Proactive Personality and Intent to Remain with an Organization: Understanding Factors Affecting Retention of Israeli Employees

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This study examined the factors that affect retention of proactive employees. Data was collected from employees in Israel and the results supported the mediating effect of three factors—organizational commitment, perceived organizational support and managerial communication in the relationship between proactive personality and intent to remain with the organization. Implications for organizations and future research are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Israel's transformation from a physically, economically and socially small, struggling society to a globally competitive society imposed new demands on human resource management. In today's global business environment, change seems to be the only constant, competition the norm, and job security a fantasy. In such a back-drop being proactive is a necessity rather than a luxury. Covey (2004) aptly asserts the importance of proactive people:

> Look at the word responsibility—"response-ability"—the ability to choose your response. Highly proactive people recognize that responsibility. They do not blame circumstances, conditions, or conditioning for their behavior. Their behavior is a product of their own conscious choice, based on values, rather than a product of their conditions, based on feeling. (p.71)

Organizations are treating proactive behaviors as a role requirement, emphasizing its value to employees, and hiring applicants with a proactive orientation (Campbell, 2000). Proactive behavior entails a dynamic approach toward work (Frese, Kring, Soose, &Zempel, 1996; Parker, 2000) seeking to improvise the existing job along with developing personal prerequisites for furthering career success (Seibert, Crant, &Kraimer, 1999) and organizational effectiveness (Bateman &Crant, 1999). It encompasses behaviors such as taking charge (Morrison & Phelps, 1999) and personal initiative (Frese et al., 1996) and is closely associated with flexible role orientations (Parker, Wall, & Jackson, 1997). In this study we empirically test the relationship between an employee's intent to remain with an organization and proactive personality, managerial communication, perceived organizational support, and organizational commitment of Israeli employees. In the following discussion we review the literature on these key variables and their relationship to an employee's intention to remain with an organization.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Proactive Personality and Human Resource Management

The dispositional approach involves the measurement of personal characteristics and the assumption that such measures can aid in explaining individual attitudes and behavior. Also when traits and predispositions are strong there is a lesser likelihood they will be overridden by situational forces (Dweck& Leggett, 1988). Using this approach past research has conceived proactive personality as a relatively stable individual disposition toward proactive behavior (Bateman &Crant, 1993). Additionally, the extant work on proactive behavior advocates the fact that the construct *proactive personality* explicitly encompasses the varied aspects of proactive behavior and initiative (Crant, 2000).

Bateman and Crant (1993) defined the construct *proactive personality* "as a dispositional construct that identifies differences among people in the extent to which they take action to influence their environment" (p. 103). They further developed the Proactive Personality Scale (PPS) to measure this construct and provided evidence for the scale's convergent, discriminant, and predictive validity with results from three studies. Since then, a number of studies have consistently demonstrated the validity of the proactive personality construct, as assessed by the PPS (e.g., Becherer& Maurer, 1999; Crant, 1995, 1996; Crant& Bateman, 2000; Kirkman& Rosen, 1999; Parker &Sprigg, 1998).

Proactive personality is a unique disposition not captured by other typologies such as the five-factor model; Crant and Bateman (2000) found only moderate correlations with the five-factor model of personality. Furthermore, Crant (1995) found that proactive personality predicted sales performance above and beyond conscientiousness and extraversion. Additionally, Bateman and Crant (1993) showed that proactive personality is distinct from self-consciousness, need for achievement, need for dominance, and locus of control. All these studies provide further evidence for the discriminant validity of proactive personality.

Research in understanding this construct has been rapidly increasing. Its effects have been studied in varied fields like job performance through a social capital perspective (Thompson, 2005); transformational (Bateman &Crant, 1993) and charismatic leadership (Crant& Bateman, 2000); and job search success (Brown, Cober, Kane, Levy, &Shalhoop, 2006). Chan (2006) has explored the interactive effects of situational judgment effectiveness and proactive personality on work perceptions and outcomes. Parker and Sprigg (1998) found that proactive personality moderated the interactive effect of job autonomy and demands on employee strain. Their results were consistent with the premise that proactive employees take advantage of high job control to manage more effectively the demands they face, whereas passive employees do not take advantage of greater autonomy to this end.

Retaining Proactive Employees

There is an ever increasing demand by organizations for proactive behavior as they expect employees to fix things that they see as wrong (Erdogan& Bauer, 2005). In this context the words of Bateman and Crant (1999) are apt:

> Proaction involves creating change, not merely anticipating it. It does not just involve the important attributes of flexibility and adaptability toward an uncertain future. To be proactive is to take the initiative in improving business. At the other extreme, behavior that is not proactive includes sitting back, letting others make things happen, and passively hoping that externally imposed change "works out okay." (p. 63)

From the above discussion it is evident that proactive employees are an asset to an organization. This led to understanding the factors affecting proactive employee retention. Based on the extant literature of both proactive personality and retention three factors were chosen for the present study— organizational commitment, perceived organizational support and managerial communication. Also in the present study, instead of measuring turnover intentions a more positive variable was chosen i.e. intent to remain with the organization.

Proactive Personality and Organizational Commitment

Commitment to one's organization is a significant employee attitude and refers to an individual's feelings about the organization as a whole. It is the psychological bond that an employee has with an organization and is related to numerous work-based outcomes, including satisfaction and involvement with one's job and work motivation (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Mathieu &Zajac, 1990; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, &Topolnytsky, 2002). Mowday, Porter, and Steers, (1982) also found that organizational commitment is related to turnover i.e. it was found that organizational commitment was related to an employee's intent to stay with the organization (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1982). In an attempt to understand the antecedents of organizational commitment researchers have found that not only organizational characteristics but also personal characteristics such as locus of control etc predicts organizational commitment (Coleman, Irving, & Cooper, 1999; Mathieu &Zajac, 1990; Meyer et al., 2002). Proactive employees are not passive recipients of environmental constraints on their behavior. Rather, they can intentionally and directly change their current circumstances (Crant, 2000). They take initiatives and hence we anticipated that if such individuals are committed to the organization they would intend to remain with the organization. Hence we hypothesized:

> *Hypothesis 1: Organizational commitment will mediate the relationship between proactive personality and intent to remain with the organization.*

Proactive Personality and Perceived Organizational Support

Blau (1964) viewed work as a form of social exchange that involved an undefined series of transactions which consequently obligates both parties involved in the social interaction. Thus effort and loyalty are traded for material and social rewards (e.g., Etzioni, 1961; Gould, 1979; Levinson, 1965; March & Simon, 1958; Mowday, Porter, & Steers (1982). Social identity theory proposed that employees "remain loyal when they feel that their organizations ... value and appreciate them" (Tyler, 1999, p. 235). Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986) suggested that employees' commitment to their organization is partially based on their perception of the organization's commitment to them. They conceptualized employees' perceptions of their organization's commitment as "perceived organizational support" (POS) and defined it as "global beliefs about the extent to which the organization cares about their well-being and values their contributions" (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986, p. 501). They further developed a measure for POS—Survey of Perceived Organizational Support. Its validity and reliability have been tested in several studies (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro 1990; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Garstka, 1993; Hutchison &Garstka, 1996; Shore &Tetrick, 1991; Shore & Wayne, 1993). Moreover, Shore and Tetrick (1991) demonstrated that perceived organizational support and organizational commitment are distinct constructs. POS "may be used by employees as an indicator of the organization's benevolent or malevolent intent in the expression of exchange of employee effort for reward and recognition" (Lynch, Eisenberger, &Armeli, 1999, pp. 469-470).

POS has been found to have a positive impact on several job-related perceptions and outcomes. Employees with high levels of POS exhibited less absenteeism and were found to be more conscientious about carrying out their work responsibilities (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990). They showed positive correlations with organizational commitment (Garstka, 1993) and organizational citizenship behaviors (Moorman, Blakely, &Niehoff, 1998; Randall, Cropanzano, Bormann, &Birjulin, 1999). POS was also found to be related to communication with top management, supervisors and coworkers (Allen, 1992, 1995, 1996).

Eisenberger et al.'s (1986) description of POS provides a framework within which employees' affective commitment to their organization develops. Gouldner (1960) suggested that employees have the responsibility to react positively to favorable treatment from their employer. Similarly the exchange models of Etzioni (1961) and Gould (1979) suggest that perceptions of organizational support increase affective attachment to an organization and strengthen expectations that greater effort will be rewarded. Consequently, employees who think their organizations support them put forth more effort thereby increasing employees' job performance. Rhoades and Eisenberger's (2002) meta-analysis revealed that

POS is modestly related to job performance. Additionally, Eisenberger and his colleagues (e.g., Armeli, Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Lynch, 1998; Eisenberger et al., 1986) argued that high POS leads to an obligation to repay the organization for its attention to socioemotional needs. This in turn yields increased effort and greater performance (Eisenberger, et al, 1990). Studies have also shown that POS is related to intention to leave (reverse of intention to remain) the organization (Allen, Shore, &Griffeth, 2003; Wayne, Shore, &Liden, 1997). The above discussion leads to the hypothesis of the potential moderating role of perceived organizational support.

> *Hypothesis 2: Perceived organizational support will mediate the relationship between proactive personality and intent to remain with the organization.*

Proactive Personality and Managerial Communication

An important factor in employees' support for change which has gained importance in recent years is managerial communication, which is also predominantly important in the entire organizational change process (Armenakis& Harris, 2002; Lewis, 1999). It is generally defined in terms of a process through which companies basically prepare employees for change by stating and clarifying issues related to the change (Lewis, 1999). Communication helps employees to gain a better understanding for the need for change, as well as to have some insights on the personal effects which may be caused by the proposed change (Armenakis& Harris, 2002). The process perspective suggests that *when* employees receive adequate and suitable communication in a change context (i.e. appropriate justification for, and information about, the change and timely feedback), they will have more favorable attitudes toward the change which, in turn, should impact their intention to stay with the organization.

Hence in the present study we anticipated the potential mediating effect of managerial communication.

> *Hypothesis 3: Managerial communication will mediate the relationship between proactive personality and intent to remain with the organization.*

METHODOLOGY

Research Setting and Participants

Cross-sectional data were collected from employees who work in the private sector in Israel. The main sectors represented in our sample are technology, pharmaceuticals, telecommunication, finance and aviation. The data were collected via a self-report online survey using the snow-ball effect. We initiated our survey administration process by sending an email information letter to 25 people in 14 private sector companies in Israel, inviting them to participate in the research study. These initial respondents were asked to disperse the survey to five other employees who worked with them in their company or to other workers in the private sector. This sampling methodology is referred to as the snow-ball effect. The email cover letter contained the link to the survey and a request not to answer the survey if the recipient was not working in the private sector in Israel. Because English is a second language in Israel and is actively used and spoken in the country's business community, the contact email and the survey were distributed in the English language. Only employees with access to email and the internet were able to receive and answer the survey. The surveys were collected during the Summer of 2008. We collected 120 completed and usable surveys.

Prior to our data collection in Israel, we conducted a pilot study to test the reliability of the survey. We distributed the survey to 40 MBA students in a large, public university on the West Coast in the United States online via www.Zoomerang.com and in the classroom.

The respondents had an average age of 30 years. Of the 120 people surveyed, about 54% were female, and 46% male. About 59% of respondents had a Bachelor degree, 27 ½ % had a Masters degree, and only 2 ½ % had a post graduate degree. Of the 120 respondents, 23% were software engineers, about 17 % customer service representatives, 15% sales and marketing people, about 8 % human resource

management people, 7 ½ % operations and logistics and about 6% in business development. Tables 1 and 2 provide a demographic and job positions profile of the respondents, respectfully.

TABLE 1
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Variable	N	%
Gender		
Female	64	53.33
Age		
20-29 years	44	36.66
30-39 years	62	51.66
40-49 years	3	2.5
50-59 years	7	5.83
>60 years	4	3.33
Education		
High School	13	10.83
BA	71	59.16
MA	33	27.5
Higher Degree	3	2.5
Tenure (Organization)		
< 1 year	13	10.83
1-5 years	88	73.33
6-10 years	11	9.16
11-20 years	8	6.66
>20 years	0	0
Tenure (Job Position)		
< 1 year	17	14.16
1-5 years	91	75.83
6-10 years	7	5.83
11-20 years	5	4.16
>20 years	0	0

Note: N = 120

TABLE 1
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS: POSITIONS WITH
ORGANIZATION (Continued)

Variable	N	%
Job Position		
Software Engineer	24	20
Manager	14	11.66
Sales/Marketing	18	15
Customer Service	20	16.66
Operations / Logistics	9	7.5
Human resources	10	8.33
Business Development	7	5.83
Others	18	15

Note: N = 120

Measures

Proactive Personality

Proactive personality was measured by using the shortened version of Bateman and Crant's (1993) 17-item Proactive Personality Scale (PPS) created by Seibert, Crant, and Kraimer, (1999). The shortened version consists of 10 items which were selected as they had the highest average factor loadings across the three studies reported by Bateman and Crant (1993). These three studies presented evidence for the scale's reliability (Cronbach's alpha across three samples ranged from .87 to .89, and the test-retest reliability coefficient was .72 over a 3 month period) and convergent, discriminant, and criterion validity. Seibert et al (1999) mentioned that the deletion of 7 items did not result in a major effect on the reliability of the scale (17-item α = .88; 10-item α = .86). These items were summed to arrive at a proactive personality score. Responses were indicated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree"), with such items as "I excel at identifying opportunities" and "No matter what the odds, if I believe in something I will make it happen." Internal consistency (coefficient alpha) obtained in the current study was .89, in line with that reported by Bateman and Crant (1993).

Intent to Remain

Employee's intent to remain with the organization was measured using a scale from Robinson (1996). This four-item scale asked employees to respond to Likert-type questions about how long the employee intends to remain with the employer, the extent to which they would prefer to work for a different employer, the extent to which they have thought about changing companies, and one binary question ("If you had your way, would you be working for this employer three years from now?"). We found a rather modest reliability with Cronbach's alpha measuring .84.

Organizational Commitment

This variable was measured using the scale developed by Allen and Meyer (1990). The scale consisted of 9 items (e.g., "I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this organization.") which was used in this study. Responses were made using a 7-point Likert-type scale

ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). This scale exhibited strong reliability with Cronbach's alpha measuring .96.

Perceived Organizational Support

Perception of organizational support was measured using the nine-item short version of the Survey of Perceptions of Organizational Support (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990). Items (e.g., "My organization really cares about my well-being") were presented on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores reflect more favorable perceptions of support. The scale had high reliability as Cronbach's alpha = .96.

Managerial Communication

Managerial communication was measured by using a subscale of the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ) (Downs & Hazen, 1977). Although several factors are identified by Downs and Hazen (1977) as indicators of overall communication satisfaction in the workplace, the focus of the present study was specifically related to the dimension that assesses employees' satisfaction with communication with their immediate supervisor or manager. It assesses how satisfied employees are with information they receive about their job, recognition of their efforts, and how well supervisors understand problems faced by employees. A 7-point Likert response format (ranging from 1 = very dissatisfied to 7 = very satisfied) was used to measure employees' satisfaction to the five items. The reliability found in the present study was in tune with these studies as Cronbach's alpha was .94.

Demographic data

The survey also included items inquiring about the subjects' age, gender, ethnicity, and job tenure. (See Table 1).

Data Analysis

In the present study the data was analyzed by using hierarchical linear regression. To test for mediation Barron and Kenny (1986) suggested a three-step procedure: 1) the mediator was regressed on the independent variable, 2) the dependent variable was regressed on the independent variable, and finally 3) the dependent variable was regressed on both the independent variable and on the mediator. However, to test for complete mediation the independent variable needs to be controlled in the third step. Hence a simple regression was performed for step one, but for steps two and three a hierarchical linear regression was employed. A formal test of the significance of mediation was provided by the Sobel test (1982) (see MacKinnon, Warsi, & Dwyer, 1995).

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 displays means, standard deviations and correlations among all the variables. Proactive personality was significantly and positively related to intent to remain with the organization ($r = .39$, $p = .01$) and the three factors organizational commitment ($r = .64$, $p = .01$); perceived organizational support ($r = .64$, $p = .01$); and managerial communication ($r = .59$, $p = .01$). Given the proposed mediational framework organizational commitment ($r = .59$, $p = .01$); perceived organizational support ($r = .57$, $p = .01$); and managerial communication ($r = .57$, $p = .01$) were significantly correlated with intent to remain.

TABLE 2
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND ZERO-ORDER CORRELATIONS AMONG VARIABLES

	Variables	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4
1	Intent to remain	5.19	1.30	-			
2	Proactive Personality	5.57	0.63	.39**	-		
3	Organizational Commitment	5.32	1.01	.59**	.64**	-	
4	Perceived Organizational Support	5.15	1.20	.57**	.64**	.76**	-
5	Managerial communication	5.40	1.31	.57**	.59**	.69**	.73**

Note. N = 120
** *p*< .01.

Hypotheses Testing

For testing hypothesis 1, which suggested the mediating role of organizational commitment in the relationship between proactive personality and intent to remain with the organization, we first regressed organizational commitment on proactive personality. This was followed by a two-step hierarchical linear regression (see Table 3). In step one, intent to remain with the organization was regressed on proactive personality, followed by step two wherein proactive personality was controlled and organizational commitment was introduced. Finally we calculated the Sobel's test (Preacher &Leonardelli, 2001). Formula for the test was drawn from MacKinnon, Warsi, and Dwyer (1995). The above steps were repeated for analyzing hypotheses 2 and 3 related to the mediating effect of perceived organizational support and managerial communication respectively. Tables 3, 4 & 5 summarize the results of the regression analyses.

TABLE 3
SUMMARY OF HIERARCHICAL REGRESSION ANALYSES: MEDIATION OF THE EFFECT OF PROACTIVE PERSONALITY ON INTENT TO REMAIN BY ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

				Sobel Test	
		ß	ΔR^2	*z*	*p*
Regression 1[a]			.34***		
	Proactive Personality	.76***			
Regression 2[b]					
	Step 1		.16***		
	Proactive Personality	.81***			
	Step 2		.18***		
	Proactive Personality	.08		2.71	.006
	Organizational Commitment	.73***			

[a]Dependent variable is Organizational Commitment
[b]Dependent variable is Intent to Remain with the Organization
Note. N = 120. ****p*<.001.

As shown in Table 3, the regression coefficient for organizational commitment was significant in contributing to intent to remain with the organization when proactive personality was controlled indicating the mediating role of organizational commitment (ß = .73, p = .001; $R^2\Delta$ = .18, p = .001). Proactive personality was statistically insignificant in step 2, which suggested that organizational commitment completely mediated the relationship between proactive personality and intent to remain with the organization. The Sobel test (1982) revealed significant evidence of complete mediation by managerial communication, z = 2.71, p = .006.

TABLE 4
SUMMARY OF HIERARCHICAL REGRESSION ANALYSES: MEDIATION OF THE EFFECT OF PROACTIVE PERSONALITY ON INTENT TO REMAIN BY PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

		ß	ΔR^2	Sobel Test	
				z	p
Regression 1[a]			.32***		
	Proactive Personality	.68***			
Regression 2[b]					
	Step 1		.16***		
	Proactive Personality	.81***			
	Step 2		.17***		
	Proactive Personality	.16		3.18	.001
	Perceived Organizational Support	.58***			

[a]Dependent variable is Perceived Organizational Support
[b]Dependent variable is Intent to Remain with the Organization
Note. N = 120. *p<.05. ***p<.001.

TABLE 5
SUMMARY OF HIERARCHICAL REGRESSION ANALYSES: MEDIATION OF THE EFFECT OF PROACTIVE PERSONALITY ON INTENT TO REMAIN BY MANAGERIAL COMMUNICATION

		ß	ΔR^2	Sobel Test	
				z	P
Regression 1[a]			.32***		
	Proactive Personality	.56***			
Regression 2[b]					
	Step 1		.16***		
	Proactive Personality	.81***			
	Step 2		.17***		
	Proactive Personality	.20		3.28	.001
	Managerial Communication	.51***			

[a]Dependent variable is Managerial Communication
[b]Dependent variable is Intent to Remain with the Organization
Note. N = 120. *p<.05. ***p<.001

Similarly as seen in Tables 4 & 5, the regression coefficient for perceived organizational support and managerial communication respectively, were significant in contributing to intent to remain with the organization when proactive personality was controlled indicating the mediating role of perceived organizational support (ß = .58, p = .001; $R^2\Delta$ = .17, p = .001) and managerial communication (ß = .51, p = .001; $R^2\Delta$ = .17, p = .001). Proactive personality was statistically insignificant in step 2 for both the variables, which suggested that perceived organizational support and managerial communication completely mediated the relationship between proactive personality and intent to remain with the organization. The Sobel test (1982) revealed significant evidence of complete mediation by perceived organizational support (z = 3.18, p = .001) and managerial communication (z = 3.28, p = .001).

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed at delineating the process/mechanism through which proactive personality affects intent to remain through three factors—organizational commitment, perceived organizational support and managerial communication, thereby providing evidence for the importance of these three factors in retaining an organization's proactive employees. The present study has made an important contribution to both the proactive personality and the turnover literature. Interestingly we found that all the three factors completely mediated the relationship between proactive personality and intent to remain which implied that in the absence of these three factors there would be no relationship between proactive personality and intent to remain.

Practical Implications
The above findings have several practical implications; especially from an applied perspective this type of research is important, as it gives more insight on how organizations can recognize and leverage from those exhibiting proactive personality. There is hardly any doubt in the fact that proactive employees are an asset to the company, however it is up to the company to make sure that they do not lose such an asset. Our results indicate that proactive individuals in Israel will intend to remain with the company if they believe that the organization is committed to them; supports them and their 0supervisors/managers communicate with them thereby making them feel an important part of the organization.

Limitations of the Study
Data for this study was collected anonymously. Although limiting any inference of causality among the study variables, protecting respondents' anonymity provided benefits by potentially reducing the method bias (see P. M. Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & N. P. Podsakoff, 2003). Employees tend to provide biased responses if they believe their identity could be revealed to management. This, in turn, may result in a less of internal validity if respondents are hesitant to provide honest responses to the survey questions for fear of repercussion (Green &Feild, 1976).

Additionally, data for this study were collected via self-report measures to assess both the predictors and outcome variables thereby raising concerns about common method variance (Spector, 2006).

Future Research
The present paper shed light into the mechanism by which PAP affects intent to remain with an organization of Israeli employees. The literature on turnover supports that intentions are one of best predictors of turnover behavior (Armitage& Conner, 2001). However, research has found that intentions do not always result in turnover behavior (Allen, Weeks, & Moffitt, 2005). Hence it would be interesting to replicate this study using turnover behavior as the outcome variable.

In today's borderless and competitive world it would greatly help if this study could also be replicated by comparing data across cultures example Israel and Japan as Japanese employees exhibit higher work centrality, and give greater importance to job security and stability than do employees in the U.S. (England &Misumi 1986; Lundberg & Peterson 1994).

Finally, it would be interesting to observe if the present results would differ in a longitudinal study.

Crant (2000) aptly states the importance of proactive personality which can be rightly applied to an organization undergoing change—as change relates to dynamism and uncertainty: "As work becomes more dynamic and decentralized, proactive behavior and initiative become even more critical determinants of organizational success" (p. 435). This study provides an initial attempt to delineate the process/mechanism through which proactive personality affects certain job–related outcomes in the backdrop of a change setting. The "bottom line" is to prevent organizations from losing one of their most important assets—its proactive employees.

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