

LOCAL REGULARITY OF SOLUTIONS TO TIME-DEPENDENT SCHRÖDINGER EQUATIONS WITH SMOOTH POTENTIALS

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Abstract. Consider solutions to the Schrödinger equation $i\partial u/\partial t = -Pu + Vu$ in a half-space $\{(x, t) \in \mathbf{R}^n \times \mathbf{R}_+\}$ with given boundary values $u = f$ on \mathbf{R}^n . Here P is an elliptic constant-coefficient operator in x , and $V = V(x)$ is a suitable potential. We prove several results about local regularity and boundary behaviour which were known in the case $V = 0$. In particular, if f belongs to a Sobolev space, then u is locally in a mixed Sobolev space. Moreover, u converges to its boundary values along quasi-every vertical ray, and the corresponding maximal function can be estimated.

1. Introduction

We define the Fourier transform in \mathbf{R}^n by setting

$$\hat{f}(\xi) = \int_{\mathbf{R}^n} e^{-i\xi \cdot x} f(x) dx$$

and also introduce Sobolev spaces $H_s = H_s(\mathbf{R}^n)$, $s \in \mathbf{R}$, by defining the norm

$$\|f\|_{H_s} = \left(\int_{\mathbf{R}^n} (1 + |\xi|^2)^s |\hat{f}(\xi)|^2 d\xi \right)^{1/2}.$$

Let p be a polynomial in \mathbf{R}^n which is real and elliptic, i.e. its principal part does not vanish in $\mathbf{R}^n \setminus \{0\}$. We assume that the degree m of p is at least 2. Then set $P = p(D)$, where $D = (D_1, \dots, D_n)$ and $D_k = -i\partial/\partial x_k$.

Let V be a real-valued function in $C^\infty(\mathbf{R}^n)$ with $D^\alpha V$ bounded for every α . We define an operator $H = -P + V$ by setting $Hf = -Pf + Vf$ for $f \in H_m$.

Then H is a self-adjoint operator on $L^2(\mathbf{R}^n)$ and e^{-itH} is a unitary operator for $t \in \mathbf{R}$. We set $u(\cdot, t) = e^{-itH}f$, $f \in L^2(\mathbf{R}^n)$. Then u is a measurable function in \mathbf{R}^{n+1} , and it is well known that u satisfies the Schrödinger equation $i\partial u/\partial t = Hu$ for $f \in H_m$, where the derivative is taken in the L^2 sense. Taking the derivatives in the distribution sense, one also has $i\partial u/\partial t = -Pu + Vu$ for $f \in L^2$.

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We shall here study the regularity of u when the initial value f belongs to Sobolev spaces H_s . Also the pointwise convergence of $u(\cdot, t)$ to f as $t \rightarrow 0$ will be discussed.

To formulate the results, we introduce mixed Sobolev spaces $H_{\varrho, r}$ for $\varrho \geq 0$, $r \geq 0$. We set $H_{\varrho, r} = H_{\varrho, r}(\mathbf{R}^n \times \mathbf{R}) = (G_\varrho \otimes G_r) * L^2(\mathbf{R}^{n+1})$, where G_ϱ and G_r are Bessel kernels in \mathbf{R}^n and \mathbf{R} , respectively. The Bessel kernel is given by the formula $\hat{G}_s(\xi) = (1 + |\xi|^2)^{-s/2}$, and the norm in $H_{\varrho, r}$ is the obvious one.

We introduce the class

$$\mathcal{A} = \left\{ \varphi \in C^\infty(\mathbf{R}^n); \text{ there exists } \varepsilon > 0 \text{ such that} \right. \\ \left. |D^\alpha \varphi(x)| \leq C_\alpha (1 + |x|)^{-1/2 - \varepsilon} \text{ for every } \alpha \right\}$$

and set

$$Sf(x, t) = \varphi(x)\psi(t)u(x, t),$$

where we assume that $\varphi \in \mathcal{A}$ and $\psi \in C_0^\infty(\mathbf{R})$. Let \mathcal{S} denote the Schwartz class.

We then have the following result.

Theorem 1. *If $\varrho \geq 0$, $r \geq 0$, then*

$$(1) \quad \|Sf\|_{H_{\varrho, r}} \leq C \|f\|_{H_{\varrho + mr - (m-1)/2}}, \quad f \in \mathcal{S}.$$

Here the constant C depends on φ and ψ .

Theorem 1 expresses a local smoothing property for the Schrödinger equation. For instance, taking $\varrho = r = 0$ in (1) we obtain

$$(2) \quad \|Sf\|_{L^2(\mathbf{R}^{n+1})} \leq C \|f\|_{H_{-(m-1)/2}},$$

and $\varrho = (m-1)/2$, $r = 0$ yields

$$(3) \quad \|Sf\|_{H_{(m-1)/2, 0}} \leq C \|f\|_{L^2(\mathbf{R}^n)}.$$

From (3) it then follows that $\varphi u(\cdot, t) \in H_{(m-1)/2}(\mathbf{R}^n)$ for almost every t if $f \in L^2(\mathbf{R}^n)$.

Setting

$$u^*(x) = \text{ess sup}_{0 < t < 1} |u(x, t)|, \quad x \in \mathbf{R}^n, \quad f \in \mathcal{S},$$

we have the following maximal inequality:

Theorem 2. *If $s > \frac{1}{2}$, then for any ball $B \subset \mathbf{R}^n$*

$$\left(\int_B u^*(x)^2 dx \right)^{1/2} \leq C_B \|f\|_{H_s}, \quad f \in \mathcal{S}.$$

To formulate our next result, we shall introduce capacities C_s for $s > 0$. We set

$$C_s(E) = \inf \{ \|g\|_2^2; 0 \leq g \in L^2(\mathbf{R}^n), G_s * g \geq 1 \text{ on } E \}, \quad E \subset \mathbf{R}^n.$$

By C_s -q.e. we mean everywhere except on a set of C_s -capacity 0, and similarly for C_s -q.a.

A function $f \in H_s$ can be written as a convolution $f = G_s * g$ with $g \in L^2$. At C_s -q.a. points x , this convolution is well-defined in the sense that $G_s * |g|(x) < \infty$. These well-defined values of f can be recovered if one knows f almost everywhere. In fact, the means of f in small balls centered at x converge to $G_s * g(x)$ if $G_s * |g|(x) < \infty$.

We shall now describe how to make the solution u to the Schrödinger equation precise by defining it at sufficiently many points. Let $f \in L^2(\mathbf{R}^n)$. The function u is measurable and defined a.e. in \mathbf{R}^{n+1} . Let $B_{x,t}(\delta)$ be the ball in \mathbf{R}^{n+1} with center (x, t) and radius δ and let $B'_{x,t}(\delta) = \{(x', t); |x' - x| < \delta\}$ be a horizontal disc. We define the value $u(x, t)$ as the limit as $\delta \rightarrow 0$ of the mean value of u over either $B_{x,t}(\delta)$ or $B'_{x,t}(\delta)$, at all points (x, t) where this limit exists. We speak of the ball and the disc method.

Theorem 3. *Let $s > \frac{1}{2}$ and take $f \in H_s$. Define u as above and make u precise by the ball or the disc method. If $0 < \rho < s - \frac{1}{2}$, then the following holds for C_ρ -q.a. x : The function u is defined at every point of the vertical line $\{x\} \times \mathbf{R}$, its restriction to this line is continuous, and its value at $(x, 0)$ is $f(x)$.*

We shall also prove that the local smoothing inequality (2) is best possible in the following sense.

Theorem 4. *Assume $P = \Delta$ and $V = 0$. Define Sf as above and assume that*

$$(4) \quad \|Sf\|_{L^2(\mathbf{R}^{n+1})} \leq C \|f\|_{H_s}, \quad f \in \mathcal{S},$$

for all $\varphi \in C_0^\infty(\mathbf{R}^n)$ and $\psi \in C_0^\infty(\mathbf{R})$. Then $s \geq -\frac{1}{2}$.

In the cases $n = 1$ and $n = 2$, Theorem 2 can be improved in the following way.

Theorem 5. *Assume $n = 1$ or $n = 2$. Let $P = \Delta^k$, where $k = 1, 2, 3, \dots$, and define u^* as in Theorem 2. Then for any ball $B \subset \mathbf{R}^n$*

$$\left(\int_B u^*(x)^2 dx \right)^{1/2} \leq C_B \|f\|_{H_{n/4}}, \quad f \in \mathcal{S}.$$

In the case $V = 0$ (and $\varphi \in C_0^\infty$ in Theorem 1) Theorems 1–3 were proved in P. Sjögren and P. Sjölin [5] and Theorem 5 in P. Sjölin [7].

We remark that local smoothness for solutions to Schrödinger equations has also been studied by P. Constantin and J.C. Saut [1], [2].

We also remark that an important tool in the passage from the case $V = 0$ to the case of general V is Duhamel's formula for solutions to Schrödinger equations

$$u(\cdot, t) = e^{itP} f + \int_0^t e^{i(t-\tau)P} (-iVu(\cdot, \tau)) d\tau, \quad f \in H_m$$

(cf. [1], [2]).

In [6] we proved Theorem 2 in the case when $n \geq 3$ is odd, $P = \Delta$ and $V \in C_0^\infty$ is small, with a different method. The proof in [6] was based on results of A. Melin [3], [4] on intertwining operators. Set $H = -\Delta + V$ and $H_0 = -\Delta$. Melin constructed a bounded linear operator A on L^2 such that $HA = AH_0$. One has

$$e^{-itH} = Ae^{-itH_0} A^{-1},$$

and a combination of properties of A and results in [5], [7] for e^{-itH_0} gave Theorem 2 in this special case.

2. Proof of Theorem 1

We set

$$S_0 f(x, t) = \varphi(x) \psi(t) e^{itP} f(x), \quad x \in \mathbf{R}^n, t \in \mathbf{R}, f \in \mathcal{S}(\mathbf{R}^n),$$

where $\varphi \in \mathcal{A}$ and $\psi \in C_0^\infty(\mathbf{R})$. With $\alpha = \frac{1}{2}(m-1)$ one then has

$$(5) \quad \|S_0 f\|_{H_{\rho, r}} \leq C \|f\|_{H_{\rho+m, r-\alpha}}, \quad \rho \geq 0, r \geq 0.$$

In the case $\varphi \in C_0^\infty(\mathbf{R})$, (5) was proved in [5]. It is also easily seen that the argument in [5] gives (5) with $\rho = r = 0$ in the case $\varphi = \hat{G}_s$ with $s > \frac{1}{2}$. It is then clear that (5) with $\rho = r = 0$ holds for all $\varphi \in \mathcal{A}$, since $|\varphi(x)| \leq C \hat{G}_s(x)$ for some $s > \frac{1}{2}$. This result can now be extended as in [5] and gives (5) for all $\rho \geq 0$, $r \geq 0$.

The conditions on V imply that V is a multiplier on H_s , i.e.

$$(6) \quad \|Vf\|_{H_s} \leq C_s \|f\|_{H_s}, \quad s \in \mathbf{R}.$$

Next we prove that

$$(7) \quad \|e^{-itH} f\|_{H_s} \leq C_s \|f\|_{H_s}, \quad t \in \mathbf{R}, s \in \mathbf{R}.$$

To begin with, it follows from the ellipticity of P that $g \in H_m$ if and only if $g \in L^2$ and $(-P + V)g \in L^2$. More generally,

$$(8) \quad g \in H_{jm} \quad \text{if and only if} \quad g, (-P + V)g, \dots, (-P + V)^j g \in L^2,$$

with a corresponding norm equivalence. Here $j = 0, 1, 2, \dots$. The “only if” part in (8) follows directly, and we shall prove the “if” part by induction.

Assume that $g, (-P + V)g, \dots, (-P + V)^j g \in L^2$. Using an induction assumption, we then conclude that g and $(-P + V)g \in H_{(j-1)m}$. It follows that $Pg \in H_{(j-1)m}$ and $g \in H_{jm}$. Hence (8) is proved.

For $f \in H_{jm}$ we have

$$(-P + V)^k e^{-itH} f = e^{-itH} (-P + V)^k f \in L^2, \quad 0 \leq k \leq j,$$

since $(-P + V)^k f \in L^2$ and e^{-itH} is unitary on L^2 . It follows that

$$\|e^{-itH} f\|_{H_{jm}} \leq C \|f\|_{H_{jm}}, \quad j = 0, 1, 2, \dots,$$

and interpolation and duality now give (7).

We shall also verify that the mapping $t \mapsto u(\cdot, t) = e^{-itH} f$ is continuous from \mathbf{R} to H_s if $f \in H_s$. Because of (7), it is sufficient to assume that $f \in \mathcal{S}$. We set $v_t = u(\cdot, t) - u(\cdot, t_0)$ and may assume that $s > 0$. One has

$$\|v_t\|_{H_{s+1}} \leq C, \quad t \in \mathbf{R},$$

and

$$\|v_t\|_2 \rightarrow 0, \quad t \rightarrow t_0.$$

We also have

$$\begin{aligned} \|v_t\|_{H_s}^2 &= \int (1 + |\xi|^2)^s |\hat{v}_t(\xi)|^2 d\xi \\ &\leq \int_{|\xi| \leq R} (1 + R^2)^s |\hat{v}_t(\xi)|^2 d\xi + \int_{|\xi| > R} (1 + |\xi|^2)^{-1} (1 + |\xi|^2)^{s+1} |\hat{v}_t(\xi)|^2 d\xi \\ &\leq C(1 + R^2)^s \|v_t\|_2^2 + (1 + R^2)^{-1} \|v_t\|_{H_{s+1}}^2, \end{aligned}$$

and it follows that $\|v_t\|_{H_s} \rightarrow 0$ as $t \rightarrow t_0$. The continuity is proved.

We shall now prove (1). Duhamel's formula gives

$$u(\cdot, t) = e^{itP} f + \int_0^t e^{i(t-\tau)P} (-iVu(\cdot, \tau)) d\tau, \quad f \in H_m.$$

For $f \in \mathcal{S}$, we multiply by $\varphi \in \mathcal{A}$ and take norms in H_s , $s \geq 0$, getting

$$\|\varphi u(\cdot, t)\|_{H_s} \leq \|\varphi e^{itP} f\|_{H_s} + \int_{I_t} \left\| \varphi e^{i(t-\tau)P} (Vu(\cdot, \tau)) \right\|_{H_s} d\tau,$$

where $I_t = [0, t]$, $t \geq 0$, and $I_t = [t, 0]$, $t < 0$. Hence,

$$\begin{aligned} \left(\int_{-T}^T \|\varphi u\|_{H_s}^2 dt \right)^{1/2} &\leq \left(\int_{-T}^T \|\varphi e^{itP} f\|_{H_s}^2 dt \right)^{1/2} \\ &\quad + \left(\int_{-T}^T \left(\int_{I_t} \left\| \varphi e^{i(t-\tau)P} (Vu(\cdot, \tau)) \right\|_{H_s} d\tau \right)^2 dt \right)^{1/2}. \end{aligned}$$

We invoke (5) with $\rho = s$, $r = 0$ to estimate the first term on the right-hand side.

Using an obvious notation, we have

$$\|\varphi u\|_{L^2(-T, T; H_s)} \leq C \|f\|_{H_{s-\alpha}} + \left(\int_{-T}^T |t| \left(\int_{I_t} \left\| \varphi e^{i(t-\tau)P} (Vu(\cdot, \tau)) \right\|_{H_s}^2 d\tau \right) dt \right)^{1/2},$$

where we have also used the Cauchy–Schwarz inequality in the last term. The square of this term can be majorized by

$$T \int_{-T}^T \int_{-T}^T \left\| \varphi e^{it_1 P} (Vu(\cdot, \tau)) \right\|_{H_s}^2 dt_1 d\tau.$$

Invoking (5) again, one finds that this is less than

$$C \int_{-T}^T \|Vu(\cdot, \tau)\|_{H_{s-\alpha}}^2 d\tau$$

(where C depends on T). Hence,

$$\|\varphi u\|_{L^2(-T, T; H_s)} \leq C \|f\|_{H_{s-\alpha}} + C \|Vu\|_{L^2(-T, T; H_{s-\alpha})},$$

and from (6) and (7) we obtain

$$(9) \quad \|\varphi u\|_{L^2(-T, T; H_s)} \leq C \|f\|_{H_{s-\alpha}}.$$

This estimate yields (1) in the case $r = 0$.

We shall now extend this to the case $r > 0$. An easy consequence of (9) is that

$$(10) \quad \|\varphi D_x^\beta u\|_{L^2(-T, T; H_s)} \leq C \|f\|_{H_{s+|\beta|-\alpha}}.$$

Indeed, Leibniz' rule shows that

$$\varphi D^\beta u = D^\beta(\varphi u) + \sum_{|\gamma| \leq |\beta|-1} \varphi_\gamma D^\gamma u,$$

for some $\varphi_\gamma \in \mathcal{A}$. A simple induction argument gives (10).

It follows from the Schrödinger equation that for $\varphi \in \mathcal{A}$

$$\varphi \frac{\partial u}{\partial t} = \sum_{|\gamma| \leq m} \varphi_\gamma D^\gamma u,$$

where $\varphi_\gamma \in \mathcal{A}$. Differentiating with respect to t and using the Schrödinger equation again, one obtains more generally

$$\varphi \frac{\partial^k u}{\partial t^k} = \sum_{|\gamma| \leq km} \varphi_\gamma D^\gamma u, \quad k = 0, 1, 2, \dots,$$

where $\varphi_\gamma \in \mathcal{A}$.

The above equality combined with (10) now gives

$$\left\| \varphi \frac{\partial^k u}{\partial t^k} \right\|_{L^2(-T, T; H_s)} \leq C \|f\|_{H_{s+mk-\alpha}}, \quad \varphi \in \mathcal{A}, \quad k = 0, 1, 2, \dots$$

It follows that

$$\|\varphi \psi u\|_{H_{s,k}} \leq C \|f\|_{H_{s+mk-\alpha}}, \quad s \geq 0, \quad k = 0, 1, 2, \dots$$

for $\varphi \in \mathcal{A}$, $\psi \in C_0^\infty(\mathbf{R})$.

Theorem 1 now follows from the above inequality and interpolation.

3. The remaining proofs

Proof of Theorem 2. Here we use the notation

$$\|Sf\|_{L^2(H_r)} = \left(\int_{\mathbf{R}^n} \|Sf(x, \cdot)\|_{H_r(\mathbf{R})}^2 dx \right)^{1/2},$$

so that $L^2(H_r) = H_{0,r}$. For $s > \frac{1}{2}$ define $r > \frac{1}{2}$ by $mr - \alpha = s$. Then Theorem 1 implies that

$$\|Sf\|_{L^2(H_r)} \leq C \|f\|_{H_s}.$$

Since $r > \frac{1}{2}$ the $L^\infty(\mathbf{R})$ norm is majorized by the $H_r(\mathbf{R})$ norm. We obtain

$$\left(\int_B u^*(x)^2 dx \right)^{1/2} \leq C_B \|f\|_{H_s}$$

for every ball B , if we choose φ and ψ suitably. Theorem 2 is proved.

We omit the proof of Theorem 3, since it is the same as the last part of the proof of Theorem 2 in [5].

Proof of Theorem 4. Set

$$v(x, t) = \int_{\mathbf{R}^n} e^{ix \cdot \xi} e^{it|\xi|^2} \hat{f}(\xi) d\xi, \quad x \in \mathbf{R}^n, t \in \mathbf{R}, f \in \mathcal{S}(\mathbf{R}^n).$$

It is sufficient to prove that if

$$(11) \quad \|\varphi\psi v\|_{L^2(\mathbf{R}^{n+1})} \leq C \|f\|_{H_s}, \quad f \in \mathcal{S},$$

for all $\varphi \in C_0^\infty(\mathbf{R}^n)$, $\psi \in C_0^\infty(\mathbf{R})$, then $s \geq -\frac{1}{2}$.

Choose $g \in C_0^\infty(\mathbf{R})$ so that $0 \notin \text{supp } g$, g is even, and $g(\frac{1}{2}) = 1$. We first assume $n = 1$ and define f by $\hat{f}(\xi) = g(\xi/N)$ where $N > 1$. Then

$$\|f\|_{H_s}^2 = \int_{\mathbf{R}} (1 + |\xi|^2)^s |g(\xi/N)|^2 d\xi = \int_{\mathbf{R}} (1 + N^2|\eta|^2)^s |g(\eta)|^2 d\eta N \leq CN^{2s+1},$$

so that

$$(12) \quad \|f\|_{H_s} \leq CN^{s+1/2}.$$

The function $e^{i\xi^2}$ has Fourier transform $ce^{-ix^2/4}$ for some constant $c \neq 0$, and one finds that

$$\begin{aligned} v(x, t) &= ct^{-1/2} \int_{\mathbf{R}} e^{-i(x-y)^2/4t} N \hat{g}(Ny) dy \\ &= ct^{-1/2} \int_{\mathbf{R}} e^{-ix^2/4t} e^{2ixy/4t} e^{-iy^2/4t} N \hat{g}(Ny) dy \end{aligned}$$

for $t > 0$. Hence,

$$|v(x, t)| = |c|t^{-1/2} \left| \int_{\mathbf{R}} e^{i(x/Nt)z/2} e^{-i(1/4N^2t)z^2} \hat{g}(z) dz \right|, \quad t > 0.$$

The function

$$F(\alpha, \beta) = \int_{\mathbf{R}} e^{i\alpha z/2} e^{-i\beta z^2} \hat{g}(z) dz$$

is a continuous function of (α, β) , and $F(1, 0) = 2\pi g(\frac{1}{2}) = 2\pi$. It follows that there exists a $\delta > 0$ so that $|F(\alpha, \beta)| \geq 1$ if $1 \leq \alpha \leq 1 + \delta$ and $0 \leq \beta \leq \delta$. We conclude that $|v(x, t)| \geq ct^{-1/2}$ for $t \geq 1/4N^2\delta$ and $Nt \leq x \leq Nt + \delta Nt$. When $1/N\delta \leq t \leq 2/N\delta$, one then has $|v(x, t)| \geq cN^{1/2}$ for x in an interval of length $\delta Nt \geq 1$. Hence, $|v(x, t)| \geq cN^{1/2}$ for (x, t) in a set of measure $\geq c/N$.

It follows that

$$\|\varphi\psi v\|_{L^2(\mathbf{R}^{n+1})} \geq cN^{1/2} \left(\frac{1}{N}\right)^{1/2} = c,$$

and (11) and (12) yield $N^{s+1/2} \geq c$ for $N > 1$, so that $s \geq -\frac{1}{2}$.

When $n \geq 2$, the argument is similar. One chooses g as above and sets

$$\hat{f}(\xi) = g(\xi_1/N)g(\xi_2/N) \cdots g(\xi_n/N), \quad \xi = (\xi_1, \dots, \xi_n).$$

Proof of Theorem 5. Set $u_0(x, t) = (e^{itP} f)(x)$ and $u_0^*(x) = \sup_{0 < t < 1} |u_0(x, t)|$. It was proved in [7] that

$$(13) \quad \left(\int_B u_0^*(x)^2 dx \right)^{1/2} \leq C_B \|f\|_{H_\gamma}, \quad f \in \mathcal{S},$$

where $\gamma = n/4$.

Since $(e^{itP}(Vu(\cdot, \tau)))(x)$ is a continuous function of (x, t, τ) if $f \in \mathcal{S}$, it follows from Duhamel's formula that

$$u(x, t) = u_0(x, t) + \int_0^t \left(e^{i(t-\tau)P} (-iVu(\cdot, \tau)) \right)(x) d\tau.$$

Hence for $0 < t < 1$

$$|u(x, t)| \leq u_0^*(x) + \int_0^1 \sup_{0 < t < 1} \left| \left(e^{itP} e^{-i\tau P} (Vu(\cdot, \tau)) \right)(x) \right| d\tau.$$

Using (13) twice we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} \left(\int_B u^*(x)^2 dx \right)^{1/2} &\leq \left(\int_B u_0^*(x)^2 dx \right)^{1/2} \\ &\quad + \int_0^1 \left(\int_B \left(\sup_{0 < t < 1} \left| \left(e^{itP} e^{-i\tau P} (Vu(\cdot, \tau)) \right)(x) \right| \right)^2 dx \right)^{1/2} d\tau \\ &\leq C \|f\|_{H_\gamma} + C \int_0^1 \|e^{-i\tau P} (Vu(\cdot, \tau))\|_{H_\gamma} d\tau \\ &\leq C \|f\|_{H_\gamma} + C \int_0^1 \|u(\cdot, \tau)\|_{H_\gamma} d\tau \leq C \|f\|_{H_\gamma}, \end{aligned}$$

and the proof is complete.

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