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Decision Making by Nordic Newspaper Editors

An Exploratory Study and Comparison to U.S. Editors

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FOREWORD

This working paper explores the values systems of Nordic newspaper editors and their decision-making styles and compares them to those held by counterparts in the U.S. The study was carried out at the Media Management and Transformation Centre, Jönköping International Business School, Jönköping University, Sweden, as part of its on-going investigations of managerial challenges and settings.

This paper was written by George Sylvie, an associate professor in the School of Journalism, College of Communication at the University of Texas. Sylvie conducted the research while a visiting scholar at the Media Management at Transformation Centre in 2006. He has written widely on the roles of editors and managerial change. He is the author of *Time, Change and the American Newspaper* and *Media Management: A Casebook Approach*.

This report shows that American editors tend to share managerial approaches based on gender differences and experience, whereas Scandinavian editors tended to gravitate toward more functional points of reference. They have a propensity to view disparate, almost-polar values as single utilitarian groups or continuums (e.g., professionalism and controversy, control and diversity, and objectivity and price). They also revealed a common, employee- or subordinate-related thread in their self-reported management tendencies while perceiving their main weakness as a lack of control.

1. Introduction

Audiences are changing the way they use newspapers. American shifts have been well-documented: Most U.S. newspapers continue to lose readers (Compaine & Gomery, 2000). Scholars and journalists fear that declining competition increases advertising costs and, hence, the likelihood that advertisers will seek better values (and venues) for their money (Lacy & Martin, 2004). As the American public's news tastes changed, so has the public's attitude toward public affairs news. Readers generally have tepid experiences with newspapers: News is less of a "something to talk about" experience. Newspaper managers tend to think readers have far more positive experiences than they actually did, suggesting that newspapers are not poised to do what it takes to improve that situation (Readership Institute, 2000).

But America does not own the problem. One would think that Nordic newspapers, with some of the highest readerships in the world—four of every five Swedish and Danish adults read a newspaper on an average day, Norway averages 626 daily newspapers for every thousand adults (barely second on the globe to Japan), and the typical Finn spends twice as much time reading a newspaper than his American counterpart—would be immune (World Association of Newspapers, 2006a). However, not counting the flood of free dailies in Denmark, newspaper circulation also has declined in those countries. Even in Denmark, TV and the Internet are making inroads in the advertising market; ad revenues for paid-for dailies has declined 6 percent since 2001 (World Association of Newspapers, 2006a). Recruiting young readers has become a priority.

Indeed, on a global scale, newspapers have been judged to be out of touch with many readers, missing whole audience sectors and their news preferences. This has prompted many strategies, ranging from additional research to a technology-infused expansion of the number of publishing channels. In doing so, newspapers have transferred much control of audience dynamics to the audience itself (World Association of Newspapers, 2006b). But the transfer has not gone quickly or smoothly in Europe or America, one reason being that the producers of newspaper non-advertising content—journalists—have been slow to add the changing media landscape's demands for new skills and new audience understanding onto their professional competencies list (Bierhoff & Schmidt, 1997; Sylvie & Witherspoon, 2002). Because of cultural and nationalistic differences, journalism schools are not united in how to approach the issue (Lönnroth, 1997; Huang et al., 2006).

Also, if newspapers are to attract more readers, then newspapers will have to change their content to conform more to the tastes of readers or—at the very least—find a more reader-friendly way to present the news. That implies newsroom managers will have to think and edit differently—in short, their decision-making process will have to be examined and re-structured. One place to look involves these managers' values.

2. The Role of Values

Initially, it was argued (Heath, 1976) that individual decision-making is a complex process dependent upon, among other things, the adjustment of "value priorities" and how they mediate between social drives and individual decision (326):

> *Values form part of the assessment matrix which individuals use to define and evaluate their surroundings. Rather than simply existing as responses to situational stimuli, values, when structured into systems, serve as dynamic definitional and evaluative constructs.*

Since then, values—for the most part—are seen as beliefs that underlie attitudes—the application of a value—and researchers in general argue that values predict behavior (Connor & Becker, 2003).

2.1 Values in Industry

Correlational studies show relationships between values and decision-making of all kinds—for example, a correlation analysis of two cultures by Badr et al. (1982) found a positive relationship between a manager's personal values and his decision-making. American managers' theoretical, economic, political and religious personal values correlated with their choices of action. The study also found positive relationships between theoretical, social, political and religious personal values of the Egyptian group and their corresponding choices of action. But little has been done on establishing the influence of values *on* decision-making.

Still, values research continues, with studies examining, e.g., the relationship between personal values, organizational values, and organizational commitment (resulting in the finding that values are multidimensional and that each value may affect behavior differently (Finnegan, 2000)) while also examining the role of the value of fairness regarding the causes of absence in supervisor disciplinary decisions (resulting in the finding that supervisors who valued fairness render more severe disciplinary decisions than supervisors who value fairness less (Judge & Martocchio, 1995)).

Although no consensus exists as to which values are important in organizations (Meglino and Ravlin, 1998, 358), more recent values research "strongly" corroborates effects of values on decisions—albeit without a clear view of the values-behavior relationship (372). Still, the importance of values scholarship cannot be denied. How much a person values a style of behavior seems related to how he or she evaluates decisions and situations (383).

More recent studies have attempted to clarify the debate by using Williams' (2002) logic about connecting values to organizational strategy. For example, Connor & Becker (2003) surveyed more than 160 state government managers and found public managers' values apparently disposed them to certain decision-making methods. A later study linked the decision-making styles of rational (systematic hunting for and rational assessing of options), dependent (looking to others for guidance and bearing) and avoidant (trying to evade decision-making) to self-esteem and action control (Thunholm, 2004). Even more recently, researchers connected managers' personal values (traditional, collectivistic work, self-transcendent, and self-enhancement values) to charismatic leadership, suggesting those managers displaying higher levels of charismatic leadership are driven by traditional values or by openness to change values (Sosik, 2005).

In addition, there's evidence that age and gender may have some direct relationship to values. In India, for example, scholars (Mellahi and Guermat, 2004) showed that, despite ample institutional pressure to defuse the effect of the new managerial values on managerial practices, young managers' values have a strong impact on managerial practices. In both age groups, the values the managers held largely mediated their behaviors. Other research showed significant difference in values between men and women (Chusmir et al., 1989) and that patterns counter to the stereotype—that female leaders use a relationship-oriented management style, encompassing collaborative, contributory and vicarious behaviors to accomplish tasks while male leaders, use task orientation, competition, and power—exist (Robinson and Lipman-Blumen, 2003): Women were neither more collaborative, nor more contributory than men, who used relational behavior more frequently than women and were less task-oriented.

2.2 Values in Communication Spheres

As to the role of values in journalism, the knowledge is not as well-defined. We know, for example, that newspaper editors perceive themselves as forceful and important champions of journalism values while using modern, participatory managerial methods. The editors with positive attitudes toward organizational integration perceived they had higher levels of organizational support (Gade, 2005). But most studies have been isolated, as mass communication and journalism scholars have tended to focus on ethical or market issues; few scholars have sought to explore the relationship between values and newsroom management. For example, there's the ongoing debate as to whether newspapers are businesses or agents of democracy and how to treat them accordingly (see, e.g., Cranberg et al., 2001). "Values" in this debate tend to center on whether boardroom or newsroom attitudes prevail in a newspaper operation.

Scholars have tried a number of indirect ways to measure the status of that debate, examining particular value sets within certain contexts. Hollifield et al. (2001) compared "organizational" and journalistic values' impact on hiring decisions to see if marketing-oriented capabilities and considerations were the focus. The study found mixed support for the view that organizational culture dominates decision-making; while such influence has increased over time, top news executives also place a higher priority on core professional values when hiring news workers (110). Gade's survey (2002) of newspaper editors found that two of the three "types" of managers regarding change and the encroachment of market-based values—the "critical skeptic," the "change agent," and the "resigned pragmatist"—recognized their change management shortcomings and had reservations about profit impulses. Beam (1998) also looked at values from the standpoint of whether senior editors at market-oriented papers still valued traditional journalistic values; none of these studies focused on decision-making in general, however.

Deviating from the behavior-content link, Voakes (1997) tried to establish a social influences connection to ethical decision-making. He theorized that values also were filtered by social influences: individual, competition, small group, organizational, competition, occupational, extramedia, and legal (22-26); he found the latter five particularly relevant. A similar study (Berkowitz and Limor, 2003) found that one U.S. state's newspaper reporters' ethical decisions vary by context and that an important difference was their degree of professional confidence and experience. Still, no study examined beliefs of newsroom managers until recently.

3. Research from the United States

Sylvie and Huang (2006) found it necessary to define just how decisions are made within the management context. They theorized that examining the thought processes of mid-level editors—the "infantry sergeants" of the newsroom, if you will—will lead to a better understanding of what may drive content and management decisions. Sub-editors are important in setting the agenda of the executive editor and the managing editor. As departmental heads, they are on the conceptual frontlines, not just in terms of how a story is developed, but also what stories are developed, how reporters are chosen and evaluated, how news is packaged and how budgets are determined. Extending that logic via social psychology, Plaisance and Skewes (2003) built upon an earlier proposal by Viall (1992) and attempted produced a "profile" of journalistic values. Their U.S. survey, using sociologists' value-theory research, sought to connect values to adversarial, disseminating and interpretive functions of journalism; only the latter role provided a significant relationship. But they, too, did not explore newsroom managers' belief systems.

This presented an opportunity, then, to focus on human behavior that makes a difference in the problem-solving effectiveness of a newspaper. Although that quality of information makes or breaks decision-making, perception of that information also makes a difference. The general public believes that many newspapers have become distant and unsympathetic, as well as sensational and not credible. They believe newspapers must become more introspective and self-regulating. Understanding the impact, if any, between the internal decision system and the views and writing of the members will help newspapers become self-learning and more adaptable organizations.

3.1 Methods

A national survey was constructed and delivered online. The survey used a stratified, random sample of daily newspapers in the United States. According to Neuendorf (2002), stratified sampling reduces the sampling error for the stratifying variable to zero but full-sample analysis requires statistical adjustments. In order to stratify newspapers by circulation, a list of papers had to be generated and then their circulations calculated. A total of 400 newspapers were randomly selected. The sampled papers ranged from the largest ones such as *USA TODAY* and *The New York Times* to a small paper with a circulation size of 6,200. After pre-testing, personalized emails were then sent to five mid-level editors at each newspaper to solicit their participation in the survey. A "mid-level editor" was defined as either the head or assistant to the head of a newsroom department. The email contained a URL address that the respondent could go to in order to participate. Two waves of emails were sent in March and August 2005 because of more than 400 "bounce-backs." The valid email count was 1,677.

Instrument: Value Systems. In examining value systems, the study factor-analyzed 48 newspaper mid-level editors' decision-making values and developed four value systems best representing all editors. The four value systems are, in the order of importance to editors, (a) journalistic, (b) audience, (c) organizational and (d) social values. In addition, both demographic and job-related variables had significant impact on the values an editor relied on for decision-making. For example, women were more likely than men to make decisions based on social, journalistic and audience values, and non-White editors were more likely than White editors to use organizational values. In terms of job-related influence, editors used organizational values to make decisions if they were more experienced, higher positioned, with a larger staff, or in a bigger newspaper. Instead of treating the four value systems as dependent variables, the authors went one step beyond to test the effect of editors' value systems on their decision-making styles (see Figure 1).
Figure 1: Editors' Decision-making Process
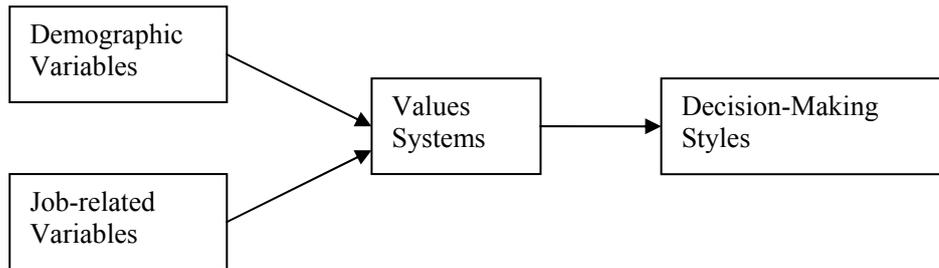
Instruments: Decision-making Styles. Numerous instruments are available for assessing individual decision-making styles (Rowe & Mason, 1987; Chusmir et al., 1989; Scott & Bruce, 1995; Shim & Goldsberry, 2002; Poon Teng Fatt, 2004). Among the instruments, the General Decision-making Style (GDMS) measure, developed by Scott and Bruce (1995), offers a more theory-based reasoning and better scales with cross-sample validity. Scott and Bruce defined decision-making style as "the learned, habitual response pattern exhibited by an individual when confronted with a decision situation. It is not a personality trait, but a habit-based propensity" (820). Based on a multistage, four-sample study, Scott and Bruce suggested five decision-making styles which were neither context- nor problem-specific. A rational style is characterized as deliberate and logical; an intuitive style relies on internal hunches; a dependent style projects responsibility for decisions onto others; an avoidant style attempts to avoid decision making; and a spontaneous style attempts to make decisions as quickly as possible.

The study operationalized decision-making styles by using the GDMS measure. The measure has 25 items, so there were five items—each measuring one of the five styles: rational, intuitive, dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous. Editors were asked to rate the 25 items in a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." A rational style posed statements such as "I usually double-check my information sources"; an intuitive style posed statements such as "I usually trust my inner feelings"; a dependent style posed statements such as "if I have the support of others, it is easier for me to make import decisions"; an avoidant style posed statements such as "I usually put off making many decisions because thinking about them makes me uneasy"; and a spontaneous style posed statements such as "I usually make quick decisions." The internal consistency of the five scales (alpha ranging from .68 to .94) was characterized as reliable across Scott and Bruce's four different samples: military officers, graduate students, undergraduate students, and engineers.

3.2 Results

Survey Profile. Some 341 surveys were completed out of 1,677 valid deliveries for a 20 percent response rate. Since the study random-sampled 400 newspapers rather than the 1,677 editors from the sample parameter, an organizational response rate was also calculated. These editors were from 209 newspapers, yielding an organizational response rate of 52 percent, which provided an alternative indicator of how representative the sample is. Most respondents (84%) were managing editors, deputy managing editors, section editors and assistant section editors; the remainder holds higher positions such as editors or publishers. Women made up 34 percent of respondents; men made up the other 66 percent. Whites made up 94 percent of the respondents, while Blacks constituted 2 percent and Hispanics 2 percent. Compared to the 2003 American Society of Newspaper Editor's annual survey (NAA, 2004), the percentages of women are similar (34% vs. 37%) but the percentages of non-Whites are very different (6% vs. 13%).

Variable Profile. Table 1 presents descriptive (mean and standard deviation) and internal consistency reliability statistics (Cronbach's alpha coefficient) for the four values systems and the

five GDMS scales. In general, the editors ranked the journalistic values as most important when making decisions. Conversely, the social values were reported as relatively least important. At the same time, the editors, in average, agreed they were more rational, intuitive and dependent, but less avoidant and spontaneous. Internal consistency reliabilities were adequate for all scales except for the "dependent" scale. Cronbach's alpha for the dependent scale (.57) was too low to consider reliable with the sample. That is, the composite scale was not a reliable measure to capture a dependent decision maker. Although scale developers Scott and Bruce acquired an average alpha of .79 for the dependent scale with several samples, subsequent studies were not able to obtain as high an alpha as Scott and Bruce (α =.62: Loo, 2000; α =.70: Thunholm, 2004). As a result, the dependent scale was dropped from further analyses.

TABLE 1: Descriptive & reliability statistics for the value systems and the decision-making styles

	Mean	Std. deviation	Cronbach's alpha
Value Systems [a]			
Journalistic	2.18	.54	.78
Audience	1.78	.55	.73
Organizational	1.01	.75	.79
Social	.16	.71	.84
Decision-making Styles [b]			
Rational	3.92	.65	.82
Intuitive	3.44	.65	.75
Dependent	3.43	.62	.57*
Avoidant	2.13	.87	.89
Spontaneous	2.62	.70	.72

N=341

[a] on a scale of "-3=least influential" and "+3=most influential"

[b] on a recoded scale of "1=strongly disagree" and "5=strongly agree"

* α =.57, which is less than the acceptable level of .60, so it is dropped for further analysis.

3.2.1 Do mid-level editors' value systems correlate with their decision-making styles?

Correlation. Investigating the relationship between editors' value systems and decision-making styles by using Pearson-product-moment correlation coefficient, the study (see Table 2) showed that an intuitive style positively correlated with all four value systems; a rational decision-making style positively correlated with three: journalistic, organizational and audience values; and a spontaneous style positively correlated with two: social and audience values. An avoidant style positively correlated with only social values but negatively correlated with journalistic and organizational values; whereas other decision-making styles didn't have negative relationship with any value systems.

TABLE 2: Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Values and Decision-Making Styles

	Rational	**Intuitive**	**Avoidant**	**Spontaneous**
Social values	.08	.32**	.15**	.27**
Journalistic values	.25**	.16**	-.18**	.05
Organizational values	.25**	.20**	-.13*	.04
Audience values	.20**	.13*	-.02	.15**

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)
*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

3.2.2 Do mid-level editors' value systems significantly correlate with their decision-making styles after controlling for demographic and job-related variables?

Hierarchical regression. Although bivariate correlations showed some relationships between editors' value systems and decision-making styles, the relationships might disappear after controlling for other variables. So four hierarchical regressions were performed, each analyzing one of the four decision-making styles as the dependent variables, the four value systems as predictor variables, and the demographic and job-related factors as control variables.

Table 3's total R square showed all four hierarchical regression models significant at the .01 level and the amount of R-Square-Change also significant for the four models. Since R-Square-Change represents the four value systems' unique contribution to each decision-making style, one can confidently say that editors' value systems as a whole significantly influence their decision-making styles. After demographic- and job-related variables' effects are removed, the relationships between editors' value systems and decision-making styles still are statistically significant.

TABLE 3: Hierarchical Regression Analysis of the Relationship between Values and Decision-Making Styles after Controlling for Demographic Variables and Job-related Variables

Variable Blocks	Rational	Intuitive	Avoidant	Spontaneous
	(std. Beta)	(std. Beta)	(std. Beta)	(std. Beta)
1. Demographic variables				
Gender	-.08	.03	.12*	.16**
Race	.00	.03	-.07	-.01
Age	-.07	.09	.02	.17
Education	.05	-.05	-.03	-.05
Ideology	-.02	-.03	.08	.06
2. Job-related variables				
Experience	.00	-.22*	-.14	-.30**
Position	-.03	.02	.09	.05
Circulation	-.06	-.08	-.12	-.15
Staff size	.05	.10	.07	.17
3. Value systems				
Social values	-.14*	.32**	.34**	.36**
Journalistic values	.16*	.07	-.16**	.02
Organizational values	.23**	.04	-.23**	-.18*
Audience values	.05	-.08	.04	.10
Total R Square	.11**	.13**	.17**	.16**
Adjusted R Square	.13	.09	.14	.12
R Square Change	.09**	.11**	.09**	.10**
N	338	341	341	341

**. p<.01
*. p<.05

In terms of individual relationships among demographic data, job-related factors, value systems, and decision styles, five significant predictors were found:

1. The factor of gender predicted avoidant (beta=.12, p<.05) and spontaneous (beta=.16, p<.01) decision styles. Specifically, male editors tended toward more avoidant and more spontaneous decision styles.
2. Less-experienced editors tended toward more intuitive (beta=-.22, p<.05) and more spontaneous (beta=-.30, p<.01) decision styles.
3. Social values had a positive impact on intuitive (beta=.32, p<.01), avoidant (beta=.34, p<.01), and spontaneous (beta=.36, p<.01) decision styles but negative impact on rational style (beta=-.14, p<.01).

4. Editors ranking journalistic values higher were more likely to say that they make rational decisions (beta=.16, p<.05); whereas editors who ranked journalistic values lower were more likely to say that they make avoidant decisions (beta=-.16, p<.01).
5. Organizational values were positively related to rational decision style (beta=.23, p<.01) and negatively related to avoidant (beta=-.23, p<.01) and spontaneous (beta=-.18, p<.05) decision styles. Among the four value systems, only audience values had no predictive power on decision-making styles after controlling for demographic and job-related variables.

3.3 What it Means

Extracting meaning from these data requires examining the data for question as to whether mid-level editors' value systems significantly correlate with their decision-making styles. The answer appears an unqualified "yes"; the level of the correlation coefficients indicates a small-but-definite relationship. But the hierarchical regression helps determine whether these value systems make a significant contribution to predicting decision-making styles above and beyond the contribution made by demographic-related predictors. So, as a precision-building instrument, hierarchical regression shows all the value systems have a greater impact on predicting the intuitive decision-making style.

This is not to short-shrift the fact that mid-level editors' value systems significantly correlate with their decision-making styles: Correlation results showed that 12 out of 16 relationships were significant. More importantly, the results confirm Scott and Bruce's findings that "individuals do not rely on a single decision-making style…individuals use a combination of decision-making styles in making important decisions" (829). For instance, results show that an editor who ranked high in journalistic values was more likely to report rational and intuitive decision styles and less likely to report an avoidant style.

As for whether mid-level editors' value systems significantly correlate with their decision-making styles after controlling for demographic and job-related variables, five significant decision-making style predictors alluded to earlier were found. Gender predicts avoidant and spontaneous styles; experience predicts intuitive and spontaneous styles; the editors' social value systems predict all four styles; a journalistic value system is good at predicting rational and avoidant styles; and the organizational value system is a predictor of rational, avoidant, and spontaneous styles. Similar to previous findings of a counter-stereotypical pattern, male editors in U.S. newsrooms were significantly related to more avoidant and more spontaneous decision-making. As to the dominance of organizational culture on decision-making, the U.S. study showed editors who ranked high on "social values"—many of them culture-based—were more likely to report they have an intuitive, avoidant or spontaneous decision-making style and to say they do not have a rational style. In contrast to other studies, however, this study showed no significant impact of age and ideology on editors' decision styles.

3.4 Limitations

Other aspects of this study warrant caution in interpreting the results: the less-than-desirable response rate; the fact that it's a sample and not a census; its exploratory nature; and the self-reported quality of the results. As with any survey, scholars rely on respondents' memory and ability to fully comply with instructions and the choice of conducting a survey rules out chances for observation or other methods that would confirm or dispel the results. Too, this study's sample methodology likely under-represented certain demographic sub-groups while over-representing those with access to the Internet and email. In terms of content, the study stressed

U.S. editors and not those of other countries or territories, so any international inferences about values require qualification.

4. Newspaper Management in Europe

European newspapers contend with a host of challenges, specifically how to reinvent current business models: The Internet's arrival and the free availability of news online—mixed with trepidation over well-established trends of waning circulation, a declining advertising market share and high newsprint prices—are cause for concern. Daily European newspapers also face serving increasingly disparate and split audiences; younger readers seem more interested in Internet-based searching permitting personalized reading (European Commission, 2003). This is similar to the situation in America, but without the large, broadly homogeneous market permitting U.S. publishers to domestically recover much of their investment and, thus, offer high-value content at relatively low prices (32).

Compounding the readership troubles for European newspapers, advertisers are taking advantage of the increasing number of media selections (and the Internet's share of classified ads grows) while getting more serious about proof of impact (CEPIPRINT, 2004). Even more alarming to some publishers, however, has been the emergence of free commuter dailies that "served notice to the paid dailies that they were under-serving significant portions of the market and that their claims to represent a mass audience were, in some respects, false" (CEPIPRINT, p. iii). The fact that new, younger readers with little prior newspaper reading experience are likely to read such publications (Bakker, 2002) adds to the quandary.

Adequately approaching this dilemma requires good productivity, which "depends on the value of a nation's products and services, measured by the prices they can command in open markets and the efficiency with which they can be produced" (European Commission, 5). European productivity varies by country because of such factors as economies of scale; differences in work practices, technological difficulty, and the product mix; and levels of investment, capital, and capacity. Nordic countries "consistently score lower" on productivity (p. 8), primarily because of their book and magazine publishing sectors. Sweden, Finland, and Denmark—no Norway data were provided as Norway is not an EU member—rank medium-to-low among EU countries for productivity (p. 43). While productivity can be underestimated, Nordic countries' newspaper industries consistently form the bottom of EU rankings in labor productivity; there also is a positive relationship between productivity and investment per employee (59, 75).

In addition, there's cause for concern about European newspapers' competitiveness and innovative capabilities. As publishers increasingly turn their attention toward how to reinvent their business models with the advent of the Internet and declining circulations, they also must re-examine how they manage their core competencies and functions since many signs suggest news stories are "not a must-have" in the future (European Commission, 154). This will mean, among other things, looking at current workflow processes for potential new revenue opportunities and cost savings. Yet, there are few indicators—qualitative or quantitative—of the current or future skills bases within newspapers (20). In short, the more than 2000 European daily newspapers appear to be managing with one arm tied behind their collective backs. As a wide variety of new job roles continues to emerge, newspaper managers will have to address the accompanying complaints about more workload, disintermediation, and reduced autonomy (144)—a task they seem reluctant to address via additional training (145).

4.1 The Nordic Newspaper Markets

By the 1990s, Nordic media companies' structures were similar, with the daily press wholly owned by domestic companies. Since then, newspaper ownership structure has shifted to include

a modicum of foreign interests; still Nordic-owned media companies still control Nordic media markets (Sundin, 2003). It's no coincidence that researchers, then, usually regard Scandinavian countries as a whole in international studies; their similarities in speech, pasts, and locale facilitate this approach (Hofstede, 1980; Wilberg, 2003). The newspaper markets themselves are very competitive, with local and regional newspapers often taking a bite out of the circulations of their larger, more prestigious peers (e.g., see Gustafsson, 1996).

But country by country, Fenno-Scandinavian newspapers face additional problems. Although all the countries have extremely high readership per capita, circulation declines for paid newspapers have started to become more noticeable and audiences have started to fragment in various ways. Despite Scandinavian Europe having the highest daily paid circulation as a percentage of its total population of any region on the planet (Wilkinson, 2006), the area's newspapers face a myriad of competitive concerns.

For example, Denmark's press has seen advanced reader interest in national and international news and the papers that provide it, meaning local and regional papers' circulations suffer (Jauert & Prehn, 2000; Søllinge, 1999). Still, total newspaper circulation increased by more than half a million—thanks largely to an influx of free dailies—and more than 80 percent of Danes daily read a newspaper (World Association of Newspapers, 2006a). While newspapers remain stronger in terms of advertising than other Danish media, strictly local newspapers are rare—in contrast to the situations in other Nordic countries. As newspapers expanded, they phased out local editions to cut costs, meaning several towns no longer have publications (Søllinge, 1999). The combined desertion of the less-educated reader and the rise of more entertaining, competing media have even caused official Danish concern (69-71).

The situation reversed in Sweden, where local dailies remain relatively strong, but at the expense of national publications and evening newspapers; single people are beginning to abandon newspaper reading in increasing numbers (Weibull & Jönsson, 2000; Hadenius & Weibull, 1999). Newspapers are mainly local or regional and virtually all are sold via subscription. Most have experienced circulation declines since the 1980s, but none heavier than the afternoon-oriented, metropolitan single-copy sale newspaper (Weibull & Jönsson, 2000). Free newspapers increased their market share and non-dailies increased circulation (World Association of Newspapers, 2006a).

In Sweden, most households—3 out of every 4—subscribe to a newspaper. A high living standard, political awareness, a well-educated populace and good journalism all work toward that end. But increased subscription rates, a sluggish Swedish economy and single persons' lack of an established reading habit present problems to this day (Hadenius & Weibull, 1999). Declining newspaper share of advertising revenue makes the downward spiral of Norwegian circulation less of a concern in that country. A high number of newspaper titles, the highest newspaper readership in the world (600 daily copies per 1,000 inhabitants) (Østbye, 2000), and government policy to preserve traditional, scattered residential patterns have contributed to a large number of exclusively local newspapers (Høst, 1999). In fact, most papers in Norway distribute locally or regionally (Allern, 2005).

Finland's newspaper market is stable, but with not much growth potential and nearly saturated markets (Jyrkiäinen, 2000). High unemployment and expanding electronic media forced circulation losses in the major Finnish dailies, which—along with all Finland's newspapers— retreated to their core circulation districts and cut back on national and international coverage (Salokangas, 1999). However, young Finns are avid newspaper readers (World Association of Newspapers, 2006a).

4.1.1 Nordic Newsrooms

Despite the general stability of Nordic newspaper markets, the rest of the world faces changing markets and—as a result—their newsrooms face increasing pressures for change as well, especially in how they operate. In a worldwide survey (World Association of Newspapers, 2007), the largest group (36 percent) of editors—when asked how they would invest in editorial quality—said they would train their staff in new media. Geographically, however (and possibly reflecting their more stable markets), Western European editors said they would recruit more reporters first, and train staff in new media second.

Perhaps even more of a problem is the likely vacuum in training in Nordic newsrooms to handle these challenges. Journalists normally work in their national language, directing themselves to audiences that speak that language. So journalism education has been nation-oriented, meaning its contents differ by country while technology continues to internationalize communication (Holm, 1997). In Sweden, e.g., one scholar (Melin-Higgins, 1996) has noted that journalism training has made Swedish journalists "more homogeneous in their values" (p. 14). In contrast to current media innovations and developments, which tend to be global in nature, European journalism training occurs within national contexts (Bierhoff et al., 2000).

Diversity training is considered essential (in the newsroom and for the benefit of attracting diverse audiences) yet in all four countries, women editors are rare. In Norway, only 1 of every 5 managers is a woman (van Eijk, 2005b). In Finland, women journalists feel less independent on the job than men (Heinonen, 1998). In Denmark, not one major newspaper in 2005 had a female editor (van Eijk, 2005a).

Facilitating and coping with change will mean Fenno-Scandinavian editors and managers will necessarily need to become more innovative (Bierhoff et al., 2000). Already some newsrooms are beginning to re-organize to better integrate digitized products (p. 15); broadcast media seem ahead of newspapers on this front (p. 16). A "generation gap" also is emerging: Younger journalists appear more willing and suited to use new technologies than do their older peers (10). Although Swedish newspapers are ahead of most in the EU in terms of Web edition production, editors are "uncertain" as to future directions and how to use current staff (p. 20). And as a relatively new member of the EU, Sweden requires new language skills and knowledge in legal, political and economic spheres (p. 23). But cooperation on journalism education will require time and complex negotiations. Fenno-Scandinavian newsrooms, meanwhile, will need to closely scrutinize their decision-making processes and—if experts (e.g., Jarvis, 2007) are to be believed—need to come to grips (more than they currently appear to be (see World Association of Newspapers, 2007)) with the coming importance of new media.

We know little about the commonalities among newsrooms in Fenno-Scandinavia, but individual studies illustrate parts of the puzzle. In Finland, for example, what was considered an autonomous, lifelong job is slowly changing, thanks to adjustable hours, the growth of specialization, working in groups, and more corporate, professional-style planning by editors (Heikkilä and Kunelius, 2005). At the turn of the century, like their U.S. peers, Finnish journalists were facing the pull of market-driven journalism—i.e., the pressure to make journalism more appealing to readers—as well as the opposing lure of the public service of encouraging citizenship (Hujanen, 2006). Interviews with Finnish newspaper journalists at various newsroom levels "shows that journalism in the self-perception of journalists is increasingly about private infotainment and entertainment but, interestingly, is also about private and public empowerment" (17) and that top editors' values would play a large part in guiding the shape of Finland's news in the future (18-19).

Study of those values in Nordic countries has been scarce and, to date, focused on Norwegian and Swedish newspaper executives, because of the similar cultures, heritage, language and geographical proximity (Hofstede, 1980). Wilberg (2003) studied the leadership and performance of Norwegian and Swedish newspapers by surveying higher level managers and comparing their reported behaviors to performance data. Though not examining mid-level, newsroom-based editors, the study nonetheless sheds considerable light on the importance of effective, strategic planning practices, collaborative leadership and motivation and their connection to "better robustness and competitiveness for newspapers" in the two countries (2). Although Wilberg found no differences in leadership practices between Swedish and Norwegian newspapers (120-122), his data showed that motivation and appreciation for employees stood out when examining performance differences (113-115). And although the study did not focus on goals, values and beliefs, Wilberg noted that they are "more or less clear" and "carried forward via stories, myths, and rituals" (147). This rare look into Nordic newspaper leadership recommended additional areas for research, including the study of "organizational change and how leaders and managers deal with that" (169).

By and large, however, scholars have ignored the organizational context of newspapers, despite the widely acknowledged notion that there are direct, organizational, social and cultural causes of media content, as well (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). The Sylvie & Huang (2006) study, as mentioned earlier, is rare in this context. Many newspaper managers approaching change try to surmount and outwit resistance to it, creating resistant employees who threaten the organization's long-term performance, lifespan, and flexibility as well as employees constituting the "constructive" culture. So the approach to change requires careful thought; many newsroom team efforts still get categorized as managerial control efforts, rather than exercises in interdependence. Journalists—because of culturally based notions of how journalism should be performed—resist change, seeing it as either disruptive or inefficient. They also, after a short time of openness and anticipation, fail to grasp management's message (Argyris, 1967; Neuzil et al., 1999; Readership Institute, 2000; Daniels and Hollifield, 2002; Sylvie and Witherspoon, 2002; and Gade & Perry, 2003). Research has shown the newspaper industry has a military-like newsroom culture that does little to foster communication.

This is especially important considering that a recent industry study found that newspaper culture is connected to readership: Newspapers with "constructive" cultures tended to have higher readership. Newspapers tended to fall into two basic culture types: defensive and constructive. More than 80 percent of the newspapers studied had defensive cultures. Constructive cultures lean toward looking outward, responding to market and technological change; they expect collaboration and coordination across departments. They perform at higher levels and have more satisfied customers and employees. By comparison, defensive cultures resist change. Employees are individual- rather than group-centered. They work in departments that build walls between themselves and other departments. In particular, the study identified an aggressive-defensive culture in newspapers. Employees are persistent and hard working, but generally feel they must avoid mistakes, monitor everything and work long hours to meet restricted objectives. In addition, newspapers feature confrontational styles that focus on avoiding mistakes rather than improving; forfeiting quality in some areas for improbable quality levels in others; and making supervisors—rather than staff—accountable for quality. The culture also tends to be fast-paced, often requiring people to decide quickly (Readership Institute, 2000).

So it's necessary to define just how decisions are made within that context, so that that process can be further analyzed for potential for change that will result in more desirable content. By examining the thought processes of Nordic mid-level editors—the "Infantry sergeants" of the

newsroom, if you will—we can better understand what impetus drives content and management decisions. In addition, we can further examine what generic—news ideology, environmental, task-oriented, or individual—factors affect or influence that process. Finally—and just as important—we can add to a growing body of knowledge in this area. With their high-but-declining newspaper readerships, Nordic editors pose just as interesting a case study.

5. Preliminary Interviews and Survey

To fully inform a survey of Nordic mid-level editors, it was necessary to conduct preliminary interviews with key personnel in Nordic newsrooms. Interviewees were chosen based on availability during the author's Fall 2006 term as a visiting scholar at the Media Management and Transformation Centre at the International Business School of Jönköping University in Jönköping, Sweden. Personal contacts of the author and his hosts at the centre were solicited for possible interviewees, as were heads of journalists' and publishers' associations. The result was 24 interviewees with top- and mid-level editors at a variety of Nordic newspapers. Anonymity was promised to the interviewees in exchange for their cooperation, responses to questions and the pilot test of the Q-sort questionnaire.

Men dominated the group; five—or slightly more than 1 in every 5—were females. The average number of years experience was nearly 19 years, with an average of slightly less than 12 years' experience as an editor or manager. Most of the editors (16) worked in Sweden or Finland (9 and 7, respectively), while 3 were Norwegian and 5 were Danish. Fifteen of the 24 had formal journalism education—predominantly thanks to the Finnish (5 of 7) and Swedish (6 of 9) journalists.

5.1 Strengths, Weaknesses, Likes and Dislikes

Not surprisingly, asking these editors about their strengths as a manager revealed a common (14 of 24) employee- or subordinate-related thread. Whether it was listening, delegating, coaching, motivating, or helping reporters, relationships with reporters were key. The second-most common (7 of 24) pattern involved tasks of some sort: planning, structuring, decision-making, or analysis.

Conversely, patterns among self-reported weaknesses at first were difficult to obviously ascertain. Relationships with reporters—whether it be lack of frequent or detailed feedback, e.g.—were indirectly referenced by some (5); but weaknesses routinely were cited as an over-abundance (or lack) of one thing or another—patience, listening, control, organization, focus, or planning, among others.

Closer inspection, however, revealed that the editors' weaknesses often reflected a perceived lack of control. From an inability to focus and organize, to caring too much, to an inability to motivate, to being overly cautious, to overworking, 13 of the 24 editors felt they were not doing the best they could to lead their staffs.

With control looming as perceived weakness, it should come as no surprise that the editors—when asked what they liked most and least about their jobs—took pleasure in accomplishing and producing things as well as relishing the working relationships they had with peers and subordinates. People-related factors and worthwhile contributions constituted almost two-thirds (15) of the responses to this question, with task variety a distant third (4 responses).

As to dislikes, time—and its effect on desirable or undesirable tasks—was the prime culprit, as the editors saw it. Long hours and time scarcity were more prevalent, but they also appeared in other forms, such as "all the meetings," "fast changes," "meeting fewer people," "missing the chance to write," monotonous routines, and working weekends—or so 15 of the editors believed.

5.2 What values do editors say they emphasize? How do they rank?

The editors Q-sorted the 65 values from least influential (-5) to most influential (+5). "Readers" was ranked the most important value by most editors (see Table 4); 54 percent ranked it the most influential value when making decisions. "Ethics" ranked second, with about 50 percent placing it first. Rounding out the top five were: "newsworthiness," (a mean rating of 3.63), "scoop" (3.58), and "humor" (3.42). The five lowest-rated values (in increasing order) were "conservative," "consensus," "price," "advertising," and "job status," indicating they were least influential when making decisions.

5.3.1 How do those stated values differ among editors? Do certain combinations of values reflect the responses of different groups of editors?

Although we have 65 items of editors' decision-making variables, we are undoubtedly not measuring 65 different constructs; hence, it makes sense to find some variable reduction scheme to indicate how the variables cluster or hang together. To explore this issue, the 65 values were subjected to principal components analysis (PCA) using SPSS. The procedures to assess the appropriateness of factor analysis for the variables were not performed for pilot or pre-test purposes.

An inspection of eigen values exceeding 1 and minimum 60 percent variance explained, I decided to retain six components for further investigation. The six-component solution explained a total of 66.5 percent of the variance. To derive a factor model between variables and components, I set factor loadings $\geq .30$ in absolute value and used a Varimax rotation technique. That is, the variables with rotated loadings of .30 or higher on more than one component were removed to prevent complex structure. As a result, 22 variables were reduced into 6 components (see Table 5).

I labeled components 1 to 6, respectively, as "ultimate," "intrinsic," "gauge," "collaborative," "respected," and "market-centric" (see Table 5). When Table 4 and Table 5 were compared, there was no apparent pattern, i.e., the values of each factor were not consistently top- or lowest-rated. On the other hand, slightly more values (8) were taken from the middle 25 values than either from the top 20 (7) or from the lower 20 (7); so there was fairly even distribution of values that were included in the factor analysis.

5.3.2 What is the role of demographic variables (age, race, gender, position, experience) in those differences?

To answer this question, the relationship between value groups and demographic variables, I ran an independent-samples *t* test for gender and education, and Pearson correlations for years experience and years as a manager (see Table 6). Results showed that the fewer years experience the editor had, the more value they would place on organizational needs, diversity and control (p<.01). In general, then, demographics appear to play little role as to whether this pilot group of editors place emphasis on the decision-making value groupings.

TABLE 4: Editors' Decision-Making Values

Values	Mean (N=24)	Std. Deviation
Readers	4.17	1.01
Ethics	3.83	1.20
Newsworthiness	3.63	1.21
Scoop	3.58	2.36
Humor	3.42	1.47
Responsibility	3.38	1.44
Content	3.29	1.65
Motivation	3.25	1.92
Professionalism	3.04	1.85
Accuracy	3.00	2.11
Planning	2.83	1.61
Fairness	2.75	1.87
Visual Appeal	2.75	1.82
Deadline	2.54	2.06
Satisfaction	2.38	2.02
Experience	2.33	1.88
TimelinessTiming	2.29	1.81
Coordination	2.21	1.84
Competition	2.17	1.90
Photography	2.13	2.03
Values	2.08	2.60
Audience	2.08	2.15
Group	2.00	.
Objectivity	1.92	2.86
Organizing	1.83	2.08
Diversity	1.70	2.08
Autonomy	1.67	2.60
Impact	1.67	1.88
The Region	1.63	2.90
Sourcing	1.48	2.15
Demand	1.46	2.57
Time Available	1.35	1.90
Loyalty	1.33	2.65
My Role	1.29	2.07
Company Goals	1.21	2.64
Liberal	1.08	2.48
Controversy	1.08	1.95
Attitudes	1.08	1.79
Collegiality	.88	3.14
Pride	.83	3.06
Policy	.83	2.23
Culture	.63	2.16
Budget meet	.63	2.48
Space	.57	2.27
Market	.38	2.58
Management Objectives	.38	2.75
Politics	.26	3.02
Beliefs	.25	2.75
Supervisor	.25	2.77
Control	.08	2.86
Personal Ties	-.08	2.81
Meeting	-.08	2.43
Peers	-.13	2.72
Tradition	-.13	2.83
Norms	-.25	2.44
Conflict	-.25	2.63
Libel	-.46	2.30
Marketing	-.58	2.80
Organizational Needs	-.63	2.45
Routine	-.63	2.53
Job Status	-1.33	2.22
Advertisers	-1.33	3.24
Price	-1.46	2.32
Consensus	-1.67	2.57
Conservative	-1.92	2.36

TABLE 5: Factor Analysis of Editors' Decision-making Values

Ultimate		Intrinsic		Gauge		Collaborative		Respected		Market-centric	
Ethics	.772	Peers	.749	Organizational Needs	.835	Meeting	.792	Price	.930	Demand	.856
Loyalty	.731	Satisfaction	.716	Diversity	.703	Coordination	.590	Libel	.695	Space	.851
Professionalism	.688	Motivation	.688	Control	.316	Supervisor	.384	Objectivity	.624	Newsworthiness	.679
Company Goals	.682	Job Status	.520							Competition	.443
Controversy	-.606										

Extraction method: Principle component analysis
Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization

TABLE 6: Relationship of Decision-making Values to Demographic Variables Correlations

Demographic Variable	Ultimate Values	Intrinsic Values	Gauge Values	Collaborative Values	Respected Values	Market-Centric Values
Gender	-.611	-.269	-1.220	.128	.285	-.313
Years Experience	.376	-.076	-.349	.175	-.148	.187
Years Manager	.295	-.095	**-.532****	-.290	-.147	.111
Education	1.391	-1.507	-.281	.308	-.877	.373

** $p < .01$ (2-tailed)

a Since gender and education are nominal variables, independent samples t test was performed.

A comparison of these data to the full U.S. survey would not be wise, given the varying sizes and purposes. However, if the Nordic pilot group leanings are any indication, one can anticipate at least subtle differences in the two groups. For example, the most influential values are quite similar while the least influential values pose more of a contrast (see Table 7). Also, the full U.S. sample tended to rate all—except the five least influential values—as influential, whereas the Nordic group's "least influential" ratings extended beyond its bottom 10 to include another five values (norms, tradition, peers, meeting, and personal ties). In short, the U.S. editors reported a more professional, journalistic influence and tended to report more influences than the Nordic group. On the least-influential side of the values ledger, libel seems a point of contention—a point of American emphasis while also being of little Nordic concern. The phenomenon did not repeat itself when the roles were reversed (i.e., no Nordic most-influential value appeared in the American least-influential grouping).

TABLE 7: Top 10 Rankings (by Means) of Editors' Decision-Making Values—Sample/Pilot Comparison (*values unique to each list placed in italics*)

Ranking	U.S. sample's Most Influential	Nordic group's Most Influential	U.S. Sample's Least Influential	Nordic group's Least Influential
1.	Accuracy	Readers	*Personal Ties*	Conservative
2.	Newsworthiness	Ethics	*Politics*	*Consensus*
3.	Readers	Newsworthiness	*Liberal*	*Price*
4.	*Fairness*	*Scoop*	Conservative	*Advertisers*
5.	Ethics	*Humor*	Routine	*Job Status*
6.	*Libel*	Responsibility	Marketing	Routine
7.	Responsibility	*Content*	*Control*	*Organizational Needs*
8.	*Objectivity*	*Motivation*	Peers	Marketing
9.	Professionalism	Professionalism	*Tradition*	*Libel*
10.	Timeliness	Accuracy	*Job Level*	*Conflict*

A comparison to the small U.S. editor pilot group (N=9) yields similar results (see Table 8 below). In essence, each group's values parallel those of the other group. The U.S. pilot group rated about the same number of values as the Nordic editors as least influential to some degree. Libel again seems a point of contention—a point of American influence (if not in the Top 10) while being of little Nordic concern. While the phenomenon did not repeat itself when the roles were reversed, the three Nordic unique Top 10 values (i.e., those missing from the companion American list) did garner positive, influential ratings from the American editors. In addition, two significant relationships—age and the occupational factor (which included the values culture, personal ties, experience, professionalism, satisfaction, pride, peers, tradition, and autonomy) and education and the philosophical factor (which included the values ethics, policy, beliefs, attitudes, values, conservative, liberal, responsibility, and diversity)—were found for the American pilot group, while only the afore-mentioned years-as-a-manager demographic related to any of the Nordic group factors (i.e., gauges).

TABLE 8: Top 10 Rankings (by Means) of Editors' Decision-Making Values—Pilot/Pilot Comparison (*values unique to each list placed in italics*)

Ranking	U.S. Pilot's Most Influential	Nordic group's Most Influential	U.S. Pilot's Least Influential	Nordic group's Least Influential
1.	Accuracy	Readers	Advertisers	Conservative
2.	Newsworthiness	Ethics	*Personal Ties*	*Consensus*
3.	Content	Newsworthiness	Conservative	Price
4.	Scoop	Scoop	*Liberal*	Advertisers
5.	Ethics	*Humor*	Price	*Job Status*
6.	*Impact*	Responsibility	Marketing	Routine
7.	*Fairness*	Content	*Politics*	*Organizational Needs*
8.	*Timeliness*	*Motivation*	*Autonomy*	Marketing
9.	Readers	*Professionalism*	Routine	*Libel*
10.	Responsibility	Accuracy	*Tradition*	*Conflict*

5. Conclusions

This paper has examined some aspects of the newspaper industry's readiness to change, via a look at the values of those charged with engineering the change. Many scholars believe values hold the key to the decision-making process that may or may not produce change. A recent study of U.S. newspapers' mid-level editors seems to suggest that their value systems significantly correlate with their decision-making styles. For instance, the data show an editor who ranked high in journalistic values was more likely to report rational and intuitive decision styles and less likely to report an avoidant style. What's more five significant decision-making style predictors were found.

Nordic media companies face similar concerns. Competitive markets, Internet-enhanced rivals, circulation declines, and sluggish economies have prompted the area's fall from the atop the world's most avid newspaper-reading locales. Each Scandinavian country faces its own, unique concerns, with some more stable than others. All are under siege from free-circulation start-ups, placing a spotlight on decision-making abilities. A pilot study of decision-making values of Nordic mid-level editors shows Nordic values closely corresponding to those in America, with some subtle differences.

Whereas American editors share managerial approaches based on gender differences and experience, the small group of Scandinavian editors tended to gravitate toward more functional points of reference. They had a propensity to group disparate, almost-polar values into one, utilitarian label or spectrum (e.g., professionalism and controversy, control and diversity, and objectivity and price). They also revealed a common, employee- or subordinate-related thread in their self-reported management tendencies (e.g., listening, delegating, coaching, motivating, or helping reporters) while perceiving their main weakness as a lack of control (ranging from lack of focus to overworking). And while they reported being influenced by values similar to those influencing their American counterparts, they're not as influenced by as many different values as the Americans; put another way, they tend to say more values *do not* influence their decision-making.

It would be more interesting—and perhaps significant—to see whether these comparisons are borne out by a larger, deeper, and more thorough study. Particularly of interest would be to see if Norwegian and Swedish editors compare as Wilberg (2003) suggested or whether "Scandinavian management style" is the monolithic phenomenon it implies. Of greater concern, however, is whether and how Nordic newspaper management thinking and practice presages the larger issue of the ability of managers to capably function and make good decisions in the marketplace. The current, small test group also cannot possibly shed light on whether European journalism education is as diverse as Bierhoff et al. (2000) claim; a bigger sampling would indicate whether each country is as homogeneous (and therefore as diverse from other countries) as thought.

For now, we know that Scandinavian mid-level newspaper editors tend to show enough of an independence of thought and value from their American peers to warrant further study and to amply whet the appetite of those who seek an answer to what constitutes good management in an increasingly global industry.

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