**Plattform für Umfragen,
Methoden und empirische Analysen (PUMA)**

PUMA Survey V.3

Ergebnisberichte der einzelnen PUMA-Befragungsmodule

September 2018

Plattform für Umfragen, Methoden und empirische Analysen (PUMA)
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VORWORT

PUMA, die **Plattform für Umfragen, Methoden und empirische Analysen** ist ein Kooperationsprojekt, das vom Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung (BMBWF) im Rahmen der Hochschulraumstrukturmittel 2013 gefördert wird.

PUMA schreibt in regelmäßigen Abständen die Förderung sozialwissenschaftlicher Umfragemodule aus, aus denen nach einem externen anonymen Begutachtungsverfahren die besten Einreichungen ausgewählt werden.

Im folgenden Bericht finden Sie die zentralen Ergebnisse des PUMA Survey V.3. Die Datensätze können für wissenschaftliche Zwecke kostenfrei über das Austrian Social Science Data Archive (AUSSDA) angefragt werden.

Der vorliegende Bericht ist mit folgender Referenzierung zu nutzen:

PUMA (2018). PUMA Survey V.3. Modulberichte. Einblicke in Österreichs gesellschaftlichen Wandel, Wien.

Die PUMA-Projektleiterin

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Sylvia Kritzinger
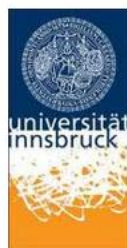
Informationen zum Projekt PUMA:

Name: Plattform für Umfragen, Methoden und empirische Analysen (PUMA)
Laufzeit: 2014-2018
Leitung: Universität Wien, Univ.-Prof. Dr. Sylvia Kritzinger
Projektkoordination: Mag. Dr. Katharina Götsch

Partnerorganisationen:

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Informationen zur Befragung

Allgemeines

Der PUMA Survey V.3 besteht aus zwei einzelnen Modulen, die gemeinsam in einer Umfrage eingesetzt wurden. Die Module wurden über eine öffentliche Ausschreibung von PUMA eingereicht und einem externen anonymen Begutachtungsverfahren unterzogen.

Die Befragung wurde von PUMA (unter der Leitung der Universität Wien) beauftragt und von *MarketAgent* durchgeführt. Die Finanzierung der PUMA Surveys sowie des PUMA-Projekts erfolgt durch das BMBWF im Rahmen der Hochschulraumstrukturmittel 2013.

Die Umfrage wurde als Online-Befragung durchgeführt.

Die Umfrage fand in deutscher Sprache statt. Einige der folgenden Teilberichte sind in englischer Sprache verfasst, da die Teams teilweise multilingual zusammengesetzt sind.

Es handelte sich um eine Querschnittsbefragung.

Stichprobe

Grundlage für die Stichprobe ist die Wohnbevölkerung in Österreich zwischen 16 und 74 Jahren mit der Einschränkung, dass nur wahlberechtigte RespondentInnen ausgewählt wurden.

Nettostichprobe (Quotenstichprobe für Österreich, ausschließlich Wahlberechtigte):

n=617

Erhebungszeitraum

Start: 1.8.2018

Ende: 10.8.2018

Principal Investigators

Die Namen der jeweiligen ModulurheberInnen finden Sie in den entsprechenden Abschnitten dieses Dokuments.

Den **Fragebogen** finden Sie auf der PUMA-Website unter: https://www.puma-plattform.at/puma-umfragen/

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Inhaltsverzeichnis:

Überblick über die Module

1. Trick of the Traits.

An experimental study on trait ownership and mediated leader effects.

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Abstract

This study tests, by means of a survey experiment, how leader perceptions are affected by media portrayals of party leaders in terms of their leadership traits, and to what extent partisan stereotypes and trait ownership moderates this relationship.

Goal and Contribution

Research has shown that citizens' subjective party leader perceptions, especially in terms of leadership traits, affect voting behavior (e.g., Bittner, 2011; Aarts, Blais, & Schmitt, 2013). What remains a largely unresolved question, however, is which trait evaluations matter most. The main goal of this study is to test how media messages of party leaders in terms of their leadership traits affects voters' perception of those party leaders and to what extent trait ownership moderates this relation. The contribution of the study is threefold. First, it takes into account that current political life is highly mediatized by focusing on *mediated* leader effects. Second, it strengthens the causal claim of (the conditionality) of leader effects by using an experimental research design as opposed to correlational data. Third, it is the first to test the theory of trait ownership in Austria and therefore (completely) outside the two-party context of the US.

Theoretical Framework

The primary focus in the leader effects literature is on the psychological variable of a leader's personality: the public values certain personality traits in political leaders and these can be sufficiently attractive to persuade voters to deviate from their habitual voting choices and cast their ballots for another party. The general perception of a party leader has its foundations (at least partly) in the public's perceptions of a leader's character (e.g., Shabad & Andersen, 1979; Greene, 2001). However, what in a leader's personality sways voters? Research on leader effects has sought an answer to this question by examining which trait evaluations affect vote decisions. Based on a large-scale literature review, Aaldering and Vliegenthart (2016) provide a conceptualization of leadership traits that integrates existing research on leadership characteristics, and formulate five traits: *political skills*, *vigorousness*, *integrity*, *communicative skills*, and *consistency*[1]. Most scholarship in this field is

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[1] Political skills concerns the skills necessary inside the political arena, including a politician's general and specific knowledge, political intelligence, competence, strategic behavior, and experience. Vigorousness concerns the 'strength' of the leader, his/her (self-)confidence and decisiveness and whether he/she dominates the decision-making process. Integrity includes a leader's intrinsic motivation and whether a politician is honest, guided by the needs of the electorate and uncorrupted. Communicative skills concerns inspiring or visionary leadership and mediagenic qualities of leaders, i.e., whether a politician comes across as empathic, charming, friendly and relaxed. Consistency concerns the stability across the visions and actions of leaders and whether the politician behaves in a predictable manner.

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based on the influence of subjective leader perceptions in the minds of voters on voting behavior. We argue that the attention must be shifted towards *mediated leader effects*, i.e. the electoral impact of media coverage of party leaders. The scarce literature that studied mediated leader effects shows that both the prominence of party leaders and the tone in which they are displayed in media coverage affects vote intentions (e.g., McCombs et al., 1997; Mughan, 2000; Eberl et al., 2017; Aaldering et al., 2018; Aaldering, 2018).

What remains a largely unresolved question in the study of (mediated) leader effects is which trait evaluations matter most. Some scholars have studied the asymmetrical responses of voters to different trait evaluations, but the results are largely inconclusive. First, extant research based on prospect theory has shown the existence of a *negativity bias* (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Tversky & Kahneman, 1992): responses to negative information tend to be stronger than responses to positive information. Stronger reactions to negative triggers are found in a range of fields, including perceptions of political parties and party leaders (e.g., Lau, 1982; Holbrook et al., 2001). Contradictory, however, other empirical results show that positive traits evaluations have a stronger impact on voters than negative ones (e.g., Wattenberg, 1991; Aarts & Blais, 2013; Aaldering et al., 2018; Aaldering, 2018). Secondly, scholars have studied asymmetrical effects of different traits, assuming that not all leadership traits result in equally strong effect on voters. Here as well, the empirical evidence is inconsistent. Some show strongest leader traits effects for competence related traits (e.g., Miller et al., 1986; Costa & Ferreira da Silva, 2015), others find that the character dimension of leadership traits, including integrity and empathy, affect citizens strongest (e.g., Johnston, 2002; Bittner, 2011).

This study argues that the influence of leaders' trait perception on voting behavior is conditional upon the leader's party family. Hayes (2005) formulated the theory of trait ownership, which states that the issue ownership of political parties, eventually results in the ownership of character traits by these parties. Studied in the context of the US, he shows that Republicans own the issues of taxes, defense and family values, while democrats own the issues related to healthcare, social welfare and education. Resulting from this, Republican politicians are more often associated with (strong) leadership and morality, while Democrats own the traits compassion and empathy. Moreover, he argues that overcoming the expectation gap is most important in the influence of leadership traits on voting behavior: scoring high on non-owned traits or scoring low on owned traits most strongly influences voters. His empirical results confirm his theory: Republican politicians gain electorally most when they score high on the leadership traits owned by Democrats, and vice versa (Hayes, 2005).

The trait ownership theory is the starting point of this study. As in the US, European political parties own issues as well. It has been shown that right-wing parties in European democracies own issues as economic policy, taxes, defense, crime and immigration, while left-wing parties are issue owner on issues such as unemployment, healthcare, education, social welfare and the environment (e.g., Walgrave & De Swert, 2007; Green & Hobolt, 2008; Dejaeghere & van Erkel, 2017). From this, we can ascertain that left-wing parties in Europe are more strongly associated with characteristics as integrity, compassion and empathy (just like the Democrats in the US), while right-wing parties are associated with competence and decisiveness (as do the Republicans). Thus, we expect that the candidate of the right-wing party owns the traits political skills and vigorousness and the candidate of the left-wing party owns integrity and communicative skills. Testing the idea that overcoming the expectation gap will affect voters most strongly, we hypothesize that *positive discussions in the media of a candidate in terms of non-owned traits have stronger effects on leader perceptions than positive*

discussions of owned traits, while *negative discussions in the media of the candidate in terms of owned traits have stronger effects on leader perceptions than negative discussions of non-owned traits.*

Methodology

To test the theory of trait ownership in the Austrian context, we developed a 2*2*2 post-test only survey experimental design, in which we manipulate (1) the trait (competence-character), (2) the tone of the evaluation (positive-negative), and (3) the political party of the party leader (ÖVP-SPÖ) in a news media message. The manipulation occurred in two steps. First, all respondents receive some very basic information on a (male) fake political candidate (we named him Wolfgang Maier) for *Landeshauptmann* in Burgenland, in which we only varied the political party of the candidate. Then, we provided respondents with a news article in which the candidate is discussed, that includes politically and personally neutral information on a campaign event and the manipulated experimental conditions of some very general issue standpoints of the corresponding party ideology and a discussion of the candidate in terms of his traits (political competence and vigorousness or integrity and communicative skills). After reading the biography and the news article, participants are asked to evaluate the politician. Unfortunately, many of the respondents of the survey did not read the information about the candidate very carefully and were not able to answer basic questions about him, which left us with a sample of 444 respondents.

Results
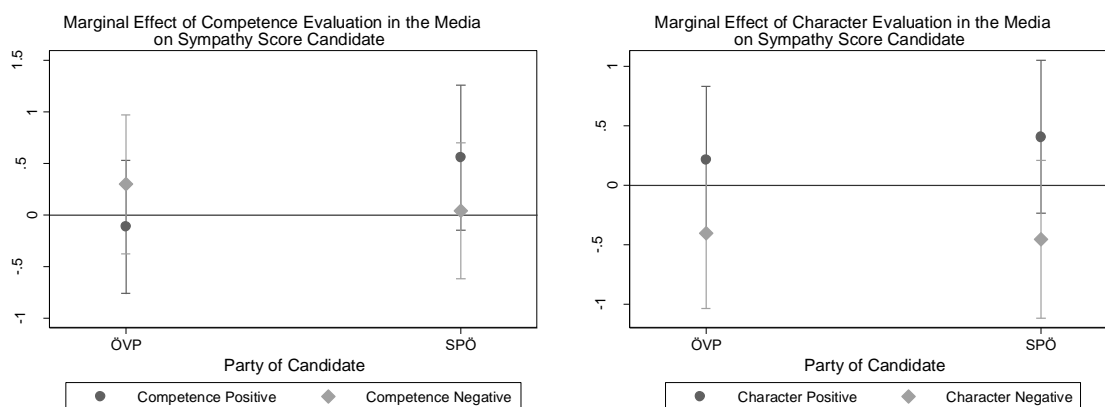
This figure shows the effects of positive and negative trait evaluation on competence (political skills and vigorousness, left graph) and character (integrity and communicative skills, right graph) for the candidate of the ÖVP and the SPÖ. None of the marginal effects, nor the interaction terms between the tone of the trait evaluation and the party of the candidate, reach conventional levels of statistical significance. This indicates that, contrary to our expectation, praise or criticism in media coverage of a political candidate in terms of his character traits does not affect the general evaluation of this candidate and trait ownership does not play a role in explaining which traits matter most.[2]

Conclusion

We conclude that in the Austrian context, leader perceptions are not affected by media portrayals of candidates in terms of their leadership traits and that partisan stereotypes and trait ownership cannot account for differences in the strength of the mediated leader effects. Surprisingly, the results show that none of the variables of interest, and none of the moderating effects of interest,

[2] The main effects of positive and negative trait coverage on candidate evaluation are insignificant as well.

show statistically significant results. There are three possible explanations for these findings. First, it is possible that the trait ownership theory cannot be applied to the Austrian context, because of particularities of the Austrian political system that were unforeseen. Second, it might be that the trait ownership theory cannot be applied to the European context at all and is much more US-specific than we thought. Third, the insignificant results are caused by a statistical power problem and a larger sample is needed to test the impact of media coverage of candidates in terms of their character traits on candidate evaluation, and the moderating effect of trait ownership, in the Austrian context. To test which of these three explanations holds, we run the experiment on a German sample as well.

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2. An Experimental Assessment of Approval and Evaluative Voting

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Key words: voting system, approval voting, evaluative voting, experiment, election

Introduction

In our PUMA module, we ran an online survey experiment in which we asked a representative sample of the Austrian population to cast a vote. We created a ballot to similar to the one of the 2017 election of the National Council. The respondents saw on their screen the main parties and the main candidates of these parties. Then, they had to indicate their preference for one of the parties and for 15 individual candidates within this party.

The experimental treatment is the type of preference vote the respondents could cast to express their preference for individual candidates. A third of the respondents (randomly selected) could choose to approve each of the candidates or not [0,1]. This binary system is often called Approval Voting (AV). Another third of the respondents (randomly selected) could give 0, 1, or 2 points to each of the candidates. The last third of the respondents could give a positive, a negative, or no points to each of the candidates [-1,0,1]. These last two systems are two different versions to what is usually referred to as Evaluative Voting (EV). The goal of our research is to study the effect of the type of preference voting on voters' decisions.

The survey was fielded in June 2018 and targeted the population of eligible Austrian voters. The sample size is 700 respondents, and is representative of the Austrian population in terms of gender, age and education. The survey was conducted online, which is the best survey model for this type of study. Unlike telephone interviews, online surveys allow for a visualisation of the ballot, which helps improve the quality of responses. Also, this way of asking for respondents' vote choice has already been successfully implemented in other contexts (Laslier et al. 2015).

Theoretical Background

We explore the effects of AV on a [0,1] scale, and EV on a [0,1,2] and [-1,0,1] scale. In a study that uses a similar design, Baujard et al. (2014) show that not all voters use the additional options provided by EV to deviate from the binary character offered by both the original ballot used in the real world election as well as in AV. In our study, we concentrate on the possibility to cast negative votes. So far, we know very little about the prerequisites of voting negatively. This is an understudied topic. Yet the possibility to vote negatively exists in some countries like Latvia, but also Austria. In Austrian elections, voters can either vote for one candidate within a party-list, or cross out all candidates except one. They are thus accustomed with the practice of voting negatively. We therefore expect them to be more willing to use this option than voters from countries where this possibility does not exist. Yet, we still assume that voters are affected by the type of preference voting, and are more

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reluctant to express a negative vote (-1) in the EV ballot [-1,0,+1] than a neutral vote (0) in the EV ballot [0, 1, 2], although the two are formally equivalent.
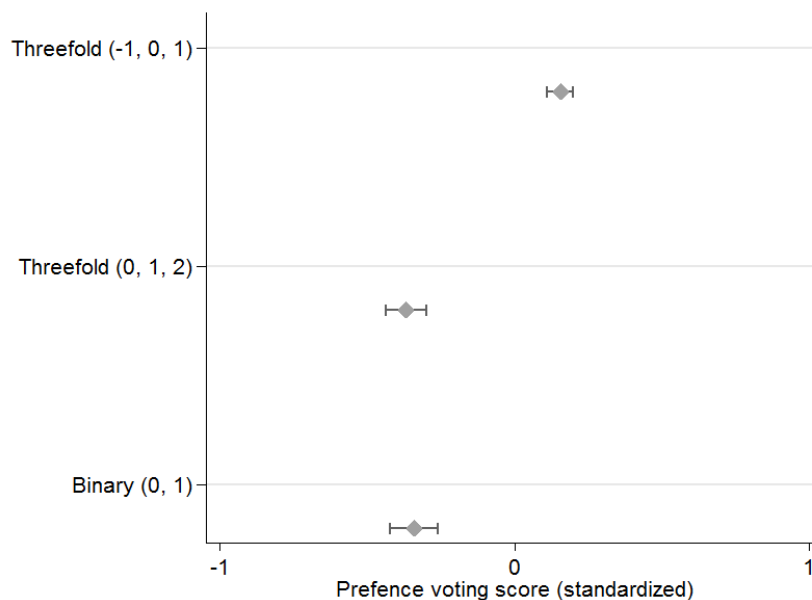
Results

A first assessment of our experimental data shows that voters indeed are reluctant to vote negatively. To prove it, we rescale each of our three types of preference voting to standardise them in a scale ranging -1 and 1. Table 1 below presents the rescaling. Once standardised, the three types of preference voting can be compared.

Table 1: Rescaling the three types of preference voting

	Original scale	Standard scale
Approval Voting [0,1]	0	-1
	1	1
Evaluative Voting [0,1,2]	0	-1
	1	0
	2	1
Evaluative Voting [-1,0,1]	-1	-1
	0	0
	1	1

Figure 1 below reports the average number of points by the respondents to the individual candidates in each type of preference voting. Once standardised, the number of points given is nearly identical in AV [0,1] and EV [0,1,2]: -0.34 and -0.37, respectively. However, the number of points is higher in EV [-1,0,1]:0.16. This suggests that the respondents were reluctant to give negative votes to the individual candidates. Consequently, the number of points given is higher.

Figure 1: Average number of points (standardised) given by respondents to candidates

The same result obtains when we separate respondents depending on the party for which they vote. Figure 2 shows that when they give systematically more points when they face EV [-1,0,1]. This suggest that the reluctance to give negatives votes is the same across partisan lines.

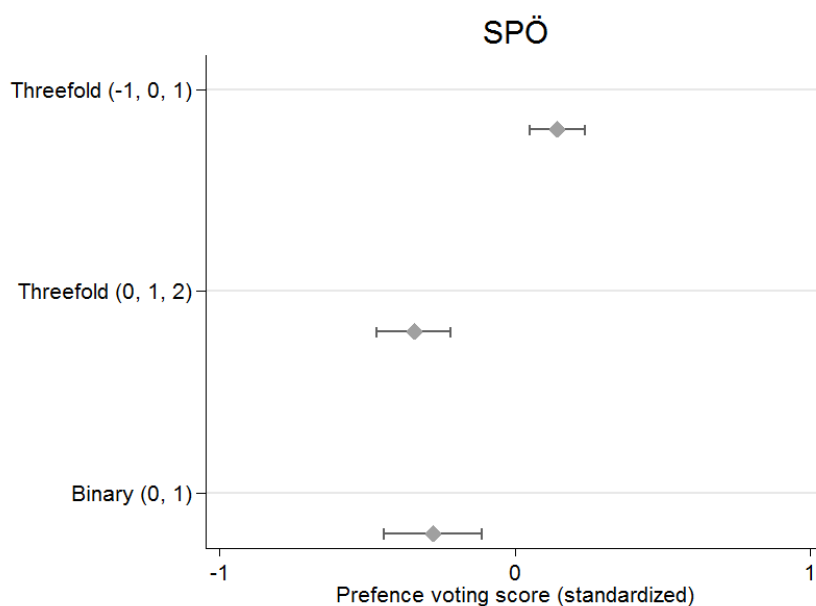**Figure 2a: Average number of points (standardised) given by respondents to candidates by party**

Figure 2b: Average number of points (standardised) given by respondents to candidates by party
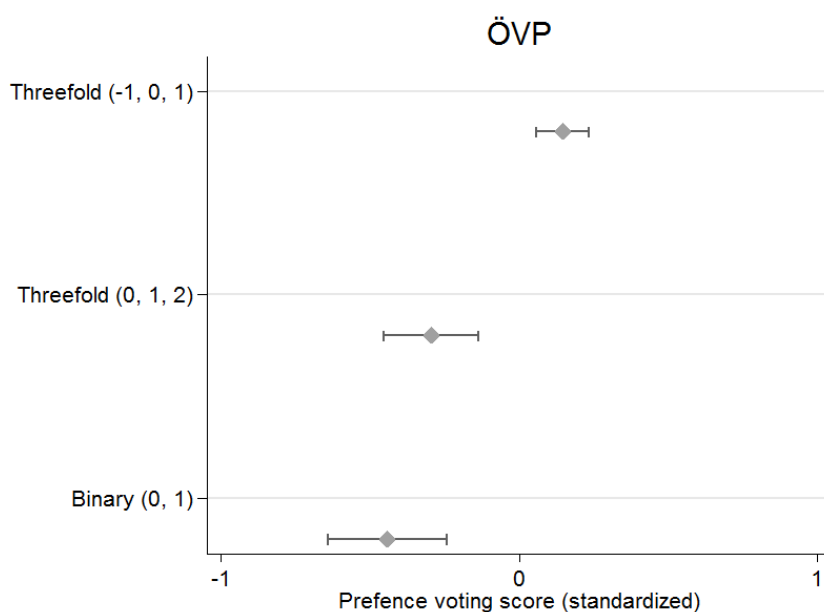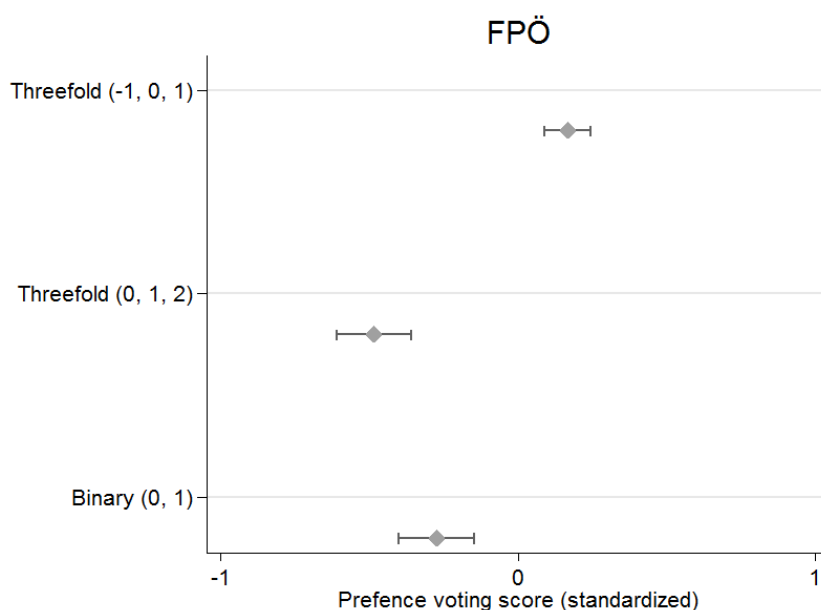

ÖVP

Figure 2c: Average number of points (standardised) given by respondents to candidates by party

FPÖ

Future Research

Using these data, we will conduct future research in two directions. First, extending on the findings presented above, we will analyse *who casts what kind* of preference vote. For example, it has been observed that right leaning voters tend to be more reluctant to support more than one candidate than left leaning voters (Blais et al. 2015). We will thus examine whether the characteristics of the voters (socio-demographics and political attitudes) moderate the effect of the type of preference voting on their vote choice.

Second, Bol et al. (2016) show that candidates' nationality has a discernible impact on respondents' vote choice in a simulated European election online. Hence, we will also evaluate whether easily identifiable candidate characteristics such as academic and aristocratic titles, or the candidate's position on the list, moderate the effect of the type of preference voting on vote choice. In short, we will examine *who attracts what kind* of preference votes.

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