



Association between Parental Willingness to Communicate with their Adolescents about Birth Control and their Adolescents' Sexual Health Knowledge and Safer Sex Practices

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Introduction

- Sex education programs provide appropriate tools to engage in sexual activity safely and responsibly. Adolescents who receive comprehensive sex education engage in fewer risky sexual practices, are more likely to use appropriate methods of birth control (Wu, 2010), and are less likely to experience teen pregnancy (Kirby, 2002).
- The way in which parents communicate with their children about sex and sexual health is an important factor in adolescents' sex education and development.
- Positive relationships between adolescents and mothers are associated with a higher probability of birth control use and a lower probability of both sexual intercourse and pregnancy (Jaccard and Dittus, 2000).
- Communication between mothers and adolescents is associated with greater sexual health knowledge and lower STI risk (Miller and Whitaker, 2012).

Research Questions

- Is there an association between parental willingness to communicate with their adolescents about birth control and their adolescents' knowledge on sexual health?
- Is parental communication about birth control related to adolescents use of safer sex practices?

Methods

Sample

- Respondents were drawn from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health). Add Health is a longitudinal study of a nationally representative sample of adolescents in grades 7-12 during the 1994-95 school year who were followed for five "waves".
- This investigation focuses on a subset of Wave 1 data, specifically the responses of adolescents who were at least 15 years old at the time of data collection (n=4,465) and their parents (n=5,671).

Measures

- Parental willingness to discuss birth control with their adolescent was measured through their response to a question in the parent survey: "To what extent do you agree with the following statement: 'Talking about birth control with {NAME} would only encourage (him/her) to have sex.'"
- Adolescent sexual health knowledge was measured through a series of 10 statements from the Section 19 Knowledge Quiz regarding sexual health that the respondent was instructed to mark as true or false. Correct responses were summed to create a score from 1-10.
- Safer sex practices in sexually-active adolescents (n=2,565) were measured through their responses the question: "Did you or your partner use any method of birth control when you had sexual intercourse most recently?"

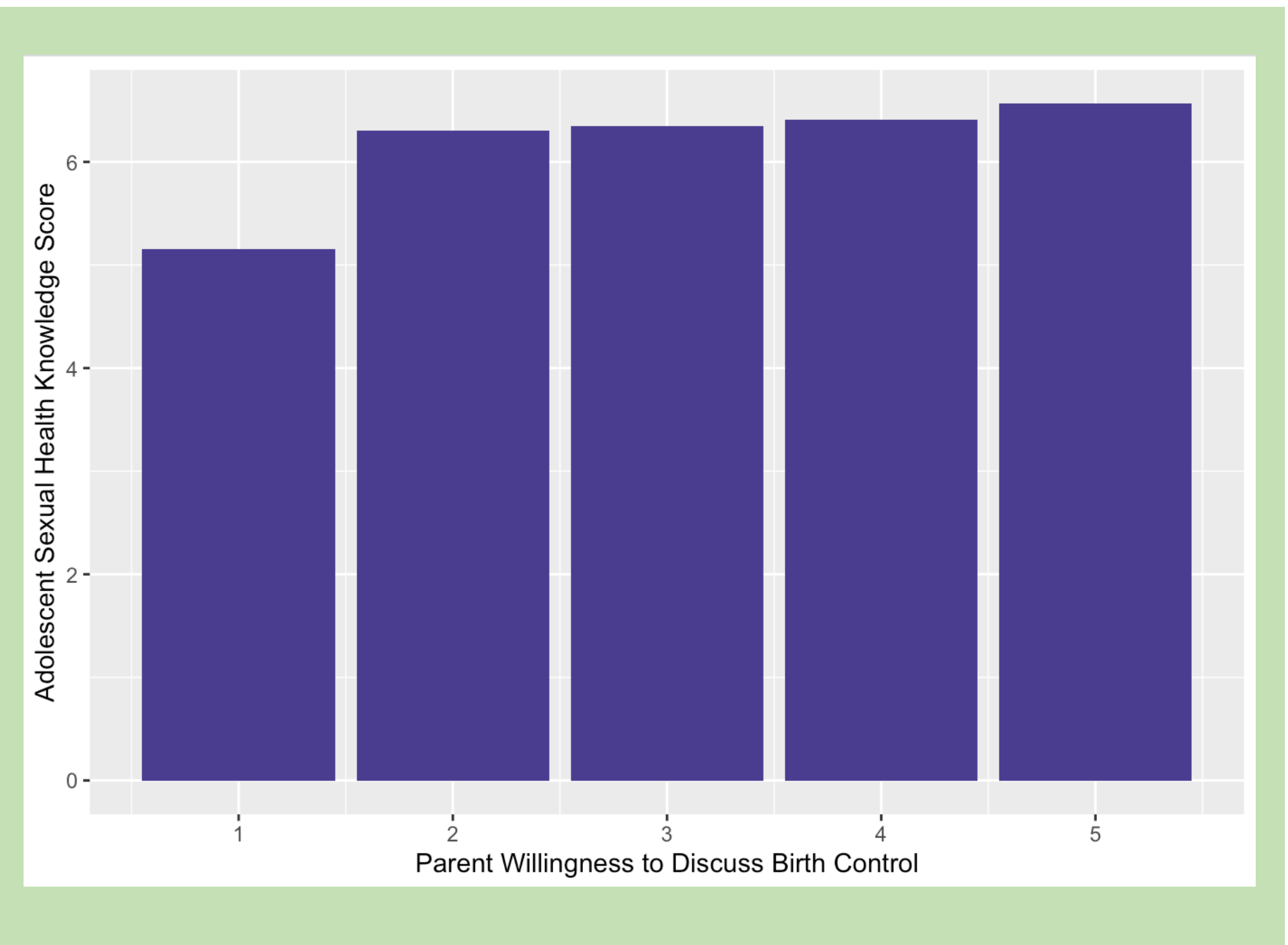
Results

Univariate

- 52.014% of parent respondents strongly disagreed that discussing birth control with their adolescent would only encourage them to have sex. This response indicates greater willingness to discuss birth control with their adolescent.
- Average adolescent sexual health knowledge score was 6.45 out of 10.
- 66.28% of sexually active adolescent respondents had used some form of protection during their most recent sexual intercourse.

Bivariate

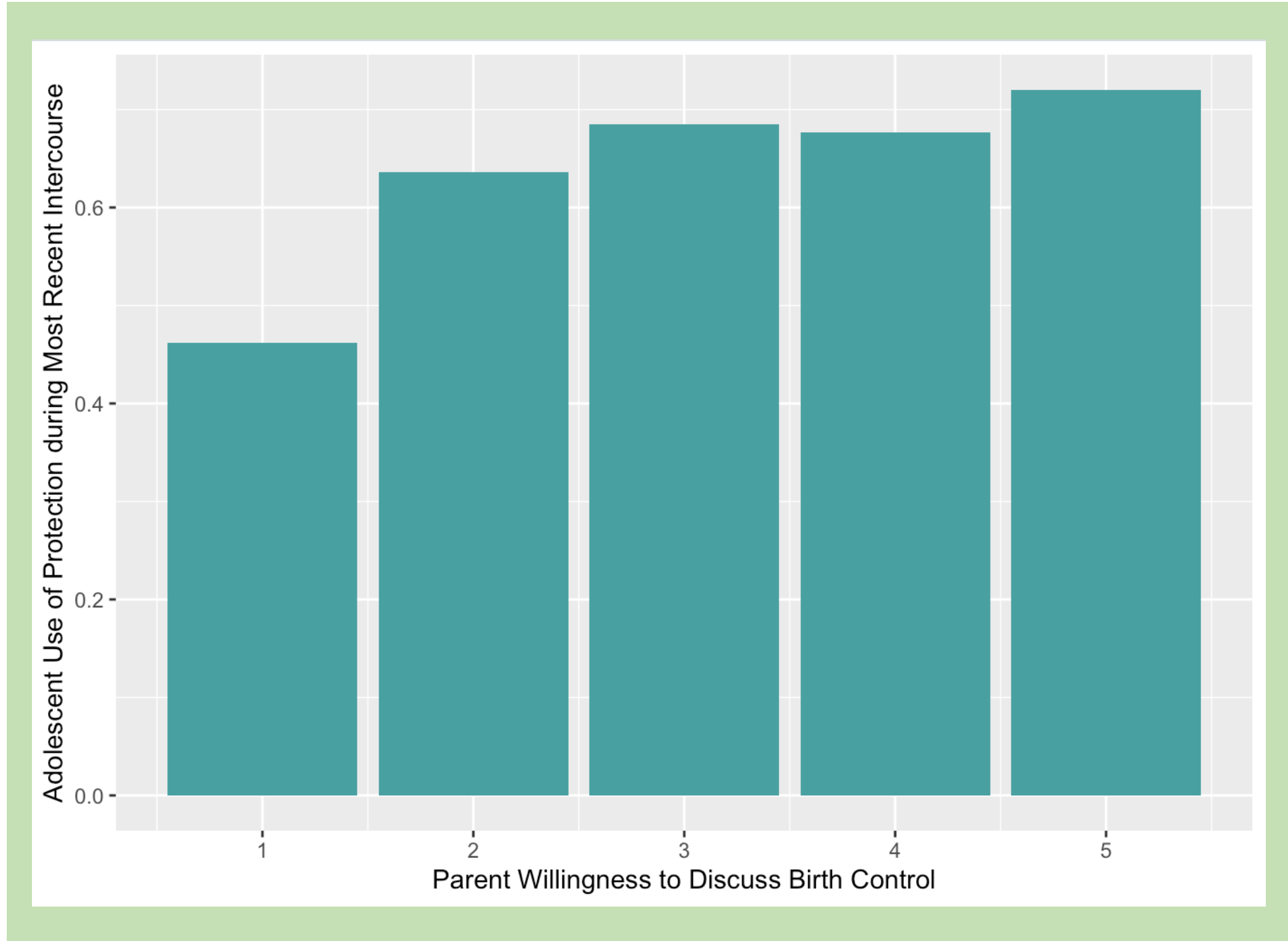
Figure 1: Parental Willingness to Discuss Birth control compared to Adolescent Sexual Health Knowledge



- A simple linear regression analysis showed that parental willingness to discuss birth control use with their adolescent was significantly and positively associated with a greater adolescent sexual health knowledge score (b= 0.17321, p= 0.0125) (Figure 1)

- A logistic regression analysis showed that parental willingness to discuss birth control use with their adolescent was significantly and positively associated with whether the adolescent used any method of protection during their most recent sexual intercourse (b= 0.17346, p=0.0288) (Figure 2).
- As the "score" of parent willingness to communicate about birth control increases by 1, the odds their adolescent used protection during their most recent sexual intercourse increase by 18.94%.

Figure 2: Parental Willingness to Discuss Birth Control compared to Adolescent Use of Protection during Most Recent Sexual Intercourse



Multivariate

- Respondents' satisfaction with both their maternal and paternal relationships were not moderators or confounders for the association between parental birth control communication and sexual health knowledge or whether adolescents used protection during their most recent sexual intercourse.
- After controlling for maternal and paternal relationship satisfaction, parental willingness to discuss birth control with their adolescent is significantly associated with greater sexual health knowledge (Maternal b=0.18546, p=0.00777; Paternal b=0.17988, p=0.00962) and with whether their adolescent used some form of protection during their most recent sexual intercourse (Maternal b=0.162039, p=0.0425; Paternal b=0.16892, p=0.0339).

Discussion

- On average, the adolescents of parents who disagreed that discussing birth control only encourages their adolescent to have sex, thus exhibiting a greater willingness to discuss birth control with their adolescent, showed greater sexual health knowledge and a greater likelihood that they used protection in their most recent sexual intercourse. This suggests a relationship between parental communication about birth control and greater sexual health knowledge and greater use of safer sex practices in adolescents.
- Regardless of adolescent satisfaction with their maternal and paternal relationships, adolescents whose parents who were more willing to discuss birth control on average had greater sexual health knowledge and used safer sex practices. This points to a need for focused conversations on safer sex, but not necessarily an association with overall positive parental relationships.
- Parents may use this information to inform how they communicate with their adolescents regarding safer sex and birth control. This illuminates the importance of parents and families in providing sex education to their adolescents.
- Further research is needed to investigate if/how general parental/familial relationships as well as different sexuality ideologies (such as abstinence-based) perpetuated by parents are associated with adolescents' sexual health knowledge and safer sex practices.

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