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## Contents

Introduction .....	638
Land and Place .....	638
Indigeneity, Youth, Media, and the Archive .....	640
“Transgressive” Youth, Social Policy, and the Politics of Resentment .....	641
Counter-Narratives, Double Memories, and Belonging: Indigenous Youth Speak Back .....	644
Conclusion .....	646
Cross-References .....	647
References .....	647

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## Abstract

Reconciliation narratives in post-conflict and post-settler societies and within divided populations underpin much of the official discourse about national identity. Within these narratives, belonging and civic harmony are heavily emphasized. Indigenous young peoples, however, do not necessarily identify with the notions of belonging, home, civic harmony, and nationhood that are embedded in settler or Crown discourses and often feel excluded or marginalized by these official memory regimes. Previous research shows that politicized constructs of belonging and cultural alienation are developed by marginalized young people in response to these tensions which have a powerful impact on their perceptions in later years of life. In light of this evidence, this chapter explores the way that divergent interpretations of national identity are navigated by indigenous young people in New Zealand. Indigenous Māori youth are positioned in this chapter as active historical agents who have produced their own historical memories

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and practices of belonging and national identity that sit outside official discourses. These cultural memory repertoires speak directly to the conflicts of the past and their ongoing impact on what it means to be young and Māori in contemporary New Zealand. In response, indigenous Māori youth create parallel stories drawn from both official (Crown) sources and tribal histories, which act as politicized counter-narratives that suggest a range of possible histories and ways of belonging.

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## Introduction

In conflicted democracies, indigenous young people's narratives of belonging tend to be complex, multilayered, and, at times, seemingly contradictory. The story arc does not always run neatly from social disunity or injustice to harmony, resolution, and reconciliation. Often, the remembrance of discord and historical injustice sits alongside official chronicles of apparently happy endings. Yet the memory politics of post-settler nations depend heavily on widespread acceptance of the stories about the cultural encounters of the past, an agreed-upon record of the memories that different ethnic and cultural groups have of their relationships with each other over time. These accounts of cultural contact, often heavily edited, are eventually woven into the nation's founding stories, culminating in tales of home, place, civic identity, reconciled cultural relationships, and belonging.

In post-settler states, however, where indigenous groups have been dispossessed of land, resources, and political and social autonomy, the driving themes of conquest and occupation form a powerful subtext for official memories of the past. These official histories sit uncomfortably alongside indigenous narratives that recall the past in radically different ways and which position native peoples as more active agents in the nation's history than state-sanctioned records might suggest (Carretero and Kriger 2011). It is in these intersections between "approved" state histories and tribal narratives that ideas about nationhood converge with a series of racialized discourses about youth and childhood that have come to characterize social policy in New Zealand since the mid-twentieth century. Many indigenous youth, however, have responded to these interconnected historical and governmentalized discourses by establishing a range of alternative native identities that sit in opposition to nationalist and bureaucratic rhetoric (Kidman 2012; Epstein 2009; Carretero and Kriger 2011). This chapter explores the contradictions inherent in discourses of nationhood, indigeneity, and youth, focusing on indigenous Maori youth and the politics of belonging in New Zealand. The discussion concludes with an exploration of the ways that indigenous youth "speak back" to national histories and the social policy discourses that racialize and diminish them.

## Land and Place

If places matter, they matter in different ways to different people. But in post-settler states, place identities that are anchored in contested geographical spaces have the

potential to unsettle and disrupt cultural scripts about belonging and national unity. In his discussion about the colonial encounters between Aboriginal peoples and settlers in Australia, Trigger (2003) argues that indigenous readings of the land and associated land use practices were enacted at the same time as European settlers sought to engage intellectually with the land by bringing it within a meaningful aesthetic. He contends that the ensuing contest between these “mental maps” has never been resolved and continues to be played out in the present. In New Zealand, too, cultural affinities with land and place are profoundly entwined with both tribal and anglo identity narratives, and these narratives are often in conflict as both Pakeha (i.e., New Zealanders of European descent) and Maori groups lay claim to competing identity/land discourses (Bell 2009).

Ideas about land, place, and belonging also frame the cultural imagining of indigenous young people in post-settler states in particular ways. In nations where tribal groups have witnessed the loss of their lands over successive generations, many indigenous youth carry with them powerful collective memories of tribal dispossession and these memories influence identity formation in the present (Kidman 2012). Accordingly, indigenous young people’s notions of cultural belonging are often overlaid either by direct experience or by clan memories of detribalization and social dislocation. Indeed, these competing collective memories underpin much of the cross-cultural dialogue about contemporary nationhood that takes place in former colonies where cultural divisions are part of everyday life for many young people. Collective memories may well be the raw material of nation-building projects, but in post-settler countries, they are often disputed cultural memories at odds with “official” accounts. In New Zealand, land narratives figure heavily in officially sanctioned colonial histories. Within these accounts, the land is portrayed variously as a backdrop for early cultural encounters – the “first time” meetings that shape the “what-happened-next” of history – and as the basis of disputes over systems of land tenure and ownership. The land is also the site of “place-making” activities for various groups of people who engage deeply with the physical environment and have invested a range of socio-spatial identities and memories within it (Panelli et al. 2008). For many Pakeha New Zealanders, the landscape is central to early pioneering narratives; for example, it features heavily in stories about the taming of the wilderness by “intrepid” white settlers as well as in tales about the awe-inspiring and dangerous beauty of the wilderness that underscores the geographical imagining of New Zealand as a modern nation (Le Heron 2004).

By contrast, Maori tribal identity narratives emphasize the importance of tribal histories and collective tribal memories that speak to and are framed by land and place. Within indigenous geographies, land, people, and place are inextricably linked in ways that sit outside white/anglo mapping discourses (Panelli 2008). For example, members of indigenous tribal communities with multigenerational links to place view the land, as Tamasari (1998) contends, as a “hinge” between the self and the ancestral world. But in post-settler states, the land is also a domain across which power relationships between peoples have been inscribed and enacted, sometimes harmoniously and sometimes with violence and bloodshed.

Thus, in nations where competing cultural affinities and claims to land prevail, the structuring of a sense of place and belonging is never neutral and is subject to constant negotiation and renegotiation over time.

In places where the loss of ancestral tribal lands and ways of life through colonial invasion, land confiscation, and legislative expediency continue to have an impact in the present, tribal memories, histories, and stories can mobilize a range of indigenous understandings about belonging, land, and place that are framed by a powerful sense of loss. Indeed, even those who have experienced tribal de-territorialization either firsthand or as a cross-generational memory continue to draw meaning from tribal “spaces” (Andrews et al. 2012). These recollections are not simply a reflection on the importance of tradition or a nostalgic yearning for an imagined past; as will be discussed later, they are an important component of contemporary identity-making for Maori young people in New Zealand (Kidman 2012).

Accordingly, collective tribal memories and narratives about land, place, and history shape the way that indigenous childhoods and adolescence are experienced as a set of intersecting spatial and cultural relationships in the present, whether these experiences are rural or urban, provincial or suburban, and tribal or, in cases where the tribal land base has been taken or whittled away, diasporic and migratory. It should be noted here that land and place also play an important role in the making of nonindigenous childhood identities but indigenous young peoples’ tribal geographies cut across these wider social narratives about nationhood and citizenship in ways that are often deemed especially troubling for official narratives that rely on widespread public acceptance that cultural relationships are either harmonious or have been reconciled. Within these “sanctioned” stories, however, the lived worlds of indigenous young people frequently disappear and are replaced by an idealized view of tribal youth and their role in national histories. This romanticizing of indigeneity and youth can be seen at work in the official repositories of national memory, particularly in the childhood collections of national museums, as is discussed below.

## **Indigeneity, Youth, Media, and the Archive**

Frantz Fanon once wrote that “what is often called the black soul is a white man’s artefact” (Fanon 1952/2008, p. xviii), and in the context of nation-building narratives, constructions of indigeneity and childhood are often a product of “white” imaginings of ethnicity and youth. In their discussion about representations of children and young people in the media, Olson and Rampaul (2013) argue that alongside images of childhood innocence, “whiteness was also implicitly idealized in early representations of childhood and images of a white childhood came to be considered universal and desirable” (Olson and Rampaul 2013, p. 24). They contend that “non-white children have, therefore, traditionally been subject to stereotypical and caricatured representations or have simply been excluded from cultural productions of media images, being replaced instead by images of white childhood” (p. 24). A similar process is at work in Australia where non-white, non-anglo young people are largely excluded from Australian public imagery

relating to youth and childhood (Saltmarsh 2011). The near complete erasure of indigenous Australians from media reports and public debates about Australian youth reinforces a form of “compulsory whiteness” (Saltmarsh 2011, p. 32) that is at work within the social imaginary whereby white or anglo youth identities are represented in terms of active social participation and citizenship while indigenous and migrant young people are portrayed as passive bystanders.

In New Zealand too, media representations of Maori regularly reify “race” as the basis of Maori identity in ways that construct indigenous people as “the perennial Black Other” (Wall 1997, p.44). These kinds of racialized discourses also influence the way that conceptualizations of youth and childhood have figured in the New Zealand historical imagination. For example, early collections of childhood artifacts in New Zealand’s major museums, including Te Papa, New Zealand’s national museum, focused on childhood artifacts such as the elaborate clothes and christening gowns that were commonly found in white middle-class homes and schools (Townsend 2012). Museums frequently depend on these kinds of nostalgic and romanticized images of idyllic anglo childhoods that emphasize both innocence and privilege and this has been the case in New Zealand although in recent years some attempt has been made to redress the imbalance (Townsend 2012). In light of this, while representations of young Maori are not entirely absent from present-day national museum collections and childhood archives, nor are they particularly visible. This emphasis on anglicized youth and childhood, however, has the effect of reinforcing “whiteness” in the way that the nation’s young people are “remembered” in the museum and the archive. Accordingly, the production and consumption of these selective and heavily anglicized representations becomes a form of nostalgic *misremembering* of youth whereby middle-class Pakeha children become a proxy for *all* children. Moreover, when these kinds of memory regimes are seen in combination with contemporary representations of youth in social policy discourse, it is not simply a matter of privileging “whiteness” in discourses relating to children and young people; rather, indigeneity comes to be actively aligned with moral apathy and cultural deficiency, as is discussed below.

### **“Transgressive” Youth, Social Policy, and the Politics of Resentment**

Though Maori young people are marginalized, idealized, or anglicized in archival collections, they are a central focus of contemporary social policy debates and government surveillance. In liberal democracies such as New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and Australia, young people are frequently imagined in political discourse as “workers-in-becoming.” This is a Neoliberalism construction of youth and childhood that underpins a form of child and youth-focused liberalism which endorses the view that increased government investment in young people is a means of securing the future well-being of workers, citizens, and families (Elizabeth and Lerner 2009).

In New Zealand, however, neoliberal child and youth-focused ideologies are enacted in unique ways as a direct result of the ethnic and racial politics of the nation.

These politics have emerged from heightened government recognition during the 1970s of historical injustices that were visited on Maori tribal communities in the making of the modern New Zealand nation; an explanatory note about the political background of New Zealand is needed here. Culminating in 1975, after a period of intense Maori protest and political opposition to the successive government mismanagement and abuse of Maori land rights, Maori anger threatened to spill into wider civil unrest. In order to circumvent the possibility of a further deterioration of cultural relations, perhaps even bringing the country to the brink of civil war, a Tribunal, known as the Waitangi Tribunal, was established to deal with Maori grievances against the Crown (Celermajer and Kidman 2012). In 1988, the Waitangi Tribunal was given the authority to investigate historical injustices dating back to 1840, the year representatives of the British Crown entered into an agreement with many Maori tribal leaders known as the Treaty of Waitangi. The Treaty of Waitangi laid out the terms of the relationship between British and Maori and is considered to be the founding document of the New Zealand nation. Within a few years of signing the Treaty, however, the Crown turned its back on these responsibilities and breached the terms of the agreement many times over the years with devastating economic and cultural consequences for Maori tribal communities.

The Waitangi Tribunal was established as a way of dealing with these historical breaches of the Treaty. It is empowered to investigate Maori claims of Crown wrongdoing and make recommendations to the government for redress. As part of the reconciliation process, the Crown makes a formal apology to the Maori community that has mounted a successful claim and this is accompanied by some form of economic reparation. In fact, while some Treaty settlements number in the millions of dollars, the quantum of reparations is insignificant compared with the economic losses sustained over time by Maori tribal communities and does not compensate for the loss of life and tribal autonomy or the permanent loss of economically productive tribal lands.

Treaty settlements are enormously important to Maori communities, not least because the wrongs of the past are formally recognized and political apologies for these injustices are enshrined in legislation. From the Crown's perspective, there is a belief that justice has been restored and that common memories of the past can be negotiated and new cultural relationships can be forged in the future. For tribal communities, Treaty settlements open up the possibility of "alternative imagined communities" (Seuffert 2005, p.485) with the potential to transform the nation. For many tribes, this includes the dream that a redistribution of power might ultimately reshape cultural relations in a post-Treaty settlement society. This is the very stuff of nation-building, but in the New Zealand context, political apologies to Maori tribal communities and subsequent Treaty settlements have not, in fact, captured the wider public imagination to any great extent nor have they been built into modern nation-building narratives (Celermajer and Kidman 2012). Indeed, these settlements have been controversial amongst some members of the New Zealand public who do not understand or who are unsympathetic to the purpose of the Tribunal and the basis of the damaged historical relationships between Maori and the Crown, nor acknowledge the importance of cultural redress (Gagné 2008).

Public antagonism surrounding aspects of the Treaty settlement process and varying levels of hostility towards Maori aspirations for self-determination (Barber 2008) have directly influenced the way that public debates about youth and indigeneity are structured in New Zealand. Firstly, emerging from the tensions within and around the reconciliation process, resentment has become an organizing trope in the political relationships between many groups of Maori and Pakeha (Johansson 2004; Barber 2008). Zembylas (2010) argues that the structures of resentment are deeply embedded in historical and political practices rather than in individual or psychological matters. He contends that in divided nations, the politics of resentment, or the means by which one group asserts its identity by negating the other, is how conflicting sides legitimize their positions. In the New Zealand context, neoliberal discourses about youth are underpinned by a deep resentment, evident in public debates, about indigeneity and Maori young people. Public resentment about Maori youth is further fueled by media representations that regularly depict them as dangerous or violent criminals (Coxhead 2005), as political troublemakers (Nairn et al. 2006), or as members of a generation lost to the economy through unemployment, drugs, or alcohol abuse.

Alongside public acrimony and as a direct result of the economic management and structural reform agenda of successive governments over the past 30 years, young Maori have also come to be represented in policy discourse as subordinate and highly racialized entities. This positioning of children and young people in contemporary social policy has its immediate origins in the restructuring of the New Zealand economy in the 1980s and 1990s. During this period, the highly regulated, primarily agrarian economy shifted towards one based on neoclassical, market-based economic philosophies that were geared towards competing in global free markets. Other nations in Europe and the Americas also adopted these economic philosophies, but New Zealand's experience of economic restructuring was unique because liberalization was carried out more comprehensively, more rapidly, and as Goldfinch (1998) argues, with "a degree of theoretical purity that was probably unparalleled anywhere in the world until, arguably, the liberalization of eastern Europe" (Goldfinch 1998, p. 177). Indeed, according to the World Bank, New Zealand has come to be known as the most business-friendly nation in the world although it is also acknowledged as a particularly difficult place to be a worker (Andrews 2005).

The impact of these reforms was wide ranging. There was a dramatic increase in unemployment levels across the country, while at the same time, many social welfare programs were reduced in scope or entirely eliminated. Young people in New Zealand were particularly badly affected as jobs dried up and, correspondingly, levels of anxiety, hopelessness, and depression soared leading to a swift upsurge in youth suicide rates (Weaver and Munro 2013). In fact, New Zealand has the highest youth suicide rate in the world and indigenous young people are overrepresented in these bleak statistics (Clark et al. 2011).

Already struggling, Maori communities were hard hit by the economic reforms with rising unemployment levels and widening health and income disparities between the nation's rich and poor. It was also during this period that Maori

(and also Pacific) peoples were identified in social policy documents as being proportionally “overrepresented” amongst low-income groups who receive welfare benefits (Elizabeth and Larner 2009). Children in these families became a focus of attention and the concept of a particularly “Maori” form of child poverty began to emerge in policy papers and media reports. As such, children and young people growing up in these families were increasingly described as being “at risk.” Policy-makers of the era explained this as a consequence of being located within families where there was no adult in paid employment.

These policy narratives have, however, evolved considerably since the 1980s and 1990s to the point where ethnicity, youth, and economic apathy are often conflated. Elizabeth and Larner (2009), for example, contend that in New Zealand the child is racialized through its “location within Maori and Pacific families, many of which are headed by single mothers who have a weak relationship with the labour market” (Elizabeth and Larner, p. 144). The “disadvantaged” child or young person, depicted in policy rhetoric as being part of a family structure that does not “pull its weight” in economic terms, is usually represented as being of either Maori or Pacific descent. Social and economic disadvantage is therefore primarily associated with ethnicity, an idea that has subsequently been linked in the public imagination with laziness and moral inertia. A strong undercurrent of public anger is directed towards young people from these families that is derived from a resentful belief that “hard-working,” tax-paying Pakeha citizens, who are also struggling financially, are expected to support them (Barnett 2006). In this respect, public indignation about the children of social welfare recipients who have already been racialized in policy discourse, combined with varying levels of hostility towards Treaty claims and indigenous politics, positions low-income Maori youth as a “transgressive” moral and economic threat to a normatively “white” economy and society.

### **Counter-Narratives, Double Memories, and Belonging: Indigenous Youth Speak Back**

If Maori young people are all too visible in policy discourse and political rhetoric about “dangerous” and “wayward” or “disengaged” and “lazy” youth, they disappear almost entirely from the sites of national memory: the archive, the museum, and nation-making tales of historical events. Thus, they are marginalized within the official record on one hand, while on the other hand they are a highly visible target for public resentment and moral rebuke. Unsurprisingly then, young Maori, like other young people from marginalized communities, tend to take a highly critical stance towards nationalist accounts of historical events and rarely identify either personally or collectively with national histories that depict them as a conquered, vanquished, or weakened “race” (Epstein 2009).

How, then, do indigenous young people respond to negative representations of indigeneity and youth? Kennelly and Dillabough (2008) contend that the lived social and political status of young people cuts across larger cultural narratives of



democracy and citizenship. In post-settler states, however, racialized discourses of youth and childhood also intersect with wider cultural narratives that specifically exclude or marginalize young people on the basis of their indigeneity. In these environments, many indigenous young people respond by appropriating and generating a range of possible histories based on an awareness of natives as historical agents (Carretero and Kriger 2011). They do this by actively and consciously engaging with indigenous and/or tribal narratives which then become a form of counter-narrative or parallel story that speaks to a set of cultural and historical memories that differ, sometimes substantially, from official accounts and which reinforce tribal youth identities. These counter-narratives are not simply a means of reappropriating marginalized cultural space; they are also an enactment of indigenous agency in the face of the nation-building project. But they also serve another purpose insofar as they can be deployed by young people who are searching for ways of belonging within the context of a conflicted democracy or post-settler state.

The search for belonging as an indigenous young person in a post-settler nation becomes a political act when, in order to retrieve a sense of belonging, young people find ways not only of coming to terms with the past but also navigating between competing versions of the past. In their study of American young people's collective memories, Schuman and Scott (1989) found that historical events need not be personally experienced in order for young people to invest political meaning in them. They contend that adolescence and early adulthood is the time when generational and collective memories are most likely to be seen in political terms. These findings have important implications for the way we think about indigenous young people's selective engagement and disengagement with national histories. Onuoha (2012) suggests that memories of the past "pose a major obstacle to reconciling divided populations, constructing a durable peace and embarking on a viable nation-building project" (Onuoha 2012, p. 1). He further contends that the articulation of group identity within the nation-building project is linked to the things that people can connect their memories with. Thus, in post-settler states, if unresolved cultural relationships and an ongoing sense of loss relating to ancestral lands and ways of life are central to indigenous memory regimes, then national histories that focus on apparently reconciled cultural relationships are highly problematic for indigenous young people. Indeed, these historical losses become part of their collective memory and shape tribal youth identities in the present. Accordingly, indigenous youth narratives about belonging, nation, and place become highly politicized (Kidman 2012). At the same time, as indigenous young people construct these politicized memories about the past, however, official discourses about indigeneity and sanctioned forms of youth and childhood come into play in ways that position native youth in terms of transgressive and racialized identities.

Young people in New Zealand, however, link their ideas about national identity with cultural origins and experience rather than the political status of citizenship. This is particularly the case for Maori young people whose families have migrated to urban areas and are no longer in daily contact with tribal life or their tribal communities (Andrews et al. 2012). Indeed, even those who live at a considerable distance from tribal homelands draw meaning and a profound sense of belonging from their

identification with their tribal communities (Andrews et al. 2012; Webber 2012). Alongside this, Maori youth are constantly “Othered” in political, social, and nationalist discourses, and most are also familiar with being the target of everyday racism (Fitzpatrick 2013; Webber 2012). Thus, it is through the assertion of these tribal identities that many young people respond to the public and cultural stigmatization of Maori youth. In this respect, expressions of tribal identity and tribal “citizenship” by indigenous young people activate a particular kind of relationship with the nation-state that allows them to “speak back” to the orthodoxies of national memory regimes as well as the inequalities evident in social policy discourse and public debate. This acts as a signal that memory, belonging, and identity can be derived from tribal repositories of memory as opposed to the national archive and that these memories can unsettle the apparent unity of national narratives and identities.

These constructions of belonging differ from a simple desire for emotional attachment; rather, belonging becomes politicized when the boundaries of a community of belonging (such as a tribal or cultural community) are contested by outsiders (such as the Crown) and the work of creating and maintaining an “us” and a “them” is carefully monitored (Yuval-Davis 2006). Spatialized belonging and place attachment, however, are conflated with a sense of belonging to a particular community or group of people, and as a result, the politics of belonging are further fused with identity politics (Antonsich 2010). These ideas can be applied in the context of post-settler nations where young people’s articulations of tribal identity are framed by a politicized and re-tribalized sense of belonging that operates against (and occasionally within) official memory-making. Certainly there is a mutual patrolling of the us/them boundaries that separate these imagined communities of belonging.

The deployment of tribal cultures, identities, and practices as a means of “speaking back” to racialized political discourses about indigenous youth is well documented and is the subject of considerable debate in New Zealand (see, e.g., Rata 2010) and elsewhere (see, e.g., Geschiere and Jackson 2006). With this in mind, the anthropologist, Jeffrey Sissons, has argued that the appropriation, transformation, and reappropriation of indigeneity as an elaboration of an indigenous consciousness, or what he calls “a nationalized indigenism” (p. 74), particularly amongst indigenous people located in urban settings far away from the tribal base, have followed a similar course within all post-settler states. He contends that these cultural reappropriations are regarded in the indigenous world as “reimaginings of the future” (Sissons 2005, p. 11) rather than as a return to the past. In other words, these expressions of identity should not be seen in terms of nostalgia or idealized cultural memories; rather, they offer a means through which indigenous young people can claim a place within the context of a nation that acts to exclude and marginalize them.

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## Conclusion

The entwined discourses of youth and indigeneity in post-settler nations like New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the United States point to underlying tensions and cultural discord that remains largely unresolved. However, indigenous young

people have responded to the experience of cultural marginalization and social exclusion by opening up spaces for the articulation of tribal identities and memories that provide a sense of belonging and pride in (tribal) community. In many respects, these articulations of identity become a means for reasserting cultural autonomy and self-determination in the face of tribal de-territorialization and the loss of tribal sovereignty. These small, everyday resistances do not in themselves “fix” a broken history, but they do signal the possibility that a range of histories and identity positions are available for indigenous youth in post-settler states and that many young people have become adept at mobilizing these positions both creatively and effectively.

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## Cross-References

- ▶ [Childhood and Youth Citizenship](#)
- ▶ [Education and the Politics of Belonging: Attachments and Actions](#)
- ▶ [Koorlankga wer wiern: Indigenous Young People and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Space and Place in Studies of Childhood and Youth](#)

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