



# The creative development process: Biographical insights on innovation in Anglophone music



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**Orientation:** This qualitative study follows a process of inductive theory development.

**Research purpose:** Focussing on recent 'pop icon' musicians, the aim was to weave systemic insights into a holistic model that identifies some characteristics of creative development.

**Motivation for the study:** Within the diverse literature on creativity, what seems missing is an integrative perspective of similarities in the creative path-dependent development process.

**Research design, approach and method:** Following an in depth review of publicly available data about iconic Anglophone musical artist-musicians of the period spanning the 1960s–1980s, including Dylan, Cohen, Young and Springsteen, bibliographic and life turning-point analysis was applied to derive propositions about a path-dependent process of creative development.

**Main findings:** The study finds that such individuals typically trace a 'path-dependent' trajectory of creative transition across seven stages. Sequentially, these are the stages of: (1) *Pathology*, (2) *The Rage to Master*, (3) *Authenticity*, (4) *Perseverance*, (5) *Practice*, (6) *Perspective* and (7), *Accessing Flow*. Drawing insights from Gardner's theory of creative asynchrony, after which asynchronies that seem to characterise a process of negotiation and transition of conflicts across these stages was derived.

**Practical/managerial implications:** The model derived provides useful insights into how to enable creative development for those in similar contexts.

**Contribution/value-add:** The study provides a conceptual ordering of key biographical milestone stages and intrinsic influences explaining aspects of creative development. Thus, the study builds on previous work on the creative career development of individuals in a music industry genre and extends the literatures related to biographical analysis including personality, individual differences and turning points.

**Keywords:** creativity; creative development; creativity management; music; innovation; path-dependence; turning points; asynchrony.

*'By the rivers dark*

*I wandered on.*

*I lived my life*

*in Babylon.'*

Leonard Cohen (*By the Rivers Dark*, 2001)

## Introduction

In the music industry, creativity is the foundation of artistic expression and innovation. The literature on how personality and individual differences of musicians and songwriters shape creative development and innovation has grown over time. This literature includes studies on individual personality differences of musicians (Benedek et al. 2014; Buttsworth & Smith 1995; Wills 1984); the relationship to musical work of perfectionism, achievement and distress (Stoerber & Eismann 2007); learning (Rose, Bartoli & Heaton 2019); and even associations between personality traits and mental health and drug use (Langvik, Bjerkeset & Vaag 2019). Other studies in this field have applied psycho-biographical techniques (Belli 2009) as well as biographical analysis (Gardner 2011); nevertheless, many insights gleaned from such studies seem fragmented. Although complementary, missing from studies in this body of work is an integrative perspective of similarities in the path-dependent development of creative practice. Such a perspective would speak directly to creativity management in the music industry, informing, for example, the

identification and nurturing of creative ideas, the encouraging of experimentation and the creating of a supportive environment where employees feel empowered to take risks and think outside the box. Within the context of a world of ongoing flux and change, where creativity is at a premium, enhanced creativity management processes would, in turn, better inform organisation and management sciences and their focus on how organisations can be more effectively managed. Within the management disciplines, including organisational behaviour, strategic management, human resource management and operations management, creativity management processes can assist in assisting organisations in their ability to innovate and adapt to changing environments. Moreover, as creativity management processes are rooted in the key management disciplines of organisational behaviour and psychology, a deeper appreciation of the underlying principles of musical creativity may assist in the design of strategies aimed at enabling more creative and productive outputs. Appreciative of the close linkages between creativity, the creativity management process, and the organisation and management sciences, as outlined above, the study hereby proposes a path-dependent developmental model of highly creative musicians and documents those characteristics that describe their rise to prominence.

Proceeding thus, and extending Gardner's (2011) biographical analysis exploring the development of various prominent individuals, bibliographic and life turning points analysis is applied to derive propositions about a path-dependent process of creative development associated with a musical genre. To do so, the study uses publicly available data about a certain category of musicians of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, including but not limited to iconic artists like Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen, Neil Young and Bruce Springsteen. Using biographic analysis and discussion of patterns of individual behaviours, the objective of the study is to weave systemic insights into a holistic model that identifies some characteristics of creative development. In doing so, the study seeks to make the following main contributions to the personality and individual differences literature.

Firstly, the study builds on previous work on the creative career development of individuals in a music industry genre. As highlighted during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, this occupational group was typically exposed to earnings instability (Wills 1984). The model derived provides useful insights into how to enable creative development for those in similar contexts. To do so, the study links different literatures at the nexus of the industry-specific creative development process (Andreasen 1987; Baas et al. 2016; Gino & Wiltermuth 2014; Hare 1987; Kyaga et al. 2013; Schlesinger 2009). Related to this literature are insights provided by the process of creative destruction described by Schumpeterian theory (Adler et al. 2019; Henrekson & Sanandaji 2019). Whereas such individuals are creative artists, through the management of, sometimes, multiple identities, they are also entrepreneurs; their Darwinian, risk-prone competitive environments share stark similarities with those of fledgling enterprises facing gales of creative destruction.

Secondly, in its focus on the creative development of musicians, the study contributes to literature in the tradition of biographical analysis (Andreasen 1987; Dávila & Ruiz 2018; Ludwig 1992; Post 1994), to extend work seeking to understand the highly creative work that drove the musical culture of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s (Oksanen 2013; Smilde 2008; Strachan 2008).

Thirdly, the study extends the literature on personality (Yao & Li 2021; Zhang, Xu & Sun 2020), individual differences and turning points to consider intrinsic aspects of highly personal developmental turning points in creativity development. The study, therefore, builds on a growing literature on life turning points that includes, for example, studies on the effects of turning points associated with criminal behaviour (Boman & Mowen 2018), interpersonal problems in groups (Gitterman & Wayne 2003), leadership and social justice (Hertz 2016), and drug use (Messer, Patten & Candela 2016), to name a few. Similarly, research on turning points also extends to work life topics, such as leadership and corporate social responsibility (Hemingway & Starkey 2018), gendered institutional change (Hertz 2016), personality, well-being and adversity (Jayawickreme, Brocato & Blackie 2017). In extending this literature, the study provides a basis for further work to test predictions of a model of creative development.

Fourthly, the study contributes specifically to research on an understudied cohort of musicians that have had an important cultural influence. Longstanding research suggests that there can be some cross-cultural differences in how individuals cope with problems (Sica et al. 1997), and the study, therefore, delimits its focus to the single Anglophone musical cultural group of the 1960s to 1980s.

With evidence to suggest musical genres differ in domain-related indicators of divergent thinking and creativity (Benedek et al. 2014), the study delimits its focus scope to the music associated with the cohort of biographical subjects.

This study is structured as follows. Firstly, the biographic methodology is introduced and explained. Given the study's inductive nature, and the need to conserve space, relevant literature is discussed in the sections that report and discuss the analysis. Secondly, a broad seven-stage model of path stages of creative development is presented. The issue of what is termed the resolution of domain and field asynchronies is then discussed, and conclusions are derived.

## Research methods and design

The study's methodology seeks to explore the creative progress of individuals who were successful in the Anglophone music industry in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and, in certain cases, after this. Especially included are the relevant biographical accounts of seven music luminaries: specifically, the singer songwriters Bob Dylan, Neil Young and Leonard Cohen; the 'Rock 'n Rollers' Keith Richards and Bruce Springsteen; and the jazz-driven musicians Donald Fagen

and Bill Evans. Further accounts are drawn from groups such as The Beatles, The Bee Gees and The Eagles, as well as acclaimed individual artists like James Taylor, David Bowie and Elton John. As discussed, drawing on a body of literature and theory on turning points, the study identifies patterns in the creative development of these individuals.

In doing so, the study applies a qualitative application of turning point analysis (Baxter & Bullis 1986; Golish 2000) to derive a typology of stages of creative self-development, which can result from changes within an individual because of path-dependent differences arising from the negotiation of different turning points in an individual's creative career trajectory. Turning point analysis is concerned with the substance of change, with occurrences that lead to dynamic change and to individual development (Baxter & Bullis 1986); and the study, therefore, applies bibliographic analysis on the intrinsic experiences of iconic recording artists to derive a model of turning points associated with their creative development. Biographic analysis (Andreasen 1987; Dávila & Ruiz 2018; Ferrarotti 2005; Post 1994) is a useful methodology when the objective of study is to derive insights into an individual's behaviour and career progression.

Contingent on the above, the study's approach takes the following form. Firstly, the study undertakes a biographical analysis, following an inductive theory development process (Carlile & Christensen 2004) to build a circumstance-contingent path-dependency theory of creativity that is specific to the type of creativity exhibited by the biographical subjects. The consequent model of what is called 'path-dependent creativity' suggests seven stages corresponding to distinct periods that differ from each other according to intrinsic experiences related to the creative songwriting process. Although the authors suggest that the process of stage transition is path-dependent, they acknowledge that some of these stages overlap.

Secondly, the study applies Gardner's (2011) theory of asynchrony to explain certain emergent patterns in the analysis. Gardner's theory predicts that creativity arises from the resolution of intrinsic or conceptual tensions. The study elaborates on this to derive insights into the unfolding of creative careers that may be useful to scholars and practitioners concerned with creativity and its development.

The study proposes that there are certain path-dependent characteristics describing the process of the development of creative productivity that has largely not been identified or explained by current theories of creativity. Hence, the study seeks here to delineate and describe a specific path trajectory describing the evolution of a creative life. Thus, the study seeks to explain 'what causes what, and why, and show how the result of that causal mechanism differs by circumstance' (Carlile & Christensen 2004:16).

In the derivation of the model that follows, the study references biographical data in seven tables describing the sequential stages describing the path of creative development.

## Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the University of Cape Town Commerce Ethics in Research Committee (No. EX2023/02/001).

## A path stage model of creativity development

As life events – or stages – can be important hurdles, the study suggests that the way in which individuals negotiate these is key to their subsequent development as artists. Here Gruber's (1988:27) postulate on the development of a theory of creativity remains important: that such a theory should deal with 'the unique and unrepeatable' to 'explain how knowledge and sometimes well-known processes, organized in new ways, bring about the great marvels of human thought and invention'. In many ways, the creative development and breakthroughs of the biographical subjects defy attempts to demonstrate the predictable and repeatable. Nevertheless, the authors suggest that certain patterns are evident in accounts of their life stories. It is these emerging regularities that the authors suggest amount to theoretical insights.

### Stage 1: Pathology derived from shadow

In the first stage of the model the innocence and innate creativity of the child becomes suppressed through the creation of shadow to manifest as pathology. Shadow formation, according to Priilaid (2018), is:

[T]he psychological process whereby all painful and unmanageable aspects of early self are split off and shunted to the unconscious where it is left neglected and separate from any aspect of the creative life. (p. 69)

While the shadow is always with humans, over time it will do whatever is required to reintegrate with the rejecting self. In the process of shadow formation, all of the biographical subjects seem to have experienced some form of primary exclusion, each one an exiled child or an outsider in some way. As per Table 1, Young suffered from polio, and his father left when he was 12. Dylan refers to never fitting into mainstream culture, notwithstanding how it changed over time. Fagen also relates how he never fitted in at school. Richards recounts taking beatings at school and refers to the brutality and pressure of the school context. Evans felt the pressures of racial exclusion even as part of a band, and Cohen recounts feeling like a 30-year-old outsider starting out in the youth culture of the 1960s.

As per these examples, research shows childhood adversity to be related to significantly stronger creative experiences. Thomson and Jaque (2018) studied a sample of 234 professional artists, finding that although those who had experienced greater childhood adversity also experienced more negative psychological effects, they reported more positive creative performance experiences. Individuals exposed to stress at an early age can develop certain

TABLE 1: Pathology.

Artist	Quote	References
Bob Dylan	When I started out, mainstream culture was Sinatra, Perry Como, Andy Williams, The Sound of Music. There was no fitting into it then, and of course, there's no fitting into it now.	Flanagan (2017)
	<i>Drugs and depression:</i> While never a junkie, Dylan was introduced to LSD in 1964 and is assumed to have taken narcotics throughout the early part of his career. In a 1984 Rolling Stone interview, he noted this: 'I never got hooked on any drug. [But] who knows what people stick into your drinks or what kinda cigarettes you're smoking'.	Loder (2021)
	Back in the 1960s, trying to describe his existential sense of alienation, Dylan referred to his earlier readings of Jack Kerouac, confessing: 'I felt that that atmosphere, that everything that Kerouac was saying about the world being completely mad, you know, and that the only people that for him were interesting were mad people, the mad ones, the ones, you know, mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything, at the same time, the ones who moved beyond: all those mad ones. I felt like I fitted right into that bunch'.	Scorsese (2005)
Bruce Springsteen	Springsteen describes his childhood as 'a lifeless, sucking, black hole'.	Hailey (2018)
	It was complicated and exacerbated his subsequent struggles with his father, Doug.	Carlin (2012:9)
	...who, years later would be diagnosed a paranoid schizophrenic. Said Springsteen subsequently, 'It wasn't in the doing. It was in the not doing. It was in the complete withholding of acknowledgement. It was in the vacantness'.	Carlin (2012:33)
	On school: 'It is here I receive the bullying all aspiring rock stars must undergo and suffer in seething, raw, humiliating silence, the great "leaning up against the chain-link fence as the world spins around you, in rejection of you" playground loneliness that is essential fuel for the coming fire'.	Springsteen (2016:15)
Neil Young	On tour Springsteen did no drugs and played the scout master. Road manager, Bobby Chirmside, relates a situation where he and Springsteen had dropped by the band's dressing room to find the boys getting high. Bristling Springsteen reportedly hissed. 'If. I. Ever. Fucking. See. This. Again. I don't Care who it is. They're gone. On the spot. I'll fire them'.	Carlin (2012:264)
	Springsteen: 'Long ago, the defences I built to withstand the stress of my childhood, to save what I had of myself, outlived their usefulness, and I've become an abuser of their once lifesaving powers. I relied on them wrongly to isolate myself, seal my alienation, cut me off from life, control others, and contain my emotions to a damaging degree. Now the bill collector is knocking, and his payment'll be in tears'.	Hailey (2018)
	Aged six, Young suffered from polio. Aged 12 his father left his mother and subsequently divorced.	McDonough (2002)
Keith Richards	<i>Addiction and work driven:</i> In 2012, Neil Young acknowledged that he'd never penned a song not stoned.	Young (2013:6)
	Notoriously 'The Last Waltz' concert featured Young with a substantial wedge of cocaine stuck up his nose.	Lawson (2002)
	He says in 2012: 'The fact is that I can be really irritable when I'm unhappy about stuff. I can be a nitpicker about details that seem to be over the top. But then again I'm into what I'm into, so a lot of people forgive me because of that'.	Carr (2012:4)
Donald Fagen	Richards was younger and smaller than most of his class. When he was 9 or 10, he was repeatedly waylaid by schoolyard toughs on his way home. 'I know what it is like to be a coward. I will never go back there. As easy as it is to turn tail, I took the beatings. I told my mum I had fallen off the bike again. To which my mum replied, "Stay off your bike, son." ... It's called play, but it's nearer to a battlefield, and it can be brutal. See. This. Again. I don't Care who it is. They're gone. On the spot. I'll fire them'.	Richards (2010:25)
	<i>On addiction:</i> 'It was a very time consuming routine. I'd wake up in the morning, and first thing is to go to the bathroom to have a shot. You don't brush your teeth. And then, oh fuck it, I've got to go to the kitchen to get the spoon. Those stupid rituals that you go through. ... Every time it got progressively harder to kick. And the desire to go back on the minute you were off got stronger'.	Richards (2010:406)
Bill Evans	Fagen: 'I was a nerd at school. Somewhere between a nerd and a schmendrick. I didn't fit in on any level'.	Steely Dan (Group), Fagen and Becker (2009)
	<i>Work driven and depression:</i> Referring to his workaholic behaviour on <i>Gaucho</i> (1980): 'That album is almost a document of despair. We were running out of steam as far as our youthful energy was concerned and we weren't mature enough to deal with it. We were still adolescents'.	Sweet (1994:134)
	In 2013 Fagen published 'Eminent Hipsters', a series of journal entries while on tour. An entry from 20 June 2012: 'By the way, I'm not posting this journal on the internet. Why should I let you lazy, spoiled TV Babies read it for nothing in the same way you downloaded all those songs my partner and I sacrificed our entire youth to write and record, not to mention the miserable, friendless childhoods we endured that left us with lifelong feelings of shame and self-reproach we were forced to countervail with a fragile grandiosity and a need to constantly prove our self-worth – in short, with the sort of personality disorders that ultimately turned us into performing monkeys?'	Fagen (2014:89)
Leonard Cohen	'I was very happy and secure until I went to the army. ... Then I started to feel there was something I should know that I didn't. ... I was attacked by some guys for what I believed, and by musicians who claimed I should play like this pianist or that. Pretty soon I lost the confidence I had as a kid. I began to think that everything I did was wrong'.	Pettinger (1998:23)
	In 1958, Evans joined the Miles Davis sextet. 'Evans was uncomfortable in the band for a number of reasons, not the least being his status as a racial minority of one. It was hard to endure the racial teasing from this established gang. Davis, who loved Evans, could nonetheless be cruel, and Coltrane never quite approved his presence'.	Pettinger (1998:62)
	<i>Addiction and depression.</i> Though 51 when declared dead in 1980, Evans had become addicted to heroin, followed by cocaine, more than 20 years earlier, under the influence of Miles Davis. According to Gene Lees, 'It was the longest suicide in history'.	Pettinger (1998:3)
	She also has a theory about his addiction: 'When he came down, when he kicked it, which he did on numerous occasions, the world was – I don't know how to say – too beautiful. It was too sharp for him. It's almost as if he had to blur the world for himself by being strung out. I had that impression all the time'.	Pettinger (1998:62)
Leonard Cohen	In the 1960s, when rock stars would become the counter-culture spokesmen and poets of their generation, Leonard would once again be considered old – if with better reason this time; he was in his thirties when he made his first album – and would feel himself to be an outsider.	Simmons (2013:57)
	<i>Depression and addiction.</i> 'What I mean by depression isn't just the blues, it's not just like a hangover from the weekend, the girl didn't show up or something like that. ... It's a kind of mental violence which stops you from functioning properly from one moment to the next'.	Simmons (2013:57)
	Cohen battled all his life with drink. See his lyrics for his 2001 'That don't make it junk' and 'I fought against the bottle, But I had to do it drunk'.	Board index (n.d.)

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mechanisms to protect themselves from psychological risks, thereby developing resilience (Dienstbier 1989; Meichenbaum 2017; Rutter 1987). According to Rutter (1987), successfully coping with adversity can engender a 'steeling' effect. This effect has been termed 'stress inoculation' or 'antifragility', whereby early life stressors may be curvilinearly related to psychological well-being (Liu 2015).

An implication of this literature is that individuals with low levels of early life stressors may have a higher sensitivity to future stress. Controlling for socio-demographic effects, Hölte, Mc Gee and Thoma (2019) found empirical evidence of an inverted-U relationship between early life adversity and individual quality of life, mediated by mental health. It is this mediation effect of mental health, or pathology, that

characterises this first phase of the creative development pathway.

The extent of pathology in creative artists is well documented. Bruce Springsteen suffered from mood swings, and Robin Gibb was highly strung, as was Brian Wilson who suffered from panic attacks and auditory hallucinations. Similarly, David Bowie dealt with mental instability and drug use through a focus on his music, and Elton John contended with a cocaine addiction. Robbie Robertson, Kendrick Lamar, Frank Zappa, Angus Young, Gene Simmons, Chris Martin and Robin Gibb all seem to have been driven by an addiction to work itself, a number of them eschewing alcohol or drugs. Many of the biographical subjects seem to progress from the early rejecting experiences to act out challenges of their own pathology either through work or some form of alternate addictive behaviour. Pathology for creative musicians, therefore, seems to be characterised by either some kind of addiction or workaholic habits.

Additionally, some artists seem to identify with a sense of being pathologically different. Dylan, for example, refers to Kerouac's description of interesting people being mad, identifying himself as part of this category. According to Fagen, his miserable and friendless childhood left him with

'lifelong feelings of shame and self-reproach, ... the sort of personality disorders that ultimately turned us into performing monkeys' Fagen (2014:89). Cohen describes his depression as 'a kind of mental violence which stops you from functioning properly from one moment to the next' (Simmons, 2013:57). A common thread in these experiences seems to be the vulnerability of these artists to their own pathologies and the effects of these pathologies on their creative productivity. The nexus of pain, suffering and creativity seems to characterise patterns in the creative journeys of many of these artists. From the above, the study derives:

- Proposition 1: Path-dependent creatives are likely to experience early life adversity and intense vulnerability to their own pathologies.

## Stage 2: Rage to master

In the process of pathological pain management, many of the subjects seem to forge a state of productivity as they create from the source of their own woundedness. As per Table 2, Young was influenced by school bullying, and the impact of the loss or absence of a strong father figure is clear in the work of Roger Waters and Elton John. Springsteen refers to an emptiness that was filled with music, and others describe him as creating from a 'place of anger' (Carlin, 2012:266).

**TABLE 2:** Rage to master.

Artist	Quote	References
Bob Dylan	In 1962 Dylan broke into the songwriting zone following his breakup with long-term girlfriend Suze Rotolo. Subsequent songs like 'Tomorrow is a long time' and 'Don't think twice, it's alright' revealed a Dylan at the peak of his songwriting powers.	
	Later, reeling from a devastating divorce, Dylan's masterpiece 1975 album <i>Blood on the Tracks</i> , yielded some of the greatest songs penned in that period, including: 'Tangled up in Blue', 'Idiot Wind', and 'You're a Big Girl Now'. The tone and lyricism of these pieces appeared to underscore an earlier Dylan observation that 'Pain sure brings out the best in people, doesn't it?'	Larkin (2002:186)
	With Dylan, ongoing search for greatness appears to have been founded on a pact made directly with God. Interviewed on 60 min following the publication of his 2004 autobiography, he was asked why he was still musically active and touring at the age of 63. 'Well it goes back to the destiny thing. I made a bargain with it, you know, long time ago, and I'm holding up my end'. Asked what the bargain was, Dylan replied: 'To get where I am now'. On probing with precisely whom he'd had made this pact, Dylan responded: 'Ha-ha. With, with, you know, with the chief, the chief commander... On this earth and in the world we cannot see'.	Bradley (2004)
Bruce Springsteen	'When I was a child, and into my teens, ...I felt like a very, very empty vessel. And it wasn't until I began to fill it up with music that I began to feel my own personal power and my impact on my friends and the small world that I was in. I began to get some sense of myself. But it came out of a place of real emptiness'.	Hailey (2018)
	Actress Joyce Hyser, who met Springsteen in the late 1970s, contended that he was afraid of being happy because it would 'screw up with his creative force', as she put it. 'At least at the time, he created from a place of anger, not from a place of happiness'	Carlin (2012:266).
	In 1965, Bruce Springsteen was in the car with his mother listening to WMCA when for the first time he heard 'Like a Rolling Stone'. 'That snare shot that sounded like somebody'd kicked open the door to your mind', he said in 1988. 'It reached down and touched what little worldliness a 15-year-old high school kid in New Jersey had in him at the time. Dylan was a revolutionary. Bob freed the mind the way Elvis freed the body'.	Greene & Marchese (2014)
	'For some, the Animals were just another one the really good beat groups that came of the Sixties', Bruce Springsteen said at his 2012 keynote speech at South By Southwest. 'But to me, the Animals were a revelation. The first records with full blown class consciousness that I had ever heard'. The passionate vocals and organ-heavy sound of the Animals was a huge influence on Springsteen as a young songwriter and he fully admits he stole the chords of 'Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood' for 'Badlands'.	Greene & Marchese (2014)
Donald Fagen	'Yes I've gone insane. You know I'm laughing at the frozen rain. I feel like I'm so alone. Honey when they gonna send me home?'	Steely Dan (Group), Fagen & Becker (1975)
Bill Evans	His pithy analysis of the tune 'Suicide is Painless'; from the Vietnam War-based TV series <i>M*A*S*H</i> ; drew wry smiles from those in the know. 'Debateable', he offered, with little apparent irony (Pettinger 1998:281). His pithy analysis of the tune 'Suicide is Painless'; from the Vietnam War-based TV series <i>M*A*S*H</i> ; drew wry smiles from those in the know. 'Debateable', he offered, with little apparent irony (Pettinger 1998:281). His pithy analysis of the tune 'Suicide is Painless'; from the Vietnam War-based TV series <i>M*A*S*H</i> ; drew wry smiles from those in the know. 'Debateable', he offered, with little apparent irony.	Pettinger (1998:281)
Leonard Cohen	Sylvie Simmons: 'The Big Bang of Leonard, the moment when poetry, music, sex and spiritual longing collided and fused in him for the first time, happened in 1950, between his 15th and 17th birthdays ... when he happened upon "The Selected Poems of Federico Gracia Lorca." Leafing through its pages, he stopped at "Gacela Of The Morning Market." The poem made the hairs stand up on the back of his neck'. ... 'when something was said in a certain kind of way, it seemed to embrace the cosmos. It's not just my heart, but every heart involved, and the loneliness was dissolved, and you felt that you were this aching creature in the midst of an aching cosmos, and the ache was ok. Not only was it okay, but it was the way that you embraced the sun and the moon'. He was, in his own words, 'completely hooked'.	Simmons (2013:28–29)
	Rebecca de Mornay: 'Leonard developed the tenacity and character to sit still within suffering ... and write it out, and live it out, and not try and escape from it'.	Simmons (2013:364)
	Lyric from 'Anthem': 'Ring the bells that still can ring. Forget your perfect offering. There is a crack, a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in'.	Simmons (2013:57)

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Dylan is also quoted as saying that pain brings out 'the best in people' (Larkin, 2002:186) and that his work after his divorce was some of his most creative. Leonard Cohen has been described as having the tenacity to 'sit still within suffering ... and write it out, and live it out, and not try and escape from it' (Simmons, 2013:364). Neil Young stresses the need to give 'everything you have ... to go right to the end of the candle, to right where it's going to melt ...' (McDonough, 2002:13).

Dylan displayed a creative urge that is reflected in his constant writing, even writing songs on napkins. Similarly, Keith Richards recounts how he played guitar constantly, oblivious to his surroundings. *A rage to master* relates to how children become obsessed with an activity, a form of intense motivation, that keeps a child at an activity for hours every day (Winner & Drake 2018). This seems to characterise the obsession described by some of these musicians.

From here, the biographical subjects seem to follow a transcendent process, transitioning from a stage of creativity driven initially by their deeply emotional experiences, to one in which they seem to find their voices through a profound early connection to driving artistic influences. Young, for example, credits Bob Dylan's 'Like a Rolling Stone' for changing his life. Dylan himself references Woody Guthrie's writing as a revelation, as well as Robert Johnson's. Lou Reed was inspired by literary classics, seeking to capture something of these in his music. Bowie refers to the need to manifest something that he felt inside, which drove him to work, a process of self-understanding. For Elvis Costello, finding a voice is key to song writing. Reg Dwight found himself and his voice after changing his name to Elton John. Thus, the study proposes the following:

- Proposition 2: Propelled by early wounding, path-dependent creatives are likely to develop a profound connection with art in the field.

### Stage 3: Authenticity

Following an initial connection with art, a quest for authenticity is observed. This dynamic is exemplified in Neil Young's shift from what he describes as the 'middle of the road', towards 'the ditch', a 'rougher ride' which he found more interesting (see Table 3). Sternberg's (2018) triangular theory of creativity suggests that individuals like Young will typically defy the crowd, themselves, and/or the *zeitgeist*, or the spirit of the times. The size of such a notional triangle represents the extent of creative contribution. A high level of creativity represents defiance of all three and is associated with revolutionary theories such as evolution or relativity. Sternberg's approach implies creativity as an attitude to life, with cognitive, affective, motivational and environmental components emerging from an authentic and innovative approach to creative work. Springsteen's authenticity and reputation for upholding the authentic values of rock are an example here. As he once said, 'All you needed to do was to risk being your true self'.

In turn, Dylan's resilient authenticity is evident in his shifts in musical styles and perseverance in the face of poor sales of his initial album. The Steely Dan duo of Fagen and Becker were also unaffected by the cold responses of the recording establishment. The same applies to Evans, who said:

I know where I come from, where I am and what I have to work with, and I try to make the most total kind of musical and human statement within the means and tradition from which I came. (Pettinger 1998:273)

The artistic grit displayed by the biographical subjects seems to demonstrate a common rejection of the status quo. This is perhaps what sets these highly creative individuals apart from those in more conventional fields. Non-conformist or inappropriate behaviour is often commonplace, and such creative expression can disrupt routine behaviours associated with established traditions.

The authenticity and resilience of the biographical subjects seem to stimulate their attainment of another state, one of artistic discipline, persistence and proactivity. Cohen's search for discipline is revealed in his 5-year stint as a Zen Buddhist monk. The authenticity and resilience associated with finding one's own creative voice seem to provide a confidence that motivates persistence and a proactive attitude to one's art. The personal nature of the creative process is revealed in Robin Gibb's adage:

[D]on't invite anybody to say anything critical when you are developing a song ... if you feel you are onto something special, that will uniquely come out as something special in the end, the last thing you want is somebody coming in ... it has a psychological effect. (Rachel 2013:37)

Springsteen locked himself away in his bedroom to record his 1982 album, *Nebraska*, and in 2007, Justin Vernon of Bon Iver recorded *For Emma, Forever Ago* in the isolation of a winter cabin. In his words: 'I didn't know where else to go and I knew that I wanted to be alone and I knew that I wanted to be where it was cold' (Whibbs 2008). Similarly, Leonard Cohen left London for the Greek Island Hydra to work on his first novel. This leads the study to the next proposition:

- Proposition 3: Through profound early connections with art, path-dependent creatives are likely to develop an authentic artistic mind-set.

### Stage 4: Perseverance

As per Table 4, a view of artistic discipline at work is offered by Young: 'I love to watch and try to guide what is happening, expanding the goals and reach of a project as it unfolds. Each tangent offers new possibilities for exploration and discovery. A job is never finished. It just reaches a state where it can be left on its own for a while' (Young, 2013:101). Springsteen offers similar insights:

I was all I had ... I had only one talent. I was not a natural genius. I would have to use every ounce of what was in me- my cunning, my musical skills, my showmanship, my intellect, my heart, my willingness- night after night, to push myself harder, to work with more intensity than the next guy just to survive untended in the world I lived in. (Springsteen 2016:137-138)

TABLE 3: Authenticity.

Artist	Quote	References
Bob Dylan	<p>During his 1965–1966 world tour, Dylan, the crowned prince of folk music and the darling of the civil rights movement, infamously he switched mid-concert from acoustic to electric guitar. On the notorious bootleg recording of the 1965 Manchester concert, the acoustic disciples were scandalized, one famously yelling out: 'Judas!' to an equally unimpressed Dylan, who replied 'I don't believe you, you're a liar!' before ripping into a snarling version of 'Like a Rolling Stone', instructing his band to 'play it fucking loud'.</p> <p>In July 1966, Bob Dylan crashed his motorbike. His subsequent recuperation offered an opportunity to recalibrate following the prior success of his electric phase, especially his <i>Highway 61</i> (1965) and <i>Blonde on Blonde</i> (1966). 'I had been in a motorcycle accident and I'd been hurt, but I recovered. Truth was that I wanted to get out of the rat race'. Following this period he changed direction completely to record the country inclined <i>John Wesley Harding</i> (1967), in Nashville.</p>	<p>Glover (1998)</p> <p>Dylan (2005:114)</p>
Bruce Springsteen	<p>Unpacking the lesson Elvis taught him, Springsteen observed: 'All you needed to do was to risk being your true self'.</p> <p>'There are many good, even great voices out there tied to people who will never sound convincing or exciting. They are all over TV talent shows and in lounges in Holiday Inns all across America. They can carry tune, they can hit all the high notes, but they cannot capture the full emotional content of a song. They cannot sing deeply'.</p> <p>As a young artist Bruce Springsteen was equally aware of the potential dangers posed by his status as a rising star. 'The distractions and seductions of fame and success as I'd seen them displayed felt dangerous to me and looked like fool's gold', he declared in his recent biography. 'The newspapers and rock rags were constantly filled with tales of good lives that had lost focus and were stumbingly lived, all to keep the gods (and the people!) entertained and laughing. I yearned for something more elegant, more graceful and seemingly simpler. Of course in the end, nobody gets away clean, and eventually I'd take my own enjoyment (and provide my share of laughs) in fame's distractions and seductions, but not until I was sure I could handle them'.</p>	<p>Hailey (2018)</p> <p>Springsteen (2016:495)</p> <p>Springsteen (2016:293)</p>
Neil Young	<p>Following the success of early 1970s albums such as <i>After the Goldrush</i> and <i>Harvest</i>, Young famously retreated from his lucrative, mellow, countrified format. He explained that while songs like 'Heart of Gold' (off <i>Harvest</i>) had put him in 'the middle of the road', 'travelling there soon became a bore, so I headed for the ditch. A rougher ride, but I saw more interesting people there'.</p> <p>In 2012, Dylan neatly explained why Young has remained a pre-eminent singer-songwriter of his generation: 'An artist like Neil always has the upper hand. ... It's the pop world that has to make adjustments. All the conventions of the pop world are only temporary and carry no weight. It's basically two things that have nothing to do with each other'.</p> <p>Young suggests that great art requires 100% commitment. 'You have to be ready to give everything you have, and you have to make sure you really got a lot to give. Because if you go out there and you're not ready to give everything you have – ... – to go right to the end of the candle, to right where it's going to melt and be gone, then you're nothin'. You shouldn't even be there. You're just markin' time'.</p> <p>Young to record boss David Geffen: 'You hired me to do what I do, not what you do. As long as people don't tell me what to do, there will be no problem'.</p>	<p>(Neil Young – Wikiquote n.d.)</p> <p>Carr (2012)</p> <p>McDonough (2002:13)</p> <p>Carr (2012)</p>
Donald Fagen	<p>Fagen and Becker were renowned for their dislike of the glitzy West Coast Hollywood lifestyle and parodied it mercilessly, especially on <i>Gaucho</i> (1980). In his biography, Fagen reveals undiminished disdain for unreal people. 'The TV Babies have morphed into the Palm People. For example, those people in the audience who can't experience the performance unless they're sending instant videos to their friends: Look at me, I must be alive, I can prove it, I'm filming this shit. You know what? I refuse to look at you. You're a corpse. And you prove that every day, with everything you do and everything you say. Wake up, ya dope! Outside!'</p> <p>Q: You and Walter (Becker) were not what we would normally think of as pop-rock stars. How did you guys survive in the business for so long?</p> <p>A: 'We always had an art-for-art's-sake attitude toward the whole thing. Luckily, there was a time when our vision of what music we liked seemed to mesh with a lot of what people in the population also liked. But that's no longer true'.</p>	<p>Fagen (2014:140)</p> <p>Holley (2019)</p>
Bill Evans	<p>Jazz great Bill Evans is possibly another who never compromised his artistic integrity. 'The market doesn't influence my thinking in the slightest... I know where I come from, where I am and what I have to work with, and I try to make what I consider to be the most total kind of musical and human statement within the means and tradition from which I came'.</p> <p>Puerto Rican bass player Eddie Gomez recalls the advice offered by Evans on one of their final albums: You're Gonna Hear from Me (released posthumously in 1988): 'His demands were simple enough – show up and give one hundred percent, don't hold back, and take some chances now and then. He urged me to be myself and not to dwell on the legacy of Scott LaFaro. Bill Evans was articulate, forthright, gentle, majestic, witty, and very supportive. His goal was to make music that balanced passion and intellect that spoke directly to the heart'.</p> <p>'I came to the conclusion that all I must do is take care of the music, even if I do it in a closet. And if I really do that, somebody's going to come and open the door of the closet and say, "Hey we're looking for you"'</p>	<p>Pettinger (1998:273)</p> <p>Pettinger (1998:248)</p> <p>Pettinger (1998:38)</p>
Leonard Cohen	<p>The constantly evolving Cohen moved through a number of artistic and personal phases, including a 5 year period in a Buddhist monastery, where he was ordained a Rinzaï Zen Buddhist monk, and a messy, financial court case in which it was found that his prior manager had defrauded him of most of his life's earnings, leaving him, in 2005, with just \$150 000 to his name and forcing him to tour in 2008 and 2009.</p>	<p>Simmons (2013:390, 422–424)</p>

Note: Please see the article Prilaid, D.A. & Callaghan, C.W., 2023, 'The creative development process: Biographical insights on innovation in Anglophone genre', *Acta Commercii* 23(1), a1129. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ac.v23i1.1129>, for complete reference list.

With regard to an example of success in ice skating, and the way top performers practice jumps that they cannot do rather than those that they can, Colvin (2008) stresses that:

Landing on your butt twenty thousand times is where great performance comes from. That fact raises the question of why anyone would go through it for a reward that is many years away. This is the deepest question in the study of exceptional performance ... The answer may extend so far into a person's psyche that no one can get all the way there ... But that doesn't mean the question is a black hole or that pursuing it is hopeless. On the contrary, many findings provide intriguing hints as to why great performers pay the price they must pay. (p. 188)

Following the poor album sales in the 1980s, Dylan retreated to focus on performing to his best ability, to stand fast and to be true to his art. Cohen was no different, expressing frustrations with what he considered his song writing limitations. Through

persistence both pulled through, moving then on to a period of ongoing practice and consequent creative breakthroughs. Jackson Browne recalled of the cheap bedsitter he occupied with other on-the-make musicians at the start of his song writing phase in the late 1960s: 'There was a stereo, a piano, and bed and guitar and a teapot' (Ellwood 2013). Accordingly, the study derives:

- Proposition 4: Through authentic striving, path-dependent creatives are likely to develop the ability to persevere in a way that is independent of expected payoffs, which contributes to successful creative development through the channel of a form of proactivity with little regard for potential failure.

## Stage 5: Practice

For the cohort under study, the discipline of artistry seems to derive from a state of practice. Neil Young enforced a

TABLE 4: Perseverance.

Artist	Quote	References
Bob Dylan	Trying to break through in New York, 1961, Dylan suffered public indifference. At a concert staged at the Carnegie Chapter Hall, the venue was only a quarter full and, although the promoter, Izzy Young, had agreed to split the gate with Dylan, when it became clear that the 52-strong audience was not going to cover costs, Dylan received nothing other than a few spare dollars from Young's own pocket. 'He took it pretty straight', Young recalled later.  In its first year Dylan's first Columbia album, Bob Dylan, sold only a break-even 5000. At Columbia Records, he was referred to as 'Hammond's Folly' (after his producer, John Hammond) and some considered dropping his contract.  Later, following some disastrous album sales in the late '80s, Dylan subsequently acknowledged that he felt he had been abandoned by his art and by God and so sought desperately to understand the nature of his condition. Deducing existentially that it was only he who the audience came to see and not the band, he strove with renewed energy to perform as best he could, concluding: 'I'm determined to stand whether God will deliver me or not'. This insight to stand fast and be true to his art turned out to be a revelation. 'Everything just exploded every which way', he said later. In the years that followed, he released some of his finest work, including <i>Oh Mercy</i> (1989) and <i>Time Out of Mind</i> (1997).	Sounes (2011:111)  Gilliland (1969)  Sounes (2011:348–385)
Bruce Springsteen	Springsteen's primal fear was of not maximising his abilities and not possessing a clear understanding of where he was going and how he was going to get there. 'I was all I had', he said of himself in his start-up band, Steel Mill, in 1970. 'I had only one talent. I was not a natural genius. I would have to use every ounce of what was in me – my cunning, my musical skills, my showmanship, my intellect, my heart, my willingness – night after night, to push myself harder, to work with more intensity than the next guy just to survive untended in the world I lived in'.  'After first contact knocks you on your ass, you'd better have a plan, for some preparedness and personal development will be required if you expect to hang around any longer than your fifteen minutes'.	Springsteen (2016:137–138)  Springsteen (2016:213)
Neil Young	At the start of a project, Young reflects that he is sure whether an idea will actually work. 'I love to watch and try to guide what is happening, expanding the goals and reach of a project as it unfolds. Each tangent offers new possibilities for exploration and discovery. A job is never finished. It just reaches a stage where it can be left on its own for a while'.	Young (2013:101)
Keith Richards	Reflecting back to 1959 when he had dropped out of school, Keith Richards said: 'I had big ideas, even though I had no idea how to put them into operation. That required meeting a few other people later on. I just felt that I was smart enough, one way or another, to wriggle out of this social net and playing the game'.	Richards (2010:765)
Donald Fagen	'I'm a very introspective kind of person as it is, so I like the action of always working, it's a kind of therapy in itself. I'm basically someone who has to fight nervousness and depression'.  Starting out in 1969, the Steely Dan duo of Walter Becker and Donald Fagen possessed incredible reserves of determination and self-belief, cold-calling on Manhattan's music recording establishment. They could not afford to put together a demo tape and resorted instead to assaulting their potential bosses with live renditions of their latest offerings, cheerily plunked out on any available out-of-tune office piano. Bemused record executives reported: 'zero commercial prospects'. Their first label boss, Kenny Vance, recalled that they looked like street hobos as 'insects, with no vibe coming from them', and as 'librarians on acid'.	Sweet (1994:200)  Sweet (1994:17–19)
Bill Evans	In the mid-1960s, Evans reflected on the pull of jazz on his life. 'I was involved with jazz – like I went to college; I got a teacher's degree – so that I could teach; but when the moment came – bang – I went out into jazz. It was like it was so much a part of my inner life and I didn't realise it'.	Cavrell (1966)
Leonard Cohen	Grappling with his songwriting limitations, Cohen recalled sharing his frustrations with the Canadian poet, Irving Layton (1912–2006), explaining to him what his aspirations were and what he was trying to do. 'Leonard', Layton is reported to have replied when Cohen had finished, 'are you sure you're doing the wrong thing?' Cohen offered this as self-consolation: 'Well, you know, we're talking in a world where guys go down into the mines, chewing coca and spending all day in backbreaking labour. We're in a world where there's famine and hunger and people are dodging bullets and having their nails pulled out in dungeons so it's very hard for me to place any high value on the work that I do to write a song. Yeah, I work hard but compared to what?'.	Cocker (2012)

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rigorous practice routine, which band members struggled to cope with (Table 5). Like Young, Springsteen never formally studied music, but his signature work ethic made this irrelevant, this being apparent after joining a band at 13. Together with Eric Clapton, Elvis Presley, Jimi Hendrix, Robin Gibb, Lionel Ritchie and Michael Jackson, Dylan could neither read nor notate music, but achieved success through practice. On receiving the Nobel Prize, he explains:

Everything worth doing takes time. You have to write a hundred bad songs before you write a good one. And you have to sacrifice a lot of things that you might not be prepared for. Like it or not you have to follow your own star. (Sisario 2016:n.p.)

Glen Frey's observation of his early mentor, Bob Seger, is equally apt:

'Bob was the first guy who wrote his own songs and recorded them that I ever met. He said: If you want to make it you have to write your own songs. I said what if they're bad? He said well they are going to be bad. So just keep writing and eventually you'll write a good song'. (Ellwood 2013:n.p.)

Evidence suggests that striving for perfectionism can result in complex and conflicting outcomes, in that negative reactions to imperfections are related to higher distress and extrinsic motivation, but that striving for perfection on the whole can be healthy for many musicians (Stoerber & Eismann 2007).

According to Ericsson, Krampe and Tesch-Römer (1993:363), many 'characteristics once believed to reflect innate talent are actually the results of intense practice extended for a minimum of 10 years'. This 'ten-year rule' derives from biographical research, such as that conducted by Chase and Simon (1973) in their study of chess mastery. In his study of creative individuals, Gardner (2011) also found that breakthroughs typically occur after 10 years of work in a domain.

In the biographical sample, Fagen also describes himself as a self-taught pianist and vocalist, even after a period of formal music study. Steely Dan was infamous for their perfectionist approach to recording, most notably on their 1980 album, *Gauche*. Keith Richards was known to be inseparable from his guitar, working on it every spare moment. It is said of Leonard Cohen that he was constantly writing. There seems to be no short cut to mastery.

Deep practice and experience seem to also characterise the development of the following state of perspective, a role of attentive mastery and pattern recognition that fosters creative mastery. Bill Evans stressed the importance of teaching oneself but held that practice was paramount to achieving mastery, even though this was merely an intermediary step to elevating the aspirant to a position where art could be



**TABLE 5:** Practice.

Artist	Quote	References
Bob Dylan	<i>Self-taught:</i> In 1952, as an 11-year-old in Hibbing, Minnesota, Bob Zimmerman and his 6-year-old brother, David, were offered piano lessons on the family's Gulbrandsen spinet by his cousin, Harriet Rutstein. As their uncle, Lewis Stone, later recalled: 'David, who was a very, very smart boy, took it all in ... and he could play better than Bob. He was very musically inclined'. Bob, however, became exasperated with the formality of these lessons and soon packed it in, preferring instead to teach himself (Soules 2011:27). <i>Practice:</i> On receiving his Nobel prize, Dylan was forthright about the practice required. 'Everything worth doing takes time. You have to write a hundred bad songs before you write a good one. And you have to sacrifice a lot of things that you might not be prepared for. Like it or not you have to follow your own star'.	Sisario (2016)
Bruce Springsteen	<i>Self-taught:</i> Springsteen never formally studied music. His mother bought him a \$60 Kent guitar in Christmas 1964 and, in the following year, though local networking set up a band called the Castiles. <i>Practice:</i> Bruce Springsteen was also renowned for his unrelenting work ethic. His documentary on the making of Darkness on the Edge of Town (1978) recounts the effort he put into this album, with historical footage showcasing Springsteen both alone with his composition notebooks and together with the E Street Band as it ground out a raft of songs in a collaborative slow-heave. Even when he joined his first band, The Castiles, at the age of 13, his work ethic was never in dispute. Recalls fellow Castiles band member, Frank Marziotti: 'Bruce was always a fast learner. You showed him one thing, and he came back the next day and showed you three'. Springsteen fondly confirmed: 'I guarantee you that once I had the job, I went home and started to woodshed like a mad dog. I was in a band. ... Oh yeah, after I got into the band, I just listened and played all night. Every available hour and minute'.	Carlin (2012:23–27) Carlin (2012:29)
Neil Young	<i>Self-taught:</i> At Earl Grey School, Neil Young took two guitar lessons from Mr Jack Riddell. Other than that he was completely self-taught: 'Mr. Riddell taught me everything I know in those two lessons'. <i>Practice:</i> In the late 1960s, working initially with a band called 'The Rockets', Young's strictly enforced practice routine soon saw the band break up under the pressurised work load. Young subsequently invited key members of the old band (Whitten, Talbot, and Molina) to join him as his new backing band, 'Crazy Horse', which went on to record 'Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere' in 1969.	McDonough (2002:79) Crazy Horse – Wikipedia. En.wikipedia.org (2021)
Donald Fagen	<i>Self-taught:</i> Fagen has classified himself as both a self-taught pianist and a self-taught vocalist, although he did spend a few semesters studying formally at Berklee College of Music and took some vocal lessons in the mid-1970s as a precaution after feeling the straining effects of years of touring. <i>Practice:</i> Steely Dan carried with it an unrelenting work ethic. Along with the entire production process, Fagen and Becker approached their playing as an extension of the creative songwriting process. They were both meticulous about sound quality and tone. There are endless anecdotes of the two fixating in the recording studio for weeks on a particular guitar lick or drum tone in the studio (Sweet 1994). Steel Dan sound engineer, Roger Nichols, 1993: 'We're all perfectionists. It wasn't a drag for me to do things over and over until it was perfect. In my own way, I'm just as crazy as they are'.	Wikipedia (2021) Roger Nichols (2011)
Keith Richards	<i>Self-taught:</i> Keith Richards states bluntly that short cuts are impossible. 'If you want to get to the top, you've got to start at the bottom, same with anything', he says, observing that lots of beginners erroneously believe that they can become Jimi Hendrixes just because they can make a flat-top go 'wee wee wah wah'. Guitar greatness comes from getting to know the instrument inside out, Richards maintains. 'I would just play every spare moment I got. People describe me as being oblivious to my surroundings – I'd sit in a corner of a room when a party was going and be playing. Some indication of my love of my new instrument is Aunt Marje telling me that when (my mother) Doris went to hospital and I stayed with (my grandfather) Gus for a while, I was never parted from my guitar. I took it everywhere and I went to sleep with my arm laid across it'. <i>Practice:</i> By 1964, a mere 5 years after Richards had acquired his first guitar, the Stones were hitting America with a version of black-inspired blues so strong that no one thought they were white, let alone from the UK. Such was their US impact that Motown giant Bobby Womack remarked that at first he'd thought the Stones were black guys. 'Where did these motherfuckers come from?' he reportedly asked.	Richards (2010:59) Richards (2010:158)
Bill Evans	<i>Self-taught:</i> 'The jazz player, if he's going to ultimately be a serious jazz player, teaches himself'. <i>Practice:</i> 'You have to spend a lot of years at the keyboard before what's inside can get through your hands and into the piano. For years and years that was constant frustration for me. I wanted to get that expressive thing in, but somehow it didn't happen. When I was about 26 – about a year before I went to Miles (Davis) – that was the first time I attained a certain degree of expressiveness in my playing. Believe me I had played a lot of jazz before then'. Running the numbers on the hours the 26-year-old Evans must have practised to get to this point of virtuosity is revealing. Starting at age six, he would have logged two decades of piano training – 13 years just in jazz. During his jazz training, at 2.5 (to 3) h' practice daily for 6 days a week, the left-handed Evans would have logged 10 172 h; fitting neatly within Gladwell's rule.	Pettinger (1998:89) Pettinger (1998:56–57)
Leonard Cohen	<i>Practice:</i> (Friend) Arnold Steinberg recalls, 'Of all the things about Leonard, the first thing, the first thing that comes to mind was he was constantly, constantly writing – writing and sketching. One always sensed that there was an inner need – pushing out words and pictures, never ending, like a motor running'. Says jazz musician Phil Cohen: 'A couple of times he looked up and he looked like he was totally out of it – not drugged, just in a totally different world, he was so into what he was doing. From my experience of working with a lot of performers, there was this sense of almost desperation that I picked up from the look on his face that said "Don't disturb me," I said to myself, "This guy is very serious".'	Simmons (2013:63) Simmons (2013:63)

Note: Please see the article Priilaid, D.A. & Callaghan, C.W., 2023, 'The creative development process: Biographical insights on innovation in Anglophone genre', *Acta Commercii* 23(1), a1129. <https://doi.org/10.4102/acc.v23i1.1129>, for complete reference list.

instinctively articulated. Robin Gibb's ear became so attuned to the environment that he was able to compose the melody for 'I Started a Joke' after hearing an aeroplane engine. Elvis Costello has described the creative process as follows:

I don't want to sound spiritual, but I try to make an antenna out of myself, a lightning rod out of myself, so that whatever is out there can come in. (Montandon 2007:155)

Proposition 5 is derived from this:

- Proposition 5: Through perseverance, path-dependent creatives are likely to develop the ability to develop an intensity of practice, which contributes to successful creative development through the channel of domain mastery.

## Stage 6: Perspective

Ongoing artistic practice seems to also provide a platform for the development and reinforcement of unique artistic

perspectives (Table 6). In concerts, Neil Young has long eschewed hit-list playlists and displays confidence in live improvised jam sessions. When recording, Springsteen also advocates improvisation, 'It's fascinating to record a song when musicians don't know it ... If people learn their parts too well then they consciously perform rather than play flat out' (Carlin, 2012:424). Similarly, Dylan's recording of *Girl from the North Country*, with Johnny Cash, includes incorrect words and timing that was off.

This freewheeling perspective on performance and rendition seems to derive from having sufficient confidence to break the mould. According to Gardner (2011:37), Einstein 'was able to affect a breakthrough precisely because he did not simply accept as a given the paradigms and agendas of the physics of his time', instead going back to first principles, 'in setting for himself the most fundamental problems and in looking for the most comprehensive yet simplifying explanatory axioms'.

TABLE 6: Perspective.

Artist	Quote	References
Bob Dylan	<i>Improvisation:</i> A fine example is 'Girl from the North Country', which he recorded with the late Johnny Cash in 1969 for the album <i>Nashville Skyline</i> . In the recording, Dylan's timing is off and in one of the verses he even starts off with the wrong words. This notwithstanding, it remains one of his most loved songs and continues to be covered by artists across the world. <i>Observation:</i> Following his initial New York breakthrough, Dylan moved upstate to the then unknown village of Woodstock, rooming in a bedsitter above the local Café Espresso coffee shop. Its then owner, Bernard Paturel, recalled how Dylan would scatter photos and pictures on the floor, stalking out images and word associations. 'He was like an abstract painter composing a picture', said Paturel.	- Sounes (2011:144)
Neil Young	<i>No playlist:</i> Once on stage, Neil Young seldom lets on to the audience what's in store for the night. Says Willie Nelson who, with Young and John Mellencamp, started the Farm Aid movement in the mid-80s: 'You never know what you are going to get in a Neil Young concert because he never knows exactly what he's going to do. That way everyone is surprised'. At a 2013 concert played at London's O2 arena, Young played out a cacophonous electric set with Crazy Horse. Those who'd arrived expecting to hear Harvest had mostly left by half time. Over 2.5 h, Young played only three acoustic numbers; one, 'Blowin' in the Wind', not even his. <i>Observation:</i> Neil Young: 1971: 'Seems like even when I'm happy, I write about bein' lonesome. I don't know why. And you're asking about images I write, like 'the burned-out basement' and all that – I really don't know where that comes from. I just see pictures. I just see pictures in my eyes'.	Carr (2012) - McDonough (2002:126)
Bruce Springsteen	<i>Improvisation:</i> In recording sessions Bruce Springsteen leans toward jazz improvisation: no over-preparation; just going with the flow and staying with the vibe. Says Springsteen: 'It's fascinating to record a song when musicians don't know it. ... If people learn their parts too well they consciously perform rather than play flat out. When you just launch into it, it breaks down another barrier between you and the audience. One less layer of formality'.	Carlin (2012:424)
Keith Richards	<i>Observation:</i> Richards notes how his observation skills have juiced his powers of creativity. When you realise you are a songwriter, Richards asserts that you have to become an observer. At this point two things happen. Firstly, you distance yourself and, secondly, you are constantly on the alert. In time, alertness becomes ingrained within you as you observe people and how they interact. Observation, he writes, makes you oddly distant, a voyeur of sorts. 'You shouldn't really be doing it', said Richards. 'It's a little of Peeping Tom to be a songwriter. You start looking around, and everything's a subject for a song. The banal phrase which is the one that makes it. And you say, I can't believe nobody hooked up on that one before! Luckily there are more phrases than songwriters, just about'.	Richards (2010:183)
Donald Fagen	<i>Observation:</i> Fagen's ironic and cynical view on life is based on his deep-seated antipathy towards conventional mainstream America. His view on life is that of an anti-social outsider and almost all of his songs are laced with a bitter-sweet take on the status quo. Fagen grew up in South Brunswick, New Jersey, where he grew to loathe the suburbs. 'It was like a prison. I think I lost faith in [my parents'] judgment. What I mainly realised was their judgement wasn't the same as mine, their view was different. In fact, it was probably the first time I realized I had my own view of life'.	Sweet (1994:7)
Bill Evans	<i>No play list:</i> Bill Evans never introduced a concert playlist until the set was complete. His focus remained on letting the music speak for itself, rather than allowing people to cue the songs in their heads by introducing them up front. 'The best way I can draw people into a musical experience is to avoid words entirely', he said.	Pettinger (1998:214)
Leonard Cohen	<i>Observation:</i> Cohen's friend Irving Layton would say of Leonard that 'he was able to find the sadness in Westmount. That takes genius. He was able to see that not all rich people, not all comfortable people, not all plutocrats, were happy'. 'Genius', Layton said, 'is the ability – it's a very rare ability – to see things as the actually are. You are not fooled'.	Simmons (2013:51)

Note: Please see the article Prilaid, D.A. & Callaghan, C.W., 2023, 'The creative development process: Biographical insights on innovation in Anglophone genre', *Acta Commercii* 23(1), a1129. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ac.v23i1.1129>, for complete reference list.

The practical process of deconstruction and reconstruction also seems to enable a sense of fresh perspective. Dylan scattered photos and pictures on the floor, abstractly linking images and word associations. Other artists leverage attitudes and life experiences into their art. Fagen's rejection of the conventional mainstream is reflected in the music of Steely Dan. Tom Waits drew his perspectives from seedy nightlife and the ability to get wild. When asked in 1972 why he wasn't wearing his girl's dress, the androgynous David Bowie replied: 'Oh dear. You must understand that it's not a woman's. It's a man's dress' (The Guardian 2016).

Gardner (2011) suggests that the study of extraordinarily creative individuals can reveal particular combinations of generative ideas associated with their contributions and a central theme around which their key ideas are organised. Cohen was said to have the ability to discern the reality behind appearances, giving him an artistic perspective on the weight of everyday sadness and emotionality that he translated into music. In his work, sorrow, hopelessness and despair comingled with passion, high hopes and deep love. These perspectives are all important because they fuse with the drive for authenticity. A keen sense of artistic perspective blurs often into the following state of flow moments from which creativity may ultimately emerge. Thus, for Cohen, creative writing was 'like a bear stumbling into a beehive or honey cache. It's not very graceful and it's very awkward and it's very painful and yet there's something inevitable about it' (Warnes 2016). The quest here is becoming oneself. Locating the true inner voice is all, and the perspective seems

to be a catalysing agent. When writing *The Naked and the Dead*, Norman Mailer is said to have started each day by reading Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*, and when asked about the requirements for great art, Tom Waits suggested breaking windows and other forms of 'hoodlum' behaviour. Clearly, the role of inhibition, and hence play, becomes important here because it locates and unfetters the exiled inner child, holds logic at bay and offers fresh insight. It is a mindset that moves the artist closer to spontaneity and the unconscious. Critical to fresh perspectives is the acquisition and mastery of one's own artistic voice. The voice must be developed over time and with ongoing practice to become innate and instinctual. Here practice does not stop but, like driving a car, changes the emphasis from rote learning to honing muscle memory for the automatic rendering of self. Hence, the study derives:

- Proposition 6: Through practice, path-dependent creatives are likely to develop a highly tuned sense of perspective, which contributes to successful creative development through the ability to deconstruct and construct their perceptions of reality.

## Stage 7: Accessing flow

From the biographical analysis, the shift from mere perspective to actually getting into the moment of artistic serendipity – or flow – requires a hushed moment of creative receptivity when one 'sets the table'. Table setting requires a degree of inner work, reorientation and preparation. Entering 'the flow', Springsteen would get into a state of watchfulness,

using non-conscious activity to dissociate from a sense of time and space (see Table 7). According to Springsteen:

When you're writing well, you're not exactly sure how you've done it, or if you'll ever do it again. You're looking for the element you can't explain. The element that breathes life and character into the people or situation you're writing about. (Carlin 2012:242–243)

His classic 'Born to Run' is said to have emerged from this type of form of table setting.

Entering flow-like conditions, 'experience seamlessly unfolds from moment to moment', and an individual experiences a state with certain characteristics, such as intense and profound concentration on a present activity, the merging of action and awareness, an absence of reflective self-consciousness, a sense of control over the situation, a temporal distortion whereby time seems to pass more quickly and an intrinsic enjoyment of the activity that is independent of the end goal (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi 2014:90).

Joan Baez describes Dylan's process:

Bob stood at the typewriter in the corner of his room, drinking red wine and smoking and tapping away relentlessly for hours. And in the dead of night, he would wake up, grunt, grab a cigarette, and stumble over to the typewriter again. (Sounes 2011:146)

Richards recorded the chord structure for the Rolling Stones hit 'Satisfaction' in a table-setting moment, while experimenting late at night before falling asleep, leaving the recorder on.

The regulation of attention is a key component here. An individual must decide what to pay attention to, and how intensely and for how long, and it is these choices that 'will determine the content of consciousness, and therefore the experiential information available to the organism' (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi 2014:92). Bill Evans describes entering an uncritical space to manifest creativity and attain a different creative state. For Cohen, this was never easy:

I never had the sense that I was standing in front of a buffet table with a multitude of choices ... I felt I was operating in more what Yeats used to say was the 'foul rag and bone shop of the heart'. I just pick it together. I don't work with a sense of great abundance. (Cocker 2012:2)

This state of withdrawal and reflection seems to be a precursor to a state of spontaneous and inspired non-conscious action. Barry Gibb likens song writing to a flash of an idea, or a flash of a chorus of a song, which can come literally in the middle of the night. Getting into such spaces of 'flash' can prove key to unlocking heightened creative experiences. Most of The Bee Gees' successful songs were written quickly. Similarly, when recording, Springsteen would strive to avoid over preparation and to just go with the flow. Jimmy Webb wrote some of his most successful songs living in the back of his car, and Paul Simon wrote *Sounds of Silence* when 21, in his bathroom, with the lights off. He explains that 'The main thing about playing the guitar, though, was that I was able to sit by myself and dream' (Schwartz 1984:31). Leonard Cohen was equally perplexed about the origin of his song writing: 'if I knew where the good songs came from I would go there more often' (Cohen 2011).

TABLE 7: Accessing flow.

Artist	Quote	References
Dylan	In the summer of 1963, Dylan hooked up with folk queen Joan Baez, who subsequently described his method of song capture: 'Bob stood at the typewriter in the corner of his room, drinking red wine and smoking and tapping away relentlessly for hours. And in the dead of night, he would wake up, grunt, grab a cigarette, and stumble over to the typewriter again'.	Sounes (2011:146)
	Later that year Dylan moved in with Baez. Her friend Nancy Carlin recalled how, when in songwriting mode, he would stand by the window with its Carmel Valley mountain view and, Hemingway-style, peck-type on an old typewriter while simultaneously picking out the rudiments of a tune on the old piano. 'He'd drink black coffee all morning and then, at lunchtime, he would switch to rot-gut red (wine). And he would drink red rot-gut the rest of the day'.	Sounes (2011:146)
Bruce Springsteen	The composition of 'Born to Run' is classic 'setting of the table'. Recently single, Springsteen had rented a small house west off Long Branch, New Jersey. Following his morning routine, in a state of watchfulness, with a note book by his side, he absorbed himself in a non-conscious activity musical activity waiting for the moment to arrive. Beside an open notebook, strumming on his guitar, he fished for an idea. Then three words appeared in his mind: 'born to run'. Later he recalled how he'd liked the phrase because the cinema it evoked, conjuring in his head snatches of Brian Wilson's 'Don't Worry Baby'. (The songs are played in the same key and deal with the same themes.) And so the song took form, though it would take weeks to smooth out to its full expression.	Carlin (2012:172)
Neil Young	Young in 1971: 'And sometimes I can't get them to come, y'know, but then if I just get high or something, and if I just sit there and wait, all of a sudden it comes gushing out. I just got to get to the right level. It's like having a mental orgasm'.	McDonough (2002:126)
	Said he later: 'There's no way you own it. It's a gift that keeps on giving. It goes away, then it comes back, if you're ready to accept it it's there'.	Rose (2008)
	In Neil Young's opinion, this is why Kurt Cobain from Nirvana committed suicide. 'Because there was no control to the burn. ... He didn't know that he could maybe go somewhere else and get some more fuel, come back and do it again. ... At his stage, it was all music. Kurt Cobain only had one world'.	McDonough (2002:699–700)
Keith Richards	So many of the great Rolling Stones songs appear to have been sparked in 'table setting' moments. In 1965, Richards wrote their first major hit, 'Satisfaction'. Having just bust up with his girlfriend, he was alone in his London flat, jamming on his acoustic guitar late into the night. Almost unconsciously, he pressed the record button on his Phillips cassette player and spent 5 min experimenting with a few riffs before finally passing out. On awaking the next morning, Richards rewound the tape to hear what it was he'd played, and there, before 40 min of loud snoring, was the rough-hewn chord structure for 'Satisfaction'. It was all he needed. In 2004, Rolling Stone magazine voted it the second greatest song ever written after Dylan's 'Like a Rolling Stone'.	Richards (2010:176)
Bill Evans	The question of setting the table is beautifully explained through an incident relating to Evans, shortly before his death in 1980, aged just 51. Warren Bernhardt, whom Evans was mentoring, was paying attention to the master as he played. 'He was playing magnificently then, and he spoke to me again ... about how, when things were just right, he could get every molecule in a given place to begin scintillating in a new and higher fashion, a quantum jump up from ordinary walking reality. This is something he could see when it was recurring'.	Pettinger (1998:276)
Leonard Cohen	'I never had the sense that I was standing in front of a buffet table with a multitude of choices ... I felt I was operating in more what Yeats used to say was the "foul rag and bone shop of the heart." I just pick it together. I don't work with a sense of great abundance'.	Cocker (2012)

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Proposition 7 is derived from this:

- Proposition 7: Through perspective, path-dependent creatives may set the stage for attaining moments of creative flow.

The progression through the seven different stages outlined above is now deployed to ground a discussion of implications, and lessons are drawn for the theory and practice of creative development.

## Discussion

First coined by Gardner and Wolf (1988), the term 'asynchrony' describes the ability of creatives to advantageously lever their differences from the norm. In this section, the authors draw out further linkages to explain how the seven-phase path-dependent model is shot through with asynchrony. This path, the authors suggest, serves as a honing trajectory – winnowing out those less capable and enabling those who are. To commence, whereas the study's analysis, hitherto, is largely inductive, the authors now articulate with the work of Gardner (2011) which helps to explain and illustrate why linkages and processes operate.

For Gardner (2011), an analysis of creativity requires an understanding of its antecedents at different levels, namely, the sub-personal, personal, impersonal and multi-personal levels. Although the creative process is expected to develop amidst all these forces, the study's analysis suggests that the process for highly successful creatives also comprises *an intensely personal component*.

Of relevance here is honing theory: a perspective that seeks to predict how creative ideas 'unfold over time, both in the minds of individuals, and through interaction amongst individuals' (Gabora 2016:3). Applying this theoretical frame to the data provokes the questions of: (1) whether and to what extent the path-dependent process identified here mimics a honing process of creative evolution and (2) whether this process 'reduces' to a game of creative 'survivor'. For if it is so difficult to become a world-leading songwriter and performer that the biographical sample comprises 'survivors', then the insights that are derived might be able to explain why.

Relevant here is Gabora's (2016:5) suggestion that Darwinian theories of creativity face challenges related to the notion that selection is influencing the distribution of 'randomly generated heritable variation across generations'. When such variation is fundamentally chaotic, would anyone endowed with the necessary hereditary talents and proclivity exposed to this path emerge as ultimately successful? This is an interesting question because it reduces to a test of how useful the insights are for those seeking to learn how to improve creativity. Certainly, the study's data suggest that luck is an additional key to success. Fagen (Sweet 1994:151) acknowledges this: 'We never expected to sell as many records as we have recently, we just lucked out really', as does Springsteen (2016:428): 'My chances were one, one in a

million, in many millions'. This said it should remain clear that while the subjects acknowledge the role of luck, they still seem to follow a path-dependent process of creative development.

Juxtaposed to theories that predict that novelty will emerge randomly through trial and error, Gabora (2016) suggests that honing theory provides an improved description that allows for an understanding of creativity as 'the process that enables minds to restructure and self-organize, and thereby culture to evolve' (Gabora 2016:6). While useful, Gabora's insights do not, however, explain 'why' the biographical respondents differ in many respects from those in other creative fields or what makes this particular analysis unique in its contribution to the creativity literature. Here, Gardner's work on asynchrony extends Gabora's argument and explains certain characteristics underpinning the sample. According to Gardner (2011:np): 'individuals who avoid any kind of asynchrony may well be prodigies or experts, but they are unlikely to become creative people'; while 'those who experience asynchronies at all points may be overwhelmed'. Between these two extremes, Gardner hypothesised: '*that an individual will be judged creative to the extent that he or she exhibits several asynchronies and yet can withstand the concomitant strain* (emphasis added)'.

Given Gardner's hypothesis, what seems to emerge from the analysis is that the biographical subjects may have faced a 'perfect storm' of asynchrony. Carefully considered, each of the seven stages the authors identify seems to be characterised by some form of asynchrony. The underlying pattern in these relationships seems to be one of the asynchronic forces acting on an individual to facilitate a process of creative evolution, or in some instances, creative revolution.

Analysis of the patterns related to the identification of the seven stages, therefore, seems to suggest certain individual-level asynchronies that require resolution to develop to the next stage. The discussions here build on the inductive stage model to incorporate deductive ideas, such as those suggested by Gardner (2011) that provide additional insights and further analysis of identified patterns.

## Conclusion

As it is suggested, in Stage 1, *Pathology*, there seems to be an emotive asynchrony between the individual and a state of emotional pain based on childhood circumstances. From the imperfect fit, some form of resolution is required, quite possibly from a breakage of trust with the norm. A successful reconciliation of this asynchrony results thus in a 'different' perspective from others and the development of a creative lens from the perspective of an 'other'. Stage 2, *Rage to Master*, in which early wounding yields a profound connection with art, seems to be characterised by an emotive asynchrony between the individual and a state of emotional pain, whereby the asynchrony is reconciled through a channelling of emotional energy into creativity. This reconciliation seems

to drive a profound early connection between an individual and a specific creative endeavour. In Stage 3, *Authenticity*, the development of an unyielding artistic mind set seems to arise from an individual's successful resolution of asynchrony related to the conflict between a need for an independent voice and the status quo, in that there seem to be costs associated with breaking away from the norm.

Stage 4, *Perseverance*, seems to relate to the tension between inertial forces associated with challenges and difficulties faced along the way, and the need to persist, even if this persistence is costly. Solving this asynchrony seems to develop in the individual a sense of persistence and proactivity in the face of continual challenges. Stage 5, *Practice*, seems to capture the asynchrony associated with a tension between a path offering other opportunities and the need to stay on a path that might sometimes not hold out any promise of success. To continue an extended period of practice and persistence for such a long time with no clear prospect of the payoff is certainly a differentiating characteristic of the highly successful creative individuals sampled here. According to the data, Stage 6, *Perspective*, seems to highlight the tension between the need to follow the rigidity of one's disciplinary practice principles – the success factor that got an individual to this level – and the need to break this rigidity, to be able to develop the confidence to break rules and to create according to one's uniquely individual perspective. Solving this asynchrony takes an artist to another level of unique creativity, which differentiates him or her from the rest of the pack. Stage 7, *Accessing Flow*, captures a pattern across the subjects, whereby they seem to be able to access a state of preparation for highly creative activity. Here the asynchrony that needs to be resolved may be between the preceding one – of needing to break from convention and establishing authenticity – and a need to transition to a state of preparation, of receptiveness to creative insights.

Finally, the path-dependent model suggests that highly creative individuals might have benefitted from additional domain-and-field asynchronies. The 1960s and 1970s folk-rock and jazz-tinged domains are counter-cultural in many respects, serving as antidotes to the previous generation's saccharine ballads and big-band crooners. With many of its artists at the barricades of society's changing norms, zeitgeist radio-station music is perhaps emblematic of an asynchronic relationship – both as a stand-alone field and as an abutment to external mainstream society.

Thus, within this period's wider maelstrom, the biographical respondents appear to contribute unique insights to the creativity management literature in that they seem to have faced a *perfect storm* in their resolution of asynchronies. Gardner's (2011) predictions bear repeating here:

Individuals who avoid any kind of asynchrony may well be prodigies or experts, but they are unlikely to become creative people; those who experience asynchronies at all points may be overwhelmed. (p. np)

The objective of this study was to inductively derive a proposition-based model describing characteristics of the creative development of a certain type of biographical subject, in this case a popular Anglophone musician in a context of societal change. Findings seem to question notions that such achievements derive primarily from luck rather than persistence and expertise (Benedek et al. 2021).

Future research might build on the work here to address some of the inescapable limitations of such work. The work is also limited by other necessary trade-offs, such as the balance between inductive and deductive analysis, although the inductively derived propositions can be tested using further empirical research across different contexts.

The delimitation of the study to certain musical genres and to a specific type of biographical respondent has methodological advantages but also some limitations. For example, the study reduces heterogeneity bias by using a relatively more homogenous sample in a single genre. A downside to this is that whereas using a single genre increases visibility in patterns to make these patterns accessible for analysis, there is less variability in the analysis associated with domain and field asynchronies compared to that associated with these individuals. A consequently interesting comparative study could explore similarities and differences in the creative process along a cross-section of musical genres including less commercial ones, such as metal or punk rock.

Notwithstanding its limitations, the findings may offer useful insights into the creative development process of the biographical subjects, derived in a time prior to the proliferation of social media that nevertheless maps what might be a timeless process of creative ideation. Such insights may be particularly relevant to those studying or working in creative industries that are under severe pressure at this time.

In conclusion, the findings contribute as a basis for further scholarly research in certain understudied areas. The career development of musicians is yet to receive equitable treatment in the employment literature, and future research should build on these findings to develop understandings of how to succeed in such professions. The findings may be particularly salient given the COVID-19 pandemic that has had catastrophic consequences for musicians who have been unable to ply their trade to live audiences.

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## Data availability

Data are available via accession codes, unique identifiers or web links for publicly available data sets.

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