

THE ASSESSMENT OF IMPULSIVITY AND AGGRESSION AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO VICTIM PERCEPTION RISK IN DOMESTIC ABUSE

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OVERVIEW

- ▶ Background of PhD
 - Impulsivity and Aggression
 - Risk assessing
- ▶ Research questions
- ▶ Phases of study
- ▶ Summary

VICTIM JUDGEMENTS OF RISK

The research literature argues both for and against victim accuracy in assessing risk of harm.

- ▶ **Victims as the expert of the abuser and attuned to their behaviours and cycles of violence** (Hart & Gondolf, 1994; Weisz, Tolman, & Saunders, 2000; De Becker, 1994)
- ▶ **Victim trauma means they minimise the danger in order to cope with the abuse, as well as affecting their confidence in the legitimacy of their insights** (e.g. Dutton & Dionne, 1991; Campbell, 1995).

BACKGROUND

Impulsivity

A tendency to act on the spur of the moment, without planning or a clear sense of decision or desire, or without deliberation (Carver, 2005; Shapiro, 1965)

Cognitive (such as making quick decisions)

Motor (acting without thinking)

Non-planning (lack of forethought)

-Barratt (e.g. 1985)

Aggression

A goal-directed motor behaviour that has a deliberate intent to harm or injure another object or person (Berkowitz, 1993)

Physical aggression

Verbal aggression

Hostility

Anger

-Buss-Perry (e.g. 1992)

BACKGROUND

► **Relationship between aggression and impulsivity** (Hollander & Stein, 1995; Farrington, 1991), **and impulsivity can reliably distinguish offenders from non-offenders** (Smith & Waterman, 2006; Pallone & Hennessy, 1996)

► Previous research has found raised levels of both impulsivity and aggression in the personalities of perpetrators of domestic abuse (Edwards, Scott, Yavis, Palzis, & Panizon, 2003; Tweed & Dutton, 1998; Shorey, Brasfield, Febres & Stuart, 2011)

► Vast amount of theories posed over the years of domestic abuse, which shows some overlaps in aggression and impulsivity theories

BACKGROUND – ASSESSING RISK

• **Multiple sources of information, including measures of personality** (Whittemore & Kropp, 2002)

• **Example: Spousal assault risk assessment (SARA) - 20 items, to be used on perpetrator and victims**

- measures anger and impulsivity via perpetrators directly

What about when a person approaches a service and discloses?

BACKGROUND – ASSESSING RISK

- UK Family practitioners and police current practice:

Domestic abuse, stalking and 'honour'-based violence (DASH) risk identification checklist (RIC)

- Complements current statutory approaches and informs MARAC meetings
- Assessment done with the adult victim only using a checklist of widely known risk factors
- Does not** assess victim's perception of aggression and impulsivity of their abuser

Section of form	Date	Assessor's name (signature)	Section of form	Date	Assessor's name (signature)
<p>Section 1: General information</p> <p>1.1 Name of victim (if known) _____</p> <p>1.2 Date of assessment _____</p> <p>1.3 Location of assessment _____</p> <p>1.4 Name of assessor _____</p> <p>1.5 Reason for referral _____</p>					
<p>Section 2: Risk assessment</p> <p>2.1 Has the victim been threatened or harmed by the perpetrator? (Yes/No) _____</p> <p>2.2 Has the victim been threatened or harmed by the perpetrator in the last 12 months? (Yes/No) _____</p> <p>2.3 Has the victim been threatened or harmed by the perpetrator in the last 6 months? (Yes/No) _____</p> <p>2.4 Has the victim been threatened or harmed by the perpetrator in the last 3 months? (Yes/No) _____</p> <p>2.5 Has the victim been threatened or harmed by the perpetrator in the last 1 month? (Yes/No) _____</p> <p>2.6 Has the victim been threatened or harmed by the perpetrator in the last 2 weeks? (Yes/No) _____</p> <p>2.7 Has the victim been threatened or harmed by the perpetrator in the last 7 days? (Yes/No) _____</p> <p>2.8 Has the victim been threatened or harmed by the perpetrator in the last 24 hours? (Yes/No) _____</p> <p>2.9 Has the victim been threatened or harmed by the perpetrator in the last 12 hours? (Yes/No) _____</p> <p>2.10 Has the victim been threatened or harmed by the perpetrator in the last 6 hours? (Yes/No) _____</p> <p>2.11 Has the victim been threatened or harmed by the perpetrator in the last 3 hours? (Yes/No) _____</p> <p>2.12 Has the victim been threatened or harmed by the perpetrator in the last 1 hour? (Yes/No) _____</p> <p>2.13 Has the victim been threatened or harmed by the perpetrator in the last 30 minutes? (Yes/No) _____</p> <p>2.14 Has the victim been threatened or harmed by the perpetrator in the last 15 minutes? (Yes/No) _____</p> <p>2.15 Has the victim been threatened or harmed by the perpetrator in the last 5 minutes? (Yes/No) _____</p> <p>2.16 Has the victim been threatened or harmed by the perpetrator in the last 1 minute? (Yes/No) _____</p> <p>2.17 Has the victim been threatened or harmed by the perpetrator in the last 30 seconds? (Yes/No) _____</p> <p>2.18 Has the victim been threatened or harmed by the perpetrator in the last 15 seconds? (Yes/No) _____</p> <p>2.19 Has the victim been threatened or harmed by the perpetrator in the last 5 seconds? (Yes/No) _____</p> <p>2.20 Has the victim been threatened or harmed by the perpetrator in the last 1 second? (Yes/No) _____</p>					
<p>Section 3: Risk factors</p> <p>3.1 Age of victim (if known) _____</p> <p>3.2 Sex of victim (if known) _____</p> <p>3.3 Ethnicity of victim (if known) _____</p> <p>3.4 Religion of victim (if known) _____</p> <p>3.5 Marital status of victim (if known) _____</p> <p>3.6 Number of children (if known) _____</p> <p>3.7 Number of previous partners (if known) _____</p> <p>3.8 Number of previous assaults (if known) _____</p> <p>3.9 Number of previous threats (if known) _____</p> <p>3.10 Number of previous attempts (if known) _____</p> <p>3.11 Number of previous injuries (if known) _____</p> <p>3.12 Number of previous hospital admissions (if known) _____</p> <p>3.13 Number of previous police contacts (if known) _____</p> <p>3.14 Number of previous court orders (if known) _____</p> <p>3.15 Number of previous convictions (if known) _____</p> <p>3.16 Number of previous sentences (if known) _____</p> <p>3.17 Number of previous fines (if known) _____</p> <p>3.18 Number of previous community orders (if known) _____</p> <p>3.19 Number of previous probation orders (if known) _____</p> <p>3.20 Number of previous prison sentences (if known) _____</p>					
<p>Section 4: Summary</p> <p>4.1 Overall risk level (Low/Medium/High) _____</p> <p>4.2 Recommended actions _____</p> <p>4.3 Date of next assessment _____</p> <p>4.4 Assessor's signature _____</p> <p>4.5 Date of signature _____</p>					

Children

- Children focus:**
 - What can they tell us?
 - Play therapy and information gathering.
 - Along with adult's risk assessment, can the children contribute?
- "Child centered assessment is the direct inclusion, where appropriate, of the child... where research with children highlights their need to be listened to and included in the decisions affecting their lives" (Holt, Buckley & Whelan, 2008, p. 807)

THESIS AIMS

Impulsivity and aggression levels are currently not measured in victim perception risk assessments, such as the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and 'Honour' Based Violence - Risk Identification Checklist (DASH-RIC).

Multiple sources suggested, but current focus is on adult victim only, with a risk factors checklist

- ▶ **Aims:** Inform victim-perception risk assessments in two ways:
 1. Explore perpetrator personality constructs reported by the victim (aggression and impulsivity)
 2. Explore the potential contribution of child victim accounts
- ▶ Mixed methods study



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the experience of risk in domestic abuse for victims/survivors?
- What are the theoretical relationships between victim observed aggression, impulsivity and domestic abuse?
- Are the above relationships predictive of risk in domestic abuse?
- Are victims/survivors able to identify aggression and impulsivity and the risks these present to themselves and their children?

EXPLORATION OF RISK IN DOMESTIC ABUSE

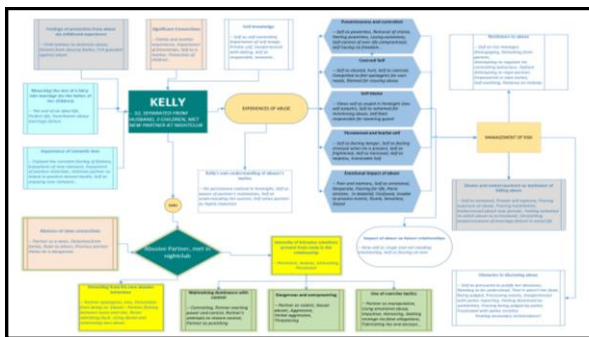
- ▶ **Three phases of study using mixed methods:**
 - Study 1: Qualitative, interviews with adult survivors
 - Study 2: Quantitative, questionnaires with students & general population
 - Study 3: Qualitative case study, narrative interview with survivor/and their children
- ▶ Ethical approval
- ▶ Sensitive research
- ▶ Recruitment

PHASE ONE – QUALITATIVE STUDY WITH SURVIVORS

- ▶ Semi-structured interviews with survivors of domestic abuse (n=6)
- ▶ Recruited from a brief domestic abuse survey at Leeds Trinity University
- ▶ Exploration of the lived experience of risk in domestic abuse using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)
- ▶ Five emergent superordinate themes

INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS (IPA)

- ▶ Phenomenology
 - Participant as the expert of the phenomenon
 - Lifeworld of the participant
 - Bracketing
- ▶ Idiographic
- ▶ Interpretation
 - Double hermeneutic and the hermeneutic circle
- ▶ Development of themes, sub themes then superordinate themes



EMERGENT THEMES

Superordinate Themes

Concepts of self, and relationships with others

Recollections of abusive behaviours

Psychological trauma

Heightened awareness of risk, and actions of managing it

Partner's characteristics as intense and troubling

Subordinate Themes

- Self-knowledge
- Romance and attraction experiences
- Significance of mother as both a barrier and route to safety
- Coercion, manipulation, emotional abuse
- Power and control
- Anger and aggressive behaviour
- Outpowered via control
- Coerced, leading to feelings of shame, guilt and self-blame
- Emotional confusion
- Long term, and ongoing, impact of abuse
- Sensing abuser's dangerousness
- Beating/abuse
- Risk management
- Hidden children
- Impulsive behaviours
- Arrogance
- Intense emotions
- Alcohol and drug taking
- Troubling relationship with own family

RISK

"You never knew when, but you knew it was going to happen at some point. You just didn't know when." (Charlotte)

"I would do everything he told me to do, or I'd sit there quietly but then that would get him more angry, if I cried it would get him more angry because, why was I like that? Erm, anything I did wasn't right and I'd just try, say if I was crying and he shouted at me for that I would try and stop, but then I'd start shaking so then I was in the wrong for shaking. I just couldn't do anything right." (Charlotte)

"I was not comfortable to leave him alone with the children whatsoever, at all" (Elena)

"Everything became about keeping him happy, keeping him calm." (Elena)

AGGRESSION AND IMPULSIVITY

"He was in debt, he was in a mess, but he lived for the spur of the moment" (Emily)

"There's lots of incidences where he'd been to work and then he would have gone straight to the city centre before coming home, and he'd come home with, you know, an arm full of new computer gear when there's like no food in the house, you know." (Elena)

"He got like really aggressive and he like grabbed me and banged me against the wall. It was the first time that he'd ever hurt me like that and I don't think he was doing it to hurt me. I think he was just so frustrated." (Yasmine)

"He was always you never knew, he was so unpredictable... his mum said something to him once straight away that's if he's gone for her, like he doesn't think about." (Charlotte)

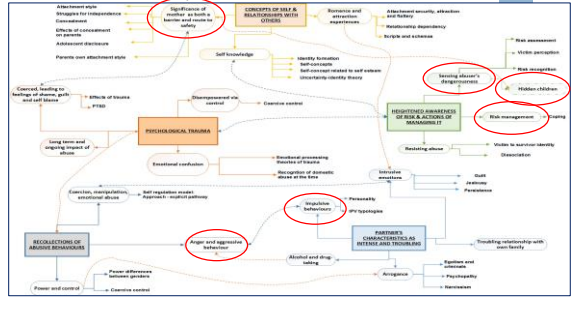
"It would just be like a flicked switch in his head and he'd swoop down to the floor pick the brick up and stand over the children with his hand held high." (Elena)

SIGNIFICANCE OF MOTHER

"I had to walk and I literally ran from his flat when he let me out. I had to call a friend to get me a taxi to, because I couldn't call my mum, she knew I was with him but she didn't know. I didn't even think that I could talk to her, at all"
(Charlotte)

"The only reason I got rid of her [abusive partner] was because of my mum. My mum was the only reason that she left"
(Lyndsey)

Phase One - Summary



PHASE TWO – QUESTIONNAIRE STUDY

- ▶ 113 participants.
- Ages from 18 to 70 ($M=30.38$, $SD=12.68$). 95 (84.1%) females and 18 (15.9%) males.
- ▶ Each participant was instructed to report on their current, or most recent, partner within the questionnaire.
- Ages of partners ranged from 16 to 78 ($M=31.31$, $SD=13.01$) 24 (21.2%) females and 89 (78.8%) males.

METHOD

- ▶ Battery of questionnaires distributed in general population and Leeds Trinity University. Eligibility was to be over 18 and to have had at least one partner.

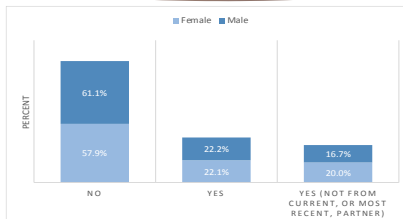
Self-report and reports of partner

- ▶ Barratt Impulsivity Scale (BIS)
- ▶ Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ)
- ▶ Aggressive Acts Questionnaire (AAQ)

Self-report only

- ▶ Domestic abuse survey (incl. items on DA and CC experience)
- ▶ Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence Risk Identification Tool (DASH RIC)

FINDINGS – EXPERIENCES OF COERCIVE CONTROL AND DOMESTIC ABUSE



CORRELATIONS OF BIS, BPAQ & AAQ

▶ Self-report:

BIS (M = 61.81, SD = 8.82) and the BPAQ (M = 64.05, SD = 16.48), $r(113) = .21, p < .05$.

▶ Reports on their partners:

BIS (M = 66.84, SD = 12.90) and the BPAQ (M = 69.75, SD = 25.28), $r(113) = .55, p < .01$.

BPAQ (M = 69.75, SD = 25.28) and the AAQ (M = 104.83, SD = 56.31), $r(43) = .52, p < .01$.

BIS (M = 66.84, SD = 12.90) and the AAQ (M = 104.83, SD = 56.31), $r(43) = .34, p < .05$.

BIS = Barratt Impulsivity Scale.
BPAQ = Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire.
AAQ = Aggressive Acts Questionnaire

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN BIS, BPAQ & AAQ AND THE DASH-RIC

Reports of Partner	DASH RIC
BIS Motor	.24
BIS Cognitive	.19
BIS Non-Planning	.29**
BIS Total	.29**
BPAQ Physical Aggression	.55**
BPAQ Verbal Aggression	.27
BPAQ Anger	.42*
BPAQ Hostility	.57**
BPAQ Total	.55**
AAQ Impulsive Aggression	.43*
AAQ Mood	.56**
AAQ Premeditated Aggression	.70**
AAQ Agitation	.55**
AAQ Total	.57**

N=35. ** 0.01 * 0.05 (one-tailed)

BIS = Barratt Impulsivity Scale.
BPAQ = Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire.
AAQ = Aggressive Acts Questionnaire
DASH-RIC = Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence Risk Identification Checklist

DIFFERENCES IN SCORES – IMPULSIVITY

	Non-Victim/Survivor of CC/DA (N=66)				Victim/Survivor of CC/DA (N=25)				Mann-Whitney U test			
	Mean	SD	Median	Range	Mean	SD	Median	Range	U	Z	p	q2
Participant own score												
BIS Total Score	60.91	9.03	59.5	49	63.36	7.79	66	28	664.5	-1.43	.08	-
BIS Motor	21.33	3.80	21	20	21.48	3.06	22	10	782.5	-.38	.35	-
BIS Cognitive	15.95	3.26	15	16	17.92	3.08	18	13	497	-2.93	.002**	.10
BIS Non-Planning	23.62	4.62	23	21	23.96	4.45	24	18	761.5	-.57	.29	-
Participant ratings of most recent partner												
BIS Total Score	63.62	12.10	64.5	53	75.12	13.68	73	58	445	-3.38	.001**	.13
BIS Motor	22.70	4.60	22	18	25.32	5.46	25	21	604.5	-1.96	.03*	.04
BIS Cognitive	15.61	3.48	16	15	18.68	3.66	19	14	451	-3.34	.001**	.12
BIS Non-Planning	25.32	6.05	25.5	24	31.12	6.6	31	25	432	-3.50	.001**	.14

*p<0.05 ** p<0.01 (one-tailed)

BIS = Barratt Impulsivity Scale.
BPAQ = Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire.
AAQ = Aggressive Acts Questionnaire

DIFFERENCES IN SCORES – AGGRESSION

	Non-Victim/Survivor of CC/DA (N=66)				Victim/Survivor of CC/DA (N=25)				Mann-Whitney U test			
	Mean	SD	Median	Range	Mean	SD	Median	Range	U	Z	p	q2
Participant own score												
BPAQ Total Score	60.89	16.27	58	72	72.96	17.97	75	83	508.5	-2.82	.003**	.09
BPAQ Physical Aggression	16.98	6.44	15.5	30	20.2	7.27	18	31	584	-2.15	.02*	.05
BPAQ Verbal Aggression	12.55	4.17	11	19	13.72	4.60	14	17	294.5	-1.39	.08	-
BPAQ Anger	14.88	4.86	15	20	17.52	5.12	17	20	573	-2.25	.013*	.06
BPAQ Hostility	16.48	6.00	17	25	21.52	5.87	21	22	458	-3.27	.001**	.12
Participant ratings of most recent partner												
BPAQ Total Score	60.53	19.12	55	83	98.04	22.12	98	78	170	-5.83	.001**	.38
BPAQ Physical Aggression	18.56	7.34	16.5	33	29.16	10.25	29	32	346	-4.26	.001**	.20
BPAQ Verbal Aggression	12.36	4.66	12	19	18.24	4.69	19	20	294.5	-1.73	.001**	.25
BPAQ Anger	14.17	5.72	12	21	24.68	7.21	27	28	230.5	-5.29	.001**	.32
BPAQ Hostility	15.44	6.16	14	24	25.96	7.04	26	23	198.5	-5.58	.001**	.35

*p<0.05 ** p<0.01 (one-tailed)

BIS = Barratt Impulsivity Scale.
BPAQ = Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire.
AAQ = Aggressive Acts Questionnaire

DIFFERENCES IN SCORES – AGGRESSIVE ACTS

	Non-Victim/Survivor of CCDA (N=20)				Victim/Survivor of CCDA (N=13)				Mann-Whitney U test		
	Mean	SD	Median	Range	Mean	SD	Median	Range	U	Z	p
Participant own score											
AAQ Total Score	73.95	41.89	52	141	114.85	67.64	100	181	84.5	-1.68	.08*
AAQ Impulsive Aggression	27.2	16.95	31	62	43.31	25.95	41	79	80	-1.85	.08*
AAQ Moral	20.80	13.80	14.50	48	32.62	19.07	26	52	81	-1.81	.04*
AAQ Premeditated Aggression	10.78	4.35	9.5	13	15.38	8.46	13	22	100.5	-1.10	.14
AAQ Apportion	13.2	8.54	10	28	23.54	15.27	20	40	103.5	-.081	.10
Participant ratings of most recent partner											
AAQ Total Score	76.53	50.80	53.5	163	136.5	54.51	137	173	61	-3.20	.001**
AAQ Impulsive Aggression	28.22	19.92	20.50	57	47.44	18.87	46.5	62	72	-2.85	.002**
AAQ Moral	20.44	13.11	14.5	45	36.17	14.01	36	48	62.5	-3.15	.001**
AAQ Premeditated Aggression	9.61	8.38	6	31	21.89	12.63	21.5	40	58	-3.30	.001**
AAQ Apportion	18.06	12.28	13	46	31	11.99	30.5	42	62.5	-3.15	.001**

*p<.05 **p<.01 (one-tailed)

BS = Barratt Impulsivity Scale.
BPAQ = Bus-Perry Aggression Questionnaire.
AAQ = Aggressive Acts Questionnaire

SUMMARY

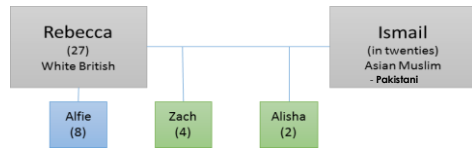
- ▶ Victims/survivors have ability to judge aggression and impulsivity in abuser
- ▶ Currently used risk assessment (DASH-RIC) correlates with impulsivity and aggression
- ▶ Victims/survivors self-reported higher scores on some factors of aggression and aggressive acts, and also on cognitive impulsivity – effects of abuse

PHASE THREE – SURVIVOR FAMILY CASE STUDY

- ▶ Exploration of parent/child experiences and dynamics
- ▶ Children's awareness of domestic abuse
- ▶ Narrative inquiry
- ▶ Play techniques



THE FAMILY



ADULT SURVIVOR THEMES - REBECCA

Areas	Themes
1. Mother's Acknowledgement of Risk to Children	a. The journey towards understanding her children's fear b. Children's implicit and proactive interventions of abuse
2. Acknowledging Risk	a. Risk perception as a sensation b. Observing the signs of dangerousness
3. Impulsivity & Aggression	a. The blurred perceptions of impulsivity b. The effects of dependency on acknowledging aggression
4. Other Emergent Themes	a. Reflections on accommodating the abuse b. The transition from rejection to acceptance of parental intervention

CHILD OBSERVATIONS

- ▶ Children's natural language is play (Landreth, 2002)
- ▶ Sand trays are widely used by play therapists as a technique (e.g. Enns & Kasai, 2003; Grubbs, 1994; Kalf, 2003)
- ▶ Rarely used as a tool for gathering research data











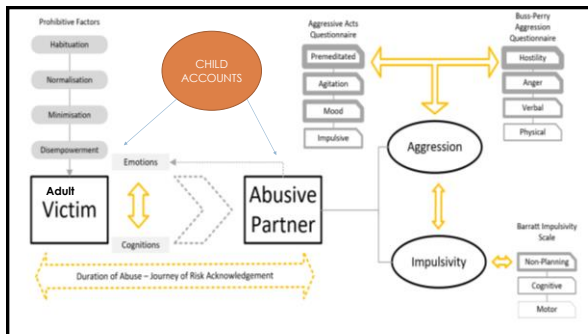
THOUGHTS?

THEMES

<p>► ZACH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ambivalence towards 'daddy' (Mullender et al, 2002; Peled, 2000) - Safety concerns (Goldblatt, 2003; Georgsson, Almqvist, & Broberg, 2011) - Retelling brother's narrative - Fearful of father (Clark, 2003; Malchiodi, 1997; Clements, 1996) 	<p>► ALFIE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Destruction of the step-father's identity - Loss and isolation (Hart, Brassard & Karlson, 1996; Holden, 2003) - Powerful anger (Lundy and Grossman, 2005)
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OVERALL SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS IN THREE PHASES OF STUDY

- ▶ Evidence that domestic abuse victims are able to make judgements on partners' impulsivity and aggression levels
- ▶ Victim observed aggression, impulsivity and domestic abuse reflect the links in the research literature on perpetrator self-reports.
- ▶ Risk 'feelings' and risk management for further exploration
- ▶ Importance of child recollections, and use of play as a non-intrusive/indirect technique
- ▶ Results informs currently used risk assessments
- ▶ Further research needed, e.g. larger samples, couple comparisons



Thanks for listening

- ▶ Any questions?

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