

**THE MEANING OF RELATIONSHIPS FOR STUDENT AGENCY IN
SOKA EDUCATION: EXPLORING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES AND APPLICATION
OF DAISAKU IKEDA'S VALUE-CREATING PHILOSOPHY
THROUGH NARRATIVE INQUIRY**

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Julie Nagashima, PhD

University of Pittsburgh, 2016

This dissertation examines a pedagogy called Soka education that was founded in early 20th century Japan. Specifically, this dissertation offers an empirical and conceptual study that examines the application of Soka education in present day. After examining the historical and political context of Soka education, I explicate on Ikeda's (1928 -) interpretations of Makiguchi's (1871-1944) Soka pedagogy and formulate a conceptual framework based on Ikeda's philosophy of education. This study uses narrative inquiry as method of research to examine the lived-experiences of four graduates who have attended Ikeda's Soka schools and who have become teachers. The stories, represented in biographical narrative vignettes, focus on the graduates' experiences when they were students at the Soka schools and their experiences as teachers. This dissertation theorizes from the narratives and shows how students developed an epistemological agency. Students graduated with a strong sense of self and commitment to contribute to society. The narratives also reveal that graduates experienced a prepared environment at the Soka schools that included upperclassmen and underclassmen bonding,

strong peer relationships, mentor and disciple relationship, teachers' encouragement and support, school mottos, after school activities, school songs embedded with a distinct Soka value, and reading the founder's speeches and messages. This environment formed a safe space where students willingly participated in a culturally specific phenomenon including persevering under any circumstance and aiming to live a contributive life. The environment was permeated with an ethos, specifically Ikeda's philosophy of education, that emphasized a culture of care that was passed down and instilled through relationships. The graduates' current classroom experiences reveal a sharp contrast between what their students experience and what the graduates experienced at the Soka schools. This difference further motivated the graduates to pass on the ethos they embraced at the Soka schools. Although the graduates experienced Ikeda's philosophy through various relationships at the school, they valued the one-to-one teacher and student relationship as the underlying factor by which they can instill this ethos to their students. After a thorough discussion of the findings identified from the autobiographical narrative vignettes, implications are offered for future research, theory, and educational practice.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROLOGUE

The two years I spent at Soka University of Japan (SUJ) was more than enough time for me to become fond of the lived-experience of Soka education. This educational experience was a sharp contrast to my prior K-12 schooling experience in the U.S. Born in New York to Japanese immigrants, my siblings and I struggled to adapt to the U.S. culture. We spoke in Japanese and lived in a Japanese cultural setting at home while learning English and the American culture at school. Due to my father's job opportunities, we frequently moved from one place to another, making an already difficult situation more complicated. We lacked the social capital to navigate our way through the school system. I had a tough time making friends or feeling a part of any community, but the one safe place where I felt accepted was at home with my family.

I think my family was the one factor that kept me balanced in the midst of my challenging situation at school. Though deeply appreciative for my family, I was also desperately seeking for a sense of belonging and a sense of identity outside of home and amongst my peers. My initial interest in studying abroad and attending a Japanese university, located in the outskirts of Tokyo, was due to my curiosity in what Soka education had to offer; the other reason being a desire to experience and live in the country of my ancestral background. The opportunity to live in Japan was a chance to find what I thought was missing and lacking in my life.

The desire for a sense of belonging was not offered simply by moving to Japan. Ironically, I went through a similar experience. My classmates back home told me I was too Asian or Japanese. When I moved to Japan, my Japanese classmates told me I was too American. At the time, I felt lost with no grounding for my sense of identity. However, at SUJ, I was surrounded by a community consisting of foreign students, Japanese students, and staff and faculty. In the dorms, I lived in a single-sex dormitory consisting of foreign students from around the world with diverse ethnic backgrounds and culture. SUJ provided an environment that allowed us, both in school and outside of school, to interact, dialogue, develop friendships, and learn from each other. The school created a safe and caring environment where I felt comfortable to be vulnerable and open. Living and learning together with people from diverse backgrounds challenged me to expand my perspectives. Moreover, this environment challenged me to develop meaningful and value-creative relationships. For the first time in my life, the unique setting forced me to step outside of my comfort zone to rethink about my preconceived views and beliefs I had about myself, others, and society.

After attending two years at SUJ, I decided to apply to Soka University of America (SUA), a newly founded four-year liberal arts college and sister school to SUJ. The experience at SUA was similar to SUJ, but magnified. The founder, administrators, staff and faculty constantly reminded us of their expectation that we were all going to become global citizens. At SUA, I felt valued and developed a sense of responsibility. I no longer doubted myself and believed that I can make my own unique contribution to the world. As a minority who struggled to get through the school systems in the United States, attending two Soka affiliated universities and experiencing Soka education was a powerful experience that empowered me and fostered a sense of agency. After six years of receiving Soka education, I graduated having a strong sense

of self and commitment to live a contributive life. Specifically, I developed a desire to contribute in the field of education, the area I struggled most. I was determined to attend graduate school to develop the necessary skills and tools to make this educational philosophy more available and accessible so that more young people can feel a sense of agency and connection to their world. This dissertation was my personal journey into exploring and learning about Soka education that fosters students to feel empowered and committed to living a contributive life.

1.2 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Pedagogy of Soka education (value-creating pedagogy) was first theorized in 1930 by a Japanese educator Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871-1944). While the term and idea Soka education has been around since the 1930s, Makiguchi was never able to establish schools based on his theory. Actual Soka schools started a couple decades later in 1968 by Daisaku Ikeda (1928 -). In 1968, Ikeda founded the first Soka junior and senior high schools in Tokyo. Following that, Ikeda founded Soka kindergartens in Brazil, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, and South Korea; Soka elementary schools in Brazil and Japan; a Soka women's college in Japan; and Soka Universities, both undergraduate and graduate, in Japan and the United States. According to Ikeda (2011b), Soka education's unique characteristic consists of three qualities: the fostering and development of human potential, fostering of the human soul and spirit, and, fostering of global citizens (p. 119).

In recent years, Soka education has attracted attention in English-speaking academia (e.g., Bethel, 1973; Garrison, 2010; Gebert, 2009, 2013; Gebert & Joffee, 2007; Goulah, 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2012; 2013a, 2013b, 2015; Goulah & Gebert, 2009; Goulah & Ito, 2012; Ikegami

& Agbenyega, 2014; Inukai, 2013; Ito, 2009; Joffe, Goulah, & Gebert, 2009, Goulah & Urbain, 2013, Kumagai, 2000, Kinokuniya, 2006, Makiguchi, 1898/2013; Nagashima; 2012; Saito, 2010; Sharma, 2008, 2015; Urbain, 2010). Various scholars both internationally and domestically are studying and publishing on Makiguchi's philosophy, Ikeda's philosophy, and Soka education in general. However, most research is limited to theoretical and comparative studies. Little empirical research exists (e.g., Goulah 2009, 2012; Nagashima, 2012; Ikegami, 2014), perhaps because Soka education has only recently surfaced in mainstream academia, and because of its short history. More importantly, Soka education does not provide any standardized blueprint or set curriculum. In fact, Soka education is not a fixed or defined term. Similar to Dewey's (1938/1955) notion of warranted assertability that knowledge is never fixed but instead evolving, Makiguchi never provides a clear definition on Soka education. Instead, he seems to believe in and have a strong appreciation for the continuing and ongoing process of the term Soka education. This might be the reasoning behind his intent to write about Soka education from a pedagogical perspective rather than on Soka education as a whole (Saito, 2010). According to Saito (2010), Makiguchi rarely uses the term Soka education and sticks to using the term Soka pedagogy. As a result, in his book, he focuses mainly on explicating the pedagogy of Soka education.

1.3 RESEARCH PUZZLE

Through empirical research, I have explored and added to the growing literature on Soka education and examined Daisaku Ikeda's notion and application of Makiguchi's value-creating pedagogy. In order to understand Soka education, I examined its application through the lived

experiences of its graduates. In this study, I intend to engage the reader to explore alongside the participants and me to learn about Soka education and rethink ways in which people relate to others.

Here, I use the term research puzzles (Clandinin 2013), rather than research questions to represent the “particular wonder” and phenomenon that is under study (p. 42). This study does not intend to provide any definitive answer or solution as a research question might require; instead this study uses research puzzles to capture and examine a phenomenon that is ongoing (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Clandinin expresses this experience in the following way: “We begin in the midst, and end in the midst, of experience” (p. 43). My research puzzles are:

1. What are the current meanings teachers assign to the lived social and cultural experiences during their time at the Soka schools?
2. What are the current lived experiences of these teachers in terms of their relationships with their students in the classroom?
3. In what ways, if any, did the situated social conditions at the Soka schools provide a space for them to make meaning and shape their lives as educators?
4. How do their present conditions shape their understandings about Soka schools and Soka education?

In this dissertation, I aim to capture the phenomenon under study to present to the reader and demonstrate how the environment and culture of Soka schools, or what forms the culture and notion Soka education, is grounded on relationality. My research examines the various relations that form and promote Ikeda’s concepts of human education and the ways these relations contribute to the students’ education and development at the Soka schools as well as in their adult life as teachers.

Using narrative inquiry, I analyze relationships as a prominent theme that resurfaces throughout the interviews with my participants. Because Ikeda argues that teacher-student relationships are the key to Soka education, the strong interactions and connections that participants had at the Soka schools, whether with their founder, teacher, or peers, seemed to be the defining characteristic of their experience in the schools.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE – PERSONAL, PRACTICAL, CONCEPTUAL, AND SOCIAL JUSTIFICATIONS

I use Clandinin's (2013) outline of justifications which include the personal, practical and social justifications to attend to the significance of this research. Specifically, to address the "so what" and "who cares" questions. In addition to Clandinin's three-part justification, I also add a conceptual justification here because there is also an important contribution to philosophical work that is suggested in this dissertation. I adopted Clandinin's (2013) suggestion of beginning my dissertation with my own personal narrative. However, this is not an extensive narrative that is part of my narrative analysis of the dissertation. Instead, I add a shortened version of my lived experience in the beginning to share to the reader my reasoning behind my interest in exploring this educational philosophy. Because I experienced Soka education and came to embody the mission statement of committing to living a contributive life, I want to study the ethos behind this philosophy that fosters students into becoming contributive individuals and hope to make this available for more students who would benefit from this philosophy and educational environment.

In regards to the practical justification, this dissertation is one of the few studies on Soka education that is in anyway empirical. I hope that by sharing my empirical research findings, I can introduce an Eastern philosophy of education, specifically Soka education, to the Western (predominantly English-speaking) scholarly community and offer possibilities for why it might benefit students and school environments. For conceptual justification, I believe this study can provide educators and the general public a bridge toward the relational/non-dualistic perspectives in education that can create more awareness for and efforts toward a relational standpoint.

From a social justification outlook, a relational perspective with a transactional stance and caring reasoning as guiding view have the potential to provide the basis for challenging the social concerns in schools today. I suggest that this relational stance might provide practical implications to challenge and prevent issues such as suicide, bullying, violence, corporal punishment, social withdrawal, and absenteeism that cloud and devastate schools in Japan today, and which also mirrors issues in the United States. Held (2006) and Noddings (1984) already argue for this point from an ethic of care perspective. In this research, I also introduce my own narrative form of representation. In most cases of narrative inquiry research that studies teachers in school settings, researchers examine the current narratives that participants experience and consider them teacher knowledge. However, in my study, I define teacher knowledge as not only the experiences collected in their current context, but, also the experiences they had as students. Therefore, my research includes the meanings and cultural contexts of the participants' Soka school experiences as students, and examines how they might be meaningful to their current experiences as teachers. I hope to add to existing teacher knowledge literature with my additional meaning and add to narrative inquiry literature with my particular narrative form of representation.

Furthermore, for those who study Soka education, I hope that my research provides a map of new approaches and ways of seeing Soka education both theoretically and methodologically. From a theoretical perspective, I hope to demonstrate how Thayer-Bacon's relational epistemology outlook provides the closest Western perspective to understanding Ikeda's human education outlook to Western and English-speaking academia. Thayer-Bacon's lens also shows how Daisaku Ikeda's philosophy of education is a perfect marriage with lived experiences and life narratives. From a methodological perspective, I hope to encourage narrative inquiry for those who plan to study Soka education by demonstrating how narrative inquiry is an appropriate and relevant method of research that explores, identifies, and brings to focus the culture, meanings, and ethos that is flourishing in the Soka schools that can only be evoked through stories.

1.5 OUTLINE FOR DISSERTATION

My dissertation is presented in seven chapters. After this introductory chapter, I give historical and political context of Soka education and its growth until present day in chapter two. I introduce the founder of Soka education, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, and his successors, Josei Toda and Daisaku Ikeda. In chapter three, I present a conceptual framework of Ikeda's philosophy of education, a contemporary interpretation of Makiguchi's Soka pedagogy. I analyze Daisaku Ikeda's conceptual framework and his definition of human education. Character development, or more specifically, the fostering of global citizens and promotion of human revolution, forms the underlying framework for human education. Further analysis of the two concepts shows that to become a global citizen means to undergo human revolution. The process or method of

accomplishing either requires engagement and a transactional relation with the other. In school settings, this translates to teacher and student relationships.

Chapter four presents a two-part conceptual framework that first identifies and explicates my epistemological viewpoint, then examines narrative ways of knowing and narrative inquiry. I, then, explain how I conducted my research using narrative inquiry. I introduce my own narrative presentation that I identify as biographical narrative vignette. In chapter five, I introduce four teachers, Fujita, Tanabe, Miyata, and Suzuki, and their biographical narrative vignettes followed by an analysis of their narrative stories. Each participant's stories include short vignettes of their experience as former students of Soka schools and their current experience as teachers in the classroom. I also include direct quotes of their voices to better illustrate their experiences.

In chapter six, I revisit the research puzzles I presented in chapter one and give an overall analysis and discussion based on the narrative. Using the research puzzles as my guide, my work theorizes from the narratives presented. For research puzzle one, I identified threads that were meaningful during their Soka school experience that weave through time and place and echo with the other narratives. These threads, which mirror Ikeda's philosophy, are human revolution, value of relationships, and respect for all life. The threads missing in some of the narratives are the concept of global citizenship and an emphasis on knowledge acquisition. Research puzzle two recognizes the powerful stories of teacher and student relationships but also the mentally exhausting aspects that come with the efforts to foster relationships. Despite the circumstances, the graduates are willing to improve their situations and overcome their struggles. As a result, the graduates demonstrate through their narratives how they use their experience to shape the context of their current teaching practice. For research puzzle three, I describe the distinct social

and cultural environments that cultivate a Soka experience for the students. These social and cultural environments are: upperclassmen and underclassmen bonding, strong peer relationships, teachers' encouragement and support, embracing school mottos, after school activities, singing school songs that were embedded with a distinct Soka value, and reading the founder's speeches and messages. I entered this research with the assumption that teacher and student relationships would be the underlying ethos surrounding Soka education. However, the narratives revealed that when the respondents were students, Ikeda's philosophy or ethos permeated the whole school environment and it was shared through various relationships. However, when the graduates became teachers, the non-Soka schools did not have a culture of care. Thus, the teacher and student relationship became essential for passing down Ikeda's philosophy.

I argue that these social and cultural environments cultivate a prepared environment (drawing from Montessori's [2007/2010] definition), an organic but also intentional and safe space where students felt safe to embrace the ethos that was embedded in the Soka schools. This meant unreservedly exploring their vulnerabilities, expressing their ideas without fear of judgment, developing a strong inner self, and learning how to respect and care for one another. This epistemological agency evoked within the graduates a commitment to contribute to society. Thus, the narratives revealed that this ethos is a culture of care. The graduates also found their current school environments to be a sharp contrast to the lived-experiences that they had at the Soka schools. This alarming difference further shaped their understanding and need for sharing with their students the cultural ethos that they learned at the Soka schools. Finally, in chapter seven, I conclude this dissertation by providing reflections and implications for future research, theory, and educational practice.

2.0 INTRODUCTION TO SOKA EDUCATION

In this chapter, I examine the historical, political, and social background behind Tsunesaburo Makiguchi's (1871-1944) life and his philosophy of education. Makiguchi's focus and concern was always on learners and their needs. His philosophy of education and his theory about Soka education is an ethos that highlights how to live as human beings and live in society with others. In this chapter, I thoroughly analyze Makiguchi's value-creating pedagogy from a teaching-practical viewpoint, as well as from a relational-theoretical viewpoint. I then follow Makiguchi's life, specifically his encounter with his disciple Josei Toda (1900-1958) and his publication activities up until his imprisonment and death, in order to provide the situated and contextual background behind the development of Soka education. Lastly, I explore the growth and expansion of Makiguchi's educational theory through Daisaku Ikeda's (1928-) own interpretations and application of Soka education in a modern-day context. Specifically, I am focusing on Ikeda's interpretation and his use of the concept *ningen kyoiku* (人間教育) or "human education" as Goulah and Gebert (2009) identify in English, to describe Soka education.

2.1 THE FOUNDING OF SOKA EDUCATION

Soka education was first theorized in 1930 by a Japanese educator Tsunesaburo Makiguchi. Makiguchi was a teacher, a member of the Board of Education of Japan, a principal of five schools, and an editor of numerous journals. He also worked under the Ministry of Education of Japan for almost three years (1910-1912), editing geography textbooks for public elementary schools across the country. Extensive scholarship on Makiguchi, his educational philosophy, and the historical context in which he lived has recently emerged in the field (e.g., Bethel, 1973, 1989, Furukawa, 2005; Gebert, 2009; 2013; Gebert & Joffee, 2007; Goulah, 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2013a, 2013b, 2015; Goulah & Gebert, 2009; Hatano, 2013; He, 2013, 2016; Inukai, 2013; Ikegami & Agbenyega, 2014; Ito, 2009, 2010; Kinokuniya, 2006; Kumagai, 1971, 1978/2008; Makiguchi, 1898/2013, 1936/2015; Makiguchi, 2002; Miyata, 2000; Saito, 2010; Sharma, 2008, 2015).

Makiguchi's educational philosophy is rooted in his genuine interest and concern for the well-being of each learner. To understand his philosophy requires an appreciation of the historical and political context from which he developed his value-creating pedagogy. During the late 1800s, the education system in Japan depended on rote memorization and what Freire (1970) would refer to as a banking system of education. The purpose of education was solely the transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the student (Anderson, 1975). Educators also randomly introduced and incorporated multiple Western pedagogies into the classrooms, which provided no coherent association between them and the daily lives of the students (Bethel, 1973). Teachers would "accept without analysis and understanding whatever educational ideas happened to be popular in a given period" (Bethel, 1973, p. 29). In a school newsletter *Shirokane*, which Makiguchi started publishing when he was a principal, Makiguchi critiques the

education system that centered on rote memorization and transmission of knowledge: “Education up until this point focused on teaching information that would be useful when students became adults and it aimed at preparing students to become adults. But, nothing was useful or relevant for the students’ current life” (in Makiguchi, 1981-1988, Vol. 8, p. 320). Rather than adults meeting the students’ needs, children were adjusting to the adults’ needs. Accordingly, Makiguchi argues, “Real education is teaching in accord with children’s daily life. To think that education is to prepare children with information necessary and useful for adulthood is a misunderstanding of education” (Vol. 8, p. 320). Education was far from Makiguchi’s view of valuing the individual learner. He argued that these trends in Japanese education neither nurture nor develop the potential of each child. For example, teaching geography for Makiguchi did not imply the standard rote memorization of locations. The study of geography meant learning how to live as human beings and learning how to live amongst others (Makiguchi, 1903/2002). In *Geography of Human Life*, Makiguchi highlights the notion of experience and exchange, indicating the significance of personal experience and interaction with others and the natural world:

The lofty insights, understandings, and principles of the universe are revealed in every tiny village or hamlet. The natural world can inspire us, foster our wisdom, and family, friends, neighbors, and the community groups can nurture us in so many ways. This immediate, direct experience available to us through the natural and social environments of our homelands can foster compassion, goodwill, friendship, kindness, sincerity, and humble hearts. (p. 21)

From interactions with others and our natural environment, Makiguchi argues that we learn to become human at the same time, we exist and live through relations with others. Through being in a relation with others and our environment, we learn the value of life and through various encounters we create new value and meaning.

2.1.1 Makiguchi's learner-centered view and conflict with the educational policies

After 1890, Japan experienced a strong nationalistic and militaristic period. Education became the means by which citizens learned to devote and sacrifice their lives for the emperor (Anderson, 1975; Bethel, 1973; Kumagai, 2000; Kumagai, 1978/2008). Shinto religion, which was the emperor's belief, was also imposed upon the citizens. In contrast, Makiguchi argued for an education that focused on learners, their needs, and most importantly, their happiness. He viewed students as powerful agents with the ability to create their own values and meanings of and for life. He believed that education provided the tools for students to create such value.

The aim of education is not to transfer knowledge; it is to guide the learning process, to put the responsibility for learning into the student's own hands. It is not the piecemeal merchandizing of information; it is the provision of keys that will allow people to unlock the vault of knowledge on their own. It does not consist of pilfering the intellectual property amassed by others through no additional effort of one's own; it would rather place people on their own path of discovery and invention. The words have been resounding in the ears of educators like ourselves since the days of Comenius and Pestalozzi, but they have yet to be put into real practice. (Makiguchi, in Bethel, 1989, p. 168)

Makiguchi was a progressive educator who saw and thought ahead of his time. This poetic passage distinctively and daringly illustrates Makiguchi's philosophy of education. It describes what Makiguchi means by creating value in one's life. Knowledge acquisition itself, according to him, is not the primary aim or intention for education. Rather, he is focused on the needs and well-being of the students. For Makiguchi, education provides the tools for learners to experience and build their own learning process. Makiguchi's philosophy of education starts in the field where teachers and principals ask themselves what they can do to help the child in front of them live a fulfilling life (Ikeda, 2010b, p. 10; Makiguchi, 1981-1988, Vol. 4, p. 27; Kinokuniya, 2006). A couple of examples illustrate how he prioritizes the students above all. The first example occurred when he was a principal at his first school; it was a school that consisted

of many families who were struggling to live on a day-to-day basis (Kamagaya, 1978/2008). Many students could not afford the necessary stationery to study so Makiguchi negotiated with local stores, purchased stationery at a cheaper price, then resold them to the students for a more affordable price.

In another school, between 1920 and 1922, Makiguchi was a principal at Mikasa Elementary School. This school offered free education to students who could not afford to pay tuition. However, many students could not even afford to bring lunch and, as a result, could not focus well and engage in the classroom. Inspired by the Cincinnati Penny Lunch program, Makiguchi gathered donations from various individuals and created his own free lunch system for students from impoverished homes (Shiohara, 2011). The free lunch system was still rare during this time. Although, the free lunch system was created for underprivileged students, it later became available for all students.

From these two examples, we can examine one of Makiguchi's ideals put into practice. Because Makiguchi's focus and priority was on his students and their needs, we see how Makiguchi actively took initiative in both schools to resolve a situation that hindered students to engage fully in their learning. His actions demonstrate his value in caring for each individual learner, not just verbally or theoretically, but through example.

Makiguchi's dedication to prioritize students and their needs is also demonstrated in his refusal to offer preferential treatment to children from privileged backgrounds (Bethel, 1973; Kumagai, 1978/2008). His viewpoint caused friction between him and the parents from wealthy backgrounds as well as administrators who supported those customs. Although the parents who advocated for Makiguchi went on a strike, this clash eventually led to his removal from his position and transfer to another school (Kumagai, 1978/2008). Bethel (1973) argues that though

“Makiguchi was generally considered an effective teacher and educator by the administrative authorities, such disregard for nearly sacred aspects of Japanese culture” was the cause for his continuous conflict with authorities, teachers, and parents (p. 40). His focus and priority was always on his students. Ikeda (2006) argues, “The willingness to do whatever is needed, the clear understanding that teachers exist to help all children, without exception, to become happy – the pedagogy of value-creation was born from the spiritual light of compassion and love for humanity” (p. 14). Makiguchi’s unwavering spirit demonstrates his dedication to his learners and how serious he was toward his learner-centered values in education.

2.1.2 Formation of Soka education – happiness as an act of creating value

Makiguchi’s journey led him to Nichiren Buddhism at the age of 57 (Bethel, 1973; Kumagai, 1971; 1978/2008). He encountered and accepted Nichiren Buddhism because its philosophy emphasizes the agency and happiness of the individual. This Buddhist concept reflected a belief he had already owned. Makiguchi asserts that, practicing Nichiren Buddhism changed his almost 60 years of view on life. All of his worries about life disappeared along with his shyness. Instead, he was driven with a daring desire to carry out an educational reform as soon as possible (Makiguchi, 1981-1988, Vol. 8, p. 406). Thus, he enriched his theory of education by adopting the views of Nichiren Buddhism to his educational philosophy he was already practicing. He named this newly formed philosophy Soka education. In 1930, Makiguchi established a group called Soka Kyoiku Gakkai that consisted of educators that practiced Nichiren Buddhism. What first began as an organization involving just educators expanded into a world-renowned Buddhist organization.

From his own teaching experiences, studies, and observations, Makiguchi affirms that people's aim in life is happiness. For Makiguchi, happiness is not an abstract concept but one rich with meaning and context that involves the individual and society; happiness does not exist separate from society. From the perspective of a long-term and sustainable sense of happiness, one cannot experience happiness if his or her environment is suffering. Humans exist within a society and depend on their society. Therefore, happiness exists from the symbiotic coexistence with others (Makiguchi, 1981-1988, Vol. 5).

Furthermore, Makiguchi's (1981-1988, Vol. 5) understanding of happiness is found in the process when individuals create value for themselves and others. Makiguchi describes value in the form of three elements: beauty, gain, and good. He adopts the neo-Kantian perspective of value from the West, which includes beauty, truth, and good, and he reforms his own model of value by taking out the concept "truth" and replacing it with the concept "gain or benefit." From Makiguchi's perspective, value is created when a subject places value on an object. More specifically, value is developed in the "interaction between humans and their surroundings" (Gebert, 2009; Gebert & Joffe, 2007; Goulah, 2013a). Thus, values of beauty, gain, and good are formed from relationships. According to Makiguchi (1981-1988, Vol. 5), beauty is the value that is associated with the sensory response. It is connected with the emotional responses such as pleasure or displeasure, beauty or ugliness. Gain is value that is in relation to the individual's existence and affects individuals in ways such as loss or gain, or benefit or detriment. The third element is the value of good, which encompasses the social, a value that is good for not only the individual but which extends to the collective.

From the description of the three elements, beauty, gain, and good, Makiguchi argues that value is formed in the relationship between humans and their environment. For Makiguchi, the

more values we create of beauty, gain, and good, the more humans flourish to their fullest potential, benefiting both the self and society and allowing the individual to experience happiness. This process of “personal growth that benefits self and society,” is happiness (Goulah & Gerbert, 2009, p. 124). For this reason, Makiguchi sees the aim of education as the happiness of the learners. In Makiguchi’s mind, the purpose of education is not separate from people’s aim in life. Therefore, if people’s aim is happiness and if that means a value-creating life, then the purpose of education must be to cultivate students’ capacity to create value (Makiguchi, 1981-1988, Vol. 5).

Ikeda (2010b) summarizes his interpretation of what Makiguchi means by the notion of creating value in the following way:

Put simply, value creation is the capacity to find meaning, to enhance one’s own existence and to contribute to the well-being of others, under any circumstance. Makiguchi’s philosophy of value creation grew from insights into the inner workings of life that his study of Buddhism afforded him. (p. 112)

Makiguchi and Ikeda’s description of value demonstrates how value is a relational component. Examining this notion from Thayer-Bacon’s (2003) relational epistemology perspective, we develop our understanding of the world and we develop value in relation to others. Thus, contributing to the well-being of others is inseparable from developing value and understanding our world.

I examine and analyze Ikeda’s interpretation of creating value from two perspectives. The first comes from Makiguchi’s teaching-practical viewpoint and the second comes from Makiguchi’s relational-theoretical viewpoint. I later return to the latter point after examining Makiguchi’s teaching methods. From the perspective of the practical viewpoint, value-creating pedagogy means advocating for a learner-centered education focused on developing the tools so that every student can learn to fully interact with others and the community. He believes that the

“experience, knowledge, and the capacity to learn” are innate parts of each child (Soka Gakkai, n.d., para 3). From a practical point of view, Makiguchi aims for an educational environment that fosters the needs of the learners and provides the tools that are necessary for students to engage and participate in their learning, and engaging in society. In the next section, I examine how his learner-centered educational theory is applied into practice.

2.1.3 Formation of Soka education – Makiguchi’s teaching method

Makiguchi’s teaching method can be examined through his approach to teaching composition. Translated work of and scholarship on Makiguchi’s works on writing and composition have recently emerged (Gebert, 2013; Goulah 2013a, 2013b; Makiguchi, [1898]2013). Makiguchi comments that this teaching method became one of his starting points for conceptualizing and formulating his Soka education theory (Makiguchi, 1981 – 1988, Vol. 7, p. 410). Hence, in order to understand Makiguchi’s system of value-creating pedagogy, Ito (2010) argues that we must first examine how Makiguchi taught composition.

During Makiguchi’s time as a teacher, Japan was experiencing pronounced “disglossia” (Gebert, 2013, p.16). There was a huge gap between the written and spoken language and there was no textbook or any systemic way of teaching composition (Makiguchi, 1981-1988, Vol. 7). Makiguchi argues that if struggling students were asked which subject matter was most challenging, they would surely answer composition. And, if asked why, they would point out that the question and answer sessions in class were frustrating because teachers asked students to answer questions that were not yet taught in class. Furthermore, the only students who had the capacity to engage and answer those questions were usually the top two to three students (Makiguchi, 1981-1988, Vol.7, p. 289). The gap between students who did well and those who

did not would only widen. Makiguchi argues that such a teaching environment was the norm in Japan and even the Ministry of Education recognized the situation but had no solution to this problem.

Like many other teachers, Makiguchi at first began teaching composition by simply asking the students to write on a topic of their interest. Once the students wrote something, the teacher corrected the students' papers with a red pen. Makiguchi notes that this method was not what he learned in school as a student teacher but what he learned as a child during his own schooling days. Some of the talkative students wrote something, but most just spent their time chewing on their pencils (Makiguchi, 1981-1988, Vol. 7, pp. 410-411). Because teachers lacked the methods to teach the foundational basics of writing, many of them simply attempted to teach what seemed standard. Makiguchi pondered how he could make every child become interested in composition and how he could help students who did poorly on composition become more expressive (Kumagai, 1978/2008). With these two themes as his objective, he began to focus on the following points:

1. Is the writing subject the appropriate topic and choice?
2. Are the writing assignments organized in the appropriate order of difficulty?
3. Do we know the students well enough that we can choose a writing topic that relates to their daily life and what they are thinking or are we choosing topics based on what society believes students need?
4. Is there anything lacking in our own instruction?
5. Are there are any points that we lack or are we fully grasping the purpose of writing? (Makiguchi, 1981-1988, Vol. 7, p. 290)

In order for students to be interested and expressive in writing, Makiguchi affirms that students need to first understand the basic structures of language and grammar and how to use those structures (Makiguchi, 1981-1988, Vol. 7). Frustrated by the unproductive nature of the teaching method and the inability to assist students with the structures and functions of writing, Makiguchi developed his own teaching method, which he published in an educational journal (Makiguchi, 1898). Makiguchi was still a student-teacher at the time when he developed his three-step method. This process and experience of grappling with how every student can learn how to write became the starting point for his future work on Soka education.

From his desire to teach students how to write sentences, Makiguchi develops a three-step writing application method (Gebert, 2013; Goulah, 2013a, 2013b; Ito, 2010; Kumagai, 1978/2008; Makiguchi, 1981-1988, Vol. 7; Makiguchi [1898]2013, Shiohara, 2011). In this lesson, the teacher begins the first step by writing a couple of sentences about a river near the school as a model for the students. For step two, the students, under the teacher's guidance, begin to write about another river. This time, the river selected is a little bigger than the one before, but it is a river also located in their area (Ito, 2010; Shiohara, 2011). During this second step, the students work collaboratively with their teacher and practice how to apply the sentences from the teacher's example to their own sentences.

For the third and last step, the teacher asks the students to apply what they learned and write on their own about another assigned river in their area. At this point, the students begin to practice how to write the sentences without their teacher's help. After the third step, the teacher further assigns students to apply what they learned by writing about mountains in their area, and so forth. This method not only teaches students how to compose sentences, but also, while expanding the geographic scenery, guides students to think about and connect to their natural and

physical environment and community. This example demonstrates how the teacher guides students to learn how to compose sentences.

According to Kumagai (1978/2008), the three-step method produced visible results. Students who didn't pay attention began to have interest. They learned how to express their ideas into writing and became confident. Students struggling and bored during composition enjoyed Makiguchi's class. Makiguchi received high praise for his teaching method among his fellow classmates and teachers (Kumagai, 1978/2008, p. 30).

Kumagai (1978/2008) notes that Makiguchi also received criticism at one point when he was a principal introducing his teaching method to his teachers. The teachers were concerned that Makiguchi's teaching method would merely force-feed students who would lose the creativity and uniqueness of literature. However, Makiguchi argues that "not everyone will become a writer," but regardless of talent, "everyone needs to learn how to write" (Kumagai, 1978/2008, p. 70). Therefore, Makiguchi's purpose was on how efficiently he could ensure that every child will learn how to write using a scientific approach. Makiguchi's concern for efficiency and effectiveness also extended to ensuring the appropriate structure and organization of writing so that students know how to express their ideas. In Japanese language, writing consists of a combination of hiragana, katakana, and kanji characters. There are 48 characters in hiragana, another 48 characters in katakana, and about 50,000 kanji characters in the Japanese dictionary, and the Ministry of Education (2010) identifies approximately 2136 kanji as commonly used characters. Forming a sentence in Japanese requires not only knowledge of grammar but also mastering the various combinations of hiragana, katakana, and kanji characters. Due to the lack of an organized method of instruction, students were frequently tied up with learning the various characters and never reached the point of developing ideas and

organizing them into writing. As a result, the students had difficulty grasping the whole picture or meaning of composition. Makiguchi felt the need for a clear and visible instructional method that could help students compose writing that formed and expressed ideas. Thus, he named the steps in basic form of instruction as the following: first, instruction begins with the teacher asking the students to develop their ideas. Then, students put those ideas into words. Next, students put those ideas in writing. Afterwards, the teacher asks the students to read aloud what they wrote. Finally, the teacher provides the appropriate kanji to include in their writing (Makiguchi, 1981-1988, Vol. 7, p. 313). This method offers a practical road map for students to express and compose ideas.

Makiguchi further identifies three stages in the writing process. The process begins with the “eliciting of ideas,” then the “ordering and structuring of ideas,” and finally the “elaborating and expanding of sentences” (Makiguchi, 1981-1988, Vol. 7, p. 314). As mentioned earlier, in order to know how to write and express ideas, Makiguchi claims that the students need to recognize and understand these basic steps first.

To prepare for the first stage, the teacher’s role is to guide the students through the *expressing of ideas* by “soliciting ideas from the students” (Gebert, 2013, p. 15). The teacher asks a set of questions regarding a certain subject. The students answer the questions and write the answers they come up with on the board. The sentences formed are in the students’ natural spoken language. Once the students have written all the simple sentences on the board, the teacher then prepares for the second stage – *ordering and structuring of ideas* – and asks the students to discuss with each other and figure out the appropriate order in which the sentences should go. When the second task is completed, the teacher sets the third stage – *elaborating and expanding of sentences* – and provides the students with samples of formal writings on the same

subject and in the same format. The students are able to compare and replace their own spoken language form with the formal written language. By engaging in this first-hand experience and activity, students are able to relate to the once almost foreign-looking written language, and recognize the functions and structures of how writing takes place.

2.1.4 Analysis of Makiguchi's teaching method

The specific and strategic teaching method that Makiguchi presents for teaching composition highlights at least four objectives. The first is the obvious teaching of subject-matter-composition. Second is the connection between teaching composition and literacy and language. Gebert (2013) argues that, for Makaguchi, language is an important tool to communicate and engage with others. By learning how to organize and express ideas, students can learn a vital method for engaging with others. Teaching composition means fostering within the students the tools necessary for connecting to and being a part of a community. Therefore, Gebert (2013) explains that, in Makiguchi's mind, "teaching the structures of language was inseparable from teaching the structures of society" (p. 20). Third, while teaching composition, Makiguchi also included the study of geography and community studies within the curriculum. By encouraging students to think and write about their natural environment that surrounds their community, students can become aware of and feel connected to their local community. This opportunity to connect stimulates learners to take interest and develop care for others. This process encourages learners to develop qualities that I mentioned earlier regarding Ikeda's (2010b) notion of value-creation which are "capacity to find meaning, to enhance one's own existence, and contribute to the well-being of others" (p. 112).

Lastly, he aimed for an educational environment where students can bring out their creativity and uniqueness to the fullest. Makiguchi believes that students enter the classroom with already rich experiences, knowledge, and capacity to learn. Therefore, students only need the tools and skills to fully utilize their uniqueness and engage and enrich their lives with others. For Makiguchi, guiding and preparing the students toward this end is the teacher's role. In highlighting these four objectives, it is clear how Makiguchi's purpose of education is embedded within the teaching curriculum. From one subject-matter curriculum, Makiguchi expanded the educational experience for students. Not only did he provide students with tools to engage in their learning, but by doing so, he also provided students with tools to engage in society and in nature. This reflects his philosophy that education teaches learners how to live as human beings and how to coexist with others.

2.1.5 Makiguchi's relational-theoretical perspective

Now, reflecting back to Ikeda's summary of Makiguchi's notion of value creation, I shift our attention from the teaching-practical perspective to the relational-theoretical perspective. From the four objectives that I highlighted from Makiguchi's teaching method, we can observe the effect of Makiguchi's relationality weaving through the curriculum and aims. Makiguchi's purpose of education, his teaching methods, and his objectives all point back to relationality.

From a broader lens and framework, Makiguchi worked to foster an educational environment where learners can engage in their studies, and, furthermore, learn how to participate, interact, and engage with others. In both Makiguchi's and Ikeda's mind, learning how to be a part of the community and contributing to society leads to living value-creating and fulfilling lives. Value-creating happiness is borne out of sharing in people's joys and sufferings

in the local community, living together in unity and caring for the well-being of oneself and others (Makiguchi, 1981-1988, Vol. 5). As Ikeda (2010b) argues, for Makiguchi, “the most fundamental and central value is that of life itself...the fundamental criterion for value, in Makiguchi’s view, is whether something adds to or detracts from, advances or hinders, the human condition” (p. 127). For Makiguchi, our understanding of others and the world around us, the values and meanings in life, are born out of the relations we create with others. Thus, for Makiguchi, the purpose of education is to prepare students to learn how to interact, participate, and contribute to society. Makiguchi’s values and perspectives come from a relational ontology and relational epistemology.

2.1.6 Publication process and passing down of Makiguchi’s ideas

The name of Makaguchi’s theory emerged around February of 1930 from a conversation he had with Josei Toda (1900-1958), an educator and his disciple (Bethel, 1973; Kumagai, 1971, 1978/2008; Shiohara, 2008, 2011). Makiguchi met Toda when he was principal at the Nishimachi Primary School. Toda was a young teacher from Hokkaido struggling to find a job. Makiguchi hired Toda to work at his school and this encounter formed a life long mentor and disciple relationship. Kumagai (1978/2008) suggests that it was perhaps Toda’s similar upbringing that drew Makiguchi to connect with Toda. When Makiguchi transferred to Mikasa primary school, Toda followed Makiguchi and supported him with his educational ideas. When Makiguchi converted to Nichiren Buddhism, Toda also followed. Thus, from his thorough understanding of Makiguchi and his philosophy, Toda suggested during a conversation one evening, that Makiguchi name his educational theory Soka education. Because Makiguchi’s theory centers on the notion of creating value, they took So (創) from the Chinese character

Souzou (創造 creating) and Ka (価) from the Chinese character Kachi (価値 value) to name his pedagogy Soka pedagogy (創価教育学). From then on, Makiguchi's theory became known as Soka education, literally meaning value-creating pedagogy in Japanese.

Makiguchi's strong passion for education resulted in his culminating work, *Soka Kyoikugaku Taikei* (The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy; Makiguchi, 1981-1988, Vols. 4 & 5), and, along with a group of educators, he established the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (Society for Value Creating Education). Josei Toda, who co-founded Soka Kyoiku Gakkai, supported Makiguchi in publishing *The System of Value-Creating (Soka) Pedagogy*. At first, Makiguchi's ideas and theories were all written on various pieces of notepaper. Toda compiled, organized, and edited Makiguchi's ideas for publication. In Toda's biographical account, he shares how he spent time spreading all of Makiguchi's notes across his room as he organized the notes one by one. These compiled notes became a draft manuscript, which Makiguchi then edited and finalized for publication (Toda, in Shiohara, 2011). Makiguchi (in Bethel, 1973) also acknowledged Toda for his extensive support and notes that were it not for Toda, he could have never reached to publication (p. 41). Makiguchi was already 60 years old during his first publications of *The System of Soka Pedagogy*. To promote and support Makiguchi's publication, a Value-Creating Support Group was formed, which included leading figures of Japan. Makiguchi's book gained recognition in magazines and newspapers throughout Japan. His support and recognition was likely due to his previous published book, *Geography of Human Life* (1903/2002), and his work with the Ministry of Education.

Makiguchi originally intended to publish 12 volumes on Soka Kyoikugaku Taikei: four volumes providing an extensive examination of his educational theories and concepts and the other eight volumes focusing on practical applications. While developing his first four volumes,

he realized that he would need five volumes instead of four to complete his theoretical overview. Although Makiguchi managed to complete five manuscripts of his theoretical overview, he was only able to publish the first four and never finished publishing the fifth volume, nor the other eight volumes (Bethel, 1973; Furukawa, 2005).

There are various speculations as to why Makiguchi never went through with publishing his fifth manuscript that was already completed. His fourth publication was in 1934 and it was also around that time when he established the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai in 1930. Bethel (1973) suggests that perhaps his energy and attention went from publications to activities in his newly formed organization. On the other hand, Shiohara (2008) argues that Makiguchi may have intentionally decided to postpone publication based on his critical observation and understanding of Japan's complex political structures and movements at the time. During this period, Japan used education as a means to entice nationalism and foster citizens in support of war. People's philosophy and value on life and happiness was based on loyalty to the country and its emperor. In contrast, Makiguchi's progressive way of thinking and educational values was ahead of his time. If Makiguchi had completed his work, his philosophy of happiness and value-creation could have been misinterpreted or misused. While some recognize Makiguchi's unfinished works, Bethel (2000) also shares his concerns of the many people who do assume and "perceive value-creating education as a specific, clearly defined body of knowledge. They perceived value-creating education as a kind of magic formula...already completed and finished [and if applied], Makiguchi's formula would resolve all our educational and social problems" (p. 42). Instead, Bethel argues that Makiguchi was against "pronouncements of absolutes" and avoided "absolutist thinking and...one-track beliefs and attachments" (p. 43). However, as to why Makiguchi never completed his work, Shiohara (2006) states, "It would be more accurate to say

that Makiguchi's energies shifted from publication activities to one of enlightening each and every individual" (p.174). His imprisonment also made it difficult for Makiguchi to pursue publication. Shiohara suggests that Makiguchi may have entrusted the further pursuit of Soka education research to future researchers and scholars. Similarly, Saito (2010) makes an interesting discovery and argues that Makiguchi, in his book *"The System of Value-creating Pedagogy,"* only uses the term "Soka education" a total of five times, and, instead uses the term "Pedagogy of Soka education." Saito suggests that perhaps Makiguchi felt that he had thought and argued his theory of Soka education in his own way and, then entrusted his successors to create and define Soka education. In fact, Saito argues that by, "Simply memorizing information from one's predecessors or books is nothing more than a product of value-consumption." (p. 651). He differentiates value-creation from value-consumption by emphasizing the core of Soka, which is to create meaning. Thus, Saito believes each of us must continue to pursue and "create" Soka education. In many ways, the very essence of not having a concrete definition signifies the working definition of the term Soka.

Although Makiguchi never wrote in his book about creating specific schools for Soka, he envisioned creating a unified Soka school system from kindergarten through university level with scholarship systems so that all students have the opportunity to learn, regardless of their financial background (Shiohara, 2008). Makiguchi's consideration for underprivileged students came from his own personal experience of struggling to receive education. Though his aim was not achievable during his lifetime, Makiguchi entrusted this aim to his disciple Toda (Ikeda, 2006, p. 11).

In the early and mid 1900s, Japan tried to unify the country by enforcing citizens to worship and enshrine Shinto Talismans as a sign of loyalty and support to the government.

During this time, the Ministry of Education integrated emperor worshiping in public school education and issued pamphlets, which described the emperor as a living god (Ito, 2009). Makiguchi's strong conviction that each person has the freedom to his or her own beliefs went against the nationalistic and imperialistic views. For this reason, in his early seventies, Makiguchi was imprisoned as a thought criminal in 1943 on charges of violating the 1925 Peace Preservation Law (Bethel, 1973; Ito, 2009; Kumagai 1978/2008). Even when he was interrogated during his imprisonment, Makiguchi continued to express and clarify his ideas including his "assertion that the emperor was a common mortal" (Ito, 2009, p. 136). He died the following year due to malnutrition and old age (Ikeda, 2010b). However, Makiguchi's will and spirit never weakened; his educational proposal, which was both relevant and necessary for the time in which he lived, survived his passing.

2.2 DAISAKU IKEDA'S APPLICATION OF SOKA EDUCATION

After Makiguchi's passing, Toda became the second president of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai and later renamed the organization Soka Gakkai. By removing the word Kyoiku (Education), Toda officially established an inclusive lay Buddhist organization that invites participation from all people from different backgrounds, both educators and non-educators (Soka Gakkai International, 2016). He met with a young man, Daisaku Ikeda (1928 -) and began privately tutoring him while entrusting him with Makiguchi's philosophy of Soka education. Ikeda on numerous occasions recognizes Toda as his life mentor and comments that he received his education at "Toda University." He also states that most of his way of thinking, character, and who he is today he learned from Toda (Ikeda, 2010b). After Toda's passing in 1958, Ikeda

became the third president of the Soka Gakkai in May of 1960 and expanded the organization globally to more than 192 countries. Ikeda also actualized both Makiguchi's and Toda's aim of establishing the Soka schools. He founded the unified Soka schools from kindergarten through university in Japan and various Soka schools around the world.

All of the Soka schools are private and non-sectarian institutions. Ikeda (2011b) claims that Soka education consists of three unique qualities: the fostering and development of human potential, fostering of the human soul and spirit, and fostering of global citizens (p. 119). On the official website (Soka Gakuen, 2012), the Soka schools as a unified school system address three core aims in their mission statement, which include 1) lifelong happiness of learners through human education, 2) fostering of global citizens, and 3) fostering creativity in learners. The first aims to nurture learners who actively seek to contribute to the happiness of oneself and others. The schools attempt to achieve this aim through valuing each learner's character and uniqueness and cultivating their innate potential. I revisit this concept "human education" in the next section. The second aim seeks to foster global citizens through deepening the learners' understanding of diverse cultures and developing interest toward peace and the environment. The third aim seeks to foster individuals who can create the necessary values to contribute to society by developing deeper understanding of the relations and connections between nature, society, and humans. Furthermore, the third aim seeks to cultivate learners who can identify problems and have the wisdom and ability to solve those problems. The three qualities and three core aims highlight Ikeda's understanding of Soka education; they focus on and emphasize the learner's well-being and their connection to others.

2.2.1 Makiguchi's philosophy in current context

While the main elements of Makiguchi's Soka education are present in Ikeda's educational philosophy, Ikeda uses the term Soka education differently. As I mentioned earlier, Makiguchi only used the term Soka education five times in his publication *Soka Kyoikugaku Taikei* (Saito, 2010). Makiguchi's publications were addressed to teachers and focused on the pedagogy or how to teach Soka education. Ikeda, on the other hand, applied and actualized Soka education into practice based on his understanding and interpretation of the term Soka education. According to Goulah and Ito (2012) and Goulah and Urbain (2013), value-creating pedagogy, under Ikeda's application, "has become a spirit of educating, an ethos, or conceptual foundation of education rather than defined methodology" (Goulah & Urbain, 2013, p. 7). Furthermore, Ikeda's writings on education consider the application of value-creating education in our current educational context.

Current issues that concern Ikeda which are prevalent in Japanese schools today include bullying and its effect on students' social withdrawal, a rise in juvenile crime, an increase in disruptive behavior, a lack of discipline in the classroom, and an overall decline in academic achievement (Ikeda, 2010b). He suggests these factors describe a phenomenon he calls "flight from learning" (p. 77). In Ikeda's view, an overemphasis on rote memorization and an aggressive exam environment imposed on students has reduced student learning and reflects the failure of Japan's educational system to fulfill its purpose of providing "spiritual nourishment, which enables us to develop our creativity through learning from the wisdom of our predecessors and thus gain access to the common cultural assets that humankind conveys from generation to generation" (2010b, pp. 77-78). Here, Ikeda identifies spiritual nourishment, fostered from interaction, as a necessary component to *developing our creativity*. This means that in order to

develop our creativity, spiritual nourishment or interaction and connection with others is a key factor to Soka education. Thus, this concept of providing spiritual nourishment is more than a typical instructional learning or knowledge acquisition; it involves a relational component. Spiritual nourishment is the fostering of the human soul and spirit through interaction.

Ikeda's notion of spiritual nourishment is similar to Held (2006) and Noddings' (1984/2003, 2002, 2005, 2012) concept of caring. Ikeda (2012) suggests three points as the basis for a specific way and behavior that educators should follow: "1) to care for one person, 2) to listen to the troubles of one person, and, 3) to carry the struggles of one person" (p. 240). These points mirror Noddings' (1984/2003) caring theory which include caring, listening, and motivational displacement. Both Held and Noddings argue that in a relationship between student and teacher, when students feel cared for, which both describe as feeling attended to and listened to, they have the capacity to respond and reciprocate. Similarly, Ikeda argues that, "young people are keenly aware of how they are being evaluated. They can accept even severe criticism if they know it is fair and based on genuine care and concern, if it is meant as fuel for growth and improvement" (Wider & Ikeda, 2014, p. 162). He further adds, "students derive great security and self-confidence from the awareness that someone knows them well and appreciates them accurately" (p. 162). In a conversation with Lou Marinoff, he suggests that the "one-to-one, life-to-life interaction develops a sense of self-confidence and self-knowledge in children" (Marinoff & Ikeda, 2012, p. 158). Thus, this idea of spiritual nourishment, or caring interaction, builds motivation, competence, and confidence through human interactions.

These points remain consistent in many of his addresses and speeches. For example, in his speech, Ikeda (2010b) critically assesses the priorities that the Japanese government has placed historically on education; he states that schools' priority, prior to the war, was militarism,

and, post-war, economic prosperity. Education has always been used by the government as means to fulfill its needs: “A certain type of personality, not the full development of personality, has been sought, as if casting individuals from a uniform mold” (p. 84). However, the priority, according to Ikeda, must be on human beings. Like Makiguchi, Ikeda argues that education serves to foster the human being, or the whole child, and not just to fill empty vessels with knowledge; he argues that education must be more than a means to a specific end such as using education narrowly for the purpose of teaching learners what they need to know for a certain profession or a job.

Every argument or statement Ikeda makes is rooted in his concern for humanity. Ikeda’s priorities are clear and consistent – they are human-centered. Accordingly, Ikeda (2010b) proposes a paradigm shift from our traditional notion of *education for society’s sake* to one that builds “a society that serves the essential needs of education” (p. 70). In other words, when we change our mindset and transform our society into one that serves the needs of education, Ikeda believes education has a basis to support and provide spiritual nourishment: “Learning is the very purpose of human life, the primary factor in the development of personality, that which makes human beings truly human” (p. 84). For Ikeda, education is where learning and the fostering of human beings take place through caring human interactions.

2.2.2 Introduction to Ikeda’s human education concept

Ikeda’s human-centered value for education is described in his distinct languages. For example, Ikeda states that education should aim to foster human beings who will be humans throughout their lifetime (Ikeda, 1993, p. 458). He also uses language such as living, or being, or becoming “truly” or “fully” human (Ikeda, 2002, 2006; Marinoff & Ikeda, 2012; Wider & Ikeda, 2014).

While I am emphasizing the words “truly” and “fully” to make a point, these words are English words used in Ikeda’s translated texts. Thus, I am emphasizing these words to refer to the descriptive language that Ikeda uses in his way to describe humans. For example, in his dialogue with Marinoff, he states communication and interaction are what is needed “to live fully human lives” and what also “makes us fully human” (Marinoff & Ikeda, 2012, pp. 49-50). He uses the language again when he talks about education. Ikeda (2006) argues that, “Education is what makes us fully human...Education is the great enterprise of steadily and surely passing on the fullness of humanity from the past to the future” (p. 156). He also argues that the purpose of higher institutions is to “cultivate the fully realized individual” (p. 160). In the Japanese, not yet translated text, Ikeda (in Marinoff & Ikeda, 2011) refers to this notion of the “fully realized individual” as “*zentai ningen*” (全体人間) (pp. 279-280). This term “*zentai*” can be referred to as “whole” or “entire” or “full.” He then describes this “*zentai ningen*” as an individual with wisdom, creativity, knowledge, sincerity, responsibility, one who can take action for the happiness of others, and, lastly, who can courageously transform society from their respective fields (Marinoff & Ikeda, 2011, pp. 279-280). For Ikeda, there is a distinct and significant meaning to being human. The descriptive language reflects Ikeda’s human-based value and it also describes what he means by *ningen kyoiku* or human education.

While Makiguchi uses *Soka kyoikugaku* or value-creating pedagogy as his language to characterize his educational approach, Goulah’s bilingual-bicultural analysis of Ikeda’s writings indicates that he frequently uses the term *ningen kyoiku* [human education] more than the term Soka education (Goulah, 2010b, 2012; Goulah & Gebert, 2009; Goulah & Ito, 2012). According to Goulah and Gebert (2009), *ningen kyoiku* is a formula “to describe educational philosophy and practice that has developed on the basis of Makiguchi’s pedagogy” (p. 126).

In many of Ikeda's translated books, human education is translated as humanistic education, humane education or human-/people-centered education in English (Goulah & Gebert, 2009). However, Goulah and Gebert argue that the way Ikeda describes *ningen kyoiku* is not quite the same as the translated term humanistic or humane education. The translated term humanistic education alone only encompasses part of Ikeda's use of human education. Thus, Goulah and Gebert suggest that Ikeda's use of human education is a combination of all these terms rather than one or the other and introduces the term "human education" when describing *ningen kyoiku* in English. Goulah argues this slight but significant distinction provides a richer context to understanding Ikeda's notion of human education from the normative classification of *humanistic* education. In a later article, Goulah and Ito (Ito, 2008; Goulah 2010b; Goulah & Ito, 2012) enrich this distinction by highlighting the origin of human education. In keeping with Goulah's argument, I am adopting the term human education.

Through a systematic reading of Ikeda's earliest writings on education, Ito (2008) and Goulah (2010b, 2012; Goulah and Ito, 2012), traces Ikeda's use of *ningen kyoiku* ("human education" to his reading of the Swiss educator Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) and Pestalozzi's use of the German word *Menschenziehung*. Ito and Goulah contend that Pestalozzi's concept of *Menschenziehung* derives from the notion of home education with a mother watching over her child as the child develops and grows into a human being. Pestalozzi's democratic ideals on education emphasized the importance of bringing out the latent potential inherent in all learners. Ikeda adopts this term and deepens it further seeing all experiences, in and out of homes and schools, "as educational processes...that makes us fully human" (Goulah, 2012, p. 67). More specifically, Goulah and Ito (2012) argue that, "Ikeda revised and expanded

the notion of *ningen kyoiku* into a *principle, process, and goal* of becoming fully human in the truest sense (in and outside school)” (p. 62).

Here, I explicate what Ikeda means by *ningen kyoiku*. In his biographical narrative *The New Human Revolution* (2012), in the chapter titled Human Education, Ikeda argues that, “the purpose of education is not to create machines, but, rather, to create human beings...humans are the source from where all cultures are formed and shaped. Deep within each human life exists potential that is immeasurable” (p. 217). Therefore, Ikeda states that, “human education is to bring that potential out, to polish it, and to guide it toward its full capacity” (p. 217). The learner’s happiness and prosperity of society is an inseparable aspect of human education.

Ikeda (2007) describes the process of nurturing character as another component of human education (p.140). He refers to this notion of character as human wholeness; a self that embraces history and traditions and coexists with others (Ikeda, 2010b). He describes character as what is fostered in the day-to-day life from creating values of beauty, gain, and good through the interactions with oneself and the environment (Ikeda & Gu, 2012). Ikeda states that he often refers to and interchangeably uses the term Soka education as human education because of this focus on developing the character (Ikeda & Gu, 2012, p.311). He further argues that character development is polished and shaped through the intense interaction between human beings and their characteristics (Ikeda, & Gu, 2012), and more specifically, between the student and the teacher (Ikeda, 2007, p. 140). Ikeda (In Ikeda & Gu, 2012) also adds that machines can’t create human beings. Nor does a government initiative create humans. “Humans can only be polished and fostered from the human to human bond of confronting and interacting with one another” (p. 311).

Theoretically, Ikeda argues that human education is ideally fostering within individuals three balanced states of mind: “wisdom, emotional richness, and will power” (Ikeda, 2012, p. 258). By wisdom, he means the ability to understand, analyze, and process information; in short, the ability to think critically. By emotional richness, he means the ability to bring out various feelings such as joy, anger, passion, and compassion. By will power he refers to the solid internal belief that generates the decision-making ability and the springboard for pursuing goals. In other words, human education ideally nurtures the ability to critically think, the capacity to feel and express emotions, and the will that stimulates action; it fosters thinking, feeling, and doing. But for a well-balanced state of mind that Ikeda envisions, there are two necessary qualities one must work on—compassion and capacity for self-improvement. Having these qualities and a balanced state of mind provides the opportunity to richly interact and experience events in life to the fullest. Through this ideal balance, Ikeda (in Ikeda & Gu, 2012) argues that, “the aim of Soka education that professes to human education is to bring out the innate potential in each learner and foster the type of character with a strong life force who will/can continue to create value under any circumstance” (p. 312). Ikeda (2010b) further highlights human education in the following way:

I believe that education is what remains long after the content of each specific lesson we were taught has been forgotten. The essence of education is character formation, teaching young people how to live in society and encouraging them to think independently. Study is much more than simply absorbing existing knowledge and techniques, and the ability to memorize and reason is nothing compared to the wisdom, emotional richness and creativity that reside within every human being. (p. 150)

This passage clearly shows that Ikeda’s notion of the purpose of education, specifically nurturing young people’s character to become competent and compassionate individuals who engage fully in society, is consistent with Makiguchi’s notion of the purpose of education as described above.

Ikeda's perspective can also be examined in the school anthem at the Soka schools in Tokyo. Ikeda (2007) explains how one of the verses states, "For what purpose do we love people?" In contrast to the popular understanding that tends to be a self-centered notion of love, Ikeda considers love from a broader perspective. He argues that education should foster in students genuine care "to love people, to love the world, and to love peace" (Ikeda, 2007, p. 137). Goulah and Ito (2012) argue that Ikeda adopts Makiguchi's ideas of creating values of beauty, gain, and good, but, Ikeda's Soka education also "contains the spirit to foster individuals who create wisdom, courage, compassion, and other human virtues through dialogue, global citizenship, and 'human education' in the mentor-disciple relationship" (p. 61). Goulah (2010b) also argues that Ikeda's notion of human education is a shared vision with Makiguchi and Toda that focus on fostering contributive citizens through caring teacher-student interactions "whereby ordinary individuals are empowered to transform their beliefs and behavior and create value toward personal and social benefit" (p. 263). Thus, Goulah and Gebert (2009) describe this Soka education experience as Ikeda's commitment to an "epistemological empowerment" (p. 127).

2.3 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

Both Makiguchi and Ikeda value the happiness of the individual however, they both have their own unique take on this idea. Makiguchi was a teacher, principal, and educator before becoming the first president of the Soka Gakkai. As a result, Makiguchi's core philosophy stems from an educational perspective and expands to a worldly one. In contrast, Ikeda was the third president of Soka Gakkai before founding the Soka schools. Therefore, his philosophy stems from a worldly, humanistic perspective and focuses and values education because of his worldly

perspective. Though their backgrounds and experiences differ slightly, both seek the happiness of the learner and society. By making Makiguchi's philosophy applicable in present day context, Ikeda is, at the same time, expanding on and developing his own philosophy of Soka education. Ikeda's philosophy of education is born out of and is also culminated in Makiguchi's Soka pedagogy, which he describes as an education that aims to "foster people of character who continuously strive for the greatest good—that of peace—who are committed to protecting the sanctity of life and who are capable of creating value under even the most difficult circumstances" (Ikeda, 2010b, p. 127). By applying Makiguchi's philosophy to present day educational challenges, Ikeda is, at the same time, expanding on and developing his own philosophy of Soka education.

In this chapter, I introduced an Eastern pedagogy from the late 19th and early 20th century called Soka education. I examined the founder of Soka education, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi's life and educational values and the political and historical background surrounding him when he formed his value-creating pedagogy. Makiguchi's philosophy focuses on the happiness of the individual, which means learning how to live in society and engage with others. In the context of schooling, Makiguchi created a curriculum that provided students with the tools to learn how to engage in their studies and, furthermore, learn how to use those tools to fully interact in their communities. I examined how, following Makiguchi's death, Daisaku Ikeda applied his concept of Soka in the current context of education. For Ikeda, the lack of spiritual nourishment and relation between teacher and student and an overemphasis on rote-memorization and exams have created various issues challenging education today. For Ikeda, *ningen kyoiku* or human education is how we respond to the educational challenges in present day. In this paper, I take Goulah's term human education and argue that this term is a refined term that Ikeda uses interchangeably

with Makiguchi's concept of Soka education. I, then, explored what Ikeda means by human education. Ikeda describes human education as the fostering of three balanced states of mind; the capacity to think critically, feel emotions, and take action.

3.0 ANALYSIS OF IKEDA'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

In the previous chapter, I introduced two points that Ikeda asserts constitute human education. The first point is fostering and balancing the three states of mind, namely wisdom (the ability to think critically), emotional richness (the ability to feel emotions), and will power (the ability to take action). The second point is embracing the two qualities of compassion and the capacity for self-improvement. In this chapter, I unpack Ikeda's educational philosophy and what it means to be fully human. Specifically, I address his Buddhist perspective of dependent origination, which undergirds his view of life and its inherent dignity. I believe this perspective most informs his educational philosophy of global citizenship, human revolution, and the mentor-disciple relationship. Thus, I explicate these three concepts in this chapter to develop my conceptual framework that characterizes Ikeda's notion of Soka Education.

3.1 IKEDA'S PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

The significance of Buddhism lies both in the discovery of the Buddha nature in all beings and in the establishment of a practical method for bringing it out, so that human beings can derive maximum meaning from their lives. This reformation of the inner human world – what we in the Soka Gakkai International call human revolution – is especially relevant to modern civilization, which has long been trapped in a sort of spiritual quicksand. We can escape the quicksand by calling forth the supreme human potential available to each of us. Through examining life from the viewpoint of Buddhism, I believe we can grasp the true nature of the fundamental problems of existence and see for ourselves the way to solving them.

(Ikeda, 1988/2003, pp. 17-18)

According to Ikeda, there are three kinds of relationships that make us fully human: the individual and society, human beings and nature, and, body and spirit (Marinoff & Ikeda, 2011, 2012). He fears, however, that people are losing their sense of wholeness because of the disintegration of these relationships. Ikeda (2010a, 2014) argues that contemporary global society is a manifestation of the Faustian ego. Ikeda describes the Faustian ego as human greed for knowledge, action, and control that also leads to humanities' self-destruction. Rather than recognizing the interconnectedness and interdependence between humans and nature, human beings have instead separated themselves from nature by trying to control it:

We see [the Faustian ego] in nuclear weapons, whose use would "defend" the possessor nation at the price of humanity's extinction; in a society where free market competition is glorified at the cost of widening disparities and the conscious neglect of its most vulnerable members; in the unabated pace of ecological destruction driven by the prioritization of economic growth; in a global food crisis brought about by commodity speculation. (Ikeda, 2014, p. 517)

Today, many industrialized countries face technological and material challenges that distract people from the organic connections they have (or once had) with nature, with the human other, and with themselves. Ikeda's theory of human education draws its emphasis from the concern that people are losing a sense of wholeness and from the need to weave back the relations that make us fully human.

For Ikeda, life pertains to the oneness of everything that exists as part of the living cosmos; he sees the living cosmos and everything in it as one whole entity of life. It might be easier to imagine this concept if we think about the living cells and organisms that exist in a human body. Within a human body exists a universe of millions of living cells. Each cell and organism is a separate entity by itself but cannot live on its own or in isolation. For Ikeda, we are intricately connected to the multifarious universe around us. At the same time that we are not

separate from the cosmos, we each exist and have our individual and unique life. This underlying philosophy shapes Ikeda's belief in need for us to live and coexist in harmony.

3.1.1 Dependent origination

The Buddhist concept of dependent origination, also known as dependent co-origination or co-arising (a translation of the sanskrit term *pratitya samutpada*), suggests a deeper understanding of the workings of life and why we should be cognizant of our relations with others and nature. The Chinese character for dependent origination – *engi* (縁起) – consists of two characters: *en* and *gi*. *En* (縁) literally means bond, relation, connection, and fate while *gi* (起) literally means origin. The literal translation of dependent origination is “every bond has an origin.” This origin refers to the causal relations that bind one thing or one person to another. All beings and phenomenon that take place through interaction and relation in the cosmos “are linked in an intricate web of causation and connection” (Ikeda, 2010a, p. 195). Nothing exists or occurs in isolation and every life manifests itself through its causal relations. Every life and phenomenon takes part in maintaining and shaping the living cosmos. Ikeda (1988/2003) further states that, “Each individual entity shapes its environment, which affects all other existences” (p. 19). From this perspective, every life has incalculable latent potential that is manifest through the transactional and causal relations. This is the underlying ethos or theoretical lens through which Mahayana Buddhism views the workings of life and the universe. For this reason, Ikeda urges respect for the dignity of life and symbiosis, where individuals value “the uniqueness of each existence, [and] supports and nourishes all within the larger, living whole” (p. 236). This underlying concept of dependent origination shapes Ikeda's notion of human education.

3.1.2 Creative coexistence and dignity of life

Ikeda uses the term *kyosei* (共生) which can be translated in English as symbiosis or creative/harmonious coexistence of all living beings and nature. The term *kyosei* or creative coexistence is often described with the Buddhist principle *esho-funi* (依正不二). The literal translation of the Buddhist term *esho-funi* is the oneness of life and its environment. The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism (2002) describe the term as, “The principle that life and its environment, though two seemingly distinct phenomena are essentially non-dual; they are two integral phases of a single reality” (p. 477). One cannot exist without the other. *Esho-funi* portrays the phenomenon of dependent origination. Through causal relations, we are all interlinked with our environment. The viewpoint of dependent origination and oneness of life and its environment guides Ikeda’s conceptual framework to understand why he argues for creative coexistence.

The term symbiosis initially emerged from the field of ecology. However, modern notions of symbiosis also suggest harmonious coexistence of unique and diverse individuals coming from various backgrounds (Kawada, 2010). Therefore, throughout the document I translate *kyosei* as creative coexistence. This modern notion, creative coexistence, is similar to the popular metaphor of the salad bowl theory or mosaic. Contrary to the melting pot metaphor, in which diverse people of different cultures come together and exist through becoming one culture, the salad bowl theory celebrates and embraces diversity and uniqueness while coexisting together. Kawada adds that, “Because of these differences [between people, individuals] are able to create a richer quality of life for its members overall” (p. 93). The contemporary notion has similar views with Buddhism. In fact, from a Buddhist perspective, dependent origination is the

underlying belief that encourages for creative coexistence. Ikeda sees the intricate connections from the perspective of causal relations, thereby, arguing the importance and need for us to also become aware of our interdependence and to learn to live alongside each other in engaging and enriching ways.

Ikeda (2010a) further articulates that, “universality is a symbiotic order in which humanity, nature, and the cosmos coexist, and microcosm and macrocosm are fused in a single living entity” (p. 47). Because Ikeda’s way of knowing is constructed from this holistic perspective of life, he sees the oneness of all life, human beings, nature and the cosmos as one entity. He sees life from an inclusive lens that does not limit or exclude people based on their age, gender, nationality, or race and shows the same concerns for the natural environment (Ikeda, 1988/2003, 2006, 2010a, 2014; Marinoff & Ikeda, 2011). His emphasis on the interconnectedness of life can be examined in his annual peace proposals addressed to the United Nations. Since 1983, he has written on numerous issues that concern the sanctity of life including peace, human rights, human security, education, environmental sustainability, and conflict resolution (Ikeda, 2014). For this reason, Ikeda places emphasis on embracing the dignity of life and thereby learning to live together with one another and enrich one another’s life (2006). This is a difficult task. Thus, Ikeda elaborates and addresses ways in which we can develop respect for life.

I specifically highlight two themes that continuously resurface in Ikeda’s writings. They are fostering of *sekai shimin* (世界市民) or *chikyu shimin* (地球市民), which literally translates to world citizens or global citizens, and promotion of human revolution or inner transformation. Ishigami (2007) analyzes Ikeda’s works on the dignity of life and asserts that this idea or theory is not a matter of simply understanding or recognizing respect for life. It implies the willingness

to continue working towards the sanctity of life. Ishigami argues that the idea denotes or requires an active participation. Thus, Ishigami suggests that this notion of the dignity of life requires action in two directions: inward toward the self and outward toward others. This inward action describes the challenge to develop respect for oneself while the outward action refers to respect for others. I resonate with Ishigami's analysis of the need for active participation inward and outward. To add to this idea, though, I argue that this direction inward would be what Ikeda refers to as human revolution and the direction outward would be his idea of becoming global citizens. I examine these two concepts in the following sections and conclude that, while the two actions denote separate notions, they also overlap and represent the same idea. The fostering of global citizens also means the simultaneous undergoing of human revolution or development of the self.

3.2 GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

When Ikeda uses the term *sekai-shimin* (世界市民), which literally translates as global or world citizen, he has a clear idea and definition for what informs a global citizen. Thus, I would like to invite the reader to let go of their assumed definitions of the term global citizen to examine what Ikeda means by *sekai-shimin*. In describing this term, Ikeda (2010b) identifies three characteristics - wisdom, courage, and compassion – as essential to becoming a global citizen. By wisdom, he means the keen insight and perception to recognize the interconnectedness of all life. Ikeda (2011b) argues that we need to learn about the world. If we do not, we turn to prejudice and intolerance toward others. In an earlier section, I introduced the concept wisdom when describing the three balanced state of mind and identified wisdom as the ability to

understand, analyze, and think critically on their own (Ikeda, 2012). Here, Ikeda adds another layer of meaning to wisdom. I believe it is the ability to understand, analyze, and think critically on one's own that builds and allows oneself to recognize the interconnectedness of all life.

The second characteristic is courage. Ikeda (2011b) also describes this as the courage to learn. Courage is the willingness, the character and strength to respect differences and to learn from those differences (Ikeda, 2010b). Ikeda claims compassion as the third characteristic of global citizenship. By compassion, he means the ability to develop empathy for all people, not only for those who exist in one's immediate environment but also for those who may be physically distant and outside their national boundaries. I think it is significant that Ikeda highlights these three qualities. We need wisdom to recognize connections we have with others and we need courage to respect and extend our compassion to others. If we lack any one of these three qualities, we cannot show respect or take action toward others.

Notably, the three indicators of wisdom, courage, and compassion exemplify how each characteristic requires the presence of the "other." To become global citizens who embody the three qualities requires a cultural exchange and dialogue between people to connect back the disintegrated relationships. Ikeda calls this the healing process between self, others, and nature (Ikeda, 2010a; Marinoff & Ikeda, 2012). For Ikeda, dialogue is the intuitive instrument to learning about oneself (Goulah, 2012); it is the process for oneself to develop fully and in wholesome ways as human beings. Ikeda (Marinoff & Ikeda, 2012) describes dialogue in the following way:

Dialogue is an opportunity for drawing out a person's positive mental functions and sharing them. It also brings the negative mental tendencies to the surface, into the light of day, where they can be consciously examined. This process enables people to perceive their situation with greater objectivity and to interpret the main cause of their suffering more constructively, empowering them to resolve and eliminate suffering. (p. 103)

Dialogue helps us to become aware of ourselves and how we interact with others. At the same time, it also helps us to understand and recognize the other. It provides us the opportunity to recognize our flaws and limitations and critique ourselves as well as others. A transactional relation takes place and we enrich our lives from it. Through dialogue and engagement, we cultivate our wisdom, courage, and compassion. Through the presence of the other, we attend to others and engage in dialogue that affects the other and affects us at the same time.

Two examples illustrate how Ikeda's ideals are put into practice at the Soka schools. For example, on the primary and secondary education levels, Ikeda invites numerous foreign visitors to his schools in Japan. In most occasions, students are invited to join the meetings and assemblies where cultural exchanges are taking place between Ikeda, the visitors, faculty and students of Soka. Such occasions maximize the opportunity for young students to experience meeting, engaging, and being stimulated by various foreign guests coming from diverse cultural backgrounds and views. On the university level, Soka University of America (SUA) consists of a diverse group of students; 42 percent of the students at SUA are international students. According to US News ranking under *Best Colleges 2014*, SUA was ranked top for foreign student factor and ranked second for their ethnic diversity ratio (Soka University of America, 2014, para. 2). Among the student body, about 40% are international students coming from more than 40 different countries. Among the other 60% of domestic students at SUA, the student body ethnicity ratio is high even after excluding the international student body. These rankings demonstrate the strong diversity values that the university holds. In order for students to take full advantage of this valuable and diverse learning experience, SUA requires a four-year mandatory dorm life for all students. The purpose is so that students can cultivate a "meaningful living-learning community" (Soka University of America, 2014, para. 1). Furthermore, the curriculum

at SUA, requires all students to take a two-year language course and to study abroad for one full semester during their junior year. In 2006, there were only a few schools in the nation with such a curriculum.

Such innovative efforts both within and outside the curriculum at the different Soka schools encourage students to foster intercultural exchanges and dialogues; Soka encourages students to connect and engage with others. For Ikeda, Soka education involves the fostering of consciousness, understanding, and compassion for others, which results from involving oneself with others. In essence, Ikeda's philosophy, which emphasizes the individual in relation to his/her agency both locally and globally, is humanistic.

3.3 HUMAN REVOLUTION

Now I turn my focus to the second aspect, the effort to work inward, what Ikeda calls human revolution. Ikeda's mentor Josei Toda adopted the term *ningen kakumei* (人間革命) or human revolution from Shigeru Nambara (1889-1974) the former president of the University of Tokyo, also known as Tokyo Imperial University prior to 1947 (Huyghe & Ikeda, 2007; Seager, 2006). After Japan lost World War II in 1945, Nambara argued for the need of a humanistic approach in order to reestablish the nation as a whole from the post-war devastating condition. He, thus, suggests a revolution of the human spirit:

The fundamental task of a true Showa Restoration is a revolution in the very Japanese spirit itself, the creation of a new spirit of the people [kokumin], and thereby a change in the character of the people; more than a change in the political and social system, it is an inner intellectual and religious revolution of the spirit. (Nambara & Minear, 2011, pp. 169-170)

Toda adopted this term from one of Nambara's addresses in 1947 and promoted it through his speeches and through his autobiographical novel *Human Revolution*. Though Nambara was the original inventor of the term, it was both Toda and Ikeda who made the term known nationally and globally (Goulah, 2010b; Urbain, 2010). After World War II, in which Ikeda describes the time in Japan as a time of "spiritual desolution," Toda asserts that, "people must return to the very beginning and recreate their own inner human revolution" (in Ikeda, 2010a, p. 43). Ikeda is convinced human revolution is the key to challenging problems facing humankind (in Garrison, Hickman, & Ikeda, 2014, p. 270). Human revolution offers a new narrative for people. It provides hope and inner strength for people to change a circumstance that might seem devastating or disappointing. Ikeda argues,

When we can shift our viewpoint, we realize that troubles are the very things that help us grow as human beings. They are like fuel for the engine impelling us forward and upward [...] Only with the firewood of sufferings can we ignite the fire to wisdom and use it as the motivating force for achieving our happiness. What is most important is learning how to convert the firewood of suffering into fuel for what we in the Soka Gakkai International call human revolution. (Marinoff & Ikeda, 2012, p. 6)

As a result, Toda and Ikeda made this term, human revolution, the "primary task in the Buddhist way of life" that people aspired for in the Soka Gakkai organization (Ikeda, 2010a, p. 120). Furthermore, Ikeda (2004) describes human revolution in the following way: "A great human revolution in just a single individual will help achieve a change in the destiny of a national and further, will enable a change in the destiny of all humankind" (p. viii). Therefore, he adds that, "because the individual is the protagonist who creates his or her own destiny, a religion of the human revolution that can develop the human being's infinite possibilities is most needed" (Garrison, Hickman, & Ikeda, 2014, p. 255). Elsewhere, he describes this process of individuals realizing their potential in the Soka Gakkai International movement of human revolution as an "Empowerment of the people, by the people and for the people" (Ikeda, 2014, p. 299). Thus,

Ikeda argues that Nichiren Buddhism is a religion of human revolution (Ikeda, 2011a, p. 228). By incorporating this new concept, it created a new wave of thought in Buddhist schools of thought – the goal of becoming fully human in this lifetime.

In Buddhism, one's thoughts and actions are reflected through a concept referred to as greater and lesser self (Ikeda, 2010a). The lesser self is defined as a condition in which the individual has given into and is consumed by his or her personal desires and attachments. It depicts an individual whose need to consume is driven by a pervasive sense of emptiness. It is an egotistical state "blinded by temporary circumstance" (Ikeda, 2010a, p. 139). Similarly, the concept *three poisons* in Buddhism describes human conditions that are consumed by the lesser self. Ikeda describes these three poisons, greed, anger, and foolishness as what fundamentally cause human suffering. Greed refers to the need to fulfill one's needs even with the cost of others. Anger refers to strong hate and anger that can destroy oneself and others. Ikeda (in Marinoff & Ikeda, 2012) also adds that anger "is a manifestation of hurt and despair erupting as aggression and violence" (p. 56). Foolishness depicts one's ignorance to recognize the "dignity and worth of oneself and others," as well as, the interconnections with others and nature which also causes greed and anger (Marinoff & Ikeda, 2012, p. 56). From the Buddhist viewpoint, humans all possess these human conditions but through human revolution, the process of recognizing and mastering these destructive aspects greed, anger, and foolishness in our lives, Ikeda argues that human beings can feel genuine fulfillment and act toward the wellbeing of oneself and others (Ikeda & Zgurovsky, 2011).

In contrast to the lesser self, the greater self recognizes and perceives the interconnectedness and interdependence of the self with the cosmos (Ikeda, 2010a). This state of life can be described as the capacity to empathize with others and the willingness to contribute to

the well being of others and nature. Naturally, the aim for Buddhists is to live for this greater self. Ikeda states that, “Buddhism states that this commitment comprises of four aspects: (1) the determination to relieve people’s suffering; (2) the desire to bring people joy; (3) the breadth of spirit to rejoice in others’ happiness; and (4) an impartial compassion for all people” (Ikeda, 2010a, p. 125).” However, by living for the greater self does not mean to reject or deny the lesser self (Ikeda, 2010a). On the contrary, such state of life can become the “driving force” if “correctly oriented” (Ikeda, 2010a, p. 140). In fact, it is the attachments and desires of one’s lesser self that motivates a condition of the greater self and “stimulates the advancement of civilization” (p. 140). Human revolution is the difficult process of sublimating the energies of one’s lesser self to the benefit of one’s greater self. This transposition redirects our desires and attachments to a constructive and altruistic path. This active effort toward self-mastery is the transformative aspect Ikeda calls human revolution. As Ikeda understands it, human revolution is the practice of inner cultivation but more than that the inner struggle necessary to bring about such cultivation; it entails recognizing, owning, and challenging one’s preconceived notions of both one’s limitations and one’s capacities. Ikeda often describes this process as courageously standing up and not being defeated in any situation. He also describes these characteristics as the “sprit of Soka” (Ikeda, 2013c, p. 132).

The idea of living toward the greater self – a state of life that recognizes the interconnectedness, empathizes with others, and willingly contributes to the wellbeing of others – coincide with the qualities that describe a global citizen. He also clearly states that human revolution is the “expansion toward and merger with the “greater self” of wisdom, compassion, and courage” which are the same qualities that he uses to describe global citizenship (p. 2010a, p. 239). He also describes human revolution as a form of character training (Ikeda, 2010a);

which is also the process of human education or becoming fully human. Ikeda's concepts have distinct meanings but also overlap in their meanings. For example, undergoing human revolution is the process to becoming global citizens and the process of becoming global citizens also requires undergoing one's own human revolution. Furthermore, undergoing human revolution or becoming global citizens also describes the process of human education.

Though the concept human revolution as promoted by Toda and Ikeda is a Buddhist term, Ikeda also uses similar terms such as "*uchinaru henkaku*" (内なる変革) (Ikeda, 2013a, p. 240) or "*naimenteki henkaku*" (内面的変革) (Ikeda, 2013b, p. 156), translated as "inner transformation" (2014, p. 183) or "inner revolution" (2014, p. 332) and "*toya*" (陶冶) (Ikeda, 1996, p. 235), translated as "inner cultivation" (2010a, p. 118) as ways to define or explain human revolution in his translated texts to refer to, not necessarily the Buddhist significance, but its conceptual significance. Accordingly, he uses these terms in both Buddhist and non-Buddhist venues interchangeably, suggesting the importance of the concept to be adopted in any context and to all people (Urbain, 2010). For instance, in one of his peace proposals addressed to the UN, he argues for the need for a "transformation of the self" which, according to Ikeda (2014), is a step toward "world citizenship," "environmental revolution," and "realizing global revolution" (p. 183). Urbain (2010) suggests that Ikeda "has been able to translate the concept of human revolution into an integral part of an inclusive philosophy of peace, which can be used by people of all backgrounds even without its original religious basis" (p.113).

3.3.1 Human revolution through engagement with others

By emphasizing the importance of the individual and their inner transformation, Ikeda does not imply an extreme sense of individualism focused on one's own self-interest. In fact, Ikeda (in Garrison, et al., 2014) argues that:

Individualism has the negative aspect of overstressing individual rights to the point of weakening communal bodies, in which people should cooperate and collaborate. This tendency is becoming increasingly conspicuous in society today. And this is what makes education so important – when it fosters an open mind and thus enables us to humbly learn from one another's differences and create new value. (p. 216)

He further explains that the Eastern notion of individualism is different from the Western concept of individualism. Whereas the Western thought promotes a separate and independent entity as the idea of the individual, the Eastern perception portrays an interdependent view. As such, Ikeda makes this point by demonstrating how the Chinese character “person” (人、*ren*) is written. This character is formed from two lines, or sticks, that lean against each other. It illustrates “two people leaning on each other...two people facing one another, two people communicating with each other, two people who love each other. The implication is that there is no such thing as an isolated individual” (2010a, p. 211). Elsewhere, Ikeda (2015) further explains that the Chinese character “human” (人間、*ningen*) is composed of two characters which literally reads “in between people,” implying that humans exist and develop into richer individuals with and by others.

If human revolution is a process that makes us fully human, then, it is human interaction and communication that also makes us fully human. Ikeda (in Marinoff & Ikeda, 2012) explains that an absence of human interaction, “can only lead to breakdown on both the individual and the larger social level.” (Marinoff & Ikeda, p. 49). He further makes his argument using

Rabindranath Tagore that, “the human being loses sight of the self when existing in isolation; that is, the human being finds a larger and truer self in the context of many human relationships” (Marinoff & Ikeda, 2012, p. 50).

American philosopher John Dewey (1916/1944) also spoke against isolated individualism and argued that the individual cannot be separated from society:

Given feelings, ideas, desires, which have nothing to do with one another, how can actions proceeding from them be controlled in a social or public interest? Given an egoistic consciousness, how can action which has regard for others take place? (p. 297)

Highlighting Dewey’s (1925-1953) position on the individual, Garrison (2010) describes the difference between individuals who are self-actualized in relation with others and those who are self-actualized in isolation from others. Garrison argues, “The problem with selfish self-actualization is that it tends to cut emergent individuals off from the connections with others necessary to growth” (p. 46). Referring to both Ikeda and Dewey, Garrison concludes, “Individuals are contingent social constructions. Hence, self-actualization and creative self-expression are social functions requiring otherness and difference in a pluralistic democratic community” (p. 46). If there’s too much emphasis on the individual, then the notion of individualism can fall short and become egoism.

Thus, Ikeda offers Dewey’s suggestion that the, “development of a wholesome society must rest on the formation of a new individualism [that] is constantly aware of the existence of others, faces the challenge of social reform, and strives to create oneself anew” (Garrison, et al., 2014, pp. 224-225). Much like Dewey, Ikeda envisions a social self-actualization, or the full realization of the individual through engagement with others. He argues that individuals “can only become fully realized through interaction with others” (p. 68). For Ikeda, human beings are

dependent social beings and in order for each one of us to undergo our human revolution, or inner transformation, he believes interacting and engaging with others is a prerequisite.

Ikeda also sees the powerful change an individual can bring forth to society through this practice. He argues that human revolution can lead to a societal and planetary revolution; and, the inner transformation of the spirit becomes the catalyst for peaceful society (Ikeda & Zgurovsky, 2011). He believes a human revolution in each person can lead to overcoming the challenges to global civilization, but, he sees both the personal and social transformation equally important. Even if humankind did not face global challenges, Ikeda would still argue the need for human revolution in each individual because his focus is on each person and their happiness. The human being is the aim and the development of the human being is also the aim. For Ikeda, each focus is not a tool or the negotiable means to attain something. On the contrary, he treats each focus as the aim.

Ikeda's emphasis on the dignity of life and the importance of harmonious coexistence with one another stems from his non-dualistic Buddhist view of life. Because we coexist, Ikeda suggests that we can mutually benefit from and live enriching lives by valuing the dignity of life, working on our self-development, and fostering the three essential qualities of wisdom, courage, and compassion. His focus on inner transformation and global citizenship informs his belief in the penultimate value of education and specifically human education. Accordingly, Ikeda (2007) argues that, "the focus of Soka education is in actualizing human revolution in oneself and others" (p.105).

This human education environment that Soka education seeks to continuously foster describes what Dewey would imagine as "democratic faith in human equality" (Dewey, LW 14, p. 226, in Garrison, 2010). Garrison carefully distinguishes Dewey's notion of human equality

from other notions of equality that promotes sameness. He argues that Dewey's concept of human equality refers to moral equality and equal opportunity for each individual to bring out their innate and creative possibilities and, furthermore, so that they can make their own unique contribution to society. This mirrors Ikeda's notion of human education. In sharp contrast, Garrison states that our modern education system is a mis-education that focuses heavily on standardization, quantitative results, and rigid curriculum that take away from the human equality that Dewey feels is lost. Garrison further argues that in contrast to modern feudalism which "fails to recognize genuine, value-creating individuality and individual human revolution, Soka education challenges such forms of feudalism whether found in the West or the East" and seeks to create an educative environment for genuine human education and character development (p. 46).

3.4 MENTOR AND DISCIPLE RELATIONSHIP

In the following section, I examine Ikeda's notion of the mentor and disciple relationship and teacher and student relationship, which he argues is the underlying source of human education. After exploring his personal narratives and examining how he develops the concepts of mentor and disciple and teacher and student relationship, I synthesize and highlight five points that best describes Ikeda's description of teacher roles. I then introduce Noddings' (1984) care theory that strengthen and deepen Ikeda's concept of teacher and student relationship. I conclude this section with a review of the conceptual and empirical research on Soka education.

3.4.1 Fostering wisdom and knowledge

In education, knowledge acquisition itself does not provide a holistic educational experience that Ikeda describes when talking about human education. For Ikeda, knowledge means more than the traditional banking system of education (Freire, 1970). It includes the study of diverse cultures, the exploration of different avenues of interests, and the opportunity for all individuals to unearth their unique capabilities. Moreover, Ikeda (2010b) warns that though knowledge provides wealth and prosperity, without humanism at its core, it can lead to “weaponry of mass destruction” (p. 110). Regardless of the two polar positions which knowledge can produce, for Ikeda, education must foster knowledge that contributes to the happiness of the people. Ikeda (2006) further expands on his meaning of knowledge and wisdom:

Knowledge alone cannot give rise to value. It is only when knowledge is guided by wisdom that value...is created. The font of wisdom is found in the following elements: an overarching sense of purpose, a powerful sense of responsibility and, finally, the compassionate desire to contribute to the welfare of humankind. When wisdom arises from such wellsprings, it nourishes the kind of inner strength that remains unmoved by the superficial judgments of society and can acutely discern what is of genuine value and what is, in fact, detrimental. (p. 173)

Wisdom, then, is a quality formed from the process of character development. As we nurture and polish our character, we develop wisdom, and we use our wisdom and knowledge to create value. Ikeda frequently encourages teachers to plant the “seed of character” in their students. Like the process of undergoing inner transformation and acquiring the three qualities, Ikeda reminds us that character is not something quickly attained or learned: “Character is shaped and polished gradually through the intense and earnest interaction between teacher and student” (p. 140). The core of human education, for Ikeda, is the nurturing engagement between teacher and student that fosters fully human beings:

Soka education...is based on a solid and, I believe, universal world view. If I were to express this in a single phrase, it would be the spirit of shared commitment between teacher and learner, mentor and disciple. Just as a diamond can only be polished by another diamond, it is only through intense human interaction engaging the entire personality that people can forge themselves, raising themselves up to ever greater heights. It is the relationship between teacher and learner, between mentor and disciple that makes this possible. (p. 181)

In a way, students spend half their lifetime as youth in schools with their teachers and fellow students. Ikeda (2012) argues that the teachers' presence in the schools is the most influential and most important educational environment for students. In addition, there are abundant opportunities in the school environment for learners to interact with others coming from different viewpoints, cultures, and backgrounds. This environment, where learners can engage with others, provides the space for learners to undergo their human revolution and develop the qualities for global citizenship. For Ikeda, human education promotes the altruistic and constructive way of life that endorses the dignity of life and creative coexistence.

3.4.2 Mentor and disciple relationship

When some think of the term mentor and student, some may refer to the ancient Greek philosophers Socrates and Plato. It might also refer to a distant relationship such as Martin Luther King Jr. who followed Mahatma Gandhi and his civil-rights movement through non-violence. Or this term in modern day may be associated with assigned relationships in a community organization such as Big Brothers Big Sisters where older students are appointed to look after younger students academically and socially outside the school environment. Or for those already in a work environment, the individual may have an assigned mentor who trains or teaches them skills of how to be successful in their field. Or perhaps for younger generations the

term may be associated with their favorite hero movies where the protagonist seeks a mentor to learn how to protect civilians from villains.

In fact, the term mentor originates from Homer's ancient Greek poem *Odyssey*. In the poem, the king of Ithaca, Odysseus, appoints Mentor to take care of the whole household while he is away in the Trojan War. However, Roberts and Chernopiskaya (1999) argue that it is Francois Fenelon's (1651-1715) work on *The Adventures of Telemachus*, a sequel to Homer's *Odyssey*, in which the character Mentor took on a meaning. This sequel popularized the term to our modern day notion of mentor.

Fenelon was a writer and a tutor among other things. For one period he was a tutor for the Duke of Burgandy. His responsibilities included the character formation of the young duke. He wrote several works to guide his student. One of his most famous works was *The Adventures of Telemachus*, in which Fenelon deepened the character Mentor to portray the type of educator and education that he valued (Roberts & Chernopiskaya, 1999). Fenelon's ideals and values in education and teaching were represented in the character Mentor and within the relationship between Mentor and Telemachus. As such, the term mentor was not part of the English language prior to 1750, but, it slowly became known as a common noun from the beginning of 18th century (Roberts & Chernopiskaya, 1999).

In contrast, the Eastern notion of mentor/master and disciple/student relationship has historical and culturally situated contexts. Such relationships can be dated back to Buddhism with Shakyamuni and his students, to China with Confucius and his students, to martial arts with the masters and his students, and to many other artisans with masters and their disciples/students learning the way of craftsmanship. In the Eastern culture where hierarchical structures and cultures such as filial piety are characteristic, there is romanticism that is formed between

notions of the mentor or master who holds wisdom and the disciple/student who follows their mentor/master with utmost respect. This relationship can refer to a bond where a skilled and knowledgeable individual passes down their skills and knowledge to another.

The concept I examine in this study, the mentor-disciple relationship, comes from this traditional Eastern culture. For Ikeda, the term is born out of his own lived-experience and encounter with Toda. It was words of encouragement the relationship between Makiguchi and Toda and, furthermore, the relationship between himself and Toda that shaped Ikeda's understanding of the significance of mentor and disciple relationship. Exploring this concept in relation to his life narrative provides a richer context to understanding Ikeda's philosophy of education.

When Toda met Makiguchi, he was inspired by Makiguchi's vision, action, and way of living. Therefore, Makiguchi's vision to one day establish Soka University naturally became Toda's dream. From Makiguchi's compiled notes, it was Toda who edited and brought Makiguchi's ideas into publication. Makiguchi's accomplishments of founding Soka Education would not have flourished were it not for Toda. Toda lived his life committed to carrying out his mentor's vision. Similarly, Toda's vision for establishing Soka University would not have actualized were it not for Ikeda. Toda's disciple, Ikeda, committed to carrying out Makiguchi's and Toda's vision. After Toda's passing, it was Ikeda who founded the Soka schools kindergarten through university levels in Japan and throughout the world.

Ikeda (2010b) describes his relationship with his mentor Toda in the following way:

In my own case, most of my education was under the tutelage of my mentor in life, Josei Toda. For some ten years, every day before work, he taught me a curriculum of history, literature, philosophy and organization theory. On Sundays, our one-on-one sessions started in the morning and continued all day...Most of all, however, I learned from his example. The burning commitment to peace that remained unshaken...was something he carried with him his entire life. It was from this, and from the profound compassion that

characterized each of his interactions, that I most learned. Ninety-eight percent of what I am today I learned from him. The Soka, or value-creating, education system was founded out of a desire that future generations should have the opportunity to experience this same kind of humanistic education. (pp. 118-119)

The culminating relationship between Makiguchi and Toda and with Toda and Ikeda depicts how the mentor inspires the disciple in a way of living. In this quote above, Ikeda describes Toda as his mentor in life because Toda not only taught Ikeda with the academic tools necessary in life but also taught him how to live as a human being. Through his own life, Toda taught Ikeda a humanistic philosophy of life. Moreover, it is through this relationship that Ikeda develops his way of understanding about himself and his relation to his world. Thus, Ikeda's personal relationship and narrative becomes the model for his concept of mentor and disciple relationship.

In Chinese characters, the word teacher is read in two ways: one who is born earlier and another is one who lives and experiences life first. In essence, the Chinese character describes the teacher as one who shows their understanding of life to their student. Ikeda describes this mentor and disciple relationship as a shared commitment: the mentor, through his own life exemplifies how to live a good life (Marinoff & Ikeda, 2012). The disciple, from his encounter with his mentor, naturally develops a deep sense of appreciation and commits to repaying his gratitude by carrying out his mentor's vision. By adopting the mentor's vision as his own, the disciple expands his capacity. This is the shared commitment of mentor and disciple. Ikeda describes this as:

In the end, both teacher and student achieve far beyond what they could have on their own. Moreover, in such a relationship, the mentor wishes for the disciple to surpass them. These bonds are characterized by mutual respect and gratitude, and a sense of oneness in striving toward a shared dream. (November 2012, pp. 13-14)

There is a famous Japanese analogy and phrase that illustrates such a relation between mentor and disciple. The literal translation reads: "Although blue dye comes from the indigo

plant, it is bluer than indigo.” This phrase depicts the situation when the disciple has surpassed the mentor in whatever she or he was learning. According to Ikeda (2011b), Makiguchi argues that this well-known Japanese saying is the distinctive feature of Soka Education. Educators who value Soka Education seek for their students to surpass themselves. Using Makiguchi’s argument, Ikeda reintroduces the phrase and suggests that Soka Education represents the disciple exceeding the mentor, child exceeding the parent, student exceeding the teacher, underclassmen exceeding the upperclassmen and continuing to foster and send off talented individuals committed to living contributive lives (Ikeda, 2011b). This relationship model of the learner exceeding the knowledgeable one displays the continual and ongoing cycle of living contributive lives.

From this viewpoint, the mentor and disciple relationship takes on an instrumental role. Such a shared commitment can also be found from the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates and his pupil Plato. Plato established the famous academy and published the dialogues with Socrates to ensure that Socrates would exist and be known past his lifetime. Similarly, South American philosopher and educator Simon Rodriguez (1769-1854) also speaks to this notion of a shared commitment in his letter addressed to his student Simon Bolivar (1783-1830). Simon Rodriguez states (in Ikeda, 2012): “The work that I was going to undertake demanded the presence of you...and you...to complete yours, needed me” (p. 11). This letter between Rodriguez and Bolivar signifies the shared commitment between mentor and student. Neither the mentor’s nor the student’s achievement could have been accomplished without the other. Likewise, Makiguchi, Toda, and Ikeda’s relationships and their lived experiences exemplify this notion of a shared commitment.

For Ikeda, the teacher and student relationship in the context of schooling is like the mentor and disciple relationship in which two distinct individuals engage and enrich each other's character based on their interaction with one another. Thus, he argues that such spiritual interaction that is seen from a shared commitment is necessary in the relationship between teacher and student (Ikeda & Gu, 2012).

3.5 TEACHER AND STUDENT RELATIONSHIP

As mentioned before, Ikeda's concept of mentor and disciple relationship is shaped from his relationship with his mentor Josei Toda. In the same way, I argue that Ikeda's understanding of teacher and student relationship is also formed from his lived-experiences and relationships with his former teachers. In this section, I begin by sharing Ikeda's personal narrative of his life as a young child in school to illustrate how he develops his philosophy on teacher and student relationships. After introducing Ikeda's childhood narrative, I reexamine his concept of teacher and student relationship.

3.5.1 Childhood memories of Hiyama-sensei

Japan was in the midst of supporting militarism and emperor worshiping when Ikeda attended elementary school. Schools during this time around the mid 1930s were places where children were trained to be soldiers. Certain routines and verbal cues were emphasized to bring consciousness and familiarity to young children. Such language and narratives promoted militarism and influenced many young people including Ikeda and his classmates to hold high

heroic ideals for the army (Ikeda, 2010b). Ikeda later reflects on these memories and realizes how education can ironically become a means to satisfy political and economic needs and how students can be viewed only as commodities for the purpose of fulfilling the country's needs. In contrast to such experiences in schooling, he also encounters teachers in his life who later become examples and role models for his educational philosophy. One such teacher he mentions on numerous occasions is his elementary school teacher Hiyama-sensei (Ikeda, 2007, 2010b; 2015, Ikeda & Gu, 2012; Marinoff & Ikeda, 2012; Sadovnichy & Ikeda, 2002; Wider & Ikeda, 2014). One of his unforgettable stories includes a time when he was on a field trip. Coming from a financially struggling household, Ikeda's pocket money for the trip was money that his mother gathered tirelessly. However, during his first day on the field trip, the young Ikeda spent all of his money to treat all his classmates. Knowing Ikeda's background and seeing the situation, Hiyama-sensei approached Ikeda when he was alone to remind him that he must buy some gifts for his family who were working hard. Hiyama-sensei, then, gave Ikeda some money. The young Ikeda was deeply touched by his teacher's compassion, and with the money he was given, Ikeda bought some gifts for his family.

On another occasion, he remembers a classroom experience, during geography session, when Hiyama-sensei encouraged students to imagine where they would want to travel if they could go anywhere. That class experience challenged and stimulated Ikeda's curiosity to see beyond his own country. From his personal experience, both with Hiyama-sensei and with Toda, Ikeda began to recognize the positive influences that teachers can have on students. At the same time, his school experience that enforced political agendas on children also made Ikeda aware of the potentially negative effects. On another occasion, a student sitting nearby Ikeda suddenly vomited in class. Students were panicking by the situation but Hiyama-sensei quickly comforted

the student and reassured everyone that everything was all right. His voice calmed the students down and he swiftly cleaned up the student's vomit. Ikeda remember being impressed by his teachers' effectiveness and efficiency in responding to a sudden situation. Ikeda (2015) explains that his teacher set an example for him of what it means to be a leader.

Accordingly, Ikeda argues that knowledge acquisition itself is not sufficient. Ikeda describes Hiyama-sensei as a caring teacher who made effort to know each of his students and his or her family situations. In class, he was a teacher who fueled inspiration and inquisitiveness to students' learning. Ikeda also mentions that even after 30 years since he graduated elementary school, Hiyama-sensei showed genuine care for his students. One time, Hiyama-sensei and his wife visited Ikeda on November of 1973. Ikeda describes this incident: "I was moved by his [Hiyama-sensei's] fond affection for former pupils who had graduated decades earlier. Mr. Hiyama passed away in 2004, but my gratitude to him lives in my heart" (Wider & Ikeda, 2014, p. 105). Such a bond with his teacher became the basis for his beliefs about teaching and education.

While Ikeda (2006) lays the foundation for human education, he argues for the kind of quality teachers required for Soka education to be carried out successfully. Ikeda states that, "Educators must make the effort to call for the creative powers latent in their students. In this undertaking, they require endurance, courage and affection...Teachers must be constantly creative if they are to evoke creativity from their students" (2010b, p. 171). To apply Ikeda's argument into practice requires fostering relationships with students, furthermore, a caring type of relation. Endurance and affection towards another entails a caring teacher and student relationship. He suggests teachers take initiative to smile and actively greet their students. In Ikeda's mind (2007), such warm gestures are at the roots of *ningen kyoiku* or human education.

He also encourages teachers to foster relationships with their students to the point that it leaves a strong and lasting impression that students can recall clearly – for example, “at the time, at that place, that particular professor shared warm words of encouragement” (Ikeda, 2008, p. 126).

Ikeda (2006) further states, “The mentor creatively and imaginatively uses various means and methods to inspire and awaken in the learner the wisdom and power that has been realized by the teacher” (p. 181). However, in order for teachers to carry out such practice, he argues the importance of teachers undergoing their own inner transformation (Ikeda, 2012, p. 236). In fact, because Ikeda (2007, 2012) believes human education is the key to building a better society, he argues that realizing this task depends on how much teachers are willing to develop and improve themselves.

In one of his essays, Ikeda (2010b) makes an analogy of growing cherry trees to fostering people in education. He begins by describing how difficult it is to grow cherry trees. Ikeda argues that there are no manuals or guidelines to growing cherry trees because each cherry tree develops uniquely in different environments. In the same way, children are all uniquely different and each has their creativity. Therefore, it depends on the caretakers’ patience and faith in learners that they will blossom in their most unique way.

The roots are especially important. One expert on trees says that the spread of the crown of a cherry tree is mirrored almost exactly by the spread of its roots below ground. If we water the tree only around the base of the trunk, the tree will become “lazy” and not bother to spread its roots far in search of water. For people, ‘roots’ correspond to the tenacity of our spirit, our refusal to give up. Once a tree has taken firm root, it can survive even on a rocky mountain face buffeted by powerful winds...To the precise degree that we care for and have faith in children, they will extend and spread their roots. And it is this that will give them the strength to survive and make their way successfully through life. (pp. 138-139)

From the points that I have presented from Ikeda, let us reexamine some of the themes that he argues concerning teacher roles in the teacher-student relationship. I highlight five important roles.

- First, to believe in and aid students in the process of unleashing their potential.
- Second, to provide stimulation and nurture students' inquisitive nature to learn.
- Third, to encourage students with confidence and show their belief in students.
- Fourth, to undertake their own human revolution to continuously self-reflect and learn with students.
- Finally, but, most importantly, what overlaps and connects with the other roles and is a necessary quality to acquire in order to develop and perform the kind of teacher-student relationship Ikeda talks about is, to have compassion and care for their students.

3.5.2 Examining teacher and student relationship through caring theory

Thayer-Bacon (2003) asserts that educators and all those who work in schools should promote and emphasize caring relationships because humans are social beings in relation with others. Similarly, Webb and Blond (1995) highlight the importance of caring relationships in school contexts as essential to relational knowing. In their study, Webb and Blond find that caring and knowing by being in relation is a reciprocal bond. As the teacher and student both develop a sense of knowing, namely when the teacher cares and understands his or her student by being in relation and the student understanding that the teacher cares for him or her, a response and effect takes place. Webb and Blond argues (1995) that, "When in-relation, when a teacher cares for her students, and when that caring is responded to, the knowing of these persons interacts in an

intersubjective way” (p.624). Furthermore, education requires relationships for teachers to know their students, about their lives and their individual learning abilities, in order to understand “what students know already and what they need to learn” (Thayer-Bacon, 1998, p.116). Thayer-Bacon argues that by knowing their students on a more personal level, teachers can work more effectively and assist in the students’ learning process by making connections with what students know and what they need to learn. Thus, education can provide the space for students to become knowers. If teachers and schools recognize that relationships are necessary for both students and teachers in order to further student learning, caring relations should be required and expected.

Earlier in the global citizenship section, I introduced Ikeda’s concept of compassion which he defines as the ability to develop empathy for all people including distant others. In the context of schooling and teacher and student relationships, Noddings (1984) and Held (2006) have extensive scholarship on the notion of care that I believe can help define and identify further what Ikeda’s teacher and student relationship entails. The ethics of care has several qualities that both Held (2006) and Noddings (1984) address. Two of those qualities are fundamental and essential, which include: 1) attending to the particular other, and 2) valuing a caring relation fostered with the particular other. The ethic of care begins with persons having “a compelling moral salience of attending to and meeting the needs of the particular others for whom we take responsibility” (Held, 2006, p. 10). In a caring relation, persons are committed to fostering, nurturing, and maintaining, the relation and are concerned with the well being of the other.

According to Noddings (1984), a caring relation takes place between one-caring and cared-for. One-caring represents a person who practices care and cared-for refers to the person who receives care. For the purpose of reading with clarity, I use Noddings’ framework and

regard one-caring as she and cared-for as he. In a caring relation, one-caring must be, foremost, attentive to the cared-for. She has a moral obligation to care; when practicing caring, she demonstrate the following attributes: engrossment and motivational displacement. Engrossment results from her commitment to attend and respond to the cared-for. She shows receptivity through qualities such as fully listening and making effort to understand the cared-for. Motivational displacement is the other attribute that follows by fully receiving the other and putting one's own needs aside to meet the needs of the cared-for. Suspending one's own view is the only way teachers can understand their students and ensure that is it a caring relation and not one that is a "manipulative or harmful to the student, or vice versa" (Thayer-Bacon, 2003, p. 247). As a result, caring is "other-centered" (Thayer-Bacon, 1997, p. 30). Thayer-Bacon further adds that caring is a commitment to being open and receptive and to continuously self-reflect. Thus, when the one-caring is feeling for the cared-for, not from her assumed perspective of how he feels but when she understands from his perspective, she is displaying motivational displacement.

Held's (2006) and Noddings' (1984) notion of caring, which Thayer-Bacon (2003) describes as caring reasoning, that attends to the other, that commits to maintaining the relation, and holds concern for the other are steps for how teachers can enact the five points I identified earlier as teachers' role. Those roles are, faith to believe in students' potential, the ability and creativity to stimulate interest, to encourage students with confidence, commitment for teachers to continually self-reflect on their actions, and fostering a caring relation. These actions in turn reflect Noddings' concept of engrossment and motivational displacement.

Because the one-caring is fully engrossed in the relation, the response she receives from cared-for manifests in genuine joy and motivation to promote further care for him. Response

varies and can be from a simple nod or smile to a more complex engagement with the one-caring. Most importantly, the response represents acknowledgement that the care and effort from one-caring is recognized by the cared-for. His role and responsibility, to acknowledge and respond in reciprocation, contributes to additional care; the reciprocity completes the formation of a caring relation. In short, the caring relation takes three steps which include interacting (willingness to be attentive), acknowledging, and reciprocating. The caring relation can be between any two persons. It can be an intimate relation between mother and child or it can be a less intimate relation between two strangers that bumped into each other on a street. Therefore, from the latter relationship, it is clear that the length of time is also not limited as long as the three steps of interaction, acknowledgement, and reciprocation takes place.

The caring relation that involves the three steps, interaction, acknowledgement, and reciprocation mirrors and help describe Ikeda's (2010b; Marinoff & Ikeda, 2012) concept of mentor and disciple relationship. The teacher attends to the student and shows the student a way of life. Then, the student acknowledges with appreciation. And, finally, the student reciprocates by repaying that gratitude. The student reciprocates by carrying out the mentor's mission or way of life.

In this section, I introduce Noddings' (1984), Held's (2006), and Thayer-Bacon's (2003) concepts of caring to describe Ikeda's concept from a Western perspective. The concepts on caring were the closest to Western tradition in describing Ikeda's mentor and disciple relationship and teacher and student relationships. However, Ikeda's notion of caring is slightly different and is developed from the Buddhist perspective of compassion. This is clear and evident from the proposals he gives detailing the qualities to foster in global citizenship and human education. On the other hand, Held (2006) argues that caring is not compassion or

altruism where the carer might be interested in the benefit of the cared-for. She explains that “caring is a relation in which carer and cared-for share an interest in their mutual well-being” (pp. 34-35). Similarly, Noddings (2012) explains that caring is separate from *virtue carers* who might be interested in the *assumed needs* and not in the *expressed needs* of the cared-for (p. 773). Therefore, Noddings argues that caring is completed when the cared-for acknowledges and shows reciprocation. In contrast, the Japanese term for compassion (慈悲 *jihi*) is formed by two Chinese characters, which literally reads to give happiness and remove suffering (SGI-USA, 2016). Ikeda’s notion of caring and compassion inspired by Buddhism is in helping others to become happy by helping them realize their innate potential. Thus, although the concepts of caring shared by the Western thinkers helps explain Ikeda’s notion of caring, Ikeda’s concept offers a deeper description that also reflect his other beliefs about education.

3.5.3 Summary of Ikeda’s conceptual framework

Ikeda argues that the establishment of the dignity of life requires not only a conceptual understanding that life is worthy of respect, but the active effort to work towards it through the engagement of oneself and others (Ishigami, 2007). The engagement with oneself is human revolution/inner transformation and the engagement with others is global citizenship. The process of becoming fully human involves these engagements in the relations between self, others, and the environment. Ikeda’s human education theory promotes this process and environment for learners to become fully human and to realize creative coexistence with one another. For Ikeda, these two engagements in a school setting begin from the relationship between the teacher and student. Thus, I examine Ikeda’s concept of mentor-disciple relationship and teacher-student relationship. Furthermore, to give a richer description of what Ikeda means

by this relationship I connect Ikeda's work to extant philosophy of education in the United States, specifically, Noddings' (1984) concepts of care. The next section examines the conceptual and empirical research on Soka education.

3.6 RESEARCH ON SOKA EDUCATION

Goulah and Gebert (2009) state that teachers, encouraged by Ikeda's humanistic education in Soka schools and the like, appreciate and value the teacher and student interactions. They further suggest that teacher and student relationships and, specifically, the teacher's belief in students to be "autonomous creators of lasting value" is the underlying factor that connects Makiguchi's philosophy with current notions of Soka Education.

3.6.1 Conceptual studies on Soka education

Little empirical research exists on Soka education, perhaps because of the short history since Ikeda founded the Soka schools network. In this section, I examine the empirical and conceptual research about the application of Soka Education. One of the earliest studies examines the use of Makiguchi's theory of Soka education in present day Japan by conducting interviews and analyzing official documents produced by the Soka schools (Sharma, 2008). Sharma concludes that it is difficult to find a prescription for Soka education and the application of value-creating education because of the rigid, nationally standardized K-12 curriculum in Japan, which is overseen by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (Sharma, 2008;

see also MEXT, 2010; Gebert & Joffee, 2007). As a result, Sharma questions whether the principles of Soka education, as Makiguchi envisioned them, are applicable in present day Japan.

Prior to Sharma's (2008) study, Gebert and Joffee (2007) discuss a report of Soka schoolteachers' experiences applying the principles of Soka education in practice, and they found that these teachers demonstrate the principles of value-creating education *outside* the delimitation of curriculum through such actions as fostering humanistic teacher-student relationships. Specifically, Gebert and Joffee (2007) name several commonalities including commitment to the happiness of the learner, to dialogue, to taking full responsibility for issues in the classroom, to inner transformation, and to community involvement. Commitment to the happiness of the learner includes teachers' reports stating belief in their students, never giving up on them, connecting and reaching the students. Commitment to dialogue includes reports showing efforts from the teachers to seek one-on-one dialogue, visiting their students at home, and using alternative styles of communication. Commitment to inner transformation includes reports expressing teachers' inner struggles and their determination to challenge their struggles which lead to their personal growth. These findings were consistent with my narrative research conducted in 2008 (Nagashima, 2012). The common themes shared by these educators that Gebert and Joffee studied all reflect Ikeda's human education philosophy – an education that focuses on the happiness of the learner by educating the whole person and teachers' qualities and requirements to instill such an education for the learner. For Ikeda, the teachers' commitments exhibited in Gebert and Joffee's work, what Ikeda (2010b) would call spiritual nourishment, serve as the precondition for Soka education.

Ikeda's emphasis on the significance and need of human education has motivated and inspired many graduates of the Soka schools as well as lay members of the Soka Gakkai to

pursue careers in education. Some have founded schools with principles of Makiguchi's and Ikeda's philosophy of education (Joffee, Goulah, and Gebert, 2009). One example of such schools exists in New York City.

3.6.2 Case study of a school informed by Soka education

Joffee, Goulah and Gebert (2009) published an article regarding a school informed by Soka education. The article consists of an interview and dialogue that describes an example of how Soka values can be applied in modern day context, and, furthermore, how it can be applied not only in Japan but also internationally. The school's educational focus has specific values that are consistent with Makiguchi and Ikeda's educational theories. These themes are belief in the individual's inherent potential, community involvement and learning of community, teacher-student relationship, and diversity.

In 1993, Monte Joffee, along with several educators seeking Soka education, established one of the first five charter schools in New York (Joffee, Goulah, & Gebert, 2009). This new school started with both Makiguchi's and Ikeda's value as their guiding principle. The purpose of the new school was to focus on the happiness of the learners and to foster leaders who contribute to society. The former was driven from Makiguchi's purpose of education and the latter was coined from Ikeda's notion of human revolution – that a human revolution in a single individual has the potential to create a change both locally and globally. Adopting Ikeda's notion of human revolution with Makiguchi's emphasis and value on beginning change from the local community, Joffee and his team formed their school's mission statement, "Developing Leaders for the Renaissance of New York." Specifically, on the school's website describes in further details the significance of this mission statement:

Renaissance is based on the conviction that a change in the destiny of a single individual can lead to a change in the destiny of a community, nation, and ultimately humankind. Its mission as a K-12 school is to foster educated, responsible, humanistic young leaders who will through their own personal growth spark a renaissance in New York. Its graduates will be global citizens with an abiding respect for peace, human rights, the environment, and sustainable development. (The Renaissance Charter School, n.d.)

In order to cultivate a community-like environment and education focused on development of the whole child, Joffe and his team of educators created a unified school consisting of grades “K-12 under one roof” (Joffe, Goulah, & Gebert, 2009, p. 183). In 2000, the school became a charter school and in 2015, expanded to include pre-kindergarten. The school is also recognized for fostering a diverse study body both ethnically and academically.

Some of the school’s core values that reflect Makiguchi’s and Ikeda’s educational philosophy include: study of local community, fostering relationships with local communities, and team teaching and looping structure (Tomioka, 2012). This first value distinguishes the school from other schools and also connects with their mission statement. In order to be competent leaders for New York, one must study and become aware of their community. Thus, the school offers a multidisciplinary curriculum and incorporates the learning of “geography, history, economics, culture, and people of New York” into traditional subject courses such as math, science, language arts and social studies. In order to accomplish their first goal and bring a variety of projects and learning opportunities for their students, the school forms partnerships with numerous community organizations that help enrich the students’ knowledge of geography, history, culture, and people of New York. This highlights the second value of building strong relationships with the local community. The first and second values of incorporating community studies into the traditional subject-matter courses and preparing students to belong and actively contribute to their community echoes with Makiguchi’s teaching approach and philosophy of education.

The third value is a teaching system that help provide continuity and individualized attention; team teaching involves a couple of teachers working together to teach classes and the looping structure requires each teacher to teach a class of students for two to three years. The school's values follow Makiguchi's principle of providing opportunities for teachers to become involved and engaged with each learner and their needs. This system showed that the times and ways each student learned and flourished varied proving the impossibility for teachers to determine students' potential just by their classroom behavior and academic achievement alone (Joffee, Goulah, & Gebert, 2009). Furthermore, the most recent statistics of their school show that 100 percent of their graduates from twelfth grade attended college providing further proof that "there are ways for working with kids to the point that they succeed" (Joffee, 2009, p. 189). This third value reflects Makiguchi and Ikeda's emphasis for teacher and student relationships and demonstrates how relationships are essential to students' growth and success.

The school values at RCS also reflect educational implications that Thayer-Bacon (2003) offers for promoting more teacher-student relationships and peer relationships. Her recommendations, inspired by Montessori philosophy, include the importance of caring relationships, diversity, curriculum that is multidisciplinary, multicultural, and ecological. In order to foster caring relationships, she proposes examples such as having smaller classroom sizes, having more than one teacher in a classroom or lengthening the time spent in each classroom with a specific teacher. To expose diversity, Thayer-Bacon argues that such environment can include diverse ages, co-education, ethnic background, religion, and social economic backgrounds. The more diverse students develop rich relationships with their peers, faculty, and staff, the more students have the opportunity to interact and learn from relations with the other. Therefore, Thayer-Bacon's implications suggest that: 1) RCS's focus on team teaching

and looping structure provides an opportunity for teachers to nurture caring relationships; 2) RCS's focus on diversity and creating a diverse student body provides an environment where students are exposed to diversity; and lastly, 3) the school's value to study their local community in different class subjects and effort to foster relations with the community allows students to explore ecological, holistic, multicultural and multidisciplinary curriculum.

3.6.3 Case study of students' perceptions at Soka University of America

Using a case study design, Goulah (2012) conducted research at Soka University of America and found that students perceived Soka education, human education, and value-creating education to consist with the notion of experience. Furthermore, Goulah found that the study abroad curriculum at SUA, of learning a new language and learning how to live and interact in a foreign country reflected important key themes including human revolution and creating meaning from experience, interaction, and self-reflection. Language and study abroad became a tool for students to experience, engage, and learn about oneself and others.

In Goulah's study, all participants learned Ikeda's philosophy not through a curriculum but taught themselves through reading Ikeda's books and essays and participating in the Soka Education Student Research Project (SESRP), a student organization on campus, in various capacities. From this study, Goulah noticed that all participants interpreted human education as Ikeda's overall philosophy of education that fosters the whole person while value-creating education is a specific process and means toward fostering a whole person. Participants identified value-creating education as an experiential process in which students learn to make meaning from their lived and situated context, a process that students experience and learn at Soka University of America. One participant, from the context of language learning and study

abroad experience, stated that value-creating education is learning how to develop creativity in various situations that is not limited to one's preconceived cultural values and limitations, but, the ability to bring out creative responses that "confront situations in an aesthetic, energetic, dynamic, critical, and engaging way by which we reevaluate the values we inherited" (Goulah, 2012, p. 78). Therefore, in the context of language learning and study abroad, language becomes that tool for intercultural dialogue and the opportunity to reflect, reexamine, and develop one's ability to create value. This experience is the practice of undergoing human revolution and the curriculum at SUA provides the space and time to nourish that practice. In contrast to the notion of value-creating education, participants identified human education as involving human revolution from the curriculum and lived experiences, and, most importantly, through the interactions between the self and other. Goulah finds that all participants relate the idea of value-creating education, human education, and Soka education with the notion of experience, suggesting that Ikeda's educational philosophy is one that must be a "lived and embodied practice" (p. 80).

Through expanding one's own sense of limitations, and undergoing human revolution, participants identified their experience and personal development of becoming fully human, "the flowering of one's full potential," as happiness (p. 84). The language courses and study abroad programs provides opportunity for students to use the tools they are equipped with to challenge and create new values through encountering and engaging with others. Furthermore, through encountering and engaging with others, students have the opportunity to recognize humanity in others. This educational process, which fosters and expands the learner's potential is Ikeda's notion of human education.

3.7 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I examine Ikeda's philosophy on life and suggest a conceptual framework of his application toward promoting an ethos including dignity of life and creative coexistence. Specifically, I argue that the process of undergoing human revolution and becoming a global citizen is Ikeda's notion of human education. After giving a thorough analysis of these two terms, I suggest that both experiences involve the interaction and transactional relation with the other that allows for reflecting, critiquing, self-transformation, and value creation. I, then, present Ikeda's application of human education in the schools. For Ikeda, human education in the schools begins from the teacher and student relationship. Both his concept of teacher and student relationship and mentor and disciple relationship are formed from his lived-experiences with his teacher Hiyama-sensei and with his mentor Josei Toda. From the descriptions about teacher and student relationships, I highlight five points that best represent Ikeda's argument on teacher roles. They are having faith in learner's potential, stimulating students' curiosity, encouraging students with confidence, continuing to self-reflect, and, lastly, caring for their students. I argue that these five points reflect actions that come from engrossment and motivational displacement, qualities that describe necessary attributes for caring (Noddings, 1984). Noddings' (1984) analysis of the three steps that complete caring also help describe Ikeda's concept on mentor and disciple relationship. To complete the caring relation, interaction, acknowledgement, and reciprocation take place. Similarly, in the mentor and disciple relationship, interaction from showing a way of life, acknowledgement through feelings of appreciation, and reciprocation by carrying out mentor's mission compare and reflect each other. Past research highlights diverse ways in which Soka Education is applicable to current day context. For my study, I examine how

students have experienced or perceived Ikeda's educational philosophy at the Soka schools, and how, if they are, applying their perceived notion of Soka Education in the classrooms as teachers.

4.0 METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

In this dissertation, I adopt Thayer-Bacon's (2003) notion of relational (e)pistemology, the view that we develop our ways of knowing through being in relations, as my lens that informs my narrative approach to studying Soka Education. Although Ikeda's ways of knowing are informed by Buddhist philosophy, Ikeda's personal narratives also illustrate how his concepts, such as mentor and disciple and teacher and student relationships, are developed from a relational way of knowing. The particular historical and cultural contexts with Hiyama-sensei and Toda-sensei informed his relational concepts.

In this chapter, I examine what Thayer-Bacon means by relational (e)pistemology and introduce the theories and perspective that grounds this theory. After explicating on what informs my method of research, I introduce narrative ways of knowing and narrative inquiry. I then give a detailed account concerning how I collected my data, the ethical considerations surrounding my research, details for my narrative representations, and the trustworthiness of my research.

4.1 RELATIONAL EPISTEMOLOGY

As social beings, people grow and develop, learn a language and culture, and form a sense of self, all through their relationships with others. Who we are as individuals and how we think depend greatly on the social relationships we have with others, as well as the time, place, and culture into which we are born. Because of this necessary social beginning that all human beings have, which helps form who we are, we can never claim to know solely based on our own

individual perspectives. What we come to believe are answers or solutions, our most trustworthy knowledge, which we derive through interactions with others. Given that we are social beings contingently placed in this world, affecting each other from beginning, it is easy to understand that we need each other to be better thinkers. (Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1998, p. 38)

4.1.1 Introduction to relational ways of knowing

Relationality, the condition of being in relations, argues that we are all social beings, and that, through interacting and developing relations with others, we cultivate a sense of self. Thayer-Bacon (2003) also states that, as we develop our sense of self, we also come to recognize that sense of self and how our particular social environment and situatedness affect “the way we view the world through our relationships with others. Other people help us become aware of our own embeddedness” (p. 8). Thayer-Bacon introduces relational (e)pistemology to suggest an alternative way of understanding epistemology – from a relational form of knowing. In order for her to argue her relational epistemology stance, the author begins by addressing the dualistic assumptions that are connected with the term epistemology. Some of the well-known assumptions that she highlights include taking an absolutist stance in order to avoid relativism charges, or favoring mind over body (an androcentric view), or favoring objectivity over subjectivity. In contrast to these dualistic views that are attached to traditional epistemology, Thayer-Bacon introduces (e)pistemology, with the parenthesis specifically to separate the concept from its assumed notions and to highlight the non-transcendent and non-dualistic description of the concept, which embraces views from post-modern, pragmatist, and feminist views. As such, the concept attempts to dissolve assumed dualistic stances and, instead, she recognizes emotional dimensions and contextuality. In a world that is continuously changing moment to moment, Thayer-Bacon (2003) explains that we are social beings and active

participants in our ever-changing world and there is no absolute objective or a spectator's perspective because we are "embedded in it" (p. 32). Her claim for a redefined epistemology recognizes Subjects as "gendered subjects" (p. 34). To avoid confusion, I do not include the parentheses when referring to Thayer-Bacon's epistemology in this paper. Rather, by mentioning the significance of the parentheses here, I hope that readers will differentiate and view her proposed epistemology from a relational context.

From the viewpoint of a relational epistemology, human beings are constantly, from birth, in a personal, social and holistic relation with each other and with the environment. Through these relationships, we come to understand our world and construct knowledge that continues to be shaped and reshaped. Thayer-Bacon further argues that: "people develop (knowing) as they have experiences with each other and the world around them...With enlarged perspectives people are able to create new meanings for their experiences" (p. 9). In personal relations, persons are from the time they are in their mother's womb and also, after birth, dependent on their caregivers for survival. The caregiver, with her own social relations, affects the individual, as the individual also affects the caregiver. When they become older, they have social and natural relations, in addition to the personal; they go to school, engage with neighbors, engage with their community and absorb different aspects of the world. Each encounter nurtures, shapes, and reshapes the person as he/she simultaneously shapes and reshapes others. A holistic perspective sees not only the relations of individuals with their world from a transient, immediate, and physical context but also from the perspective that individuals are interconnected and interdependent with people, nature, and the whole universe. To support her proposed relational epistemology outlook of understanding the world through relations, Thayer-Bacon forms her relational outlook with qualified relativist perspective as her theoretical perspective.

4.1.2 A qualified relativist perspective

To avoid charges of relativism, Thayer-Bacon (2003) addresses her stance as a qualified relativist perspective that embraces Pierce's (1958) fallibilism, James' (1909/1975a, 1909/1977, 1912/1976) radical empiricism and radical pluralism, and Dewey's (1949) transactional theory. Thayer-Bacon's redefined notion of epistemology takes on a relational way of knowing that is transactional, in the sense that we are all situated in, live in, and interact in this world and "we affect each other" and affect our world "as we experience 'it'" (p. 76).

Pierce's fallibilism highlights the value of lived experience and how knowledge is confirmed through experience. James' radical empiricism further adds to Pierce's view by emphasizing pluralism and avoiding notions of universal truths. For James, truth is satisfactory truth. Thayer-Bacon lastly adds Dewey's (1938/1955) concept of warranted assertability to develop a more nuanced understanding of knowledge as something that is continuously evolving through social relationships. Knowledge is not fixed and changes as people live their lives. Thus, Dewey argues that what we know (what some may call knowledge) can only be warranted through experience (in Thayer-Bacon, 2003). For Dewey, the concept of knowledge itself seems to assume a defined and fixed concept, however, since what we know changes through experience, Dewey uses warranted assertability instead of knowledge to suggest this ongoing process.

By highlighting and incorporating these specific points, Thayer-Bacon forms the theoretical perspective of a qualified relativist standpoint for relational epistemology. She values a relational epistemology that considers knowledge as something gained through the particularities and situatedness of the moment. In particular, I highlight Thayer-Bacon's concepts that seem most pertinent and relevant to my position. Specifically, I include, Dewey's

transactional theory, caring reasoning coming from Noddings' care ethics, and Mahayana Buddhist concepts of dependent origination and compassion.

4.1.3 Transactional theory

Adopting Dewey's views, Thayer-Bacon asserts that individuals, while born into their own unique settings where they are socially affected, are not socially determined. Dewey's contribution to relational epistemology includes not only warranted assertability but also the concept of transactional relations. Transactional relations describe how, by being in relations and fostering communication, we continue to develop, grow, and form new ways of knowing. Through interacting with social environments, individuals are developing knowledge and making meaning, while at the same time, sharing and adding knowledge to their communities. Others affect us, and at the same time, we affect and influence others. This transactional nature illustrates the fluidity of change and the necessity for persons to be in relations.

4.1.4 Caring reasoning

Noting the similarities that Noddings' (1984; 2003) caring practice and its relationality has with her relational outlook, Thayer-Bacon claims that caring is "vital to a nontranscendent (e)pistemology" (p. 119). Thus, Thayer-Bacon argues for caring reasoning, a concept that she forms to describe the significant role that caring has to both ethics and her notion of epistemology. She suggests that caring reasoning is similar to Dewey's notion of "sympathetic understanding" and Noddings' notion of "engrossment." Reasoning and emotions, which tend to be considered at times as conflicting concepts, are not separate notions from a relational

viewpoint, but are deeply interwoven. Similarly, Jose Ortega y Gasset argues that, “We live based on our beliefs” and he further adds that, “All our behavior, including our intellectual activities, depends on our system of authentic beliefs. We live, act and exist within our beliefs” (Ortega y Gasset, in Ikeda, 2000, p. 46). Thus, Thayer-Bacon argues that our emotions drive our actions. Both Held (2006) and Noddings (2002; 2005) speak to this same argument from a care ethics perspective. Caring reasoning is an act of care, which first involves acknowledging the other, and then choosing and committing to attend to the other by opening ourselves and listening. From caring reasoning, we learn to compare and critique our contexts and particular situations from both a micro/personal and a macro/social level.

Caring reasoning helps us recognize and understand our own limitations (e.g., our ignorance, assumptions, and preconceived notions) as well as our possibilities. Our understandings and knowledge develop through being in relation with others. And caring reasoning allows us to develop knowledge about ourselves, others, ourselves in relation with others, and our ways of knowing.

4.1.5 Buddhist concepts of dependent co-origination and compassion

Thayer-Bacon (2003) presents Mahayana Buddhism shared by various representatives who are commonly cited in this field of study to understand relationality from a holistic view of nonduality that also includes nature. One of those representatives whose ideas she highlights is Daisaku Ikeda. Of the four dharma teachings that Thayer-Bacon identifies to represent relationality from a holistic view, I focus on Thayer-Bacon’s interpretation of the two concepts, dependent co-origination and compassion, that contribute to her relational theory. First, I’d like to quickly note that Thayer-Bacon refers to *pratitya samutpada* as dependent co-origination or

dependent co-arising. However, Ikeda phrases *pratitya samutpada* as dependent origination. There really is no difference other than a translational preference between the two words; however, it can confuse readers so I refer to the concept from here on as how Ikeda phrases the term – dependent origination. I also share more in depth the Buddhist concept of dependent origination and notion of compassion in the section where I expand on Ikeda’s philosophy of education. Here, I focus on Thayer-Bacon’s interpretation of the two concepts that contribute to her relational theory.

Dependent origination refers to the view that all beings and things exist and become into existence through relations. Everything is interconnected and interdependent with each other and all phenomena come into form through causal relations. All beings and things appear and form through their interdependence. In other words, “nothing can exist in absolute independence of other things or arise on its own accord” (Thayer-Bacon, 2003, p.159). This concept of relationality includes all living and material beings and things that exist in this universe. Therefore, this concept reflects the view that we are mutually dependent and interconnected not only with human beings but also with nature and the universe. Separating nature from human beings and attempting to control or dominate nature is problematic; instead, we coexist and live mutually dependent and connected with nature. This awareness of and sense of interconnectedness is what encourages compassion towards one another and our environment.

The Buddhist notion of compassion, which Thayer-Bacon (2003) argues is closely related to her concept of caring reasoning, is developed from an understanding of our interconnectedness and interdependence with the universe. When individuals recognize their mutual dependence and connections with each other and the environment, the Buddhist perspective assumes that being part of the universe, naturally, arouses compassion within the individual and a desire to

participate and contribute, to be a part of that whole. Buddhism recognizes equality of all living beings based on the belief that each life holds a Buddha-nature. Every person has the latent potential or Buddha-nature that, with awareness and wisdom, can flourish and thrive. Through relationality and causality, each person can bring out and expand their Buddha-nature or stay dormant. Compassion develops from the understanding that we are all mutually dependent with one another and the recognition that each life interweaves and forms an intricate web of relations.

Thayer-Bacon (2003) offers an alternative view on epistemology that is derived from relationality. She supports her claim theoretically with her qualified relativist perspective and argues her viewpoint with concepts including transactional relations, caring reasoning, dependent origination, and compassion. She demonstrates theoretically and conceptually how we are in relations and thus how we form our ways of knowing through those relations. Thayer-Bacon's (2003) theory also supports how Ikeda's concepts of teacher and student relationship and mentor and disciple relationship are informed by a relationship way of knowing. This viewpoint informs my choice in using narrative inquiry as my method of research.

4.2 NARRATIVE WAYS OF KNOWING AND NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Inspired by Ikeda's emphasis on human education, many graduates of Soka schools pursue a career in teaching and education. Though there are no specific curricula or standardized system that defines Soka education, students enter the Soka schools and graduate taking away with them a Soka experience. Ikeda, on numerous occasions, encourages students to make their time at Soka schools their foundation for the rest of their lives. If many students consider their experience at the Soka schools to be the foundation of their lives, how do they understand and

make meaning out of their experience? What were the situated social and cultural conditions like that contributed to their experience? How do students who later become educators apply their experience at the Soka schools into practice in their classrooms?

As theoretical and empirical education research about Soka education is just emerging, varied methodologies for research will be crucial to articulate the possibilities of Soka education to encourage its expansion. Each research method provides a perspective dependent upon the viewpoint from which researchers examine their study. Such perspectives highlight a certain phenomenon about reality.

I begin this chapter with a discussion of teacher's knowledge and their ways of knowing to examine what defines and describes teacher's ways of knowing. Particularly interesting is how teachers form knowledge through their lived-experiences and narratives they share with others. I then connect this discussion to narrative ways of knowing as relational knowing. Because my research examines graduates who have experienced Soka education and who are also currently pursuing a career in teaching, I argue that teacher knowledge consists of not only knowledge formed from classroom and professional experience, but also knowledge about teaching that is formed from their experience as former students.

I use qualitative research methodology, specifically narrative inquiry, to examine the participants' life stories and their perceptions of Soka education. Participants are Soka graduates who have become teachers in schools in Japan. I examined how they interpret and make meaning of their lived experiences at Soka, how they perceive their teaching experiences in relation to their students, and how they might be applying their understanding and beliefs from Soka at their current teaching environment. In this chapter, I give thorough descriptions concerning data collection, design, and data analysis.

4.2.1 Teacher's knowledge and their ways of knowing

Makiguchi (1989) states that because teachers are the ones instructing the classes and interacting with the students, teachers' experience and knowledge is imperative to understanding education. For this reason, Makiguchi argues research must begin from the teachers' experience. To study Soka education, then, an exploration into teachers' knowledge and their experiences that have nourished their knowledge, both personally and professionally, is necessary. Earlier research on teacher knowledge examined teaching styles or methods and how those skills fostered different outcomes in students' academic achievement. There are various possible factors that affect or contribute to students' academic achievement, including but not limited to students' social economic background, cultural experience, home environment, school environment, neighborhood and community environment, family relationships, peer relationships, and teacher relationships; all of these factors are directly and indirectly linked with personal and social relationships. While such factors are not necessarily connected directly with the classroom teaching experience, some teachers, regardless of students' backgrounds, successfully support students to produce significant results. Thus, researchers have sought to identify which specific teacher qualities or skill sets guide students' academic achievements. Earlier studies on teacher knowledge examined teachers' competence in subject knowledge and curriculum (Schulman, 1986). The research aimed at determining what teaching behaviors produced academic achievement to help foster more teachers who can produce results. This body of research was motivated by the idea of improving teacher training.

In contrast to these earlier studies, Field and Macintyre Latta (2001) bring light to Aristotle's (1925) three concepts of knowledge, which are technical, theoretical, and practical wisdom, and argue that educational systems have focused mainly on technical and theoretical

knowledge. Due to an overemphasis on technical skills, the value of practical wisdom, or learning that is developed through the experience, has been minimized. However, practice, theory, and experience in teaching are not mutually exclusive from one another. By focusing mostly on one (technical knowledge), teaching and learning become compartmentalized. Researchers began to acknowledge that teachers' skills and techniques alone were not the only embodiment of teaching. From studies that framed teacher knowledge in respect to teacher behavior, research in this field shifted to acknowledge the experiential aspect of knowing. Recognizing the situational and contextual complexities of teachers' experiences, Clandinin and Connelly (1996) emphasize learning and knowing through personal experiences inside the classroom, professional interactions teachers have with colleagues, and teachers' personal experiences outside the professional environment. Thus, the shift in teacher knowledge research expanded from "knowledge *for* teachers" to "knowledge *of* teachers" (Fenstermacher, 1994, in Verloop et al., 2001).

While others use the concept personal practical knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996), Field and Macintyre Latta (2001) use the term practical wisdom to suggest wisdom developed in the process of acquiring experiences. However, the daily experiences that become practical wisdom require a particular kind of experience. The authors analyze and examine further the process of how wisdom is created. They state, "What makes an experience stand out from the flux of life is that something in particular happens that surprises us...if we take what happens seriously, transforms us...requires us to be a different person in a different place" (p. 889). Such experiences involve undergoing "an element of suffering," challenging oneself to confront new situations and new ways of thinking (p. 889). The experience of being surprised or undergoing struggles that challenge and transform individuals is similar to Ikeda's (2010a) notion of human

revolution. For Ikeda and Thayer-Bacon (2003), that experience that invokes personal growth and change is human interaction. Olsen and Craig (2001) offer another element to this process – the interaction. They assert that teachers can confirm and claim that experience by interacting with others in a supportive community and exploring further their experiences.

To foster the development of knowledge, having supportive communities, a sense of worth to share those experiences and knowledge that those experiences are valued and accepted is essential. Similarly, Thayer-Bacon (2003) would describe this community as a gathering of various interactions based on caring reasoning. In the framework of teacher knowledge, Olsen and Craig (2001) introduce two concepts: knowledge communities and narrative authority. Knowledge community is referred to a safe place where one feels comfortable sharing experiences with others, and learn from others' experiences to develop knowledge. Narrative authority is developed when teachers share their personal experiences with another and can claim their knowledge and make meaning of their experience. This safe place is where teachers can confront various situations and new ways of thinking. I argue that this is also where Field and McIntyre Latta's notion of practical wisdom and Makiguchi and Ikeda's notion of creative value can be developed. Knowledge community is essential for teachers to claim their narrative authority. Narrative authority and knowledge community are fundamentally relational and transactional. In both cases, the individual must interact and dialogue with others to develop their knowledge. Thus, teachers develop their knowledge from personal and professional contextual and situated experiences. The knowledge teachers have about teacher beliefs, behaviors, and approaches is likely to be connected to particular experiences that they had in the classroom. While most literature speaks to teachers' personal experience in the classrooms and personal experiences they have while being teachers, DiRezze (2000), drawing partly on Lortie (1975),

argues for teacher's personal experiences when they were former students in a classroom. As learners, their observation and interaction with former teachers can contribute to development of their understanding of what teaching and being a teacher means:

The professional life of the teacher is imbedded in the personal. Aspiring teachers enter formal teacher training with some notion of what it is to teach simply by virtue of the fact that they have had experience with formal schooling. They then served an "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975) in their own lives as students through which they have formed both implicit, and explicit ideas about the nature of teaching and learning. (DiRezze, 2000, p. 59)

Through observing, being engaged in the classroom, and developing relations with their teachers, learners develop a sense of understanding about their educational experience. Taking this concept into the discourse of Soka Education research, I suggest that former Soka graduates who are currently teaching also have considerable knowledge (especially about what Soka education means to them) that was developed when they were learners in relation with their teachers in the classroom. I also assume that these graduates have rich personal and practical wisdom and knowledge as current teachers. Exploring teacher knowledge, specifically the experiential aspect, is one approach to identifying and examining the meanings of Soka, how individuals value and make meaning of their experience, and how they might apply Soka education in their practice as teachers. The suitable method to examining these lived experiences is narrative inquiry.

4.2.2 Narrative knowing and narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry is the study of the ways humans experience the world (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative is a way to capture those experiences through interaction of researcher and participant conveying that interaction into writing, and examining the thinking process and meanings behind those experiences. Lyons and LaBosky (2002) argue that narrative is a way for

people to story their experiences; it is a way to create meaning and to “preserve what it is they know and how they think, and rethink their craft, capturing those illuminations discovered in the midst of classroom life” (p. 12). Describing such phenomena thoroughly is not possible through simple facts or data. It can only be brought to the surface through stories (Carter, 1993). And because, in large part, teachers’ knowledge of teaching comes from their practice in the classrooms, stories provide a way to access that knowledge. Narrative studies “is a way of making teachers’ knowledge conscious and public, and open to scrutiny” (Lyons & LaBosky, 2002, p. 12).

According to Lyons and LaBosky (2002), there are five distinct features that describe narrative inquiry. These qualities include:

1. intentional reflective human actions,
2. socially and contextually situated,
3. engaging participants in interrogating aspects of teaching and learning by “storying” the experience,
4. implicating the identities of those involved, and
5. constructing meaning and knowledge (pp. 21-22).

First, narrative practice is an intentional and reflective activity of the mind. Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, and Orr (2010) argue that story is the natural method by which humans make sense of their experience. Second, narratives are socially and contextually situated; this means that narratives are situated with certain individuals and takes place in a specific setting or situation. Similarly, Clandinin and Rosiek (2006) argue that while the individuals’ personal story is the foundation of the narrative, the process of narrative inquiry also invites and portrays the complex situational context that comes with the stories. They state:

[Narrative inquiry is also] an exploration of the social, cultural and institutional narratives within which individual's experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed and enacted – but in a way that begins and ends that inquiry in the storied lives of the people involved. Narrative inquirers study an individual's experience in the world and, through the study, seek ways of enriching and transforming that experience for themselves and others. (p. 42)

Third, narrative prompts participants to question and challenge their knowledge in order to bring new meaning and understanding. Fourth, because narratives involve the process of reflecting and tapping into the sense of self, individuals experience self-discovery that can affect their identities both personally and professionally. The third and fourth features describe a space of knowledge community or a space where caring reasoning and transactional relations are taking place (Thayer-Bacon, 2003). The safe place of a knowledge community offers a space where individuals attend to each other and interact with each other to produce new meanings from the experiences they share. Through the transaction, individuals affect each other. The interaction offers a space for human revolution (Ikeda, 2010a). In other words, narrative is a transactional relation that can affect each other's identities.

Lastly, narrative inquiry is the process of constructing meaning and knowledge. This last feature echoes Field and Macintyre Latta's (2001) notion of practical wisdom or Makiguchi and Ikeda's notion of creating value that are both evoked from experience and interaction with others. As a result of their cumulative assessment, Lyons and LaBosky (2002) argue that the five qualities demonstrate exemplary narratives.

When referring to experience, Clandinin and Connelly (2000), among others in narrative research, embrace John Dewey's (1938) criteria for experience. Nothing is fixed—we continue to experience and be involved with our world through our relations with others. In particular, Clandinin and Connelly use Dewey's criteria of interaction and continuity of experience as their conceptual framework for their three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. As researchers delve

into their narrative inquiry, they need to think within three commonplaces, a metaphorical space of temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; 2006; Clandinin, 2006; 2013). By being aware of the three-dimensional metaphorical narrative inquiry space, Clandinin and Connelly provide a way for researchers to fruitfully and respectfully engage and attend to their participants in the most meaningful way.

The first dimension describes the movement of going backward and forward within the narrator's temporal space between past, present and future (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; 2006; Clandinin, 2006; 2013). In this place, inquirers attend to the people, events, place, and things that form that temporal space. This dimension describes the continuity of the temporal space; even in the present, people are continuing to live and experience. There is no fixed space. The second dimension portrays the personal and social aspect when the researchers and participants engage; this dimension describes the movement inward and outward. The personal reflects the inward space, where the inquirer experiences and examines the feelings, emotional responses, and moral dispositions that emerge through the relation and inquiry. This personal space also shapes the social space. The social space is oriented outward, where inquirer explores the situated cultural, social, institutional, familial, or linguistic context. In other words, the inquirer examines the outward place of what's happening to the people and events taking place in the narrative. The third dimension is the place, the situated physical environment where the narratives take place and where the inquirer conducts the study. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) describe this place as the "specific concrete, physical, and topological boundaries of place or sequences of places where the inquiry and events takes place" (p. 480).

For my narrative research, I adopt Lyons and LaBosky's (2002) five features that describe exemplary narrative work and Clandinin and Connelly's (2000; 2006) three-

dimensional narrative inquiry space as my guide to design the research method. My research explores and examines the rich stories and lived experiences of former Soka students, the cultural ethos they value, and their current experiences as educators. By providing opportunities for teachers to share their stories, possibilities for new insight and understandings can emerge. Narrative inquiry helps capture not only the individuals' rich stories but also the social, cultural, and institutional narratives that lie within the individual's lived experiences (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2006). Likewise, I examine the social and cultural meanings of Soka education as defined and applied by the graduates.

4.2.3 How relational knowing informs method of research

As I mentioned previously, I identify with Thayer-Bacon's (2003) relational epistemology and her qualified relativist perspective. My way of understanding the world and way of knowing stems from a relational ontology. Through interacting with others personally, socially, and holistically, as well as with nature, I believe we experience various relationships and we reach new meanings and understanding from those experiences. The transactional relations and caring reasoning that describe and cultivate relational ways of knowing guide the rationale for choosing narrative inquiry, a narrative way of knowing, as my methodology. Transactional relations demonstrate how we are not only affected by our social environments, but, how we, individually, also affect our environment through communication. Caring reasoning, the intentional act of noticing and committing to attend to another helps us form relations and also helps us recognize, compare, and critique our contexts with others to form new meanings. Through being in relations, we develop transactional relations as we engage in conversation; through acknowledging and attending to others, we develop more opportunities for rich conversations

which then expand our understanding and perspectives. The space for transactional relations and caring reasoning in educational settings is where knowledge communities are formed and where teachers are able to engage in a safe place to share their knowledge through stories and lived experiences allowing for narrative authority to take place (Olsen & Craig, 2001; Craig & Olson, 2002). Through narrative communication, teachers engage, reflect, critique, and learn. Narrative is both a methodology and method; it is a way of knowing and a method of inquiry at the same time.

4.3 DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

In this study, I interviewed graduates who became educators about their Soka experience in their knowledge communities. I focused on teachers and their understanding of Soka education through their lived experiences both past and current. The interviews were all conducted in Japanese. The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended in nature. See appendix B for the initial questions I created to help guide my interview. I focused on five key areas: 1) their personal lived social and cultural experience at the Soka school, 2) their understanding of Soka education based on their personal experience attending the Soka school, 3) their present lived and relational experiences of being a teacher, 4) how the meanings and value created at Soka reflect, or not reflect, in their teaching and relationships with students, and 5) how their present conditions shape their understanding of Soka education. I examined how Soka education is being applied in practice both past and present. I asked for the raw experiences that can describe, illustrate, and clarify Soka education. I sought to understand how graduates who received the education apply Soka education in their teaching practice.

4.3.1 Sample

During my preliminary research in 2008, I interviewed 13 participants who were in some way connected to the Soka schools, whether as former students, faculty, or administrators representing research institutes or individuals who worked at a Soka-inspired school. See appendix C for the official consent I asked participants to sign to participate in this study. I began my search for participants through personal connections with staff and former students of Soka University of Japan. From the initial data collection in 2008, I narrowed my participant criteria to those who have attended Soka Gakuen [Soka Elementary to Soka High School] and who are now actively teaching in public or private schools in Japan. I chose students from Soka Gakuen with the assumption that students received more individualized attention and experienced a Soka culture compared to university students in Japan.

In 2011, having a more targeted group, I interviewed and conducted the first round of interviews with nine new participants and conducted follow-up interviews with the previous two participants from 2008 who were graduates of Soka Gakuen. After the first round of interviews, I conducted follow-up interviews two weeks later with the nine new participants. These participants were introduced through former classmates and administrators working at Soka University of Japan. For my dissertation, I examine four participants for representation. The rationale and analysis of representation come later in this chapter.

4.3.2 Participants

When selecting four participants to represent my dissertation data, I tried to incorporate equal representations of gender, teaching experience, age and the grade level they teach. See the table below for specific information regarding participants.

Table 1. Participants

Participant Names (pseudo)	Gender	Average age (at time of interview)	Grade level	Soka experience	Teaching experience at end of interview	Date of interview
Fujita	F	Early 40s	Junior High	Elementary-College	20 years	2011 (Twice)
Tanabe	M	Early 30s	Elementary	Elementary-College	9 years	2011 & 2013
Miyata	M	Late 20s- Early 30s	Elementary	Junior High-College	8 years	2008, 2011, & 2013
Suzuki	F	Late 20- Early 30s	High School	Elementary-College	6 years	2008, 2010, 2011, & 2013

4.3.3 Setting

The interviews were conducted at locations where participants felt comfortable to meet. Most were conducted in small cafes or coffee shops located nearby the train stations where the participants worked or lived. Few were conducted on school grounds and some took place at their homes. Follow-up interviews also took place in the same manner. I also conducted a third follow-up interview via-skype with three of the four participants.

4.3.4 Research intention and process

In order to elicit longer narratives, promoting an atmosphere for storytelling is an important consideration for researchers (Reissman, 2002). Therefore, the interview questions were open-ended in nature and viewed as a conversation instead. The aim was in giving up control and following the participants in their story. In order for participants to have a comfortable space to bring out their stories, I focused on attending to the other. I stayed engaged and emotionally responsive by listening attentively and empathetically and non-judgmentally (Josselson, 2007). To keep the story as authentic as possible, I was careful not to show any subtle or overt opinions towards the participants, including either negative or positive opinions that could potentially encourage participants to change their stories or lead to questions about the authenticity of the stories.

These guidelines were duly imprinted in my mind as I conducted my first set of interviews in 2008. However, after hearing the recorded conversations, I heard myself not fully attending to the participants. I focused on the questions I had prepared rather than the ongoing conversation itself. Therefore, I realized later on that there were moments of potential rich conversations in the recording that could have been pursued if I had listened and picked up on small details. With more time to reflect on my questioning skills, I conducted my second round of interviews in 2011 with more ease. I found myself attending to and following their stories in an organic manner. In these cases, I noticed I ended the interviews sometimes without asking all the questions I had prepared due to lack of time. However, I engaged in richer conversations with the participants.

Furthermore, while the first set of interviews in 2008 focused on finding out whatever I could learn about Soka Education, my second set of interviews in 2011 focused on a certain

group of participants, a certain type of experience they had as students, and a certain type of experience they were having as teachers. After the first round of interviews during my second visit in 2011, I transcribed the recorded conversations in Japanese and coded or identified themes that were significant to Soka Education. I looked for common threads that echoed across narratives (Clandinin, 2013). I also highlighted parts of the conversations that I did not focus on closely enough the first time, but which were important to revisit. I composed interim research texts that began to interpret the stories. I moved on to translating and writing the research texts into English. I paid attention to the three-dimensional space of temporal, social, and place (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). For the third round of interviews, I followed up with themes missed during the previous interviews. I also shared my analysis and interpretation with my participants. This process of confirmation led to biographical narrative vignettes.

4.3.5 Ethical considerations – Relational cultivation

Earlier I argued that relational epistemology, which informs my method of research, forms the basis for my value in the relationships that were built with my participants. Here I share, from an ethical standpoint the relationships I developed with the participants and their importance to my study. As researchers, we have ethical responsibilities such as authenticity and interpretation when presenting our studies to the scholarly community. At the same time, as narrative researchers, we also have a responsibility to the human relationships that develop during the process of our research (Josselson, 2007). I speak to the latter responsibility next and I speak to the former responsibility later in the section about trustworthiness and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Reissman, 2008).

To some degree, the expectations of the relationship between researcher and participant are explicit in the formal consent that the participant signs when they agree to take part in the study. This consent protects both the participant and the researcher; the researcher is obligated by consent to conduct an ethical study. However, the hidden and unforeseen dynamics that develop through the course of the research, the implicit aspect not stated in the consent, is another responsibility that the researcher must be aware of (Caine and Estefan, 2011; Josselson, 2007). From an ethical standpoint, consent is built from a relational process, “deriving from an ethic of care rather than rights” (Josselson, 2007, p. 540). Through the process of long-term research and repeated conversations, dialogic relations emerge between researchers and participants. While conducting interviews, the subtle cues and rapport that the researcher gives reflect the “researcher’s capacity to be empathic, nonjudgmental, concerned, tolerant, and emotionally responsive” (p. 539). Such rapport can build trust between the researcher and participant. This emerging relationship during the course of the interviews heavily determined the depth and quality of the information shared by the participant.

Transparency is another important aspect of ethics. My role as a researcher was to take responsibility for my involvement and disclose my personal connection to the nature of this study. As a former graduate of one of the Soka schools, I have the advantage of sharing a similar experience and understanding about the Soka schools and Soka education. This insider lens helped the research by me being already familiar with the social and cultural norms and traditions at the Soka schools, and forming a more comfortable interviewing environment for the participants. Knowing that I am a former graduate of their schools helped many of the participants trust how I use their information and openly share their stories. One participant

emphasized that there was no need for me to conduct member checking (Hatch, 2002) because he completely trusted me with his stories.

Josselson (2007) argues that at the end of interviews, it is important that participants feel comfortable, and that the interview ends on a positive note. For my study, after the final interviews, I asked questions that helped participants reach closure, making sure to end interviews with each person feeling comfortable. I thanked each participant for their contributions and walked through the timeline of my dissertation, the process of what will happen from now on and what they most likely can expect with the information they shared. I left each conversation asking if there were any concerns, questions, or suggestions that they might have for me and to provide an opportunity for participants to share how they felt about the whole interview process.

4.4 DESIGNING NARRATIVE REPRESENTATIONS: BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE VIGNETTES

In the context of narrative research, in an interview with Elliot Mishler, Clandinin and Murphy (2007) highlight Mishler's emphasis on the fluidity and situational circumstances of narrative studies:

For him [Mishler], the field of narrative inquiry will be defined from within the different communities of narrative inquirers with researchers picking up on each others' work that helps them address issues salient to their own research problems. We can learn from various alternative approaches, picking up and applying what seems appropriate to what each of us is attending to. (p. 636)

The narrative, then, becomes defined from within the inquiry. Narrative research comes in various forms and methods. To some, narrative methods are introduced in structures and for

others, like Mishler (in Clandinin & Murphy, 2007), they might depend on the field or type of research that the researcher is pursuing. Taking into account Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) notion of the three-dimensional narrative space and Lyons and LaBoskey's (2002) distinct features of narrative inquiry, I took Reissman's (2008) and Clandinin's (2013) approach to organizing, designing, and presenting narratives. Reissman identifies four styles of narrative methods from numerous literatures including: thematic, structural, dialogic/performance, and visual. Although Reissman assigns characteristics to the various narrative approaches, like Mishler (in Clandinin & Murphy, 2007), Reissman is mindful of the complexities in narratives and encourages researchers to cross boundaries when appropriate, and not be bound by one approach. For my research, I adopt the thematic and, in some cases, structural analysis.

According to Reissman, thematic analysis directs attention entirely to the content of the narrative. For this reason, the focus of thematic analysis is on what has been said rather than the process of how it was shared. Thus, "There is minimal focus on how a narrative is spoken (or written), on structures of speech a narrator selects, audience (real and imagined), the local context that generated the narrative, or complexities of transcription" (p. 54). In thematic analyses, data is collected through various methods including interviews, observations, written documents, and group conversations. The forms of narrative presentation can be diverse to fit the purpose of the narrative; for interview methods, presentation is in a form of narrative biography or using segments of interview texts.

Structural analysis, on the other hand, directs its attention from "exclusive focus on a narrator's experience to the narrative itself...structural analyses are concerned with content, but attention to narrative form adds insights beyond what can be learned from referential meanings alone" (Reissman, 2008, p. 77). That is, language formation and expressions uniquely shared by

the narrator are examined. Although most of the narratives in this research is in the form of a thematic analysis, structural analysis was used at times when language formation, certain facial expressions, or situational contexts appeared significant to address.

Each account of the participants is written in a biographical form. Within these biographies, I highlight two specific periods in time of the participants: the first period is their experience as students at the Soka school(s) and the second as current teachers. Within each period, I also included portions that are told from the participants themselves. The intention of this biographical form is intended to present each participant's life stories while highlighting the two significant periods that also captured the raw and powerful accounts of the participants' experiences by using their actual voices.

4.5 EXAMINING TRUSTWORTHINESS IN NARRATIVE RESEARCH

In narrative research, two important points to address when examining trustworthiness in narratives are: 1) the story shared by the narrator to the researcher, and 2) the story then reconstructed by the researcher (Reissman, 2008). In addressing the first point, I specifically narrowed my participants to those who have graduated the Soka school system to establish believability and trustworthiness. To describe their understanding of Soka schools, I chose those who have experienced Soka Education personally. They have the authority to own and claim their personal experience as Soka Education.

I also designed my methods accordingly to create as much trustworthiness and transferability as possible. In the interview process, to strengthen participants' arguments on their defined notion of Soka Education, I asked participants to share their experiences at Soka, which

helped to describe their belief in tangible examples. Then, to further solidify and to ensure clarity in their descriptions, I followed up with questions about their current teaching beliefs, practices and experiences as teachers in the classroom. This process leads to transferability of the written texts – a double layer of clarification and believability in the participants’ understanding of Soka education – through thick descriptions of their individual contexts and histories (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Atkinson (2007) argues that the particular stories the participant chooses to share define in fact, who they are and what they believe, adding another layer of believability. He states:

A person’s life story, the one he or she chooses to tell others, is what is most real, most important to him or her and is what gives us, the casual reader as well as the researcher, the clearest sense of the person’s subjective understanding of his or her lived experience, his or her life as a whole. (p. 233)

There are a few additional ways I attempted to maintain authenticity and accuracy of the stories being presented by the researcher. The participants I interviewed all spoke Japanese. My first language is Japanese. I grew up bilingually in both English and Japanese and also have experience studying abroad in Japan. I passed the Japanese Proficiency Test (Level 1 –which is the highest level of proficiency).

I relied on the recordings from the interviews, conducted member checking (Hatch, 2002) to confirm with each participant the accuracy of the information, and although the participants remain anonymous, reconfirming that they felt comfortable with their stories becoming public in the dissertation.

My purpose in writing is not to define Soka education or to make any generalizations about it. Instead, I aim to highlight the effect that Soka education can have on these educators and, more importantly, how these individuals apply Soka education in their own teaching practices. According to Polkinghorne (1995), “The power of a storied outcome is derived from

its presentation of a distinctive individual, in a unique situation, dealing with issues in a personal manner” (p. 18). Likewise, qualitative research eschews focusing on certain data to make a general statement by instead highlighting particular individuals and their experiences. Thus, by examining such individual cases, I portray what might be the effects of Soka education for the individuals in my study. Carter (1993) argues that the stories researchers select convey a certain perception about the phenomenon, and, in this case, I suggest that individual case stories or biographical narrative vignettes that I present convey notions of Soka education.

4.6 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

Soka schools founded by Ikeda exist in several different countries and hundreds of students graduate and take with them a Soka education experience. What exist are the rich accounts and lived experiences of Soka graduates. Through relations, we form particular dialogues and engage in communication. We develop meanings. The moment one attends to the other in a conversation, where there is an interaction, acknowledgement, and reciprocation, there is a relationship that is established (Noddings, 2005). Daisaku Ikeda’s philosophy of Soka education is also embedded in relations. Relationality is a key factor to understanding Soka education.

I use Connelly and Clandinin’s (2000) and Lyons and Laboskey’s (2002) approach to inquiry as guides for mapping out my narrative inquiry. I also follow Riessman’s (2008) and Clandinin’s (2013) suggestions as lens to design and present my particular narrative representation. After gathering my field texts and focusing thematically on what has been shared by the participants, I looked for “threads” or common themes that the participants share that seem to weave through across time (Clandinin, 2013, p. 132). Specifically, I examined how these

threads weave through in their stories at the Soka schools and how they connect in their current lives as teachers in the classroom. After identifying common “plotlines” that surface in their lived experiences, I searched among other participant’s narratives to find any “resonance or echoes that reverberated across accounts” (p. 132). Once I moved from the field texts to the interim texts, and to the final research texts, I shaped my unique and particular format for my narrative representation: biographical narrative vignettes.

5.0 BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE VIGNETTES

5.1 FUJITA

I met Fujita on a Sunday afternoon. We decided to meet at a cafe inside the Keio Plaza Hotel located right next to the train station. Earlier that day, Fujita was attending her school's basketball game and was coming right from the game. Fujita is a middle school teacher and has been teaching English for over 20 years. She also coaches the school's basketball team. She was straightforward when she spoke and calm and composed throughout our time together. She also carried a sense of confidence through her posture and manner.

Fujita is the first graduating class of Soka elementary school. Soka elementary first began by opening its school to second and third grade. She was in third grade when she first attended. She also graduated Soka junior high, high school, and Soka University of Japan, totaling ten years of primary and secondary education and an additional four years of higher education at the Soka schools.

5.1.1 A culture to seek personal growth

When she was in elementary school, Fujita described herself as a bratty and stubborn child. Her teacher often scolded her for her bad behavior. She admits that her attitude also lasted through her junior high and high school years. It was a time when she felt prone to resist and defy adults.

Even though she did not exhibit the best habits early on in school, the educational experience and environment at the Soka schools supported her growth as a student and fostered an ethos that shaped a way of life for her. The educational experience also inspired Fujita to become a teacher. She poignantly asserts that, “the very essence of who I am, the way I think, the way I live my life, the way I perceive things, I learned at Soka and from the founder.”

The first image that comes to her mind when reflecting back to her elementary school years was her daily routine. Every morning before class, she walked over to the school monument. The monument was placed in the school grounds right before students enter the building. It had the school mottos, created by the founder, engraved in it. For the lower grades, the mottos were written in easier words. It read: Be bright, considerate and tenacious. Then, for the upper grades, there was another monument that read: Boldness, friendship, and will power. Every morning she read these 3 mottos before going to class to remind and motivate herself to live up to these words.

When she attended Soka Junior high and high school, the routine changed from reading the mottos, to singing the school songs. Students at Soka schools created their own school songs and attributed meanings in the songs. For Fujita, the school songs inspired feelings of conviction, affirmation, and revitalization. It also included feelings of appreciation for the school and their dreams for the future. Almost everyday, from 8:00AM to 8:15AM during homeroom, some of the upperclassmen would volunteer their time to visit and share with their underclassmen the meaning and significance behind the songs.

There were many school songs; some made by former students, some by the founder, and some that were a collaboration of both the students and founder. Fujita emphasized that this was a unique tradition at Soka schools different from other schools. Usually in other schools, the

music teacher or a professional would be hired to create a school song and the song would be sung seldom and only at official ceremonies such as graduation. The students created a tradition to sing these songs in the morning. The songs reminded students about their own goals and aspirations and it encouraged them to challenge and persevere in their lives. Through the songs, the upperclassmen passed down the spirit of Soka to the underclassmen. Fujita believes a big part of the Soka culture was the bond between the upper and younger classmen. For Fujita, these valuable moments with her upperclassmen and the meaningful messages that were passed down to her from the founder and alumni are her most memorable and fondest experiences she had at the Soka schools that encouraged her and shaped her character.

One of Fujita's favorite school songs was "Makeji Damashii" (Indomitable Spirit). The students created the first draft and the founder added the fourth and fifth verse. The lyrics included a message from the upper classmen to the underclassmen encouraging them to persevere even when confronted with obstacles or struggles. This song shared the spirit to never give up. When Fujita attended the Soka schools, the rituals of reading the school mottos or singing school songs encouraged her in her daily activities with academics and club activities. During this time, she remembers working hard to build her character and her skills in hopes of one day contributing to society. One prominent experience she remembers strongly, about persevering and building character, was during high school when she exerted her energy into studying to improve her class ranking.

When Fujita entered high school, her first class ranking was a below average score of 300 out of 400. The scores were not publically shared but each student received their test scores along with their class ranking. When she received her ranking, she was shocked. She knew she could do better and determined to challenge herself to become top of her graduating class. In

addition to her academic goals, Fujita also participated in club activities. She continued to challenge herself in both academics and school activities. Year after year, she slowly started to increase her class rank. Among the various subjects, she loved English and Japanese grammar, but struggled in math. After three years of hard work, Fujita finally ranked number 1 out of 400 students during the second semester of her senior year in high school. That same year, the founder visited one of the school festivals and shared the importance of exerting effort. The founder encouraged the students and said to them that hard work never lies. It pays off. She strongly agreed with his words because of her experience working hard and becoming top of her graduating class in one of the semesters. Since then, she often reminds herself these words and, now, as a teacher, she also shares them with her students.

Even today, right before our appointment, I was with my students and just said the same words to them after they lost the game. Just like I did, I want my students to challenge both their academics and activities. I think in order to develop character, knowledge acquisition is important, but I believe club activity is also an effective way in nurturing one's character. I say this because I was one who learned from sports.

Instead of passively living through her three years in high school, Fujita believes she lived her three years cultivating and challenging herself in her daily life in academics and her club activities. Fujita believes this was a culture she learned at the Soka schools and a way of life, which she feels deeply indebted to. Of her 40 years, she emphasizes that 10 years, a quarter of her life, was spent at the Soka schools. How she reflects or believes, the choices she makes, and how she lives her life stems from her school experience. She stresses that, "They inspired me to see beyond my own needs and to care for others and be an active participant of society."

5.1.2 A culture of care

In addition to the culture of personal transformation and growth, the Soka schools also embraces and nurtures a culture of care and value to contribute to society. Fujita explains that from a young age, teachers and administrators often spoke with confidence to the students that they would develop into future leaders who will contribute to society. These conversations occurred quite often and naturally. This was the culture fostered at the Soka schools. However, she also mentioned that this motivation to contribute to society was not something forced. The songs and school environment consistently provided a way of life that the students can then choose to embrace willingly or deny. Fujita chose to embrace this ethos and it was followed by a sense of personal responsibility:

This value became my personal goal and it expanded my limited perspective to think beyond my immediate surroundings. It helped me to think about society and others and develop a deeper goal in life. It reminded me that whatever I challenge in life wasn't just for myself but for others. Of course this was a gradual process. When I was younger, I didn't have the capacity to think for others but when I was in high school and college, I had to think about my career, and that's when I knew and felt strongly that I wanted to live a contributive life.

Fujita believes that the capacity to want to help others is an innate emotion and act that everybody embodies. People want to help others, feel appreciated and fulfilled. At Soka, this innate potential is nurtured and encouraged. She believes this environment makes Soka schools unique. Furthermore, the way the school values the students and how the students reciprocate and respond is a distinct Soka school experience. She highlighted that this was completely different from other schools.

At the Soka schools, we learn and live in a culture of compassion and respect for others. It's a very humble and honorable character. In reality, human beings have a natural instinct to prioritize themselves first. But, on the other hand, we have these moral and humanistic aspects too. So at the Soka schools, we learn to value ourselves but also learn how others are just as important and valuable too.

5.1.3 Fujita's journey of becoming

During her third year in college, when she was deciding which career choice to take, she knew she wanted a job that brought out the best in her and what she can do for the rest of her life. She also wanted a job that involved using English and related to basketball, which were her favorite subject and sport. And, most importantly, she wanted a job where she could pay forward or contribute the specific ethos she learned to society. Reflecting on her experience and her personal growth, Fujita felt appreciation for the Soka school environment that was nurtured and fostered by the founder, the students, and the teachers. She realized that the Soka school shaped her to be who she is today. She had an affirmation that, "This is what it means to teach." This led her to seek teaching as her career. She also knew she could fulfill her goals of using English and basketball if she became a junior high school teacher. She felt teaching was a noble career because it involves fostering of human beings. Teaching was her way of repaying her appreciation for the education and experience she received at the Soka schools.

Now, teaching at a public middle school, Fujita teaches first and second year students [7th and 8th graders]. She has an easier time teaching first years because she teaches them from the beginning when they enter middle school. However, second years tend to be more delinquent. They disrupt class by walking or talking during class. She teaches English but students might be

studying for some other subject or reading a comic book. Many of the students think they can do whatever they want. There are also students who are struggling with learning English. She has 40 students so the student-teacher ratio is high, making it difficult to cultivate relationships. Thus, Fujita tries to build a relationship of trust with her students. She also makes effort to teach lessons that are easy to follow. She does this by making clear goals and creating small hurdles for the students to overcome. For example, she provides smaller and easier quizzes so that students can understand. In the classroom, she walks around the classroom and interacts with the students as much as possible. When she gives students work to do, she tries to stand next to the students and give them individual attention. When she does this, she could feel the students' desire to want to learn and seek attention. Outside of the classroom, she tries to connect with her students during breaks, after school, or through club activities. By spending time with the students, she hopes that students feel acknowledged.

In addition to being an English teacher and a basketball coach for the school team, Fujita also has another hat to wear as the dean in charge of student discipline. As the dean, she has a difficult role to discipline and have serious conversations with students about their misconduct. Fujita explains that middle school is a difficult time for students; they often cause trouble on the surface level. Therefore, rather than seeing the negative traits of the various students she interacts with, she tries to focus on students' positive traits that show potential for growth.

As a teacher, there's responsibility for teaching subject matter or doing our best in our roles as advisors or coaches. But, what's most important is whether the teacher has faith in the students and has a commitment to foster their students. We only have at the most three years with our students so I think it's important that teachers are committed to fostering their students during that limited time.

Fujita sees moments when she needs to be strict and scold students, and, she also sees moments when she needs to praise her students. Because scolding and praising is a delicate balance, she feels it is vital that teachers respect and care for each person. Without this connection as a foundation, a teacher cannot know when is the right moment to scold or praise the student in a meaningful manner. For example, she recently caught a student playing Nintendo DS during class. She had to first talk to them and be clear that that kind of behavior is not appropriate or acceptable. But if she only disciplines the student, he or she is likely to leave the conversation with a negative impression and distance themselves from her. This could create a bitter relationship between Fujita and the student. Instead, she looks for their strengths and praises them and tries to end the conversation with a positive message or express her expectation and belief in their potential.

It's not enough to just have expectations in your mind. You have to let the student know by expressing it to them. When you do, they feel recognized and cared for. So students come to me afterwards [e.g., sometime at graduation or even years after graduation] to share their appreciation. Even if they might not understand now, I share my belief in their potential and future.

Fujita explains that a teacher-student relationship is a human-to-human relationship. However, as adults, teachers tend to talk to their students with an authoritative position and the relationships can be imposing or intimidating.

It's easy for teachers to slip into their visibly labeled role as an adult or teacher figure, but when we do that, students can feel oppressed. So I think it's important to create a human-to-human relationship that is first built on trust.

5.1.4 Teacher and student relationship beginning with the teacher

In Fujita's teaching career, she encountered a female student in her fifth year of teaching that became one of the most challenging experiences in her teaching career. During class, Fujita remembers how the student could not sit still in class. She frequently left the classroom or skipped class. The student often ran away from home and what troubled Fujita most about this situation was that her parents did not bother or try to take responsibility to find their own daughter when she went missing. She often encouraged the parents to go find their child. Fujita worked hard to connect with the student. She wanted to help her situation. The student's behavior was an ongoing situation that continued for a couple months. Fujita shares the emotional journey she went through and how she broke through with the student:

At first, she was defensive and didn't listen to me at all. I remember being so frustrated and wondering why she won't listen. I was still young and very emotional. I remember feeling overwhelmed and thinking I wasn't good enough to be the inspiration or change in her life. I was certain that whatever I did, it wasn't going to work on this child.

Fujita thought she was a horrible teacher for not being able to connect with her. She was concerned for the students' wellbeing and, emotionally exhausted, at the same time, with the situation. She continued to do what she thought was right and work with the student. She struggled for three months with the situation, and, after three months of challenging her relationship with the student, she started to reflect on her actions.

Then, one day, it dawned on me that I was only thinking from my perspective. I was worried about appearance and how I looked as a teacher. It was one-sided and very selfish. Once I started reflecting on my own behavior, I was able to change my attitude and the way I spoke. If I found myself frustrated with her, I'd remind myself that this is

not about my ego. I started to care about her and her needs and, gradually, she started to reciprocate. She might have been annoyed with me at first, but, I think she started to understand my intentions and she started to change. She started to calm down and listen to me. Our relationship changed. Through being patient, we started to have dialogues. I even invited her over to my place and she actually came over. The student started to stay in school and she was also calm at home too. I don't think it was one word or incident that changed her. I think it was a gradual process of building a relationship of trust. I learned from that experience what it means to really care for each individual. It was hard and I struggled a lot as a new teacher, but it was a meaningful experience.

She recognizes that middle school is a difficult age and time for students. However, she has moments when she feels depressed when she feels nothing she does is meaningful enough. In such times, when she hits a wall, and feels trapped, she reminds herself why she chose this path. When she looks back to her turning point, it reminds her of what she learned at the Soka schools. The spirit and culture of Soka. "It refreshes and encourages me to keep moving forward and to live a contributive life." For Fujita, the Soka school is a mental place she goes back to during challenging times.

5.1.5 Education that goes beyond the classroom experience

Fujita recognizes that, often, in reality, teaching does not go smoothly in the way she would like it to go. When working with students, teachers do not necessarily see immediate results. Often, she has instances when she feels she cannot connect with the students or they do not respond in the way she had hoped they would. But, she continues to make effort to connect with her students in hopes that, one day, maybe five or ten years down the road, the time she spent with

her students would become meaningful or create value in some way. As a result, some of her students who worked hard showed results years later in their lives. She values this belief because this was also the case for her own experience and she developed profound appreciation for her teachers at the Soka school years after she graduated. One personal experience with a student also supports and validates Fujita's belief.

When Fujita was 25 years old and still new to teaching, she had a student named Manami in her class who also was in the basketball team Fujita coached. Because Manami was in both her class and the basketball team, Fujita remembers taking particular time and care for her during the three years she was in school. Manami's mother passed away when she was young so her father raised her. She seemed lonely at times so Fujita made sure to pay attention to her. She was never the studious type. In her third year, she did so poorly in her academics, the school worried whether she would be accepted to any high school. But, Fujita knew that Manami loved playing basketball and knew how much it meant to her. So, with a motherly type of love, she told her that if she does not study, she could not play. Fujita decided to work one-on-one with her afterschool so that Manami can improve in academics. She continued to support her even during summer vacation. Because Manami wanted to continue playing basketball, she studied and worked hard. Fujita knew she had a strong will inside and knew if she worked hard, she could do well. As a result, Manami was accepted to a high school and successfully graduated middle school.

Since then, Fujita had not heard from Manami for a long time, but, 12 years later Manami surprised her by sending an email. In the email, Manami shared to Fujita about her life. After graduating high school, Manami worked hard to become a nurse. She had the opportunity to meet a lot of foreigners through her job, which inspired her to want to live in the United States and study English once again. When Manami sent the email to Fujita, she was already living in

the states. Manami contacted Fujita because she wanted to thank Fujita for all the time and care she put into her. Manami stressed that the three years she spent in junior high was the most influential time of her life. Manami believes she is where she is today and doing what she enjoys doing because Fujita challenged her during those three years.

For Fujita, the purpose of school and education is, undoubtedly, for the students to become happy. It is where students gain knowledge, a way of thinking, and a way of doing that's necessary in order to joyfully create and open possibilities in one's life. She further adds, "So it's not only the subject matter in the classroom, but, education in schools also means learning about how to treat friends, how to develop various relationships with people, and learning how to challenge obstacles when confronted by one." Fujita believes that students learn about life and how to be involved in their life from various activities that they encounter, experience, and explore in school. These include club activities, school events, and the diverse interactions they have with others. And, she hopes that these rich experiences become the energy to propel forward in their life after they graduate.

5.2 REFLECTION: FUJITA NARRATIVE

5.2.1 Social and institutional conditions

Fujita's biographical account highlights some interesting social conditions that are cultivated at the Soka schools. The ethos that was echoed throughout Fujita's lived-experience was the volitional desire for personal growth and the culture of care and desire to contribute to society. This ethos is consistent with Ikeda's (2012) description of two necessary qualities, compassion

and capacity for self-improvement, that constitutes his notion of human education. The social conditions allowed this cultural ethos to surface and be embraced by students. For Fujita, this consisted of messages from the founder, school monuments with mottos, teachers and staff continuously voicing their beliefs to the students about their potential and their belief in students to live contributive lives, and peers forming traditions to sing songs that remind them of the school's ethos. These social conditions shaped a distinct Soka culture that naturally allowed Fujita to internalize this cultural ethos. Furthermore, Fujita believes that caring, which she experienced through the culture of care at the Soka schools, is an innate quality that every one has, but, that needs to be nurtured in order for students to respond. For Fujita, Soka provided this social environment where caring took place. Thus, the social conditions and relationships were key to cultivating this culture of care in students.

5.2.2 Willingness to participate and embrace a Soka environment

A noteworthy discovery from the conversation with Fujita was the routines she made or chose to be involved in. Her morning routines were one of her most vivid memories. Both her primary and secondary school routines, whether reading the mottos on the monument or singing the school songs, involved self-motivation to contemplate and reflect on this ethos prepared by the school. Although it was the founder and the school that placed this cultural ethos, the students willingly created the tradition of passing down the spirit of Soka down to their underclassmen. Fujita also eagerly accepted and responded to this cultural setting.

Fujita's willingness to accept and respond reflects a unique social culture within the Soka schools. There is a safe and comfortable environment that the Soka schools fostered that allows students to feel vulnerable to embrace and respond to this ethos. This social culture is also

validated through the relationships. For Fujita, the bond between the upperclassmen and underclassmen reinforced significance and meaning. In other words, because there were strong bonds, the routines and meaning behind the songs mattered. As a result, the school songs, which could have been insignificant, became a meaningful value and vision she embraced as her own value. In order to foster this social and cultural setting and apply this ethos in the schools, both the safe environment and meaningful relationships were necessary. The Soka school environment reflects the three balanced states of mind required for human education (Ikeda, 2012). Specifically, the school offers an academic environment for students to think critically while also creating a safe environment for vulnerability and growth. As a result, students could explore their emotional richness. Finally, Fujita's willingness to participate and challenge herself also demonstrates will power, the third balanced state of mind. Therefore, the value that constitutes the two essential qualities and the environment that fosters three balanced states of mind represent the environment necessary for human education.

5.2.3 Human revolution through challenging and working hard

Ikeda's (2010a; 2011a; in Garrison, Hickman, & Ikeda, 2014; in Ikeda & Zgurovsky, 2011; in Marinoff & Ikeda, 2012) notion of human revolution is echoed throughout Fujita's narrative. For example, when she expresses her views and experience on the importance of challenging and working hard, Ikeda's human revolution concept is reverberated. She describes this notion of challenging and working hard as a culture and vision she learned at the Soka schools. In her narrative she introduces this notion in three different vignettes. The first two are from her personal experience of undergoing human revolution once as student and, then, as a teacher. The third account details how Fujita, then, passes her values to her students.

In the first vignette, when she finds out about her class ranking, she makes value by determining to change and improve herself. She uses this incident as an opportunity to propel forward and challenge herself in her academics and in her basketball activity. As a result, she becomes top in her class and sees first hand the value in challenging oneself. This personal experience validated and cultivated a way of life for Fujita, which she, then, further creates value (Makiguchi, 1981-1988, Vol. 5) by encouraging and passing down these values to her students.

The second vignette involves a deeper inner struggle and transformation. She struggles with the student and continues to grapple with the relationship to which she finally comes to the realization that she had to put aside her ego and change her views and her actions to truly connect with the student. In other words, Fujita challenged herself toward her greater self (Ikeda, 2010a) However, this does not mean that she did not care. She struggled because she cared for the student. However, she had to look beyond her perspective in order to change how she showed her care for the student. This experience reflects Thayer-Bacon's (2003) caring reasoning and Noddings's caring theory and her two attributes – engrossment and motivational displacement (Noddings, 1984; Thayer-Bacon, 2003; Thayer-Bacon, 2004). Fujita, the one-caring, showed engrossment through her commitment and willingness to attend to and maintain a relation with the student. She further showed motivational displacement when she put aside her perspective and needs to completely attend to the students' needs. When these two attributes were acted by the one-caring, the cared-for, in turn, responded.

Similar to the second vignette, the third vignette also shows a teacher-student relationship account. Compared to the second one which focused on Fujita's human revolution, this third vignette describes how Fujita internalized the value she learned at the Soka schools, applied these values in her own teaching, and learns the outcome of the relationship years later. This

experience taught Manami to challenge herself and it also taught her a way of life, which was further validated through Manami's appreciation email to Fujita.

5.2.4 Teacher and student relationships

Fujita wears multiple hats in the school as a teacher, and, other times, as the basketball coach or dean in charge of student discipline. However, regardless of her role or position, she values creating relationships with her students. As a teacher, she tries to create connections by building trust, giving attention, walking around the classroom rather than standing in front of them, and standing next to the students when interacting with them. Fujita sees the teacher-student relationship as first a human-to-human relationship. Thus, rather than a top-down or pure instructional approach, her actions show her respect towards the students.

Similarly, as a disciplinarian, when she meets with a student, she makes effort to make the interaction with the student meaningful by focusing on the students' positive traits and strengths, putting faith in all students to succeed, and making sure to end the conversation by praising the students and expressing her expectation and beliefs in the students' potential. When focused on the role as a disciplinarian, it is easy to focus on the negative actions since the student is meeting with her as a result of their misconduct. Of course Fujita addresses the misconduct. However, because her focus is on how she can make the engagement with her student most value creative and meaningful for the student, her actions focus not only on disciplining the student, but also on how to encourage the student to move forward from this point.

Fujita's narrative account about her student Manami is another example that demonstrates Fujita's value and commitment to form relationships with her students. She dedicated a lot of her time with this student after school and even during summer break to

improve her test scores. The care was reciprocated through her results in successfully graduating and getting accepted to a high school as well as her surprising mail years later thanking Fujita for her tireless efforts to teach her how to work hard and challenge. Both Fujita's and Manami's personal accounts present Makiguchi's (1981-1988, Vol. 5) notion of happiness. They created value from their lives and experienced personal gain [such as exerting effort in their academics], which also led to their growth and creation of good for the collective society through becoming a teacher and nurse respectively. The various accounts of Fujita's narrative both as a student and as a teacher demonstrate Makiguchi and Ikeda's value creative and human-centered philosophy applied in daily life.

At the same time, Fujita also has moments when she feels depressed when she feels nothing she does is meaningful enough. In such times, when she hits a wall, and feels trapped, she reminds herself why she chose this path. When she looks back to her turning point, it reminds her of what she learned at the Soka schools. The spirit and culture of Soka. "It refreshes and encourages me to keep moving forward and to live a contributive life." For Fujita, the Soka school is a mental place she goes back to when she needs to refresh.

Although Fujita shares how she struggles being a teacher at times, she is not deterred by a need for immediate gratification. Rather, she embraces value-creating philosophy that respects all life and potential in every life. This is evident from the interactions with her students. The Soka schools taught her a way of life and, furthermore, what it means to be a teacher.

5.3 TANABE

We decided to meet at the same café where I also interviewed Fujita. The location was nearby the Hachioji train station where Soka University is located and also a quiet place to conduct interviews. Hachioji city was a mutually familiar and convenient location for both of us because of our affiliation with Soka University.

Tanabe is an elementary school teacher in his early thirties and has been teaching for nine years. He taught at one elementary school for six years until he was transferred to teach at his current school where he has been teaching for three years. Tanabe had a soft-spoken voice, but, he also showed his firm character as he spoke with conviction and certainty about his experiences and teaching philosophy throughout the interview.

Tanabe attended the Soka schools from elementary through high school and also attended Soka University of Japan. The years he spent at the Soka schools brings back positive emotions and feelings. In particular, the relationship with his peers and teachers made the experience most memorable for Tanabe. He describes the classmates he went to school with as one team. “We grew up together, learned together, and lived together for 12 years. Our camaraderie is strong.” Teachers also played a strong role. They listened and respected students’ opinions and made effort to help actualize students’ opinions. In the process, the teachers joined the students in their process for learning and growth. The students also enjoyed doing something with the teachers. These interactions made Tanabe feel valued and recognized by his teachers. While at the Soka schools, Tanabe assumed this was the kind of natural and normal relationship that existed everywhere between teachers and students. He says, “The founder once said, that the tradition of Soka schools is that the teacher will do anything for their students. I agree. They did so much for us.”

5.3.1 Turning point

Since he was young, Tanabe enjoyed taking care of children. He also looked after his underclassmen and naturally developed an interest in becoming an elementary school teacher. He experienced first hand how much capacity children have to absorb and acquire knowledge and wanted to contribute to this age level. His interest solidified into a definite career goal at the end of his freshmen year in high school. He volunteered to support his school's graduation ceremony and was in charge of taking pictures of the ceremony. His specific role was capturing the graduating class and their facial expressions. The graduation ceremony took place in the school gymnasium. Tanabe was standing in the middle aisle between dozens of students sitting in the rows of folding chairs. The founder started to give a speech to the graduating class. This speech and message made a lasting impression for Tanabe and it was the moment when the founder shared with conviction that his last task in life is education.

It was a declaration. His [The founder's] face was firm and serious. The founder's passion for education reached all of us in that gymnasium. It was as if he was showing and guiding us on a path. At that moment, I remember thinking to myself, *this is it*. It was the moment when my future was determined. From hoping to become a teacher, my desire changed into a determination that I will become a teacher. Put simply, it was an electrifying moment. Completely forgetting my role to take pictures, I squatted down facing the stage with my eyes fixed on the founder. I listened intently to his speech. It felt like time stopped for that brief moment and it was just me and the founder in that gymnasium. I just knew in that moment that this [career in education] was how I was going to repay my appreciation to the founder.

Until this point, his interest in becoming a teacher was still a vague dream.

However, this particular speech created a turning point in his life. Tanabe explains that, even prior to this speech, the founder often conveyed the importance of education and it always inspired him. In his 16 years at the Soka school system, he received various messages and speeches from the founder. When he was attending Soka elementary, the founder introduced ideas of many great thinkers in his speeches to make a statement. When Tanabe was attending Soka University of Japan, the founder shared thoughts of many other world thinkers that he was not familiar with, which motivated him to study even harder. The founder's speeches were at times straightforward and simple; at other times, it challenged Tanabe's perspectives. The founder's words had warmth, but also strictness; his speeches and writings became a guiding principle throughout Tanabe's life. In particular, the graduation speech was the most meaningful and influential. This graduation ceremony was the start of Tanabe's journey to challenge himself for personal growth and advancement.

Although he determined to become a teacher, Soka University's education major was academically rigorous. Moreover, the primary education program within the education major was also extremely competitive. Tanabe's grades in high school were low at the time and it was nearly impossible to get accepted into the education department with the grades he had. He had to make a choice to become serious with his education. Fortunately, he had friends who were studious so he decided to study with them and learned how to study well. His friends also motivated him to study. He reflects back with appreciation for his friends who were good influences and notes that it would have been impossible to study that hard if he was alone.

While studying, Tanabe also took on leadership roles in various school activities including the school library, ping pong club, and also the student council. He worried whether he was fulfilling his responsibilities in his respective activities or rather creating a burden to his

fellow members by his over-involvement. His biggest fear was judgment by his classmates. He struggled whether he was doing the right thing by taking on so many responsibilities and feared failing or making mistakes. Due to his fears, he struggled and, at one point, felt stagnant. During this difficult time, he read one of the founder's writings and was encouraged by his words. The founder writes, "The biggest mistake in your youth is not doing anything due to fear of failure." The founder's words identified exactly with what Tanabe was experiencing. He felt relieved and reassured that he could make mistakes. From that moment, he decided to stop worrying and do his best.

He challenged himself throughout the next two years in high school. Because he exerted himself and persevered, he highlights that his graduation became that much more meaningful. He says, "I still remember my graduation. I couldn't stop crying. I made a lot of memories. The founder taught me how to live my life. I don't think this type of experience is something you can experience in public schools." Tanabe was successfully accepted to Soka University's primary education program and experienced first hand the benefits of challenging and forging ahead. There are many other speeches and writings that inspire Tanabe but these two [the one at graduation and the other one he read about fearing mistakes] were the most influential quotes that remain in his heart.

5.3.2 Culture of Soka: A place to go back to...

Tanabe uses a distinct language when describing and ascribing meaning to his experience at the Soka schools. He said the Soka school is a place to go back to. It is a physical space and location to go back to, but, also a mental and spiritual space to go back to. For example, for the physical location, he explains that, "We can return whenever we want to. I think this is a strong

characteristic of Soka schools. Even if we graduate from one school to another, we could easily walk to our elementary or junior high school to see our teachers.” When he visits the elementary school, there are still teachers that remember him from when he was a student. Sometimes he visited his underclassmen to help out or volunteer as a voice trainer. At other times when he was struggling, he visited to seek advice from his former teachers. Whenever he visited, the school always embraced him. His former teachers would welcome him and say to him, “I’m happy you came. How are you?” Just these words made him feel at peace. When he was preparing for his exams to become a teacher, his former teacher at Soka high school helped him prepare for his exams. For Tanabe, the Soka schools are far from a temporary physical location that he once was at in the past. It became an important part of his ongoing life. Thus, they continue to be a part of his life.

In contrast, Tanabe underscores how staying connected with former teachers in public schools is difficult because of the government system that requires teachers to transfer every couple years. For example, Tanabe shared about two students who recently visited the public school he teaches. They were former graduates of the elementary school and came to visit their teachers. Unfortunately, there was nobody who knew the students because all the teachers who had been teaching at the time had all transferred. One of students sadly uttered in a low tone, “I guess we won’t be back anymore” and left the school. Tanabe hopes none of his students will experience this and tries to create a place his students can come back to. Because Tanabe had meaningful relationships at the Soka schools, he makes effort to connect and stay connected with his students. When they graduate, he tells his students that they can always come back to visit the school.

In addition to this physical location as a place to go back to when describing Soka schools, Tanabe also describes the presence of the founder as a mental and spiritual place to go back to. Whenever he feels stuck or challenged with something, he goes back to the founder's speeches and books. Tanabe explains, "The founder's presence is like a father or like a teacher's teacher. He constantly says we are all his children and precious treasures. It's reassuring just to know someone cares for you. It made me feel protected." Reflecting back to his experience as an adult and teacher, Tanabe explains that the environment was *already prepared*. He states the environment and people at the Soka schools were ready to foster students into individuals who challenged themselves, who wanted to grow, who cared for others, and who were committed to contributing to society. Tanabe describes the unique aspect of Soka schools in the following way, "Soka education is not about fostering elites. At the Soka schools, students who might not be academically competent become exceptional students. Teachers focus on making students feel confident about something so that they go into society and feel confident." As a teacher, Tanabe makes effort to provide these values he learned at the Soka schools to his students.

5.3.3 Teaching values: Tanabe's application

For Tanabe, the responsibility of being a teacher includes more than teaching the subject matter. He believes it includes developing relationships and having heart to heart connections with his students. Tanabe tries to be an individual who supports his students when they are struggling and be a dependable figure that his students can count on whenever they need him. For Tanabe, his teachers and the founder was his dependable figure. He hopes to establish a connection that will allow students, when they are ready or when they are in need, to reach out to him.

Likewise, Tanabe believes students have the responsibility to develop a learning attitude and spirit to challenge various things in life. He wants students to work hard and do their best. This attribute was an important quality Tanabe learned from the Soka schools. For Tanabe, a numerical or letter grade itself is not necessarily important. Rather, he hopes students remember the process of challenging toward something and creating positive habits in their life. Thus, he stresses to his students that winning is not about obtaining an A or 100, but rather, acquiring the practice to continuously challenge. He explains, “Nothing will change if you don’t change. If you do something, something might change. I think that’s what challenging means. If you move forward and challenge it, even if it’s from zero, it can create possibilities.” Once a student has the habit to challenge and work towards something, Tanabe believes it can become a skillset that can be applied beyond schoolwork and towards their life as tools to deal with real life situations and to contribute to society.

As a teacher, Tanabe wants his students to feel confident. He feels that this is one of his roles as a teacher. It can be just one thing that he or she feels confident about, and, if the student feels confident, that is his greatest joy as a teacher. Thus, Tanabe makes effort to teach his students what he learned from Soka; he shares the importance of challenging and gaining confidence through challenging and accomplishing something. For example, he had a student who hated green peas. During lunch, Tanabe encouraged her to eat at least half of the peas served. In Japan, most schools on the elementary level serves food and the students eat in their classroom with their classmates. The teacher will also eat at his desk or with the students. As a result, the setting made it easier to recognize a child who was not eating all her food. Tanabe worked with the student everyday to encourage her to challenge eating her green peas. Then, one day, she was able to eat all her green peas. Tanabe praised her for challenging and eating all her

peas. He believes children can challenge other things when praised and feel confident. Thus, the student eats everything now. More importantly, he underscores that, since then, she changed and started to challenge things rather than make a tantrum.

In accord with what he learned at the Soka schools and his values on teacher-student relationships, Tanabe values a one-to-one dialogue, which he applies to his students as well as with parents. When he has a serious conversation with his students, he tries to talk with them privately and speak to them from their perspective so that the student can understand. He sits down with them so that their eyes are on the same level and not him looking down at them. With parents, Tanabe avoids phone calls and generic reports or letters. He makes effort to meet the parent one-on-one to talk and communicate with them so that it avoid miscommunication and helps with understanding each other. The interaction, thus, creates a more meaningful connection than a phone call or letter. He also encourages and advises younger teachers he supervises with this approach. Tanabe learned this quality from the founder and emphasizes that it became a way of life for him too. Accordingly, he adds that the Soka schools were always filled with these kinds of values.

For Tanabe, the notion of connecting with students involves not only the classroom interactions, but, it also extends beyond the classroom. He makes effort to get to know the student after school hours and even after they graduate from the school. He believes, this bond, this human-to-human connection that continues beyond the school and which helps with students' way of living and being is what Ikeda describes as human education. Tanabe states, "I think if my student, through our relationship, feels in some way supported during crucial times, that's a successful example of human education. They are bonds that cannot be severed." Through his relationships, he assures his students that there is and will always be a place for

them to return or come back to. After his students graduate, he shares his cell phone number and email address so that they can contact him anytime if they need someone to talk to. As a result, the students periodically contact him for mini gatherings or reunions. Another way he makes effort to stay in touch with both his current and former student is through sending them New Year's greeting card every year. Tanabe explains:

I try to value those relationships. I learned this from Soka. When my former students invite me to their mini gatherings, I go see them and ask them how they're doing. I listen to their experiences and I think just asking how they're doing is important. Some share with me their struggles. I try to listen and, at times, share my thoughts.

5.3.4 Tanabe's care for his students beyond the classroom

Tanabe had an absentee student once in his class, a common and troubling phenomenon in Japan. He taught him for three years from fourth to sixth grade. The student came out the first half of his fourth year, then, stopped coming to school. He was absent throughout the rest of his fourth year. The student's older brother was also struggling with absenteeism. When Tanabe home visited the student's home, he was shocked at the student's home environment. The curtains were closed 24 hours creating a dark atmosphere. The dishes were left not only in the sink, but also on the floor, and the house was a complete mess. The mother seemed to have no authority or control in what her children did. The father also seemed indifferent to being involved. It did not seem like a normal family environment. Tanabe decided to stop by the student's home every morning before going to school to try to encourage the student to attend school.

If he just left the house; if he can overcome those few minutes of getting out of the house, I thought he would come to school. He won't come out if I just knocked on his door and

asked him. So I would wait until he came out himself. When he did, I would greet him and say, “let’s go to school together.” I also told him that he can’t run away from things he doesn’t want to see. I tried to encourage him and say, “let’s face them.” When he came to school, he was able to participate in class. During that period, I went every morning. I think he lacked a lot of personal and physical contact with his family. He started to come out more during his fifth and sixth year. I thought maybe he’s okay now.

The student graduated elementary school and he is now a senior in high school. Tanabe heard that he was struggling with absenteeism again. He was aware of the student’s situation because he was in communication with the middle school faculty. Tanabe was also in touch with many of his former students, so, whenever he met with the absentee student’s classmates, he asked them how he was doing. When he reflects back, he wonders whether there was anything else that he could have done for the student. However, even though that student may seem unsuccessful at the moment, Tanabe believed that it did not mean the student will continue to be unsuccessful. He knows that it is difficult to reach every student, but he hopes that the time he spent with the student, whatever he shared or taught him, will make meaning for him some day. After the student graduated, Tanabe continued to send an annual New Year’s greeting card. That was the only communication with the student. Whenever Tanabe sent one, the student always sent a greeting card back. The student never said anything in the card but always sent one back. Tanabe commented, “It’s my joy as a teacher to know that the teacher-student relationship doesn’t end in the classroom.”

5.3.5 Relational knowing: Learning from his students

In Tanabe's teaching career, there was one student who impacted his life and who left a strong impression. The student was one of Tanabe's students when he was teaching sixth grade and who passed away from cancer during that year he taught him. Tanabe noted that the day we had our interview, June 18th, was that student's birthday. The student was bright and active and had many friends. He was first diagnosed when he was in fifth grade. At first, the school was informed that his cancer was not life threatening. But, his cancer soon spread to his lungs. Then, he was hospitalized and everyone all knew the severity of his condition. He was mostly in the hospital during the time he was in Tanabe's class.

I often visited him in the hospital. He also had a phone so we often sent text messages to each other. He'd text me about what he was doing. Like, "Hey, I went fishing today and caught a fish." I would reply, "Oh, cool. You'll have to show me next time." Or he'd tell me he went to see a baseball game. But, the interaction we had is beyond just describing it as something memorable in my teaching career. He'll remain in my memory. It sounds light to express it as my memory. In my teaching career, he's part of the foundation of who I am. Right before he passed, I felt like he taught me the power of life.

One day, Tanabe heard the ambulance pass by when he was at school. The student lived nearby the school so Tanabe had a weird feeling. When he received the call from the mother about his passing, Tanabe was speechless. Then, he broke down in the teaching lounge. The students in his class understood what had happened and accepted their classmate's death. The whole class attended the funeral and sang a song together in memory of their classmate.

Later, he heard from his parents that in his last moments, he didn't ask for what he wanted. He instead left messages for his family members. The student until his last moment

showed compassion for others. The student wished to see Tanabe as well but his parents told him he must be very busy. After hearing about this, Tanabe was deeply touched.

This student's life made Tanabe think about the meaning of life and living life. He explains that, "He lived a short life. But, he left a strong message to us. His strong will to live." Since then, whenever there's a subject on morality, Tanabe always talks about him to his current students. He shares about how this student lived his life to the fullest. He hopes that his story can provide a way for his students to understand life and how to live life. Tanabe shares that the story always has a strong impact on his students. They respond by listening intently and wholeheartedly. Every year, Tanabe continues to meet with the student's parents on October 4th, the day he passed, to share his experiences. He explains, "I think it's my mission as someone who interacted with him to share, to encourage, and pass on his life to other students."

In addition to passing on the value of life and the values of living, Tanabe also hopes to foster students into individuals that surpass him. He wants students to do more than what he accomplished.

I don't want them to be limited to my standards. I want them to succeed more and contribute in ways I couldn't. This outlook comes from one of the founder's encouragements. He stated that when we interact with our underclassmen, the underclassmen wouldn't grow and develop unless we interact with them with the mindset to foster them into even greater human beings than ourselves. This is the same with education. When we teach children, we shouldn't teach just what's required, but, we should have the desire to foster our students into individuals who'll breakthrough from their shells to contribute their unique abilities in various ways to the world.

Thus, whenever possible, as a way to provide the values he learned at Soka, he makes opportunities to share his personal experiences and struggles he went through to encourage his students about the importance of working hard and developing the courage to challenge difficulties. By connecting his own lived experiences to a class lesson, he also tries to incorporate values during class to provide a stronger impression and a living learning-experience that is beyond a textbook lesson.

5.4 REFLECTION: TANABE'S NARRATIVE

5.4.1 Relationships – bonds that cannot be severed

The first and foremost quality that he experienced and learned at the Soka schools was the value of relationships. When I asked him about his experience, the first thought that came to his mind was the relations he fostered during his school years and beyond. His friendships helped him through the process of studying and working hard to achieve his goals. Even after years had gone by since graduating the school, his former teacher supported him when he was applying for the teacher certification exams. The support of his friends and teachers helped him to become a teacher. His values on relations are mirrored in his teaching methods and philosophy. This is demonstrated in the examples he gives including his one-to-one dialogue methods and being a dependable adult figure who students can count on when they are struggling. His care and commitment to developing relations is also evident in his personal narratives with the student who hated green peas and the student who struggled with absenteeism. This commitment to attend to and care for his students and value a relationship reflects two fundamental qualities to

the ethics of care (Held, 2006; Noddings, 1984) and it also describes caring reasoning (Thayer-Bacon, 2003). In both cases, Tanabe continued to connect with the students until they responded, whether it was to encourage a student everyday to eat their green peas or to visit a student's home every morning to encourage the student to come to school on their own. These two examples also illustrate how the caring relation was completed by the students' acknowledgement and reciprocation of care. With the student who struggled with cancer, he continued to keep in touch with the student through text messages when the student could no longer attend school.

The last experience, with the student who passed away from cancer, describes a deeper teacher and student relationship. The focus of the story is not necessarily an interaction with a student or what the teacher did for the student that impacted a student's life. It was a teacher-student relationship that impacted a teacher's life. Though the student passed away, the teacher-student relationship continues to exist in Tanabe's life. The student taught Tanabe the meaning of life. The meaning and value he carries from the relationship is evident from his annual visits to the student's parents also through the messages he addresses to his current students about this student's life.

He creates value (Makiguchi, 1981-1988, Vol. 5) and meaning (Ikeda, 2010b) out of the student's life and makes meaning for other students' lives, even years after the student passed. There is a meaningful bond that exists beyond the physical extent of a confined teacher and student relationship in the classroom, a relationship that he describes as bonds that cannot be severed. Tanabe's personal experiences present Noddings' (1984) and Ikeda's (2010b; in Marinoff & Ikeda, 2012) caring relationship between teacher and student. From Noddings' view, there was interaction, acknowledgement, and reciprocation. Students reciprocated by eating the

green peas or coming out to school. In the case of the student with cancer, the caring relationship, Tanabe felt the care and reciprocated by continuing to share the student's life to his current students and by keeping in touch with the student's family. From Ikeda's view, the teacher attends to the student, shows the student a way of life, and the student acknowledges with appreciation. At the Soka schools, Tanabe learned a way of life and he showed his appreciation by challenging himself and becoming a teacher.

Tanabe's effort to keep in touch with his students even after they leave the classroom setting also mirrors the relationship he had with his former teachers. Although the relationship he values is teacher-student relationship because of his current profession, he notes that the relationship that students experience does not necessarily have to be a teacher-student relationship. For Tanabe, the relationship that was most influential and valuable to him during his schooling was with his classmates. After graduating the Soka schools, the relationship he valued naturally shifted to teacher-student relationships because he sought for their advice and support during important moments in his life and the teachers responded with care. When he was taking his teaching certification exam, his former teacher helped him to pass the exam. Tanabe explains that having good relationships and experiences is also what it means to experience Soka education.

5.4.2 Challenging and exerting oneself

Another characteristic and quality Tanabe learned at the Soka schools, and which he continues to practice in his life, is the importance to challenge and work hard. This value is echoed throughout his narrative. He mentions twice during his schooling at the Soka schools that he made a decision to challenge himself. The first time was when he decides to study and improve

his grades. Second time was when he decides to challenge all his extra curricular activities. As a result, he was accepted into the education program that seemed daunting and impossible at the time. The emotional description he gave about crying at his graduation also reflects the amount of effort Tanabe placed on challenging oneself and the rewarding experience he felt at graduation. This characteristic and cultural aspect of Soka schools, to challenge limitations and exert oneself for self-improvement, reflects Ikeda's notion on human revolution and the process for human education (Ikeda, 2010b, 2012).

His personal experience validates the importance of challenging oneself and further motivates him to apply this value he learned to his teaching. Tanabe mentions twice how he encourages his students to challenge their struggles. Once with the student who could not finish eating her green peas and another time when he was encouraging a student struggling with absenteeism to come out to school. Tanabe hopes by encouraging his students to challenge oneself, it will become a tool and skillset for their lives in the future.

5.4.3 A way of life

The third characteristic was a phrase Tanabe uses to describe the significance of the founder. Tanabe emphasizes that the founder taught him a way of life. Accordingly, the two personal accounts he shares of his schooling experience involve the choices and actions he made at the Soka schools. In both cases, Tanabe was inspired by the founder's message. Tanabe's narrative account is a clear example of Ikeda's (2010b; November 2012; in Marinoff & Ikeda, 2012) notion of the shared commitment between mentor and disciple; the mentor shows a way of life to his disciple and the disciple adopts his mentor's vision as his own and expands his own capacity. Likewise, Tanabe adopted his mentor's vision to contribute to society through education. As a

result, he challenged his limitations and achieved far beyond what he could have done. Tanabe also adopts this view and passes on these values and way of life to his students. His stories with his students and his hope that his students surpass him and contribute to society in more ways than what he could have done (Ikeda, 2011b) are strong examples of Ikeda's mentor and disciple relationship applied into practice.

5.4.4 A place to go back to

In his narrative accounts, Tanabe repeatedly describes Soka schools as a place to go back to. I believe this is another cultural phenomenon resulting from the school environment that aims to foster relations and student development. Students and teachers stay connected and that connection nurtures a space for students to go back to, whether to seek support, advice, encouragement, or to refresh and reenergize. Because he values this supportive environment, he also mirrors and applies this in his own teaching environment with his students. He makes effort to develop and maintain relationships and ensures a safe space for students to feel comfortable to return to if they needed any support or encouragement. This nurtured environment is what Tanabe describes as a prepared environment.

5.4.5 Prepared environment

The fifth and last description that Tanabe uses to describe the Soka schools and its cultural settings was that *the environment was prepared*. Montessori (2007/2010) also stresses the importance of preparing a child's environment. In her case, she meant physically preparing the environment that conforms to the children's size and to make that environment their own

environment. Montessori argues that, “we must do everything to help him perfect himself. In other words, we must exercise him in the things he must do, for exercise gives rise to development” (p. 44). By preparing a child in his or her own environment, Montessori argues that, “he works by himself toward his own self-perfection” (p.45). Similarly, the aim for Ikeda’s human education focuses on developing the individual to their fullest capacity.

In Tanabe’s mind, the Soka school is an example of a prepared environment. He further explains that the aim of Soka schools is not to foster elites, but to foster exceptional human beings. The environment was a safe place for vulnerability and it was ready to accept, embrace, and support students to excel, to grow, to maximize their potential to the fullest. This was nurtured through the caring relationships and the ethos that was shared by the such as challenging and developing oneself and caring for others. Teachers, staff, and administrators embraced these values. Thus, Soka schools were prepared for students to experience Ikeda’s human education in practice; for students to embrace the Soka values. When a student has an inspiration or motivation and when they are ready to take ownership or responsibility to strive for their aspirations, the environment is prepared and ready to support the students toward achieving those goals.

5.5 MIYATA

I first met Miyata in 2000 during my second year at Soka University of Japan (SUJ). We were majoring in the same program. Though our actual correspondences during the year I attended the program were brief, he left a strong first impression. At one of the very first social gatherings for our program, I remember attending the dinner gathering, but, being hesitant to socialize.

Including myself, there were two other international students in the program. The three of us sat at the end of the table. Miyata was one of the first students to come speak to us. He was very friendly and social. He helped break the ice and it allowed us to mingle with the other students in the program. He later explains during our interview how he loved interacting with people and he was always the type in class who would rally all the students together. If there were any students reluctant or indifferent to participate, he would want to get them involved and unite the class.

Years later, through mutual friends, I learned that he became an elementary school teacher. After hearing about my research on Soka Education, he willingly accepted to be part of my research. Miyata attended Tokyo Soka high school and Soka University of Japan totaling seven years of schooling at the Soka institution. He started teaching elementary level straight after graduating college and has been teaching for 12 years. Miyata was in his late twenties when I first interviewed him in 2008.

From when he was young, Miyata had positive images about teachers. His first experience with a teacher was his mother. He grew up watching his mother live her life joyfully and fulfilled with her life as a mother and teacher. At home, she was always excited to talk about her job. The impression he received about teaching, from watching his mother, was that it must be a rewarding and worthwhile profession. He also had a unique experience during his schooling. All throughout his elementary and middle school years, Miyata had seven male teachers. All his encounters with his teachers were positive and they were all good teachers. As a young male student and having this rare experience of having consistently male teachers, he naturally wanted to become like his teachers.

When Miyata attended Soka high school, his first impression was that it was a normal school with students like anywhere else having both good and bad traits, strengths and

weaknesses. Everyone had his or her own unique character. Tokyo Soka high school was a high-ranking school but not everybody liked studying. Some hated studying. Miyata smiled and described himself as one of those students who hated studying. However the following seven years at Soka high school and Soka University of Japan shapes the foundation for his values about education. It also symbolizes and defines his understanding of what Soka education means and what it conveys.

5.5.1 Soka Tennis

What Miyata remembers most from his school days at Soka high school was the time he spent playing tennis. He was part of the Tennis club and practiced every day, every morning before class, and also on the weekends. At Soka high school, there was a word called *Soka Tennis* which was considered within the club members as a rule or policy. This word supported the students mentally and it symbolized working hard for others and winning, not necessarily in the competitions, but in their lives as human beings. Miyata stressed that at Soka, even the players that are not skilled are glowing. Whatever the club activity, it has been a tradition to focus not only on the skillset but also strengthening the mental aspect of the individual. Miyata stated that this was a unique aspect unlike other schools. He explains that in other schools, the goal of sports might be to practice and become a better player and to compete and win in tournaments. But, at Soka, the purpose was not focused on winning. Thus, at competitions, he was mindful of his own behavior and attitude in order to create a good example for other schools and students.

5.5.2 Strong peer relationships and learning to believe in oneself

He gained invaluable friends through tennis who he can confide anything about. He made friends he could trust to share about his struggles and who supported him as he challenged and overcame those struggles. The friends he made through playing tennis was one example of the many deep bonds at Soka high school and university. Miyata explained in his own words, “At Soka, I felt each connection and bond was rich and strong. I think this was a result due to others who also shared and sought the same kind of bond that I also valued.” These bonds cultivated Miyata’s educational values of seeing every individual with potential. One example of this bond was when he was in college. Although Miyata on most occasions was calm and carefree, there was a time in college when he was struggling and anxious about his life:

I used to worry about having no worries in life. But, during my junior year in college, I had a period when I was depressed. I started to worry about what I was going to do with my life. I was uncertain about my future. In such times it’s common to lose touch with friends. When you’re feeling good you keep in touch and actively engage to keep in touch. But when you’re feeling down and when you avoid people, it’s natural to lose friends. But, even during those times, there were many friends who were there for me and who I felt genuinely cared for me within the Soka education environment. Even without words, I could feel their confidence in me. They believed that I was going to be okay. And because of this experience, I believe that there is an education, my own education, a unique teaching that only I can do. That’s why I felt strongly about becoming a teacher. In reality though I realized the difficulty of sharing my values once I became a teacher. But because I have and embody this value, I think my students feel this from our relationships.

The strong friendship he fostered at the Soka schools gave him the confidence to believe in himself. Similarly, at Soka, he witnessed the same confidence and faith from teachers. Even when students were troubled or showed indifference toward their studies, he remembers how his teacher would continue to show care and support. For one particular student, Miyata's teacher continued to keep in touch with the student even after the student had graduated to encourage and support the student. For more details on this particular narrative between the teacher and student, see Nagashima (2012).

5.5.3 Recognizing the potential in oneself and others

Miyata's personal experiences at the Soka schools shaped his confidence and desire to become a teacher and provide the same experience for his students. Miyata expressed this in the following way:

Because there were people in my life that truly believed in my potential, I felt joy and fulfillment. Soka education to me is that urging feeling, the eagerness to want to share that joy. Being a Soka Gakkai member is my strength. There's something I want to pass on. It comes from my lived experience. My educational value comes from the founder's philosophy on life and Nichiren Daishonin's philosophy, which is to believe in the potential of each and every child. Whether it's our physical features, or nationality, or environment we grew up in, there might be differences but the value of life is all the same – the equality of life. This value comes from my own education and experience at the Soka schools because people believed in me. This is Soka education. Soka education has what I feel the direction for where education needs to go. Each child has potential. At

Soka schools, education is internal. This is my educational value. That's the value I see in education.

The way Miyata sees friendship, education, and his Buddhist faith are all the same. That is the belief in the potential of each life. In education, even when a child acts or performs in way teachers might not approve of, Miyata believes that the important point is for teachers to believe in the potential of the child and to believe that he or she can improve and become better. Rather than dismissing someone, Miyata treats everyone equally regardless of race, ethnicity, or age because he believes everyone is equal with inherent potential. So with friendship, he sees a human-to-human bond, a connection between two lives. Thus, for Miyata, friendship, education, and his faith are all the same.

Miyata's upbringing also reflects his consistent value on the dignity of life. His parents' educational beliefs reflect the philosophy of Nichiren Buddhism. Miyata explains how his parents always trusted him and believed in him. They never rejected his life choices and they made sure to voice their belief and love for him. Like his friends, he felt that deep bond of trust and confidence from his parents. From his home environment to his school environment, Miyata was surrounded by a value system that fostered and nurtured his values. Thus, through his experience, Miyata believes that the most important lesson he should teach and convey to his students as a teacher is the dignity of life. Although the principle of respect for life comes from his Buddhist practice, he asserts that the foundation for his beliefs in the dignity of life stems from his personal experience developing relationships at Soka high school and Soka University.

5.5.4 Miyata as a teacher

Miyata states with firm conviction that his strength is his ability to believe in the potential and possibilities of others. In reality, there might be differences between people's abilities such as physical strength. However, in relation to each person's innate potential and possibilities, Miyata sees everyone equally. Each life is important and significant. For this reason, he believes the purpose of education is the full development of a human being. Therefore, education is more than acquiring knowledge for Miyata. Knowledge is important, but, school is also the place where learners learn about themselves and their inner development.

Accordingly, he chose to teach at the elementary level because he felt that this level of schooling was the first place where students began to interact and become involved with other people. In elementary school, teachers spend their whole day with the same students, which, allows deeper and richer relations and interactions. For Miyata, it was the most ideal environment to share his sense of humanity. Most importantly, he felt the encounters children had during this time shaped a lot of their ways of thinking. However, in reality teachers have to teach subject matter. Miyata understands that knowledge acquisition is important, but, he strongly feels that the internal growth and development is more important. So, in the classroom, he tries to make his students recognize that their teacher believes in their limitless potential.

I think the students who realize this are able to live freely and strongly. I think Soka education is the process of sharing this belief. But, I don't think by just saying this - that if they work hard, all their efforts will show results – the message would be conveyed. So I try to share this point through actual events or activities at school. In any type of event, there are always students who lack confidence to participate. In such moments, I encourage them and share my message. And, as they work towards the event, all my

students eventually feel happy that they challenged themselves because now they have the experience and know they can do it. These are the moments when I feel really happy that I became a teacher. It's not just teaching and learning. It's also building a relationship of trust.

At the same time, Miyata does not disregard the fact that each human being is uniquely different. Their academic ability of how one learns and understands is different as well as one's unique abilities and strengths as human beings. In his class, Miyata has about 37 elementary school students, however, he approaches and regards his students not from a 1 to 37 perspective but from a 1 on 1 basis. He thinks about how he can strengthen and expand each child's unique potential. In order to create a 1 to 1 relationship, Miyata makes sure that he is open with his students in order to make them feel comfortable. He explains, "This is my position with anybody, whether at school or in my personal life. When there's a connection with another, rather than to think what the other is thinking, I make myself open. Then, others naturally feel comfortable with me." However, by being open he does not mean sharing his personal life. It means to be embrative and approachable. He also shares with his students the various mistakes he made in his life to allow students to feel connected. He also verbally conveys to them that he trusts them and that he sees them as one human being to another.

5.5.5 Happiness

Miyata further shared how happiness is interconnected with internal growth. He shared a quote that the founder once said, "To learn is light, to not learn is darkness." He interprets this to mean that to know what is right is happiness; to not know is unhappiness. Miyata feels it would be ideal if his students can use the knowledge they have attained to do what they think is right in

their life. Miyata further described in his own words what he meant by happiness: “To me, happiness is when students are able to live freely. I think the most meaningful sense of happiness is having the ability to challenge and overcome struggles in life when they appear.” He explains what he means by this with an example. Miyata argued, that if his students, years after they leave or graduate from his classroom, were to fail to get accepted to a certain school, he would not feel personally responsible as a teacher. If that student failed to get accepted, but, knew somehow he or she will still be okay and can find another option, then, he would feel he accomplished something. However, if that student felt so miserable that he or she wanted to commit suicide, then, Miyata shared that he would feel responsible. Thus, Miyata concluded, “I won’t necessarily feel responsible for their knowledge acquisition, but, I would feel responsible for their internal growth.” Miyata exhibits a strong passion for children’s growth and development. He argues that the desire to want to teach and serve students is similar to how doctors want to save lives. The more his students grow as an individual, he feels it also represents his own worth as a human being.

In order to understand his students more, he also holds parent-teacher conferences every year and meets with every child’s mother. This is a common practice in Japanese schools, however, Miyata uses this as an opportunity to create value for both him and the parent. Miyata conducts a one on one dialogue, and, most of the time, the parent comes to the school and they have their meetings on the school grounds. He shared that it was a time when they can talk deeply about the child. It was an opportunity for Miyata to learn about the child that he does not see in the classroom. How he or she thinks and behaves at home. Similarly, it was also an opportunity for the mother to learn about her child and how he or she acts and performs in the classroom. He says,

Through our discussion, I reflect and think, oh he or she must have wanted to do this or must have been thinking about that during that particular moment. I also learn things about what that student needs to improve on. But, what's most rewarding is, in most of my cases, the mothers share how much their child is enjoying their school life. They tell me that since their child started attending my class, they would come home everyday and talk about what happened at school. Even if they fought at school or have difficulty in their studies, most of the students enjoy coming to school. Most of the parents throughout my years of teaching have shared with me how much the child is enjoying their school life after attending my class. I'm not doing anything special, but, I interpret that in my own way and I believe that somehow the students feel and know that I believe in their potential, that I value them and treasure them. It's not just a teacher who teaches and children who learns. I'm also fostering a one to one relationship of trust with my students.

5.5.6 Dilemma in teaching

While Miyata holds ideals about how he wants to connect with his students, he also expressed his current frustrations and dilemma. He feels a challenge between the beliefs he wants to convey and what he needs to teach, as well as the challenge between what he wants to convey and limitations the schools place on teachers. For example, when Miyata became a teacher there was one thing he definitely wanted to do for his students. That was to present a book accordingly to each of his students with a personal message on their birthday. This idea emerged from his own personal experience with one of his teachers at Soka high school. For three years straight, his teacher gave him a book on his birthday with a personal message written inside. It usually

mentioned one phrase about the student's strengths. That gesture made him really happy. It felt like the teacher did something especially for him; that she made time to think about him when she chose the gift. However, when he became a teacher, he quickly learned that that was not possible. Miyata describes his dilemma:

I felt like there was someone who was rooting for me. Soka education is about an individualized education and meeting the needs of each student. We were taught and fostered in that kind of environment. This interaction with the teacher was one of the moments at Soka that made me feel that there was someone who cared for me. It also became an example or a guide of what I can do as a teacher to show my support and care for my students. I felt it was a way of communication that I thought could let my students know that they have potential and possibilities. But, in reality, that idea was denied once I became a teacher. I tried different ways to share to my students and many times I was denied. In the public schools, the ways in which we can share our care is limited. Nowadays, schools are very careful. We can't give things to students and we can't have any personal connections with our students. Our role is purely to teach subject matter. We're told that we have certain work hours during the day and we should limit our interactions within those hours. But, I think education also take place in moments where we need to be involved in their private matters. When I was young, it was different. Teachers came down to the school grounds afterschool and played with us. I felt cared. Education can only be fostered through the human-to-human connection, but, I feel we are going towards a direction that discourages connections.

Though he experienced this dilemma in the first few years as a novice teacher, he also explained how, through years of experience, he found other ways to share and connect with his

students. Miyata shared how his views had gradually changed after the first two interviews. He argued, “At first I was discouraged [...] and focused on what I couldn’t do.” Whereas, eight years later, even though there are things he can’t do, he shares that, “there are still things I want to convey to my students. So I try to create value from my situation and find other ways of how I could convey what’s important within the given flexibility.” The following narrative is Miyata’s account with a student, an actual example that illustrates how he found a way to create value in the opportunities provided to convey his message to his students that he believes in their potential.

5.5.7 The student who wanted the pretty pen

Miyata shared the most recent incident he had with a female student who stole a couple pens from her classmates. The student stole because she wanted them. She purely thought they were cute pens and wanted to use them so she decided to take them. The student was using them in the classroom so it was obvious that she stole the pens.

The girl who had her pens stolen was upset and went to talk to Miyata because she wanted him to do something about it. At this moment, Miyata felt that if he simply scolded the student who stole, then, the message or lesson might not reach her. Rather, the student might put herself down for it and not see her own possibilities. If they’re being scolded, then, the incident ends with the student having a negative experience. He knew that if he scolded the student they would understand that they did something bad. But, he felt that purely laying out the rules of right and wrong was not enough. He carefully listened to what the student had to say about her pens being stolen, and made sure she was heard. He knew that scolding could also make him emotional. After making sure he had all the facts, Miyata decided to make time so that he could

think. He wanted to make sure he had the most meaningful dialogue with the student. However, in order to get to that point of meaningful dialogue, he shares about his own internal struggles and how he grapples with this issue. Here, in this moment, he shares about his personal journey of human revolution in his own words. He articulates:

I think and reflect on how best to approach the situation so that it would really reach the student. I want enough time to fully think about it so I decided to wrestle with this overnight. During this process, I feel uncomfortable and I'm going through my own emotional turmoil until I talk to the student. I want to talk to the student but I don't want to hurt her feelings. I don't want to deny the student's possibilities and potential. So I'm feeling restless.

The next day, Miyata went to the girl and invited her to talk with him privately. He sensed that she already knew what he was going to talk about. They met during break at an empty and quiet room next door. The student was smart so she knew coming in what she had done and was already regretting what she did. When they started to talk, the student had tears flowing from her eyes. He asked her why she was crying and if there was something she wanted to say. Through the course of their dialogue, the student expressed that she was feeling remorseful. As a teacher, one option at this point was to dismiss the student because she was aware and was already feeling bad. But, Miyata felt the conversation was not enough if she left just feeling remorseful. Instead of dismissing her, he continued to have a dialogue with her. He stresses:

I felt there was more in that moment that I could do. I shared how I believed in her and that she has a lot of possibilities. This way, she would remember this incident with a positive and constructive feeling. Not an incident where she was scolded by an adult, but,

an incident when a teacher engaged in a dialogue with her because he cared and believed in her.

Before he ended the conversation, he wanted the student to understand about relationships. He shared with her that though she can apologize to the student who she stole from and even though that student might forgive her, he said to her she must understand that the memory of her stealing will remain in that student's memory. He wanted her to understand that in order to restore the relationship, she would have to make effort to rebuild that relationship of trust with that student. And he reassured her that he would support in any way to help with that process. Miyata shared that the student cried even more. She was crying from a sense of relief to know that a teacher believed in her. He shared:

After our talk, I wanted to avoid dragging this issue because it's not constructive for the student either. To believe means if the student said she won't do it again, it means to believe her words. So I ended by letting her know that this conversation is over and that I won't bring it up again. She seemed refreshed when she left the room.

5.6 REFLECTION: MIYATA'S NARRATIVE

5.6.1 Social and cultural setting prior to attending the Soka schools

Before examining the social and cultural factors at the Soka school, it is important to note the unique social settings in which Miyata lived both at home and at school. First, from a young age, the most influential people surrounding him shared their confidence toward him. At home, his parents were the first to show trust and confidence in him. They continually trusted his decisions

and actions without judging or reprimanding him. At school, his friends showed confidence and faith in his ability to breakthrough from his struggles. He also witnessed teachers at the Soka school who cared and never gave up on the students even years after graduating the school. Throughout the course of his life, Miyata consistently experienced people showing care and confidence in him and believing in his potential. Normally one might experience one or two, or none, of these groups showing trust and confidence in the individual. Yet, for Miyata, he experienced a consistency in almost every relation that mattered in his early childhood and adolescent years – family, friends, and teachers. This was a distinct social setting, a relational one that Miyata lived in that not only fostered his self-esteem and self-efficacy, but also cultivated and validated his viewpoint and values about the dignity of life.

Furthermore, Miyata's Buddhist philosophy reflects his values as well as his parents' values. His account regarding his Buddhist philosophy and how it applies to his educational values reflects Goulah and Ito's argument (2012) regarding Ikeda's Buddhist humanism and its influence. They suggest that, "While Ikeda's educational efforts do not lie in Buddhist proselytization, just as Christianity cannot be separate from Paulo Friere's educational philosophy, Buddhism cannot be separated from Ikeda's educational philosophy" (p. 61). In the same way, Miyata's philosophy on life and education are also inseparable with his Buddhist philosophy. However, like Goulah and Ito's argument, Miyata's virtues are in no way meant to proselytize or convert anybody into Buddhism; it purely represents and supports the principles and values he stands by.

The second unique social setting interesting to highlight is the teachers that he interacted with. The first being his mother who was passionate about teaching and the following teachers being predominantly male teachers who became good role models. These two factors contributed

to his positive characterization about teachers and teaching. Thus, we can already examine how these unique social settings influenced Miyata's beliefs, way of being, and career choice.

5.6.2 Cultural ethos behind Soka Tennis

At Tokyo Soka high school, even in an extra-curricular activity such as the tennis club, where some may overlook the influence of Soka education due to its non-academic and non-school hour setting, Miyata described a distinct cultural norm, unique to Soka schools. Embedded in the students' actions and beliefs, there was a prescribed term called Soka Tennis, which highlights two principles that echo Ikeda's notion of human revolution (2010b) and human education (2012): 1) the importance of winning in their lives as human beings; and 2) the view that even unskillful players shine. The two principles focus on cultivating and fostering human beings. Therefore, the focus was not on how skillful one can be in playing tennis, but on building character and challenging to improve oneself. That is why even the unskillful players were shining. The term Soka Tennis provided a sense of purpose and direction for the students concerning how to see oneself as well as others.

5.6.3 Peer relationships

The relationships he created with his teammates developed into lifelong friendships and his friends played a crucial role in reminding and encouraging him to believe in his potential when he was struggling. Suzuki's narrative revealed that though his teachers played a significant role in his life, it was his peers who made an impression on his life during hardships. However, what was significant about this relationship was the ethos, the culture of care, learned at the Soka

schools and passed on through the interactions in the tennis team (that was then further shared to him from his peers). Ikeda's philosophy, which permeated the schools, was passed down through the interactions. Miyata asserts this event made him realize that there was something unique that only he can contribute. His eagerness to share this ethos describes the mentor and disciple relationship and also describes an individual's process of becoming fully human; it describes a process of an epistemological agency.

5.6.4 Dilemma and finding ways to create value

Miyata expressed his frustrations in the first two interviews about the limitations the schools place on how teachers can show their care for students or create relationships with students. However, he also shared in the latter, more recent, interview that he found ways to still share what he wanted to share with his students. The story about the girl and the pretty pen demonstrates how the limitation did not stop him from creating value (Ikeda, 2006, 2010b) with the opportunities provided to convey what he wants to convey. Miyata's actions highlight Ikeda's (2006) description of a teacher creatively using "various means and methods to inspire and awaken in the learner the wisdom and power" (p.181) realized by the teacher. This experience illustrates how Miyata sought to find ways to improve himself, the qualities of human revolution (Ikeda, 2012) and human education (Ikeda, 2007, 2012), so that he could still share the meaningful experiences, beliefs, and ethos he learned to his students. He wanted to empower them to believe that they are important and valuable individuals.

5.6.5 Soka education in practice

The pen case is a clear example that reflects his interpretation and understanding of his experience at the Soka school and his application of Soka education in his own teaching. From the personal narrative, I identify several steps that Miyata takes in order to make this seemingly troublesome situation into the most value creating moment for the student who stole a couple pens.

He showed care in both students. We see this through his first approach of listening and making sure each student (both the victim and student at fault) was heard (Noddings; Thayer-Bacon). His motive was not to scold from a morally right or wrong stance but to form a dialogue with the student to understand her and to share with her a valuable lesson about relationships and life. We see this from his decision to step back and collect his thoughts. He took time to wrestle with the issue to understand and figure the best outcome for the students. Miyata carefully and consciously prepared for the conversation so that the student would not leave the conversation feeling regretful or ashamed. Instead, he chose to create a constructive outcome for the student. In this way, Miyata made the effort to create the most meaningful learning opportunity, as well as a positive memory of a time when a teacher cared for her. She likewise responds to Miyata's relational caring.

In order to do this, Miyata also works through his own inner struggle to make this the most value creating moment. This is evident in the section where he describes about his own emotional turmoil as he collects his thoughts to figure out the best outcome. Rather than taking the easier route by scolding the student and dismissing her, he steps back, takes some time, and personally challenges with this problem. This act describes Ikeda's notion of human revolution.

As a result of his conscious efforts for relational caring (Thayer-Bacon, 2008) and human revolution (Ikeda, 2012), he concluded the meeting with the following actions: 1) conveyed his confidence in her ability to improve; 2) shared about consequences to breaking someone's trust and about the importance of relationships; 3) showed his support in helping the student restore her relationship with the student she stole from; 4) showed his trust in her by stating that this conversation ends now; finally, 5) concluded with a positive atmosphere.

From this short narrative, Miyata illustrates how he applies his understanding of human education in his teaching. Because relationships were an essential part of his education at Soka high school and Soka university, he, in turn, also begins his teaching from a relational approach. By sharing the importance of valuing relationships, Miyata conveyed to the student important life skills. Throughout the interview, Miyata echoed Ikeda's beliefs on the dignity of life, the inherent potential in each individual, and the importance of believing in the student's potential. He used these words in the narrative but they were also reflected in specific examples with his students.

5.7 SUZUKI

A friend from Soka University of Japan introduced me to Suzuki in December of 2008. After a couple email correspondences, we decided to meet at Soka high school on a regular weekday after school hours. When I arrived at the school, I had an interesting experience. The moment I entered the school grounds, a Soka student who was passing by politely bowed and greeted me. As I walked towards the school building, a few more students greeted me as they were passing. I was not expecting anyone to greet a complete stranger. If I were walking anywhere else, even at

a public school in the states, rarely would anyone greet a stranger. But, the moment I stepped foot into the school grounds at the Soka school, I was no longer a random passerby. I was now part of a community. Therefore, my actions also had to reflect accordingly. This mini episode demonstrated an example of the school environment at the Soka schools.

I met with Suzuki at the teacher's lounge where the principal granted us access to conduct our interview in the school cafeteria. There were distant footsteps and voices of people walking and talking but nobody was in the cafeteria so it created the perfect space and place for our interview. Suzuki was 28 years old when we first met. Like Fujita, she was calm and collected and carried herself well.

5.7.1 Varsity tennis – “For what purpose?”

Suzuki attended the Soka schools from elementary through college and also attended graduate school at Soka University of Japan. Of her schooling experience, playing Varsity tennis for six years during junior high and high school was one of Suzuki's most memorable experiences. She was Varsity vice-captain for both junior high and high school. Suzuki stressed that the most important part of their club activity were the weekly meetings where the players all sought the purpose of their activities. At these meetings, the teammates asked each other, “Why do we play tennis? What should be our mindset when we prepare and compete in games?” Suzuki and her teammates constantly questioned, shared, and confirmed each other's thoughts and determinations. Although being a member of Varsity tennis was special and memorable to Suzuki, she also experienced difficulty.

I remember playing tennis so clearly because we exerted all our energy into it. There was a time when I thought I was working hard and by practicing before class, during lunch,

afterschool, in the evenings and even during 10-minute breaks between classes. Everyone thought I was a little too extreme. It was hard to recognize that I was not in rhythm with the rest of my teammates. I was just trying to do my best in something but realized I was focused on myself and not on my teammates.

Suzuki felt this was how she was responding to the founder's expectations. Her intentions were genuine and sincere. However, she had to learn to unite with everybody else. Every day Suzuki reflected on her actions and wondered how she was going to create unity with her teammates. She also read through the founder's guidance and speeches to seek a solution. Gradually, she made effort to dialogue and form unity with her teammates and, in the end, their spirit was united as one team again.

5.7.2 Bond with upperclassmen and underclassmen

From the relationships she developed with her teammates, she also learned the distinct and unique bond that is nurtured between upperclassmen and underclassmen at the Soka schools. From her upperclassmen, Suzuki learned to serve and protect her underclassmen. Through the caring relationship she received from her upperclassmen, she developed respect to continuously learn from them and ask for their advice. Suzuki asserts that this strong bond remains even 10 years later. During her school years, her upperclassmen told her to take every advantage to use them as a catalyst to grow. They said to her, the best way to return the favor is by learning from them and becoming greater individuals than themselves. When she became upperclassmen, she made effort to then support her underclassmen by teaching them and coaching them how to become better players during the morning and after school practices. She also shared the same message her upperclassmen conveyed to her.

5.7.3 Bond with tennis coach

In addition to the bonds she created with her peers in Varsity tennis, she also developed a close relationship with the female advisor for the tennis team. In the U.S., we would consider her a coach. Usually, in most schools in Japan, a teacher takes responsibility for at least one club activity as an advisor. Rarely are there people hired specifically to coach a school club or athletic team unless they compete nationally or have funding. Thus, a faculty member takes on the role of coaching and mentoring the students.

Because Suzuki was a dependable student, the advisor had a lot of expectation for her. Suzuki also wanted to respond to the teacher's expectations and often went to her for guidance and advice. Suzuki went to for her anything from seeking praise or understanding to sometimes challenging her with different ideas and thoughts. At other times, she went to her to ask her opinions and insights about the founder's speeches and writings. Suzuki felt comfortable to talk to her and sometimes went as often as everyday. Having an older female figure to confront her feelings and thoughts made a meaningful learning experience for Suzuki.

5.7.4 Learning to become global citizens

At the Soka schools, Suzuki also developed a sense of connection to the world. From when she was little, Suzuki met with many of the founder's various foreign guests he invited to the school grounds. Meeting foreigners was a common and natural occurrence at the Soka schools and because of this experience, she perceives these guests and people around the world to be close and connected. As a teacher, Suzuki also wants her students to feel this too. The international and intercultural experiences at the Soka schools is the foundation for her view about the world.

I think other schools also have opportunities for students to interact with foreign people. Especially private schools. The current school I'm assigned to also has a study abroad program and students get to meet people from abroad. But, it's definitely not the same as the feeling I had at the Soka schools. It's not just interacting. I learned about people and the world through the founder. Our founder respected every person, regardless of who or where they were from.

Suzuki explains that in Japan there are a lot of negative images that the media portrays about other countries and foreign people. There is a lot of information from the Japanese media that makes it difficult to trust people around the world. But, because she learned about the world through the founder, she can truly respect all people and hopes to share these views to her students.

5.7.5 Encouragement, praise, and belief in students' potential

For Suzuki, everything she experienced was Soka education. At the Soka schools, her teachers and the founder's writings and speeches showered her with encouragement, praise, and confidence to believe in her potential and in her capacity to contribute to society. She explains that the curriculum at the Soka schools is not that different from other schools. She stresses it is the environment that is unique like no other. Regardless of whether a student excels in their studies or not, Soka schools teaches students to believe in the dignity and potential of each person. Suzuki believes this environment is what makes a difference in student's confidence and this is what differentiates Soka from other schools. This experience continued for Suzuki even after she graduated the Soka schools. When she was applying to become a teacher and was in the midst of her interviews, Suzuki felt anxious and, for a brief moment, she began to doubt herself.

She decided to ask for some advice from one of her elementary school teachers at the Soka school. When she shared her doubts, the teacher reassured her with warm words and told her she was going to be all right and that she had complete confidence in her. She told Suzuki, “I know you can do it.” The teacher’s belief in Suzuki left her feeling encouraged and confident. (Nagashima, 2012). After they ended their conversation, the teacher wanted to send Suzuki off so she stood in front of the school building and watched as Suzuki left the school grounds. Suzuki explains that there was at least 20 meters of distance but her teacher stood there smiling until Suzuki was no longer in sight. This left a strong impression on Suzuki that reaffirmed the culture of Soka schools. She felt a deep sense of appreciation for the teacher’s care and belief in Suzuki.

5.7.6 Becoming a teacher

Suzuki decided to become a teacher after hearing a speech by the founder that addressed the importance of education. Suzuki knew she wanted to become a teacher but she also wanted to experience the so-called “real world” and the kind of jobs she would one day prepare her students for. So, after receiving her graduate degree, Suzuki worked for two years in an office job and then, became a high school teacher in Saitama prefecture. Her working hours is from eight o’clock to five-thirty in the evening but, like her coworkers, she stays until seven. As a teacher, she believes her job is to prepare and have as many students accepted into college and as many students to attend a prestigious university. She tries to be strict with what she teaches in the classrooms and thorough with how she grades her students. She also incorporates as many practice exams as possible. In the classrooms, she tries to avoid looking over them by not

standing on the platform in front of the classroom. She also tries to close the distance between her students by walking around and engaging in conversations with them.

After teaching for a couple years, Suzuki noticed the alarming differences in the school environment her students experience compared to her own schooling experience at the Soka schools. One significant difference she is aware of is the lack of praise or encouragement from teachers. Instead of praising or instilling confidence in their students, she sees teachers using scare-tactics and discouraging students in hope that that will motivate them to study and work hard. One such example took place in the teachers' lounge. A student one day came in and had a conversation with another teacher about his future career. He was a senior and was about to graduate high school. The student wanted to become a teacher but his teacher discouraged him by telling him what he could and could not accomplish. Unfortunately, the student did not study as much, and, as a result, he had poor grades consistently throughout the three years in high school. This situation was unsettling for Suzuki. Personally, she believed it was not too late for the student to work hard and challenge himself. She felt the difference is in how much a teacher could believe in the potential of their students. But, she also understood that his teacher was looking out for the student's best interest. She understands the other teacher's point of view, that even if the student wanted to become a teacher, his actions did not imply that and he also did not seem to have a strong resolve or willpower. So it made sense that the teacher was trying to guide the student toward a normal career path, one that the teacher was sure the student could do. As teachers, Suzuki feels this is important too. But, she also felt that teachers seem to perceive their job as needing to show students the realities of society, which was instead imposing their [teacher's] assumed realities of the "real world" on the students rather than listening and supporting the students' dreams and aspirations.

I wondered whether there were ways that they could encourage the students by praising them and giving courage and hope. When I was at the Soka schools, teachers encouraged us to believe in ourselves. They taught us that we could accomplish anything if we put all our effort into it.

Along with the overwhelming absence of teachers praising or encouraging students, Suzuki also noticed a couple other troubling accounts with her students. One concern is that there are too many students who lack confidence in themselves. She further adds that they are insecure and unstable about their existence and identity. Many students tell her “I’m not good enough.” She recognizes this because she also sees it in herself. Even as an adult, she finds herself sometimes having moments when she lacks confidence and thinks less of herself. Suzuki explains that if she had not attended the Soka schools, those feelings would have overwhelmed her. Fortunately, at the Soka schools, she was raised to believe that she was remarkable and capable and that she could make a difference in the world. Through the founder, the teachers, and her peers, she learned to see herself and others in a new way and she hopes to share this to her students too. Whether there was any relation to the lack of encouragement from teachers and lack of confidence in students, she also noticed her students lacking consideration or empathy toward others. She worries that students are too concerned for themselves and lack the capacity to think of others.

Another important characteristic that she feels is missing is the willingness to learn from others, an attribute that may be culturally specific to Soka schools. Suzuki explains that her students lack interest or curiosity to learn from others, whether about academic subjects or about life. Lastly, Suzuki feels that students lack a sound philosophy or purpose that guides them toward curiosity and feeling confident, and compassionate. This troubling phenomenon she sees

in her students fortifies her commitment as a teacher. She believes there is something meaningful she can convey and a unique contribution she could make as a teacher. This sense of confidence and belief was fostered at the Soka schools.

5.7.7 Suzuki's philosophy of education

As a teacher, and also from her own schooling experience, Suzuki values an education that praises and encourages students; not reprimands them. She tells her students that their stage is the world and that they will be contributing to the world. She explains, "I say this like it's a fact." She also makes every opportunity to tell her students that she respects them, values them, and believes in them, and wants them to become happy. Whenever she shares her thoughts, the students' faces lit up. For Suzuki, happiness means knowing how to persevere in life. Even in a difficult situation, to have the strength and will power to challenge and persevere. She explains,

Through my own experience, and from encountering different students, I know that money, knowledge, fame or status does not define or equate to happiness. That's why I think it's important that they know how to change their own reality by changing themselves first. Happiness is to have the confidence and willingness to know how to find a way forward.

Suzuki always asks herself what the best course of action is or best way to convey something that is meaningful for her students. She also takes the same approach towards her classroom teaching. She asks herself what she can do to make it the best lesson plan. As a high school teacher who teaches politics, social studies, economics and sometimes world history and theories, Suzuki uses her classroom lessons to make opportunities for her students to think and care about other people. When they learn about a certain political or historical figure, she tries to

broaden their perspectives and challenge them to think more deeply and critically beyond the limited, and in many ways one-sided, information that textbooks provide them. For example, when the class learned about Gorbachev and his policies, she incorporated his humanistic approach toward his social perspective during the Cold War. She then connected those views with the values and humanistic philosophy she learned at the Soka schools. Suzuki hopes to expand their sense of connectedness and care from the immediate to the distant people around the world.

She believes all her values and educational philosophy comes directly from the founder Daisaku Ikeda. She articulates further and states that sharing the founder's values and vision is Soka education. To her, this means to give encouragement, instill confidence, and to teach that every individual is unique and irreplaceable. Suzuki believes the only way to instill these values is through the interaction with her students. She asserts, "I think in the end, unless the students feel that their teacher cares for them, I don't think any message would really reach them." Thus, she makes every opportunity to understand and connect with her students. Suzuki also explains that this act to connect with her students is not enforced out of a sense of duty or obligation, but from her desire to connect. She asserts that she genuinely loves her students and wants her students to be happy. Students in turn recognize this and feel comfortable to confide in her their worries and troubles. They often come to her for advice.

Suzuki is especially popular amongst young female students. Sometimes, her students would come see her in the mornings before class during her classroom preparation time. Recently, she took three days out of a week to listen to her students for 90 minutes. Although she wants to support her students, she also felt she needed to use her time more wisely and efficiently so that it does not affect her teaching quality. Because she continuously wants to improve her

teaching and listening skills, she enrolled herself to attend a class that teaches how to conduct effective dialogues. There are also times when students hate her or when she feels discouraged from the interactions with her students. Sometimes she experiences difficulty believing in her students. But, Suzuki shares that Soka education helps her to believe in her students. During difficult times, she would go back to the founder's speeches and writings that inspires her to believe in her students again.

5.7.8 Cheerleading to encourage people

For Suzuki, the most memorable experience in her teaching career was the time she spent as an advisor [in the U.S. we would consider them coaches] for the cheerleading team in her previous school. Before she was assigned as the advisor to the team, there were only male teachers and nobody had experience teaching or coaching cheerleading. Nobody knew how to guide them so there was no discipline. The club existed only in name. Practices were held at the gymnasium but rarely did they practice or train. They seldom did anything more than stretching. Even though food and drinks were not allowed in the gymnasium, they still brought them and ate and drank during practice. It was a chaotic situation.

Last year, Suzuki was assigned as the advisor to the team and she made it her mission to change the environment. She started to incorporate strength training and was strict with her students about following school rules and manners. This included being strict about tardiness, greeting people properly, not wearing make up, and not bringing food or drinks into the gym. If they asked her why they had to follow these rules, she told them that cheerleaders had a purpose to encourage people with their cheering and dancing. She encouraged them to become individuals who can make other people happy.

For the next year, I spent 3-4 hours every day after school with them, coaching and encouraging them. When you spend that much time with your students, you start to know them personally and you learn about their troubles with friends or at home. I continued to encourage them and also made time to talk with them one-to-one. I often told them that my happiness was in seeing them become happy. Since many schools tend to lack female teachers in their thirties, young female students naturally seek me for guidance and advice. Over time, I developed trust with them until my last day there.

After a year passed, her term ended and Suzuki was transferred to a new school [the public school systems in Japan transfer teachers every couple of years]. Rarely do they stay after 4-5 years. Before she left though, her students told her that the atmosphere changed into a positive environment because of Suzuki and that they hoped to continue keeping this positive momentum and environment even after she leaves. They also told her that they would do their best. This made Suzuki happy.

I was only with them for about a year but I engaged and spent time with them in the best way I can. In the end, I was able to pass on the values and philosophy I learned to them. I believe they took the first step toward becoming people who can persevere.

Suzuki shares that sometimes teaching can be physically overwhelming, but on a mental level, she is never tired because she genuinely loves her students. Suzuki hopes to continue sharing the values she learned at the Soka schools through interacting and fostering caring relationships with students.

5.8 REFLECTION: SUZUKI'S NARRATIVE

The distinct social and cultural settings at the Soka schools allowed the opportunity for Suzuki to experience and adopt this ethos of care that affect the way she views life and in the way she teaches and interacts with her students. This cultural ethos she embraced from her lived-experience include the importance of encouragement, belief in the potential of all people, having a sound philosophy, perseverance, undergoing human revolution, value of relationships, and finally, global citizenship.

5.8.1 Encouragement and belief in the potential of all people

The teachers' and founder's constant encouragement, praise, and confidence in the potential of each individual student empowered Suzuki and it developed a strong sense of agency. This experience taught Suzuki the dignity of all life and the view of recognizing each person's unique potential and contribution that they can make regardless of their academic achievement.

5.8.2 Social and cultural settings within the tennis team

The varsity tennis team cultivated a unique environment rooted in rich and culturally specific traditions. The weekly meetings where students reflected and confronted each other with their opinions and thoughts about the purpose of their activity challenged her to find meaning and develop wisdom. The environment also encouraged her to work hard whether it was for practice or to resolve something with her teammates. She learned to undergo human revolution (Ikeda,

2004, 2010a, & 2011a; Marinoff & Ikeda, 2012) by working hard and also reflecting when necessary to change a situation if she needed to.

5.8.3 Relationships

While at the Soka schools, Suzuki also learned the value of relationships. In particular, the strong relationships she developed with her upperclassmen and underclassmen taught her how to respect, protect and care for others. Another meaningful relation she developed was with the female teacher she confided in. Interestingly, the relationship she had with her teacher resembles the kind of relationship she also fosters with her students. Just as it was more comfortable for Suzuki to confide in a female teacher, Suzuki's female students also confide in her with their troubles. The caring teacher and student relationship she experienced at the Soka schools became the model for how she interacts with her students.

5.8.4 Fostering global citizenship

Suzuki's narrative also demonstrates how the school fostered global citizenship (Ikeda, 2010b & 2011b) in Suzuki. The frequent foreign visitors created an opportunity for Suzuki to create meaningful exchanges that naturally developed into respect and care for people living in other countries. What seems particularly significant is her emphasis that it was not the interaction and exchanges itself that fostered her respect for others but it was through observing these visitors through the founder's perspective and how he treated the visitors. The exchange alone is practiced in other schools, but interacting with foreigners from a certain perspective, in this case the founder's perspective, is distinct.

5.8.5 Application of human revolution

As a teacher, Suzuki shares the dilemma she faces when she wants to care for her students but when those actions sometimes interfere or affect the quality of her teaching and instruction. However, even in those particular situations, Suzuki demonstrates how she applies Ikeda's (2004, 2010a, & 2011a; Marinoff & Ikeda, 2012) philosophy of human revolution. Because she is continuously seeking to become a better teacher, she always challenges herself to take the best course of action in both her interactions with her students and in her instructions. Thus, in the case where she was spending 90 minutes of her morning prep time three times a week to listen to her students, she sought to take classes to learn how to be more skillful and efficient in listening.

5.8.6 Application of mentor and disciple relationship

Suzuki asserts that all her values for teaching are directly adopted from Ikeda's philosophy of education. Suzuki's narrative identifies the key descriptors that highlight Ikeda's mentor and disciple relationship. In particular, her hope to share and pass on Ikeda's philosophy of education is a key descriptor of a mentor and disciple relationship (Ikeda, 2006, 2010b, 2011b, & 2012; Marinoff & Ikeda 2012) between her and the founder. She also describes this act of sharing Ikeda's philosophy of education as Soka education. Furthermore, her efforts to pass on Ikeda's philosophy has manifested in another mentor and disciple relationship between her and the students on the cheerleading team. For example, Suzuki worked with the cheerleading group and made efforts to instill a sense of purpose in the students and show a meaningful way to approach their group activity. Suzuki showed engrossment and motivational displacement (Noddings, 1984) by being fully present for her students. She listened to their troubles and also put aside her

own time to coach her students. Though the students were tough and delinquent at first, the students acknowledged Suzuki's care and developed a connection with her. The caring was reciprocated when the students found out that Suzuki was leaving. They responded to her by committing to fulfill Suzuki's vision of having purpose and building a good team environment. In the end, there was a shared commitment (Ikeda, 2006) between Suzuki and the students.

5.8.7 Application of human education

The specific stories and lived-experience she shares as a teacher reflects her efforts in applying Ikeda's human education theory (Ikeda, 2012). For example, her lessons in class to challenge her students demonstrate the fostering of critical thinking skills and ability to think. Her lessons also offer opportunities for students to care about others. Furthermore, her effort to encourage and share her confidence in her students' potential reflects the fostering of students' emotions and ability to feel. The time she spent with the cheerleading team to train and foster them into competent and confident individuals established trust and care with the students. As a result, the trust transformed into students' acceptance for change and their willingness to maintain a positive environment. This short story portrays how students developed a volitional willingness to act and also a willingness to improve themselves. Most importantly, her care and commitment for the students through the one to one teacher and student relationships reflect how she is also fostering compassion. Suzuki's actions examined together illustrate how she provides students with the environment to foster the qualities necessary for human education.

5.8.8 A prepared environment fosters epistemological agency

Suzuki identified some troubling concerns with the schools she works for, which were: teachers' lack of praise toward students, students' lack of confidence, students' lack of consideration toward others, students' lack of willingness to learn, and students' lack of purpose or sound philosophy. The concerns she raised were the very qualities that Suzuki was able to receive or experience at the Soka schools. She was "showered" with encouragement and praise from her teachers and taken care of by her upperclassmen. As a result, she developed confidence, a willingness to learn, care toward others, and a sense of purpose. Her experience highlights an epistemological agency. The alarming differences that Suzuki finds between what she experienced at the Soka schools and what her students experience not only reasserts her belief in the value-creating philosophy she gained at the Soka schools but also motivates her to pass on this ethos or culture of care to her students as well. These troubling differences also reveal the lack of prepared environments in regular schools. Whereas, the prepared environment at the Soka schools created a safe space for students to willingly participate and embrace this culture of care, the lack of prepared environment at Suzuki's current school seems to have a causal connection with the lack of confidence in students, lack of care toward others, lack of motivation to learn from others, and the lack of a general sound philosophy in their lives. This lack of prepared environment also further strengthens the importance of having an environment where students can embrace an ethos that nurtures and develops respect for oneself and others.

6.0 DISCUSSION

The autobiographical narrative vignettes presented in the previous chapter showed how the graduates had a unique and distinct culturally specific experience. This deeply powerful and meaningful experience is illustrated in the way they describe their schooling experience. The narratives show how graduates experienced a Soka experience and then embraced and adopted this cultural ethos, specifically Ikeda's philosophy of education, as their own. In this chapter, I revisit the research puzzles I introduced in chapter one that guided this exploratory journey into the lives of Soka school graduates. In the first research puzzle, I identify the main threads that were echoing and resonating in all the narratives. I explicate on how the threads revealed a distinct cultural value that permeated throughout the Soka school environment. I also address some of Ikeda's ideas that are missing from the narratives. In the second research puzzle, I highlight the caring relationships that are valued by the graduates and show how the stories the graduates lived during their schooling shaped the contexts of their teaching practice. In the third research puzzle, I address the idea of safe space and how the Soka schools successfully fostered and prepared an environment conducive for students to embrace the culturally specific ethos presented to them unique to the Soka schools. Finally, in the fourth puzzle, I present two ways, in which their present conditions shaped their understanding about their understanding about Soka schools and Soka education.

6.1 REVISITING RESEARCH PUZZLE #1

What are the current meanings teachers assign to the lived social and cultural experiences during their time at the Soka schools?

After examining the four narratives, there were a couple “threads” that were weaving through time and place that were particularly meaningful for the graduates and that were echoing and resonating with one another (Clandinin, 2013). Interestingly, the threads that were identified in their narratives presented key elements of Ikeda’s philosophy of education. These threads are:

1. Human revolution
 - Limitless potential in oneself and others
2. Value of relationships
 - Learn to care
 - Believe in oneself and others
 - See the strengths and beauty in all life
 - Teacher roles
 - Human education
3. Mentor and disciple relationship
4. Respect for all life

After explicating what these threads mean, I then conclude this section by underscoring what were missing from their experiences that seemed relevant and equally important as the ones that were recognized.

6.1.1 Human revolution – challenging themselves

The first thread that echoed across the narratives was Ikeda’s (2010a; Ikeda & Zgurovkey, 2011; Marinoff & Ikeda, 2012) human revolution concept. The graduates described this thread as an

experience when they exerted and challenged themselves. Whether for studies or after-school activities, they challenged passionately and unwaveringly toward expanding their limitations. For instance, Tanabe and Fujita were determined to improve their academic level and they used their obstacles as fuel to achieve their happiness (Ikeda in Marinoff & Ikeda, 2012, p. 6). Although the task seemed impossible for each of them at the time, they challenged themselves, and as a result, Tanabe was accepted to his desired major and Fujita ranked number one of her graduating class.

Both Tanabe and Fujita's narratives reveal a process within the individual that Ikeda identifies as human revolution (Ikeda, 2010a; Ikeda & Zgurovsky, 2011; Marinoff & Ikeda, 2012); they went through first a recognition of their limitations, a shift in their viewpoint and willingness to change their situation, and a shift from the lesser self who is consumed by their personal desires and attachments to the greater self of one willing to contribute to society, which in their cases meant committing their time toward studying and becoming a teacher (Ikeda, 2010a; Ikeda & Zgurovsky, 2011). As a result, Tanabe's and Fujita's examples demonstrate Ikeda's (2010a) description of human revolution as a form of character training and process of human education.

Tanabe's and Fujita's narratives strongly suggest that it is possible for students who are labeled as academically challenged to achieve equally successful outcomes as students who are academically high-achievers. Human revolution through the eyes of these Soka graduates is a solid belief that they can change their circumstance through changing themselves and making effort to transform that circumstance. Goulah and Gebert (2009) describe this phenomenon as a "commitment to an epistemological empowerment" (p.127). I adopt their term but prefer the notion agency here and argue that the graduates develop an epistemological agency. This philosophy challenges the common narratives in education that otherwise divides or ostracize

students who might be labeled as academically challenged and misses the opportunity for those individuals to achieve something. Rather than giving up something because they feel they are not good enough, human revolution perceives the possibilities in all lives. For instance, in Suzuki's narrative there was a student who was discouraged by one of the teachers in Suzuki's school. In this case, if the student had a viewpoint like human revolution, that student's life might have been different. Tanabe and Fujita's experiences suggest how the concept of human revolution can provide opportunities for students to grow and expand their possibilities. Ikeda's concept provides a new narrative for both teachers and students and also a tool set that they can further apply in other aspects of their lives.

In Miyata's and Suzuki's narratives, the two shared about exerting their efforts and energy in playing tennis and in being part of a team. For Suzuki, her challenge was in creating unity with her tennis team. For Miyata, he also mentions about his struggle when he was at Soka University of Japan and how he overcame his struggle through the support of his teammates who continued to believe in him. This experience led him to realize his potential and believe that there was something unique only he could contribute by becoming a teacher. In both cases for Miyata and Suzuki, they focused more on the significance of their outcome and did not expand too much on the aspect of struggle. However, the graduates' narratives suggest that human revolution is part of the struggle of becoming. Fujita's narrative about the challenge she had with her student is an example of the struggle of becoming. It portrayed the inner struggle of one person learning to truly care for the other.

6.1.2 Value of relationships

The second thread that reverberates through the four narratives is the value of relationships. In particular, four kinds of relationships stand out in the graduates' lived-experiences: 1) relationship between upperclassmen and underclassmen, 2) relationship between teacher and student, 3) relationship between peers, and 4) relationship between mentor and disciple. At the Soka schools, graduates fostered meaningful relationships of quality that deepened or influenced the course of their lives.

6.1.2.1 Underclassmen and upperclassmen relationships

Fujita, Suzuki, and Tanabe all echo each other when they talk about the strong relationships between upperclassmen and underclassmen. This relationship consists of upperclassmen taking care of their underclassmen and passing on the ethos they learned while the underclassmen seeks and learns from their upperclassmen. This relationship between upperclassmen and underclassmen is fairly common in Japanese culture, however, Soka schools deepens this bond with an added Soka value. According to Ikeda (November, 2012), the relationship between underclassmen and upperclassmen should be like the mentor and disciple relationship or the Indigo plant analogy Makiguchi used to describe Soka education (Ikeda, 2011b). Specifically, this relationship involves upperclassmen fostering the underclassmen with the desire for the underclassmen to surpass them and the underclassmen learning and surpassing their upperclassmen. Both Tanabe and Suzuki share Ikeda's view regarding the relationship between upperclassmen and underclassmen. For example, Tanabe emphasized that the role of upperclassmen was to motivate and foster their underclassmen into greater human beings than themselves. Similarly, Suzuki stressed that the best way to pay back appreciation to

upperclassmen was by surpassing them. She also expected her underclassmen to utilize her as much as they could and grow from their relationship. There was already an established cultural value concerning upperclassmen and underclassmen when graduates entered the school, so they received care from upperclassmen. The relational experience validated graduates to do the same for their underclassmen.

Similar relationships might exist in other schools, like Montessori or Sudbury, where students take care of underclassmen or even after they graduate, they might visit and volunteer their time and interact with underclassmen. However, these cases would be more rare than often. In contrast, Soka schools have a distinct underlying philosophy that drives students and shapes the relationship. The social and cultural context encourages students to foster deep relationships. Thus, it allows for these quality relationships to occur more frequently in various contexts such as club activities within the school.

Furthermore, a relationship that was equally significant to both Miyata and Tanabe was with their peers. Similar to the quality relationships found in teacher and student, Miyata and Tanabe developed indispensable friends who helped and encouraged them in their paths to becoming teachers.

6.1.2.2 Teacher and student relationships

Relationship between teacher and student was another meaningful connection that graduates identified with at the Soka schools. The kinds of relationships varied including giving a book on their birthday, selected uniquely and accordingly to the students' character (Miyata), supporting their ideas from behind the scenes (Tanabe), listening to their questions and concerns (Suzuki), and giving advice or support even years after they graduated from the school (Tanabe & Suzuki). From these interactions, graduates found their teachers to be caring, encouraging, supportive, and

most importantly, believed in their potential. Many of the qualities that the graduates ascribed to their teachers reflect my conceptual synthesis, the five points I identified from Ikeda's (2001b, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010b, Wider & Ikeda, 2014) writings concerning the teacher's role in the teacher and student relationship. These points are:

1. To believe in and aid students in the process of unleashing their potential.
2. To provide stimulation and nurture students' inquisitive nature to learn.
3. To encourage students with confidence.
4. To continue self-reflecting and learning with students.
5. To have compassion and care for students.

For Tanabe and Suzuki, the teachers' "endurance, courage and affection" (Ikeda, 2001b, p. 133) were essential when they were applying to become teachers. Their narratives suggest that the teacher and student relationship fostered during their schooling provide a space for students to come back to when they need. Thus, relationships fostered at Soka schools are long term and teachers continue to be a part of and help their students in their development as human beings beyond the classroom. This supports Ikeda's (2007) notion that caring teachers are at the roots of human education.

This particular role is especially critical and necessary for students who do not have adult figures or role models who guide them in their development. This is evident in Suzuki's experience teaching at high school. In particular, she encounters many students who lack confidence and often hears her students say "I'm not good enough." She recognizes how different the environment at the Soka schools is compared to the current school she teaches. At the Soka schools, she constantly received encouragement, support, and expectation from her teachers, which led to her confidence and belief in herself. This echoes Ikeda's (Wider & Ikeda,

2014) claim that students develop “great security and self-confidence from the awareness that someone knows them well and appreciates them accurately” (p. 162). Ikeda’s claim suggests that in order to make meaningful interactions with their students, teachers need to make time and effort to know each of their students well. Suzuki’s testimony demonstrates the need for teachers, and other adult figures including administrators and parents, to embody Ikeda’s five qualities, and how, by doing so, it can provide possibilities for students to receive quality relationships and, develop into confident individuals. Most importantly, the narratives reveal that the graduates embody these qualities as teachers and it was an underlying thread that resonated with all four narratives when they described their interactions with their students. I explicate further on this latter relationship in the section where I respond to research puzzle #2.

6.1.2.3 Founder and student relationship

The last and most unique relationship shared by the graduates was the relationship with the founder of Soka schools, Daisaku Ikeda. What is interesting to note is that the interactions that graduates described was not a particular type of relationship. In most cases, the graduates connected with the founder through his writings, such as speeches and messages addressed to Soka students for events and ceremonies. At times these messages were delivered directly by him in person at events or ceremonies, and, in other instances, they were written or published. Though the interaction may be considered distant when viewed from a normative perspective, the graduates viewed the relationship as personal. For Tanabe and Miyata, they saw the founder’s existence as like a father or teacher’s teacher.

Moreover, when I asked them about their teaching philosophy, they all responded that their philosophy came from Ikeda. They also added that when they were lost or struggling, they

would look for answers in Ikeda's writings. His philosophy became an important cultural ethos that graduates embraced as guiding points in their lives.

6.1.2.4 Mentor and disciple relationship

The graduates all resonate with one another when they share about their appreciation for their schooling experience. Their career choice of becoming teachers became their unique contribution to society and how they could repay their appreciation to the founder. Both Tanabe and Fujita believed becoming a teacher was their path to take to contribute to society. In both narratives, living a contributive life was already an aim. Thus, when they made that firm decision to become a teacher, they both voiced similar thoughts – this is how I'm going to contribute to society.

Likewise, Miyata and Suzuki believed that there was a unique contribution only they could make. By becoming a teacher, they knew there was a value that only they, respectively, can create. This conviction followed from their affirmation that their life mattered and that they can create value to make their own unique contribution to society. The graduates learned a new outlook to life and a way to live life. This commitment to contribute to society reflects Ikeda's (Marinoff & Ikeda, 2012) notion of a shared commitment between mentor and disciple. For example, in this case, the founder shares how to live a good life (the value embedded in the school), the students experience Soka education and develop a sense of agency, then, the graduates develop appreciation and commits to repaying their gratitude through carrying out the founder's vision (education and contributing to society). For the graduates, this meant by becoming teachers. This unique and distinct relationship was a powerful motivator for the graduates to live and willingly commit to a contributive way of life that expands from one's immediate and limited perspective. Ikeda (November, 2012) argues that, "in the end, both teacher and student achieve far beyond what they could have on their own" (pp. 13-14). Thus, by

fostering mentor and disciple relationships, schools have the potential to create more socially conscious individuals or individuals with a volitional desire to live a contributive life.

6.1.2.5 Relationship summary

Initially, I went into the interviews with the assumption that the relationship between teacher and student was going to be the most important aspect reflected in the narratives. This was true in the narratives the graduates shared about their teaching experience as teachers in the classroom. However, when they were still students at the Soka schools, similar interactions existed, not only between teacher and student, but also in other relationships with peers and upper and underclassmen. After interviewing the graduates and reading the narratives several times, I realized there was no one particular relationship that was the key at the Soka schools. Rather, it was the quality of those relationships and the meanings students attributed from them. This suggests that there is a cultural ethos that is embraced and embodied by both students and teachers, which are then reflected in the ways relationships develop. Thus, this distinct ethos specifically, Ikeda's philosophy of education, permeated in the environment. Now as teachers, teaching in regular schools, the teacher and student relationship becomes essential because they do not have that environment that existed in the Soka schools.

6.1.3 Common value from all threads: Respect for all lives

The narrative stories reveal a common value that was permeating throughout the school. The rich experiences students ascribed meaning to all manifested to respect for all lives. When students went through their human revolution (2010a; Ikeda & Zgurovkey, 2011; Marinoff & Ikeda, 2012), they realized the latent untapped potential within themselves. This experience further

created the opportunity for students to believe in the potential of others. This effect is manifested in their stories as they share their efforts as teachers to encourage their students. When students established valuable relationships, they received care and respect from others. From the care they received, whether between teacher and student, or upper and underclassmen, or with peers, they learned to care for and respect others. They also learned to appreciate and value the strengths and beauty in others. This phenomenon also reveals Ikeda's (1988/2003) description of dependent origination where each individual's inherent potential is manifested through connection and transaction and, at the same time, "affecting all other existences" (p. 19). This environment provided conditions for the causes of dependent origination.

These relationships were further strengthened not only through personal experiences, but from Ikeda's ethos. For instance, Ikeda's (2011b) interpretation of Makiguchi's Indigo plant analogy or his recommendation for teacher roles encourages deeper relationships and guides the teacher and student and upper and underclassmen relationships. There were multiple venues where Ikeda's ethos was manifested in the schools. In various ways, the graduates were reminded that people cared for and valued their life. As a result, students developed confidence, belief in oneself and others, and, furthermore, a desire to contribute to society through becoming teachers. Graduates also validated the application and affect of Ikeda's educational philosophy by embodying this ethos that they learned and passing this culture of care to their students.

6.1.4 What was missing?

The narrative accounts reflected Ikeda's key concepts and a cultural ethos and how they were embedded in the school environment. However, there were concepts from Ikeda's educational philosophy that were not emphasized when graduates talked about their schooling experience or

their teaching experience. These concepts were global citizenship and academic content or knowledge acquisition.

I argued in Chapter 2 that global citizenship is one of Ikeda's key concepts that shape his philosophy of education. Despite its significance, Suzuki, the high school teacher was the only one who underscored this concept in her narratives. The other three graduates responded briefly if asked about it but this concept was not necessarily reflected in their stories. Though the graduates did not emphasize Ikeda's notion of global citizenship, their narrative accounts reveal that what they value is consistent with the qualities of a global citizen. For instance, all the graduates learned to believe in the potential of oneself and others and learned to care and respect others. This is the underlying quality necessary to embrace and nurture Ikeda's (2010b) three characteristics that describe global citizenship, which are the wisdom to recognize the interconnectedness, courage to respect all differences, and compassion to develop empathy toward others in distant places. There are a couple possibilities or reasons to consider that might shed light to why the concept was important to Suzuki but not underscored in others' stories. One possibility is that the graduates might just be mirroring what they experienced. They might be focusing on other key concepts of Ikeda's philosophy precisely because that was their experience at the Soka schools. There might have been a lack of this concept in their schooling experience. For Suzuki, though, the frequent engagement with foreign visitors at the Soka schools was what sparked her to begin thinking and caring for people in outside of her country. However, this might not have been enough for other students. A second possibility to consider is the place where these narratives were conducted. The narrative inquiries took place in Japan, a predominantly homogenous country. This might be the cause to why they might not consider global citizenship as important as the other concepts. Another possibility to consider is Suzuki's

teaching subject. She teaches subjects that naturally touch upon issues surrounding international relations and this might be why she is more interested in this concept than other graduates. Lastly, even if they had an opinion or strong value, my approach to the interview or direction might not have tapped into those thoughts or offered interviewees the space to think or talk about this concept.

Knowledge acquisition is another concept that was not highlighted in most of the narratives. According to Ikeda's (2012) human education concept, the ability to think which he describes as critical thinking skills is an important skillset, which is nurtured through dialogue, academic content, and study. He also adds that teacher's responsibility includes instilling intellectual curiosity (2010b, 2012). Suzuki mentioned briefly about her lessons and her efforts to incorporate additional information about historical figures that are sometimes lacking from the texts or misleading if students learned simply from the available textbook. Her approach offers alternative ways to think about historical figures that challenges students' thought process. This is a clear example of how she fosters critical thinking skills. However, Suzuki, again, was the only one to talk about this in her narratives. In regards to academic content, Fujita briefly shared how she prepares her students by creating mini tests to help them understand English and she also shared an experience where she helped a academically delayed student to catch up by helping her during summer and after class. However, I did not pick up on any specific experience about critical thinking or the ability to think. Like the other narratives, the graduates did not speak much on instilling intellectual curiosity. The graduates acknowledged the importance of knowledge acquisition and content learning, but they were more invested in the growth of their students developing into confident human beings.

According to Ikeda (2008), the importance of teacher and student relationships is not necessarily the content knowledge that the teacher provides but whether they can remember at some point that the teacher cared for them. Thus, the narratives suggest that the graduates are applying Ikeda's thoughts and beliefs into practice. However, Ikeda (2012) also adds that the ability to critically think is an important skillset in fostering fully human beings. There are a couple factors that might be the cause for why the graduates, other than Suzuki, did not emphasize or share an experience concerning their efforts to foster students' critical thinking skills or their abilities to think. One possibility might be the grade level that the teachers teach. While others teach at the elementary and junior high school level, Suzuki teaches high school students who are preparing to attend college. Incorporating critical thinking skills in the curriculum at this age level might be more relevant and required. Similar to the possibility I suggested earlier, critical thinking skills might not have been emphasized at the Soka schools, and, it may be the reason for their lack of emphasis in their teaching. Another more likely reason could be that they do value critical thinking skills, but that my method of approach could not elicit the necessary response to reveal that part. The last possibility I suggest is in the academic limitations or structures of the Japanese schools systems. Schools in Japan may simply lack culturally in teaching students critical thinking skills.

The rich and detailed narratives of their lived-experiences at the Soka schools portray for at least four graduates, how they created meaning to their experiences. Because they saw their own growth and value, they also wanted their students to experience similar growth and development as human beings. Graduates created value from their own experiences that now guides their way of life and view about others.

6.2 REVISITING RESEARCH PUZZLE #2

What are the current lived experiences of these teachers in terms of their relationships with their students in the classroom?

All four graduates shared powerful stories that displayed deep bonds with their students. They demonstrated their intent and effort to build relationships through actions that went beyond the classroom interactions. For instance, these actions included:

1. Visiting an absentee student every morning to encourage the student to attend class (Tanabe).
2. Working one-on-one after school and during summer vacation to help a student who was failing classes (Fujita).
3. Making time and listening to students who suddenly dropped in during her prep time to share their worries and struggles (Suzuki).
4. Taking personal time to make thoughtful decisions that were in the best interest for his students and how he could make a particular situation into the most meaningful event for the student (Miyata).

Most graduates shared that they kept in touch with their students and sometimes met with them when invited to a gathering even years after they graduate from the school. Tanabe described this relationship as “bonds that cannot be severed.” Every case presented an extraordinary act by the teachers that were beyond the expected interactions in the classroom. Even if the students did not show immediate responses, the teachers continued to care and support their students in the hopes that it would be a meaningful experience for them in the future.

In contrast to the graduates' view about caring, Noddings' (1984, 2007, 2010, 2012) caring perspective requires reciprocation for caring to be completed. She argues that, "Without it, there is no caring relation – no matter how hard the carer has tried to care" (2012, p. 773). Noddings might instead describe the Soka graduates as *virtue carers* (p. 773) who act upon *assumed needs* and not on the students' *expressed needs* (p. 773). According to Noddings, *virtue carers* are different from *relational carers* and believe to know what their students need and acts on their own preconceived beliefs. Therefore, virtue carers do not foster caring relations or engage with their students in a relational way. However, the graduates share their care and effort to form relations. Though it was at times frustrating, they did not allow their care to be altered dependent on immediate responses. Thus, I argue that the caring that these graduates understand displayed a deeper sense of caring.

Although these relationships present a rewarding experience for both students and teachers, all four teachers also shared the struggles they encountered in the process of developing relationships with their students. Taking time to form relationships beyond the classroom is time consuming and can also be mentally exhausting at times. For example, Fujita experienced stress and frustration when she could not reach her delinquent student; Tanabe went through a painful experience when his student passed away; Miyata experienced frustration due to the political limitations concerning the ways in which he hoped to connect with his students; and Suzuki was concerned with the quality of her teaching each time a distressed student visited her during her prep time to meet with her. However, these struggles also reveal some important points from Ikeda's concepts. In Fujita's and Suzuki's cases, they sought to improve themselves and undergo human revolution to be better teachers and to solve their struggles. Fujita expanded her capacity from this experience to understand caring in a deeper way. Suzuki sought to take classes to find

more effective ways to care for her students. For Tanabe's and Miyata's cases, they created value from the situation. Tanabe made meaning from the relationship with his student by passing on what he learned to his current students and by also continuing to connect with the student's parents. Miyata learned from the limitations he encountered and found other value creative ways to navigate through the political limits in order to connect with his students.

The stories the graduates lived shaped the contexts of their teaching practice. They enacted and passed on Ikeda's ethos that they learned at the Soka schools because they found meaning and value in their schooling experience. As mentioned earlier, Soka was surrounded by this ethos, a culture of care, and the ethos was not just shared by teachers; it was also learned and shared from other relationships. This is probably the reason why graduates did not necessarily underscore their relationships with teachers as the most significant occurrence in their schooling experience as I had initially anticipated. For some graduates, their most significant experience was with the founder or with their peers. In the case of the schools where the graduates teach, which were public schools, this is not necessarily the case. This is evident from Suzuki's testimony that many students struggle with feeling incompetent and "not good enough." Thus, the graduates' role, to care and foster this cultural ethos, becomes crucially important. These stories demonstrate that Ikeda's ethos, nurtured through relationships, is an important factor to fostering self-aware, competent, and contributive citizens. This cultural ethos fostered at the Soka schools or the kind of relationships fostered by Soka graduates, are often missing in schools due to other factors such as the over emphasis of standardization. As a result, current school systems in Japan and the U.S. are not organized to support this philosophy. Thus, these narrative accounts suggest the need to take more alternative and flexible ways to connect and make more personal connections. In order for teachers to consider and value this, administrators and policy

makers must make possible ways to incorporate this ethos so that teachers have time and support to foster relations with their students and instill belief, confidence, and curiosity in their students.

6.3 REVISITING RESEARCH PUZZLE #3

In what ways, if any, did the situated social conditions at the Soka schools provide a space for them to make meaning and shape their lives as educators?

According to the narrative accounts of the four graduates, Soka schools provided a unique experience and environment for their students. There is a distinct social and cultural condition that has been nurtured and passed on as traditions through time. Based on the biographical narrative vignettes, this cultural and social environment includes: 1) upperclassmen and underclassmen bonding, 2) creating and singing school songs, 3) strong peer relationships, 4) school mottos that students embody, 5) after-school activities with an ethos that students embody, 6) teacher's support, and 7) reading the Founder's messages and speeches. These situated and cultural contexts gradually shaped and cultivated a prepared environment. I suggest that this prepared environment is also a safe space. This is evident from the narratives. For instance, Tanabe mentioned that the school is a place to go back to. Fujita described this from a spiritual sense and both Tanabe and Suzuki visited the school as adults to seek support from their teachers. These actions demonstrate how significant and meaningful their experience was at the Soka schools. Because this prepared environment created a safe space for the graduates, their stories also reveal how they in turn try to foster this safe space for their students.

The notion of a safe space has been theoretically discussed in various literatures, but, I specifically focus on the literature concerning a safe classroom. According to Holley and Steiner

(2005), a safe classroom environment “allows students to feel secure enough to take risks, honestly express their views, and share and explore their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors” (p. 50). Thus, Holley and Steiner argue that a safe space in the classroom is an environment where students can feel comfortable to take risks to expose themselves and bring out their individuality without fear of judgment or embarrassment. The outcome of this process would be personal growth. Thus, safe space in this content is primarily focused on the emotional wellbeing of the student. The narrative accounts all describe Soka schools as an environment that displays these qualities of a safe space. However, in the case of Soka schools, this safe space is extended from the classroom to the entire school. The graduates felt safe enough to submerge themselves for learning, reflecting, nurturing, and deepening their understanding about themselves and their immediate surroundings. Students were willing to become vulnerable for self-discovery and growth. At the Soka schools, the graduates sought and desired to expand their potential. They learned a way of life. Furthermore, teachers were ready to support students in this endeavor. Thus, students identified Soka schools as a place to go back to.

Existing research further argues that the role of the teacher is essential in securing a safe environment (Barrett, 2010; Chan & Treacy, 1996; Holley & Steiner, 2005; Hyde & Ruth, 2002; Latting, 1990). Specifically, literature suggests that students perceive their teachers as responsible for fostering a safe environment (Hyde & Ruth, 2002) and students felt increased motivation in their learning when they perceived their teachers as securing safe spaces (Holley & Steiner, 2005). Thus, securing this safe space meant the need for teachers to be emotionally present (Chan & Treacy, 1996). Furthermore, research suggests that “reinforcing common understanding” amongst all participants within that environment was essential (Holley & Steiner, 2005, p. 51). Narratives confirm that both these elements, the role of supportive and emotionally

present teachers (and students) and an environment with a shared understanding amongst all participants, existed at the Soka schools. The social and cultural conditions at the Soka schools foster a shared understanding among students and teachers. This shared understanding is Ikeda's philosophy of education. Furthermore, because these graduates experienced a safe space they also make effort to create a similar environment as a teacher by being supportive and emotionally present for their students. Although the graduates shared a powerful story of their personal experiences that demonstrate why they value Ikeda's philosophy and ethos, there is a factor that must also be considered. Their volitional willingness to participate at the Soka schools might have been motivated from their religious background. Thus, a question to consider is whether this cultural ethos can be upheld equally by non-Buddhists.

6.4 REVISITING RESEARCH PUZZLE #4

How do their present conditions shape their understandings about Soka schools and Soka education?

I find their present conditions as teachers shape their understandings about Soka schools and Soka education in two ways. The first condition is from the sharp contrast they see between the experiences they had at the Soka schools and the experiences their students are having now. The second condition is from the interview and relationships they built with me.

In regards to the first condition, the school environment where the graduates all work at are seemingly limited in the ways teachers can show care and lacks the kind of relationships they experienced at Soka schools that their students could benefit from. For instance, Miyata felt limited in his ways for showing care, Suzuki felt students lacked confidence and needed more

encouragement and praise by their teachers. Tanabe witnessed the difficulty students experience in public schools to stay connected with their former teachers. The school environment was not prepared in the way Soka schools are at fostering students into becoming competent individuals. However, the challenges and school contexts that worked against this ethos they learned at Soka schools, in turn, drove them toward sharing and fostering this ethos to their students. In a way, their current environment reminds them but also affirms their understandings and significance of their schooling experience.

For the second condition, I believe the interviewees and I established a “knowledge community” through the relationship we developed and it was a safe environment for them to develop their “narrative authority” and share their rich and raw experiences (Olsen & Craig, 2001). The knowledge community was formed from a couple factors that include: 1) sharing similar experiences (as graduates of Soka schools), 2) having a mutual interest in wanting to contribute to increasing more understanding about Soka education, and finally, 3) knowing the gatekeeper or having someone we mutually knew. Because they knew I was a graduate of the Soka schools, there was an immediate sense of connection and trust, which also speaks to the particular schooling experience at the Soka schools. In this space where graduates felt safe and comfortable to share their raw experiences with me, they also developed and claimed their narrative authorities. Our interview which was in a form of dialogue brought them back, for that brief time together, to their schools to revisit, relive, and reaffirm their experiences. The questions I asked also stimulated and challenged their ways of knowing and created a transactional relation (Thayer-Bacon, 2003). The interviews helped provide a space for them to rethink, make connections that they did not before and, furthermore, articulate their Soka school experiences in a new light. As a result, a transactional relationship was occurring and a relational

way of knowing (Thayer-Bacon, 2002) and narrative way of knowing (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000) took place for both the participants and me that shaped and reshaped our understanding of Soka schools and Soka education.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

This dissertation explores, through qualitative research, the Eastern philosophy of education called Soka education and its educational school systems. I began by introducing Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, founder of Soka education and the historical, social, and political significance behind the founding and growth of Soka education. Then, I introduced Daisaku Ikeda, the founder of the Soka schools, and his interpretation and application of Makiguchi's philosophy. Ikeda provided a unique interpretation of Soka education and this study examined how or whether Ikeda's interpretations were being applied in practice at the Soka schools. Thus, I interviewed graduates and listened to their experiences to see how they understood Soka education. Specifically, I used narrative inquiry as my method of research and studied the lived-experiences of four graduates of the Soka school systems in Japan. I filtered my interviews to graduates who chose teaching for their careers with the hopes that they can better articulate their experiences from an educational perspective. The use of narrative inquiry as a method of research allowed for the unique social and cultural phenomenon and ethos that students experienced at the Soka schools to present itself in the most raw and organic way for the readers to understand. Thayer-Bacon's relational ways of knowing (2003) informed my method of using narrative inquiry.

This research gave extensive biographical narratives of four graduates. It was qualitative and thick in description, which allowed for a more thorough examination of the particular phenomenon under study. Throughout the process of my research I kept memos of all the

thoughts and questions that came to my mind. Some of those thoughts and questions were to myself and some were suggestions for future research. Now as I reach toward the end of this dissertation, I reflect on my approach as a researcher, then and now, and offer these thoughts and suggestions that have emerged through this journey of exploring Soka education and, furthermore, through my own journey of becoming a narrative inquirer. Specifically, I present them in three sections: suggestions for future research, theory, and educational practice.

7.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

7.1.1 Reflections on conducting the research in Japanese

Conducting my research in Japan was important. Although there are several Soka schools around the world including the United States, Japan is the only country where there are Soka schools from kindergarten to college. Furthermore, since the schools originated in Japan, it also has the longest history and this cultural ethos cultivated in the Soka schools has historical significance to Japanese culture. For example, mentor and disciple relationship and teacher and student relationship are concepts that are both rooted in Japanese culture. In order to understand Soka education, then, I felt it was important and appropriate to begin my research in Japan.

I had an advantage conducting this research in Japan because I speak native Japanese language and have also passed the Level 1 Japanese proficiency test that qualifies me to be competent to work in Japan. I also attended Soka University of Japan for two years, which made me familiar to specific cultural contexts of the ethos existing in the Soka schools. Moreover, my Buddhist background added another layer for understanding the various cultural contexts

including Japanese culture, Soka culture, and Buddhist culture. As a result, there was a safe space for my interviewees to feel relaxed and safe to share their stories without feeling judged or misunderstood. Furthermore, I had the advantage of recognizing and not missing the context-specific cultural languages or nuances that were shared by the graduates. Yet, even with all the advantages of being an insider, there were still challenges in the process that I would like to make known.

One of those challenges was the sometimes culturally specific language that was not transferable or translatable in English. In these cases, it is solely dependent on the researcher's choice of words and meaning to best interpret what the interviewee was trying to convey. Furthermore, how one perceives another's story even when shared in the same language is complex. The situation is further complicated when that information is then translated into another language. How one person uses language is unique and distinct. When that meaning is further translated into another language by somebody else, it can be interpreted into a completely different cultural nuance, even when translated literally. I believe researchers must be cognizant of this and exert themselves to represent the participants' data in the most ethically possible way. Thus, I deeply appreciate Miyata's words at the end of the interview when he said that he trusted me with how I will share his story. Similarly, I believe all the other interviewees entrusted me with their stories. For example, after the end of each interview, the graduates all humbly thanked me for the opportunity and shared how the interview challenged them to think more deeply about Soka education in relation to their experience at the Soka schools. They also participated in the interview because they wanted to support further growth in Soka education research.

Another challenge that I experienced was when I was gathering literature for my research. The most difficult part of writing my literature review was reading Makiguchi's

original works. These historical texts were written in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The language is quite different and difficult for even native Japanese people to read. Thus, as a Japanese American not educated in Japan, I felt my limitations when I was reading through Makiguchi's texts. It took a group of us to discuss the texts and interpret the text together to gather what was being said.

7.1.2 Reflections on entering in the midst and leaving in the midst

Through the process of conducting my narrative inquiry, I realized that the nature of this study, to enter in the midst of stories and leave in the midst (Connelly and Clandinin, 2000) or to follow stories through the organic flow of conversations, inadvertently can leave some information out or unquestioned. In my case, this was the concept of global citizenship or their thoughts and practices on knowledge acquisition and developing critical thinking skills. Clandinin (2013) describes this situation through a similar experience she went through:

There were many things he had not told me, because I had not asked. I wondered what else I did not yet know. I realized again that in narrative inquiry the stories we hear are always partial, always contextual, and always in the relational space between researcher and participant. I wondered what other stories we could share if we continued to talk. (p. 116)

Although I was aware of this process and experienced this in between my interviews, I was only able to fully realize this when I was in the process of analyzing and finalizing my narrative accounts.

During the first interview, I had a particular lens with a particular expectation of an outcome that I approached this study from, which narrowed my ways of guiding and navigating the stories they were telling. New information emerged after every interview, whether from their stories or from reading and finding new meaning about their stories, which helped me to learn

something more about the person. Sometimes I did not realize that I missed some information until I was at the stage of writing the overall analysis of the narratives. During the interview, there was already so much rich information that was shared that I did not notice what was missing until I finally knew what stories and themes I was focusing on. After I completed the narratives, I realized that even at that point, the narratives were not complete and will never be finished. The stories that emerged from the interaction between me and my interviewees came to life based on a particular dynamic and flow that emerged in the midst of where my interviewees were as well as where I was in that particular time and place. Thus, the stories that are presented are not fixed representations of people but a snapshot of a certain moment that occurred based on the particular dynamic between the interviewees and the researcher.

Through the process of interviewing, transcribing, and writing the narratives, I also learned something about myself. It occurred to me at that point that I was also on my own journey of becoming a researcher. This experience helped to recognize my limitations and to continue becoming a better researcher for the next interviews.

7.1.3 More interviews

For research in the future, I would recommend more interviews to examine whether newly interviewed graduates would echo the stories my participants shared and whether new phenomenon or meanings can shed light or deepen our understandings of Soka education. For this research, I included equal gender mix and they represented teachers from elementary, junior high and high school. For future research, I would continue to conduct more interviews with graduates from various age groups (so that it includes both beginning and experienced teachers), gender, and teaching levels (from pre-K to college). I suspect that there will be generational

differences in the data. An older more experienced graduate might have better ways of teaching or forming relationships with their students compared to a recent graduate. At the same time, a graduate who just started their teaching career might have richer and detailed stories to share from their experiences because their memories from Soka schools are more recent. Furthermore, since the graduates I interviewed for this dissertation all attended and graduated from Tokyo Soka schools, I would include interviews from graduates of Kansai Soka schools next time to see if their experiences resonate with those conducted in Tokyo. Just as there are cultural differences between northern and southern states of the U.S, Tokyo and Kansai are also said to have cultural differences. Therefore, I anticipate there might be slight differences in the ways that students might describe their experiences in comparison to Tokyo schools. However since Ikeda's ethos and mission statements are consistent, I would be interested to see the similarities and differences between the schools.

7.1.4 Conducting research at Soka University of America

A more comprehensive research project can then extend the research to examine international Soka schools to see whether their stories continue to echo or possibly conflict with one another. Soka University of America (SUA), which concentrates its curriculum and environment heavily on fostering global citizens, would be the site I would suggest for this comparative study. SUA is a multi-national and multi-ethnic setting conducive to fostering global citizens and would be the most fitting location of all the Soka schools to examine whether the challenges of fostering global citizenship, if there is one, is exclusive to homogenous environments or whether it might still be challenging even in a diverse setting. I expect there will be a stronger emphasis on global

citizenship for students at SUA because the concept is not only embodied by people at SUA but also embedded in the curriculum.

The population is not only ethnically and culturally diverse, but the students are also coming from different religious views, making SUA the prime setting to examine whether this cultural ethos is being fostered regardless of students' religious background. However, when comparing and contrasting the findings between graduates from Soka schools in Japan and America, there are two facts to keep in mind. First, Soka schools in Japan have long-standing cultural traditions because of its longer history, which is a significant factor to the prepared environment that encourages a safe and supportive place for students. In contrast, SUA is a relatively newly established institution with only 16 years of culture and tradition. If the interviewee is one of the first few classes, they entered the school when there was not much history. Second, the Soka schools in Japan have all school levels available beginning from pre-school to university level. On the other hand, the only Soka school available in the U.S. is university level. Thus, researchers interested in conducting further research should keep these differences in mind.

7.1.5 Interviewing non-teachers

Although this particular study examined graduates who became teachers, it will be equally fascinating to see how other graduates, who chose other career paths, interpreted their lived-experiences and to further examine how they might have shaped their current lives based on the stories that have shaped them during their schooling years. Since this study only took account of the students' narrative accounts, another interesting perspective to explore are the lived-

experiences of teachers, administrators, staff, and parents involved in the Soka schools. How might their lived-experiences enrich the particular social and cultural context that was examined?

7.1.6 Ethnographic and duoethnographic research

Finally, to deepen and strengthen the personal experiences shared by the graduates, I also recommend ethnographic and duoethnographic (Norris, Sawyer & Lund, 2012) research for future research. The rich and raw observations at the Soka schools can offer another layer of trustworthiness and more depth and meaning to the stories shared by the interviewees. Observations can demonstrate through actual example how teachers are instilling this cultural ethos and knowledge in the classrooms. Furthermore, duoethnographic research, which is similar to narrative inquiry, is another research method that I believe can be beneficial to further understanding Soka education. Both narrative inquiry and duoethnography share similar methodology. Whereas narrative inquiry is an approach based on a narrative way of knowing, duoethnography is a research method based on a dialogic way of knowing. Duoethnographers “use themselves to assist themselves and others in better understanding the phenomenon under investigation” (Norris et al., 2012, p. 13). While my narrative inquiry introduced stories of particular phenomenon as experienced by the participants, the perspective was then represented by a single voice of the researcher. In duoethnography, both voices are present and focuses on the multiple perspectives that emerges from that dialogue (Norris et al., 2012). It is a dialogue that shares and examines the life stories of both participants and it is a study that further examines the ideas and theories that are transformed through the dialogue. The conversation is fluid and can steer its course in any way the participants desire. Thus, this kind of research would be an alternative method of research where researchers can have a dialogue about their thoughts

on particular theories and phenomenon about Soka education and the research can also capture new thoughts and offer new ideas that are born from the dialogue. I offer some suggestions on the conceptual work of Soka education in the following section.

7.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY

In this dissertation, I formed my conceptual framework for Ikeda's philosophy of education and offered a working synthesis of Ikeda's view on teacher role in teacher and student relationships. Other scholars have also developed their own conceptual framework and it will be interesting to compare and contrast these ideas to examine how the concepts might deepen ideas or form new ones. One example of a concept that might differ from my work is the concept of global citizenship. While my framework introduces human revolution and global citizenship in both overlapping and parallel ways for how we act upon dignity of life, others might view Ikeda's notion of global citizenship from a different framework, such as an end result of Soka education. For me, human revolution, global citizenship, and mentor and disciple relationships are all goals and I am still in the process of trying to understand these concepts. In addition to the conceptual framework, my proposed working synthesis of Ikeda's view on teacher roles can benefit greatly with more research both conceptually and empirically. Conceptual research can strengthen, deepen, and further shape Ikeda's view on teacher roles and empirical research can examine whether all the suggested roles can be applied in practice and help to further shape the framework.

Ikeda's notion of human revolution and comparing and contrasting similar Western ideas can be its own theoretical piece either conceptually or empirically. For example, a study worth

examining is the aspect of the inner struggle that takes place during the process of undergoing human revolution. Thayer-Bacon (2003) argues that human beings through engaging with the other, learn and develop their understanding about themselves, others, and the environment they live in. However, Ikeda's human revolution concept focuses on the process of learning and growing. Prior to understanding something, people are sometimes challenged and experience an inner struggle that offers an opportunity for them to learn something new from that experience. A conceptual piece on the different ways people can learn and grow in their process of human revolution might be an interesting study. While my research for this dissertation focused on Ikeda's application of Soka education, further research in Makiguchi's concepts and applications and Toda's views on Soka education can inform Soka education.

Another line of inquiry for conceptual work that would be interesting and helpful for Soka education research is the study of Ikeda's view regarding the Buddhist term dependent origination and exploring further the similarities to Thayer-Bacon's (2003) relational epistemology. While Ikeda's ethos is rooted in this Buddhist term dependent origination, his philosophy of education is also a relational way of knowing oneself and others. One research study might explore the similarities in these views and compare and contrast these views to examine how interrelated and overlapping they are and how research might better represent them as a methodology or epistemology for another research study.

The narratives I present in this research demonstrate clear examples of how Ikeda's philosophy was applied in practice at the Soka schools as well as how they were embraced and valued by graduates who then shared his cultural ethos to their students. While most of Ikeda's ethos was manifested in relationships and non-academic settings, little was presented on how teachers motivated or instilled intellectual curiosity, an important quality in Ikeda's human

education concept of fostering fully human beings. Therefore, an ongoing question for researchers is whether Soka education can be implemented in curriculums and practiced in classrooms through lesson plans. I offer some implications for this in the next section.

7.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

There are many people around the world both graduates and educators, including those not necessarily Soka alumni but who are attracted to the ethos of Soka education, that are interested to apply Ikeda's philosophy but are not quite sure how. Here, I offer suggestions based on my own research of how one might begin to apply Soka education in their classrooms or schools.

7.3.1 Establishing an ethos

From the research I conducted, the two most important qualities that seem essential to the groundwork of Soka education are the belief of teachers in the inherent potential of their students and their value in relationships. Without believing in the students' limitless potential, creating a new narrative, specifically Ikeda's concept of human revolution, is difficult. If teachers can foster confidence in all students to believe in their unique potentials, more students might develop a volitional desire to care and contribute to society.

Furthermore, in order to act on this new narrative and support students in achieving their goals, it is essential to value and build caring relations. Without caring relationships, neither teacher and student relationships nor mentor and disciple relationships can be fostered. Views on

the significance of relations can be drawn from multiple philosophical sources including Soka education, Buddhism, and Western philosophy articulated by Ikeda, Noddings, and Thayer-Bacon. What binds these ideas together is the authors' concern for an education that reaches and encourages all students in their learning and growth.

In addition to the two aspects that were found in the narratives, I add a third value that is essential to applying Soka education. This third value is a commitment by schools and teachers to foster global citizens seeking to live a contributive life. There must be a conscious effort by schools and teachers to create a multi-cultural environment where students can interact with other students and teachers from diverse backgrounds and continuously explore and learn through diverse settings and lesson plans. The more interactions and transactions students experience with others, the more they engage with others and provides opportunities to challenge their ways of knowing (Thayer-Bacon, 2003). As a result, students experience a human revolution and expand their capacities and learn about themselves in relation to others. For curriculum, instead of designating just one month out of the year for celebrating or learning about Black history or woman's history, they should be part of our everyday curriculum just as it is a part of the students' every day life. Incorporating social justice curriculum and news events that happen on the day-to-day in both their communities and distant places into lesson plans is a practical way that students can connect a context of their community to a context in distant places and begin to learn about themselves in relation to others.

Value creation or making practical meaning and value from any given environment is the fundamental basis for Soka education. This means that if teachers created value from their unique contexts and resources available to them, the outcome or value that is born out of the particular situation will look different in every setting. Ryan Hayashi's (2013) example in New

Mexico is a perfect example of how one teacher created value and transformed his math class into a social justice curriculum. He created value from the unique context he was situated in, and, with his Soka informed value, established relationships with his students to develop the most meaningful and engaging lesson plan.

7.3.2 Recommendations for school curriculum

The narratives also demonstrate that, in order to make meaningful connections with their students, there is a lot of time and effort required from teachers. This implies teachers' effort to connect and build relationships with their students, to know their students and their needs, and prepare in advance to build meaningful lessons for the students. However, if students, parents, administrators and policy makers expect teachers to make such effort, there should be structures in place that support teachers in this endeavor.

It is important to focus on creating an environment for these ideas to flourish. The following are some suggestions for teachers, administrators, and policy makers that would promote an environment where teachers have more opportunities to build stronger and deeper relationships with their students. For example smaller class sizes, home visits, one-on-one parent-teacher conferences, and school curriculums that foster long-term relationships between teachers and students are some structural approaches to building relationships. Home visits are more common in Japanese school and rare in the U.S. but by visiting them at their homes, teachers can understand their students' living situation and context that affects their learning.

I have another set of recommendations to make about school curriculum. This proposal might look like the looping structure (Tomioka, 2012) in elementary schools where teachers are assigned to students not only for one year but for up to three years, which helps to build a long-

term relationship between student and teacher. Teachers can support students better in both their well-being and knowledge acquisition when they know their students better. In junior high or high school, since classes are separated by subject matter, one alternative is for teachers to be personally assigned to a couple students as their advisors for the three years. As advisors, there could be personal meetings every two weeks or on a monthly basis throughout the school year to ensure the students' well being and for their academic success. By knowing their students better, they can also work with other teachers to help the student in their success. For example, if a teacher finds that one of their assigned students is struggling with a certain subject, they can connect with that specific teacher to find ways to better assist the students' learning.

For how Soka education might look like in curriculum or academic content, I first and foremost believe teachers' creativity is the most meaningful contribution to students' learning. However, in addition to teachers' creativity, I also believe there are some structures that can assist teachers in bringing out their creativity and by instilling students' curiosity and motivation to study. Consistent with Makiguchi's (1981-1988, Vol. 8) argument that content knowledge must be practical and applicable to students' daily life, a multi-disciplinary approach that can incorporate other disciplines in one subject, such as math, philosophy, English, and/or history that pertains to their daily life would be meaningful for the student. In order to incorporate content-knowledge with students' daily life, knowing the cultural, social, and political dynamics of the community is also necessary. For example, Hayashi (2013) had to first home visit his students in order to understand the complex social and political context they were situated in to, then, create his social justice curriculum. Another suggestion is to collaborate with other classes and create multi-disciplinary coursework to co-teach and offer group exercises to stimulate students' learning. Furthermore, coursework that is not only confined to the classroom but

extending out of the classroom, or inviting guest speakers from the community are also other learning opportunities and experiences that students can benefit from. Providing diverse ways for students to connect to lessons are important methods that teachers should incorporate to try to reach all students' learning approaches.

To incorporate more positive and supportive relationships between peers, I suggest that schools begin to encourage a culture of taking care of others. For instance a mentoring program on a school-wide level might be a structural approach that can promote upper classmen to take care of underclassmen. Similar to the advising program I suggested from teachers, the upperclassmen would be assigned to an underclassman they would take care of throughout the school year. This would be a voluntary program that might be experimental at first or start out small but could gradually turn out to be big once students experience the benefit of the relationship. By applying the idea of collaborating with other classes for a multi-disciplinary coursework can also provide opportunities for peer relationships. For example, a teacher teaching senior history or politics course can team up with a teacher teaching freshmen math to create a multi-disciplinary coursework and encourage group work to solve problems. Students can learn about math in relation to history or politics and, furthermore, learn to work with others and develop relationships with older or younger classmen.

Although these structural implications are intended to support teachers with building relationships so that there are support systems for teachers to create value, I want to keep in mind that these structures are not the magic formula or solution to educational problems and surely not a blueprint to implement Soka education. Furthermore, structures can quickly become another set of busywork or nuisance if viewed as a burden or another task that teachers feel administered to do. Thus, in order to create a prepared environment for students and teachers, all parties,

including parents, teachers, administrators, policy makers, and the community must be willing to support in this endeavor.

APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL

Copy of IRB approval.

Pitt Seal

University of Pittsburgh
Institutional Review Board

3500 Fifth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
(412) 383-1480
(412) 383-1508 (fax)
<http://www.irb.pitt.edu>

Memorandum

To: DR. JULIE NAGASHIMA
From: CHRISTOPHER RYAN, PhD, Vice Chair
Date: 12/10/2008
IRB#: PRO08100169
Subject: Soka Education Research

The above-referenced project has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board. Based on the information provided, this project meets all the necessary criteria for an exemption, and is hereby designated as "exempt" under section 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2).

Please note the following information:

- If any modifications are made to this project, use the "**Send Comments to IRB Staff**" process from the project workspace to request a review to ensure it continues to meet the exempt category.
- Upon completion of your project, be sure to finalize the project by submitting a "**Study Completed**" report from the project workspace.

Please be advised that your research study may be audited periodically by the University of Pittsburgh Research Conduct and Compliance Office.

Figure 1. IRB Approval

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please describe a little about your occupation.

_____ さんのご職業について詳しく教えてください。

2. What is the meaning and value of education?

_____ さんにとって教育の意味そして価値とは？

3. What is your vision of education?

_____ さんの教育思想を教えてください。

4. How do you view your relationships with your students (if teacher)?

_____ さんは生徒さん達とどんな人間関係をお持ちですか？

What's the difference between teacher and student?

教師と生徒の違いとは？

What role does the teacher play? What role does the student play?

教師はどういう役割ですか？同じく学生の役割は？

How would I see that in your classroom?

それは教室の中ではどのように表現されていますか？

5. How do you view your relationships with other teachers (if teacher)?

_____ さんは他の教師とはどんな人間関係をお持ちですか？

6. In what ways do you view yourself responsible for student learning (if teacher)?

_____ さんは、生徒さん達への教育についてどのような責任を持っていると考えますか？

a. In what ways do you view students to be responsible for their own learning?

生徒自身が自分の学習についてどのような責任を持つべきだと思いますか？

b. In what ways do you view students to be responsible for their own learning?

生徒自身は自分の教育にどのように責任を持つべきだと思いますか？

What aspects of Student and teacher relationship falls outside of responsibility?

学生と教師の関係においてこういった点が、師弟関係の責任の範囲外であると考えますか？

7. How do you define Soka Education?

創価教育とは？

a. What is Soka Education?

b. What does it mean to you?

_____さんにとって創価教育とは何でしょう？

c. If you were to explain Soka Education to someone who has no knowledge of it, how would you describe it?

_____さんは、創価教育について知識をまったく持ってない人に創価教育とは、と聞かれた時にどう説明しますか？

d. Can you share your personal story – when you strongly experienced or witnessed a moment in time that represented this Soka philosophy? What is the event that epitomized it?

_____さんにとって、これはまさに創価教育だ、創価教育の象徴だ、と思った瞬間ってありますか？

Was there a particularly good teacher, environment, culture, or time?

特にそれを強調させる教師・環境・文化・時代の背景はありましたか？

From your perspective, what counts as Soka? What aspects are not Soka?

_____さんにとって創価とは何を意味しますか？あるいは、創価とはいえないこと（点）はどのようなものだと思いますか？

8. How has this philosophy affected you?

この創価教育哲学はあなたにどのように影響しましたか？

a. How has it affected the way you teach?

実際どのように_____さんの教え方に影響しましたか？

b. How has it affected the way you view your students?

どのように_____さんの生徒に対しての見方に影響しましたか？

9. From your perspective, how do you think you are applying Soka Education in your practice (if teacher)?

教育現場で創価教育哲学をどのように実践していますか？

10. Or how do you think Soka Education can be applied into practice (if researcher)?

創価教育はどのように教育現場で（あるいは他で）実践できると思いますか？

11. もし____さんが学校を作るとして、創価教育をその学校に実践していこうと思ったら、____さんの学園での経験で何が大事だと思いますか？どう実践できるとお考えですか？

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

研究への参加について同意書

課題名： 創価教育学研究

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この研究は、牧口恒三郎の創価教育哲学の理解を深めるため、以下の2点に焦点をあてます。

- 1) 牧口恒三郎の創価教育哲学をどのように池田大作が実現しているのか。
- 2) 牧口恒三郎の創価教育哲学を創価教育の研究者、または現代の教育者が教育現場でどのようにその哲学を理解し実践しているのか。

研究に参加していただける場合、何問かの質問にお答えしていただきます。質問は仕事や回答者の教育思想、それから回答者が教育者である場合、生徒との人間関係について詳しく質問します。インタビューも録音させていただきます。所要時間は約1時間となります。

この研究に参加することに伴う危険性は非常に低いと考えられます。個人のプライバシーを守るため、本研究で集めたデータには、参加者の本名の代わりに、匿名または仮名をつけます。費用の負担はありません。

今回提供していただいた録画や個人情報などの記録は、いっさいもらさないように保管し、少なくとも五年保存させていただきます。研究の成果は、個人を特定できない方法で学術雑誌に発表することもあります。

研究協力は自由意志で、協力しない場合も不利益は受けません。この同意書を書いた後も協力をやめることも可能です。

ご質問がある場合、上記の研究代表者にご連絡ください。協力者としての権利に関する疑問がある場合、ピッツバーグ大学 IRB に属する協力者保護代弁者にご連絡ください（電話：1. 866. 212. 2668）

研究参加同意書

- 私は、この研究について、内容を文書及び口答で十分に説明を受け、理解しました。私は、この同意書の複写をもらいます。
- 私は、研究を行う際、質問することができること、及び上記の研究者に説明してもらえることを、十分理解しています。
- 私は、研究参加が自由であり、文書による同意の撤回も出来ることを、理解しました。
- この研究に参加することに同意します。

研究協力者署名

日付

- この研究に参加し、インタビューを録音することを許可します。

研究協力者署名

日付

説明と理解に基づく同意(*informed consent*)の証明書

私は、この研究について、その性質や目的、及びこの研究への参加に伴う利益や危険性を、上記の方に十分説明しました。また、上記の方の質問に解答し、今後もこの研究についての質問に解答することを承諾します。

同意を得る者の名前

本研究での役割

同意を得る者の署名

日付

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