

FORUM, SUMMER 2025

The Official Newsletter of the Mid-South Sociological Association, Inc.

The Mid-South Sociological Association Inc. (MSSA), founded in 1975, is a 501-C-(3) non-profit organization providing both professional support to, and a forum for sociologists who teach, conduct research and reside in the Mid-South region of the US. Through its publications, annual conference, academic support and collegial networks, MSSA. promotes the advancement of sociological research, the diffusion of knowledge, innovative service and teaching. From its inception, MSSA, Inc has been and continues to be committed to mentoring and enabling the growth of the next generation of sociologists in the value of high-quality research and engagement, and ethical, professional service.

The Mid-South Sociological Association Inc. embraces diversity and promotes inclusion by recruiting, including, and valuing people of all races, genders and gender identities, sexualities, ethnicities, religions, economic and employment statuses, abilities, and other dimensions. The MSSA celebrates all expressions of diversity and identity and strives to provide an environment conducive to free expression of ideas without fear of judgment in any way. Moreover, the MSSA does not tolerate any action from any member or conference participant that encourages or promotes hatred and/or intolerance in any form. Further, to the extent that the Board determines that it is not detrimental to the best interests (financial and otherwise) of the association, the MSSA will use the economic power of the annual conferences and other activities to select locations and enter into agreements with businesses that have policies and practices that reflect the values of the MSSA.

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From The President's Desk

As we approach the 2025 Mid-South Sociological Association annual meeting in North Augusta, South Carolina, I find myself reflecting on the challenges and opportunities facing our discipline. Like many of you, I've felt the weight of these times—marked by political polarization, ongoing racial and economic inequality, and a growing skepticism toward higher education and science. These dynamics not only shape our research but also test our commitment to public engagement, critical inquiry, and the mentorship of the next generation of scholars.



Sociologists are trained to examine the social forces that shape our lives, but even we have been tested in recent years by unprecedented disruptions: a global pandemic, environmental crises, man-made and natural disasters. These are not just topics of study—they are lived realities.

This year's conference theme, "Disasters: Understanding the Textures of Loss, Love, and Recovery Amidst Forced Social Change," invites us to explore how individuals and institutions respond to upheaval. Disasters—whether natural, social, or political—leave behind layered experiences of grief, resilience, love, and transformation. Our meeting in North Augusta will be a space for that vital work—an opportunity to come together, share research, and learn from one another.

In that same spirit, I am proud to announce that this year, the Mid-South Sociological Association is collecting funds to make a donation to Paine College, a historically Black liberal arts institution located in nearby Augusta, Georgia. This contribution is both symbolic and tangible—an acknowledgment of the value of HBCUs in shaping intellectual life in the South and beyond, and a small step toward strengthening ties between academic institutions and the communities that sustain them.

As we look ahead to the conference, I encourage you to bring your full self—your scholarship, your questions, your challenges, and your hope. This is a moment not just for critique, but for care; not just for analysis, but for action. In times of crisis, our work matters more than ever. Let's use this meeting to recommit ourselves to the power and purpose of sociology.

With gratitude and service,

Dr. Melencia Johnson President, Mid-South Sociological Association

Editor's Introduction

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Matt Schneider, and I am an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. I have been an active member of the Mid-South Sociological Association since 2021, and it is now my great pleasure to serve as the editor of *Forum*.

This newsletter is known as the "voice of the Mid-South," and as such, I believe my role is to use this space to share your contributions to the field and your accomplishments with the Mid-South Sociological Association's



membership (and hopefully beyond). Periodically, I will be in touch to ask you about your achievements. Our membership wants to hear about your recent publications, grants, promotions, and new positions. Additionally, if you have any questions about or ideas for the newsletter, feel free to reach out (schneiderm@uncw.edu)! I would love to create space in the newsletter for your work. This might include, but is not limited to commentary pieces, teaching notes, and reflections on the discipline.

In this issue of *Forum*, the goal was to showcase the brilliance of our members, and in turn, includes a series of "spotlights." Below, you will find information about recent award winners, read about first-time MSSA conference attendees, and learn about the recent accomplishments of our peers.

Thanks for trusting me with this position. I hope to hear from you soon!

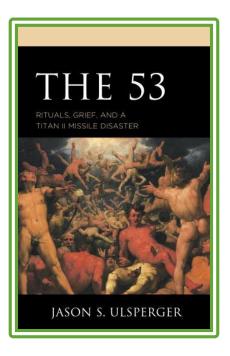
Matt Schneider Forum Editor, Mid-South Sociological Association

2024 Award Winners

<u>Jason Ulsperger, Arkansas Tech University,</u> <u>Standford M. Lyman Distinguished Book Award Winner</u>

The 53: Rituals, Grief, and a Titan II Missile Disaster

On August 9, 1965, 53 men died in the impoverished hills of rural Arkansas. Their final breaths came in a government facility deep underground while their loved ones were at home expecting their return. The incident at Launch Complex 373-4 remains the deadliest accident to occur in a U.S. nuclear facility. The 53: Rituals, Grief, and a Titan II Missile Disaster analyzes the event. It looks at causes but more importantly at how the mishap has affected daughters and sons for nearly six decades. It gives new sociological insight on technological disasters



and the sorrow following them. The book also details how surviving family members managed themselves and each other while benefiting from the support of friends and strangers. It describes how institutions blame the powerless, and how powerful organizations generate distrust and secondary trauma. With an analysis of the event and post-disaster life, their children share stories on what went wrong and how they keep moving forward. (https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781793609762/The-53-Rituals-Grief-and-a-Titan-II-Missile-Disaster)

David Ademule, Mississippi State University, Graduate Paper Competition Winner

"Community Structure and White-Collar Crimes: Testing Social Disorganization Theory"

Although social disorganization theory was originally developed in the 1920s to explain juvenile delinquency, scholars have extended it to other forms of crime, making it one of the most widely cited theories of crime. However, previous research has failed to examine whether social disorganization theory can adequately predict white-collar crime, creating limited knowledge on the extent to which community-level characteristics may account for its prevalence. Thus, this study furthers extant literature by examining the link between indicators of social disorganization and four white-collar crimes (fraud, bribery, forgery, and embezzlement). Combining data from the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) and the American Community Survey (ACS) for 3,144 counties across the United States, results show that (1) indicators of social disorganization are positively related to county-level counts of bribery, forgery, and embezzlement (but not fraud) and (2) poverty, which is one of the key indicators of social disorganization, surprisingly demonstrates an inverse relationship with all four white-collar crimes.

Eli Golde, University of Florida, Undergraduate Paper Competition Winner

"Hispanic Disaggregation and Variation in Social Capital Access"

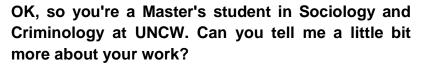
Sociological inquiry of race and ethnicity typically takes a monolithic approach when examining Hispanic people. Subsequently, much previous research has neglected to fully consider the nuances among ethnic subgroups that fall under the panethnic Hispanic umbrella and their implications for our understanding of social inequality. Our project seeks to understand the ways that stratification into social capital and social mobility maps onto Hispanic subgroups. We use disaggregated data from the US Census Bureau that contains the number of Hispanic people in each zip code in the United States broken down by their country of national origin, along with zip code-level data from the Social Capital Atlas. We ran correlation analyses for 26 different Hispanic groups, in addition to the total Hispanic population, with economic connectedness, or the rate of low-income people with high-income friends. Our results show Mexicans, Guatemalans, and Hondurans were found to have the strongest negative social capital access indicators among Hispanic subgroups, while South Americans and Spaniards were found to have strongest positive associations. Overall, the total Hispanic population tends to live in areas with significantly less social capital access than average. In population proportionadjusted models, we discovered areas with a low presence of Hispanics had greater social capital access than communities with a high population of Hispanics. Our findings indicate stratification does exist among Hispanic subgroups in access to social capital and economic mobility. Groups with higher average incomes and those who are racialized as closer to White tend to have higher social capital access indicators, suggesting the presence of race and class hierarchies within the Hispanic group.

Member Spotlight:

An Interview with Kailee Lancaster, University of North Carolina Wilmington

Can you introduce yourself?

I'm Kailee Lancaster. I'm from Raleigh, NC but have been in Wilmington, NC for about 5 years. I attended the University of North Carolina Wilmington [UNCW] for undergrad and received a Bachelor of Arts degree in criminology with a minor in psychology. After that, I enrolled in UNCW's sociology and criminology Master's program. While in school, I've been mainly doing jobs related to data analysis and evaluation for various entities such as the Office of High Impact Practices at UNCW and the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce.





Yes, I recently passed my thesis defense! My thesis is titled "Critical Consumption: True Crime Consumers' Perspectives on Sensationalism." This project explores how young adult true crime consumers perceive and interact with sensationalism in the genre. Using a decolonial feminist cultural criminological lens, it examines the influence of race, class, and gender on consumption patterns, critiques the colonial and fear-based narratives that drive misrepresentation, and calls for greater media accountability and critical consumption. Fun fact, I presented my thesis proposal when I was at the MSSA conference in October 2024. I have also completed a few reports for recent evaluation projects such as a report on homelessness in Onslow County, North Carolina.

Congratulations on passing your thesis! What are your goals moving forward?

I've been applying to jobs, mostly government positions in North Carolina. I'm hoping to do something regarding data analysis but I'm also open to expanding my evaluation consulting business, K-Lead Consulting, to include more clients/projects! I really love doing program and process evaluation.

This was your first time attending the MSSA annual meeting. What did you think of the conference?

MSSA 2024 was the first academic conference I had attended and presented in. It gave me an opportunity to learn more about other institutions, conference dynamics, and a wide range of topics and disciplines within sociology. I appreciated the friendliness and welcoming environment and look forward to keeping in touch with MSSA!

Member Spotlight

Aaron Padgett, University of Missouri → University of Kentucky

Aaron Padgett attended his first MSSA conference in 2024 and now serves on the Membership Committee. He recently earned his PhD in Sociology with a Graduate Minor in International Development from the University of Missouri. As an interdisciplinary scholar, his work connects critical social sciences with environmental humanities, policy studies, international relations, and critical Indigenous perspectives. His dissertation was a qualitative historical-relational project focused on environmental discourses and mobilities in (and from) Micronesia. In addition to examining ways in which the



United States conceives of Micronesia and the world's oceans as extensions of the humanitarian/security state through racialized, militarized imaginaries of the technofrontier, his work examines counternarratives from Micronesian senses of place, heritage, futurity, and mobility practices. Originally from south-central Kentucky, he also maintains an interest in Appalachian Studies, particularly regarding settler culture, waterways, and political ecology. He is proud to announce that this fall he will be joining the University of Kentucky as a Lecturer in Sociology. Aaron recently published a co-authored chapter in <u>Deviant Hollers</u> from the University Press of Kentucky. His latest publication is a public sociology piece, now available at <u>Fathom</u>. In the coming months, you'll also be able to read his forthcoming work at <u>Pacific Asia Inquiry</u> and <u>Lo Squaderno</u>.

Publication Spotlight - Books

Agbai, Edward, Ashraf Esmail, Henrietta M Okoro, Sylvester Udeorah, and Brandon Hamann. 2025. *Twenty-First Century Issues: Perspective On Climate Change, Pandemic, and Digital Transformation*. Hamilton Books.

Lyle, Perry and Ashraf Esmail (2025). *Impact of Leakage, Whistleblowing, and the Rise of Propaganda*. IGI Global. https://www.igi-global.com/book/impacts-leakage-whistleblowing-rise-propaganda/348330.

Norman, Lauren B. 2025. *Substance Use: Current Readings and Trends*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company.

Publication Spotlight – Articles and Book Chapters

Aktas, F., Rider, E., and Yilmaz, F. 2025. "Social Capital, NGOs, and the Resilience of Refugee Women Entrepreneurs (Chapter 13)." In N. Ranabahu, H. de Vries, & R. Hamilton (Eds.), *Refugee Entrepreneurship: A Research Companion*. Routledge.

Aydiner, C. and Rider, E. 2025. "Breaking Barriers: Women Refugee Entrepreneurship and Integration Frameworks in Europe and America (Chapter 6)." In N. Ranabahu, H. de Vries, & R. Hamilton (Eds.), *Refugee Entrepreneurship: A Research Companion*. Routledge.

Burke, Jessica, Lisa Eargle, and Ashraf Esmail. 2025. "The Spanish Flu and its Effects on Population Growth: The Aftermath." In *Twenty-First Century Issues: Perspective on Climate Change, Pandemic, and Digital Transformation*. Edited by Edward Agbai, Ashraf Esmail, Henrietta Okoro, Sylvester Udeorah, and Brandon Hamann, pp 3-28. Hamilton Books. Lanham, Maryland.

Davidson, Theresa. Forthcoming. "The Resiliency of Peoplehood: The Tohono O'odham, the Border, and Environmental Degradation." In *A Vision of One Humanity & One Planet as the Theoretical Framework for Worldwide Social Justice*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Gordon-Lennox, Jeltje and J. David Knottnerus. 2025. "Ritual Practice, Addiction, Obsessive-Compulsive Behavior, and Routine: Ritual Dynamics and Human Coping Strategies." Pg. 279-289 in *Somatic-Oriented Therapies: Embodiment: Trauma, and Polyvagal Perspectives*. Edited by Herbert Grassmann, Maurizio Stupiggia, and Stephen W. Porges, Norton Professional Books.

Grossman, Kandice, Aaron Padgett, and Rebecca Scott. 2024. "It's Grandpa's Land: Settler Property, Heteropatriarchy and Environmental Disasters." In *Deviant Hollers: Queering Appalachian Ecologies for a Sustainable Future*, edited by Zane McNeill and Rebecca Scott. University of Kentucky Press.

Hamann, Brandon and Ashraf Esmail (2025). "Global Terrorism and the Religious Dimension: Is Global Terrorism Religious or Ideological?" In *Global Terrorism Quest for Social and Economic Justice*. Edited by Sylvester Udeorah, Edward Agbai, and Henreita Okoro, pp. 406-422. Pine Book Writing.

Hidalgo, Danielle Antoinette. 2024. "Dance Music Reckonings: Authenticity, Whiteness, and Toxic Masculinity." In *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Music Industry Studies*, edited by David Arditi and Ryan Nolan. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hidalgo, Danielle Antoinette. 2024. "Platformization and Its Ongoing Impact on Dance Music Spaces." Dancecult: *Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 16 (1). https://doi.org/10.12801/1947-5403.2024.16.01.13.

Johnson, Kevin, J. David Knottnerus, and Duane Gill. 2024. "Structural Ritualization Theory (Disruption, Deritualization, and Reritualization Applications for Technological Disasters)." Pg. 612-616 in *Encyclopedia of Technological Hazards and Disasters in the Social Sciences*, edited by Duane A. Gill, Liesel A. Ritchie, and Nnenia Campbell. Northampton, Massachusetts: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Lyle, Perry and Ashraf Esmail. 2025. "The Historical Perspective of Fake News." In *Impacts of Leakage, Whistleblowing, and Rise of Propaganda*. Edited by Perry Lyle and Ashraf Esmail, pp. 1-16. IGI Global.

Mavyan, Rouby, Ashraf Esmail, Hovsep Mavyan. 2025. "Contagion: The Disease of Spreading Fake News in the Digital World." *In Impacts of Leakage, Whistleblowing, and Rise of Propaganda*. Edited by Perry Lyle and Ashraf Esmail, pp. 17-36. IGI Global.

Moore, Brendan James, Syed Adeel Ahmed, and Ashraf Esmail. 2025. "Managing Digital Technology and Research Communication for Sustainable Systems." In *Twenty-First Century Issues: Perspective on Change, Pandemic, and Digital Transformation*. Edited by Edward Agbai, Ashraf Esmail, Henrietta Okoro, Sylvester Udeorah, and Brandon Hamann, pp 175-192. Hamilton Books. Lanham, Maryland.

O'Neill, Brian F. Matthew Jerome Schneider, and Alejandro Garcia Lozano. 2025. "Toward a Critical Environmental Justice Approach to Ocean Equity." *Environmental Justice* 18(2): 90-99. https://doi.org/10.1089/env.2023.0067.

Ota, Yoshitaka, Gerald G. Singh, Andrés M. Cisneros-Montemayor, Eliana Ritts, Matthew J. Schneider, Ana Spalding, Mia Strand, Wilf Swartz, and Alexis Valauri-Orton. 2024. "An Ocean Declaration for equitable governance to guide observation." *NPJ Ocean Sustainability* 3: 1-3. https://doi.org/10.1038/s44183-024-00093-3.

Padgett, Aaron. 2025. "Against the blue current: Hegemonic environmental rhetoric in the making of Pacific futures." *Fathom*. https://oceannexus.org/2025/04/11/against-the-blue-current/.

Reiter, Abigail and Miranda Reiter. 2024. "Unnoticed Burdens for Students of Color and Unearned White Privileges of White Homogeneity at a PWI." *Virginia Social Sciences Journal* Vol. 57. https://www.virginiasocialscience.org/journal-archives.html#/.

Reiter, Miranda, Abigail Reiter, Tangela Towns, and Yawo Bessa. 2024. "The Impact of Social Support, Psychosocial Characteristics, and Contextual Factors on Racial Disparities in Hypertension Disparities between Black and White Women." *Open Journal of Social Sciences* (Ethic and Cultural Studies Special Issue). https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2024.127008.

Schneider, Matthew Jerome and Brian F. O'Neill. 2025. "'Thank you in advance for not changing my retirement home's intrinsic beauty': NIMBYism, environmental privilege and the politics of offshore wind energy." *Coastal Studies and Society* 4(1): 55-83.

https://doi.org/10.1177/26349817251315582.

Tatch, Andrew and Ismail Yigit. (forthcoming). "Exploring Labor Market Narratives on the r/blind Subreddit". *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness*.

Ulsperger, Jason S. and J. David Knottnerus. 2024. Technological Disasters and Grief." Pp. 304-308 in *Encyclopedia of Technological Hazards and Disasters in the Social Sciences*, edited by Duane A. Gill, Liesel A. Ritchie, and Nnenia Campbell. Northampton, Massachusetts: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Walker, Alicia M. and Arielle Kuperberg. 2025. *Bound by BDSM: Unexpected Lessons for Building a Happier Life*. Bloomsbury. https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/bound-by-bdsm-9798881803032/

Walker, Alicia M. 2025. "An Emotional Affair." *Contexts*, 24(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/15365042251318669

Causes for Celebration!

Robyn Brown was hired as Lecturer of Criminology at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. She is scheduled to start in Fall 2025.

Danielle Hidalgo is recovering from a craniotomy she had in late January (to remove a brain tumor that was discovered last August). In her words, "the fact that I'm generally ok feels like a huge accomplishment at this point!"

Willie Pearson, Georgia Institute of Technology, was selected as the Class of 1934 Distinguished Professor. It is the highest honor that Georgia Tech bestows on its faculty, recognizing outstanding contributions in teaching, research, and service.

Abby Reiter earned tenure and was promoted to Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke.

In November 2024, Andrew Tatch was appointed as the Associate Chair in the Department of Anthropology, Sociology, and Criminology at Troy University.

Alicia M. Walker recently started writing a regular column for Psychology Today called *Hidden Desires*. The column can be accessed here: https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hidden-desires.

Join us in North Augusta, South Carolina for the 51st Annual MSSA Conference!



All conference presenters (including virtual-only presenters) must have an active MSSA membership AND register for the meeting the time of conference, unless given special permission by the Executive Office.

See MSSA Membership Rate Structure for membership pricing.

Join or renew your membership and register for the conference using our Online Portal.

Hotel Information

Crowne Plaza North Augusta

Address: 1060 Center St, North Augusta, SC 29841

Phone: (803) 349-8400

Block Rate Booking Information

\$159 per night

Block rate booking available until September 24, 2025

Use this link for block rate booking.

Conference Registration Rates		
	By September 15	After September 15
2025 Regular Meeting Registration	\$120.00	\$150.00
2025 Emeritus Meeting Registration	\$120.00	\$150.00
2025 Joint Meeting Registration	\$120.00	\$150.00
2025 Non Member Meeting Registration	\$155.00	\$185.00
2025 Graduate Student Meeting Registration	\$70.00	\$100.00
2025 Undergraduate Student Meeting Registration	\$55.00	\$85.00
2025 Sponsored Undergraduate Registration	\$10.00	\$10.00



UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT PAPER COMPETITION SUBMISSION DEADLINE: MAY 17, 2025

The Mid-South Sociological Association invites the submission of student papers for its annual Undergraduate Student Paper Competition. The competition is open to students in the Mid-South Region and to other undergraduate students who are members of the Mid-South Sociological Association. A prize of \$100 will be awarded for the best paper. The authors of the papers selected will be presented with certificates of merit after presentations of their papers at the MSSA annual conference.

RULES FOR THE COMPETITION

- Each paper must be accompanied by a cover letter requesting participation in the undergraduate competition session. The letter must include the title of the paper, author(s) of the paper, the school affiliation, the email address and the telephone number of the author(s).
- The maximum length of an eligible paper shall be 20 double-spaced pages of text, not counting abstract, references, tables, and figures.
- Papers may be co-authored with a maximum of three undergraduate student authors. Papers that list co-authors who are graduate students or faculty will not be considered in this category.
- Papers must not have been submitted for publication prior to submission for this competition.

Each submission will be evaluated by a committee of scholars and members of Mid-South Sociological Association Inc. Evaluation will be based on (1) originality, (2) contribution or potential contribution to the discipline, (3) quality and clarity of arguments, and (4) technical writing (i.e. neatness, use of an appropriate format, grammar, spelling, etc.). To receive full recognition for participation, submissions must meet deadlines and participants must present their papers at the 51st Annual Conference. Winners are also expected to be present at the awards banquet.

Students are strongly encouraged to seek faculty guidance prior to submission of papers. It is the responsibility of the submitter to provide a paper that is readable, in one of the formats noted above.

Papers (in Word, rtf, or PDF format), and questions regarding the competition should be submitted by email to Dr. Joel Crombez, MSSA, Inc. Vice-President Elect, at jcrombez@kennesaw.edu.



Graduate Student Paper Competition

2025 SUBMISSION DEADLINE: MAY 15

The Mid-South Sociological Association invites the submission of student papers for its annual Graduate Student Paper Competition. The competition is open to students in the Mid-South Region and to other graduate students who are members of the Mid-South Sociological Association. A prize of \$100 will be awarded for the best paper. The authors of the selected papers will be presented with certificates of merit after presentations of their papers at the MSSA annual conference.

Rules for the Competition

- Each paper must be accompanied by a cover letter requesting participation in the graduate competition session. The letter must include the title of the paper, author(s) of the paper, the school affiliation, the email address and the telephone number of the author(s).
- The maximum length of an eligible paper shall be 25 double-spaced pages of text, not counting abstract, references, tables, and figures.
- Papers may be co-authored, but not by faculty. Papers that list co-authors who are faculty will not be considered in this category.
- Papers must not have been submitted for publication prior to submission for this competition.

Each submission will be evaluated by a committee of scholars and members of Mid-South Sociological Association Inc. Evaluation will be based on originality and contribution or potential contribution to the discipline. Papers will be scored on the following: (1) thesis statement/main idea/research question, (2) sociological theory foundation, (3) organizational structure and coherence, (4) literature review, (5) research methods, (6) trustworthiness, (7) use of relevant evidence, (8) findings, (9) citations, and (10) technical writing. To receive full recognition for participation, submissions must meet deadlines and participants must present their papers at the 51st Annual Conference. Winners are also expected to be present at the awards banquet.

Students are strongly encouraged to seek faculty guidance prior to submission of papers.

Papers (in Word, rtf, or PDF format) should be submitted HERE in the submission portal, or copy and paste the following link into your browser: https://mssa.meetingsavvy.net/login.

It is the responsibility of the submitter to provide a paper that is readable, in one of the formats noted above.

If you have any questions regarding the competition, please contact Dr. Greenidge directly at ggreenidge@nwmissouri.edu.

Questions about MSSA? Want to get involved?

Reach out to our Executive Council!

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