

Indigenous education, colonization, neoliberal schools, and narratives of survivance

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Abstract

Framed in Foucault's theorization of governmentality and drawing on Harvey's scholarship on neoliberalism and Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill's critical analysis of heteropatriarchal settler colonialism, we theorize a historical linkage between colonizing education and neoliberal schooling. Against that historical backdrop, Ernest and Amanda, two Native American students, articulate narratives of what Gerald Vizenor calls "survivance," which "confront the tragic closure of culture and engender a sense of Native presence instead of historical absence." In the context of their stories, we propose a praxis of refusal as an ethical stance of restive resistance to institutional practices and power relations inherent in the heteropatriarchal settler colonial academy and neoliberal schooling. As praxis, we conceptualize refusal as intentional action that subverts institutional power relations and practices by bringing Indigenous histories, wisdom, and knowledge to active presence; re-politicizing educational spaces, which neoliberal marketization has de-politicized; and disrupting impoverished "commonsense" curricula and pedagogies to reconfigure educational, social, and political institutions as more equitable, just, democratic, and culturally sustaining and revitalizing.

Keywords: *Indigenous Education, Settler Colonialism, Neoliberalism, Governmentality, Survivance Narratives*

One Sunday morning in April 2015, we, Jim and Jaime, attended a presentation by Kristen Buras at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. Her talk was a requiem for public education in post-Katrina New Orleans, a human catastrophe characterized by then Education Secretary Arne Duncan as “the best thing that happened” to the city’s public schools (Anderson, 2010). The commodification of public spaces and Black bodies and the role of charter schools, edupreneurs, and the destruction of public education in the city’s broader gentrification plan demonstrates the city government’s commitment to neoliberalism’s calculus of disposability (Giroux, 2007).

Reflecting on our work with Native American students in South Dakota, Buras’ (2011) analysis suggests a link between neoliberal “education deform” (Pinar, 2012) and heteropatriarchal settler colonial education (Arvin, Tuck, & Morrill, 2013). Yet juxtaposed with that history of institutional violence are survivance narratives, “the metaphors and ‘tropisms’ of consciousness and irony that seek to confront the tragic closure of culture and engender a sense of Native presence instead of historical absence” (Vizenor, 2010, p. 44).

The purpose of this paper is threefold. First, we theorize a connection between colonizing education and neoliberal schooling. Second, Ernest and Amanda, two American Indian students with whom we have worked for four years, present counter-narratives of survivance, which illustrate “active resistance and repudiation of dominance, obtrusive themes of tragedy, nihilism, and victimry” and create “an active presence, more than the instincts of survival, function, or subsistence” (Vizenor, 2008, p. 11). Their narratives also illustrate the incommensurability that unsettles “moves to innocence” embedded in settler colonialism and in social justice movements “often thought of as exempt from Indigenous decolonizing analysis” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 28). Ernest’s and Amanda’s stories counter the historical erasure of Indigenous cultures and peoples, as Anzaldúa (1987) expressed:

I am visible—see this Indian face—yet I am invisible. I both blind them with my beak nose and am their blind spot. But I exist, we exist. They’d like to think I have melted in the pot. But I haven’t. We haven’t. (p. 86)

Finally, we propose a praxis of refusal as an ethical stance of restive resistance to oppressive institutional practices and power relations inherent in governmental systems. In theorizing governmentality, Foucault (as cited in Gordon, 1991, p. 46) asserted that working within a governmental system “implies neither subjection nor global acceptance.

One can simultaneously work and be restive. I even think that the two go together.” Like Tuck and Yang (2014), we conceptualize refusal as practices through which to negotiate scholarly learning from dispossessed peoples while actively refusing to serve commodified exploitative narratives of pain demanded by the settler colonial academy. Such praxis might open or deepen generative spaces in systems of governmentality through which to embody dissenting counter-conducts (Foucault, as cited in Gordon, 1991).

Methods

We do not really see through our eyes or hear through our ears, but through our beliefs. To put our beliefs on hold is to cease to exist as ourselves for a moment—and that is not easy. (Lisa Delpit, 1988, p. 297)

We represent this work through auto ethnographic methods, the subject matter of which consists of stories as performative life experiences (Denzin, 2014). Kovach (2009) notes the importance of story in the context of learning with Indigenous communities because of the deep connections between story and knowledge, wisdom, and history. Smith (2012) explains:

The point about the stories is not that they simply tell a story, or tell a story simply. These new stories contribute to a collective story in which every Indigenous person has a place... The story and the story teller both serve to connect the past with the future, one generation with the other, the land with the people and the people with the story. (pp. 145-146)

The goals of research with Indigenous communities include “the survival of peoples, cultures, and languages; the struggle to be self-determining, the need to take back control of our destinies,” which require an active, strategic research program “relentless in its pursuit of social justice” (Smith, 2012, p. 143). Of the 25 research projects being undertaken world-wide by Indigenous communities as explained by Smith (2012, pp. 144-162), Ernest’s and Amanda’s stories illustrate projects committed to claiming, testimony, survivance, revitalizing, envisioning, and sharing through personal narratives of place, happenings, and experiences (Kovach, 2009).

As non-Indigenous scholars, this work has made us more mindful of several ethical concerns. The first relates to our privileged positions in the academy where research represents an epistemologically exclusive commodity predicated on institutionalized

knowledge that cannot bear any threat to its “aspiration to scientific certainty control, and prediction” lest its gaps become exposed (Taubman, 2012, p. 20). Closely related to our positionality in academia is the tension associated with creating academic text. Fine (1994) critiques the academy’s stubborn refusal to interrogate—as the inventors and suppressors of questions, shapers of the contexts we study, interpreters, and narrators—how we create texts under the pretense of objective distance. We have struggled to represent this research in a way that satisfies academic publication requirements while raising critical questions about whose voices are privileged in academic discourses, what counts as “data,” where and the degree to which our voices are presenting the text—to open dialogic spaces, for example—and the points at which we step back so that Ernest’s and Amanda’s narratives fill those spaces, and the degree to which we analyze and interpret others’ experiences. In that context, we recall Apple’s (2013) ninth task in which critical analysis of education must engage: “using the privilege one has” to “open spaces at universities and elsewhere for those who are not there, for those who do not now have a voice in that space and in the ‘professional’ sites to which, being in a privileged position, you have access” (pp. 43-44).

Still, when we consider our positions in the academy, we continue to grapple with our privilege to decide, for example, where to speak and where to remain silent. That power remains starkly visible to us in the context of work with students and communities who have struggled to sustain and revitalize histories, cultures, knowledge, and languages, which education institutions like those in which we work have attempted so systematically erase. We all view this work as part of an evolving, generative project of re-visioning research with Indigenous communities that attempts to “create mutually beneficial roles for academic researchers in community research” (Tuck, 2009, p. 424). Finally, as non-Indigenous scholars working collaboratively toward justice for Indigenous peoples, we have entered the discussion from what Battiste (2013, p. 74) calls “different trajectories” than Ernest and Amanda. This project, therefore, represents an Indigenist process through which we “borrow freely” from critical approaches, but privilege Indigenous voices (Battiste, 2013; Smith, 2012). As non-Indigenous researchers, we have remained mindful of Tuck’s (2009) call for amoratorium on damage-centered research. Tuck (2009) explains damage-centered research as scholarship that “intends to document peoples’ pain and brokenness to hold those in power accountable for their oppression” (p. 409). The danger inherent in damage-centered research is its “pathologizing approach in which the oppression singularly defines a community” (Tuck, 2009, p. 413). Tuck (2009) instead advocates for “desire-based frameworks,” which “document not only the painful elements of social realities but

also the wisdom and hope” (p. 416). Refusing damage-centered research through collaborative scholarship with Indigenous communities requires “understanding complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination of lived lives” (Tuck, 2009, p. 416). This work, therefore, focuses on the voices of Ernest and Amanda, who speak a desire that embodies “the hope, the visions, the wisdom of lived lives and communities” (Tuck, 2009, p. 417).

Ernest and Amanda present their narratives through autoethnographic writing and photographs upon which they reflect as meaningful representations of their lived experience. Imagery provides a participatory method of qualitative inquiry that affords “greater narrative latitude when it comes to ethnographic knowledge production and a larger role in determining why and how research outcomes are produced and received” (Gubrium & Harper, 2013, p. 16). We suggested autoethnographic writing because Ernest and Amanda are familiar with that method through their coursework with us, which relied extensively autobiographical reflection. Ernest’s and Amanda’s narratives include course writings, transcriptions of stories they told in recorded conversations about their lives, home, and experiences in education, reflections on their photographs, and their desires for the future of their communities.

The tension we noted above concerning the creation of text applies to research methods more broadly. Research *on* Indigenous communities in the settler colonial academy represents a history of objectification and epistemological erasure and violence (Arvin, et al., 2013; Connell, 2007; Kovach, 2009; Pete, 2015; Smith, 2012; Tuck, 2009; Tuck & Yang, 2014). In this work, we attempt to frame our research as research *with* Amanda and Ernest to both create a space for their narratives and negotiate the mutually beneficial research relationship suggested by Tuck (2009) as part of our refusal of damage-centered scholarship. We acknowledge the historic dynamics of power and privilege, the commodification of Indigenous communities and academic research, and the colonizing tendencies inherent in research associated with the heteropatriarchal settler colonial academy. We view this work as part of an evolutionary project through which to further expose the partiality of Western institutionalized knowledge, the power that underlies its privilege, and expand generative spaces in the academy for other voices and knowledge.

We met both Amanda and Ernest in 2011. Amanda was a doctoral student in sociology at the time of our collaboration. I, Jim, served on her doctoral committee, and we both worked with Ernest in community panels and various activities and projects through the American Indian Education and Cultural Center (AIECC) at South Dakota State

University (SDSU). We also co-taught a special topics course on education, community building, and justice in which both Ernest and Amanda participated. They introduce themselves below through *I am from* poems, which are followed by brief introductions of us, Jim and Jaime.



Figure 1. Amanda and Ernest as young children.

Amanda

I am from moving boxes, from Oil of Olay and from glitter everywhere.

I am from Busy Bee oatmeal cooking.

I am from strawberry plants and forest trails.

I am from Packer Sundays and scientific thinking.

I am from Janet and Gilford and Helma.

I am from the overly dry and sarcastic sense of humor and women storytellers.

I am from “watermelon seeds will grow in your belly if you swallow them,” and “you should read more.”

I am from Episcopalianism and long house ceremonies and the blending of the two.

I am from Green Bay, Oneida, Wales, Scotland, and Germany and cornbread and macaroni and cheese.

I am from the great aunt handing out vodka at the nursing home, the Jell-O queen, and the Space Shuttle builder.

I am from what I am able to remember, details arched and fading.

Ernest

I am from the log home that sits away from everything, the smell of Dad's fresh baked bread.

I am from the deep purple morning glories in the picture window, the ice-cold spring water that always tastes so good and crisp.

I am from the family cookouts, ice-cold sweet sun tea, listening to my aunts and uncle talk for hours and hours about the "Old days" and growing up. From Brute, Grandpa's aftershave, and my lovely Grandma's musk perfume, from my aunties and their comforting words in times of hardship, from the life lesson of tough love from Mom and Dad. From teaching my little brother to fish, from catching my first fish with my Dad.

I am from sitting down at every meal as a family and praying before we eat. Strong support from my family. From Mom telling me to not to forget to pray.

From being told as a child that Falling Rock was a real person in the Black Hills, and that if I planted a rock and watered it I will grow.

I am from Grandpa-Reverend Weston, Singing Dakota Hymns in church, being taught about Easter Sunday and its meaning. From the teachings about the Lakota values and traditions. From the refreshing feeling after a sweat.

I am from Porcupine, SD, Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, and the Dakota to the east, and Lakota at home from hot vegetable soup and fresh baked bread.

I am from old school pictures on the wall, Grandma and Grandpa's 50th anniversary cake topper that has always sat on the shelf.

I am from all I know.

Jim

I am a former high school history, social studies, and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) teacher in the Washington, DC area and was an assistant professor of teaching, learning, and leadership at SDSU during our work together. SDSU is a rural, predominantly White institution in a state that is home to nine reservations and in which approximately nine percent of the population identifies as Native American. In my early interactions with teacher education students and faculty, I began to question how well our programs were developing pre- and in-service teachers and administrators to serve the state's Native American communities. I reached out to the faculty and staff at the AIECC and to Jaime, who was Chief Diversity Officer at the time, and through those interactions began to question institutional power relationships and practices in the university and my program, and my role in perpetuating them. In discussing those concerns with Jaime, Ernest, and Amanda, we desired to interrogate the complexity of institutional power, both visible and invisible.

Jaime

I have been working in higher education for more than 20 years where my role as an administrator has always been grounded in the work of diversity, equity, and social justice. I have served as chief diversity officer, associate dean for diversity, director of multicultural affairs, and currently serve as associate vice president for community, equity, and diversity at the University of New Hampshire. Throughout my career I have had opportunities to teach and have taught courses in Women's Studies, Chicano Studies, and English. As a developing researcher, a central concern for me is to understand my role as a mixed-race woman higher education administrator in the lives of the students and communities I serve. This current work has further affirmed my desire to understand how I may engage in praxis to interrogate and transform oppressive hierarchies in pursuit of social justice.

Framework

We situate this research in a framework advocating a praxis of refusal by working as Foucault (1991/1978) wrote, restively within a system of governmentality. This research “lives” in the intersections of Foucault’s theorization of governmentality (1990, 1991/1978, 2008), critical analysis of neoliberalism as governmental practice, and interrogation of the heteropatriarchal settler colonial academy. Critical analysis of the historical connections between the institutional power and practices associated with colonization and neoliberalism as a governmental system reveals the emergence of survivance narratives from the subversive spaces of paradox and contradiction, which Foucault (as cited in Gordon, 1991) suggested inevitably exist in governmental systems.

Governmentality

Governmentality both individualizes and totalizes through the institutional power relations and practices by which populations become “governable” through subjugating bodies (Foucault, 1990, 2008; Gordon, 1991). As a matter of political economy, techniques of institutional power develop and sustain economic processes and social hierarchies that guarantee relations of domination intended to adjust the “population to economic processes” and insert “bodies into the machinery of production” (Foucault, 1990, p. 141). Governmental power thus de-politicizes, commodifies, and harnesses bodies for “productive” uses, which “dissociates the body from its political power” and renders it submissive (Ziarek, 2001, p. 24). Governmental de-politicization is essential to the emergence of a neoliberal market society. Yet Foucault asserted that governmentality, historically concerned with the “conduct of conduct,” is “interwoven with the history of

dissenting ‘counter-conducts’” through which to generate “counter-politics” (Gordon, 1991, p. 5). Ziarek (2001) similarly suggests that the multiple modalities through which power is actualized in bodies renders power open to the “reversal of forces” (p. 25).

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism, which has become a hegemonic discourse, “proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills” through “strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (Harvey, 2005, p. 2). Neoliberalism reduces the common good to private interest and views the state’s sole legitimate role as securing private property rights, guaranteeing functioning markets, and creating markets in sectors where they do not already exist, by force if necessary (Harvey, 2005). The connection between neoliberalism and colonization on which we focus relates to accumulation by dispossession through which corporatized state power redistributes all forms of wealth upward by dispossessing people of land, resources, and culture (Harvey, 2005, 2014). Land privatization, suppression of the commons, commodification of labor, destruction of traditional production and consumption patterns, and exploitative credit systems dispossessed Indigenous peoples of land and resources traditionally regarded as open for common use (Harvey, 2005, 2014). White colonizers thus justified “the wiping out and dispossession of ‘unproductive’ indigenous populations to make way for the ‘productive’ colonizers” (Harvey, 2014, p. 40). As a governmental practice, accumulation by dispossession through colonizing education contributed to the deculturalization—replacement of a people’s culture through cultural genocide—of Indigenous peoples (Spring, 2009).

Heteropatriarchal settler colonialism

Settler colonialism is “a persistent social and political formation in which newcomers/ colonizers/ settlers come to a place, claim it as their own, and do whatever it takes to disappear the Indigenous peoples that are there” (Arvin, et al., 2013, p. 12). Settler colonists dispossess Indigenous peoples by extracting the land’s surplus value, exploiting Indigenous labor, and turning Indigenous peoples into “ghosts” (Arvin, et al., 2013; Connell, 2007; Harvey, 2014). Heteropatriarchy refers to “social systems in which heterosexuality and patriarchy are perceived as normal and natural, and in which other configurations are perceived as abnormal, aberrant, and abhorrent” (Arvin, et al., 2013, p. 13). Heteropatriarchal settler colonialism exists in narratives of rugged individualism and frontier masculinity, which represent a mythopoetic trope of escape and the reconfiguration of masculinity through repudiation of the feminine and the entitlement to restorative violence (Connell, 1995; Kimmel, 2012). The masculine-feminine binary is a

fundamental assumption of European philosophy and patriarchal ideology through which hegemonic masculinity claims to embody the power of rationality (Connell, 1995). Western patterns of hegemonic masculinity are deeply implicated in the totalizing rationalization of culture and society and the global violence that led to Western hegemony (Connell, 1995). Historically, heteropatriarchal rationalization is essential to the development and export of capitalism, including its neoliberal configuration.

Survivance and Cultural Revitalization

Survivance represents an “active sense of presence over absence,” which renounces dominance, “the unbearable sentiments of tragedy, and the legacy of victimry” (Vizenor, 2008, p. 1). Stories of survivance such as those of Ernest and Amanda, emerge from spaces of paradox and contradiction inherent in governmental systems and resonate with critical culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogies (CSRP) comprised of three components (McCarty and Lee, 2014, p. 103):

- CSRP attends directly to asymmetrical power relations and the goal of transforming legacies of colonization.
- CSRP recognizes the need to reclaim and revitalize what has been disrupted and displaced by colonization.
- Indigenous CSRP recognizes the need for community-based accountability, which serves the needs of Indigenous communities as defined by those communities.

In the context of Ernest’s and Amanda’s stories, our work suggests that survivance narratives as CSRP may contribute to the embodiment of the curricular, pedagogical, and scholarly counter-conducts that bring Indigenous histories to active presence and subvert damage-centered scholarship and curricula and pedagogies of Indigenous erasure.

Connecting settler colonialism to neoliberalism

The Indian Industrial School model established by Richard Henry Pratt illustrates the connection between colonization and neoliberal schooling, and boarding school proponents such as Pratt presaged neoliberal schooling in at least three ways. First, like Pratt, proponents of neoliberal education “reforms” like those who descended on New Orleans in Katrina’s aftermath proceed from oppressive, racialized, classed assumptions about the applicability of market processes to complex human interactions in schools (Berliner & Glass, 2014; Buras, 2011; Pinar, 2012; Ravitch, 2013; Taubman, 2000, 2009).

Second, Pratt explained the purpose of American Indian education as taking the “‘Indian’ out of his students” to establish a “multiracial” society in which Indians relinquished their culture and adopted Anglo-Saxon and Judeo-Christian ways (Reyhner & Eder, 2004, p. 143). Pratt predicated multiracial society, however, on institutional racism and classism that fueled a narrative of the “cultural inferiority” of Native Americans, who could be educated only to the extent that they “occupy positions of inferiority to Whites” (Kumashiro, 2012, p. 35).

The classed and racialized assumptions underlying neoliberal schooling, its discourse privileging the private over the public, and its false narrative of the failure of public education, which paternalistically positions communities of color as at deficit, mirror Pratt’s death-saturated language (Giroux 2014) from a 1909 speech to the National Education Association’s Indian Department:

The mass of children of primitive races are not well developed in the power of abstract reason and personal initiative. Vocational training, therefore, rather than higher education is their need, allowing full scope for those of exceptional ability to pursue college, professional, or technical training. (Reyhner& Eder, 2004, pp. 145-146)

Third, Pratt’s ideology appealed to heteropatriarchal settler colonialism, rugged individualism, and frontier masculinities (Arvin, et al., 2013; Connell, 1995; Kimmel, 2012), which sought “disintegration of the tribes and giving to individual Indians rights and opportunities among civilized people” (Reyhner & Eder, 2004, p. 143). Neoliberalism also appeals to masculinized rationalization and hyper-individualism, which reposition schools as providers of educational services, students and knowledge as commodities, and education as a private benefit rather than a public good (Apple, 2013; Boyer, 1994). Neoliberal education policies, such as those pursued in post-Katrina New Orleans (Buras, 2011), also perpetuate Pratt’s racist, classist paternalism, which positions students and communities of color as damaged, deficient, and inferior.

In their writings and in our conversations, Amanda and Ernest reflected on experiencing precepts of settler colonialism in neoliberal schools. Amanda, for example, wrote about an experience at age 14 when she and her brother arrived for the first day of school while the community adjacent to the reservation was embroiled in a spear fishing controversy:

I am 14 years old.

It’s the first day of yet another new school year, early in the morning; the sun already crested the horizon.

The grass is still damp with dew, but the air in the bus is already growing hot and uncomfortable as we pull into the lot of the high school.
The driver stops at the edge of the faculty lot and orders us to leave her domain.
We exit the bus slowly, trying to hold on to the last precious moments of carefree summer.
As we lumber past the teachers' cars, my brother pauses and tilts his head toward one of the cars.
I turn to see what he's noticed.
"The only good Indian is a dead Indian" says the bumper sticker.
We hurry along past the offending car, having already been stung by it.
In the next row we pass a truck. "Save a fish, spear an Indian" says the sticker on this one.
We paused and wondered at the one next to it, "Indian Pride," a reference to the school mascot.
We turn and look at the building we are about to enter, and my brother nudges me with his elbow. "You can pass," he says. "Don't tell them what you are unless you have to."
I am 14 years old.

Ernest discussed his perception of Indian education as "lesser than" in the context of deciding to attend Red Cloud Indian School for high school, on which he reflects at length in his extended narrative.

By the time I was in 8th grade I knew that I wanted to go Red Cloud High School, which is a private school on the reservation. I knew they had a very good record of their students going to college and being very successful. So I went there, and it was there that I realized that I was behind. A lot of the students who were in my class were from Red Cloud Elementary School. I noticed that I was part of the group of students who were always behind, and that is just one thing that I always think about and wonder: how could that be changed?

Yet the experiences on which both Ernest and Amanda focus resonate most with Vizenor's (2008, 2010) concept of survivance, specifically their reflections on desire associated with family, community, and cultural relationships.

Survivance, presence, and revitalization

The photo taken by Jim at Wounded Knee (Figure 2) illustrates a survivance narrative written in marker on one of the pillars at the entrance to the monument. In green, black, and blue, an anonymous interlocutor provided a counter-narrative to the historical erasure of Indigenous histories, which Takaki (2008) characterized as the powerful, popular, and inaccurate Master Narrative of American History. Beginning with the Louisiana Purchase, the unknown historian provided a critical history leading up to Wounded Knee—the Fort Laramie Treaties; the mass execution of the Dakota 38 ordered by

Lincoln; the capture of Custer's American flag; the Dawes Act; Sand Creek; and names like Sitting Bull, Big Foot, and Chivington. As Anzaldúa (1987) wrote, the narrative's presence asserted its writer's existence and refusal to melt into the pot.

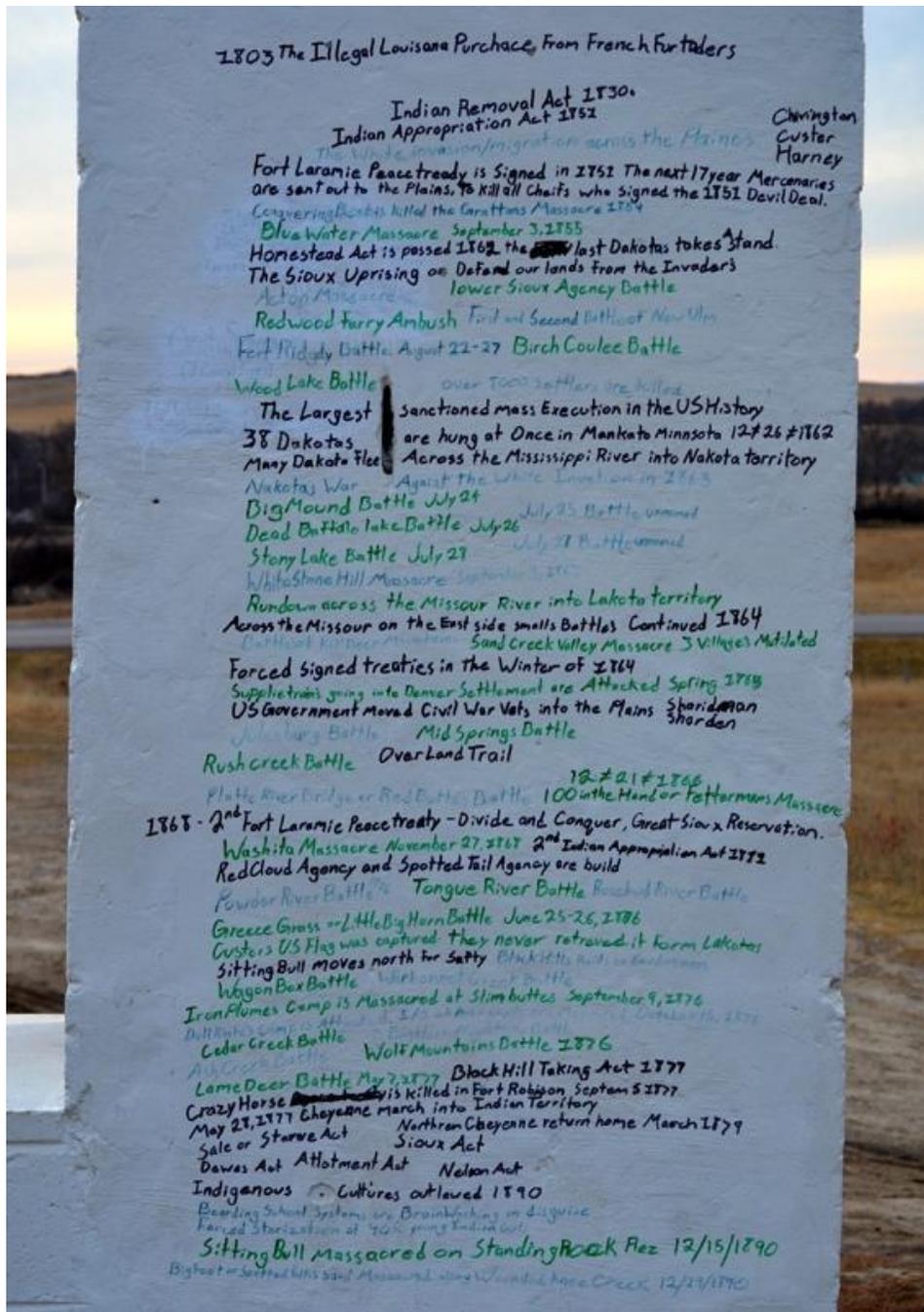


Figure 2. A survivance narrative at Wounded Knee.

Below, Ernest and Amanda share narratives of survivance, revitalization, envisioning, and active presence, which counter the historical erasure of Indigenous histories and the “moves to innocence” inherent in the heteropatriarchal settler colonial academy (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Thematically, their narratives capture a sense of desire as they reflect on significant relationships and the importance of connectedness to family, culture, language, and community. Ernest, for example, reflects on the importance of cultural groundedness in his negotiation of connections to home and community on the one hand and the individualism and competition he encounters in Westernized education institutions. Similarly, Amanda reflects extensively on the tensions she encounters in her pursuit of education to defend her community’s sovereignty and culture and the often contradictory expectations she encounters in colonized educational spaces and by some members of her community. Ernest and Amanda accompany their narratives with photographs that further elucidate their experiences and desires for themselves and their communities.

Ernest

I am in your company.

So, can you share a story or two?

Maybe, tell me about someone you knew.

Compassionate, tall, me

I am me, just Ernest.

I worry about others but me, Mom, Dad, Brother, Sisters, tomorrow.

When I first came to SDSU I felt independent, as big as an ant.

Now, months later I feel, accomplished, pride that I never felt before, proud to be Native American, but still I feel as big as an ant, and watched.

The thing that made a difference for me was knowing who I am, where I am from, and what I got to do, doing so not just for me, but for Mom, Dad, Brother, Sisters, home.

The World is, the world is selfish, colorful, beautiful, but evil.

I hope people can see what I see, know what I know, and feel what I feel.

I am observant, respectful, humble, me, myself.

I am Ernest Weston, Jr.

I am in your company.



Figure 3. My Grandpa, Father, and me.

My educational journey: From tribal school to state institution

I remember when I was young we moved back home to Porcupine, or the “old place” as my Grandpa often called it. It was the place where I would find myself and the place of many teachings. We moved in the middle of fall semester of first grade at one of the county schools on the reservation. We got settled in and I then had to find a new school. I remember sitting by my Grandpa’s side and he looked at me and asked where I wanted to go to school. He asked if I wanted to go to the county school or the “day school,” which was the federally funded tribal school. The official name of this elementary school was Porcupine School, or Porcupine Day School.

My first grade teacher was my Grandma Ruby; she was the one who taught me how to read and stressed that reading was important. We would always have class time in the library and check out books to take tests on. I recall the reading program, Accelerated Reader, where we couldn’t go above our reading levels. Once we finished a book we jumped on the computer to take a quiz over the book. There are many things I recall from this time in my life, and now that I reflect on these moments I cannot help but wonder who made those policies and who structured tribal schools. I recall that in the third grade we focused entirely on reading and spelling with the program VoWac. This was around the same time we see the No Child Left Behind policies come into the schools. I remember in the fifth and eighth grade years it seemed like all we did was prepare for the Dakota STEP test, the required testing the state of South Dakota requires all schools to give. Of course, tribal schools usually ranked low in the results.

Seventh grade was an interesting year; we went through two teachers in one year. One of them went to treatment, one couldn't handle the politics of a tribal school, and then finally one stayed, she stayed for a long time actually. Falling in love with the reservation and people she worked at the day school and plans to return there to finish out the rest of her years. I am still in contact with this wonderful soul who is a good friend of my family. After graduating eighth grade, I had three options for high school, two tribal high schools or a private Catholic school that was well known for their rigorous academics and high rates of graduation. I knew I was going to go to college, so I figured I needed to be academically prepared.

High school was some of the best times of my life. Red Cloud, being a small private Lakota-Catholic school that relied on donors, allowed me to have a unique high school experience. Most of the teachers there were AmeriCorps members, community members or Jesuits themselves. One of the great things about Red Cloud is that they intertwine Lakota values and teachings into the education as well as Catholic teachings. They offered mass to the students as well as the sweat lodge ceremony. They offered classes in theology as well as Lakota studies. Sacred Stories was one of the classes that I enjoyed. We learned about the bible and Lakota creation stories. But of course, I came across the Dakota STEP test again. Needless to say I am not a fan of these kinds of tests as a student, but people need their data.

One of the things that I really enjoyed about my high school experience was the class retreats we took each year. My senior year we actually took two retreats, one in the fall and one in the spring. Both of these took place at a retreat center in the Black Hills. During these retreats we often did group activities and had personal reflection time. There was always a spiritual component to these retreats. Usually we had a Lakota prayer service where we made tobacco ties that help our prayers, usually in the evening. Then the next morning we would hike up the tallest peak in the Black Hills to tie the prayer ties to a tree. These retreats were meaningful to us students, they connected us all and made us comfortable with ourselves as well as prepare us for life's journey.

On the reservation graduating high school is a huge meaningful feat. Being tribal people we celebrate these accomplishments in our own way. Usually students are given an eagle feather or eagle plume to wear on their graduation cap and a star quilt. Both of these are symbols of accomplishment and sacrifice. I remember my graduation very well. My parents were probably happier than I was. They made sure that my siblings and I took school seriously and that we went further than they had in their educational journeys.

I chose South Dakota State University as the place where I would pursue higher education. A few days before I left for college, my parents wanted to have a cookout and invite family over to share a meal with them. All my aunts, uncles and grandparents came. While everyone was eating people started to stand up one by one to give me words of encouragement and advice for my next step in life. One of my uncles starts to explain to me what was happening. In our traditional ways before men become warriors they would have to leave and go see things outside their community. They would go by themselves and see the world to gain perspective and find themselves. We call this a *zuyámáni*, a warrior's journey. I really never understood what my uncle was telling me at that time. Then the morning came, it was 4 a.m., and I had all my belongings packed into my pickup, ready to go. My Mom and Dad cooked me breakfast and fed me before I left. Then I hugged everyone before I walked out the door. My Mom, Dad, Sisters and Brother, we all shared tears of joy. I remember driving away and looking back into the rearview mirror and seeing my dad sit on the front porch, he later told me that he sat there and cried. He cried because he was happy; he knew I was going to do well. But as the eldest child, he knew it was time for me to start my *zuyámáni*.

When I got to college I didn't realize I stepped into a new world. Currently I am in my fourth year where I am studying Political Science and American Indian Studies. I've learned a lot here, not just academically but a lot about the world. Here is where I learned about my positionality and that my view of home would be different from now on. One of the words that changed the way I seen the world was colonialism. I remember hearing this word and not knowing what it really meant. It wasn't until later I learned what it was and how it affected me. It was my sophomore year of college I realized how colonial Western higher education was for tribal people.

I remember having a conversation with an instructor who was concerned with me because I wasn't participating in classroom discussion. In my mind I was just being respectful and humble, letting people speak. Humility is a value Lakota people live by but not in college where you have to be the best at everything and make sure people know it. There is no time to be humble here, especially when you have to consume all this information just to later regurgitate it for a test. Nonetheless, I have had some wonderful experiences here in college. I have met some amazing people and have gained valuable knowledge.

Looking back on my journey thus far, I can easily see the effects of policy on education. Let's just say that No Child Left Behind left a lot of students behind, including American

Indian Children. There is a lot of work to do for education still because there shouldn't be minority students rallying to be heard, or tenured professors being let go of their duties because of politics. There also needs to be voice for the one marginalized group, the American Indian students. Even as an undergraduate I work and wish for these things for American Indian students like me. My educational journey is not over; it should never be over. You learn something new every day.

Home is everything I know

Home is everything I know. To me home doesn't mean a house necessarily. Home is what you make it. Home to me is all my extended family. All the cousins. That's home. All the family gatherings. It seems like every time we gather, we've got to have a meal. That's home. Home is sitting down and eating together as family and praying before you eat. Christmas. To me that is home too, because we always did something for Christmas together as a family.

Home is who I am. All those teachings when I was little from my Grandpa. He'd have all kinds of sayings about everything. That's home. The values you are taught when you are little, that's home. All those stories, too, that's home. Every time my family meets, they always tell stories about growing up. I always listen to that. That's home to me.

Home is family. Gathering. Being there. The support. That's home. That gives me the sense of pride of realizing that I have culture. I come from a really great people who've been through a lot, and we're still here. That gives me pride. And the traditions I have give me pride. Then the skin color. This brown skin really gives me pride because that notifies people that we're still here. That is the sense of pride I always get, but of course I do it in a humble way. I don't go around and rub it in people's faces. Those are the teachings I was taught about humility. That's the sense of pride I carry.

Photographs

I was drawn to taking scenic photos. This one (Figure 4) is the entrance to the reservation. That's home to me. That's family, too. I take that with me. This is where I'm from, and that too gives me pride.



Figure 4. The entrance to Pine Ridge.

The reason I took this (Figure 5) is because I was told I was going to walk a hard road in life. There's going to be these bumps, and curves, and hills. When I took this I automatically thought about being told that. The road is not straight, it's not flat. It has a curve in it. There's a hill. This means you have to work hard to climb. That to me is just how life is going to be. It's not perfect, but you've got a beautiful view. This, too, reminds me of home.



Figure 5. The path of life.

This photo (Figure 6) is looking west outside my house. You've always heard the reservation is poverty. There's poverty there. And then the reason why we were sent to this particular place by the government is because it was supposed to be unlivable. Well, I think that it is. I think of how beautiful the reservation is in that pretty sunset.



Figure 6. Looking west outside my house.

Hopes and dreams

Looking into the future I see myself continuing my education, but I don't know where I'll be studying. What if I change? Looking into the future I know I'll have good stuff going for me. Looking into the future I see my family, what's in the future for them. Looking to the future I think it will be easier for the Native students to get their education, especially here. I guess I play a role in it every day by going to class, doing my work, being a student. That is making a big statement. So that's my role. Maybe I play a leadership role, but from a student standpoint my role now is just to go to school and to stay here, because that is making a big statement.

My dream is for my family to live a really good life and to be happy. They are now, but I also want that for my brothers and sisters, for them to go out into the world and figure out who they are. Another thing is for me to speak my language fully, and to understand it fully, to be fluent and for me to help my people with my education. That's my dream. I never thought of that fully until now. I have just noticed that it's different from other peoples' dreams. We're all unique, but my dream is for other people to be happy, for my community, my tribe, my people. I like saying that—my people. That's my dream, to help my people with my education, with my knowledge, and my experiences to prepare

them for their journey. I'd like to help them give them guidance and be there to help them.

Amanda

Parker Palmer's (2011) third chapter and his discussion about the two kinds of heartbreak are what stayed with me the most throughout the course I took with the two of you; Palmer's (2011) chapter is also what I tend to see and think of most often in my scholarly and personal life. The contrast that Palmer (2011) lays out between a heart that breaks apart versus a heart that breaks open is what I think of most often now in the context of my own experiences as a student, my teaching, and how I conceptualize my future research.

As an American Indian scholar I sometimes think about the irony of having chosen a career in education. I hold the tension that exists for me between the idea that by continuing to pursue education—the very institution that has been used as a weapon of mass destruction against many Native communities—that I am somehow betraying my identity as a Native person, and on the other side, my realization that as Native people we need to have tribal members who are well-educated to lead our nations and defend our sovereignty. When I was younger, as an Indigenous student I was often told that I could not possibly do as well as I did academically. In contrast to that, I had Native students question my identity as a Native person because I did well in classes, or sometimes I had Native adults get upset with me for submitting willfully to colonial rule. For myself though, even as a kid, I wondered how as a nation we would re-attain our legitimacy as a sovereign nation if we did not possess the credentials demanded by the White world that surrounded us. Wouldn't it be better if we as Native people earned the papers, the degrees, that others required so that we could defend for ourselves our rights as Native people? So that we could determine what education of our own people would look like?

In this respect, Palmer (2011) has given me the language to describe the seeming contradiction that I have often struggled with to define for myself. Palmer's (2011) description of the heart breaking open as having “learned how to flex to hold tension in a way that expands its capacity for both suffering and joy” is a perfect way to describe many of my experiences as a student in both K12 and higher education. I am, and for the most part always have been, convinced that my path in life was to be one of instruction and learning, and that there had to be a way to involve Native or Indigenous discourse into the manner in which we teach, especially when working with Native people and

populations. It seems that for us as Native people to be in the best position to protect our sovereignty and our rights to self-determination, we have to participate in the institutions that give us the credentials we need to legitimize our efforts to control our own governments and schools. So, while on the one hand I have to defend my identity as a Native person as I continue in education, on the other it is my acquisition of education and credentials that best put me in a position to insert Indigenous knowledge and methodologies into mainstream classrooms. We cannot Indigenize the academy (or anything else) if we do not engage those institutions which we seek to change.

As a teacher in primarily mainstream classrooms, I have the opportunity to provide my students with alternative perspectives. I have an obligation to help my students challenge the status quo and to think critically. By doing this through alternative narratives about things they might be familiar with, hopefully my students (whatever the level) will learn to consider that what they are often taught is not always “correct.” I also have the unique opportunity to engage fellow educators as a colleague with the same credentials they have. By pushing their thinking and challenging their knowledge in the language they are familiar with, I maybe have a better chance of being successful. For example, when teaching Social Problems, I tried to frame the course through a perspective of empathy allowing my students to engage with ideas and perspectives that may not be comfortable for them, but still allows them to have discussions that are meaningful.

The meaning of education

I think I always felt that education was kind of a way out of my situation. So if I went to school and I got a degree, I would be more likely to be able to support myself because when I was younger life was always about me. It wasn't about when I get married, or when I have a partner, it was always that I needed to do this for myself. Part of it was making sure that I put myself in a position where I could take care of myself, but part of it also is about being able to give young people in my community a voice.

It seems sometimes like there aren't Native people in schools to defend students where they are: when they use their language; when ceremony calendars don't line up with school calendars, or; when funeral rites don't follow what we typically think of. In our community a funeral isn't a one-day thing. When a person dies, you have to keep a fire until the funeral, and that process used to be 10 days, but in modern life you can't afford to miss 10 days of school, or work, or anything. Schools, even though they're in proximity to our reservation and Native students, had been going through this process for many years. There still isn't a good understanding of what our culture is. So it's

interesting to me. I feel like Native students need more people to advocate for them in a lot of ways.

Photos

This photograph (Figure 7) is from the children's museum here in Brookings, but it reminded me a lot of what we read in Palmer (2011) about the broken heart. I included it because I think that a lot of my educational journey has been about holding that tension. I think there's always been an assumption that pursuing education makes me an apple. It makes me red on the outside, white on the inside, or somehow less Native than other people, but I do it anyway. And so there's that tension there, not that I have to choose between my Native identity and being educated, but it's almost like people expect that's what I have to do, and I think that's why I always feel like I'm defending my identity so much.



Figure 7. Holding tension in life-giving ways.

I wanted to take a picture of the smoke hole in the longhouse on the reservation that is being reconstructed (Figure 8). All that there is there right now are poles and some holes. These are the support poles, but they still have the hole in the center to allow smoke out and pressure in. It's the function of the structure, but I don't think I would be where I am without support, and sometimes that's meant finding it for myself. Sometimes it's just having people who won't let me quit because it would be really easy to quit. Sometimes it's just a text message. Last semester when I was recovering from surgery it definitely felt like I was failing. I think having my Mom stay with me the first two weeks I was home after surgery was really helpful.



Figure 8. Support poles converging into a smoke hole.

That's my Grandma and my Nephew (Figure 9). She passed away about six months after that was taken. This is Jonathan, my cousin's son. Jonathan was my grandma's 17th or 18th great grandchild, but he was the first baby that she had ever seen actually born. She was in the delivery room. This photo was taken at a meet Jonathan party. I was asking my mom about my Grandma's experiences and about her life, and my Grandmother and her sister participated in this elder interview project. As we watched the interview, and my mom asked her: "We're hoping that when these are done, we can put the interviews in the tribal school and the library and places where young people in the community can watch them. What kinds of advice do you have for young people?" My Grandma thought about it for a minute and started talking about how important education was. My cousin Jessica and I at the time were in college. I was a junior and my cousin Jessica was a year behind me so Jessica was just entering her sophomore year. So my Grandma was talking about how she hoped that we kept going.



Figure 9. My grandma holding Jonathan.

Conclusion: Jim and Jaime

True culture supports its people; it doesn't destroy them. (Lisa Delpit, 2012, p. 7)

Considering Delpit's (2012) concept of culture, neoliberal schooling contextualized in the history of heteropatriarchal settler colonialism illustrates an anti-culture and anti-politics imbued with anesthetic curricula, pedagogies, and institutional practices predicated on commodification, disposability, and violence. Ernest's and Amanda's counter-narratives of survivance demonstrate their commitment to cultural sustainability and revitalization and capture their commitment to actively resist heteropatriarchal settler colonialism and neoliberalism through, as Amanda put it, "Indigenizing the academy."

Amanda's reference to "Indigenizing the academy" resonates with Pete's (2015) call for educators to "Indiginize and decolonize their teaching, service and research" through "resisting and confronting the epistemic ignorance of our profession" in an academy in which Indigenous "ways of knowing have been marginalized, dismissed and made invisible" (p. 65). More broadly, Battiste (2013) conceptualizes Indigenizing the academy as a move toward "a global reclamation for education" (p. 14). Ernest and Amanda articulate an understanding of education as a political and personal journey of cultural revitalization and the reclamation of sovereignty, which bring to presence connections between generations, senses of place, and histories that have been "disappeared" (Arvin, et al., 2013) by the heteropatriarchal settler colonial academy and neoliberal schooling. As Indigenist scholars (Battiste, 2013; Smith, 2012) we have learned that we consistently confront our own limitations, which as Delpit (1988) writes is not easy. This work has reminded us that the institutions in which we work have been built on partial knowledge, which is often mis-knowledge (Kumashiro, 2001) imbued with the hubris inherent in heteropatriarchal institutions predicated on hyper-masculinized claims to objective certitude and rationality—men of reason (Connell, 1995)—rather than a sense of critical humility or critical consciousness. Neoliberal schooling with its roots in heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism, suffers a "narration sickness" that presents "reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable" and expounds on topics "completely alien to the existential experience of the students" (Freire, 2009, p. 71).

Palmer (2011) similarly critiques the academy's "cult of expertise" in which "there are no ambiguities, only claims of certainty," which silence voices with deep experiential knowledge, but who lack "expert credentials" (p. 133). Neoliberal schooling likewise

jettisons wisdom, knowledge, and ways of knowing that lack a “market value” in favor of, as Ernest wrote, “data.”

Based on our work with Ernest and Amanda, we therefore advocate for a praxis of refusal, an intentional ethical stance of restive resistance within a governmental system built on institutional power relations and practices inscribed in heteropatriarchy, settler colonialism, and neoliberalism. Restive resistance includes “analytic practices of refusal” that reframe scholarly learning from dispossessed peoples through an ethic of humility rather than hubris and an active refusal to exploit the “damage-centered” research sought by the settler colonial academy (Tuck, 2009; Tuck & Yang, 2014). In the context of the de-politicizing “moves to innocence” embedded in settler colonialism and neoliberalism, a praxis of refusal:

- Actively and intentionally re-politicizes “marketized” educational spaces and positions teachers and scholars as public intellectuals committed to political advocacy;
- Disrupts hegemonic, impoverished “commonsense” curricula, pedagogies, power relations, and institutional practices;
- Reframes oppressive institutional practices and power relations as equitable, just, democratic, and culturally and environmentally sustaining/revitalizing; and
- Actively creates and holds spaces of presence for Indigenous histories and narratives of survivance, cultural revitalization, and sovereignty.

Like Pinar (2012), we urge active intransigence to the instrumentality and “sadistic stupidity that is education deform” (p. 11), which dispossesses students and teachers of the “agency of subjectivity” without which “education evaporates” (p. 43). Most important, teachers, teacher educators, and all who value the well-being of children as the sustainable future, must firmly refuse the vicious calculus of disposability inherent in the heteropatriarchal settler colonial academy and neoliberal schooling. No curriculum or pedagogy is neutral. In a market society seemingly content to sacrifice between one-fifth and one-quarter of its children to poverty on the altar of capitalism to neoliberal deities, we urge educators to act, as Palmer (2011) encourages, ethically, humanely, and firmly in pursuit of justice. At least one aspect of such an Indigenist project requires privileging Indigenous voices, histories, and desires through bringing survivance narratives to active presence and an ethical refusal to feed damage-centered scholarship to settler colonial institutions (Tuck, 2009). Such a critical culturally sustaining/revitalizing (McCarty & Lee, 2014) political agenda, will require, as Takaki (2008) wrote, looking into a different mirror.

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Notes

[1] We use the terms “Native American” and “Indigenous” throughout this paper because Ernest and Amanda used those words along with their tribal identifications when they described themselves and their communities.

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