A HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY INTO THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF TAIWANESE PARACHUTE STUDENTS

By

Benjamin T. OuYang

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Advisory Committee:
Professor Francine Hultgren, Chair and Advisor
Associate Professor Jing Lin
Ms. Su-Chen Mao
Associate Professor Marylu McEwen
Dr. Maria del Carmen Torres-Queral

ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: A HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY INTO THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF TAIWANESE PARACHUTE STUDENTS.

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Department of Education Policy and Leadership

The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of Taiwanese parachute students, so named because of their being sent to study in the United States, frequently unaccompanied by their parents. Significant themes are revealed through hermeneutic phenomenological methodology and developed using the powerful metaphor of landing. Seven parachute students took part in several in-depth conversations with the researcher about their experiences living in the States, immersed in the English language and the American culture. Their stories are reflective accounts, which when coupled with literary and philosophic sources, reveal the essence of this experience of living in a foreign land.

Voiced by teenage and young adult parachute students, the metaphor of landing as shown in their search for establishing a home and belonging, is the slate for the writing of this work's main themes. The research opens up to a deeper understanding of this phenomenon in such themes as foreignness, landing and surveying the area; lost in the language; homesickness; and trying to establish friendships.

Through the unique voice of the parachute students, the knowledge created from within these themes illuminates new understandings and insights for educators. Through

this research we come to know ways in which various educational venues of student life can serve as a forum for the perspectives of ESOL students and educators, as well as encouraging parental support for parachute students. Equally important, we learn the values of belonging and of home, two aspects of life so often taken for granted.

This work is also a personal accounting of the lived experience of the researcher who went to Taiwan for ten months to experience being immersed in the Chinese culture and language. In this journey of opening up the lived experiences of the Taiwanese parachute students, the researcher also came to know himself and the culture he once abandoned. His experiences bring the parachute students' meaning to further depth. They came to a new way of understanding themselves and their meaning of home which, in turn, makes them ambassadors for appreciating diversity and increasing multiculturalism in the educational field, and in the global society.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the parachute student with whom I fell in love. She is the better half of me, far prettier and smarter than I. Behind every man, there is a great woman. Jia-Shieu has been my inspiration, my love, and my support throughout this entire doctoral journey. Making this journey complete, I owe her much thanks. Truly, I am a blessed and a lucky man. My greatest honor and title in this world is to be her husband.

I also dedicate this work to my daughter, Ling Ling. So many times, I have come home from studying seeking to hold her, as her very presence was of comfort to me. And as I embraced and held her, sugars and spices would sprinkle all over me, giving me new strength. Daddy is done writing this paper Ling Ling, we will play much more now.

To my father and to my late mother, I also dedicate this work. My father is my hero, my role model, and many times my inspiration. I have dreamed many times of presenting this paper to him. He first planted in my heart the idea to earn a doctorate. He gave me both his name, and part of his greatness within him. I am forever grateful for his character and integrity.

Finally, I dedicate this work to Mr. and Mrs. Wen Hua Lee, my in-laws. Not only have they shared with me the Taiwanese culture, but also much about life and appreciating diversity. They have helped me to accept the Chinese culture, rather than run from it. I am proud to be their American son-in-law and I will always be grateful for them allowing me to wed their daughter.

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This journey would not have been possible if it were not for the support of many friends and family members. Their kindness helped me to travel with the parachute students on their journey of self-discovery, and in my journey for the search for knowledge. Without acknowledging those individuals who assisted me in this process, this dissertation would not be complete.

My sincere appreciation goes to my committee members: Jing Lin, Su-Chen Mao, Marylu McEwen, and Maria del Carmen Torres-Queral. Their thoughful enthusiasm, genuine interest, and insightful comments helped shape this effort into a scholarly work. I am honored to have their names on my dissertation.

I also want to thank the courage and support of my participants. Their generosity and enthusiasm in sharing their lives with me made this dissertation possible and authentic. Every parachute student was generous with their time and inspired me with hours of endless stories. Their compassion for my thirst to understand their experiences, elevated this dissertation to greater levels of insight and further depths of understanding.

To all the nuns and priests who would not let me quit, I am most grateful. To the Oblates, Franciscans, Opus Dei, Paulists, and Holy Family religious order, and to all the lay people who somehow knew that by earning a doctorate I could somehow help the message of the poor and needy be heard, I thank you. You have encouraged me to move forward in life, and helped me to dance with the divine. We all work for the same boss, and it has been a pleasure having Him work through you.

I wish to thank all the members of Our Lady of China. Patiently, they endured my struggle through the Chinese language, with my poor control of the tones and heavy

American accent, and in return, gave me the Chinese poems, idioms and expressions to compliment this study. Their knowledge of the Chinese language and culture compliment the opening of the parachute students' phenomenon.

Finally, I wish to thank my Advisor and Chair, Francine Hultgren. She has seen me cry, be frustrated terribly as I searched for meaning, and depressed as I was filled with doubt wondering if I could go on. However, she never let me quit, and encouraged me onward while not compromising her standards of excellence nor her belief in me. She has had the patience of a saint, the directional skills of a gifted counselor, and the support and gentle look of a mother.

Dr. Hultgren has been not only an incredible Advisor and Chair, she has been the best teacher that I have ever had. She has allowed me to taste the true joy of learning by not allowing me to hide from the struggles that accompany that journey, but rather let me work through them. And as I searched for phenomenological and Hultgren nods, I have seen how high I can fly in the joy of knowledge and understanding. Without her, I do not see how I could have survived this dissertation journey. I have been blessed with the one true dream that every doctoral student hopes for, a supportive and caring Chair. I will miss Dr. Hultgren, her guiding spirit, her warm embrace, and to my surprise, even her gentle discipline. It has been my pleasure working with her and I bow to the wisdom within her. Always, she will have a special place in my heart.

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I'VE LANDED--WHAT LAND AM I ON?
TURNING TO THE PHENOMENON OF PARACHUTE STUDENTS

> "How do you say this?" "What does this mean?" "Can you repeat what you have said?" These are some of the questions that I asked several times a day since I moved from Taiwan to the United States in the winter of 1983. Not knowing a word of English, I was lost in the crowded hallways and in all of my classes. With no friends to depend on, I was lonely and confused. "I want to go home!" I thought to myself, "I want to be with the people I know and to live in familiar surroundings! Oh, how I miss the school uniforms and going to school on Saturdays." Looking back, I am still amazed with how I have adapted to the American way of life. No longer do I feel alienated. I have finally come out of my shell and am ready to take on new challenges.
> (Lee, the Broadneck Senior High Literary Magazine, 1989, p. 19)

These are the words of a former parachute student, one of thousands of Taiwanese students who are literally "dropped" in the States to complete their compulsory education. The Taiwan government nicknamed these students who study abroad "The Taiwanese Parachute Students." These students attend school with limited English backgrounds, and many times, they are left alone in the States without family members for extended periods of time. As a high school counselor, I have been called by this phenomenon as I observe first hand what students experience in traversing this foreign land.

Loneliness, frustration, and confusion are evident in the words of the homesick parachute student quoted above, having experienced the crossing from one culture to another without family and friends for support. These students have to overcome not only a cultural barrier, but a communication barrier in that when they arrive, they have an inability to express and understand a completely foreign language. Also, one must not forget as I have forgotten numerous times, that these students face tremendous difficulties and traumatic experiences, not as graduate students or as adults, but as children.

More and more Taiwanese parachute students are being dropped off in the States to study. Although Taiwan's educational program is considered outstanding, many Taiwanese parents would rather have their children attend school in the States. From 1983 to 1993, more than 24,000 primary students and over 13,000 secondary students left Taiwan to attend school in the United States. The majority of these students remain in the United States until the completion of their undergraduate and graduate studies (R.O.C. Yearbook, 1995). According to the Taiwan embassy in Washington, D.C., the trend for parachute kids to attend school in the States continues to rise. More Taiwanese parachute students are coming to the States to study after the United States switched diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China. Also, in 1987 the Supreme Court ruled that public education could not be denied to illegal immigrants (Kao, 2000).

The parachute students' families are enticed by these opportunities in the States as well as concerned about the difficulties in Taiwan. Under the island's competitive education system, only about one-fourth of junior high students are admitted into high schools. And Taiwan's military service law requires every young man to serve two years in the armed forces after his eighteenth birthday (R.O. C. Yearbook, 2000). The constant threat of Taiwan going to war with China is even more reason why parents from Taiwan choose to send their children overseas.

The original parachute students were not from Taiwan or China. They were American born Chinese whose parents were afraid of their children losing the Chinese culture and language. In a personal conversation with Mr. Wing (2001), he shares that his parents had him live in China with relatives for one year, and that many of his Chinese friends went back to the mainland for extended periods of time. George Wu (2003)

shares that at the age of eight, his parents required that he live in China with relatives. His parents were comfortable knowing that George would be taken care of by a village of family members. George only knows of one other student whose parents required that he live in China as a youth.

The trend for the Taiwanese parachute students is different than what it was ten years ago. In the past, parents would accompany their children to the States and make sure that they were safe and financially secure before leaving their child alone, or with relatives. The Taiwanese government calls these parents the astronaut parents (Fu, 1994). More recently, one parent accompanies their parachute student overseas while the other parent stays in Taiwan financially supporting the family. As soon as the parachute student is ready for college, the parent who stays in the States usually returns home to Taiwan. This trend may be the result of an increasing number of concerns regarding parachute students who have become at-risk (Kao, 2002).

I wonder, what is it like for Taiwanese students, known as parachute students, to be dropped off in the United States to study? How do they understand the ground upon which they are dropped? What does it mean to arrive in such a way? Do they pull their own ripcord? Or is this life support cord ripped from them? After they land, do they hide their parachute to get back to their homeland? Or do they throw away their parachutes, content after their arrival?

The parachute students travel half way around the world to a completely foreign land, to learn a different country's curriculum, language, and values. They must learn a new language that is foreign to their own, and encounter values that may not be similar to theirs. There is limited literature available regarding the experiences of these parachute

students (Fu, 1990). The government of Taiwan is aware of where these students are landing in the States and why they continue to come to America; however, they are not examining these students' personal experiences after they land in the States. The focus of my study, then, is to uncover what the meaning of this experience is like for Taiwanese "parachute" students in order to provide insights about what can be done to enrich their study here in this foreign land. I turn first to my experience in a foreign land to step inside the phenomenon I am seeking to understand.

My Lived Experience Landing in Foreign Soil: A Reflection on the Past

The first time I visited Taiwan, I had just spent a week and a half in Hong Kong with luxurious accommodations. My friends and I had our own maid and were living in a five star hotel. Everywhere I went in Hong Kong, people spoke to us in English. I had no problems adjusting. After a week in Hong Kong, I was able to travel around the island with ease, take public transportation wherever I wanted to go, and order whatever foods I wanted, anytime during the day or night. If I wanted American or Chinese food, I knew where to get it, and if I was being cheated or being treated disrespectfully by the locals, I knew it and I let the locals know it.

On the other hand, as soon as I stepped off the plane in Taiwan on my first visit, I felt immediate culture shock. I did not know where to pick up my luggage. Instructions, posted or spoken, were in Chinese. The first time I tried to order food, I couldn't because I was unable to read the menu. Once I tried to order a coke, and the waitress asked if I wanted a small, medium or large coke. I stood there frozen, terrified because I did not understand what she had said. As a grown adult, I was completely dependent upon my future wife. I did not know which bathroom was male or female. I did not know how to

use the public phone. I was afraid of people talking to me and was terrified if my future wife and I got separated moving on and off the bus. I was extremely intimidated and scared by these new experiences. As an adult feeling traumatized by these experiences, I wonder how scared and terrified the children must be who come from Taiwan--particularly when they are "dropped" off with few supports for grounding.

The Initial Call and the Return to Taiwan

The first time I went to Taiwan, I went as a tourist. I was in and out of there in less than ten days. The second time I went to Taiwan, I went as a student. In August 1997, I took a leave of absence from Montgomery County Public Schools and traveled to Taiwan for nine months to study Chinese. I enrolled at Shi Da University, Taiwan's famous Chinese language Institute, and I immersed myself in the Chinese language and culture of Taiwan. Besides the death of my mother, and perhaps the writing of this dissertation as well as the entire doctoral process, this was the most difficult experience of my entire life.

I went to Taiwan to study Chinese for many reasons. First, as a Chinese American I wanted to learn Chinese so I could teach and speak Chinese to my future children. I believe bilingualism is a special gift and I want my children to have that gift and experience so they can communicate linguistically with their grandparents or other relatives. I do not want them to experience language barriers like I experienced with my in-laws and grandparents. I want them to be exposed to and familiar with the completely different and unique world made possible through the Chinese language. By being able to communicate in Chinese, the opportunities are endless for being present to that culture with family, international students, and over one billion Chinese. By learning Chinese,

what a tremendous gift they will have to be able to walk the streets of Taiwan or China and understand what is being communicated around them. What a tremendous gift it will be for them to walk into any Chinese store and be able to order whatever they want to order and to be able to converse and bargain with the owner. What a tremendous gift it will be for them to converse with members from the older generation concerning what China and Taiwan were like before, and to converse with individuals from their generation who may look like them, but have very different and diverse backgrounds. To be bilingual is to open a whole new world of opportunities, conversations, and experiences with others.

Personally, I knew that if I could break down the language barriers that I have with my in-laws, I could break down other barriers that I encounter with them. When I first started dating my wife, Jia-Shieu, my in-laws had four arguments against me: I was not Taiwanese; I was not a businessman; I was a Roman Catholic; and worst of all, I did not speak Chinese. Now, they only have three arguments against me. By learning Chinese, I have been able to become closer to them, and they have begun to accept me. Now, I am able to understand what they are saying about me. Now I am able to sit down at a dinner table and not only enjoy the cuisine, but I can enjoy the conversation. Now when they have concerns about the family or the extended family, I can better contribute in expressing those same concerns. But my interest in the language goes beyond the family.

Merleau-Ponty (1962/1998) in Phenomenology of Perception, shares that "Language is an external accompaniment of thought" (p. 177). "Every language conveys its own teaching and carries its meaning into the listener's mind" (p. 179). Gadamer

(1960/1989) in Truth and Method believes that "Language is the medium in which substantive understanding and agreement takes place between two people"(p. 383). By studying the Chinese language, I am better able to get into the minds and understand the thoughts of the Taiwanese parachute students. I am better able to understand and define the essence of their lived experiences. By knowing Chinese, I can cut through much more than the language barriers. I am able to make a bond, establish a pack, and offer an environment for the Taiwanese parachute students to be more willing to share their lived experiences. I want the Taiwanese parachute students to feel that we understand each other.

Finally, in my attempt to understand the Taiwanese parachute students better, I believed that it would be very helpful to visit where my students came from. By studying the customs, traditions, values, and language, I am better equipped to understand, communicate, and experience what the Taiwanese parachute students experience. Just as the Taiwanese parachute students come to the States to study, I wanted to be an American parachute student going to Taiwan to study. By landing in a completely foreign land to study a completely foreign language like they do, I believe I am in a better position to relate to their lived experiences. Thus, when the Taiwanese parachute students share what it is like to arrive in a foreign land for the first time, I want to be able to say, "I've been there." When a Taiwanese parachute student shares how scared he/she feels when lost on public transportation, I want to be able to know, genuinely, what it is like to be lost in this new place. And when a Taiwanese parachute student explains what it is like to go to a foreign school for the first time, not knowing the language or the culture, I can

re-member with them how sad and lonely I felt on my first day at the Taipei Language Institute.

In Edward Casey's book Getting Back into Place, he shares that "Place serves as the condition of all existing things. This means far from being merely locatory or situational, place belongs to the very concept of existence" (Casey, 1993, p. 15). After their landing, what kind of existence do the Taiwanese parachute students have? What kind of effect is place having on them? What kind of dwelling place do they stay in? In what ways do they feel out of place or in their proper place? Will they ever feel they are in a safe place? How can they get back into place when they have never been in place?

Casey (1993) goes further to connect place with culture: "It is in the mediation of culture that places gain historical depth. We might even say that culture is the third dimension of places"(pp. 31-32). Wu (1991) states that "When foreigners want to understand some problems of adult life in the host culture, they realize that they first have to know how the young are brought up in that culture" (p. 273). Yet, what is it like to be brought up in both cultures? Does the combination of American and Taiwanese cultures allow the Taiwanese parachute students to feel in place? Do the American and Taiwanese cultures combine within the students or is one culture too much out of place, and thrown away? What dimension of culture assists them through their space and time in America's place?

The Preparation for and "Place" of the Landing: First Experiences in Being Lost

During my nine months in Taiwan, I kept a journal of my experiences in this foreign place to my body, but not my blood. Throughout my dissertation, I share my experiences as they relate to the experiences of the Taiwanese parachute students. As I

begin this journey, I welcome the reader to begin with me as I share my first experiences going to Taiwan as a student.

> Jia-Shieu and I were very tired after spending nine hours straight packing our valuables. I keep on wondering what material we forgot to pack. We are exhausted and yet excited that we are finally doing this unique journey. I said final good-byes to our cat. She knew something was up because of all the different bags, but I don't think she was aware that we would be gone for nine months. I gave the keys for our town house to our new tenant, Anthony. Kwan, a good friend, drove us to the airport. It was nice being surrounded by such good friends.
>
> We had just spent four days at the East Coast Chinese Catholic Youth Conference and said good-bye to our youth group kids, all sixty of them. So, with few hours of sleep and emotional good bye's, Jia-Shieu and I departed for Taiwan.
>
> Our trip to New York City was uneventful. However, as soon as we entered into the China Airlines terminal, I entered a completely different atmosphere. Practically everyone in the airport was Chinese. I remember two stand up posters picturing Chinese airline stewardesses. I thought to myself, "Even the posters have Asian faces." Was I in Taiwan already? In addition, I noticed the non-Asian faces more than the Asian faces. Growing up in the States as a minority, one notices that there are other Asian faces around. One feels safe when there are other Asians around. However, in the China Airlines terminal, I noticed the non-Asian faces more. I identified more with the non-Asian faces. Perhaps because even though I was surrounded by Asians, I felt like a minority. Most of the people in the airport were speaking fluent Mandarin or Cantonese. I was hoping that perhaps there were other American born Chinese around to keep me company.
>
> To my surprise, my brother met us at the airport. It was great seeing him and I knew he was the last family member on my side that I would see for nine months. Being a doctor, he gave me all this medicine. He said that I would need it being overseas. Already, I had the beginning stages of a cold sore. He left as soon as we started to board the plane. It was great seeing a family member. We boarded the plane at twelve midnight. (Monday August 25th, 1997)

What dimension of time and space had I entered? Was I entering the Twilight Zone? Or was I struggling between what Wu describes in the twilight between the darkness of being "foreign" and the light of being "home" (Wu, 1991, p. 268)? I was certainly not in my zone; I was in a fog or in a daze. I had not left American soil and I was already out of

place. Would I always feel so out of place? Do the Taiwanese parachute students feel so out of place, so displaced? What twilight zone do they believe they are in? What helps them to get in place?

It was so special seeing my brother. Not only because I had not seen him in a long time, but because he would be the last OuYang I would see for quite some time. In Diane Connelly's book, All Sickness is Homesickness, she shares, "I see that as one family member arrives, she becomes the occasion of arrival for the entire family. She ushers them all home. And they too act as a life support for everyone around them" (Connelly, 1993, p. 34). My brother felt like a life support for me. Not because he gave me so much medicine, but because it felt like he was saying that the family was supporting what I was doing. It was a taste of home and family, before I was leaving home and family. What are the life supports for the Taiwanese parachute students? How do their families support them? What helps them to taste home again?

> On the plane, I noticed that the China Airlines stewardesses all wore the exact same thing. They boarded the plane with the same kind of luggage. Don't they get confused which luggage was theirs?
>
> The stewardesses gave us slippers to wear. I was never given a pair of slippers to wear on an American airline. It did feel more comfortable not having to wear my shoes. I was concerned that others would have foot odor. The food was a lot better than any American airline food I had eaten. We had a midnight snack that consisted of rice with beef and every meal had fruit that tasted like it wasn't processed. I began to start drinking pepto-bismol to make sure I didn't get an upset stomach. I avoided eating any of the salads. I heard that salads can really disturb your stomach.
>
> I began to practice my Chinese with the airline stewardesses. Jia-Shieu was determined that I would not hide behind her using her for an interpreter and thus, not practice my Chinese. During one meal, I asked for wine with my meal. However, I thought the stewardess said that I had to pay for it. She probably misunderstood me thinking that I wanted to buy a bottle. I didn't want to pay for the bottle because I knew it would be expensive. So I told her no thank you when in reality, a glass of wine would have been free. Thus, due to my limited language skills, I missed out on a golden opportunity to have a glass of wine.

> We stopped at Anchorage to refuel. They made us disembark from the plane. So, Jia-Shieu and I left the plane and as soon as we entered the terminal, we noticed that the air stunk of smoke. Everyone was lighting up. I had forgotten how so many Asians love to smoke. We tried to find a corner of the terminal that had a non-smoking section, but we could not find one. My eyes were getting irritated and my cold sore began to hurt. There were some very large duty free shops. Cigarettes were the hot ticket item as well as liquor. We boarded the plane happily into a smoke free environment.
>
> Once our plane left the runway, we had an additional nine hours to go. What an exhausting trip especially after we attended the East Coast Conference. They gave us new slippers to wear and Jia-Shieu and I began to sleep very well. We woke up when they started showing a Jackie Chan movie. I was excited because I like Jackie Chan. However, when they started the movie, I soon figured out that the movie was in Chinese. They had English subtitles, but I could not read them. It was so frustrating trying to read the English subtitles and so I unhooked the earphones. I thought to myself, "Why are you listening to the movie when it is in Chinese? I don't understand it, so why am I listening to it? Will I be able to understand a movie in Chinese when I come back from this journey?"
>
> Before we landed, the stewardesses went around the plane and were selling, of course, cigarettes. People were buying them left and right. The tobacco companies may have some difficulties in the States with some legal issues. However, in the Far East, they are murdering people. It made me very mad. (Tuesday, August 26th)

Was I going to get murdered in Taiwan? Maybe not physically, but perhaps emotionally or educationally? In what ways do the Taiwanese parachute students believe that they are going to get murdered? What will make them think that they are going to die? Also, in Taiwan was I going to hit someone physically for smoking in my face? Who or what gets in the Taiwanese parachute students' faces? What makes them lose face?

I lost a chance for a glass of wine; what other chances would I lose in Taiwan? Wu states that as a foreigner, the "Tailored fit relationship between people's actions and their situations no longer exists" (Wu, 1991, p. 269). On the plane before I even arrived in Taiwan, I did not feel as if I fit in. I did not feel fit. Nothing seemed to fit. Not only was I in the twilight zone, I was not in my comfort zone. Each situation felt

uncomfortable, unfamiliar, and un-welcoming. In what ways do the Taiwanese parachute students feel uncomfortable, unfamiliar, and unwelcomed? In what ways have they lost their tailor who fits their actions with their situations? By not fitting in, what other chances do they lose? What chances do they take? By chance, what do they stumble over or find?

> We arrived in Taiwan at six o'clock in the morning. I did not feel tired and we had no problems going through customs. Jia-Shieu's sister, her husband, and her father came and picked us up. We had a total of eight bags. I was wondering why we had so many bags. Later, I realized that Jia-Shieu had packed a lot of clothes. As we went through the airport doors, I immediately felt a rush of humidity hit our faces. What tremendous heat and it was only six in the morning! I thought Maryland was hot! As we were putting our bags in the car, I told her father to be careful with one particular bag because it contained our lap top computer. However, instead of saying computer, I said, "Electric urinator." Everybody started laughing. The tones are so important in Chinese and I had mixed up my tones. Here I am, half way around the world, and minutes after I land in Taiwan, I put my foot in my mouth.
>
> Jia-Shieu and her father drove in one car and Pei-Yu, her sister, Alex, Pei-Yu's husband, and I drove in the other car. I noticed again how hot and humid it was. Maryland can get hot and humid, but nothing like I experienced in Taiwan. As we were driving to my new home after exiting off the highway, Alex got lost. He had lived in Taiwan his whole life, but still got lost. I was thinking to myself, if he gets lost in Taiwan and he is a native, what is going to happen to me and I don't even speak the language. Also, we almost got into a car accident. Taipei is very difficult to drive in. No one follows the driving rules and the majority of people drive motorcycles. They weave in and out of the roads and onto the sidewalks. It didn't surprise me as much since this was the second time I have been to Taiwan. The first time I visited Taiwan I was afraid to cross the street.
>
> When we finally arrived at the building where I would be staying, Jia-Shieu was standing outside. Accidentally, she locked herself outside of our apartment after she had put all of our bags in the apartment. It was very frustrating being locked out. I was just dying for a shower after a twenty hour plane trip and Jia-Shieu locked us outside. We waited for the locksmith to come in the tropical heat. I was slowly becoming frustrated and drops of perspiration dripped from my arms onto the cement floor.
>
> After an hour, we were able to enter into our apartment. It was smaller than the size of my college apartment. It was very nice, but for a three hundred thousand US dollar apartment, I thought it would be a lot nicer. We had a very small living room, a seven by six foot dining room, a

guest bedroom, a bathroom, a kitchen and a master bedroom. We were very spoiled by Taiwanese standards. There was no carpeting because Taiwan is so humid, thus the carpeting would smell and become moldy. The furniture was beautiful cherry wood furniture with Chinese hand carved art inscribed. Also, we had black leather sofas and beautiful European pictures. The apartment was beautifully decorated. However, in my selfishness and just coming from the heat, I was disappointed because we did not have central air conditioning. Also, I was complaining that everything was so short. I had to bend my head when showering and all the mirrors were placed too short. If I did not bend, in the mirror you saw my body without my head. In Taiwan, being a six feet tall male has its serious disadvantages.

One very distinct difference in the apartment compared to the States was the bed. When I first arrived, I was so tired that when I saw the bed, I wanted to jump on the bed. However, I was soaked with perspiration so I decided to shower first before lying on the bed. So, I showered, dried myself off and then I took a running belly flop onto the bed. I hit the bed and bounced off onto the hard floor in pain. The bed was as hard as the floor. The beds in Taiwan are not soft and padded because there is so much humidity, that an American bed would become damp and moldy. I got up and then slowly lay back down on the bed, only to notice that the bed was not long enough for my body. My ankles and feet were protruding off the bed. I would have to sleep in the fetal position in order to get my whole body on the bed.

We unpacked a little more, and then proceeded to go to the Language Institute. We went to the bus stop, became sweaty again, and then proceeded to get lost. The bus system was confusing even for Jia-Shieu, who once took the bus everyday. We had to go to the bus station first and then take a transfer bus to arrive at the Language Institute. Once we arrived, we walked in the registration office and they told us they were closed for lunch. We would have to come back in two hours. I guess that was the last straw for me in a very frustrating day, but I became very quiet in my frustration and Jia-Shieu was very aware that I was upset. I ate in silence as we had lunch. We went to a casual restaurant and Jia-Shieu ordered for me. There were no American menus or menus in English. Jia-Shieu became upset with my silence and then I shared my frustrations with her. She responded by saying gently that the bus system was very confusing and that it was not fair for me to be so critical. She was right and I realized how ungrateful I was for her. I was slowly learning how spoiled I was in the States, how spoiled I was in Taiwan to have her, and how much more grateful I should be. I apologized.

After lunch, we went back to the Language Institute. There, I tried to register for classes and the receptionist was on the rude side. I kept on thinking about when we register students in the Guidance office back in the States. We always tried to be particularly nice to the ESOL students. It seemed to be easy to empathize with them. Now I was the “ESOL”

> student or more appropriately, a “CHESOL” student, Chinese for speakers of other languages. The receptionist may have been rude because she was registering late students. I swore that when I return to the States, I will remember what it was like to register and not feel particularly welcomed.
>
> We filled out the paperwork and then had to wait for the placement test. There were about thirty other students there who had to take the placement test. They placed us in the audio room and we started the test simultaneously. The first part of the test was listening comprehension. I understood the first five questions, but the answers were in Chinese characters. Even though I knew the right answer, since I don’t read Chinese, I could not answer the questions. I guessed on the first six questions. When I came to the writing part, I put my pencil down, and raised my hand. I asked the proctors if I could leave since I don’t write Chinese. They told me to do something that I didn’t understand and I just sat down again. I had come to Taiwan not being able to read or write, and my comprehension was limited. I walked out of the test room dejected and discouraged. I felt like the test did not represent what I actually knew. I wondered how the parachute students feel coming to the States? Here I was overwhelmed as a thirty year old man, how do the parachute students handle the change being teenagers or preschool students? (Wednesday, August 27th)

I wonder what my father-in-law thought of me as I told him I was carrying an “electrical urinator?” I wonder what other words or phrases I have said wrong? What English words or phrases do the Taiwanese parachute students mispronounce? What words or phrases have they said incorrectly where Americans have laughed at them? How did they feel being laughed at instead of “laughed with?”

Merleau-Ponty (1962/1998) says that he “begins to understand a philosophy by feeling my way into its existential manner, by reproducing the tone and accent of the philosopher” (p. 179). Why was my reproducing the tone and accent of Chinese so bad? By not knowing my tones well, what tone was I establishing? What was I accentuating by my accent? Was I tone deaf as I was listening and then speaking the language? As they begin to understand the English language, what kind of tone do the Taiwanese parachute students believe they are establishing? How do they feel the tone of an American school

as they enter it for the first time? Do they want to keep or get rid of their accent? What do their accents say about them?

As I took the language placement test, I felt that the test was a test of "foreignness." Everything was foreign. I was in a foreign land, taking a foreign test, in a foreign way, with a foreign language. Whether it was reading, writing, listening or speaking, I was completely in the dark of "foreignness." I became a small child in a big, unknown, powerful world. What do the parachute students become? How do they handle the test of foreignness? What helps them not feel so foreign?

Placement Implacement: Homeless Reminders

What was I thinking? Why was I putting myself through so much pain and confusion? There is no place like home. There is no place like home. Why was I so far away from home? Nothing felt like home. I almost did not survive the first day; how was I going to survive one year? I did not parachute safely into Taiwan; I belly flopped into Taiwan hitting not only the bed, but the heat, the language barrier, the cultural barriers, the traffic, the confusion, the inability to read or write, and miscommunication with everyone from my father-in-law to the stewardesses. I was lost way before I was lost at the bus stop. I was lost before I got on the plane! Let me go home. Let me go home! My head may have been over the mirrors in the apartment, but I was way over my head in Taiwan. The pain from saying good-byes to my family and friends was nothing compared to the pain from saying good-byes to American food, communicating with friends, and knowing where I was going and being completely in charge with my life. "I am now sensitive to aspects unappreciated where I was first living"(Casey, 1993, p. 294). Why is it I had to leave home, in order to appreciate home? As Casey states, "It is as if I

had to leave my home to become acquainted with a more capacious world, which in turn allows me to grasp more of the home to which I return" (Casey, 1993, p. 294).

Instead, was I in prison? Was I locked into a situation in which I could not get out? Were my prison walls the language barriers, cultural barriers, and communication barriers that denied me from understanding what was being communicated around me and about me? Jia-Shieu and I were locked out of our apartment, but was I locked out from so much more? Was I locked out from really knowing and understanding what was going on around me? Was I locked out from being able to understand a culture that was a part of my wife? Who would be my locksmith to open the doors for me, eliminating my barriers, my prison walls? Do the parachute students feel as if they are in prison? Do the Taiwanese parachute students belly flop into the United States? Do they feel as lost as I did? Do they always feel like they want to go home?

Do they feel like their lives are not formerly at home? Do they feel so out of place, that they feel displaced? Casey (1993) believes that individuals feel displaced when they are forced away from their homeland and are not able to return. At the same time, they cannot connect or reconnect to their new place. Whether it is the cuisine, the language, the culture, or the landscape, something is different, too different for the individuals to make their new place, their new home. It is as if they feel they are unplaced, not even knowing where they are at sea (Casey, 1993). Perhaps they feel like they are over the sea being overseas? They may never feel a moment where their new place is at rest, motionless, stable, and at peace.

What does it take for the Taiwanese parachute students to feel implaced? What assists them in making the States their new home? What threats of displacement threaten

their implacement (Casey, 1993). What influences the Taiwanese parachute students to feel connected to their new surroundings? Or do they disconnect themselves from their surroundings as one gets disconnected from the Internet, having to start over and over again to be connected?

Perhaps the key for me to get connected was the equivalent of passing a test? After all, coming to Taiwan was a big test: a test of my patience, my language skills, a test on my body that I would not dehydrate. So often, Taiwan was a test where I did not know the directions because I could not understand them. I could not read them. Perhaps the test of living in Taiwan was not the key to escape from Taiwan. Perhaps there is no key because there is no answer key. Was I as lost as I was in the testing room? Directions were explained to me, only to be not understood by me. What was the key to success? How could I look for a key that I do not even know exists or what it looks like? For what key are the Taiwanese parachute students looking? What key will unlock their happiness and set them free? Perhaps a key is not what they should be looking for, but a combination-- a combination of things that will unlock the combination of barriers against them. What combination will unlock their padlock?

Understanding through Standing Under

In order to fit on my bed, I had to lie in a fetal position. In Taiwan, I felt as if I had my thumb in my mouth with diapers on as Jia-Shieu escorted me around Taiwan. I was completely dependent on her. I was her big baby. Thank God for her. It is so nice to have a beautiful wife that takes care of you, and she had no choice but to take care of me. She was my emergency parachute that I would not let go of. How could I let go of her? What would I do if I lost her? Then I would really be lost. Oh, I was already lost. What

emergency parachutes do the Taiwanese parachute students have in the States? Who or what will they not let go of? Or do they not hold onto anything and just free fall, not knowing where they land and not aware of what they might run into?

Although Jia-Shieu could communicate with me, she did not understand what was going on inside of me. Had it been too long for her to remember what it was like when she first arrived in the States? As I listened to, but did not understand Jackie Chan on the plane, did Jia-Shieu listen but not understand me? Or was it the other way around? Did I listen, and not understand what Jia-Shieu was communicating and trying to express to me? Do we listen to the Taiwanese parachute students but do not understand them? Do they listen to us, but not understand us?

Oh, get me out of there. Get me out of there! Was there no relief? Where could I go run and hide? Could I hide from just the heat? Oh, the heat, what intense heat! The heat was overwhelming and suffocating. I was overwhelmed and was suffocating from the heat and from being immersed. As the heat surrounded me, so did the entire Taiwanese culture, the language, the atmosphere; the immersion process engulfed me. I was saturated in my sweat and from being immersed in a foreign culture. I felt as if there was no relief, no place to hide. As there was no place to hide from the smoke in the terminal, there was no place to hide from being overwhelmed, from being in culture shock. Everywhere I went, I would hear Chinese, see Chinese, eat Chinese, experience Chinese. At the same time, I <u>was</u> Chinese, but I did not <u>know</u> Chinese. I could not understand, speak, read or write Chinese. I just could hear Chinese, but not know Chinese, not comprehend Chinese. As I drank Pepto-bismol to protect my stomach,

nothing could protect me, not from the heat and not from being so lost, so immersed, so foreign.

Where do the Taiwanese parachute students run and hide? What do they do and where do they go to get away from the heat? What helps protect them? Where do they feel safe? What cools them off? Is it bad to be cooled off? In their eyes, is it good or bad to be cool?

Again and again I forget how grateful I should be that I had the opportunity to visit Taiwan. It was not so bad, or was it? I kept on forgetting that I chose to go to Taiwan. It was my choice to take this 'leave of absence.' I wanted to take another leave of absence, an absence away from Taiwan. Yet, what a unique opportunity. How many people ever get the opportunity that I experienced, a completely different culture half way around the world? Why can I not be grateful? What would assist me to be grateful? What would help me to remember to be grateful? I was spoiled to be in Taiwan, spoiled to have Jia-Shieu, and spoiled to have this special opportunity. Perhaps Jia-Shieu needed to yell and correct me everyday like she did during lunch. I needed to be humbled. What humbles the Taiwanese parachute students? What assists them in knowing that they should be grateful? What would help them understand what a gift being in the States and learning English is?

According to the Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology (1966), the word "grateful" originates from the Latin word *gratus* which corresponds to the Sanskrit word *gurtas* meaning welcome, agreeable, and thankful. The addition of the suffix *ful* may originate from the Italian word *gradevole* meaning pleasing. Thus the word "grateful" can be seen as to welcome being pleased. Or perhaps grateful can be interpreted as to

agree with being pleased. The American Heritage College Dictionary (1982) defines "grateful" as being appreciative of benefits received. Another definition of grateful is affording pleasure or comfort.

Is or is it not hard for the Taiwanese parachute students to be grateful? How can they afford pleasure or praise being pleased? Or are they displeased as they are displaced? In their eyes, is affording pleasure or comfort too expensive, and not affordable? Or perhaps they believe that America's style of affording pleasure or comfort is not comfortable or pleasurable to them? In what ways do they appreciate appreciating?

A Change of Heart from a Change of Home: Becoming the Phenomenon

Two years before I left for Taiwan, the current school I work for asked me to interview for a counseling position in their Guidance department. I considered it an honor to work at this school. However, I respectfully declined an interview, stating that I believed in my career commitment-- wanting to serve a more financially needy student population. After I came back from Taiwan, I was asked again by my current principal, to interview for a counseling position. This time, I interviewed and was offered a position. What caused me to have a change of heart? What caused me to change my point of view in just four short years?

I altered my decision not because I wanted to work with the needs of the rich. I altered my decision because I discovered that my current school has a large ESOL department and I would be able to work with over 100 ESOL students. After spending nine months trying to learn another language, I wanted to use what I learned to assist other students, in particular, students from Taiwan and China. Equally important, I knew

that from my experiences in Taiwan, I hopefully could improve the experiences of the ESOL students. So, when teachers are particularly hard on ESOL students because they do not understand some scientific concepts or some historical backgrounds, I can inform the teacher how hard it is to understand History and Science terms. And when the cafeteria staff yells at the international students because they do not know how much the food items are, I can inform them how difficult it is to count money in a foreign language. Finally, when the teachers repeat instructions over and over again to the foreign students, but the foreign students do not understand, I can tell the teachers how important it is to find someone who speaks their students' native tongue.

I am motivated to study the lived experiences of the Taiwanese parachute students for many reasons, but in particular, I enjoy assisting and being with them. I feel a bond, a closeness to them perhaps because of my wife and because of my experiences in Taiwan. I enjoy learning about their experiences and why they have come to the States. I enjoy hearing of their disappointing and exciting moments living in a land so foreign to them. I enjoy watching them becoming a part of the American culture, but maintaining their Taiwanese heritage. One teacher commented to me that it was very nice to have me at their school because I am the first person who can fight for the parachute students and truly understand them.

To my surprise, when I assist a Taiwanese parachute student, I think of my wife and how difficult it must have been for her to come to the States as a twelve year old. My wife, who was quoted at the beginning of this chapter, was herself a parachute student in a school where her sisters, and cousins were the only Asians in the entire school. Also, I think of my parents, who came to the States not for their compulsory education, but as

undergraduate and graduate students. How hard it must have been for them to come to the States saying good-bye to China, their homeland, not knowing that they would not be able to return for over thirty years.

Outside of school, I am even more motivated to study the lived experiences of Taiwanese parachute students. As the youth coordinator for the East Coast Chinese Catholic Youth Conference and a youth group leader for a Chinese Catholic youth group, I see the frustrations, anxieties, and disappointments of many parachute students. The lived experiences of the parachute students surround and unfold in front of me. Every weekend I see these students slowly becoming accustomed to the American traditions; slowly they become more fluent in English; slowly they prefer to eat American food, and slowly they want to look not like Taiwanese, but like Americans. As I become closer to my youth group members, I have a greater interest in empathizing and understanding the Taiwanese parachute students' experiences.

Turning to Phenomenology to Study My Phenomenon

The phenomenon of the Taiwanese parachute students is real to my life, not only because I married a parachute student, but because I work with parachute students. On the weekends, I party and pray with parachute students. My church is full of parachute students. My parents were parachute students and, thus, I am a product of parachute students. The parachute students are so much a part of my own lived experiences. I consider studying them as studying a part of myself, my genuine self. To study the lived experiences of these students I turn to phenomenology.

Being Called to the Question

Questions regarding the lived experiences surface, having been called forth through my own experience on foreign soil. What is it like for the parachute students as they first step off the plane? After they land, what is it like for them to be immersed within a foreign culture where they would have difficulty ordering food or asking where the bathroom is? Do they feel that their parachutes never open as they enter a classroom where they do not understand what is being said and very few people have the same cultural background? My orienting question, then, is **What are the lived experiences of Taiwanese parachute students?**

The Landing Approach

Van Manen (1990) describes the nature of human science phenomenology:

> Natural science studies objects of nature, "things," "natural events," and the way that objects behave. Human Science, in contrast studies "persons" or beings that have "consciousness" and that act purposefully in the world by creating objects of "meaning" that are "expressions" of how human beings exist in the world. (pp. 3-4)

To research human experiences means to question always the way in which the world is experienced (van Manen, 1990). At the same time, human beings want to know the world in which they live. In essence, for human understanding there is an inseparable connection to the world. To uncover the world's connection, aspects, and secrets, the hermeneutic phenomenological approach is used.

As van Manen (1990) suggests, this approach permits me to develop meaning from the interpretive examination of Taiwanese parachute students' lived experiences. It is a philosophy of the personal; the individual is studied to understand the background and circumstances in which that individual exists (van Manen, 1990). I am searching for the essence of a phenomenon in its completeness, as it reveals itself through my own

lived experiences and through the lived experiences of Taiwanese parachute students. Thus, this approach allows me to use the shared accounts of Taiwanese parachute students as part of piecing together what their lived experiences are. This approach allows me to share my personal experiences as I am part of the picture of the experiences of Taiwanese parachute students. The end result of the research interest of hermeneutic phenomenology is understanding.

Van Manen(1990) outlines a methodological process for phenomenological research, terming it a dynamic interplay among six research activities. These are:

1. turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
2. investigating experience as we live it rather as we conceptualize it;
3. reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
4. describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting.
5. maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
6. balancing the research context by considering parts and whole. (pp. 30-31)

I use this approach to study the lived experiences of Taiwanese parachute students. The six methodological themes are explained in greater detail in Chapter Three.

The Organization of this Journey

This Chapter has consisted of my turning to the phenomenon, some general background on Taiwanese parachute students, and a brief introduction to the type of methodology used in this inquiry.

In Chapter Two, I explore in more depth the lived experiences of Taiwanese parachute students. I discuss how the phenomenon has been illuminated to me through conversations I have had with parachute students. I refer, also, to other existential sources of information such as literature, poetry, novels, and metaphors to establish a clearer understanding of the phenomenon.

In Chapter Three, I review what hermeneutic phenomenology is and why I chose this methodology. I provide the philosophical grounding and methodological structure of hermeneutic phenomenology. Moreover, I review van Manen's six research activities that are implemented in completing hermeneutic phenomenological research.

In Chapter Four, my reflective thematizing work is presented that characterizes the lived experiences of Taiwanese parachute students. This chapter includes an interpretive reflection based on my conversations with seven Taiwanese parachute students over a nine-month period. My phenomenological descriptions reveal the core meaning or essence of the lived world of Taiwanese parachute students.

In Chapter Five, I open up the lived experiences of the parachute students when they return back to Taiwan. Most parachute students return to Taiwan for a visit, but rarely is a visit so life changing. I also bring together the meaning that my study has for readers, educators, and students themselves. Suggestions are made for how teachers might be more empathic to Taiwanese parachute students as they struggle in their new world. In addition to academics, teachers are encouraged to focus on the emotional and social needs of Taiwanese parachute students. Considerations are also given as to what Taiwanese parachute students can do to improve their experiences in the States. Finally, I reflect on my own experiences from this journey as an educator, parent, husband, counselor, Assistant Principal, American born Chinese, and human being. This chapter also raises questions for reflection and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO:

THEY'VE LANDED--WHAT LAND ARE THEY ON? EXPLORING THE PHENOMENON OF THE TAIWANESE PARACHUTE STUDENTS

What is it like for parachute students to come to a completely foreign land and study in a different educational program? What is it like for them to leave their home not knowing what is in store for them or if they will ever return to their homeland? I reflect on these questions as I engage in preliminary conversations with parachute students from Taiwan.

In this chapter I explore the phenomenon of the Taiwanese parachute students through a variety of textual sources. By opening up and exploring different sources, I paint a beginning picture of what the Taiwanese parachute students' experiences entail. I use different sources like etymological tracing of words to explore this phenomenon. As these students enter the States, they immediately must confront language barriers. Language is an important tool for understanding and communication. An examination of the terms or phrases that they and other Asian Americans use is beneficial in examining the Taiwanese parachute students' lived experiences.

Moreover, I analyze words that are important to the participants involved. Van Manen (1990) states that "Being attentive to the etymological origins of words may sometimes put us in touch with an original form of life where the terms still had living ties to the lived experiences from which they originally sprang" (p. 59). By studying the etymological origin of words as well as the definition of words, I am able to understand the lived experiences of the parachute students better. The origin and meaning of words are significant for today's interpretation of the used language.

Equally important, I use the experiences of others to explore the phenomenon, and I use my experience of attending school in Taiwan the first time, as well as attending Chinese school in the States. I cite other Taiwanese parachute students' experiences as well as the experiences of Asian Americans growing up in the States. I believe the examination of other people's experiences opens up different aspects about the lived experiences of the Taiwanese parachute students. Educators and phenomenologists become more experienced themselves from the Taiwanese parachute students' experiences.

Finally, I use cultural differences as a source for exploring the Taiwanese parachute students' lived experiences. In what ways have the different cultures caused a unity or disunity between the Taiwanese parachute students and their homeland or their parents? Is there a bond or division between the Asian American students and the Taiwanese parachute students?

Thus, I explore the phenomenon of the Taiwanese parachute students' experiences from the perspectives of cultural and linguistic influences, as well as from obtaining experiential descriptions from others. I hope to bring the phenomenon into greater relief through the questioning made possible from the lived experience accounts brought forward.

Being a Student: Not in Residence

When I first entered Taiwan as a student, they immediately stamped my passport stating that I was a student, a foreign student. The same is true for the Taiwanese parachute students. As they enter the public schools, they are given "international or foreign student status." At the same time, they are labeled as parachute students by the

Taiwanese government. They are considered foreign in one land and exiles in their homeland. I begin this section by examining the word “foreign” and the term “parachute student” as these are the labels they are given once they arrive. Equally important, I explore what Taiwanese parachute students experience once they arrive in the classroom.

Being Outside

The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology (1966) states that the word “foreign” is derived from the old French root word *forene* meaning alien or strange, as well as from the Latin root word *foras* meaning to be out of doors. Ironically, the Barnhart Dictionary of Etymology (1988) states that the "spelling of ‘g’ is possibly the result of a confused association with ‘reign’ (more likely with the older spelling sovereign)" (p. 399). The Thorndike Barnhart Comprehensive Desk Dictionary (1958) defines “foreign” in two ways. The first definition of foreign is "outside one's own country." The second definition is "not belonging, not related" (p. 319). The term foreigner has a negative connotation as someone who has a lack of appreciation and misunderstanding of another culture. Foreigners seem to be "outside the door" and not fitting in with the norm. Likewise, foreigners are expected to fit in as I was expected to when in Taiwan.

When I first visited Taiwan, I felt like a foreigner and felt I was in a very foreign land. Although for the first time in my life I was surrounded by millions of people who looked just like me; I never felt so different. In America, due to my physical appearance, I felt like a foreigner growing up in the States. Although born in the States, I was mocked for my culture and my heritage. My parents tried to avoid my looking different and appearing foreign. They did not teach me Chinese for fear that I would have an accent

and not only look different, but sound different. Their physical appearance and accents could not deny them from being labeled a foreigner. My physical appearance and accent could not deny me from being labeled a foreigner in Taiwan.

Foreign students do not feel as if they reign over the United States. They do not have sovereignty over their American classmates. On the contrary, many times they are looked down upon by Americans. Oei and Lyon (1996) indicate that, "Most Asians in America are viewed as 'foreigners,' but nearly four out of ten were born in this country and eight out of ten speak fluent English" (p. 50). Many parachute students speak fluent English after being in the States for two years. Also, those individuals who came before adolescence do not have obvious accents. If an individual was talking to a parachute student over the phone, that individual may not realize that the parachute student's second language is English.

If the parachute students speak perfect English, why, then, do people continue to consider them as foreigners? Why are they still considered "outside the door?" What are the benefits of being outside? How do they get "inside?" Do they prefer to stay inside or outside?

The Students Descend

The Webster's New World Dictionary (1983/1990) refers to the term "student" as "one who studies or investigates, one who is enrolled for study at a school, college, etc." (p. 586). The term student originates from the Latin root word *studere* meaning to study. To study is an effort to learn by reading or thinking.

According to the Barnhart Dictionary of Etymology (1988), the word "parachute" originates from a French balloonist named Blanchard. Blanchard put a dog in a basket

and then dropped the basket from a balloon. The prefix *para* is derived from the French and Italian root word *parare* meaning to stand against or to protect against. The suffix *chute* is derived from the French root word *cheoite* or the Latin root word *cadere* meaning to fall. Thus, the word parachute can be seen as protecting against a fall. The Thorndike Barnhart Comprehensive Desk Dictionary (1958) defines parachute as "an umbrella like apparatus used in descending safely through the air from a great height" (p. 566).

Examining the origins of words like “foreign” and “parachute students” has assisted me to be sensitive to the meaning of language and the use of labels. Foreign and parachute seem like contradictory terms, a true paradox. One word promotes safety while another word promotes non acceptance. Parachute students are expected to study their schoolwork in a safe environment. At the same time, they are considered as foreigners and not necessarily as friends. I question whether the students have been given an appropriate nickname by the Taiwan government. The current name is misleading and does not accurately reflect their true lived experiences. I wonder what name the parachute students might choose themselves?

They Have Landed: Is it Safe?

I wonder if parachute students feel as if they descended safely to the United States? From their experiences, would they say that they arrived safely to study, or did their parachutes never open? Kiang (1996) notes that Asian American students have to respond to a full range of academic, social, and personal challenges by themselves:

> At the same time, due to linguistic barriers, cultural differences, and economic pressures, Asian Pacific American parents, most of whom are immigrants, typically do not participate or intervene consistently in their children's schooling, even if they express high expectations at home for

> their children's educational success. Thus Asian Pacific American students are often left on their own to manage and mediate their experiences in school. (p. 28)

Michelle Ott (1994) interviewed 266 Asian Pacific Americans and found that fifty-four percent of respondents had been called names or harassed, and twenty-four percent had been attacked physically in school. Nine out of ten respondents heard of or witnessed Asian Pacific American students being harassed, and six out of ten had heard of or witnessed one being physically attacked. Although these incidents occur in the schools, Ott adds that sixty-nine percent of the respondents never reported the incident to the school, and thirty percent said that the teachers would not care or would do nothing about the incident if reported. Of those students who had experienced harassment, one out of three had considered dropping out of school. Kiang (1996) reports an Asian student's account of being mocked in a high school setting:

> When we pass by them they give you some kind of like a dirty look....They say ,"Look at that Chinese girl," and then they call like, "Chink, go back to where you belong." (p. 34)

What is the experience like for parachute students coming from Taiwan to study? What is the experience like of taking classes with American students? What is it like attending an American school when one does not understand what is being said to you or around you? How is a parachute student changed from these experiences? For the parachute students to arrive safely, they need to be protected against their fall. The fall may not be the descent from a plane, but the fall of not knowing that they are not welcomed. In what ways do they feel as if they have been abandoned after they were dropped off? Is what happens after they arrive the true danger and threat to their well

being? Is the safe arrival only protecting them from eventually being thrown out the door and being considered so foreign that they are not wanted?

Derogatory Echoes

Through the remembrances of the parachute students being persecuted because of the way they look or the way they speak English, I am brought back to my own childhood experiences. I remember not being mocked in the classroom, but certainly mocked on the playground. The derogatory song rings in my ears where children do not realize what harm they do.

Chinese
Japanese
Dirty Knees
Look at These.

O'Donohue (1999) shares, "There is some innocent child like side to the human heart that is always deeply hurt when we are excluded" (p. xxi). Innocence of youth was lost when confronted by unwelcomed words and mocking laughter. Must all Asian children go through similar experiences? If American born Chinese must confront persecution in the schools, what do parachute students experience? Although difficult for the parachute students, I must ask these questions in order to uncover their experiences more fully.

In school settings, individuals who distribute racist comments are not limited to the children on the playground. Teachers, whether knowingly or unknowingly, have made comments to me in my academic career that stung in the classroom. My sixth grade teacher said in front of the class, "Ben, why are you reading that book backwards. Don't read that science book like a Chinese book." Another time, a math teacher said to me, "Com'on, you're Asian, you should know how to do this problem." Before I took a

final exam in high school, a teacher was taking roll. When he came to my name, he said it in a derogatory way, laughing at the sound of my Chinese name. What is it like to be judged or known only by your physical appearance? What preconceived expectations are established concerning the parachute students? What stinging comments have been made to parachute students from faculty members?

As a public educator, I see ignorance portrayed by my fellow educators even though they are surrounded by a higher percentage of Asian Americans. Numerous times prior to my trip to Taiwan, I had been asked by the main office to come and interpret for visiting parents in the building. At such times, I would tell them repeatedly that I am only fluent in English. In every school where I have been a faculty member, many teachers have shared with me that they thought I would be short, speak in broken English, and would work very hard. I have confronted numerous teachers for not calling Asian American parents because they thought their students' parents could not speak English. Another friend of mine stated that the first time he was at a teacher's conference, the superintendent of the school system came up to him and said, "Don't tell me, math teacher right?" He was an English teacher and now, has left education.

The most painful experience I have ever endured as an educator occurred in the principal's office. I was called down to the principal's office because the secretary thought that I had a phone call from my mother. When I told the secretary that this was impossible, she insisted that it was my mother. Again, I reiterated that this was not feasible. Yet, she persisted stating that, "The lady on the phone had a thick accent and I am certain that it was your mother." She was not aware that my mother had passed away a month earlier.

If ignorance like this exists in the teachers' lounges and in the minds of educators, how much more does it exist in the streets where children play, and in the classrooms where children learn? If I as an educator experience ignorance from my fellow educators, what are the parachute students experiencing with their teachers? What ignorance are educators exemplifying to not only the parachute students, but to other American students in the classroom? In Taiwan, the students bow to their teachers as they enter the room and as they leave. Would parachute students bow with respect or with disdain to their American teachers? Do parachute students confide in their teachers, or do they feel that the teachers contribute to their problems? From their experiences learning from teachers, what kind of role models do the parachute students feel their educators are?

My Parachute Experience of Landing at School

As I reflect on what it may be like for the Taiwanese parachute students to attend school in the States, I reflect on my first experiences attending school in Taiwan. I welcome the reader to experience the same feelings and emotions that I endured. I ask the reader to sweat like I sweated, to bite one's nails in anxiety like I bit my nails, and to look for comfort like I looked for comfort. I invite my readers to reflect on what they may have experienced their first day of school. Then imagine what their first day of school may have been like in a foreign land.

> Today was my first day of school and I hated it. The day started okay with me getting up very early to prepare for school. Jia-Shieu walked me to the bus stop as a mother escorts a little child to school. I got on the bus and was terrified getting lost. The bus was full of elementary and secondary students. They were going to school and were all dressed in their different school uniforms. Students in Taiwan take public transportation and are required to wear uniforms. Although from different schools, they were very well behaved. I can’t imagine American students

acting appropriately on the buses. In addition, the students were very polite. When older people entered the bus, the students would stand up and give up their seats. I was amazed and impressed. In order to make sure that I wasn't lost, I counted the number of McDonald's that I passed. Since I could not read any street signs, and every street looked the same, I figured that if I counted the familiar McDonald's signs, I would know when I would get off the bus.

After I got off the bus, I had a quarter mile walk. Although it was only seven in the morning, I was dripping with sweat. How could Taiwan be so hot!? Also, there were many loose dogs roaming the streets. The poor dogs would walk looking for any kind of food. Being a dog lover, I felt so bad. However, I was warned not to touch stray dogs because they are more prone to bite and carry diseases.

I arrived early and sat down to prepare for class. I was dripping with sweat and the air conditioning was not turned on. I went to the bathroom just so I could pour water on my face and back.

The class reviewed the different tones of the Chinese language, which I already knew. Also, I learned ten different "bo po mo fo" symbols, an English equivalent of Chinese phonics. I hated bo po mo fo. I did not like it when I was young, and I refused to have Jia-Shieu teach me in the States. Yet, in my very first class, I was learning bo po mo fo.

The class was taught in English. The poor German, Japanese, and Korean students looked totally confused. They came to Taiwan to learn Chinese and yet, they needed a third language to learn how to speak Chinese. I felt so sorry for them.

Class ended at ten and I studied for an hour. I then went out to buy a sandwhich. Sure enough, it was boiling toxic hot outside. Also, Taiwan is so polluted that when you wipe the sweat off your body, the kleenex or towel you use turns dark brown. The combination of the intense heat and the polluted air does not help at all to make oneself feel comfortable.

My second class started at noon and my teacher was very young. It was the first time in my life that I had a teacher that was younger than me. She must have been no older than twenty- eight. She was very nice but knew only a few words of English. This was the first time in my educational career that one of my teachers did not know English. Even my Chinese teachers in the States knew English. Then I thought, "In the States, the parachute students do not have American teachers who know Chinese." Immediately, I felt a communication barrier that existed between my teacher and me. We conversed in Chinese with my two other classmates. I did not understand everything that my teacher was saying and I definitely did not understand my classmates. Both of my classmates were from Japan. They did not speak Chinese very well. They stumbled over their words and their tones were not necessarily distinct. However, they could read Chinese characters and had my teacher last semester. It became very apparent that I was inappropriately placed. Both of my classmates knew over a thousand characters and I knew at most fifty. I

felt very dumb and embarrassed. Although I could pronounce Chinese better, I could not read or write. Only much later did I realize that the Japanese language uses many Chinese characters. They had a distinct advantage writing, and I had a distinct advantage speaking, because of my wife.

When we began reviewing new vocabulary, I felt like an idiot. I wanted to drop out of the program all together. I remember as an elementary student going to Sunday afternoon Chinese school. I dropped out of Chinese School then and I wanted to drop out now.

At the end of class, my teacher pulled me aside and informed me that I should transfer into a Hua Chaio class. A Hua Chiao class is a class for overseas Chinese students. Typically, Hua Chiao's are looked down upon because they don't know their own Chinese culture. Also, they may know how to speak Chinese, but they don't know how to read or write. I informed my teacher that I agreed with her and that I would try to change my class.

I went downstairs to the guidance office and there was a line outside the door of people requesting schedule changes. There must have been over twenty-five people who wanted to change their classes. They said that they would not look at any more schedule changes till tomorrow. I waited till four to talk to Theresa who was already scheduled into a Hua Chaio class. She said that she liked the class and that a friend of hers thought the class was too easy for her. I was so excited to see Theresa. She was the first person I conversed with all day. It was so nice to find a friend.

I talked to Theresa till five and then walked to my bus stop to catch the bus home. I was there at 5:20 p.m. and the bus didn't come till 6:30. Since I could not read the bus information, I didn't dare try to take another bus home. To make matters worse, it began to rain and I didn't have an umbrella. I thought to myself that I arrived to school soaked in my sweat and I leave school soaking wet. I went up to two young ladies and asked if they spoke English. They shook their heads, and moved quickly away. I don't know who was more scared of whom?

When I got on the bus, there were no seats. I tried to think of my ESOL students who routinely missed their bus stops. Their first week of school they would cry in the guidance office and would want to go back to their native country. I wanted to go back to the States and enjoy myself in the comfort of my own native environment. On the bus, it felt like everyone stared at me. It wasn't because I was tall, it was because I was wet and everyone else had umbrellas or rain gear. When I finally made it home, I was tired, exhausted, wet, and frustrated. Jia-Shieu asked me how my day was and I responded, "bad!" and just wanted her to hug me. I was like a little kid who had a lousy day of school and only wanted the comfort of his mother. (Monday, September 1st, 1997)

Not Knowing

Why did I force myself to go through such a painful experience? And I had to pay for this experience not just financially, but emotionally, socially, and academically. When I went back to Chinese school, I went back to so much more than the classroom. I went back to the frustrations and fear of looking and feeling dumb. I went back to the confusion of not knowing what was said around me, and to me, and with me. I went back to the uncomfortable experiences of fearing being asked mundane questions I did not understand, knowing an answer in one language, but not knowing how to express it in another language, and not knowing how to read or write, but trying to look like I did. I wonder how the Taiwanese parachute students feel when they go to school the first time? I wonder what they are scared of? I wonder what they try to look like or appear to be? Why would they want to go to school always feeling confused and insecure?

When I was younger, I would try to feel safe by not participating in Chinese school. Eventually, I would not go to Chinese school. Never mind that I was successful Monday through Friday in the American schools. I would not speak Chinese and I would spend time with people who would only speak English. However, I had no place to run away in Taiwan. I had no place where I could only speak English, and to make matters worse, I was surrounded by people who wanted to learn Chinese.

I hated feeling like an idiot. I had thoughts of dropping out. Is this what the parachute students feel? Is this what at-risk students or special needs students feel? Do they feel as if they are a drop-off in this society, something discarded because they are not welcomed? Are they sick of feeling like an idiot, and thus drop out? I knew I was no longer an elementary student, and my wife and her family would have killed me for

coming to Taiwan just to drop out. Fear of failure and humiliation prevented me from dropping out. What prevents Taiwanese parachute students from dropping out and quitting? What motivates them to carry on, dropping in to class instead of dropping out?

Not at Home

When I was young, my mother was there for me. Being much older, Jia-Shieu, my wife, was there for me. Who is "there" for the Taiwanese parachute students? Who is there for them to take them to the bus stop and to hug them when they get home? Who is there for them to share their problems and concerns? I wonder if they feel that they can not run away or that there is no place to hide? I wonder if they feel that they are “all there” in the States?

Besides the safety of my wife’s warm embraces, there was no safe place, except maybe for the comfort of my apartment, my home away from home. Yet, it was not really home; it did not feel at home, and it did not look like home. If anyone entered the apartment, or knocked on the door, or gave us a phone call, my home no longer felt like a possible home; it no longer felt like a safe place. My heart would jump in fear of using the language I had not yet mastered. Wu warns of this predicament. He shares, “The worst thing is that they (foreigners) do not have a way to retreat either” (Wu, 1991, p. 270). It is useless to run because there is nowhere to run. When in a foreign land, there is no place that is truly home. No place is safe from feeling foreign. There is no retreat one can retreat to.

The Silence of Not Understanding

Immediately, I felt a communication barrier with my teacher. I could smile at her, but I could not understand her. I could speak to her, but she could not understand me.

She would ask me to read the Chinese characters, but I could not read or write the characters. I was out of character to even begin to learn them. What a character I must have looked like.

My Chinese teacher knew a few words of English, but would she ever know what I truly felt? Would she ever know how I truly feared her class? Do ESOL teachers ever truly know how their students feel? Do they ever truly know what is in their students' hearts? Do ESOL teachers ever know how much more than just the language their students have to overcome?

I could not converse with my teacher and classmates, but I finally got to talk to my friend Theresa at the end of the day. I spent the whole day not talking to anyone. I felt very lonely. How lonely do the Taiwanese parachute students feel? What does it feel like for them, not to be able to converse with anyone? To spend the whole day in silence, not because they can not physically speak, but because they are afraid to speak, or they have no one to whom they can speak. What gives them the courage to speak finally? What speaks to them to find a friend?

Academic Deflation and Inflation

> In Taiwan, they have reports and you learn things and are tested on it and I used to go home with reports that Jen-Yi is one of the best students in class and it is a joy to have her in class. And then I went from that to like failing all of my classes. I seriously did not learn anything when I was in first grade the first time. I was only there for a couple of months and then they got me an ESOL teacher the second year I was there. It was very traumatic. I was very upset. (Jen-Yi ,1996, personal interview)

Jen-Yi was a strong academic student in Taiwan. Consistently, her parents received positive comments and letters from her teachers expressing how diligent and skilled a student she was. However, when she came to the States, she had to repeat first

grade. She began to work with an ESOL teacher and her grades slowly began to rise. In her own words, Jen-Yi states that, "I went from the ESOL classes to the average classes to the above average GT classes." By the time she was in eighth grade, she had already completed Geometry. Jen-Yi received a full scholarship to the University of Maryland.

In my wife's first semester in eighth grade, she went home with a report card filled with E's in her language arts classes. She was shocked and very upset, crying because in Taiwan she was ranked first in her class. She thought to herself, "This wouldn't be happening in Taiwan." My wife continued to fight academically and began to succeed in her classes. She graduated in the top five of her high school class, in the top three of her university's graduating class, and was a Rhodes Scholar candidate.

Wendy, another parachute student in seventh grade, admits that she is doing much better academically in the States than in Taiwan. She says, "In Taiwan, you have to memorize a lot of different things and I didn't memorize things very well. I wasn't really good at that." In middle school, she consistently makes the honor roll.

These parachute students are not just succeeding academically. They are very involved in extracurricular activities. During high school, Jen-Yi became very involved in student government, the Asian Awareness Club, her church's youth group, and the high school drill team. My wife was involved in three different sports and the Math team. The two other parachute students in my preliminary conversations, Vicki and Wendy, are active in ice skating and in basketball, as well as Chinese school on the weekends. What freedom do they have to enjoy and pursue other goals that they did not have in Taiwan? What successes can they call their own that they never would have experienced in Taiwan?

What motivates these students to succeed? Although they face such difficulties, what encourages them to carry on? Tsai (1996) shares that he did not want to lose face for himself and for his parents. It was a must for him to work hard and achieve success. For others, it was the fear of failure. They neither wanted to appear to be "stupid" or be called "stupid" by their parents or classmates. Finally, some mature parachute students expressed that they were amazed at the opportunities in the States compared to Taiwan. Paige was not accepted in the Taiwanese high schools. Thus, her parents brought her to the States to study. She took full advantage of what was available in the States, going to high school and college, obtaining her CPA.

I have worked with many Taiwanese parachute students who do not believe that they have tasted "success" in the States. Kevin dropped out of high school, obtained numerous jobs paying minimum wage, and decided to live away from his mother and never talk to his father again. PoYuan dropped out of high school, never earning his high school diploma. He attends school at a local community college, taking one to two classes a semester and he sleeps twelve hours a day. Kang has not passed any math or science classes. She has run away from home numerous times and has been arrested for driving without a license. Eugene dropped out of high school and did not attend any classes or obtain a job for eighteen months. He refused to leave the house and was eventually hospitalized. His father never came to visit him during four tumultuous years. He eventually returned to Taiwan in a straight jacket. The parents wanted him back in Taiwan, not because they wanted to see him, but because they knew that health care was cheaper in Taiwan.

What motivates these students not to succeed? Is their academic lack of success

their most important goal? According to Stacey Lee (1996), who completed a study on over eighty Asian American youth, some parachute students reject the entire move to the States. They reject their parents, their responsibilities as a student, and totally rebel against the culture and society. Lee (1996) shares that they become the antitheses of the model minority myth.

From the Cocoon to the Butterfly: Appearances Can be Deceiving

The Butterfly upon the Sky,
That doesn't know its Name
And Hasn't any tax to pay
And Hasn't any Home
Is just as high as you and I,
And Higher, I believe,
So soar away and never sigh
And that's the way to grieve.
(Emily Dickinson, 1952, p. 637)

When many parachute students arrive in the States, they do not want people to talk to them. They are afraid if someone asks them a question, they will not understand and not know how to respond. One to two years later, they become social butterflies. They move quickly from one location to another, stopping only to gather more information for their next visit. They grow out of their cocoons, and into their environment. They have learned how to fly and excel in what they accomplish. When they live within their cocoons, struggling to understand the language and culture, struggling to survive academically and socially, they only become stronger. They become strong enough to overcome other adversities that they encounter. There is a famous Chinese saying that, "Failure is the mother of success." The American equivalent of this is no pain, no gain. In either case, the failures and difficulties emerging from their lived experiences are motivators for future success.

As the butterfly in the poem flies high without a name to identify with or to call itself, and without a place to really call home, it continues to look enticing, as if its success hides its sadness. The parachute students look so good on the outside, but one may never know how sad they are on the inside. No one may know what their true feelings are. An educator said to me once that, "How can they have problems, when they are so successful?" The educator was blinded because of how motivated and successful the parachute students appear to be. How well they hide their grief.

Chao (1997) reports that because of the stereotype that Asians are quiet and reserved, their needs go undetected. I have seen this numerous times in the counseling office. In my ten years as a counselor, the hardest students to detect for depression are my Asian students. The students who I never thought would hurt themselves are my Asian students. How well they hide their grief.

The Silence of Being Homesick

In the book Dragonwings by Laurence Yep, a young boy named Moon Shadow comes from China to live with his father in the United States. While in his uncle's house, he reads a Chinese poem that makes him think of home. The poem is stated as follows:

Upon my bed
Lies the bright moonlight
Like frost upon the earth.

Lifting my eyes,
I see the bright moon
Closing my eyes,
I see home.
(Yep, 1975, p. 22)

Hopeful, homesick, and lonely children surface from these words. When reflecting upon this poem, I think of parachute students who may stay up late at night,

thinking about Taiwan and how much they miss their homeland. Perhaps they may miss their family or friends, or the more simple things like traditional Taiwanese food and the daily lifestyle.

As stated in Chapter One, Casey shares his experience moving away from home. "I am sensitive to aspects unappreciated when I was first living there. It is as if I had to leave my home to become acquainted with a more capacious world, which in turn allows me to grasp more of the home to which I return" (Casey, 1993, p. 294). People who leave a place have a better grasp of what they would truly miss than those who have never left. The Taiwanese parachute students are much more sensitive to the subtle things that they had in Taiwan than those students who never left Taiwan. When I lived in Taiwan, I missed miscellaneous items like potato chips, pies, carpeting, clean fresh air, and a car. I did not realize I would miss these "American" things in Taiwan. It took my leaving in order to know what I truly missed. Yet, when I tell my friends what I missed, they look at me in disbelief as if they would not miss the things that I missed.

Missing Beyong Words

Being so far away from home leads to homesickness. Yet what is homesickness? Is my home sick? Or should the proper term be homelessness? Wu says that it is so hard to describe homesickness. "Perhaps mostly it is beyond words. I am homesick, but I do not know what I am missing" (Wu, 1991, p. 274). I knew I was missing various forms of American food and my family and friends. However, I also knew I was missing much more. I have difficulty putting it into words, but I was missing more. Connelly shares, "All sickness is homesickness, homesick for ourselves and for each other" (Connelly, 1993, p. 124). Why am I homesick for the "each other" no longer with me? Is it because

there is a feeling of loss when you are so far away from the ones you love? Or is it because it is not necessarily the home, but the people in the home that cause homesickness? Perhaps a better name for homesickness is loneliness or foreignness, because it is difficult to get close to people. It is difficult to feel at home when you are so far away from home.

Struggling in the Dark

"Is foreignness the lack of homeness, as darkness is often the lack of light? Am I struggling in the twilight between the darkness of being foreign and the light of being home?"(Wu, 1991, p. 268). It is not much fun when you struggle in darkness. Not only is one confused, one is scared. I know when I first visited Taiwan, a feeling of foreignness immediately overcame me. Everything from directions, food, streets, advertisements, sounds, to limited personal body space was foreign. I was foreign and I felt foreign, being clueless, in the dark. Yet, even though I was scared and confused, my focus was not on others, but on myself. Everything was foreign around me, yet I did not want to look foreign. Wu (1991) shares that what really makes him feel foreign is the constant awareness of oneself. I was aware of how I looked, how I acted, how I ate, how I appeared when listening. I believe I was most focused on myself when I spoke, afraid that people would not understand and that they would laugh at me. I had no idea how to act Taiwanese, how to think Taiwanese, how to be Taiwanese, and there was no way of hiding my foreigness. "Foreigners usually only have the idea of conformity to the dominant culture, but do not know exactly how they can achieve this, and they feel they are not doing what they want" (Wu, 1991, p. 270).

Utopian Heartbreak

My wife shared that as a teenager she longed to go back to Taiwan. She considered Taiwan as the "promised land" and the place where the fun never ended. She could not remember a difficult time growing up in Taiwan. The schools were filled with hard work, but with many friends. She missed her friends more than anything. However, when she went back to Taiwan for the first time, her friends and Taiwan had changed.

> This image of Taiwan as my Utopia was proven wrong this past summer when I returned for the very first since the winter of 1983. The one and only goal of the students there is to receive a high score on the college-entrance exam. Because their achievements and extra-curricular activities in school are totally ignored, they spend almost all of their time studying and nothing else. Pressure from the teachers and the parents is overwhelming. "Gee, am I glad I do not have to go through this!" I thought to myself. Due to the confined lifestyle, many of my Taiwanese friends have ways of thinking that are narrow and overly conservative. I began to realize how fortunate I am to be able to develop my interests in different areas and not have to restrict all of my time to academics. I am also grateful for the environment which enables me to be more outgoing, broadminded, and independent. (Lee, The Broadneck Senior High Literary Magazine,1989, p. 19)

Connelly (1993) believes that all sickness is homesickness, and that all healing is a homecoming. And yet, when we return to the same place, is it the same place as that of before? “How can we come to such a disparate perception of what is unquestionably the same place?” (Casey, 1993, p. 294). Once we leave a place, the place is never the same again. It is as if the place we left changes when we leave. Yet, in terms of physical location, it is still the same place. When I left my hometown and returned three months later, the place was recognizably the same, but still, distinctly different. It was hard to grasp what was so different, yet the feeling of being in a different place was permissive.

Casey puts it well when he says, “Home is where one starts from, and it is also where one returns to in a journey of homecoming”(Casey, 1993, p. 290).

Taiwan was no longer the nirvana my wife once considered it as. Taiwan was very polluted, crowded, and the people were not as pleasant as before. Was it Taiwan and her friends that had changed, or was she the one who had changed? What did she leave behind the first time she left Taiwan that she was so longing to experience again? Yet when she returned, was what she longed for and hoped to find, not there?

Belonging suggests warmth, understanding, and acceptance. No one was created to be alone or isolated. O’Donohue (1999) shares, “Our hunger to belong is the longing to find a bridge across the distance from isolation to intimacy. Every one longs for intimacy and dreams of a nest of belonging in which one is embraced, seen, and loved” (p. xxii –xxiii). Perhaps that is what Jia-Shieu was looking for, a longing for belonging. In a world so overcrowded, each of us journeys alone to find out where we belong. At the same time, how can we find belonging when the past we had belonged to is no longer there?

Longing for the Past

Perhaps it is not the place that changes, but the home that changes. What changes is the meaning of home. “As there are fewer people they miss and as the places they used to know and love disappear or change their appearance, they miss really nothing but the past” (Wu, 1991, p. 274). Wu correctly addresses the harsh reality that time takes away from us, our past. I not only miss my home, I miss my past.

Home has never been the same ever since my mother passed away. Home looked like home, but it did not feel like home. It did not smell like home, and even though it

was the same location, it was not home. My mother passed away and I only remember my mother in the past. I miss the past because that is where the home I long for is. Casey (1993) shares, “It doesn’t take a poet to let us know that time ‘eats away our lives ‘and that is the most insidious ‘enemy’” (p. 7). Time took away not only my home, but the roots of my belonging. In order to have any peace of heart, I needed to settle and belong in another place, a new home (O’Donohue, 1999).

For many Taiwanese parachute students, they have not gone back to Taiwan. They have not been able to visit their old schools and the friends and families that they left behind. They have not been able to walk the streets at night and smell the aroma of the food stands and hear the sights and sounds of the night market while drinking pearl milk tea at the tea houses. They have not been able to go back to the National Concert Hall where all the rock bands play and the youth jump for joy celebrating their music. And they have not been able to go back for New Year's celebrations, where they open up red envelopes full of money, embrace relatives and long time friends, and gamble into the night.

What do they miss most about Taiwan? What was so special about what they experienced in Taiwan that they can not find here in the States? In what ways do they think about Taiwan, when here in the States? On the contrary, perhaps parachute students may not miss Taiwan. As my wife felt that Taiwan was the promised land, did her parents feel that the States were the promised land? The United States offers so much in terms of resources, education, and freedom. What is so special regarding the States that makes Taiwan seem so much worse? What have they experienced that makes the United States so special in their lives? In what way has the States become their new home?

Homesteading or Homecoming?

What if the Taiwanese parachute students are not able to return home? What if there is an understanding established by the Taiwanese parents that their children could not permanently come home until after they graduated from a U.S. college? What if I was not able to return home? What if I could not stay home or I was forced to return to my new place, my home away from home?

Casey (1993) shares that homesteading is where one journeys to a new place that will become a person's homeplace. In order to make a new place a homeplace, one must be determined to settle down for the long term. One must move from unplacement, where one does not know one's whereabouts, to implacement, being in place again. In other words, "Unplacement becomes implacement as we regain and refashion a sense of place" (Casey, 1993, p. 28).

I never gained a sense of place or being in place in Taiwan. I never could call Taiwan my home away from home. I may have stayed too short a time to make Taiwan my home. Also, I knew I was returning home to the States. Why should I make Taiwan my home, when every day I stayed in Taiwan, was one day closer to my departure? I had come to Taiwan to try and master the language, to understand the culture, and to experience what it was like to be immersed in a foreign land. I did not come to Taiwan to adapt to a new land. Consequently, I was always displaced, unplaced, and never in place. Naturally, when it was time to leave, I was happy to be out of that place. Casey (1993) shares, "If in homecoming I come back to a home that was, in homesteading I come to a

home to be" (p. 299). I never came to a home to be. My journey ended in my homecoming and I never allowed or received my homesteading.

From Homesickness to Identity Confusion

After realizing that they may be staying for a while, Taiwanese parachute students begin to move from a homesickness stage to an identity confusion stage. They stay long enough in this foreign land to realize that the land is becoming a part of them. Unlike me, who never allowed Taiwan to be a home, they allow their new home in the States to be. They realize that their journey to a new place has become their new homeplace.

The Taiwanese parachute students may realize where they are, and where they are living, but they may not be able to describe who they are. Do they call themselves ABCs (American born Chinese)? or perhaps MITs (made in Taiwan)? At the same time, are they Chinese Americans, American Chinese, Taiwanese Americans, or American Taiwanese? This next section describes the identity confusion that these students experience. To open up this phenomenon better, I draw on more conversations I have had with Taiwanese parachute students. I believe their words get to the very essence of what their experiences are.

In the following section, I present the cultural tensions that these students experience as they are addressing identity confusion issues. They may begin to identify who they are, but who they identify with is a different matter. Will they identify with other Taiwanese or with Asian Americans? Or will they totally isolate themselves from any Chinese to not look Asian, even though they are one? What happens after the Taiwanese parachute students realize that they are not going anywhere, that for the time

being, they are not landing anyplace else? What are their experiences after they have decided to stay, willingly or not?

Caught or Content Between Two Worlds

> Well, I am very comfortable living here but it is not absolute 100 percent. I don't really like calling myself an American. It is not totally comfortable for me. I see myself more American than Taiwanese, but at the same time, I don't see myself as being an American. (Jen-Yi, April 1997, oral conversation)

Jen-Yi shares that she is comfortable, but not 100 percent comfortable. When my father visits one of his six children, he never expresses that he feels at home. Instead he says he feels comfortable or he states, "I am very comfortable here." And although my father may stay with either one of my siblings or with me for as long as two months, he never calls our home his home. He is never 100 percent comfortable. Even though we try our hardest to make him feel at home, only being close to 100 percent comfortable is the best we can do. Perhaps that is how the Taiwanese parachute students feel. They may become comfortable in the States. They can not have the best of both worlds, but they are comfortable.

For other Taiwanese parachute students, they are not as comfortable as they would like to be. Kao (2000) reports that many parachute students feel out of place, as if they don't belong. They feel caught between two worlds, neither Taiwanese or American. What world can they feel at peace in or at home? Why can't they feel comfortable at least in one world?

The etymological definition of "comfort" originates from the Latin word *confortare*, which means to strengthen. The prefix *com* comes from the Latin root word *cum*, meaning together. The suffix *fort* means strong. Thus, the term comfort means to

be strong together (Skeat, 1961). If one is not comfortable, does that mean that one is altogether losing strength? How might the parachute students be strong together?

In Taiwan, I felt as if I were losing strength, always tired of my *uncomfortableness*, of my inability to be completely comfortable. There was no place to rest. I always wanted to be comforted by my wife, the one true person with whom I felt comfortable. O'Donohue (1999) shares, "When you find a place in nature where the mind and heart find rest, then you have discovered a sanctuary for your soul" (p. 5). When the parachute students find that place in nature, a place where they can rest, then that is where their heart and soul will want to be. Where might such a place be for them in the States? How might they be helped to find it?

A Bridge: To What? From What?

Jen-Yi, the parachute student quoted above, did not know what to call herself. In the beginning of this chapter, I discussed the term "parachute" meaning to protect against a fall. Instead, Jen-Yi eventually refers to herself as a bridge. The Thorndike Barnhart Comprehensive Desk Dictionary (1958) defines "bridge" as "a structure built over a river, road, etc., so that people, trains, etc., can get across" (p. 123). The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology (1966) states that the word "bridge" derived from the Old English or Old Frisian word *brigge*, meaning log road or gangway. Do other parachute students feel that they are not on land, but on a bridge or a gangway between the two countries in which they once lived? Although they may have landed in the States physically, emotionally they may have never landed. In reality, they may have landed only on a bridge that connects two countries, but is not owned by either one. Thus, they do not know with whom to identify.

What aspects of the parachute students' lives are on the bridge? What are they a bridge between? I do not believe this bridge is simply between Taiwan and the States. Rather, it is between the fear of loneliness and the comfort of acceptance. I believe the bridge is made up of their memories from the past and their dreams and hopes for the future. I believe that they are longing to move from the uncertainty of the bridge to a warm and accepting place. As mentioned previously, O'Donohue (1999) shares, "Our hunger to belong is the longing to find a bridge across the distance from isolation to intimacy" (p. xxii). Unfortunately, finding intimacy and friendship takes time. It takes time and courage to cross a bridge that is so uncertain and so long. It takes time to adjust from one culture to another.

On the other hand, perhaps they feel that they are playing the card game bridge. Some face cards that they identify with are Taiwanese, others Chinese, and others American, but each having a different identity, a different suit. What suits them? Also, there are other individuals and groups like parents, Americans, ABCs, and educators who are watching the bridge game of their lived experiences. What different faces do they see? What different suit suits them? I wonder if Jen-Yi or other parachute students feel that they are on their own bridge of innocence, not knowing which culture is truly their own, not knowing which path in life will make them happy, and not knowing which culture draws them to their best suit.

Identity Confusion: Students Without a Country

> I think the way that we have lived and the way that we have been brought up or the way that we have grown up, I don't feel that there is a home. You were born and raised in Taiwan, but then you come to America. It is hard to say this is where you want to be and this is where you feel comfortable. I think that there are plusses and minuses living in both

> areas. I will always feel like the outsider in both places. (Jen-Yi, April 1997, oral conversation)

Jen-Yi and other parachute students are confused about what they may call home, not just in terms of a location, but of an identity. They not only have difficulty determining what nationality they should identify with, but with whom they should identify. They are students without a country. They have no place that they truly can call home. Another student, Vicki, states that "Home is nowhere. Well, it is not here now, but that's what I feel now." If we have no standard name to identify them or no place for them to be at home, how will educators be able to appreciate and care for them?

According to the Barnhart Dictionary of Etymology (1988), the etymological definition of “identity” may come from the combination of two possible origins. The first origin stems from the combination of the suffix *id*, which stands for family heritage, denoting a member of the family, and “entity,” coming from the medical Latin term, *entitas*, meaning being. Thus, the term “identity” could be referred to as “family being” or “being in the family.” The second origin comes from two other terms. The first term, *idem*, which means "the same" and *identitum*, a Greek term meaning "over and over again." Thus, the word identity could be interpreted as being the same over and over again. If you combine the two ideas, one can interpret “identity” as meaning being in the same family over and over again. Yet, how can the Taiwanese parachute students be “in the same family over and over again” when their family is nowhere to be seen, and when they are so far away from home? How can they be “the same over and over again” when they have no one they can be the same with or no one they can be the same as? Perhaps what happens is that they are not “being with the same family over and over again,” but never being the same over and over again.

At first I thought I had a simple solution to their problem. They could be “the same as” or identify with other parachute students. Chao (1997) reports that parachute students do spend a considerable amount of time together. However, their lived experiences can be significantly different. They may not be able to identify with other parachute students as I did not always identify with other American students in Taiwan. Daily, I see parachute students alone in the halls, not talking to anyone. Although surrounded by students and other parachute students, they are alone in their loneliness.

In the article, "Stories of Paradise: What Is Home When We Have Left It," Christine Norris quotes Schutz regarding the confused state foreigners find themselves in:

> The foreigner is no longer able to take things for granted. His basic assumptions about being in the world with others are called into question. All that before was unquestionable is now questionable; thus a person is a reflective observer, not himself or herself. He or she is looking for the key to belong, to pass in the world of others. (Schutz, in Norris, 1990, p. 243)

Are the parachute students passing in the American world? Did they land in an area that is not right for them? For some, they may be passing in the classrooms, but they are also passing on the culture and life style outside of the classroom. It is much safer to play computer games on their calculator than it is to meet new friends.

Schutz is correct that foreigners take nothing for granted and that a person becomes a reflective observer. Vicki and her sister Wendy shared how they have changed by coming to the States.

> We have learned a lot from my experiences and we have learned not to talk as much. It is safer to listen and to watch, and we think before we do something. Before we would just do something before we think.
>
> I don't know. I had my talents in Taiwan. I do use my verbal skills more. I would like to sing, act, and speak and I think in America I have limited myself. I really don't know if I stayed in Taiwan it would have been better or worse. (Vicky and Wendy, April 1997, oral conversation)

If they are never truly comfortable in what they do, then how can they call this country their own? If they are always very cautious in their actions, what makes us think that they will ever feel comfortable in the States? Luh (1999) shares that sometimes it takes a generation or two or three to find a place to call home. I hope it does not take the Taiwanese parachute students that long to find a new home and sort out their identities.

Association/Dissassociation: Cultural Tension

When I was an undergraduate political science major, there was an article in the local newspaper regarding the Chinese New Year. On the front cover was a picture of a confused Chinese dragon, with the top part of the dragon in Chinese red, and the bottom part of the dragon painted as an American flag. The entire Chinese community read the article, but more importantly, understood the significance of the dragon. Was the dragon becoming more Chinese or more American?

Cultural tensions exist as the Taiwanese parachute students become more American. Although the Taiwanese parents want their children to learn English, they do not want their children to learn and adopt American customs necessarily. Taiwanese parachute students and Asian Americans may associate with the American lifestyle so much that they disassociate from their Asian culture, friends, and past. Or they may find comfort and safety only around the presence of other parachute students or Asian friends (Lee, 1996; Tsai, 1996). This next section presents some examples of the cultural tensions that exist for Asian Americans and the Taiwanese parachute students.

Reclaiming What Was Once Rejected

I had the opportunity to meet the author Marie G. Lee. She was referred to me by my sister who met Ms. Lee at an Asian American conference. Marie Lee has written many books regarding what it was like to grow up in the States as an Asian American.

I discovered that Marie graduated from Brown University. She went to school with my brother, but did not meet him. It was her intention not to associate with other Asians while attending college. Presently, she has no problem associating with Asian Americans. Dramatically, she has altered her thinking. I asked her to explain what helped her to change and associate with more Asians. She wrote me the following letter.

> Okay, this is kind of long and involved, but I'll try to summarize. I grew up in a rural town in Minnesota that was 100 percent white, not only 100% white but largely Scandinavian (the immigrant group that came to work in the mines) so the majority of the people are platinum blond, no kidding. Also, my parents came in '53, when it was illegal for people to immigrate from East Asia, and there were about 20,000 Koreans in the entire continental US and not likely to be more, so my parents felt that the best chance for us would be to be raised as "American" as possible, i.e., only English, no Korean culture, food, (actually, there wasn't any available back then anyways). So I grew up pretty alienated from my culture and my being Asian was a constant pain. A lot of people in our town were racist, including some teachers, so basically I was called 'chink' (and worse) a lot. So basically, I really wanted to just fit in (like your students) and I associated being Asian with being a loser.
>
> Anyways, when I went to college and met the first people of color (African American, other Asians, etc.) in my life, I slowly had a perception change. As a writer, too, I take what Wittgenstein said to heart (and I paraphrase): a writer has to know herself, really know herself, or whatever she writes will be a form of deceit. Okay so until then I was basically pretending I was a white person, didn't hang around with Asian Americans, etc.
>
> But then I started to think about all the racist things that had happened to me, I realized I could find a lot of strength in the Asian American community. I was one of the founders of the Asian American Writers Workshop, among other things, and being politically active and so forth has been really good for me spiritually: I can finally reclaim that which I spent (wasted) so many years rejecting. I just got a Fulbright fellowship, and I'll be spending the next year in Korea.

> So, that's it in a nutshell. I guess when I finally allowed myself to say, hey I'm Asian, and that's cool, things started to fall into place now. I feel I'm at a good place, in that I have a wonderful Asian American community, but I'm not alienated from other people either (my fiancé, for example, is white). I also see a lot of angry young Asians who take the political stances a little too far. I dislike it when people make facile generalizations about any group. (Marie G. Lee, on email, May 1997)

I wonder if other Asians feel that being Asian means being a loser? Or do they feel that associating with Asians means you are associating with losers? I wonder if the first time in their lives, parachute students become ashamed of the color of their skin? My parents chose not to teach me Chinese because they were afraid, like Marie's parents, that I would be mocked and rejected. Are there other Asians who were denied their cultural heritage because of American facile generalizations? How many parachute students are now pretending to be White? or Black? or Hispanic? Or have they finally accepted that they are Asian? Have they accepted their culture and now are angry for the way they have been treated? Perhaps they are equally angry with themselves for not taking stances earlier and reclaiming what was once rejected in their lives?

Asian Against Asian

Many Asian Americans face racism and rejection from other Asian Americans. These Asian Americans do not want to risk being associated only with Asians or being stereotyped by other non-Asian students. Consequently, many Asian Americans reject their own heritage and culture. What are the repercussions and the ultimate sacrifice with this decision? In what ways, then, are they rejecting themselves?

Many European Americans will lose their ethnic culture after one generation. They do not pass on the language or the customs centering around a culture in which they were raised. Although some of the recipes, culinary treats, and traditional holiday

celebrations may pass on from one generation to the next, the symbolism and representation of the culture is lost. Simply, the next generation accepts the American culture and identifies as American.

However, in many of the Asian cultures, the status of an individual is dependent upon how well one knows his/her heritage. Thus, by rejecting their culture, are Asian adolescents losing a part of their identity and heritage, as well as the respect for the older generation?

Moreover, European Americans can hide themselves in the American culture. They not only can speak English, they can look American. However, Asians can never hide their Asian identity. They may speak English with no accent, but they will always look Asian. They may lose their culture, but they can never lose a part of their identity. They may act and speak and dress like Americans, but they will always have an Asian presence about them.

Many Asian Americans will only associate with Asians of the same nationality. For example, American born Chinese (ABCs) may only associate with other American born Chinese. They not only feel more comfortable with other ABCs, but are embarrassed or feel uncomfortable amongst overseas born Chinese (OBCs). The term "bananas" or "twinkies" often refers to ABCs. ABCs are yellow on the outside, but white on the inside. Is this similar to the experiences of African Americans who are accused of acting White? Are there African Americans who are accused of being an "oreo"? Likewise, is this how African Americans feel towards Africans who come to the States and study? Are Africans more comfortable associating with White America than with African Americans?

At the same time, OBCs, or FOBs, sometimes considered a derogatory term known as “fresh off the boat,” may not feel comfortable associating with ABCs. While associating with other OBCs, they may speak their native dialect knowing that ABCs will not be able to understand them. Some Chinese feel that unless you learn the language, you are not really Chinese.

Who is overseas born anyway? The Thorndike Barnhart Comprehensive Desk Dictionary (1958) defines “overseas” as "across the sea; beyond the sea”(p. 559). I was unable to find an etymological definition of overseas. However, the Oxford English Dictionary (1989) has one definition of overseas as an adverb. Oxford uses the example of an "overseas Chinese: a native of China residing in another country" (p. 1115). Thus, the OBCs can consider the ABC's as really the OBCs? Or is nobody an OBC because none of the parachute students are natives of China? Who can oversee who is overseas? Within the same culture, why do people focus so much on the differences and not on the similarities? Why do people label people on the basis of where they are from rather than on who they are as an individual?

The first time that I visited the church I now attend, a parishioner came up to me and asked if I spoke Chinese. I said no, and she responded by saying, "Shame on you!" and then proceeded to walk away. Although not knowing my integrity and personality, I was looked down upon because of my lack of knowledge of the Chinese language. Nine years later, although this parishioner has thanked me numerous times for the volunteer work I do for the youth, she still insists that I learn Chinese.

Not being totally innocent, I have looked down upon overseas born Chinese. I remember sitting in the car with my close ABC friends, vowing that I would never even

date an OBC woman. I ended up marrying an OBC woman. Of the four gentlemen who made this same vow, three are presently married to OBC woman and the forth one is still single. Dating my wife was an eye opening experience because I noticed myself being drawn to her by her integrity and her purity. Unlike many American born Chinese girls that I had dated, her innocence was refreshing. I remember looking at her and thinking, "Wow! She would be a great mom" before I had considered any thoughts of marrying her.

Have the parachute kids had experiences being disrespected by other Chinese? Have they had experiences of not being accepted by other Chinese because of their physical appearance, the way they dress, or how they speak English? Without being given the opportunity to say hello, were they judged and condemned?

On the other hand, do the Taiwanese parachute students look down upon the ABCs for not knowing their culture, language, and heritage? Wu (1936) shared that as an ABC, he constantly was called names for being a native American not knowing enough of the Chinese heritage. That was in 1936; is this still happening today? Why are Asians fighting amongst Asians? What do they fear?

Asian against Non Asians

Not only can Asian Americans and Taiwanese parachute students become very ethnocentric, they can become very political. Many Asian American and Taiwanese students do not believe that an education alone can bring equal standing in the States. Instead, they want to use their education as a tool to fight racism (Lee, 1996).

Perhaps years of racist comments have influenced Asian students to become more militant. Or perhaps because Asian American parents are considered to be passive and not fight for their children, the children now want to fight for themselves (Schwartz,

2001). Regardless, Asians are becoming more political. Thus, they are rejecting the model minority myth of being passive and obedient to the status quo.

When I was in seventh grade, the murder of Vincent Chin enraged me. Vincent Chin, on the night before his wedding, was beaten up and killed by laid-off auto assembly line workers in Detroit because they thought he was Japanese. Although the murderer admitted to beating up Chin, no one was convicted. In 1997, the brutal beating of six Asian Syracuse University students at a Denny's restaurant on the campus of Syracuse University, enraged the entire Asian community. As the students were being beaten by locals, security officers who were county sheriffs stood by and watched. Only when African American football students came and stopped the fighting did the bloodshed stop. In the Rodney King riots in Los Angeles, many Korean stores and businesses were destroyed and vandalized, where Caucasian run businesses were left untouched. Incidences like this are taught in churches and Asian organizations to assist the Asian American students not to forget and to be careful. Moreover, the Asian American population is more highly educated than before, thus many Asian Americans know their rights. Organizations like the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF), Coalition for Asian Americans, St. Rita's for Southeast Asians, National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium, and Organization of Chinese Americans are being funded and supported to address the rising incidences of racism against Asians.

Many Asian Americans differ regarding what they feel they should do. Asian Americans, like my sister who worked as an attorney for AALDEF, believe that Asian Americans are not political enough. She shares that the illegal arrest of Wen Ho Lee and the shooting down of the American spy plane in China have only increased animosity

toward the Chinese and Asian Americans. Whereas, others like Marie Lee, who shares in the previous quote, “angry young Asians who take the political stance a little too far” believe Asian Americans should not be so judgmental.

What are the Taiwanese parachute students doing? Are they becoming more political, or are they maintaining the more traditional role of being silent? Have they decided to exemplify the model minority myth or become an activist for the rights of every Asian American?

The Influence of the Taiwanese Parachute Students' Parents

> It is impossible to write about Asian American students without talking about their parents. (Marie Lee, on email, 2001)

Although far away, for some, the parental influence on the Taiwanese parachute students can be intense. The pressure that students feel as their parents come to the States to visit is both stressful and exhausting. A time of joy with family reunions can be scarred by arguments full of miscommunication and misunderstanding. This next section addresses concerns that Taiwanese parachute students have when their parents come to visit them. I have included many quotes from the Taiwanese parachute students who share their experiences.

Language Barriers Between Parents and Students

> Sometimes there is a difference of opinion. I think I understand what she (her mom) is saying, but I don't accept it necessarily. It is hard also because I don't necessarily know all the words I want to say in Chinese to let myself communicate effectively. I think that hurts a lot between me and my parents. There is a communication barrier. It is not really a communication barrier in terms of I don't know how to speak the language. I just don't think I word it well enough and just the fact the different cultural ways of thinking. (Jen-Yi, April 1997, oral conversation)

Parachute students express difficulty communicating with their parents. As a school counselor, I interact with students who claim they have difficulty communicating with their parents everyday. Unlike their American counterparts, however, language and cultural barriers are more severe in contributing to this difficulty in communication. How ironic in that as these students come to the States, they immediately face a language barrier not knowing English. However, as they stay in the States, a language barrier develops between them and their parents. As these students enter the States as elementary and secondary students, they do not receive high school level Chinese. Their ability to express what they truly want to say and feel in Chinese is limited. They face a double linguistic role. How do they think in Chinese? In English?

I have seen parachute students struggle with their Chinese. I see this phenomenon occur numerous times when I witness Jen-Yi talking to her parents. She may begin a sentence in Chinese, but then insert English words within her sentences. It is accepted within the Chinese community that this language is known as "Chinglish." The problem is that Jen-Yi's parents and other Taiwanese parents do not comprehend "Chinglish" very well. “When a person lives in a language, he is filled with the sense of the unsurpassable appropriateness of the words he uses for the subject matter he is talking about. It seems impossible that other words in other languages could name things equally well” (Gadamer, 1960/1989, pp. 401-402). This is very true when Chinglish is substituted for Mandarin or Taiwanese.

In addition, by the parachute students coming to the States to study, many parachute students do not learn "famous Chinese proverbs." These famous Chinese proverbs are used when sharing life examples or lessons regarding life. “Every language

conveys its own teaching and carries its meaning into the listener's mind" (Merleau Ponty, 1962/1998, p. 179). Yet, no teaching can be conveyed when the listener does not understand what has been said. For example, my father in law loves to teach me famous Chinese proverbs that have significant life lessons. When I say these proverbs to some of the parachute students, they do not understand what I am saying. As the parachute students do not learn parts of their language, they are simultaneously denied parts of their culture and an ability to communicate with their parents. Gadamer (1960/1989) shares, "Mastering a language is a necessary precondition for coming to an understanding in a conversation" (p. 385). Both parties have not mastered anyone's language and only are reaching for understanding parts of what is communicated.

It is frustrating not to be able to express yourself and understand others. This is a constant feeling one has when one attempts to become bilingual. However, to have a language barrier in addition to a communication barrier, cultural barrier, and generation gap when conversing with one's parents is both stressful and tension filled.

This tension and stress cause the Taiwanese parachute students to not want to communicate with their parents. Why should they want to communicate with their parents when it only leads to conflict? Thus, they avoid their parents by not being with them. Jen-Yi would always try to be out at night. In her words, she could "deal" with her parents in the morning because they were still struggling with jet lag and, thus, did not want to talk as much. Wendy and Vicki would tell their male friends not to call when their father was around. It was not worth the effort of explaining who called. Instead, they would stay after school talking to friends rather than going home and talking to their parents.

Silent Language--Different Roles

The nonverbal communication between parent and child is very different in the Taiwanese tradition. English is a spoken language, but often, Chinese is a silent language. When an American parent is quiet, I think that something is bothering that individual or he/she is contemplating something important. When I see a Taiwanese parent quiet, I think nothing is bothering him/her. If the parents don't say anything, then the Taiwanese children can properly assume that the parents are content with the status quo. However, if the Taiwanese parents see their children very quiet, they cannot properly assume that nothing is bothering their children. Their children have accepted and model American nonverbal behavior.

"High-context communication, favored by Asians, does not require clear, exact verbal expression; it relies on interpretation of shared assumptions, non verbal signals (like body movement) and the situation" (Schwartz, 2001, p. 2). For the Taiwanese parents, it is not what you say, it is what you do. As my wife would say, "They listen to what you do." If you're tense, they will be tense and uncomfortable. If you do not show proper respect nonverbally, they will not acknowledge you or look down upon you. If you walk a certain way, they think you came from a certain part of the world. You can be judged before you have spoken.

I learned to understand this communication behavior the hard way. When I first started to date Jia-Shieu, I was scared of her father. When I would walk into a room, I would say hello and he would not respond. I thought to myself, "He surely must hate me. He must think I am too Americanized for his daughter." Only later did I realize that he

was not upset at me. And only later when I began to relax and not be so tense, did her father begin to warm up to me.

Not only are Taiwanese parents often silent, they are not accustomed to expressing their feelings. Although silence is considered satisfactory in the Chinese culture, at times it is considered inappropriate and irritating to the parachute students. Vicki, Wendy, Jen-Yi, and my wife have never seen their fathers cry. They have seen their fathers angry, but they have never heard their fathers express that they were sad or happy or confused. As the parachute students are sometimes hard to read, do they feel that their parents are also hard to read? Do the parachute students wish that their parents did not hide in their silence?

Jen-Yi considers the communication barriers so damaging to her relationship with her parents, that she does not recommend that parents send their children to the States to study. She feels that Taiwanese parents should research communication styles before sending their children abroad.

> It is different because parent roles in Taiwan are very different than parent roles in America and even though your parents are Taiwanese, you are living in America. You are seeing what other people's parents are doing and you are wondering why your parents aren't doing those things. Your parents don't realize that that is required of them here. And so the parents should research how things are done here. But the problem is that Chinese parents are not known to be communicative. They don't go and talk to their children and say, "What's wrong?" If something is bothering American children, their parents will go and talk to them. A lot of times a child feels like if I go and say something, I am considered weak. It is a screwed up Asian philosophy. Unless there is a great deal of research in communication between the parents and the children, I don't think I would suggest it (students studying in the States) at all. (Jen-Yi, April 1997, oral conversation)

If there is no substantive communication between parent and child, how can there be sympathetic understanding between them? The parachute students face an

overwhelming number of communication barriers with their parents. Miscommunication with language barriers and misunderstandings with non verbal behaviors complicate the communication process. To complicate matters, silence does not help. What can the Taiwanese parachute students do to improve the communication between their parents and themselves?

Distance Barriers

> And they have different ways of thinking. It is different enough between parent and children, but when it is like culturally too. It is totally different. And when they grew up it was totally different. They grew up with the after effects of World War II. They experienced all these hardships and so whenever we experience any hardships they think, "Oh, a piece of cake!" And so it is just different. (Jen-Yi, April 1997, oral conversation)

At the same time there exists a language barrier, a cultural barrier develops because of the parachute students' different lived experiences in the States. Parachute students become more “Americanized,” and the parents, unless living in the States for an extended period of time, do not adopt the American thinking style.

In Vicki's and Wendy's situation, their mother lives with them and their mother has become very "Americanized." Her English is excellent. They see their father about three weeks out of the year. Jen-Yi sees her parents about four weeks out of the year. Jen-Yi, Vicki, and Wendy all shared that when they lived in Taiwan, they rarely saw their fathers. They were either on business trips or always working. How can they establish an amicable relationship with their parents, when they never see them?

The parachute students are used to this separation from their parents. Yet, when they communicate with their parents, they feel pressure and conflicts develop. Vicki shares, "I feel a lot of pressure from my mom regarding the friends that I have. My

parents hold different opinions. My dad is more conservative than my mom. When he comes back he is like, 'Who is Mike and who is John?'" Jen-Yi shares that her father does not have lengthy conversations and debates with her.

> Actually, he doesn't explain, he just says. That is just how it goes. This is what he says he says, " You go to Maryland (University of Maryland)." My way of negotiating was saying, "Okay, let me go to Maryland, but let me live at school." They finally agreed to that. There is a different level of communication and a different basis of communication. He is the father figure and he says to me, do this or I want you to do this. And I say but, blah blah blah. And unless it is a very good "but" it doesn't go anywhere. I think that generally is a rule between Taiwanese parents and children. (Jen-Yi, April 1997, oral conversation)

My wife shared with me that her father makes commands that she perform certain tasks. There exists some room for discussion. However, even if her argument appears to be more sensible, her father will continue to insist his personal preferences. How can Taiwanese parachute students establish a positive relationship with their parents when their opinions are not considered? Are the parachute students really paratroopers, following the orders of their parents?

Even though the fathers are out of their children's personal lives for eleven months of the year, they feel that when they come to visit, their will takes precedence. It is either the parents' way or the highway. Regardless of the fact that they have not been present for several months, in their eyes their ideas are superior and should be followed. Jen-Yi summarizes what many parachute students feel when she shares, "They (my parents) are not around for months on end. Then they come to visit and they want to control my life. This is crazy" (Jen-Yi, April 1997, oral conversation). For many parachute students, controlling their lives means parents opening their mail, looking through their rooms, and reading their emails. Controlling their lives means parents

listening to their phone calls, taking their bedroom doors off, and spying. Controlling their lives means parents telling them what to do without really asking what their children want to do. These examples I have heard from numerous parachute students. Do parachute students feel that their parents are not only far in distance, but far in feelings, respect, and care?

Cultural Barriers

Not only do parachute students become frustrated communicating with their parents, in particular, with their fathers, they have great difficulty overcoming cultural barriers with their parents. In this section, I will use this list of scenarios to explain what their lived experiences are when overcoming cultural barriers with their parents.

Overcoming cultural barriers with your parents means:

Telling them to not belch at the dinner table without excusing themselves.
Telling them to stop picking their nose in public.
Telling them to stop cutting their nails at the dinner table while you are eating.
Telling your Dad to stop walking around the house with just his underwear.
Telling them to stop speaking about your friends in front of them in Chinese.
Telling them to stop yelling at you in front of your friends in public.
Telling them to stop saying how fat you are in front of your relatives.
Telling them to stop pointing out your extra large zit to total strangers.
Telling them that it is okay to eat American food once in a while.
Telling them that sodas are a lot more fun to drink than tea.
Telling them that it is okay to dress down in public.
Telling them that you don't want to watch Chinese soap operas 24 hours a day.
Telling them what a prom is.
Telling them that you really want to go to a prom.
Telling them that who you go to a prom with is not who you are going to marry.
Telling them that just because napkins and condiments are free doesn't mean you take a family supply home.
Telling them that non Chinese guys/gals are cute people too.
Telling them that the Chinese way is not the only way.
Telling them that it is okay to sleep in on a Saturday morning.
Telling them that to always expect straight A's on your report card is impossible.
Telling them that extra-curricular activities are important to colleges.
Telling them you want them to stay home instead of playing mahjong.
Telling them it means a lot to you if they could take some time off to see

your basketball games.
Telling them it's possible to go to basketball practice and still get good grades.
Telling them it's important to have friends of the opposite sex too.
Telling them to stop putting very ethnic Chinese food in your lunches.
Telling them that you prefer that they use your American name in public.
Telling them that not every aspect of your business is their business too.
Telling them that you don't want to be a doctor, lawyer, or computer engineer.
Telling them that you are not an old maid by the time you are twenty-five.
Telling them that it is okay to cry.
Telling them that you love them.

I shared these examples with many parachute students and everyone laughed. Some parachute students were quick to point out that these examples are not exclusively limited to the Asian American population. However, everyone agreed that the above examples did present an overall picture of what are some of the cultural differences that Taiwanese parachute students experience with their parents.

B's Are Not Good Enough

> Getting into Harvard, my parents told me, meant that I'd be set for life. I knew there had to be some reason for the rigid curfews, extra homework assignments, and despair I'd suffered through high school. My friends went to parties on weekends; I was the only one who ever had to stay in to do homework. "B's aren't good enough" was my father's favorite saying. I was the only one who sweated through pages and pages of labyrinthine college application forms, genuflected daily to the mailbox all through April, and eventually left for college via the local airport, not the bus station. (Lee, 1994, p. 1)

In the book Saying Goodbye, Marie G. Lee (1994) creates a fictional character who represents herself in her high school senior year. Marie Lee was the only Korean in her small Minnesota high school. Growing up in a small Minnesota town, she shared with me how her father would say to her that, "B's are not good enough."

It is not surprising that many Asian American students experience pressure from their parents. Parents want to see their children succeed. However, is the pressure that parents exert on their children unrealistic? The suicide rate of Asian American women

ages 15 to 24 is second only to Native Americans, and above Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics (Chung & Kwon, 1999). Is this suicide rate directly related to the pressure created from Asian parents? Is pressure coming from other sources like from within themselves? Are their experiences in the States so depressing, that they want to permanently escape by hurting themselves? Who are they comparing themselves too? In what manner do they see them SELVES? How might anxiety be a positive way to confront self?

Although parents put pressure on their children to succeed, most parents do not get involved in the school. Most parents are not in the States to be active with their child's school. Second, many Asian parents believe that they are not supposed to interfere with the school process, and consider teachers who seek parental involvement as incompetent (Schwartz, 2001).

Not Measuring Up: Parental Pressure

I remember growing up hearing my mom discuss with my brothers and sisters that they should attend M.I.T. or Harvard. Those were the only two colleges that I thought existed. When I brought my report card home, my father would make me stand at attention as he reviewed my progress. I would look down making sure that I would never look into his eyes. If I did, it was a sign of disrespect. How is the pedagogical presence between parent and child experienced if eyes cannot meet? How are the two locked together if deep seeing is not possible through the gaze? What did my father miss seeing by not being able to look in my eyes? What did I miss seeing not being able to look in his eyes?

It became very apparent early in my life, that I would not be a brain surgeon. My parents considered sending me to a special school other than where my brothers and sisters were attending. They thought that I might need some special services. I did receive some special tutors in grade two, but these tutor sessions quickly ended. My father was furious at me for performing poorly in school. When I was six years old, I remember sitting on the ground trying to tie my shoes. My father was yelling at me for such a poor report card. He asked me to spell the word, "shoe." I thought and thought and it felt like an eternity till I finally gave him an answer. I said, "I don't know." He yelled, "You don't know!?" Then my mother pushed my father aside into another room telling him to calm down. As a second grader, I felt pressure to perform better in school. By the end of the school year, I had raised my grades and was promoted three reading levels higher. Although I had improved, I was never confident that I was a good student. Why did my father put so much pressure on me? Was he afraid I would fail as a student or was he afraid he would fail as a parent? Why was there so much pressure to succeed academically and not socially, emotionally, or physically?

All five of my brothers and sisters graduated in the top ten of their graduating high school classes. I graduated in the top twenty-five percent of my class. My brothers and sisters attended prestigious schools like Brown University, University of Pennsylvania, University of Michigan, and the University of Notre Dame. I attended the University of Rochester. I remember sharing with friends that I was embarrassed that I would be attending “the University of Rejects.” It would hurt when my mom would say to me that if I would have tried harder in school, I could have been accepted to a better college. She would brag much more about her two other sons who were attending Brown

University and Notre Dame. My father and mother would compare my brothers and sisters to the Sun family, whose children primarily went to Ivy League schools. The Sun parents, Aunt Sadie and Uncle Donald, would compare their children to the Yu family, whose three daughters went to M.I.T. and Harvard. At times, it did feel that whatever we did was not good enough.

We discovered when we were much older that my parents would brag about all of their children's accomplishments, but they would never brag in front of us. They did this because they were proud of us, but they wanted to make sure we did not become conceited and lethargic. We were expected to succeed academically. An excuse did not exist to explain if we did poorly in school. It was understood that if my father could attend medical school in the States without knowing any English, then we should be able to succeed academically.

Do the parachute students feel that there is too much pressure on them to succeed academically? "The intense pressure upon children to succeed often leads to intergenerational conflicts, and many Asian Pacific Islander children suffer from anxiety, social isolation, and low self-esteem because of their mediocre performance" (Schwartz, 2001, p. 2). What are their experiences dealing with high expectations from themselves or their parents? On the contrary, since only thirty-five percent of middle school students are allowed to attend high school in Taiwan, do they feel fortunate and not worried about succeeding academically?

Alone Again

> Amidst the cut and thrust of life, especially when times are difficult, it is good to know you have your family. (O'Donohue, 1999, p. 31)

Even with all the heartaches of being away from family, and the loneliness of being dropped off in the States, for the most part, the Taiwanese parachute students are happy that they have a family. For many, "The family is the most powerful structure of human belonging in the world" (O'Donohue, 1999, p. 30). They will always belong in their family. And when they see their parents leave to return to Taiwan, it must be hard on them. Some students are very resentful of their parents for leaving. However, many cry when they leave, knowing that they are alone again (Chao, 1997).

When Jia-Shieu's parents would leave, Jia-Shieu would ask me to stay at her parents' house and take care of her little sister. At night, I would wake up and hear her sister crying in her bedroom. Her tears would pop off her face and she would hold her stomach for she was crying so hard. Although I tried to console her, I was not family. No words could describe how much she missed her family. "If parents were fully aware of their effect, they would never act" (O'Donohue, 1999, p. 32). If the Taiwanese parents could see their children cry at night from loneliness, would they leave them at such a young age?

"Parents try to make up for emotional neglect by providing plenty of financial support. School officials say many parachute kids dress very well and come to class with fancy calculators and electronic dictionaries" (Chao, 1997, p. 4). However, nice clothes, fancy calculators, and electronic dictionaries do not hug the Taiwanese parachute students back. Nice clothes and toys do not show emotional support and guidance. For some parachute students, they are on their own again.

Continuing the Journey

This chapter, Exploring the Phenomenon of Taiwanese Parachute Students, offers a beginning background of the lived experiences of being a parachute student in the States. I have highlighted a variety of themes that surfaced while I began to explore the different possibilities arising from their lived experiences. Equally important, I have discovered many new dimensions of my own experiences and the experiences of Taiwanese parachute students. In subsequent chapters, the stories of others will help to illuminate further this phenomenon. There is much that is still unknown.

In the next chapter, I describe the philosophical grounding of my research methodology as I continue to be engaged in the question, **What are the lived experiences of Taiwanese parachute students?**

CHAPTER THREE:
PREPARING FOR THE POST LANDING:
PHENOMENOLGICAL FOUNDATIONS AND METHODOLOGY

In Chapter One, I describe my experience turning to the phenomenon of Taiwanese parachute students as a research interest, an interest that has developed from spending nine months in Taiwan as well as from my lived experiences with Taiwanese parachute students. Through my experiences with them and listening to their shared experiences, I have developed a deeper understanding and insight into their daily lives. Listening, writing, and reflecting on their lived experiences helps me to expand and reveal new understanding and insights regarding Taiwanese parachute students.

In Chapter Two, I explore my phenomenon of Taiwanese parachute students from the cultural, family, social, and linguistic influences that help paint a beginning picture of Taiwanese parachute students' lived experiences. I have opened my phenomenon by using metaphors, poems, etymological tracings, pre-understandings, and my students' personal experiences. Moreover, throughout Chapters One and Two, I have included my own experiences of being an American Chinese parachute student in Taiwan. The first two chapters have established a foundation and background for my study.

The focus of this chapter is the elucidation of the philosophical grounding and methodology that is employed in this hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry into my research of the question, What is it like to be a Taiwanese parachute student? This chapter focuses on what hermeneutic phenomenology is and why I chose this methodology for my study. I review the methodological structure inherent in phenomenology according to van Manen's (1990) framework and provide a description of the process I use to complete my phenomenological study.

Inquiring with Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the "study of the lifeworld, - the world as we immediately experience it pre-reflectively rather than as we conceptualize, categorize, or reflect on it" (van Manen, 1990, p. 9). Heidegger shows how phenomenology comes from two words: *phenomenon* and *logos*. Phenomenon is derived from the verb *phainesthai* meaning to show itself. *Logos* has many meanings, but in regard to phenomenology, *logos* means to make manifest what is being talked about in speech. Heidegger (1927/1966) writes:

> Logos lets something be seen (*phainesthai*) namely what is being talked about, and indeed for the speaker (who serves as the medium) or for those who speak with each other.....In speech (*apophansis*), insofar as it is genuine, what is said should be derived from what is being talked about. In this way spoken communication, in what it says, makes manifest what it is talking about and thus makes it accessible to another. (pp. 28-29)

With the combination of the two terms, one could state that phenomenology means to make known in speech what shows itself. Heidegger states that phenomenology means "to let what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself" (Heidegger, 1927/1966, p. 30). The etymological basis of *phenomenonon* originates from the Greek interpretation "to be seen," "to appear," or "to show," and the etymological meaning of *logos*, comes from the Greek meaning "discourse" (Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology, 1966, p. 674). Phenomenology is a discursive process which brings forward something to be seen or made apparent: as such, it is a revealing of a phenomenon as it truly appears.

"Hermeneutics is the theory and practice of interpretation" (van Manen, 1990, p. 179). The word derives from the Greek god Hermes who was responsible for communicating messages from the gods to everyday mortals. Heidegger would add that the word hermeneutics is closely related to the character of *hermeneuiein*, where being is

made known, and that hermeneutics is the interpretation of the being of *Da-sein*, understanding the possibilities of being from the text (Heidegger, 1927/1966). Hermeneutics bridges the gap between the taken for granted world and the strangeness of meaning that evades penetrating the realities of our known world. Rather than restoring or reproducing an original production, hermeneutics is a self penetration of the Spirit that carries out hermeneutical tasks (Gadamer 1960/1989). It describes how one interprets to avoid misunderstanding, as well as how one comes to an understanding of the possibilities of being revealed by the text.

"Phenomenology describes how one orients to lived experience; hermeneutics describes how one interprets the 'text' of life" (van Manen, 1990, p. 4). Together they provide an interpretation of how one orients to and understands lived experiences. The facts of lived experiences are captured in language, the human science text, and this is inevitably an interpretive process just as understanding is always an interpretation. Hermeneutics and phenomenology are applied simultaneously, as if they can not be separated, to determine the essence of a phenomenon.

Heidegger's Being of Being--*Da-Sein*

Heidegger was the first philosopher to connect hermeneutics and phenomenology into his ontological project to answer the question, "What is the meaning of being?" The question of being is directly related to experiences in the life world. Phenomenologists are intentionally making connections between the world and the experience. They explore an experience, question an experience, and question the world in which the experiences occur (Torres-Querral, 1999), determining what is known and unknown. Ultimately, they examine what is being and what is the essence of being.

"This *being* which we ourselves in each case are and which includes inquiry among the possibilities of its *being* we formulate terminology as *Da-sein"* (Heidegger,1927/1966, p. 6). *Da* in ordinary German means to be "here or there" and *sein* means to be. *Dasein* means to be here or to be there for the phenomenon. *Da-sein* implies the understanding of the *being* of beings accessible within the world. Heidegger (1927/1966) writes:

> As far as content goes, phenomenology is the science of the being of beings--ontology. In our elucidation of the tasks of ontology the necessity arose for a fundamental ontology which would have as its theme that being which is ontologically and ontically distinctive, namely, *Da-sein*. This must be done in such a way that our ontology confronts the cardinal problem, the question of the meaning of being in general. (p. 33)

Da-sein is the terminology of the human being's kind of being. For Heidegger, *Da-sein* is inherently hermeneutic and phenomenological because to understand *Da-sein's* being, one has to show one's being and be understood. One attempts to understand one's way of being in the world. Van Manen (1990) expands on this issue.

> Thus, for Heidegger ... phenomenology is ontology—a study of the modes of "being in the world" of human being. Heidegger's professed aim is to let the things of the world speak for themselves. He asks: What is the nature (Being) of this being? What lets this being be what it is? (p. 184)

To find out what lets the Taiwanese parachute students' "being" be is the purpose of this investigation. Hermeneutic phenomenology lets the things of the world speak for themselves, and the methodology allows me to uncover "being" a parachute student.

Care In Being

> Being in the world has the character of being of "care." (Heidegger, 1927/1966, p. 185)

As a human being is made up of body and spirit, Heidegger contends that being has as its origin the being of care. Care dominates and is part of being as long as that

being exists. Heidegger considers this care not to be a selfish care towards oneself, but that human beings are full of care and guided by a dedication to care for or about something or some cause. To become what one can be is a result of care. Heidegger (1927/1966) shares, "The *perfectio* of human being--becoming what one can be in being free for one's own most possibilities (project) --is an accomplishment of "care" (p. 185). Care assists us to live as ethical persons, what *Da-sein* entails.

To care is to question something so much, that you complete a study on that particular topic. To care is to hope that what you do, makes a positive difference in this world and in the lives of others. To care is to be dedicated to some cause or purpose, which makes you a better person for caring so much and for having the ability to care.

Van Manen (1990) tells us that, "Phenomenological research is the attentive practice of thoughtfulness….For us this phenomenological interest of doing research materializes itself in our everyday practical concerns as parents, teachers, teacher educators, psychologists, child care specialists, or school administrators" (p. 12). The purpose of phenomenological research in the human sciences is not understanding for understanding's sake. Rather, "The insights gained through hermeneutical phenomenological research serve our thoughtful practice within the human sciences" (Fowler, 2001, p. 89). Hermeneutic phenomenology allows phenomenologists to practice care and thoughtfulness in human science research.

In addition, the care involved in hermeneutic phenomenology is a service. Gadamer (1960/1989) addresses the notion of service.

> Hermeneutics in the sphere of philology and the historical sciences is not "knowledge as domination"--i.e., an appropriation as taking possession; rather, it consists in subordinating ourselves to the text's claim to dominate our minds. Of this, however, legal and theological hermeneutics are the

> true model. To interpret the law's will or the promises of God is clearly not a form of domination but of service. They are interpretations--which include application-- in the service of what is valid. (p. 311)

Gadamer's words remind us that interpretation is a practice in which phenomenologists serve others. The information and insights gained from this study are means to inform the thoughtful practice of school counselors, administrators, teachers, and ESOL instructors. And, of course, the insights gained from this study are to be shared with Taiwanese parents and Taiwanese parachute students as a form of care, thoughtfulness, and service.

To reach a point where there is true service and true thoughtfulness, one has to care. If there is no care, then the phenomenologist will not be able to know the participants' true being, the true essence of what the participants' lived experiences entail. If there is no care, then the service rendered will be a disservice and thoughtless to the study participants. Thus, the being of care is a part of knowing *Da-sein's* being. Care is an integral part of truly turning to the phenomenon and attempting to understand the lived experiences of others.

Dr. Heidegger/ "Mr. Hide"

> He was (with the possible exception of Wittgenstein) the greatest philosopher of the twentieth century. He was (with the possible exception of Hegel) the greatest charlatan ever to claim the title of 'philosopher', a master of hollow verbiage masquerading as profundity. He was an irredeemable German redneck, and, for a time, a gullible and self-important Nazi. He was a pungent, if inevitably covert, critic of Nazism, a discerning analyst of the ills of our age and our best hope of a cure for them. Each of these claims has been advanced, with greater or lesser plausibility, on Heidegger's behalf. Who was the man who provokes these contrasting reactions? (Inwood, 1997, p. 1)

Perhaps my most morally challenging question in this entire dissertation process has been whether to use Heidegger's philosophy in my work. Although I admit that I

have not examined the personal backgrounds of the other philosophers that I have drawn upon, Heidegger's participation in the Nazi movement haunts my willingness to use his work. For many years, I refused to quote Heidegger and I reluctantly read material about him. However, as I continue working on my dissertation, and in particular my philosophical grounding, I have become more open to study Heidegger's philosophical ideas, but less comfortable knowing Heidegger the person.

Some of Heidegger's thinking was brilliant. After all, he is considered the most important phenomenologist of this century and one of the most profound thinkers of our time. Heidegger considered himself only a philosopher (Safranski, 1998). Was part of being "only a philosopher" not to act on one's thoughts? For Heidegger, was thinking quite enough to do? Heidegger did not accept the concept that "Any thinking not related to action as something external to it loses its dignity and worth; it becomes void" (Safranski, 1998, p. 365). Thinking lets beings be.

Yet, because he was a thinker, did he take the easy road in life and not necessarily the righteous road? Did he support what he stood for and what he said by his actions? He never apologized for being a part of the Nazi party. He never condemned the Nazis for the systematic extermination of the Jews. He did not take a stand for the Jews in the 1950's and 60's, years after the Nazi influence. Was he brilliant but at the same time blind?

Hannah Arendt (1958) shares, "In acting and in speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world" (p. 179). Did Heidegger reveal who he truly was by his inaction? Or did he have a sense of social concern only in the abstract, in the mind?

Perhaps because he was so invested in his work and the establishing of his work, he failed to realize what was happening around his work. Was he drawn too far into his own *Da-Sein* that he had lost sight of the being of others? Was he so consumed with his dream that he did not face reality?

In 1997, I came to a crossroad in my doctoral journey. I was debating to quit and settle for a Masters in administration. However, I was encouraged by my spiritual director, doctoral advisor, and by many nuns and priests in the Catholic church to continue with the program. They shared with me that with my doctorate, more people would be willing to hear what I wanted to express. It became apparent to me that earning a doctorate was a part of my dream. At the same time, I struggled with the fact that my time spent working on my doctorate was time taken away from working with others. When I raised the issues about so much work needing to be done, and so many people needing assistance, many responded that I would help them much more with my degree than without. Thus, every hour I spend working on my doctorate is one less hour with my students, one less hour assisting the poor, and one less hour I spend with my family. This is a tension that I struggle with and endure in my doctoral journey.

Did Heidegger have a narcissistic pursuit of philosophy, or was his pursuit of the ontological exploration of the nature of Being his gift to society? In his eyes, was his philosophic pursuit the best way to contribute to society? Did he experience tension like I have, not knowing that his words would be more beneficial to society than his works? When I discovered that Heidegger struggled ethically with what he did and wrote, and that he had dreams unfulfilled of establishing a philosophical utopia and become the next

Plato, I realized that Heidegger was a man like any other man. He had faults like any of his peers, and he struggled as would anyone during the Nazi era.

What would I have done during the times of Hitler and Nazi Germany? Heidegger did not live in the death camps and may have been aware of the racism against the Jews, but unaware of their physical persecution. Similarly, I was unaware of the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, the massacres in Zimbabwe, or the racial restrictions of the American Indians on US reservations. And when I became aware of these atrocities, I chose to do nothing. Am I so holy that I am to judge him critically? Why do I look at the speck in my brother's eye when I may have a plank in my own eye? No one is purely innocent.

In summary, there are many questions I have concerning Heidegger that I cannot answer. Intellectually, I bow to the brilliance within the man, but I do not bow to the man. I realize that if I am to complete a dissertation using hermeneutic phenomenology, I have to recognize the author who connected these two philosophic approaches. Thus, I respect Heidegger's wisdom and am grateful for it. I give him credit for his work, and his works are both brilliant and thought provoking. And it is this part of the man that I wish to recognize in my work. It is this part of the man that enhances understanding and concern for others. His brilliant ideas and not his political affiliations, are what I acknowledge in developing my philosophical grounding.

Phenomenological Research in the Writing Process

> Human science meaning can only be communicated textually – by way of organized narrative or prose. And that is why the human science researcher is engaged in the reflective activity of textual labor.
> (van Manen, 1990, p. 78)

Although it has been said, “The method of phenomenology and hermeneutics is that there is no method” (Gadamer, 1960/1989), there is a tradition and a body of knowledge and insight that forms the ground for human science research practices. Van Manen (1990) believes that a phenomenological hermeneutic approach and an organized textual practice of writing can not be separated. It is important to write in such a way that human science researchers can recognize the guidelines and recommendations inherent in this principled form of inquiry.

Van Manen’s (1990) methodological themes have a structure that is practical in completing hermeneutic phenomenological research. These methodological guidelines consist of six essential and related research activities for the purpose of bringing forward clarity, purpose, and guidance in the search for grasping lived experiences. The six methodological themes reveal the elemental structure of how human science research can be pursued. As stated in Chapter One, the six research activities are:

(1) turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
(2) investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
(3) reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
(4) describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
(5) maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
(6) balancing the research context by considering parts and whole. (pp. 30 –31)

Although a certain order is implied by the methodological presentation, one can work on various activities intermittently or simultaneously. There is no definite step by step linear research procedure to follow. This methodology is both flexible and open to allow the phenomenon to reveal itself. Critical moments of inquiry are dependent on the

interpretive sensitivity, inventive thoughtfulness, scholarly tact, and the writing talent of the human science researcher (van Manen, 1990).

Turning to My Phenomenon

> This starting point of phenomenological research is largely a matter of identifying what it is that deeply interests you or me and of identifying this interest as a true phenomenon, i.e., as some experience that human beings live through. (van Manen, 1990, p. 40)

The starting point of my phenomenological research of the lived experiences of Taiwanese parachute students was when I first began to date my wife. I would visit her at her house and realized that her parents were half way around the world, but her youngest sister was in the States. As an educator and a counselor, I was baffled at how her parents could allow her youngest sister to grow up in the States without them. To my surprise, I later discovered that my wife also grew up without her parents. Their experiences amazed me and I found myself asking more and more questions.

Moreover, as I began to work as a youth leader for my church, I met more parachute students, some arriving with one parent, some with just their siblings. Their world was unknown to me, but at the same time, I wanted to be a part of their world. I had developed a certain interest in them and as a graduate student, I jumped at the opportunities to study them.

As my studies increased, not only was I orienting to the phenomenon, I was formulating the phenomenological question. When van Manen (1990) and Merleau - Ponty (1962/1998) write that phenomenology is the study of essences, they are both instructing the phenomenologist to write a description so that the structure of a lived experience is revealed. It is revealed in such a fashion that the reader is able to grasp the

nature and significance of an experience in a unique and unseen way. Van Manen (1990) writes:

> When a phenomenologist asks for the essence of a phenomenon--a lived experience --then the phenomenological inquiry is not unlike an artistic endeavor, a creative attempt to somehow capture a certain phenomenon of life in a linguistic description that is both holistic and analytical, evocative and precise, unique and universal, powerful and sensitive. (p. 39)

Thus an appropriate topic for phenomenological inquiry is determined by the questioning of the essence of a lived experience. Gadamer shares, "The question is the opening up, and keeping open of possibilities" (1960/1989, p. 266). One question leads to other questions that bring forward lived experiences in more illuminating ways. Ironically, phenomenological questions might continue to be opened throughout the study, so that a different question announces itself toward the completion of a study. “Only the person who knows how to ask questions is able to persist in his questioning which involves being able to preserve his orientation toward openness” (Gadamer, 1960/1989, p. 367). I must be open to what truly is revealed when studying my phenomenon.

The art of questioning is the art of conversation. Questioning is dialectic because it is the art of conducting a dialogue (Gadamer, 1960/1989). Questions and answers within a conversation bring to light the strength of what has been said, of what needs to be brought forward to reveal the essence of a phenomenon. The inherent purpose for using questions is that they assist the participant and phenomenologist to think more deeply about the meaning of a lived experience.

Phenomenology’s ultimate aim is the “fulfillment of our human nature: to become more fully who we are” (van Manen, 1990, p. 12). By doing a phenomenological study, I

not only get to know my students better, I get to know myself better. The Taiwanese parachute students and I are able to see the true significance of their lived moments and how those moments have affected them. Simultaneously, I get to experience how phenomenology opens my eyes to see aspects about myself that I did not know previously existed.

Chapter One traces my turning to the phenomenon of the lived experiences of Taiwanese parachute students. I had an interest and I had questions surface from my interest. I found myself deeply interested in that which makes the question possible in the first place (van Manen, 1990). I began to live the questions, become the questions, especially in Taiwan, and question the questions until that which was put to question began to reveal something of its essential nature. My turning is not a one time occurrence. Rather, it is a process, a continuous developing, that draws me into a deeper encounter with the phenomenon.

Investigating Experiences in the Parachute Students' World

Van Manen (1990) suggests using personal experience as a starting point for investigating a phenomenon. A phenomenologist who shares his/her own experiences acknowledges that they are also the possible experiences of others. In Chapters One and Two, I wrote about several of my own experiences for the purpose of revealing a theme or opening up my phenomenon.

An additional benefit of sharing personal accounts is that I get to know myself better. As a counselor and an educator, it is imperative that I know myself. Butt (1995) shares that "In order to take up the challenge of authentic teaching, it is essential for the teacher to know themselves [sic] as explicitly as possible" (p. 11). By knowing my true

self, I can assist my students to see who they truly are, instead of what they think they are. I can help them to be true to themselves because I am true to myself.

Another textual source that van Manen (1990) recommends is the etymological tracing of root derivatives of words. Words we use to refer or explain a phenomenon often lose some of their original meaning. However, examining the etymological origin of a word brings us to its original form, the original intent of the meaning of the word. In turn, this can bring new insights into the meaning of a phenomenon. Gadamer (1960/1989) suggests, "From the way that words change, we can discover the way that customs and values change" (p. 449). Fowler (1999) states, "A recognition of such changes in customs and values may increase our awareness of the cultural preunderstanding and assumptions which shape our understanding of a phenomenon" (p. 96). I completed several etymologies of significant words in Chapter Two that opened up several questions and aspects of my phenomenon.

Equally related, searching idiomatic phrases are an important approach to opening a phenomenon. Van Manen (1990) states that idiomatic expressions are "born out of lived experiences" (p. 60). Idiomatic phrases, as well as the language of writers and poets, possess an interpretive significance for the actual phenomenological description.

In Chapter Two, using idiomatic phrases like, "Failure is the mother of success," "Fresh off the Boat," and "American Born Chinese," assists the reader to grasp more fully what I am trying to convey. Each phrase connotes a meaning or a message that describes an aspect or an experience related to the phenomenon. Idiomatic phrases help the writer to reveal the essence and nuances of meaning regarding the phenomenon.

Observing and being silent are illuminating ways to open up a phenomenon. Piaget's observing children is a classic example of seeing children in their life world. What better way to describe a lived experience of another than to experience it first hand? I see this each time I register new students from Taiwan. I see the look of concern in their eyes. I see them look down the school hallways to see if they are safe. I see them stare at the cafeteria food wondering what it is and if everything is edible. I see their expressions of relief when they meet other students from Taiwan, hearing their own mother tongue comfort them, as well as knowing that other Taiwanese students have landed safely in this foreign land and school. I see it at the end of their first day of school as the parachute students are exhausted and confused, yearning to go back, as I felt my first day of school in Taiwan.

"Silences makes human science research and writing both possible and necessary" (van Manen, 1990, p. 112). So often, much is said in silence. Van Manen shares that "Beyond the range of our ordinary speaking and writing there is a rich domain of the unspeakable that constantly beckons us" (1990, p. 113). Sometimes we can learn much from being silent and just observing. But such ways of being are not passive; they offer sources for rich textual gathering.

Experiential descriptions in literature are also enriching ways to try to bring insight about a lived experience. Van Manen reflects on the fact that "Love is better expressed by the language of poetry, music, and fine arts than through behavioral science" (van Manen, 1990, p. 71). Stories can be compelling and transforming as well. "Phenomena such as love, grief, illness, faith, success, fear, death, hope, struggle, or loss are the stuff of which novels are made" (van Manen, 1990, p. 71). These fundamental

life experiences are valuable for the reader to grasp. Indeed, many times I have been surprised when someone is able to say what I wanted to say while I could not find the words. During those times, I find myself thinking, "Yes! that is exactly what I meant to say or convey. This is exactly what I felt or this is exactly what I observed." For the times when it is hard to find the right words, it is a gift when others find them for you.

Diaries, journals, and logs are excellent sources of lived experiences. Van Manen (1990) shares the following:

> Researchers too, have found that keeping a journal, diary, or log can be very helpful for keeping a record of insights gained, for discerning patterns of the work in progress, for reflecting on previous reflections, for making the activities of research themselves topics for study and so forth. (p. 73)

These sources have phenomenological value because they capture the reflective accounts of an individual's lived experiences. Personally, my journals from Taiwan have been paramount in opening the Taiwanese parachute students' lived experiences. Although I did not discover this initially, my journals are rich with phenomenological value because they recorded significant aspects of my lived experience in Taiwan that I had forgotten. Unless I had kept my journals, I would have lost what I had discovered in Taiwan.

Biographies are an excellent resource for adding flavor to a phenomenological study. Biographies, autobiographies, personal life histories are all potential sources for experiential material (van Manen, 1990). They assist the phenomenologist to know about the writer and his/her experiences as to why they write the way they do. Moreover, the sharing of biographical details of one's life assists individuals to feel more closely united. Biography literally means description of life. The writer is sharing a life with someone. When I read an autobiography or biography, I naturally imagine that person's experiences

and I live that person's feelings and emotions. I am given insight into his/her experiences. As a consequence, I am able to be more informed by drawing on the experience of others.

Finally, other phenomenological literature or other phenomenologists are powerful textual sources a phenomenologist can tap to obtain more insight into the lived experiences of others. Finding other phenomenological literature about being in a foreign land has been enlightening in understanding Taiwanese parachute students. Equally important, my classmates, my fellow phenomenologists, have been an incredible support to me. They have shared their lessons, their insights, their lived experiences, and their struggles in completing a doctorate. They have given me strength when I thought I had none in continuing my phenomenological studies. They know what it is like to be scared of the learning process, and yet, they carry on becoming better phenomenologists and better caring humans. They have helped me to understand my students and myself better.

Reflecting on the Essential Themes

According to van Manen, (1990) "The purpose of phenomenological reflection is to try to grasp the essential meaning of something" (p. 77). It is a bringing into nearness that which tends to be obscure or evades the intelligibility of our everyday lives. The true reflection on lived experience is a thoughtful reflective grasping of what it is that renders this or that particular experience its special significance (van Manen, 1990).

As I reflect on the lived experiences of Taiwanese parachute students, I reflect phenomenologically on their experiences as a parachute student, not as a counselor or an ABC. By doing this, I am grasping the essence of their experiences. The meaning of essence is not simple nor one dimensional, but multi-dimensional with many layers of

truth formed and revealed. In order to come to grips with the layers of truth and the meanings of the text, it is helpful to think of the phenomenon as approachable in terms of themes. From the Taiwanese parachute students' lived experiences, I try to reflect on the thematic aspects of their experiences.

The process of identifying phenomenological themes is not precise. It requires sensitivity, strong listening skills, and an openness for appreciating what might be revealed. Phenomenology leads the researcher to uncover more aspects about a phenomenon. The researcher does not lead phenomenology. As van Manen (1990) writes:

> Making something of a text or of a lived experience by interpreting its meaning is more accurately a process of insightful invention, discovery or disclosure-- grasping and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule- bound process but a free act of "seeing" meaning. (p. 79)

In Chapters One and Two, experiential descriptions of the lives of Taiwanese parachute students provide a text for the hermeneutic interpretation of the meaning of those experiences. I see meaning through the experiences Taiwanese parachute students share with me. The themes give structure and order to my research and writing, as well as a better sense of understanding the meaning of an experience.

Determining which themes are appropriate and maintaining the true meaning of the phenomenon is difficult. I have struggled with whether a certain theme is applicable to just Taiwanese parachute students, or to all students. For example, concerns regarding parents is an issue that all students experience. At the same time, authors like Lee (2001) share that you cannot write about Asian students without talking about their parents. To help me determine whether a theme is incidental or essential, van Manen (1990) shares the following:

> In determining the universal or essential quality of a theme our concern is to discover aspects or qualities that make a phenomenon what it is and without which the phenomenon could not be what it is. (p. 107)
>
> Is this phenomenon still the same if we imaginatively change or delete this theme from the phenomenon? (p. 107)

In Chapter Two, I determine that the parental theme is essential. Since many parachute students share stories about their parents and because the parental theme makes the phenomenon what it is, I acknowledge the theme in order to maintain an accurate picture of the phenomenon.

To assist the researcher further, van Manen (1990) suggests three approaches that can be used to recognize significant themes. In the wholistic approach, the researcher attends to the task as a whole asking, "What sententious phrase may capture the fundamental meaning or main significance of the text as a whole?" (p. 93). In the selective reading approach, the researcher listens and reads the text several times to ask, "What statement(s) or phrase(s) seem particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described?" (p. 93). Finally, in the detailed reading approach, the researcher looks at every sentence or sentence cluster to ask, "What does this sentence or sentence cluster reveal about the phenomenon or experience being described?" (p. 93).

In reviewing the text for Chapters One and Two, I use all three approaches to bring out essential themes. With the wholistic approach, I discover that I was lost, terrified, and confused as I entered my first day of school in Taiwan. In the selective reading approach, Jen–Yi saying, "I am a bridge" reached out to me as an essential theme. Finally, with the detailed learning approach, I uncover that Asians are against Asians in many schools.

Since themes are dynamic and multi-layered, it is beneficial to use all three approaches to reveal essential themes regarding the lived experiences of Taiwanese parachute students. In Chapter Four, I use all three approaches as I discover themes from the participants' conversations in this study. I shared these themes with my participants in the second and third sessions to develop further reflection, validation, and continuing conversation about essential themes.

Hermeneutic Phenomenological Writing and Rewriting

> As soon as man uses language to establish a living relation with himself or with his fellows, language is no longer an instrument, no longer a means; it is a manifestation, a revelation of intimate being and of the psychic link which unites us to the world and to our fellow man. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/1998, p. 196)

> Language is an external accompaniment of thought. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 58)

Every language has certain meanings presenting a specific message to the listener's mind. Language is to voice what the heart is to feeling. In any hermeneutic phenomenological study, one can not escape the linguisticality of the experience. If I truly want to establish a connection to the Taiwanese parachute students, then my concentration regarding their lived language and their linguistic gestures, is crucial to understanding their conveyed messages and underlying meanings. Without language, I can not establish a "link" between them and myself. Without language, I do not have access to their thoughts, nor am I able to describe their experiences. "Language is the medium in which substantive understanding and agreement takes place between two people" (Gadamer, 1960/1989, p. 384). Language allows the descriptive, interpretive, and understanding aspects of hermeneutic phenomenology to be on common ground, to grow in mutual understanding.

I sought to understand the Chinese language to have a better understanding of the Taiwanese parachute students. Gadamer shares that “When a person lives in a language, he is filled with the sense of the unsurpassable appropriateness of the words he uses for the subject matter he is talking about. It seems impossible that other words in other languages could name the things equally well” (Gadamer, 1960/1989, pp. 401-402). Individuals express themselves best with their native tongue. I am so much more vibrant and colorful speaking English than Chinese. I mean what I say instead of trying to say what I mean. It is no different for the Taiwanese parachute students. Although they become bilingual, they can express themselves more accurately when speaking Chinese. “Lived experience is soaked through with language” (van Manen, 1990, p. 38). The Taiwanese parachute students' lived experiences are no exception.

Prior to leaving Taiwan, I knew that I would not be able to carry on a phenomenological dialogue with the Taiwanese parachute students in Chinese. However, I also knew that there were times when conversing with the parachute students that they would get “stuck” searching for a certain word or phrase to express the specific meaning that they were trying to convey. It is during those moments that I am able to prompt them with the appropriate Chinese term or phrase to assist them in the conversation. As stated previously by Merleau -Ponty, “Language is an external accompaniment of thought" (1962/1998, p. 177). By studying their language, I believed I could understand better their expressions of lived experience accounts.

Moreover, “The linguistic gesture, like the rest, delineates its own meaning. Speech can be recorded on paper whereas gestures or frames of behavior are transmitted only by direct imitation” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962,/1998, p. 186). By studying Mandarin, I

am able to understand the verbal language, as well as the tones, the nonverbal and para-verbal language of the Taiwanese parachute students. This has been a tremendous gift in communicating and relating with the Taiwanese parachute students. Van Manen describes the importance of tones in language.

> If the description is phenomenologically powerful, then it acquires a certain transparency, so to speak, it permits us to see the deeper significance, or meaning structures of the lived experiences it describes. How is such transparency achieved? It is a function of the appropriate thoughtfulness that we have managed to muster in creating exemplary descriptions by, for example, being sensitive to the evocative tone of language in which descriptions are captured. (van Manen, 1990, p. 122)

I can understand the Taiwanese parachute students' silence and what they may be communicating to me nonverbally. I can also understand their change in tone of voice, or why their voice may fluctuate to convey a different message. I am able to open up my phenomenon more vividly by opening up my experiences studying the Chinese language. I also believe that phenomenology encourages me to value the languages of others and how languages relate to understanding the experiences of others.

If language is the external accompaniment of thought, then writing is the permanent maintaining of those thoughts. Writing forces what is hidden to be exposed, what is internal to be external, what is invisible to be visible (van Manen, 1990). Writing is as important to phenomenology as language is. To write is to capture the essence of something.

To write is to bring understanding and interpretation together in a common language, a common frame of reference. To write is to be able to describe something and to feel what one is describing. To write is to recall research and one's self-realization simultaneously. Van Manen (1990) describes the significant importance of writing:

> Yet for the human sciences, and specifically for hermeneutic phenomenological work, writing is closely fused into the research activity and reflection itself. We might even argue that even for traditional social science research the cognitive stance required to do research is closely related to the cognitive style of writing. (p. 125)
>
> Writing fixes thought on paper. It externalizes what in some sense is internal; it distances us from our immediate lived involvements with the things of our world. As we stare at the paper, and stare at what we have written, our objectified thinking now stares back at us. Thus, writing creates the reflective cognitive stance that generally characterizes the theoretic attitude in the social sciences. The object of human science research is essentially a linguistic project: to make some aspect of our lived world, of our lived experience, reflectively understandable and intelligible. (p. 125)

I have enjoyed writing phenomenologically, and for once in my life there are moments that I can write effortlessly. Phenomenology is realizing that you have written ten pages about a lived experience and not being aware of the length. Phenomenology is typing as fast as you can because you realize that you have discovered aspects about a lived experience and you want to write them down before you forget them. Phenomenology is where you look at your writing and you are in disbelief regarding not only what you wrote, but that what you wrote truly reveals a phenomenon. Perhaps this is what van Manen (1990) means when he says that phenomenology is existential, or what Hultgren (1996) means when she says that phenomenology leads you. Regardless, through writing, phenomenology tempts my genuine self for insight, creativity, knowledge, empathy, and understanding of others. Through writing, phenomenology enables me to reach my potential as a doctoral student, as an educator, and as a human being.

The true beauty of writing phenomenologically is that writing allows me to name the ineffable through descriptive accounts. One has to write and rewrite and rewrite what

one is exactly trying to say. It is as if one is going through layer after layer of ambiguity and lack of clarity, while at the same time, forming layer after layer of new truths. Only after one has rewritten his/her work, does the true description of a phenomenon begin to show the essence, the meaning of what one is trying to say. In my eyes, this is perhaps the most difficult aspect of phenomenology. Yet when accomplished, it brings the reader and the writer into the very heart of the phenomenon.

Maintaining a Strong and Oriented Pedagogical Relation

Hermeneutic phenomenology is a critical philosophy of action. It deepens thought and motivates thinking such that action will develop from that thinking. By assisting the researcher to become more thoughtful or attentively aware of aspects of human life which are merely glossed over or taken for granted, the researcher is motivated to speak up and take action for those forgotten or unnoticed.

"Phenomenology is a philosophy of action especially in a pedagogic context" (van Manen, 1990, p. 154). Educators and researchers have a responsibility to be familiar with pedagogical practices that address the academic needs of their students. A phenomenological attitude gives educators a certain style of knowing, a certain advantage in understanding the academic needs of students. Van Manen calls this knowing "pedagogic thoughtfulness and tact" (van Manen, 1990).

It is one thing to try to understand a student's experiences. It is quite another to act pedagogically upon that understanding (van Manen, 1990). By practicing hermeneutic phenomenology, researchers have an action sensitive knowledge to produce more thoughtful learning in pedagogic situations and relations. Practicing hermeneutic

phenomenology calls the researcher to be sensitive and to act with pedagogic competence.

By completing this study, I seek to improve the academic experiences of Taiwanese parachute students. I hope to be a better counselor for my students. Every situation in which I act educationally with my students requires that I be pedagogically sensitive to what authorizes me as a counselor. Because I have practiced phenomenology, I have been able to go to a deeper level of understanding with Taiwanese parachute students. At the same time, I am more aware when I do not have a phenomenological attitude or I am not pedagogically thoughtful. During those incidences, I am unable to obtain a deeper level of understanding and sense I have an incomplete grasp of my conversant's lived experiences.

Thus, throughout my research, I remain pedagogically thoughtful while exploring new and better ways of being as an educator with Taiwanese parachute students. By doing this, I might assist other educators to work more effectively with Taiwanese parachute students.

Balancing the Research Context by Considering Parts and Whole

There are many questions that I must raise throughout this research process to insure that I maintain my orientation toward openness. Van Manen (1990) warns that there is a danger when one loses sight of the end of the phenomenological research. Researchers can get so involved in their work, that they fail to realize what their work has revealed. To help keep in view my fundamental research question, van Manen (1990) recommends the researcher to consider the following questions:

> What is the object of human experience to be studied?
> What is the intelligibility of the experience to be studied?

> What is the experiential situation which the researcher enters? (pp. 163-166)

Throughout this journey, it is necessary that I step back and look at the total picture, considering the parts and the whole, to determine how each part is imperative towards developing the whole picture, the true essence of the phenomenon. I need to look at the end and the beginning, the past and the future which all become essential and interconnected as the research unfolds. Likewise, a certain openness has to be present that allows for choosing directions and exploring techniques, procedures, and sources that are not always foreseeable at the outset of the research project.

Those who Have Landed: the Plan for Carrying out my Study

Van Manen (1990) suggests that, "We gather other people's experiences because they allow us to become more experienced ourselves" (p. 62). Gathering particular experiences from others allows the reader to be informed and enriched by the full significance of the person's experiences. By listening to others, we are not just looking for their accounts of an experience, but trying to discern the nature of the phenomenon as an essentially human experience.

In the process of writing Chapter One and Two, I used many different resources to open up my phenomenon, as well as personal conversations with friends/relatives who are Taiwanese parachute students. As I began my formal research inquiry, my primary approach for gathering experiential descriptions of the Taiwanese parachute students' lived experiences was from formal conversations with seven students, three females and four males ages fifteen to twenty-five, who agreed to participate in this study. Three students are from the high school where I work. The four other students are Taiwanese parachute students who I know from my church and from the Chinese school I attend.

I believe it is beneficial that I converse with students who I know from an educational environment, as well as from more informal backgrounds. Because I have come to know some parachute students as my counselees and as my students, I have established already a relationship with them. They should be more free to talk about their experiences since they know me already. In a formal school context, I am able to obtain more access to their academic experiences. Equally important, from conversing with my church students, their experiences provide a more informal social context. Thus, the church and school students speak to both dimensions regarding the entire experience. I want to have different sources for my participants so I can describe as rich an experience as possible. Choosing students that I already know enhances the relationships that have been built, as well as increases my students' willingness to share.

The length of time that an individual has been a parachute student is also a consideration for the inclusion of specific participants in this study. To be part of the study, the participants have resided in the States for at least one year. The reason why this is important is that their English will be better after being immersed in the American culture for a year. Occasionally, only one parachute student chose to respond to my questions in Mandarin. In those instances, I asked my wife to assist me in interpreting that particular parachute student's comments. Once in a while, a parachute student used a Chinese word to describe their experiences better. However, the parachute students would interpret what meaning they were trying to convey from using a particular Chinese word.

In person, I asked the parachute students if they would be willing to participate in my study. Without exception, every parachute student agreed to contribute. I sent my

participants a written explanation of the purpose of my study and expectations I had for them. A copy of the invitation can be found in Appendix A. Each student was asked to sign an agreement that indicates awareness of and consent to the conditions of the research study. These conditions include an assurance of confidentiality, permission for tape recording, and an anticipated time frame upon which this study would be completed. A copy of this consent form is located in Appendix B.

According to Heidegger (1927/1966), if being is time then it is important to see Taiwanese parachute students' beings change over time. *Da-sein* is not confined in its awareness to the present moment. It runs ahead into the future and reaches back into the past. I sought to determine how Taiwanese parachute students look back on their pasts and how they perceive their present.

I had three conversations with each parachute student throughout one academic year. Each conversation lasted between forty-five to seventy minutes. I had an ongoing relationship with the parachute students, as well as opportunities to observe them in their context of school as well as church. It was my desire to have them feel comfortable so that they could talk to me at anytime for whatever reasons.

The conversations with my high school parachute students were held in my office. The parachute students chose this location, as it was most convenient for them to meet with me after school hours. Whether in my office, the hallways, or the cafeteria, I saw the parachute students regularly. Our informal conversations varied in subject matter throughout the year. I found those times helpful to ask certain questions of the parachute students that arose from my review of the tapes.

With the parachute students from church, I had three conversations with them at

my home or at the Chinese school, forty-five to seventy-five minutes in length. With the exception of one parachute student, I saw the parachute students from church almost every week. Similar to my experience with the high school parachute students, I would have questions for the church parachute students periodically.

In addition to these individual conversations, I met with each group of parachute students for a final group conversation. These group conversations occurred after the individual formal conversations were completed. In our group conversations, the high school parachute students met in my office and the church parachute students met at my house. Each of these group conversations lasted over ninety minutes.

Only one parachute student shared personal writing or diaries that she kept. However, during both group conversations, other parachute students did share information that they found in emails and websites regarding the Asian culture. The reader will see examples of those works in Chapter Four.

Continuing the Next Part of the Journey

In this chapter I have explained what hermeneutic phenomenology is and why I have chosen it as an appropriate methodology for this dissertation. In addition, I have described the guidelines for practicing hermeneutic phenomenology. With these guidelines in place, I have shared the various approaches to studying the lived experiences of the Taiwanese parachute students, and in particular, what I am trying to understand through this investigation.

In Chapter Four, I open up the lived experiences of the parachute students with whom I had conversations. I share their experiences of coming to the States and being immersed in a culture and language unfamiliar to them. In the process of their adjustment,

the parachute students came to know much more about themselves and the world in which they live. Moreover, they realize that the journey that they have taken, may not allow them to go back to the past home that was, but at the same time, has blessed them with an appreciation for diversity, and the sharing of the best of both cultures.

My hope is that this hermeneutic phenomenological exploration of the lived experiences of Taiwanese parachute students will assist educators to be more understanding of the needs of these "dropped off foreign students." Moreover, I hope to reveal what they have become after landing in the States and how educators can better assist them to have a more fulfilling educational experience. I encourage my readers to land with my students and continue this journey with them. There will be times when we discover aspects about the Taiwanese parachute students that we might not want to know. During other times, we may encounter provocative insights into their lives. Most of all, I hope that as this journey continues, there is an appreciation by the reader of relating to others, an appreciation of diversity that too often is not addressed nor accepted.

CHAPTER FOUR:
MY PARTICIPANTS HAVE LANDED: WHAT ARE THEIR EXPERIENCES?

Inviting the Guests and Setting the Conversation Table

> In phenomenological research the emphasis is always on the meaning of lived experience. The point of phenomenological research is to 'borrow' other people's experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to better be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience, in the context of the whole human experience. (van Manen, 1990, p. 62)

In this chapter, my participants share intimate personal life stories of coming to the States, arriving and being overwhelmed, struggling with the English language, attending American schools, being lonely and confused, having difficulty making new friends, trying to understand the American culture, and making a new home. As they share their stories, I see them struggle with a variety of emotions from crying, to intense anger, to becoming frustrated, to being ecstatic. Their shared experiences assist in painting a picture of what it is like to be a Taiwanese parachute student, a parachute of many colors. This chapter is organized around the metaphor of "landing" and what it is like when the parachute students come down. Throughout their time in the States, the Taiwanese parachute students are balancing between keeping their Chinese culture, "homesteading" as Casey (1993) calls it, and adapting a new American lifestyle. The opening of this tension begins with my introduction of a metaphorical Chinese hot pot, as a way to show the conversational relation of my participants, with each one introduced at the table. Let the Chinese hot pot of stories begin.

The Chinese Hot Pot

In the Chinese tradition, food is a rich part of the culture. Family members gather together for huge feasts, one of the most popular being the Chinese hot pot. Stew is made and poured into a pot that is placed in the middle of the dinner table. The pot is kept hot by either a portable stove, or the pot is electric. Family members then place whatever food items they want into the pot. Varieties of raw fish, seafood, meat, vegetables, tofus are all added to the stew and then consumed by each family member. Thus, the food is freshly cooked in front of you, with steam coming from your plate and into your body. After everyone is done preparing their own food, noodles are added to the stew, making a delightful soup and insuring that everyone has had their fill.

Each hot pot soup has a special taste to it because each time it is prepared differently. Each ingredient is important, adding flavor, aroma, and taste to the soup. Every family member contributes to the taste of the soup, adding his or her own style and preferences. Thus everyone, young and old, are equal contributors to the making of the stew's "specialness."

Equally important, each family member has opportunities to contribute to the conversation, which is hopefully as enjoyable as the meal. During the dinner, rarely does one leave the hot pot table. If you do, your food may become overcooked or be eaten by others. Instead, participants enjoy not only the fun of making the food, but the conversations at the dinner table. As everyone waits patiently, both young and old listen to the stories woven in and around the meal. So, the beauty of the hot pot is not limited to just the cuisine, but in the conversations that surface when sharing this special meal.

The same holds true regarding my conversations with the Taiwanese parachute students. The text is like a richly textured stew of hot pot. It has been flavored, seasoned, and enhanced by the genuine and sincere contributions from the variety of students at the table. The freshness of their personal life stories create delicious themes and powerful insights into understanding their lived experiences. Their heart felt comments are the valuable ingredients responsible for making the hot pot of stories accurate, unique, and full of meaning. Each student makes the stew of stories special, and without one person's participation the stew is lacking, or as a Chinese mother might say, "It's missing something."

As everyone contributes to the hot pot, throwing their bits and pieces of stories into the community stew, people will take from others, and everyone eventually takes from the hot pot's stew of stories. So often the comments of one parachute student open up an idea or theme for another parachute student on which to reflect. What one parachute student contributes assists other parachute students to realize that they have other stories to share. Everyone is able to see what others have shared and how it enriches the stew of stories, and in the end, everyone is blessed with a deeper knowledge of themselves and those with similar experiences.

Preparing and Participating in the Hot Pot Meal

When preparing the hot pot meal, the meal's beauty is that the cook does not do any cooking. He or she just prepares the broth for the food, which can be plain canned chicken broth or water. The preparation is in the buying of the food and cutting it in small portions so that no knives are needed and the food is cooked more quickly in the stew.

In my study, the food was the conversation sprinkled with questions to entice the parachute students to share more stories. The pot was me, as I blended the individual voices as I received them, interpreting the differences in texture and deciding what was needed to make an inviting stew. Except for one parachute student, I sat down with each participant one-on-one for three different sessions. I gathered their stories to make the stew and then brought everyone together to share in the created hot pot of meaning. Sometimes, the stew got too hot, that is, I realized that for some participants, the conversation had to be taken back to the one-on-one sessions. Other times, the stew was cold, so it was my responsibility to heat it up by throwing in spices that helped students to partake in the sharing of their stories.

The complexity of their situations and the intensity of their experiences had me enthralled at the table of conversation and desiring more. Wonderful surprises were found throughout our dialogues, and I found my taste-buds being tantalized by the stories. Although stories were flowing into the hot pot, it did not overflow.

In other words, my job as a host was not difficult, and the rewards were tremendous. I did not have to sweat over a hot stove of information, but let each student prepare the meal through the stories they told, and I got to partake in it. I did not have to get up every second to make sure the food was cooking well, but relaxed, listening to the conversations concerning the journeys of their pasts.

Meet the Guests at the Conversation Table

Before I begin to share the hot pot meal of the parachute students' stories, I would like to introduce the generous guests at the table. Their contributions make the meal of their experiences truly special, a true delicacy. In the time period from September 2001

through October 2002, seven students participated in the meal of stories. None of them have returned back to Taiwan permanently, that I am aware of, although some have gone back for visits. Their names are Joyce, Lynn, Spencer, Ballerina, Thumper, Chaos, and Wei. For three participants, I use their American names and for three other students I use nicknames that were given to them. Wei is the only one where I use his actual Chinese name. My hope is that by introducing you to them, you will feel welcomed at the dinner table of their experiences.

Joyce. Joyce is a nineteen-year-old student. She was the first Taiwanese student that I registered in my current high school. Originally, she was not supposed to be my student. However, because her English skills were assessed as ESOL One and because I spoke some Chinese, they transferred her to me. During her freshman year, Joyce performed well academically, earning seven credits. However, during her sophomore year she performed poorly and failed many classes. In school, Chinese students nicknamed her "gangster lady." During her junior year, she struggled academically, but improved during the second semester. Joyce traveled to Taiwan during her junior summer. I started having my conversations with Joyce at the beginning of her fourth year. Due to so many failures, she did not have senior year status.

Joyce came to the States to live with her mother. She did not have a father and had been raised by her grandparents in Taiwan. After her arrival in the States, Joyce was not happy, constantly fighting with her mother and her illegitimate brother. Near the end of her sophomore year, she was asked to leave the home that belonged to her mother's boyfriend, and eventually, was placed in foster care. Later, I discovered that her mother's boyfriend was accused of raping Joyce.

I was unable to have three conversations with Joyce. During her fourth year of high school, her foster mother accused her of stealing. Evidence was found in her bedroom, and instead of moving to another foster home, Joyce moved in with her boyfriend and then proceeded to drop out of school. I saw Joyce only once thereafter. She was not willing to share her new phone number with me, but she stated that she did want to meet and do further tapings. Unfortunately, I was unable to schedule another taping with her. I do not know where Joyce is residing currently or if she graduated from high school.

Lynn. Lynn is a seventeen-year-old high school student. I met Lynn when I registered her as a freshman. Because I could speak some Chinese, Lynn like Joyce, was transferred to me. She was extremely quiet, and is still very soft spoken two years later. Lynn is a strong academic student, maintaining a solid 3.79 grade point average.

When I started having conversations with her, she had been in the States for a little over one year. As I conversed with her, it became very apparent that we had to struggle with a language barrier, and my limited Chinese was interfering with her willingness and ability to participate. My wife assisted me with transcribing the first tape. A blessing in disguise, our conversation influenced me to find parachute students with better English skills. However, I continued conversing with Lynn three more times. She began to master the English language and was able to express herself more articulately.

Spencer. Spencer is an eighteen-year-old high school senior. Spencer came to the States with strong English skills and was my original student, not a transfer. He entered our school at ESOL Level Three and in his senior year has exited out of ESOL.

Spencer is very smart, maintaining a solid 3.79 grade point average. He presents himself most maturely and has strong interpersonal skills.

Spencer was excited about the American culture, and did not seem to hide within the pockets of the Chinese culture. He is warm and personable, but at the same time reflective and calm. He was very willing to participate in this study.

Spencer is the elder of two children. His father works for the Taiwanese Embassy in Washington, D.C., and his mother stays at home. He enjoys many things about the American culture, but is determined to receive a solid education in the States and then return to Taiwan. He has no plans to stay in the States.

Ballerina. Ballerina was the first female parachute student that I ever met. Twelve years ago, as a graduate student and as a volunteer at our church, I tutored Ballerina in English. She was a very shy and quiet little girl. I believe it took her over two years to feel comfortable talking with me. Currently, Ballerina is a pharmacist. She earned her doctorate at the University of Maryland.

I was able to see Ballerina grow out of her cocoon. Although still introverted, she grew out of her shell beautifully and has wonderful interpersonal skills. At times, I refer to her as my *xiao mei* or little sister, and she is someone I see regularly at church-related events. She is a very responsible person who cares very much for her family and friends.

Ballerina is a nickname that was given to her. Years ago, Ballerina, some other youth group students, and myself visited a homeless shelter in Washington, D.C. Ballerina enjoyed helping those less fortunate and would volunteer regularly. As we were serving food, one of the homeless women came up to her and said, “My, you look like a little ballerina girl.” The nickname stuck and to this day, once in a while, I call her

little ballerina girl. Ballerina is the elder of two children and her parents as well as her brother still reside in the Maryland area. Her aunt and uncle also live in the Maryland area and she has relatives in New York.

Thumper. Thumper stands five foot eleven inches tall. Currently, he is a senior at the University of Maryland Baltimore County. When I first met him as an eighth-grader, Thumper was practically five feet ten inches tall. He earned the nickname Thumper because of his huge feet. He wears a size fourteen, and he used to "thump" around the basketball courts and at church.

Eight years ago, I would drive Thumper to various sports and church events. He had a big house, but no one ever seemed to be home. He would confide in me that his mother was in Taiwan and that he was alone in this huge house. Also, I noticed at our church family camp, Thumper came by himself. His mother never attended the camp. Other times, I would see Thumper with his mother attending Chinese school or other events. I have never met Thumper's father, and according to Thumper, his father has come to the Maryland area only two times. Thumper learned English very quickly and he has a great sense of humor. His laughter is contagious, and it has been a pleasure seeing him grow up. He is very caring and dedicated to his friends. Thumper will earn a degree in Computer Science and is not certain of his future career plans. If career opportunities open up in Taiwan, he said he would go, but only on a temporary basis.

Chaos. Chaos is a twenty-one-year old male who resides in the Maryland area. I met Chaos about nine years ago. Although very social, Chaos has weak interpersonal skills. He is very loud, and you know immediately that he is in a room with you. At times, I wonder if he has ever been taught social graces. Many youth group students are

nice to him, just because they are taught to do so, but it appears to be a burden. Numerous times I have had to tell Chaos that what he says or how he says things to others is inappropriate. I have had to discuss with him that his behavior is causing others to feel uncomfortable, angry, or unhappy. I wonder if what I have said to Chaos has made a difference for him, especially in terms of making friends.

It took Chaos five years to graduate from high school, and he has not successfully completed one college class. He has jumped from occupation to occupation or has taken as long as three months off from work. At times, he can be very generous with his money, and at other times, he needs financial assistance for various church-related events. He has not obtained a driver's license, but is interested in buying a motorcycle.

Different youth group members gave his nickname to him. Chaos is used as a gentle term of affection, as the older kids joke around with him that he adds "Chaos" to different church events. I use this nickname not to give him a certain image, but because Chaos likes his nickname. Moreover, Chaos is a wonderful helper, who constantly tries to assist others. He never has had a position of authority in the church, but always has given his time and effort. It is as if he tries to be a friend because many try to be a friend to him.

Chaos has no siblings and lives with his mother in a townhouse. His father has never visited him in Maryland, and he does not have a healthy relationship with his mother.

Wei. Wei is a twenty-six-year-old consultant for one of the Big Four accounting and consulting firms. Wei was not originally on my list of participants. However, since he was dating Ballerina and was curious about my dissertation, I asked him to participate

in the conversations. Wei was enthusiastic about the opportunity to participate in this way. In our conversations, I soon discovered that Wei had many opinions that were different from the rest of the parachute students. Also, he had many experiences that were not typical of other participants.

Roughly five years ago, Wei started dating Ballerina. I met Wei through Ballerina. He would come to church and then to other social events with Ballerina. After seeing Wei a couple of times, I discovered that he loved golfing. Thus, we went golfing a couple of times. I did not know he was a parachute student until Ballerina told me. Wei was never a youth group student, but he did convert to Catholicism. Actually, that is how Wei met Ballerina. Wei was interested in the Catholic Church and when Wei met Ballerina, they originally started talking about the Church. Wei still comes with Ballerina to church. Besides Church and golf, Wei enjoys making money. He started his own video business and assists his parents in a computer business. I do not know if Wei will continue to reside in the Maryland area, because he is thinking about pursuing a Master's of Business Degree. On Christmas Day 2002, he proposed to Ballerina and she accepted.

I am grateful for all the participants who gave up so much of their free time. Without their stories, the entire thematic development would not be possible. Everyone added insight and understanding to the Taiwanese parachute students' experiences.

Now that the introductions are complete, let us sit down for the hot pot meal. In the remainder of this chapter, I depict themes that emerge from the parachute students' dialogues with me. Some themes have a heavier emphasis than others. Some themes have a light taste, but still are significant. Some themes are sweet; others have a bitter taste, and others a rough texture. In each case, the themes make up the complete picture

of the lived experiences of the Taiwanese parachute students. Let us begin.

Landing and Surveying the Area

Foreign Lands

Up into the cherry tree
Who should climb but little me?
I held the trunk with both my hands
And looked abroad on foreign lands

I saw the next door garden lie,
Adorned with flowers, before my eye,
And many pleasant places more
That I had never seen before

I saw the dimpling river pass
And be the sky blue looking glass;
The dusty roads go up and down
With people tramping in to town.

If I could find a higher tree
Farther and farther I could see
To where the grown-up river slips
Into the sea among the ships,

To where the roads on either hand
Lead onward into fairy land,
Where all the children dine at five
And all the playthings come alive.
(Robert Louis Stevenson, 1957, n.p.)

If only life could be like Robert Louis Stevenson's poem. It would be wonderful to see every child who travels to a foreign land have their dreams come true. For the parachute students, their journey starts from a different place than looking from a tree. Each one starts with a different kind of parachute. Some of their parachutes of expectations are full of excitement and color, anticipating a wonderful new beginning. Spencer, Wei, Thumper, and Ballerina were excited to come to the States. Others have parachutes of gray sadness and disappointment, not looking forward to their landing nor

happy about leaving Taiwan. Joyce, Lynn, and Chaos were saddened to leave the home that they cherished.

I begin with the stories of the parachute students' preparing for the landing. Some experienced a difficult beginning; others had a smooth start, but everyone arrived safely and planned to stay for an extended period of time. Everyone came by air and none by sea. The parachute students' expectations were packed in their parachute bags of personal "belongingness," a symbol of the community they longed for, that would eventually become a part of their identity. As Gadamer (1960/1989) reminds us:

> History does not belong to us: we belong to it. Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society, and state in which we live.….*That is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being.* (pp. 276-277)

Their prejudices, or pre-understandings, inform the parachute students' way of interpreting their experiences and shape their way of being. Their family, society, and culture are the base upon which they understand their belonging. However, like the individual who climbed the tree, they do not know what they truly will face abroad. They prepare for departure with their dreams and ideas of what the States may hold. They leave the familiar for the unknown and the uncertain.

Preparing the Landing

You got to test the waters or someone does it for you. (Wei)

Before one tries to jump, perhaps it is best to decide where to land in a foreign land. The Taiwanese parachute students did not just land by themselves in a country about which they knew nothing. For some, they visited the land at a previous time to make sure that it would be safe and secure. For others, they had their families survey the

terrain and territory before they arrived. Either way, the parachute students and their families tried to make sure that their potential new environment would be safe and livable.

For my wife, an aunt and uncle first landed and perused the area. Once the family business was established, many of her relatives came to the same Maryland area to start anew and to assist with the business. Jia-Shieu shares that there was a discussion to move to the U.S. West Coast where many family friends were. However, her father said that it was best to be where family was. And her mother shared, "Why should we go to a place that was totally unknown?" For Thumper, he came to the Maryland area because of his aunt. Then he tried San Francisco where an uncle lived. When he did not like that location, he tried Wisconsin where his mother's cousin lived. He returned to Maryland after living in three different cities where relatives resided.

Other parachute students land in a certain area of the States because they have visited that location previously. Lynn had been in the Maryland area as a two-year-old for about a year. And Spencer had visited Maryland with family years ago. Both of them have extended family members in the Washington metropolitan area. They or different family members knew the environment on which they were landing and that other family members would be there to support them.

I explored Taiwan before making a commitment to live in Taiwan for nine months. I visited Taiwan to see Jia-Shieu and what her family lifestyle was like in Taiwan. And, like many American parachute students, I decided to study in Taiwan over Mainland China because there was family in Taiwan. My father, who is from Mainland

China, preferred that I study Chinese in Taiwan. He was at peace knowing that his youngest son would be taken care of by his wife's family.

There is much concern prior to a journey where one lands. The question of "If I land?" is not nearly as urgent as "What is there, when I land?" Knowing beforehand what is out there can be most relieving. Reinicke (1986) writes, "Students with prior travel experience adjust more easily than those away from home the first time" (p. 10). The unknown, when it becomes known, becomes less of a fear than it once was. Yet, what is it about knowing a place and having family in place that is so reassuring?

Casey (1993) shares the importance of place and the negative ramifications of being without place:

> Our lives are so place-oriented and place saturated that we cannot begin to comprehend, much less face up to, what sheer placelessness would be like. For just this reason, we rarely pause to consider what being no place or having no place might mean. Even when we are displaced, we continue to count upon some reliable place, if not our present precarious perch than a place-to-come or a place-that was. While we easily imagine or project an ideal (or merely better) place to be and remember a number of good places we have been, we find that the very idea, even the bare image, of no place at all occasions the deepest anxiety. (p. ix)

The prospect of "no place" is dismaying, especially when moving to a completely new location that happens to be half way around the world. In such situations, the parachute students find themselves in a special form of panic, what Casey calls "place panic" (p. ix). According to the American Heritage Dictionary (2000), the word "panic" is defined as "a sudden overwhelming terror, often affecting many people at once" (p. 897). Etymologically, panic originates from the French word *panique*, meaning terrified, and the Greek word *panikos* meaning a source of terror or groundlessness (The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology, 1966, p. 646). The parachute students may feel that

they are groundless, forever drifting because they are not landing on familiar solid ground. They may feel that they are heading towards future grounds of terror.

The parachute students have a place to go, but not yet a place to be. The Greek word *atopos* literally means without place, but also means bizarre or strange (Casey, 1993). As Casey shares, "We would be devastated if consigned to an unending life in placeless 'waste lands' vast in their vacuity" (p. x). No wonder we feel so estranged when we are out of place. There is an "uncomfortableness" and strangeness about the feeling of being out of place that the parachute students experience prior to their departure and during their stay. Not knowing what the future has in store for them can be just as disheartening as the loss they experience being away from their homeland and families.

To avoid the anxiety of "placelessness" and the terror of "groundlessness," the parachute students examine a place before moving. The point is not merely moving to a new place, but being able to get back into a comfortable place, a place that can be called home. To lessen the anxiety of moving, the Taiwanese parents try to find a reliable place, and thus, a place where family is. After all, home cannot exist without family (Casey, 1993). For the parachute students, it is comforting to be able to rely on family. Also, it is comforting to have loved ones that have traveled the path before them and can escort them on their new journey. Wei shares, "Someone who comes alone with a small family. That isn't much fun. There is strength in numbers."

Julia Kao (2002), a reporter for the China News, says that the United States is the most popular destination for parachute students. Furthermore, she notes that nearly one-fifth of Taiwan's population have relatives abroad, and more than half live primarily in

the United States or Canada. Is the United States the New Taiwan for the parachute students? It must be encouraging for the parachute students to know that other family members have survived the journey and the stay.

Family is the emergency pull chord for the parachute students. They are the people who make the landing secure, and if there is a problem, to come to their assistance. Stone (1988) writes, "The first cardinal rule of family life is that when people are really suffering, you can count on family" (p. 20). What better way to find support on a journey than to find it with family. It is such a relief to find relatives waiting for you as you arrive from a journey. And it is comforting to have family to share holidays and special occasions together. Loneliness may occur from not having any friends, but being alone is less likely with family nearby.

However, family cannot be with the parachute students all the time. Family can not be there when they go to school or interact with Americans. No matter what the parachute students' families do to prepare them for their journey, and no matter what the family members in the States do to plan their stay, nothing truly prepares the parachute students for what they are to experience when they stay for an extended period of time. That feeling of uncertainty and "uncomfortableness" continues to surround them. In Marie Lee's (1993) book, Necessary Roughness, Jae is concerned about what he will experience in his new surroundings. After his first day in his new "home," he lays awake worried what tomorrow might bring.

> I lay in the warm blanket of darkness, smelling the faint smell of oil soap. Our future was outside leaning black and heavy against the house. It scared me, but I didn't know what to do about it. (p. 30)

As Jae did not know what the future held, the parachute students do not know what is in store for them. Ballerina shares, "It was not necessarily a scary experience but certainly you are vulnerable." And Spencer confesses, "I was lonely and uncomfortable. At least I had family. When my uncle came, all he had was himself." Thumper shares, "I was hopefully optimistic, but cautious. I really didn't know what to expect. I was concerned."

Like Jae, parachute students can do very little about their situation. Their parents may have prepared them for the best possible landing with family nearby, but their hearts and thoughts rest in uncertainty. As Ballerina shares, "I had so many questions about what the future holds, but where could I find the answers?"

Their parents may have prepared the landing, finding the safety nets to help the parachute students land safely and to establish themselves. However, the parachute students may not be prepared for their arrival or their departure. They are leaving the familiar for the unknown, but do they even have a say in this life-changing journey? Do they even have the opportunity to ask questions?

Neither Voice nor Vote

It is not the parachute students' idea to leave Taiwan. Their parents instruct them that they are leaving for the States. They do not have a choice whether to stay in Taiwan; it is predetermined that they start anew in the States. Ballerina shares, "Never had a say in the matter. After all, we were kids." Spencer, who was older, was called down by his parents and informed that they would be moving to the States. And Joyce recalls her experiences:

> It wasn't my idea to come here kinda like my mom forced me to come here. She sent some letter to my lawyer to my grandparents and said that

> I had to come here, but the old people they don't know that stuff so they believe my mom and then they just sent me here to come here.

Lynn did not want to come to the States either, but only told her mother that she was not happy. Lynn did not feel that her voice was heard. She adds, "When I tried to voice my concerns, my mom was like whatever, and totally disregarded my comments." For Chaos, he shares that his parents were divided on whether to send him to the States. Like others, he had no opportunity to express his opinion.

> I came to the States because my mom decided to. My dad was working for the military so he did not come. My mom just retired from the military and she did not want me to stay in Taiwan because there was no way for me to go up to the high school or college because if you want to get in you have to go through a series of consecutive ten-day tests which is very difficult. My father did not come to the States because he did not want to. My mother and father don't get along.

In the Chinese lived language, when someone feels not listened to, the expression is used that "it is like talking to wood." No matter what is said, the wood does not change. Words are useless, as the wood has neither heart nor ears to listen. Wood also can be like a big stick, enforcing the foundation that has been established, the rules that the parents have built. The parents may speak softly but carry a big stick.

Although the parachute students are traveling half-way around the world to establish a new home, they have no say in the matter. There is no discussion, no asking for their opinion. They are just told they are leaving and that they should pack. Ballerina shares that she did not even have the chance to pack. She feels that her mom thought that eleven-year-olds do not even know how to pack. What is it like for the parachute students to leave home for an extended period of time, but not being able to pack what is most precious to them? With such a life-changing decision, they have neither a say in the matter nor at least an option to voice their opinion. Dramatically, their lives are altered

forever with a decision that does not include them. For Lynn, Joyce, and Chaos, their feelings and concerns about leaving Taiwan are not heard. Without a voice or vote and no ears to listen, they are forced into a journey that neither their heart nor self has accepted.

What is it like not to have a voice or vote in a decision that alters your life dramatically? For many individuals, not having an opportunity to speak would be considered an injustice. Not only is one denied the freedom of speech, but one is restricted from the opportunity to speak. By not being able to speak, the self is denied. Metzger (1992) writes, "Without access to language, without the right to speak what we must speak, the self disappears. To be able to speak is not only a political, but a psychological right" (p. 32).

Yet, is this a "right" in the Chinese tradition? Do the parachute students know that they have this right? In the Chinese tradition, are they in the "right" by sharing what they feel, knowing that expressing one's opinion is often construed as being disrespectful to parents? Chung and Bemak (2002) suggest that Asian Americans generally have more allocentric values that involve some subordination of one's individual goals to the goals of the collective. And Kwan (1995) shares that "An Asian society is situation centered, with a focus on the family and social self, and the society expects an individual's conformity to a situation's code of ethics" (p. 147). As stated previously, the parents may be carrying a stick, holding on to the Chinese tradition and not seeing how the parachute students may be splintering away from them.

For those who do not want to come to the States, this must be very difficult. How can they listen to allegiance and responsibilities towards family, and at the same time

speak from their hearts? Should what they want to do be more important than what their family determines what they should do? Leong cited by Sodowsky, Kwon, and Pannu (1995) shares, "Social harmony is achieved through structured family relationships that have clearly defined codes of behavior, including language usage and hierarchical roles" (p. 147). In this "hierarchical role," what social harmony can be established if the clearly defined codes of behavior are being challenged and the use of language is limited?

Gadamer (1960/1989) shares, "Only when two people can make themselves understood through language by talking together can the problem of understanding and agreement even be raised" (p. 285). If the parachute students are not allowed to say anything, what misunderstandings and disagreements are neither addressed nor resolved? Before they even cross the Taiwanese border, a new border or wall may be created in the parachute students' hearts. Their parents may have "gotten their way" to go to the States, but already lost their child along the way. Behind their masks of silence, what are the parachute students truly hiding to disguise their own feelings and emotions? And what can be done to let those feelings and emotions be known to their families in a respectful and meaningful manner?

These first two themes, Preparing the Landing and Neither Voice nor Vote, are the precursors to the parachute students' arrival. They are the backgrounds that the parachute students have opened up prior to their coming. For some, it is their last experience of Taiwan before their experiences of being in the States begin. It is their journey before the journey, an understanding but not necessarily acceptance of the new life they are about to begin. Let us continue their journeys, by learning of their experiences in the States.

Entering the Foreign Land and Following Their Customs

In the Chinese tradition, whenever individuals leave their home country, many consider the following Chinese idiom: “Enter the foreign land, and follow their customs.” There are many meanings implied by this expression. This idiom can be used as a way to say “goodbye,” but it is different from other farewell statements in that it is expressed only to individuals who travel to a country or province that is different from their own. The Chinese idiom implies that foreigners should not try to bring all of their culture to a new land. If they do, they will never adjust to a new life. It is assumed that if foreigners consider the wisdom of this idiom, their stay in a foreign land will be more enjoyable. Perhaps the English equivalent to this Chinese idiom is, “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.”

The following themes are the attempts by the parachute students to follow the language, culture, and customs of the United States. It is their journey of being immersed in a foreign land, following a road full of new experiences. At times they get lost in loneliness, identity confusion, and the English language. At times they face many struggles like culture shock, foreignness, difficulty making friends, and homesickness. They may attempt to “do what the Romans do,” but often wish they could do what the Taiwanese do.

The following themes concentrate on their time in-between leaving Taiwan and returning, in-between losing Taiwan as home and making the States their possible new home. By no means is this a journey like that of a tourist or someone who just “passes through.” In their journey, the parachute students not only learn about the States and the English language, but more importantly, they learn much about themselves. It is their

experiences of being immersed in a foreign culture and how they survive. It is their journey in how the States becomes a part of them.

Perhaps Heidegger would consider calling their struggles and times of being lost as the development of the parachute students' *da-sein*. For Heidegger (1927/1966) writes:

> *Da-sein* is a being that does not simply occur among other beings. Rather, it is ontically distinguished by the fact that in its Being this being is concerned about its very Being. (p. 53)

Throughout their time in the States, the parachute students are concerned about their Being, and discover ways to make their Being a better part of their being here. They experience many opportunities where their *da-sein* is unclear, experiences they may not consider a benefit – ones they would not like to undergo. As they learn from their experiences, they grow in how they establish their *da-sein*.

Let us open up the lived experiences of the Taiwanese parachute students who agreed to participate in this study. I invite the reader to see how the parachute students follow the customs of the States and how they try to establish their *da-sein*. I start with the parachute students' experiences of culture shock.

The Shock of Lostness and Foundness

What did the Taiwanese parachute students experience when they first arrived in the States? Some had previous experiences of landing, but for many, they had no idea what to expect. Many had heard that the States was the land of milk and honey, the golden land of opportunity. Yet after landing, they express the feeling of being in a daze, like being in a time warp away from anything they had experienced previously.

The following is a group description of what my participants collectively experienced as they entered the States for the first time. Each participant has read this description and added, as a group, their own words to convey the experience of what this first landing is like.

> Suddenly, you are immersed completely in the English language and in an English-speaking world. You hear people talking, you hear announcements but you do not understand what they are saying, and it sounds like gibberish. There is nothing in Chinese, no signs or announcements in Chinese informing you where to pick up your luggage or to exit.
>
> As you walk out of the airport, you are amazed at how much land is so open and so barren. So many trees, so many green trees, so many parking spaces, and where are all the crowds? It is as if we had landed in the middle of nowhere.
>
> Immediately, you feel a complete dependence upon whomever is driving you or which relative has picked you up. It is comforting that you meet family and friends, but there also is an uncomfortableness, an uneasiness that was not always apparent before you left Taiwan. For now you are in a land that is so foreign, so unfamiliar to you and perhaps the first time in your life you experience what culture shock truly is. As Ballerina shares, "You are lost, very lost in every sense of the word."
>
> Where are all the taxis? Where are all the buses? How come there are so many people with cars? Even the highways are completely different and the designs of the cars are so different and so much bigger. There is so much room on the roads to drive. "Where are all the motorcycles?" Everything, from the air you breathe to the words you hear to the road you drive on is different.
>
> And it sure is cold here compared to Taiwan. You have to wear much heavier winter jackets and even the slippers are different. Who would have dreamed that slippers would be worn that are warm and fuzzy. Waterproof pants and shoes, how interesting.
>
> As you arrive at your new home, which is usually the home of an aunt or uncle, you are amazed how big the house is. It is as if you have moved into a mansion. Very open, with rooms just for watching television or other rooms just to entertain guests. Practically everyone has their own bedroom and three stories high. Who would have thought of that. And there's more. Every room has air conditioning or heating. Amazing! Such room, such space, such luxury, and check out the size of the refrigerator. Perhaps this is the land of plenty.
>
> As you sit down to eat, you notice that the food is a little different. The portions and plates are bigger and the containers that you store leftovers in are huge. There are one or two dishes that smell and look

> different. Amongst the choices, there are one or two American dishes. Wei had fried chicken for the first time and he thought it was pretty good. Others had hot dogs and enjoyed them immensely. Hamburgers and Doritos snacks were also a big hit. Either way, the dinner table did not look like a traditional Chinese meal, at least not how you remembered it.

As soon as the parachute students step off the plane, the sights and sounds of the English language bombard them. Immersion in a foreign language wastes no time, has no mercy, and does not discriminate. Immediately, it makes all newcomers feel its affects. And immersion knows that the parachute students are as green as the trees when it comes to knowing the language and customs. It tries to make the parachute students feel greener, by continually giving them more stimuli and more things to overwhelm them.

Welcome to the United States, a land of freedom and a land of opportunity. Yet, for the parachute students, the kinds of opportunities for freedom are unclear and distant. The parachute students are dependent upon their hosts. Where they go and what they do is limited to what the hosts show them. It is as if they are once again infants, dependent upon an adult for food and care. They are spoon-fed bits of information and talked to with a list of do's and don'ts. However, their loved ones cannot defend them from the newness of the culture and the speed of the language. That part of their journey does not have baby seats. They must experience the birth pains of immersion, and step into the cold, harsh reality of being in a whole new world.

As they enter this new world, are they being jerked into the cold reality by the shock of it all? When Ballerina shares her experience of being lost in every sense of the word, many Taiwanese parachute students share that they are experiencing culture shock. In the early 1960s, Kalervo Oberg first coined the term "culture shock." Oberg (1961)

believes that culture shock is caused by the anxiety resulting from losing language, familiar signs, and symbols used to orient oneself in one's own culture. Schnell (1996) defines culture shock as the "expression generally associated with the frustration that occurs when persons have difficulty functioning in a different culture or when persons are exposed to individuals from another culture" (p. 3).

Yet, what is the shock in culture shock? According to the Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology (1966), the etymological definition of the word "culture" originates from the Latin word *cultura* meaning "to cultivate or to till, the cultivating of the mind" (p. 235). The word "shock" originates from the French word *choquer* meaning "violent concussion" (p. 822). Can culture shock be considered as kind of an "over-cultivation," causing violence to the mind as if the constant pounding of new and different experiences causes a concussion to the spirit of a newcomer? The shock does not feel like a type of pain, but it can become debilitating. With an electrical shock, one reacts to the sensation of electricity. In culture shock is one reacting to the sensation of a foreign culture? Even the physical body is affected by the experience of being in culture shock.

Barna (1976) shares that the whole body is in massive change when coping with being in such a new environment.

> Extra adrenalin and nonadrenalin pour into the system, general muscle tone rises, pupils of the eyes dilate, sense organs are directed toward the incoming stimuli, palms sweat. This psychological response is in constant operation, even in sleep. (p. 51)

Is there psychological or physiological damage because of too much culture? The body is not at rest; the mind is not at ease. The parachute students no longer have to dream about being in the States, but must face the reality of their arrival, the shock of being in a new culture.

Being Shocked into Foreignness: Receding and Turning Toward

Perhaps culture shock is necessary, as if it takes the shock in culture shock to alert the parachute students to the reality of moving from home to foreignness. In other words, it may not be necessary to take the shock away from the parachute students, but to let them experience it. Heidegger (1967/1993) questions why we hide from anxiety before we fully understand it. One loses opportunities for learning when anxiety is covered over. He writes:

> In anxiety, we say, 'one feels ill at ease.' What is 'it' that makes 'one' feel ill at ease? We cannot say what it is before which one feels ill at ease. As a whole it is so for one. All things and we ourselves sink into indifference. This, however, not in the sense of mere disappearance. Rather, in this very receding things turn toward us. (p. 101)

Why do we tend to avoid the very receding things that turn toward us? Is it something painful that touches us much more on the inside? How do the parachute students turn from excitement to indifference?

According to the American Heritage Dictionary (1982), indifference is defined as "uninterested: without concern; not mattering one way or another; having no influence or weight, no particular interest or concern" (p. 655). Does anxiety mean a weight on one's heart? Do we sink into indifference to avoid the very thing that causes anxiety, to lift the weight and pretend that we do not care, when we really do? Indifference may mean "disinterest" in one's well being, not to care because there is no benefit from caring, as if the situation is hopeless and can not change. Perhaps when the parachute students move away from being indifferent to experiencing differences, culture shock may act as a revealing, rather than a concealing, a being-in difference, rather than being indifferent.

In a sense, it is a healthy thing for students to experience the shock in culture

shock. If the shock in culture shock were to be taken away from them, how might the difference that is a difference be missed? According to Heidegger (1957/1969) differences should not be reduced to a distinction, but that because of differences, new possibilities are brought into view. The parachute students are a concern, because in my eyes, they are so different. For the parachute students, the experience of culture shock is a difference that is a difference; that they have to address it, as it cannot be avoided or hidden.

One taken-for-granted notion is that we deal with difference by trying to get rid of it, as if differences make the world waver and tremble. Sometimes when we address differences with students, who are labeled outside the "cultural norm," we sometimes seek to make their situation better without fully understanding the sense of difference. We tend to try to "fix a difference" when we do not fully understand it nor the potential found in what the difference might offer. Heidegger (1957/1969) shares that instead of trying to hide a difference, we should try to understand it. He writes:

> In our attempt to think of the difference as such, we do not make it disappear; rather, we follow its essential origin. On our way there we think of the perdurance of overwhelming and arrival. This is the matter of thinking, thought closer to rigorous thinking--closer by the distance of one step back: Being thought in terms of the difference. (p. 65)

Is a difference really a difference that should be eliminated? Instead of trying to change a difference, might parachute students be encouraged to look the difference in the eye? Jardine, Clifford, and Friesen (2003) note that by labeling and addressing problems, we tend to limit learning opportunities for children to experience. Jardine et al. write:

> The impulse behind institutional labeling and classification, however toxic the effects, may well have generous roots in professionals' wanting to do well by the child--wanting to fix his wounds and put an end to everyone's suffering. But fixing is a dangerous enterprise. It seeks to eradicate

> difference; but it also eliminates openings and possibilities, especially the unhesitant, grotesquely self-certain fixing we have come to expect from many educational psychologists in our respective professions. (p. 43)

There is a lot about difference that we need to interrogate. Differences can make an individual appreciate the diversity of a foreign culture and background. Differences can make an individual more open to opportunities for learning. It may take the shock in culture shock to assist the parachute students to realize the healthiness of differences. It may take the shock in culture shock for the parachute students to realize that they are no longer in Taiwan; but at the same time, they have an opportunity to learn and grow in the States, and for persons they encounter to learn from them.

Being experienced. Culture shock is certainly difficult, but it is also an opening of possibilities because the parachute students come to understand themselves differently: a struggle between their past and newly en-cultured selves. In a sense, this struggle between difference and identity is wrapped up in culture shock. Culture shock moves an individual from his/her own little world, to a broadened realization of different cultures and ways of thinking. How do we keep the notion of difference open so that it does not become overwhelming, but rather that it reveals possibilities?

Gadamer (1960/1989) shares how new experiences broaden the outlook of an individual.

> The truth of experience always implies an orientation toward new experience. That is why a person who is called experienced has become so not only through experiences but is also open to new experiences. The consummation of his experience, the perfection that we call "being experienced," does not consist in the fact somebody already knows everything and knows better than anyone else. Rather, the experienced person proves to be, on the contrary, someone who is radically undogmatic; who, because of the many experiences he has had and the knowledge he has drawn from them, is particularly well equipped to have new experiences and to learn from them. The dialectic of experience has

> its proper fullfillment not in definitive knowledge but in the openness to experience that is made possible by experience itself. (p. 355)

For the parachute students to understand culture, they must experience culture shock and become experienced by it. Culture shock is not a simple thing we just want to take away, but it is present in everyone's experience of a different culture. Culture shock is the passageway to begin understanding the diversity of a new culture. As an electric shock brings people back to life, so the shock in culture shock brings the parachute students to the life of a different culture.

Ironically, the very thing that helps them overcome culture shock is culture itself. The shock and unfamiliarity of a different culture is taken away by the familiarity of it. As individuals become used to the diversity that surrounds them, they become a part of that diversity, a part of that culture. The concerns and ill effects of experiencing culture shock become dulled. When immersed in a foreign culture, the foreignness of culture shock becomes hidden, or as Heidegger implies, becomes indifferent.

For the parachute students, experiencing culture shock is not only experiencing diversity, it is learning diverse ways of understanding. It becomes a part of their repertoire of understanding and looking at things in a different light. As Gadamer talks about the openness to experiences, Greene (1973) discusses the importance of continued learning and growth. She writes:

> The more he expands and varies the perspectives through which he looks on his world, the more rational he becomes; the more he 'knows.' The subject matters he studies, the art experience he enjoys, the 'recipes' provided by the culture all supplement his commonsense discoveries, his perceptual awareness, his personal knowledge. If he is fortunate, he will build a many-faceted stock of knowledge, a multiplicity of constructs he can use to order his experience. To the degree he does this, his perspectives will diversify; and he will find himself living in a progressively more meaningful world. (pp. 8-9)

Culture shock not only assists the parachute students to know more about themselves, but it helps them to understand others and different situations with a more open outlook. The parachute students move from looking at their experiences from a Taiwanese viewpoint to a worldlier viewpoint, from a one-dimensional view to a multicultural view. This experience truly makes the world more meaningful, as well as opening up multiple ways of seeing how the world exists.

In summary, to truly grasp and understand the world, parachute students have to experience it, and that includes the experience of culture shock. This opening of understanding and insights can be expanded to other related experiences, and in essence, more learning opportunities. I open up next the Taiwanese parachute students' experiences of feeling foreign.

This is Very *Mwashung* (Foreign)

In the Chinese language, the character "foreign," pronounced as *wai*, is always combined with some object or phrase. For example, the character "foreign" is combined with other words to say, "foreign language" or "foreign person." It is never used as a noun and is not used to describe a situation or feeling. For example, it is never used alone with a statement like, "Oh, this is so foreign to me" or "How foreign."

Instead, when trying to describe being foreign or foreignness, Chinese use the word *mwashung*, meaning strange, never exposed to. The character *mwa* means unfamiliar and indifferent. Within the character, there is a root participle meaning to hear, or never heard of. The character *shung* means green or raw. It is also the derivative for the word "birth" and is combined with the word *shungzhang* meaning "to grow." Thus, when something feels foreign to them, the parachute students may write in Chinese

or in Chinglish, “This is very *mwashung*.” This is what Ballerina wrote in her diary when she was on her sixth-grade outdoor education trip.

Mwashung can be described as being inexperienced with the unfamiliar. It means being indifferent because the parachute students do not know how to react to their new surroundings. They feel strange and uncomfortable because they are not used to what they are experiencing. They are used to calling other things foreign, but not themselves. They may be “made in Taiwan,” but the parachute students do not have the proper battery of experiences to function independently in the States.

An experience that is *mwashung* is green, green to what is expected and how to react to new experiences. At the same time, it is green to grow, grow and learn from new challenges and new opportunities for learning. The etymological definition of the word green originates from the old English word *grene* meaning “fresh, young, unripe, and immature” (The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology, 1966, p. 413). The experience of foreignness is an opportunity to mature, grow, and become experienced. It involves the growing pains of immersion and diversity, as experienced in many different moments in life. Although many things are naturally green, being green is not natural for the parachute students; it takes time for them to become ripe and mature.

Mwashung is a birth into the unknown, being exposed to the foreignness of a new land and to new beginnings. The parachute students are not prepared for the tremendous changes they confront in the States, as they leave the comfort of their homeland, their womb of familiarity. Nevertheless, as a baby is forced to leave the womb, they are forced to experience change. Foreignness causes change. What they see and hear may be “strange” to them, but it also can be an opportunity to hear differently. As culture shock

is a necessary experience for the parachute students to realize their arrival, the experience of foreignness is a necessary experience to grow and diversify. Every experience has a freshness about it, allowing a student to look at things in a different light. Nothing is stale from being immersed in foreignness, but is alive with culture and variety, as new opportunities for learning and various experiences nurture their readiness for growth.

This is Very *Cheguai* (Strange) to Me

The parachute students are aware that they are different, but how different? The differences that they have are not a luxury of originality or distinctiveness, but in their eyes, a weakness and a flaw that they want to hide. They may not mind being different, but they do mind looking dumb or clueless or so different that they are considered "weird." According to the American Heritage Dictionary (1976), the word "weird" is defined as strikingly odd or unusual in character. And in Chapter Two, I refer to the word "foreign" as "alien" or "being on the outside." Do the parachute students feel that they are so different that they are strikingly alien? It is as if their mere appearance strikes others as unusual in character, like an alien character from outer space, not approachable but certainly noticeable. The word "weird" in Chinese is made up of the characters *che,* meaning "strange," and *guai* meaning "monster." Who wants to befriend a strange monster or look like one? Moreover, a monster connotes something that should be feared. Not only are the parachute students considered strange; are they also to be feared?

The parachute students may express that a situation is "very strange" or "very *cheguai*." Instead of saying that a situation is foreign, they would more likely say, "This is very strange." According to Ballerina, Chaos, and my wife, they are more likely to

express that a situation is *cheguai*, but write that a situation is *mwashung*.

Mwashung is a more accurate definition of feeling foreign, but *cheguai* is more of the lived language that the parachute students use. In addition, when something seems foreign to them, the parachute students may say that they have never seen *mei kanguo* or never heard *mei tingguo* of something previously. *Mei* means "no" and *guo* means "in the past." In other words, it is an experience not in their past. Thus, foreignness can be considered as something always new, never before experienced.

What is it about the newness of the experience that makes it so weird? Just because an experience has never been heard or seen before does not make it weird necessarily. Is it the lack of experience in the States that causes the parachute students to feel weird or foreign? The weirdness of their situation may not be limited to the experience itself, but may be opened up by the parachute students' lack of familiarity or understanding. The situation's weirdness may be due more to how they are viewed by others—the gaze that suggests they look like an outer space alien. What is contained in this "look?"

The Mutuality of Feeling Un-comfort-able

At the same time that the parachute students may feel foreign, they may look at their American counterparts as foreign. As the parachute students interact with US citizens, US citizens also may feel a sense of culture shock and foreignness—something to which they are unaccustomed. Ballerina shares, "Our lack of understanding was not a comfort to me." Spencer shares, "They have just as much to be uncomfortable about as we are." And Lynn acknowledges, "The feeling of uncomfortableness is mutual." The culture shock and foreignness is not only something that the parachute students

experience, but they help others to experience as well.

As stated in Chapter Two, the word “comfort” originates from the Latin word *confortare,* meaning to strengthen. According to the Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology (1966), the word “comfort” also originates from the Hebrew word *naun* meaning to console. To be comforted is to be consoled so that individuals can renew their strength. Yet, when uncomfortable, they have limited opportunities to rest, minimal time to bandage their wounds of uncertainty. When uncomfortable, the parachute students are not at peace, are ill content with their present being. Moreover, how can they be consoled when they cannot understand words of comfort?

For the parachute students and their American classmates, there frequently is not a comfort in knowing one another. A strong bond is lacking between strangers from two different worlds. Are the parachute students sensitive to how others might experience their “foreignness” as uncomfortable? They may not like the feeling of foreignness, but do they unknowingly fuel this “out of place” space? For example, many parachute students will talk in Chinese, but by doing so, unknowingly exclude non-Chinese speakers in the conversation. Numerous times, I have had arguments with Jia-Shieu to please translate what others are saying. Do they forget, in the comfort of their lived language, that others do not share the same language, the same understanding? They may have difficulty translating not only the language, but also how others may feel. Why is it difficult for them to interpret the foreignness that others are experiencing?

At other times, parachute students may try to hide a part of themselves, the Taiwanese culture and traditions, from their American classmates. Thumper shares how he did not know whether to ask his friends to take off their shoes in his house. And Jen-

Yi comments how she was afraid that her friends might mock her for having a rice cooker. Lynn shares how she wants to eat with other Asian students to avoid possible comments about the Chinese dishes she eats. Wei would invite his friends to eat in his house, but never insist that they eat what his family was eating. He would hope that his family would be serving an American dish to complement their Chinese dinner. The parachute students are uncomfortable being themselves, and also sensitive that their traditions might be "too Chinese" for their American classmates. While in Taiwan, I thought many dishes and experiences were "too Chinese for me." What may be "too Chinese" for Americans may be "too American" for the parachute students. The comfort in a foreign experience involves "border crossings."

Giroux (1993) respects the notion of differences as part of a common struggle to extend the quality of public life. He writes for the need to create pedagogical conditions where students are given opportunities to learn and appreciate diversity:

> …..students become border crossers in order to understand otherness in its own terms, and to further create borderlands in which diverse cultural resources allow for the fashioning of new identities within existing configurations of power. (p. 28).

The parachute students sharing their "diverse cultural resources" may enhance the understanding of "otherness in its own terms." Hua (1968/1986) remarks that there is an important strain in American culture that insists upon the affirmation of differences and the reclaiming of origins. However, she is quick to point out that this is not limited to just one culture:

> Crossing cultural barriers, crossing parental and conventional strictures, searching for a center within oneself from the past that is ever present—are not limited to Chinese Americans; rather, they are universal concerns. (p. 5)

Instead of trying to hide their differences, perhaps the parachute students should highlight the strengths of their differences. Durrell (1957) writes, "When we withdraw from the culture around us, we not only isolate ourselves from the local people, but from our own humanity as well" (p. 97). In essence, by withholding a part of their own culture, the parachute students are hiding a part of themselves. The parachute students can share their culture, and at the same time, be true to themselves and to their American friends. If their friends are truly friends, the parachute students' differences will enhance a respect for one another. The cultural barriers that they overcome, can be replaced by cultural understanding.

The parachute students' lack of comfort in foreignness may be exactly what helps promote an appreciation of diversity. When too comfortable, one becomes complacent and experiences seem trivial, as if there is no need to think. When uncomfortable, one searches to become comfortable again. The uncomfortableness incites action, encourages thinking. And the only way to become comfortable again in foreignness is to understand the culture of others. Greene (1973) encourages educators to go beyond the norms of thinking, to use the uncomfortableness of a situation as a learning opportunity. She writes:

> Only if he breaks with fixed, customary modes of seeing can he remove the blinders of complacency. Only then can he take responsibility for his pursuits of norms and meanings. Naturally, he is a function of a culture--a member of various social groups, participating in their orientations. But he is also a unique person with his own biographical standpoint. He must become aware of this uniqueness and of his capacity to unify what constitutes the 'sub-universe of meaning' in his life; he must take action to pattern his world. (p. 8)

The parachute students must also take action to pattern their world. They can act by

embracing the American culture and maintaining the Taiwanese culture. The uncomfortableness of foreignness is not so much an inconvenience as it is an opportunity, an opportunity for learning and for appreciating differences. It is also an opportunity for their American classmates to appreciate the cultural differences that make up their surroundings. Hannah Arendt (1957) shares that to know worldly understanding is to know the reality of one's situation. She writes:

> Only where things can be seen by many in a variety of aspects without changing their identity, so that those who are gathered around them know that they see sameness in utter diversity, can worldly reality truly and reliably appear. (p. 57)

This worldly reality is a gift. To see differences, but also to see sameness in others, can contribute to breaking out of ignorance. Instead of feeling uncomfortable with differences, the parachute students can appreciate them. To understand others can help decrease the uncomfortableness of foreignness.

The parachute students experience foreignness much more than their American classmates because they are in their classmates' school and hometown. The parachute students are not the hosts, but the visitors. More often for the parachute students, the feeling of being uncomfortable, the fear of feeling foreign, becomes commonplace for them, ebbing and flowing throughout their stay.

You think everyone is staring at you. After they enter the States, students of different colors, cultures, and backgrounds surround them. Even though there is cultural diversity, the parachute students can not help but feel foreign, as if they stand out in a crowd. Thumper comments, "You notice everything around you, but when in new surroundings, you think everyone is staring at you." This is a powerful dimension of what it means to be foreign. Individuals do not stare at someone because they look the

same as everyone else, but they stare or gaze because an individual looks so different or unique.

Merleau-Ponty (1962/1998) shares that when individuals fixe a gaze upon someone, they restrict their visual field. As Americans look at the parachute students, their visual field acts like a magnifying glass, where every move is enhanced and studied. Merleau-Ponty writes:

> It appears when, instead of yielding up the whole of my gaze to the world, I turn towards this gaze itself, and when I ask myself what precisely it is that I see; it does not occur in the natural transactions between my sight and the world, it is the reply to a certain kind of questioning on the part of my gaze, the outcome of a second order or critical vision which tries to know itself in its own peculiarity, of an 'attention to the pure visual', which I exercise either when I am afraid of being mistaken, or when I want to undertake a scientific study of the spectacle presented. (p. 226)

There is a certain kind of questioning on the part of a gaze. A statement may not be uttered verbally, but certainly a gaze communicates non-verbally; "You are different, you are foreign." At the same time, a gaze implies, "You are a question." To gaze is to wonder. One wonders who you are.

Are the parachute students seen as "a spectacle presented?" In the Random House Thesaurus College Edition (1989), synonyms for the word spectacle include "marvel, wonder, phenomenon, curiosity, rarity" (p. 668). When being stared at, is it because one does not believe one's eyes at such a rarity or curiosity? On the other hand, is it because what is being stared at should be studied so as to provide understanding? Perhaps the ones staring are seeing themselves reflected back in a gaze?

When staring or gazing, we are oblivious usually that we are staring. Individuals are more concerned with what they are seeing than the message they are sending by staring. Yet in the American tradition, children are taught not to stare. What is so foreign

or uncomfortable about being stared at or gazed upon by others? Are the Americans staring at them, or are the parachute students staring at themselves? Are the parachute students watching their own moves, concerned that the Americans may be watching? Sartre (1956) shares how an individual's look can affect another person, bringing up his or her own consciousness. He writes:

> .....all of a sudden I am conscious of myself as escaping myself, not in that I am the foundation of my own nothingness but in that I have my foundation outside myself. I am for myself only as I am a pure reference to the Other. (p. 349)

Sometimes when in a foreign situation, the feeling of foreignness comes from within a person. For not only do the parachute students perceive persons in the US looking at them, but they are looking at themselves. Why are they looking from the outside-in rather than from looking from the inside-out? Are they "found outside" themselves as they turn inward to understand the referent of their Being?

As stated in Chapter Two, Wu (1991) shares, "What really makes me feel foreign is the constant awareness of one's own self"(p. 268). What is it about "awareness of one's self" that presents itself in what the parachute students are experiencing? In Taiwan, everyday the parachute students must have looked at themselves in the mirror. In the States, the purpose of the mirror has not changed, but the image has. Surprisingly, it is an uncomfortable feeling looking at oneself. What is it that really is seen? What is embarrassing or disconcerting about being stared at by strangers? Sartre (1956) believes that we are ashamed of ourselves: the shame of not knowing for what we are being judged or looked at; the shame of not being recognized; the shame of being judged by inhumane standards and superficial settings.

Instead of the stares creating embarrassment, might they instead create

illumination through reflection, an opening of understanding and possibilities for learning and being? Merleau-Ponty (1965) addresses the importance of being vitally open to the world and the differences within it. He writes:

> Sometimes one starts to dream about what culture, literal life, and teaching could be if all those who participate, having for once rejected idols, would give themselves up to the happiness of reflecting together. (p. 270)

As individuals gaze upon others, why can they not see themselves? Or perhaps the gaze is searching to find themselves in others. It does not take much for a gaze or a stare to be turned into a friendly welcoming gesture.

A stranger to themselves, a stranger in a foreign land. As it is often uncomfortable being in the house of a stranger, so is it uncomfortable being in the environment of a foreign culture. Parachute students ask themselves, "Are the clothes that I wear in fashion?" "What I wear may fit, but does the rest of 'myself' fit in?" "Am I too loud?" "Is my accent too thick?" "Is it disrespectful to say something to an adult?" "What is the proper etiquette in this place?" It is as if how they are supposed to act and who they are supposed to be suddenly become very strange and uncertain. They have a heightened self-consciousness about who they are and what they do, but they are clueless as to how they are supposed to act in this new setting. They are strangers to others, and becoming strangers to themselves. When people are staring at them, they feel strange and weird, more in relation to themselves than perhaps anyone else. What is the realm of stranger that helps them look at themselves so differently?

Greene (1973) writes about how an individual evaluates him/herself when in a new culture:

> Now, looking through new eyes, he cannot take the cultural pattern for granted. It may seem arbitrary to him or incoherent or deficient in some

> way. To make it meaningful again, he must interpret and reorder what he sees in the light of his changed experience….When thinking-as–usual becomes untenable for anyone, the individual is bound to experience a crisis of consciousness. (p. 268)

This is similar to what Sartre (1956) wrote about regarding a consciousness looking from the outside. In essence, when looking from the outside in, the parachute students are conscious only of themselves. They are not necessarily concentrating on others as much as what they themselves do and how they look. They are consciously looking within. In the Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology (1966) the word "conscious" originates from the Latin word *consci-us,* meaning "to be aware of; known to oneself" (p. 206). Perhaps for the parachute students, they are seeing themselves for the first time. As Spencer shares, "I had become somebody that I did not know I would become. I never saw myself being as I am now."

When you are a stranger, nothing is taken for granted; everything seems unusual. A crisis of consciousness occurs because one is constantly conscious of what one is doing. What is done needs to be interpreted; every step needs to be evaluated. The experience itself of being in a new environment only becomes "as usual" when individuals can reorder their position towards the new environment and stop thinking about what they have to do. In other words, they have to take time to become familiar with the unfamiliar, to feel natural in their new setting. The parachute students have to take time to know themselves again as they are changing. They have to look in the mirror again and notice and accept the changes that are real. Greene (1973) considers this a benefit, a higher level of consciousness, because the parachute students can see much more than what "less conscious fellow citizens" could possibly see (p. 268). And Sartre (1956) writes, "For consciousness there is no being except for this precise

obligation to be a revealing intuition of something" (p. 786). By seeing themselves for the first time and having their consciousness raised, they are developing the ability to question and wonder, truly to learn about others and themselves.

Perhaps people stare at the parachute students because they are strangers, and, thus, cannot be trusted. Perhaps the stare of others can be considered as a defense mechanism or the setting of a territorial boundary, informing a parachute stranger to cause no hurt or pain. Always, children are warned of the danger that strangers may bring and they are told, "Never talk to strangers." Is this where racism and prejudice arise? Are racism and prejudice products of ignorance and false assumptions that can start by a simple look?

A stranger can be considered as a foreign person. After all, in the Chinese language, the word stranger is made up of the characters *mwashung* and the character for person, *ren*. A foreigner is made up of the words *wai guo*, meaning "foreign country" and the character for person, *ren*. A foreigner is a foreign country person; whereas, a stranger is a foreign person, thus implying that a stranger (*mwashung ren*) is not necessarily a foreigner (*waiguo ren*). Do the parachute students consider themselves as foreign strangers or strange foreigners?

As they become a part of the society, the parachute students are no longer considered as strangers, but as familiar acquaintances or friends. The parachute students have an idea of what this foreign place expects, but do not know how they can achieve this (Wu, 1991). Ballerina notices how she was so aware of her surroundings, but so clueless. She shares:

> The very first day of school, I had a schedule, but I didn't understand it and I didn't know they changed classes. In Taiwan, you stay in the same

> room and the teachers move around. So, everyone got up and I was lost. My heart was racing and I got so nervous. I walked out of the room and stood in the halls. What do I do? Do I go back to the old teacher or follow my classmates? Everything just seemed so foreign to me. The principal finally found me and then he couldn't communicate with me because my English was lousy and he obviously, didn't speak Chinese. I was really scared because you are not supposed to see the principal, especially not on the first day.

The assumption here is that the principal is a bad person—a perception that educators do not want perpetuated. A principal is supposed to be a helpful person. After all, students learn how to spell the word "principal" by remembering that he/she is a "pal." Students seem to forget this "principle" as they get older. Everyone seems to be afraid of the principal, the one stranger that the parachute students should recognize as a friend. However, the principal is also considered as a stranger, someone to be avoided. Perhaps the parachute students should meet with the principal when they arrive, so as not to be considered as a stranger, but rather a friendly acquaintance. Perhaps if they were able to meet more US citizens, the parachute students would not feel as if they were strangers.

There are benefits to being a stranger. Instead of being accustomed to one's surroundings, one is a new visitor. A stranger may not have the conventional vision that others share, but perhaps, then, fresh new insights are possible. The consciousness that Greene and Sartre talk about may reveal more than what is apparent to others. They can see more than their less conscious classmates can. Perhaps individuals take too many things for granted. The parachute students' strangeness can be a positive influence for adding both diversity and creativity.

What do I do? This pervasive "cluelessness" continues over and over again in every new incident. The words, "What do I do? What do I do!" ring in their thoughts. Never before have the parachute students felt as if they were on such a peculiar stage with a spotlight aimed at them. Palms become sweaty; nervousness overtakes them. Ballerina knew she was in school, but she was lost. Her heart was racing, but she had not been running. What is it about foreignness that causes so much panic? As a theatre is dark before an opening of a show, does stage fright surface in their hearts as they perform in the darkness of foreignness and uncertainty? They may not know how to act or perform in their own production.

What is it about being in the dark and in the shadows that is so unsettling? Darkness overcomes an individual. Children are afraid of the dark. When authors write, "These are dark times," individuals think of gloom and despair. No one feels comfortable walking in dark alleyways where there are many shadows and where danger may lurk. One's own shadow may not scare an individual, but an unidentified shadow that appears and disappears can bring terror to others.

We tend to think of the darkness and shadows as something to be feared or considered with caution. Yet, can it be positive sometimes, moving in between the darkness and the light? As Gadamer (1960/1989) writes, sometimes connections or ideas are found unexpectedly:

> Indeed, just as the beautiful is a kind of experience that stands out like an enchantment and an adventure within the whole of our experience and presents a special task of hermeneutical integration, what is evident is always something surprising as well, like a new light being turned on, expanding the range of what we can take into consideration. (p. 486)

In order to develop some new insights, perhaps the parachute students have to experience being lost. When they are lost, the parachute students ask themselves different kinds of questions. For example, when I asked some parachute students what they thought of when in darkness, they mentioned power outages. When in a foreign darkness, the first thing they look for is a source of light, not the usual typical source of light, but an alternative light. Maxine Greene (1973) writes, "To philosophize was to search for the light--the rational insight that exemplified the highest self realization, the veritable perfection of man" (p. 28). Might it be the darkness that forces them to think, to be creative? They are forced to ask questions and think in a different way. They might sweat and be nervous when experiencing being lost, but their ideas and "impromptu-ness" may open opportunities for learning. When they are lost, how is it that they can find questions to help find themselves again?

Although not running a marathon physically, the parachute students feel as if their minds are running constantly, trying to catch up with what they are experiencing. Yet, is it not dangerous to run in the dark? Not only do the parachute students have to figure out what to do, they also have to figure out how to express what they need to express. Ballerina did not know how to get "unlost" and did not know how to say, "I am lost." As Ballerina shares, " I was lost, in every sense of the word." The parachute students were lost in the darkness of confusion. Being in darkness can make an individual become more lost and confused.

As their minds and bodies are in the race of understanding, it becomes not so much a race, but a journey. This journey, much more than just traveling to the States, is a journey of understanding themselves and who others are as darkness and light are woven

together. O'Donohue (1999) contends that it is well worth the trip. He writes:

> We are always on a journey from darkness into light. At first, we are children of darkness. Your body and your face were formed first in the kind darkness of your mother's womb. Your birth was a first journey from darkness into light. All your life, your mind lives within the darkness of your body. Every thought that you have is a flint moment, a spark of light from your inner darkness. The miracle of thought is its presence in the night side of your soul; the brilliance of thought is born in darkness. Each day is a journey. (p. 4)

Such a journey encompasses much more than changing, including growth as well. As the parachute students struggle in the twilight between the darkness of being foreign and the light of being home, they grow from these experiences (Wu, 1991). It is an uncertain time, as they ask themselves daily, What to do? What to do? Yet, through that uncertainty, through that darkness, a light of understanding emerges, along with courage to persevere. Such is the case with learning the language.

As if We Were Deaf and Mute and Blind

The Chinese expression, "As if we were deaf and mute and blind," is used to describe what one experiences in learning a different language. This expression implies that one's senses become handicapped when immersed in a foreign language. It is as if hearing is useless; for what is the point of hearing if one cannot understand what is being said? And why should one speak, when one cannot convey what one truly means? Seeing is pointless; although one can see, one cannot recognize anything, as if words on advertisements and street signs are just scratches, randomly placed to make one feel more lost and out of place.

The following sections are the parachute students' experiences with English as a second language. What is it like for them to lose their senses as they struggle in a foreign

culture with a completely different language? And what is like for them to re-gain their senses in their journey of re understanding their themselves?

Teaching English with Chinese, Rather than Teaching English with English

Although some parachute students had studied English for years, once they arrive in the States, they are immersed overwhelmingly in the English language. Wei shares that he had tried two English classes in Taiwan.

> Before I came, I went to an English class in Taiwan, but that didn't help me at all. It had no significant help for me, very little. Then I went to "*bushiban*" [English night school] and it was no help. It wasn't intense enough.

And Thumper comments that he was totally unprepared for what he was to experience in the States.

> My English was horrible. I took a little bit of English classes at school, but nothing prepared me for what I was coming to. When I came over here, it felt completely foreign.

Ballerina shares how she had studied English in Taiwan and had progressed through many English classes. However, once in the States, she was very confused listening to English.

> We got to the beginning and then to the middle level, but I was not at all prepared. And I thought before I came here that I would do okay. I was really moving up in my English level and when I first arrived here I guess what was different was that everyone sounded different and had different accents. So, even though they were speaking English, I thought that many people were speaking a completely different language. A word would not sound the same from different people, so I thought they were just speaking a different language. (Ballerina)

Even though Ballerina had taken many classes and spent two years studying English, she, too, was unprepared to be immersed in the English language. Individuals with dissimilar accents, the speed of speaking, and varying tones confused and frustrated her. Perhaps

the problem was that in Ballerina's eyes, "They [teachers in Taiwan] were teaching you English with Chinese, not teaching you English with English."

It is a different experience when the parachute students learn English from a teacher who speaks no Chinese, as opposed to a teacher who does speak Chinese. There is no way to retreat and escape back to the comfort of one's native language. It is as if one is forced into immersion, consumed by the constant onslaught of the English language. According to the Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology (1966), the word onslaught "originates from the middle Dutch word *aenslach* meaning to strike at" (p. 627). The word onslaught is influenced by the word slaughter. Immersion does not come gently to the parachute students; instead, it strikes mercilessly at them. As the parachute students butcher the English language, the English language, with its speed and immediate usefulness, is slaughtering them.

Although successful in the classroom, in the world of lived language, the parachute students are quickly humbled by the lack of familiarity with the vocabulary of the English language. The parachute students may know many words in English, but not the expressions, tones, intonations, rhythm, and the feelings behind the English language. Moreover, there is safety in the classroom, where there exists a culture and compassion for learning; whereas in the real world, many do not have patience for those learning a language. In a hustle-and-bustle world, the slowness of the parachute students, as well as others learning the English language, is only a frustration, a nuisance, and an obstacle to the Americans. The parachute students experience a double foreignness; not only do they look different, but they sound different as well.

Gadamer (1960/1989) states, “For you understand a language by living in it” (p. 385). The parachute students may have been prepared to study the English language, but not prepared to live in it. What does it mean to live in a language? Storti (1990) comments that it is not only the constant barrage of new stimuli that one has to encounter, but that international students encounter new situations on a scale they have never seen before. Many students were not prepared for this immersion.

For the parachute students, it is not necessarily studying a foreign language that presents a major difficulty; it is the struggle to understand and express oneself with that new language and the culture it represents. Yet it is impossible to grasp the language all at once, so the parachute students reach out to grasp a word or phrase heard in a conversation. How can they actively participate in a conversation by just understanding a word or phrase? They are not participants in a conversation, as much as they are spectators, straining and reaching to recognize a moment with a familiar word or phrase tucked in their memory. And so often, they may have heard a word before, but do not recognize it in a different context.

The Mask of Silence

The parachute students are not living in a foreign language as much as living in a foreign silence, silent not because they want to be, but because they have to be. They may speak their own language, but who will understand them? And they may try to speak English, but who will understand them? They may not have the vocabulary to speak what they truly want to speak. And they may not be able to pronounce what they truly want to announce. How can they participate in a conversation when they neither speak nor understand the language that is spoken to them?

To hide from not understanding, they put on a mask of appearing to understand. Lynn shares that she struggled how to speak and was very scared that someone would talk to her and they would not understand what she said. Thus, she shares, "I acted like I understood when others talked to me in English so that a conversation would not start." And Thumper shares, " I would nod my head like I understood something, and then move away to try to avoid a question to confirm my understanding." Just as they wore a mask coming over to the States to hide their true feelings of sadness about leaving Taiwan, the parachute students continue wearing a mask to protect themselves from their ignorance and "uncomfortableness" within the English language.

Perhaps Dunbar (1902) adequately expresses how parachute students may feel in his poem, "We Wear the Mask."

"We Wear the Mask"
We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes-
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be overwise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
To thee from tortured souls arise.
We sing, but oh the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise,
We wear the mask!
(Paul Lawrence Dunbar, 1902, p. 82)

How sad it must be to live behind a mask. Do parachute students wear a mask because they do not want to or are not able to show their true selves? Are the masks they wear

ones of embarrassment or ignorance, or are they masks for survival? Ballerina notices how she was so aware of her surroundings, but so clueless. She shares, "It was difficult to adjust to not understanding the language used around you. I hid in silence." Is the mask of silence the only safe haven that the parachute students have?

Heidegger (1946/1993) contends that silence is appropriate, for it promotes thinking. He writes, "Everything depends upon this alone, that the truth of Being comes to language and that thinking attain to this language. Perhaps, then, language requires much less precipitate expression than proper silence" (p. 246). Speech, talk, and discourse are grounded in silence, so that silence is primordial. He writes further that silence is revealing:

> Language, which speaks by saying, is concerned that our speech, heeding the unspoken, corresponds to what language says. Hence silence too, which one would dearly like to subtend to speech as its origin, is already a corresponding. Silence corresponds to the noiseless ringing of stillness, the stillness of the saying that propriates and shows. (p. 420)

What "shows up" in their silence? What is revealed when the parachute students are listening to what the silence is saying? As they are not accustomed to the foreignness of darkness, the parachute students also may not be accustomed to the foreignness of silence. Nevertheless, when confronting darkness, foreignness, and silence, there is much that can be revealed. Hearing is intensified in silence. Libraries are quiet so that great thinking can take place. And final exams are given in a quiet atmosphere so that silence can open insights and revelations. Metzger (1992) writes, "Sometimes it is not permission to speak, but permission to be silent that our soul requires. Sometimes creativity is able to offer us that silence, and silence can become the ground for creativity" (p. 50). Silence can bring new and creative ideas for understanding. So when

the parachute students talk to themselves or they are consciously thinking out loud, the silence prior to their talking and thinking has done its job, opening horizons for deeper understanding.

In the Chinese lived language, there is a saying that “Silence is gold,” meaning it is sometimes better to be quiet than to say something. It takes wisdom to know when to be quiet. Also, it is hard to look like a fool when silent. O’Donohue (1997) writes, “Silence is the sister of the divine.....A greater tolerance of silence is desirable, that fecund silence, which is the source of our most resonant language” (p. 112). Silence can produce a greater dialogue. It is as if fewer words have more significance than reckless chatter. Perhaps this is what is meant by the expressions, “Much was said in silence” or “I was comforted in our silence.” “Often secrets are not revealed in words, they lie concealed in the silence between the words or in the depth of what is unsayable between two people” (O’ Donohue, 1997, p. 112). After wearing the mask of silence, a renewed face of understanding can emerge.

You Can’t Hide Behind Anybody

For two years, Thumper and Ballerina would hardly say a word to me. They would give me a warm smile, a friendly hello, but I felt like I was pulling teeth to have a conversation with them. Ballerina shares thateven after she was promoted out of ESOL classes, she had trouble feeling comfortable speaking to native English speakers. She was afraid thatothers would mock her accent. Lynn would only talk to me in my office, as if my walls of privacy protected her. Joyce shares, “It wasn’t the point of being scared to speak English, but it was being scared of not understanding what people would say back to me.” Thumper’s first impressions were that he thought people were very

unapproachable and distant. It was as if they were more afraid of him for not understanding English than he was afraid of them.

What is so foreign about speaking to foreigners? At what point in time does a language barrier come from a lack of willingness to speak as opposed to a lack of ability to speak? Perhaps Ballerina makes a good point that having an accent accents one's differences. Perhaps the fear of not understanding a question is far more intimidating and humiliating than the fear of being alone and silent. Such fears can be so strong that they are debilitating, freezing the parachute students in hesitation and hiding them in silence.

McLaughlin (1992) shares that one of the most important aspects of effective instruction is the promotion of active English use. How do the parachute students have "active English use" when they are silent? Gadamer (1960/1989) shares that understanding how to speak is an accomplishment of life even though it does not involve interpretation or true understanding. How do the parachute students move to "an accomplishment of life" by having the courage to speak? What moves the parachute students from hiding in silence to having the courage to speak? From where does the courage to speak come? According to the Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology (1966), the word "courage" originates from the old Latin word *cor,* meaning "heart." It is also defined as the state or quality of mind or spirit that enables one to face danger. For the parachute students, do they have to have the heart, mind, and spirit to be willing to face the journey of immersion? Do their whole bodies, their whole beings, collectively embrace their new surroundings?

The willingness and courage to practice speaking English may be just as important as the willingness to study English. Spencer discovered this in the States. He

shares:

> If you need something, and you can't hide behind anybody especially not in my family, you have to do things yourself. And that forces you to learn.

By talking to others and practicing his English, Spencer opens himself up to new experiences. After all, "Conversation is a process of coming to an understanding" (Gadamer, 1960/1989, p. 385). This process may have started with silence, but eventually, the silence must be broken. And as the silence is broken, what else is broken? Perhaps when silence is broken, so, too, are barriers to communication or the unwillingness to try and communicate. When the parachute students move from silence to speaking, a new reality opens up in this foreign place.

As they speak English, the parachute students are telling the host society, "I am wlling to learn, I am opening up myself to being vulnerable." In essence, the parachute students open the doors to their humanity (Durrell, 1957). By being willing to speak, the parachute students draw closer to the people, the culture, and the language of the host people. What matters is not what they say when the parachute students speak English, or how well they say it, but what making the effort to speak English says about them. They move from being strangers, possible threats, to being possible friends. The parachute students open the doors to their true being, showing that they are not so foreign and not so different.

Yet opening oneself up to the culture and the language has some ramifications. When immersed in a foreign language, the lived body is affected. As vocabulary pours into the parachute students' memories, fatigue sets in as they try to grasp and juggle the meaning of different words. Spencer admits that the road is still difficult even with three years experience studying English. As he says, "I was confused and tired everyday."

And their mouths become tired, practicing and using unused muscles within the mouth to say words never before spoken from their lips. It is tiring constantly translating from Chinese to English and from English to Chinese. The parachute students become overwhelmed not only in the language, but saturated with information or sensory overload. As one international student said to me exhausted after a day of studying English, “Enough! I do not mean to be rude, but I cannot handle any more for now.”

Ironically, the language that overwhelms them, the very thing that makes them shout “Enough!” is the one thing thatthey need more of in order to feel comfortable in the language. The more students hear English, the more they become familiar with its sentence structure and language patterns, the more the parachute students will feel at home in the English language. Immersion is the fastest road to understanding the English language. The fatigue that parachute students experience is ignorance leaving their body. The muscles that they practice and work out become stronger as they speak the English language. What does it take to become familiar with the unfamiliar?

As the parachute students learn and practice English with native English speakers, their courage and confidence build. Lynn shares, “The more I understood, the more I felt comfortable.” Joyce comments that during her second year, she made friends with Americans and that helped her listening comprehension tremendously. Wei notes that because he was in a school that had no Chinese students, he was forced to know Americans, who in turn forced him to speak more English. Courage and confidence are experiences of becoming familiar and comfortable with the English language. As the parachute students live in the English language, the language becomes a part of them. The English language becomes a larger part of their lived language, of their experiences.

Being in the Lived Language of "Chinglish"

As the parachute students master the English language, they start to develop their own language. They move from speaking Chinese or Taiwanese to speaking English. With the combination of these languages, they live in a new language, known as "Chinglish." And with this language, there exists a unique culture separate from the American culture, but different than the traditional Chinese culture.

To speak "Chinglish" is to start a sentence in English and end it in Chinese or visa versa. To speak "Chinglish" is to speak part of a sentence in one language, but use certain words in the other language to add emphasis. To speak "Chinglish" is to say something with a mixture of Chinese and English and not realize that you used both languages in one sentence. To speak "Chinglish" is to know that the only way you truly can say what you want to say is by using both languages.

Merleau-Ponty addresses the importance of how language serves as a bond with those who share it. As stated in Chapter Three, Merleau-Ponty (1962/1998) writes:

> As soon as man [sic] uses language to establish a living relation with himself or with his fellows, language is no longer an instrument, no longer a means; it is a manifestation, a revelation of intimate being and of the psychic link which unites the world and our fellow man. (p. 196)

That revelation of intimate being, that psychic link can only be felt and experienced by those who share the same language. Speaking "Chinglish" is to unite the two worlds of Chinese and English into one common shared language, one common shared experience.

To separate the two languages would deny the true experience of the parachute students' immersion in English and complementing it with Chinese. It would not do justice to what the parachute students' lived language truly is. Much can be lost in translation, where words of one language do not properly replace and represent the

meaning behind another language. Translation can often lead to misinterpretation. There is something lost in translation. This is evident at any Chinese cultural event where the Chinese-speaking audience laughs, but the English-speaking audience remains silent after translation. So often parachute students will correct ABC's who are learning Chinese by saying, "No, the definitions are not interchangeable. What is meant by this word is used in a different context."

Nieto (1996) shares, "Language is an important symbol of cultural identity" (p. 45). It is the language with which the parachute students can identify. The parachute students not only speak the lived language of "Chinglish," they live in it. Gadamer (1960/1989) shares:

> To understand a foreign language means that we do not need to translate it into our own. When we really master a language then no translation is necessary and in fact, any translation seems impossible. (p. 384)

Many times, especially when facing the ineffable, a language seems inadequate for describing one's experience. Heidegger (1957/1969) writes about how language is so often limiting, that words do not capture accurately the meanings that are being conveyed. He writes:

> That difficulty lies in language. Our Western languages are languages of metaphysical thinking, each in its own way. It must remain an open question whether the nature of Western languages is in itself marked with the exclusive brand of metaphysics, and thus marked permanently by onto-theo-logic, or whether these languages offer other possibilities of utterance--and that means at the same time of a telling silence. (p. 73)

Perhaps that "telling silence" is the realization that words are not adequate. In moments of deep concern, where words are carefully counted, how many times do individuals say, "Words do not seem adequate," or "It is hard to put into words," or "I can't find the words." For the parachute students, at least they have two languages from which to

choose. Perhaps this is the true beauty of their bilingualism. Not only can the parachute students speak two languages, they can express themselves with the beauty that the two languages can give. As the American culture has become a part of them, so has the English language. To deny the use of both languages in their conversations is to deny a part of themselves.

When Festivals Approach, You Miss Your Family More

Alone in the foreign country as a foreigner
Everytime during the holidays, the missing of family doubles.
Knowing that the brothers are advancing in their careers,
When they are gathering to decorate the *jewi* [a plant],
They know one person is missing. (Wei, 900 A.D.)

In the Tung Dynasty, the poet Wang Wei was not at home during the "Lunar 9-9 Festival." Since he missed his family, he wrote the poem, "When Festivals Approach, You Miss Your Family More." This poem is part of the lived Chinese language when individuals experience homesickness, longing for home and family. The implied meaning behind this poem is that in everyday occurrences, usually one does not miss family. However, during family-oriented holidays and special occasions, one misses his/her family. As the poem states, "Everytime during the holidays, the missing of family doubles."

For many parachute students, the feeling of homesickness is most acute during New Year celebrations, and during American holidays. When they see American families getting together and celebrating, the parachute students wish they could be with their families and share in the celebration. One older parachute student shares, "Campuses are empty, there is no American turkey to eat; where others are feasting and celebrating, we have no invitations to any festival." The feeling of being outside the circle of fun stirs up

feelings of homesickness. When else do the parachute students experience homesickness and how do they handle those moments? The following sections concentrate on the parachute students' experiences of homesickness.

Where are the Firecrackers?

> On Chinese New Year, instead of having a ten-day vacation, I had to go to school. It was very quiet and where were all the *homebao* [red envelopes], in other words, money? Where were the firecrackers? It wasn't even recognized here that there was a Chinese New Year. People didn't even know that there was a New Year. In Taiwan, you prepared for new years by cleaning the house, shopping for food, kinda like Christmas here. You get to travel and visit family members, lots of firecrackers and lots of eating. I missed firecrackers. Firecrackers are illegal here. But here, we couldn't even stay up for the New Years because we had school the next day. It was a completely different feeling. The quietness and the lack of *homebao's* caused me to miss home. (Ballerina)

For Ballerina, the sights and sounds of the holidays were hidden and silenced. She was not able to enjoy the New Year as if the New Year never came. Just as firecrackers were illegal, it felt as if it were illegal to celebrate the New Year. The *homebao* (red envelopes) were not only sparse, they were full of emptiness. According to Chinese tradition, the red envelopes and the firecrackers are supposed to scare away the New Year's monster. For Ballerina and the other parachute students, nothing was scared away in the States, as if the New Year monster attacked them with feelings of foreignness and homesickness. The feelings behind the celebrations were gone, taken away by the lack of place and a lack of home.

The words "I'll be home for the holidays" bring a special feeling. Holidays are special, but being home for the holidays is extra special. The sights, the sounds, the food, the comfort of seeing familiar places, and the joy of family and friends make being home filled with treasured moments. Being home encompasses that special feeling Ballerina

longed to experience. It is the feeling that you are always welcome and that you belong. It is the feeling that you are cherished as part of a family. It is the security that you always have a place to rest. As Casey (1993) writes, “Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in” (p. 300).

Being home is not something new, but renewing. It renews the spirit of an individual to recall the past and to cherish the present, to appreciate all that one has, and to hope for better tomorrows. It re-kindles a passion for understanding, and to make better memories for the future. It allows for families to re-tell their stories of legendary proportions, which are somehow shaped and formed into the best interests of the storyteller. Being home brings up the fondest of memories, a special warmth, like the warmth of a childhood blanket.

There is something enticing about a warm comfortable blanket. It seems as if all babies love to have a certain “blanky” that they can cuddle and hold. A “blanky” is the first taste of home and it is of great comfort. A blanket is a symbol of warmth and security, a symbol of home. And as a blanket gets old and torn, it may not be as warm physically, but it still gives warm memories to the heart. Its sentimental value can help us re-touch the fondest of memories and re-live the happiest of moments.

Like the warmth of a childhood blanket, what is it about the warmth of home that we miss? For most, home has such a special meaning and significance in our lives. It is the place where we first establish our roots, our “belongingness,” the physicality of home and place. A home brings together intimacy, privacy, and domesticity all in one place, and under one roof. It allows an individual to be intimate to loved ones and to be private in the peacefulness of one’s home. According to the American Heritage Dictionary

(1982) domesticity is defined as “a devotion to home life” (p. 416). It is a commitment to establish and maintain the life within the home. Home encompasses more than the house; it represents the comfort of family and the lifestyle within the house. It brings about a nurturing of culture, religion, and traditions homegrown to the particular style of each family. According to Rybczynski (1986), historically there is much that defines home:

> Home brought together the meanings of house and household, of dwelling and refuge, of ownership and of affection. Home meant the house, but also everything that was in and around it, as well as the people, and the sense of satisfaction and contentment that all these conveyed. You could walk out of the house, but you always returned home. (p. 62)

You always return home, but what if you could <u>not</u> return home? Ballerina, Wei, Thumper, Joyce, and Chaos did not return to Taiwan for years. Spencer and Lynn have not yet returned to Taiwan. According to Casey (1993) this is dangerous:

> The most dangerous displacement is doubtless that from the homeland. If return to the land of origin is barred more than homesickness ensues; a profound sense of placelessness in the new society may lead to profound despair. (p. 302)

One may not be able to return home physically, but may return home emotionally over and over again in one’s heart. Perhaps this is what is meant when people say, “Home is where your heart is.” For the parachute students, when the physicality of home is beyond their return, their hearts carry them back. Is this what being homesick means, being heartsick for home? A heart, placeless in its current setting, is worn out by this constant longing to be in a different place.

When we are homesick, we look to the past as we think of home. Yet, can our past be replicated in the future? Winning (1990) comments, ”What makes me homesick is looking to the future without the assurance of home…..In this state of uncertainty we

take ourselves back home, or it calls us back through its timing to remind us that it is still there and may still offer us its warmth" (p. 255). The parachute students may be looking back on the past as a fond remembrance and at the same time, concerned that the warmth of the past cannot be felt again in this new place. Their condition is uncertain, a mystery to be seen and experienced. According to the Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology (1966), the word "certain" originates from the Latin word *certus* meaning "settled, sure." It is defined as "fully confident" (p. 159). Thus, the word "uncertain" can mean "unsettled, unsure, lacking confidence." Perhaps this is what the parachute students are experiencing, an uncertain future with a lack of confidence to face it. They may miss the assurances of home and the confidence of being on familiar ground.

Connelly (1993) shares, "'The way to do is to be' points me homeward in my every activity, my every deed, for what I intend to bring about must first be grounded in my being" (p. 10). The danger of homesickness is that the parachute students are not on solid ground, and the very essence of their Being is in question, as if it, too, is groundless. They are uncertain if they can be who they want to be, or what they hope to be in this new land. The parachute students look homeward for strength, but find no direction. Their confidence sways in the uncertainty of seeing their past in their future experiences.

They Are in Limbo

Perhaps what adds to the parachute students' experience of homesickness is that they have no place to call home in two ways. First, they do not call the place they reside in the States a home in a sentimental sense. They do not have the luxury to say, "It is good to be home" because they have not established a place in the States that they can call home. Second, many parachute students start their time in the States with a place

that is not a home just for their family, but a relative's place. They are visitors not just to the land, but forced to be visitors in a temporary home. They are in limbo. Wei shares, "Well we come here, and we are not only visitors to the land, but we have to keep our clothes in our luggages." And Ballerina shares, "It was a great feeling when we finally got our own place, but then my brother and I wondered how long that would last."

According to the Oxford Dictionary of Etymology (1966), the word "limbo" originates from the Latin word *limbus* meaning "hem, selvage, or fringe" (p. 528). It is defined as a region on the border of hell. The Chinese word for "hell" literally means an underground jail. The early months in the States can be a living hell, constantly being on the fringe of trying to establish a new home, but not finding one. For some parachute students, the States may be like an underground jail, never being able to see the sunlight of Taiwan, and always restricted from going back home.

Limbo is a state where you are caught between two places. In homesickness, the parachute students are caught in-between their home in Taiwan and the making of a new home in the States. As Casey (1993) shares, they find themselves in limbo between a past and a future home:

> A home, even if not built, is always *somewhere in particular*--or more particularly, *somewhere in.* (p. 299)
> Homes then, are not physical locations but situations for living: 'It takes a heap of living to make a house a home.' (p. 300)

It is not easy to lose a home, nor is it easy to find a home when lost in a new place. Casey's "*somewhere in"* is the meaning of home that is special to each parachute student. If home is where the heart is, then home holds a special place in one's heart and in one's memory. It is not easy to replace a home, to fill that spot in one's heart, because not any place can be called home, not any place is worthy of that honor.

Casey (1993) writes, “An important part of getting back into place is having a place to get back into” (p. 111). By starting their stay in a relative’s place, the parachute students do not have a place to get back into. Thumper, Chaos, Ballerina, Joyce, and Wei all started their time in the States in a relative’s house. They were visitors not just to the land, but forced to be visitors in a temporary home.

Rybczynski (1986) writes, “Home is a retreat from the cares of the world, a place to be at ease” (p. 160). As visitors, the parachute students are not able to retreat, to be at ease. As a visitor is considered a guest, the parachute students are expected to put on their proper self, their mask of politeness. In Chinese, the word “polite” is literally translated as “polite air.” The parachute students have to present this polite air throughout their stay in their relative’s house. For the parachute students, when does the air become old, foul, or stale?

As guests, the parachute students have to learn the house rules of their host relatives. The house rules may be very different from what the parachute students are used to in Taiwan. Moreover, the rules may be more restrictive than retreating. Thus, it is as if the parachute students can never truly relax, but must maintain a respectful presence about them, careful not to break any rules. How can one rest when they are always careful? They are never truly at ease, retreating from the cares of the world. They are never at home to be themselves, to take off their masks, and to be honest in their belonging.

In a sense, the parachute students are not experiencing homesickness, as much as they are experiencing homelessness. They are without a place that they can truly call home, or there is no home yet. As a homeless person may wander on the streets, the

parachute students are homeless, wandering and searching for familiar and safe shelter. Heidegger (1946/1993) considers homelessness in which not only the person, but the essence of the person stumbles aimlessly. He writes, "Homelessness so understood consists in the abandonment of Being by beings. Homelessness is the symptom of oblivion of being" (p. 242). Not only are the parachute students in hell, they are in oblivion. What is it like to walk or stumble aimlessly, with no purpose or substance?

Many times society does not consider, or even acknowledge the homeless, as if they are to be avoided. And it is assumed that they have some problem, some sickness that has put them in a state of suffering and homelessness. As a homeless person may live in a box, the parachute students may consider their home in the States as a box, a place which holds their personal belongings, but has no personal sentimental value to them. They never really get to unpack their bags.

It Is Not the Same

At different times, the parachute students experience homesickness in the States. Most often, the parachute students comment that they experience homesickness when missing the food from Taiwan. As Thumper shares, "You go to a restaurant and sit down for some food, and it just doesn't taste the same, not to mention being more expensive." And Lynn comments, "You look for a restaurant here that is pretty good by US standards, but it is nowhere near as good as what it is in Taiwan." The parachute students and their families will decorate their bedrooms with items from Taiwan like pictures of friends to make them feel at home, but it is not the same.

At other times, items from Taiwan that they cannot find in the States initiate homesickness. All the female parachute students complained about how homesick they

become when they go shopping. "You can't find what you want here," complains Lynn, "and when you find something that looks half decent, it doesn't fit. I miss shopping in Taiwan." When my wife went back to Taiwan, she bought over five hundred dollars' worth of clothes. I did not understand why she had to buy clothes from Taiwan and not from the States. She could only comment that, "The clothes just fit and look better." Her friends were all surprised how little she spent in Taiwan. They confessed they spend much more for clothes.

At other times, missing friends sparks homesickness. It is hard for parachute students to describe what they miss about their friends, but often it is the friendship itself. As Lynn confesses, "You know what makes me homesick so often, is when I could just get on the phone and talk with friends. I miss that." The parachute students long to see their friends, and equally important, long to experience once again the support and comfort of friendship itself (Storti, 1990).

When they surround themselves with pictures of friends to make them feel at home, it is almost as if home becomes more inaccessible, a reminder of what they cannot reach out and touch. Those re-member-ances are like symptoms. The parachute students may sense they are catching homesickness like an individual senses they are coming down with something. As an individual catches a cold, homesickness catches them. They may see the signs of homesickness, but the parachute students seem incapable of doing anything about it. As a cold makes a person feel sick, the coldness of not finding home in the States makes the parachute students feel homesick.

When sick, individuals are never truly comfortable; something aches or hurts deep within their bodies. And as patients never want to continue staying in a hospital, they are

always excited about and looking forward to returning home. Not only is there a physical discomfort, but there is an emotional discomfort as well. There is anticipation of no longer being sick, and at the same time, a concern about getting the same sickness again. Connelly (1993) shares, "All sickness is homesickness, homesick for ourselves and for each other" (p. 124). Perhaps for the parachute students, homesickness is being sick repeatedly, never getting to go home? They may try to establish home by finding the food, clothes, and customs of Taiwan, but these very things make them feel all the more homesick. This is an important tension with which the parachute students struggle. The comfort and desire to be "at home" is the very thing that causes the parachute students to be homesick.

Homesickness is being sick for home. What is this pull toward home really all about? A pull is not necessarily a comfort, but it is a force exerted on the parachute students. According to the American Heritage Dictionary (1982), the word "pull" means "to remove from a fixed position, to jerk, to tweak, to drag, to haul, and to tug at." Homesickness is to be dragged back home, or to a past, that is somehow never reached, never satisfied. Moreover, as the parachute students try to haul or pull a part of home to the States, they realize that they cannot move home here. What is it like to pull at something that never comes free? What is it like to be pulled, so that you never truly are free? It is as if the parachute students are being pulled or dragged repeatedly, back to their memories of home. So when they hear Chinese on the streets or in their schools, the language brings them back to Taiwan. When they say, "In Taiwan, we do this…," the pull of Taiwan reminds them of the way things used to be. The parachute students are never on solid ground, but moved from place to place in this new terrain, while their

bodies carry their memories.

Something Beyond Words

As the parachute students are homesick, they often lack the words to describe what causes them such heartache. Homesickness is an aching feeling of sadness that seems to stem from the heart. It can lie dormant for days or weeks and then strike, unexpectedly, and then retreat until the next time. If the parachute students could know beforehand what triggers their homesickness, they might avoid it. Yet, they do not know how to describe what "it" is. Chaos shares:

> I don't know what overcame me, maybe because I was at school and I heard music, but it wasn't music that I had in Taiwan, I don't know, I really don't know, but, suddenly I felt so homesick, so sad about being away from Taiwan. It just happens.

As stated in Chapter Two, Wu (1991) contends, "Perhaps it is something beyond words. I am homesick, but I do not know what I am missing" (p. 274).

There is something about the ineffability of an experience to be named; some things just are very difficult to name. And although a picture may be worth a thousand words, a picture cannot describe how an individual may feel about an experience. What is it that happens when something cannot be named? It must be difficult for the parachute students not to be able to put into words what they miss. If they cannot name something they miss, how can they ever find it? Gadamer (1960/1989) writes, "The possibilities of our knowledge seem to be far more individual than the possibilities of expression offered by language" (p. 401). The experience and the understanding of those experiences are very real, but to put those experiences in words may be difficult due to the limitations within the language.

Van Manen (1990) notes that we must be sensitive to the way the things of the

world speak to us. Something "on the tip of our tongues" is the world of knowledge trying to reveal itself to us, a revelation just waiting to happen. He writes, "Beyond the range of our ordinary speaking and writing there is the rich domain of the unspeakable that constantly beckons us" (p. 113). Once a name is given to an experience, once it is a part of the lived language of a culture, it is as if that experience is put on a map. It pushes that experience from the inexpressible to the describable, from the hidden to the fully exposed. The name is an advertisement for the experience. Perhaps parachute students can be caught by such advertising?

Sartre (1956) writes, "Giving names to objects consists in moving immediate, unreflected, perhaps ignored events on to the plane of reflection and of the objective mind" (p. 21). So, when Oberg (1961) first coined the term culture shock or when the expression homesickness was first used, the words themselves brought understanding to the experience. When parachute students use the terms FOB, MIT, ABC, twinkie, and banana, the words bring about a deeper appreciation for their experiences. When nicknames are used to describe Thumper, Chaos, and Ballerina, the nicknames seem to be a better description of who they are.

As the parachute students move from the ineffable to the spoken, they have to decipher what the unspeakable is saying. Yet, when finally spoken, their ignored events are moved into the spotlight, so that all can see and understand. The ineffable is thinking in progress, and as Heidegger (1946/1993) declares, in thinking, Being comes into language. He writes:

> Thinking accomplishes the relation of Being to the essence of man. It does not make or cause the relation. Thinking brings this relation to Being solely as something handed over to it from Being. Such offering consists in the fact that in thinking Being comes into language. Language is the

> house of Being. In its home man dwells. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home. (p. 217)

To think is to allow Being to take shape with the language. The difficulty of not being able to put into words what they miss adds to the parachute students' homesickness because their Being is put on hold, waiting to be created by their lived language that unfolds. Part of their Being put on hold adds to their groundlessness, and to their uncertainty experienced in homesickness.

Thus, as the parachute students experience homesickness, at the same time, they experience the ineffable. What they cannot put into words is part of their experience of homesickness. Their lack of words causes the parachute students to think, to dwell in the home of a language. New words with a new language can bring to the forefront new understandings and insights.

Bodily Remembering

The parachute students do not just carry remembrances in their minds, they carry them in their bodies. Part of being homesick is a bodily remembrance. Merleau-Ponty (1962/1998) shares how the lived body is an integral part of the sharing of experiences. He writes:

> Our own body is in the world as the heart is in the organism: it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, it breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system. (p. 203)

Our bodies carry messages from our engagement with the world. They are the anterior to every determining thought. So, when Chaos hears the music that reminds him of home, his heart sinks; a pain comes from his chest. When Ballerina misses the firecrackers, there is an emptiness and sadness inside her that fuels her disappointment.

When Thumper misses the food from Taiwan, an unsatisfied feeling grows in his body, knowing that his hunger for home remains. When Joyce is asked about her grandparents, she immediately starts crying. The body carries the "dis-ease" of homesickness. Just as in culture shock, it is as if the body is not able to rest, unable to be satisfied with its present condition.

There is a tremendous joy when the parachute students get to experience a part of home. Jia-Shieu shares, "We would get so excited when we found something from Taiwan, like drinks in the Chinese grocery stores." Ballerina shares, "When relatives would bring back stuff like junk food from Taiwan, oh man was that good." Lynn comments, "When we could get the *lian shu jew* [soap opera tapes] to see, it was like everything became less important than seeing those videos even if we have to watch them for like twelve hours in a row." The parachute students would savor every taste of home. With their whole Being consumed by parts of home, they would be mesmerized by the videos from Taiwan, drool and even fight for the last piece of authentic Chinese snacks as their bodies would jump for excitement at the opportunity to taste home again.

Some parachute students share that they became physically sick in the States. Chaos had a collapsed lung. Thumper had occasional sinus headaches. Lynn suffered through the allergy seasons, and Spencer caught terrible colds. Most parachute students suffered from diarrhea and stomach cramps adjusting to the food. And the very medicine that seemed to give them comfort in Taiwan, could not be found in the States.

To be not only homesick, but physically sick as well, is like pouring salt on the wounds of the parachute students. There is a realization by the parachute students that they are sick because of living in the States. And if they never got sick in Taiwan the way

they get sick in the States, how much more do the parachute students struggle with homesickness? How much more, in their eyes, do they have to endure having their body reacting to the foreignness of the States?

Storti (1990) shares that the foremost concern of international students is the fear of becoming physically sick. Yet, is this physical sickness related to being homesick? Since the body is not at rest, is it so strained that it causes a physical sickness? According to Connelly (1993), "All healing is a homecoming" (p. 74). If the homecoming never occurs, how can there be healing? Are the reactions of the body and being physically sick warning signs to the parachute students that they must rest, that they are overwhelmed in this place? Pain is the precursor to change. The hints from their bodily remembering may encourage the parachute students to find pieces of home in the States. Perhaps the reactions of the body and the physical illness motivate the parachute students to try to establish a home in the States. They may not be able to make a homecoming to Taiwan, but rather a coming home to their new beginnings.

The Voice of Loneliness

> There is no one before me, and no one after me. Nobody in the whole world knows how I feel. From heaven to earth I am alone and all of a sudden, my tears fall. (Chen, circa 500)

The above poem was written by a poet named Chen Zi An during the Tang dynasty 1500 years ago. Chen had written many poems, but the Emperor did not like his work and, thus, did not offer him a delegate position. Saddened by the Emperor's decision, Chen traveled to the mountains and stayed there in solitary remorse. Yet, he became more sad realizing that he was far from family and friends. Thus, he wrote the above poem to express how he felt.

Chen's poem still is used today by Chinese. Many parachute students will quote his poem when they are lonely in the States. They share that being away from home so long can be a very lonely experience. Classmates surround them, but still, there is a feeling of loneliness. You can feel very lonely when surrounded by strangers. Lynn shares, "We are struggling in a new environment; we are lonely in terms of communicating to the outer world." And Thumper comments, "You can be lonely even with family. It is us against the world."

How does one become aware that they are lonely? Some parachute students say they feel lonely when they notice others talking to friends and their own friends are nowhere to be seen. At other times, feelings of loneliness develop when they are alone: alone playing, alone studying, alone watching television, alone with no one to talk to. Thumper shares, "I had to play by myself a lot because I was the only child. Many times, I was lonely." Ballerina looks back at the time she went to outdoor education. Even though she was surrounded by 150 of her classmates, outdoor education was a very lonely experience.

> I heard outdoor ed was supposed to be the best time. I went with fear. It seemed like everyone was having a great time, but I had no one to talk to, no one to play with or who wanted to play with me. It was as if I went on this trip alone all by myself and not with 150 of my classmates. While they wrote in their journals in English, I wrote in Chinese about how foreign and depressing this trip was.

Kirova (2002) shares, "Loneliness prevents us from bringing things near us. Loneliness estranges and separates us from the things around us and thus destroys the mutual appropriation of our being toward another" (p. 158). The parachute students become lonely because individuals with whom they can experience a sense of belongingness are not with them. There might be individuals close in physical proximity, but not close in

"relation." It must be hard for the parachute students when they realize that no one can relate to what they are going through and that they cannot share their experiences with close friends.

Being alone does not mean that the parachute students experience loneliness. There is a difference between solitude, being alone, and feeling lonely. According to the American Heritage Dictionary (1982) solitude implies "the absence of all other persons but is otherwise not very specific" (p. 1164). One can be in solitude and be very comfortable. Solitude implies a peaceful experience being by oneself as if an individual chooses to be alone. One can desire to be alone, to seek out being by oneself. However, excessive time alone can lead to loneliness, the experience of being lonely.

Sounds from others let one know the living presence of others. Without the familiar sounds of family and friends, home is not the same. For the parachute students, they are not used to silence being their companion. Moreover, they are not used to hearing silence. Is silence the voice of loneliness? When alone, the silence of loneliness makes an individual question what might be present in their surroundings. It magnifies sounds otherwise disregarded. For example, Thumper shares what it was like being alone in his house when his mother would go back to Taiwan for a few weeks.

> I would get very scared. I was afraid that some bad person would try to come into the house. And I would become very scared of parts of the house. The basement, forget it. Noises at night would scare me. I would be on my bed crying, lonely, and afraid. I would try and not worry about my mom.

"The feeling of loneliness disrupts the child's ordinary intimate relation with the world of familiar things at home" (Kirova, 2002, p. 158). Thumper had been in his basement numerous times before and was not afraid. He had lived in his house for months, not

worried that a burglar would come. But by himself, worries and uncertainties seem to come into question. And the worst worry when alone is that something bad has happened to loved ones. The parachute students, having lost so much already, try not to focus on this worry, but until a loved one returns, it remains in the back of their minds. There is such a relief when loneliness and silence are replaced by voices of friends and the company of loved ones.

The experience of loneliness can feel like a cold shiver. It is not like the cold parachute students experience when tasting the American winter for the first time. And it is not the cold from which a hot soup or a winter jacket can protect and comfort them. It is a cold that creeps over them like that of a shivering fear, unknown and alarming at the same time. It is a cold that freezes an individual, like Thumper alone in his house. It is a realization that if something were to go wrong, one too young or inexperienced or disconnected would have to face the problem alone.

The experience of loneliness on the other hand expands the parachute students' awareness of the world, others, and themselves. It opens opportunities for them to appreciate what one has. Kirova (2002) writes:

> In loneliness we discover what other people mean to us. We discover the meaning of being loved. Perhaps the true being of loneliness is that it becomes an experience changing the person experiencing it. Perhaps loneliness is our way of becoming human not only because in the experience of loneliness we realize our longing to be 'with' the Other, but to be 'for' the Other. (p. 164)

In loneliness, parachute students truly can understand the meaning of cherishing friends. In loneliness, they truly can embrace their loved ones with their hearts and say "I miss you" with meaning. Loneliness is a growing and maturing experience. It brings the parachute students to a higher level of understanding their blessings. As Chen grew to

understand that friendships and loved ones should not be taken for granted, the parachute students learn that they need not remain isolated on a mountain, but come down from it with humility and with a renewed sense of living.

O'Donohue contends that although exceptionally difficult, everyone should experience loneliness. Experiencing loneliness can be a cold and shivering experience, but more importantly, it is a freeing experience. O'Donohue (1997) writes:

> Loneliness is a black burnt hole, but if you close it up, you close out so much that can be so beautiful for you as well. There is no need to be afraid of loneliness. If we engage it, it can bring us new freedom. (p. 192)

Perhaps the true beauty of loneliness is that once you genuinely experience it, you never want to experience it again. It urges individuals to reach out, so they are no longer in a state of loneliness. It is the primary motivating force to move the parachute students to meet others and to appreciate the friendships that they have.

Looking at the Moon with Good Friends

In elementary school, Chinese students learn the following expression: "When a good friend is leaving, you drag on his/her clothes and are reluctant to let go." This expression emphasizes the importance of friendships and that they are to be cherished from an early age.

In the Chinese tradition, Su Dong Pwo is known for his poetry regarding friendships. In many of his poems, he refers to the moon as if when someone misses their friends from far away, the only subject that they both can look at and enjoy is the moon. Perhaps the parachute students feel this way about friends they have left behind. Inevitably, they move on and develop new friendships.

For the parachute students in the States, the following are their lived experiences

trying to find someone to drag on their clothes and not let go. It is their experience establishing, building, and maintaining friendships in the States with both Chinese and American students. They hope to share much more than the moon with their new friends; they hope to share a part of themselves and a feeling of belonging found in the gift of friendship.

Trying to Fit in

The Taiwanese parachute students do not recognize their American peers as friends. They recognize them as classmates, but not as friends. Lynn shares, "I still feel that I have nothing in common with them. In terms of homework, I see them as students and classmates, but not as friends." And Spencer comments, "They [Americans] are truly from a different part of the planet. Well, we may share this side of the planet, but they are like from a different world." Thumper sees his American counterparts as classmates and playmates, but not necessarily as friends. "When I was younger, you can play with anyone and language is not a concern. And now, you can pick up a game of basketball with anyone regardless of race or culture. However, to share your thoughts or become close friends, that is a whole new issue."

What does Thumper mean by a "whole new issue?" What is the "issue?" Perhaps the parachute students see themselves as too different, too foreign to be worth knowing. According to the Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology (1966), the word "friend" originates from the Old English word *freond* meaning "lover," or "to set free," or "peace." It is a person who one knows, likes, and trusts. How can the parachute students be friends to Americans when the time they spend with Americans is not freeing or

peaceful, but uncomfortable and restrictive? How can they trust and know Americans, when they do not speak the same language and have the same customs?

The parachute students acknowledge that the language barrier is a problem. Is Thumper's "whole new issue" the language barrier itself? When having a conversation with the parachute students, they are quick to point out that they are friends with Chinese not because they are Chinese, but because they speak the same language. Spencer gives this example to clarify the language barrier.

> If an American is fluent in Chinese and there is a Chinese who is not fluent in Chinese, then I would become better friends with the American. Or if an American doesn't speak Chinese and even though the Chinese guy is less generous and friendlier than him, I would be more friends with the Chinese guy. Making friends or communicating is based on language. If you have the language, you have the key.

It is difficult to become friends with individuals when you cannot even communicate with them. However, is language truly the key? If that was the case, how can there be millions of people in this world who speak the same language, but are so lonely, so hurt by lack of friendships?

Perhaps what may be the "issue" or the "key" is not necessarily not knowing the language, but what is behind the language. What lies behind people's words? And what lies behind people's actions? The challenge is not only learning the English language, but also the uniqueness of the culture. One parachute student shares, "By far, the most difficult aspect of the American culture is to fit in." It is one thing to become a friend with one American, but it is another to become friends with the American culture. Spencer shares, "We are now comfortable in the environment, but not necessarily in the society." And Lee (1991) shares, "I was ignorant in the culture, clumsy in the language, and blessed with a body that made Tinker Bell look ruthless" (p. 87).

There is a tremendous desire to have friends. Every parachute student wants to have friends and be among friends. Every student has a desire to "hit it off" with a friend. Everyone enjoys the knowledge that you have "bonded" with another, or that there is a friendship, a trust, a peace between you and another. Yet, how do those bonds form? How do two people move from being strangers to being good friends? What helps them to experience the gift of friendship?

For many parachute students, they did not start making friends with US citizens until after being in the States for two-and-a-half years. At the same time, they started to participate in after-school activities. For example, Ballerina began playing in her school orchestra and by doing so, met a few US friends. My wife tried out for volleyball and maintains a close friendship with two of her teammates, who were in her bridal party. And Spencer participates in track where he met many nice people whom he does not consider as friends, but closer than just classmates. He said that the captains on the team were very nice to him.

Perhaps it is the common language of a sport, or music, or an activity that breaks through the barriers to understanding. The commonality of their interests is a passageway to communication, a communication that transcends language. And with that common interest, can develop a common goal. That goal can be considered as a belonging, a desire to fit in once again.

Maybe as the parachute students go through the "language" and "cultural" barriers, they go through a learning of how to make friends again, and how to make friends from a different culture unlike their own. Perhaps it should not be considered negative that they took time to know Americans, but rather viewed as positive that they

made opportunities to befriend Americans, as well as learning how to relate to others. They did not close their worlds to others, but took the initiative to diversify their experiences.

We spotted Asians

> When you cross cultures, and you see people from your own ethnic background, you feel you know them already. (Chinese idiom)

There is a sense of identity or "belongingness" that exists among parachute students. They do not just sit together everyday at lunch by chance. They are not heard speaking Chinese in the hallways purely because they want to practice their Chinese. School counselors do not find parachute students to introduce and welcome new students from Taiwan purely by coincidence. The parachute students search each other out, finding refuge and strength in each other's company and numbers. By being together, they realize they are not as alone as they may have thought.

Parachute students can identify a fellow traveler among a crowd of natives. Spencer shares, "Not every Chinese is friends here. But we probably know all the Chinese here." And Lynn comments, "When you see someone who is Chinese it doesn't mean that they are going to be friends, but it is usually the case that you can make friends easier." My wife shares that after she went from a high school with a very small Chinese population to a college with a larger Asian population, she specifically noticed and befriended Asians. In her words, "When I went to college, I spotted Asians." When I went to Taiwan, on the first day of orientation, I spotted and introduced myself to fellow ABC's within two hours.

While being immersed and bombarded by the American culture and the English language, the ability to find and meet other parachute students is a moment of relief and a

sense of comfort. It is an opportunity for parachute students to escape back into their own culture, which is both refreshing and therapeutic. It is comforting finding friends in a foreign land, where mutual understanding and a sense of identity can arise. Parachute students can say to each other, "I know what you are going through, and I have been where you have been. Let's do this together rather than alone."

Being with other parachute students is beneficial, even though the quality of the time is not nearly as important as the fact and frequency of it (Storti, 1990). When parachute students know they are not alone or that they have others to rely on, they feel more secure on their journey. Having friends enhances the experience of living in another country. At the same time, having fellow students with similar backgrounds share similar experiences deepens the comfort of company and satisfies the need to belong. Peace of mind opens up in belongingness, but is hidden in loneliness. O'Donohue (1999) shares:

> Our hunger to belong is the longing to find a bridge across the distance from isolation to intimacy. Everyone longs for intimacy and dreams of a nest of belonging in which one is embraced, seen and loved. Something within each of us cries out for belonging. (pp. xxii-xxiii)

Are tears of sadness the crying out to belong? Perhaps the recognition of a hunger to belong assists in creating new and unexpected possibilities of community and friendship (O'Donohue, 1999). Would the parachute students be so hungry to search for friends if they never would have experienced what it is like not to have any friends? Moreover, by experiencing loneliness and the need to belong, an ability to be grateful for what one has can develop, including a thankfulness for the current companions on their journey.

The Church as a Haven for Belonging

For some of the parachute students, it is no wonder that the church youth group was a safe haven for them. Ballerina shares, "I had more friends in the youth group. I could really relate to them. We all had similar backgrounds." Thumper comments, "I had Chinese friends in school and out of school. At church, I could bond with my Chinese friends there. We had a lot in common." And Chaos notes, "In the youth group, they were my only friends."

The youth group was filled with parachute students who were longing for a place to belong, and with ABCs, who knew of the Taiwanese culture and the need to reach out to the parachute students. It was a wonderful combination, where East met West, but equally important, where there was mutual respect and caring for one another. It was a place where students could laugh together, instead of being laughed at. It was a place where they felt safe to be themselves. It was a place where foreignness, loneliness, and homesickness disappeared for a time. Perhaps the words of Matthew 11:28-29 best explain what the youth group was trying to help others experience:

> Come unto me, all who are weak, weary and heavy laden. Gentle am I, humble in heart, and you shall find rest for your soul.

They came, those who were weak, weary and heavy laden, and found that the church and the youth group that they became a part of, became a part of them.

Why do some individuals look to God whenever they are struggling? They may not like to pray, but in times of need, there is prayer. For many, prayer brings about a peace to the soul that is rarely felt. It is the experience of talking to the divine and waiting for a soft reply. Jia-Shieu talks about how special she experiences times of silence with God. She shares:

> You know what I love about Mass? After we receive Holy Communion and we sit down in silence, praying to God--I love that, there is such a peace in the silence. It is a time when we can really sit down with God and hear what He has to say.

As part of coming to the States, who would have thought that the parachute students would come to meet God? Levinas cited in Moran (2000) denies that we understand God as a ground of being; rather, we experience an encounter with God. Levinas further adds that this encounter with God is rather the commandment to love. For many parachute students, coming to church may be the first time in their lives they experience love. The church is ripe for taking in and loving the parachute students. Jia-Shieu and Wei converted to Catholicism, and Chaos is going through the Catechizes classes. Jen-Yi was baptized, and both Lynn and Spencer attend various church events. They are part of the missionary field that is not so far from home.

The Asian American populations may not be the moral majority, nor the model minority, but perhaps they are the moral minority? Lee (2000) reports that the church is more than just a church: "Asian American churches offer their immigrant congregations more than just faith, they also act as social hubs, counseling centers, and service providers. Church is often the first place an immigrant will go in search of people to associate and identify themselves through" (p. 63). So often, it is not the preaching that is most important, but what may speak loudest to the parachute students is the care that parishioners give to those in need. As St. Francis of Assisi shares, "When entering the mission field, if necessary, use words."

For the parachute students, the church is a place they can meet US citizens and not worry about being different. Their friendships with one another and with ABCs is more than just the average friendship; they share the culture, language, customs, parents,

teenage life, and most uniquely, a faith. They share a part of their souls, weaknesses not shown to the average classmate. They allow themselves to be vulnerable in order to draw closer together spiritually and emotionally. O'Donohue (1999) considers vulnerability a precious thing:

> To make yourself invulnerable is to lose something very precious. You put yourself outside the arena of risk where possibility and growth are alive. Vulnerability risks hurt, disappointment, and failure. Yet it remains a vital opening to change and to truth….In giving love we are most vulnerable and most human. (pp. 153-154)

When the parachute students allow themselves to be vulnerable, they open possibilities for their friendships to become genuine; it is the time that they are most human, most honest to themselves and to others. When the youth groups had "sharing nights" and students would cry, students were not mocked for their tears, but embraced for their difficulties. Friendship was experienced as a brotherhood and a sisterhood, and a strong sense of family was present.

Ballerina shares, "Being in the youth group, the closeness that we shared with one another, it was a taste of heaven on earth." Perhaps this is what is so different and so special in their relationships with their youth group friends? In their bonds with one another, in the friendships that they share, they touch each other's souls. O'Donohue (1999) writes about the soul and the importance of intimate belonging:

> True belonging is gracious receptivity. This is the appropriate art of belonging in friendship: friends do not belong to each other, but rather *with* each other. This *with* reaches to the very depths of their twinned souls. (p. 3)

> True belonging comes from within. It strives for a harmony between the outer forms of belonging and the inner music of the soul. We seem to have forgotten the true depth and spiritual nature of intimate belonging. (p. 3)

The parachute students were *with* each other, and they felt a bond and a belonging that I do not know if they ever felt again. They reached out to each other, vulnerable to being *with* each other, and for many it was worth the risk. For in their vulnerability, they tasted love and true friendship. O'Donohue (1997) shares:

> When you love, you open your life to an Other. All your barriers are down. Your protective distances collapse. This person is given absolute permission to come into the deepest temple of your spirit. Your presence and life can become this person's ground. (p. 13)

Many parachute students from the youth group are still close friends; however, they are not as close as they once were. Why did they stop being such close friends? How is it that they forgot the true depth and spiritual nature of intimate belonging, sharing the temple of their spirits? Levinas cited in Moran (2000) shares, "God is never a graspable or comprehensible notion; it is at best the 'trace' of something other which disrupts the present" (p. 331). As the parachute students' present Being seemed less disrupted, their need or search for God diminished. For some parachute students, as they stopped dancing with the divine daily, they stopped dancing with other parachute students and church members. Levinas further shares that time is not a solitary experience of an individual, but a way of relating to others. Perhaps time and separate paths have caused the parachute students' bonds to weaken, or perhaps they have changed from within. O'Donohue (1999) admonishes:

> Our ways of belonging in the world should never be restricted or fixated on one kind of belonging that remains stagnant. If you listen to the voices of your own longing, they will constantly call you to new styles of belonging which are energetic and mirror the complexity of your life as you deepen and intensify your presence on earth. (p. 4)

The parachute students' ways of belonging have changed, just as their lives continue to change. As their lives become more complex, their search for friendship and

"tasting heaven on earth" may also change. Yet, whenever there are reunions, where special occasions or holidays occur, the parachute students are there, reuniting old ties and friendships. True, they may not be as close as they once were, but they recognize that their Church family gave them special moments of happiness, special friendships that were of great support.

The Lost Roots of the Orchid

In the Chinese tradition, when people see an individual confused about his/her own identity in a foreign land, they may say he/she is feeling "the lost roots of the orchid." The Chinese refer to an orchid, a beautiful flower whose roots are not necessarily planted in soil. This expression is used for Chinese who have left their homeland and miss it. At the same time, they are drifting like an orchid cast in the wind or moving down a stream. Their roots are no longer in their homeland, but not necessarily established in their new land. This expression is used to describe a feeling that one is lost, not grounded in one's identity.

For the parachute students, it is uncertain what roots they have established. They may not be able to know who they really are in a foreign land. After being in the States for so long, they may identify with being American just as much as they identify with being Chinese. The following sections are their struggles and confusion in determining who they are.

We Are Still on a Bridge

How do the parachute students identify themselves? After being in the States for years, are they still Taiwanese? Are they Taiwanese American? Or are they Chinese American? Or do they consider themselves American Chinese? For many, they do not

know. For others, they never originally considered themselves as Taiwanese. Spencer, Lynn, Ballerina, Thumper, and Chaos all do not consider themselves as Taiwanese, even though they were born in Taiwan. When I asked them why, Chaos had a simple reply, "Well, we don't speak the language, so we are not Taiwanese." Only Wei and Joyce state that they are Taiwanese, because they and their families are fluent in Taiwanese. Thumper shares that he is an MIT (made in Taiwan) and a Chinese from Taiwan (CFT), but not a Taiwanese. Lynn shares that only occasionally she says that she is Taiwanese. "I sometimes would say that I am Taiwanese because people, if you say you are Chinese, then they think you came from China. So, I say I am from Taiwan so I can avoid confusion." Spencer does not want people to know that he is from Taiwan. He shares, "Well, when I say that I am Chinese, I want them to think that I am Chinese. That is why I am saying that I am Chinese. And some people don't even know what Taiwanese means when you talk to them." Ballerina tries to clarify the situation when she explains, "There are three types of Chinese, Chinese from Mainland China, Chinese from Taiwan, and Taiwanese from Taiwan." Yet, what about the Chinese from Canada, Malaysia, Singapore, Viet Nam, Cambodia, Burma, and Thailand just to name a few? What do they call themselves? Similar to what Jen-Yi shared in Chapter Two, Wei comments, "You know, we are still kind of on a bridge. Our identities are still forming."

As stated previously, Chaos says it is the language that determines nationality. If you speak Taiwanese, you are Taiwanese. Spencer adds that if you speak both, you must be confused. He comments, "If they speak both then it is hard for them to decide. Yeah, I have friends who on one side of their family speak Taiwanese and the other side of their family speak Chinese. What are they? They must not know."

All this time, I did not know that I was calling the parachute students by the wrong name. Instead of calling them Taiwanese parachute students, I should have called some of them Chinese parachute students or Chinese from Taiwan parachute students, or even parachute students from Taiwan. How come no one ever corrected me? Was it that they were being polite? Or did they think that I could not understand?

Perhaps Maxine Greene (1973) would not blame me for making this mistake. She asserts that the identity of an individual depends purely on the individual:

> Although the natural philosophers would emphasize that the stuff of identity derives in large part from the culture in which the person matures and that the self must be deeply affected by the 'generalized other' (or the community attitudes internalized in the course of growing up), they also think of achieving--if not inventing--a self. The cultural components of the self might represent a 'me'; but there is also a conscious and critical 'I' responsible for shaping internalized notions. (p. 256)

It is the "I" in identity that seems to be the most important determination of self. As the self matures, the identity of an individual is formed and reshaped. Identity is as different as diversity. Thompson and Tyagi (1996) write, "Trying to understand race in the United States is like putting together a three-dimensional 1000-piece puzzle in dim light" (p. ix). Trying to understand one's identity can be equally challenging. An individual has a particular way of determining who one's self is. Moreover, one's self and, as a consequence, one's identity is changing. It is as if more pieces are being added to the puzzle, or that the landscape of the puzzle changes as the puzzle is being put together. Why is it so difficult for the parachute students to know their own identities?

Heidegger (1957/1969) recognizes that throughout the history of Western thought, identity appears as unity. He writes, "The unity of identity forms the basic characteristic of the Being of beings" (p. 26). People can unite under a common purpose, a common

identity. Yet, if you have nothing with which to identify, then you have nothing with which to unify. In what ways are the parachute students unified? They may know each other, but what unites them? What is their common bond that can reveal an identity about their past and homeland?

Ethnicity Fades--Race Does Not

Torres-Querral (1998) examines the lived experiences of the Cuban-American. In particular, her focus is Cuban-Americans living-on-the-hyphen. Coined by Gustavo Perez-Firmat (1997), "Living-on-the-hyphen" is living in between two cultures or being in two worlds that are intertwined. Torres-Querral (1998) writes: "For my generation of Cuban-Americans, the one and a halfers, living-on-the-hyphen is a unique balancing act that can open up the possibility to circulate within and through both cultures or to choose one cultural habitat over another" (p. 4). Torres-Querral further adds that living-on-the-hyphen allows the individual to be "marginal to neither the old nor the new cultures" (p. 4). Unlike the parachute students, Cuban-Americans are not allowed to go back to Cuba, but are forced to make a home in the States. The hyphen is a connector to their culture and their past homeland.

Many Asian Americans believe it is impossible to live-on-the-hyphen. Sodowsky, Kwan, and Pannu (1995) note that Asians refuse to accept the dichotomous choice of being either Americans or foreigners. Thus, they try to create a new definition, 100% Asian or 100% Asian American. They can never be 100% American. Their identity always has an Asian component. Unlike Cuban-Americans whose skin does not reveal their ethnicity, Asians do not have the ability to blend into the US culture and hide their ethnicity and race. For the parachute students, they are no longer separate from the

American culture, but are part of the Asian American culture. Au (1997) believes that for Chinese Americans, there can be no separation. He writes, "I do not hyphenate the term Chinese American, because I agree with the argument that a hyphen between Chinese and American suggests that the two can be broken apart. Rather, I prefer the view that Chinese defines a kind of American" (p. 27).

Part of being Asian is that our lived body always reveals our identity as Asian. Immediately, our lived bodies advertise that we have an Asian ethnicity. Lee (1994) writes, "Can you grow up being a certain Asian culture, so much so that it is a part of you, like it is your own skin?" (p. 37). The parachute students are recognized always as Asian. Individuals may not recognize them as Chinese or Taiwanese, but they can be recognized immediately as someone of Asian descent. This is not always the case for other cultures. For example, after knowing Ling Ling's (my daughter's) godfather for over five years, I never knew that he was Cuban-American. The color of his skin, the design of his eyes, his lived body never revealed to me that he was of Cuban descent. The way he speaks does not reveal that Spanish is his first language. Whether intentionally or not, he was able to hide his ethnicity from me. Unknown to me, I only saw his American side. And when I met Dr. Torres-Querral, I never would have guessed that she was Cuban-American.

However, Ling Ling's godfather knew immediately that I was Asian. I cannot hide my ethnicity. Part of my identity is written all over my skin and with my eyes. Friesen (2002) writes, "My body, in this context, is who I am--it is my identity. Our bodies are the medium through which we reveal our identity. In other words, we are immediately present to each other as embodied beings" (p. 224). Nieto (1996) writes,

"Asians, Latinos, and even American Indians may be on American soil for many generations, but are still asked the inevitable, 'Where are you from?' reserved for outsiders. Their faces or accents are constant reminders of their roots" (p. 45).

Asian Americans do have their ethnicity written all over their skin. They cannot live in the American culture without constantly being reminded that they have an Asian background. It is impossible to live-on-the-hyphen because the parachute students' lived bodies are always on the Asian side. As Stone (1988) states, "Ethnicity fades, race doesn't" (p. 115). For the parachute students, their race never disappears, but is a constant reminder to themselves as well as to others of their Asian ethnic background.

Being Chinese in America: An Identity that Develops Over Time

Although the parachute students are Chinese, how Chinese they maintain themselves is uncertain. At the same time, the Chinese that they surround themselves with, or the Asians they spot and become friends with, can eventually become "too Chinese" for their taste. As my wife shares, "One of the reasons why I married Ben was because he had both the American and Chinese culture." When Jen-Yi, Jia-Shieu's sister, was in high school, she used to call other parachute students FOB's (a derogatory term meaning "fresh off the boat" as noted in Chapter Two), even though years earlier, she was "fresh off the boat." She considered other parachute students new to the States as foreign and uncultured. Ballerina shares, "I am Chinese American. I still listen to Chinese music and eat Chinese food, go to a Chinese church, live with a Chinese mentality. However, the way I think and believe are more liberal and more American than the average Chinese." And Thumper shares, " I am in the middle. I have an American mentality, but I am still Asian. The two are mixed inside of me."

What is it like being Asian American? What does it mean to be Chinese but live in the States? Ballerina gave me a list titled, "Ways to know if you are Asian American." I copied this list down and then had many parachute students review it. They took out some ideas and added others. Below is a list of their comments. Many consider this list the same as describing what it is like to be Chinese American.

1. You say "No" when you really mean yes and say "Yes" when you really mean no.
2. You majored in something practical like engineering, medicine, computer science, or finance, or at least your parents wanted you to.
3. To be respected, you have to at least go to college.
4. If you play a musical instrument, it must be piano or violin.
5. Your stove is covered with aluminum foil.
6. You beat eggs with chopsticks.
7. You always leave outdoor shoes at the door.
8. You use the dishwasher as a dish rack.
9. You keep a Thermos of hot water available at all times.
10. You boil water before drinking.
11. You eat all meals in the kitchen to keep your dining room clean.
12. You do not use measuring cups when preparing foods.
13. You save grocery bags and use them to hold garbage.
14. You have a rice cooker.
15. You are a wok user.
16. You fight over who pays the dinner bill.
17. You wash rice 2-3 times before cooking it.
18. You make sounds when you have a bowl of soup.
19. You do not dry-clean clothes, even if they need to be dry-cleaned.
20. You iron your own shirts.
21. You like congee with thousand-year-old eggs.
22. You always cook for yourself, even if you hate it. In other words, you feel guilty going out to eat alone.
23. You use credit cards, and pay monthly bills in full.
24. You keep most of your money in a savings account.
25. You buy Christmas cards after Christmas, when they are 50% off.
26. Every close friend to your parents is an aunt or uncle to you.
27. If you do go out to eat, usually it is for Chinese food.
28. Even if you are totally full, if someone says they are going to throw away the leftovers on the table, you will finish them. You hate to waste food.
29. You have Tupperware in your fridge with three bites of rice or one leftover chicken wing.
30. When any nonperishable items are on sale, you buy large quantities and store them.
31. You have a collection of miniature shampoo/conditioner bottles and little soap bars that you take every time you stay in a hotel.

32. The condiments in your fridge are either Price Club sized or come in plastic packets, which you save every time you get take out or go to McDonald's.
33. You carry a stash of your own food whenever you travel (and travel means any car ride longer than 15 minutes).
34. You spit bones and other food scraps on the table.
35. Your dad thinks he can fix everything himself.
36. Your house/apartment is always cold in winter and hot in summer.
37. Your mom drives her Mercedes to Price Club or Shoppers Food Warehouse regardless of how far it is, even if Safeway is next door.
38. You always look phone numbers up in the phone book, since calling Directory Assistance costs 50 cents.
39. You only make long-distance calls to Taiwan at the cheapest time possible.
40. You prefer your shrimp with the heads and legs still attached.
41. You think only Japanese and Germans can make good cars!
42. You starve yourself before going to all-you-can-eat places and you never eat white rice at a buffet because it is the cheapest thing on the menu.
43. You never discuss your love life with your parents.
44. The best gift to your parents is treating them to a meal at their favorite restaurant.

This list is what the parachute students do, but more importantly, it is a list of who they are. This list has a mixture of both Chinese and American culture written all over it. It is not the complete picture of the parachute students' experiences. Yet, it captures their essence and their being. Chaos shares, "I don't agree that this list totally captures me, but I see it capturing a lot of parachute students, and it definitely captures our culture." With his words, I recognize that this list may change. As their temporal landscape changes, so does the painting of their identity. Yet to take out some statements would be to take out a part of who the parachute students are, what they represent, and what they have become.

I believe that Maxine Greene, cited in Ayers and Miller (1998), would consider the previous list as part of the Chinese culture of identity:

> Each culture has its recognizable identity: and each is ordered by particular constraints--myths, fictions, patterns of belief. The meaning of each culture is the function of the way its members think about reality, symbolize it, describe it, and people exist within and by means of the codifications that develop over time. (pp. 9-10)

Over time, perhaps the parachute students find an identity. Certainly, they have the unity of identity within the Chinese culture that exists in the States. Although very diverse, being Chinese in America is who they are and a part of what they experience. Perhaps it is not an identity that is hard for them to distinguish, but what may be more difficult is a word or phrase that accurately defines who they are. They may know their identity and what unifies them, but to put it into words is once again ineffable, or perhaps even impossible.

Nothing is Permanent

In the Chinese lived language, there is an expression that nothing is permanent. The literal translation is, "With 10000 things, nothing is consistent." With a thousand different things happening to the parachute students, their lives may have been forever changed and may continue to change as well. The parachute students not only land in the States, they land in a lived space and time that alters their lives. Not only are they changing their futures, they are changing their pasts. It truly is a journey where they can never return completely to the home that they had in Taiwan because that home is in the past with their dreams and memories.

Yet this is the beginning. After all, they are all very young and have a life of learning ahead of them. Spencer acknowledges, "Everything that we have said, it might change in a year, so this is what we have right now. I am not sure it is going to stay like this." And Wei shares, "We were different back then, we are different now, and who knows what the future holds. I am sure we will be very different than what we are now." Like Spencer and Wei, many parachute students are not sure of what their future holds.

They do realize that they have changed from their experiences of the journey and look at their past as well as their ideas of "home" in a different light.

Given that their lived time and space changes, the parachute students' experiences of foreignness, homesickness, and loneliness also change. Their experiences are not linear, but can be repeated in the future. Moreover, their experiences can change because of their pasts. Their meaning of home may change throughout their lives.

Although they have changed, what is the real nature of that change? Instead of hiding from the American culture, they have accepted it and have grown from their experiences. Storti (1990) shares, "We either open ourselves to the experience of crossing cultures and are greatly enriched by it, or we turn away and are greatly diminished" (p. 106). The parachute students have been greatly enriched, because they can choose the best of both cultures. Moreover, they have the opportunity to understand other cultures in an accepting light.

Equally important, what they have learned from their experience of immersion is that they can survive. They can struggle through the darkness of uncertainty, identity confusion, and foreignness; live through the shock in culture shock; grapple with the ill contentment of homesickness and loneliness; and adjust to the realization that they are establishing a homeplace. They can learn and become better individuals in silence, in being alone, and in a new language established from adopting a new culture. They have learned the meaning of courage to speak a language not their own, and they humbly have learned to be grateful for family and friends.

Gadamer (1960/1989) writes, "Hermeneutic work is based on a polarity of familiarity and strangeness…. *The true locus of hermeneutics is this in-between*" (p. 295).

In Chapter Four, I have tried to capture the parachute students' life in the *in-between*. Their experiences are their lives *in-between* leaving Taiwan and establishing a temporary home in the States. The parachute students have experienced being *in-between* the strangeness of being a foreigner to the familiarity of accepting a new home. They have moved from being *in-between* hiding behind their mask of silence to being vocal in the Chinglish language.

As educators, what can we do to see that the parachute students' journey in the *in-between* is not only a learning experience, but an opportunity for growth? What can we do to see that they not are only enriched by the immersion process, but also can assist other parachute students in their adjustment? And what can the parents of the parachute students do to assist their children better? These questions are pursued in Chapter Five, as well as the opening up of their experiences when they return to Taiwan. I cannot change my participants' pasts, but perhaps I can assist with the next set of parachute students' experience in the States. Their journeys continue and so does this dissertation's attempt to understand their lives.

CHAPTER FIVE:
HOMESTEADING: ESTABLISHING A HOMEPLACE

> If in homecoming I come back to the home that was, in homesteading I come to a home to be. (Casey, 1993, p. 299)

Casey (1993) writes that a journey ends in two extreme exemplars: either a homecoming or a homesteading. Determining where the parachute students consider home is a part of their journey they must face. Years earlier, they never thought the question of the meaning of home would come to them. Literally, their world was an island. Years later, their lives have become more complex, moving half way around the world to a country fifty times the size of Taiwan. And after years of being in the States, there comes a point in their lives when they decide where their future home should be--so many significant life changes for those who are so young. For many parachute students, to return home to Taiwan or to establish a new home in the States may be a struggle and a decision that can be unraveling. Neither an easy decision nor a process altered easily once set in motion, this is a struggle that comes as a result of their journey.

Unforeseen by the parachute students, the tension to decide what aspects of home mean the most to them can persist. For some parachute students, there is a pull to stay and establish a new home in the States. Although they were born in Taiwan, their ties or allegiance to the States have become strong. After all that the parachute students have been through, the States have become a part of them. How ironic that the very land that they considered foreign and un-welcoming, may be the very place that they consider as a part of their future. At the same time, there is a desire to go back to Taiwan and the home that was, as if there is something about home they never found in the States. The place of

their past, although uncertain and not part of their recent past, may be where their future lies. The part of Taiwan they miss and the part of the States with which they have grown accustomed, conflict with one another. The ability to have the best of both worlds is not only unobtainable, but to decide on one location, can be very costly. The opportunity cost is expensive, for to decide on one place means the loss of the other.

Do they wish to stay in the States, or wish to return to Taiwan? This is a more compelling call for the parachute students to answer. It was never their decision to come to the States. However, it is their decision where they will build their future home. Perhaps the answers to their dilemma may rest in their first visit back to Taiwan.

In the Fifth and final chapter, I open up the lived experiences of the Taiwanese parachute students as they return to Taiwan for the first time. Their journey back to Taiwan is a true test of how American they have become and how Taiwanese they want to continue to be. It is their journey of discovering more about themselves and what their definition of home truly entails. It is their opportunity to realize whether their return to Taiwan is a homecoming or their time in the States was a homesteading.

As part of this concluding chapter, I reveal what I have learned about myself as a counselor and an administrator that allows me to see the parachute students, and students in general, in a phenomenological light**.** As the parachute students' lived experiences opened up, my understanding about myself and my role as an educator became clearer. I completed a study using phenomenology, but in the process phenomenology has completed me. This dissertation journey contributed to my own transformation as well as the phenomenon.

Finally, from this study I share how educators can make the parachute students' lived experiences pedagogically better. I weave in recommendations that promote effective change for future parachute students. Ultimately, a primary purpose of this dissertation is to promote positive changes and a better tomorrow for parachute students. Let us begin.

A Calling to Belong

At the end of the Ming Dynasty, Hong Chung Cho was the Chief General for China's Northeast army. He was ordered by the emperor to defend China against the Ching Manchurian invasion. Chief General Hong failed to defend China, surrendered to the Ching Manchurians, and became a traitor. Chief General Hong's teacher wrote a letter to Hong asking why he surrendered, for in the Chinese tradition, Hong should have fought to his death. Hong Chung Cho responded with the following famous and beautiful Chinese proverb:

> A huge temple bell, a large bronze vessel, mountain and forest, each has its natural characteristics. You cannot force one to be the other. Each one has its own strength.

The huge temple bell represents a calling. Early in the morning, government workers were summoned to the court by the ringing of the bell. The large bronze vessel symbolizes power, for the emperor only had access to it. The bell and the vessel represent the government. The trees and mountains represent the peasants, the common people working in the fields. In ancient China, there were only two sets of people, the government workers and the peasants. Yet within those roles, there was much diversity.

The proverb's central meaning is to not force an individual to be what is not natural for them. One should not be forced to be something they are not, but everyone

has their own place and purpose in this world. Every individual has special talents or attributes that match their own calling or purpose. Each person has different personal interests and characteristics; please do not blame them for being the way they are. Although individuals may be from the same culture and background, different people have different philosophies and interests. You cannot compare two different individuals and expect them to be the same. With each individual, each person has his or her own strengths and weaknesses. It is not that one is better than the other; they are just different. Each person has a unique desire for belonging, and individual preferences. It is not healthy to go against one's natural belonging, Being, or ambitions. As a result, each individual searches for his/her own sense of belonging, sense of identity, sense of Being or *Da-sein*.

As I look back on my journey with the parachute students, their journey to the States is their struggle to find their calling and Being, their sense of belonging in a different world. It has not been an easy journey. They have crossed over not only their own culture and background, but have had to study and live in a foreign culture unlike their own. To define who they are and what they entail may have been lost in their bi-cultural world and in the confusion of immersion. It is hard for the parachute students to determine if they are meant to be wood or bronze, the trees and forests or the vessel and the bell. The parachute students have to decide what their calling is and where their calling brings them.

Heidegger cited in Safranski (1998) writes, "It is said that Being is the most universal and the emptiest concept. As such it resists every attempt at definition" (p. 1). Is it any wonder why the parachute students struggled with their identities, of what they

called themselves? And how many times did they struggle being in America as opposed to Being Chinese? Yet, it is the pain of not knowing one's calling, one's Being, one's lack of belonging that inspired the parachute students to care and seek understanding. Connelly (1993) brings to light how the uncertainty of not knowing one's belonging brings the individual to search for a place of home.

> It may be that our pains are our biggest way home, our most urgent call to being. Perhaps nothing else that we call pain would capture our attention so insistently and thoroughly. (p. 57)

We have seen this reoccur in the countless new difficulties the parachute students experienced. They struggled with the language, the customs, and making of friends. They broke out of culture shock and fought through homesickness. Their struggles moved them to a deeper level of understanding not only of who they are, but what encompasses their Being's sense of belonging. The parachute students' pain, their tensions moved them forward to understanding.

As they have matured and grown from their experiences, they have begun to formalize their own sense of Being and purpose, to see if they want to be bronze or wood, peasant or government worker, Chinese American or Chinese from Taiwan. Their decision of where their future home lies is a direct reflection of who they are as a person, what their soul tells them is their sense of belonging. O'Donohue (1999) writes:

> When you truly listen to the voice of your soul, you awaken your kinship with the eternal urgency that longs to lead you home. The deepest call to a creative life comes from within your interiority. It may be awakened or occasioned by a person or situation outside of you, yet the surest voice arises from your own secret depth. The surest choosing grows out of the natural soil of experience. (p. 85)

The following section involves the parachute students listening to the voice of their souls. Most of all, their voice is awakened or occasioned by their trip back to Taiwan. Their surest choosing grows out of this trip, and their experiences in the States determine the essence of their Being. As the parachute students have experienced tensions throughout their time in the States, it is inevitable that they encounter a new tension when they go home and see how things have changed. What becomes apparent to them, may be their most honest attempt in looking at themselves truthfully, like they have not in a long time.

The parachute students' time in the States is limited not necessarily to their preparing a home in the States, as much as it is in preparing them to address life's questions and moments of profound choosing. Their diversity of experiences is a benefit in terms of their understanding the world around them and all that it has to offer. As Ballerina shares, "We have seen a different part of the world and are richer from this experience." They have a distinct advantage over students who have never traveled abroad or experienced another culture. I end this section with a quote from O'Donohue (1999) which perhaps best summarizes the journey that the parachute students have taken. Their journey has brought them to a better understanding of what their sense of belonging and understanding may be as they search for the meaning of home in their lives.

> A life's journey is made up of continual daily choices. But there are moments of profound choosing, when a partner, a life-direction, or a new way of being in the world is chosen. This can be a wonderful time of focus and re-direction. When such a moment of choosing is genuine, it is usually preceeded by a time of gestation and gathering. Many different strands of your past experiences begin to weave together until gradually the new direction announces itself. Its voice is sure with the inevitability of the truth. When your life decisions emerge in this way from the matrix of your experience, they warrant your trust and commitment. When you

> can choose in this way, you move gracefully within the deeper rhythm of your soul. (p. 85)

Taiwan is No Longer the Home that I Thought it Was

Left home when I was young
Came back when I had grown
My accent didn't change, but I have spots of gray hair
Children see me but don't know me.
They laugh and ask where did this guest come from? (He Jer Zhang, 500 B.C.)

He Jer Zhang was an official to the emperor. After he retired and moved away from the capital city, He Jer Zhang went home back to his hometown. However, he discovered that he had become a stranger. In his sadness, He Jer Zhang wrote the above poem. Jia-Shieu learned the above written poem in second grade and to this day, elementary students from Taiwan are taught to memorize it.

For the parachute students, landing in the States is life changing, but landing back in Taiwan can be equally unraveling. For many of them, the act of physically going back home to Taiwan is the realization that their ideal of home exists only in the past. Ballerina shares, "I had forgotten how hot and crowded Taiwan was. After a couple of days, I couldn't wait to go home. My friends that were once there were no longer there for me. And the friends that had stayed were strangers to me." Wei shares, "I was disappointed in the sense that it wasn't what I thought it would be. Things were not as good as what you dream them to be. It wasn't the utopia that I thought." Thumper shares his disappointments and surprises about going back home.

> Well the food was good, don't get me wrong, it was very good, but not like how I had expected. And to my surprise, I don't remember the food being so oily as it was before. And to my even bigger surprise, I found myself looking for chicken wings a week into the trip.

This is not supposed to happen when one goes back home. It is supposed to be

utopia, a celebration and a homecoming. The food is supposed to be magnificent or, as many students say, "worth dying for." And there is supposed to be tremendous joy seeing friends and loved ones again. Instead, there is disappointment. According to the American Heritage College Dictionary (1982), the word "disappoint" means, "to fail to satisfy the hope, desires or expectations of" (p. 401). What were the parachutes students hoping for or hoping to accomplish? Were they looking to find once again a place to call home?

The parachute students' hopes, desires, and dreams are crushed. Their dreams of going home all these years are shattered by the very act of going back home and not finding the home that was. Perhaps Robert Louis Stevenson captures what they are experiencing in his poem "Home No More Home to Me, Whither Must I Wander?"

Home no more home to me, whither must I wander?
Hunger my drive, I go where I must.
Cold blows the winter wind over hill and heather;
Thick drives the rain, and my roof is in the dust.
Loved of wise men was the shade of my roof-tree.
The true word of welcome was spoken in the door-
Dear days of old, with the faces in the firelight,
Kind folks of old, you come again no more.

Home was home then, my dear, full of kindly faces,
Home was home then, my dear, happy for the child.
Fire and the windows bright glittered on the moorland;
Song, tuneful song, built a palace in the wild.
Now, when day dawns on the brow of the moorland,
Lone stands the house, and the chimney-stone is cold.
Lone let it stand, now the friends are all departed,
The kind hearts, the true hearts, that loved the place of old.

Spring shall come, come again, calling up the moor-fowl,
Spring shall bring the sun and rain, bring the bees and flowers;
Red shall the heather bloom over the hill and valley,
Soft flow the stream through the even flowing hours;
Fair the day shine as it shone on my childhood—
Fair shine the day on the house with open door;

Birds come and cry there and twitter in the chimney—
But I go for ever and come again no more.
(Robert Louis Stevenson, 1888, p. 260)

Most people love the places of old. Our hearts linger around the places of our past, where warm memories greet us occasionally. Everyone dreams of going back and reliving wonderful memories of yesteryear. Yet, sometimes it takes going back to a place of old to realize that it is no longer home and that home no longer exists. Storti (1990) shares, "When we go abroad, we expect there will be things we will have to get used to, but certainly not when we come home" (p. 99). When the parachute students go back to Taiwan, it is as if they never went home. Could home really have been that wonderful? Or do the parachute students try to live an exaggerated past that never existed, that somehow was distorted or created in their dreams as they longed to go back to their past, to the home that was?

Homesteading Without Realizing It

It is ironic that the trip home to Taiwan was not a homecoming, but a realization, an understanding that Taiwan is no longer the home of the past. Casey (1993) shares, in homecoming, the parachute students' return to the same place. They may go back to the same physical place, but not the same home-place, because that place no longer exists for them. For some of the parachute students, the trip was a confirmation that the States had become their new home, and Taiwan had become their home away from home. In actuality, the time that the parachute students are in the States, is not just for visiting or for educational purposes, but for homesteading, journeying to a place that becomes their future home-place (Casey, 1993). Throughout this dissertation, I have used the metaphor of landing. The parachute students landed in the States and considered themselves

foreign and different, strange and ostracized. They experience an incredible struggle to make the States some sort of home. After all of this--pining for their home, the homesickness they feel for Taiwan--when they physically land back in Taiwan, it is not home anymore. What does that mean for homesteading?

If home, is indeed, where your heart is, perhaps the trip to Taiwan may have helped them find their heart in the States. The realization that Taiwan is no longer home may be the answer they were looking for in life, a sense of comfort or peace in the heart. It may be the eye opening experience that opens their horizons to understanding and accepting where their new home might be. Casey (1993) shares, "As a journey is undertaken, the displacement in turn gives way to a last implacement and the end of a journey that is comparatively conclusive and stable" (p. 290). By living in the States for so long, they have established stability in a place they once considered so foreign.

What caused many parachute students to want to live in the States? Years earlier, Joyce hated every waking moment of her existence in the States, crying every night to go home. Ballerina did not think she could make it in the States, and now she wants to thrive anywhere in the U.S. Why do they have such a change of heart?

The parachute students have spent years in the States establishing a new home without realizing it. For many, they can trade in their parachutes now; they are no longer a necessity and need not be used again. Joyce shares that she is surprised how she has changed. She comments, "I want to stay here. I did not feel like that before. I love the peacefulness of the States and there are many opportunities here." Ballerina shares, "Taiwan was a home, but is no longer a home now. I want to raise my family in the States. I do not know if Maryland will always be home, but the States will be where my

future lies." Thumper shares, "After all these years, I have come to the realization that the States is where I belong. I never thought that would be the case. I might go back to Taiwan for like a job or a business deal. But to raise my family, I will be in the States."

Perhaps the change of heart that the parachute students are searching for is the comfort of knowing that their home in the States is a part of their very Being. Van Manen (1990) writes, "The home reserves a special space experience which has something to do with the fundamental sense of our being" (p. 102). It is the place where the parachute students establish their roots, their belongingness. By returning to Taiwan, many parachute students realize that their belongingness, their roots, are back home in the States. Jia-Shieu shares, "It was only after I went back to Taiwan that I realized that Taiwan was no longer a home for me."

As part of who they are, as part of their very Being, perhaps the parachute students' hearts are with the people. The people have a special place in the parachute students' hearts. It is easy for them to forget that home is not a place, or a location. Home is the people. As Wei shares, "Family is where home is, not Taiwan." And as the parachute students longed to establish friends and loved ones in the States, it is not easy to just let them go. It is as if the people who have been around them and the place itself, have become a part of who the parachute students are. Casey (1993) shares, "Places take on their character from the people who live in them. If places reflect the people who live in them, the very same people equally suggest the places they are from" (p. 304). No wonder when Thumper goes back to Taiwan, people ask him if he is an American. And when Chaos is in Taiwan, many strangers ask if they can practice their English with him, assuming he is an American. The States, its people and place, have become a part of

them, so much so that native Taiwanese consider the parachute students as foreigners. When the parachute students return to the States, they appreciate the identity of the people and place with which they can once again be a part. As one ESOL teacher shares, "When they (parachute students) come back to the States after visiting Taiwan, they are more appreciative of what they have here."

Part of that appreciation is the realization that the States has a lot to offer. If they go back to Taiwan, the parachute students will have to start making friends all over again and they may lose the friends that they have here. They will have to give up a culture to which their very Being has grown accustomed. Some have established a home that is too much a part of their Being to give up. For others, it is worth the risk of losing.

Homecoming: the Calling of Home

For some parachute students, the call to go back to Taiwan is too great for them to stay in the States. It is the home of their past and the home of their future. Their roots in Taiwan are established too firmly, grounded in the island of their youth. They were never transplanted in the States.

The transition from living in the States to living in Taiwan can be a time of uncertainty. Pei-Yu and Paige, two parachute students not in my study, returned back to Taiwan after being in the Sates for ten years. It took months for Pei-Yu to find a job, and she was not comfortable initially. She returned to Taiwan because she felt constricted in the States and believed that she had a better opportunity to find a husband in Taiwan. In her words, "There is a bigger pool of selection in Taiwan for guys." Paige went back to Taiwan because her ABC boyfriend was living in Asia. Eventually she broke off the relationship, and two years later, she married a gentlemen from Taiwan. Ted, another

parachute student not in my study, returned after being in the States for eight years due to financial opportunities. "Well, in my job in the States, my Chinese language abilities were not an asset. However, in Taiwan, my English speaking abilities would be an asset to any company." When he moved back to Taiwan, he brought with him his ABC wife and two ABC children. Paige, Pei-Yu, and Ted still have family in Taiwan.

So far, none of my participants have returned to Taiwan for good. I suspect that for most of them, considering that they came to the States at a young age, their roots of belonging are more established in the States than in Taiwan. Yet, some parachute students believe that they will go back to Taiwan. Lynn shares, "Home is Taiwan. I do not want to stay in the States. Yes, Taiwan is home." Spencer is convinced that he will return to Taiwan. He will not even consider staying in the States.

> I will go back to Taiwan. I am just here for educational opportunities. This is all part of a big plan to get me prepared to be as successful as possible in Taiwan. My attitude and outlook may change. I do not see that happening now, but it may change. I will give you that.

Spencer, Lynn, and others may also go back to Taiwan. If they do, the parachute students will experience forms of culture shock, foreignness, loneliness, and even homesickness in a place that they once considered home. Casey (1993) notes that a homecoming involves adjustment. He writes, "We not only journey back to it (home) but also move around in it once back" (p. 300). One parachute student shares, "Even when I go back to Taiwan, I experience culture shock over and over again." And Jia-Shieu shares, "When we went back this time with Ling Ling, I was afraid to cross the streets. I forgot how many motorcycles there are." Pei-Yu struggles with how people interact with others in Taiwan. "I struggled with how Taiwanese people are not as courteous and considerate as

Americans are. Americans are usually more open and watch their behavior in public. Again, the culture is different in Taiwan."

I am certain that the parachute students never would have thought that they would have difficulty adjusting to Taiwan. The American culture has become a part of them, and the Taiwanese culture has become somewhat foreign to them. Who would have thought that they would have changed this way? Who would have thought that their journey would bring them to such a different and unique background? They have to adjust to all the foreignness of Taiwan even though it was once home. They may even become homesick for the States. The very place that they experienced all these difficulties is the very place that they miss. In Taiwan, how long does it take them to get back into a lived space that they can call home? How long does it take them to re-establish their roots in new surroundings?

Yet, what draws them back to Taiwan, to a new beginning that carries with it all the struggles of immersion? Why would the parachute students give up all that they have established in the States? Perhaps that is the problem. Perhaps in their eyes, they have not established very much in the States, or think that they could establish much more in Taiwan. Paige shares, "It is difficult to belong, if you never originally belonged in the first place." Pei-Yu shares, "I did not feel that I fit in the States. I think it is related to my cultural background. I tried to get involved, but I could relate more with people with a similar background, language and stuff." In theirs and in others' eyes, perhaps the parachute students believe that happiness and belonging can be found and established better in Taiwan. Like a jigsaw puzzle, they may never have thought that they "fit in" to the American society, and that they have a "better fit" in Taiwan. Paige shares, "You

know, even though I lived here for ten years, I just never felt like I belonged." The desire to belong is a true motivator.

Still Searching and Looking for a Place to Call Home

As stated earlier in this chapter, Casey (1993) shares, "Ends of journeys fall into two extreme exemplars: homesteading and homecoming" (p. 289). Some parachute students still are searching for the end of their journeys. For them, going back home to Taiwan brings the realization that they have no home. Taiwan is no longer the Taiwan to which they dreamed of returning. As the past is no longer the past, the place of Taiwan is no longer the place they remember. At the same time, the States is not the ideal place that they wish they could claim as home. Place has affected time as time has affected place. Casey (1993) shares, "By nowhere to go, I mean not so much literal homelessness as the pervasive fact that no single place or group seems any longer to offer an abode for a more capacious self hood" (p. 308). Those parachute students are homeless again, in limbo again, looking again for new places to land. Casey (1993) writes, "In the present in which I am engaged in both experiences, I find myself in a limbo between the past and a future home." Chaos shares, "Well, the meaning of home changes for me. I do not know where I will call my future home, as far as I know, it could be anywhere." Are those who do not adopt the States as home worried they will never find a place to call home? Are their roots in the States not established, and their roots in Taiwan no longer planted?

Yet, what are the parachute students basing their judgment on to determine their ideal home? They look to the past to find stability and in the present find comfort. Van Manen (1990) tells us that temporality, or the existential of lived time, is subjective time,

as opposed to objective measurable clock time. He writes, “The temporal dimensions of the past, present, and future constitute the horizons of a person’s temporal landscape” (p. 104). Parachute students do not see their temporal landscape as they descend and land in the States, but it is created and painted by their experiences. And as they descend back in Taiwan, their American background clouds their temporal landscape. Heidegger (1927/1966) contends, “The fundamental phenomenon of time is the future” (p. 14). He writes, “Being futural gives time, cultivates the present, and allows the past to be repeated in how it is lived” (p. 14). What part of the past do the parachute students want repeated, so much so that they would return to Taiwan to find it? What part of their past do they wish they could erase from their temporal landscape?

Casey (1993) shares, “Nostalgia, contrary to what we imagine, is not merely a matter of regret for lost times; it is also a pining for lost places, for places we have once been in yet can no longer reenter” (p. 37). Not finding a home either in the States or in Taiwan is a true dilemma, as nothing from the present satisfies the longing for the past. Rybczynski (1986) writes, “Nostalgia for the past is often a sign of dissatisfaction with the present” (p. 209). Moreover, the past is never a constant, but is constantly being added to and altered. What they experience in the present becomes a part of their past. The longer parachute students stay in the States, the longer their newer past becomes. The parachute students’ experiences in the States become a larger part of their temporal landscape. And the past changes under the pressures and influences of the present (van Manen, 1990). Merleau-Ponty (1962/1998) shares that as a result, the past becomes more vague, succumbing to the lack of experiences with the past. He writes:

> In the same way, although my present draws into itself time past and time to come, it possesses them only in intention, and even if, for example, the

> consciousness of my past which I now have seems to me to cover exactly the past as it was, the past which I claim to recapture is not the real past, but my past as I now see it, perhaps after altering it. (pp. 69-70)

Thus, the past is sometimes hard to see. The students' temporal landscape becomes clouded by what has happened in the present. It is as if the past becomes further and further away, more distant in their memories and more faded in their remembrances.

It is this fading, this distancing from the past that assists the parachute students as they open to new surroundings. If the parachute students cannot find comfort in the past, why not look to the future with new ideas and creativity? Why not look for new ways of belonging? O'Donohue (1999) writes, "If you listen to the voices of your own longing, they will constantly call you to new styles of belonging which are energetic and mirror the complexity of your life as you deepen and intensify your presence on earth" (p. 4). Eventually, the parachute students find a place that they can call home by the very belonging that a home can give. "The most intimate community is the community of understanding. Where you are understood, you are at home"(O'Donohue, 1999, p. 262). Where the parachute students find true understanding and belonging is where their future home will be established.

My Journey within their Journey

> Now I am afraid that I am more confused than ever. After successfully completing eight doctoral classes, I had come upon the distinct conclusion that my personal opinions or values should not be included in my dissertation. Numerous times my professors would say, "Do not use the words 'unfortunately' when writing your papers." Other times they would instruct, "This is your own personnel opinion or value and may not be interpreted by others in the same fashion. Personal reactions should be separated from field notes. Suddenly, Mooney hits me with the idea that a producer's point of view will make me more productive. Wow! No wonder educators and researchers lose sleep. (OuYang, 1996)

The above paragraph is from my first journal review in a class that I took with Dr. Hultgren that introduced me to phenomenology. At the end of the semester, I thanked Dr. Hultgren for introducing me to a completely different methodology for research. Who would have thought that eight years later I would be finishing a hermeneutic phenomenological dissertation? Yet, this journey has in many ways, changed the way I look at students and research.

It has been two years since I formally began my phenomenological inquiry into the lived experiences of the Taiwanese parachute students. Initially my interests in the parachute students' experience arose eleven years ago from learning that my future wife's sister went to high school writing her own notes because her parents were in Taiwan. I was in shock to learn that my wife had a similar experience. As I discovered that there were more parachute students who had landed in the States, my interest began to blossom.

As the parachute students have changed, I, too, have changed much since the start of this doctoral program. I started as a bachelor, became a serious boyfriend, a nervous fiancée, a dedicated husband, and then an amazed and humbled father. At the same time in my career, I started out as a middle school counselor, and then a resource counselor, followed by a trip to Taiwan for ten months as an immersed American parachute student, then on to a high school counselor, and now an assistant principal. I started writing my dissertation with a Mac SE computer that had a screen six inches in diameter. Three computers later, I work on a Dell computer that has 100 times more memory and three times the screen size.

The changes in my personal and career lives seem to have assisted in my dedication and understanding of the parachute students. The call to this phenomenon began as a concerned school counselor. I thought to myself, "How can these parents allow their children to be halfway around the world, and not be near them? Is this legal? Is this morally correct? As a father, enjoying the stages of my daughter's life, trying to hold her and protect her from all discomforts and anxieties, cherishing each moment with her knowing full well that time will not stand still, I would whisper in her ear saying, "I will always be here for you. Do not cry, you can always use my shoulder for comfort." Yet, who could possibly comfort the parachute students from their experiences?

As I began the struggle of learning the Chinese language, I met more parachute students and realized that their journeys were similar to mine. With our similarities we could bond, despite our differences. In our journeys, we had company along the way. As a high school counselor and youth group leader, I was able to enjoy the communication and relationships that I could establish with high school parachute students. Quickly, I learned that high school students were more vocal and more expressive than middle school students. At the same time, it seemed as if their problems were more real to their lives. With that understanding, my role as a high school counselor became influential to their growth and development. As I became more interested in them, the parachute students' sharing of their lived experiences allowed us to form bonds of connection. They did not care how much I knew, until they knew how much I cared. This caring, this *Da-sein* becomes a critical part to effective phenomenology.

To my surprise, the parachute students have changed me as an educator, parent, student and child. At the same time, phenomenology has affected the way I look at the

parachute students' everyday experiences. As I have completed this dissertation, phenomenology has changed me. I knew that phenomenology would take me to places where I had never been, but I did not know that it would take me to places where I had been before but never noticed. This next section concentrates on the journey where phenomenology has taken me. This journey is an education about myself, and how I can look at others in a more revealing light.

My Parents were Parachute Students

> It was snowing again, I think Spring in O'Maha is not beautiful; it is cold, windy, and barren. I think the weather in Shanghai is warm now; many flowers are growing in my garden. I do not know when I shall return to my sweet home again. I heard that the Nationalists' war planes have made several heavy air raids over Shanghai since February. I am worrying about my relatives and friends. I hope they are safe. (Toong, April 3rd, 1950)

The above paragraph is taken from my mother's diary when she was in college. She was practicing English, and the Catholic nuns would correct her grammar. She came to the States fleeing the communists from China. One of my sisters found the diary years after my mother passed away. I read it in great sadness, knowing full well that my mother would never know that I chose a dissertation that embodies her background and experiences. Also, I am saddened by the fact that after doing this study, I have a taste of what she and my father had to endure leaving China and establishing a home in the States. Through phenomenology, I came to the realization that my parents were parachute students. While completing this dissertation, I have studied my parents' past without even knowing it. I never realized what they went through all these years. My lack of acceptance of their culture was perhaps a lack of acceptance of their past and the heritage that was such a part of them.

I miss my mother. I miss her warm beautiful eyes that would touch my soul and give me comfort. I miss her kindness and excitable spirit that longed to see her children grow. I miss her cooking and the smell of home with the air full of deliciousness and every dish made with love and care. Jia-Shieu never met my mother. I was never able to present to my mother the love of my life. And my mother was never able to hold my daughter and experience the joy of being a grandmother. The accomplishments of life seem bittersweet because my ability to share my successes with loved ones is always one person short. My lived experiences since her death can never be a part of my mother's lived experiences.

Yet, to remember the past is to open more opportunities to appreciate the joy of my experiences with my father. Everyday I am able to spend with my father is more appreciated due to the loss of my mother. When one only has one parent left in this world, that parent is more cherished and the time together is more appreciated. Phenomenology has helped me to not only appreciate my father, but my father's past and what he had to endure to provide for my siblings and myself.

There is a certain "eye opening" that one experiences through phenomenology. Metzger (1992) writes, "If we do not reveal our inner selves, we will not have models of honesty and openness and we will be ignorant of the reality of our lives" (p. 36). As I opened up the parachute students' inner lives, I found myself looking at my own life. I have been ignorant to the reality of my own life, in particular, understanding the Chinese culture and language. The only Chinese parts of my American-born "Chineseness" were the food and the tradition of respecting the older generation. I wanted no part of the culture and the language.

No wonder my father was so excited when I started dating Jia-Shieu. Perhaps he knew that my dating a girl from Taiwan was more than just the fact that I was dating someone Chinese, but the notion that I was finally accepting the Chinese culture I had never sought. That which we have failed to recognize in ourselves is sometimes visible to outsiders. Mills (1994) shares, "We gain from seeing ourselves as others see us, as well as by gazing into our own inner mirrors" (p. 4). My father saw in Jia-Shieu something that would help me see myself. And to be motivated to live in Taiwan for ten months was in part phenomenology urging me to be open and honest to what immersion is truly like. How could I write a paper about immersion if I never experienced it? True, love had an effect on my desire to learn the language, but phenomenology had an effect on my need to be honest to my heritage and myself.

As the years have gone by, I find myself becoming more Chinese, instead of more American. At the same time, I understand my father and in-laws much more because I understand their culture more. Ten years ago if someone would have said that I would become more Chinese, I would have laughed uncontrollably. Now, I look back gratefully. It has been a journey that has been well worth the costs. White (1988) shares, "Life is undoubtedly fuller and richer for those of us who are gifted with self knowledge" (p. 10). Undoubtedly, I am richer by this experience.

Listening for the Phenomenological Nod

As a school counselor, I tried to have strong attending and listening skills. One cannot address a problem if one does not listen to what the problem is. I considered it imperative that my counselees would know that I listen well. A counselor's effectiveness can be destroyed when he/she has a reputation that he/she does not listen.

Phenomenology requires an intense level of listening because it engages the senses. Van Manen (1990) shares how the art of listening is the art of hearing what is not always said:

> The phenomenological method consists in the ability or rather the art of being sensitive—sensitive to the subtle undertones of language, to the way language speaks when it allows the things themselves to speak. This means that an authentic speaker must be a true listener, able to attune to the deep tonalities of language that normally fall out of our accustomed range of hearing, able to listen to the way the things of the world speak to us. (p. 113)

The ability to listen to the way the things of the world speaks to us allows the speaker to know that the listener is trying truthfully to understand. Much of my job depends upon the ability to listen. However, the ability truly to understand what my students have experienced is harder to grasp. So often, it is easier just to assume that what students are experiencing is nothing out of the ordinary. Barritt (1984) shares, "Too often we assume that we know the meaning of experiences for others. But the everyday meaning of an experience for parents, for pupils and for teachers may be very different for each" (p. 15). In education, there is a temptation to take the everyday educational occurrences for granted.

Phenomenology is the epitome of empathy because it moves the educator to do the very opposite, to take nothing for granted. Van Manen (1984) writes, "It (phenomenology) makes us thoughtfully aware of the consequential in the inconsequential, the significant in the taken-for-granted" (p. 109). This is what every caring counselor strives for, to make us thoughtfully aware of our students' experiences. And now as an administrator, I thoughtfully must be aware of my teachers' experiences. Phenomenology has pushed me to obtain a phenomenological nod from my participants, students and teachers. I am looking for each of them to say to me, "Exactly!" or "Yes

that is exactly what I experienced. That is what I went through." Then I know that I have not only described but interpreted their experiences. As an end result, they want to share more of their experiences, assuming that since I understand, I care as well. Schwartz-Salant (1982) might consider a phenomenological nod as the ability to mirror another individual:

> To be mirrored is to be understood, to feel that someone empathetically follows our thoughts, feelings, experience etc…It is a glaring deficiency in our culture that being right is more highly valued than being related. Yet to mirror another person requires a willingness to enter into his or her own world, to suspend critical judgment and reflect what is being offered. (p. 45)

It is this mirroring, this entering into his or her own world, that is both necessary and beneficial in reflecting and understanding others. Phenomenology complements the educator's role because it emphasizes listening and empathy and brings one into the nearness of others.

In summary, phenomenology has made me a better educator. It has made me more aware of my surroundings and has enhanced my ability to be sensitive to the needs of others. Phenomenology has assisted in my understanding the plight of the parachute students by not allowing me to take their lived experiences for granted. I can empathize more with their needs; especially since I experienced them myself, I know it is a hard process adjusting to a new culture. I know not to generalize my understanding of their experiences, but to reflect on them on a case by case basis. Moreover, due to this study, I want to find them and then relate to them. I want to establish more than their knowing who I am, but that they realize they can come to me for understanding and acceptance. Van Manen (1990) would not be surprised that phenomenology has changed me. He writes:

> Phenomenological projects and their methods often have a transformative effect on the researcher himself or herself. Indeed, phenomenological research is often a deep learning, leading to a transformation of consciousness, heightened perceptiveness, increased thoughtfulness, and tact, and so on. (p. 163)

I am grateful for the changes within me as I search for phenomenological nods in my conversations and in my daily life experiences. I do not want my students and teachers to feel as if they are talking to wood. By practicing phenomenological methods, I can describe and interpret their experiences, and in return, try to formulate recommendations that might lead to more possibilities for human autonomy.

Questions: the Opening of Opportunities to Care

> From a phenomenological point of view, to do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings. (van Manen, 1990, p. 163)

When I first starting practicing phenomenology, I was concerned about asking too many questions. Prior to studying phenomenology, I was trained that whenever one asks a question, one better find or have an answer. However, that is not the point of asking questions in phenomenology. The art of questioning is to see things as possible in a different light, to assist one to wonder the essence of one's existence. Gadamer (1960/1989) writes, "The essence of the question is the opening up, and keeping open, of possibilities" (p. 266). The opening of possibilities is to understand a phenomenon in a different way, so that more questions are generated and more understanding develops.

To question is to know that there are aspects about a phenomenon that need to be revealed in order truly to understand that phenomenon. To question is to not take the status quo for granted, to make one thoughtfully aware of others and their experiences. To question is to open up a phenomenon in a way that has not been considered previously.

Gadamer (1960/1989) writes, “The art of questioning is that of being able to go on asking questions” (p. 330). The art of questioning has become somewhat of a habit for me. I began to question everything not to be annoying, but to be enlightening. By questioning, I wanted to keep open the possibilities for understanding not only the parachute students better, but other students and myself as well. It is as if phenomenology continues to lead me, allowing me to not only ask questions in my doctoral work, but to allow a lifelong journey of questioning, learning and understanding.

An example of how my questioning has changed is that when I started phenomenology, I would ask questions hoping for an answer. Now, when I ask questions, it is not the answer I am looking for as much as the opening up of future questions. My questioning about the phenomenon has changed over the time I have been engaged in it. Moreover, my questioning has changed around the phenomenon itself. What was I allowed to see in the phenomenon as I was engaged in the question? The opening of questions has assisted me to move from a descriptive level to a more interpretive understanding. For example, in one of my drafts that I wrote for Dr. Hultgren, I write, “I wonder if ABC children like myself would have enjoyed and studied Chinese more if they studied it an hour a day instead of once a week?” The question scratches the surface of understanding. However, as I progressed and practiced more phenomenology, I write, “What is it like to live the language?” and “What moves the parachute students from hiding in silence to having the courage to speak? and “From where does the courage to speak come?” Thus, instead of asking explanatory questions, I started asking opening or interpretive questions.

To ask questions is to care to understand. I only can ask about the nature of a phenomenon genuinely if I am animated by the question in the very life that I live (van Manen, 1990). It is not enough to care in order to ask a phenomenological question; the questions themselves become a part of me. Van Manen (1990) writes, "A phenomenological question must not only be made clear, understood, but also be 'lived' by the researcher" (p. 44). As I became more involved in the parachute students' lives, the art of questioning became more a part of my life. I tried to open the parachute students from the heart of their existence, because their existence became a part of my Being.

The art of questioning opened up the lived experiences of the parachute students, especially during our conversations. The questions assisted the parachute students not only to recall, but to relive their pasts in a more heartfelt way. Phenomenology and the asking of questions is not limited to just the conversation; the art of questioning continues and expands to all students and to all life's experiences. Yet, my questions did not end once the conversations ended. And as I cared more and practiced phenomenology more, my questions increased.

Humbled by Phenomenology

I have been humbled by phenomenology. To interpret what others have truly experienced is not an easy process. And to know what others have truly experienced is at times daunting. Never before have I sat in a professor's office questioning my ability to do the work. Never before have I written so much, but missed the mark, only to be asked again and again to revise and edit a masterpiece that was never on paper, but only in my mind. Never before have I written so much on a particular topic only to realize after one

question or one experience, that I have so much more to uncover to open up the phenomenon more fully. To care by using phenomenology requires effort with precision. It requires the unraveling of a phenomenon by writing about it, revision after revision, until it is worthy of receiving a phenomenological nod.

Prior to finishing my doctorate, a superintendent informed me that when I go to my defense, consider myself an expert. He said, "Remember, no one else is an expert on that committee but you." Well, I certainly do not feel like an expert. The more I know and the more I study, the more I realize that there is so much more to know and learn. Becoming an expert is not the end of phenomenology. Perhaps that is why phenomenology does not stop after the ink is dry and the defense is over. Phenomenology is a lifelong process that continually affects the phenomenologist. If a superintendent were to ask me, "Is your work done?" I will reply that my work is just beginning. As van Manen (1990) writes, "Phenomenological research has, as its ultimate aim, the fulfillment of our human nature: to become more fully who we are" (p. 12). I believe that phenomenology has helped me to become more fully who I am, but there is still so much more learning that can occur.

As I have been humbled, the desire to learn more still lingers. Perhaps phenomenology has taught me that practicing phenomenology means being a lifelong learner, because there is so much more that can be uncovered, so many more phenomena to be opened. For some reason, I embrace learning rather than flee from it. My engagement in this study has allowed me to recognize additional aspects that still need to be studied. Some areas that still need to be explored relate to the parachute students who still are in limbo. They are still on a bridge, undecided what countries they will call

home. What experiences about their journey are so difficult, that instead of persevering, they give up? Moreover, the at-risk parachute student was addressed in Chapter Three, but was not a theme that developed in my study. Equally important, other researchers can build upon my insights and address with Taiwanese educators concerns about the exodus of students leaving Taiwan. This brain drain they are experiencing is the loss of creativity and educational growth. Perhaps the positives that the parachute students experience in the US educational system can be expanded to the Taiwan education program. For example, another study might include the observation of parachute students in the classroom and their interactions with other students and teachers. O'Donohue (1999) considers learning to be a part of our soul.

> When you open your heart to discovery, you will be called to step outside the comfort barriers within which you have fortified your life. You will be called to risk old views and thoughts and to step off the circle of routine and image. This will often bring turbulence. The pendulum will fix at times on one extreme, and you will be out of balance. But your soul loves the danger of growth. (p. 19)

In essence, I am grateful for the humbleness that accompanied practicing phenomenology and completing this dissertation. If I was never humbled, I would never continue to search for understanding. How blind and arrogant I would be thinking that I know everything. In humility, I have had my own taken-for-granted understandings challenged by having conversations with the parachute students. For example, prior to my conversations, I would give directions to parachute students to what classes they would attend, not worrying that they would be accepted by ESOL teachers. However, after having conversations with Ballerina and her experience being lost in the hallways meeting the principal, I realize that it is not the directions with which the students are worried, but their interactions with strangers and not understanding what is being said to

them. Just because I knew that the ESOL teachers were nice, does not mean that they knew. Now, I am more attentive to their needs. With my search for knowledge, my soul humbles me with the need for more compassion. Every single time I said to myself, 'Wow, this is so interesting, this is so revealing and so true," I believe my soul was thirsty for more. True, knowledge is overwhelming and intimidating at times, but it is also very freeing, as it opens to new understandings.

Making a Better Tomorrow: Pedagogical Recommendations

> The end of phenomenological research is to sponsor a critical educational competence: knowing how to act tactfully in pedagogic situations on the basis of a carefully edified thoughtfulness. Phenomenological research does this by reintegrating part and whole, the contingent and the essential, value and desire. (van Manen, 1984, p. 109)

The end of this phenomenological journey is the beginning for educators and parents. It is a beginning for educators to act and respond pedagogically for the betterment of all students. There is a carefully educated thoughtfulness that seems to exuberate from the pages of this dissertation. Implied messages and hints from the parachute students reveal that some experiences were lived nightmares rather than learning opportunities.

The following section contains pedagogical recommendations for future parachute students who decide to land in another country, and for other native students who have the opportunity to meet them. It is imperative that educators make things better for those who are affected by these insights. Barritt (1984) recognizes the need for action as a result of phenomenological studies.

> Phenomenological research is done with an eye to the consequences for action. Based on the research results, try to formulate recommendations that might lead to more possibilities for human autonomy, a better situation for those on whom a decision is to be visited. (p. 15)

That is the end for why we do phenomenology in the first place: to make things better. These recommendations are not made lightly, but are brought forward phenomenologically from the opening up of the lived experiences of the Taiwanese parachute students. As phenomenology has changed me, perhaps these recommendations will promote positive change, not just for future parachute students, but for their families, educators and for anyone who cares for the well being of these students.

All in the Family

My original question, which sparked my interest in this study, still remains a concern, even after completing this dissertation. How could parents leave their parachute children alone so far away? The definition of the parachute students' experiences changes as one parent stays with the student. I still wonder, "How could he/she leave his/her family alone so far away?" The answers to these questions seem to remain unclear and unacceptable.

I include parents in the pedagogical recommendations because they are the first teachers for the parachute students. If their children go overseas, is it wise that they suddenly become spectator parents instead of active participants in their children's lives? The term for overseas parents is "astronaut parents," as if they are not even on the planet. And if one parent is an astronaut parent, while the rest of the family goes to the States, is it worth it to separate the family?

My study participants do not think so. Each participant shared that he/she is grateful that at least one parent stayed in the States. However, they all agreed that the journey to the States should be a complete family affair. Thumper shares:

> If I recommend anything to you about our journey, it is that parents are not separated on our behalf. If we come to the States, both parents should come. It is not worth it if the family is divided because of us. Eventually, we feel tremendous guilt, whether justified or not.

Chaos still has ill feelings that his father did not come to the States. "I have issues, or let's say mixed feelings toward my father. I do go see him every summer. He was not around for me and he never visited the East Coast." Ballerina shares, "Aunts and Uncles are like guardians, but they are not parents. It is not the same because when you need discipline, aunts and uncles do not know what to do. You wouldn't know if you could go to them for problems." When staying with relatives, Joyce notes that it adds to the parachute students' burdens. "This gives us two pains, you are with someone you do not love, and you are away from someone you do love."

As stated in Chapter One, a growing number of parents are accompanying parachute students to Taiwan primarily because previous parachute students left alone have had difficulty adjusting and have exhibited at-risk behavior (Fu, 1990). Moreover, when one parent stays in the States and the other in Taiwan, one becomes more American and the other becomes more Taiwanese. Differences are inevitable, as there are differences in the cultures. These differences can lead to a breakdown of the family structure. Stone (1988) writes, "The cohesion and durability of a family is an idea—a value—that has to be built every single generation" (p. 40). How can something be built well when it is not on solid ground? How can a family be built up when its members are separated physically, half way around the world?

The plight of the parachute students is difficult. How much more difficult is it when students have no guidance and no family or a partial family for support? The end result for the Taiwanese parents is they may have a student educated in the States, but

lose a part of their family. Is this risk worth the costs? The whole family can enjoy the learning process rather than suffer from it. Children grow up only once and the role of a parent was never meant to be a spectator sport. Parents have their children for eighteen years only and then their children move on to live their own lives. Perhaps parents may want to consider their children's growing years and how they may cherish them together. Parents may want to consider having their children come back and visit Taiwan instead of having them wait for years to see their home that was. This may assist them to be grateful for what they have in the States, and address the anger they may feel for leaving Taiwan in the first place. Moreover, by going back to visit Taiwan, the journey back may dispel the exaggerated ideas they may have developed concerning Taiwan.

If the parachute students' families want their children to come to the States to study, considerations should be given in the family about who should accompany the student, as well as to what happens to the fragmentation of the family unit when it is split apart. The family unit may understand better what happens when a child is taken from the family unit and displaced in another land by talking to parachute students who have traveled before them. Families may need to give consideration to the whole process of what happens to parachute students when they come to the States. For my participants and their parents, their only regret from their journeys is their family being separated. May there be no regrets for future parachute students.

Being Sensitive to Their Situation

> When does treating people the same become insensitive to their differences and likely to stigmatize or hinder them on that basis? (Minnow, 1990, p. 20)

As stated in Chapter Four, when the parachute students come to the States, they are attacked immediately by immersion. Immersion has no mercy, as it forces the parachute students to experience living in the English language, but not understanding it. As the parachute students continue to spend time in the States, their ability to speak and comprehend English grows and, thus, their capacity to adjust to the States.

As parachute students enter high school, they are required to take a foreign language as part of their graduation requirements. If their native language is being offered in the school they are attending, this is most often not a learning experience, but a class that they have to take in order to receive a graduation credit. How can their native language be considered a foreign language for them? Why do they not take English as a foreign language?

If the foreign language department does not have classes offered in their native language, they are required to take a foreign language or take three years of a computer language. In essence, what school systems are asking parachute students to do is to take an additional foreign language, even though they are struggling already with one foreign language, English. The school system is not only asking them to address issues of immersion, it is asking that the parachute students and other international students balance an additional foreign language. Is this requirement being sensitive to their situation?

While in Taiwan, I decided that I would take Mandarin and Taiwanese in the same semester. I thought to myself, "I am studying Mandarin six hours a day, and getting the hang of it. What is so difficult about taking another elective language?" The Taiwanese class met only three times a week, but because of that one class, I was overwhelmed. My

physical and mental resources were exhausted already by being immersed in Mandarin. It felt as if I had to reach down even deeper for strength in learning Taiwanese. And numerous times, I would become confused getting the Taiwanese and Mandarin words intertwined.

As a school counselor, I would have responsibilities for registering new ninth and tenth grade ESOL students. I would not register them for a foreign language, knowing that they would be adjusting to being immersed in English. As I would plan their years of education in the States, I could see their hearts sink knowing that they would have to take two years of a foreign language on top of taking numerous ESOL classes.

Ironically, it benefits ESOL students to come later to the States, during their junior year. By doing this, their native language counts as a foreign language. Instead of parachute students being required to take a foreign language, perhaps consideration should be given for students to take additional English classes. If the true purpose for students taking a foreign language is to learn the language and the culture of another country, the parachute and ESOL students address that purpose already by being immersed in the English language and the American school system. Due to their experiences, the parachute and ESOL students become more bilingual and more bicultural than their American classmates.

For some students, taking another foreign language in high school may not be difficult. Some ESOL students will choose to take another foreign language as an elective as I did, and I would encourage them to do so. However, for many other ESOL students, the requirement of another foreign language is more of a burden than a learning

experience. Perhaps this school policy may need to be revisited due to the consequences this requirement is having on parachute and ESOL students.

Having Teachers Understand Themselves

As I avoided searching to understand my own heritage and culture, how many teachers do not search to understand their own backgrounds and cultures? Greene cited in Ayers and Miller (1988) shares, "A teacher in search of his/her own freedom may be the only kind of teacher who can arouse young persons to go in search of their own" (p. 75). By searching and understanding their own backgrounds, teachers will have the benefit of diversifying their own experiences and come to an understanding of others better. By knowing themselves, they can relate to what others may experience.

So often, people of diversity know their own background. For example, anyone who is a minority knows they are one. However, those who are in the majority, often do not know their backgrounds. They may know their ethnicity, but whether they know the background and history behind their ethnicity may be a completely different matter. Practicing their culture and ethnic background may be limited to a once-a-year holiday, rather than a true lived representation of their culture. This is unfortunate, especially considering that intrapersonal knowledge, especially in the form of self-understanding and reflective analysis, are vital to teachers' learning and self-renewal through their careers (Collinson, 1996). Is it not peculiar that Americans, including myself, may know the American culture much more than their own ethnicity and background. O'Donohue (1997) writes:

> Many people miss out on themselves completely as they journey through life. They know others, they know places, they know skills, they know their work, but tragically, they do not know themselves at all. (p. 192)

Yet, at the same time, we may look to others instead of looking at ourselves to understand diversity better. Mills (1994) writes:

> We may be drawn to the general authenticity theses in part because we believe that people should not try to pretend to be something, they are not. Why try to tell someone else's story, when your own story is right there, staring you in your face? (p. 5)

Writing about oneself may be one of the most freeing and interesting things one can do. As teachers learn more about themselves, students should also learn to study their cultural backgrounds. Connelly (1988) writes, "There is no better way to study curriculum than to study ourselves" (p. 5). Yet, I have never taken a human relations class that concentrates on understanding one's own culture. And every multicultural class I have attended emphasizes studying a culture unlike your own. If teachers do not understand themselves, how can we expect teachers to understand others? Moreover, studying one's own culture often times, is applied more readily. I know after I studied Chinese, I could use it with my parents, and there was a bond that developed from sharing our culture. By teachers learning about their own culture, they are in turn, learning about others. As human relations activities arise for teachers, one program might be to have this additional dimension of work added to understand their own culture better. Appreciating diversity can begin from having individuals look within to discover their inner selves. From this entire experience, to my surprise I met myself for the first time. Perhaps other educators will do the same.

Promoting Greater Diversity and Understanding in the Classroom

> Every American is some kind of American, and I feel that issues of cultural identity should be explored by all students, not just by students of diverse backgrounds. (Au, 1997, p. 77)

The parachute students may go to school and attend classes with their US

classmates, but do they have moments where they can talk and get to know one another genuinely? The two different groups seem not to mix, as if there are literal barriers, besides cultural and language, that prevent them from interacting. It seems as if it takes an after-school activity like Spencer's track team or Ballerina's orchestra to give both American and parachute students opportunities to know one another. Why is it that extra-curricular activities or the electives seem to be the area where international and US students become friends? Perhaps the electives and extra-curricular activities are the common language that both cultures can finally share and enjoy.

Schools can cultivate opportunities for international and American students to learn about one another in non-elective classes. Greene cited in Ayers and Miller (1998) writes, "All that we can do I believe is cultivate multiple ways of seeing and multiple dialogues in a world where nothing stays the same" (p. 93). Multiple ways of seeing and multiple dialogues can occur by utilizing the tremendous resources that are available from the diverse student population. American students, not just ESOL students, can volunteer in the ESOL departments. Student government representatives can spend time with international students so ESOL students are practicing their English with native speakers. International students can be student aides in foreign language classes.

Yet, the problems with these suggestions are that they do not touch every student, every learner. Perhaps something more pressing needs to occur. It is easy for disinterested or placid students to avoid learning about diversity. Minnow (1990) considers this to be a great loss in a student's education.

> When students in the majority avoid the experience of not being understood, or of not understanding what others say, they fail to learn about the limits of their own knowledge. They miss a chance to discover the importance of learning another language. By their very comfort in the

> situation, they neglect the perspective of any student they consider different from themselves. (p. 29)

To open opportunities for students to learn the perspective of others, perhaps it should be considered that school systems offer Diversity/Human relations courses as a part of a graduation requirement. Students can learn about different cultures, and learn to present their own cultures to others. By doing this, it is as if we are allowing students to be a part of their own curriculum. Teachers respond well to being a part of the decision making process; how much more will students? Nieto (1998) would agree with this recommendation. She writes, "Students and teachers need to learn how to construct curricula that affirms all students while also challenging the idea of fixed or idealized identities" (p. 55).

Moreover, students can be required to complete "community understanding hours" in addition to the already established community service hours. As part of adding cultural diversity to their curriculum, "community understanding hours" may assist students to understand different cultures better by bringing students into different cultural experiences. For example, students would benefit from visiting a Jewish Synagogue, a Muslim mosque, a Buddhist temple, or a Christian Church. Or perhaps they may benefit from experiencing a Chinese New Year celebration, an Indian Wedding celebration, or attend an international night. Instead of just watching a video on a culture, they can live and experience it firsthand.

Currently, Maryland high school students are required to take a half credit health class where they are required to learn about their physical bodies, as well as how to avoid sexually transmitted diseases. They are required to learn about health-related issues, but are not required to learn about a healthy culture. And an additional requirement is that

Maryland high school students complete sixty hours of community service. In community service, they may learn how to serve others, but when do they learn how to understand and appreciate others better? In a world where fighting occurs so much due to ignorance and racism, is understanding and learning about others not as important as learning about one's health and serving others?

Perhaps the difficulty in establishing a class to address differences is that it is so vague. As Thompson and Tyagi (1996), quoted in Chapter Four, share, "Trying to understand race in the US is like putting together a three dimensional 2000 piece jigsaw puzzle in dim light" (p. 4). The reason why students should study diversity is because it is vague. Would educators rather have students pursue and understand their own culture and identity or have students possibly live their lives in a constant state of mis-identity and misunderstanding that can lead to possible racist attitudes? Would educators want students to benefit from understanding and accepting differences or hide from them? If educators never assist students to challenge those fixed or idealized identities, then have we really given them an education that promotes understanding and acceptance of others? Instead of producing understanding and acceptance, are we instead producing ignorance? Hacker in Euben (1991) writes:

> America is becoming less white, less European, and less bound by a single language and culture. White men are becoming another minority, and since men do not think of themselves as gendered or as raced, this has become a considerable shock. (p. 4)

When the minority becomes the majority, then will our school systems react to the diversity that surrounds them? Will our students be educated to appreciate diversity or to fear it?

In our public schools, perhaps school curriculum policies need to be revisited to promote more opportunities for appreciating and understanding diversity. Part of a well-rounded education includes understanding and appreciating the diversity that surrounds students. Despite efforts bringing cultural diversity into the curriculum, there is a ways to go with regard to this particular aspect when working with the parachute students. By adding more opportunities for understanding cultural diversity into the educational curriculum, educators are enriching their students' educational backgrounds and opportunities for multiculturalism to be experienced and understood.

Making a School Their Home

After completing this study, the importance of home resonates from this dissertation. How can educators present a culture for the parachute students so they do feel at home and perceive an environment that is safe for learning? So often the students who seem to struggle academically the most, are the ones who do not find a home away from home in the school. They never seem to feel a sense of comfort and existence of home in the school. Something is missing, a sense of home and a sense of place.

Pedagogically, teachers can bring a little home to the parachute students. For example, they can have parent volunteers translate Chinese text into English. By doing so, teachers are introducing material that parachute students may have studied in Taiwan, but can learn in English. And why can they not do a report in English on a book they have read in Chinese? The familiarity may bring a sense of comfort and enjoyment of learning. Au (1997) writes:

> The disconnectedness between the world depicted in books and my own world paralleled the disconnectedness between school and life outside. (p. 81)

> As a student I do not remember thinking it odd never to come across a book written by an Asian American or with Asian American characters, or, for that matter, with any but European characters. I assumed that books were supposed to represent another world, not anything close to my own experiences, since that was the case with all the books I had ever read. (p. 81)

The very "disconnectedness" that Au talks about can be eliminated by introducing familiar curriculum in English or Chinese books that can have English assignments corresponding with it. Why should educators follow a prescribed curriculum when another more diverse curriculum could cover the same objective?

Teachers can maintain a positive learning environment by insuring that students are not mocked for their accents or lack of knowledge of the English language. No student wants to attend a class where they are the center of mockery. Yet as a counselor, students of all races inform me that teachers hear the teasing, but choose to let it go unnoticed. Chaos shares, "I believe my ESOL teacher was racist because she would let students mock me, but when I tried to fight back, she would yell at me." Perhaps if parachute students were allowed to express their concerns, it would create better understanding between the parachute students and their teachers. Counselors can play an instrumental role in increasing communication with the parachute students by making sure they are accessible and open to conversations. If the language barrier is too great, then perhaps the counselor should consider contacting the ESOL counselors.

Regarding ESOL counselors, the policy may need to be revisited in the school system. Currently, ESOL counselors are assigned to several schools. They may be bilingual, but their benefits are limited when speaking to lower level ESOL students who do not share the same primary language. When watching both students and ESOL

counselors, they seem to struggle with communicating. Perhaps ESOL counselors should counsel students who share the same native language. Certainly, this breaks down communication barriers and increases understanding. Metzger (1992) writes, "There is nothing more lonely than to discover that one has, despite all one's efforts, only been talking with or about oneself" (pp. 67-68). Is that what the parachute students feel and experience?

In conclusion, bringing a little bit of home to the parachute students may assist the parachute students to feel at home in the American classroom. If anything, the message that educators may be sending to them is that they care. That message can be just as important as the curriculum that teachers are trying to teach.

An Ending to a Beginning

What we call a beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning
And the end is where we start from…..

We shall not cease the exploration
And the end of our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And to know the place for the first time.
(Elliot, 1943, pp. 38-39)

As I bring this research endeavor to a close, I realize that this journey is just the beginning. This study of the parachute students' lived experiences has opened new paths to explore and new questions to ponder. Questions opened up have and continue to broaden the search for understanding of the parachute students' experiences.

I understand that there is much more to learn and study about the parachute students' experiences. This study has been about more than just their journey to the States; it has been about the parachute students' struggle to find a place called home. Say

(1999) writes, “Home is not a place or a building that is ready-made and waiting for you…. You have to make it yourself” (p. 30). The parachute students looked for a place of belonging, a place of love, that for some, was in front of them without even knowing it. For others, this place has and always will be, their original home. Their journey to this discovery, this homecoming or homesteading, has been difficult, but rewarding. Every one of my participants said that this journey has been worth the trip. As Ballerina shares, “We are better from this experience.”

From this dissertation, it is my hope that educators will be able to assist ESOL students better. This dissertation was written to interpret and describe the parachute students’ experiences, but equally important, to create strategies and opportunities to promote positive change pedagogically. In this Chapter, I have made several suggestions involving policy and curriculum changes. Basically, these recommendations were made to increase understanding and learning for both parachute students and for students in general. As I look at the parachute students in a different light, I hope that educators look at the parachute students and other ESOL students with compassion and understanding, seeing their experiences as a wonderful opportunity to explore diversity.

For both the parachute students and myself, our lives are an incomplete project (Greene cited in Ayers & Miller, 1998). As Wei shares, “This is an ever-changing process. It will be interesting what we will be like ten years from now.” It is just the beginning for the parachute students. As they have faced difficulties in the past, may they face other opportunities for growth that lead them to new horizons of understanding. And I can accompany them on their future journeys, watching them grow and mature from

their experiences, and in the process, making better tomorrows for future parachute students.

I end this journey with one of my mom's favorite poems. This poem was written on her funeral card. In hindsight, I realize that she is the first parachute student I ever met. Perhaps she loved this poem because of her experiences coming to the States. My mother's journey and the journey of other parachute students had many difficult roads to walk and bridges to cross. Within their adversity and struggle, they came to know themselves better, rising to new levels of perseverance, and creating new beginnings of discovery and home. I leave you with this poem and its words of wisdom.

May You Have

Enough happiness to keep you sweet,
Enough trials to keep you strong,
Enough sorrow to keep you human,
Enough hope to keep you happy,
Enough failure to keep you humble,
Enough success to keep you eager
Enough friends to give you comfort
Enough wealth to meet your needs,
Enough enthusiasm to look forward,
Enough faith to banish depression,
Enough determination to make each day better than yesterday.
Author Unknown

APPENDIX A

AN INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Title of Research Study: The Lived Experience of Taiwanese Parachute Students

You are invited to participate in a research study that will explore the lived experiences of being a Taiwanese parachute student. According to the Taiwanese government, a Taiwanese parachute student is a student between the grades of kindergarten through twelve, who travel overseas to study. This study is being conducted by Benjamin T. OuYang, a doctoral student in the Department of Education, Policy, Planning, and Leadership at the University of Maryland at College Park, MD.

The purpose of this study is to explore the nature of the experience of being a Taiwanese parachute student in the States. This research is qualitative in design. It is a search for the underlying meaning of the lived experiences of Taiwanese parachute students.

Your participation will entail sharing your experiences coming to the States through private conversations with the researcher. Each conversation will be tape recorded to preserve the integrity and completeness of your experiences as they are shared. The tape recordings will then be transcribed into written form, so that underlying themes might be identified and explored. All conversations, tape recordings, and written transcripts will be held in strictest confidence. Your identity, and that of any family members, will remain anonymous. After this study is complete, the tapes will be destroyed.

As a participant in this study you will be agreeing to meet with the researcher on three different occasions during the next twelve months. Each meeting will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Meeting times will be arranged at a time and place that is mutually agreed upon by participant and researcher. In turn, the researcher will be sharing his interpretations of the themes that emerge from your shared dialogue with the participants.

By sharing your insights and experience in this research study you will be contributing to a more complete understanding of the parachute student experience. If you decide to participate in this study, please sign the required consent form on the following page. If you have any questions, please contact me at the below listed phone number or email address. Thank you.

Benjamin T. OuYang
Telephone (301) 890-9785
Email: Benjamin_Ouyang@fc.mcps.k12.md.us

Dr. Francine Hultgren, Advisor
University of Maryland
Telephone (301) 405-4562

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH STUDY

1. I have discussed the nature of this research study with the researcher, Benjamin T. OuYang, and I understand that we will be discussing my experience of being a Taiwanese parachute student.

2. I agree to having my conversations with Benjamin T. OuYang tape recorded and transcribed for the purposes of this study.

3. I understand that my identity, and that of my family members, will remain anonymous.

4. I understand that I will be permitted to read the researcher's interpretations of themes.

5. I understand that the time demands of this research study will require meeting with the researcher on three different occasions during the next year, for periods of forty-five to sixty minutes each.

6. I understand that my participation is purely voluntary, and that I may ask questions or withdraw from this study at any time without any penalty.

Participant's Signature Date

Parent Signature Date

Researcher's Signature Date

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