Francis Galton

Divided into 2 groups: those who are worthy to give life, and those who are not

“Around the world, eugenics of one form or another is implicated in: compulsory sterilization; legislation on mental deficiency; immigration law and racist policies; the notion of natural intelligence; normalisation of segregation by race, ability and class.”

UCL Inquiry into the History of Eugenics

“Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male” – 1932-1972

- 600 black men – 399 with syphilis, 201 without
- Without patients’ informed consent
- They received free medical exams, free meals, burial insurance
- Not treated for syphilis, even when penicillin became the recommended drug of choice (1947)
- 40 wives contracted syphilis and 19 children were born with congenital syphilis
- Prompted a change in research ethics laws

Structural discrimination

The macro level processes and systems that maintain and perpetuate racial inequity

Separation

Humans see themselves as being different from others

Hierarchical power

Stratification of society according to categories

People at the top have privilege, capabilities, and capital

- Colonisation
- Law and governance

Power and politics

Populist politics blame and scapegoat others



Donald Trump: “Make America Great Again”
“When the looting starts, the shooting starts”



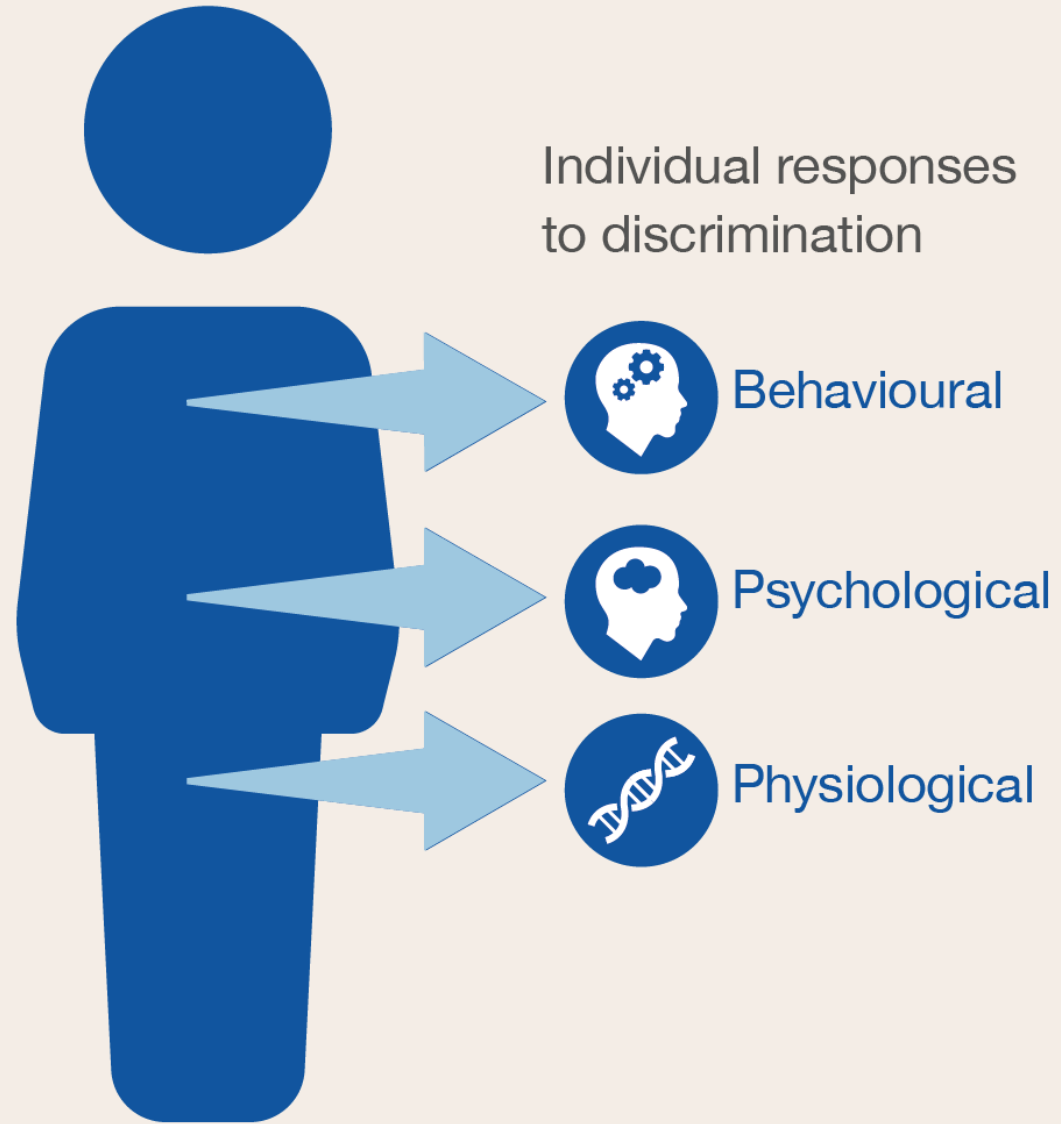
Narendra Modi: The ‘Saffronisation’ of India



Jair Bolsonaro: “Indians are ...increasingly becoming human beings just like us.”



Boris Johnson: “Take back control”



Health impacts

Preconception and perinatal

Offspring outcomes

- Low birthweight or small for gestational age—predicts higher blood pressure and cortisol reactivity in children and adolescents
- Offspring mortality: stillbirth; perinatal, neonatal, and infant mortality
- Less likely to be breastfed—associated with childhood obesity, type 1 and type 2 diabetes, and higher risk of infectious disease in the baby
- Preterm birth
- Poor infant social–emotional development
- Congenital anomalies
- Changes in hypothalamic–pituitary axis genes in offspring (due to maternal stress in pregnancy)
- Reduced effectiveness of mother-to-child HIV transmission

Maternal outcomes

- Barriers to accessing maternity care
- Maternal mortality—related to hypertensive disorders, deep vein thrombosis, and pulmonary embolism
- Breastfeeding duration and initiation
- Family disruption
- Antenatal and post-partum depression
- Excessive weight gain during pregnancy
- Poor quality of care
- Complex obstetric issues
- Sexual assault
- Unwanted pregnancy
- Forced sterilisation
- More induced or second trimester abortions

Adulthood

Mental health

- Anxiety
- Somatoform disorders
- Alcohol misuse
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Depression
- Psychological distress
- Suicidal ideation

Sexual and reproductive health

- Reduced health-care access
- Forced sterilisation
- Sexually maladaptive behaviours, including higher risk of HIV
- Unsafe abortion
- Sexual assault

Non-communicable diseases

- Hypertension
- Heart disease
- Chronic pain
- High cancer risk
- Asthma
- Diabetes
- Stroke
- Obesity
- Myocardial infarction

Increased mortality

Childhood and adolescence

Mental health

- Psychological distress
- Major depression and depressive symptoms
- Emotional difficulties
- Low self-esteem
- Maladaptive behaviours—eg, drug and substance misuse and risk-taking behaviours
- Anxiety
- Suicidal behaviour
- Self-reported stress
- Low academic motivation
- Internalising behaviours

Sexual and reproductive health

- Sexually maladaptive behaviours

Non-communicable diseases

- Increased adolescent BMI and waist circumference
- Early drinking
- Asthma

Increased mortality

Older adult and end of life

Mental health

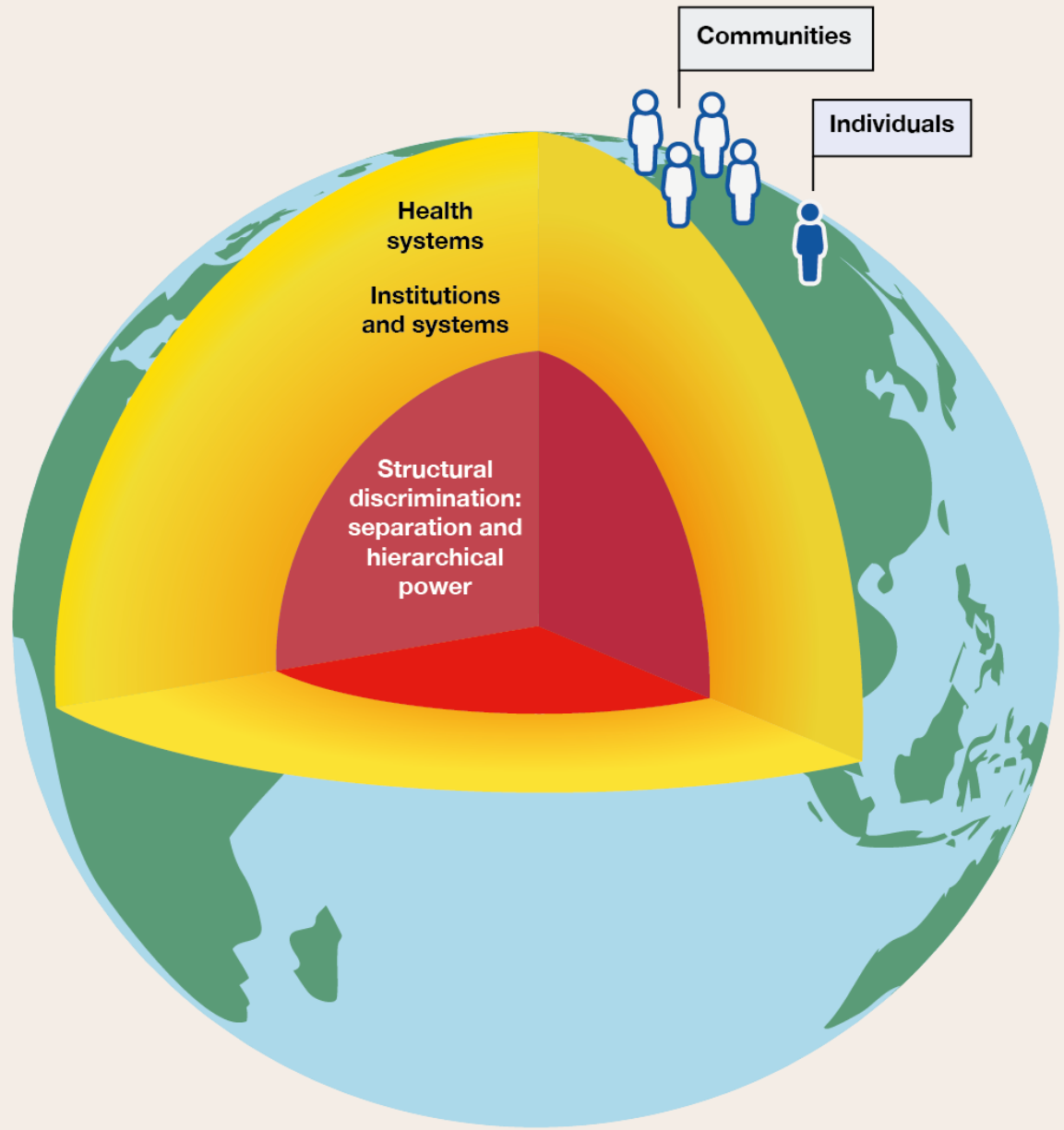
- Depressive symptoms
- Schizophrenia
- Psychological distress
- Cognitive impairment and dementia

Non-communicable diseases

- Cognitive impairment and dementia
- Reduced access to and quality of palliative care

Increased mortality

Reduced life expectancy



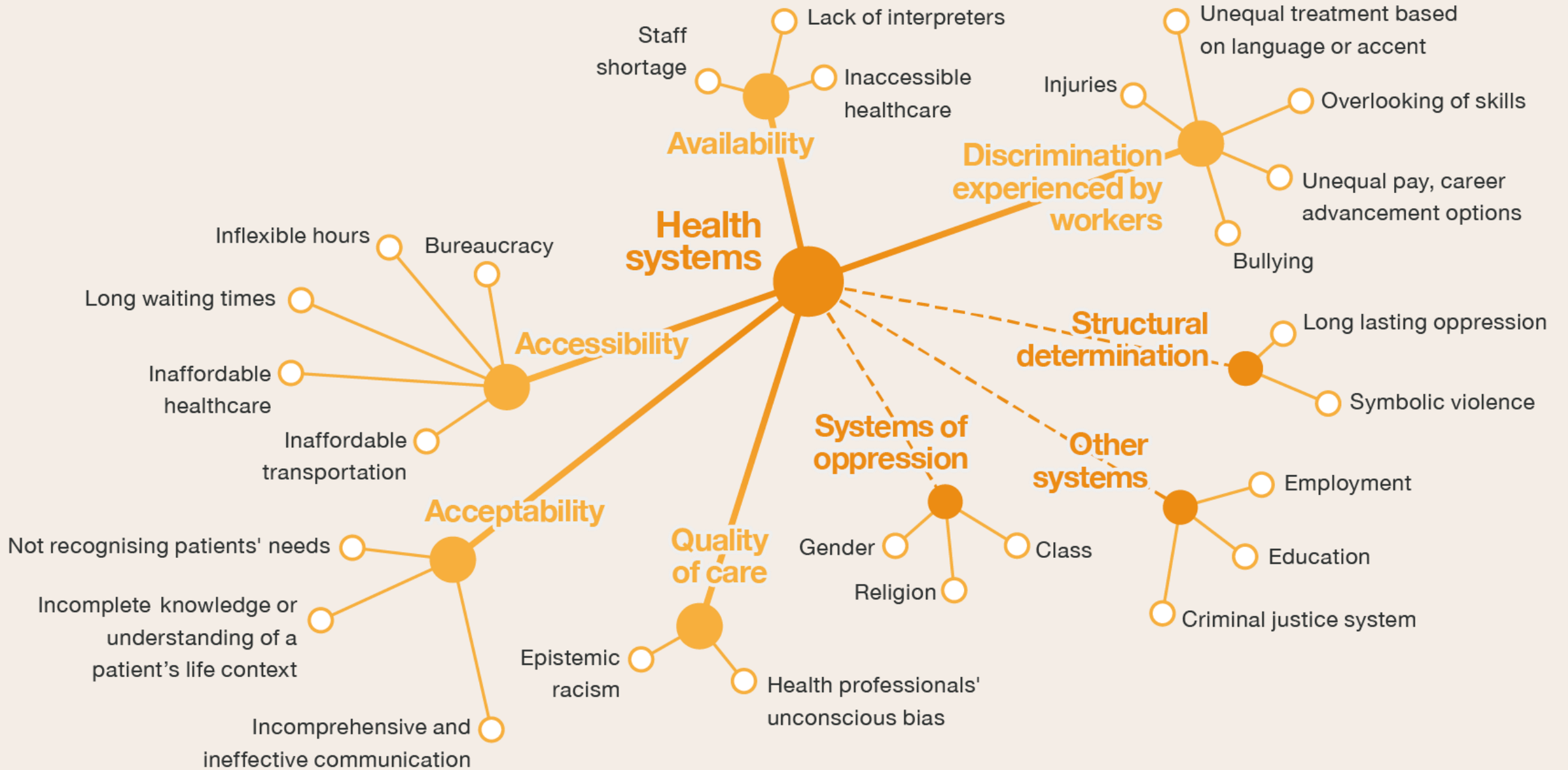
Communities

Individuals

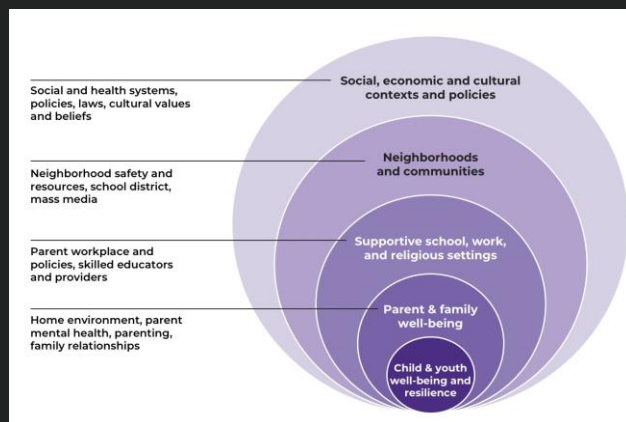
Health systems

Institutions and systems

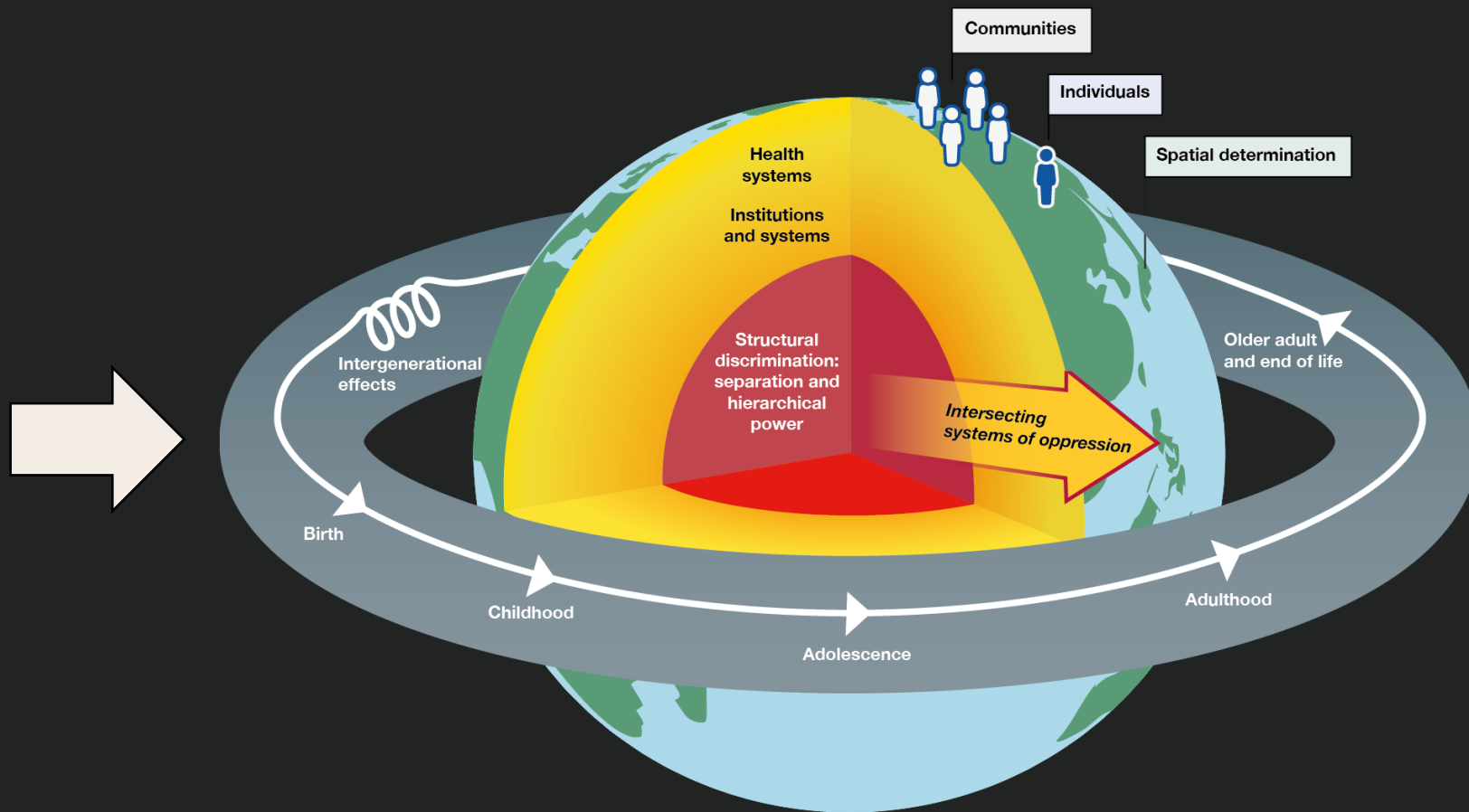
Structural discrimination: separation and hierarchical power



Conceptual model

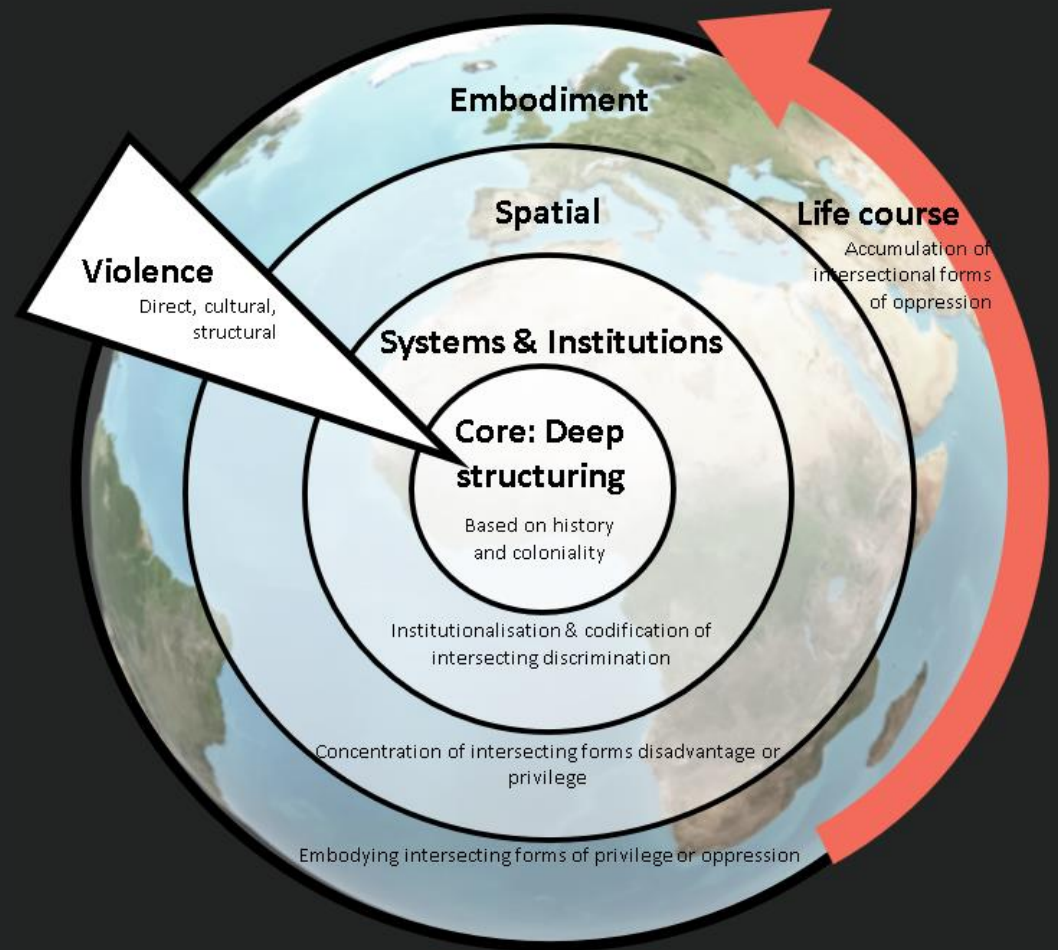


Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model



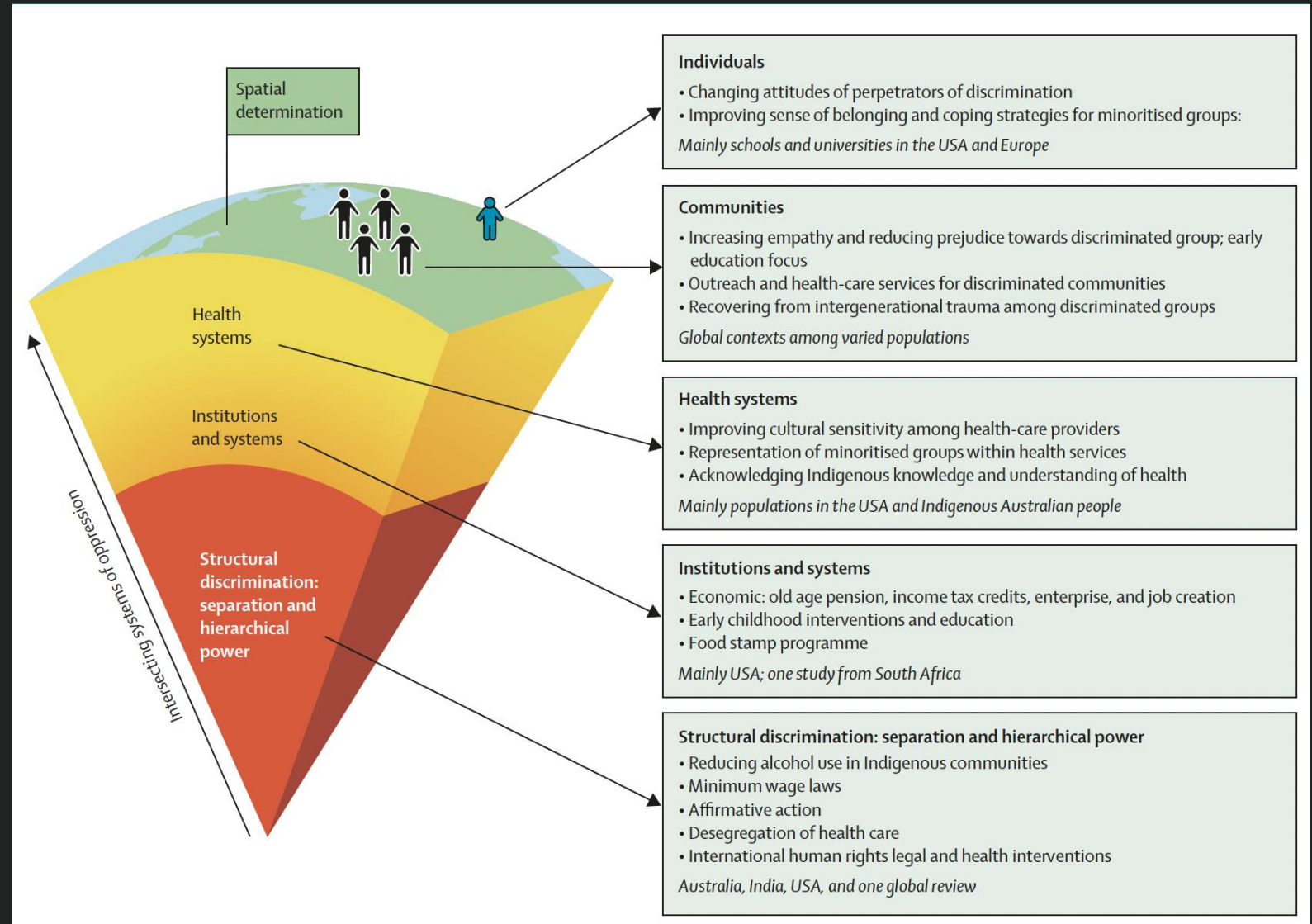
Intersectionality

- **History & coloniality:** shapes contemporary experiences
- **Separation & hierarchy:** across lines of identity/privilege
- **Institutionalisation in systems:** racism embedded in laws, practices, health systems
- **Visibility:** visible factors
- **Violence:** direct, cultural, structural



Action to prevent adverse health outcomes from racism

Action must be
multisectoral,
society-wide



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Our Vision

Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, skin colour, caste, religion, Indigeneity or migratory status affects the health of individuals and communities across the world. Our goal is to reduce the adverse effects of discrimination that leads to poor health. Race & Health is a collective of academics, artists, activists, policy makers, grassroots organisations and individuals. This will be a hub for investigating how racism and discrimination affects health and interventions to improve health. We are creating a catalyst to achieve equitable health for all. Join us.

If you believe in our work, you join us, support us and importantly, if you can, fund us.

Join our mailing list

Email *

We are committed to addressing the

health impacts of racism, xenophobia & discrimination



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