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ABSTRACT

Useful resources for teaching sociology on the undergraduate or graduate level are discussed. Initially, the article suggests well-known resources such as various professional and reference publications, audiovisual aids, and computer-assisted instruction. One resource not frequently thought of includes people such as administrators, colleagues, and students. Administrators can encourage mandatory evaluations by students of instructors, colleagues can collaborate in team teaching or serve as outside examiners, and advanced students can serve as instructors to slower students. Another resource includes ideas drawn from sociology: flexibility of the learning environment, role of inquiry in teaching as well as research, and effect of student interest on course success. Teacher-developed materials comprise the final group of resources. Such materials should be directed toward operationally stated objectives, include means for evaluating their achievement, articulate with theory and methods, extend and apply sociological insights, and include carefully selected test items. (Author/AV)

LEARNING TO TEACH: SOME RESOURCES[1] FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS OR PEOPLE WISHING TO HELP GRADUATE STUDENTS*

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The title of this Roundtable provokes a number of questions. Can one learn to teach? If so, how does one do it? What do we mean by resources? And last, how do we tackle such questions in a one-hour discussion?

I shall assume that the answer to the first question is: Yes. Of the three root requisites for adequate instruction, two at least are learnable and teachable. The three primitive needs are: command of subject matter, concern for students' intellectual growth, and the imagination to contrive those learning experiences that serve the first two requirements for effective instruction.

The first, command of subject matter, is not the issue this morning. The second, concern for students is a matter of heart and will over which we have little control. (A change in the reward pattern might affect this; for where a man's purse is, there shall his heart be also.*) But we can help ourselves in the contriving of imaginative--and evaluated--learning experiences. One step in this direction is to seek tentative answers to the question implied by our title: What are the resources for learning to teach?

There are a number of resources so obvious that it suffices simply to point to them. For example, three general publications are useful resources for the sociology instructor: TS, The Chronicle of Higher Education, and Change. The first is of course indispensable. Journal indices, especially those of the big 3, must be at hand as one builds a

*Throughout this paper the word, man, and pronouns in the male gender are used to avoid awkward constructions. They are neutral and refer to both men and women.

course, develops a syllabus. So, also, Sociological Abstracts. On my list of routine sources I'd include two other, quite different sorts of publications--those of the USGPO and the NY Times. Publications of the USGPO are the single best source of data we have: they are best buys which needn't be bought; for they are readily available in all University libraries. Publications from HEW, including those of the Social Security Administration, data from the decennial surveys and the intermediate sample surveys, the City and County Data Book, the summaries given in The Statistical Abstract, demographic data, including life tables, data on the family, on education (public and private), Federal Judicial Statistics for what they're worth, composition and change of rural and urban populations, data on income, the labor force, poverty and changes between census points, information by sex and age, on racial and Spanish-speaking minorities--these provide the materials for pedagogical inventions, the devices through which students can gain insights into social patterns in our society. There are parallel resources, of course, at the state level, giving us the chance to make comparisons and creating the need for explaining major differences, where they exist, between state and national parameters.

The Times of course is limited, as is a text, by its extra-localism and universalism. (This is a shortcoming readily remedied by supplementing with local material including data from students' own families and their aggregated experiences.) It is a remarkable resource for its daily revelations of our culture, its descriptions (implicit--although Charlotte Curtis can be quite explicit) of our stratification system, its reports on racial enmities, its discussions touching the sociology of re-

creative behavior--the arts and sports. In reported cause-effect allegations there is endless material for instruction in methodology. And daily there are reports pertinent to a half dozen of the thirty-plus subfields in sociology. (A recent example was the report of the mandatory jail sentences for those males in an Indian province who refuse ro evade mandatory sterilization after the birth of a third child.)

While considering print, another potential but ill-exploited resource for sociology lies in literature--novels, poetry, plays--especially those that students are reading in classes taken concurrently with their work in our sociology classes. (It is quite astonishing, when you reflect on it, how utterly ignorant we are about the total intellectual gestalt in which the course we teach is set. And therefore how little able we are to contribute to the integrity of the student's intellectual growth.)

Another obvious resource is the computer. More and more undergraduates are learning some sociology through batch processing of data such as those in data sets from NORC at Chicago and SRC at the University of Michigan. The National Data Program for the Social Sciences developed under Jim Davis's supervision at NORC offers marvelous current data on our institutions and beliefs. He and his colleagues at Dartmouth developed the IMPRESS system for the instruction of undergraduates there. Survey Research Center makes available useful data sets especially those bearing on the economy and polity. Bruce Eckland at my university (and others), Tom Van Valey at Virginia and many of our colleagues across the country are harnessing the computer to the uses of undergraduate instruction in sociology. Likewise, interactive terminals are employed for undergraduate instruction, tapping programs set up for teaching in a range of subject

matter. At Emory University Marty Levin and William Pendleton teach statistics almost wholly through such terminals at which a student sits working through his problems and getting immediate (and corrective) response from the computer program.

Or one might exploit more recently available resources such as video recordings of CBS newscasts (now possible on contract), the teaching information processing system (TIPS)[2], which monitors each student's progress and prescribes correcting and extending experiences; instruction through simulation, such as Bill Gamson's SIMSOC; Guided Design, a scheme for team work on a series of increasingly complex problems; and variants on the Keller scheme, various personalized systems of instruction.

Such resources, I suppose, are those we commonly think of. But this is a rambling enumeration. And we could doubtless lengthen the list and spend our time profitably by developing an annotated commentary on each resource, perhaps roughly rank-ordering them by our judgment of their usefulness.

But it's high time to put my last question: How do we tackle this question in a one-hour period. We could follow a loosely structured scheme, if you like, putting questions and trading ideas. Or if you wish, as a target for discussion, I can throw out some ideas about 3 sorts of resources: people, ideas and inventions for teaching.

PEOPLE

Self

The sorts of people we might think of as potential resources for improving instruction are one's self, administrators, colleagues and students. I mention self, first, since we are remarkably myopic in considering the wealth of possibilities open to us, independent of institutional constraints. Why do we overlook the self as resource? Because of the cardinal sin that shows itself at two levels, classroom and curriculum.

In the classroom we are excessively cocky, taking as self-evident that which any competent sociologist should see as problematic: our effectiveness in altering others' (students') behavior. A young friend of

mine, arriving with his Ph.D. from one of our top departments, simply transferred material from a graduate syllabus—a potpourri of readings from Weber, Durkheim, Marx, Pareto, et al.— to his introductory course. And he did so with a serene sense of superiority as he contrasted the demands of his introductory section with those of lesser mortals. And yet, at the end of the course and despite his disenchantment with this scheme (owing to students' adverse responses and low achievement) his chutzpah persisted. For he saw his newly revised course, again, as the ultimate answer to the introductory. My point is that a salutary humility is a sine qua non for releasing the resources that lie in our selves for improving instruction in sociology. We need first to acknowledge that we don't know what we're doing. Otherwise we will never think to exploit our own resources.

Sometimes pride shows at the curricular level—a tendency to think big, to think of sweeping curricular changes or revised requirements that entail the cooperation of refractory others. Simultaneous revelation is rarer than independent invention. One is lucky if, on matters of curricular revision--core courses, appropriate sequence, relative emphases--he can find one brother under the sheepskin. A department is as hard to move as a reluctant rhinoceros. Only rarely can it be seen, collectively, as a resource for the improvement of instruction.

How, then, can the individual be his own resource? In ways, as the auctioneer says, too numerous to mention. First, he can stipulate prerequisites for admission to his course, so bringing students' aims and talents in line with those embodied in the course. Pre-selection and allocation are too badly and too seldom employed to improve our teaching.

(I'll return to this matter, later.) Second, ridding himself of that peculiar combination of arrogance and masochism that drives us to use ourselves as solo center-stage performers, the sole dispensers of the truth, he can act in the role of composer and conductor, creating a score embodying different experiences for his students, articulated in a way to lend integrity to the whole course. This may mean some programmed instructional tools, field work, laboratory exercises, problems in application and extension, visiting lecturers or consultants, a sequence of sample tests drawn from a library of items scored for level of difficulty and discriminating power, book reviews, work as research apprentices, and the like. Third, to encourage peer learning/instruction, some work could be done by teams, enabling the instructor to invest more time in assessing half as many reports. Especially in large classes, the sociologist will consider a fourth option: with out-of-class work well defined, he can cut the class in half and work more intimately with each half on alternate days or weeks. Or he might set aside a reading period of a week or two with a specific task to be completed during that period. In the meantime, he will be able to see each member of the class individually--or in pairs or triplets--to check on progress and to adapt course material to the backgrounds and concurrent experiences of his students. Or if the class is small, he might devise a score calling for all the players to devote themselves as collaborators, throughout the semester, to a single research project.

This, clearly, is an enormous undertaking; and one requiring years, much revision and systematic evaluation. But for the achievement of a good course--a <u>demonstrably</u> good course--why should we expect less

than a lifetime's investment?

Administrators are critical resources. It makes all the difference to have a department chairman who thinks poor can be made fair, fair good and good always better. This is the kind of administrator who seeks, as evidence pertinent to decisions on promotion, samples of examinations, syllabi, field work schemes and the like, together with evaluative data from students and colleagues. He is the sort who encourages the instituting of mandatory evaluations by students of instructors' teaching every third (or 4th or 5th) semester. He sees to it that his faculty have available a library of materials bearing on effective sociology instruction. It includes not only such general materials as Teaching Sociology and the old TAS issues that treated such problems, but also a file of syllabi for all courses taught in the department, copies of examinations and test items, pedagogical devices created by members of the department, transparencies, videotapes with commentaries for analyzing the effectiveness of specific teaching problems, instructions for and examples of computer uses for instruction, an annotated bibliography of the publications from state agencies pertinent to various subfields of sociology. This is the administrator who institutes in-service and pre-service training programs in sociology instruction—mandatory for all instructors with fewer than 3 years' experience. This is the administrator who knows that while some of the department's undergraduates will be producers, all will be consumers of sociology: he is, therefore, precious of the reputation of the discipline and the department by seeking to improve UG instruction. He is the administrator who is constantly looking for better ways to do the instructional job.

Such administrators are few. But there are a few. They constitute a great resource.

Colleagues. I am impressed with how little we help one another--and what an oversight this is. How might we use our colleagues as resources? Let me offer some examples.

One of my most exciting classes was one conducted in Yellow Springs, Ohio by Gerry Lenski, sitting at his breakfast table in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. My students had just finished reading The Religious Factor. It was an impressive and stimulating piece of research and my students had much to say and ask about it. But what better way of handling these questions than to talk to the author? So we rigged a telelecture arrangement, allowing students and Professor Lenski to talk with one another. The conversation was animated. I thought the interchange was good, the class successful.

Colleagues can serve as outside examiners. Oberlin College regularly asks a sociologist and an anthropologist outside the department to examine their honors students. The same might well be extended to other courses with all the advantages that accrue from separating the roles of teacher and inquisitor.

If we are competent as sociologists and teachers, our students' papers will often assess a piece of research by a sociologist. Why not, then, have the student relay his reactions and appraisal to that sociologist? In my experience, these colleagues have been pleased to respond to the thoughtful reactions of an undergraduate. In the process, students learn in a vivid way what's meant by the pursuit of ideas.

Sometimes our colleagues collaborate through commercial publications such as the supplements for the instructor that accompany many introductory texts. But too often these are produced, not by our colleagues but

by assistants who've had little teaching experience, who have apparently inadequate criteria for devising test items or exercises and who produce a fairly useless product.

I believe that, in Carolina, we are now devising a better system of using colleagues as resources. We have formed a Carolina Committee of Correspondence to trade notes on teaching. Each of us in the course of a year will invent one instructional device. These will be passed on to the dozen or so of us for review prior to the NCSA meetings where we will discuss our reactions to each of them as a basis for improving them. In each of the departments represented by each of the collaborating sociologists these inventions will build into a library of teaching devices, available to all members of the department. As they accumulate, they will be filed, and cross-filed, under the 30-plus subfields of sociology for easy retrieval by the sociologist seeking instructional ideas for his course.

Students are another people-resource too seldom used to benefit instruction. I've mentioned team assignments which set the stage for mutual aid and instruction. Students can be a great resource as preceptors. In some instances of self-paced or programmed instruction, the more advanced students serve as consultants and instructors to their fellows. Not only do they multiply the instructor's strength: they themselves are put in the best of positions for learning. Students' talents cannot be usefully exploited in the traditional lecture-discussion mode of instruction. For here, in a one-to-many relationship, the whole responsibility falls directly on the sociologist-teacher whose typical performance is to talk his students into a coma. But where the learning is active, when the problems are not

play problems, but real ones, when there are live data either directly from the field or secondary data from census and registration sources--then the chances of peer instruction emerge. It is then that we discover what remarkable resources our students can be. Such an instance occurred when, at Berkeley, Arlie Hoschschild and David Nasatir merged their courses--in sociology of education and methods of research, respectively--to do a field study of parents' evaluation of the school system in the city.

Students can be mutually helpful in the constructive evaluation of one another's work--not for grading, but to develop criteria of excellence and so to improve future performance.

I'd suggest, finally, that students become an important resource especially when theirs and the professor's aims are compatible. This speaks again to the needfor an effective screening of students admitted to your course.

People: one's self, administrators, colleagues and students--these can be, but too seldom are, important resources for improving instruction in sociology. So, too, are ideas.

IDEAS: from the wisdom literature of sociology

Carl Taylor, in his presidential address to the ASA, plumped for fruitful collaboration between the man of knowledge and the man of action, between sociologist and practitioner. He wrote:(1947:2)

> There is no reason to believe that the average sociologist, had he spent his life in any one of the specific areas of behavior about which he generalizes (the institution of education, for example) could not and would not make practical application of his sociological generalizations to that area of behavior and action.

Well, the fact is that we have every reason to believe that the sociologist cannot and does not make practical application . . . to a specific area of behavior in which he spends most of his life--i.e., teaching.[3]

I've suggested elsewhere that we should do what we don't--i.e., capitalize on our intellectual heritage. (See Wilson: 1976) So I will do no more here than to summarize the instances offered there and add one or two more--one in particular.

The point is this: in sociology's legacy there ar[illegible]ificant resources for improving our instruction. For example, the link between physical distance and social distance comes to us from various sources: Park's essay on the city as a spatial pattern and a moral order, Bogardus' social distance scale, Whyte's Street Corner Society, some of Homans' work. All of these, and more, speak to the inanity of our classroom architecture and silently enjoin us as teachers to do something about it.

Simmel has spoken to us about the qualities peculiar to the diad--its dangers and vulnerability in contrast to the triad. It is not hard to see its profitable application in the use of outside examiners, allowing instructor and student to triangulate on the external enemy. Or in the devising of a scheme of self-paced instruction, or of laboratory exercises, or of a common research problem which, once again, allow a collaborative relationship between instructor and student in the attack on the problem that lies outside, and strengthens their relationship.

A third example. You may think of John Dewey as a philosopher and educator. But his Human Nature and Conduct is a contribution to social psychology and belongs to us. In it, and indeed, from the time of the Scotch school of moral philosophers through work on cognitive dissonance we learn that problems emerge when the smooth, on-going tenor of life is interrupted, when familiar sequences fail to materialize, when expectations are not met. Some of the ethnomethodologists have used this challenge to the familiar as

a way of studying the grammars of customary performances. If then sociology is a process of inquiry, if we think commonsense inadequate and familiar conduct worth questioning, our mood as teachers should be interrogatory I think this is not often the case. We fail to fix problematic behaviors--or to make the customary problematic. We deal in the declaratory. We have few laboratory exercises in which a student retraces the trail blazed by others to win through to a solution. And we have virtually no pattern of building courses around a problem, or a sequence of problems. In short, we fail to exploit the resource that lies, implicit, in our legacy.

So it is, too, with our knowledge about recruitment for organizational membership. Were we to learn from our legacy we would be more keenly aware that the success of a course of instruction is largely determined before the first class meeting. It is determined by the talent brought by the student to the course. It is determined by the motivation brought by the student to the course. It is determined by the student's purposes, and the extent to which they match those of the instructor's. We are the specialists in social organization. And we see these ideas applied when we admit graduate students for work toward the doctorate in sociology. We see these ideas applied in selecting candidates for medicine and law. We see these ideas at work in their distilled, ideal typical form in the selection of a football squad. Any football coach knows that his students' success, individually and collectively, largely depends on highly selective recruiting done the previous winter.

Don't we know this? If so, why don't we use this idea from organizational analysis as a major resource in devising our courses?

IDEAS

Standards

Here is another set of ideas that belong to us. They are subsumed under the heading, standards guiding competent inquiry. They are, that is to say, standards for good research. We all know them; for as professionals one of our two principal roles is that of sociologist-as-research-person. The other is that of sociologist-as-teacher. Are the standards for good research so different from those for teaching that the former are not applicable to the latter? If this is not the case, then why do we persist in our schizophrenic state, with double standards? Or, standards on the one hand and standardlessness on the other?

There are reasons for the lack of standards governing the instructional role. They include a tradition of professorial omniscience that made standards needless, and their suggestion gratuitously insulting. They include the institutionalized lack of training for teaching among sociologists. There is also the system of rewards--on the basis of demonstrated achievement for published research; on the basis of an ascribed trait, the inevitable passage of time for teaching. We lack standards for teaching because one cannot contrive much less apply standards for operations that are hidden and whose outcomes are unknown. We lack standards because there is scarcely time to work them out when most students are taught sociology by the least experienced and most transient among the instructional staff. We lack standards, in part, because some are fearful lest a sterile orthodoxy be imposed.

If we took our legacy seriously, applying to our teaching those

ideas we call standards for competent research, we would have a very different mode of instruction in sociology. First, the stress would be on inquiry--not so much on what we know as on problems worth tackling. Second, research standards point to collaboration, not individual, competitive grade-grubbing. Third, we would think it absurd to profess without training. Fourth, as in all inquiries entailing independent and dependent variables, we would require assessment of outcomes: we would ask, what aspects of my instructional pattern make for what outcomes, latent as well as manifest? Fifth, to apply research standards to teaching would be to make demonstrated competence in sociology instruction a condition for retention or promotion. Sixth, such standards would require us to put pertinent variables--outcome variables--in operational terms, so making their degree of achievement measurable. We would not allow ourselves to put our objectives in such vacuous pieties as: to achieve a sociological perspective, to appreciate the complexity of society, or to appreciate the rigor of scientific method. And it would require us to open the doors to the process of teaching sociology, and windows; for it would require open-ness, not secrecy. A condition of an adequate proposition bearing on teaching would be its refutability--as is the case with an hypothesis.

In sum, then, ideas are resources as well as people. Our legacy in sociology includes such resources. A whole set of such ideas, the standards we apply to research would, were they applied, vastly improve our instruction. So too, to make other examples, would ideas about conditions for stimulating inquiry; the connection between spatial distance and the character of human relationships; the implications of

numbers, two's and three's; and the significance of recruitment in determining organizational outcomes.

We disregard these great resources to our great detriment.

INVENTIONS FOR TEACHING

Years ago Elbridge Sibley, in a study of the training of sociologists in the United States, lamented our lack of laboratory procedures and genuine apprentice training opportunities. In teaching undergraduates we are not so preoccupied with mastery of technical methods, as was Sibley. Since we are using sociology to contribute to a liberal arts education, we will be more concerned with extension and application and policy issues than would be the case with students training for sociology. Yet Sibley's strictures are to the point in undergraduate instruction. Our penchant is to talk students to death, to assume that telling is teaching, that hearing is learning. We throw answers at students' heads before they're aware that there are questions to be answered. We need, badly, inventions for teaching, an imaginative arrangement of opportunities for inquiry.

I said at the beginning that three fundamentals for the adequate teaching of sociology are command of subject matter, concern for students' intellectual growth and the imagination to invent those learning devices that bring sociology and the student together.

I'm really speaking about a resource that is mostly not available, one that we have to create. It's a very hard job. I know, because I tried to invent just such experiences in the Instructor's Supplement that accompanies my text. But however difficult, this is the place to begin. Such resources will emerge only as the work of topflight sociologists who

are so devoted to their discipline that they will work inordinately hard to help their students see how sociology illuminates their worlds. The product will be something that enables students to pursue a problem. The product will engage students in an inquiry that is artfully contrived to require certain specific learnings along the way. Let me specify certain learnings that such inventions would entail.

1. Such a learning device would involve the operations that define the instructor's objectives. If, for example, the teaching invention requires field work, students may be constrained to draw a probability sample. This operation is the definition of the instructor's behaviorally stated aim: at the end of this course students will be able to draw an area probability sample of Middletown and to specify the range within which they can be confident that the part represents the whole.

2. Since learning goals are behaviorally stated and the teaching invention consists in the operations that define those goals, the device can (and must) include means of evaluating the effect of teacher intervention. This means before-and-after testing.

3. Since every such teaching invention fixes on a problem, students will seek (and test) whatever available answers there may be in the wisdom literature. Which is to say: these teaching inventions will invoke relevant theory. Every inquiry will be set against the backdrop of pertinent theory.

4. A parallel condition is set for skills, or methods of inquiry. Each teaching invention will impel students to master some basic tactic or strategy useful in the analysis of social phenomena.

5. Since a proposition in sociology is more powerful and more useful the more classes of behavior it embraces, each teaching invention will ask students to extend the findings, however tentatively, to other populations and to other sorts of behavior. The more interesting extensions will be those which bracket behaviors which seem to the unperceptive to have nothing to do with one another--e.g., child-rearing and brain-washing. Some years ago Whiting, Kluckhohn and Anthony found a marked relationship between mother-male child dependency and intimacy in the first years of life and violent initiation rites. (Data were from anthropological studies of some fifty to sixty tribes.) This pattern they then extended, speculatively, to violent gang behavior among contemporary urban adolescents.

6. Since our students are not, most of them, to be sociologists, we must demonstrate how sociology is pertinent to their daily lives. (And self interest reminds us that these are to be the public and the Proxmires of the future.) Hence each teaching invention should stimulate questions and require tentative answers about applications. What does sociology have to say about economic incentives--about a guaranteed annual income or a negative income tax? What does sociology have to say about the consequences of integrated and segregated housing? What, in the example cited above, would our findings suggest as a way of reducing gratuitous violence among urban adolescents?

7. Each teaching invention should include a questionnaire bearing on students' experiences. I call it a questionnaire, rather than a test, to suggest that the items should be developed with the same care that we would put into a research instrument. We would eliminate double barrelled

questions, submit the instrument to pilot runs as a preliminary to revision. We would test for level of difficulty and discriminating power. In devising our tests we would be guided by the standards we apply to our research.

The set of questions would make a coherent whole. Responses to them would provide an adequate index of students' mastery; and one index of the adequacy of the instructor's work.

* * * *

In sum, then, there are indeed useful resources for improving sociology instruction. Beyond the obvious roster--various publications, audiovisual aids, computer-assisted instruction and the like, there are other resources we less often think of and too seldom exploit. Among these are people (ourselves, administrators, colleagues and students) ideas drawn from sociology's rich legacy; and a cumulative library of teaching inventions, a sort of resource that is mostly yet to be achieved. Such inventions should be directed toward operationally stated objectives, should include means for evaluating their achievement, should articulate with theory and methods, should extend and apply sociological insights and findings and should include carefully selected test items.

These resources, now available or in the making, are by no means exhaustive. But they do perhaps constitute a beginning for a useful inventory.

FOOTNOTE

[1]The best concrete answer to the question posed for this session is given in the statement by Charles A. Goldsmid, "Resources," in Teaching Sociology, 3:3 (April, 1976), page 339 et seq.

[2]Information on the TIPS system and the Guided Design scheme is available from the IMPACT program, Exxon Education Foundation, 11 West 49th St. [illegible], N.Y. 10020. SIMSOC is published by The Free Press. On the Keller system, see Keller, Fred S., "Good-Bye, Teacher. . ." Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis I:79-89 (Spring, 1968) and for a newsletter about Keller-plan courses, write to J. G. Sherman, Psychology Department, Georgetown University, Washington, D. C.

[3]We can understand why this is so. There is the secrecy and, therefore, the pluralistic ignorance that surrounds instruction in sociology. There is therefore, the standardlessness of the operation, buttressed by the virtuous invoking of academic freedom. There is, also, the self-protecting disposition not to measure outcomes, or to put objectives in operational form (as would be the case in research). There is the schizziness of a profession whose practitioners are torn between creation and transmission; and in which the lesser rated and lesser rewarded activity (transmission) supports the former (creation--i.e., scientific productivity). In one way or another, all of these militate against the thoughtful "practical application of . . . . sociological generalizations to that area of behavior and action." (Taylor:2).

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