

“Creativity is vital in
shaping our futures...
families are fundamental in
developing it”

MAKING OF ME

Jen Lexmond & Shelagh Wright
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Third Floor
Magdalen House
136 Tooley Street
London SE1 2TU

T 0845 458 5949
F 020 7367 4201

hello@demos.co.uk
www.demos.co.uk

INTRODUCTION

Creativity and cultural engagement are essential ingredients in making our individual and collective lives rich. They are both key to developing and dependent on the social capital that is so vital in mobility and life chances. The terms creativity and culture are acknowledged as tricky to define, but the domains they describe, however disputed, are widely recognized as crucial to our futures.¹ The Oxford English Dictionary defines creativity as ‘involving the use of the imagination or original ideas in order to create something’ and culture as ‘one, the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively. Two, a refined understanding or appreciation of this. Three, the customs, institutions and achievements of a particular nation, people or group’. Many commentators and researchers have argued that creativity and culture make more prosperous and cohesive societies.² They provide accounts of how talent flows and grows. What we have been less good at is understanding how to nurture that talent and potential in the first place. The role of families is fundamental.³ This paper looks at how families could be better supported and how we might get more from our existing investments in this area.⁴ We ask questions about what should be done as a stimulant for the kinds of ideas we need.

It's the post-industrial economy, stupid

Globalisation, organisational change and technological progress have led to the creation of a new kind of work – ‘thinking jobs’ that require a new set of skills, from communication, information and risk management, to resilience, problem-solving and creativity. In today’s economy, knowledge is the primary source of productivity.

1 Williams, Raymond. *Keywords*. Rev. Ed. (New York: Oxford UP, 1983); Ivey, Bill. ‘Expressive Life and the public interest’ in *Expressive Life*, Ed Sam Jones. (London: Demos 2009); Shakuntala B & Burn A, *Rhetorics of Creativity* (London: Institute of Educations, 2008)

2 Florida, R (2002) *The Rise of the Creative Class. And How it's Transforming Work, Leisure and Everyday Life*. Basic Books

3 Social Exclusion Task Force, Cabinet Office, *Think Family* (2007)

4 Creative and Cultural Education, *Cultural Offer*, Renaissance funding for museums, Booktrust books for babies, Creative Apprenticeships – to name a few.

As Charlie Leadbeater has said, in the next century ‘the engine of growth will be the process through which an economy creates, applies and extracts value from knowledge’.⁵

The creative economy has been growing faster than rest of the economy for at least the last decade and is projected to grow faster than most other sectors in the next five years.⁶ The creative and cultural industries now account for 1 million jobs in the UK as well as an additional 800,000 creative occupations, and in London, the sector employs more people than financial services.⁷ It has been estimated that the amount of digital content being produced in the UK will grow by 10 to 100 times over the next three years.⁸ The UK has the largest creative sector in the EU and in the world relative to GDP.⁹

Eighty-five per cent of the creative economy is made up of organisations employing fewer than five people and 30 per cent of growth is predicted to come from the creation of new jobs.¹⁰ Forty seven per cent of growth is driven by start-ups making the creative economy a likely engine of recovery from the recession.¹¹ The sector is also able to respond quickly to changing demand because of the swift adaptability of small firms and the well established networks in the sector:

5 Leadbeater, C. *The Independents: Britain’s New Cultural Entrepreneurs*. London (1999)

6 Department for Culture, Media, and Sport. *Staying Ahead : the economic performance of the UK’s créative industries*. London (2007)

7 Department for Culture, Media, and Sport. *Staying Ahead : the economic performance of the UK’s créative industries*. London (2007)

8 Meadway J & Mateos-Garcia, *Demanding Growth* (London : NESTA, 2009)

9 Department for Culture, Media, and Sport. *Staying Ahead : the economic performance of the UK’s créative industries*. London (2007)

10 CCSkills, *The Footprint: Baseline Survey (2006/7) and Creative Blueprint England* (2008)

11 Department for Culture, Media, & Sport, *Creative Britain: New Talents for the New Economy* (London: DCMS, 2008)

“What powers economic growth? It's not technology – technology is a raw material. What makes human beings unique is one thing – creativity. All else are subsets. Creativity powers economic growth”¹²

-Richard Florida

‘Creativity’ is not only important within the creative sector: problem solving and design-led innovation have become sought-after skills in the wider economy. Creativity also holds the key to tackling many 21st century issues, from dealing with climate change to the growth of mega-cities. Far from just providing an engine to power the arts and cultural sector, creativity will deliver the social and environmental entrepreneurship we need.

One reason for this is that creative businesses often have social aims as well as purely financial ones. In a 2004 survey, 90 per cent of TV and film producers in the North East said they feel ‘uncomfortable’ expressing their goals in commercial terms, and 18 per cent of music industry small enterprises say they are ‘not about making money’.¹³ Not merely profit-making endeavors, creative enterprise aims to add something more to the world whether through better design, aesthetic appeal, diversity or originality.

Family Fundamental

Educational and cultural institutions will play their part in aiding the transition to ‘thinking jobs’, but the development of the new skills required for future jobs is also dependent on the home environment. Evidence from developmental psychology tells us that

12 Florida, R (2002) *The Rise of the Creative Class. And How it's Transforming Work, Leisure and Everyday Life*. Basic Books

13 Nesta, *Creating Growth: How the UK can develop world-class creative businesses* (London: National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts, 2006) <www.nesta.org.uk/assets/pdf/creating_growth_full_report.pdf> (accessed 16 May 2007).

soft skills – creativity, application and social skills – are developed in the earliest years.¹⁴

The family is therefore a key site for creative and cultural development. The huge investment in early years provision over the previous decade, including the setting up of Sure Start local programmes and the rolling out of children’s centres across the country demonstrate how government can act to support families. With its original focus on holistic child development and parenting, the Sure Start infrastructure has been, and should be, a key site to help support families and their children before they start school. Pressure on public finances means that Sure Start’s future is increasingly uncertain, but continued support for families as key players to generating creativity and cultural development in the next generation is vital.

Making more of me

A policy response to complex changes in the economy – which affect *all* sectors because they require new workplace skills, including life skills developed from the very early years - must address the development of both children’s ‘creative capability’ and ‘cultural engagement’.

How do we make more of ourselves and create good and sustainable livelihoods? Can our families make this more likely? We propose there are three key components to this: Know How (the core creative capabilities in early development); Know What (cultural

14 Feinstein, L (2000) The relative economic importance of academic, psychological and behavioural attributes developed in childhood Brighton: University of Sussex

Smith, ID & Allen, G (2008) Early Intervention: Good Parents, Great Kids, Better Citizens. Centre for Social Justice & the Smith Institute

Shore, R (1997) Rethinking the Brain : New Insights into Early Development. New York : Families and Work Institute

participation, knowledge and production); and Know Who (social capital and networks for development).

1. KNOW HOW – DEVELOPMENT OF CREATIVE CAPABILITIES

Academic and vocational qualifications are still essential to success in the labour market, but they are no longer enough to secure it. The education system has struggled to develop ways to transfer learning from compartmentalised ‘subject’, ‘stages’ and ‘classes’ into practical contexts, where students can apply their knowledge creatively to the world around them. The innovative application of knowledge requires more than just absorbing and feeding back information. Instead, we are called upon to use knowledge in new and creative ways, transferring what we know across different subjects and for different purposes, questioning assumptions and redefining problems.

Today, employers hire staff based on intangible skills as much as on qualifications. In a recent study, Accenture calculated that the value of these ‘intangibles’ accounts for 70 per cent of the value of the US’s top 500 companies, up from 20 per cent in 1980.¹⁵ In a study in 2006, Demos found that human resources directors in FTSE 250 companies ranked ‘creativity and innovation’ as the most important skills for graduates in ten year’s time – above numeracy, literacy, and IT skills.¹⁶

But what exactly are these intangible skills and how is the family situated to help in their development? In his book *Five Minds for the Future*, Harvard Professor of Cognition and Education Howard Gardner outlines the specific cognitive abilities that will be sought after by employers and leaders in the years ahead: the disciplined

¹⁵ ‘The battle for brainpower’, *The Economist*, 7–13 Oct 2006.

¹⁶ S Gillinson and D O’Leary, *Working Progress: How to reconnect young people and organisations* (London: Demos, 2006).

mind, the synthesising mind, the creating mind, the respectful mind and the ethical mind.¹⁷ Tom Bentley, education advisor to the Australian government and former director of Demos, sums up four main characteristics that define creativity as a skill: the abilities to question assumptions and redefine problems; to transfer knowledge across different contexts; and to recognize that learning is incremental and involves making mistakes; together with the capacity to focus one's attention in pursuit of a goal.¹⁸

A recent study from Demos shows that parenting in the early years plays a key role in nurturing 'soft' skills like application, initiative, empathy, pro-social behaviour and emotional self-regulation.¹⁹

Different parenting styles (as well as background factors such as educational qualifications of parents, poverty, and home environment) have a strong influence on the successful development of these skills.²⁰ The fact that parenting skills and ability are not equally distributed across socio-economic groups means that soft skill development is an important element in social mobility, with poor parenting and material poverty adding up to a double disadvantage for many children. Today, material deprivation in a child's family correlates with a deficit in soft skills more strongly than even a few decades ago.²¹

Questions:

- Is there agreement with Tom Bentley's definition of creativity as a skill?
- How do people think creativity is best promoted in the early years?

17 Gardner H Five Minds for the Future. (Boston : Harvard Business School, 2006)

18 Seltzer K & Bentley T The Creative Age. (London : Demos, 1999)

19 Lexmond J & Reeves R (forthcoming) Building Character. London: Demos

20 Lexmond J & Reeves R (forthcoming) Building Character. London: Demos

21 Margo J, et al (2006). Freedom's Orphans : Raising youth in a changing world. London : ippr

- Do we know enough about the role of the family in the development of creativity in the early years?
- When is the family most influential for the development of creativity?
- What existing schemes and activities might we redefine to support these ends?

2. KNOW WHAT – CULTURAL CAPABILITIES AND PARTICIPATION IN PRODUCTION

Families help children engage and participate in cultural activity: a day out at a natural science, art or history museum, or arts and crafts time on the kitchen table at the weekend. Such activities are also often a means by which parents are introduced to new cultural forms by their offspring.²²

However, there are a number of barriers to cultural engagement in this traditional form. For example, average household spending on recreation and culture in the UK has now reached 7.9 per cent of GDP (more than any other country in the OECD).²³ Forthcoming research from CCE shows that cost is the most commonly-cited barrier acting against more widespread participation in cultural activities (39 per cent), and is particularly likely to be mentioned by those in social groups DE. Those in groups DE are also more likely to cite transport problems and a lack of opportunities in the local area. Those in groups AB, on the other hand, are more likely to cite a lack of time as a barrier to participation.

²² <http://www.philly.com/inquirer/home_region/20090921_Report_shatters_myths_about_cultural_activities.html>
<<http://www.philaculture.org/research/reports/research-into-action>> (accessed 1/10/09)

²³ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD Factbook 2006: Economic, environmental and social statistics. <<http://oberon.sourceoecd.org/v1=728798/cl=13/nw=1/rpsv/factbook/10-02-02-g01.htm>> (accessed 16 May 2007)

Families are important not only in helping children to access art, music, film etc., but also in enabling them to become producers of culture themselves and to use their creativity towards their own ends. Families are central to involvement in what Henry Jenkins, Director of the Comparative Media Studies Program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, calls ‘participatory culture’:

“[Participatory cultures are] cultures with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one’s creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices.”²⁴

Cheap digital technology and wider broadband access have made the internet the site of a vast, new participatory ‘homemade’ culture.²⁵ In 2005 the Pew Internet & American Life project found that more than one-half of all American teens have created media content and roughly one-third of teens who use the Internet have shared content that they have produced.²⁶ These numbers are set to rise.²⁷

This outburst of creativity heralds the arrival of a more participative and expressive democracy, where information is shared, edited, remixed and produced, all in a public forum.²⁸ It has created more

24 Jenkins H, et al (2009). *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture : Media Education for the 21st Century*. MIT press. Available at : <http://digitalllearning.macfound.org/atf/cf/%7B7E45C7E0-A3E0-4B89-AC9C-E807E1B0AE4E%7D/JENKINS_WHITE_PAPER.PDF> (accessed 18/09/09)

25 Holden, J *Democractic Culture*. (London : Demos, 2008)

26 Lenhardt A & Madden M (2005) *Teen Content Creators and Consumers*. Washington, DC:

Pew Internet & American Life Project, November 2. Available online at

http://www.pewInternet.org/PPF/r/166/report_display.asp

27 Meadway J & Mateos-Garcia, *Demanding Growth* (London : NESTA, 2009)

28 Hannon C, et al (2008). *Video Republic*. London: Demos

opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, more relaxed attitudes towards intellectual property, a stronger sense of citizenship, and finally the development of key skills; as described in Demos' Video Republic, a new 'r' skill should be added to the classics: 'reading, writing and *representing*'.²⁹

But there are barriers to these positive outcomes that must be overcome:

- A participation gap creates unequal access to the skills, knowledge, opportunities and experiences that will prepare the next generation of young people to engage fully in this new world.
- A 'transparency problem' highlights the difficulties that young people face in deciphering how the media and corporate ownership of information and spaces shape their perception of the world.
- The breakdown of formal career paths and the training and guidance that goes along with them has created an 'ethics challenge' where young people are less prepared for their increasingly public and influential roles as media makers and participants in their communities. This lack of role models and ethical advice means that young people are more vulnerable to making poor decisions about privacy and appropriateness online.³⁰

There are two main challenges to ensuring equal participation in cultural production for all:

- Maintaining funding for arts and cultural institutions in a time of recession.

Leadbeater C The Art of With (unpublished, 2009) <

<http://www.charlesleadbeater.net/cms/xstandard/The%20Art%20of%20With%20PDF.pdf>> (accessed 1/10/09)

29 Hannon C, et al (2008). Video Republic. London: Demos

30 Jenkins H Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture : Media Education for the 21st Century (2006)

- Protecting ‘participatory culture’ by maintaining a free and open internet where cultural production can be shared.³¹

All of this adds up to a shift from individual expression and private ownership to community involvement and public ownership. Successfully navigating this new world requires a new social literacy. Parents and families hold a key position not only in helping to develop those important skills but also as gate keepers to new cultural experiences and networks.

Question:

- Does it matter what kind of cultural experience children and young people have (high *vs.* populist culture, culture as consumption *vs.* culture as production)?
- Does it matter if some young people have more access to ‘traditional’ cultural experience than others?
- Does the cultural offer of 5 hours of cultural activity a week help or hinder family-based access to cultural experiences?
- How can we help young people and families make more of cultural engagement and production?

3. KNOW WHO – SOCIAL CAPITAL AND NETWORKS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Access to careers in the creative industries is largely determined through networks.³² This has always been true to some extent in most work areas but is increasingly the case in small enterprises and project-based work environments, particularly in a downturn. In addition, project-based careers are predicted to increase as

³¹ Ivey B, ‘Expressive Life and the public interest’ in Jones S (Ed) *Expressive Life* (London : Demos, 2009)

³² Wright S & Parker S. *The Last Mile*, Demos: 2006

companies outsource more activity as a response to managing uncertainty and risk.³³ This adds up to a combination of continuing growth in creative enterprises, the rise of project-based careers and the need to be linked into networks to access work opportunities.³⁴ Skills and networks are often developed by early work experience, shadowing and/or involvement in making work and by making content on an amateur basis. All of these opportunities are *socially* made and determined through who you know, or who your parents and family can pull strings with. The development and deployment of social networks is an important reality and remains crucial in career development. Young people need to know how to develop their social capital and exploit it to support their lives and livelihoods.

Social and cultural capital is key then to making these initial connections and links.³⁵ The recent report on social mobility from Alan Milburn criticises informal recruitment systems, such as internships and work placements, as becoming a back-door for better-off, better-connected youngsters. The report says:

*“The arts and cultural industries are a case in point. They will be one of our country’s major professions in future. There is strong evidence that children who are exposed to the arts early in life more actively engage with them when they become adults...what is missing is a structured and supported mechanism to provide children with a range of cultural activities.”*³⁶

33 Faulkener & Anderson (1997) Short term projects and emergent careers. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

34 Meadway J & Mateos-Garcia, NESTA, (2009) Demanding growth

35 Bourdieu P & Passeron J "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction" In Richard K. Brown (Ed), Knowledge, Education and Cultural Change. London: Tavistock.

36 Milburn A (Panel Chair) et al Unleashing Aspiration : The Final Report on Fair Access to the Professions (London : Strategy Unit, 2009)

Family and friends are the primary source of advice and support for careers choices and contacts. In a study by the Careers Research and Advisory Centre, 86 per cent of young people said they relied on personal contacts for advice and guidance.³⁷ Middle-class families are good at finding sources of support and opportunities for their children. They rely on their social networks to enable this and in turn pass on the invaluable legacy to their offspring.

We need to find a way to connect *all* young people with more opportunities to develop wider social networks and capital that will help them shape their economic and cultural lives in a way they are then able to grow, sustain for themselves and pass on to their children. The Milburn report, *Unleashing Aspiration*, recommends working with the cultural organisations to help widen access to the sector through the delivery of structured arts and cultural activities - for example, through the Arts Explorers initiative that focuses on children from 5 to 11.³⁸ The recent development of Creative Apprenticeships, and to a lesser extent the Future Jobs Fund, also provides alternative access routes, but these need to be better supported and offered in larger numbers to have real impact, especially at a time of growing youth unemployment.

Question:

- How can we support young people and families in accessing the networks that will develop their future livelihoods and life chances?
- How can we widen access to the creative industries in ways that are not dependent on elitist networks with high barriers to entry?

³⁷ Careers Research and Advisory Service, *Informing Choices* (2003)

³⁸ Milburn A (Panel Chair) et al *Unleashing Aspiration : The Final Report on Fair Access to the Professions* (London: Strategy Unit, 2009); CC Skills' Creative Apprenticeships is another good example of this

- Are there examples of good schemes in operation that could be extended further?

Creativity and culture are vital in shaping our shared futures so we must find better ways of supporting and nurturing these opportunities for all, not just for the fortunate few. This is an area of enquiry that needs much more work and deeper research to find the possible answers. We know that families are fundamental to this development and can be offered many more useful and imaginative ways to help their children, as most are desperate to do.

REFLECTIONS AND INPUT FROM THE ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ON WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 21, 2009

Attendees:

David Willetts MP

Ryan Shorthouse, Special Advisor to Maria Miller MP

Paul Sternberg, Peter de Haan Charitable Trust

Shealgh Wright, Demos Associate

Jen Lexmond, Researcher, Demos

Steve Moffitt, A New Direction

Sonia Sodha, Senior Researcher, Demos

Paul Collard, Chief Executive, CCE

Sam Jones, Researcher, Demos

Julia Margo, Director of Research, Demos (Chair)

Geethika Jayatilaka, CCE

Alison McGovern, CCE

Matt Lane, Head of Royal Opera House Thurrock and Thames Gateway

Eugene Grant, Demos

Recurring themes and issues

- How can we measure creativity?
- The soft skills ('intangible') vs. hard skills ('tangible') divide remains flawed and the use of such language should be readdressed.
- What are the barriers to families engaging in creative and cultural learning?
- Is it misleading to perceive creativity and creative learning as unstructured?
- What should be the role of the government?
- Cost (both direct and indirect) and anticipated risks are major barriers to cultural learning. Therefore, there remains an urgent need for 'low-risk' invitations to learning.
- Any responses that are developed must be *demand-centred*; they cannot focus solely on supply.

Questions and thoughts arising from roundtable discussion

What are the things we don't know and ought to find out?

'Measuring' creativity or soft skills or both is extremely difficult, as any distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' skills remains inherently flawed. Thus the language of 'soft' and 'hard' skills has to change.

How do we measure creativity?

In attempting to measure creativity there remains a key difference between measuring general progress and measuring set targets. Until we know if and how we can measure creativity, it may be difficult to ascertain whether or not we have made any progress. This considered, can we then apply to creative skills the same measures that are employed for literacy and numeracy?

Do we risk substituting quality for quantity?

In terms of policy and government intervention, should efforts focus on the *quantity* of children and families that can be reached or the *quality* of help provided?

What is the role of other institutions in encouraging family input in this regard?

Research shows that the most crucial stage in a child's development is between ages 0 and 3, and so the family/parents remain(s) the most important institution.

We should not assume that child care and parenting are separate.

Childcare and parenting should not be thought of as separate from one another. Many nurseries and early years centres both allow and encourage parents' active involvement in activities such as outings.

Why doesn't family 'x' participate in creative and cultural learning? What are the barriers?

It should be noted that there is free access to many cultural and creative institutions, *e.g.* museums; however, free access does not automatically translate into active engagement. Research by the CCE shows that costs (which are often indirect) and practical difficulties are the most prevalent barriers in this regard.

Assuming we are born creative, where does creativity get 'blocked'?

Human beings are, by their very nature, creative. Therefore, we need to examine where and at what point this creativity becomes 'blocked'.

Can the state 'fix' the problem? Is the state any good at fixing families? Does it have a proven track record?

What is the role of the state in this matter? Should its role be more interventionist or should it remain purely analytical?

Should there be a distinction between structured and unstructured learning?

It may be fallacious to assume that creative play has to be totally unstructured. Some literacy and numeracy programmes are both formulaic and structured; yet, they remain relatively successful.

Should there then be early years creativity programmes that are akin to literacy and numeracy lessons in this way?

Creative play between adults and children can also be quite structured. Similarly, so can other leisure activities. For example, becoming an active member of a football team, attending regular training sessions, and playing league/competition matches may prove more successful in helping to foster a child's social skills than if they were left to simply kick a ball about in their local park.

How does one attract or entice families towards cultural learning (as opposed to 'pushing' them towards it)?

The internet has a key role to play here – access to it, and use of it, is seen as more equitable than other activities *e.g.* nature walks. How then can we make the internet a safer space for creative learning?

Thoughts from Paul Collard, Chief Executive at CCE

In determining a family's exposure to creative and cultural learning, it is education – not income – that is the predominant factor.

In terms of a child's development there remains an enormous disparity between children who received up to ten hours of creative learning a week and children who received none.

Much of the problem at hand is a result of “**the failure of demand**”: in terms of creative activity those who *do* the most, *want* the most. Creating more opportunities will simply mean they are used by families who are already culturally engaged.

Cost remains the most fundamental barrier to families engaging in creative and cultural learning. Even when opportunities are free of charge, there remains a stubborn suspicion among some families (especially low-income families) that such opportunities will not remain free. Then, added to this suspicion, are a multitude of anticipated risks: the risk not being able to afford it; the risk of added costs (for example, entry to a museum might be free but then

what about food, the gift-shop etc?); the risk of being made to feel dependent on someone else; the risk of embarrassment etc. Therefore, there remains a real need for **'low-risk' invitations**. Ultimately, creative and cultural learning opportunities need to be designed from a family perspective.

Thoughts from David Willetts MP

- We should remain wary of the divide between tangible and intangible skills - children develop intangible skills like creativity, application and empathy through tangible experiences like reading books, going to school, being part of structured activities and play.
- The distinction between creative consumption and creative production is not as separated as we think. The onset of new digital technologies and 'participatory cultures' has made cultural production more visible, but throughout history people have produced new ideas and new content through analysing and consuming culture in more traditional ways – by reading books, looking at art works, and listening to music. In other words, it's a symbiotic process.
- Sure Start centres remains a useful site for both children *and* families and work should be done to explore how Sure Start centres should be reformed and refocused on key early years issues. For example, is the current Ofsted inspection model appropriately applied to early years learning centres?

Responses from the roundtable

- Contrary to David Willett's proposition, tangible skills *do not* come before intangible skills. As made clear by the *Building Character* project, soft skills should not be thought of as an 'add-on' or additional capability; they are paramount to a child's character and development.
- Families that engage in creative and cultural learning activities together become more resilient. As an institution, the family

becomes more meaningful and adolescents acquire better coping strategies for problems in later life.

- We should encourage creative and cultural institutions to work in deprived areas and estates as this may improve engagement and foster opportunities for learning, for example the new Royal Opera House outpost at Thames Gateway.
- Conclusively, the problems at hand require a **demand-centred response**.

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