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A Study on the Improvement of Gender Inequality in the Measurement of Time Spent on Housework

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I. Introduction

1. Background and Purpose of the Study

Though almost all people acknowledge the gender inequality in housework, they cannot accurately point out its realities in detail. If the category of housework encompasses planning work for overall daily lives required to maintain family life and emotional labor needed to maintain family relations, the gender inequality of housework will further widen in gap. The purpose of this study is to seek ways to improve gender inequality in measuring the time spent on domestic work.

To this end, first, this study examined the limitations of existing measuring tools of women's housework (that they could not measure women's housework properly) and reconstructed the measuring tools of the time spent on housework. Specifically, the study reviewed behavioral standards of housework measuring tools to identify behavioral standards that have not been measured until now, and presented measuring methods

that can reflect realities of performing domestic work as much as possible. Second, based on these reconstructed measuring tools for time spent on housework, it surveyed the actual conditions of performing housework, and analyzed the gender difference in the amount of time spent on performing domestic work. Third, the study examined standards and conditions for equal division of housework because men's housework as an axis of the gender unequal structure of housework should be raised and equal division of housework is required. Fourth and last, based on the results of the study, this study presented new measuring tools and behavioral standards and identified policy agendas for equal division of domestic work.

2. Main Contents and Methods of the Study

The main contents and methods of this study include the following:

First, it analyzed data from the survey of time used in daily lives to grasp the realities of gender inequality of housework.

Second, it conducted a focus group interview (FGI) to reconstruct the behavioral standards of existing measuring tools of housework. The FGI was conducted by dividing various types of 32 ordinary people into four groups, each with 8 persons, based on their characteristics of gender, marital status, whether they have children and children's age, and couple's employment status. Main contents of the survey included definitions and properties of housework, detailed items of housework, standards and forms of division of housework, and contents and conditions of equal division of domestic work.

Third, it devised a proposal for reconstruction of behavioral standards for measuring housework. By classifying types of existing housework

into further detail and expanding the concept of housework, the study reconstructed the tools to encompass activities to maintain family life, including planning work and family-related work. The reconstructed measuring tools of the time spent on housework consist of 64 detailed items in seven areas.

Fourth, using the reconstructed measuring tools, the study conducted a questionnaire survey to identify the perception of housework and the gender inequality in performing housework in reality. The subjects of the survey included 1,200 married men and women in their 40s or younger. The survey method was to conduct an online survey using the online panel of professional survey agencies.

II. Realities of Gender Inequality in Housework and Limitations of Existing Measuring Tools

1. Realities of Gender Inequality in Housework Based on the Daily Life Time Survey

First, it was found that unequal use of time between wife and husband still persisted in all areas of time spent on housework. The total amount of housework time was 201.1 minutes for wife and 30.8 minutes for husband, and this gender difference was found to be the same in all areas of detailed housework items except for vehicle management. Care time for children under 10 years old who live together with parents was 87.6 minutes for wife and 23.8 minutes for husband. Care-related travel time was 29.7 minutes for husband and 35.3 minutes for wife, with wife spending longer time than husband. Housework time with home-managing time, child care time, and care-related travel time all

combined was 324 minutes a day for wife and 84.3 minutes a day for husband. Wife spent time on housework 3.8 times longer than husband.

Second, when the study examined differences in the couple's share of housework time by employment type, it was found that the wife's share of total housework time accounted for 87.9%, while the husband's made up a mere 12.1%. This gender inequality was clearly found even when the wife too was employed. In other words, even in the case of a working couple, the wife's share of housework time was 86.0%. This figure was similar to single income husbands, single income wives, and unemployed couples. Even when both wife and husband were wage workers, the wife's share of housework time was higher than the husband's.

Third, according to the share of care time for preschool children between the couple, the wife accounted for 79.1% and the husband 20.9%, showing that the wife spent more time on child care than the husband. In all the cases of a working couple, single income husband, and unemployed couple, the husband's share of care time was remarkably lower than the wife's. However, only when the wife was a single breadwinner, the husband's share of child care time was slightly higher than the wife's. These findings show that the wife takes most of child care regardless of employment status, but the husband shares child care with the wife in an almost similar share only when he is unemployed.

Lastly, regarding the share of care-related travel time, the wife had a larger share than the husband. This indicates that even in the case of travel time, care-related travel is an area where women are primarily responsible. Through the above-mentioned results of the analysis it was found that women spent much more time on housework and family care than men, and that women undertook a more share even in the same

household. In particular, the analysis by employment type showed the same tendency regardless of women's employment. These results confirm the characteristic that despite an increase in the number of working couples, the structure of unequal gender role still remains in housework and family care.

2. Limitations of Existing Housework Measuring Tools

The current surveys of measuring housework time typically include the daily life time survey and family survey. The daily life time survey divides domestic work into home management and family & household member care. Its detailed items of actions comprise a total of 47 sub-items including 28 sub-items in 8 items for home management and 19 sub-items in 7 items for family & household member care. Measurement is done in such a way to record time spent on actions for each 24 hour-day for three days in total. Performed activities are recorded in the time unit of 10 minutes, with simultaneous actions recorded up to three. The family survey looks into the frequency of performing 8 items and their required time for home management and investigates sharing child care with the husband as a nominal variable.

However, because the measuring tools of housework time has the following limitations, it is necessary to take the following into consideration when preparing standards for measuring housework time and behavior.

First, the daily life time survey is conducted in such a way to measure housework time as time actually put into action. However, domestic work in the form of planning among the actions necessary for the family is not expressed in action, so it is difficult to be measured or may be

underestimated by the existing measurement method.

Second, the qualitative aspects of housework are not measured. If housework is intensively conducted or efficiently performed with high skill level, less time is required, but this characteristic of housework is not taken into account.

Third, housework includes not only regular work conducted every day but also long-term periodical activities, such as monthly, quarterly, and yearly housework, and non-regular activities. However, the current methods of the daily life time survey that records housework on a daily basis or the family survey that records housework on a weekly basis cannot measure housework that is repeated with a long-term cycle or non-regular housework.

Fourth, the daily life time survey includes simultaneous actions, but domestic work has a lot of hidden work that is performed unconsciously if it is not an action. As this hidden housework cannot be measured by the daily life time survey, housework time can be measured less than the actual time spent on housework.

To make up for these limitations of existing measuring tools, the category of housework needs to be expanded. According to the results of reviewing previous studies with definitions of housework, it was found that housework should be defined as a broad concept, including all activities needed to maintain family life.

III. Analysis of the Results of Focus Group Interview to Reconstruct Housework Measuring Tools

The results of the focus group interview are as follows:

Housework included “all the work needed to maintain a family life.” That is, housework was an activity that was conducted routinely and repeatedly or required a considerable amount of time input. Also, it was a concept that included not only a visible 'behavior' but also 'planning activity' that accompanied the behavior. In addition, housework was an obligatory activity that the interviewees should do even if unwilling to, thus accompanying psychological stress. These attributes of domestic work acted as a standard for deciding even identical actions differently over whether to include them in housework, depending on individuals and circumstances. As such, housework was identified as a considerably expandable concept depending on individuals, families, and circumstances because the interviewees perceived as the area of 'housework' their care of family members, family related activities, such as family occasions and meetings for birthdays, ancestral worship services, and holidays, or even emotional labor among family members.

Second, in order to grasp the actual conditions of performing housework that is not restricted to such a fixed category or content, it is required to reconstruct the existing classification and measurement methods centered on the agents of performing fixed activities and the amount of time input. To do so, it is necessary to reexamine activities that are measured separately from housework even if it can be included in housework or existing activities that cannot reflect the actually performed housework. On top of this, a multifaceted review should be

conducted on a new classification system and measurement method that takes into account various activities, including long-term and non-regular activities, invisible planning activities, and family-related activities, that are carried out in the family but not captured in the existing systems.

Third, the interviewees decided the 'ideal' division of housework as they thought it was. To make their decision, they considered not only the fairness of the kind of work each person performed or of the time spent on the work but also the importance or intensity of the work, mental effort, relational and emotional aspects including the husband's attitude toward participation in housework, and the possibility of adjustment to situations and conditions. This result indicates that when improving the housework classification and measurement systems, qualitative aspects should also be considered, such as “which situations can be seen as gender equal division of housework?” along with a review on the new category of housework and ways of performing domestic work.

Fourth, as individual propensities including talents or preferences were taken into account, gender division of work loosened or the type of work was adjusted to circumstances and conditions from time to time. However, domestic work was still performed based on the fixed gender division of work. This tendency was found equally from planning activities or family relational activities that were developed as a new category of housework. This indicates that in order to improve gender inequality of housework, actual conditions of housework should be closely examined through the reconstruction of classification and measurement systems of housework, and various policy interventions are needed to transform the fixed gender division of work.

IV. Actual Conditions of Performing Housework According to the Reconstructed Housework Measuring Tools

1. Reconstructed Items of Housework

Housework includes 64 items in seven areas. The seven areas comprise clothing life, dietary life, dwelling life, household operation, family exchange and events, children-related activities, and family care. Each area includes planning and practical work, with 21 items for planning work and 43 items for practical work.

2. Category and Image of Housework

This study reconstructed the category of housework depending on the place of performing housework and the nature of housework (planning and practical work, activities to maintain a family life, relational work, care work, etc.), then asked if the respondents thought each work fell under the category of housework. The reconstructed category of housework included 10 items of work: (1) work related to food, clothing, and shelter to maintain a life with family members who live together, (2) a series of planning work for food, clothing, and shelter (making out a menu, planning for shopping, planning for house repair, etc.), (3) work to manage, run, and plan for household (household financial planning, children's education planning, etc.), (4) work performed at parents' or in-law's outside my place (holidays, preparation for ancestral worship service, cleaning, etc.), (5) work to take physical care of children, (6) work related to children's education, and various cultural and hands-on activities, (7) work to take physical care of my parents, (8) work to take

physical care of spouse's parents, (9) work to maintain relationship with my parents and relatives (calling to say hi, gathering, etc.), and (10) work to maintain relationship with spouse's parents and relatives (calling to say hi, gathering, etc.).

According to the result of the survey, over 70% of the respondents answered that 8 items out of 10 came under the category of housework. The item with the highest proportion that fell under the category household was “work related to food, clothing, and shelter to maintain a life with family members who live together” (89.4%) for both men and women. The item with the second highest proportion was “work performed at parents' or in-law's outside my place (holidays, preparation for ancestral worship service, cleaning, etc.)” (88.4%), followed by “a series of planning work for food, clothing, and shelter (making out a menu, planning for shopping, planning for house repair, etc.)” (81.1%), and “work to take physical care of children” (79.9%) in that order. The items that showed differences by gender included “a series of planning work for food, clothing, and shelter” (84.0% for women, 77.9% for men), “work to manage, run, and plan for household” (78.1% for women, 69.8% for men),” and “work performed at parents' or in-law's outside my place” (90.8% for women, 85.3% for men).

According to the survey of the image of housework, a higher proportion of women than men agreed to its negative image, but a lower proportion of women than men agreed to its positive image. As for the value of housework, 43.5% of women agreed to the statement that housework was worthless, while 30.0% of men agreed to that statement. This is to say that men placed a higher value on housework than women.

3. Actual Conditions of Performing Housework: Comparison by Gender

The study examined the actual conditions of gender inequality in performing housework. The gender inequality was identified by asking such questions as “Who performs housework, man or woman?” “Who performs more housework, man or woman?” and “Who feels more burdened with housework, man or woman?”

A. Proportion of Performing Housework

1) Gender difference by the proportion of performing housework

This study surveyed who performed each of 64 housework items and analyzed the gender gaps in the proportion of performing housework. When the proportions of performing housework were compared by gender, women had a higher proportion than men in most items, excluding only two items, vehicle management and vehicle-related service, with women's proportion at less than 50%. On the other hand, men showed a very high proportion in some particular items only. Regarding items in which more than 80% of the respondents answered they performed housework, women answered they did in 44 items, while men did in 6 items only.

Among the 64 items, women had a higher proportion of performing housework than men in the areas of all children-related activities and clothing life items, in 7 items out of 8 in dietary life, 5 items out of 6 in family care, and 8 items out of 10 in household operation. Dwelling life is the area where there is the largest number of items, 9 out of 15, for men to have a higher proportion of performing housework than women. Specifically, men had a higher proportion in the area of dwelling

life, including house management, garbage disposal, vehicle management, and also in the area of family care, including accompanying family members or giving a ride when going out. On the other hand, the areas where women had a higher proportion of performing housework were mostly related to food and children--items that have traditionally been considered as women's roles among the detailed items of housework. This shows that the structure of gender division of roles based on the fixed idea of men and women is still dominant among the detailed items of housework.

The item with the largest gender gap in which women's proportion was higher than men's was “counseling for children's school and private institutes” (96.7% for women, 39.5% for men), with its gender gap being 57.2 percentage points. The gender gap of “participation in gatherings of student parents” (92.4% for women, 35.3% for men) was 57.1 percentage points, almost the same difference as that of “counseling for children's school and private institutes.” The item with the third largest gender gap was “collecting information on children's education, including private institutes, learning aids, and tutoring” (96.4% for women, 43.7% for men), with its gap being 52.7 percentage points. Gender difference was found to be very big mostly in activities related to children's education.

Items with gender gaps of more than 40 percentage points fell mostly under the areas of dietary life, children-related activities, and part of clothing life. These items included “making non-daily foods, including *kimchi* and preserved foods”(48.8pp), “planning for grocery shopping and preparing a shopping list”(48.7pp), “preparing and making meals”(48.2pp), “preparing and making snacks”(46.9pp), “participating in activities and events related to kindergarten and daycare centers”(46.7pp), “deciding the

overall method of meals, including menu”(46.0pp), “participating in activities and events related to children's school”(44.1pp), “helping children with their homework and learning”(42.9pp), “deciding the overall method of children's education”(41.6pp), “making plans for purchasing clothes”(41.0pp), and “managing children's education and care costs, including paying the fees”(40.3pp).

Items with a large gender gap in which men's proportion was higher than women's included “managing vehicle”(53.2pp), “getting vehicle service”(52.8pp), and “house management (house-related management, including changing florescent lamps)”(37.7pp).

B. Gender difference by the cycle of performing housework

Among the regularly performed items, this study compared gender gaps in items whose proportion of performing housework regularly on a daily or weekly basis was 50% or over. Those with the proportion of 50% or over were 21 items in total, including washing and arranging clothes in clothing life, and deciding the overall method of meals including menu, planning for grocery shopping, preparing and making meals and snacks, washing dishes and cleaning up after meal, and preparing food ingredients in dietary life. The proportion of daily or weekly housework was high in deciding the frequency and method of cleaning, daily cleaning, bathroom cleaning, throwing away garbage and recycling in dwelling life, and looking after pet animals and plants, and offline and online shopping in the area of household operation, and accompanying children or giving a ride to/from kindergarten or school, helping children with homework, reading books for children/playing with children, and taking physical care of children in the area of children-related activities.

The gender gaps in these items show that women had a higher proportion of performing housework in 19 items, except for throwing away garbage and recycling. In particular, the gaps in the proportion were close to or over 40 percentage points in dietary life, except for washing dishes and cleaning up after meal. The mean value of gender gaps in the items with a high proportion of daily and weekly regular housework was 27.4 percentage points. On the other hand, there were no large gender gaps in the items whose proportion of non-regular housework was 50% or above.

It was found from the above that women had a high proportion of performing regular and frequent housework but did not have a large gap with men in the proportion of performing non-regular housework. This is to say that women undertook most of regular housework while performing non-regular work as well at a similar level to men's. Therefore, this implies that when measuring whether a housework item is performed, the cycle of performing the housework item should also be taken into consideration in order to accurately capture the realities of gender inequality in performing housework between men and women.

B. Comparison of the Amount of Time Spent on Housework by Gender

1) The amount of time spent on housework by cycle

When the amount of time spent on housework was examined by gender, women had an absolutely larger total amount of time spent on housework than men. The fact that women allocate more time on housework had already been confirmed in the daily life time survey by Statistics Korea too. However, the results of analyzing housework

including relational or planning work in this study showed that women's amount of time spent on housework was much larger than men.

Specifically, it was found that women spent more time than men in all seven areas where housework is performed in a short-term cycle within a month. For example, women spent four times more time than men in dietary life, and 1.5 times more time in children-related activities. In other words, women had a higher frequency of and larger amount of time spent on performing housework in items that are conducted regularly in a short term.

In housework items that are performed in a long-term cycle of a year, women spent more time than men in 5 areas out of 7. Items in which men spent more time than women were household operation and family care. However, the difference in the amount of time between men and women was very small, with 42 minutes yearly in household operation and 3.6 minutes yearly in family care. As examined in the above, this is a point comparable to women's use of much more time than men in housework that is performed frequently and regularly in a short-term cycle.

When the time spent on short-term cycled regular activity (monthly), long-term cycled regular activity (yearly), and non-regular activity is added up, women spent approximately 301 hours and men approximately 99 hours per month on housework. It was also analyzed that women spent about 24 hours and men about 14 hours and 42 minutes on annual housework, and that women allocated about 31 hours and men about 16 hours and 25 minutes on non-regular household activities. This shows that women spent an overwhelmingly larger amount of time on housework. If the total amount of time spent on housework is converted to that on a daily basis, women spent about 10 hours and men about

three hours considering monthly activities alone. This result did not come from the time diary method but from calculation of the amount of time by surveying the cycle of performing housework by item, frequency of performing housework and required time for performing housework once. Here, the amount of time includes simultaneously performed items, and particularly planning work is highly likely to overlap in time with practical work because it cannot be captured in action. Also, if various kinds of housework are conducted at the same time, for example, if respondents prepare a meal and look after children while running the washer, these actions are simultaneous, but the time is measured as performing different items of housework.

<Table 1> Frequency and time of performing housework by cycle

(Unit: times, minutes)

Housework cycle	Women		Men	
	frequency	amount of time	frequency	amount of time
Regular activity-monthly	483.8	18,061.7	216.7	5,937.7
Regular activity-yearly	23.0	1,442.2	18.6	883.0
Non-regular activity	37.1	1,857.2	25.1	985.2

2) The amount of time spent on planning and practical work

When examined by dividing housework into planning and practical work depending on the nature of housework, men and women spent amounts of time differently when they performed short-term regular (monthly) housework. The amount of time spent on performing monthly

planning work was 41 hours and 22 minutes for women and 11 hours and 7 minutes for men; and the amount of time spent on monthly practical work 258 hours and 24 minutes for women and 87 hours and 6 minutes for men. In short-term regular monthly housework, women performed planning work about four times longer and practical work about two times longer than men. However, in regular annual housework, women performed planning work 1.7 times longer and practical work 1.5 times longer than men. In non-regular housework, women spent 1.9 times more time on both planning and practical work than men. In other words, there was not such a big gender difference in annual or non-regular activities depending on the nature of work whether planning or practical. However, there was a big gender difference in planning work among the housework activities that should be conducted frequently. As such, the housework measuring method centered on practical work had limitations in accurately capturing women's housework.

V. Policy Suggestions

1. Suggestion for the Reconstruction of Housework Measuring Tools (Proposal)

As it is required to reconstruct the classification system and measuring tools of household that can include the new category of housework and the method of performing housework, this study proposes the following household measuring tool shown in <Table 2>. Here, the new classification and measuring systems should make up for existing housework with specific items and also include an expanded concept of housework, such as planning and relational activities. The study presents 64 detailed items

of housework in seven areas, including dietary life, clothing life, dwelling life, household operation, children-related activities, family exchange and events, and family care. The 64 items are again divided into planning and practical work depending on the nature of work.

<Table 2> Measuring housework items

Classification	Planning work	Practical work
Clothing life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planning for purchasing clothes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Washing clothes ▪ Mending and making household textiles and footwear ▪ Getting service for household textiles and footwear ▪ Arranging clothes
Dietary life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deciding the overall method of meals, including menu ▪ Planning for grocery shopping and preparing shopping list 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preparing and making meals ▪ Preparing and making snacks ▪ Making non-daily foods including <i>kimchi</i> and preserved foods ▪ Washing dishes, cleaning up after meal ▪ Preparing food ingredients ▪ Getting food-related service (getting delivery foods)
Dwelling life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deciding the frequency and method of cleaning ▪ Planning for purchasing home appliances and housing goods (collecting and comparing information, preparing a list, etc.) ▪ Planning for house management and collecting information, including house repair and home appliances repair ▪ Managing costs for household management and maintenance(managing living expenses) ▪ Dwelling-related planning, including moving, and collecting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Daily cleaning ▪ General housecleaning ▪ Bathroom cleaning ▪ Throwing away garbage ▪ Recycling ▪ Managing and making household goods ▪ Getting dwelling-related service (house-related maintenance and repair, including electricity and plumbing) ▪ Getting household goods-related service(maintenance repair service for home appliances) ▪ Managing house (house-related management, including changing florescent lamps)

Classification	Planning work	Practical work
	<p>information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collecting information on overall household management and maintenance 	
Household operation and other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Household financial planning (annual spending planning, financial investment planning, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Handling house operation-related financial affairs Handling government office-related affairs Managing vehicle Getting vehicle service Looking after pet animals Looking after plants Getting service for pet animals and plants Offline shopping Online shopping
Family exchange and events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing schedule and planning events, including my family occasions and birthdays Managing schedule and planning events, including spouse's family occasions and birthdays Choosing gifts for family occasions and birthdays Preparing grocery shopping list and planning for holidays and ancestral worship services Planning for a family trip with parents or relatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparing holidays and ancestral worship services (preparing foods, etc.) Exchange with my parents (calling to say hi, visiting, etc.) Exchange with spouse's parents (calling to say hi, visiting, etc.)
children-related activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deciding the overall method of children's education Collecting information on children's education, including private institutes, learning aids, and tutoring Managing children's education and care costs, including paying the fees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counseling for children's school and private institutes Accompanying children and giving a ride to/from kindergarten and school Participating in children's school-related activities and events (observing class, supervising exams, bazaar, school arts festival, sports day, school volunteering, etc.) Participating in kindergarten and daycare center-related activities and events (show and tell, one-day teacher,

Classification	Planning work	Practical work
		sports day, picnic, volunteer services, etc.) ■ participating in parents' meeting(on/offline) ■ Managing children's learning (homework, school performance evaluation, study, etc.) ■ Reading books for children, playing with children, etc. ■ Taking physical care of children, including washing face, taking a bath, brushing, etc. ■ Accompanying children for cultural and hands-on activities
Family care	■ Collecting information and planning related to physical care of parents or other adult family members (choosing care methods) ■ Collecting information and planning related to daily care of parents or other adult family members(planning and preparing for buying daily necessities, accompanying them when going out) ■ Counseling and planning with adult care-related care giver and nursing homes	■ Taking physical care of parents and other adult family members ■ Accompanying adult family members, including parent or give a ride when going out ■ Supporting housework for parents and other adult family members (buying daily necessities, cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, etc.)

2. Suggestion for the Method of Measuring Housework

What is important in the practical work-centered measurement of housework is the cycle of performing housework. However, the currently representative and reliable daily life time survey that can tell the time spent on housework relies on the time diary method to measure time. As a result, this method cannot measure monthly, yearly, or non-regular

housework that is not performed on the date of the survey. It can be agreed that this method of the daily life time survey is a survey method that suits the purpose of the survey. However, the housework time measured by the daily life time survey cannot capture the total amount of actually performed housework because the housework performed by women encompasses not only daily and regular activities but also a lot of weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annually performed work. Therefore, housework should be measured by the cycle of performing housework for each item, the frequency of performing housework by cycle, and required time for housework.

3. Suggestion for Regular Surveys Using the Reconstructed Housework Measuring Tool

Regular and continuous surveys should be conducted using the proposed housework measuring tool and method in order to identify the actual conditions of performing housework. The ideal way forward for surveying housework performance would be to secure a budget for a new survey and implement it. However, given the budgetary limitations, it is suggested that the survey of housework performance be conducted by adding some questions to the National Survey of Families and Households, which has been implemented once every five years by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, or that a method of measuring housework separately as an additional survey be reviewed.



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