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PROFESSOR: All right. So this, of course, does not actually mean that you have more time for assignment three. In fact it eats a little bit of your time for assignment three. Sorry about that, but I think this is a net gain for everyone. Right. With that out of the way, Mia Consalvo. Actually, a lot of you probably are already familiar, you might have taken any of her classes. She is the visiting lecturer visiting professor, visiting professor here at GAMBIT. Are you teaching something in the spring?

GUEST SPEAKER: Yes. Cheating and ethics in games. Brian can tell you all about it.

PROFESSOR: You can take this as the sneak preview

GUEST SPEAKER: Yes. This is a taster of a little bit of what we do. Thanks. OK. So it sounds like you all have lots of opinions, which will be good. So to get started and actually, I don't like the term lecturer because I don't get to lecture very much I'm going to start by handing around some index cards and I want you to take a few minutes and generate some examples of ethical elements, procedures, episodes, games, the more specific you can be the better. And I'm actually going to collect these at the end because, as Phil mentioned, I'm teaching this ethics and games class and I want to bring in more examples of this stuff. So this will actually be useful for me.

AUDIENCE: Talking about in games.

GUEST SPEAKER: Yeah. So we were just talking about *Fable*, but if you could think of a more specific example from it, a level, different choices that you get with characters in certain games, whatever you can come up with in terms of are there interesting ethical

dilemmas, situations.

AUDIENCE: Wait. Is this within the context of the game, or are we talking about in a multiplayer game your conduct with other players, and this kind of thing?

AUDIENCE: Or, when I was in Owen's office whether or not to steal the swag.

GUEST SPEAKER: You can do it within MMOs as well, or a multiplayer game. You can continue to write examples [UNINTELLIGIBLE] if you can think of them. But just to get you started

AUDIENCE: [UNINTELLIGIBLE]

GUEST SPEAKER: Well then you can start by giving me an example.

AUDIENCE: Sure. OK. So I have a couple. Fighting games, obviously, there's always kind of questions and debate about whether something's cheap or viable or should you be allowed to do it. Yeah, so if maybe I'm trying to think how to describe it so, people who play casually will tend to say, oh, if you do this with this character then it's cheap and you shouldn't do that, whereas the community at large and people who play seriously tend to say, well, if you can do something you should be allowed to do it, and if you can't overcome it that's your own fault.

GUEST SPEAKER: OK. So violating a community norm?

AUDIENCE: Yeah [INTERPOSING VOICES]

GUEST SPEAKER: Even if it's allowed in the rules but it's against a community norm. OK. It's like using [UNINTELLIGIBLE]. You hadn't thought about that. Evan?

AUDIENCE: [UNINTELLIGIBLE]

GUEST SPEAKER: Oh, sorry.

AUDIENCE: I have a bunch of stuff, which is related to griefing just generally. So let's just go for the one which is one of my favorites. So this is griefing for comic effect, or role playing griefing but doing it in a way which you are then going to write a blog about. And from your character's perspective the griefing makes sense.

So there is a particular player that played *EverQuest*. His name is Fandy the Famous Bard. He was on the good team's side and he grieved evil because evil is bad. So people who had played evil characters, he would run around and annoy in a really frustrating way, which eventually caused the makers of *EverQuest* to change the rules of the server so that people could kill him, where previously they weren't allowed to.

GUEST SPEAKER: What did he do?

AUDIENCE: There was this mechanic in *EverQuest* where if you were close to a monster it became aggressive and attacked you. So he had a low level character who was able to run really fast and

GUEST SPEAKER: I have heard of him.

AUDIENCE: he would run around and then run over the top of evil people, and then the monsters would detach from him and then kill them. Oh yeah, and the catch was that the server was a mobile server. Aside from that is why so you can't complain to GMs about a player's behavior, aside from there was a built in protection for players so that if they're level four or below so a very low level they can't be killed by higher level players.

And so he just sat on the cusp of that. Yet there's still a way to use his ability to go around and grief people from a higher level. It was pretty great. And he did it all totally in character as well, which is what makes this a good grief.

AUDIENCE: Is that me? OK. I think of *Portal* when they ask you to use your portable [UNINTELLIGIBLE].

GUEST SPEAKER: [UNINTELLIGIBLE]. You get to burn up the Cube.

AUDIENCE: Yeah. You don't want to, and they make you. And you've tried to leave without it a few times and you try to break the machine and it doesn't work. It's very sad.

GUEST SPEAKER: I feel bad. [INAUDIBLE] OK. How about you?

AUDIENCE: I thought of Jason Rohrer's *Sleep Is Death*.

GUEST SPEAKER: What is that like?

AUDIENCE: It's a more of like a story telling tool where you have one player that can control the 2D world and then you have one player who is the player, and they can interact with it. And each player has 30 seconds to make some kind of action, and then you make a story going back and forth. And what happens is you can play online with people, and the controller character or player will have some kind of story that they want to tell. And so it's up to the player whether or not they want to go along with the story and act like a character in that world or try and break the story.

GUEST SPEAKER: OK. What's the name of it again?

AUDIENCE: *Sleep Is Death*.

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE]. I forgot what it's called.

GUEST SPEAKER: Actually that's more grieving, would you say?

AUDIENCE: Kind of.

AUDIENCE: Is that by the same person as [INAUDIBLE] *Passage*?

AUDIENCE: Yes.

AUDIENCE: In *Ocarina of Time* there's the treasure box gambling game. [UNINTELLIGIBLE] achieve if you use the Lens of Truth. [UNINTELLIGIBLE] So there's a built in mechanic that allows you to cheat.

AUDIENCE: [UNINTELLIGIBLE] legit.

AUDIENCE: Yeah [UNINTELLIGIBLE] use it anyway so it's not like a [UNINTELLIGIBLE].

AUDIENCE: I just like include the [UNINTELLIGIBLE].

AUDIENCE: Lucky man.

AUDIENCE: So in *Civ IV* for each and every sector there's some sort of slavery mechanic, but I guess in *Civ IV*'s example I know. Many players don't seem to mind the fact that what is considered slavery is ethically wrong, but in the game it's affectionately called whipping, and it's considered a very efficient way of converting food

GUEST SPEAKER: What's it called?

AUDIENCE: Whipping.

AUDIENCE: Whipping.

AUDIENCE: You whip and then you [INTERPOSING VOICES]

GUEST SPEAKER: OK. So it's efficient but it's slavery.

AUDIENCE: You use granaries to offset the population loss, and if you [UNINTELLIGIBLE] farms it becomes a very effective way to produce, especially in the [UNINTELLIGIBLE].

AUDIENCE: [UNINTELLIGIBLE] a lot of people that way.

AUDIENCE: So in *The Sims* [INAUDIBLE].

GUEST SPEAKER: But you have to watch them flail around and die.

AUDIENCE: And they get tired and [INAUDIBLE]

AUDIENCE: A more obscure example that goes along with [UNINTELLIGIBLE] grieving is discussions over the point in the game the community is in MMOs. Specifically, there was apparently a huge problem in an obscure MMO called *Skyress* where a large community of the players was there to basically anthropomorph and RP. A large community of the players was there to play to win because it had a large combat economy system. And this, tactically, almost tore the game apart because it was such a small number of people over what should be the point to this game when, mechanically, somebody thinks they're alive. Also in *Canara Rey* you can blow up people, and they'll even put the star. It was traumatizing.

AUDIENCE: Yeah, but they're in a giant ball of awesome.

AUDIENCE: That's true.

GUEST SPEAKER: Well, it's not really murder but

AUDIENCE: I didn't want to get starred. [INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: It's starification.

AUDIENCE: If they don't suffocate on the inside of the kevlar first. [INTERPOSING VOICES]

GUEST SPEAKER: It's like the Borg, once you're in there you know it's a better way of [UNINTELLIGIBLE]. You're grateful.

AUDIENCE: So in *F.E.A.R* there's a nail gun, and when you kill people with it the game does a really good job of spectacularly nailing them to surfaces in the environment. So if someone jumps and you shoot them in the shoulder you can nail them up to the ceiling. And if you nail them multiple times you can have them hanging by a hand, and by their head, and by a foot from the ceiling or from the wall.

Anyway, [INTERPOSING VOICES] on forums there were entire threads devoted to sharing screenshots of your most spectacular nails, just the absolutely, most gruesome five nails to the eye suspending a guy from [UNINTELLIGIBLE] kind of thing. And it's pretty Anyway, and there's a lot of debate on these threads because most people will be like, yeah, look at this picture this one's awesome and everything it has blood spatters everywhere and all that.

But every third or fourth post it would be like, you guys are so messed up, this is wrong. And it's not real, you idiot, but that fact that you like it is still real. And people would argue at great lengths over this. And I remember chancing upon these forums and being like, is this messed up? I'm not sure.

GUEST SPEAKER: So is it more efficient in the game to use the nail gun to kill people than other [INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: It's a hell of a lot more fun.

GUEST SPEAKER: OK. But it's not like the game forces you to do it if you would not want to.

AUDIENCE: No it doesn't. You could use other guns, but at some point, if you don't have enough ammo for the other guns you would switch to the nail gun, I guess. it's a good gun. Shotgun is fun too. It disintegrates people at short range.

AUDIENCE: I've now heard they're [UNINTELLIGIBLE]. [INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: [UNINTELLIGIBLE] turn people into skeletons.

AUDIENCE: Yes. That one was in the expansion. Yes. that was the original, though. The sniper rifle is a rail gun that shoots a beam of electricity and turns people into big [UNINTELLIGIBLE] of flesh off of their bones.

AUDIENCE: Delightful. *Grand Theft Auto*, you can get a prostitute for money, you get help. And then eventually you kill the prostitute, and get your money back.

AUDIENCE: [UNINTELLIGIBLE]

AUDIENCE: And then some of the ones related to that is *BioShock* where you can either kill the little sisters and harvest them for lots of good, or lots of points, rather, or save them and get a small amount of points but you feel better about yourself, which actually in the end, ends us being the better way to go.

GUEST SPEAKER: It's like you get more if you save them?

AUDIENCE: If you kill them and harvest them you get 10 points, let's say. If you save them you get five points. But then after 10 saves you get a bonus of 100 points. So it ends up being more efficient in the long run to save them, more efficient in the short run to kill them.

GUEST SPEAKER: And also if you're going to kill them you should kill them all. Don't just knock off one.

AUDIENCE: In *Age of Empires III* when you are colonizing your colony you have the option of exploiting the native people to help you fight. They just help you fight.

GUEST SPEAKER: How is this presented to exploit natives?

AUDIENCE: You establish an outpost inside of their residence area and you supposedly train with them. There's nothing really there in the game, you just literally put a house of yours inside of their colony.

AUDIENCE: Also Microsoft's selling that for \$0.10.

AUDIENCE: Empires III?

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

AUDIENCE: Why?

AUDIENCE: I think it was just yesterday. I'm not sure. [INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: In *inFAMOUS* you can choose whether to be bad or good, and [UNINTELLIGIBLE] other people or to help them survive in a post apocalyptic world. And I guess you can do the same thing in *Fallout*.

GUEST SPEAKER: Well also, *inFAMOUS* forces you more to choose. Remember Ash was playing that in our class? And she said you really had to go one way or the other to get on either end of the spectrum there were special abilities. If you stayed in the middle you got nothing. Although there are certain things you can build off of.

AUDIENCE: So there's also getting a following. You can gain people that travel with you. Like based off if you're good, neutral, or bad.

AUDIENCE: I'm sorry. I was going to say, in *Fallout 3* there's one particularly really good example where you get trapped in this dream world that this guy is creating for you and a bunch of other people, which you don't know that it's a dream world at first. You know it's a dream or something but you don't know that these are real people and they're dreaming with you.

And he tells you to kill the other people in the dream in order to let you get out because he is in complete control of it. You can kill them and you'll get out fine and all the people will be dead. Or there's ways that aren't you're not told but there are

ways to just go around all of it and just get out without killing anyone.

AUDIENCE: They stole that from in *Baldur's Gate 2* there's a similar thing.

AUDIENCE: I was actually going to talk [INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: So the first thing I would mention is a *Emerald Items*.

GUEST SPEAKER: Just one thing.

AUDIENCE: *God of War*, [UNINTELLIGIBLE], how so many times you'll be fighting monsters and all of a sudden a bunch of civilians come by and you just let them go, but there's no fun there. If you kill them you get life and experience so it's

AUDIENCE: [INTERPOSING VOICES] reward you for killing them?

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

AUDIENCE: Oh that's bizarre.

AUDIENCE: You get your life back.

AUDIENCE: Maybe some [INTERPOSING VOICES] do that in the story.

AUDIENCE: Huh?

AUDIENCE: You're Kratos.

AUDIENCE: Oh, you are the God of War.

AUDIENCE: Well, you become the God of well, pretty much you just go around killing, hacking and slashing everything up.

AUDIENCE: OK. So these are just civilians who are doing nothing.

AUDIENCE: Yes, they're just running away from everybody for their lives from scary monsters, and then you come and just hack them all into pieces. Also in the game, the second one, in order to pass on you have to translate something. And to translate it you smash your head into it and then they say you have to sacrifice it in blood so you

just smash them into pieces until they have the blood sacrifice.

GUEST SPEAKER: It feels so good.

AUDIENCE: Do you have to do that?

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

AUDIENCE: Oh, OK.

AUDIENCE: In *Indigo Prophecy* you switch between different sets of characters. And one of them is a guy who committed a murder, and then you switch to the cops who are trying to catch him. In one of the earlier scenes you play as a cop you bring in a witness and you're trying to make up the artist rendering of what the murderer looks like. And so you can choose whether or not to make a faithful rendering and bring the cops closer to catching him or to make one that looks nothing like him so you can evade them when you play as the other guy.

GUEST SPEAKER: Interesting. If you make it not look like you as killer

AUDIENCE: Then there are other clues he has to find in order to finally track him down.

GUEST SPEAKER: Can you

AUDIENCE: How do you win this game?

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

AUDIENCE: [UNINTELLIGIBLE] events.

AUDIENCE: Yeah. [INTERPOSING VOICES]

GUEST SPEAKER: I mean is the goal to catch the killer, or for the killer to get away, or you just

AUDIENCE: It's actually an adventure game so the goal is to maintain the story.
[UNINTELLIGIBLE]

GUEST SPEAKER: OK. Philip.

AUDIENCE: In a LARP that I played a long time ago I was allowed to draw one item from a location every hour. The game ran from noon to midnight on three different days but I couldn't play before 2:00 PM. So I come in at 2:00 PM. How many items was I allowed to draw when I came into the game given that I already missed two hours of the game? And if the answer is, well, I can make that up, then what happens if I miss an hour half way through the and if I forget. No one's looking into the box.

GUEST SPEAKER: What did you do?

AUDIENCE: What did I do?

GUEST SPEAKER: Yes.

AUDIENCE: What did I do? I think I drew more than one item at the beginning of the game and I made sure I never forgot. So, honor system. A lot ofLARPs are based on the honor system.

AUDIENCE: So in *Final Fantasy VII*, like a lot of Japanese RPGs, you get used to the idea of walking into people's houses and just digging in the items you find, except in FF VII they actually mix it up a couple of times. There are a couple of instances where you go in there and do that and maybe it's fairly insignificant, you could buy it easily with a couple pieces of gold or gil or whatever it is.

And then the person walks out of their kitchen or something, and it's, did you just take my item? And you have the option saying yes or no. And if you say no then you get to keep it but if you say yes they're, what the hell? Give it back. I thought it was interesting.

AUDIENCE: I have something that hasn't really been touched on. When you're running a very large scale Guild in an MMO you reach a point where you need to distribute from these high end The community optimal thing to do is for the people who are in charge of the Guild to allocate who gets what so that you can, for instance, kick out the characters that's most important for the Guild to have for the [? game ?] to progress. But for the most part, actual members of the Guild don't really like that

because you would like to receive some kind of reward for having put in time to the Guild. And going a long time without ever having gotten anything is really frustrating, so people come up with these intricate systems for DKP for distributing your resources, essentially, to try to balance the interests of the individual and the interest of the community.

GUEST SPEAKER: How many of you are unsure what DKP is? Dragon Kill Points. There are these sometimes elaborate schemes for if you participate in these raids, you get so many points. And the idea is the Guild claims everything that drops physically. And you build up points, and at some point you have enough to buy a certain item.

So let's say you're on a raid and you just got something really cool last time. If something drops this time that you could really use, even though you're there you don't necessarily get it because you just spent all your DKP. And there's lots of Guild drama over how these DKPs

AUDIENCE: Primary source of Guild drama.

AUDIENCE: Have you been playing?

GUEST SPEAKER: Hm?

AUDIENCE: Dan, have you been playing this?

AUDIENCE: You end up by raids and then you catch them before breakfast.

GUEST SPEAKER: And there are black out dates.

AUDIENCE: Running one of these things is actually surprisingly complicated and hard, particularly so my little experience, I ran a Guild which incorporated this. One problem that happens is if you have fixed prices for things then you get DKP inflation as prices change. And what happens is and it's incredibly complicated to where, now, you have to reprice everything constantly.

So instead we went for an auction based system where people bid on things. And then prices correct themselves. However, people can collude in auctions, which

then causes a resentment in people who aren't in on the collusion, and the whole thing is just a nightmare. And now I don't run a Guild anymore and I'm really happy.

AUDIENCE: In games like *Pokemon* or *Animal Crossing* you can decide whether or not to change the time on your DNS or game cube. [UNINTELLIGIBLE] score came out I was like 10 I had a bed time. I didn't have a lot of time to catch up on Pokemon.

AUDIENCE: You can do that too and manipulate the RNG and get the stats you want. Perfect for [INTERPOSING VOICES].

AUDIENCE: There's also besides whenever you do the random number generator hacks in games in order to get a certain drop that's normally 1% but you can increase it to up to almost 100 but what I was going to say was that in *Fallout 3* you can pickpocket people. And something you do when you pickpocket people, as long as you don't get caught, you can take a grenade from your inventory and place it in their pocket, and all of a sudden they're, oh my god, there's a grenade, run away. And it will blow up inside their pocket and they will explode.

AUDIENCE: What game?

AUDIENCE: *Fallout 3*. And the funny thing is that that's actually an achievement to blow someone up.

GUEST SPEAKER: Do you get, other than the joy and giggles

AUDIENCE: Well besides from the joy and giggles, [INTERPOSING VOICES] you can pick their pockets, whatever they have in their pocket you can get.

AUDIENCE: That is still left.

AUDIENCE: Well you take it out as you're putting the grenade in.

AUDIENCE: You wouldn't want their [UNINTELLIGIBLE] to be damaged by the grenade.
[INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: Yeah, you're just putting them in at the same time.

AUDIENCE: [UNINTELLIGIBLE]

AUDIENCE: And it can be a little tricky. [INTERPOSING VOICES]

GUEST SPEAKER: OK. Anybody have any representative examples we haven't touched on?

AUDIENCE: I used to play a lot of [UNINTELLIGIBLE] online and they had a bunch of really sophisticated rules that applied in certain situations. So there were a lot of times in the game where you just flat out lie to people and have them go into situations that were unsafe for them. For example, if people were in your house in an urban [UNINTELLIGIBLE] game if people are inside your house they are automatically flagged as attackable by you because they're in your house and you might not have let them in. And they can run outside their house and they'll be unattackable by you.

But you can also put a trash barrel in front of your door, which only you can destroy and nobody else can destroy, and they can't run through that. So you would invite them in to trade them something or enjoying your meal. And they're in your house, then you put a trash barrel there so they can never leave and just kill them.

GUEST SPEAKER: Or just leave them there, right?

AUDIENCE: Or just leave them. There are tons and tons of rules. [INTERPOSING VOICES] It's really bad, it's really bad. I was part of the Guild that did this to me and then I [UNINTELLIGIBLE] I was like, that is pretty sick. There are a bunch of ways to steal tons and tons of money from people and they didn't realize that you did.

GUEST SPEAKER: Did you get that [UNINTELLIGIBLE]?

AUDIENCE: Yeah. Yes. But I feel like just blatantly lying to people as a tactic instead of just being [UNINTELLIGIBLE].

AUDIENCE: The question about real world money for in game items especially for competitive games whether or not it's allowed by the GMs. Those are two different questions. One is the ethical question from the player's standpoint. And the other is what does it mean in terms of the player character relation in the game.

AUDIENCE: I was going to say one thing that comes up especially in board games that have a lot of positive feedback, it's called king making. Good examples are like in Monopoly, or *Settlers* or Munchkin. And how it works, let's say you and Owen and I are playing *Settlers* and typically what will happen is say Owen is winning but I'm typically really far behind, or someone is going to be in a position where they have no chance of winning.

So if I decide he's winning and you're close second and I'm distant third, what people do is say, hey Mia, I will give you everything for your one little card and then you can win because I'm mad at Owen. And then it comes up, like you said, in Monopoly there's this question of is that a really jerky thing to do? The rules don't disallow it. It's an ongoing debate. [UNINTELLIGIBLE]

GUEST SPEAKER: Don't do that.

AUDIENCE: Similarly in Monopoly, the rules don't specifically allow If I have two [UNINTELLIGIBLE] we'll exchange that and promise each other immunity on our properties or something that you're not allowed to actually promise each other. Or if [UNINTELLIGIBLE] will always do it to you and will promise me half the profits or something like that where clearly the third person is now shut out of the game and can't win because [UNINTELLIGIBLE] advantage even though we're [UNINTELLIGIBLE] with things that aren't explicitly allowed in the rules.

GUEST SPEAKER: How many of you have played *Dragon Age*?

AUDIENCE: I've seen it played.

GUEST SPEAKER: OK. I've just, I'm playing through it right now. I've been thinking about these issues a lot. Actually on my first play through there's a scene where there's a kid possessed by a demon. You have the choice whether you kill him or not. The first time I killed him and I thought everybody did. I had no compunction about it. It was like die demon, demon die. It turns out everybody really hated that, all the other characters, my companions.

And this play time through I was I'll try it. And it was all this extra work involved. But

it seems like in the game whether you want to do the good thing or not it generally works to your advantage to do the good thing because you get more stuff, either better approval ratings from your companions who then unlock bonuses or you get stuff. Whereas, being the jerk

AUDIENCE: It kind of depends on who your companions are.

GUEST SPEAKER: Does it? Who approves?

AUDIENCE: People like the

AUDIENCE: Like Elven assassin, I can't remember what his name is.

GUEST SPEAKER: Oh, Zevran.

AUDIENCE: [UNINTELLIGIBLE] but she likes all the jerky things.

GUEST SPEAKER: OK. I didn't have Zevran the first time through. That's why [UNINTELLIGIBLE].

AUDIENCE: Also that one guy, [UNINTELLIGIBLE] that can spot [INTERPOSING VOICES] No, no, another guy. I think you can get him on your team at least. He's in the temple where there's that big dragon and where you're doing some ash quest or something. And he wants you to pour dragon blood on the ashes or something. I'm pretty sure you can get him on your team. Am I right or am I wrong? But I think you can get them as part of your final army. And they're pretty good, and they're bad.

GUEST SPEAKER: I just chose poorly, apparently, my companions [INAUDIBLE] moralistic ones like kill a kid. OK. In the reading you did [UNINTELLIGIBLE] talks about different choices and the way that game designers are putting games together. And he talks about two different categories, the open and the closed ethical systems. The open was more letting players determine for themselves [UNINTELLIGIBLE] they want to take and kind of seeing how that goes through, whereas the closed is the system that forces a particular way of playing upon you. And so, just kind of going through these here, where do you see them falling in terms of closed and open?

AUDIENCE: Wait. You confused me with those [UNINTELLIGIBLE]. You said open means that

you have the decision on how to value actions or on what to do?

GUEST SPEAKER: Well he says, for example, in *The Sims* with drowning, he mentions *The Sims* is an open game where you can do what you want and think about what happens.

AUDIENCE: A definitely closed example, it's not up there, but I'll give you a closed example up there [UNINTELLIGIBLE]. In the first *Modern Warfare* game they have a flashback sequence where you have to snipe the featured bad guy, [UNINTELLIGIBLE]. And even though in the game story he survives your attempt to kill him, if you don't actually hit him with the bullet the game won't let you progress. So you have to go and basically snipe this dude no matter what, the game won't let you do it. And that's just part of the story, that's just how it works.

And it's dubiously moral that you should be meddling with such affairs but you know. And it actually comes back to bite you later in the game because you're at the place where it's causing problems for you the fact that you tried snipe this guy. And they had you play the flashback but you have to do it. And it's all directed [UNINTELLIGIBLE].

AUDIENCE: Isn't like the Cube murder closed as well because you don't have a choice. You have to kill him to move on.

GUEST SPEAKER: The what?

AUDIENCE: The Cube murder in [INTERPOSING VOICES]

GUEST SPEAKER: Oh, the Cube. I'm thin ing Q. Yeah, that would be closed because you simply can't move on, and you just have to deal with your

AUDIENCE: But that's the joke.

AUDIENCE: Yeah, yeah. Exactly.

AUDIENCE: *Starification* is fairly closed.

GUEST SPEAKER: Yeah. You can bad mouth those people you just can't play *Katamari* I'm sorry.

AUDIENCE: I have a question actually about when we passed *Sleep Is Death* grieving. It seems to me that was intended by design.

GUEST SPEAKER: Which one?

AUDIENCE: The *Sleep Is Death* grieving directly under [UNINTELLIGIBLE]. Like the idea that I am a GM, you're a player, and part of the challenge is not knowing whether your player is going to play along with you. But that's part of the game. So I don't know that [UNINTELLIGIBLE] closed or open. That tension's intended.

GUEST SPEAKER: I don't know.

AUDIENCE: It's still open, right?

GUEST SPEAKER: I would say this one is open, I guess, because you are allowed to do what you want.

The example he gives for closed ended is one of them is *Manhunt* where you have to kill the bull and the more grisly you kill them the better in some ways you don't like it. There's just no way to get through the game.

The other example he also gives is *Shadow of the Colossus*. And that one, especially, it's ambiguous in terms of, OK, I have to kill these things, and if you play through you realize well, wait a minute, they're just hanging out they're not really doing anything necessarily bad but I have to keep killing them anyhow. And you can start to feel guilty but it's what you have to do to play the game. So you would say that's a closed system.

AUDIENCE: [UNINTELLIGIBLE] and *Indigo Prophecy* might be closed because you have to go on with the story, you have to make decisions such in order to progress on.

AUDIENCE: I feel like it isn't is that right?

AUDIENCE: I think the idea is that closed would be you don't get to make decisions. Closed is like if you want to play the game you have to make this moral decision you don't have a choice in the moral decision, you have to be evil. And that's one thing. And another game could be you have to be good but if you have the decision between both paths then that's open, I believe, right?

GUEST SPEAKER: Yes.

AUDIENCE: The premise behind *Inidgo Prophecy* was that you can choose to do any action in the game it would just have a different ending as a result. But in practice it only had a few endings but the premise was that it would have countless endings depending on your actions.

AUDIENCE: [UNINTELLIGIBLE] and *Age of Empires III* is going to have some closed Maid exploitation because for the campaigns at least [UNINTELLIGIBLE] there are conditions for completing a scenario [INTERPOSING VOICES]

GUEST SPEAKER: Oh, so you have to do [UNINTELLIGIBLE]?

AUDIENCE: The [UNINTELLIGIBLE] is open. [? QTA ?] is open. [INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: Most of the rest are open.

GUEST SPEAKER: Yeah. *Fallout 3* is definitely open.

AUDIENCE: The western style one.

AUDIENCE: The *F.E.A.R* nail gun is actually

GUEST SPEAKER: The nail gun is what?

AUDIENCE: I don't know of anyone who's gotten through F.E.A.R without killing someone with a nail gun at some point.

AUDIENCE: But is that [INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: Can you punch things?

AUDIENCE: Yeah you can.

AUDIENCE: You can't run at that level.

AUDIENCE: You can actually kung fu kick things, which is pretty cool, in slow mo.

AUDIENCE: In fact, I don't say all the rest of them seem open.

GUEST SPEAKER: Pretty open, yeah.

AUDIENCE: [UNINTELLIGIBLE] kicking people.

GUEST SPEAKER: You don't have to do this at any point, do you?

AUDIENCE: No. [INAUDIBLE]

GUEST SPEAKER: OK. So most of these what, do we say about [UNINTELLIGIBLE]?

AUDIENCE: Oh.

AUDIENCE: Open.

AUDIENCE: Regarding *BioShock*, would that be open or closed?

AUDIENCE: Well [UNINTELLIGIBLE] open

AUDIENCE: You have a choice but it's in your best interests to do one or the other.
[INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: So if you have only one thing you can do it's fairly closed. If you have only two things you can do that are very clearly defined is it really an open system or is it just a closed system with two paths.

AUDIENCE: I was under the impression that [UNINTELLIGIBLE] because you weren't self guiding the system was determining whether what you were doing was good or bad.

AUDIENCE: I was thinking [UNINTELLIGIBLE]. I thought *inFAMOUS* [UNINTELLIGIBLE] would also be closed.

AUDIENCE: [UNINTELLIGIBLE] I didn't get the difference between only having one option and the system telling you which option is the right option. So in that case some of these turn from open to close.

AUDIENCE: Like this one. {INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: *BioShock* would then be closed. *Fallout 3 The Dream Land*, would that be closed?

AUDIENCE: It isn't telling you which choice is the right option. You needn't be morally [UNINTELLIGIBLE].

GUEST SPEAKER: What do you think? Do you think he's saying I know what you're saying because he also mentioned *Ice Field Republic* as a closed option. Is it that there are two discrete, like good or evil, like the Jedi or the dark path? Is *Fallout* that concrete? *Fallout 3*. I know *inFAMOUS* is. You're either going one way or the other. But I'm not as sure, and I'm just asking people who've played it, is *Fallout 3* that particular in is it setting up a dichotomy of the good character versus evil, or is it much

AUDIENCE: It's much more of a gradient.

AUDIENCE: Yeah. [UNINTELLIGIBLE]

AUDIENCE: In *Baldur's Gate* there's two things. There's your alignment, which you pick at the beginning of the game. It's more like D&D style but it's fixed. But then there's this thing that's your reputation, which can be decreased if you do certain things, from the game point of view, in view others. So you can get into doing bad stuff sometimes without actually decreasing your reputation.

You can also just pick a evil alignment and then do only good things, and that's just very weird. So I don't exactly remember how the alignment really factors into game play. But there's a moment, for example, in the game, there's a big story for it rejoins it afterwards but you you have to ally yourself with either the Thieves Guild or the vampires in town who are competing affections.

So you have the thieves against the vampires. If it's the thieves against the vampires you got to pick one to help you raid a certain area, and you don't really have other choices. And one doesn't make you gooder or eviler. They're both kind of bad. But you have to do it to find the person that you're trying to get. That's kind of closed.

AUDIENCE: So in terms of *Baldur's Gate II*, I would say, one, there's the reputation stats, which

I've found never really into the [UNINTELLIGIBLE], which is some type of metric for your

AUDIENCE: That's not true.

AUDIENCE: You kill everyone and you have to go [UNINTELLIGIBLE] to do that. People in your party can duel you for your honor if they get upset at you. Kaldor dueled me, left my party, and then tried to attack me because I was too evil.

AUDIENCE: [UNINTELLIGIBLE]

AUDIENCE: [UNINTELLIGIBLE] I stood out. Like very, very specific actions that will affect your alignment, and there aren't very many of those. In addition you have these cut scene decisions, which are also very black or white, good or evil. But I would say there's a lot of decisions in the game that don't [UNINTELLIGIBLE], that have both that ethical choice but not nearly as much of a mechanical impact.

GUEST SPEAKER: One of the things he also mentions in relation to the open system, going back to *The Sims*, is that you can do what you want and the game doesn't necessarily punish you. You can murder and you can drown your Sims, and the rest of the Sims in the house don't move away in fear or disapprove of your action. It's just up to you whether you want to feel bad about it or not.

Or the game has no larger response other than let a Sim die once the site lit a Sim on fire. And I wish they rolled for his life and got a zombie back. It turns out the only way zombies happen in the game is if you make somebody else unhappy. So then I had to kill a zombie. It was sad. So that was another element to it.

One of the things that he talks about in general in relation to all of this, and a lot of these fit is ethics to your statistics. That somehow ethical systems are on this point or sliding scale and that you're heading towards good or you're heading towards evil. We were even mentioning this before class started that you can blow up an entire town but then if you give three beggars \$0.50 cents each suddenly you're back at neutral because of the way that these sliding systems work in bizzarely

mechanical ways.

AUDIENCE: Yeah, you can buy reputation back by stoning two temples.

AUDIENCE: It's like indulgences.

AUDIENCE: Yeah it is, exactly.

AUDIENCE: Indulgences [INAUDIBLE].

AUDIENCE: I have to close this now because I'm getting high off of marker fumes. I wanted to show you an example of one that we haven't talked about yet. Somebody mentioned *Call of Duty*. This one is actually from last year. It's not *Castro*, which is the new one, but

AUDIENCE: Is it the Russian hostage thing?

GUEST SPEAKER: Yes. It's the new Russian level

AUDIENCE: [UNINTELLIGIBLE]

AUDIENCE: From *Modern Warfare 2*.

AUDIENCE: It's like a competition.

GUEST SPEAKER: So this was last year's *Call of Duty*, and this was the optional level. You did not have to play it. And of course it caused a big storm when it was released. I'm just going to play it and then we can talk about it afterwards. Has anyone played this?

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

GUEST SPEAKER: Want to provide a little context or explain the a little bit more?

AUDIENCE: So the convoluted plot is that this is a false flag attack, which is staged by a terrorist organization, which is meant to frame the CIA to start a war between Russia and the US. And so the idea here is that you are playing a character who is undercover as part of the CIA who is part of this terrorist organization. And then you end up being double crossed because they, as it was just revealed at the end, they knew you

were a CIA agent and they're trying to pin the attack on America. So that's the

AUDIENCE: Do you have the option [INTERPOSING VOICES] of shooting Makarov in the back or

AUDIENCE: No, I don't believe so.

AUDIENCE: If you tried and shoot Makarov then the level ends with a fail, and you have to arrest him again. If you try and get through the level without shooting any civilians the level also ends. Makarov decides that you're a traitor and shoots you before doing anything else

AUDIENCE: Before he's supposed to shoot you later

AUDIENCE: Before he's supposed to shoot you, I seem to remember.

AUDIENCE: I think you can get through the mission by not shooting any civilians but you can't get through without shooting any of the cops.

AUDIENCE: Yeah, there's

AUDIENCE: If you don't shoot the cops then you can't [UNINTELLIGIBLE].

GUEST SPEAKER: Yeah that's true. [INAUDIBLE]

AUDIENCE: Although that guy was incredibly diligent about killing civilians. I did not play that level that way.

AUDIENCE: Oh, god. I did.

AUDIENCE: Yeah, that guy took his work to heart. I don't think that I would have like Owen says I haven't played *Modern Warfare 2* yet or *Black Ops*, for that matter but I don't feel like it would come to me that it was really necessary to just hunt down every last [INTERPOSING VOICES]

GUEST SPEAKER: He's thorough. He's very thorough. But it is also interesting that you [INTERPOSING VOICES] and that's all right that you think, well, I'm killing all of

these people

AUDIENCE: So that I can then kill him, probably, or something.

GUEST SPEAKER: Right, or it's for a greater good, right, that I'm going to get in with this group and help bring down this terrorist cell, whereas, ha, ha, not so much. *Call of Duty*, has anyone played *Black Ops*?

AUDIENCE: Not yet.

GUEST SPEAKER: There's a scene in it, another level where you can assassinate Castro. And I was just watching it

AUDIENCE: It pissed off Castro.

GUEST SPEAKER: this morning.

AUDIENCE: It did. They

GUEST SPEAKER: No the Cuba objected to the video game. I watched that level. It's not nearly as exciting as this one. Although it's interesting in that you infiltrate his compound, you get up to he's in his bedroom with his whatever she is and you shoot him. And in this clip the guy shot him in the head and it slows down to bullet time actually, and you see it enter his forehead and he falls over.

And then the enraged lover grabs the machine gun and starts firing at you in her negligee. So you have to kill her too. And, yeah, Cuba is the operation. But I don't think it takes a lot to get Cuba mad at the United States anyway.

AUDIENCE: Can you score that? I don't see the statistics, the like statistics. [INAUDIBLE].

AUDIENCE: [UNINTELLIGIBLE] see if I dislike.

AUDIENCE: It's pretty high [INAUDIBLE].

PROFESSOR: In the previous *Modern Warfare* game there's actually I haven't seen anyone draw this parallel, but there is a level where you are in the middle of a firefight, a US

Marine in some Middle Eastern war zone, and you are told to shoot at enemies who are coming onto your center but at such a range that you cannot tell friend from foe. That it's absolutely certain that whatever it is you can get there's a 50% chance that there's actually one of your allies.

AUDIENCE: There's also the really creepy

PROFESSOR: Gunship sequence.

AUDIENCE: the gunship sequence, which is

PROFESSOR: Which gets most of the attention. But I was surprised by the subtlety of the sequence where you are just in the middle of a firefight in *Modern Warfare 1* because it has that situation of you are being told to kill but you may not, even though everyone that you might be shooting at is a combatant, you may not want to shoot everyone in this space. I felt that made a more interesting, subtle point [UNINTELLIGIBLE]. That's kind of what the situation of being in the Middle East right now is like, as far as you can tell.

GUEST SPEAKER: I was thinking about this because I actually did an interview last week, two weeks ago, with some radio people and it was about *Black Ops* being released because it's the best selling entertainment media ever. And they introduced it, of course, on the segment as the ultra violent video game, *Call of Duty*.

AUDIENCE: That's pretty accurate.

GUEST SPEAKER: It is please. And one of the questions that each affiliate asked over and over is they mentioned the Castro level and they said, have video games gone too far? Is there a line that shouldn't be crossed? And I'm sure if they had none of these people actually played video games so they were just reading their scripts this might have even fit even better in terms of [INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: I'm surprised this got through.

GUEST SPEAKER: Well it's an optional level. You don't have to do it. Interesting comment right there. If it was JFK airport or US citizens But leaving aside just the knee jerk gamer

defense, well, it's just for fun or it's just a video game, how do you answer that question?

I know what I spew to them but I'm just curious in terms of what does it mean beyond just games as statistics for the good or the dark side? Is there a point you think where it can go too far with the game? What's the assumption behind that question?

AUDIENCE: There's a really disturbing news report I was reading about this Japanese game called *RapeLay*. And for me it was clear this is totally messed up, I can't believe this exists. But the part that was disturbing was the defense put forth by the developers.

And they were saying who are you guys to be telling us this is messed up. You Americans, you make games all the time where you have to kill people. Murder is a much worse crime than rape. Our game is not nearly as bad as, say, this.

And I was, wait, no, but that's more messed up. But, what? And I don't know what to think of it.

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE]

AUDIENCE: What?

AUDIENCE: In a *South Park* episode they address it [UNINTELLIGIBLE]

AUDIENCE: Actually, just online on that game in particular there was a backlash that I heard in Japan about *RapeLay* mainly because the game had been out for maybe two years and gone completely unnoticed until, basically, the West heard about it, American and Europe. Because I think it showed up on Amazon.com or something at some point. And of course, there was a gigantic controversy. The media blew it up completely, and so then, in Japan was it banned in Japan, I think?

AUDIENCE: No. [INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: But it had been out for a while and no one had paid attention. All of a sudden

AUDIENCE: Apparently Japanese politicians started cracking down on these types of games. And a lot of fans got really angry and they said this is just like your Western Euro centric view, and why is this backlashing onto us kind of thing.

PROFESSOR: The only reason why there was a backlash was because of political attention not necessarily because of moral

AUDIENCE: A lot of our moral framework is Judeo Christian in nature. I read an entire *Wikipedia* article on such things afterwards. Child pornography, as long as it doesn't actually show the actors, so representations, animated, 3D, whatever is not illegal in Japan. And there's no real political pressure either to make it illegal. It's just not part of the public consciousness that it's something that needs to be made illegal. And the point is not a weird point, completely crazy, that killing people is probably the worst crime. And the West makes games that advocate that all the time.

AUDIENCE: So the question of [INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: Would there probably be a radio interview with that answer?

AUDIENCE: In terms of the question of whether or not a game crosses the line first assumes that there is a line to be crossed. And second, I guess, my answer would be yes there is a line but that line is basically whether or not people buy the game. If people buy the game the game hasn't really crossed the line.

AUDIENCE: So [UNINTELLIGIBLE], the video reminds me of the game of *9/11*, where you are a person on one of the top floors

GUEST SPEAKER: Oh, and you could jump.

AUDIENCE: Yeah. Well, that's the only way to end the game. You can go any way you want but there's no escape. And so the only way to end the game is to jump out a window.

GUEST SPEAKER: That had the same response.

AUDIENCE: I was just going to say, back on the point of is there a line or not? I think the line is

not a line on whether it becomes OK or not. It's a line between I know we mentioned this before, but between pornography and art. There's ways to take pictures of naked human bodies and it's artful and people respect it and all that.

And there's ways in games to represent killing and rape and all that kind of stuff in a way that provides a message within this framework that makes it OK. And there's games where I think *Manhunt* is one of these where there's no real point other than just displaying just terrible, terrible images for the sake of displaying that. In my mind it's very, very similar to the discussion of is that image pornography or art?

AUDIENCE: See, I think that's the right way to go with this kind of a thing in particular. I feel that there's this question of is it doing anything meaningful in the game other than just being gratuitous? And in this case it's definitely, yes. It progresses the plot, it makes you think, I guess, a bit about the characters that are involved.

There's character development with Makarov here, it's showing the shady dealings of the CIA and all this kind of business. It's also making a political statement at the same time. So yeah, it's not just nailing people's eyes to the ceiling with a nail gun and what have you.

AUDIENCE: I was thinking, are there any games that are over the line? I could definitely imagine a game that would be over the line. You could imagine in *RapeLay*, or whatever it's called, there were a customizable character thing that you were advertising, rape your neighbors or something like that. I would be uncomfortable with something like that. I almost wanted to say that there is no line if people buy it, but I feel like there are some things that they would be over the line regardless of whether people buy it or not.

GUEST SPEAKER: People might even buy it because they are over this line.

AUDIENCE: Yeah, of course. That's why you would buy that.

GUEST SPEAKER: How many of you have played or seen *Super Columbine Massacre* RPG? How many of you have heard of it? OK. Does that game cross the line?

AUDIENCE: Can somebody describe this? [INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: I mean, I get the idea. from the title.

GUEST SPEAKER: Somebody want to?

PROFESSOR: It's kind of a *Super Nintendo* US style RPG. It has you walking around in this sort of *Final Fantasy* with Nintendo era kind of graphics with quotes and dialogue that have been collected from the actual news reports of the [UNINTELLIGIBLE] diaries and stuff like that. And yeah, it is largely about the events leading up to and the massacre itself. Yes, and you do go around and I can't remember whether you actually

GUEST SPEAKER: You do everything.

PROFESSOR: You shoot everybody.

GUEST SPEAKER: You have to sneak into the school. I forget which one you start off as, it's either Kinkel or Harris, but you pick up your friend. It's very RPGish in the beginning where you're in the room because you touch objects and it gives flashbacks to your friendship with this guy like learning how to make pipe bombs behind the convenience store.

And you pick him up, you go to the school. You have to sneak in and plant some bombs. And after those go off then you move through the school and you're shooting. And it's interesting [UNINTELLIGIBLE].

I've showed it to a class once in Ohio, my old school, and I'm sneaking into the school, right, and there are security cameras you have to avoid. And students, you can't be seen by them either. And there's a point where I'm trying to manipulate the character and everyone in class is like, oh, that way, that way. Oh, oh, you blew it, you got seen, you got kicked out.

And it was like this moment of typical gaming, like, oh, you did it. And then you realize, I got kicked out of the school because I was trying to plant a bomb. And this was based on something that really happened.

And it was that moment of like you were saying with the friendly fire and not sure who you're shooting. And it was like, wow, this is something that made me think about what about all those other games where I'm happy to kill people, and I don't really think about the consequences. And this is a game where you are forced to.

AUDIENCE: [UNINTELLIGIBLE] a really interesting parallel in a film that I could think of, *The Battle of Algiers*. I don't know if you've seen this but there's this scene where you are following the insurgents who are these two women who've managed to smuggle bombs into a cafe they think leaders of the civilians hang out, which is largely frequented by the ruling class French section of society there.

And there's this incredibly tense scene where they're trying to leave their bombs in the cafe without being detected and get out of there. And you're like, oh my god, are they going to be able to make it? I hope that they can bomb this cafe. What am I thinking? This is terrible. And you definitely have that same kind of tension.

AUDIENCE: I feel like people devote too much emotional energy into getting offended. They pour their heart and souls into getting offended by things. And the line for me is is it does it advocate and is it instructional? If it's not either of those two things it doesn't affect me really, and if you really want to go out and play some messed up shit it's none of my business.

And my line is not going to be the same as your line, it's not going to be the same as someone else's line. And because there is no human definable line it really scares me that someone could define a line. And since I don't like that idea I'd rather say that as long as it's not like and then you pull back the safety, and here's how you sneak into the airport, and then here's how you shoot this. As long as it's not something like that, and now please go do it, here's why you should because America is evil, or whatever.

That would scare me because I think that would be increasing the chances that someone shoots me up at an airport. But otherwise, because my attitudes are so liberal and someone else's attitude is going to be so conservative, and oh god,

someone else's attitude is going to be even more liberal than mine and be OK with things that I wouldn't feel comfortable with.

If I was allowed to draw a line, someone else could draw that somewhere else, either before or after, and that would just mess everything up. And so that's how I feel about it. And I think that the environment right now kind of tends towards that in that

AUDIENCE: [UNINTELLIGIBLE]?

AUDIENCE: Huh?

AUDIENCE: The line drawing?

AUDIENCE: Yeah, in that

AUDIENCE: Depends on which line drawing?

AUDIENCE: Yeah. People who make games are not intrinsically, on average, really messed up, and so tend to make stuff that they feel generally comfortable with. And those who are messed up, you just draw attention to them, really, by giving them publicity anyway. For every person who says that *Diablo 2* got an M rating because of violence. Now if you look at it today it's like little sprites whacking at each other.

But that was the line back then. And if that's the line today then this stuff is absolutely horrendous and should not be disseminated. But I think it should be, and someone else might think what I think is OK is not OK. It's just going to be what I think is not OK is OK. It's very complicated.

GUEST SPEAKER: This guy got death threats. Apparently seen this game.

PROFESSOR: I'd strongly like to agree with the a lot of effort being put into the line drawing especially the public display of, hey, I'm drawing the line here, mostly by politicians but also by people with some sort of possibly, often self interested agenda. And both by the game industry and by people who [UNINTELLIGIBLE] the game industry.

It seems like there's more effort either being used to figure out what is offensive and what is not offensive than to discuss the need that some things should be able to offend. That we should have stuff that needs [UNINTELLIGIBLE] There needs to be some stuff that crosses because maybe the line [INAUDIBLE].

AUDIENCE: And it's a method to sensitize adults to violence. There's so much violence these days it'd be better if you didn't freak out at every little

AUDIENCE: I think it's totally OK to be freaked out at things. I think that you should definitely say when you're offended by something, and I think that should be open to debate like whether something is a decent artistic expression or [INTERPOSING VOICES] So there's a difference between staging that you find something offensive and attempting to have these things banned or [INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: I agree.

AUDIENCE: I'm totally fine with people wasting words on saying whether it's

AUDIENCE: No clearly. But as long as because you are offended you think I shouldn't be able to look at it, that's the problem.

AUDIENCE: OK. I think it's

PROFESSOR: Or even better, if by being offended you get to now make your point. This is why it is offensive to me and these are my reasons for it. It might be more informative and actually better for society to get those ideas out into the open.

AUDIENCE: Suppose you get offended by proxy? It doesn't offend me but I can see how it offends others.

GUEST SPEAKER: I think there's also a conflation of taking offense and discomfort because playing these games might be uncomfortable. And I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing if it makes you think about, like [UNINTELLIGIBLE] was saying, or like [UNINTELLIGIBLE] game, this *Super Columbine Massacre*, if it makes you think about things in a different way, or like that film.

And especially games have the ability to provoke that in you to make you think because you're the one. Especially these games that force you to do certain things. It's like, well, I don't even think about is there a game that you absolutely refuse to play because there was something in it that you just really did not want to do?

PROFESSOR: That's fine.

GUEST SPEAKER: OK? I think we'll end there.

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Fall 2010

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