UNDERSTANDING WHAT IT IS LIKE TO BE STALKED

Partner Stalking: How Women Respond, Cope, and Survive. 

In Partner Stalking: How Women Respond, Cope and Survive, T.K. Logan, Jennifer Cole, Lisa Shannon, and Robert Walker report on their study of the impact of being stalked. The research was based on analysis of interviews of 62 women. Most of the women had been stalked by former partners who had physically abused them during their relationships. This book is a welcome addition to the growing psychological literature on partner stalking (see, e.g., Davis, Frieze, & Maiuro, 2002; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1998). The qualitative data presented by Logan and her colleagues provide vivid examples of how stalking can affect women’s lives.

The crime of stalking is defined as unwanted and repeated behavior that induces fear in the target of this behavior. Although media attention has often focused on strangers who stalk well-known celebrities, as Logan et al. discuss, the majority of stalking is actually “partner stalking” where the behavior is directed toward a current or former partner of an intimate relationship. Such behavior is quite common, especially if one considers the behaviors typically classified as stalking, but includes situations where there is no fear. Based on a review of several studies, Logan et al. conclude that about a quarter of women have been victims of partner stalking. This does not occur in isolation from other aspects of the relationship. Partner stalking often occurs along with other types of abuse, including battering and psychological or sexual abuse. Partner stalking is also more violent overall than stranger stalking. This finding in the literature led the researchers to define their sample within this framework.

The question of how common partner stalking is was not their focus, nor did they want to understand the stalking of strangers or stalking in the absence of other types of abuse. The goal of Logan et al.’s research was to better understand how women reacted to being stalked and how they attempted to cope with this unwelcome behavior. Qualitative data is ideal for investigating this type of question. The researchers used a volunteer sample of women who were invited to contact the researchers if they “...experienced serious conflict or feelings of being controlled in an intimate relationship with a man.” Women who called were screened to ensure that they had been in a violent relationship and stalking had occurred.

One of the first issues the authors addressed in looking at their data was how women got into these abusive relationships. This is a question that is still all too often asked about battered women (Frieze, 2005). Data presented here provide one very interesting answer to this question. Sometimes behavior that might be seen as stalking in other contexts can be interpreted as very attentive, loving behavior, especially when accompanied with statements about how much the stalker cares for the victim. For example, he might repeatedly want to know what she is doing at all times because he says he misses her and thinks about her so much. Some of the most common stalking tactics reported in this book include talking to friends and relatives about the person, calling her at times she does not expect, following her, and passing by her house unexpectedly. All of these can be seen as romantic behaviors, especially early in a relationship. Other behaviors are not as romantic. These include sending harassing messages on the telephone, threatening to harm the victim, and threatening self-harm.

When study participants were asked how they felt about such behavior, the most common reactions were frustration, feeling overwhelmed, feeling angry, and feeling lonely. Victims said they felt they could not be the person they wanted to be or that they could not do the things they wanted to do because of these constant threats and monitoring. They felt that the stalkers controlled their thinking as well as their actions.

The women were also asked what they did when the stalking was occurring. Many reported trying to ignore the stalking behaviors, at least at first. Others felt they had to take protective measures such as deliberately avoiding the stalker or getting help from friends and family. Although police were sometimes helpful, this was not always the case. One of the final sections of the book talks about how one can provide support to someone being stalked. The stories of the stalked women tell us how important such support can be.

This book would be a wonderful supplemental reading for those teaching courses related to the psychology of women or psychology of gender, or to courses on violence. Students will find the book provides them with a very vivid picture of relationship violence and partner stalking. Professionals will also find this book helpful. It provides a very detailed review of related research. Sixteen pages of cited references are included at the end of the book. It might also be used by a clinician who wishes to give a client more background about stalking and partner violence.

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Wexler goes on to suggest that some abusive men are more vulnerable to feelings of self-fragmentation and are overreactive to disrespect cues because of a history of childhood abuse. In this way, Wexler connects the STOP program with existing theory on the intergenerational transmission of violence. This is one of the strong points of the proposed treatment—STOP works directly to help men see the impact of their abusive behavior on their children (sessions 25 and 26).

Wexler reiterates the importance of developing a strong therapeutic alliance with these men while highlighting the ineffectiveness of a shame-based approach. Theoretically, these ideas are most similar to those expressed in Dutton and Somkin’s (2003) edited book, Intimate Violence: Contemporary Treatment Innovations, and Hamel and Nicholls’s (2007) edited book, Family Interventions in Domestic Violence: A Handbook of Gender-Inclusive Theory and Treatment.

Strikingly, the STOP treatment offered by Wexler not only differs from traditional batterer interventions that are predicated on the feminist perspective, but it also differs from many psychoeducational batterer interventions. Most of the initial skill-deficit programs focused extensively on the assumption that batterers had anger management problems and needed better conflict resolution skills (for a review, see Norlander & Eckhardt, 2005). Even recent interventions for interpersonal violence continue to stress the link between anger and aggression (Cavell & Malcolm, 2007). Unfortunately, however, a meta-analysis of both existing anger-management interventions and Duluth-based batterer treatment programs indicated that neither has been shown to be very effective as stand-alone programs (Babcock, Green, & Robie, 2004).

Thus, Wexler’s delineation of an integrative program that takes the best of existing skill-based (e.g., Red Flags of Anger—Session 1) and feminist programs (e.g., Masculinity Traps I—Session 6; Masculinity Traps II—Session 7) and adds treatment components to modify other known correlates of aggression (such as Jealousy and Misinterpretations—Session 8; Feelings and Real Feelings—Session 4; The Broken Mirror—Session 5; Substance Abuse and Relationship Abuse: What’s the Connection—Session 9) represents an exciting advance to batterer interventions.

Wexler’s treatment approach is also novel in that it explicitly addresses dysfunctional communication that may be occurring in the intimate relationship (Stith, Smith, Penn, Ward, & Tritt, 2004). Specifically, relationship skills are delineated in Session 13 (Assertiveness), Session 14 (Expressing Feelings and Asking for Change), Session 15 (Handling Criticism), and Session 16 (Expressing Feelings and Actively Listening). Relatively few other programs have integrated known interventions for domestic violence perpetration with skills that are expected to enhance relationship functioning (as an exception, see Building a Lasting Love for high-risk pregnant adolescents; Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Turner, & McGowen, 2007).

Thus, this guide has much to recommend it. It is clinically astute, comes with a relaxation CD and suggestions for movie clips to be utilized within sessions, and presents a treatment that is theoretically relevant and fresh. STOP can be used by a variety of practitioners, in multiple settings, with many different types of abusive men. By the end of the book, Wexler convincingly makes the case that STOP is ripe for dissemination.

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**PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS: EXPANDED PERSPECTIVES**


The purpose of this volume, *Violence and Exploitation Against Women and Girls*, is to develop a series of interdisciplinary, cross-cultural perspectives based on new and expanded conceptualizations of gender-based violence and exploitation that capture the enormity and complexity of these issues. The general framework, posited to advance new theoretical models presented in many of the book's chapters, is a global human rights view. This perspective demonstrates a clear understanding of the far-reaching implications for international public health and progressive social and economic change. Across the 24 chapters, divided into five parts, careful attention is devoted to integrating universal human rights issues with the values and normative practices of national and local cultures. The editors and authors present several progressive models and recommendations for education, intervention, and prevention, which effectively integrate issues across various types of violence and exploitation (such as sex among adolescents in group settings, female genital mutilation, sexual harassment, domestic violence, and rape), understudied populations (such as cyberbullies, aging women, disabled girls and women), and cultural groups (such as domestic violence issues in Mexico, Israel, Canada, and the United States, and with Chinese and South Asian immigrants).

Meaningful themes emerge across many of the chapters in this volume, most notably the profound influence of patriarchy and its social oppression of women as well as the influence of culture on all forms of violence against girls and women. In several chapters, destructive and abusive practices that have strong religious, family, and community support in patriarchal cultures are discussed in detail and placed in the context of a particular cultural group. In the chapter, "Gender-Based Violence," the authors clearly articulate the need to understand the profound and complex influence of patriarchy across cultures to advance research, intervention, and prevention efforts. Feminist influences that challenge patriarchy are credited with helping international organizations, such as the United Nations, to understand that acts of violence against women are a form of social and economic control. The authors illustrate how feminist efforts to advocate this form of social change are often stigmatized across many cultures, making progress slow and difficult.

The editors and authors advocate the development of new, comprehensive, and conceptual models that account for gendered contexts in which men and women, as well as boys and girls, understand and react to violence in different ways. These gendered differences are apparent at a relatively early age and are illustrated in the chapter, "Who Wins in the Status Games," which focuses on adolescent sex in group settings. In these status games, boys are reported to gain status by participation in group sex activities. Girls initially hold the belief that they too will attain an increase in status by participation in group sex activities; however, the girls actually lose status, are stigmatized, and are denigrated by both girls and boys. As described by the authors, this exploitation of girls by boys at an early age further supports the impact of a patriarchal social structure in which the sexual exploitation of young girls is not particularly noteworthy by community standards and is not considered deserving of community intervention. In the chapter, "Intimate Partner Violence," the complexity of gendered violence is noted in the increasing level of violence perpetrated by women. The authors support the development of models that adequately account for women's use of violence, while also acknowledging that women use violence differently from men (such as self-defense, retaliation). A theoretical model that focuses on patriarchy clearly explains a widespread pattern of intimate partner violence in which men are perpetrators and women are victims. However, this model may not sufficiently explain every nuance of gender-based violence in which women are violent in intimate relationships.

Part IV, "Cultural and International Perspectives on Violence against Women," effectively presents the powerful influence of culture on all forms of oppression, exploitation, and violence. The authors consistently discuss the international dilemma that emerges when acts of violence are viewed as human rights violations in one culture and are seen as moral imperatives to maintain social order in another culture. This seeming impasse between different cultures is highlighted in several chapters that describe communities in which tolerance and acceptance of exploitative and violent practices are justified by a genuine wish to preserve valued customs, traditions, and normal practices. The desire to fulfill these cultural expectations is often accompanied by a
belief that some level of violence is acceptable and by the need to avoid the humiliation, shame, and possible ostracism that will follow a rejection of cultural mores. Various authors draw attention to the tough bind that is inherent in efforts to value cultural differences and not to impose Western standards on other cultures, while at the same time promoting a humanitarian view intended to eliminate violence. The author of the chapter, “Cultural Beliefs and Domestic Violence,” explains the disconnection that can occur for women who are conflict between proposed nonviolent changes and strongly held cultural beliefs. Several authors suggest that culturally informed strategies for change be developed and implemented, based on women’s cultural perceptions of violence against women. The authors of the chapter, “Domestic Violence in the Chinese and South Asian Immigrant Communities,” clearly advocate the position that “culture cannot be used to justify violence” (p. 297).

As an edited book, this volume has several unifying themes, though it is not written with a single unified voice. As such, several authors present divergent points of view, such as how or whether to integrate the concept of learned helplessness into an understanding of domestic violence. Given the nature of edited works, the presentation of content by different authors has the potential to be uneven. As indicated previously, the vast majority of chapters have well-conceptualized, sophisticated views on the complexity of gender dynamics. However, the chapters with content focused on “Factors that Influence Abusive Interactions Between Aging Women and Their Caregivers” and “Violence and Exploitation Against Women and Girls With Disability” present gendered themes in oversimplified ways that do not advance the understanding of violence against women and girls in these special populations.

This well-structured, densely written book contributes a strong interdisciplinary, international, and cross-cultural perspective to advance the study of violence against women and girls and makes recommendations for cutting-edge research methodologies. Feminist scholars, psychologists, practitioners, and other social scientists who are invested in global humanitarian efforts will be able to integrate this work into their teaching, research, and practice endeavors.

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SADNESS REVEALED: INSIGHTS ON WOMEN’S DEPRESSION


In the introduction to A Secret Sadness, author Valerie Whiffen states that the book is a self-help book. It is surely structured as a self-help book, with real-life case examples and “Questions to Ask Yourself” at the end of each chapter. However, unlike most self-help books, A Secret Sadness presents substantive, informed summaries of state-of-the-art empirical research to support the book’s advice and claims. Some of the research cited is Whiffen’s own work. Indeed, one of the greatest strengths of this book is Whiffen’s expertise as a researcher and clinician. Throughout the book, her insights are informed by a thorough understanding of current evidence and practice regarding the etiology and treatment of women’s depression. This informed stance gives the book a compelling and engaging quality rarely found in psychology books that are written for a nonacademic audience.

A Secret Sadness is organized in a manner that allows readers to examine specific depression-related factors that may be present in their lives. The introduction briefly explains that the book is intended for depressed women and the people close to them. The first main chapter of the book outlines the symptoms of depression and how these symptoms manifest themselves in three case examples of women from Whiffen’s practice. These three women are presented throughout the book to illustrate the various risk factors, life experiences, and treatment approaches that form the book’s content. The case examples are well chosen, and the three women are described in a manner that is sympathetic, yet straightforward in its analysis.

The second chapter, which focuses on the role of biological processes in women’s depression, is also very direct; Whiffen states that “there is no evidence that reproductive hormones cause depression” (p. 20). That statement is just one example of how Whiffen dispels myths concerning what is known (and what is not yet known) about the causes of depression in women. She also explains the complex interaction that exists between genetic risk and life stress in bringing about a depressive episode. In such explanations, Whiffen exemplifies the writer’s dictum “Know how complicated it is and then state it simply” (Hemingway, 1986, p. 37). She presents the current state of scientific evidence and knowledge around the issue of biological risk factors in a concise manner, while still accurately articulating the current challenges faced by researchers in accounting for women’s elevated risk of depression during the reproductive years. The reader sees that biology alone is likely not the cause of depression, even during the postpartum, menstrual, and menopausal phases of a woman’s life.

Whiffen is able to use the research literature and her clinical expertise to encourage the depressed woman reading this book to examine her whole life in searching for possible causes of her depression. This examination includes careful consideration of current stressors, as well as past traumas. Three of the 10 chapters of the book are dedicated to a discussion of attachment styles and childhood abuse. Whiffen details the possible causal pathways of influence between childhood trauma and depression in adulthood. Because that discussion is a dominant theme in A Secret Sadness, this book may be most useful for women looking to better understand the roots of patterns of recurrent depression in their lives, rather than for women coping with one current singular stressor that is depressogenic. However, Whiffen does devote attention to the importance of gender-role expectations in accounting for women’s experience of life stress and consequent depression. In Chapter Three, entitled “The Process of Living Is Stressful,” she cites current research in describing the types of stressors that are most likely to cause depression, as well as key protective factors, including the importance of having a confidante who provides guidance and support.

The book certainly succeeds at demonstrating how some current relationship behaviors that are problematic may have served an adaptive function for a woman earlier in her life, especially in the context of childhood abuse. Such information can be highly
enlightening for depressed women who engage in self-blame concerning their self-destructive behaviors. Also helpful is Whiffen's reframing of potentially pathologizing terms that are often applied to depressed women. For instance, she favors the phrase "blind spots" over the label "cognitive distortions." She details how certain types of blind spots, such as not recognizing one's need for independence within a damaging relationship, can make women vulnerable to recurrent depression. However, it is also evident in her descriptions that everyone, male and female, has blind spots. Such normalization in Whiffen's writing allows for a combined effect of nonblaming and clarity.

Another strength of this book is its practical guidance concerning different types of treatment approaches and how to seek a suitable therapist. In addition to describing the broad range of available treatment options for depression, Whiffen outlines the techniques and strategies that were instrumental in the course of treatment for each of the three case examples of women she has presented in the book. She also recounts the key roles played by the women's readiness for change, the presence of a supportive social network, and the therapeutic relationship in determining the effectiveness of treatment.

As a self-help book, A Secret Sadness is decidedly psychological and quite apolitical. There is not a great amount of content concerning the role of societal oppression in increasing women's risk of depression. However, Whiffen does address the role of the social context of women's lives (including their work lives, friendships, and lives at home) in demonstrating the complex interplay between various sources of risk. She also focuses on much more than just symptoms in describing the experience of depression and recovery from depression. Whiffen has accomplished something rare and crucial in writing this book; she has done justice to the women whose lives and relationships are so dramatically impacted by the devastation of depression. Moreover, she has shown the powerful synergy that can exist between empirical research and sound practice in helping women cope with depression and its consequences.

REFERENCE


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WHERE ARE WE FIVE DECADES LATER? A SCHOLARLY JOURNEY INTO THE NATURE OF PREJUDICE


Dovidio, Glick, and Budman bring together an intellectual discourse of some of the world's most eminent scholars to take an incisive look at the past, present, and future study of stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination, particularly as it pertains to the application of Allport's (1954) seminal work, The Nature of Prejudice. Lucid, compelling, comprehensive, and informative, this book is a tribute to the original works of Gordon Allport, generated more than half a century ago. This book is written from a position of passion and eloquence which speaks to the enduring quality of Allport's intellectual legacy. Furthermore, the authors attempt to answer whether or not his work is applicable to society's present mode of oppression, discrimination, and prejudice.

The authors present readers with a multidimensional look into 50 years of social psychological research on prejudice and discrimination. This volume begins with a general overview of Allport's The Nature of Prejudice and then guides readers through the major themes outlined in Allport's original work. Every section ranges in content from understanding and identifying the dynamics involved in the structure, function, acquisition, and impact of prejudice, to the individual and group processes involved in the application and evaluation of programs designed to eradicate or reduce it.

Each chapter is prefaced by a brief summary of Allport's influence on the chapter theme, followed by the author's goals for the chapter, including a critical analysis of past and present research and theory development and concludes with the future direction of the chapter's theme. Each chapter of this volume takes readers through dimensions of historical significance, such as the impact of prejudice on the experience of World War II, the desegregation of public schools, and modern forms of discrimination and prejudice in the United States. This work can be used to stimulate difficult dialogues, as well as encourage scholars to engage in vital research related to diversity. It presents a multifaceted interpretation of the study of prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination. This book is an important resource for students and researchers in nearly any field of social inquiry, such as psychology, sociology, communications, gender studies, and business.

This book contributes to feminist scholarship by filling in some of the gaps not addressed in The Nature of Prejudice. Laurie Budman's chapter, which brings life to this volume by challenging Allport enthusiasts, uncovers the hidden sources of gender-based prejudice and discrimination. There are other notable chapters in this volume that give less attention to gender-based ideology, but are clearly relevant to feminist scholarship. For example, in chapter two, Alice Eagly and Amanda Diekman highlight sexism as a form of prejudice neglected by Allport. Also, in chapter six Mary Jackman identifies the relevance of gender-based scholarship in challenging some of the assumptions outlined in Allport's work. Furthermore, in chapter 13 John Jost and David Hamilton challenge Allport's original assumption of stereotypes as negative and discuss a process in which the status quo is legitimized by stereotypes, referring to it as a "system justification function" (p. 218). Eliot Smith and Diane Mackie's chapter reiterates the importance of the "stereotype content model" (pp. 369–370), which suggests that women receive sympathetic treatment as a result of being stereotyped as incompetent (p. 372). In chapter 25, C. Daniel Batson and E. L. Stocks examine the reasons why racism and sexism are the most commonly studied forms of prejudice. Lastly, the notable chapter by Brian Mullen and Tirza Learner addresses the contemporary and controversial topic of linguistic diversity. This chapter might be of particular relevance to linguists and those interested in the intersection of prejudice and language-related factors.
Despite the volume not having an exclusive focus on gender-based initiatives, feminist scholarship can benefit from this work in the analysis of deeply rooted forms of gender-based discrimination and oppression. Moreover, this volume challenges readers to have the courage to go beyond the original analysis concerning prejudice and discrimination delineated by Allport. Instead, the general themes of the chapters urge readers to take a critical look at its impact on the social, cultural, economic, and political realities of today. As chapters 20 through 22 have articulated, contemporary society presents us with new and more complex challenges to address the sophisticated institutionalized forms of oppression, racism, and discrimination.

The various authors credit Allport throughout this volume for his landmark contributions. Furthermore, they expound upon, critically analyze, and challenge some of his themes that may not apply to the more subtle forms of discrimination that currently pervade U.S. culture.

One of the strengths of this volume is the structural format and clarity with which each chapter is written. Readers can feel comfortable in knowing that, depending on their purpose, select chapters can be chosen from the text to fit their use. Some relevant limitations are the discrepancies in interpretation of Allport’s work from chapter to chapter. An additional noteworthy challenge of this volume is the lack of chapter analysis regarding less researched areas of prejudice, such as, disability, age, and sexual orientation. Furthermore, without clear knowledge of Allport’s original work, some chapters may be more challenging to comprehend than others, not only due to the content, quality, and diversity in style of writing, but also because some of the writers refer to themes outlined in the original text without a full explanation within the present volume.

The editorial quest to investigate and understand the multiple dimensions and complexity of prejudice was clearly apparent and was successfully achieved by the authors and editors. This book is a must read for the next generation of scholars who plan to investigate stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination.

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TRUTH TELLING THROUGH RESEARCH


Developmental researchers, Leadbeater and Way, present a second volume of research on the lives and development of urban girls, a population as understudied as it is stereotyped. The book, following in the footsteps of its predecessor, *Urban Girls: Resisting Stereotypes, Creating Identities*, is a compendium of research studies, qualitative and quantitative, by scholars and researchers from diverse disciplines in the social sciences. This book continues the intellectual mission of the editors’ earlier publication. The aim of this most recent edition is to undo misconceptions about young women growing up in poor, urban minority communities by telling truths through research. The focus of this second collection is on the strengths of these girls, challenging misperceptions of this population as deficient (i.e., typically thought of and studied in terms of educational failures, early pregnancy, drug use, etc.).

Both editors are well-known researchers who preferentially study groups that lie outside of mainstream social science research, thereby enlarging or correcting the current body of knowledge about human development (Way, 1998; Leadbeater & Way, 2001a, b). This book acknowledges Carol Gilligan’s gender critique and repair of social science’s avoidance, which articulates the practice of silencing the worlds of girls and women. Gilligan (1982) long ago illustrated how unknown gender bias widely influenced theoretical claims from developmental research. Leadbeater and Way’s contribution to Gilligan’s feminist-inspired research agenda (e.g., Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995) is to shine that lantern on girls who are cast even further outside the mainstream by virtue not only of gender, but also poverty and ethnicity. This important second book highlights ways to be inclusive and equitable in investigating the growth and development of all youth. Lead better and Way are two of a number of researchers who continue to be interested in uncovering how humans develop, particularly those on the outskirts of mainstream existence where there are considerable impediments to what is often termed “normative development.”

Because the book is a compendium of research on a topic, a reader can flip through the text to find chapters with new information on specific topics, such as the actual sexual practices of Latina youth, resistance practices of African American families, effectiveness of mentorship, and basic and applied theory. But whether intended or not, this is a book that, read cover to cover, has a story to tell about the lives and development of a population rarely viewed outside the lens of stereotypes.

Part I opens the story with new theoretical ways of studying the development of urban girls. Part II offers the lived experiences of these teens that undergirds the theories. One of the major highlights of this book is the shifting of the concept of resilience to include context. Several researchers demonstrate how mentors, friends, mothers, and even researchers are vital to urban teens overcoming adversity. Parts III and IV add to that expansion. Part III focuses on culture with an entry about Hmong girls. The two studies in Part IV show how resistance practices can empower and thus counter the potential deleterious effects of increased awareness of race and class relations (p. 91).

Parts V and VI present issues that any theory of resilience would have to include. Studies on sexuality in Part V offer a correction to views popularized even within the health care establishment. In the spirit of truth telling, the book closes with a stunning 20-year ethnographic report of an inner-city neighborhood that shows the increasing adversities facing newer generations of urban girls.

The book has interwoven political and scholarly goals in an epistemological way to foment change within the scholarly community and beyond. The research methods developed to uncover knowledge about normative development in youth were typically devised from studies with children and families of sufficient means—people who do not struggle to overcome hurdles to living, but
expect and enact lives that have little in common with lives that begin and remain precarious due to scant resources and oppressive living conditions. The humanistic and academic goals of the authors combine nicely to provide studies that show not only a wider and more accurate glimpse into the lives of urban girls, but also point the way for researchers to improve their methods for studying development.

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