



Examining professional identities: an exploratory study of images and social representations about the pedagogical coordinator

*Examinando identidades profissionais:
um estudo exploratório das imagens e representações sociais
sobre o coordenador pedagógico*

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Abstract: The study examines the social representations of pedagogical coordinators regarding their professional identity and raises the following questions: How does the coordinator perceive his profession? How does he understand others' views on his role? What images of the coordinator are conveyed by online magazines, and how do these images relate to the coordinator's own representations? With the support of the theory of social representations, the research examines images of pedagogical coordinators in online magazines and analyses the responses of coordinators to two questions regarding their professional identity. The data was treated by content analysis and image analysis techniques as part of social representations investigations. The results show consensual images about the coordinator and some discrepancies between this image and those that he thinks others have about him. The results contribute to

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the debate about the construction of this professional identity.

Keywords: Social representations. Professional identity. Pedagogical coordinator.

Resumo: O estudo examina as representações sociais de coordenadores pedagógicos sobre sua identidade profissional e levanta as seguintes questões: Como o coordenador percebe a sua profissão? Como ele entende a visão dos outros sobre sua função? Que imagens sobre o coordenador são veiculadas em revistas eletrônicas e como elas se relacionam com suas próprias representações? Com o suporte da teoria das representações sociais, a pesquisa examina imagens de coordenadores pedagógicos em revistas *online* e analisa as respostas de coordenadores a duas questões sobre a sua identidade profissional. Os dados foram tratados pela análise de conteúdo e por técnicas de análise de imagens nas investigações em representações sociais. Os resultados mostram imagens consensuais sobre o coordenador e discrepâncias entre essa imagem e as que ele acredita que os outros têm dele. Os resultados contribuem para o debate acerca da construção dessa identidade profissional.

Palavras-chave: Representações sociais. Identidade profissional. Coordenador pedagógico.

Introduction

The process of shaping professional identity entails self-reflection and an awareness of how others perceive the professional (Dubar, 2005; 2006). Therefore, to gain insight into how the pedagogical coordinator constructs his professional identity requires an examination of how he perceives himself in relation to others with whom he interacts. The dynamics of this interaction would impact how professionals perceive themselves and address the challenges of their profession. Furthermore, it would also be necessary to examine the images and knowledge about this profession conveyed by both print and digital media. In our view, these images contribute to the propagation of beliefs and traditions, as well as the dissemination of new knowledge about being a coordinator. This set of ideas plays an important role in the training of professionals and the expectations associated with their work.

The training of pedagogical coordinators has undergone a series of transformations over time, posing challenges to the formation of their identity and impacting their professional performance (Placco et al., 2015). In 1969, specific qualifications were defined in Pedagogy courses, academic training required for the role of pedagogical coordinator, such as administration, guidance, and school supervision (Saviani, 2006; Domingues, 2014). However, in 2006, the Resolution CNE/CP no. 01/2006 (Brazil, 2006) introduced the Curricular Guidelines for the Pedagogy course, and teacher training begun to include various activities related to teaching and learning. This more unitary formation poses challenges for the identity constitution and professional practice of the coordinator, requiring them to navigate and harmonize diverse dimensions of their work (Placco et al., 2015).

Being a pedagogical coordinator involves a series of responsibilities such as articulating, training, and transforming pedagogical work (Placco et al., 2015; Nagel,

2022). This position requires, in addition to practical knowledge, an understanding of power relations within the school environment (Souza; Placco, 2017). Moreover, the pedagogical coordinator engages in constant dialogue with students, teachers, and headteachers, which requires an ability to address diverse institutional needs and expectations and develop pedagogical interventions that enhance teaching and learning processes (Furtado, 2020).

Despite the professional identity of the pedagogical coordinator is under constant construction (Placco et al., 2015; Sartori; Pagliarin, 2016), many of the problems confronted by this professional today often find their roots in a previous configuration characterized by a centralized focus on “control” (Vasconcellos, 2019, p. 126). With the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of the perspectives held by pedagogical coordinators regarding their profession in the context of these transformations, this study analyses social representations of being a coordinator produced by professionals who work in the Municipal Education System in the city of Curitiba, in the southern region of Brazil. The research also analyses images about this profession that circulate in two digital magazines whose target audience are professionals linked to education. The research raises the following questions: How do pedagogical coordinators perceive their profession? How do they understand the perspectives of other school actors regarding their role? What images about this professional are featured in online magazines in education? How do these images correlate with the statements made by the interviewed coordinators about their profession?

By analysing social representations in speeches and images, this study intends to widen the understanding of how this professional identity evolves and gain insights on expectations towards professional practices. The result of the study can contribute to the development of continuing training programs that promote reflexions on the intricate relationship between traditions and new knowledge about this profession.

Images and words in social representation studies

Multi-methodological procedures that explore both verbal and visual modalities facilitate the observation of diverse representational elements (Bauer, 2008; Silva et al., 2021). Images published in digital media disseminate knowledge about the pedagogical coordinator and can impact the construction of his identity and the way in which other school actors interact with him. Additionally, they propagate new knowledge about this profession, with elements that may align with or differ from those traditionally associated with this identity. It is in this sense that images come closer to social representations, which are understood as an articulated set of ideas, beliefs, values,

and knowledge about a given object, with the function of guiding human behaviour and identity constructions (Moscovici, 2012, 2015; Deschamps; Moliner, 2014).

The speeches of pedagogical coordinators about their profession also express social representations, as they put into words the ideas, values and knowledge about this topic that circulate in their social environment. Social representations not only guide human behaviours, judgments, and social identities, but they also prescribe social practices that constitute reality, defining what is “[...] licit, tolerable or unacceptable in a given social context” (Abric, 2000, p. 30). Therefore, it is important to examine the elements that make up representations and observe how they build an articulated set of ideas about something. This analysis also allows us to understand the association between traditions and professional experiences in the shaping of social representations. Thus, adopting a psychosocial perspective in educational research facilitates understanding of how and why perceptions are constructed, maintained, shared, and justified. (Alves-Mazotti, 2008).

Identity representations are modulated by several representations (Deschamps; Moliner, 2014), forming a set of ideas about what it means to belong to a social group. Professional identity is closely related to social representations as it finds its foundations both in culture and traditions, and in the professional and training context. Social representations guide our social interactions (Souza et al., 2012) and maintain the specificities of each group (Almeida; Doise, 2009). By accessing these ideas through both speech and images we can have a more profound and comprehensive understanding of social representations (Bauer; Gaskel, 2008; Silva et al., 2023).

About the study

This is qualitative research with the theoretical and epistemological contribution of the theory of social representations. The study is divided in two phases. In the first phase, we analysed the digital images published in reports about the pedagogical coordinator in the magazines *Nova Escola* and *Educação*. Both magazines publish content focused on Basic Education, with reports aimed at professionals in this area. The first images about this professional start to appear in the digital format in 2014. As a criterion for selecting images of the coordinator, each image should be accompanied by caption, title, or text.

In the second phase, an online questionnaire was applied to 43 pedagogical coordinators that work in the Municipal Educational System of Curitiba. The questions were as follows: How do you describe your work? How would another person describe your work? Following a comprehensive reading of the responses, we identified

some recurrent themes, that led to the elaboration of thematic categories. The data were analysed according to Bardin (2016) and a comparative analysis was carried out between the two responses. The objective is to determine whether the coordinators' representations align with others' perceptions of their profession. In another moment, data from the first phase (analysis of digital images in magazines) were compared with data from the second phase (questionnaire). The objective is to determine whether the visual characteristics conveyed by the images align with the ideas expressed by the participants.

The invitation to participate in the research and the questionnaire were sent to all schools and regional education centres that are part of the Municipal Education System of Curitiba. The invitations were addressed to pedagogical coordinators working either in schools, regional educational centres, or Municipal Education Office. The questionnaire remained open for two months during the first semester of 2021.

A total of 43 female coordinators replied to the invitation and participated in the study. They work in Early Childhood Education and Early Years of Elementary Education (19 in schools, 9 in Regional Education Centres and 15 in the Municipal Education Office). Among the 43 coordinators, 34 have more than 5 years of experience in pedagogical coordination. The average age is 44,51 (median = 43; standard deviation = 7.79). The research was authorized by the Ethics Committee of Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Paraná (no 4.594.357) and the Ethics Committee of the Municipality of Curitiba (no 4.458.237).

Methodological procedures

The data obtained with the first phase of the research were analysed according to the studies by Silva (2015), Silva et al. (2020) and Silva et al. (2021). The aim is to identify the most salient iconographic elements and reflect about their proximity with social representations. Following a comprehensive analysis of the images it was observed that the figures depict the body in different positions and in varied locations in schools. In some images, he is accompanied and in others, on his own. The figures also have different facial expressions, and there were subtle variations in clothing style when compared to teachers' style. Regarding the context, some objects form a setting that aid the description of this professional activity such as papers, and computers. Thus, we chose these items to build the following categories: 'Body posture', 'Facial expression', 'Clothing', 'Space/context', 'Social interaction', and 'Accessories'. In a second round of analysis, we developed a cross-examination of categories to observe co-

-occurrences and identify the most relevant items in the professional's representation (Silva et al., 2021).

The category 'Body posture' presents two subcategories: 'standing up' and 'sitting down'. This category is based on the studies about body posture in social presentations (Goffman, 2011). It also finds support in the studies of Jodelet (2006), Santos; Silva (2017), Silva et al. (2020) and Silva et al. (2021) about how the body and its image reflect social norms of conduct.

The category 'Facial expression' has three sub-categories: 'neutral', 'smiling' and 'serious'. The face is recognized as a body part that takes an important role in conversations, and complements other modalities of communication (Goffman, 2011; Knapp; Hall; Horgan, 2013; Silva et al., 2021). The face also indicates emotional states and displays predispositions to maintain social interactions. Facial images classified as 'neutral' may convey formality, and faces classified as 'serious' may communicate preoccupation, and dissatisfaction. Conversely, faces classified in the sub-category 'smiling', may express satisfaction, harmony, and greater predisposition to social interaction.

The category 'clothing' has two subcategories: 'formal' e 'informal'. Clothes have a symbolic value (Damhorst, 1990; Johnson; Schofield; Yurchisin, 2002; Hall, 2011; Silva et al., 2021) and offer clues about group membership, religion, age e social status (Wilson, 2003). Clothing can be used to convey information about oneself and have an influence on first impressions about others.

The category 'Space/context' has three subcategories: 'classroom', 'outside/hall', and 'office'. This category is based on studies on how individuals represent their daily spaces and the embedding of social representations in spatial context (Silva, 2015, Silva et al., 2020). Space functions as mediator of social interactions (Foucault, 2004), and can play a role in people's characterizations (Silva et al., 2021). Representations of the human figure in public or private spaces, for example, offer clues about social categorizations (Silva et al., 2021).

The category 'Social interaction' generated two subcategories: 'accompanied' and 'unaccompanied'. The subcategory 'accompanied' is divided into three types: accompanied by teachers, accompanied by students, and accompanied by parents. Those photographed next to the coordinator may help disseminate information about professional assignments, responsibilities, and hierarchical position within the school structure.

The category 'Accessories' assembles objects such as computers, and papers. These objects add information about professional practice and help to differentiate this professional from other professionals.

The data obtained were tabulated, and the tables show the distribution of the categories. The subcategories were exclusive and were scored only once. Figure 1 presents examples of the classification procedures adopted.

Figure 1: Examples of the classification procedures adopted - categories and subcategories

 <p>https://novaescola.org.br/conteudo/21174/qual-e-o-papel-do-coordenador-pedagogico-em-aco-es-de-recomposicao-de-aprendizagem</p> <p>Categories – Body posture: standing up; Facial expression: smiling; Clothing: informal; Space/context: corridor/hall; Social relations: accompanied by teachers.</p>	 <p>https://novaescola.org.br/conteudo/7183/coordenador-pedagogico-vive-crise-de-identidade</p> <p>Categories – Body posture: standing up; Facial expression: smiling; Clothing: informal; Space/context: classroom; Social relation: accompanied by students.</p>
 <p>https://novaescola.org.br/conteudo/7185/conhecimentos-que-o-formador-precisa-ter</p> <p>Categories – Body posture: standing up; Facial expression: serious; Clothing: formal; Space/context: classroom; Social relations: accompanied by teacher.</p>	 <p>https://novaescola.org.br/conteudo/20120/coordenador-como-estruturar-um-bom-calendario-de-formacoes-para-2021</p> <p>Categories – Body posture: sitting down; Clothing: informal; Space/context: office; Social relations: unaccompanied; Accessories: computer, papers, pen.</p>
 <p>https://novaescola.org.br/conteudo/7183/coordenador-pedagogico-vive-crise-de-identidade</p> <p>Categories – Body posture: standing up; Facial expression: smiling; Clothing: formal; Space/context: sports court; Social relations: accompanied by students.</p>	 <p>https://novaescola.org.br/conteudo/7185/conhecimentos-que-o-formador-precisa-ter</p> <p>Categories – Body posture: standing up; Facial expression: smiling; Clothing: informal; Space/context: classroom; Social relations: accompanied by teacher.</p>

Source: The authors (2024).

Identity and recognition

Data collected in the second phase of the research (questionnaire) were analysed by the content analysis (Bardin, 2016). After a random examination of the responses to both questions, some topics emerged more frequently and were grouped into two categories due to their thematic similarity: 'Positive perceptions' and 'Negative perceptions'. Each one contains subcategories (see Figure 2).

The responses to the first question (How do you describe your work?) were classified in the categories "Positive perceptions" and "Negative perceptions". The category "Positive perceptions" has two subcategories: 'value attributed to the profession', that groups comments that describe the professional's identity by highlighting his values and qualities, and 'identification of duties', that describes with detail the types of activities performed. These categories align with findings from studies by Dubar (2005; 2006), Deschamps and Moliner (2014) and Mendes et al. (2022). For the category 'Negative perceptions', two subcategories were found: 'bureaucratic questions' and 'different notions of work'. The first subcategory gathers critical opinions about the bureaucratic activities performed by the coordinators. The second sub-category groups comments about this profession that often diverge from their actual responsibilities or aspirations (Sartori; Fabris, 2020; Souza; Placco, 2017).

The responses to the second question (How would another person describe their work?) were classified in the categories "Positive perceptions" and "Negative Perceptions". The category "Positive Perceptions" has the same two subcategories: 'value attributed to the profession' and 'identification of duties'. They present positive opinions about this profession and describe the functions and duties of the coordinator. The category 'Negative perceptions' has three subcategories: 'bureaucratic issues', 'different notions of work', and 'Varied'. The first one presents depreciative opinions about the bureaucratic activities and the second groups ideas about the work that do not correspond to those help by the research participants. The 'Varied' category consolidates responses indicating that various school actors have different opinions regarding the coordinator. Figure 2 presents examples of classification of responses to the two questions.

Figure 2: Examples of classification of responses in categories and subcategories: a. How do you describe your work? b. How would another person describe their work?

a.	Category: Positive perceptions	
	value attributed to the profession	identification of duties
	“Very important for teaching and learning processes ...” (CP 04).	“I work directly with teachers, developing continuing education actions, specific referrals to students and families, lesson planning...” (CP 20).
	Category: Negative perceptions	
	bureaucratic issues	different notions of work
	“Very bureaucratic and undervalued” (CP 07).	“A work that goes beyond pedagogical issues, we are multipurpose at school. Always looking for alternatives to meet different demands” (CP 16).
b.	Category: Positive perceptions	
	value attributed to the profession	identification of duties
	“Very important for the implementation of teaching and learning” (CP 26).	“I would say that my work is important to articulate the actions that involve student learning” (CP 14).
	Category: Negative perceptions	
	bureaucratic issues	different notions of work
	“[...]as a controller or inspector, and who carries out more bureaucratic work” (CP 38).	“[...]they would say that we don’t do anything or that they don’t know exactly what we do [...]” (CP 29).
	Category: Varied	
	“[...] the opinions will depend on the person, the role they occupy, or their profession” (CP 21).	

Source: The authors (2024).

At another point, we conducted a comparative analysis of the responses with the aim of verifying whether the representations of professional identity correspond with the images that others have of this profession according to the respondents. Two categories emerged from this comparison: ‘Perceptions converge’; ‘Perceptions differ’. As the perception that others hold of a profession influences the construction of one’s identity (Dubar, 2005; 2006), the correspondences or dissonances identified may indicate crucial elements at play in the process of shaping this profession.

Results

Images of pedagogical coordinators

After randomly examining digital images published from 2014, 36 met the established criteria and were selected. They contained titles and subtitles that cited the pedagogical coordinator and/or accompanied a text that referenced the coordinator. Data from the first phase of the research were organized into six categories, presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of categories (N e %) – analysis of the images of pedagogical coordinators published in digital magazines in education (N = 36; 30 female e 6 males)

Categories e subcategories	N	%
Body posture		
standing up	24	66,66
sitting down	12	33,33
Facial expression		
neutral	17	47,22
smiling	14	38,88
serious	5	13,88
Clothing		
formal	22	61,11
informal	14	38,88
Space/context		
office	15	41,66
classroom	11	30,55
hall/outside	10	27,77
Social interaction		
accompanied by teachers	23	63,88
unaccompanied	8	25
accompanied by students	4	11,11
accompanied by parents	1	2,77
Accessories		
nothing	17	47,22
paper	7	19,44
computer	6	16,66
other	3	8,33
blackboard	3	8,33

Images selected between 2014 and 2023.

Source: The authors (2024).

Most images were classified in subcategory 'standing up' (66,66%). In our view, an upright posture communicates characteristics associated with an active professional, always on the move, and performing different functions in daily school life. Additionally, these images may express professional traits, roles, levels of responsibility and authority. The images classified in the subcategory 'sitting down' communicate two different, yet complementary, traits. In some cases, the professional is in the office, engaged in bureaucratic activities, handling papers and computers. At other times, she is meeting with teachers. The intersection of the subcategory 'standing up' (N = 24) with the other subcategories allows the identification of the most common type of coordinator (see Table 2).

Table 2: The intersection of the subcategory "standing up" with the other subcategories (total number of items per category = 24)

	Facial expression			Clothing		Social interaction			Space/context		
	smile	neutral	serious	formal	informal	with prof.	alone	with student	extern/hall	office	classroom
N	14	7	3	15	9	14	6	4	10	9	5
%	58,33	29,16	12,5	62,5	37,5	58,3	25	16,66	41,66	37,5	20,83

Source: The authors (2024).

In most of the images classified in the 'standing up' subcategory, the coordinator appears smiling (58,33%), formally dressed (62,5%), interacting with teachers (58,3%) and in external environments (41,66%). Many were also portrayed in their offices (37,5%). These representations seem to portray the coordinator as someone available for interactions specially with teachers. Smiling faces convey a kind and approachable person, while formal dress may indicate authority and rank. When accompanied by teachers, the coordinator is represented side by side or face to face. When represented with students (16,66%), coordinators are always in the foreground, and students are in the background. Only in one case, the coordinators were accompanied by parents.

The coordinator's perception about his profession and other views on his work

Table 3 presents the classification of responses in categories and subcategories to the question about how the coordinator describes her work and how she believes others perceive it: 'Positive perceptions' (subcategories: 'value attributed to the profession' e 'identification of duties') and 'Negative perceptions' (subcategories: 'bureaucratic issues' and 'different notions of work').

Table 3: Distribution of responses to the questions: a. 'How do you describe your work?'; b. 'How would another person describe your work?' (N = 43)

	Categories e subcategories	N	%
a.	Positive perceptions	36	83,72
	value attributed to the profession	9	20,93
	identification of duties	27	62,79
	Negative perceptions	7	16,27
	bureaucratic issues	3	6,97
	different notions of work	4	9,3
	Categories e subcategories	N	%
b.	Positive perceptions	20	46,5
	value attributed to the profession	4	9,3%
	identification of duties	16	37,20%
	Negative perceptions	19	44,1
	bureaucratic issues	3	6,97%
	different notions of work	16	37,20%
	Varied	3	6,97%

Source: The authors (2024).

The data in Table 3 reveals that most responses to the first question were classified in the 'Positive Perceptions' category (83,72%). This result indicates that the work is well-defined in developing pedagogical actions and is valued. However, a minority of responses (16,27%) were classified in the 'Negative category', highlighting that it is part of their job carrying out bureaucratic tasks and getting involved in situations that are not necessarily linked to their role. These data are in accordance with the studies by Sartori and Fabris (2020) and Souza and Placco (2017).

When asked about how others perceive her, the responses were classified differently. Only 9.3% refer to the value of this work (previous question = 20,93%) and 37,20% identify that others have different notions of duties and responsibilities (previous question = 9,3%).

Then, a comparison was made between the same subject's responses to the two questions. The aim was to understand whether views about being a coordinator converge with or diverge from the perceptions that others have of this professional. The results indicate that in 51,16% of cases the views converge and that in 46,51%, they diverge. So, we tried to find out who are the coordinators who most report differences

of opinions. This outcome led us to inquire whether work experience and the work environment have an impact on perceptions about other's opinions on this profession.

The participants are divided into two groups according to work environment: 19 work at schools, and 24 work at the Municipal Department of Education and in regional centres. In the first question, 75% of coordinators who work at the Municipal Department of Education and at the regional centres clearly identified their attributions, compared to 42,10% of those who work in schools. Additionally, they did not mention the bureaucratic functions or different notions of work, compared to 15,78% and 21,05% of those who work in schools, respectively. In the second question, 25% of the coordinators who work at the Municipal Department points out the existence of different views regarding the professionals' duties, compared to 58,82% of those who work in schools. The data suggests that the work context potentially shapes opinions regarding this profession and the formation of its identity. Coordinators who work in schools report different representations about their profession, which must impact the configuration of their identity. They also manifest greater concerns with bureaucratic activities.

Discussion

Images are powerful communication tools because they synthesize multiple pieces of information and knowledge about professional identities (2015). Images of the body published in the media can communicate various elements, including posture, facial expression, clothes, and spatial context, which collectively contribute to conveying representations about affiliation to a social group (Silva, 2021). The images analyzed in the first study show a professional in constant proximity and interaction with teachers. Thus, we can infer that they propagate the ideals and responsibilities of articulating, forming and transforming pedagogical work. For the area of pedagogical coordination, issues related to the mediation of pedagogical actions with teachers have great significance.

In the second study, the coordinators' statements about the role of monitoring pedagogical work seem to conflict with reports of other tasks and responsibilities. A wider variety of tasks appear mainly in the responses of coordinators that work in schools. They negatively describe the many bureaucratic activities in which they are involved. The office room, where the coordinator was represented in 41,66% of the images, could reflect bureaucracy, hierarchization and decontextualization of pedagogical work, which are phenomena highlighted by Sartori e Pagliarin (2016). However, more in-depth studies on the association between the office room and bureaucracy would be

necessary, as many of these activities and the mediation of pedagogical work have been carried out in other locations, and virtually with the support of information and communication technologies.

The absence of iconic elements also aid the analysis of these representations. There were few images of coordinators accompanied by students and parents. This result corresponds with the responses to the questions, as there were few moments in which students and parents were mentioned, although this interaction is part of their functions (Campos; Aragão, 2012; Placco; Almeida; Souza, 2015; Nagel, 2022). Therefore, digital images seem to convey an ideal image of the coordinator, with a focus on interaction with the teacher.

Finally, the mean age of participants and the many years of professional work in this role indicate that they are experienced professionals. Possibly, the participants of this study anchor their representations in life and professional experiences. There is a framework of models, experiences, images and memories for associations and references. Therefore, when legislation changes important points about professional duties, different beliefs and knowledge about being a coordinator begin to circulate in the professional environment. It is necessary to articulate this new set of knowledge with school context and representations constructed by the community about this professional.

Conclusion

The results of the study show that some characteristics and roles of the pedagogical coordinator are consensual and well defined. However, the study also identifies discrepancies between the coordinator's image about himself and the images that he thinks others have about him. As identity representation is a construction that finds support not only in the experiences and knowledge that the individual has, but also in how he is perceived the data indicate possible transformations and adjustments under way in this identity.

Social representations are a system of interpretation that mediates and organizes behaviour and perceptions of a group of people (Moscovici, 2012). Therefore, the study proposes that we consider what training policies say to coordinators and how they are translated into images and words, as they will have an impact on professional practice. For continuing training programs for pedagogical coordinators, it would be interesting to observe the set of representational elements that sometimes converge and complement each other, sometimes diverge and conflict, and their effect on professional practice. The work context significantly shapes perceptions of a profession,

as representations emerge from a dynamic interplay between the individual and their environment. Consequently, exploring the impact of work conditions becomes crucial in understanding the intricate process of constructing a professional identity

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