# Adjustment Experiences of Foreign Students in Liceo de Cagayan University: A Basis for Program Recommendation to the Guidance Center

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Abstract - The study was conducted to determine the rate of foreign student's adjustments in Liceo de Cagayan University (LDCU). Specifically, the study delved into (1) the profile of the respondents in terms of their age, gender, nationality, course, no. of years in LDCU; (2) the extent of their cultural, socialization, interaction, communication, and conflict adjustments; and (3) the significant difference between the profile of the respondents and their adjustments experiences. Using the descriptive research design, ten foreign respondents were chosen from the original twelve. The findings of the study revealed the following: Most (50%) of the respondents were between 18-20 years old and the majority (60%) were males. Majority of the respondents (60%) were Koreans and half of them (50%) took Bachelor of Arts courses, while the rest were distributed into the following courses: BSEd, BS Psych, BSPT, BSBA, and BST-HRM. The respondents describe their cultural adjustment as fair (2.30). While their socialization (2.68), interaction (2.74), and communication (2.60) adjustments are described as good, respectively. However, the conflict adjustment (3.18) indicates that the respondents often encounter difficulty in adjusting when confronted with complicated situations in dealing with their classmates. It was also found that the personal demographic profiles of respondents like age and gender did not affect their adjustment experiences. This implies that the adjustment process is quite the same for both genders and across all ages. Since the data revealed that foreign students had some degree of difficulties with their cultural adjustments, there are some activities that must be offered by the University to make the foreign students adjust easily to their new environment. They would be able to appreciate the Filipino culture if they will undergo cultural immersion programs.

*Keywords* - Adjustment experiences, foreign students, cultural adjustments

### INTRODUCTION

Education plays a vital role towards progress, growth of individuals and prosperity. This is protected and safe guarded under our constitution that everyone needs education. Growth in education is not physical but growth in insight and understanding of relationship between various experiences and learning.

It has been observed that most foreign students nowadays decide to enroll in Philippines Schools for various reasons. Liceo de Cagayan University accommodates Foreign Students from U.S and other countries especially from Korea for the past nine years. At the time of the study, there were about 12 foreign students who enrolled in the university.

Being foreigners in a new place requires socialization in order for them to understand the locals and for the locals to understand them. In the case of foreign students they really need to socialize for the purpose of fitting in. This research investigated the process of Liceo de Cagayan University program for the foreign student in cooperation with the Guidance Center. Although this endeavor can be a meaningful one, which includes positive personal and education outcomes, the foreign student may also experience difficulties which must be examined. These experiences that they have might have contributed to their cultural formation.

As International Studies students, the researchers conducted this study to determine the adjustment experiences of the foreign students in terms of cultural formation, socialization, interaction, communication, and conflict management.

### FRAMEWORK

The study was anchored on the "Theory of Psychological and Socio-Cultural Adjustment during Cross- Cultural Transition by Ward and Kennedy (1999). This theory explains the fit between students from different countries and their experiences in adjustment in other school. Adjustment of foreign students could be in terms of cultural aspect, the socialization process, Interaction, communication, and responding to conflict. Based on the aspects of foreign students and adjustments on their exposure to another cultural school environment, the dependent variables were formulated as reported in Figure 1.

Accordingly, the authors (Ward & Kennedy, 1999; Searle & Ward, 1990) maintain the premise that psychological adjustment can be best investigated within stress and coping abilities domains, while sociocultural adaptation is conceptualized within social skills and culture competence approach. They argued that psychological adjustment is defined in terms of emotional and affective outcomes, while sociocultural refers to behavioral competence.

The distinction between psychological and socio-cultural adjustment has been conceived based on results from empirical research done by the authors mentioned above, which has demonstrated that these categories are strongly associated and the strength of their correlation is influenced by several factors. Psychological adjustment in terms of psychological and emotional well-being is altered by life changes, coping abilities, personality characteristics and social support. Positive psychological outcomes are related to positive experienced life changes, including the ability to cope adequately with the demands in the new culture and relationship satisfaction. As a consequence, low incidence of life changes and adequate social support facilitate psychologically adaptive outcomes (Searle & Ward, 1990). By contrast, socio-cultural adjustment, defined in terms of social and behavioral competence is affected by culture-specific factors, such as length of residence in the host culture, interactions with host nationals, cultural distance and language fluency. Successful socio-cultural outcomes are determined by greater amount of contact with own community, greater cultural similarity and improved language knowledge of the receiving society. Socio-cultural difficulties in migrant populations have been linked to a cultural incongruity and less interaction and identification with host nationals (Ward & Searle, 1991; Bhugra & Arya, 2005).

According to Yusoff and Chelliah (2010), *cultural adjustment* involves the adaptability to fit-in in school of different cultural environment. In this study, it refers to the ability of the foreign students to participate in school activities, cultural presentation, sports activities and team building activities of the University.

Moreover, adjustments in terms of socialization refer to the absence of discrimination, recognition of the feeling of sense of belongingness and the ability to relate and associate well with their teachers and classmates.

On the other hand, interaction is a form of adjustment of foreign students on being able to deal with their teachers, classmates and schoolmates. Joshiahi (2008) proposed that *interaction* is closely examined with effective communication technique. Consequently, conflict with their older students is prevented through proper and appropriate adjustment in interaction and communication.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study determined the (1) profile of the foreign students in terms of age, gender, nationality/citizenship, course, and number of years in Liceo de Cagayan University; (2) the extent of the foreign students adjustments in Liceo de Cagayan University in terms of cultural adjustment, socialization adjustment, interaction adjustment, communication adjustment, and conflict adjustment; and (3) the significant difference in the respondents' adjustments experiences when they are grouped according to gender and age?

### **METHODS**

The study was conducted using the descriptive research design to portray accurate characteristics of the subjects of the study. The universal sampling was used in the study since all the foreign students who were officially enrolled at the time of the study were taken in as respondents. Originally, there were 12 who were enrolled; however, two went back to their own country. As a result, only 10 foreign students were taken in as respondents.

In gathering the data, the researchers used a researcher-made

questionnaire based on the concepts used in the study and also conducted personal interview among the respondents. Part I solicited information on the profile of the respondents and Part II determined the adjustment experiences of foreign students in terms of cultural, social, interaction, communication, and conflict adjustments.

The researchers set a time frame of one month to interview and administer the questionnaires among foreign students as respondents. Each question was carefully worded in order to get the desired response of the foreign students. The researcher asked the names of the foreign students who enrolled in the university from the university registrar. After that, they sought the help of the guidance office of the university so that they would be able to gather the foreign students who served as respondents of the study. The researchers explained personally to the respondents the questions to avoid any confusion among the respondents since most of them find difficulty in expressing themselves in English.

The researchers used the frequency counts and percentages to determine the profile of the respondents; weighted mean was used to determine the extent of their adjustment experience in their stay in LDCU; and ANOVA was used to determine the significant difference in the respondents' adjustment experiences when they are grouped according to gender and age.

# **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

# Objective 1. Determine the prof le of the foreign students in terms of age, gender, nationality, course and number of years in Liceo de Cagayan University

# Table 1. Profile Distribution of the Respondentsin terms of Age

AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
18-20	5	50
21-25	2	20
26-31	3	30
TOTAL	10	100

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents in terms of age. As shown on the table, the majority of the respondents (50%) were between 18-20 years old, followed by those within 26-31 years old (30%) and those with ages 21-25 years (20%) were the lowest in number. The data further showed a relatively small number of foreign students whose age bracket is from 26-31 years old.

This data reveals that people from ages 18-20 years old put more value on education because they are still starting to establish their foundation as an individual while people whose age bracket is from 26-31 valued the education less because they already have established their own foundation.

GENDER	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Male	6	60
Female	4	40
TOTAL	10	100

Table 2. Profile Distribution of the Respondentsin terms of Gender

Table 2 shows the distribution of the respondents in terms of gender. It reveals that the majority of the respondents (60%) were males, and only four (40%) were females. Hence, males dominated the samples.

These findings could have been attributed to the fact that more males are allowed to go out of their country to have education compared to females.

Other studies that examined international students showed that female students had higher emotional, physiological, and behavioral reactions to stressors (Misra et al., 2003) and also were more likely to feel homesick and lonely than male students (Rajapaksa and Dundes, 2002).

NATIONALITY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Ghanaian	1	10
American	1	10
Belgian	1	10
Korean	6	60
Ecuadorian	1	10
TOTAL	10	100

### Table 3. Respondents' Nationality

Table 3 shows the distribution of respondents in terms of nationality. From the table, it can be seen that when it comes to nationality, the majority (6 or 60%) were Koreans. Other nationalities listed were: Ghanaian, American, Belgian and Ecuadorian—with having one respondent each, respectively.

According to some respondents, they prefer to study here in the Philippines because they think that education in the Philippines is cheaper compared to the education in their country. In fact, they said that a one semester in Korean education is equivalent to three semesters here in the Philippines.

COURSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
BSEd	1	10
BSPsych	1	10
Bachelor of Arts	5	50
BSPT	1	10
BSBA	1	10
BST-HRM	1	10
TOTAL	10	100

Table 4. Respondents' Course

Table 4 presents the distribution of respondents by course. As tabulated, half (50%) of the respondents were taking up Bachelor of Arts with majors in English, and International Studies The remaining five respondents took up Bachelor of Science in Education, Bachelor

of Science in Psychology, Bachelor of Science in Physical Therapy, Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and Bachelor of Science in Tourism Major in Hotel and Restaurant Management, respectively.

NO. OF YEARS IN LDCU	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1 yr	6	60
2 yrs	0	0
3 yrs	3	30
4 yrs	1	10
TOTAL	10	100

Table 5. Respondents' No. of Years in LDCU

Table 5 presents the distribution of respondents in terms of their number of years in LDCU. As revealed on the table, 60% of the respondent is still in their first year in Liceo de Cagayan University. The data also shows that 30% of the respondents have studied for three years in Liceo de Cagayan University while only one has been in the university for four years.

The data simply show that most of the respondents are still adjusting to their environment since most of them have been in the institution for only a year. Moreover, the data also suggests that during the SY2010-2011, an additional number of foreign students opted to study in Liceo de Cagayan University.

Based on the study of Wilton and Constantine (2003) they found that greater length of stay in the host country was associated with lower levels of psychological distress among international college students. In a more recent study on the relationship between adult attachment styles and psychological and sociocultural adjustment of international students by Polek et al. (2008), it is proven that length of residence appeared to be positively related to identification and contact with the host culture. Objective 2. Determine the extent of the foreign student's adjustments in terms of cultural adjustment, socialization adjustment, and interaction adjustment.

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description	Interpretation
1. During my stay in LDCU I participate in school activities	2.30	seldom	fair
2. During my stay in LDCU I am entertained by the cultural presentations of the university	2.40	seldom	Fair
3. During my stay in LDCU I am encouraged to participate in the sport activities of the university	1.80	Seldom	Fair
4. During my stay in LDCU I learn in the team building activities facilitated by our department/college.	2.20	Seldom	Fair
5. During my stay in LDCU I can easily adapt to the culture of the university	2.80	Often	Good
OVERALL	2.30	Seldom	Fair

Table 6. Extent Foreign Students' Cultural Adjustment

Table 6 shows the extent of the foreign students' cultural adjustment. In general, the results show that the respondents demonstrated a fair adjustment experience as indicated by the overall mean of 2.30.

Among the indicators, the highest mean (2.80) falls on Item No. 5 (During my stay in LDCU I can easily adapt to the culture of the university) which suggests that the respondents have a good cultural adjustment process because they can often adapt to the culture of the university. On the other hand, the lowest mean (1.8) falls on Item No. 3 (During my stay in LDCU I am encouraged to participate in the sports activities of the university) suggesting that the respondents seldom participate in sports activities in the university which shows a fair cultural adjustment.

The data with the highest mean revealed that the respondents are very satisfied about the values, kindness, and hospitability of the Filipino students and professors that helped them easily adapt to the culture of the university. This suggests that Filipinos welcome other races and respect cultural boundaries; hence, making the respondents cultural adjustment easy for them.

On the other hand, the data in the lowest mean could have been brought by the fact that during the SY 2010-2011, students do not have much encouragement to participate in sports activities since the intramural games were held later in February and the data gathering was conducted during the First Semester of the said school year.

According to Dr. Roderigo Sicat (2011) on his study on "Foreign Students Cultural Adjustment and Coping Strategies" at Tarlac State University, just like any visitors to a foreign country, foreign students must deal with cultural differences and make adjustments. Sicat (2011) cited that adjustment is an on-going process demanded by one situation and then another and it does not happen overnight. Hence, the longer a foreign student stays in his host university, the more likely that he would feel at home to the new culture.

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description	Interpretation
1. I experience discrimination from my classmates.	3.30	Always	Unsatisfactory
2. I feel that I don't belong to the group.	2.90	Often	Fair
3. I participate in the activities of the campus organizations.	2.30	Seldom	Fair
4. I would rather socialize with my fellow nationals here in the school.	2.40	Seldom	Fair
5. I can relate well with my classmates and teachers.	2.50	Often	Good
OVERALL	2.68	Often	Good

Table 7. Extent of Foreign Students' Socialization Adjustment

Table 7 shows the extent of the foreign students' socialization adjustment. The overall mean (2.68) shows that the respondents often socialize which indicates a good socialization adjustment. Among the indicators, Item No. 1 (I experience discrimination from my classmates) has the highest mean of 3.30 indicating that the respondents always experience discrimination which is consistently the main issue when it comes to the respondents socialization adjustment, while the

lowest mean (2.30) falls in Item No. 3 (I participate in the activities of the campus organizations.) showing that the respondents seldom participate in the activities of campus organization.

The data suggests that when it comes to socialization adjustment, the foreign students still have this problem that they always felt that they are being discriminated by their classmates which suggest the common problem of foreign students. But overall, they are well adjusted in relating with their Filipino classmates and professors.

INDICATORS	WEIGHTED MEAN	VERBAL DESCRIPTION	INTERPRETATION
1. I can freely interact with my classmates and instructors in the classroom.	2.40	Seldom	Fair
2. I participate in group activities in the classroom	2.80	Often	Good
3. I am afraid to express my thoughts and feelings.	2.90	Often	Fair
4. I can openly express my personal beliefs to my teachers and classmates.	3.00	Often	Good
5. I feel welcome in the school.	2.60	Often	Good
OVERALL	2.74	Often	Good

# Table 8. Extent of the Foreign Students' Interaction Adjustment

Table 8 shows the extent of the foreign students' interaction adjustment. In general, the overall mean (2.74) shows that the respondents often interact with their instructors and classmates.

Among the indicators, Item No. 4 (I can openly express my personal beliefs to my teachers and classmates) has the highest mean (3.00) which suggest that the respondents can freely interact with their classmates and professor if it has to do with their beliefs, while the lowest mean (2.40) falls in Item No. 1 (I can freely interact with my classmates and instructors in the classroom) which suggest that the respondents seldom interact with their classmates and professors which could have been attributed to language barrier.

The data revealed that foreign students generally feel well-adjusted in terms of the interaction process. Interaction is a process in which people act toward or respond to each other. Or it can also mean acts, actions, or practices of two or more people who are mutually oriented towards each other--that is, any behavior that tries to affect or take account of each other's subjective experiences or intentions.

Hence, this finding is supported by the study of Dr. Roderigo Sicat (2011) on his study on the cultural adjustments and coping strategies of foreign students at Tarlac State University. According to Sicat (2011), the medium of instruction, pedagogical techniques, instructional focus and classroom interaction are school related factors which greatly affected the students' academic and social performance. He further added: "Korean and Chinese students come to the Philippines to learn English; hence, it takes time before they could interact with their Filipino teachers, friends and acquaintances. To Koreans who were basically zero in both verbal and nonverbal English language, the interaction was almost impossible. Even the Nepalese, who were already English speaking, found it hard to understand the accent and pronunciation of their teachers" (Sicat, 2011).

INDICATORS	WEIGHTED MEAN	VERBAL DESCRIPTION	INTERPRETATION
1. I can easily follow instructions from my instructors and classmates.	2.70	Often	Good
2. I can easily express myself to my professors and classmates.	2.70	Often	Good
3. I find it difficult to express myself in English.	3.30	Always	Unsatisfactory
4. I cannot understand the language of some of my classmates.	2.40	Seldom	Good
5. I can connect myself with the language that my classmate is using.	1.90	Seldom	Fair
OVERALL	2.60	Often	Good

Table 9. Foreign Students' Extent of Communication Adjustment

Table 9 shows the extent of the foreign students' communication adjustment. In general, the overall mean (2.60) reveals that the respondents often communicate with their classmates and professors

which are still good for their communication adjustment.

Among the indicators that are found in Table 9, Item No. 3. (I find it difficult to express myself in English) which suggest that the respondents always find difficult to express themselves using English language which invariably a hindrance to their communication and suggest an unsatisfactory experiences in their communication adjustment, while the lowest mean (1.90) falls to the Item No. 5 (I can connect myself with the language that my classmate is using) which suggest that the respondents seldom tried their best to learn the local language which shows that they can fairly adjust as far as communication adjustment is concern. English proficiency and adjustment appear to be positively related.

Several researchers have investigated how students' language proficiency in English affects their adjustment (Poyrazli et al. 2002; Swami et al. 2009). Poyrazli et al. (2002) measured the general adjustment in their study involved the ability to negotiate issues related to education, cultural adjustment, and the establishment of social relationships with other local students. Success in these areas depends on the students' ability to communicate in English.

Similarly, the qualitative study conducted by de Guzman et al (2006) which analyzed the English language learning difficulties of 13 purposively chosen Korean students in a Philippine university relative to their sociolinguistic competence, motivation in using the English language, and cultural factors revealed that heir difficulties exist both in daily conversation and in the academic setting. The researchers attributed these difficulties to both the subjects' and the Filipinos' different entry points in the learning and use of English. Despite cultural barriers in communication, however, the Koreans studying in the Philippines are instrumentally motivated to learn the English language (de Guzman et al, 2006).

INDICATORS	WEIGHTED MEAN	VERBAL DESCRIPTION	INTERPRETATION
1. My classmates take advantage of me when it comes to financial collections.	3.40	Always	Unsatisfactory
2. My instructors and classmates segregate me because I am foreign.	3.20	Often	Fair
3. My instructors and classmates criticize my judgment and discernment on some issues	3.10	Often	Fair
4. I can sense my classmates that they are stabbing me at the back	2.70	Often	Fair
5. I am discriminated by my classmates because of my nationality.	3.50	Always	Unsatisfactory
OVERALL	3.18	Often	Fair

Table 10 shows the extent of the foreign students' conflict adjustment. In general, The overall mean of 3.18 indicates that in terms of conflict adjustment, the respondents often encounter a situation which involves conflict which is likely commendable for their conflict adjustment.

Among the indicators that can be found in Table 10, Item No. 5 (I am discriminated by my classmates because of my nationality) has the highest mean (3.50) which suggest that the respondents always have this feeling that they were being discriminated by their classmates because of their nationality which is highly the main issues of foreign students. Moreover, this was closely followed by Item No.1 (My classmates take advantage of me when it comes to financial collections.) This could have been attributed to the mindset of most Filipinos who think that foreigners have lots of money and they can afford anything that is why when it comes to financial collections needed for their school project, their Filipino classmates would be asking a bigger share from them.

On the other hand, the lowest mean (2.70) falls in Item No. 4 (I can sense that my classmates are stabbing me at the back). This feeling could have been also brought by language barrier since they cannot

understand what their classmates are saying and when they laugh, the international students would think that their Filipino classmates are making fun of them. The culture of a person's nationality orients them on how they deal on other nationality. These cultural differences may somehow cause conflict. People of different cultural backgrounds will most likely have a different frame of reference; what one person perceives to be "normal" is merely a consequence of the culture that that person was raised in.

ADJUSTMENT PROCESS	WEIGHTED MEAN	VERBAL DESCRIPTION	INTERPRETATION
Cultural adjustment	2.30	Seldom	Fair
Socialization adjustment	2.68	Often	Good
Interaction adjustment	2.74	Often	Good
Communication adjustment	2.60	Often	Good
Conflict adjustment	3.18	Often	Fair
OVERALL	2.70	Often	Good

Table 11. Extent of the Foreign Students' Overall Adjustment

Table 11 shows the extent of the overall adjustment of foreign students. In totality, the foreign students enrolled in Liceo de Cagayan University felt often adjusted to their stay in Liceo de Cagayan University as indicated by its overall mean of 2.70. This means that their adjustment experiences were generally positive and that they did not encounter substantial adjustment difficulties during the course of their stay in the University. Ethnic difference plays a role in the adjustments of students. For international students, supportive social relationship is important to their psychological and academic adaptation while for domestic student; sense of control is the only important determinant of their psychological and academic adaptation.

Objective 3. Determine the significant difference in the respondents' adjustment experiences when they are grouped according to gender and age

Gender	n	F-value	P-value	Decision	Description
Female	4	0.10	0.764	Do not Reject (greater)	Not significant
Male	6				
Age	n	F-value	P-value	Decision	Description
18-20	4	0.31	0.741	Do not Reject (greater)	Not significant
21-25	3				
26-31	3				

Table 12. Test of Difference of the Respondent's Adjustment Experiences in terms of Gender and Age

Table 12 presents the statistical difference of the adjustment experiences of the respondents when grouped according to gender and age. The results reveal that there is no significant difference in the adjustment of foreign students when they are grouped according to gender and age. This implies that the above mentioned demographic factors did not have any significant influence or impact on the adjustment experiences of the foreign students.

Other adjustments are rejected because the result in p-value is less than alpha ( $\alpha$ =0.05). There is also no significant difference in the respondents' adjustment experiences when grouped according to gender and age.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Foreign study is a multifaceted phenomenon - its impact is felt on academic institutions in both the 'host' and 'sending' countries, on the economies of nations, and of course on the individuals involved. With more than one million students studying abroad, foreign study has assumed considerable importance in higher education planning. It seems possible that the experiences of students from other cultures and/or with different destinations will differ.

In this paper, the adjustment experiences of foreign students were examined in terms of certain factors that were found to relate to the adjustment process. International students are at risk to encounter many problems as they adjust to campus life and life in the Philippines in general. This paper reveals that the process of adjustment is complex and affected by a host of factors—such as cultural assimilation, socialization activities, interaction patterns, language fluency or effective communication and conflict avoidance.

Meeting new people, creating a support network, adjusting to life away from friends and family at home – these are issues for all new college students. For international students, the adjustment to a new social life is even more difficult given potential language barriers, inexperience with cultural references, idioms, sarcasm and slang, and limited knowledge of culturally specific cues (e.g., verbal and non-verbal messages about personal space, the end of a conversation, etc.). The results of this study revealed that foreign students had fairly positive adjustment experiences. Although foreign students face the challenge of learning in a new culture as well as leaving the classroom to find a foreign environment surrounding them at the start and end of each day; they find the entire experience very rewarding. Beyond navigating lectures, exams, and interactions and socializations with students, faculty, teaching assistants and university staff, foreign students successfully face the challenge of developing a sense of belonging in the social network that exists in the campus. Adjusting to a new culture can be a challenging and stressful experience. Culture shock still remains to be one of the most common challenges that international students need to face in their sojourn in a foreign country. Therefore, it is important also that they should be given social support which is a factor that appears to improve adjustment and may provide international students with opportunities to develop an understanding of the new culture.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are offered:

1.It is recommended that the University organize and require all new international students to attend an International Students Orientation before the start of their stay in the University. During the orientation session, students should be informed about school regulations, academic resources available to them oncampus, and the various student activities they may take part in. To improve cultural adjustment, it is also suggested that international cultural programs be organized and facilitated by the University. The program should include a regular flow of culture-related film showings, seminars, cultural shows and food festival.

- **2**.It is recommended that an International Friendship Partners Program be devised by the University.
- **3**. The following recommendation is given: The University's "Speak in English" policy must be sustained and if possible strengthened. As this greatly helps foreign students communicate and interact well with their fellow students and as well as with their professors.
- 4.It may also be of great help if the University or the Languages department offers intensive academic and general Filipino and English Language programs for international students. The programs should prepare international students to become effective, confident speakers of English in academic institutions.
- 5. It is recommended that students, faculty and staff members are given the opportunity to learn about and appreciate the native cultures of international students in which they are interacting with.

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