

“El corazón del hombre se conquista a través de la cocina”

The Evolution of Machismo in Puerto Rico

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Abstract

In the patriarchal scheme of Puerto Rico, Machismo has contributed to the negative outlook of women where they are seen as weak individuals with limited capabilities when compared to men. This research studies the perspective of young adults towards the changing male and female roles in Puerto Rico. Modern college age Puerto Ricans in the heart of their development as adults share their outlook on this social issue. Twenty-three males and thirty-three females participated in a four part online survey that explored their attitudes towards certain gender stereotypes and their concept on the designation of gender roles. The results indicate that college age Puerto Ricans tend to incline and advocate for gender equality within the workplace, the household, finances, and sexuality. Concluding that modern-college age Puerto Ricans have egalitarian attitudes towards gender equality and do not reinforce or perpetuate the attitudes of machismo.

Keywords: machismo, gender roles, patriarchy, Puerto Rico

Introduction

“That’s for girls. Boys don’t play with those things,” tells the father to his son at the tender age of four who is playing with his sister’s dolls and knows nothing about “gender roles.”

“You are ‘macho’, a boy, a man. You are masculine and men do not cry,” tells the mother to her son as he has a temper tantrum characteristic of his short age.

(Torruella, 2012)

The roles of women and men have changed over the years; in all societies and times there exist different patterns of conduct that are assigned to men and women (Estrada-Carmona, Pérez-Aranda, 2009). Gender gaps between male and female educational levels, workplace involvement, unequal pay, and the absence of female figures in politics and leadership positions limit women’s capacities and opportunities (Del Toro, 2009). The Random House Dictionary defines machismo as “a strong or exaggerated sense of manliness; an assumptive attitude that virility, courage, strength, and entitlement to dominate are attributes of masculinity.” In the Puerto Rican society, the dominant patriarchal views encourage this male-attitude. It is believed that men feel superior to women, and society only relays simple responsibilities to women. This research intends to answer, “how has machismo evolved in the Puerto Rican society?” by studying the perspectives of young adults towards the current, and changing, male and female roles in Puerto Rico.

Between the 1950’s and the early 1980’s, women’s entry to male-dominated occupations increased due to the rapid economic development of this period (Presser, Yi, 2008). Men were expected to work outside the home whereas fulltime employment for married women did not relieve them of their responsibilities as homemakers (Canino, Rubio-Stipek, Shrout, Bravo, Stolberg, Bird, 1987). Different factors, such as industrialization and economic development,

have boosted shifts in gender roles. By studying the perspective of modern college age Puerto Ricans, this study explores how machista attitudes in the eyes of the Puerto Rican youth have changed and evolved with time.

I believe that modern college age Puerto Ricans are the developing adults that will take over Puerto Rico's helm in the near future. Therefore, it is of utmost importance for this generation to promote gender equality because "the equality between men and women is an essential element for human and social development" (Estrada-Carmona, Pérez-Aranda, 2000). Due to economic and social development, I hypothesize that the participants will be promoters and advocates of gender equality, rejecting machismo.

Education helps to increase women's consciousness about gender relations and organize them to engage in grassroots struggles for their rights (Sultana, 2010). The female participants of the study will be from a high education level which guides me to predict that due to their formation, they will be were aware of their rights and capabilities as females, leading to a strong support of gender equality. This fact also leads me to predict that the perpetuation of machismo is not women's fault but men's. Hence, I hypothesize that male's incline towards gender equality will be less strong than women's.

Literary Review

The roles of women and men have changed over the years; in all societies and times there exist different patterns of conduct that are assigned to men and women. Each culture selects the duties that must be obeyed by these two sexes (Estrada- Carmona, 2009). Women have served as a property of men in procreation and socialization, product of their society (Pérez-Aranda, 2009). According to Estrada, the rules, penalties, obligations and restrictions eventually become discourses that undermine the cultures on the appropriate behavior or the "expected behavior" of

the people according to their gender. Even knowing that these forms of relationships between men and women are unfair, there exists a pattern of behavior that is hard to change because it is internalized given that through primary socialization we learn the acceptable ways of behavior for men and women (Estrada-Carmona, 2009). Burín states that nowadays men and women continue to transfer stereotypes, attitudes, beliefs and values that are assigned to each gender and as a product, they produce social inequalities. The equality between men and women is an essential element for human and social development (Pérez-Aranda, 2009).

Patriarchy in Puerto Rican employment

Presser and Yi investigate the patterns and determinants of women's mobility into and out of male-dominated occupations in Puerto Rico during a period of rapid development between the 1950's and the early 1980's (Presser, Yi, 2008). The study is based on data from the Puerto Rico Fertility and Family Planning Assessments of 1982, which include verdicts of women's employment and other life-course changes. Such approach to historic facts allows an examination of the effects of human capital, family status, socialization and opportunity structure in the labor market on women's entry into male dominated occupations (Presser, Yi, 2008). The research showed an increase in women's entry into male-dominated occupations during this time lapse of economic advancement. Thanks to periods of economic development and industrialization, women in Puerto Rico have had the opportunity to undertake male-dominated tasks in times where their capabilities were even more overlooked.

In an article written at the Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico, Rodríguez del Toro presents a global view of women's issues in terms of human rights, equality and justice between genders. Gender gaps between male and female educational levels, workplace involvement, unequal pay, and the absence of female figures within politics and leadership

positions, limit women's capacities and opportunities. Although these challenges for women have been around for centuries, the study suggests "demographic changes and increasing diversity in family structures" (Del Toro, 2009). Del Toro states that women are increasingly educating themselves and obtaining more college degrees in comparison to men. According to data from 2006, the total university enrollment in public and private institutions in Puerto Rico was 60% female (Tendenciaspr, 2008). However, there are more men than women employees in Puerto Rico.

It is argued that women's employment has resulted in advances in women's autonomy, gender equality, and renegotiations of the provider role, but, intensified by men's unstable earnings, it has also led to the increase of female family headship even among married women (Warren, 2010). In her article, Warren discusses the analyses of Helen Safa, who studied the impact of development strategies and social policies on women headed families in the Caribbean and Puerto Rico. Warren concludes that economic trends promoting women's employment and extending their social participants have broadened their dimensions of autonomy and transformed the definition of female-roles to include the expectation of their economic contribution (Warren 2010).

Historically, athletics participation has been understood as a practice appropriate for males (Aybar-Soltero 2008). In his research Aybar-Soltero "examines the role conflicts among female Puerto Rican athletes." The study was conducted through a survey among 420 female athletes of 23 different disciplines. The results showed that the perception of role conflicts by the athletes come mostly through the following situations: little recognition of abilities, skills and achievements, demand for high physical performance during competition while they are

expected to portray less capacity when measured against males, and the loss of the female image or femininity.

Patriarchy in the Puerto Rican media

Camacho presents the history of the Puerto Rican comadre (co-mother or godmother) and discusses the traditional but contradictory values she presents in the Puerto Rican society. The study presents a qualitative deconstruction of the character known as “La Comay” from the popular Puerto Rican television tabloid show *SuperXclusivo* as an example of how the comadre personage is represented in Puerto Rican pop culture (Camacho, 2010). After closely analyzing fourteen episodes of this television emission, Camacho concludes that *SuperXclusivo*'s portrayal of the comadre is being used to reinforce patriarchal values in the Puerto Rican society because she “reinforces the attitudes and prejudices that exploit female sentimentality and maintain women in their subordination.” Nonetheless, the character is also a strong woman not afraid to offer her opinions and does not shrink from controversy or criticism (Camacho, 2010). According to Camacho, the television character reflects some of the feminist roles comadres have played throughout the years.

Machismo within Hispanic communities in the United States

A study conducted by Canino, Rubio-Stipec, Shrout, Bravo, Stolberg and Bird in Puerto Rico and New York with Anglo and Hispanic community samples reported a higher rate of depressive symptoms and depressive disorders in women than in men. In Puerto Rico the socialization process strongly stresses sex-role differentiation (Canino, 1992). Men are expected to work outside the home; whereas fulltime employment for married women does not relieve them of their responsibilities as homemakers. This patriarchal social context results in sex

differences in depressive symptoms because of the more patriarchal social context in which they are socialized (Canino, Rubio-Stipec, Shrout, Bravo, Stolberg, Bird, 1987).

It is commonly assumed that Hispanic immigrants in the United States subscribe to a patriarchal ideology that keeps women subordinated to men, often through violence and exploitative reproductive behaviors. In a study conducted by Gonzalez, Sable, Campbell and Dannerbeck, data was collected from 200 face-to-face interviews composed of 172 questions with Hispanic people in mid-Missouri; 100 men and 100 women. In the results they found no patriarchal ideology supporting women's subordination to men, violence as a mechanism of control, reproduction as a way of exploitation, or cultural influences discouraging access to and use of birth control in the Hispanic community; rather, these immigrants revealed adequate knowledge of birth control use and positive perceptions of gender equality (Gonzalez, Sable, Campbell, Dannerbeck, 2009).

Global views on Machismo

Although there seems room for improvement within the workforce, it cannot begin until the mindset of the household is changed as well. In the research article, "The Latin American Family: Familism vs. Machismo", Ingoldsby explains that even though many women protest and try to surpass machismo to have their own place in society, the majority of women support this attitude. Girls are raised in a patriarchal society where they are expected to encourage macho roles. They are submissive, dependent and endure physical punishment because they think this is the only way (Ingoldsby, 1991). This mentality is inculcated at home, where mothers teach girls to do everything the father decides. Until the shift in the household occurs, the shift in society will cease.

Estrada-Carmona and Pérez-Aranda conducted a study at the Universidad Autónoma de Campeche, México with the purpose of comparing attitudes towards gender equality between men and women who were studying psychology and engineering in this institution. These two fields were chosen for being highly masculinized, in the case of engineering, and highly feminized, in the case of psychology. The 278 participants were surveyed on different subjects such as sexual orientation, religious views towards gender equality, couple values, private matters such as personal interests, public matters such as social behavior, and freedom of sexuality. The results showed that attitudes towards gender equality between students majoring in these two fields were different. Psychology students showed more egalitarian attitudes towards gender roles than engineering students. At the same time, women presented more egalitarian attitudes towards gender than men. These findings are closely related to the idea that professional fields of study are influenced by gender stereotypes (Estrada-Carmona, Perez-Aranda 2009).

Watto examines the “differential significance of the multiple dimensions of conventional patriarchal ideology of gender relations as predictors of perpetrating male physical violence against women.” Mainly, opposition to gender equality and women’s autonomy, linking women’s sexuality with family honor, religious orientations towards treating women as subordinate partners, and approval to violence against women were identified as multiple dimensions of conventional patriarchal ideology of gender relations (Watto, 2009). To conduct the study, data was collected from male heads of households from rural and urban settings of district Gujrat in Pakistan. Women’s autonomy was measures through interviews that questioned females’ access to property rights, freedom of mobility, and decision-making in the household, family, and career choices. Watto concluded, “men’s opposition to gender equality and women’s

autonomy, and their orientation linking family honor with women's sexuality were insignificantly correlated with the propensity of perpetrating physical violence against women."

Sultana conducted a research in the University Pendidikan Sultan Idris in Malaysia to examine women's gender ideology and the influence of patriarchal norms in the education of their children. Women's gender ideology appears to be constrained by patriarchal ideology that gives priority to the masculine over the feminine in almost all environments, that is to say, school, household, labor market and community (Sultana, 2010). Sultana expresses that due to patriarchal belief, parents give less priority on daughter's education. The study was based on primary information gathered in the villages of the north region of Bangladesh from 340 women. These women were married and had at least two children who were at least one son and one daughter. The 340 women completed an 8-item Likert scale survey. The results indicated that the majority of the respondents tended to follow the traditional ideology, as they do not like to support daughter's higher education (Sultana, 2010). Sultana concludes, "due to patriarchal ideology, sons are preferred over daughters to pursue higher education."

In a second research, Santana examines the awareness of women towards their right at household. The study was based on primary information collected from an ethnographic and structured survey in three villages in the northern region of Bangladesh. Results showed how in Bangladesh, gender ideologies are characterized by unequal power. 'Gender norms' assign specific entitlements and responsibilities to men and women-for example- women are expected to take on caring or domestic duties and remain close to home, while men are expected to be the main breadwinner, working outside the home, with greater freedom to move around public places (Santana, 2010). In the study, it was found that women's education was a key indicator to

women's greater awareness towards their right in family. Sultana's (2010) study concludes the following:

Education helps to increase women's consciousness about gender relations and organize them to engage in grassroots struggles for their rights. Similarly, it is argued that education provides women employment and income. These increase women's mobility and make them more confident towards their rights in household decisions. (p. 1561)

Although these studies exploit the difference in gender roles and the history behind each gender stereotype, the question of change still remains. I am looking to research how the roles have changed over the years and how young adults view this shift. I want to research whether or not young adults still support these attitudes and whether or not women are responsible for perpetuating machismo. Puerto Ricans have been questioned on the subject of machismo but the questions have never been focused on modern college age Puerto Ricans, who are after all, the developing youth that will take over the country in less than a decade.

Methods

Participants

To study the evolution of machismo in the Puerto Rican society, seventy-five participants were surveyed. Of the seventy-five participants forty-six were female, twenty-eight were male and one preferred not to disclose his or her sex. Of the seventy-five participants, five ranged between the ages of zero to seventeen, sixty-four ranged between the ages of eighteen to twenty-four and six were twenty-five years old or over. Thirty-three participants attended co-ed high schools while forty-two attended single sex schools. Ten of the participants were currently high-

school students, fifty-eight were college level students, six had already graduated from college and one skipped this question. Seventy-one participants were Puerto Rican, two were American and two mentioned to be from another unspecified nationality.

Only the answers of fifty-seven participants were considered for the study given that they were the only ones who fulfilled the criteria of modern college Puerto Ricans. Of the fifty-seven participants, thirty-four were females and twenty-three were males. See figure 1. All the participants ranged between the ages of eighteen to twenty-four. Twenty-five participants attended co-ed high schools while thirty-two attended single sex schools. See figure 2. The fifty-seven participants were currently in college and they were all Puerto Rican. Note that one female did not complete the survey in its totality.

Figure 1

Answer Choices	Responses	
Female	59.65%	34
Male	40.35%	23
Total		57

Figure 2

Answer Choices	Responses	
Co-ed (both sexes)	43.86%	25
Single Sex	56.14%	32
Total		57

Apparatus and Materials

The study was conducted electronically via Survey Monkey and the participant's identities remained completely anonymous; answers were also collected through this service. The survey was sent out via the social network Facebook, were different individuals had the

freedom of deciding whether or not to be part of the study. The process was voluntarily in its totality.

Procedure

The participants received the survey via Facebook and then proceeded to answer four parts of the questionnaire. Once the participants clicked on the link to the survey, provided by Survey Monkey, they were presented with the informed consent page. The first part of the questionnaire focused on demographic information such as sex, age, education and nationality. The second part of the survey consisted of a likert scale of one through four that asked the participants to assume postures towards ten premises that embodied the attitude of machismo. The third part of the survey asked the participants to relay responsibility of five different situations to either men or women, or both. The fourth and last part of the survey was an open-ended question that allowed the participants to share any additional comments on the topic discussed. The participants then submitted the completed surveys back to Survey Monkey.

Results and Discussion

College Age Puerto Ricans

Figure 3 and Figure 4 present the results for all modern college age Puerto Ricans, both male and female, who participated in the study. The results indicate that college age Puerto Ricans tend to incline and advocate for gender equality within the workplace, the household, finances, and sexuality. In the premises: “Men must not cry,” “Only men should be CEO’s of multinational companies,” “Girls can take karate classes,” and “Who should receive a better education?” the incline towards gender equality was stronger than in other premises. These five questions relate to social stereotypes, the workplace, sexuality, and education accordingly. This

concludes that, in general, modern-college age Puerto Ricans in the heart of their development as adults have egalitarian attitudes towards gender roles and do not reinforce or perpetuate the attitudes of machismo. Economic trends promoting women's employment and extending their social participation have broadened their dimensions of autonomy and transformed the definition of female-roles to include the expectation of their economic contribution (Warren, 2010).

Figure 3

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Men must not cry.	46.43% 26	51.79% 29	0% 0	1.79% 1	56
Housekeeping duties are a woman's job.	50% 28	32.14% 18	16.07% 9	1.79% 1	56
The husband should work while the wife takes care of the children.	50% 28	33.93% 19	12.50% 7	3.57% 2	56
A woman would be a good fireman.	7.14% 4	16.07% 9	44.64% 25	32.14% 18	56
Men should always pay when going on a date with a woman.	14.29% 8	41.07% 23	33.93% 19	10.71% 6	56
Only men should be CEOs of multinational companies.	82.14% 46	14.29% 8	0% 0	3.57% 2	56
Boys can take ballet classes.	8.93% 5	14.29% 8	39.29% 22	37.50% 21	56
Girls can take karate classes.	0% 0	1.79% 1	37.50% 21	60.71% 34	56
A woman must get married being a virgin.	46.43% 26	42.86% 24	8.93% 5	1.79% 1	56
Only women can be secretaries.	48.21% 27	35.71% 20	8.93% 5	7.14% 4	56

Figure 4

	Women	Men	Both	Total
Who should receive a better education?	0% 0	1.79% 1	98.21% 55	56
Who should drive a minivan?	10.71% 6	3.57% 2	85.71% 48	56
Who should have the highest household income?	0% 0	14.29% 8	85.71% 48	56
In the case of a divorce, who should get the majority of the assets?	16.07% 9	1.79% 1	82.14% 46	56
Who should loose their virginity first?	0% 0	21.43% 12	78.57% 44	56

Male college age Puerto Ricans

Figure 5 and Figure 6 reveal the results for male college age Puerto Ricans who participated in the study. They did not present machista attitudes; in fact, they were inclined towards gender equality. The majority of the males presented an egalitarian tendency in all the premises. This tendency is more evident in the five following premises: “men must not cry,” “only men should be CEO’s of multinational companies,” “girls can take karate classes” and “who should receive a better education?”

Figure 5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Men must not cry.	26.09% 6	69.57% 16	0% 0	4.35% 1	23
Housekeeping duties are a woman's job.	26.09% 6	34.78% 8	34.78% 8	4.35% 1	23
The husband should work while the wife takes care of the children.	21.74% 5	43.48% 10	26.09% 6	8.70% 2	23
A woman would be a good fireman.	17.39% 4	26.09% 6	52.17% 12	4.35% 1	23
Men should always pay when going on a date with a woman.	13.04% 3	47.83% 11	30.43% 7	8.70% 2	23
Only men should be CEOs of multinational companies.	65.22% 15	34.78% 8	0% 0	0% 0	23
Boys can take ballet classes.	17.39% 4	26.09% 6	30.43% 7	26.09% 6	23
Girls can take karate classes.	0% 0	4.35% 1	56.52% 13	39.13% 9	23
A woman must get married being a virgin.	39.13% 9	47.83% 11	13.04% 3	0% 0	23
Only women can be secretaries.	21.74% 5	47.83% 11	21.74% 5	8.70% 2	23

Figure 6

	Women	Men	Both	Total
Who should receive a better education?	0% 0	4.35% 1	95.65% 22	23
Who should drive a minivan?	26.09% 6	8.70% 2	65.22% 15	23
Who should have the highest household income?	0% 0	30.43% 7	69.57% 16	23
In the case of a divorce, who should get the majority of the assets?	13.04% 3	0% 0	86.96% 20	23
Who should lose their virginity first?	0% 0	39.13% 9	60.87% 14	23

Female college age Puerto Ricans

Figure 7 and 8 present the results retrieved from female college age Puerto Ricans. Females were strongly supportive of gender equality and rejected the practices of machismo. Figures 7 and 8 show how women's results were strongly egalitarian. Nonetheless, one should note that even though women were more inclined towards gender equality on the premise that stated, "men should always pay when going on a date with a woman," it was only by 4%. This raises the question of machismo vs. chivalry.

As stated before, education helps to increase women's consciousness about gender relations and organize them to engage in grassroots struggles for their rights (Sultana, 2010). The female participants of the study received high quality education that explains that due to their formation, they are well aware of their rights and capabilities as females. This leads to a strong support of gender equality.

Figure 7

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Men must not cry.	60.61% 20	39.39% 13	0% 0	0% 0	33
Housekeeping duties are a woman's job.	66.67% 22	30.30% 10	3.03% 1	0% 0	33
The husband should work while the wife takes care of the children.	69.70% 23	27.27% 9	3.03% 1	0% 0	33
A woman would be a good fireman.	0% 0	9.09% 3	39.39% 13	51.52% 17	33
Men should always pay when going on a date with a woman.	15.15% 5	36.36% 12	36.36% 12	12.12% 4	33
Only men should be CEOs of multinational companies.	93.94% 31	0% 0	0% 0	6.06% 2	33
Boys can take ballet classes.	3.03% 1	6.06% 2	45.45% 15	45.45% 15	33
Girls can take karate classes.	0% 0	0% 0	24.24% 8	75.76% 25	33
A woman must get married being a virgin.	51.52% 17	39.39% 13	6.06% 2	3.03% 1	33
Only women can be secretaries.	66.67% 22	27.27% 9	0% 0	6.06% 2	33

Figure 8

	Women	Men	Both	Total
Who should receive a better education?	0% 0	0% 0	100% 33	33
Who should drive a minivan?	0% 0	0% 0	100% 33	33
Who should have the highest household income?	0% 0	3.03% 1	96.97% 32	33
In the case of a divorce, who should get the majority of the assets?	18.18% 6	3.03% 1	78.79% 26	33
Who should lose their virginity first?	0% 0	9.09% 3	90.91% 30	33

Males and females: Results Compared

As stated before, the results indicate that college age Puerto Ricans tend to incline and advocate for gender equality within the workplace, the household, finances, and sexuality. Nevertheless, the results reveal differences when compared by sexes. Even though both sexes support gender equality distinctively, women are stronger supporters of this attitude than men. This is seen in the comparison of Figure 5 to Figure 7 and Figure 6 to Figure 8. In these figures, women's results showed more consistency towards equality than men, meaning that even though men's overall answers were towards gender equality, the instances under each category were more divided between both postures (machista and no-machista).

For Figure 6 and 8, the participants were asked to designate specific roles to men, women, or both. The results show that male and female college age Puerto Ricans are pro gender equality. However, note that the men who did not incline towards the option "both," advocated more for men in the majority of the responses. In this case, males who did not opt for gender

equality chose genders according to stereotypes. They present machista attitudes in their answers to: “who should have a minivan?” which is considered a ‘mom’s’ car, “who should have the highest household income?” believed to be the man’s responsibility in the machista society where the woman is expected to stay at home, and “who should lose their virginity first?” where it is a common Catholic belief that women must marry wearing white embodying their purity as virgins. One can conclude that men who did not promote gender equality may be considered machistas and perpetuators of this attitude.

In Figure 8 we see how women who did not choose “both” favored women, their own sex. Women’s results do not show any incline that could be considered reinforcing of the attitudes of machismo. In the premise that questioned, “in the case of a divorce, who should receive the majority of the assets?” women that did not opt for “both” as a choice, opted for “women.” In this case, we can conclude that women are not machistas, but they only reinforce this attitude when for their economic convenience.

In Figure 7 we see how the answers “strongly agree” and “strongly disagree” were more popular amongst women. This shows that females are strong supporters of gender equality. In Figure 5 men were more inclined to choose “agree” and “disagree.” This presents us with the fact that men are supporters of gender equality. When both sexes are compared, one can conclude that even though both sexes are supporters of gender equality, women are stronger supporters than men.

Conclusion

This research intended to answer, “how has machismo evolved in the Puerto Rican society?” by studying the perspectives of young adults towards the current, and changing, male and female roles in Puerto Rico. After conducting the study, results showed that modern-college

age Puerto Ricans in the heart of their development as adults support egalitarian attitudes towards gender and do not reinforce or perpetuate the attitudes of machismo. From both sexes, females were the strongest supporters of this attitude. As machismo slowly evolved into new stereotypes and roles, it has also been slowly dissolving from the social panoramas.

The completion of this research was a long journey where time and number of participants were the two major limitations. More time would have been beneficial for the analysis of the participant's high-school education and with a greater number of participants, I would have collected more accurate data. For further development of this research, I would recommend to have participants from all age groups: elders, adults, young-adults, teenagers and kids. This way, the evolution of machismo will be presented in a timeline constructed by all the age stages of development. I would further recommend exploring the topic of female's opinions of machismo vs. chivalry. I encourage any individual interested in the remake of this research to collect qualitative data through personal interviews instead of quantitative data.

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