Information Technology- Portable Operating System Interface (POSIX®) Base
Specifications, Issue 7

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Interpretation Request #1
Topic: OLDPWD Clause: 4. Utilities

IEEE Std 1003.1-2008 says to set OLDPWD to PWD if “the PWD environment variable is
changed” or if the PWD environment variable value is changed. Currently all the exist-
ing Posix shells don’t compare OLDPWD and PWD values, thus the result of cd command
might be that OLDPWD is set to current directory.

Interpretation Response
IEEE Std 1003.1-2008 clearly states that the OLDPWD environment variable must be
set to the current working directory immediately prior to the call to cd as long as the
cd command completes successfully, and conforming implementations must conform to
this.

Rationale for Interpretation
When IEEE Std 1003.1-2008 requires that the PWD environment variable be set, that
constitutes a change to the PWD environment variable even if the new value of PWD is
the same as the old value of PWD.