



## **The evolution of the family in the contemporary society: the case of Albania**

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**Abstract:** The study of the family constitutes one of the most important fields of sociology. Everyone in all societies grows up in a family environment and marriage is a very widespread social institution. The structure of the family has changed throughout the world, affecting aspects of behavior, attitudes, beliefs, and relationships. The study focuses on comparing today's family life with those of earlier periods and aims to highlight the eventual changes Albanian family has been through over the years. Nowadays there is a tendency towards free choice of spouse, mainly due to the influence of western ideas that emphasize individualization and love in the family. Women's rights are increasingly recognized in relation to the choice of marriage as well as in decision-making and their contribution within the family.

A special importance has been paid to the expansion of children's rights in our country as well. The legal framework is important for the protection of their rights. In addition to the positive aspects and the constant efforts of family members for a dynamic life and with increased well-being, the family often encounters problematic aspects as well; which leads its members to despair and create feelings of anxiety or guilt. Lately, the Albanian society is facing the contemporary tendencies of the family, which require enough time to be accepted by the society.

**Keywords:** *family, family evolution, problematic aspects, legal rights, contemporary trends.*

## **Introduction**

The family is considered an institution as important as the state, because both of them, through their organization and functions aim to maintain a social cohesion necessary for modern society. Seen in this light, the family remains today a social, economic, moral and traditional organization. The family is the first union between people, which has served as the basis for the creation of the state. If in its beginnings it was based on a natural union of persons, over time it turned into a civil union, which was subject to a legal regulation. (Lubbock, 1889).

In the sociological sense, the family is treated as a community between persons, which is characterized by the element of common **conjuality** and common interests between persons. As a social phenomenon, the family is presented as a form of social relations between individuals, linked to each other by blood ,marriage, or mutual interes to create a family. Based on these relationships, family members are the parents, married or not, their children; other persons having a gender relationship with their parents and consequently with their children. However, two persons who are married or cohabit without marriage are also considered families; or a child living with only one of his or her parents; or the child living with one of the biological parents and with a person other than his / her parent. (Omari, 2010).

Also, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights defines the family as "the natural and fundamental nucleus of society, which enjoys the protection of the state, but without reference to the structure of the family or the resources from which it is created."

In most western societies tribal ties for practical interests are limited to a small number of relatives. Many people, for example, have unclear idea about relatives who are further away from their first or second cousin. In many other cultures, especially the small ones, family relationships carry a great deal of weight in many areas of life. (Giddens, 2004).

### **Family development history**

Researcher Laurence Stone distinguishes three main stages of family development over a three hundred year period from the 1500s to the 1800s. The dominant form of the family in the early part of this period and hundreds of years ago was what the researcher Stone calls families of open descent. This was a kind of core family living in relatively small houses but deeply focused in community relationships, including those with other relatives. The family was not clearly separated from the community. Individual freedom of choice in marriage or in other aspects of family life depended on the interests of others, such as parents, other relatives, or the community. According to Stone, during this period the family was open to support, advice, investigation and intervention from outside, from neighbors or relatives, while internal private life didn't exist.

The open-family was followed by what Stone calls the limited patriarchal family, which lasted from the early 16th century to the early 18th century. During this period the nucleus family became a more separate unit, distinct from connections with other relatives and with the domestic community. This stage of family development was accompanied by an increasing emphasis on the importance of marital and parental love, however there was also an increase in the authority of the father role.

According to Stone, the limited patriarchal family was increasingly replaced by the home-locked core family, a group with close emotional ties that has a high degree of private family life and preoccupied with raising and educating of their childrens. This is the kind of family that continues throughout the twentieth century. The closed-core family was foretold with the birth of affective individualism, the formation of marital bonds based on self-selection, under the guidance of romantic love norms. (Stone, 1977)

This family gradually became more or less universal in western countries with the spread of industrialization. In this way marriage and family took the form they still have today. (Giddens, 2004).

## **The role of the family in society**

Although the concept of the family and its structure, during the development of this institute has undergone constant changes, the role it has played in society has remained relatively constant.

The function of family solidarity. First of all the family plays a protective and supportive role among family members. Solidarity in the family manifests itself in two dimensions, both moral and material. Within the family there is often a physical, mental security, health care and emotional support.

Economic function. Family members generate income, organize the administration of daily living on the basis of a common budget, gradually forming a common capital and consequently sharing the profits or risks, as the case may be. The family economy thus grows gradually and is passed down through the generations through the legal instrument of inheritance.

Educational function. It has always been accepted that the family plays a primary role in the development of the child's personality. According to the family code, parents have the obligation to raise and educate their children. (Omari, 2010)

### **Health benefits**

Children enjoy a healthy lifestyle when living in a healthy family. The family takes care to feed them healthily, enjoy the time outside the home and get prompt medical attention when needed. Health benefits also exist for parents. Research has shown that people living with children in their family tend to live longer, even after the children have grown up and left. This may be because parents tend to eat them with healthier food, quit smoking, reduce their smoking, quit using medication, and may even stay more active compared to their childless peers. (“What Is The Importance Of Family In Modern Society?”, 2020).

## **The importance of the family in the education of children**

One of the most important ways that parents contribute to society is by educating their children. The lesson doesn't go in one direction only. In a healthy family, learning has a great advantage, perhaps only after meeting basic needs. When talking during the dinner time, family members often share their political views. They can discuss issues in a candidate's

next election or qualifications. This inspires everyone to learn more about the people and ideas involved so that they can make an informed decision when it is their turn to vote.

Parents start teaching their children as soon as they are born. They can help them learn to walk and learn new words as they develop their vocabulary. They teach them behaviors and take advantage of learning opportunities in everyday life. It is essential to mention that, they bring a love that children need to learn which will serve them throughout their lives. Most parents are equipped in different ways when it comes to helping their children learn after they go to school.

For parents, the solution of all children disagreements might be a daily. One of the ways that parents face is to learn their children how to solve the problems by themselves. Parents learn their children what is right and wrong and encourage them to follow the laws of the state. Each task that they do together, teach them more how to work as a team to achieve its goals. (“What Is The Importance Of Family In Modern Society?”, 2020).

### **Contemporary family trends**

We have to admit that the organization of family life and the persons who make it up have not been and cannot be defined infinitely. The family has been born, changed and is constantly developed, in addition to the developments that society itself undergoes. On the other hand, the dynamics of life confronts us with different approaches, new ways of thinking and living, which make us reflect both in terms of recognizing and respecting the freedoms of the individual and preserving the concept of the traditional family.

Today, new lifestyles have emerged in society, which differ from the traditional family structure or, as the case may be, from the source that serves for the creation of the family.

These are:

Actual cohabitation or family between a man and a woman, without entering into marriage.

Actual family between persons of the same sex;

Marriage of persons who have changed sex;

One-parent family, resulting in the birth of a child through assisted reproduction methods, when the donor of the genetic property remains partially unidentified.

Family with three parents, which refers to the case when two people have agreed to give birth to a child by one of them with the genetic wealth of a third and meanwhile the child has grown to the person with whom one of his biological parents lives. (Omari, 2010)

### **Cohabitation**

In our social and legal system, the family is formed on the basis of marriage between a man and a woman, a relationship which is known in the legal literature with the term "legitimate family" because it is related in a form prescribed by law. But by many academics the choice of cohabitation as an alternative to family creations, is rightly considered as an expression of the individual freedom of the person.

According to our Family Code, Article 163 cohabitation is "a union of fact between a man and a woman living as a couple, characterized by a common cohabitation that has the character of stability and continuity". (The family code, Article no. 9062, date 8.5.2003).

Cohabitation has a stable and continuous character, which means not only common living but also common interests; moral and material assistance between the persons living together and the children came from this cohabitation.

Although we have a definition included in the Family Code, it doesn't provide any legal consequences for the persons being in this relationship. According to Articles 163 and 164 of the Family Code, there is a possibility for these persons to expect by agreement the consequences that arise in terms of children or the property acquired during cohabitation. (The family code, Article no. 9062, date 8.5.2003).

### **Involvement in cohabitation and marriage**

The increase of the cohabitation phenomenon indicates a change in the nature of intimate and personal relationships; has led some scholars to pretend that individuals have become more focused on their needs and self-development, rather than focusing on long-term obligations and commitments arising from marriage. ( Giddens, 1992).

According to Giddens (1992), "pure relationships" are linked for their own well -being, to what each person can contribute to a sustainable society, which only lasts as long as both parties think that this relationship is harmonious. sufficient for each individual to remain within it. (Giddens, 1992).

Beck & Beck Gernsheim (1995) also emphasize the flexibility, negotiation, and unpredictability in intimate and share relationships by suggesting that “individuals move away from traditional rules and security, from external control rules, and general moral rules, becoming open and dependent on decision-making, and are assigned as a task to each individual”. (Beck, U. and Beck-Gernsheim, E. (1995).

### **Family violence**

Some of the cases of family violence are also addressed to children. The harmful effects of domestic violence on women are well documented. It is known less about the impact on children who testify that a parent or guardian is subject to violence. These children - the forgotten victims of family violence - are the focus of this report.

The findings show that children who are exposed to family violence can experience a range of severe and lasting effects. Children growing up in a violent home are more likely to be victims of child abuse. Those who are not direct victims have some of the same behavioral and psychological problems as children who themselves are physically abused. (World Health Organization, 2002).

Children who are exposed to family violence may have learning difficulties and social disabilities, display violent, dangerous or delinquent behavior, or suffer from severe depression or anxiety. Children in the early years of life are particularly vulnerable: Studies show that family violence is more prevalent in homes with younger children than those with older children. (Brown, Brett V., and Sharon Bzostek, 2003).

The situation of violence against women in Albania is still worrying and this is proven by the latest statistics. During the period 2008-2012, the number of registered cases of violence against women at the national level were: in 2008 there were 822 cases, in 2009 there were 1217 cases, in 2010 there were 1998 cases, in 2011 there were 2181 cases and in the first half of the year 2012, 1,100 cases had been registered with the General Directorate of Police. 4 The fact that there is an increase in the number of registered cases shows that women's awareness has increased. The issue of cases that are not reported due to fear, stereotypes, lack of infrastructure, etc. remains a problem.

## **Gender equality in the family**

Among the indicators of gender equality, the field of work-family balance has always been an essential issue. (Caracciolo di Torella, Eugenia and Annick Masselot, 2010). Equalization of professional duties and family responsibilities is an important issue for men and women, who have to combine the care needs of family members in addition to their daily paid work.

When couples define their commitments to balance such diverse responsibilities, many elements are involved including the availability of paid work income, personal preferences, cultural context, and institutional influence that enable them to contribute to the creation of individual balance sheet strategies and daily life by defining what some scholars determine as the gender contract between partners. (Becker Gary S., 1981).

In particular, partners' gender ideologies, which are normative beliefs about roles perceived as appropriate for men and women, are a major factor in the division of labor within the home. For this reason, attitudes towards gender roles can be considered as an indicator of individual support for gender equality. income and welfare. (Bergh Johannes, 2006).

## **The rights of women and children in the family**

Over the years, Albania has known important and positive developments in terms of the adoption and implementation of legislative, institutional and administrative measures undertaken as well as the design of policies aimed at improving the status of women and achieving gender equality in the country, especially in decision-making. Gender mainstreaming have been aimed at strengthening the status of women, in order to give them greater access to the labor market, including official, political or business careers. However, much remains to be done in relation to the real guarantee of gender rights.

Gender equality is the equal participation of women and men in all areas of economic, political, social, cultural life, equal position between them, equal opportunities and opportunities to enjoy rights and fulfill obligations in the society, by equally benefited from the achievements of its development. (Law no. 9970, date 24.07.2008).

This is the principle according to which all human beings should have equal legal rights regardless of race, sex, religious beliefs, socio-cultural level or political status. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979



by the UN General Assembly, which entered into force on 03.09.1981, is often referred to as the international act of women's rights.

Comprised of a preamble and 30 articles, it sets out what discrimination against women is and sets a national action agenda to end such discrimination. The CEDAW Convention of 1979

For the purposes of this Convention, the term "discrimination against women" means any discrimination, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex, which has the effect or purpose of compromising the recognition, enjoyment or exercise from women, not taking into consideration on the basis of equality between men and women, of fundamental human rights and freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. (UN General Assembly, Convention on the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, september 3, 1981)

Albania has ratified the “Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women” (CEDAW), through law no. 7767, voted by the Assembly of the Republic of Albania on 09.11.1993. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is an important guiding document in the day-to-day operation of the government mechanism for gender equality and women's associations. Based on it and the recommendations of the CEDAW committee, initiatives have been taken for legal improvements, such as: drafting and approval of law 9970, dated 24.08.2008 “On Gender Equality in Society”;

Law no. 9669, dated 18.12.2006 "On measures against family violence", Law no. 10221, dated 04.02.2010 "On protection from discrimination", etc. At the same time, positive developments have been observed in the practical implementation of administrative and political measures; strengthening institutional mechanisms; development of awareness campaigns for the practical recognition of the rights of women, girls, etc.

An important part of this study is the economic empowerment of women, as a key factor in achieving gender equality. Albanian legislation prohibits discrimination in the field of employment, professional activity and social security benefits. The Constitution, the Labor Code, the Law on Protection from Discrimination, the Law on Gender Equality, etc. include the principle of non-discrimination, equality and equal treatment for both men and women in employment relations and equal service payment. ( The full legal framework on this issue is given in Albania’s 3rd periodic report on CEDAW).

## **Problems, findings and analysis of results**

The study focused on collecting information from the answers received from the questionnaires addressed to individuals in cities in the Republic of Albania; who have had as their experience the phenomenon of migration. In the study participated 414 people.

### **Gender of respondents**

Out of 412 participants in the study, it results that 85.7% belong to the female gender; while 14.3% belong to the male gender. Only 2 people didn't participate.

### **Age group of respondents**

Out of 412 participants in the study, it results that 21.35% of them belong to the age group 0-20 years; 52.91% of them belong to the age group 21-30 years; 13.83% of them belong to the age group 31-40 years; 1.94% of them belong to the age group 41-50 years and 9.95% of them belong to the age group 51-60 years. Only 2 people didn't participate.

### **Civil Status**

Out of 414 participants in the study, it results that 60.1% claim to be single, 29.7% claim to be married; 8% claim to be in a cohabiting relationship with their partner and only 1% are divorced and 1.2 are widowed.

### **Level of education**

Out of 414 participants in the study, it results that 1.5% of them claim to have 9-year education; 10.6% of them claim to have secondary education; 55.1% of them claim to have higher bachelor education; and 26.8% of them state that they have completed master studies in one of the profiles for which they have completed higher bachelor studies or different with them and 3% have completed doctoral studies and 3% have completed postgraduate specializations.

### **Employment sector**

Out of 349 participants in the study it results that 14.61% did not specify the position where they work; 17.19% of them claim to have worked in the health sector (nurse, doctor); 7.44% are positioned in the service sector (call center, construction, cashier, etc.); 6.30% work in education; 5.43 work in the private sector; 1.71% work in administration; 1.43 are self-

employed and 6.59% are students; 23.85% did not answer and 15.51% are unemployed. Only 65 people didn't participate.

### **The importance of family nowadays**

Out of 412 respondents, it results that 97.8% of them state that family is very important and 2.2% of the respondents stated that family is somewhat important. Only 2 people didn't participate.

### **Nowadays or 20 years ago was more importance given to the family?**

From the persons participating in the study from 412 respondents, it results that 36.9% of them claim that in previous years more importance was given to the family; 32.8% of them claim that the same importance is given to the family as in the past and today; while 29.4% of them state that nowadays more importance is given to the family and only 0.9% of them have specified other answers. Only 2 people didn't participate.

### **Relationships within the family nowadays compared to 20 years ago.**

Out of 414 respondents, it results that 41.5% said that relationships within the family are more distant compared to 20 years ago; 38.2% of them stated that these relationships are more approachable; 17.9% of them stated that they value the relationships within the family equally today and 20 years ago and only 2.4% of the respondents specified other answers.

### **Collaboration between family members nowadays.**

Out of 414 persons surveyed, it results that 74.6% stated that they are maximally committed together for the progress of the family; 16.4% of them stated that only the wife is committed to the progress of the family; 4.5% stated that only the spouse is committed to the progress of the family and 4.5% of them specified other answers.

### **The Dark Aspects of the Family Nowadays.**

Out of 403 people participating in the study, it turns out that 59.6% claim that domestic violence is one of its main dark sides; 15.1% claim to be gambling / gambling; 10.9% claim sexual abuse and 14.4% have specified other answers. Only 11 people didn't participate.

### **Problems of children in the family compared to the first 20 years.**

Out of 406 persons participating in the study, it results that 45.1% state as problems of children in the family - problems with communication in the family; 25.1% report problems due to drug use; 14% report problems with family violence; 7% claim to have problems with

schooling; 3.8% report problems with violence against children and only 5% have specified other answers. Only 8 people didn't participate.

### **Services provided to the family compared to that of the first 20 years.**

Out of 411 people participating in the study, it results that 65% of the respondents stated that nowadays many services are provided for the performance of the family compared to the services provided for the family 20 years ago; 18.2% of them stated that nowadays few services are provided for the performance of the family compared to 20 years ago; 13.9% of them claim that nowadays there are no services for family performance and only 2.9% of them have specified other answers. Only 3 people didn't participate.

### **Contemporary family trends, how have they changed compared to the first 20 years.**

Out of 406 people participating in the study, it results that 45.6% stated that they are skeptical about contemporary family trends; 38.7% of them stated that these contemporary family trends are supported by society; 11.6% of them stated that these contemporary tendencies of the family have not been accepted yet and only 4.1% of them have specified other answers. Only 8 people didn't participate.. The commitment of the Albanian family for the education of children compared to that of the first 20 years.

Out of 407 people participating in the study, it results that 72% have stated that the Albanian family makes maximum efforts for the education of children compared to the efforts of families 20 years ago; 24.3% stated that Albanian families are relatively committed to the education of children compared to the efforts of families 20 years ago; 3% stated that Albanian families are not interested in the education of children compared to the efforts of families 20 years ago and only 0.7% of them specified other answers. Only 7 people didn't participate in this study.

### **Respect for the rights of women and children compared to 20 years ago.**

Out of 409 people participating in the study, it results that 58.2% claim that the rights of women and children compared to that of the first 20 years have begun to be respected; 21.5% stated that they are somewhat respected; 17.8% stated that the rights of women and children are maximally respected compared to the first 20 years; 1.2% stated that the rights of women and children are not respected compared to the first 20 years and 1.3% of them specified other answers. Only 5 people didn't participate in this study.

### **Communication in the family compared to previous years.**

Out of 410 persons participating in the study, it results that 53.7% stated that they communicate freely between family members; 26.8% stated that there are barriers between family members in communication; 16.6% of respondents stated that they communicate more freely with their mother; 0.3% stated that they communicate more freely with the father and 2.3% specified other answers. Only 4 people didn't participate in this study.

### **Gender equality in the family compared to the first 20 years.**

Out of 407 people participating in the study, it results that 65.6% claim that there is gender equality in some aspects compared to the first 20 years; 23.6% of them say that there is gender equality in the family compared to the first 20 years and 1.2% of them have specified other answers. Only 7 people didn't participate in this study.

### **Family organizations compared to the first 20 years**

Out of 411 people participating in this study, it results that 39.9% claim that family organizations are more numerous compared to the first 20 years; 29% claim that nowadays there are organizations with special cases compared to the first 20 years; 28.2% say that the organizations today are fewer compared to those of the first 20 years and only 2.9% of the respondents have specified other answers. Only 3 people didn't participate in this study.

### **Interest and involvement in the interests of your child**

Out of 367 persons participating in this study, it results that 61.9% of the respondents claim that they are involved all the time in the interests of their child; 19.9% claim to be partially involved, to give space to teenagers in their interests; 12.3% of them state that they would like to, but have been busy getting involved in the interests of their teenage child and 6% of them stated that they have never been involved in the interests of their teenage children because it has not been necessary. Only 47 people didn't participate in this study.

### **The evolution of the family in the future**

Out of 411 people participating in this study, it results that 70.8% of the respondents claim that the family will progress for the better in the future; 15.1% of respondents claim that the family will evolve for the worse in the future; 10.2% of respondents state that the evolution of the family in the future will not change anything from nowadays and 3.9% of respondents have specified other answers. Only 3 people didn't participate in this study.

## **Discussions or conclusions**

The results show that almost all respondents are employed. This of course has to do with the necessity to meet the requirements of daily life for family members. Responsibility and financial support is very important from people who are active to be at work. Work can be defined as the fulfillment of tasks, including the expenditure of mental and physical effort, which aim at producing goods and performing services that meet human needs. Work is the activity performed in exchange for a salary, which serves to meet the material needs of family members.

The results of the questionnaires show that 56.1% of the respondents state that the relationships within the family are more approximate or the same as they were 20 years ago.

The findings of the data show that almost all respondents have specified one or more dark sides of the family, such as: family violence, gambling, gambling, sexual abuse, etc.

Family violence is encountered in all human societies, regardless of their level of economic and social development. It is a social phenomenon and affects all segments of the population - young and old, educated or illiterate, married or single, affects anyone, race or ethnic group. It includes the violation of civil, cultural, economic, political and social human rights. Scared data from around the world on the extent of family violence confirms the fact that violence is an international problem. Violence manifests itself in various forms; where we can mention: physical violence, psychological violence, sexual violence, economic violence, unconcern violence. "Family violence necessarily requires the intervention of family members, but often also external mechanisms. Children are sometimes abused by both parents who may use different forms of violence or different intensities of violence. "Meanwhile, there is a lot of talk about passive or assisted violence, as well as active violence." (Mandro - Bilali, A., Kalaja, E., 2009, page 25). Also, another dark side of the family we mention sexual abuse, some abuses also committed by close family members, such as cousins, stepfather or even biological father. Of course, relevant institutions need to act through appropriate policies and strategies to prevent and minimize the incidence of domestic sexual abuse.

As we notice from the answers received from the respondents about 57.2% of the answers received state that for the contemporary tendencies of the family individuals are still suspicious or have not been accepted by society. Trends such as: cohabitation, family with one parent (where mainly career women decide to adopt or have a child of their own through assisted reproduction methods (with donors), cohabitation, etc.

Cohabitation is an emotional and sexual relationship of two partners living together, but legally unrelated, illegitimate in the civil status.

The Family Code, in the Republic of Albania, article 163 specifies that: "Cohabitation is a factual union between a man and a woman living in a couple, characterized by a common life, which represents a character of stability and continuity." Usually cohabitants share the same living space.

These are mainly couples bound in partnership for a common social, spiritual, perhaps even material, economic life that may have or raise common children, but that maintain independence before the law in obligations to marriage and family. Cohabiting persons do not have the quality of spouses, so they are not recognized the mutual rights and obligations provided by the family code for spouses, neither between them nor towards third parties.

As we notice from the answers received from the respondents about 57.2% state that there is an increasing tendency to respect the rights of women and children in the family. This growing trend has come from a number of factors such as: the adoption of laws that protect women and children, through the policies of institutions.

## **Conclusions**

The study concluded that a high percentage of respondents, exactly 97.8% said that the family is very important nowadays. All family members make maximum efforts for its progress but also in solving the problems of daily life that the family faces in Albanian society.

The study concluded that a high percentage of respondents, 74.6% have a maximum cooperation between family members. This is also due to the values that characterize the Albanian society, which are included quite well in family life such as the feeling of solidarity, love and commitment for the support provided to family members who in certain periods may encounter various situations for which the support of family members is also important, both emotionally, psychologically and economically.

The study concluded that a very high percentage of respondents, 72% of Albanian families are maximally committed to the education of children compared 20 years ago. Albanian families invest their savings in their children's education.

The study concluded that a high percentage of respondents about 70.8% said that the family will develop for the better in the future. In recent years, progress has been made not only in

the adoption of relevant legislation regarding the rights of individuals within the family sphere but also in the observance of these rights by all family members (women's rights, children's rights, equality in the family, etc.).

The study concluded that a high percentage of respondents about 65.7% claim that gender equality in the family already exists for some components of daily family life, as well as the implementation of relevant legislation regarding gender equality.

The study conclude that a higher percentage of responders answers about 65 % confirms that nowadays are offered more services for families compared to 20 years ago. Service offered in aspects of social problems, services in case of negative problems that family might face( such as sexual abuse, drug usage, mainly in young persons etc) health service etc. For the service offered to the individuals that need such service are respective institutions that solve this kind of problems as well as looking to these individuals in the future.

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