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The academic and social adjustment problems of Taiwan-Chinese students studying at Iowa regents higher educational institutions

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The academic and social adjustment problems of Taiwan-Chinese students studying at Iowa regents higher educational institutions

Abstract

Cross-cultural contacts are easier and more convenient because technological developments have shortened the distance between countries. The third world countries demand advanced technological and industrialized knowledge and skills to develop their countries. Therefore, they send a large number of students to highly developed countries to absorb their invaluable scientific experiences. In particular, the third world countries send a large number of students to the United States because of its leading position in technology, advanced economic development and democratic leadership.

THE ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT PROBLEMS OF TAIWAN-CHINESE STUDENTS
STUDYING AT IOWA REGENTS HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education:

Educational Psychology:

General Educational Psychology

Shu-Er Lee

University of Northern Iowa

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This Research Paper by: Shu-Er Lee

Entitled: THE ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT PROBLEMS OF TAIWAN-CHINESE
STUDENTS STUDYING AT IOWA REGENTS HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

has been approved as meeting the research paper requirement for the
Degree of Master of Arts in Education: General Educational Psychology.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	4
Definitions of Terms	4
Research Method	5
Limitation	6
Summary	6

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW	8
Foreign Students Studying in the United States	8
Adjustment Problems of Chinese Students	10
Academic problems	10
Socially related adjustment problems	13
Summary	18

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES	20
Overview of the Research Procedure	20
Population	21
Instrumentation	21
Data Collection	22
Data Reporting System	22
Reliability and Validity	23
Summary	24

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS	26
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Demographic Information	26
Questionnaire Result: Likert Scale	27
Academic problems	27
Socially related problems	30
Problem solving strategy	33
Questionnaire Result: Non-Likert Scale	34
Reliability	36
Summary	37

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	39
Summary	39
Conclusion	40
Recommendations	42

APPENDIX	45
REFERENCE	48

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Cross-cultural contacts are easier and more convenient because technological developments have shortened the distance between countries. The third world countries demand advanced technological and industrialized knowledge and skills to develop their countries. Therefore, they send a large number of students to highly developed countries to absorb their invaluable scientific experiences. In particular, the third world countries send a large number of students to the United States because of its leading position in technology, advanced economic development and democratic leadership.

Not only does international education help develop the home country's technological and industrial base, but foreign students studying in the United States also grow individually because of personal experiences. Foreign students not only learn information from books or lectures, but they also profit from daily life experiences which reflect the American culture. The experience of autonomy and the relative freedom offered by a democratic society is a very exciting experience that enlightens one's mind (Chang, 1971).

Chinese students began to study at United States universities in the middle of the nineteenth century. Yung Wing, the first Chinese student who studied in the United States, graduated from Yale University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1854. As China began to accept Western technology, the Chinese Educational Mission and the Organization of Manchu government headed by Yung Wing planned to send

120 students to study in American universities. In 1872, the first group of thirty promising young students was recruited to study in the United States. The Manchu government planned to send 30 students to the United States in each of the following three years. After several years, the Manchu government terminated this plan because of cultural conflicts (Wheeler, King & Davidson; 1925).

At beginning of the twentieth century, many Chinese students again began their voyages in pursuit of foreign study and traveled chiefly to Japan, America, and Europe. After World War II, the Chinese society's demand for modernization and industrialization required more highly trained scientists and engineers. Thus, Chinese students' desire to continue their higher education abroad was motivated by a nationalistic drive toward modernization, especially in the fields of science and technology (Chang, 1971).

Since the beginning of this century, the number of Chinese students attending American universities has risen steadily. By the 1986-87 school year, in excess of 55,000 Chinese students had traveled to the United States. According to the Institution of International Education (IIE) (Open Doors, 1987), there were 25,660 students coming from Taiwan, the Republic of China (R.O.C.); 20,030 students from China, the People of Republic of China (P.R.C.); and 11,010 students from Hong Kong. For a long time, Taiwan, R.O.C. along with Malaysia, India, and Iran, sent the largest number of students to the United States to study. From 1983-1987, Taiwan, R.O.C. sent the largest number of students (Open Doors, 1987) because of changing political policies, economic growth,

and lack of higher education facilities available in that country (Altbach, Kelly, & Lulat, 1985).

It is a challenging task for Chinese students to realize their goal of higher education and/or professional training in the United States. The major language of most Chinese is Mandarin, which is totally different from English. Most Chinese students encounter language difficulties when studying in the United States. In addition, language assumes a different cultural context for thinking and behavioral patterns that creates some adjustment problems for Chinese students.

Aside from language difficulties, Chinese students studying in the United States experience the same study problems that native students encounter. For example, some Chinese students have test anxiety and financial problems as might some Americans students. For these and other related reasons, Johnson (1971) suggested that researchers should treat foreign students as regular students first, rather than as foreigners.

In addition to the language problems, Chinese students may encounter cultural difficulties in adjusting to American society. The cultural difficulties include different attitudes toward learning, thinking, and behaving in academic areas as well as in daily life. The individual manners, philosophies, values, life styles, and appearances of Chinese students are different from the majority of Americans whom they encounter. When Chinese students enter American society without considering these differences and when they do not allow time for appropriate adjustment, problems and conflicts may arise that influence their lives adversely. Therefore, most Chinese students live with their

fellow countrymen in subculture groups and keep their own cultural values and life style; they speak their own language, listen to their native music, and read their native newspapers (Klein, Alexander, Tseng, Miller, Yeh, Chu, & Workneh, 1971; Kang, 1972).

For the past twenty years there has been research in social science and in education where the main subjects were the Taiwan Chinese or Hong Kong Chinese. This research used the term "Chinese" instead of "Taiwan Chinese". In this paper, the author will use the term "Chinese" mainly to refer to the Taiwan Chinese students.

Statement of the Problem

This study proposed to investigate the attitudes of related Chinese students toward academic and related social adjustment problems in the Iowa Regent Universities. This descriptive study used an original questionnaire to determine these related attitudes through basic statistical data; in lieu of hypotheses, data analysis was given by the median of the mean and median of the standard deviation. The study assumed that these students have language problems and socially related problems, but personal efforts overcame these problems.

Definitions of Terms

1. Academic problem:

Problem that may occur when attending "a formal study at an institution of learning, especially of higher learning." (Gove, ed. 1981, p. 9). For the purpose of this study, problems will include test anxiety and language related problems.

2. Chinese student:

A person who is "a native of China, or a person of Chinese ancestry" (Funk & Wagnalls, eds. 1963, p. 238). In this paper, the term specifically refers to the citizens of Taiwan, the Republic of China, who study at three Iowa Regent Universities.

3. Co-national:

This term represents "members of a minority national group in a state" (Gove, ed. 1981, p. 468). In this research, this term indicates Chinese students who come from the Republic of China.

4. Foreign student:

"Anyone who is enrolled in courses at institutions of higher education in the United States who is not a citizen or immigrant" (Open Doors, 1987, p. iii).

5. Social adjustment problem:

An adjustment problem may occur "when an individual attempts to maintain or further security, comfort, status or create inclinations in the face of the ever-changing conditions and pressures of the environment" (Good, ed., 1973, P. 13). For the purpose of this study, these problems will specifically include problems of differing life styles, making friends, social isolation and racial discrimination of Chinese students studying in Iowa.

Research Method

This study is a survey using an author-designed questionnaire given to a sample of Chinese students at the University of Iowa, Iowa State

University and the University of Northern Iowa. General attitudes toward academic and related social adjustment were measured by a thirty-eight item questionnaire utilizing a Likert scale format. Data were analyzed by the main frame computer of the statistical Package for the Social Science program (SPSS). SPSS is a widely accepted computer program for social science and educational research. The development of the questionnaire, procedural details, and data analysis are explained in Chapter Three. The survey demographic data and the results of this survey content are analyzed in Chapter Four.

Limitation

This study was limited to collecting data from volunteer Chinese students enrolled in the 1988 spring semester at the three Iowa public universities, the University of Iowa, Iowa State University, and the University of Northern Iowa. Because the topic is limited to Taiwan Chinese students this paper excludes students who have permanent residence and/or are American Chinese. All of the students are seriously pursuing academic university training. This paper does not account for other factors, such as immigration or political considerations.

Summary

Developing countries send students to learn from the advanced technological and scientific knowledge of other nations to promote their own national development. Likewise, Taiwan government follows its national demands and sends students to the United States to learn

valuable information that will assist in the Republic of China's development. However, the differences between the Oriental and Occidental cultures contribute to the social and academic problems for the Chinese students. This study utilized a self-designed survey questionnaire to investigate Chinese students academic and social adjustment problems.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature examines the adjustment problems of foreign students in general and Chinese students in particular. The problems of Chinese students focus on academic problems and related social adjustment problems. The areas of academic problems include general learning problems and English language acquisition. The related social adjustment problems include socializing with Americans, making friends, racial discrimination, and social isolation. The chapter is composed of the following categories: (1) foreign students studying in the United States; (2) the adjustment problems of Chinese students, namely, academic problems and social adjustment problems.

Foreign Students Studying in the United States

The following paragraph discloses a certain degree of truth about the foreign student's life and, moreover, the need for this study.

"The more we uncover the painful facets of the adaptation most foreign students make in the United States, the more difficult it is for us to take any position that would lead to the glossing over of foreign student problems. Perhaps the best progress can be made by shifting our focus from the foreign aspect of the foreign student process to the human aspect." (Klein, Alexander, Tseng, Miller, Yeh, & Workneh; 1971, P.88)

It is a continuous international trend for developing countries to send students to developed countries to receive higher education and/or professional training (Cummings & So, 1985; Lee & Tan, 1984). These foreign students return to their home countries to assist their

governments in the modernization process. It has become common practice for developing countries to advance their national economic and social development by employing techniques and practices of western technology and industrialization. Therefore, the total number of foreign students studying at higher institutions of education in the United States is increasing, the proportions of foreign students from Latin America and Europe have decreased, while the proportions from the Far East and Africa have significantly increased during the past twenty years (Cummings & So, 1985; Lee & Tan, 1984).

Academic problems are the major source of difficulty for foreign students. Among the academic problems, problems with the language are the major factors contributing to this stressful situation (Perkins, Perkins, Guglielmino, & Reiff, 1977). English language proficiency could be divided into four parts to further study this problem: reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Another important variable which affects the foreign student's adjustment problem is the time to adapt to a new environment. The "U-Curve" hypothesis is a widely discussed theory about the international student's emotional ups-and-downs. These ups and downs are effected by varying time periods of the student's stay. This classical theory (Lysgaard, 1955) proposed that the predominant adjustment problems of foreign students happens during the second stage following the beginning period of excitement and freshness of arrival, whereby the majority of foreign students encountered intensive adjustment problems from the food, culture differences, and language and academic difficulties.

The Adjustment Problems of Chinese Students

The Chinese culture has its own language, values, philosophies, religions, and life styles which are different from the American culture. Growing up in a culture which is totally different from the American culture may cause Chinese students to have intensive adjustment problems while living and studying in the United States.

Chu (et al., 1971) found that the major adjustment problems of Chinese students cluster around academic problems, social adjustment problems, financial problems and job placement problems after graduation. The first cluster concerned academic problems and language deficiency problems, such as "not having enough time to study"; and "finding out the right courses to take"; "not understanding English"; and "finding the school work too difficult." The second cluster concerned social or cultural contact, such as "feeling lonesome for my home and family"; "concern about racial discrimination"; and "having my behavior misunderstood".

Academic Problems

The most frequently cited academic problem for foreign students is English language proficiency (Goodwin, 1983; Heikinheimo & Shute, 1986; Johnson, 1971; Perkins, Perkins, Guglielmino, & Reiff, 1977). Oriental students are prone to suffer more in English language proficiency than other foreign students. Dorpowski's (1977) doctoral dissertation investigated the problems of three international groups of graduate students: Oriental, Latin American, and Arab students. He found that Oriental graduate students' English language problems were greater than

Latin American or Arab students' problems. Even when Chinese students had been well prepared before going to the United States, the English language deficiency was still the major difficulty (Chu et al., 1971). When Chinese students come into the American society, they find that their knowledge of English language does not function very well. This deficiency serves as a barrier to cultural communication and can easily create some cross-cultural misunderstandings. Practical English usage is very different from the English language acquired in the classrooms of non-English speaking countries. Therefore, the different accents and idioms that American people use daily make listening comprehension a problem (Chang, 1971). However, Chinese students whose English was adequate upon arrival in the United States were able to adapt better than those whose English proficiency was inadequate upon arrival (Surdam, Collins; 1984).

It is an apparent fact that higher English test scores for Chinese students have correlated with higher academic performance. Allen (1965) found that there was a positive correlation between English test scores upon admission to the United States educational institutions and academic success in the first semester. For the foreign graduate student, Allen proved that there is a high correlation between the GPA and English test scores. Therefore, foreign students with highly proficient language ability are able to achieve academic excellence easier than those students with a lower level of language proficiency.

Sharma (1971) investigated foreign students attending the Universities of North Carolina and found that foreign students had difficulties giving oral reports, participating in class discussions,

taking notes in class, understanding lectures, and preparing written reports. Apparently, these foreign students had difficulty in speaking, listening and writing in English. Foreign students who had output related language problems did not know how to appropriately convey their opinion by oral or written form.

In Lee's (1973) doctoral dissertation, he found that almost half of the international students in the University of Virginia reported problems related to the following eleven variables: financial difficulties, language difficulties, course difficulty, lack of social life, cultural differences, different pace of life, homesickness (loneliness, companionship), uncertainty about the future, alienation, experience with discrimination, and not having close friends as the "least difficulty." He explained that this did not mean that they were in an intolerable situation. Rather, he thought that they had a very special willingness to endure the discomfort and devote themselves to achieving academic excellence. That devotion of the international students was a strong motivation to work hard and compete with the English proficient students, even in a disadvantageous situations.

The motivation of Chinese students studying in the United States is a very important aspect of their lives which needs to be examined. According to the Chu et al. (1971) survey investigation, the goals of Chinese students studying in America were: getting a degree; receiving training in special fields; having a variety of experiences; finding out what I am like; finding out how people in my profession work in the United States; and visiting different parts of the United States. These results indicated that getting a degree or professional training was the

first priority for Chinese students and that experiencing the culture and people was the second consideration; personal growth was also important, although it was a less important consideration.

The major fields of study selected by Chinese students tend to be the science-related fields of engineering, and the natural, medical, and agricultural sciences. Chang (1971) claimed that these majors account for 63 percent of the total Chinese students and professionals in her survey research. These scientific and engineering majors provide the international students (which include Chinese students) ready employment upon graduation (Johnson, 1971). In the meantime, these majors need less English language proficiency and allow the students to achieve academic success more easily.

Chinese students appreciate the high quality of the faculty in the United States. They also enjoy the wealth of teaching materials and the structure of the higher educational system in general (Chang, 1971; Chang, 1972).

Socially Related Adjustment Problems

Hull (1978) concluded that Asian students with origins in China, Korea, or Japan seem to be particularly prone to being misunderstood and socially isolated from Americans. He thought part of the reason was the cultural, psychological and language differences between the East and West.

Several studies (Chang, 1971; Kang, 1972; Miller, Yeh, Alexander, Klein, Tseng, Workneh, & Chu, 1971) indicated that Chinese students established ties with the already existing Chinese groups because they

felt comfortable in their own sub-cultural atmosphere. But, these "country cliques" can be detrimental to their learning and socialization, and may produce resentment from the United States Students. Kang (1971) described the typical picture of Chinese students studying at the University of Minnesota as following:

"On average I speak Chinese more often than I do English. In the morning I exchange greetings with my roommates in Chinese. We usually leave the house together. More often than not, I have my lunch with other Chinese students in my department. Over the dinner table, I and other house-mates share a Chinese meal that one of my house-mates cooked, and our conversations are in Chinese. If I go to see a movie, it is usually with one of my Chinese friends. Well, it is just like transplanting a small segment of my college life from back home." (P.75)

This small Chinese university community at the University of Minnesota served numerous valuable functions including: (a) structure in a world where manners and morals are different from patterns valued at home; (b) mutual support and approval in a familiar frame of reference where academic stresses are at an all time peak; (c) suitable marriage partners and substitute peers for parents in the complex mechanism of mate selection; and, (d) relief from the stresses of coping with new situations in a strange tongue where ignorance is equal to inferiority and where embarrassment and loss of face are strongly negative experiences. Although the functions of the co-national community may contribute toward perpetuation of social isolation, it is an efficient method of helping students cope with a different culture (Yet, et al., 1981).

To most Chinese students family is the ultimate affiliation that provides the most support financially and emotionally. Compared with

the American pattern of parent-child relationships, Chinese have a different family style. Most Chinese were brought up in a more traditional atmosphere which has a more conservative attitude toward the family. This characteristic can be traced from the the deep-rooted cultural background of Confucian doctrines and related moral lessons. For example, to respect and obey one's parents and to take care of one's siblings are the important duties. Most parents use the authoritarian style to teach their children which is the same method used by the classroom teachers (Chang, 1972). Family expectations strongly influence Chinese students studying in the United States. Sometimes too much parental expectation will lead some Chinese students to experience stress (Bourne, 1975).

Although many Chinese students try to involve themselves in American culture and try to enjoy cross-cultural activities, they find it is difficult to accept the cultural environment and to be able to balance this with the demands of intensive studying. They crave relaxation in their spare time and do not want to be bothered with the stress and difficulties associated with language problems.

Chinese students spend most of their time studying to achieve academic excellence. This may result in feelings of loneliness especially during the United States holidays. Since it is difficult to maintain close contact with their families, they feel the need for intimacy with other people. Most foreign students feel socially isolated from and desire more social contact with American students and/or conationals. Das (1976) found in his study that there was very little social contact between foreign students and American students and

that some foreign students often had an intensified sense of social isolation and feelings of loneliness and homesickness during holidays.

Most Chinese students experienced social isolation. It is important to note that the social isolation of Chinese students in the United States does not mean that they were poorly prepared or mentally unhealthy. Yeh (et al., 1981) found that prior to their departure for graduate study, 132 students proved to be significantly better prepared than a group of 108 control students in graduate schools in Taiwan.

Other studies have also indicated the problem of loneliness and isolation experienced by Chinese students. Johnson (1971) indicated that "the greater distances involved in their separation and the frequently stronger family ties no doubt contribute to a feeling of isolation." (p.66). Klein et al., (1982) interviewed more than 40 students from Taiwan and Hong Kong and found that more than half of them revealed that social isolation from Americans was a fact of life for most Asian students.

Sue and Zane (1985) indicated that recent immigrant Chinese students become more anxious, lonely and isolated than American-born Chinese or those who immigrated over six years ago. Recent immigrants have limited English proficiency and must study more hours which significantly reduces their opportunities for participation in most social activities. Consequently, they are lacking in social effectiveness. Chinese students have a similar situation in that they strive to earn good grades but neglect aspects of their social life.

It is a valuable asset to have international friends. In a cross-cultural setting, establishing a strong friendship is a difficult task

for international students who do not have good English communicating abilities. Some studies showed that many Chinese students failed to establish close relationships with Americans during their sojourn time (Klein et al., 1971). Yeh and her associates (1981) indicated that sojourning Chinese students were primarily study oriented and thus were less interested in building close friendships with American people.

Some studies showed that international students commented that most Americans are superficially nice to foreign students. A great majority of Chinese students think that Americans are more materialistic than people in other countries and that American interrelationships are shallow (Chang, 1972; Klein et al. 1971).

Only a small minority of Chinese students had enough courage to attempt to move into American society in the 1970s. This means the majority of Chinese have been treated differently by the Americans so that they are seldom actively committed to American activities. Some Chinese students who express hesitation in trusting or extending friendships to Americans have troubles with cross-cultural adaptation and worry about the possibility of racial prejudice (Chang, 1971). Most Chinese students are aware of the racial discrimination that exists (Chang, 1971; Perkins, Perkins, Guglielmino, & Reiff, 1977). Racial discrimination is a very subtle attitude that often blocks cross-cultural understanding.

Klein et al. (1971) noted that the international students with emotional problems are extremely isolated from social contact with American friends and co-nationals. Chinese students who interact with

both Americans and Chinese students have fewer adjustment problems than the students isolated with either group.

Yeh et al. (1981) also found in their clinic research that seventy-seven Chinese students from Taiwan had to return prematurely from overseas study because of psychiatric disorders. "The majority of cases were schizophrenias or paranoid psychoses (85.7%). The paranoid manifestations were the most conspicuous symptoms among these psychotic Chinese students...The paranoid symptoms were significantly more prevalent among males than females. There were only five affective disorders, including two manias and three depressions" (P. 144).

Summary

It is a present international trend that the third world countries are sending tertiary students to the United States for advanced scientific or technological learning. Among these third world countries, Asian countries have sent more students than any other geographical area during the last two decades. The cultural differences between the East and West are so great that they create adjustment problems for foreign students. Chinese students whose native language is not English usually have more serious problems concerning the English language. Most Chinese students were strongly motivated academically and encountered heavy pressures from both academic and socially related adjustment problems. Most Chinese students generated an unique subculture in the university setting which emphasized familiar Chinese living and study styles. Under intensive academic pressure, these students often live isolated from American society and felt increased

loneliness and homesickness during certain periods of time such as holidays. Meanwhile, Chinese students still try to understand and cope with American society and people. They have had to overcome communication gaps and cultural differences to build international friendships.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This chapter focuses on the methodology and related necessary information by which this research survey was conducted. This chapter will include the following information: (a) a review of the research procedures, (b) a description of the population sample, (c) a description of the research instrument, (d) a discussion of the data collection and analysis procedures, (e) information about the instrument's reliability and its validity components, and (f) a summary.

Overview of the Research Procedure

There is extensive research on international education regarding the adjustment of students studying in foreign countries. Based on a number of foreign student adjustment studies with an emphasis on Chinese students, a questionnaire was initiated to ascertain two major adjustment problems of Chinese students: academic problems and social problems. In the first part of this questionnaire there were 38 statements using the Likert measurement scale. Items one to eighteen investigated academic and English language adjustment; items 19 through 38 investigated the attitudes toward social adjustment and related problem solving skills. Most items were negatively stated, but items 20-24, and item 28 (concerning attitudes of socialization with Americans and their culture) were stated positively. Response options to the Likert scale items ranged from one to five; (1) "strongly disagree", (2) "disagree", (3) "neutral", (4) "agree", and (5) "strongly agree". The

data, which included the demographic data, were coded by the UNI computer programmer. These data were then analyzed by the university main frame computer system, SPSS program. A descriptive data analysis was obtained which included mean, standard deviation, frequency, percentile, mode, and median.

Population

The original population for this study was intended to include all the tertiary Chinese students studying in the midwestern part of United States. Due to limited funds and resources, the study was limited to Chinese students in the Iowa Regents Universities. The target population of this study consisted of approximately 350 students from the University of Iowa, approximately 200 students from Iowa State University, and 3 students from the University of Northern Iowa.

Instrumentation

A questionnaire was developed to investigate Chinese students' attitudes toward their own academic and social adjustment problems in the higher educational institutions which they attend. These institutions were in the Regent Universities system in Iowa, a midwestern State in the United States. The survey included two parts: (a) an IBM computer answer sheet, and (b) a two-page questionnaire. The questionnaire had three parts in addition to the demographic data. The first part consisted of a 38 items using a five-point Likert scale. All participants were asked to answer each statement with one choice from "(5) strongly agree to (1) strongly disagree." In the second part, the

participants were asked to choose three of fourteen items which they thought were the most stressful to them. The third part of this survey was an optional, open-ended question for participants' responses. This question was added to gain more information which might compensate for any stressful university experiences not mentioned in first part and second part.

Data Collection

During February of 1988, the questionnaire was approved by Dr. Lawrence Kavich, the Chair of the Research Committee. The research proposal and the questionnaire were later approved by the Human Subject Committees of the University of Iowa (UI), Iowa State University (ISU), and the University of Northern Iowa (UNI). The questionnaire was administered in two ways. The majority of the questionnaires, computer answer sheets and cover letters were personally distributed by the author. In the meantime, the Chinese Students Association at UI and Kuang-Hua Association of ISU assisted in the distribution of questionnaire kits composed of a cover letter, two-page questionnaire and computer answer sheet. The data were collected on a voluntary and anonymous basis. Of the 180 questionnaires that were distributed, 155 questionnaires were returned and 146 questionnaires were usable.

Data Reporting System

Analysis of questionnaire data primarily focused on the 38 Likert scale items. References will be made to the two other sections of the survey in the discussion section of Chapter Four.

The questionnaire's 38 items were divided into three parts: academic adjustment problems, socially related adjustment problems, and coping strategies. The SPSS computer program of the UNI main frame computer was utilized to calculate the mean and standard deviation of these collected data. These data were organized into four groups by the median of standard deviation and median of mean according to the descriptive research method of measurement suggested by Dr. Gilbert Hewett, Visiting Professor of Educational Psychology at UNI in conjunction with the prescribed method of statistical interpretation for data collected via the Likert scale. The four groups were divided as follows: the first group had higher mean and smaller standard deviation; the second group had lower mean smaller standard deviation; the third group had higher mean and the larger standard deviation; and the fourth group had lower mean and larger standard deviation.

The second section of the questionnaire dealt with the three factors most stressful to Taiwan Chinese students. This section was evaluated for frequency and percentile. The last section was the open-ended question which dealt with generalization of personal stressful experiences.

Reliability and Validity

The purpose of this survey was to measure stressful academic and socially related adjustment problems of Chinese students. The original concepts were taken from Porter's Doctoral Dissertation (1962), which included an inventory to determine the problems of foreign students in general. Since Porter's inventory thoroughly examined the problems of

foreign students, this survey focused only on the major concepts of academic and socially related adjustment problems of Chinese students. Additional research discovered many articles concerning the adjustment of Chinese students to studying in the United States. Among these, the classic studies by Chu and his associates (1971), Kang (1972), Chang (1971) and Chang (1972) were used as reference models for the questionnaire. A Pre-test was administered to six Chinese students before the questionnaire was finally accepted. This questionnaire was carefully reviewed by three professors of the College of Education at the University of Northern Iowa and two graduate students with majors in teacher education.

The reliability of this questionnaire has been divided into three parts: (1) academic attitudes toward English difficulties and learning; (2) Chinese students, subculture context; and (3) pro-American attitudes. The reliability coefficients (Krombach's alpha) of these three sections were obtained by the SPSS program of reliability procedure from the UNI main frame computer.

Summary

This chapter focused mainly on the methodology of survey research. The target population of this survey consisted of Chinese students enrolled of three Regent Universities: UI, ISU, and UNI. The research instrument an original questionnaire of 38 items utilizing the five point Likert measurement scale to investigate Chinese students' attitudes toward: (1) academic adjustment; (2) socially related adjustment; and (3) problem solving strategies. The descriptive

statistics would be applied to analyze the result. The related information as data analysis, instrument validity and reliability were also included in this chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to report and explain the statistical results of this study. Research results are reported in the following three sections. The demographic information of the sample is described first. The questionnaire results are then analyzed by descriptive statistics. A discussion of the results will conclude this chapter.

Demographic Information

The demographic information obtained from the respondents to this survey describes the background of the students who comprise the statistical sample. The survey data was provided by students at the three public universities in Iowa: the University of Iowa (UI), Iowa State University (ISU) and the University of Northern Iowa (UNI). The total number of participants in this survey was 146; 90 from UI, 53 from ISU, and 1 from UNI. Demographic information included classification, major field of study, sex, age, length of stay in the United States, TOEFL score, and GPA.

Among these 146 subjects there were 14 undergraduate students (10%) and 131 graduate students (90%), with 92 male students (63%) and 54 female students (37%). Differentiated by age, 101 Chinese students belonged to the 20-29 age group which composed 69% of all sample subjects. Forty-one students belonged to the 30-39 age group which composed 28% of the survey group. Four students did not reveal their

age (3%). The length of their matriculation ranged from 3 months to 10 years. The average length of time these Chinese students studied in the Iowa was two years and five months.

The majority of Chinese students were studying either engineering or science: 56 students (38%) in the sample were science majors; 36 students (25%) were engineering majors; 6 students were social behavior science majors (4%); 14 students (10%) were art and humanity majors; 11 students (8%) were education majors (8%); 20 students (14%) were business majors (14%) and 3 students (2%) omitted the subject major data. The average score on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) was 556. The range of TOEFL scores was from 500 to 657. There were eight respondents who did not report their TOEFL scores. Grade Point Average (GPA) of the respondents was 3.52 with a range from 2.7 to 4.0; but there were 21 missing GPA scores. The mode was 3.4; the median was 3.6.

Questionnaire Result: Likert Scale

Academic Adjustment Problems

Table 1 "Academic Adjustment Problems" shows the mean and standard deviation of the respondents' scores in response to items 1-18 on the questionnaire. These scores were listed according to the rank order of the mean for items 1 to 18 on Likert-type scale.

The results of items 1-18 were categorized into four groups according to the median of standard deviation (1.07) and the median of the mean (2.71). The first group (items 1, 18, and 13) had a smaller standard deviation and a higher mean. This group had higher agreement

with the item statements which were evidenced by tighter clusters of answers around each statement. In this group the results showed that Chinese students strongly agreed that they experienced intense academic pressure. As a result, they spent more time studying. Chinese students slightly disagreed when they were questioned about the lack of time to study. This item was higher than the median of mean.

The second group (items 8, 7, 16, 9, 15, and 10) had a lower mean and a smaller standard deviation. The results indicated that Chinese students slightly disagreed with the statement that they had problems reading, or understanding spoken English. These Chinese students did not have significant problems with communicating, listening, reading or taking examinations. Also, the Chinese students did not dislike their advisor or members of their faculties.

The third group (items 12, 14, 6, 4, 5, and 17), with a higher mean and larger standard deviation, exhibited a wider variety of attitudes toward academic adjustment problems. The relationship between better English ability and better performance had the highest mean (4.00) within the academic adjustment problem area. Most Chinese students thought that better English proficiency would help them to achieve better academic performance while a few Chinese students disagreed with this correlation. In the sequence of academic adjustment questions, some of these Chinese students agreed that they were spending most of the week days studying. This information corroborated previously cited references which stated that Chinese students spend extra time preparing for their classes. Actually, Chinese students did spend extra time studying. They did spend most of the week days studying, but this

statement was not a widely accepted situation. Another statement which is significant despite the larger standard deviation was that Chinese students tended to use their native thinking style to write English. For some students this might be true, but it was not a predominant fact. Furthermore, the students slightly disagreed with the statement that they had difficulties with oral expression and with written assignments. They denied that overstudying deprived them of their social life.

The last group (items 11, 3 and 2) had a lower mean and a larger standard deviation. Most students did not agree that they felt nervous about taking examinations. They strongly disagreed with the statements that they disliked their area of study and that they lacked confidence in their ability to complete their degree.

Table 1

Academic Adjustment Problems

Items	M	SD
12. If I had better English ability, I would do better in my academic work.	4.00	1.18
1. I have strong academic pressure.	3.51	.98
14. I spend most of my week days studying for my classes.	3.47	1.13
6. I have use a Chinese thinking style to write.	3.32	1.11
18. I spend extra time studying for my classes.	3.17	1.04
4. I have difficulties in expressing myself orally.	2.86	1.10

5. I have difficulties with writing assignments.	2.80	1.13
13. I lack enough time to study.	2.74	1.02
17. I study during weekends; therefore, I lack enough time to socialize with my friends.	2.75	1.14
11. I feel quite nervous about taking examinations.	2.68	1.09
8. I have difficulties in communicating with Americans.	2.59	.97
7. I have difficulties in listening to lecture.	2.45	1.01
16. I feel uneasy with my department faculty.	2.43	.93
9. I have a hard time completing my reading assignments.	2.34	1.01
15. I dislike my academic adviser.	2.17	1.04
10. I have difficulties in taking exams because of English language problems.	2.16	1.05
3. I dislike my present area of study (curriculum).	2.15	1.13
2. I lack confidence to complete my degree.	2.14	1.19

Note. 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, and
5=strongly agree.

M=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation

Socially Related Adjustment Problems

The socially related adjustment problem section was divided into four groups according to the median of the mean (2.82) and the median of the standard deviation (.94) (see Table 2). The first group (items 31, 26, 25, 22 and 32) of socially related adjustment problems dealt with

cultural association between Chinese and American students and had a higher mean and a smaller standard deviation. The results indicated that these students identified with their culture and spent most of their free time with other Chinese students. Both items' mean reached 4.00 which was the highest score in the social adjustment section. Students also agreed that they experienced a culture gap when communicating with Americans. They slightly agreed that they had many American friends and slightly disagreed that they were isolated from American society.

The second group of statements (items 24, 23, 30, 21 and 27) dealt with appreciation of American culture. With lower mean and smaller standard deviation, the results indicated that these students did not like American cultural activities or the intercultural activities. The Chinese students did not think they had a role identification conflict. These students indicated that they disliked making friends with Americans and they did not spend most of their free time with non-Chinese foreign students.

In the third group of socially related adjustment problems (items 28, 20, 19 and 29), like the first, dealt with cultural associations between Chinese and American students. In group three each item had a higher mean and larger standard deviation because Chinese students strongly agreed that they spend most of their free time with Americans. Most of the Chinese students expressed their intention to live similarly to their American friends. In contrast, some Chinese students thought their life style in the United States was similar to a Chinese life

style. Some Chinese students slightly disagreed that they experienced culture shock.

In the fourth group (items 35, 33, and 34) most Chinese students slightly disagreed that they had emotional problems and a feeling of homesickness. Group four had a lower mean and larger standard deviation. The item most disagreed with was that loneliness during the weekends and on holidays was a problem. Most Chinese students did not think they were lonely during the weekends and holidays, but in this group, responses indicated that a range of attitudes existed toward these statements.

Table 2

Social Adjustment Problems

	Items	M	SD
26.	I spend most of my free time with Chinese.	4.03	.94
31.	I am identified with the Chinese culture.	4.01	.84
28.	I spend most of my free time with American friends and/or students.	3.77	.99
25.	I experience a cultural gap when I communicate with Americans.	3.47	.91
20.	I try to live similarly to my American friends.	3.43	.97
19.	My life style in America is similar to a Chinese life style.	3.28	1.13
22.	I have many American friends.	3.25	.93

32.	I feel isolated from American society.	2.89	.90
29.	I have experienced culture shock.	2.82	1.02
24.	I like American cultural activities.	2.69	.87
35.	I have emotional problems which sometimes prevent me from concentrating on my academic work.	2.61	1.18
33.	I often feel homesick.	2.60	1.07
23.	I like intercultural activities.	2.58	.91
30.	I have role conflicts in which I tend to lose my past identity.	2.33	.93
21.	I like making friends with Americans.	2.28	.82
27.	I spend most of my free time with non-Chinese foreign students.	2.18	.92
34.	I feel very lonely during weekends and holidays.	2.17	1.00

Note. 1-strongly disagree; 5-strongly agree.

M-Mean; SD-Standard Deviation.

Problem Solving Strategy

The last three items (37, 38, and 36) concerned problem solving strategies. Table 3 lists the mean and standard deviation of these three items (see Table 3).

Of the three strategy options provided these Chinese students tended to seek help from their compatriots. However, this item had the largest standard deviation which implies students had different attitudes toward this item. Secondly, they may have sought help from Americans, but the results indicated they slightly disagreed with this

statement. A major consensus among the students is that they strongly disliked seeking help from the university counseling service for their personal adjustment problems.

Table 3

Problem Solving Strategy

Items	M	SD
37. I seek help from Taiwan Chinese friends if I have related social/ academic problems.	3.38	1.17
38. I seek help from American friends and/or students if I have related social/academic problems.	2.56	1.06
36. I use the counseling center for help.	1.72	.90

Note. 1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree.

M=Mean; SD=Standard Deviation.

Questionnaire Result: Non-Likert Scale

The second part of the survey was "selecting three most stressful factors." The results indicated that Chinese students thought language deficiency, academic pressure and job problems (after graduation) were the most stressful factors to them. The total frequency was 350. Table 4 provides the frequency and percentile rates of the fourteen factors.

Language deficiency, which had 83 votes and 23.6%, was ranked the most stressful among these fourteen factors. Hence, it could be

concluded that English language deficiency disturbed these students very much. Academic pressure to achieve placed second, which had 60 votes and 17%. Chinese students worried about their studies and felt pressure from the stress of their academic work. The third most stressful factor was job problems after graduation, which had 44 votes and 12.5%. This seems to be an important concern to most Chinese students.

The less stressful factors were cultural adjustment, dating problems, and political problems.

Table 4

The Stressful Factors in Rank Order

Stressful Factors	Frequency	Percentage
1. Language deficiency	83	23.6
2. Academic pressure	60	17.0
3. Job problems (after graduation)	44	12.5
4. Financial problems	43	12.2
5. Emotional problems	26	7.4
6. Racial discrimination	25	7.1
7. Social isolation	20	5.7
8. Family expectation	15	4.3
9. Homesickness	13	3.7
10. Cultural adjustment problems	8	2.2
11. Dating problems	8	2.2

12. Health problems	8	2.2
13. Political problems	6	1.7
14. Others (<u>teaching assignment</u>)	1	.2

Note. 350 for total frequency.

Only six respondents answered the final open-ended question. Two of them mentioned academic problems and the others disclosed their personal, stressful feelings toward the university experience. The data were not representative of most Chinese students because the answering rate of this question was too small, therefore, these data were not used.

Reliability

The reliability discussion of this questionnaire has been divided into three parts: (1) the academic attitudes toward English difficulties and learning; (2) Chinese students, subculture context; and (3) pro-American attitudes. The reliability coefficients (Krombach's alpha) were obtained by the SPSS reliability procedure. The reliability coefficient for academic attitudes toward English language difficulties and learning, comprised of items one to eighteen was .85. The reliability coefficient of the second part of the Chinese-oriented subculture, which included items 19, 25, 26, 29-35, was .63. The third part of this survey consisted of pro-American attitudes, comprised of 20-24, and 28, the reliability coefficient of this part was .69. Three

item numbers 27, 36, and 38, did not fit into these three categories, so, they were not examined for reliability.

Summary

The primary result of the academic problem was that most Chinese students did not have language problems although it still was the most stressful factor. Secondly, when experiencing social problems they strongly identified with their Chinese culture and keep a close contact with their Chinese group.

Furthermore, the academic problem under consideration has been whether or not Chinese university students see English language proficiency as critical to academic success. The assumption, throughout, has been that these students view English language proficiency as essential to academic success and without it, failure is eminent. The data from "Academic Adjustment Problems: Group II and III" dispel this assumption because proficiency is a boon to academic success, they did not feel that their own level of functioning, whatever it was, was insufficient enough to constitute a problems. Their solution was simply to work harder and devote more time to achieving the level of excellence which they expected of themselves. Ironically, the greater stress came from the need for academic success, itself (Group I). Despite this intense pressure, the Chinese students remained confident in their own ability to succeed and were satisfied with whatever career choices each had made.

In addition, the social problem was that the Chinese university students experienced significant emotional stress due to cultural

alienation. Here, too, the data demonstrate quite the opposite. Groups I, II, and III of Socially Related Adjustment Problems dealt with the cultural associations between Chinese and American students and the attitudes Chinese students held toward American culture. Chinese students were divided in their cultural associations. Some Chinese students preferred to function within the confines of their own society, not associating with American students except in the most superficial ways. Other Chinese students adopted American ways almost exclusively, while a third group interacted regularly with American students, but maintained a private Chinese lifestyle. Group II identified those Chinese students who were beyond indifference to American culture, rejecting American ways because they simply did not like them. These students actively sought to maintain their Chinese lifestyle and shunned association with American students. Group IV of Socially Related Adjustment Problems dealt with the consequences of these cultural choices by asking the Chinese students if they experienced emotional problems, especially loneliness or homesickness. Regardless of the lifestyle preference, the Chinese students denied that either loneliness or homesickness were problems for them.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this chapter summarizes all the research and includes some suggestions for further study. This final chapter includes a summary, a conclusion, and recommendations. The summary recalls the methods and procedures of this research. The statistical analysis and the interpretation of the results will be in the conclusion. The recommendations provide suggestions for further study in this field.

Summary

This survey was designed to investigate Chinese students' attitudes toward academic and socially related adjustment problems in the Iowa Regent Universities. The sample consisted of 146 students from the Regents Universities of Iowa. The instrument of this survey was a questionnaire comprised of 38 items of utilizing the Likert scale. It included two major parts: academic problems and socially-related adjustment problems; and a final part which dealt with problem solving strategies.

The reliability of the socially related adjustment scale was divided into two sections: first, the Chinese oriented attitudes which demonstrated .63, and second, the pro-American attitudes which demonstrated .69 internal reliability. The estimate of internal reliability in the academic section was .85. Selecting three stressful factors and one open-ended question were discussed. The result was

analyzed by the SPSS computer program. The descriptive statistics used were means, standard deviations, frequencies, percentiles, medians and modes which were selected to interpret the results.

The subjects included both graduate and undergraduate students divided almost two-to-one, male to female who were primarily from twenty to thirty years of age. The Chinese students studied in America on average, for about two and one-half years. Although the area of study ranged from science and engineering to art, humanities, and education, over sixty percent of the students surveyed majored in science or engineering. The students had an earned a mean GPA of 3.52 with a mean TOEFL score of 556.

Conclusion

The results indicate following four conclusions:

1. Chinese students are excellent students. They are willing and anxious to learn in spite of the discomfort of cross-cultural academic work. They are willing to spend extra time to learn and have an abundance of confidence when it comes to their studies. However, these students encounter English language problems as most foreign students do, making writing and speaking a considerable burden for them. To compensate for their language shortcomings, they must work longer and harder, but language problems do not prevent them from achieving their academic goals. As stated, this survey indicated a high mean GPA which implies the talent and dedication of the students as a whole.

2. Chinese students still maintain their own social clique when in the university setting. It is an adjustment tool of sorts. They want

to have a successful academic career and they feel the need to escape the overwhelming stress brought to bear on them by their new living circumstance. They build up their own unique society in which they can maintain their old identity.

3. Chinese students make an effort to understand more about American people and their culture. Chinese students tend to spend more time with Americans than with other foreign students. Their second choice after other Chinese as companions is Americans. Chinese students usually find their experience with Americans rewarding and impressive, but their rigid identification with Chinese culture and customs hampers their understanding of American experiences. Even though Chinese students seek to spend time with Americans, the lack of fluency in English discourages them from striving for strong friendships with their American acquaintances. The Chinese students are very conscious of cultural differences and deficiencies in English. This would apparently account for the contradictory results that is the Chinese tend to spend a great deal of time with Americans, yet they do not develop strong, lasting friendships with Americans. Although Chinese students spend time with Americans and have an interest in experiencing American culture and claim to have many American friends, at some point they hesitate or withdraw somewhat because of cultural differences that they cannot understand or accept and/or because they feel inferior in language usage. In conclusion, Chinese students make an effort to adapt, but encounter obstacles which prevent them from fully enjoying the cross-cultural experiences in which they find themselves.

4. In the past, research literature shows that Chinese students studying in America felt lonely, homesick and were emotionally disturbed at times. Under these circumstances such a response would be understandable. However, although the living circumstances have not changed much for Chinese students over the last fifteen years, the theme of loneliness, homesickness and emotional problems was almost non-existent in the survey results. It appears as though Chinese students of the eighties are much happier during their matriculation than their predecessors of the seventies.

Recommendations

As a result of this research three related areas of interest are recommended for further study.

1. When conducting Chinese students' adjustment survey research, it is best to use the Chinese language to write the survey questionnaire. Upon finding the survey questions written in Chinese, students are predisposed to answer the questionnaire. Some subtle personal feelings about the stressful situation are difficult to express in a second language.

2. A comparison between mathematics oriented majors and non-mathematics oriented majors would be a good topic for further study to help determine Chinese students academic adjustment problems. Different intensity of English language application contributes to their different English language problems. The result indicated that these students did not have English problems which was contrary to the author's assumption. It could be that the majority of respondents were

mathematic-oriented majors for whom English is not a major learning tool. The number of non-mathematics oriented major respondents in this survey was too small to make a valid comparison at this time.

Therefore, it would seem that effect of English proficiency on student adjustment of mathematic vs non-mathematic majors would be a productive study.

3. Research exploration into the adjustment problems of Chinese undergraduate students compared to graduate students would be beneficial. Recently, the Taiwan government decided to open opportunities for high school graduates to study abroad thus completing their higher education. In the near future, there will be thousands of high school graduates from Taiwan enrolling in United States universities or colleges. Since the majority of respondents to this survey sample are graduate students (90%), the results of these research data may or may not accurately represent the academic and social adjustments problems of the new tide of undergraduate students.

From the perspective of research methodology, these two suggestions for further research are suggested for Chinese students studying in the United States:

1. A broader sample size should be surveyed. A wider representation of several states would provide more accurate data than a narrow regional, sampling.

2. Some statements in this questionnaire need to be more definitively described. For example, item 22, "I have many American friends" needs to be reworded. If the researcher makes it more specific such as, "I have five close friendships with Americans", it would reduce

the respondent's confusion about how many is "many". Five is more definitive so the responses would be more accurate. This would facilitate the research analysis by being more specific.

Finally, further study needs to explore the acculturation of Chinese students studying in the United States. Research into the pattern and degree of their adjustment and assimilation in the host society would provide information needed to better understand international education.

Appendix:

The QuestionnaireLikert Scale

The following statements describe possible (stressful) situations. There are five categories: strongly agree (A), agree (B), neutral (C), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (E). For each statement below please choose one of the above choices and fill in the proper space on the computer answer sheet with a #2 pencil.

1. I have strong academic pressures.
2. I lack confidence to complete my degree.
3. I dislike my present area of study (curriculum).
4. I have difficulties in expressing myself orally.
5. I have difficulties with writing assignments.
6. I use a Chinese thinking style to write.
7. I have difficulties in listening to lectures.
8. I have difficulties in communicating with Americans.
9. I have a hard time completing my reading assignments.
10. I have difficulties in taking exams because of English language problems.
11. I feel quite nervous about taking examinations.
12. If I had better English ability, I would do better in my academic work.
13. I lack enough time to study.
14. I spend most of my week days studying for my classes.
15. I dislike my academic adviser.

16. I feel uneasy with my department faculty.
17. I study during weekends; therefore, I lack enough time to socialize with my friends.
18. I spend extra time studying for my classes.
19. My life style in American is similar to a Chinese life style.
20. I try to live similarly to my American friends.
21. I like making friends with Americans.
22. I have many American friends.
23. I like intercultural activities.
24. I like American cultural activities.
25. I experience a cultural gap when I communicate with Americans.
26. I spend most of my free time with Chinese.
27. I spend most of my free time with non-Chinese foreign students.
28. I spend most of my free time with American friends and or students.
29. I have experienced culture shock.
30. I have role conflicts in which I tend to lose my past identity.
31. I am identified with the Chinese culture.
32. I feel isolated from American society.
33. I often feel homesick.
34. I feel very lonely during weekends and holidays.
35. I have emotional problems which sometimes prevent me from concentrating on my academic work.
36. I use the counseling center for help.
37. I seek help from Taiwan Chinese friends if I have related social/academic problems.

38. I seek help from American friends and /or students if I have related social/ academic problems.

Non-Likert Scale

Please fill in the space on the computer sheet under item A for any 3 of the following situations which have been stressful for you!

39. Language deficiency.
40. Financial problems.
41. Social isolation.
42. Academic pressure.
43. Health problems.
44. Dating problems.
45. Family expectation.
46. Political problems.
47. Cultural adjustment problems.
48. Homesickness.
49. Racial discrimination.
50. Emotional problems.
51. Job problems (after graduation).
52. Other _____ (please name it).
53. Please describe a university related experience which was stressful in the space below. (If you do not have such an experience leave this question out!)

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