

A DAY IN OUR SHOES:

Adults with Developmental Disabilities Share Their
Experiences Living in Small Cities and Towns

Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council

Full Council Meeting

January 24, 2014



ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY



Statewide focus groups

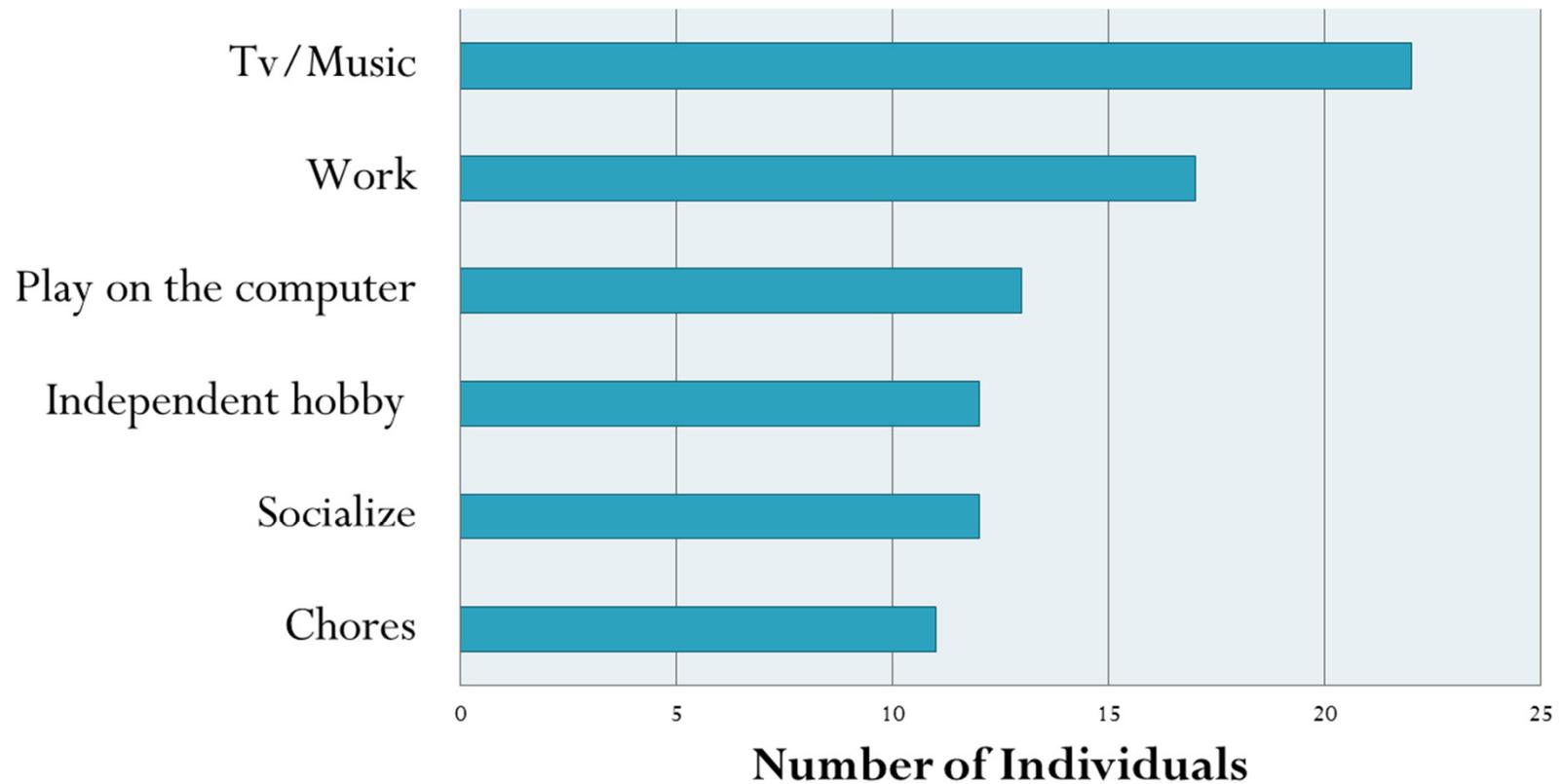
- Flagstaff, Prescott Valley, Sierra Vista, Yuma
- 35 participants
- Average age 39 years old
- 66% white, non-hispanic
- 80% at least a high school degree
- 40% unemployed, 29% center or group based employment, 2% competitively employed
- “A Day in My Life”

A Day in My Life (list activities and any support needed)

6:00	_____
7:00	_____
8:00	_____
9:00	_____
10:00	_____
11:00	_____
12:00	_____
1:00	_____
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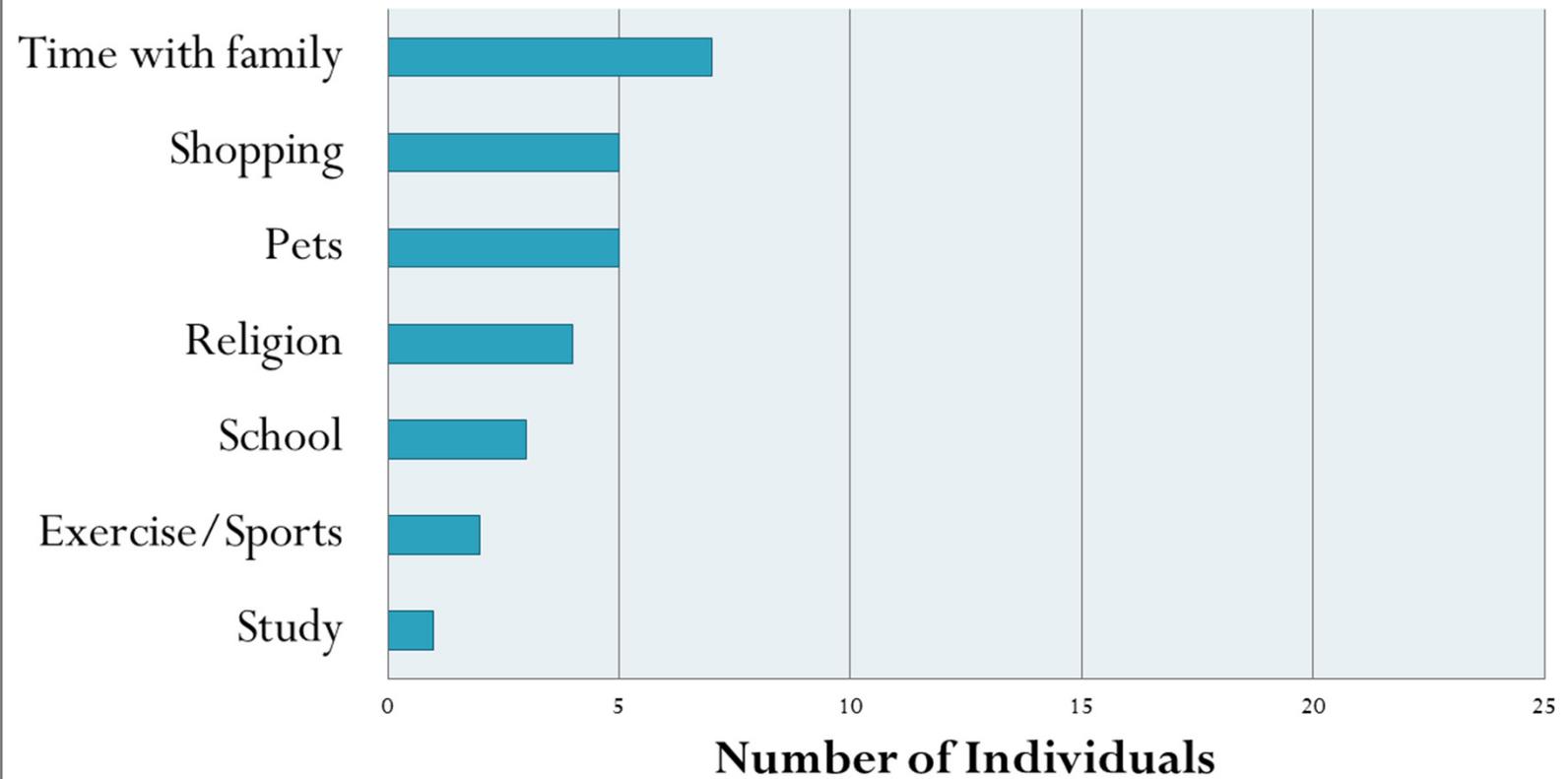
“A Day in My Life”

Activities I Do in a Normal Day ($n=33$)



“A Day in My Life”

Activities I Do in a Normal Day (cont.)



Unemployed and Not Looking:

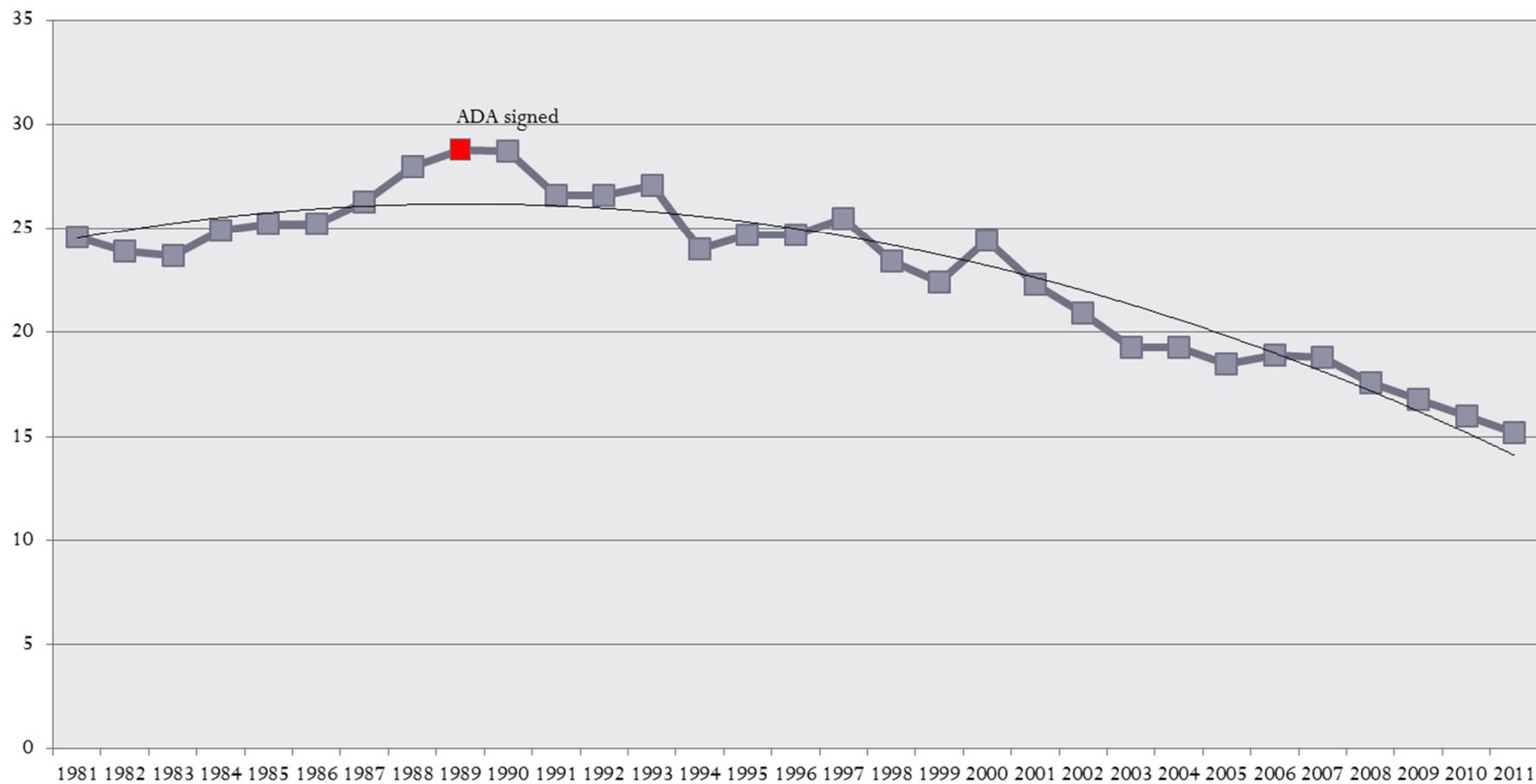


**Barriers and Challenges
to Finding Employment**



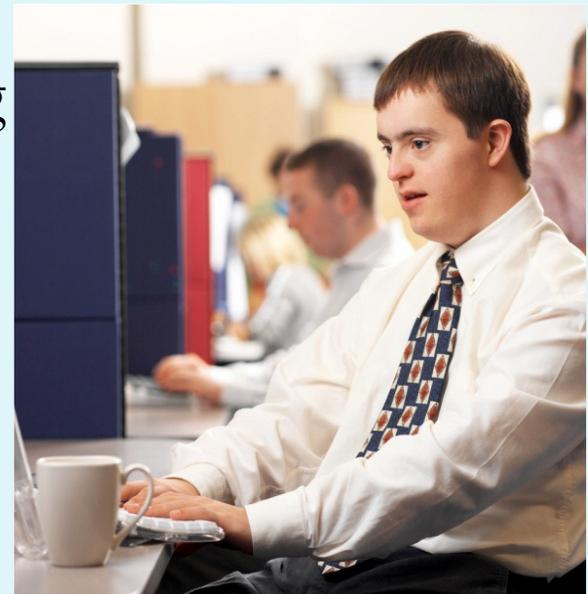
Employment Outcomes Deteriorating

The Percentage of U.S. Adults Ages 18-64 Employed with a Work Limitation, 1981-2011



Arizona Employment Outcomes (2011)

- People with disabilities are more likely to be living in poverty, making \$9,652 **less** annually than people without disabilities.
- People with disabilities are approximately **three times less likely** to be employed than people without disabilities.
- **Three-quarters** of people with disabilities are unemployed and not looking for work.



Why They Are Not in the Labor Force

- Employers' bias about their disabilities

I had the manager tell me that I couldn't work there because I was retarded. I work harder and do more than other people, but I never get the opportunity.

- Felt the job market had changed to their detriment

At jobs that I would normally get, like fast food, people who are overqualified are applying.

- Fear of losing SSI benefits

When you work too many hours a year, you lose your benefits. When you lose your benefits, you have to start the whole process over again if you ever need it again.

- Didn't think they could work or were happy not working

Why They Are Not in the Labor Force (cont.)

- Negative past work experiences
- Although some had career ambitions, most would take any job. This is what one individual said about working at her center-based job.



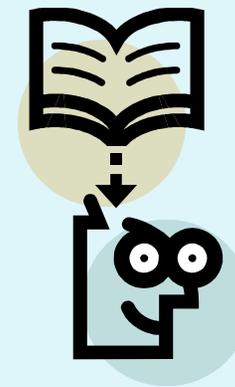
It is not our favorite, but it is what we have right now. At least we have a job where we can earn money.

- Some preferred center-based employment or day treatment.

If I work out in the community I would just be picked on and made fun of. I would rather work with others like myself where I won't get teased.

Need for Information and Advocacy:

Finding Their Voices



Need for Information and Advocacy

- Feel a loss of control

You don't want to have to depend on people, you want to be able to be independent... to do these things for yourself.

We do have a voice, but we keep getting ignored.

- Unanimously desired a local self-advocacy group

Where can we go to get better information to help us along. How to get Social Security, how to get benefits...

a support system. That would be really great for us. We don't need to be alone.

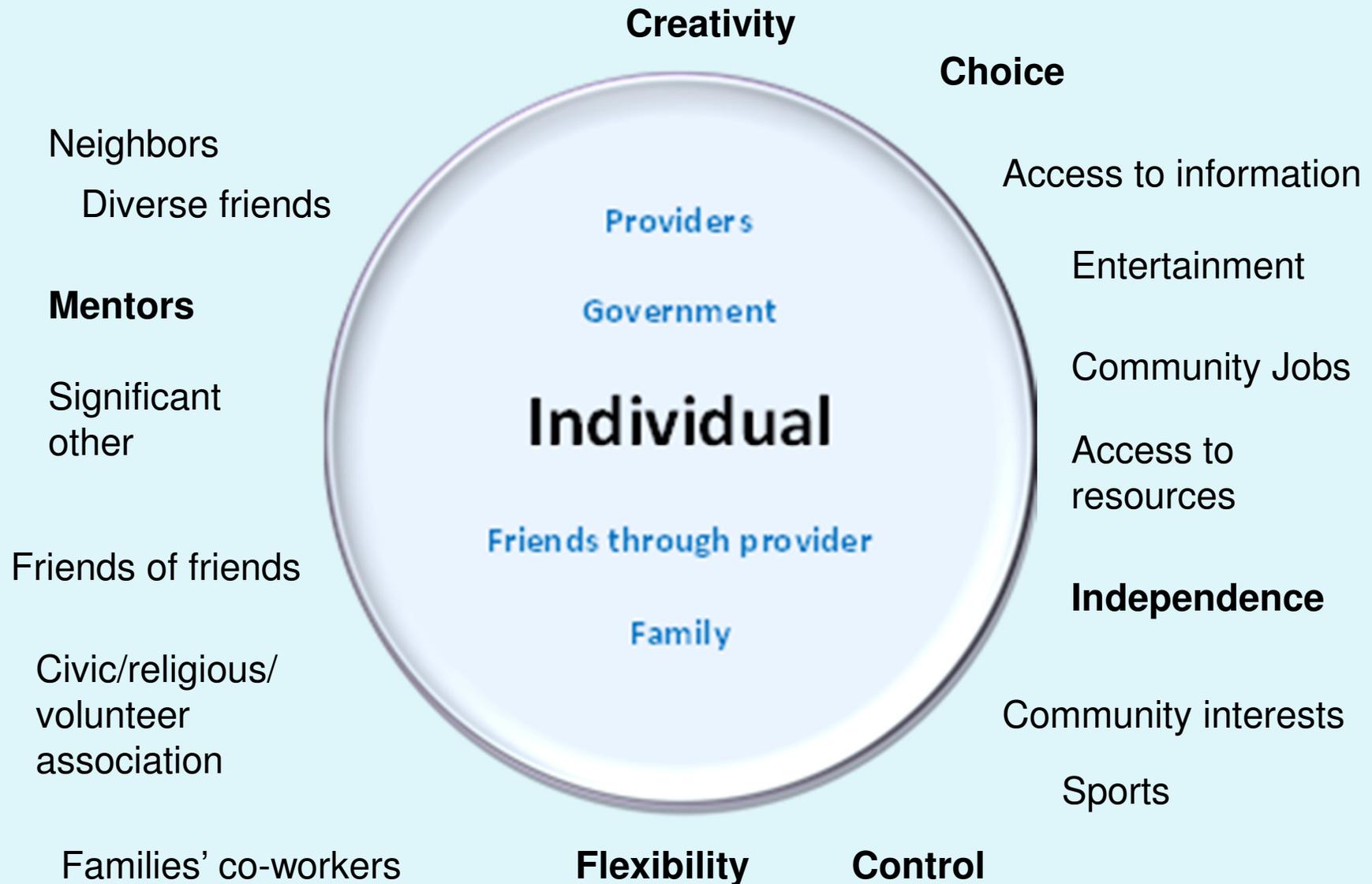
You can't change people, but you can change perception.



Discussion and Next Steps:

Some Things to Consider

“The Disability Bubble”



Breaking the Bubble: Continuum of Community Participation

**Physical
presence**



**Having
presence**



**Active
participation**

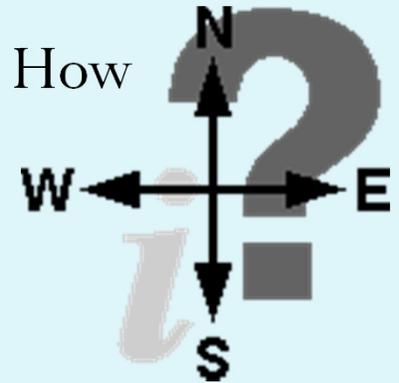
Limitations



- The focus group participants don't necessarily represent the overall state DD population
- Reports their perceptions, which may differ from the points of view of counselors or family members
- Focus group time/location may affect who attended
- Recruitment may not include those who are “disconnected”

Next Steps

- **Independence over Dependence:** How can individuals be offered more opportunities outside of the disability bubble, learn independence and learn from failure, while still remaining safe?
- **Building a System Outside of the System:** How can informal systems be expanded to provide mentoring networks, ride sharing, information exchanges, and support?
- **Community Participation:** How can individual interests and dreams be supported by a formal system with a shortage of resources and transportation?





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