

6 Keeping an eye on the goal(s)

Het artikel 'Keeping an eye on the Goal(s): a framing approach to understanding volunteers' motivations' van Linda Bridges Karr gaat over een nieuwe alternatieve benadering van de motivatie voor mensen om vrijwilligerswerk te blijven doen. Het onderwerp motivatie van vrijwilligers is niet altijd eenduidig. De meeste aandacht wordt besteed aan de vraag waarom mensen überhaupt vrijwilligerswerk doen. Daarin zijn drie stromingen te onderkennen. In de fundamentele school gaat het debat over het al dan niet bestaan van altruïsme, wederkerigheid of eigenbelang. Een spannend academisch debat, maar zoals Karr impliciet ook aangeeft, voor mensen die met vrijwilligers werken eigenlijk nutteloos. De tweede stroming (de narratieve benadering) zoekt naar de aanleiding voor mensen om ergens vrijwilligerswerk te gaan doen. Hierbij wordt het al dan niet doen van vrijwilligerswerk geplaatst in het levensverhaal van mensen. Deze onderzoeken geven meestal aan dat mensen ergens vrijwilligerswerk doen omdat ten eerste, er een soort van positieve grondhouding was ten aanzien van het doel of de doelgroep van organisatie en ten tweede, ze vervolgens gevraagd werden. De derde stroming is de functionele benadering waarin gekeken wordt naar wat mensen terug krijgen van of zoeken in het vrijwilligerswerk. Karr koppelt hier vooral aan het werk van Clary en Snyder, maar ook de procesbenadering van Omoto en Snyder en het identificatiemodel van Grube en Piliavin zijn hiertoe te rekenen. In deze benadering wordt gekeken naar het nut van het vrijwilligerswerk voor de vrijwilliger. In de procesbenadering wordt daarbij nog gekeken naar de persoonskenmerken die mensen delen die (eerder of vaker) vrijwilligerswerk doen.

Het interessante van het artikel van Karr is, dat zij de vraag stelt wat de wisselwerking is tussen de doelen van de organisatie, het proces van organiseren in de organisatie en de ontwikkeling van de motivatie van vrijwilligers. Zij gaat er vanuit dat het management van een organisatie niet alleen passief moet inspelen op de motivatie van haar vrijwilligers, maar dat er ook actieve methoden moeten zijn om die motivatie te beïnvloeden en daarmee beter aan te laten sluiten op de praktijk van de organisatie. Hoewel Karr het niet zo noemt gaat het om het leefbaar houden van de organisatie. Leefbaarheid van een organisatie betekent dat op de lange termijn de baten en lasten voor de vrijwilliger in evenwicht zijn of dat de baten hoger zijn. Om hier inzicht in te krijgen introduceert zij een variant op de functionele benadering: de zogenaamde framing theorie. Terecht stelt ze zelf aan het einde dat meer onderzoek noodzakelijk is om duidelijk te maken wat en hoe de framing benadering kan toevoegen. Ik wacht met spanning vervolgonderzoek af!

plaatsbepaling

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Keeping an Eye on the Goal(s)

A Framing Approach to Understanding Volunteers' Motivations

The primary objective of this article is to draw attention to the fact that volunteers do not simply bring a fixed set of goals and motivations into the organization, but choose their actions according to multiple – and changeable – motivations that are in large part shaped in a social context. At any given time, individuals may have several motivations for acting as they do. Because attention is selective, the ways in which an individual defines a social situation will affect the degree to which he or she attends to various types of motivators. Through its own goals and practices, an organization may also serve to shape the motivations of its volunteers by drawing attention to or away from certain types of goals. For the organization, then, cultivating the sustained involvement of volunteers requires not only knowing and speaking to the motivations of volunteers, but also considering the possible impact of encouraging or discouraging certain types of goals. The article seeks to forge a link between current research on volunteer motivation and broader sociological theory on human motivation and pro-social behaviour. The theoretical arguments are illustrated with information from a cross-national survey of volunteers in two national volunteer organizations.

Linda Bridges Karr

Individuals have many reasons for choosing to volunteer their time and effort within organizations. For one, such work may fulfill a need to make a meaningful contribution to society, while for another it may represent an opportunity to make contacts and acquire skills that can lead to greater success in the world of paid employment. Understanding the mechanisms underlying the motivation to volunteer – and to continue to volunteer – is important to the long-term planning of volunteer organizations, who are more and more affected by broad-scale demographic and socio-economic changes.

In recent years, considerable attention has been given to theoretical development in the area of volunteer motivation, seeking to move beyond the attractive but overly simple distinction between 'egoistic' and 'altruistic' motivations to volunteer (for example: Cf. Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen, 1993). The 'functional approach' to volunteer motivation (Clary and Snyder, 1991; 1998) proposes that volunteerism can serve any

of six major functions for individuals. Career motivations are directed toward improving a volunteer's opportunities in the paid labour market. Value motivations proceed from the volunteer's personal moral and ethical make-up. Social motivations respond to a volunteer's need to behave in ways expected or desired by significant others. Protective motivations are directed toward guarding against or minimizing unpleasant feelings or circumstances. Volunteers motivated by understanding seek to increase their awareness of particular questions or issues. Enhancement motivations seek to add some measure of increased value to the volunteer's life experiences. Because it is well known that the motivations leading to the initial decision to volunteer are not the same as those that contribute to continuing involvement in volunteer work, it is important to consider mechanisms that may affect the sustainability of volunteer work.

Monitoring the goals of many individuals is a tricky business in any organization, and is particularly trou-

blesome in volunteer organizations. If we assume, however, that certain broad categories of goals are shared by all individuals, and that these goals are served through a variety of instrumental means, we can begin to consider the mental orientations – or ‘frames’ – through which individuals define a situation and consider alternatives for action (Lindenberg, 2001). An individual in a ‘gain frame’ seeks to maximize tangible resources, while one operating in a ‘normative frame’ seeks to act appropriately. An individual in a ‘hedonic frame’ seeks immediate gratification. At any time, several frames may be active for an individual, although one will be more prominent than all of the others.

The salience of frames may also shift. Given the proximity of particular frames to an individual’s emotions and fundamental goals, frames may be weaker or stronger relative to other frames, and thus may require differing levels of outside intervention to invoke or maintain (Lindenberg, 2001). By becoming aware of the effects that organizational practices may have on the motivational framing of their volunteers, organizations can not only improve their ability to meet their volunteers’ needs, but may also improve their ability to identify and change practices that may encourage mismatches.

Volunteer motivation in current research

As mentioned above, the literature on volunteer motivation has been growing over the past decade. A number of different models has been proposed and brought into use which seek to explain various aspects of volunteer motivation, but which have proven difficult to integrate into a dynamic theory of motivation in volunteer work. Three major models that have appeared are the functional approach of Clary and Snyder (1991; 1998, as mentioned above), the volunteer process model (Omoto and Snyder, 1995; 2002) and the role identity model (Grube and Piliavin, 2000). Together, these models are capable of taking both multiple and changing motivations into account, but do not include the organization as an active player in the shaping of goals underlying various types of motivation.

The functional approach argues that volunteering serves one or more functions for an individual. It argues further that satisfaction with and continuing participation in volunteer work may be predicted by the extent to which volunteers are able to realize such functional rewards¹. While this approach allows us to consider a number of rational motivations for volunteerism, it does not take into account the possibility that a focus on one set of goals may limit the attention that will be given to other sets of goals. Additionally, the role of the organization in cultivating sustained volunteerism that is assumed by the functional approach is limited to providing or not providing access to rewards that speak to the functional motivations of its volunteers. It is widely understood that the initial motivations that lead an individual to volunteer are not necessarily the same as those that keep volunteers active over time. The functional model provides no mechanism for considering the organization’s role in shaping the motivations of its existing volunteers.

The three-stage volunteer process model (Omoto and Snyder, 1995; 2002) takes a step in the direction of developing such a mechanism. The first stage considers the effects of individual characteristics, organizational practices, and characteristics of the larger social environment on the decision to volunteer (Cf. Vliert et al., in press; Dekker and Halman, 2003; Meijs et al., 2003). The second stage involves the effects of individual perceptions, organizational processes, and the social contexts in which volunteer services are exchanged on the overall experience of volunteer work. The third stage of the model considers the impact of volunteer work on the individual, organizational, and societal levels. While individual changes resulting from volunteer work in an organization are considered in this model, the changes that are considered are not specifically related to the motivation to volunteer.

In the role identity model, Grube and Piliavin (2000) argue that both internal and external characteristics of the organization contribute to the development of a volunteer role identity, as does the perceived importance attached to the work. This identity as a volun-

¹ For example, a volunteer whose participation is largely driven by career motivations will be more likely to continue to the extent that she is able to use her experiences to enhance her prospects in her paid career. On the other hand, if the work fails to provide useful contacts, skills, or experiences, the career-motivated volunteer is not likely to remain for a very long time.

teer contributes in turn to the likelihood that an individual will continue engaging in volunteer work. The likelihood that the volunteer will remain with a given organization depends upon the development of an identity specific to that organization. One important organizational experience highlighted in the volunteer role identity research is the development of social ties with others within the organization. This serves both to increase the expectations of others that a volunteer will continue and to enhance the volunteer's sense of personal importance.

Grube and Piliavin (2000: 1117) caution that "...one practical implication for those who manage volunteers might appear to be to exert social pressure on new volunteers, quickly engage them in desired behaviours, and thus promote role identity and, hence, continued behaviour. However, a new finding of our study suggests that one must consider the effects of both general and specific role identities before drawing policy implications". From this, we see that an organization may take action to influence a volunteer's psychological experience within the organization. What is implied, but not discussed, however, is that a volunteer's continuation is also affected by the way in which the volunteer experiences (defines) his or her relationship with the organization. It is just this point that calls for a link between the heretofore psychological models of motivation with broader sociological theories of action.

Framing theory

As mentioned above, individuals pursue not one but many goals through their behaviour. At the same time, they are not capable of focusing on all of these goals equally, and thus their attention is selective. The details that take centre stage often serve to obscure other possible choices. Sociological framing theory (Cf. Lindenberg, 1998) assumes that all individuals share the universal goal of improving their positions (both physically and socially), and that this goal can be pursued through a variety of instrumental means. Lindenberg (2001) describes three overarching mental orientations or 'frames' through which individuals evaluate social situations and plan their actions: hedonic, instrumental gain, and normative. Within the hedonic frame, behavioural choices are guided by goals that seek immediate and palpable improvement

or gratification. An instrumental gain frame refers to a situation in which the goal of maximizing tangible resources serves as the primary guide. Action choices guided by a normative frame are oriented toward acting appropriately. At any time, several frames may be active for an individual, although one will be more prominent than all of the others.

Frames are not completely determined by personality, nor are they static or exclusive. An individual may perceive a situation primarily as one of personal gain, but may also seek to have fun or 'do the right thing' in the process. For example, the strongest reason many people give for seeking and holding a job is the need to 'make a living'. In this, we can say that, for the most part, employees operate from a gain frame in the context of their work. We know, however, that pay is not the only criterion along which people make employment decisions. If that were the case, how could we explain the large numbers of highly educated people who opt for relatively low-paid careers as public school teachers? Many teachers, of course, say that they feel 'called' to teach - they find the work fulfilling in itself, irrespective of the fact that they could probably earn more money in another profession. Here we see that a normative frame is operating in the background, behind the primary gain frame. The salience of a given frame is assumed to be affected by characteristics of the social situation.

Because some frames may be weaker or stronger relative to other frames, differing levels of outside intervention may be necessary to invoke or maintain them (Lindenberg, 2001). Recent research in human resources (Mühlau, 2001; Horgan, in press) shows that the effectiveness of certain organizational practices rests on their ability to invoking and maintaining an appropriate combination of frames. For example, the practice of offering premium salary and benefit packages invokes an instrumental gain frame by encouraging employees to focus on increasing his own material resources, while organization of work into teams encourages a sense of mutual obligation. The latter can be seen as seeking to balance the gain frame by keeping a normative frame salient in the background (Horgan, in press). By becoming aware of the effects that organizational practices may have on the motivational framing of their volunteers, organizations can

not only improve their ability to meet their volunteers' needs, but may also improve their ability to identify and change practices that may encourage mismatches.

As does the functional approach, a framing approach allows actors to have not a single but many motivations for their behavioural choices. Unlike the functional approach, however, a framing approach to volunteer motivation provides a theoretical reason to expect some motivations to become more important than others, due to the effects of selective attention. By beginning from the assumption that volunteers' motivations can and do shift, a framing approach also allows us more clearly to consider the role played by the organization in the overall motivational process.

An empirical illustration

The remainder of this article presents preliminary empirical results from a cross-national survey conducted by the author among volunteers in two national volunteer organizations – Girl Scouts of the USA (four member councils) and Scouting Nederland. These organizations were chosen as the research setting for several reasons. First, they are both members of the international Scouting and Guiding movement, and thus have similar ideological and historical roots. Second, certain aspects of the volunteer work carried out within both organizations are comparable, specifically with regard to the planning and leading of program activities with children. Third, the histories and practical operations of the two organizations differ substantially, allowing targeted comparisons of organizational characteristics². At the centre of the research design was a questionnaire survey, distributed to a sample of over 5,000 Dutch and American. The sample was restricted to volunteers who work directly with children, providing leadership in the form of regular meetings³.

One section of the questionnaire was designed to give a picture of the current general goal-orientation of the

respondent. The section contained a list of twenty-six possible life-goals, each of which reflects one of the three master frames. Respondents were asked to choose the three goals that were most important to them at this point in their lives. No space was left for listing other goals, in order to encourage a focus on the particular sets of goals relevant to the theoretical framework under examination⁴. Table 1 provides the frequency and percentage with which each of the twenty-six goals was chosen by respondents as one of the three most important to them at this point in their lives, broken down by country.

Preliminary data analysis suggests that some groups of goals may have been more prominently represented than were others. In the American sample, four goals were listed by twenty percent or more of the respondents: 'Spending time with my family' (81.4 percent), 'Doing something for a cause that is important to me' (25.2 percent), 'Helping other people' (22.6 percent), and 'Feeling good about myself' (22.2 percent). Three goals were listed by at least twenty percent of the Dutch volunteers: 'Having fun' (59.5 percent), 'Spending time with my friends' (37.4 percent), and 'Feeling good about myself' (22.8 percent). Notice that, while three of the four goals most frequently listed by the Americans were consistent with the normative frame, all three of the top goals from the Dutch respondents were consistent with the hedonic frame. These distributions suggest differences in the arrays of goals indicated by the American and the Dutch volunteers.

The frequency with which each particular goal was selected as among the three most important to respondents provides further detail to the 'map' of framing among the volunteers participating in this survey. Of the 1458 usable American responses, 862 (59.1 percent) reflected normative goals. Hedonic and instrumental gain goals comprised (20.6 percent) and 332 (20.3 percent) of American responses, respectively. Of

² The comparisons described here are not intended to lead to generalized predictions for these or for other organizations. Their purpose is to develop an initial empirical illustration of patterns that would be expected to emerge under specific conditions, as suggested by framing theory.

³ The results reported here are based on responses received from 1266 Dutch and 500 American volunteers. Further details and description of the samples may be obtained on request from the author.

⁴ The list of goals, therefore, was chosen to reflect the theoretical ideas, and is not intended to be a comprehensive categorization of life goals. It is quite likely that respondents had other goals in addition to the ones included in the list. The intent of the question, however, was to investigate the importance attached by respondents to the selected listing of goals. Further research must evaluate the appropriateness of any tentative conclusions drawn from this study in light of further clarification and empirical evidence.

Table 1: Percentage of respondents selecting each goal as among the three most important

	US (N=500)	NL (N=1266)
Hedonic Goals		
Spending time with my friends	11.4	37.4
Feeling needed	4.6	4.2
Feeling less lonely	0.4	1.3
Feeling that I am important	1.6	1.9
Feeling good about myself	22.2	22.8
Reducing boredom	0.2	2.3
Escaping personal troubles	0.8	0.7
Having fun	18.8	59.5
Instrumental Gain Goals		
Making contacts that will help me in my career	1.4	5.1
Working through problems in my personal life	12.2	10.5
Learning how to look at the world from a different point of view	3.8	11.4
Learning how to understand different sorts of people	3.4	11.3
Exploring potential careers	2.8	4.9
Finding career opportunities	3.4	2.6
Identifying my own personal strengths	9.0	6.6
Gaining experience that will help me in my career	3.2	10.1
Making new friends	2.8	8.4
Being successful in my career	8.6	6.5
Gaining greater understanding of issues that are important to me	8.6	9.2
Normative Goals		
Helping those who are less fortunate than myself	15.8	4.9
Helping other people	22.6	11.9
Spending time with my family	81.4	17.3
Showing compassion for people in need	10.6	3.2
Acting in ways that people who are close to me wish me to act	2.6	3.4
Doing something for a cause that is important to me	25.2	17.6
Engaging in activities that are important to the people I know best	14.2	14.6

the 3741 usable Dutch responses, 1723 (46.1 percent) were hedonic goals, 923 (24.7 percent) normative, and 1095 (29.3 percent) instrumental gain goals. Figure 1 presents a graphical representation of these distributions.

Although the patterns are clearly different for the two samples, each suggests the prevalence of one category, with the remainder of responses evenly divided

among the other two. Normative goals comprise the greatest category among the American volunteers in this study, while hedonic goals account for the greatest proportion of Dutch responses.

This very rough, aggregated overview says little about the orientation of individual volunteers, and thus does not suggest recommendations for the organizational management of frames. Moving the analysis in this

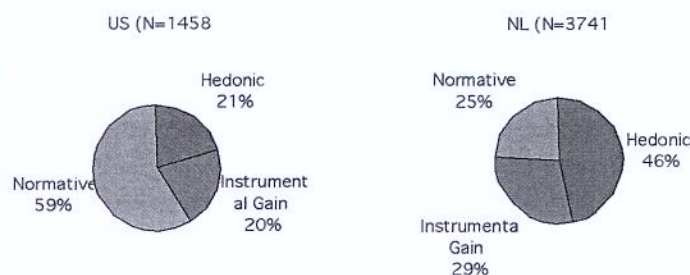


Figure 1: Composition of goal choices reflecting each of the three master frames

direction requires the consideration of goal selections at the individual level. Defining a volunteer whose choices indicated a dominant hedonic frame as one for whom at least two of the three goal choices reflected the hedonic frame, Table 2 shows the percentage of respondents in each country whose responses suggested each of the three master frames. Figure 2 shows the representation of each frame within the two samples.

Table 2: Percentage of respondents in each country exhibiting each of the three master frames

	USA (N = 415)	NL (N = 1011)
Hedonic	12.8%	55.0%
Instrumental gain	13.0%	26.4%
Normative	74.2%	18.6%

As suggested by the aggregate distributions, the normative frame comprised the greatest share of the dominant frames among the American volunteers, while the hedonic frame accounted for the greatest share of the Dutch dominant frames.

Eighty-three percent of the American respondents (415) exhibited a dominant frame, as defined above. Of these, nearly three-fourths (74.2 percent) exhibited a normative frame. Instrumental gain and hedonic frames were exhibited by 13.0 and 12.8 percent, respectively. Dominant frames were exhibited by eighty percent (1011) of the Dutch volunteers. More than half of these respondents (55.0 percent) exhibited a hedonic frame, with instrumental gain and normative frames exhibited by 26.4 and 18.6 percent, respectively.

As discussed earlier, framing theory allows the consideration of multiple goals operating in a given social setting. Having identified a dominant ('foreground') frame, the next step is to identify goals that are salient in the background. Using the same logic as before, the data were examined for volunteers having chosen two but not three goals from any single category. The foreground frame is identified by the two similar goals, while the background frame is identified by the 'odd' goal of the three. There are six possible arrays: 'hedonic, supported by instrumental gain' (HIG), 'hedonic, supported by normative' (HN), 'instrumental gain, supported by hedonic' (IGH), 'instrumental gain, supported by normative' (IGN), 'normative, sup-

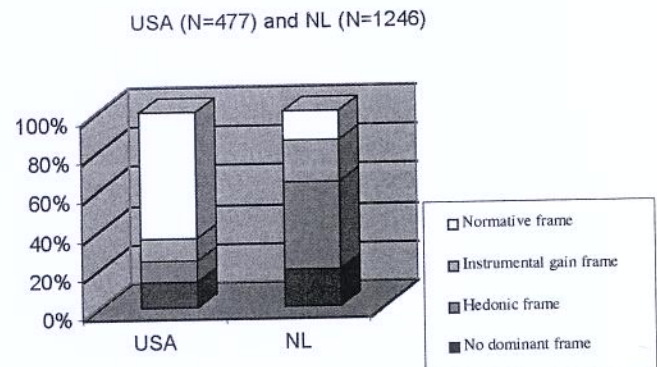


Figure 2: Distribution of frames among respondents, by country

ported by hedonic' (NH), and 'normative, supported by instrumental gain' (NIG). Table 3 presents the distribution of these arrays among respondents, broken down by country. As suggested by the distributions of frames in general, these results in Table 3 show little difference in the frequency with which the most prevalent frame for each country (normative for the American sample and hedonic for the Dutch sample) was supported by either of the two remaining frames. Among the American respondents, both the instrumental gain and the hedonic frame were most frequently supported by normative goals. Similarly, hedonic goals were the most likely to support dominant instrumental gain and normative frames among the Dutch respondents.

Table 3: 'Arrays' of frames among respondents in each country

	US (N=312)	NL (N=858)
HIG	1.6%	28.1%
HN	14.1%	25.1%
IGH	2.2%	19.5%
IGN	12.8%	8.3%
NH	36.2%	12.7%
NIG	33.0%	6.4%

It is important to note that the intent of the discussion above was not to show inherent cultural differences between the goals of American and Dutch volunteers. A variety of demographic differences between the volunteer populations could be expected to have a strong impact on the general life-goal orientations of group leaders in each organization. Most notably, Girl Scout leaders in the United States are typically recruited

Table 4: Summary of volunteer management practices in Scouting Nederland and Girl Scouts of the USA, as discussed in Karr and Meijs (in press)

	Scouting (NL)	Girl Scouts (USA)
Recruitment	Informal "Grow your own" Young adults, existing members	Formal Meet existing needs Parents of (prospective) Girl Scouts
Training	Informal Basics required /loosely enforced Supplementary training offered as development or incentive	Formal Basics required and strongly enforced Supplementary training offered as development or incentive
Retention	Program progression Volunteering built in as component of program Strong local groups Membership	Job specification (and "career ladders") Orientation to mission Networking with other volunteers Formal Recognition Membership

from among parents having daughters of Girl Scout age, while Dutch Scouting leaders are typically recruited from among young adults and older youth participants. It is logical to expect that the types of goals that are important among young adults are different from those that are important to older adults. (For a more detailed discussion of this point: Cf. Karr and Meijs, in press.) The point of this discussion is to provide evidence that the volunteers in each organization are likely to approach their work from different orientations, and are thus likely to define their relationships with the organization according to different sets of goals. The discussion that follows shows how volunteer management practices in each organization appear to be suited for the arrays of frames that are likely to prevail among their volunteers.

Organizational practices and frames

Karr and Meijs (in press) provide a descriptive sketch of practices employed in Scouting Nederland and in member councils of Girl Scouts of the USA with regard to the crucial processes of recruiting, training, and retaining volunteers. Table 4 provides a summary overview of these practices.

The loose structure of the Dutch organization encourages the salience of the hedonic frame, while building a strong sense of community at the level of the local group, providing an element of normative support. The stricter, more formal structure of the US organization speaks to a normative focus on rules and

accountability, while the opportunity to provide a resource for their own daughters, and opportunities for informal interaction provide necessary elements of instrumental gain and fun (hedonic goals).

Concluding remarks

Because we know that volunteers come into and remain within organizations for a wide variety of reasons. It is therefore in the interest of an organization to have a general sense of the types of goals its volunteers are pursuing through their work, the extent to which these goals are being met, and – more importantly from a strategic point of view – the extent to which organizational practices are encouraging certain types of goals to the exclusion of others. In other words, it is important that decision-makers in volunteer organizations understand the incentive structures implicit in their volunteer management practices.

The development of a 'framing' indicator has the potential for helping managers in volunteer organizations develop strategies for the future. It will be less useful, however, as an individual assessment tool for determining the likelihood that a particular volunteer will achieve a good 'fit' within a given organization. Rather, its utility should lie in allowing a means for managers (and other decision makers) to assess the extent to which its practices both cultivate and invoke appropriate orientations among the volunteers. Further research should address the following: What specific practices can be expected to cultivate

each of the master frames?

How can practices be combined to arrive at an optimal array of framing in an organization?

How can an awareness of framing processes be useful in facilitating organizational adaptation and change?

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