

From struggle to exchange: a group of students proposes a dialogue on practical traineeship

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Introduction.

This paper comes from the work of a group of eighteen students attending the master's degree course "Clinical Psychology of the person, of organizations and of the community" at the Faculty of Medicine and Psychology of the University of Rome "Sapienza".

We have set up a laboratory on the role of practical traineeship with the chair of the Professor R.M. Paniccia, with the aim of treating this complex and controversial topic that connects reality and several social actors: agencies, Order of Psychologists, University and students.

Our goal has been thinking over training in psychology and the figure of clinical psychologist, focusing a specific time we consider relevant in our training: practical traineeship, seen as a critical event on the way that leads from the student role to the professional one.

We understand the complexity of practical traineeship if we connect it with the specificity of training in clinical psychology, where training and profession path goes through the implication in one's experience, which allows to integrate psychological theory and practice by re-thinking the emotions experienced in relation to different contexts using clinical psychology categories.

We have decided to deal with this topic from different points of view: in the first part we introduce the reader to the current context that characterizes the practical traineeship in psychology. We present the political/normative context, then we define the methodology that we used and, at last, we discuss the characteristics of the process in which our group has been involved.

This premise allows the reader to then switch to a second part referred to the exploration of the relational dynamics established in the relationship between trainee and organization by analyzing our practical traineeship experiences. In the last part, we offer some points of discussion on the trainee's clinical psychology function and on critical situations in meeting with agencies.

University and practical traineeship.

Our contribution focuses on an issue we think to be current since, in relation to normative and implemented processes¹, on 17/07/09 the MIUR and the Order of Psychologists decided to make practical traineeship continuative and post-graduated, thus removing it from university curriculum.

In fact, the protocol note n. 4605/08², which now regulates practical traineeship, states that: *"it is not possible to combine different periods of practical traineeship in order to reach the expected academic year if these two periods are discontinuous"*.

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¹ <http://www.psy.it>.

² http://www.psicologia1.uniroma1.it/professione/tirocini_post.shtml.

We think that the previous 3 + 2 reform, although it appears to have failed in creating a specific professional figure at the end of the three-year degree, that is the junior psychologist³, has the merit of having introduced a practical traineeship in the middle of an important training phase, before choosing the next two-year specialistic/master course.

Those of us who have done the pre-graduate practical traineeship are part of the university clients whose time period spent in practical traineeship isn't recognized by the university itself.

In this dark normative blackout we want to regain the sense of this experience that is valuable for its educational and professional significance, highlighting our point of view as students, university clients.

To see our university degree recognized in the EC, a curricula standardization of all EC countries is necessary, because Europsy⁴ requires that the professionalizing practical traineeship is post-graduate. We think it is important to dwell on the meaning of the word *to recognize*, as it allows to see the emotional world characterizing this matter; *to recognize*⁵: to know again, to know the thing or person that has been perceived before. We can say that recognizing the practical traineeship got in the three-year course in order to a professional development means to consider this experience as a training activity that has enabled students to acquire professional skills.

If we think of the actors who take part in the practical traineeship activity, we realize that this context is a field of very large and complex interrelations, full of obstacles and dangers, depending on how one lives it, but also very fertile if it is taken into consideration as well as the other interlocutors. Thinking about the complexity of developing psychological and professional skills in academic career emerges as a dense topic which refers to multiple points of view; if we consider the matter as rooted in history and the current situation in psychology, where the co-presence of several epistemological matrices influences both degree programs and professions in the service context, we can realize the delicate ground on which psychological skills can grow up.

In recent years, academics have invested in the practical traineeship of the three-year course, who rank as interlocutors of this learning experience and recognize its resource as a link between theory and praxis, without splitting intervention in a before, in which one understands, and in an after, in which one sets to work.

In this subject, to develop the ability to recognize emotions and to think of one's experience in a relationship is not a power, but is part of the intervention process that can be built through thought on emotions and relationship. In this sense, training that does not face real contexts of intervention is likely to remain self-referential, where the student is asked to rely uncritically on a proposed model, without testing the usefulness of his/her learning. We think that without listening and interpreting our emotions, there can't be a clinical psychology work.

So without the implication in contexts of intervention, how can students orient themselves and choose in the varied world of psychological theoretical models?

And before that, how can academic institution verify the effectiveness of its training proposal without talking about these questions with its clients?

In recent years we have watched many reforms, so frequent that even enrolling at an examination becomes an adventure in the jungle of courses and educative regulations, and these reforms have beset university as they have forced the academic institution to get organized constantly, resulting in an anomic and voiceless context since the relationship with students is not governed by negotiated rules, shared and reliable, but organized according to law measures preoccupying university organization immediately.

The establishment of a continuous post-graduate practical traineeship has not foreseen a dialogue with those who use university, nor transitional rules for those who are involved in change. If, in order to conform with the global dimension of the european regulations, we don't consider the local feature of education proposals, that self-government law invites to diversify in the different italian universities, we may not recognize our expertise and resources but we may use them to develop an indefinite academic discipline and profession, focusing on what is missing in order to comply with regulatory requirements.

³ By the enrolment to the Register B, after state examination in psychology, with the three-year degree, one is entitled to be Junior Psychologist.

⁴ <http://www.inpa-europsy.it/>; <http://www.efpa.eu/europsy>.

⁵ www.etimo.it.

Uniformity refers to a single form, to a homogeneous whole, there is no tolerance for difference, the main aim is given and reified. Integration of different parts, on the contrary, is possible when differences and limitations are known and are used as resources to build a common product; then conflict can be occasion of development for the whole system.

In our group process we have experienced a fluctuation between these two modes, integrating and uniforming, realizing how this function belongs to everybody and every group and how the confusion we live can be a breeding ground for the work we want to do, if we try giving it sense all together, recognizing in it the possibility to gather clues for planning shared lines of development.

We consider confusion (from etimo.it, "cum funderere": mix together without any distinction and order) a mind's symmetrical mode of functioning, referring to the bi-logic mind theory proposed by Matte Blanco (1975). For this reason, the psychologist can work on confusion, experiment it and try to give meaning to it.

In our path, practical traineeship has represented a space of discussion on training between teachers and students, proposal of university training and social demands of institutions: a strategic point of view to promote the construction of the young and socially not well-known figure of the psychologist.

Practical traineeship, as we shall see in more detail, allows to know realities that are external to the university context, leading the trainee to meet with distant professional, or otherwise different from those offered in training proposal.

Tutor, in this case, is a well-known professional recognized by trainee because included in a professional work environment where trainee can find a reference for the construction of his/her own professional image, so tutor could be represented as an identificatory function. Therefore, tutor is central in the course of the practical traineeship because he/she assumes the functions of goal planning, supervision and verification in conformity with the law⁶. This identification process, even if it may seem coherent and functional in other knowledge contexts, is not so obvious for the training in clinical psychology.

Since the establishment of the psychological profession, with the Law n. 56/89⁷, the graduates in psychology or attended psychotherapy schools that, because of the growing demand, have multiplied over the years, or started working as social workers. This loss of professional identity, which has continued until today, poses the difficulty of recognizing a socially shared competence, since the professional identity is not determined by precise and definite psychological skills, but is often referred to an uncritical adherence to one's own school of thought.

Then, practical traineeship seems to be the time when trainee experiences a double sense of belonging: to his/her theoretical model and to service, characterized by its own mode of understanding the function and practice of the psychologist. This dual affiliation can represent for the trainee a discontinuity in the development of his professional identity, critical issue that can emerge as a confusion experience in relation to trainee's role into organization, and precisely starting from confusion our group has begun to reflect and explore this subject.

Methodology and story of the group.

We start from a general statement. For the pre-graduate practical traineeship, as it was designed by the Faculty of Psychology, no moment of reflection and verification of the activity was expected, both in progress and at the conclusion of training path. This element seems to be consistent with what we will discuss later: without shared learning goals and the reflection on the possible clinical psychology skills we can develop and test in different training contexts, the opportunity to equip

⁶ To introduce to the context in which one has one's own practical traineeship; - to make, with the trainee, a planning of the experience, by effectively defining goals, methods and phases, harmonizing them with the context's characteristics; - to verify the trainee's experience by means of a constant supervising, by supporting the trainee's critical understanding and applying the trainee's suggestions for integrating and correcting the experience itself; - to act an integrative educational function, from the evaluation elements shown during supervising; - at last to do a final evaluation of the practical traineeship, in relation to both the individual trainee's training results and their articulations with the whole institutional context in which the practical traineeship has been carried out.

⁷ [http://www.enpap.it/documenti/riferimenti_legislativi/Legge%2056_89%20\(agg_marz08\).pdf](http://www.enpap.it/documenti/riferimenti_legislativi/Legge%2056_89%20(agg_marz08).pdf).

oneself with tools and specific areas of verification and comparison on what one doesn't seem to be a student's training need, for which the University should take responsibility. So we can think that the experiences of powerlessness and frustration that have characterized the practical traineeship experience of many of us, often seen as a time parted from the complexity of university curriculum, in which the student is thrall to his/her own emotions experienced, can represent the lack of a shared space within which to revise the affective symbolization that have characterized the relationship with the agency, thanks to interpretative instruments and categories that can relate the subjective elements and the contextual ones and recover the sense of practical traineeship into the entire training path.

During the lessons of Clinical psychology intervention we have begun to re-think the emotions related to this experience with the aim of sharing it by using the tool of report and a private blog too, as a container of our material and medium of exchange.

By report we mean a *methodological tool that is at the service of thought, as chance of moving from acting emotions within relationships to knowing interlocutors and context through the identification of criteria and models useful in such a knowledge* (Carli, Grasso & Paniccchia, 2007).

Report has been therefore a central tool in our work. Although some of us already had reported on their individual experience of practical traineeship on the occasion of three-year graduation thesis, to use this tool in relation to different interlocutors, colleagues and teachers, in contexts, lessons and laboratory, and with aims, sharing experiences, has been something new for us.

The ability to use report as a tool to share our experiences, rather than being a prerequisite for starting a joint effort was rather the product of a group process. Initially, each student seemed to act the relationship mode that's typical of university setting: a vertical relationship characterized by the knowledge transmission from teacher to learner, in which class group mostly worked as a way of containing experience that was mainly lived as a dual relationship.

In our university training we have often used group work as a resource for learning, a mode we have experienced with teachers with the purpose of educational activities, but also a study tool for us as students. However, in the laboratory on the function of practical traineeship, group work has been much more complex, because we have shared experiences and events that we all considered unique for each of us, often very intense from an emotional perspective. We have always tried to focus attention on two levels: one refers to the content of reports on practical traineeship, the other on the group process: two levels that are inextricably connected to each other.

So group was the common ground on which our work has developed, on the one hand it has represented the framework within which to elaborate our product of reflection, on the other hand it has consistently enabled us to confront with the process of our group construction.

An important organizational change then has occurred in the final phase of our lessons, when we were asked to further develop our reflection with the goal of publishing an article about practical traineeship in the Rivista di Psicologia Clinica. Both teachers and students have hailed this challenge, although we were aware of the difficulties we will have had to face. We then have met Renzo Carli, director of the Journal, to negotiate the paper aims and Cecilia Sesto who, as referee and teacher, has supported us along this path. This proposal has given us the chance of relating with a client, the Journal, and expressing our point of view to an audience of readers, a rare occasion in our usual experience of students, that are unlikely to be asked to talk about university issues.

In our first meeting the teachers have proposed us the exercise of the "TAT in acquario", an experience that, from a picture stimulus, *"proposes to move from an individual product to a group product, entailing to abandon one's own point of view, creative pride, personal creative ability, so to find creativity within the group"* (Carli, 2004, p. 159). So, it has been possible to experience relational dynamics that will have been proposed again in a similar way during the paper writing.

We have been confronted with the resistance to give our contribution to the group, so to obstruct a collective story. After this exercise we have tried to understand what had happened by using clinical psychology categories. Through this process of sharing of meanings it was possible to think of the difference between reaching an agreement in a democratic way by show of hands, which however leads to "get rid" of someone, and the possibility of reaching a shared target, thanks to listening and rules negotiating.

Taking a "meta" position to view processes and contents has allowed us to shift our attention from facts to recurring relational dynamics, trying to connect them with our emotions experienced.

In the first self-managed meetings, we have realized that the group construction is not a given premise and we have confronted with what "to be in" group means, even before "being" group. Effort has been the subject of our initial discussions, the absence of many people at some meetings has urged us to reflect on our involvement. We have experienced the difficulty in listening and getting organized by rules.

We have often felt that each of us "went one's own way" by continuing to have several irons in the fire, in a circle. What we said was either uncritically accepted or rejected and then attacked aggressively, two sides of the same coin. In other words, self-centered tendency prevailed, a struggle where the proposals made by the individual were to remain unchanged in order to continue the work. We then have faced the emotions evoked by the group state: the difficult oscillation between feeling autonomous individuals, each with one's own thoughts and unique point of view, and "getting lost in the group" by listening what the group was saying and experiencing a "free-floating attention" (Montesarchio & Venuleo, 2011).

To overcome this initial impasse, to be divided into small discussion groups has been useful: the presence of a few people have made communication more fluid, there has been less resistance in listening and following the exchange process that was built together in the course of the meetings time. A next subdivision into three smaller groups has allowed us, then, to examine the three main aspects of this work: the specific methodology we have used, practical traineeship in the educational view and practical traineeship in the professionalizing perspective. In parallel, plenary meetings have had a strategic function, which retraced the steps taken in each small group to define the following ongoing operational goals.

So we have started testing the meaning of the much-idealized sharing, no longer characterized by an individualistic and self-referential drive, but seen as a collective dimension; step by step we have built up a working group, based on belonging to a common project and to a same way of looking at the psychological profession.

To stay and feel in the group has allowed us to live, in the here and now of the process, what was happening in the there and then of practical traineeship, reproducing the same problems. The group has represented an useful observatory from which to re-think practical traineeship experience, thanks to its "meta" perspective.

Practical traineeship has been a pre-text for us to think in order to acquire new skills through analyzing an emotionally dense experience in which we all have been implicated. When the work has been concluded, we assume that our initial fantasy has been to be able to solve all the confusion by writing this paper once for all, to make a diagnosis to training with the aim of finding its dysfunctional causes and pathological aspects. To create a "user guide" on practical traineeship will have meant so finally making trainee powerful in respect of practical traineeship and not the contrary.

Acting this fantasy will have led us to define and crystallize practical traineeship by unchangeable categories, but that will have been no functional to develop thinking skills that have allowed us to give meaning to the experienced events.

During one of our meetings we have talked about, then, how difficult it was for us to abandon what gives power over somebody, such as diagnosis and categorization do, and how much the ability to observe, analyze and stay in relationship was still not recognized as a psychological competence. For us, this reflection has been possible thanks to an ironic look that has enabled us to develop a divergent thinking about our models of belonging. The ability to call the theoretical foundations of our training into question is, in our opinion, a valuable acquisition of the psychological competence, because it implies a series of very important methodological developments. First, discussing one's own theory of belonging means having the will to prove its practical and epistemological effectiveness, rather than uncritically relying on a specific model as a "missionary", with the aim of being trained in the psychological profession by pursuing an operational and undogmatic competence. Second, to be ironic about one's own theory and involvement in it means adopting a divergent perspective, considering implicit collusions and fantasies that substantiate them, like what usually happens in the different psychological interventions. Finally, to discuss and be ironic by reporting means to consider the tool of the clinical psychology report powerful in connecting the

emotional and contextual analysis and in looking at the opportunity for the psychologist to use involvement and experiences as resources and not as wrong or unnecessary data.

A critical reflection on the training function of practical traineeship.

The aim of this second part of the paper is to recover the meaning and function of the practical traineeship experience, seen as a critical moment in the training path of student in clinical psychology. We assume that practical traineeship represents a moment of discontinuity for the trainee student, besides reflecting on this moment may cast light on how to organize the training relationship and how university and students help to define, in a more or less shared way, the specific professional attributes of the clinical psychologist.

From the protocol note n. 4605/08, as above, and apart from considerations on the criteria for the professional registration, what we want to emphasize here is the gradual disappearance of practical traineeship proposed as a specific forming area in the decrees and regulations established by the Faculty and the Order. The decision to postpone practical traineeship at the end of the academic career in order to preserve its time continuity, in fact, deprives it of the linking function between training time and professional culture, of "the integration between the theoretical and practical knowledge", which represented one of the most innovative aims of pre-graduate practical traineeship.

On the other hand, the subject of the difficult integration between training and profession, theoretical knowledge and praxis, is not new in the institutional debate on clinical psychologist's competences and professional identity. Here we reflect on the "institutional" dimension that defines the relationship between university educational culture and professional models proposed in the different contexts of the clinical psychology intervention, so to show how it contributes to promote the emotion experienced of confusion that accompanies the student in his/her studies and construction of a defined professional image.

In this sense, it seems interesting to point out how the next reorganization of the academic programs proposal from the newly formed Faculty of Medicine and Psychology seems to tend towards a psychology training based on the acquisition of a "most solid" theoretical basis which, from a common three-year course, is "specified" by means of master's degree programs oriented to the various applied contexts of psychology, according to a "more homogeneous" definition of each training path from a disciplinary view. In front of the split between training and profession, the Faculty seems oriented to solve the issue with the idea that *a sound theory is the best praxis*⁸ postponing the actual confrontation with the professional context to a later stage, in which formally the University is no more bound to its clients.

University training as a value or as a project.

We think that we can look at university training in very different ways. Training may have, for example, the *connotation of value* and University represents the means, a sort of social elevator, which allows to achieve a sense of intellectual man, characterized by the possession of a "knowledge" that defines him, wanted by the student that is oriented towards the professional world. From this point of view, the university training appears to be a goal to strive for, within a process where the student is gradually involved in a variety of models as a "tabula rasa", models that often are poorly connected to each other, whose integration seems to be left to the individual's skills. Practical traineeship, in this sense, is that peculiar time in which to experiment - in operative professional contexts - the adequacy of the model or, to be more exact, of assumed models, by confirming theory in praxis. Besides, to face professional cultures that offer activities and constructs that often are far from university training, creates an emotion experienced of confusion

⁸ We remember that during an assembly, attended by the students of the Faculty of Medicine and Psychology and the representatives of Psychology departments, when someone proposed to think about the postponement of the practical traineeship, the matter was immediately solved by "a good theory is the best practice".

in the trainee that may lead him/her, respectively, to devalue his/her knowledge learned in training, experienced as "abstract" and inapplicable to actual professional contexts, or to reject the same professional agencies, because they are considered incapable of putting these theoretical models, institutionally recognized and presented, into practice effectively. From this point of view, it seems that students solve the confusion resulting from being confronted with profession by resorting, as appropriate, to fantasies of belonging, that is taken for granted, or devaluation of university training. On the other hand, training can be conceived as *a project* and be organized according to learning goals and skills to develop and test. A training, therefore, that is no longer seen as a value or a knowledge transmitted to students, as learners to be "filled", by means of the academic authority. In this training project view, the Other is conceived as a stranger⁹ with whom to develop a relationship of exchange, marked by sharing training goals and the definition of psychological skills, that may be experienced and analyzed in practical traineeship. The ability to look at the Other as a stranger refers to a training relationship in which University is conceived as an organization that offers a service and the student as one who makes use of it as a client. In this sense, student becomes someone having a development demand in relation to university and training can be seen not as a mere acquisition of knowledge, but as a project oriented to develop¹⁰ expertise in analyzing and dealing with demands emerging from the different intervention contexts, expertise that also refers to the possibility of negotiating training goals.

University training and practical traineeship.

We can now try to define how practical traineeship represents a critical moment with respect to the continuity of training path.

The meeting with the training agencies, as mentioned before, leads the student to deal directly with those same intervention contexts conceived by training itself, as well as with a professional culture that often is very far from the university one. Practical traineeship, therefore, puts the student in front of his/her expectations on psychological profession, expectations that aren't apart from training path, and directly refer to student's fantasies developed in relation to training and professional identity. We think that the confusion resulting from this encounter, if not thought, can lead to an experience of powerlessness that tends to devalue skills, or an experience of omnipotence that enhances the university knowledge and rejects training agency as a rigid organization incapable to see trainees' potential. In both cases, it seems there is an insoluble gap between training and profession. We can assume that the trainee's confusion is related to the failure of negotiating training goals and to no clear definition of specific psychological skills the student may experience during practical traineeship. We want to focus on how, without analysis and discussion occasions on practical traineeship goals, and hence on the possibility of founding a competent praxis on them, the only dimension that organizes the trainee's position within the training agency seems to be the fantasmatic-emotional one.

On the other hand, the confusion experienced by trainees, instead of being "solved", can be thought and used to redefine training goals. We mean here that precisely the trainee's ability to "be in confusion" and to think about fantasies through which he/she symbolizes the relationship with his/her training agency and path, represent the psychological skills to be tested in the "concrete" practical traineeship experience, which can be recovered as a specific training space. So, the ability to analyze relationships organizing contexts, from one's own emotions, can refer to the ability to use the trainee's experience as a resource to highlight the relationship that a professional

⁹ The relationship with the stranger is a mode of relating which allows to be able to chance symbolizing what is unknown as friendly. So it implies the overcoming of a relationship limited to maintain systems of belonging in favour of the acquisition and information exchange that facilitate the reciprocal development and cultural enrichment. See, Carli, R., & Paniccia, R.M. (2005).

¹⁰ By development we mean the product of the clinical psychology intervention oriented by the constructs of collusion and analysis of demand. For a brief proposal of the model of the analysis of demand, see Carli and Paniccia (2005).

organization establish with its client, external and internal¹¹, just based on how it relates to the trainee him/herself.

In order to explore how the student organizes his practical traineeship experience we can try to evaluate its function as a client.

Practical traineeship: the possibility of thinking about in-training psychologist's fantasies

As a client of his/her psychological training, the trainee asks the training agency for acquiring a professionalizing experience in a specific work environment. From this element, and using both reflection within our group and analysis of reports produced during the lessons of *Clinical Psychology Intervention* held by the Professor Rosa Maria Paniccia as a methodological premise, we have tried to reflect on the value of practical traineeship as moment of connection between the training context, the practical traineeship experience and the professional representation of psychologist students create during their degree course.

The first part of our discussion focuses on the analysis so called "establishing phase" of practical traineeship, that is the moment of the first contact with the professional agency, which refers to both the student's research and choice of the organization, and the first interview in which practical traineeship goals are (or not) negotiated with the tutor, as a preliminary and a formal project of practical traineeship. As mentioned previously, the contact with an external organization evokes some student's fantasies that, if caught in their relational dimension, allow to analyze students' emotional representations and expectations in relation to their training and the psychological profession. By reading our reports, we notice a common trend to use criteria of belonging in choosing the training agency. Specifically by belonging we mean the emotional need to refer to well-known elements of the context, so as to overcome the confusion generated by the contact with the Other. The search for the training agency that is close to the student's home or the possible use of recommendations or privileged links, appear to be discriminatory criteria that guide the choice and that stand out for their symbolic connotations:

After a couple of failed attempts in searching organizations where to work could be interesting, I settled for a socio-health association, at least located close to home, since I thought saving time will have allowed me to study for exams and easily to finish my three-year degree course as soon as possible.

This non-profit organization mainly dealt with autism and I had chosen it for this reason too, for 5 years every summer I was doing voluntary work with children with physical and mental disabilities including autism and I wanted to be involved in something already known and, at the same time, to treat autism from another point of view, no longer as volunteer, but as expert in psychology.

I started thinking about where to do it, if in Rome or near my town in Tuscany. Only now I realize that I did not have clear aims with respect to this experience, in fact, probably I felt confused even about my idea of psychology, psychological profession and the possible skills I could experience and improve by practical traineeship. For this reason I found and accepted the situation that was closer to me, both physically and in relation to what I had learned and experienced until then with respect to just well-known professional roles.

I chose to have my practical traineeship in a CSM because I thought that this was the most appropriate to my expertise and I considered public service as the right context protecting my professionalism, since I did not want to be mistaken for a social worker or thereabouts, such as I had been implicitly asked in the interviews with private cooperatives.

Each of these passages shows how the choice of the training agency is a critical time for students, urged to maintain a continuity with their university path and to consider their own fantasies about the psychological profession, which are directly connected to the representations of the organizations and contexts of the psychological intervention. The confusion that arises from this dual strain seems to be "solved", from time to time, by the search for a given belonging, namely, by the need to refer to well-known elements that can ensure the "familiarity" that the student feels

¹¹ By *external client* we mean, in relation to an organization, the person who uses the product/service of the organization itself. By *internal client* we mean the internal components of the organization that use the other components' work to function.

compromised in the relationship with the Other. Familiarity, therefore, as a fantasmatic solution to confusion, but also as a way to avoid confrontation with the context and thought on the aims and competences to bring into play. Belonging seems to act as a symbolic-affective mode to assimilate the agency to oneself, to make the Other well-known, and occurs differently depending on the circumstances: looking for a reduction of the physical distance from one's context of reference, living practical traineeship as a "trouble" to overcome as not to compromise the continuity of one's training path, completely identified in exams and studying, but also looking for an agency that guarantees the relationship with something known and doesn't leave students at the mercy of their own confusion. Hence the reference to the choice of organizations that deal with certain types of users, already familiar to the student or with which the student thinks is "easier" to interact, or to normative contexts regulating most of the trainees' tasks in a well-organized way, so that students can define and "preserve" the profession conception they feel the most appropriate to their training defensively, such as, by means of the opposition to the "confusing" proposal of a profession close to that of a social worker.

This reference to a normativity, to a definition of pre-ordained tasks, seems emblematic of a common trend we have found from reading our reports, that is the repetition of the same ademptive dynamics that characterizes student's training path, depending on the configuration of the teacher-student relationship, in the trainee-training agency relationship, and more specifically with the tutor. In this case, the given belonging can be evident in students' tendency to set a sort of collusive continuity between training and practical traineeship, by establishing a relationship with the agency's persons in charge in which it overlaps the teacher's educative figure to the tutor's professional one, in order to have a relationship in which knowledge is ideally transferred from something full (the teacher) to something empty (the student). The teacher-student model refers to the technician-layman¹² relationship dynamics: the expert, the holder of a strong model, who "transmits" knowledge to the student, as a "tabula rasa" to be educated. From this point of view, the relationship seems oriented to the student's passive assimilation of a "top-down" knowledge rather than towards the definition and sharing of educational goals and competences to develop. This dependency experience seems to characterize the relationship with the tutor of the training agency, who at last embodies the strong professional reference, on which the trainee relies to define his/her professional identity. The defining moment of the training project between trainee and tutor seems to be indicative of this performance-based dynamics, often described in reports as a mere "bureaucratic formality". We refer to the first interview, in which the trainee and the tutor first define the practical traineeship's goals. In most cases the trainee has to fill in the form of the practical traineeship project without clear ideas on what he/she is going to do in practice, he often "copies" forms already filled in by the previous trainees of the agency or transcribe what is dictated by the tutor. In this sense, a collusive relationship emerges between a "high" that decides and a "low" that carries out, a dynamics shared by the training agency itself. We want to highlight that the time of the definition of the practical traineeship goals, if it is thought, can instead become an important occasion to observe and to understand how the agency and the trainee establish a collusive relationship. In this case, it is a dynamics where the exchange with the stranger is often excluded because, on the one hand, trainee reproduces the dependency of the teacher-student relationship; on the other hand, the agency makes the trainee a mere "performer", thus avoiding to see the difficulties that would arise from considering the Other as a stranger, and holder of a training and professionalizing demand.

Trainee and tutor: a hypothesis for a clinical-psychology analysis of the relationship.

The relationship with the tutor, therefore, is mainly characterized by the trainee's tendency to seek a substitute reference point of those task-based modes he has acquired in his training, thus implicitly excluding his/her own comparison with the construction of a competence to deal with the strangeness and with confusion. Performing tasks is expressed in imagining to come in contact with agencies that hold strong professional perspectives, with "techniques" to learn, finding in them

¹² Literature on this subject is vast. See, for all: *Il gruppo in psicologia clinica* [The group in clinical psychology], R. Carli, R.M. Paniccia and F. Lancia (1988), p.93.
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a kind of "draft" that predisposes duties in a generic and directive way throughout the practical traineeship:

I had the opportunity as a trainee to be able to observe through a one-way mirror the whole diagnostic phase involving the client and the several professionals in the agency.

What happened was that a group of trainees sitting side by side, a little aside, acted as "public" during the "show" of the clinical case on the agenda. Thus the "small" trainees observed the "great" professionals carrying out their work and proposing strategies and possible hypotheses of intervention.

In this respect I remember a similarity that often characterized me during the observation of the clinical and diagnostic agency's work, I thought to be at the cinema. The lights were off, the sound was perfect and in front of me there was a large rectangular glass through which I could see the clinical encounter. Then, at the end of it, there also was a discussion such as when people talk about the just ended movie after having left the cinema.

An anger, acted in a silent and task-based atmosphere, started to move inside of me, especially since I began to feel that my role within the association will have been to answer phone calls, send schools several faxes which announced that the operator Tom will have been replaced by the operator Dick on certain days. We didn't get even a glimpse of the activities the tutor had promised us.

Having received no indications of what actually I could do (with the exception of observing), I felt pervaded by an experience of helplessness and anger at the same time for having been left at the mercy of these emotions that I could not express and communicate.

At that time, despite the lack of guidance and support, I learned to make do.

The first passages of these reports describe the trainee experiencing his/her passive position in relation to the proposal for a professional model strongly oriented to the technicalities. The "show", the "one-way mirror," the "movie screen" refer to a relationship in which the trainee can do no more than simply observe, to learn, as an external and silent spectator in front of the team or the expert who shows his/her technique in the actual clinical practice. But what happens when the tasks proposed by the agency are not clear or do not live up to the trainee's expectations? The unclear goals of the practical traineeship project, the lack of the trainee's defined and actual role within the service, lead to the failure of the task-based relationship that the trainee is accustomed to experience in the educational context. The frustration, anger, helplessness arising from the confusion are acted by means of the refusal or proposal of a new performance, looking for an adaptation to the agency's duties, however, considered marginal or totally detached from the psychological profession.

We can think of the confusion that trainee starts experiencing when he/she abandons one's own self-referentiality as a student taking exams, to confront him/herself with an unknown context. This experience is also linked to the university context, where there are different theoretical approaches and models that students often fail to combine in a process that allows them to build their own professional identity. This means that students often don't have a demand in relation to the training agency, but they think that the agency itself has to organize their practical traineeship project, to tell them "what to do". When the training agency provides the trainee with a kind of relationship that plays a couple teacher-student, the student can maintain his/her task-based position. But when this does not occur the trainee's experience becomes an occasion to give vent to all his/her emotions. What seems missing is the proposal of a relationship based on professional development goals that are shared with the agency. It seems that the implicit agreement is based around to be or not to be accepted regardless of a project that provides skills brought into play by both sides. The only possible relationship seems to be that between someone who gives and someone who takes, and if someone has nothing to give the only alternative is to feel omnipotence-impotence:

A morning like any other, the operator on duty sent me to do the shopping for the boys (that was one of the specific tasks of the trainees) and then, after my return, she remembered that she had forgotten to tell me something to be taken. Then she asked me to go there again, I showed my disagreement, feeling a lot of anger inside me. It seemed to me that we, the trainees, were the operators' scullions and consequently I felt

we were often considered like that by the young guests, who only pretended to delegate this task to us, conceived by me as something denigrating. Then I acted this my emotion with one of the boys, who had demanded that I took something to eat and I told him in reply that if he did not have come to the store with me I would not have contented him. I justified my decision that, in my opinion, was an educational act able to correct the boy's claiming behavior. In fact it was probably a way to show I had the power in that situation, not by chance that morning while the operators were in supervision I was alone and could act my omnipotence, increased by the situation itself. In response, on my return, the boy realized that I didn't have bought what he wanted and punched the ping pong table located in the living room, breaking it in half.

At this point, we are interested in focusing a subject that crosswise seems to characterize the different practical traineeship experiences as they are described in our reports. From a comparative reading, we have found no direct references to the possible practical traineeship goals, in a more or less general way. Here we want not only to underline the lack of sharing the training and professionalizing goals that characterize, in practical traineeship, the phase establishing the relationship between the agency and the student, but also the difficulty shared by students to be able to track and recover, through the later reflection in reporting, the possible goals and development lines of the practical traineeship experience. Paradoxically, even in reports that appear to describe a relationship marked by the ability to negotiate goals from the very first and to exchange views, opinions and emotions on the trainee's experience with the tutor, we find the tendency, thinly disguised, to organize the relationship in the manner we have defined teacher-learner:

Since I was accustomed and immersed in a collusive perspective represented by the pair teacher (tutor) - influential / learner (trainee) - submissive, or "subdued" to the will and directives of the competent figure, that request amazed me. I expected that they will have given me instructions, and I will have just run them passively, unconsciously I wanted to establish a mode of relating based on the power of rules and on performing tasks, on the social mandate, in other words, on the process of legitimation that is upstream of a practice defining ideal aims and no goals, but they were proposing an agreement based on the client, on the possibility of agreeing together on shared purposes.

Moreover, my tutor, stimulated not only my desire to constantly learn and know new things, but also dialogue and my asking questions a lot, as if he wanted to undermine the form of standardization and conformity that is so present in the classroom context. He told me all along that most of misunderstandings that then lead to poor results, derive from "the problem of the obvious", for example, by taking for granted what the other says, without asking for further clarifications.

These two passages, taken from the same report, refer to a relationship characterized by the constant dialogue between the tutor and the trainee, the aim of giving meaning to the experience from sharing purposes and goals, the construction of a commission in the practical traineeship relationship. The interesting thing is that the reading of the whole report does not show these goals and the exact commission in relation to which product has been built. It seems that the student, during reporting, does not consider important to point out the specific way in which, the goals on which the exchange relationship was based, but merely describes the relationship by referring to interpretative categories that are presented in an abstract way. This process takes on a meaning if we use also the reporting time to understand how the student emotionally symbolizes his/her relationship with training. Reporting seems to be seen as the space of reflection in which the student "shows" the teacher what he/she has learned through the use of a language that "exposes" the model almost in a descriptive way. In the absence of the goals' deepening, it seems that the relationship's novelty is wholly focused on the opportunity to ask questions, stimulate dialogue, terminate the conformity related to the "problem of the obvious", but without analyzing how this is reflected in the context and in the relationship with the tutor. The revival of the teacher-student relationship becomes clearer when the ability to negotiate goals seems to be mostly linked to the characteristics of the tutor, "enlightened monarch", who displays one's willing to talk, rather than to a real expertise in exchanging and constructing a commission in order to a training product. In other words, the trainee's participation appears to be more stimulated by a tutor who is particularly attentive and open to engage the trainee, not to leave him/her alone, within a "positive" relationship that hides the trainee's submissive attitude, who lives the occasion of negotiation as "unexpected event".

The passive role and uncritical and collusive view of the trainee about the concessions of the "good and enlightened" tutor emerge at the very moment in which the report refers the "negotiation" in a vague and abstract way, without specifying the effectively shared goals.

Practical traineeship between university and work contexts. An opportunity to re-think the clinical psychology profession.

Starting from reflections on the practical traineeship experience and interpretation of our group's process, in this third part of the paper we propose a clinical psychology function of the trainee within agencies. The interest in dealing with this subject derives from the curiosity to explore the areas the clinical psychology trainee can develop in a professionalizing perspective. We think we decide to deal with it now not by chance, since we are going to meet with the work reality. By clinical psychology function we mean the competence to keep into consideration both process and client, in relation to new social demands.

To develop these issues we have used the reporting methodology and we have created a blog dedicated to gather our work.

In order to share the process that has led us to this paper, we have devised a continuous parallel between our practical traineeship experience, teamwork and relationship dynamics of our training agencies.

The ability to consider the relevance of the users in relation to an agency has gone hand in hand with the group's skill, gained in recognizing the strangeness of our interlocutors: the Journal, the teachers who have supported us, you the readers, we as a group.

In our path it has been difficult, and still it is, thinking of users as clients. We consider the client as one who does not use a service passively, but may benefit from it, verifying the intervention's quality. Only now we begin to think of the variety of clients.

It has been interesting to note that the reports reveal a different emphasis on different "actors" of the practical traineeship. Ongoing, we have mainly focused on the relationship with users, giving them the "power" to put us in crisis. After our practical traineeship, we have started to share an emotion experienced of frustration that we have linked to the relationship with the service crosswise. At this point of our path we have begun to grasp the network of relationships between team, users and trainee.

We have had our practical traineeship in public and private services, specifically mental health services, associations and social cooperatives. We have mainly dealt with physical and mental handicapped people, children with integration problems.

It seems interesting to note that most of us have chosen psychiatric services, particularly Mental Health Centers, Day Care Centers and therapeutic communities for one's practical traineeship. Places where the figure of the psychologist is disappearing and currently present in small numbers compared to other figures, such as social workers, professional educators, psychiatrists and nurses.

However, to get into these services, psychologists are required to be specializing in psychotherapy.

If we think of practical traineeship as an opportunity to explore the clinical psychology practice, we realize the confused feeling characterizing the trainees' experience, in relation to the difficulty of identifying with psychological models proposed by agencies, sometimes far from trainees' fantasies. We argue that the confusion can be a starting point to thinking about fantasies and experiences that organize the relationships between theory and practice, training and profession, university and training agencies.

We hypothesize that in these contexts the mode of "putting off" emerges to avoid confusion. So it has been also applied to the writing of this paper, at least of this part we wanted to treat, by postponing the work, "because we have time" or "because it should be a well done work" or "because new things always emerge". We think that the basis of this postponement, there is a shared fantasy that only an "accumulation" of knowledge may help to learn in a professionalizing perspective.

The forthcoming establishment of a "hard core", referred to a theoretical three-year course within our Faculty, seems to confirm this fantasy, putting off the "professionalization" till a post-graduate practical traineeship, marking again the separation between the training and professional time. Even within the services we have met, we have often had the fantasy that expertise can be "really" acquired only in schools of specialization. As if "the theory is the best practice".

The Reports. A cross-analysis of our practical traineeship.

Exploring our report has revealed a shared fantasy on the psychology trainee as "chick" to be educated and raised. We remember the image of one of us, intent to write in his notebook continuous observations of what happened within an Integrated Psychotherapy Service. In proposing his hypothesis, during a team meeting in which he claimed to be recognized and put himself in the family therapist's shoes, he came up against being simply considered as a trainee. In this situation, we can note the helplessness/omnipotence experience, as options between which we often fluctuate.

We can assume that a further common trainee's mode of organizing confusing experience is the search for belonging, or to the model learned in the training path, or to the model proposed by the agency. The first emotional dynamics is so expressed by one of us: "The Clinical Intervention degree course is The Psychology". In relation to the training agency, this fantasy is translated into act, when the trainee starts considering oneself as a Missionary defending an effective model and connotes the Other as incompetent. The alternative is that the trainee is incorporated in the system/organization, uncritically adhering to the collusive myth that shape that context, "getting rid" of the previous knowledge. These modes may be acted not only in the formalized tutor-trainee relationship, but in the wider team multidisciplinary context too.

Another possibility, for the trainee, may be to consider oneself as interlocutor of a strange system, developing an exchange relationship from the first meeting with the agency. We think that an exchange relationship exists when the trainee starts wonders what he/she can offer to the agency and the agency itself is open to develop a practical traineeship project.

On the contrary, we share the experience of ready-made projects, the same for everyone. This finding is particularly interesting if we think that the way in which an agency relates to the student at first, seems to reflect the relationship that will be defined as time goes by and, more generally, its organizational culture. We also think that this mode of relating may be a mirror of the relationship between agency and client. In fact, we hypothesize that this might be a way to manage the stranger, placed, settled and controlled through a project that is defined a priori. One example is to consider a new user on the basis of one's own definition of the problem. We account a part of the report of one of us:

The two children I will have had to assist were diagnosed with problems of hyperactivity and mild mental retardation, but in practice they did not require no kind of special attention absolutely, since they were fully integrated with the other children and, therefore, they categorically refused any kind of contact with me, that is, their "learning support teacher even during playing".

To define the user by means of rigid categories doesn't allow to see the Other in one's specificity. Another report shows the difficulty of dealing with users who do not respond to the agency's fantasies.

Two autistic young guys aged sixteen, whom I'll name Mario and Francesca, arrived at my ward. Mario and Francesca are two very different guys, so much that, at first, it seemed strange to me that they had the same problem. Mario was more easily involved in the various activities that gradually every day I suggested him, but the more I went on, the more I felt that it was not the right place for him; he had a potential that was not at all taken into account for a possible development.

In the same report, the trainee seems to collude with the agency, shifting attention to Francesca, considered needy and "more autistic" than Mario was. We wonder if not considering Mario's "potential" can be functional not to call one's own competence into question. The "unknown users"

might perturb the balances which tend to be perpetuated in the services, often leading to chronicity.

We bring to our mind the new social demands that are presented to the Mental Health Centers. At present, these ones deal with not just psychiatric users, but also with the so-called "common emotional disorders" for which it is difficult to propose an intervention. It would require re-thinking the agency's organization and basing it on the client figure.

As users can rock the boat, so the trainee can break the organization's continuity, allowing the agency to "see" and "re-telling" itself. The trainee has a "temporality", as well as the user and the team. Time is, for the trainee, defined by his/her degree course and, for the user, determined by the intervention project. The multidisciplinary team is too often characterized by institutional rigidity. These different temporalities lead us to think of hospitality in its ambiguous role: the host's hospitality, but also the guest's one. The institution gives hospitality to the relationships between these temporalities. But institution is a system of relationships, isn't it?

Note how the trainee, "host", seems to be "required" by the contexts. To accommodate a professional training project aimed at a social improvement, or rather to overcome economic and organizational, but also emotional, problems of availability of many services? One of us writes in her report:

An experience of my practical traineeship I feel as significant refers to a problem I encountered during the summer camp. On that occasion, I was not in the ratio of 1 to 2 as we had agreed with the manager during the first contacts, but I functioned as a "joker" in the summer camp by performing the most various tasks, randomly and without a thought organizing the work, I mean without shared goals.

The "joker function" of our colleague suggests an unclear definition of the trainee's function, that seems to be used as a "stopgap". Because of the lack of human resources? Or perhaps because of a problematic definition of roles within the agency? Starting from our colleague's report, the function she has got makes us to think of a "culture of doing".

The problematic nature of serving a function seems to recur within a team of a socio-health association. Specifically we refer to an organization, aimed at home care for disabled or elderly users (S.A.I.S.H. - Service for the autonomy and social integration of handicapped people) and at educational and cultural assistance for disabled users at school (A.E.C. - Cultural Educative Assistant), met by another colleague:

This association seems to work for autonomy. But the autonomous person is who "has one's own norm within oneself". My hypothesis is that there is no sharing goals among the different professionals of the cooperative. Rather, each is independent in carrying out one's own tasks: social workers, psychologists, administrators, as well as the A.E.C. and carers. Clearly, the assumption underlying this autonomy is precisely that of presence.

Moreover, during a GLH (group working on handicap), the case of a child with tuberous sclerosis:

G. was assisted by one of the association's operator, P., and by three learning support teachers who worked with him in turn. That meeting was attended, in addition to the psychologist and to me, by the learning support teachers, the operator, the principal, the child psychiatrist and the physiotherapist. The problematic issue was the following: if the child had had a prolonged epileptic fit, a little valium suppository should have been administered to him rectally. Until then this task had been attributed to the child's mother who had then withdrawn her availability because of her work engagements. Now, who has to take this responsibility? The learning support teachers claimed it was up to A.E.C., the A.E.C. stated to have established a good relationship with the child, but though feeling guilty, she did not want to assume such a responsibility. The principal argued that not only A.E.C. but the whole school would have been responsible for it. The child psychiatrist said he disagreed with making a fuss about a "little suppository" and that, anyway, the case of a prolonged epileptic fit was remote, since the child was much improved in recent times. But here I assumed that the problem was not giving valium to the child in itself; the critical event mainly emerged on the symbolic level. In fact, the cultural educative assistant's tasks and responsibilities were not well-defined so, when the presence of the user's mother was missing, the actual matter referred to the person who had to replace her.

In this example the problematic definition of the functions within the team is reflected in the relationship between agencies that deal with the same client. Delegation appears to be the main drive. Our colleague suggests, in fact, that there is a continual "passing the buck", in a potentially infinite growth in claim. Let's think of the fantasy that there are few resources in services, and compare it with the sense of this event.

Through the reporting we see different ways of "staying in practical traineeship": from a "joker function" to a "thinking function". By it we mean the ability to "photograph" the relational dynamics into the agency, from the trainee's experience.

May the trainee's function be called Intervention? If we think of intervening as "getting in the middle, interfering to exert some influence" or, again, as "actively participate, expressing to give a contribution", we are reminded of the trainee's potential value. Far from attributing magical powers to the trainee, we believe that the agreed introduction of a temporary "guest" in a collusive system, if caught and thought, could be an opportunity for exchange between agency and trainee, no more "chick" to feed but resource.

We think so to recover a sense of professionalism of our practical traineeship. Exploring the meaning of intervention, we have focused not on a *problem diagnosed in the Other*, but on the *relationship systems*. We think that there may be some privileged spaces in which to propose a thought.

Our reports show that team meetings and supervisions can be used in different ways: they can support the culture of "that's all very well", symbolizing the user as the only holder of problems; or even the situation in which the working team continuously and exclusively analyzes its own process, leaving the user "out of the room". But there is also, in our experience, the resource of the work meeting at which the trainee can facilitate thinking about the relationship between working team and users.

Recovering our experiences related to psychiatric services, strong emotions seemed to manage the relationships within the organization. Let's think of the difficulty of dealing with not defined and necessarily accepted users because within a public service, or even let's think about the difficulty of identifying the resources, experienced as never enough. When aren't resources enough? We remind of the complaints of the public services: "too little staff", "no funds", or absences. In a culture of "more than you are, the better" or "the more the merrier", the trainee can assume a variety of roles, without using a clinical-psychological function.

Let's think of the militancy that characterizes these places, designed to meet the madhouses' closure. The trainee may be totally motivated to be part of this "big family", of this wonderful world, forgetting completely his/her own potential function. The main risk is the collusion between the trainee's desire to be recognized and the fantasy of a needy service, because it's public and lack of resources. A colleague of ours writes:

I was part of something unique, important and one-off. My desire to be recognized and to spot my value was so great that I was carried away by the emotion of being part of a whole, without remembering that once there was something that made me run away from that involvement. The inability to recognize and explore myself led me to give in and I was captured by the enchantment of that so good and efficient service.

It is as if our colleague was so affected by the feeling of finally being useful, to leave her training path out. We assume that also the user, by going into this kind of "muffled world", can leave a family context to run into a familistic one. We have experienced moments of stagnation in these contexts, which may reflect a sort of closure and defensive repetition of the organization, according to the physiological development of the agency.

Psychiatric services are aimed at users' rehabilitation, with the aim of putting them back into their context. In relation to this, it is interesting to note that in these agencies to consider the relationship with the user's family, that is a potential resource, is seen as a problem. By resource we mean everything that can be used to establish an intervention aimed at the client in a development perspective. We think there are two clients: an "internal" (the team) and an "external" (the user, the family, the services involved in the therapeutic project, the broader context). But even university training is a client of the these agencies, isn't it?

Conclusions.

We think that we can recognize resources and that a familistic system can be not infinitely pursued within an organization, but stopped and thought through the recognition of tools and resources available in that context.

Moreover, we think that within our writing paper-group the dynamics, leading to the non-recognition of the emotions that characterize a relationship, as they have emerged from the "TAT in acquario", are not missing, but also that we are developing a greater expertise to see them and to use available tools to think about them.

We think that a clinical psychology function, from explored and shared emotions, can propose a way to analyze relationships and not "given problems". Function that we have experienced within the group, to return a value to our practical traineeship, moreover bureaucratically not recognized today.

We have imagined of reducing everything that has emerged in our training path just in having practical traineeship. Recognizing the need of limit to make thinking useful, we hope that our contribution can lead to further questions.

We propose a parallel between this work path and a process of organizational functioning that could also characterize the agencies that have hosted us. We have chosen to talk about our training experience within the group and in our practical traineeship trying to connect them, in a process of recognition of the Other, so arriving to the goal of writing a paper. We don't think of this as a definitive point, but as a processual evolution.

Even an intervention project has its process, where the beginning and the end are the limits necessary to continuously test the quality and effectiveness of the intervention itself. What are the criteria for determining the intervention's duration? How does the team handle the end of an intervention project? Hence, the importance of the work on team, a group that needs to redefine itself to deal with the new demands it receives.

If we think of the group as a number of diversities, we also have had to negotiate more functional goals and strategies from time to time. It has been complex to recognize that "in here", in this paper proposed to the Journal, "each of us is present".

The clinical-psychological function, in the private context as well as in the public one, now more than ever, needs to be continually re-thought to meet the new demands that emerge from the social context. Otherwise, the risk is to perpetuate a profession deprived of its function to deal with "problems".

If today you asked us if we think that our practical traineeship has been shaping, we would answer yes. In fact, it has allowed us to live a real social context, to experience a confusion that probably was not just ours, and, subsequently, to recognize and organize it, we think, without longer postponing its overcoming to an indefinite time, but trying, through spaces as lessons and this group work, to explore it for making it something useful. Something that surely will help us to grow in our professional path.

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