

# Department of Psychology Newsletter



North Dakota State University | Summer 2011

Volume 3, Issue 1

## Notes from the Chair

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Dear alumni and friends,

It has been awhile since our last newsletter. In the interim there have been many changes in the Department and the University. NDSU continues to be a very dynamic and exciting place to work. I will highlight some of the major changes. Hopefully this will help to catch you up and also put some of the enclosed stories in context.

Whether it was our good fortune to recruit colleagues who were dedicated to their students and work or whether it was simply the long winters that gave us few options other than work, the truth of the matter was that our academic family was very productive and growing. From 2004 to 2008 we had gone from 13 full time faculty to 16, 280 to 350 undergraduate majors, and from about 15 to over 30 graduate students. We had greatly expanded our annual grant expenditures and, despite having added two floors of research space (5,000 sq. ft.) at the Graduate Center, we were bursting at the seams. Thus, it was with relief and eager anticipation that we sat down with architects in the winter of 2008 to plan out our new space. The 2007 ND legislative session had approved funding for improvements to Minard Hall which included total renovation and a new addition (the architect's render-



(Continued from page 1)

ings of the “new” Minard appear on the previous page and to the right).

Unfortunately, in the middle of a snowy December night, 2009, the north wall of the existing Minard Hall collapsed. In preparation for building the new addition, contractors had excavated near the north side of the building. This inadvertently allowed the soils under the existing building to move, undermining the foundation of the outer wall, which gave way. After a year’s worth of soil borings, investigation, and re-engineering, construction on the new addition has finally begun again.



In the meantime, the remodeling on the interior of Minard Hall has been progressing well. They have completely redone the electrical, plumbing, heating and ventilation, and started reframing the walls in much of the building. We will be moving to temporary space within the building this summer to allow them to begin working on the spaces that we currently occupy. The entire project is anticipated to be completed in December 2012.

As buildings change so do people. Dr. Dean Bresciani started as NDSU’s 14th President in the summer of 2010. This spring we conducted a search for a new Provost and Vice-president of Academic Affairs. Bruce Rafert, currently Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School and Professor of Physics and Astronomy at Clemson University was named to the post. He will be starting in August. Both of these administrators are strong supporters of research and graduate education. We hope that Psychology will continue to prosper under their leadership.

We have been fortunate to hire a number of new, bright, energetic and very good faculty. Please see the



enclosed introductions for two couples that have joined us in recent years.

The biggest programmatic news is that we have started a doctoral program in Psychological Clinical Science. We have just admitted our first class who will be starting this fall. See the announcement and description in the following pages. We are looking forward to the continued growth and energy this program will bring us.

### *Support of Student Research*

Donations to Psychology through the Alumni Foundation helped support student presentations at professional conferences. Here is a sample of student authored papers.

Betts, K.R., & Hinsz, V.B. (2011). *Shared representations promote false recognition in group memory*. Presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, San Antonio, TX.

Fetterman, A. K., Robinson, M. D., & Meier, B. P. (January, 2010). *“I’m so angry I’m seeing red!” Reaction time evidence for an implicit association*. Poster presented at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Las Vegas, NV.

Gayzur, N. D., Simon-Dack, S. L., Saville, A. L., Langley, L. K., & Teder-Salejarvi, W. A. (2009, March). *An event related potential study of inhibition of return in younger and older adults*. Poster presented at the annual meeting of the Cognitive Neuroscience Society, San Francisco, CA.

Kvasnicka, L. & Hilmert, C. J. (2010, February) *The Autonomic-Cardiovascular Profiles of Effort and Negative Emotion*. Poster presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP), Las Vegas, NV.

Moeller, S. K., Robinson, M. D., & Wilkowski, B. M. (January, 2010). *You never think about my feelings: Interpersonal dominance and emotion decoding performance*. Poster presented at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Las Vegas, NV

Toeh, Ai Ni, Hilmert, C. J., & Zielke, D.J. (2011, March). *Primary and secondary emotional effects of social support*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychosomatic Society (APS), San Antonio, TX.

## *Distinguished Alumnus*



### **Brian P. Meier**

Of course, all of our alumni are special, but Dr. Brian Meier has distinguished himself as an excellent instructor and an outstanding researcher. He is currently an Associate Professor of psychology at Gettysburg College, Pennsylvania.

After graduating from high school in Zeeland, North Dakota, the path of this future NDSU Psychology alumnus would take a few twists. Brian did a two-year stint as a tank driver in the U.S. Army and took a technical degree in electronics at Bismarck State College. He worked in that field for five years in New Jersey, but as Brian confesses, “Human behavior always fascinated me”.

His interest led him to take an introductory psychology course at a New Jersey community college. “Suddenly, I realized I had found my passion”, recalls Brian. He eventually quit his job and returned to ND to attend NDSU as a full time psychology major. “I believed I wanted to be a clinical psychologist”, he remembers, and after graduating from

NDSU, he attended a master’s program in clinical psychology at Ball State University. But after learning about Milgram’s famous studies on obedience and authority, Brian realized he wanted to be a social psychologist.

As luck would have it, the Psychology Department at NDSU just started the Health/Social Ph.D. program. The department chair at the time, Jim Council, encouraged Brian to become a graduate student in this program, and Brian reports that he had the good fortune of working with both Verlin Hinsz and Michael Robinson. “It was somewhat of a gamble to attend a brand new Ph.D. program”, he recalls, “but the mentoring I received from both Verlin and Michael was better than what I would have received at the top program in the country.”

Since his move to Gettysburg College, Brian has led a very productive research program on affect and social cognition. “The major reason I am so excited about social psychology is because it requires us to develop creative designs to test our hypotheses. I absolutely love my job. The students, my colleagues, and the college are truly exceptional.” When asked to reminisce about his fondest NDSU memories, Brian volunteers “I loved Kevin McCaul’s thoughtful questions, I enjoyed Verlin’s interesting and whacky lectures, and I continuously marveled at Michael’s knowledge of psychology.”

### ***Recent Publications***

- Landau, M. J., Meier, B. P., & Keefer, L. A. (2010). A metaphor-enriched social cognition. *Psychological Bulletin*, *136*, 1045-1067.
- Meier, B. P., Robinson, M. D., Carter, M. S., & Hinsz, V. B. (2010). Are sociable people more beautiful? A zero-acquaintance analysis of agreeableness, extraversion, and attractiveness. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *40*, 293-296.
- Toburen, T., & Meier, B. P. (2010). Priming God-related concepts increases anxiety and task persistence. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, *29*, 127-143.



### ***The public face of the Department of Psychology.***

Front office staff Jean Jones (l) and Laura Thibert will greet you with a warm smile and answer all of your questions. Please call and say hi sometime.



### Faculty Introductions



#### Kathryn Gordon

Katie Gordon is an Assistant Professor in the Clinical Program. She received her Ph.D. from the Florida State University in 2008. That year she completed her internship at the University of Chicago Medical Center and joined our faculty. Katie's expertise is in eating disorders and suicide. In fact, the conjunction of these two problems is not uncommon and should provide for a fertile area of research. Katie teaches abnormal psychology, advanced psychopathology, and behavior therapy.

#### Recent Publications:

Gordon, K.H., Castro, Y., Sitnikov, L., & Holm-Denoma, J.M. (2010). Cultural body shape ideals and eating disorder symptoms among White, Latina, and Black college women. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 16*, 135-143.

Van Orden, K., Gordon, K., Counts-Allan, C., James, L., Schmeelk, K., & Joiner, T. (in press). Self-Control Regulation Interpersonal Psychotherapy: a SCRIPT for beginning therapists in the treatment of borderline personality disorder. *International Journal of Cognitive Therapy*.

Fink, E.L., Smith, A.R., Gordon, K.H., Holm-Denoma, J.M., & Joiner, T.E. Jr. (2009). Psychological correlates of purging disorder as compared to other eating disorders: An exploratory investigation. *International Journal of Eating Disorders, 42*, 31-39.

#### Keith Donohue

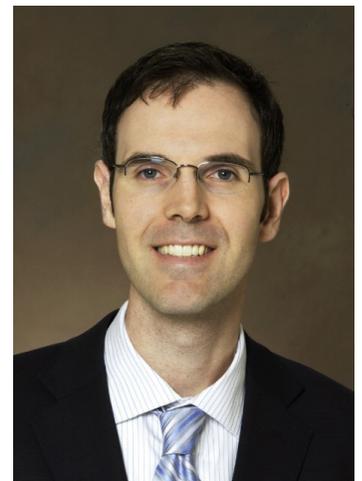
Keith Donohue is also a clinical psychologist from Florida State University. If you're thinking that this is too much of a coincidence, you can put the thought to rest—Keith and Katie are married. Keith completed his internship at the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School in Piscataway, NJ. His research interests focus on the interaction of cognition, emotion, and alcohol intoxication. Keith is teaching the psychology of drug use and abuse at the undergraduate level and assessment as well as methods and statistics at the graduate level.

#### Recent Publications:

Schlauch, R. C., Waesche, M.C., Riccardi, C.J., Donohue, K.F., Blagg, C.O., Christensen, R., & Lang, A. R. (2010). A meta-analysis of the effectiveness of placebo manipulations in alcohol challenge studies. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors, 24*, 239-253.

Schlauch, R. C., Lang, A. R., Plant, E.A., Christensen, R., & Donohue, K.F. (2009). The effect of alcohol on stereotypic and prejudicial responding: the moderating role of internal and external motivations to inhibit. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, 70*, 328-226.

Donohue, K.F., Curtin, J.J., Patrick, C.J., & Lang, A.R. (2007). Intoxication level and emotional response. *Emotion, 7*, 103-112.



*Students hard at work—as usual—as it should be.*

## Recent Faculty Additions



### Benjamin Balas

Dr. Ben Balas joined the NDSU Department of Psychology as an Assistant Professor in January, 2011. Ben received his Ph.D. in Brain and Cognitive Sciences from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2007. He then completed a Post-doc in the Laboratories of Cognitive Neuroscience at Children's Hospital in Boston. Ben's research focuses on the neural mechanisms underlying object (including face) recognition. He uses a variety of techniques including brain wave research to see how individual learn to recognize complex natural objects.

**Recent Publication:** Balas, B. & Nelson, C. A. (2010). The role of face shape and pigmentation in other-race face perception: An electrophysiological study. *Neuropsychologia*, 48, 498-506.

### Erin Conwell

Dr. Erin Conwell also joined the Department as an Assistant Professor in January of this year. She and Ben are married. Erin received her Ph.D. in Cognitive and Linguistic Sciences from Brown University in 2009. She did a post doc at Harvard in Developmental Studies. Her specialty is language development. In particular, she is interested in how experience with language helps children to learn about words that can be used in more than one grammatical category.

**Recent Publication:** Soderstrom, M., Conwell, E., Feldman, N. & Morgan, J. (2009). The learner as statistician: Three principles of computational success in language acquisition. *Developmental Science*, 12, 409-411.



## E. V. Estenson Award Winners

### The Outstanding Psychology Majors



Erin Doerner (l), was the 2009 EV Estensen Award winner. Erin is a doctoral student in school psychology at the University of Oregon. Konrad Bresin also shared the award in 2009. He has just finished his M.S. at NDSU and will be attending the University of

Illinois doctoral clinical program in the fall.

In 2010, the EV Estensen was awarded to William E. Davis, now a PhD student in social psychology at Texas A&M, and Sara Wyman, who is on her way to the clinical program at Northern Illinois.

Pictured to the right is Brooke Ammerman (c), this year's Estensen winner. She will be attending the

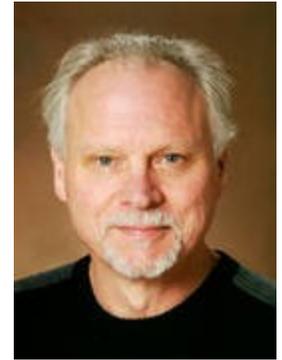
clinical program at Northern Iowa this fall. Also pictured are Darrin Carter and Laura Vogel-Ciernia, Junior Research Award winners. Vogel-Ciernia is also a Beatty Scholar



### *Research News*

#### **COBRE Renewed**

The Center for Visual and Cognitive Neuroscience in the Department of Psychology at NDSU received a competitive renewal of a grant from the National Center for Research Resources, a division of the National Institutes of Health, this past September. The grant, part of the Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence program, was for \$10.7 million and will run from 2010 to 2015. Mark McCourt (r) was the PI on the project. The original goal of the project was to enhance the research infrastructure (through the development of facilities and equipment and staff), to expand research capacity through the recruitment of talented researchers and faculty, and to develop a program of research that would eventually be self-sustaining through successful external funding. The present grant continues this work and will support a number of small and large projects by several faculty. These include, for example, the study of depth perception from motion parallax (Mark Nawrot), vigilance and avoidance in affective visual processing (Michael Robinson), the development of face and object recognition (Ben Balas), and object perception and cognition in infants (Rebecca Woods). Work by professors Blakeslee, Rob Gordon, and Linda Langley was supported by the previous grant and they will continue to collaborate in the center.



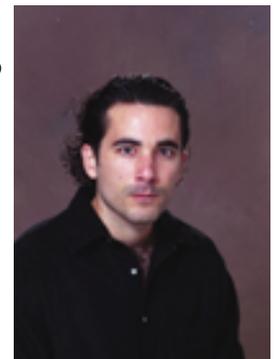
#### **NIAAA Award for Alcohol Research**

Brian Ostafin has been awarded a \$359,000 grant from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. One of the mysteries of problem alcohol consumption has been related to the question of why some individuals have difficulty refraining from excessive drinking despite their best intentions to limit the amount they drink. Previous work suggests that automatic associations between alcohol consumption and potential emotional and social benefits increases the risk of problem drinking. Dr. Ostafin's work will use a unique paradigm in which adult, non-abstinent participants will be given an alcohol prime (drinking to a breath alcohol level of .05 percent), tested for automatic alcohol-approach associations and then allowed the opportunity to drink further during a taste test. It is hypothesized that initial drinking strengthens automatic associations which in turn leads to an impairment in self-control. Should this hypothesis be confirmed it holds many implications for the assessment and intervention of alcohol related problems.



#### **NSF Award to study Emotion Regulation**

Michael Robinson was awarded a \$428,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to study the cognitive control of emotion. Individual's clearly differ in their emotional responses to provocation. Dr. Robinson's research will investigate why some individual's lose self-control when provoked. Participants will be provoked through exposure to aversive noise or exposure to film clips known to arouse anger. Their ability to control attention, thoughts, and behavior will be measured in an attempt to identify particular vulnerabilities to loss of control. Since anger and hostility have such a great cost to the psychological and physical health of individuals and society, any gains in knowledge about the cognitive factors that are important in "the heat of the moment" will be valuable.



*Construction on the Move*



Clearing the rubble from the north wall.



New foundation in. Steel going up.

*Main office has been maintained in the midst of construction.*



Looking north down the main hallway in Minard. Plywood walls separate the main office in Minard 115 from the construction zone in the west and north side of the building.

The main office door is to the right of this end wall.

New windows on the exterior spruce up the look of an old building. They are considerably taller than the replacements that had been put in some time ago, restoring the original size and bring much more light into the interior spaces. Eventually Psychology will occupy the first floor and part of the second floor in this building and in the new addition.

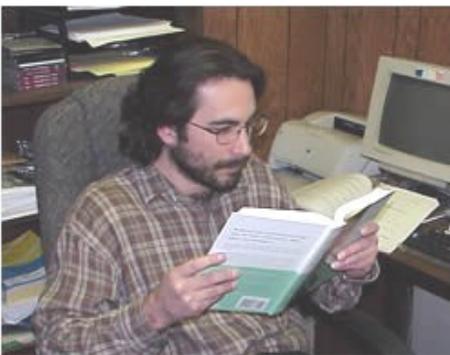


## *Award Winning Faculty*

### **Robert D. Gordon**

#### **2009 College of Science and Mathematics Award for Excellence in Teaching**

Rob Gordon was recognized for dedication to quality instruction both in and out of the class room. Rob teaches research methods (stat) and sensation and perception and gets rave reviews. In addition, graduate students, who were not his own students, wrote glowing letters of support for the time that he takes to mentor them in research and to help them with class material even for classes that he wasn't teaching.



### **Michael D. Robinson**

#### **2009 College of Science and Mathematics Award for Excellence in Mentoring**

Michael Robinson was recognized for the success his students have had in publishing and in getting excellent positions following their degrees. Brian Meier (see p. 3) was one of those students.



### **Clayton J. Hilmert**

#### **2010 College of Science and Mathematics Award for Excellence in Teaching**

Clayton Hilmert is one of the most amazing Intro Psych teachers we have ever had. His student ratings top the chart. In addition he teaches Health Psychology at the undergraduate and graduate levels. His students praise him for his humorous and engaging style and for a unique ability to get them involved and to stretch their thinking.

### **Verlin B. Hinsz**

#### **2011 Fred Waldron Research Award**

The Fred Waldron Research Award was established with an endowment to the NDSU Development Foundation. It recognizes a single faculty member in the University for consistent and excellent contributions to research and scholarship. Verlin Hinsz is an outstanding role model in this regard. His program of research on decision making performance has been well funded for many years and produced an impressive number of highly cited publications. He is pictured here with his wife, Magda Chalikia.



## *Program News: Graduate Programs having Early Success*

Despite the fact that our graduate programs are relatively new and have only been producing graduates for a few years, our students have had remarkable success. Here is a list of some of our graduates and what they are doing.

- Scott Engel, Research Scientist, Neuropsychiatric Research Institute, Fargo, ND
- Brian Meier, Associate Professor, Gettysburg College
- Susan Cordes Green, Assistant Professor, Concordia College, Moorhead, Mn
- Rochelle Bergstrom, Associate Professor, Minnesota State University, Moorhead
- Melissa Lewis, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, University of Washington
- Ben Kirkeby, Assistant Professor, Jamestown College, ND
- Amanda Dillard, Assistant Professor, Grand Valley State University, Michigan
- Dana Lawrence, Assistant Professor, Jamestown College, ND
- Ben Wilkowski, Assistant Professor, University of Wyoming
- Amber Koblitz, Research Fellow, National Cancer Institute
- Renee Magnan, Postdoctoral Researcher, University of New Mexico
- Jared Ladbury, Visiting Professor, Minnesota State University, Moorhead
- Aaron Clarke, Postdoctoral Researcher, Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne, Switzerland
- Lynnette Leone, Postdoctoral Researcher, NDSU
- Hsin-Mei Sun, Postdoctoral Researcher, NDSU
- Lexi Kvasnicka, Assistant Professor, Dakota College, Bottineau, ND
- Sara Moeller, Assistant Professor, Saint Xavier University, Chicago

## *Program News: New Doctorate in Psychological Clinical Science*

Following up on the many years of a successful MS program in Clinical Psychology, we finally have a doctoral program. Our very first class has been admitted and will be starting this fall. Because we did not get any new resources with our new program, and are especially lacking in University-based funds to support students, we have had a difficult choice to make. We have suspended admissions to the terminal master's program in order to put our resources and energy into developing the doctoral program.

Like the other two programs in the Department, the focus of the Psychological Clinical Science program is to produce researchers and academics. We hope that our students will go on to contribute to psychological knowledge by investigating clinically relevant issues. Basic and applied research on the nature, etiology, and course of health and mental health problems as well as

their prevention and treatment will form the core of our efforts.

This program is designed to meet APA and Psychological Clinical Science Accreditation System (PCSAS) accreditation standards. We will be applying for accreditation as soon as we are eligible (i.e., having students at all levels of matriculation with evidence of success). The curriculum consists of four years of study and 1 year of internship. In comparison to other clinical programs, relatively more time will be spent on research activities than on those that are involved in purely practice activities. Of course, it is hoped that our relationships with professionals in regional research and health settings will foster the development of practicum placements that combine research with clinical application.

## *Program News: Council takes over as Chair*



**James R. Council** will assume the position of Chair of the Department of Psychology this summer. Dr. Council has had a long and productive career that has positioned him well to lead the Department into the future.

Dr. Council started his career by earning the Award for Distinguished Early Career Contributions to Hypnosis from Division 30 of the American Psychological Association. At NDSU he applied his interest in hypnotic susceptibility and expectancies to a variety of topics including pain, incest victimization, eating disorders, and most recently to creativity in the arts. He earned the College award for Excellence in Research in 1994. Over the years, his interests have

gradually changed. While originally he taught assessment and personality, his popular courses now are History and Systems and Psychology on Film. His scholarly endeavors are also focused on the history of psychology.

Council was chair from 1998 to 2004. Since that time he has gained additional administrative experience. He was the President of the University Senate in 2005. He served as the Dean of Libraries from 2006 to 2008. Jim was Associate Dean of the College of Science and Mathematics, from 2008 to this year. He has also completed training in mediation skills and is on the Minnesota Roster of Qualified Neutrals.

All in all the Department is very fortunate to have such a qualified and dedicated professor who is interested in returning to the chair. We're looking forward to his second tenure at the helm.

## *New lab space on first floor Minard taking shape.*



**Above.** Central hallway outside of main office looking north. This will eventually serve as access to Psychology laboratories.

**Above right.** From central hallway looking west. This is a laboratory suite, roughly in the same place that the 116 hallway used to be in. There is all new



electrical, plumbing, data, heating and ventilation as well as new walls and configuration.

Clearly, or not so clearly, there isn't much to see in these pictures. But, they are included to document the progress we are making and to let you know that a year from now we are all going to be very happy.

## Summary of Development Foundation Funds for Psychology

Fund Name	Interest Bearing	Purpose
▶ Dr. Patricia A. Beatty Psychology Endowment	Yes	Scholarship for undergraduates
▶ William W. Beatty Endowment Fund	Yes	Undergraduate and graduate professional development through research
▶ E. V. Estensen Memorial Fund	Yes	Student awards for academic excellence
▶ Kevin & Harriette McCaul Psychology Endowment	Yes	Student travel to scientific conferences
▶ Psychology Endowment Fund	Yes	Faculty development
▶ Psychology Department Research Fund	No	Support of student research
▶ Psychology Department Fund	No	Feeder to above funds and miscellany, e.g., faculty and staff recognition, colloquium support, Red River Undergraduate Conference

## NDSU Faculty Bring Science to the Community

The Dean of the College, Kevin McCaul, started a community lecture series to create better ties and more awareness between the campus and the people of Fargo-Moorhead. Psychology faculty have been an important part of this program. Katie Gordon is an expert on suicide. She has explored a theory that suggests that a lack of a sense of belonging coupled with a high tolerance for pain leads people to engage in suicidal behavior. She talked about how to recognize signs of suicide and the steps that might be helpful to prevent it. Clay Routledge is a social psychologist who studies how our awareness of our mortality motivates us in daily life. Terror management theory has some interesting things to say about how these motivations may contribute to behavior that many of us have a difficult time understanding - terrorism and suicide bombings.

SCIENCE CAFÉ  FACE-TO-FACE CONVERSATION WITH A SCIENTIST

Thursday, November 19, 7-8:30 P.M.  
Stokers Basement | HoDo | 101 N. Broadway, Fargo

**SCIENCE SAVING LIVES**

Presented by  
**Katie Gordon**  
Free and open to the public

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**NDSU**

SCIENCE CAFÉ  FACE-TO-FACE CONVERSATION WITH A SCIENTIST

What Motivates Suicide Bombers?

**THE PSYCHOLOGY OF TERRORISM**

7 - 8:30 p.m., Thursday, December 11  
Babs Coffee House | 604 Main Ave., Fargo  
For the community. Everyone is welcome.

presented by  
**CLAY ROUTLEDGE**  
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY  
North Dakota State University

The Sept. 11 attacks brought suicide terrorism to America's shores. With the increased importance of global security comes an increased need to understand the psychology of a suicide bomber. Why are some people willing to die and kill others in the service of an ideological agenda? This question will be explored with discussion of emerging theory and research on the psychology of terrorism.

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