DPOP
NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2023

ASC DIVISION OF
Public Opinion & Policy

Chair's Corner

Hello DPOP Members! Once again, I am writing with great news. Our second year at ASC was amazing. We held our first social that was very well attended, had a much talked about Outreach Table, and continued to grow our membership. We were also able to present our first award, the Young Scholar Award, to Dr. Scott Duxbury. I know I speak for the entire Executive Board when I say ASC was a success for DPOP.

Although it seems far away, preparations are already underway for the 2023 ASC meetings. We will have our general member meeting, five sponsored thematic panels, and have secured a location for a social off site. Additionally, we hope to recognize members with three awards this year.

I want to just take a moment and thank everyone - our members and Executive Board - for their hard work in making DPOP a success. Although we are one of the newest Divisions, we are growing and making waves. I am forever grateful to each of you!

Cheryl Lero Jonson
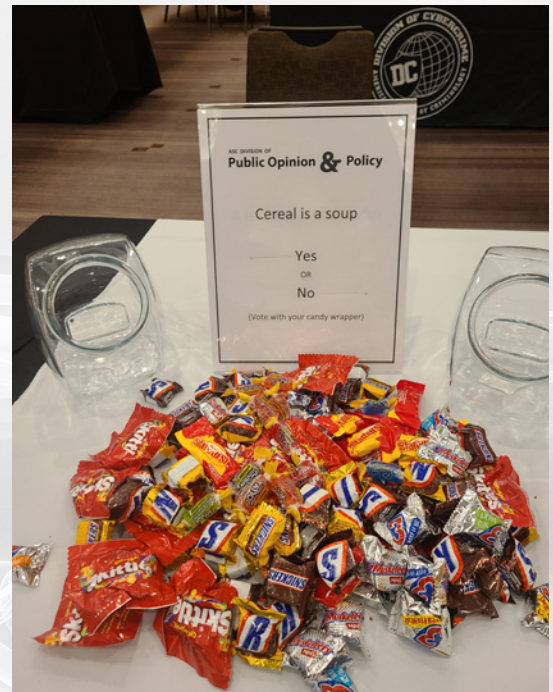
2022 ASC Meeting

Scott Duxbury receiving the Young Scholar Award from Cheryl LeroJonson

Amanda Graham, Kevin Wozniak, and Sean Patrick Roche at the DPOP Outreach Table

First Annual DPOP Social at Max Lager's Wood-Fire Grill & Brewery

Poll question at the DPOP Outreach Table

The Division of Public Opinion & Policy had a successful presence at the 2022 ASC Annual Meeting. DPOP awarded our inaugural award, the Young Scholar Award, to Scott Duxbury. Additionally, we hosted our first annual DPOP Social that was highly attended. Our Outreach Table sparked much conversation with DPOP members and non-members alike with our daily poll questions. Watch the DPOP Twitter account and website for information for about DPOP events during the upcoming 2023 ASC Annual Meeting in Philadelphia.

DPOP TEACHING CORNER:

Opting-in to Teaching with Public Opinion Research Survey-Based Methods

Amanda Graham, *Georgia Southern University*
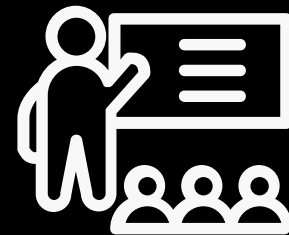
After our first official lap around the sun as a formal ASC Division, the response at the 2022 ASC Meeting in Atlanta from members and non-members alike provides evidence of our Division's importance for those interested and/or engaged in survey-based research in criminal justice and criminology (particularly with readers of this newsletter). But, the impact of this methodology and its research go beyond the pages of journals and newsletters. From my perspective and experiences, survey-based research provides a rich opportunity to enhance the classroom in at least three key ways.

First, and perhaps most obvious, the use of survey-based methods pairs nicely with quantitative methods classes at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. Not only can it be used to teach about survey methods (experimental and non-experimental) and data collection (e.g., convenience sampling), but also it provides an opening to talk about more fundamental matters in the research process, such as the measurement of constructs (see, e.g., AERA et al., 2014) and the impact of word choice on respondents (see, e.g., Farrow et al., 2018; Ashford et al., 2018). Surveys also provide an avenue for students to develop their skills talking or writing about research to both scientific/academic and lay audiences. Critically, it gives students a chance to learn about the entire research process, from the development of questionnaires, obtaining a sample, analyzing data, to discussing the construction of data, which are important for information literacy.

I have long used survey methods in my classroom. For example, in an undergraduate research methods course of roughly 30 students, I was able to quickly put together a survey in Qualtrics (you can use whichever platform you prefer or even use paper/pen survey methods), using basic questions from large probability-based surveys (e.g., General Social Survey), common criminal justice scales (e.g., low self-control, belief in rehabilitation), basic sociodemographic questions, and some fun preference-based questions (e.g., favorite color, favorite season). This survey was fielded at the beginning of the semester as a "get to know you" type of activity, with the hidden intent to use the aggregate responses and the survey itself as a learning tool throughout the semester. When the time came, I was able to illustrate best (and worst) practices in survey design (see the next page for examples of intentionally poorly designed questions) as well as informed consent, ethical survey-based research, question ordering, skip-patterns, scale/index construction for complex constructs, and more. Likewise, the class was able to assess the response options provided for these questions and how that may have influenced responses to the survey.

A second key use of survey-based research, particularly that from public opinion research and polls, is the use of the findings in classes. Criminal justice and criminology issues are consistently portrayed in the media. From drug policy, gun control, mass incarceration, to the use of the death penalty, public policy debates in our field are ripe for use as illustrations

Which of the following is your favorite color?

- ○ orange
- ○ purple
- ○ red
- ○ yellow
- ○ green
- ○ blue

Rank the following animals

- horse
- tiger
- peacock
- corgi
- wolf

of the potential success or failure of policies and the impact of the public's voice on driving policy (see Burstein, 2003; Wozniak, 2016). Presenting these polls and related research not only provide students with an overview of public opinions but also gives them an opportunity to think beyond the "n of 1." These polls and research provide students the ability to think critically about an issue as well as engage in perspective-taking, which is important for empathy and altruism (Batson, 1991; Batson et al., 1991).

As such, I regularly present polls about public policy (e.g., "Defund the Police," Graham & Jonson, 2022; death penalty; gun laws; mandatory minimums) in class to prime conversations with evidence. Likewise, the use of trend data from these polls allows for discussions about the changing nature of American perspectives on topics such as the death penalty (see e.g., Gallup, 2023) or satisfaction with police following a highly-publicized negative event (see e.g., Griffin et al., 2021).

Third, but likely not the last possible way to use public opinion and survey-based methods in the classroom, these methods provide students an opportunity to demonstrate their research skills at the undergraduate or graduate levels (e.g., thesis, dissertation, independent studies, capstones), which may serve to demonstrate student learning in programmatic assessments. Students, guided by faculty, are able to ask their own questions, collect data, analyze it, and make conclusions about their own scholarly interests. Additionally, one survey may be filled with various research questions developed by several students, providing a large return on investment when done creatively and with forethought. Therefore, the survey data collected can be used both immediately as well as stored for future students to peruse for use for their own research questions.

This use of student developed surveys can be done quite easily. After students build their survey in their preferred platform (e.g., Qualtrics, SurveyMonkey), outlets, such as the sub-Reddit "SampleSize" (https://www.reddit.com/r/SampleSize/), provide a place for students to collect data from national or international survey-takers at no cost; however, keep in mind this would strictly be a convenience sample. Alternatively, for a low, researcher-determined price, students also may use Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). If students have a bit more money, there are survey outlets available, such as Qualtrics, SurveyMonkey, Prolific, and Lucid/Cint. Finally, if greater funds are available and there is a desire for approximated national representation, students may wish to engage with YouGov to field their surveys.

Having collected data with students and on my own and using most of these outlets, each fielded survey, regardless of the platform used, can provide a multitude of opportunities for students and faculty alike.
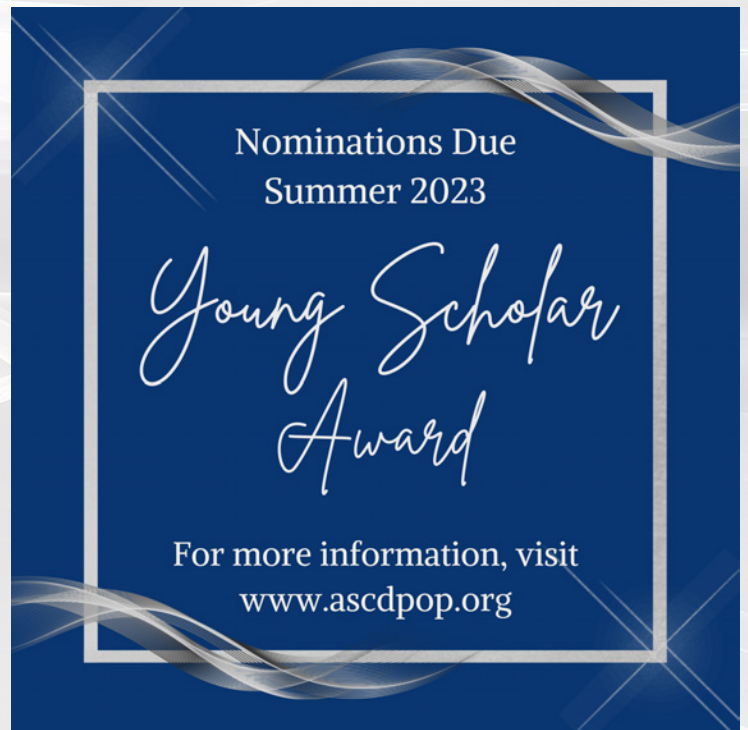
Ultimately, survey research and public opinion data are for more than just publications in academic outlets; they belong in the classroom, too! When students are involved in survey design and implementation, they are able to gain firsthand knowledge about methods and measurement, which are essential for information literacy and science. Surveys in the classroom also provide empirical evidence for self-reflection, critical thinking, perspective-taking, and empathy. What's more, they present students with an opportunity to engage in independent thought and investigation to demonstrate skills learned in their degree program. As we embark on our next lap around the sun as a Division, I encourage you to think about how public opinion and survey-based methods might stimulate student interest, learning, and, fundamentally, success both in the classroom and beyond.

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2023 Awards

Call for Nominations Coming Soon

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Call for Chapter Proposals

Agenda for Social Justice: Solutions for 2024

A Project of the Justice 21 Committee of the Society for the Study of Social Problems

Chapter Proposals Due: May 01, 2023
Chapter Drafts Due: September 01, 2023
Final Chapter Due: December 01, 2023
Anticipated Publication Date: August 2024

The Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP) and the Justice 21 Committee are beginning our work on the seventh iteration of the publication the *Agenda for Social Justice*. This iteration of the series – *Agenda for Social Justice: Solutions for 2024* – is the US-nationally focused volume that coincides with the US Presidential election cycle. It is designed to inform the public-at-large about America's most pressing social problems and to propose actionable responses and solutions to those social problems.

This project affirms the resiliency and commitment of the SSSP to social justice scholarship. This volume will be an "agenda for social justice," in that it will contain specific recommendations for action for elected officials, policy makers, and community members.

This work is scheduled to be published by Policy Press, an academic publisher at the University of Bristol, UK, as a project in public sociology.

We ask you, individually or with colleagues, to submit a brief proposal (1-2 pages max.) identifying a significant social problem in America. The proposal should include responses to each of the following prompts:

-Identify and define a concrete social problem of national scope; and then answer the following three prompts:

  -*Prompt 1:* Clearly define the social problem and scope of the social problem for a non-specialist/generalist audience (i.e., what is the definition and extent of the social problem?).
  -*Prompt 2:* Describe how we know this is a pressing social problem (i.e., what are the sources of data, information, or evidence that tell us about this social problem?).
  -*Prompt 3:* Explain the kinds of law, policy or social actions that can alleviate the social problem. These should be viable and actionable solutions for reducing, mitigating, solving, or abolishing the social problem.

Please submit a copy of your 1 to 2-page proposal using the Google Form (https://forms.gle/fb573F1dA5EWfMTC8) by May 01, 2023. Chapter drafts will be due September 01, 2023, and final manuscripts will be due December 01, 2023. Final contributions will be limited to 3000 words maximum (or roughly ten double-spaced manuscript pages). The volume is expected to launch in August 2024.

Call for Chapter Proposals

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For more information on the **J-21 Project**, see Robert Perrucci's presidential address in the May 2001 issue of Social Problems ("Inventing Social Justice"). Past rapid response e-volumes produced by the J-21 committee are on the following SSSP webpage (https://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/m/908/The_Agenda_Rapid_Response_Volumes).

Topics of Interest Include, but are not limited to:

- Agricultural and Food Policy
- Authoritarianism
- #BLM Black Lives Matter
- Children's Rights/Issues
- Climate Change
- Commodity Chains
- Corporate Regulation
- Crime and Justice
- Declining Middle Class
- Disability Rights
- Drug Policy
- Economic Policy & Inequality
- Education
- Employment/Unemployment
- Energy Policy
- Environmental Policy
- Family Policy
- Financial Systems
- Foreign Policy
- Gender Equity
- Global/Regional Governance
- Globalization
- Green Economy
- Gun Violence/Control
- Hate Crimes & Groups
- Health Care Policy
- Human Rights & Violations
- Human Trafficking/Slavery

- Immigration/Border Issues
- Income Security/Social Security
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- Labor Issues and Rights
- LGBTQ+ Rights
- Mass Incarceration
- Mass Media
- #MeToo Movement
- Migration
- Militarization
- Minority Rights
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- National Security
- Nuclear Policy
- Police Violence & Militarization
- Political Processes/Campaign Finance
- Population/Demography
- Privacy/Surveillance
- Protest Movements
- Racism
- Refugees/Asylum/Detention
- Religious Issues
- Reproductive Rights
- Resource Extraction
- Rule of Law
- Sex Work & Sex Workers

- Sexual Assault and Harassment
- Social Welfare Systems
- Student Loans
- Terrorism
- Trade Agreements
- Violence against Women
- Voting Rights/Barriers
- War/Peace

DPOP RESEARCH CORNER:

Using Anchoring Vignettes to Address the Measurement of Probability in Self-Report Surveys

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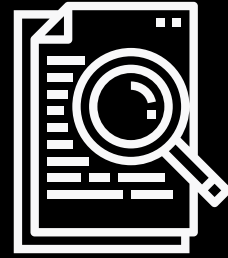
Measures of the perceived likelihood of an event (i.e., risk) are common in public opinion research in criminology and criminal justice. Indeed, perceived likelihood (usually, of apprehension) is the preeminent deterrence variable in the literature on offender decision-making (Apel, 2013; Pratt et al., 2006). However, there is little consensus on how to measure this construct. There are two primary ways to elicit subjective perceptions of probability in self-report surveys:

1. Verbal questions (e.g., "How likely is it that you will be caught if you commit [CRIME]?"; with responses ranging in a Likert-style scale such as "1. Very Unlikely" to "7. Very Likely"), and:

2. Numeric questions (e.g., "What is the percent chance that you will be caught if you commit [CRIME]?"; where responses range on the ratio-level in a raw percentage from 0–100 percent).

The measures employed in the extant literature vary extensively, and often appear without justification. Some studies have employed Likert scales (e.g., Pickett et al., 2018; van Gelder & de Vries, 2014), others have used "percent chance" and other numeric scales ranging from 0 to 100 (e.g., Kamerdze et al., 2014; Pogarsky et al., 2017), and still others have used a mixed 11-point scale (e.g., Loughran et al., 2011; Loughran et al., 2012) that may be functionally numeric to respondents (with each category signaling a 10 percent increase in probability from 0 to 100) despite verbal labels.

Studies that have employed numeric measures (e.g., Kamerdze et al., 2014; Paternoster et al., 2017; Pogarsky et al., 2017) typically assume respondents' reported perceived probabilities of apprehension (e.g., a 20% chance of being caught for drunk driving) are precise, literal, and durable numeric estimates (see Thomas et al., 2018, p. 60). However, Kahneman (2011, p. 150); argues that for most people, "probability … is a vague notion, related to uncertainty, propensity, plausibility, and surprise…they do not try to judge probability as statisticians and philosophers use the word." Some research finds respondents prefer to receive information about risk in numeric form, but to communicate it to others using verbal terms (Erev & Cohen, 1990; Wallsten et al., 1993).

Probability is a complex concept, and individual survey respondents may understand questions about it in systematically different ways (Brady, 1985), also called "differential item functioning" (King et al., 2004, p. 191; see also Ward et al., 2017). Differential item functioning (DIF) often occurs in questions on subjects that are significant, yet abstract, and which are commonly explained with reference to examples (e.g., political efficacy). An increasingly

prevalent method to account for DIF is the use of anchoring vignettes (Hopkins & King, 2010; King et al., 2004; King & Wand, 2007). This approach explicitly presents respondents with examples of the concept of interest, presents questions about these examples, then uses the responses "to estimate each person's unique DIF, and to correct for it" (King et al. 2004: 193).

Using the anchoring vignette method to deal with the seeming interpersonal incomparability of verbal and numeric measures of apprehension risk could proceed in the following steps. First, respondents could be asked how likely or unlikely (1 = Very Unlikely; 5 = Very Likely) it is they would be caught if they committed each seven different generic crimes (e.g., "Stole something like a video game from a store"; "Drove drunk"). Normally, the raw scores for these answers would be combined in a generalized likelihood of apprehension scale, but this scale could be subject to DIF across respondents. Instead, respondents could be presented with three anchoring vignettes:

1. Bradley goes to local bar on Friday night and drinks beer until he is drunk. He decides to drive home on Central Avenue. On this street on Friday nights, about 1 out of every 4 drunk drivers get pulled over.

2. Melissa sneaks into a movie at the local mall without paying. About 10 out of every 20 people who do this will be caught. How likely or unlikely is it that Melissa will be caught?

3. Michael goes to a dance club and gets into an argument with another guy. He sucker punches the guy and knocks him out, and then runs out of the club. About 75 out of every 100 people who punch someone in a club like this will be arrested.

Respondents could then be asked, to estimate the likelihood (1 to 5) that the character in the story would be arrested. The goal here would be to have respondents map verbal assessments of probability, with which they may be more comfortable, onto the numeric information associated with objective measures of apprehension risk (e.g., "1 out of 4").

Finally, the research could use a non-parametric method to standardize the responses. For each respondent, a new "vignette-corrected" version of each likelihood measure is created by recoding the original response relative to the respondents' answers to the three vignettes. Respondents are thus given a new 7-point score: 1 if their personal likelihood measure was below what they reported for Bradley, 2 if equal to Bradley, 3 if between Bradley and Melissa, 4 if equal to Melissa, 5 if between Melissa and Michael, 6 if equal to Michael, and 7 if above Michael. See Figure 1 for an example of two respondents' answer would be recoded.

In Figure 1, the general likelihood of apprehension index for Respondent 1 (GenLike1) appears to be lower than for Respondent 2. Yet when the vignette assessments of Respondent 2 are accounted for, and made comparable to those of Respondent 1, Respondent 1's general likelihood of apprehension index is higher than Respondent 2. The resulting variable is theoretically DIF-free (King et al., 2004).

While this coding procedure will standardize responses, it does assume that the respondent has ranked the vignettes consistently by using the base-rate information

Figure 1. Comparing Assessments of Likelihood using Anchoring Vignettes
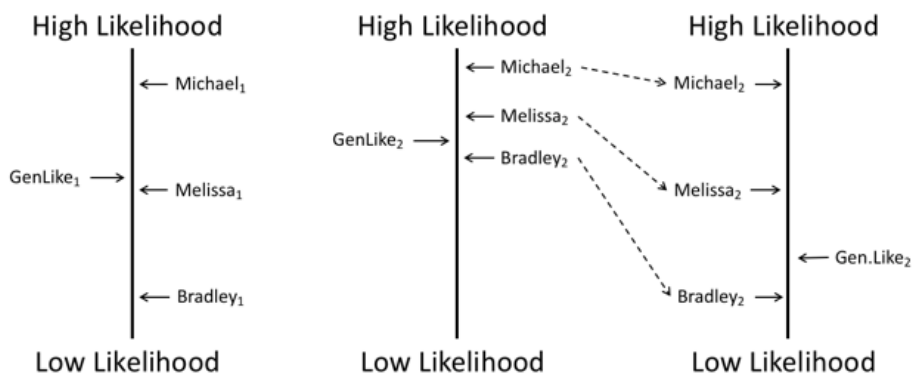
Note: This figure it directly adapted from King et al. (2004, p. 195) to illustrate the example in the context of apprehension risk.

provided in each vignette. In other words, Bradley should be ranked as less likely to be apprehended than Melissa, and Bradley and Melissa should be ranked less likely than Michael. When a respondent ranks two vignettes with the same likelihood (i.e., a "tie") or ranks a less risky vignette as carrying greater risk than a riskier vignette (i.e., an "inconsistency") the simple non-parametric coding approach cannot account for them.

In Spring 2018, I (along with Justin T. Pickett, Jonathan Intravia, and Andrew Thompson) conducted a survey of college students (n = 553) to assess the anchoring vignette method in the context of apprehension risk perceptions. We provided these students with the vignettes noted above and found that 32.9% of the sample had some sort of "inconsistency," and more than half (56.6%) reported some sort of "tie."

This suggests a strong lack of numeracy in the population and that future research may not be able to employ the non-parametric method. Fortunately, there are parametric methods that can overcome these issues (King et al., 2004, p. 195), most notably compound hierarchical linear ("chopit") models (see e.g., Paccagnella, 2011). These models both avoid the statistical inefficiencies of the nonparametric approach, and allow for multiple measures of the underlying concept of interest (King et al., 2004, pp. 196-197; see also Rabe-Hesketh & Skrondal, 2002). Researchers should consider adopting anchoring vignettes and compound hierarchical linear ("chopit") models in tandem to account for DIF in the reporting of probabilities.

This article was partially adapted from:
Roche, S. P., Pickett, J. T., Intravia, J., & Thompson, A. J. (2022). On the measurement of subjective apprehension risk. *Criminal Justice Review, 47*(1), 77-93.

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Publications

Cullen, F. T., Graham., A., Hannan, K. R., Burton, A. L., Butler, L., & Burton, V. S., Jr. (2022). Catholics and capital punishment: Do Pope Francis's teachings matter in policy preferences? *Punishment & Society, 24*(4), 592–621.

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New Positions

Jaclyn Schildkraut was named Executive Director, Regional Gun Violence Research Consortium, Rockefeller Institute of Government

Thank You to Our 2023 Committee Members

AWARDS - Justin T. Pickett, Chair

Matthew J. Dolliver, *The University of Alabama*
Omeed Ilchi, *Purdue University Northwest*
Angela Jones, *Texas State University*
Robert Lytle, *University of Arkansas at Little Rock*
Kelly Socia, *University of Massachusetts Lowell*

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Colleen Berryessa, *Rutgers University*
Jaclyn Schildkraut, *Regional Gun Violence Research Consortium*

CONSTITUTION/BY-LAWS - Justin T. Pickett, Chair

Madison Gerdes, *Northeastern University*
Ráchael Powers, *University of South Florida*

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Erin Kearns, *University of Nebraska at Omaha*
Jodi Lane, *University of Florida*
Michelle Protas, *University of Cincinnati*

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Ashley Balavender, *Rutgers University*
John Navarro, *Sam Houston State University*

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Adam Dunbar, *University of Nevada, Reno*
Danielle Fenimore, *Police Executive Research Forum*
Jason Silver, *Rutgers University*
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