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WHERE CAN ADOLESCENTS FIND AN "ISLAND OF PEACE" IN
HIGH SCHOOL?

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Abstract

In this article, the authors review the contribution of art education and creative processes in the art workshop of a high school in Israel in the current digital era. Adolescents are defined as "screen youth" in this era, with screens and social networks becoming an almost inseparable part of the body and a major part of adolescents' lives. The article describes perceptions and definitions of various scholars regarding the characteristics of youth in this era, and the contribution of artistic creation to society and culture in general, and especially to adolescents, while addressing the unique processes in the art workshop. The article also reports on findings that emerged as part of a narrative qualitative study, in which graduates of the art workshop were interviewed about their personal experiences during their high school years and its contribution to their well-being as an 'island of peace'. The first author's insights from her long-standing professional experience in teaching art in workshops are also integrated. Conclusions are drawn about the vital and beneficial qualities of this important place in schools, but also for the education system in the 21st century, in general.

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Keywords: Art education, art workshop, creativity, island of peace, digital era, screen youth.



1. Introduction

"Soon silence will have passed into legend. Man has turned his back on silence. Day after day he invents machines and devices that increase noise and distract humanity from the essence of life, contemplation, meditation". Thus, wrote Hans Jean Arp, the French-German sculptor and poet, about the loss of silence in the modern era. This rings true and raises the question, where can adolescents find an island of peace and quiet in high school? Where can adolescents cultivate the qualities of observation and encounter their selves in high school? Where is humanistic pedagogy taught and implemented in the digital age?

In the digital age, or as it also called, "the internet age", social networks and smartphones have become an integral part of the body and the being of the 'screen youth' in personal and group aspects.

Adolescents spends three years in high school. The busy school hours, the demanding curriculum requirements, and the turbulent physical, cognitive and social characteristics of adolescents affect their well-being.

Additionally, the characteristics of the digital age, social networking, and the permanent connection to smartphones affect the daily lives and very existence of adolescent students. According to the sociologists' division to generations following the Internet revolution, adolescents nowadays belong to the Z generation, which has behavioural characteristics that contradict humanistic characteristics that are valuable to human society in general and to the individual in particular (McCrinkle & Wolfinge, 2014).

In view of this situation, we ask, what are the humanistic characteristics expressed in the pedagogical processes in the art workshop in high school and what is their importance and contribution to the 'screen youth'?

1.1. Art Education and Education through Art

It is very important in education to increase the value of creativity, the value of individual work, and the value of one's personal voice. In parallel, it is very important in education to cultivate one's inner discourse, interpersonal discourse, emotional discourse, and group discourse. The education system should encourage and implement creative pedagogy and strive for "education through art". Art education seeks to restore creative work to the center of action of education systems as a process centered on a workshop that combines theoretical and practical learning.

It may seem utopian to think of an experiential and experimental workshop as the core of an educational system, but it can be implemented by placing creativity in the center of education as a way to achieve meaningful learning.

Let us think for a moment about the art workshop as an overall discipline at the center of the school, and the process in the art workshop as a space of creativity and learning, as a platform for the growth of the individual and the group, the core of a humanistic educational method (Arnheim, 1974; Carmon, 2012; Harpaz, 2009; Erhard, 2003; Shapira, 2008; Tadmor, 2012).

1.2. Creativity and its importance

The origin of the word "creativity" is Latin and it means 'the earth', 'the child', 'makes', 'create'— in other words, it denotes a dynamic process that grows and develops. The concept of creativity can be

summed up in De Bono's (1988) definition: At the simplest level, "being creative" means bringing about something that did not exist before.

Creative thinking is also a way of life (Gardner, 1982, 1996); it is the individual's lifestyle, which provides purpose and meaning (Lam, 1972). The importance of creative behavior, Landaw (1973) believes, lies not only in enabling a person to rediscover himself and his surroundings, but also in the tools it provides for dealing with the processes of change that characterize our time. Change will be the most constant factor in the life of contemporary adults, so the creative approach will help them deal with uncertain situations and successfully cope with changes and understand them. According to Landaw (1973), a person who is raised with creativity will be equipped with the courage and freedom of action to maintain full contact with the world and be an inseparable part of it. Such individuals will adapt to changing situations and will help to design changes as best as possible; they will not only know how to take advantage of opportunities, they will also be able to envision and create them (Landaw, 1973).

1.3. Creativity and Education

"The existing educational systems are not designed to meet the challenges we face today. They were developed to satisfy the needs of an earlier era. Reform is not enough; they need a fundamental change" (Robinson, 2013, p. 61).

Professor Robinson (2013), who is working to advance his ideas on reforming the education system to foster creativity, original thought, and the unique talents of each student, argues that creativity is the true intelligence, and being in one's element means achieving the full and satisfying realization of this intelligence. This is a basic human right, claims Robinson (2013). The education system is failing because it ignores what makes people unique and prevents them from developing their natural abilities and abilities. Robinson suggests that each student's education be based on their element.

Education, he says, should be the process in which people develop as human beings. In light of this, it is very important to develop the creativity of students, which is being trampled by the education system, which he calls the "educational grinder" (Robinson, 2013, p. 149).

When humans find their medium, they discover their true creative power and realize themselves. If so, "the surest way to bring out the good of man is to help him connect with his own creative abilities" (Robinson, 2013, p. 149). The key to creativity is imagination, and therefore one has to expand the range of experiences of man. Robinson believes that it is important to have an open mind and be attentive to the various possibilities. Creativity is related to thought and emotion and both are essential to human balance. Without individuality and authenticity there will be no personal growth. Creativity, he claims, makes it possible to turn imagination into reality and is a physical concert, a concert combining logic with the subconscious and the physical and mental ability to realize ideas. In all professions, creativity is required, and every individual is born with a degree of creativity. The crucial thing is to learn to be creative and develop this ability. According to him, society is the one that harms the element. The schools, for the most part, are "the silent killer of the element" (Robinson, 2013, p. 177). This destruction is due to the fact that the education system makes the children homogeneous and tends to oppress those who stand out. He claims that children have an incredible ability to innovate, that all children have wonderful talents, and that the education system hurts them.

Sigmund Freud, the psychologist and father of psychoanalysis, one of the most important thinkers in the field of personality theory and the most prominent and influential intellectuals of the 20th century, stated in similar fashion that:

High school should not settle for not pushing its students to suicide, and strive to achieve more. It should give its students the passion to live, as well as support and backing in a period of life where the developmental task spurs students to relax the relationship with their parents and family. It seems to me that the schools fail in many ways and fail to fulfil their duty of providing a substitute for the family and arouse curiosity in the life that takes place outdoors. The school must not forget that it deals with non-adult humans, which have the right to be delayed in certain stages of development, even if this gives rise to disagreement. The school must strive to be nothing more than a game in life. (as cited in Friedman, 1967, p. 60)

Newsweek magazine published in July 2010 an article titled 'The Crisis of Creativity' which reported that there is a decline in creativity, especially among kindergarten and elementary school children. The findings link between uniform school curricula and a lack of creativity development. The many hours spent by children and adolescents watching television, computer screens, and smartphones are also factors that are detrimental to the development of creativity. As Robinson claims, there is no doubt that the educational system has failed to cultivate the creative component at the core of the educational endeavour. If so, it is very important to understand who are the new learners in modern Western society?

1.4. Generations in modern Western society

Humanity has experienced an amazing revolution since the move from analogue to digital technology that began in the 1980s. Western society's new generations have begun to relate to a technological-digital age that is changing the world order, the rules of behavior, the social order, cultures, priorities, personal taste, and ways of contact and communication between people. The pre-revolutionary generations ("digital immigrants") find it difficult to grasp and understand that this is a significant social change, and not merely technological progress; a change that is reflected in almost every known human activity (McCrinkle & Wolfinge, 2014). Table 01 refers to the five major generations in modern western society according to sociologists.

Table 01. Five major generations in modern Western society according to sociologists (McCrinkle & Wolfinge, 2014)

Five major generations in modern Western society	
Born in the mid-1920s to the mid-1940s	The founding generation Wisdom generation Traditionalist builders
Born in the mid-1940s and up to the early 1960s	Baby boomers generation Boomer generation / Baby boomers
Born in the mid-1960s and early 1980s	X Generation
Born in the early 1980s and until the end of the 1990s	Y Generation From 1980 the generations began to relate to the technological age. The first generation was named

	the "Millennial Generation" and grew up in a world dominated by the Internet
Born in the late 1990s to mid-2010s	Z Generation This is the generation of Google, new learners, digital generation, plasma generation, youth screens, V generation
Born in 2010 and after	Alpha Generation

1.5. The Digital Era- Z generation

Generation Z was born into the era of digital technology and is the first generation to spend its youth using smart phones. Numerous nicknames have been given to it by researchers such as generation millennium, the generation of Google, new learners, the digital generation, the plasma generation, screen youths, generation homeland, generation V (virtual generation), community of contents, web generation, Google generation, generation dot-coms, the echo-boomers, the me generation, generation D (digital), generation Z, millennial learners.

In primary schools, the next generation is the Alpha generation, born after 2010. The Z generation and the Alpha generation were the first to be born into the millennium (McCrinkle & Wolfinge, 2014).

1.6. The effects of screens on adolescent behaviour

Researchers in the contemporary era, the digital age, point out that the hardest addiction of teenagers today is to screens: computer screens, television screens, mobile phone screens, and computer game screens. The 15-year-old smartphones have opened users to a world of knowledge, made complex processes simpler, and fill numerous functions for adolescents, who use them from the moment they wake up till they go back to sleep (Misra, Cheng, Genevie, & Yuan, 2016; Turkel, 2012).

The cellular devices not only change the way we do things, they change who we are. For example, simple and everyday experiences of life are now recorded and instantly uploaded to the social networks. Turkel (2012) in her book "Alone Together" explains what happens to the relationships between people in this age, arguing that a large and growing part of the world's youth is connected to smart phones and almost always connected to social networks. The screens and the net have become an inseparable part of the body and the way of life.

The digital age has a great influence on the characteristics of society in the broad sense, as emerges from current studies. These characteristics include breaking up the social group and encouraging individuality, a need for immediacy, a culture of "here and now" without the ability to reject gratification, superficiality, passivity, a lack of boundaries, difficulty in concentration and detachment, inability to listen, a lack of values, drinking alcohol not because of boredom but due to an inability to talk, share experiences, and expose oneself without drinking, loss of the ability to communicate with each other, a distorted perception of reality leading to violent and alienated discourse (Misra et al., 2016).

1.7. The art work shop program and process in high school

The duration of the art work shop program in high school is three years, from 10th to 12th grade. The studies are part of the curriculum, and are considered a major subject (5 credits) in the high school diploma.

The creative process in the art workshop includes a variety techniques for painting, sculpture, and mixed techniques. The studies take place within the framework of a creative group that supports and enables personal and group development in a pleasant and silent atmosphere, with music in the background.

The studies include art creation in the workshop, visits to art exhibitions, and meetings with artists. Over the years, a personal art portfolio is created that gives expression to the development of the student's abilities, personal issues, personal attitude, and creativity. In the 12th grade, an individual final project is displayed in a group exhibition in the school.

The workshop process is based on active learning, a combination of discipline and personal motivation, with cognitive, emotional, and technical developments occurring as the students advance from one phase to the next. According to Dewey (1960), "education means development in the realm of experience and practice" (p. 23). The creative process in the workshop facilitates activities that are different from what is customary in the education system. It is a process that allows learning and playing and invites students to engage in action through personal choice and self-commitment.

The art workshop is a space of play that simulates reality. Working in this space enables students to encounter knowledge and actively create, to touch things, to think instinctively, to experience a different relationship between the students and the teacher; it is a more cooperative system. The teacher leads the learning process as mentor and coach, whose guidance is dialogical and based on mutual experience and action. Art studies in the group provide social communication skills and a sense of belonging through joint action and dialogue. The joint educational activity creates social consciousness and involvement, communication, reciprocity, and recognition of the right of each individual to self-expression. In this way participants can learn from each other.

Work in the workshop requires planning, a long-term vision, proper organization of work, learning from in-depth reflection that constantly accompanies the workshop experience, and the ability to draw conclusions. Thus, learning in the workshop provides practical and methodical work habits. These are the foundations of practical, disciplined learning, based on the work of the learner under the guidance of the teacher (Ben Eliezer, 1997).

Viewing the adolescents and their creative work as the core of education facilitates the pedagogic process in the art workshop - the process that develops the well-being of adolescent students during high school, and in particular the various components of well-being: optimism, flow, empathy as a social skill, academic self-efficacy, relationships, personal functioning, purpose and meaning (Erhard, 2003; Noddings, 2005; Shadmi & Zimmerman, 2008)

The contributions of the art workshop to adolescent students in the digital age in light of the humanistic pedagogy applied in it can be seen in Table no. 2, which was created by the researcher, based on her long-time acquaintance with the students of Generation Z.

Table 02. Behavioral characteristics of the Z generation in reference to the characteristics of humanistic pedagogy in the art workshop

Behavioural characteristic	Characteristics of Z	Art workshop pedagogy
Eye contact and interpersonal communication	Virtual intimacy through a machine, a substitute for face-to-face encounters.	Allows a direct, intimate encounter, face to face
The ability to be alone	They deny themselves the benefits of being alone	Nurturing the ability to be alone allows for an encounter with inner, personal depth
The attitude toward the social group	Breaking up the social group Encouraging individuality	Co-occupation as a group of artists is a shared and deep common denominator. Making a group exhibition
Ability to delay gratification	A culture of "here and now" without the ability to postpone gratification	An ongoing process of creation from stage to stage, from planning to the final product
Access to knowledge	Superficiality in research. Access to knowledge directly and immediately	In-depth discussion of subjects from different aspects of content and techniques
The nature of the activity	Passivity	Activity from beginning to completion
Approach to boundaries	No boundaries	Boundaries of time, place, technique, materials, and ability to express
Ability to concentrate	Difficulty in continuous concentration and disconnected from thinking	Deep and continuous work that requires a great deal of concentration on content and techniques
Content world	Content that is mediated by screens encourages violence, Glorification of the external world	Selected, personal, authentic, deep and sensitive content
Ability to communicate with each other	Difficulties in communicating with each other	Communication through visual products, through the art language, an ongoing artistic and emotional discourse about the works and motives for the works
Ability to share and be exposed	Drinking alcohol out of an inability to speak, share, and be authentically exposed without drinking	Developing visual and verbal expression as an integral part of the creative process, followed by the development of emotional and reflective discourse
The nature of the discourse	An alienated and sometimes violent discourse	Professional, emotional, deep, collaborative, and authentic discourse

2. Problem Statement

High school adolescents are experiencing confusion and pressure because of the physical, emotional, and cognitive changes of this era and due to potential social complexities. Additionally, they must withstand a heavy load of studies, which all together influence their well-being. There is a need to promote the well-being of adolescents in high school and to strengthen their individual authenticity and uniqueness through art and creativity pedagogy.

3. Research Questions

1. What is the contribution of the art workshop to the development of the following components of well-being of adolescent students in high school: (1) Optimism, (2) Flow, (3) Empathy as a social skill, (4) Academic self-efficacy, (5) Relationships, (6) Personal functioning, (7) Purpose and meaning.

2. Where can adolescents find an ‘island of peace’ in high school?

4. Purpose of the Study

To examine the effects of the multicultural art workshop on the well-being of high school students in Israel during adolescence.

5. Research Methods

Mixed-methods, qualitative and quantitative narrative analysis. The research paradigm: qualitative research, narrative research.

6. Findings

The total score of 34 adolescent art students on the well-being questionnaire reflects the contribution of the process in the art workshop to their well-being in the aspects of (1) Optimism, (2) Flow, (3) Empathy as a social skill, (4) Academic self-efficacy, (5) Relationships, (6) Personal functioning, (7) Purpose and meaning.

The researcher divided these aspects into three groups: 1. Interpersonal relationships (Emo1); 2. Meaning and hope (Emo 2); 3. Sense of ability (Emo 3). Group no. 4. is the combination of the data from the former three groups. The measurement is on a scale of 1-5.

The level of interpersonal relationships (Emo1) increased from 3.51 to 3.55.

The level of meaning and hope (Emo 2) increased from 3.44 to 3.48

The level of sense of ability (Emo 3) increased from 2.97 to 3.63

The level of the combination of the three groups increased from 3.58 to 4.20.

The results are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 03. Initial well-being findings

	The beginning of the school year			The end of the school year				
	EMO1	EMO2	EMO3	EMO4	EMO1	EMO2	EMO3	EMO4
Mean	3.51	3.44	2.97	3.58	3.55	3.48	3.63	4.20
SD	.57	.63	.80	.67	.64	.86	.74	1.21

Findings of the 24 qualitative narrative interviews with graduates of the art workshop in the past five years. The interviewees were asked to relate their experiences from the art workshop. The key themes that emerged from the interviews corresponded with the behavioral characteristics of the Z generation mentioned above.

Quiet and calm

"In high school I was constantly under pressure, every time I drew a painting here, it really calmed me ... here I had moments of quiet ... three hours of calm ... and not being pressured ... rest from thoughts ... the art workshop allows you to do what you want."

"The workshop had an atmosphere, and when you get there it's what you need to do. There was industrial quiet. I love quiet and feel comfortable with the quiet. I'm with myself without noise around, you can concentrate and hear what you think. It was quiet and we did not need more than that. The quiet enabled everyone to work."

Meeting with myself

"The art workshop is a place where I found myself more than anywhere else in my life. I opened another room in my heart and only light went in there."

"For me, art is to convey emotions, to convey yourself, the painting is the way I feel, the colors, the shape ... that's how I am ... The biggest contribution of the workshop is mental, it taught me to accept myself."

Authenticity- personal questions

"Every time a person engages in a spiritual activity like art, he touches himself, digging to this place in the soul in which you are most what you are. I think in my work I managed to get to this place."

"I'm proud that it's my thing, I did not imitate anyone."

"It's mine and it's about me."

"My paintings have a lot more meaning than I thought when I painted them."

"I put into my paintings my emotional state, the subject of death and the meaning of life. I chose to draw old women and wondered if I could reach that age?"

Face-to-face meeting, group communication, respect for others

"We looked at each other, studied each other ... we consulted ... I was always interested in what others were doing, to see the potential of each and where to get to the final work."

"There were a lot of people there that I would not talk to in life, but what united us all was our support for each other. People paint from the heart, everyone invests in his painting. I never saw anyone laughing at the other's painting. You build friendships there. There are so many different approaches to art in a group and no one mocks the other. The three years were amazing because of the people I studied with."

"I hooked up with people I never thought I would ever connect with. It opened a door for me to meet other people. Externalities were not important, appearance, religious background. It makes you open up to more people, populations, opens your mind on another level."

"The workshop is an exciting place where you work and see the others working."

"It's an ongoing deep process of learning and doing."

"There was a commitment and I enjoyed it. I wanted to work. There's a lot of work I've done. I drew so much I wanted to reach this stage that I would look and be proud of what I did in this work. There was a lot of learning".

"I was waiting to arrive and work on my work. In the workshop I managed to get into it and invest. At home I could not. In the workshop, I managed to get into it, invest in it, not think about anything else, delve into it and be surprised how it took me three hours without feeling the time go by."

"Through art, music and painting I learned about myself and the environment. I learned to understand myself much more. I went through a process that made me want as much as I could to express myself through art, to be precise about what I wanted to say and what I felt inside with the tools and the brush".

Persistence

"I had to fail quite a bit to figure out how I should do ... I worked on the drawings for hours and hours in order to be precise about what I wanted to convey ... I went through a process ... It was not easy but it was good. I learned about myself all the time."

Cognitive, emotional, visual expression ability

"My final work was on sports. It helped me. At the beginning of the year, I was in a difficult emotional state because of football and I slowly started to work and got into it."

Development of creativity

"The art workshop is another world, suddenly calm, the songs in the background, feeling really positive with all the works around you. I wish every student was open to this area of art, it should be part of the routine, clear your head, open your head, your creativity opens in all directions." In figure 01 the adolescents can be seen during their creativity process in the art workshop.



Figure 01. High school adolescents creating in the art workshop

7. Conclusion

The findings showed the contribution of the art workshop process to several aspects of well-being among adolescent high school students. From the beginning of the school year till the end of the year, the degree of mental well-being of art students increased with reference to the three dimensions: 1. interpersonal relationships, 2. purpose and meaning, 3. sense of ability.

Interpersonal relationships developed as a result of the multiple meetings in the 12th grade as part of the preparation of the final works. Each student created his or her work but was also exposed to the

works of his or her colleagues. The contemplation, conversations, sharing and exposure throughout the year, the personal discourse, the art discourse and the setting up of the group art exhibition—all of these fostered mutual assistance and created a close relationship. It is important to note that the students worked together in the workshop from the 10th grade, and close interpersonal relationships had already been built during the previous two years. Nonetheless, there was an increase in this aspect in the final year.

The level of meaning and hope (Emo 2) increased from 3.44 to 3.48. The art students came to the art workshop with an urge for creativity, a love of practice in this field, and a desire to express themselves. The students' final theses dealt with the subjects they chose from deep personal interest. In light of this, there was a development in the sense of taste and meaning as the students progressed with the final work and presented it.

The level of sense of ability (Emo 3) increased from 2.97 to 3.63. The significant increase was in this group. The sense of ability increased greatly during the 12th grade. The students progressed in their final work, improved their technical ability and visual expression, presented their work in a group exhibition, and were highly appreciated by the peers, the school community, and their parents. Furthermore, they achieved high marks in the matriculation exam. Thus, their achievements at the end of the 12th grade were the peak of the entire process.

The level of the combination of the three groups increased from 3.58 to 4.20. All the indices rose from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, which means that the process in the art workshop cultivated the well-being of the adolescent students with reference to the three groups: 1. interpersonal relationships, 2. purpose and meaning, 3. sense of ability. These three groups include the seven components of well-being: (1)Optimism, (2)Flow, (3)Empathy as a social skill, (4)Academic self-efficacy, (5)Relationships, (6)Personal functioning, (7) Purpose and meaning (Shadmi & Zimmerman, 2008).

According to the interviews, it can be concluded that the graduates of the art workshop remember the art workshop as being very relaxing, a place that allowed them rest and freedom of choice. The quiet allowed them to meet with themselves, concentrate, connect with their personal thoughts, and work.

The workshop allows adolescents to find themselves, open their hearts, bring light to their life, acquire tools and express their personal feelings and self-acceptance. In addition, the process in the workshop allows the adolescents to get to know themselves, and express themselves in a unique and authentic way through doing something very meaningful to them. The process in the art workshop promotes interpersonal communication, mutual support, acceptance of the other, personal and close acquaintance, openness, respect for the process and for others, tolerance and enjoyment of social and shared creation.

In the art workshop process, the adolescents are committed and work with a desire to move forward and reach the end stage with full devotion, and in doing so they lose their sense of time, and get a sense of flow. It is a lengthy, challenging cognitive, emotional, creative learning process, with a great desire to express personal life experiences and personal messages. It is a way of thinking and contemplation, expressing one's authentic personal voice through creating visual art in high school (Cohen Evron, 2012). If so, we found the answer to the question where can adolescents find an "island of peace" in high school.

The silent art workshop is not a legend. It cultivates contemplation and concentration. It is an island of quiet, calmness, concentration and authentic personal creation, a place that cultivates in the adolescents' inner peace, peer relationships, an ability to express issues and personal desires, to ask questions, to express

through visual tools their inner world, inner emotions and unique personal statement, as well as the ability to collaborate with peers and with the teacher as a mentor. It is a process and experience that cultivates optimism, flow, social skills, empathy, academic self-efficacy, good relationships, personal functioning, purpose and meaning, and a sense of ability (Shadmi & Zimmerman, 2008).

In the digital era, humanistic pedagogy in the art workshop allows and offers the "screen youth" a place that is a world of its own, which provides and cultivates valuable treasures such as quiet and calmness, observation, meeting with oneself, authenticity, face-to-face meeting with peers, group communication, respect for others, an ongoing deep process of learning and doing, persistence, cognitive, emotional, visual expression abilities, and the development of creativity.

The core of education is the intellectual, mental, and spiritual being, in a sense also religious, which raises existential fundamental questions in the student, and through which a dialogue takes place, led by the teacher, strengthening the student's consciousness, shaping his identity, shaping his worldview, so that his values are developed and embodied. (Tadmor, 2012, p. 8)

Therefore, the art workshop is a habitat and "island of peace", a necessary place in high school in the digital era, which realizes the core of education.

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