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Does work integrated learning better psychologically prepare British students for life and work?



Inspiring tomorrow's professionals

A photograph of several students walking in a modern building with large glass windows. The students are dressed in casual attire, including hoodies and jackets. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting an indoor or well-lit outdoor area.

Lisa Ward

Fiona Purdie

Today's presentation



- **Background to the study**
 - Joining the international work integrated learning project
 - Placements at the University of Huddersfield
 - What we know from the literature about the psychological effect of WIL
- **Methodology**
 - Design
 - Measures
 - Sample
- **Results**
 - Does WIL influence students psychologically and in what way?
- **Implications**
 - For the academic community
 - For the University of Huddersfield
 - For HEIs nationally and internationally

An international study...



- Originated at the University of Waterloo (Canada)
- Definition: Co-operative Education, Placements, internships
- The largest Co-operative Education Provider in Canada with 15,000 students.
- WatCACE
- Found out about research at WACE

An international study...



Project Partners:

- Assoc Prof Maureen Drysdale, University of Waterloo, Canada
- Dr Kristina Johansen, University West, Sweden,
- Dr Sheri Dressler, University of Central Florida, USA
- Elena Zaitseva, Liverpool John Moores, UK

Placements at the University of Huddersfield



- 25,000 students
- 2011 fee 'free' placements, from 2012 - £500
- Sandwich Degrees
- Professional Placements
- Big Society Volunteering
- Simulation, Canalside Studios, Penfield

The Background



Graduate employment challenges:

- Record numbers of graduates in the UK (Chevalier & Lindley, 2009)
- Increasing difficulty in securing employment post-university (Browne, 2010)
- Higher expectations as a result of tuition fee reforms (Browne, 2010)

Result: A challenge to design programs better equipped to enable students to acquire the skills, knowledge & experience that increase employability & lead to more satisfying careers.

A possible solution? WIL

The documented benefits of Work Integrated Learning



Occupational/academic benefits (Powell *et al.*, 2008; Bates, 2008):

- Better careers
- Better salaries
- Better degree outcomes

Specific competencies:

(Costley, 2007; Crebert *et al.*, 2002, Dreuth & Deuth-Fewell, 2002; Lizzio & Wilson, 2004; Rickard, 2002)

- Decision making
- Interpersonal and self-management skills
- The application of theoretical knowledge in workplace environments
- Professional networking and behaviour
- Leadership

The documented benefits of Work Integrated Learning



Psychological factors:

- A more positive view of chance of gaining employment over specific competencies or occupational advantage (Allen & van der Velden, 2007).
- Self esteem (Crebert *et al.*, 2002)
- Self efficacy (Cuzzi *et al.*, 1996).

Research question

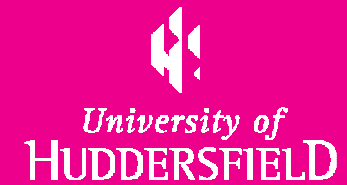


Do students who pursue WIL have significantly higher self-concept, self-efficacy, hope, and motivation for study, and significantly lower procrastination, compared to students who pursue a more traditional degree programme?



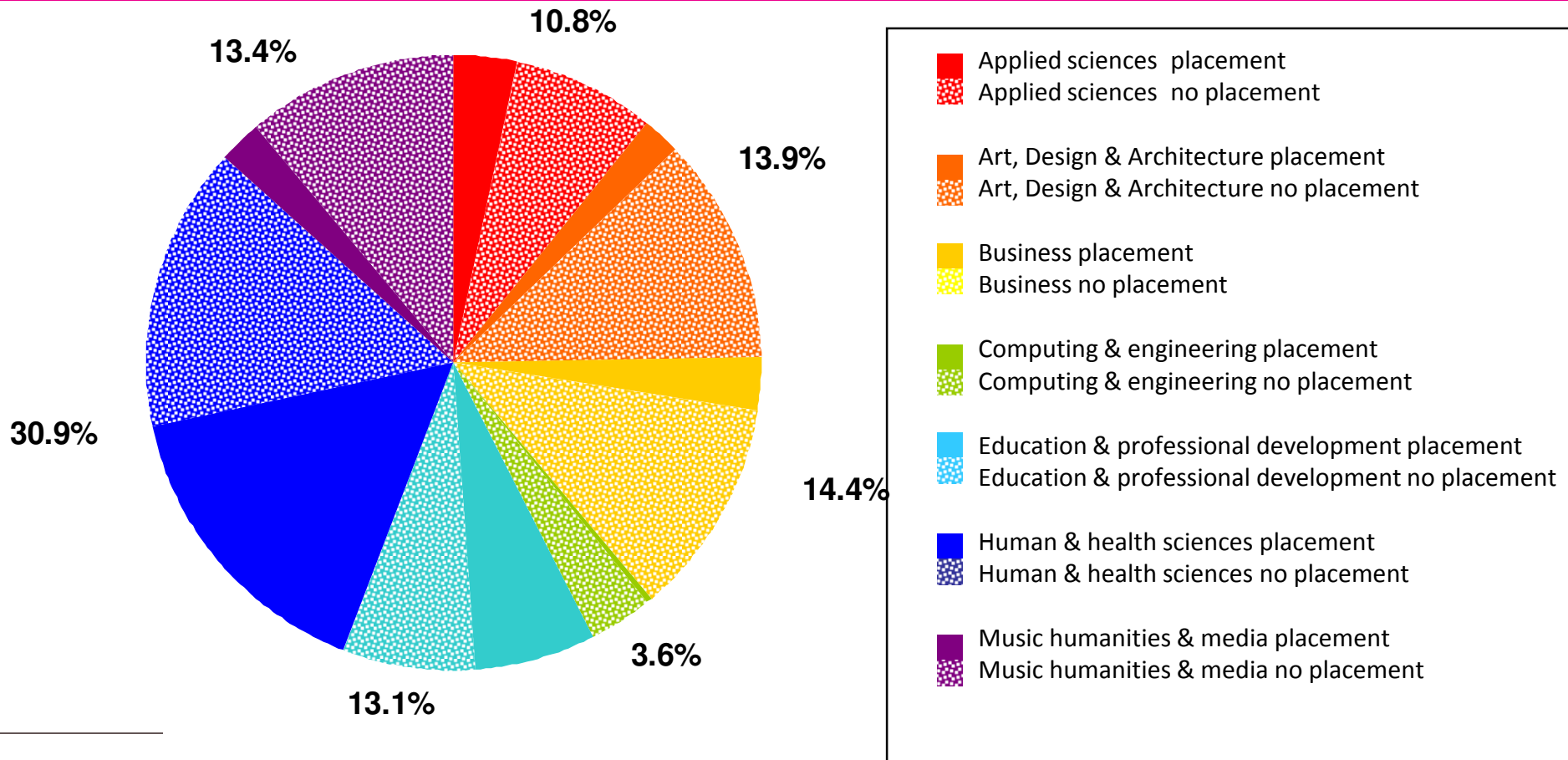
Questions

Sample



- Self selected sample of undergraduate students, from all academic schools at the University of Huddersfield, UK (n=621)
- Placement: 33.3%/ non placement: 66.7%
- Males: 25% / Females: 75% (significantly more females undertake placements)
- Mean age (yrs): 26.5

Percentage of students per school, by placement participation

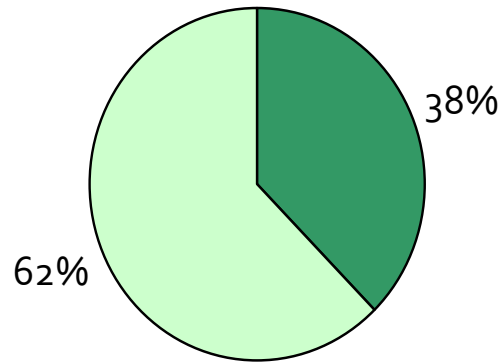


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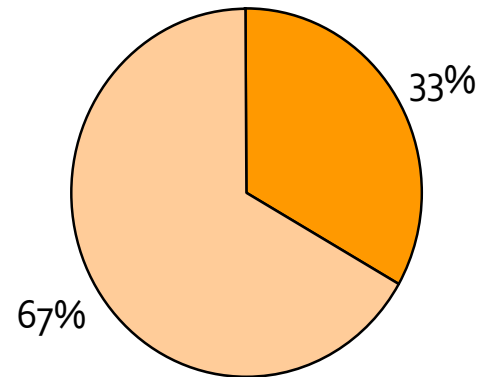
Proportion of students undertaking work related activity



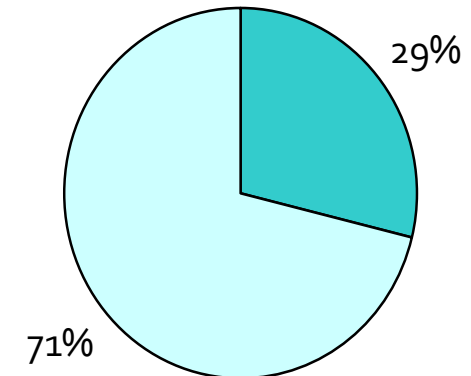
Current part time work



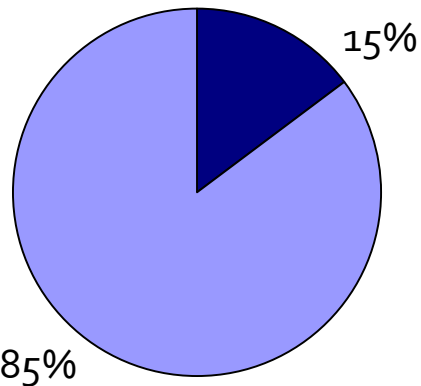
Placement



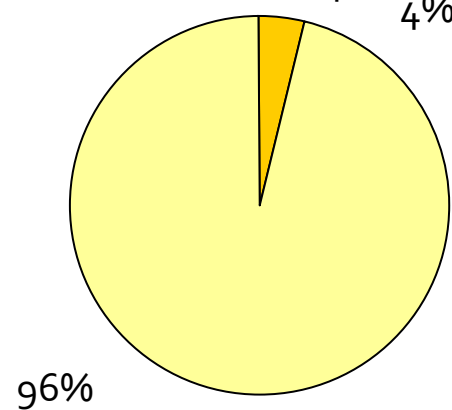
Voluntary work



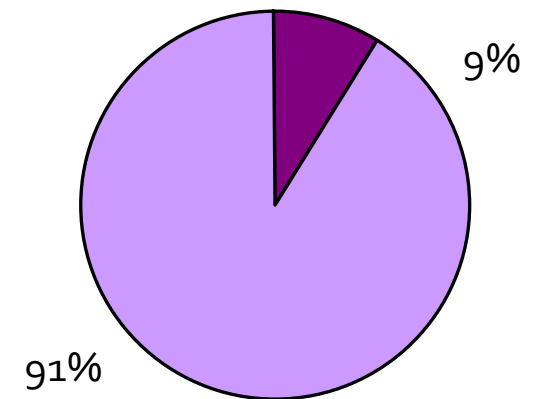
Relevant previous work



Internship



Experiential learning



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- Cross-sectional analysis
- Measures, demographic and educational data were collected from participants at the end of their academic year.
- Chosen to accommodate the varied placement programmes available at the University of Huddersfield

Measures



Trait Hope Scale (*THS*: Snyder *et al.*, 1991), which measures hopes and goals

Procrastination Assessment Scale – Students (*PASS*: Solomon & Rothblum, 1984), which measures the postponement of goals and tasks.

Self-Description Questionnaire III (*SDQ-III*: Marsh & O’Neill, 1984)., which measures a set of learned perceptions, beliefs and opinions that individuals hold about themselves.

College Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (*CASES*: Owen & Froman, 1988), which measures the degree of competence participants believe they have in various academic settings.

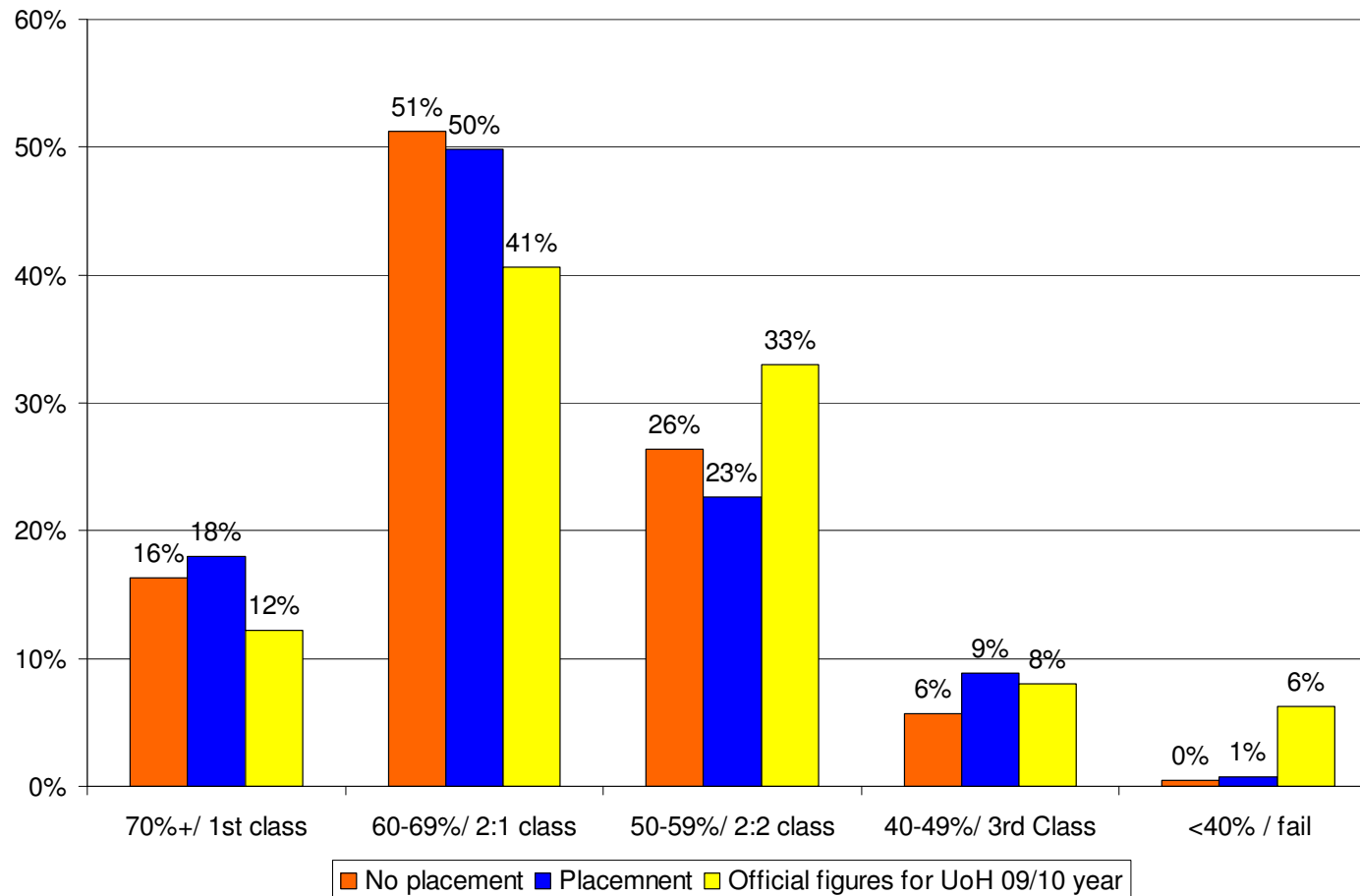
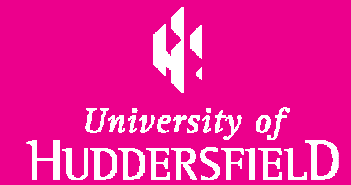
Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (*MSLQ*: Pintrich *et al.*, 1993), which assesses motivation and learning strategies by University students.

A range of demographic, educational and occupational information was also collected



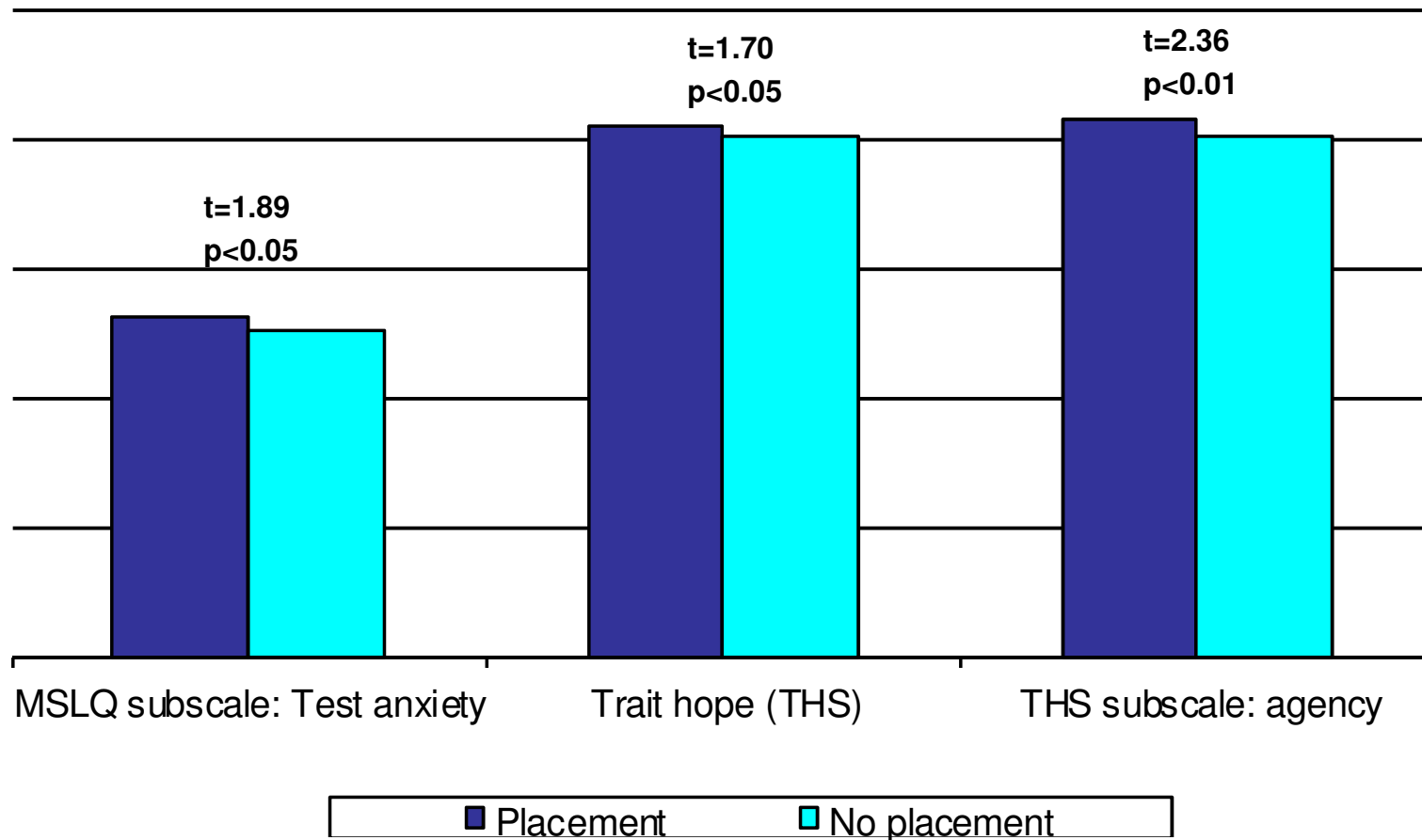
Questions

Academic achievement reported by placement and non-placement students



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Mean results by placement participation



Theoretical implications



- Our findings suggest that cognitions & emotions are most affected by WIL
- Findings are consistent with previous evidence to suggest that an improvement in confidence is a key outcome of WIL (Cope, 2000; Ward, 2009).
- Lack of significant differences in measures relating to learning behaviours, e.g. procrastination, learning strategies, or in academic achievement were found, contrary to existing literature (Powell *et al.*, 2008).

Why might this be?

The specificity of the experiential differences between placement and non-placement students.

Practical implications

For the University of Huddersfield and beyond



- Models of graduate employability suggest that self-confidence and self esteem are key facilitators of later employment (Dacre Pool & Sewell 2007).
- Changes in HE landscape with higher fees from 2012
 - Will two year degrees become the norm?
 - How can work related elements be better integrated into courses?
 - Will student stake on even more part-time jobs to pay for education?
 - Will employers still expect work experience?

Limitations and directions for future research



- Main limitation: the use of a cross-sectional design.
- Precluded understanding whether differences are a result of WIL or whether students who participate in WIL are different prior to commencing placement.
- Future studies employing a pre-post design are indicated
- Longitudinal studies documenting occupational outcomes of WIL vs non WIL students

Next Steps



- Secured funding for qualitative research. ‘The more the merrier?: a qualitative examination of the contribution of multiple work integrated learning experiences to student learning, personal development and preparation for employment.’
- Looking for ongoing collaborations with our research partners.

Conclusion



Our findings suggest that work integrated learning has a much more wide reaching influence than simply moulding better students. It's effect is one of a more hopeful and confident adult, better equipped emotionally to face the challenges of the employment market and life beyond.

Up Coming Presentations



- Impact Upon Teaching and Learning – **University of Huddersfield, Teaching and Learning Committee, September.**
- ‘In the right placement at the right time? An investigation of the psychological outcomes of placement learning’ **International Conference on Education and Educational Psychology (ICEEPSY 2011), Istanbul, October.**
- ‘Learning beyond the lecture room: Do placements help students learn about themselves and for themselves?’ **Psychology of Education Conference, Preston, November.**



Questions

Thank you for your time
and attention

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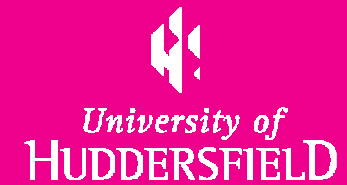
We are grateful to Maureen Drysdale and colleagues at the University of Waterloo, Canada for the contribution of their research design and for our inclusion in the international Work Integrated Learning project of which this study forms a part.

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