OPENING UP TO & REACHING ACROSS PEDAGOGIC RELATIONSHIPS OF
POSSIBILITY: INNOVATIVE PRACTICE FOR JAPANESE-BRAZILIAN CHILDREN IN A
JAPANESE RURAL PUBLIC SCHOOL

by

Ellen Preston Motohashi

B.S. in Early Childhood Education, State University of New York at Fredonia, 1985

M.A. in Teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language, San Francisco State University
San Francisco, 1991

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

The School of Education in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Social and Comparative Analysis of Education

University of Pittsburgh

2011

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

This dissertation was presented

by

Ellen Preston Motohashi

It was defended on

March 21, 2011

and approved by

Michael Gunzenhauser, PhD, Associate Professor

John Weidman, PhD, Professor

Wendell McConnaha, PhD, Director of Falk School

Mitsuyo Sakamoto, PhD, Associate Professor, Sophia University, Tokyo

Dissertation Advisor: Noreen Garman, PhD, Professor

OPENING UP TO & REACHING ACROSS PEDAGOGIC RELATIONSHIPS OF
POSSIBILITY: INNOVATIVE PRACTICE FOR JAPANESE-BRAZILIAN CHILDREN IN
A JAPANESE RURAL PUBLIC SCHOOL

Ellen Preston Motohashi, PhD

University of Pittsburgh, 2011

Japan has entered an era of unprecedented sociocultural shifts stemming from demographic changes and economic needs that the native Japanese population can no longer sustain. In the early 1990s the Japanese government, desperate to appease the growing labor shortage. opted to select a racially appropriate group from which to pool its blue-collar labor resources by "calling home" second and third generation South American Japanese descendants, (*Nikkeijin*), mostly Brazilian. This period coincided with an increased enrollment of Japanese-Brazilian students, 30 percent of the total, at a school in rural Japan.

This interpretive study highlights the experiences and transformative actions of two Japanese educators, and one Brazilian assistant teacher who were instrumental figures in the grassroots educational reforms that took place in this school. The individual and collective actions of these educators transformed chaotic classrooms into engaging educational spaces, complacent children and overwhelmed educators into responsive, caring and collaborative partners in their own and others' learning and teaching. This inquiry centers on three narrative portraits created from in-depth conversations that draw out the unique personal and professional histories of these individuals while linking them to the broader story of sociocultural change taking place in Japan and the educational reforms that occurred in the school. Extend school -wide observations of classrooms, annual school events, professional development workshops,

and faculty meetings over a year and a half are paired with rich textual data generated from intense, open-ended conversations with the participants of the study.

The narrative portraits in this study reveal the personal and professional life experiences that each of these individuals drew on to confront the challenges they faced and the actions they took to transcend personal and professional difficulties. The central themes generated through the narrative portraits and philosophic/theoretic interpretations that follow each portrait reveal pedagogic acts guided by philosophical convictions, ethical caring pedagogic relationships founded on a deep sense of response-ability (Noddings, 2003), responsiveness to cultural-linguistic difference, and innovative pedagogic practice. This work addresses the dearth of literature on educational experiences of immigrant children in Japan in English, much less stories of success, culturally responsive practice and inclusive education.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

Hast thou named all the birds without a gun?
Loved the wood-rose, and left it on its stalk?
At rich men's tables eaten bread and pulse?
Unarmed, faced danger with a heart of trust?
And loved so well a high behavior,
In man or maid, that thou from speech refrained,
Nobility more nobly to repay?
O, be my friend, and teach me to shine!
(Emerson in Atkinson, 2000, p. 696)

A journey never begins or ends alone, we always carry within us those who have shaped and guided us on the many paths we take throughout our life. An accomplishment such as this requires perseverance, patience, fortitude, imagination and, above all, encouragement. This work and passage in the unfolding story of my life would not have been possible without the love, understanding and unwavering support of my family. Family is a funny word because we tend to think of it in the traditional sense, despite knowing better in all our post-modern sophistication. I have several "families" to thank for holding me up when I was about to fall, guiding me through dark periods, and for inspiring me simply by their "being" in my life and in this world (existentially and physically).

Firstly, I must, above all others, thank my husband, Toshiya, and my sons, Kazuya and Kaito for their tremendous courage, patience, support and love, which they gave unconditionally and ceaselessly throughout this experience. As a wife and mother I would not have been able to face the challenge of this great task without being able to share the trials and tribulations of this

This work is dedicated to my older brother, Stephan McGhee Preston (1961-1979), because of his enduring spirit in my life. He never had the chance, but I did; this is for both of us. And to my sons, Kazuya & Kaito Motohashi, because each day you inspire me with your strength, imagination, honesty, and compassion for those you share your worlds with. Everything I do and have done has been guided by you, and is for us, in the hopes that we help each other and those we meet in this life shine just that much brighter.

1.0   PROLOGUE

As I sit on the train heading back into the past I feel simultaneously propelled into the future. I am surrounded by businessmen drinking canned coffee; young men and women heads and shoulders hunched over cell phones, texting distant friends or lovers; children lost in virtual worlds and other fellow passengers too tired or bored to notice the same passing landscape that beckons me across time and space. My body is slowly pushed forward by the accelerated pace of the bullet train as it speeds toward the many individual destinations of my own and my fellow travelers. I am headed toward both familiar landscapes and points yet unknown; I know this journey well and have been here before, though neither my purpose, final location, nor I remain the same. (Reflective journal entry, 9.24.08)

To discover meaning in "the gap between past and future" (Arendt, 1960/2006, p.3) is a key precept of this work; in my own life and in the lives of the individuals at the center of this narrative inquiry. This interpretative work highlights the pedagogic actions, personal and professional struggles, and philosophical convictions of three individual educators who were part of a collective effort to enact and implement local school change at Ishikawa Elementary School,[1] a small rural Japanese public school with a large Japanese-Brazilian student population. These individual stories are embedded within a broader story of local and national sociocultural change across the breadth of Japan which the children, their families, and teachers at this school daily face. At its foundation, this inquiry has been a quest to discern the personal and professional life experiences that each of these individuals drew, and subsequently acted, on when confronting the challenges

---

[1] All school names and locations, except for the prefectural name, Aichi prefecture and city of Nagoya, are pseudonyms.

presented to them when they walked into the ongoing and unfolding story of Ishikawa Elementary School. What has unfolded revealed acts guided by deep pedagogic philosophical convictions, ethical caring pedagogic relationships, actions driven by a sense of response-ability (Noddings, 2003), responsiveness to cultural-linguistic difference, bridging divided communities, innovative pedagogic practice, and conflicts of identity turned to transformative experience. Looking across a broad range of philosophic and theoretic conceptualizations I have made sense of the rich narratives of experience that were shared with me as I heed van Manen's (1990) call to "lace anecdotal narrative into more formal textual discourse [that will] create a tension between the pre-reflective and reflective pulls of language"(p. 121).

I wrote the above field text as I made the first of, what would become, many journeys back to a region where I lived twenty years ago. The entry into my journal reflects a sense of uncertainty as I traversed the same terrain I had crossed as a younger woman. I was enroute to a rural area where I taught as an Assistant English Language Teacher in several junior high schools on the peninsula south of Nagoya, the third largest city, in central Japan. When I resided in the small rural community where I conducted this research I was one of a very small population of foreigners living or working in the region (Aichi prefecture) that is now home to the second largest population of foreigners outside of Tokyo.[2] When I first lived in the area I struggled to accept, or rather ignore, the many stares and whispers from passersby as they scrutinized my "foreign-ness" and difference. Now, I sit on the train, less troubled by the scrutiny and stares. I have earned my place and settled into a feeling of being at "home" in this

---

[2] In 2007, out of the 8,065 total number of foreign national children registered in public schools Aichi prefecture those registered as Brazilian or Peruvian nationals totaled 5,030, or 77percent of the total (Matsumoto, 2009). As of 2006 there was a total of 20,692 foreign national children registered in public schools across Japan. The total foreign population in Aichi prefecture as of 2009 totaled 222,184 residents (Nakagami, 2009). (See footnote #4 or p. 6 for detailed information on immigration statistics and foreign student population nationally).

once strange culture after nearly two decades of living and working here, yet still remain forever the foreigner to the strangers I pass.

I did not anticipate that Ishikawa Elementary School would become the site of my doctoral research when I first visited there in September of 2008, nor could I know that I would shift my thinking about the capacity of Japanese educators to positively respond to, and engage their linguistically and culturally different students. This was a personal bias embedded in my own experiences as a mother, educator, and scholar that I found myself confronting before and during the work required by this inquiry. I was put in a position to "contemplate the historicity of my existence," which Gadamer explains (1976) as,

> constitut[ing] the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience. Prejudices are biases of our openness to the world. …Is not our expectation and our readiness to hear the new also necessarily determined by the old that has already taken possession of us? The nature of the hermeneutical experience is not that something is outside and desires admission. Rather, we are possessed by something and precisely by means of it we are opened up for the new, the different, the true. (p. 9)

In this unfolding tale of the educators and the reforms they enacted at Ishikawa Elementary school I am not the central character, nor are my children, but the narrator through which others' stories will be told, retold, and interpreted. In so doing, my own story as an individual, mother, educator, and researcher, as well as those of my children's schooling experiences in Japan will also be woven into the text. These occasional anecdotes provide parallel stories to broaden possible interpretations made from the narratives that claim central positions in this inquiry. Clandinin and Connelly (1990) capture the intersubjective and co-constitutive nature of the project I have set before me.

> We…think in terms of a two-part inquiry agenda. We need to listen closely to teachers…and to the stories of their lives in and out of the classrooms. We also need to tell our own stories as we live our own collaborative researcher/teacher

3

lives. (p.12)

This brief introduction is not the beginning of the story, rather it situates individual lives and events within a dialectic of time and space. The stories of the individual educators at Ishikawa Elementary School, the challenges they faced, and they changes they envisioned neither begin or end with this research project. There is only the continuation, interruption and rebirth of past and present stories: institutional, individual and collective; all pregnant with possibilities to "open up [to], the new, the different, the true" (Gadamer, 1976 p. 9).

> *The train conductor has announced that we will soon be briefly stopping at Nagoya Station. My heart begins to beat rapidly in anticipation. Twenty years have passed since I disembarked onto the platform of this station. Twenty years of becoming a woman, an educator, a wife, a mother and now an emerging scholar/researcher. The body, mind, and place have all changed, and yet retain a familiar sameness. I step off the train and look left, then right, searching for the right exit to take to my next train that will head south down the peninsula taking me to my final destination, Urata-cho. I am surprised to see the signboards on the platform. Many are written in four other languages besides Japanese: English, Korean, Chinese and Portuguese. I stop, astounded, the abstract has become reality and the signs of the socio-cultural change I have been anticipating these last three years studying in preparation for this day could not have been any clearer. Truly both place and person are not the same.* (reflective journal entry, 9.24.08)

2.0 THE BIG PICTURE: PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE PROBLEMS WITH IMMIGRATION IN JAPAN

Japan has entered an era of unprecedented sociocultural shifts stemming from demographic changes and economic needs that the native Japanese population cannot sustain. Willis (2006) cites the 1999 calculations by the Japanese government predicting a continual yearly decrease of 600,000 workers a year due to the ageing of Japanese society, low birthrate, and a shortage of Japanese willing to work within the blue collar labor industries. United Nations figures predict that by the year 2050 the (im)migrant[3] population of Japan will comprise as high as 30percent of the national total population[4] (Willis, 2006). In an interview with Johnston (2004), the former head of the Tokyo regional bureau, Hidenori Sakanaka, made the following claim attesting to the future dependence of Japan on (im)migrant labor, which is by now a well-publicized, and contentious fact.

---

[3] Placing parenthesis around (im)migrant allows me to include both migrant and immigrant groups in this discussion more easily. There are clear distinctions between these two groups with regard to the embeddedness into the economic, social and cultural fabric of the (im)migrant to her host community and the implications this has on long term life chances (Portes & Zhou, 2005; Rumbaut, 1994; Tsuda, 1999).

[4] 2005 statistics break down the registered foreign nationals at 1,973,747 or 1.55percent of the total population. This figure can be further broken down accordingly: *Koreans* at 30.8percent of the foreign national population, or 607,419; *Chinese* at 24percent or 487, 507; *Brazilians* at 14.5percent or 286,557; Filipinos at 10.1percent or 199,394; *Peruvians* at 2.8percent or 55,750; *Americans* at 2.5percent at 48,440; and Uncategorized *Others* at 14.6percent or 288,213 (Ministry of Japan Immigration Bureau, 2005). These statistics represent a 44.5percent increase in the number of registered foreign nationals documented over the past decade (Tsuneyoshi, 2004).

By 2050, Japan's population will have shrunk from the current 127 million to about 90 million, and to about 40 million by the end of the century. By my calculations, we need 10 million new immigrants by midcentury to survive as a nation. (Johnston, 2008)

A new class of (im)migrants, commonly referred to as "newcomers"[5], began entering Japan in the early 1990s as a result of the revised immigration and refugee act of 1989, which determined new categories of select groups for legal admission into Japan. The groups which became eligible to apply for work or residential visas were: descendants of Japanese who remained in China after WWII and given permission to return to Japan; the second and third generation South American descendants of Japanese (*Nikkeijin*) who immigrated to Latin American between 1908 and the mid-1970s, and Filipinos, mostly women, who have been called upon to fill the growing need for low-wage care of the growing elderly population (though many also come on the so-called entertainment visa and end up as hostesses in night clubs as part of the underside of the Japanese "entertainment" industry). Tsuneyoshi (2004) rightly problematizes the term "newcomer" when referring to the steady increase of (im)migrants into Japan over the past two decades. The vast difference across these groups, ethnically, culturally and linguistically, as well as the intra-group diversity of same language groups requires a more focused assessment of the unique needs among these "newcomer" groups socially, economically, educationally and politically.

Newcomers includes everyone from an adult foreigner worker from an Islamic country to a Brazilian child growing up in Japan. The religion, family status, language, legal status and cultures are diverse, as are the needs. Moreover, one might note that newcomers are hardly newcomers in the true sense of the term if the

---

[5] The earliest use of the term dates back to the 1970's when more visible, racially marked (im)migrants, many who entered illegally, began streaming into Japan looking for work in the growing economy that boomed in the 1980's. These "new" (im)migrants hailed mostly from the Middle East and South East Asia (Douglass & Roberts, 2006; Graburn, Ertl & Tierny, 2008)

category has been in existence for several decades. There are now a number of newcomers who simply do not fit the conventional newcomer category. (p. 62)

The Japanese government, desperate to appease the growing labor shortage and calls for cheap labor opted to select an ethnically appropriate group from which to pool its blue-collar labor resources by "calling home" second and third generation South American descendants of Japanese (*Nikkeijin*), mostly Brazilian. The government, recognizing the increasing need for unskilled (im)migrant labor felt this was the safest choice, considering the cultural and racial link these descendants have to native Japanese (Lesser, 1999; Tsuda, 2003). The newly revised immigration law resulted in a steady stream of the two largest groups of *Nikkeijin,* Japanese-Brazilian and Japanese-Peruvian (im)migrants and their families, into Japan in the early 1990's, with Japanese-Brazilians making up the third largest (im)migrant group in Japan (see footnote #3). This period coincides with the increased enrollment of the Japanese-Brazilian student population in the school at the center of this inquiry, Ishikawa Elementary School.

The problem with such a racially and ethnically selective choice became apparent when large numbers of second and third generation Japanese-Brazilians arrived in Japan with little cultural or linguistic knowledge of their "motherland", their Brazilian spouses and children having even less. One of the central narratives in this study is of a woman, Leticia, who came to Japan under such conditions. Leticia is a Brazilian married to a second generation Japanese-Brazilian man who took advantage of the immigration reforms and brought his family to Japan seeking a better life. Leticia's story defines the tremendous gap and struggle facing these families that cross not only thousands of kilometers to arrive in Japan, but then face a seemingly un-bridgeable gap culturally and linguistically once here (Brody, 2002; Douglass & Roberts, 2000).

Second and third generation Japanese-Brazilians predominantly speak Portuguese, have become acculturated into Brazilian society, and many are Catholics, despite retaining strong identification with their Japanese heritage (Tsuda, 2003; Lesser, 1999). The Japanese-Brazilians who (im)migrate with their families try to retain their cultural heritage in Japan, but often discover for the first time how Brazilian they are in comparison to the native Japanese (Tsuda, 2003). The children raised in these homes will face many of the same contradictions as they struggle to find a place for themselves between their cultural and linguistics homes.

The educators and administrators at Ishikawa Elementary School know all too well the repercussions of this loosely thought-out immigration plan. Every day they welcome the children of the Japanese-Brazilians who have been "called home" and struggle to create a space for them, organizing and enacting their own reforms while seeking additional resources wherever available for children who are culturally and linguistically very different from the native Japanese they sit beside in school.

The Japanese government has generally ignored the challenges educators all over Japan face, leaving the work of educating the (im)migrant children in their schools to the regional districts (prefectures) and local governments (Douglass & Roberts, 2006; Graburn, Ertl & Tierny, 2008). In 2007, The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science & Technology, known as MEXT (subsequently referred to as Ministry of Education) did establish a national Japanese as a Second Language curriculum and set up recommended designated schools as model Japanese as a Second Language schools, of which Ishikawa Elementary was chosen during the two year period from 2008-2009. Similarly, many prefectures around the country conduct professional development workshops and seminars to provide some support for teachers

on how to better deal[6] with their foreign students (Kanno, 2008b). Mostly, schools and teachers are left on their own to educate their (im)migrant students as best they can, relying on local support systems, local NGOs and individuals from both the Japanese and non-Japanese community (Gordon, 2006; Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999).

While definitive figures are hard to come by because foreign-national children are not required to attend school, and many don't (Riordan, 2005; Tsuneyoshi, 2005), some estimates provide a general understanding of the newcomer student population. The Ministry of Education provided a figure of 20,692 foreign-national students requiring language support enrolled in Japanese public schools in 2006, making up 0.13percent of the total population of school-aged children.[7] This number is determined by the child's native language and proficiency in Japanese[8] (elementary through high school), and has quadrupled since the Ministry of Education began compiling statistics in 1995 (Kanno, 2008a). The breakdown in enrollment for newcomer children in need of Japanese language support shows that Portuguese speaking Japanese-Brazilian children make up the largest group of this population of children, at 7,345 or thirty seven percent. Of these remaining "newcomer children" estimates provide the following numbers for language minority children enrolled in Japanese public schools: 5,532- Spanish,

---

[6] I have chosen this word purposely, because this is the way the teachers'at the two professional development seminars I attended described their situations. They appeared to not know how to "deal with" the foreign students in their classrooms and schools, with many feeling lost on how best to educate them despite their best efforts and concern over their well-being.

[7] "Foreign national students" is an aggregate category and groups all children not naturalized as Japanese citizens into this category, thus "newcomer" (im)migrant children are grouped within this class along with children who may be temporarily residing in Japan as ex-patriot children or exchange students in the secondary school.

[8] The Japanese government determines the number of foreign national children in public school by the number of children requiring special language support as determined by their teachers. The criteria used by the government highlights the focus on language rather than cultural needs of these students, which also points to the narrow scope, or recognition of the influence of the cultural needs of the children and how this relates to their location and engagement in the school community.

2,405 Chinese, and 3,795 classified as "other", though this figure is predominantly made up of Filipino children (MEXT, 2005).

These children are spread across 5, 346 public schools in Japan. The majority of the newcomer, or language minority children attend public elementary schools with a total of 13,307 registered students. This number significantly drops by less than half for those students continuing on to junior high school, with enrollment as of 2005 at 5,097. A further drop in enrollment signifies serious concerns over the future educational prospects of these children when considering that less than six percent or only 1, 204 high school aged newcomer students were enrolled in public high schools[9] (MEXT, 2005). These numbers raise the question, and highlight a serious concern, of the social and economic consequences over how best to educate these language and cultural minority students, thus enabling them to claim an active and participatory position within Japanese civil society (Burgess, 2007).

The predicted growth in the population of (im)migrants who will make Japan their home signifies an overall trend and represents the steady increase in the number of children accompanying their parents as they (im)migrate to Japan, or are being born in Japan. I would argue that the implications of such forecasts require a serious reconsideration of traditional educational policies that provide little support for enhanced social integration or inclusion for the (im)migrant families who find themselves in the center of a changing national narrative and identity.

---

[9] Japanese compulsory schooling requires students only attend school between the ages of six and fifteen, or through junior high school. Secondary education at the high school level is not provided as a public service and most require exams to enter which many students begin preparing for when making choices about which junior high schools to enter, which can also require taking an entrance exam.

2.1   CONTEXTUALIZING THE NARRATIVES WITHIN A NATIONAL(ISTIC) DISCOURSE

Historically, a homogenizing discourse based on a nationalistic literature genre called, *nihonjinron,* has been utilized to create a unified national identity and consciousness designed to distinguish an ideal of the Japanese as united through their racial, cultural and linguistic features. (Befu, 2001; Weiner, 1997). This homogenizing narrative reifies the purity and uniqueness of the Japanese people based on one language, one culture, and one national conscience that may have resuscitated the dying embers of national pride after Japan's defeat in World War II (Befu, 2001; Brody, 2002; Graburn & Ertl, 2008; Gurowitz, 1999; Lie, 2001).   The influence of this discourse on the national psyche has waned, and many of the younger Japanese seem capable of crossing cultural and linguistic boundaries more easily than their predecessors (Graburn et al., 2008 ; Kambayashi, 2008). Yet, there remains a strong sense of national character and a cultural consciousness that draws clear boundaries between Japanese (and what is means to be Japanese in relation to race, culture and language) and Others (understood as an aggregate term signified by the Japanese character which translates directly as "people from an outside country or *gaikokujin")*. Burgess (2004) provides a glimpse into the possible disruption of this oppressive and limiting nationalist discourse, for both Japanese and non-Japanese, which is likely to occur in this time of great socio-cultural change.

> While it is too early to claim…that the multicultural age has already come to Japan, it is possible to say, as Yamanaka (2002) does, that "Japan stands at the crossroads of becoming a multicultural society ... the dawn of becoming a multi-ethnic society." The question is not whether, but how long contemporary discourses can maintain the illusion of homogeneity. (p.15)

I have been very fortunate in my relationships with Japanese, enjoying many close friendships, and have lived with my mother and father-in-law for over the past seventeen years. In fact, my mother-in-law and I often receive comments of surprise from strangers who marvel at how close and open we are with each other often saying, "even Japanese women and their daughter-in-laws are not as close as you two!" Yet, we are a rare case. I do speak Japanese and know Japanese customs very well, though do not agree with or abide by all of them, as is natural for an (im)migrant, which I consider myself to be. Nor would I classify my mother-in-law as typical, due to her open-minded and open-hearted perspective which is welcoming and tolerant of difference. Of course, she is not alone in this respect but cannot be considered the norm, either.

One danger of this discourse is that it reinforces the outsider's image of Japanese as lacking diversity, which is far from the truth, despite widely held views to the contrary. There exists intragroup and ethnic diversity among Japanese,[10] as with any racial, ethnic or linguistic group, due to cultural, lifestyle, personal, economic, educational, gendered, and regional differences (Graburn et al., 2008; Lie, 2001; Murphy-Shigematsu, 1993). However, these differences are often only discovered once personal relations are formed or individuals open themselves to expose their unique characters and qualities.

> While Japan has long made claims to an ideal of homogeneity, Japanese people are well aware of their internal differences. It is only in contrast to other nationalities that Japan becomes an essential homogenous category. Japan may appear to be 'one nation, 'one race' in an international context, but within the nation, and particularly between localities, individuals maintain multiple categories that distinguish themselves from one another. (Graburn & Ertl, 2008, p. 21)

---

[10] The indigenous people of the northern island of Hokkaido, the Ainu, the original inhabitants of the Ryuku Islands, Ryukuans, commonly known as Okinawans, and the caste-group known as the B*urakumin*.

To outsiders (this applies to non-Japanese both within and outside of Japan) the Japanese do appear to be "one kind" of people, but this is simply not the case. Though, as a homogenous society with deeply shared sociocultural and psychosocial traits of interdependence and their racial similarities, they appear more similar than dissimilar on the surface.

The saliency of the nationalistic discourse that poses the greatest threat to the incoming (im)migrants calling Japan home, and being called into Japan, is retained more within institutional discourses than by individual Japanese (Linicome, 1993; Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999). As socializing institutions functioning under the auspices of the Japanese national government, schools are and have been used to develop the national character of Japan as a nation of like-minded individuals, racially and culturally, strongly emphasizing the interdependence and group-oriented practices so noticeable in Japan (Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999). Children's autonomy and individuality are nurtured, of course, but care is taken to retain, and reinforce, the needs of the group and the harmonious coexistence of the members of the group (Cave, 2008).

Difficulty arises when a member, or members, of the defining unit, one's class, do not easily fit with the group, require special support, or are unaware of the cultural practices and group behavior required to sustain unity. Children like mine, and the Japanese-Brazilian children at Ishikawa Elementary, who do not easily fit within the categories that define group membership are often misread, misunderstood, and may eventually become marginalized or ignored (Gordon, 2006; Kanno, 2008b). Japanese children who have lived and been schooled abroad, termed returnees, often experience the same difficulty managing the cultural nuances of such group-oriented institutional and social behavior upon their return to Japan (Kanno, 2003).

A comment made by my older son when he was in sixth grade might help illuminate the difficulties children experience when they don't match the imposed criteria for membership into

the group. He spoke to me about the problems he was experiencing trying to connect with the

other children at a school well-known for its supposed international program designed to accept

returnee children. His sentiments express the contradiction he feels when others seek to confine,

and define him within categories that do not fit with his own sense of self.

> The teachers and children at school look at my face and listen to me speak and
> don't think I'm Japanese. But, I am Japanese, too. They can't see that I *feel*
> Japanese, but that it is different from them because I am not *only* Japanese. I
> always feel different and out of place. (Personal communication, March, 2007)

During the eight months my son attended this school[11] I listened feeling helpless as he

slowly stripped himself of any stigmatizing features of difference. He attempted to neutralize his

self-expression, to become a generic form of his otherwise expressive and vibrant self, by erasing

any signs of difference that would draw unwanted, and often negative, attention his way. It was

an extremely painful and traumatic time for him, and for me as a parent.

2.2   HEEDING PAST LESSONS

In consideration of the current increase in (im)migrant children attending Japanese pubic schools

and the seemingly inevitable continued growth of these children the question that arises is what

precedent is there for educating non-Japanese children in public schools in Japan?

Unfortunately, a review of past practices provides little comfort to parents and teachers alike of

---

[11] My husband and I withdrew my sons from this school because of the difficult social and learning experiences
they encountered there to enroll them in an international school. Most low-income parents of bilingual/bicultural
children in public schools in Japan do not have this option.

14

non-Japanese children, and generally paints a dismal picture of discriminatory practices that simply replaces one minorty groups' marginalized experiences with another's (Himeno, 2003; Kanno, 2008a, 2008b; Lee, Murphy-Shigematsu & Befu, 2006; Linicome, 1993; Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999).

In the past Koreans and Chinese, now referred to as "oldcomers" were brought to Japan as colonized subjects in the early 20th century and suffered social exclusion and discriminatory educational practices (Lie, 2001; Weiner, 1997). Many opted to disguise their ethnic heritage and linguistic differences by claiming Japanese names and passing as Japanese, veiling their ethnic identity in public, often at great cost to their psychological and personal well-being (Lee, Murphy-Shigematsu & Befu, 2006; Lie, 2001). Japanese-Brazilian children with racially-marked features, on the other hand, have difficulty masking their outsider appearances and may face a future carving out a niche for themselves in that liminal space between their adopted and home cultures, despite complete proficiency in Japanese and cultural competence.

Several schools with large populations of foreign national students, which does not represent the norm[12] have established pull-out Japanese as a Second Language classes and mathematic support, yet the majority of these students struggle to keep up in Japanese medium instruction classes that provide little-to-no support for non-native speakers, often further slipping in their academic standing (Burgess, 2007; Himeno, 2003; Kanno, 2008a, 2008b; Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999). The prevailing message (im)migrant children and their parents receive is that the schools are not responsible or capable of educating their children or providing the special educational services they require. Himeno (2003) points out the rigid stance of the government's position on this matter.

---

[12]Of the 5, 346 schools with foreign-national children enrollments, over 80percent had 4 or fewer foreign national students (MEXT 2005).

Although MEXT has adopted some policies for newcomer children, they do not fit the actual situation of the children. The fundamental idea at MEXT is that "newcomer children do not have an obligation to study in Japan," and that if "they want to enter Japanese schools, we will accept them and treat them as equally as Japanese". (section IV)

This statement mirrors a common refrain heard among mainstream American teachers when referring to their culturally and linguistically different students: "I treat them all the same." The problem with this generic attitude is that it morphs all children's needs into one prototypical student type. This is highly problematic, generally speaking, but more so for culturally and linguistically different children who have distinct needs and require programs tailored toward their successful integration and active engagement within the school community while simultaneously nurturing their linguistic and academic growth (Cummins, 1986; Davidson,1996; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Murrell, 2007).

Many (im)migrant Japanese-Brazilian children are not fortunate enough to have access to such enlightened school programs and often pass each day in public Japanese schools that do not recognize or appreciate their special talents or needs, as the following quote attests:

Immigrant kids who do go to school must struggle to hold their own. Bullying is endemic. The language problem is crippling. I've heard that some schools even encourage their foreign pupils to quit. There are regions where 40 percent of the foreign children are not attending school" (Sugiyama in Hoffman, 2006).

These are real and very devastating experiences that will and do have long lasting and life altering affects. This was the school environment I was expecting to encounter in my research, as it is the predominant story of (im)migrant children's educational experiences in Japan. The educators at Ishikawa Elementary School chose an alternative story to the prevailing national narrative by working to bridge the gaps that divided them to teach both *to* and *across* difference. These educators sought to rewrite their own and the stories of the children in the school when

16

they committed themselves to creating inclusive, responsive and individualized learning experiences for the children, which may result in a shifting plotline for not only their Japanese-Brazilian, but also their Japanese students' lives.

3.0   A PURPOSEFUL APPROACH

3.1   METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

> To establish a strong relation with a certain question, phenomenon, or notion, the researcher cannot afford to adopt an attitude of so-called scientific disinterestedness *(van Manen, 1990 p.25)*.

This research project requires a theoretical framework and methodology that can accommodate for the multi-storied lives and complex educational task of teaching a large population of language minority children in a rural school in Japan during a time of national and local change. In the following sections I introduce my methodological approach and framework. van Manen (1990) defines methodology in the human sciences accordingly.

> On the one hand, "methodology" refers to the philosophic framework, the fundamental assumptions and characteristics of a human science perspective. It includes the general orientation to life, the view of knowledge, and the sense of what it means to be human which is associated with or implied by a certain research method. (p.27)

I have come to this research out of a deep concern for the schooling experiences of (im)migrant children living in Japan, which is born out of my own experiences as an educator of bicultural and bilingual children, and as a mother of such children. I also come to this study with an explicit view of education based on my own teaching experiences and deeply held belief in a responsive, individualized and caring pedagogy that nurtures the holistic development of the

learner. Similarly, I have carefully considered the best methodological fit for this inquiry into the lives and experiences of educators teaching language minority children that complements my own pedagogical philosophy with an ethical stance as a researcher. Again van Manen (1990) helps me to better orient the essential link between my own pedagogical thinking and the theoretical stance that I take as an educational researcher.

> The life world, the world of lived experience, is both the source and the object of phenomenological research. To make a study of the lived experience of parenting or teaching, one needs to orient oneself in a strong way to the question of the meaning of parenting or teaching. (p.54)

By privileging story and narrative knowing as both an ontological and epistemological stance (Bruner, 1986; Carger, 2005; Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, 2000; Hatch, 2002; Polkinghorne, 1988, 2005) narrative inquiry allows me to sift through both my own and the individual educators' personal and professional histories enabling a better conceptualization of the particular experiences that have informed their pedagogic philosophies and guided their actions. "Doing narrative inquiry" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000 p.50) enables me to piece together a multi-layered representation of these educators to enact change and transform a school community where others could only manage chaos.

Several influential narrative studies on schools and school change guide this work (Craig, 2003; Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, 1996, 1996; Lawrence-Lighfoot (1983), Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman-Davis ,1997; Phillion, He & Connelly, 2005).   Specifically, Clandinin and Connelly's (1990, 1995, 1996) theoretical frame highlights the intersection of teachers' personal practical knowledge, drawing on the work of Johnson (1989) within a professional knowledge landscape. Their work provides a useful lens through which to frame this inquiry due to its emphasis on the Deweyan theory of continuity of experience (Dewey, 1938). Personal practical

knowledge is conceptualized as being,

> In a person's past experience, in the person's present mind and body and in the person's future plans and actions. It is knowledge that reflects the individuals prior knowledge and acknowledges the contextual nature of the teacher's knowledge…knowledge that is constructed and reconstructed as we live our stories and retell and relive them through processes of reflection. (Clandinin in Craig, 1999, p.398)

These residual personal and professional experiences invariably inform the teacher's current classroom practice, which Clandinin and Connelly (1995,1996) term, the professional knowledge landscape. They draw on Crites (1971) work on the narrative quality of experience to reconceptualize the constitutive force of the teacher's experiences and memberships within and across a variety of school knowledge communities and environments. Clandinin and Connelly (1996) recount the development of their theoretical approach in this description of the professional knowledge landscape.

> Keeping our eyes firmly on the question of teacher knowledge, we began to pay attention to the ways knowledge was both formed and expressed in the contexts in which teachers lived. … Their stories and ours were always lived out within interwoven and multilayered scenes and plotlines. It was from these stories and through conversations with teachers that we adopted the metaphor of a professional knowledge landscape to help us capture this complexity. (p.150)

These personal and professional experiences run like threads through each educator's story as they become interlaced into the fabric of a textual representation of their shared action and commitment to school change. These personal and professional educator stories are intertwined with each other, yet distinctly separate from each other. The many different colored threads of change, struggle, and innovation weft over, under and in-between the lives of these educators creating a uniquely textured tale of school change.

3.1.1 Scanning the Terrain: First Impressions & Reconceptualizations

I awoke the morning of September 24th anxious about my first visit to a Japanese public elementary school, Ishikawa Elementary School, with a large Japanese-Brazilian population, yet also very excited to see how such a school looked and felt. I was going to attend a professional development seminar designed for teachers of non-Japanese to network and observe successful implementation of the newly created national Japanese as a Second Language curriculum. Ishikawa Elementary School has been chosen as the host of the annual seminar due to its status as a Japanese as a Second Language model elementary school and the success of its programs that target their large Japanese-Brazilian student population. The experience that awaited me was far different than I had anticipated and disrupted many of my pre-existing notions about the capacity of Japanese teachers and administrators to engage with and create inclusive learning environments for linguistically and culturally different children.

The drive to Ishikawa Elementary School was very pleasant as we meandered past well-kept homes on the narrow and windy country lanes banked on either side by rice fields. The crisp air and deep blue sky created a clean contrast to the deep green of the rice fields still fresh from the fertile touch of summer. The school, snuggled within a verdant green hillside, was flanked on one side by a subsidized apartment block starkly divided by the burnt orange of the newly renovated buildings on one end, and the stained, gray older buildings on the other. These apartments are home to the majority of children from the school, both Japanese and Japanese-Brazilian, and signify the residents as low-income, and working class.

As soon as we turned toward the school entrance my eyes were immediately drawn to a large banner announcing a new century of renewed Japanese-Brazilian relations.[13] The predominant message, displayed in both Japanese and Portuguese, seemed to proclaim that this small school community held a central position within this revived, historical relationship; a bridging of the past to the future, of one community to the other. Before entering the school I stood gazing at the banner as it gently rose upward toward the deep blue sky imagining the early autumn breeze carrying its message beyond the enclave of this small community into the outer world. I wondered if this was merely a symbol put on display for the benefit of the visitors, or if it reflected a truly proud, inclusive and integrated community

---

[13] 2008 was the 100th anniversary of the first Japanese emigration to Brazil in 1908, which reached its peak between 1915-1940, leveling out in the 1960s. (Lesser, 1999)

Making my way into the school I grabbed a pair of green plastic slippers from the long shoe box that runs along the left wall of the entrance reserved for visitors and put my shoes into the emptied space. Opposite the visitor's shoeboxes were rows of shoe cubbies marked with the school children's names, many written in katakana[14]for the Japanese-Brazilian students whose shoes rest among their fellow classmates in long rows of shoeboxes that were once exclusively reserved for the majority Japanese student population served by this rural elementary school. The hallway that split left or right beyond the entrance was bright, clean and inviting. A large Brazilian flag beckoned from one end of the hall, opposite were smaller national flags hanging from the ceiling down the hallway to the right. I was reminded of the many national flags that hang outside of the U.N. building in New York City and wondered again about the sincerity of these multicultural symbols. As I walked down the hall I noticed several bilingual signs (in Japanese & Portuguese) and began to get a sense that these symbolic expressions of cultural diversity were more than shallow symbols, but rather signaled a reaching out and inclusiveness to the Japanese-Brazilian parents and students in the school community. This didn't feel, or look like any Japanese public school I have seen before.

I was beginning to recognize that the banner hanging outside, the large Brazilian flag welcoming staff, students and visitors, and the bilingual environmental signs represented more than some veneer of shallow multiculturalism,[15] but rather signified sincere expressions of cultural responsiveness, encouragement and acceptance. I sat looking beyond the stern faces of the teachers participating in the seminar to the outdoor open area just outside the home economics room (called, seikatsu-kyoshitsu, or "life studies" in Japanese) where we were seated. I noticed a group of boys, Japanese-Brazilian and Japanese, playing freely and openly. Screeching voices of Japanese and Portuguese disrupted my focus and drew my eyes in their direction.
(reflective journal, 9.24.08)

This opening section of my reflective journal from my first visit to Ishikawa Elementary School contextualizes and illuminates my initial impressions, responses and reflections about the school's seemingly inclusive and culturally responsive environment that led me to this inquiry. Additionally, I later refer to my earliest impressions, and the subsequent professional development seminar I attended in February 2009 when I introduce the three central figures in the study through the use of portraiture, which I explain further on in this section.   The

---

[14] The Japanese writing system has 3 distinct writing scripts. There are phonetic syllabaries (hiragana and katakana) and a pictographic writing system (kanji).
[15] (Amanti, 2004)

professional development seminar described above is one of a series of annual events jointly organized by one of the schools across the prefecture with a Japanese as a Second Language program and the prefectural board of education (Aichi prefecture in Central Japan).

It took me a while to distinguish between the prefectural bureaucrats and the educators from the school, though my confusion was cleared up the minute the then-acting principal, Principal Ishiyama, welcomed us to the school in his casual tone and began to give his opening speech. His message was immediate and explicit, the school had successfully created an inclusive community after many years of working through various challenges, taking advantage of serendipitous opportunities to bridge the school to the Japanese-Brazilian community, and through many structural, pedagogical, and curricular trials and errors. I recall thinking it odd that I was asked to sit to the side of the group of 38 attending teachers in an excluded rather than included position. Some had traveled from across Japan like I had, though most were from the prefecture and local regional schools.   Not only was I placed at the periphery of the group, but in being situated as such my status as an outsider was more greatly marked and exaggerated.

My marginalization within the room contradicted the principal's message of inclusion, respect, and building bridges across time, space and individuals. The peripheral positioning I experienced was much more in line with my own experiences and expectations of the rigidity, lack of understanding and intolerance for difference within public schools.   I suddenly found that my curiosity was in tension with my skepticism about the ability of Japanese educators to bridge cultural and linguistics gaps and value their language minority students' *as they are* within their own richness of being, rather than for what they might become with the right amount of language instruction and acculturation into Japanese society (Gordon, 2006, Himeno, 2003; Kanno, 2003, 2000; Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999; Riordan, 2005).

By the end of the day of more close observations within the classrooms, additional speeches on the structural and pedagogic changes, direct contact with the school administrators and children the struggle between my skepticism and curiosity landed on the side of curiosity. Ezzy (2002) grounds the tension I experienced as a necessary aspect of interpretive research drawing on Gadamer's hermeneutics to drive his point home: "The interpretive task involves examining 'fore-conceptions' provided by popular understandings and preexisting theory and reworking these interpretations and fore-conceptions 'in terms of the things themselves' " (p. 27). I left the school at the end of the day filled with more questions than I came with and a desire to more fully understand the story behind the changes these educators spoke about and the individuals in the school who envisioned and lived through them.

I subsequently made a second visit to Ishikawa Elementary School on February 6, 2009, for another professional development seminar organized by the school and local district on the individualized curriculum that was created by the teachers at the school. This event dwarfed the the earlier prefectural seminar with a total of 400 attendees. Once again, I was the only non-Japanese participant in the group, though the Japanese as Second Language assistant teachers and several community volunteers were all South American, mostly Brazilian or Japanese-Brazilian.[16] This time the seminar was coordinated by the local school district in collaboration with three universities and had a completely different tone and feel from the previous seminar, which had been organized by the prefectural board of education, as mentioned. From the moment I entered the school I was warmly greeted by the curriculum coordinator, who eventually became my main contact person at the school throughout my year doing fieldwork, I sensed that the entire air of the event was lighter, more welcoming and inclusive.

---

[16] One of the Japanese as a Second Language support teachers, and cultural liaison working out of the district office is from Argentina.

The school was, once again, made available for the participants to wander freely to observe the classrooms while lessons were in progress. As I walked around the school I was greeted with enthusiastic waves from many of the children I had met on my previous visit, but also received curious gazes, as before, by the children and their teachers who strived to retain some semblance of normalcy in the midst of hovering young pre-service female teachers in black suits nudging their way around corners and windows to peek into the rooms and over the shoulders of the children.   I tried my best to move into the less densely occupied spaces and waited patiently for the black swarm of bodies to pass so that I could enter a corner and watch as the teacher retained her position as the center of the children's attention.   I remained a curiosity to the children, but after several moments they turned away and back to their studies while I continued to take down hurried notes and impressions of my thoughts on this second visit.

These first two visits exposed differing views of life in the school and introduced me to several overriding themes that seemed to contribute to the restorying of the school over the past four to six years. I immediately became fascinated by the "hows" of the story of the change and I grappled with questions that grew out of my field texts from these first two visits such as: Who initiated the changes? Was there an administrative directive to enforce change or did it occur more organically? Was there any teacher resistance if the restructuring was enforced on them? What was the chronological process of change? Did some things have to be put in place for other changes to occur? If so, what was the process that unfolded? How have the changes become sustainable?   How did the administrators change and then retain the cultural transformation of the school? How did the external vs. internal storying of the school change? What, if any, tensions exist between these stories?

Upon returning home after each of these seminars I revisited the literature on narrative

inquiry and school change that guided my first working theoretical framework around which I devised my initial set of questions about both the storied aspects of the school, the process of change and the individual stories behind the change they enacted collectively (Craig, 2003; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, 1996, 1998, 2000; Lawrence-Lighfoot (1983), Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman-Davis, 1997; Phillion, He & Connelly, 2005). I refer to *changes enacted individually and collectively* throughout this work and it is important to clearly define how I am using this term performatively, and in its fullest agentic sense. Scott (2003) provides a description that pairs well with my own understanding and usage of the term.

> *Enactment* is the active process by which individuals, in interaction, construct a picture of their world, their environment, their situation. Weick argues that: 'since human beings actively create the world around them through perception, organization members do not merely react to an objectively accepted physical environment but enact their environment through information and the creation of meaning.'" (Kreps in Scott, 2003, p. 99)

Further into the research experience and after several hours of conversations with the principal I learned that the defining institutional metaphor, as well as a deeply held personal belief of the acting principal is the notion of bridging, linking, or connecting *(kakehashi* in Japanese). Lawrence-Lighfoot (1997) calls this a "resonant metaphor" (p.198) and draws on the saliency of such metaphors for both participant and portraitist [17] to probe the deeper meaning of human experience.

> The metaphors – spare like poetry – embrace and express a large arc of human experience. The portraitist needs to listen hard for these metaphors and search for the symbols, always trying to decipher their meaning in a particular context and questioning actors about their origins. …Resonant metaphors are not only expressive of the central themes and values of human experience, they are also generative. They embody values and perspectives *and* they give them shape and meaning. (p. 198)

---

[17] Lawrence-Lightfoot's terminology for the researcher and specific to the methodology of portraiture (1983; 1997).

I found myself moving into new theoretical territory as I sought to better understand the metaphorical significance of bridging by exploring the open-systems theory of bridging in the literature on organizations and organizational theory (DiPaola &Tschannen-Moran, 2005; Johnson, Jr. & Fauske, 2005; Johnson, Jr. & Owens, 2005; Scott, 2003), and further linked this to culturally responsive pedagogy that bridges cultural and linguistic gaps in children's mainstream schooling experiences (Cummins, 1986, 2000; Darder, 1991; Gay, 2000; Nieto;1994).

As each participant's professional and personal life story unfolded I began to recognize the deeper connection between these life histories as directly related to the choices and actions of these educators in this particular time and location. I soon began to shift my focus from my intention to unearth the story behind the educational programs and practices I witnessed being enacted and the changes that brought these about, to looking more directly at the individual experiences of the educators and why they were uniquely positioned to have made sense of, and acted in the ways that they did. Essentially, I realized that the story, which initially sparked my interest in this project centered on *how* the educators enacted school change had been too narrowly conceived. In fact, there were two different types of stories that were simultaneously being acted upon and enacted; each tells a different story that informs the understanding of the other.

Bruner (1986) congeals my understanding of these differing stories as they run alongside the broader narrative of change. I came to make sense of the actions taken by these educators as each narrative began to unfold through the recursive meaning making made by and from the participants' telling of their story. With each participant interview I found myself shifting between chronological tales of actions taken, and the individualized stories of each educators

personal and professional experiences. The latter began to fill the spaces and questions that continued to elude my understanding of not only *how* the restructuring came about, but *why* these individual educators were able to bring them about.

> Story must construct two landscapes simultaneously. One is the landscape of action, where the constituents are the arguments of action: agent, intention or goal, situation, instrument, something corresponding to a "story grammar." The other landscape is the landscape of consciousness: what those involved in the action know, think, or feel, or do not know, think, or feel. The two landscapes are essential and distinct: it is the difference between Oedipus sharing Jocasta's bed before and after he learns from the messenger that she is his mother. (Bruner, 1986, p.14)

I soon became fascinated by the *whys* of the story of the change at Ishikawa Elementary School and came to understand that the *hows* of the change rested atop and were contingent on the whys. My new thinking was born out of greater insight into not only the experiences in the lives of the individual teachers but of my own shifting understanding that had taken root in my reflective journal entries after each school visit and interview.   Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) describes these as germinating texts that guide the further exploration of the meanings, thoughts and interpretations made with each experience in the field and calls them "impressionistic records" (p. 188).

> These daily reflections are documented in an "Impressionistic Record" – a ruminative, thoughtful piece that identifies emerging hypotheses, suggests interpretations, describes shifts in perspective, points to puzzles and dilemmas (methodological, conceptual, ethical) that need attention, and develops a plan of action for the next visit.   In these Impressionistic Records we see the interplay between relevant dimensions and emergent themes, between our anticipatory schema and our developing insights drawn from our interpretive descriptions in the field. (p. 188)

I was drawn to wander into this new terrain of emerging questions and insights as they led me toward seeking more personal information and life history narrative.

I found myself journeying into the two storied landscapes as defined by Bruner (1986, p.14) that make up the tale of Ishikawa Elementary School and the educators who reshaped both their own and the school's story. I began to ask more interesting questions, related to my earlier, more straightforward questions, but these new question led me into less clearly delineated and defined territory of human experience as it is caught in a swirling space of experience merging past, present, and future actions. The new questions I began to ask were: Why were these individual educators better positioned to act and advocate for their Japanese-Brazilian students, and not others? What in these educators' lives/professional experience positioned them so as to see opportunities where others saw collapse of order? Where personal experience was lacking to provide empathy or understanding how did/does professional background and experience support and strengthen the educators' resolve to not give up on or dismiss their responsibility to educate the Japanese-Brazilian children staring back at them everyday in their classroom? What ultimately drove these educators to find the sheer will to pick up the pieces again, and again, after failed attempts before ultimately, and intentionally, building the bridge that would span the cultural, linguistic and educational gap between their Japanese-Brazilian children, their parents and the teachers of the school? How did these educators come to *see* the Japanese-Brazilian children in all their fullness of being, outside of imposed social and pedagogical categories?

Guided by these questions I began to see more of what I desired to understand and recognized that looking further into the lives and experiences of these educators as individuals and professionals I would simultaneously and iteratively be answering both sets of questions. Once I readjusted my focus and reconsidered the foundation of my inquiry I began to see things within a multi-dimensional perspective. My concern is not solely with the pedagogic, curricular, and structural changes that took place within the school, but more so with the intersection of

perceived opportunity, personal experience, professional knowledge, and the historical moment whereby each individual portrayed in this study entered into this story uniquely positioned to support the work and enhance the community of the school. I began to understand that the story I sought to unearth has a much longer history than the five or six years of restructuring I initially focused on.   Digging deeper into the individual life histories and professional background experiences of these educators brought to light their personal motivations and the professional philosophies that guided their actions and informed their decisions.

As I adjusted my perspective to look more deeply into the story of consciousness as defined by Bruner (1986) I began to seek out Lawrence-Lightfoot's (1997) portraiture as a way to privilege the personal stories of these educators within the more chronological and contextualized story of action around the changes that were brought about by these educators. Portraiture is particularly suited to representing the individual stories and changed narrative of Ishikawa Elementary School because it appeals to a sense of goodness (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983; Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman-Davies, 1997). This research is centered around stories of deep philosophical commitments to an individualized and responsive pedagogy, individual and collective action, growth, and positive change. Focusing on both the institutional story of change, but also on life history narrative allows for a theoretical and philosophical understanding of both the *hows* and *whys* bringing these stories into a coherent, conceptual piece. Portraiture enables me to represent the resonant theme of *goodness* that runs throughout two of the central narratives in this inquiry. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) provides the following interpretation of goodness in schools as seen through the lens of portraiture.

> I am seeking to formulate a view that recognizes the myriad ways in which goodness gets expressed in various settings; that admits imperfection as an inevitable ingredient of goodness and refers instead to the inhabitants' handling of perceived weaknesses; that looks backward and forward to institutional change

30

and the staged quality of goodness; that reveals goodness as a holistic concept, a complex mixture of variables whose expression can only be recognized through a detailed narrative on institutional and interpersonal processes. (p.25)

I have been humbled by the pedagogical relationships (van Manen, 1990) I witnessed at Ishikawa Elementary School and have been inspired by the stories of the personal and professional experiences these educators drew on to enact and realize such relationships. As I mentioned earlier I first entered this school guided by my own limited perceptions of Japanese public school educators and held a negative bias toward them with regard to their ability to provide their linguistically/culturally different students enriching and responsive learning experiences. Rather than retell this more commonly recounted tale of discriminatory, negligent and damaging learning experiences and teaching practices of language and cultural minority children in Japan, this story illuminates a counter-narrative that speaks of possibility, reciprocity, bridging gaps, and renewal. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983, 1997) describes her move toward portraiture early on in her research career as guided by a search for goodness as opposed to reiterating the story of pathology associated with minority education in America.

> I was concerned, for example, about the general tendency of social scientists to focus their investigations on pathology and disease rather than on health and resilience. This general propensity is magnified in the research on education and schooling, where investigators have been much more vigilant in documenting failure than they have been in describing examples of success. (p.8)

By way of narrative inquiry and portraiture I have been able to merge these two closely linked storied landscapes defined by Bruner (1986). I privilege the voices and life experiences of each educator by way of narrative portraits, which have been designed to draw out the "histories that have brought them to their present place" (Bathmaker, 2010, p. 5). Throughout the conversations with all of the participants in this inquiry the historical and socio-cultural stories of

31

their lives articulate the importance of seeking out these elusive, non-observable stories necessary to understanding the change they have collectively brought about. Bathmaker (2010) speaks of the possibility of narrative life history to reshape the now-ness and one-dimensional plane of the present to add depth, dimension and form to the lived experience of others.

> What stands out clearly [in life history narrative research] is that possibilities for social change need, at least in part, to be understood and conceived of through the small everyday acts of individuals, and the histories that have brought them to their present place. (p.5)

I do not wish to romanticize the educators, the students, or the changes that have occurred within this school community. But, I do intend to remain faithful to the stories told to me, and my own impressions of these educators as I have come to know them. There are imperfections, contradictions and tensions in my interpretations of what I have witnessed as well as in the changes, and stories of these changes that I have been told. Narrative understandings of these tensions become embedded within individual portraits depicting the shared and personal struggles of three educators guided by the possibilities inherent in their collective effort to bridge the differences that have been divisive to, rather, create an inclusive, responsive and caring learning community.

3.1.2   Nudging My Way Into and Among the Story of Ishikawa Elementary School

> From a phenomenological point of view, to do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings. And since to *know* the world is to profoundly *be* in the world in a certain way, the act of researching- questioning- theorizing is the intentional act of attaching ourselves to the world, to become more fully part of it, or better, to *become* the world. (van Manen, 1990, p. 5)

Gaining access to a research site can prove a great hurdle for a researcher and may set the tone for the research project as much as formulating the guiding research interest, methodology, and questions   (Chase, 2005; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Hatch, 2002; Mertens, 2005). Additionally, how a researcher gains access to a site may set an ethical tone for the ensuing relationships formed within, during, and after the research. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe entry into a field site as "walking into the midst of stories" (p.64). This metaphor is quite apt and locates the multiple stories of the school, the participants, and myself within the constellation of lived experiences that I have entered, reflected up, interpreted and re-interpreted within the flowing dimensions of time and space.

I conducted this research in a non-Western culture, within a highly structured and stratified social institution. As well, I had to remain vigilant about any behavior that might have reflected badly on my friends and gatekeepers who introduced me to the school. One of the my two gatekeepers is a friend I co-taught with when working as an assistant language teacher twenty years earlier in a nearby junior high school. His wife, also a good friend, is a member of the local school board and helped arrange for me to attend the professional seminar that first brought me to Ishikawa Elementary School.

In addition to the cultural nuaces of negotiating relationships within the school I was aware of my ethical responsibilities while participating in conversations with the participants of

the study, as well as adhering to the deeply established rituals and conduct of schooling in Japan.

Mertens (2005) advises researchers engaging fieldwork in countries outside of the United States

to heed cultural norms and practices regarding access and entry. "All contexts have their own

cultural norms and expectation based on various … socially defined characteristics of the people

in them. The researcher should be sensitive to what these norms are and how they might affect

the research work" (p.250).

Fortunately, I am acculturated in the nuances and rituals of schooling in Japan having had

both professional experiences as a teacher in junior high schools and as a parent of children who

attended a Japanese school. I am sensitized and acculturated to these rituals and am aware that

this has been one of my strongest assets in securing access to the school and the individual

educators. It required constant diligence and attention not to over-step my position, nor to create

a divide through overly excessive formalisms when more casual and open relationships had been

forged

Access or entry is often regarded as an entrance into a physical space, but we also enter

into relationships. The meaningful spaces of narrative inquiry and portraiture are filled with the

stories that arise out of individuals opening up to each other around a central issue or question.

Entering this relational space requires care, respect, and attentiveness without which the stories

that form the meanings of the participants and the researcher's lives cannot take shape.

Clandinin and Connelly (1990) reconsider the traditional notion of entry from a relational

standpoint that resonates strongly with me.

> Negotiating entry is commonly seen as an ethical matter framed in terms of
> principles that establish responsibilities for both researchers and practitioners.
> However, another way of understanding the process as an ethical matter is to see it
> as a negotiation of a shared narrative unity. (p.3)

How do the researcher and the participant in the study join together in a shared narrative? The only way to do this is dialogically. To create a space around hearing and attending to each other's stories, where both researcher and participant come away understanding not only the other, but, the self better (Davies, 2008; Erdinast-Vulcan, 2008; Todd, 2003).

3.1.3   Hearing the Voices: Learning to Hear the Stories as They are Told

> The method of listening *for* a story rather than *to* a story is at the heart of the process of co-constructing narrative. When listening *to* a story, the researcher records the account that the actor is sharing and structuring entirely on his or her own. When listening *for* a story, the researcher plays a more active listener role in the actor's storytelling. (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997, p.121)

There are several methods I have used to aid me in discerning the meanings that underlie the actions of the individuals who brought about change and re-storied Ishikawa Elementary School. One of the most important of these methods was to engage the participants in conversations centered on their experiences in the school, from before coming to the school, and about the school.

I have chosen to follow Burgess (1988) by engaging the participants in the study in "conversations with a purpose" (p. 143). These conversations were certainly purposeful and intentional as they were guided by particular ideas born out of my own personal life history, pedagogical philosophy, academic interest in the education of linguistic and cultural minority students, and the *how* questions that arose from my earliest visits to the school.[18] Rather than being constrained in any way by these questions I was able to guide the conversations in

---

[18] Appendix A

35

particular, purposeful directions, which led to a seeking-out of the deeper meanings that led to renewed understanding and paths of inquiry, the *why*.   Engaging the participants in "conversations with a purpose" (Burgess, 1988) conceptualizes the more traditionally understood interview format as "conversations based on participation" (p.143) and is in-line with the interconnected and co-constructed nature of narrative inquiry and portaiture.   Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) speaks of the inter-connected and relational aspects of the purposeful dialogue between researcher and participant in portraiture.

> Here the conversation chronicles the developing relationship between them, the emerging trust and intimacy, capturing the dance of dialogue. …With voice in dialogue the portraitist purposely places herself in the middle of the action (in the field *and* in the text). She feels the symmetry of voice-hers and the actors- as they express their views and together define meaning-making. (p.103)

Gunzenhauser (2006) states that it is only through dialogic encounters that we can claim a renewed understanding of the researcher-participant relationship as a relational turn requiring "two knowing subjects" rather than the more traditionally conceived notion that sees it as one between "a knower" and "a known" (p. 627).   Conceptualizing and acting within a relationship in this way allows an opening, or bridging, across an intersubjective space in which both are active participants in the creation of knowledge born out of a dialogic encounter couched within an ethical relational stance (Gunzenhauser, 2006; Todd, 2005).

Remaining cognizant of my own subjectivity as separate from my participants requires that I function within a connective space to ethically relate, hear, and care for the participants of my study within our "conversations with a purpose" (Burgess, 1988). My task as the other in this dialogic relationship is rather to listen to the stories as they are told according to the personal meaning accorded them, and to recognize that to assume to know them beyond the confines of our relationship is both untruthful and unethical.   Noddings (2003), in line with Butler (2006),

considers the importance of listening to and addressing an *other* within such a dialogic encounter. "There is another, deeper, answer to the question of why we should listen, and this one has little to do with domains of knowledge. We should listen because another addresses us. To listen is a moral obligation" (p.21).

Who is it, then, that I was addressing and listening to in this narrative inquiry? I was introduced early on to the educators most associated with developing the pedagogical, curricular and culturally responsive educational reforms having been present at the two professional development seminars described earlier. I later became acquainted with other individuals who have played central roles in this story of school change during my visits to the school and through my preliminary conversations with the chosen participants for the study. I provided a letter, in Japanese, describing the study and its purpose by way of my main contact person at the school, the curriculum coordinator.[19] I asked the following educators and administrators to allow me time to speak with them, and in some cases observe their classes: Principal Ishiyama[20], the recently retired principal (who was the acting principal from April 2005- March 2009, and architect of the major reforms that occurred during his term as principal), Takeishi-sensei[21], the head teacher and coordinator for the individualized curriculum that has been implemented, two Portuguese language assistant teachers, one Brazilian, Leticia, and Rika, a Japanese-Brazilian, Nishida-sensei, the curriculum coordinator, Superintendent Abe of the local school district, and Dr. Kato, a retired emeritus professor whose earlier reforms introduced open-structure schooling in the school district and have had profound repercussions and influence on the educators who claim center stage in this study.

---

[19] The English introductory letter is provided in Appendix B. A Japanese translation of this letter was provided to the principal and teachers Ishikawa Elementary School, and superintendent of the school district.

[20] All names except for Dr. Kato are pseudonyms. Dr. Kato requested that I use his actual name.

[21] I use the Japanese suffix –sensei, used as a form of address on the endings of names the teachers names.

All of these individuals not only agreed to let me speak with them and tape our conversations, but consistently made themselves readily available to me, spent numerous hours talking to me informally and always greeted me warmly during my visits to the school. I had one to two hour long conversations with Principal Ishiyama, Takeishi-sensei, the head teacher, curriculum coordinator, Nishida-sensei, and Superintendent Abe in two to four taped in-depth discussions each. While, I was only able to schedule one formal conversation with each of the two Portuguese language assistant teachers I asked to participate in the study we were able to have many informal chats during my visits to the school. They each made themselves available to me whenever they were not too busy and answered questions that continued to emerge from my observations and conversations with the Japanese educators. In total I have approximately twenty hours of transcribed taped recordings.

In addition to these scheduled conversations, I have had numerous informal conversations in the hallways, staff room, classrooms, and grounds of the school with many of these individuals as I spent my days in the school and participated in three annual community building events, (Saturday Night School in July 2009 and September 2010, and International Friendship Day in November, 2010). Principal Ishiyama, Takeishi-sensei, and Leticia, the Brazilian assistant language teacher all claim central positions within the study and their personal and professional life histories are vital to grasping the overall shift in the school story. Each of these three educators are represented through individual narrative portraits and are followed by theoretic and philosophic reflections that conceptually locate the individual stories in theoretic texts centered on the emergent themes particular to each individual participant's narrative.

All of the conversations were conducted in Japanese and then transcribed and translated

into English with the exception of the interview with Dr. Kato, the emeritus professor, which took place in English. I sent the original Japanese transcriptions to the participants for clarification to use in subsequent follow-up conversations. Teachers in Japan, like teachers all over the world, are very busy and are required to spend most of the day with their students. Therefore, many of the conversations took place within the school, occurring after school when we were not constrained by time. I had the privilege to spend the day with both Principal Ishiyama and Dr. Kato on a visit to one of the two open-structure elementary schools in the district, Sakanoue Elementary School. I benefited tremendously from the many illuminating conversations I had with these men that day and learned details about their past shared experiences that have led them to their innovative and open pedagogic mind-set. I was also able to tour this school which is at the centre of their professional knowledge community and vital to the individualized pedagogic and philosophic orientation of many of the educators who enacted change at Ishikawa Elementary School.

Additionally, I spent a day with the head educator when she made a visit to Tokyo and we toured a local museum together with a couple of the university professors who have been closely engaged in reflective practitioner-research and professional development at the elementary school. These day-long, casual encounters were invaluable to gaining a deeper understanding of these educators outside of the context of the school allowing us to bridge the relational gap between researcher and participant. I sent each of the completed portraits to the participants, two were translated back into Japanese for Principal Ishiyama and Takeishi-sensei, and one was sent in its original form in English to Leticia. I requested feedback or clarification from all three of them on both the representation and information included within each.

It is important to say a word about the translated texts. My Japanese is quite proficient,

but I am aware that particular nuances were missed during the conversations I had with the participants and may not have fully engaged some stories in the way I would have done in a shared native language. I taped each conversation, except for the one with Leticia, and composed extensive field texts during informal conversations when possible. I realize that I might have misinterpreted certain phrases or words and that my final textural representation of these spoken texts runs the risk of misrepresenting or altering the intended meaning or construction of the stories I was told. Seeking to limit this possibility I employed a bilingual/bicultural translator to help me with the translation and transcription of the recorded conversations. I took the first set of transcribed conversations to the participants and asked them to read these over marking any sections they would prefer I did not use. In several of these clarification and feedback sessions participants had marked sections where they felt they may have spoken too strongly about their fellow teachers and preferred that I remove these from the final narrative portrait. I reassured them that I would not include any of the sections or phrases that concerned them explained that I would provide the final draft of the the narrative portraits I crafted from the recorded conversations for them to check.

One last point regards the translator's interpretation of the conversation that she transcribed and translated. She has had to interpret the meaning of the utterances in our conversation in order to translate the Japanese into English, which I then re-interpreted and revised into more natural English while listening through the recordings to discern emergent themes. For each recorded interview I went through multiple listenings allowing me to relive each conversation and clarify both the translated meanings and my own interpretation of the participants' stories.

Reissman (2008), referring to work done by Bogusia Temple, raises important

considerations around working within and across two languages. "If meaning is constructed rather than expressed by language, 'the relationships between languages and researchers, translators and the people they seek to represent are as crucial as issues of which word is best in a sentence in a language' " (Temple in Reissman, 2008 p.42). Bearing this in mind, I have worked closely with my translator, going over the translations of the recorded interviews together discussing and reworking the meanings she has assigned to the conversations and stories from my encounters with the participants. In several instances we carefully worked over expressions in Japanese and points of address where my translator used overly formal language that did not match the more congenial and informal relationships, which I had formed with the participants. These conversations have actually brought to bear the importance of carefully crafting the textual representation of the audio texts based on clear and culturally concise narratives.

3.1.4   Coming to "See": Learning to Look at All Sides

In our ever day practices the relational properties that make up the spatial coalesce, bringing forth constellations of meaning. If we are to take the close examination of daily practices seriously as qualitative scholars, we must recognize the inherent spatial relations they contain. (Kuntz, 2010, p. 151)

In this section I consider the role participant observation has played in the study. The surrounding school environment plays a major role in helping me to understand the nuances of the social worlds and physical space where the teachers and children relate to each other and spend their days. The focus of this study is on the stories lived out and created within the

physical environment of the school, as well as the day-to-day relational interactions that occur there. I recognize the importance of contextualizing the lives of the participants whose stories I am trying to piece together within the spaces they inhabit, and the individuals with whom they interact, noting how that interaction occurs and what impact my being there might have had on these interactions. Early on I questioned how best to position myself so as not to be too disruptive, yet also feel comfortable and engaged. Behar (1996) provides a useful answer to the confounding position of the participant observer.

> As a mode of knowing that depends on the particular relationship formed by a particular anthropologist with a particular set of people in a particular time and place, anthropology has always been vexed about the question of vulnerability. … Our methodology, defined by the oxymoron, "participant observation," is split at the root: act as a participant, but don't forget to keep your eyes open. (p.5)

Fortunately, narrative inquiry and portraiture allow for a loosening of the boundaries Behar (1996) describes. One fundamental tool that further enhances the researcher within the field are detailed field texts of the ongoing documentation of what is happening in real time. I returned to these scribbled field texts after each visit and expanded on my observations, wonderings and impressions in a reflective researcher journal, making for richly textured experiential texts (Garman, 2006). Doing so provided an opportunity for deeper reflection, allowing me to think over the experiences I had in the field and about the stories I had been told to gradually shape emerging theoretic texts generated from the contextualized "lived" experiences within the experiential texts (Garman, 2006). Learning how to see, feel, hear and attend to the particulars from within the whole scene required a diligence and focus that allowed me to record and recreate the textual richness of the holistic experience.

I made my first visit to the school in September 2008 and had my last formal conversations with Leticia in February 2010. I officially began my data collection in September

42

2009,[22] visiting the school every 3 weeks for 2-full days of observations. I alternated the days of my visits in order to participate and observe as much of the school life, curriculum and activities as possible. For the first 3 months I visited the school on Thursdays and Fridays, which provided me opportunities to experience one of the extra-curricular activities that has been important for the project of these educators to build community, support student-directed learning, enhancing teacher-student relationships, and inclusive participation by the entire student body. Subsequently, I changed the days of my visitation to Mondays and Tuesdays from December 2009 through February 2010 to experience the atmosphere of the school when things ran according to a more traditional schedule. I also participated in one of the staff professional development seminars with two visiting university professors to discuss the on-going practitioner research project the teachers at the school have been involved with over the past three years.

In addition to the regular school day visits I attended the three annual festivals, as mentioned earlier, which have grown into major local events enjoyed not only by families and friends, but also people from all over the school district and local region to experience the performances and activities organized by the teachers and students. The first of these events I visited was the Saturday Night School held on July 5, 2009. I was able to bring my family, and I enjoyed observing my children as they played on the school grounds and participated in the activities. The second of these annual events I attended was International Friendship Day on November 21, 2009 when the school once again opened itself up to families, friends and the local community for a day of class performances, activities and community organizing.   I describe the extra-curricular program and these two annual school-wide events in the following section on contextualizing the school, peripheral participants and programs.

---

[22] The IRB was approved August 2009. Approval #PRO09080061

Lastly, I have received documents on students academic progress, demographic information on the foreign national student population within the district, time schedules for the past 4 years (these were one of the first structural adjustments to be made and have proved very important to increasing the overall flow and organization of each day), information packets on the Japanese as a Second Language and individualized curriculums, and related documents on the foreign national community from the local city government.   In 2009 Dr. Kato, Principal Ishiyama, teachers from the school, and a small network of university scholars published a book about the school's curricular and pedagogical changes that they designed (Kato, 2009). I am fortunate to have this text as it fills in gaps in my own research, though my interests are quite different from the chronological, sequential narrative of the teacher texts. This important document tells the story of change *from the perspective* of the individual educators themselves *in their voices,* according to *their own choice* of self-representation.

3.1.5   Finding My Place Within the Text

In portraiture, then, the place and stance of the researcher are made visible and audible, written is as part of the story. The portraitist is clear: from where I sit, this is what I see; these are the perspectives and biases I bring; this is the scene I select; this is how the people seem to be responding to my presence. (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997, p.50)

I have come to this study with many ideas about and experiences within schools in Japan and have run up against them from my very first visits in the school described earlier in this section. These impressions are formed not only from my experiences as an educator, but also as a mother of bicultural and bilingual children who lived through some very negative, even traumatic experiences within a Japanese school. I have two decades living in Japan and share a house with my mother and father-in-law who are Japanese and do not speak English. I am and have been

deeply immersed in Japanese culture, but am also aware of my visibility and external perceptions of myself as Other. As well, the literature that I have been immersed in throughout my studies has deeply impacted my understanding of schooling for culturally and linguistically different children and guided my foray into this inquiry.

Krall (1988) writes that undergoing intentional self-study and self-understanding is a legitimate and necessary task for the educational researcher "that enhances and develops … interpretive skills and that fosters self-awareness in relation to the general human condition" (p.468). I am living and raising children in a foreign context as an immigrant in Japan similar to yet distinctly different from the Japanese-Brazilian children and their families at Ishikawa Elementary School. Primarily, I have been privileged to make educational choices for my children that most of the Japanese-Brazilians parents are unable to due to financial difficulties. Openly reflecting on my experiences living as a foreigner with children in Japan brings additional insight into the stories told by the teachers of their Japanese-Brazilian children and their families.

I have remained mindful of my privilege, and status as a white, American, English speaking foreigner when conversing with the Japanese-Brazilian and Brazilian assistant teachers, most of whom have children at Ishikawa Elementary School and the junior or senior high school in the district. While I share being a foreigner in Japan with the Japanese-Brazilian children and their assistant teachers and have also come into the school as an "outsider", I am an outsider of a different class and status. In Japan, white, professional, English speaking foreigners have always received preferential status as foreigners in Japan. There is a well-established hierarchy based not only on race and language, but also on economic and professional status (Weiner, 1997).

I am also aware of my position as a researcher who has been supported by the principal and superintendent, thus impacting the inevitable power imbalance between the teachers

participating in the study, and myself.   Professionally, I have been a teacher of monocultural and monolingual Japanese children, as well as a mother, friend and teacher of many non-Japanese and bicultural and bilingual children and have first hand knowledge of the differences that exist between all three of these groups.   I recognize that the children categorized within these groups are unique individuals and am aware of the vast intra-group differences across economic class, social status, educational level/experiences, cultural/linguistic identification and personality.

These multiple subjective positions contextualize and shape my interpretation of all I encounter while in the school and as I engage in dialogue with the individuals who participated in this study.   During conversations with the participants I drew on one or more of these subjectivities depending on my relational position to whom I was addressing or being addressed by, and by the shifting nature of each of these relationships across time.   I am reminded of Butler's (2006) account of the impossibility of ever giving one's self over *completely* to an other when engaging in dialogue, because the account one gives is always dependent on who is addressing us, and thus we never fully reveal ourselves to any one particular person within any one dialogic encounter, nor do they to us.

> So the account of myself that I give in discourse never fully expresses or carries this living self. My words are taken away as I give them, interrupted by the time of a discourse that is not the same as the time of my life. This "interruption" contests the sense of the account's being grounded in myself alone, since the indifference structures that enable my living belong to a sociality that exceeds me. (p.36)

I have remained truthful to my understanding of Butler as I, in turn, construct my telling of the participants in this inquiry who have addressed me in their partiality.   I remain ever

cognizant that I am only able to take from their accounts what my own positionality and subjectivity requested of them.

3.1.6   Weaving it All Together: Creating One Story Out of Many

The contingencies of field inquiry are not to be viewed only as obstacles to one's inquiries but as opportunities to learn which inquiries are the ones that really matter. These contingencies should be celebrated, for they are where all real discoveries lie. (Liberman, 1999, p.50)

In this final section I trace the course taken through my inquiry as I struggled with and celebrated the contingencies of this project. I recognized early on that reflexive inquiry continually shaped this work and guided me in my exploration and understanding of submerged meanings within the stories that were shared and co-constructed with me.

Qualitative researchers, particularly those conducting interpretive inquiries, speak in a different language from researchers working within post-positivist methodologies (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, 1990; Denzin, 1997; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman-Davis; Richardson, 1997; van Manen, 1990). "Like other qualitative methods, narrative relies on criteria other than validity, reliability, and generalizibility. It is important not to squeeze the language of narrative criteria into a language created for other forms of research" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, p. 7). Narrative inquiry and portraiture seek a trustworthiness in their representations based on the skill of the researcher to interpret collected stories using rich descriptions of the field, multi-dimensional participant portraits, and by framing the resultant texts and theoretic offspring born

out of these within the language of rich narrative to move between multi-voiced textual representations (Clandidn and Connelly, 1990, 2000; Denzin, 1997; Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman-Davis, 1997; Phillion, He and Connelly, 2005; van Manen, 1990).

I have attended to the rigors of the research while remaining true to relational, experiential and ethical concerns as is required by a methodological integrity that yields quality scholarship and understanding of a phenomena. "Qualitative research is demonstrably trustworthy and rigorous when the researcher demonstrates that he or she has worked to understand the situated nature of participants' interpretations and meanings" (Ezzy, 2002, p.32). While there are no set procedures for either the method of interpretive inquiry, nor for dealing with matters of representation because these are, like the inquiry itself, dependent on the researcher's subjectivity, query and phenomena or individuals under study. There are, though, certain agreed upon aspects of the qualities that define good interpretative studies. Again, van Manen (1990) is helpful here, "human science research as writing must indeed produce *oriented, strong, rich, and deep* texts- texts which invite dialogue with those who interact with it. …a phenomenological human science text invites a dialogic response from us" (p. 21).

I have drawn my understanding out of the previously discussed notions surrounding the rigors or criteria of quality interpretive research to seek out the " 'woodpaths,' towards a 'clearing' where something could be shown, revealed, or clarified… . However the paths (methods) can not be predetermined by fixed signposts. They need to be discovered or invented as a response to the question at hand" (van Manen, 1990, p. 29). By remaining connected to my field texts and taped conversations throughout the year and a half I engaged this inquiry I have run into several diverging "woodpaths" (van Manen, 1990). In recursive, reflective and reiterative writings I returned each time to the field and to the texts with new thoughts of

emerging themes of understanding that eventually led me toward one of many clearings out of the intermittent patches of lightness and darkness in the wooded landscape of this inquiry. The path that I followed to reach this particular clearing is distinctive of my own ontolo gy, epistemology and relational knowing between the site, participants and myself.

It is here that I come to the crux of the problem of representation, termed by Garman and Piantinida (2006) as "the struggle for representation" (p. xvii). I have struggled as I have written, reflected and returned to the texts of this project many times over. I earlier mentioned my shift in understanding that ultimately there are two parallel stories that needed attending to, the story of action and the story of consciousness (Bruner, 1986). I have chosen portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman-Davis, 1997) to help me fully represent these two stories within my own interpretative narrative of these parallel stories to aid my understanding of the individual, collective and institutional changes I theorize. "Human science research *is* a form of writing. …In the case of the present project we want writing to serve pedagogy" (van Manen, 1990, p.112). Keeping van Manen's (1990) credo close to heart I consider the ultimate goal of this project and textual representation as "stand[ing] in the service of the mundane practice of pedagogy; it is a ministering of thoughtfulness".[23]

Garman (2006) provides a conceptual heuristic in her division of the "three essential texts" in interpretive inquiry. These are: experiential, theoretic, and discursive (p.5). Briefly, "the experiential text is the author's version of reality, which requires a *standing close* language full of evocative and persuasive sensibilities. A necessary characteristic of the experiential text

---

[23] I understand van Manen's (1990) use of mundane here as "of this earthly world rather than a heavenly or spiritual one", rather than in the pedantic sense of "lacking interest or excitement; dull" (Oxford English Dictionary).

is verisimiltude" (p.7). Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman-Davis (1997) describe the importance of verisimilitude for contextualizing the field for the reader.

> The reader should feel as if he or she is *there*; seeing the colors of the autumn leaves, feeling the temperature of the gentle breeze, and hearing the rustling branches. That is, he or she should not only see the contours and dimensions of the terrain but also feel placed in it, transported into the setting. (p.45)

I have inserted sections from my experiential texts into this methodological section as I do throughout the completed piece of this research. I envisioned these experiential texts as bridging the space that exists between the two modes of storytelling as defined by Bruner (1986) and necessary for creating a sense of place wherein the stories of consciousness reside. Secondly, the theoretic text creates space for the author, "to reflect on the experiential text and to resonate with the happenings at a distance. …The theoretic text represents the author's personal theories" (Garman, 2006, p.7). Through recording my thoughts, experiences and impressions in field texts and reflective researcher journal I was able to discern the resonant metaphors, relevant dimensions (recurrent patterns), and emergent themes generated by the rich descriptions of my experiential texts, and attentively listening "*for stories*" (Welty in Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997, p. 99) in the conversations I had with the participants.

I earlier mentioned the resonant metaphor of *kakehashi* or bridging as a personal, communal, pedagogic and structural metaphor deeply embedded in the meaning behind the creation and enactment of the changes that reshaped and restoried Ishikawa Elementary School. This also acts as a defining metaphor for my own conceptual bridge across theoretical camps, which help me to better understand the actions and salient experiences of these educators to reconsider pedagogic practice and restructure schooling in favor of, rather than against, successful engagement and learning for culturally and linguistically different children

Lastly, Garman (2006) describes discursive texts, or the guiding and relevant literature that informs the inquiry, as "more extensive than doing a literature review" contained within one section of a paper or dissertation. Rather, these texts should, "transform the wealth of this scholarly text into insightful warrants for the experiential and theoretic texts" (p.8). I find it troublesome and overly weighty to upload my work with a detached literature review, separate and lifeless, from the internal meaning-making and connective discourses that run through the holistic piece. Following Garman's (2006) interconnected representation of these three texts I will be threading the experiential, theoretic and discursive texts throughout the representation of this work. I use Lawrence-Lightfoot's (1997) portraiture as a way to individualize each participant in a narrative portrait that can stand alone, unhindered by the discursive texts. I wish to retain the wholeness of each individual's experiences as told to and interpreted by me. I then follow each experiential, narrative portrait with a philosophic or theoretic reflection composed of the discursive texts, which allow the conceptual underpinnings that I have associated with each individual's story to be clearly worked out and explicated.

The unique context of Ishikawa Elementary School, its history within the small district, particularly in relation to two alternative, open-structure schools, and the transformative events, activities and educational programs that have been instrumental in turning the school around will be described prior to the narrative portraits and philosophic reflections that follow each. An understanding of the contextual landscape of the school, an introduction to Dr. Kato and Superintendent Abe, and the curricular programs and events that have been introduced is vital to making sense of the three narrative portraits that make up the central interpretive work of this inquiry. The main philosophic discussion in this document comes in the form of philosophic reflections that follow detailed narrative portraits of the three representative participants in this

inquiry. I have chosen to highlight the story of Principal Ishiyama, the main initiator and visionary of the transformation of the school, Takeishi-sensei, the head teacher of the sixth grade and in-residence coordinator of research, who has the longest history in the school and is accredited with developing the individualized educational program that has been influential to drawing out and engaging the students in their lessons, and lastly Leticia, the Brazilian assistant language teacher who represents the view from the other side. She has worked in the school since before the changes began to take place, is an advocate for the Brazilian and Japanese community, and had both of her children enrolled in the school. I chose to illuminate the experiences and stories of these three participants because they represent a well-focused lens across the community of individuals who have worked over the past six years to conceive of and then implement change within the school.

3.1.7 Alternate Possibilities & Concerns

I have several concerns. One is that I may have missed nuanced aspects of the participants' stories because of specialized vocabulary that I am not accustomed to, as well as cultural differences in narrative style between Japanese and English. I have lived in Japan for almost 20 years and am daily immersed in Japanese both inside and outside of my home. I hear my mother-in-law's stories of her life and have become skilled at a more patient turn-taking than I am accustomed to from my socialized interlocutor position as an American English speaker, listening for just the right space to interject a question or a comment as deemed culturally appropriate when addressing an elder or person of higher rank. Yet, I struggled to contain my curiosity and enthusiasm in many of the conversations with the educators, occasionally lapsing into the culturally comfortable conversational style of my English-speaking, female persona. It

is difficult to know if this positively impacted the quality of the conversational texts or inhibited them.

Additionally, there are always issues of power within any conversational relationship that I had to pay attention to, particularly with regard to gender, age and occupational status, all linguistically determined and marked in Japanese. Despite my own elevated position, as a researcher, I was addressing older men who hold positions of power within their institutions and communities, and I remained aware of my lower status as much as possible. Although I was forgiven minor linguistic infractions because I am held to a different standard as an outsider, not being expected to know the intimate social nuances of appropriate Japanese usage. Fortunately, the administrators who took time out of their busy schedules to speak with me do not represent the detached and guarded principals I have met in the past. True to their deeply held philosophic beliefs they responded to me as a complete individual, seeing beyond the shallow, one-dimensional veneer of my position as a researcher.

By the very nature of interpretive research my account of these educators' life experiences and the changes that occurred in the school are only a partial understandings of the whole. Despite my diligence to attend to the in-between spaces and *listen for* the deeper meanings in the stories told, I cannot claim to know anymore than I was exposed to from any particular relationship or angle I happened to view the person or scene from. Nor am I able to represent the stories outside of the contexts and conversations from within which they occurred. I am able to provide a trustworthy account of these images alongside the feelings and thoughts associated with them truthfully through my own experience and interpretation of that which presented itself to me. "A phenomenological description is always *one* interpretation, and no single interpretation

of human experience will ever exhaust the possibility of yet another complementary, or even potentially *richer* or *deeper* description" (van Manen, 1990, p.31).

4.0 FRAMING THAT WHICH CAN BE SEEN: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The bridge swings across the stream with ease and power. It does not just connect banks that are already there. The banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream. The bridge designedly causes them to lie across from each other. One side is set off by the other, by the bridge. …With the banks, the bridge brings to the stream the one and the other expanse of the landscape lying behind them. It brings stream and bank and land into each other's neighbourhood. . ..Bridges lead in many ways. (Heidegger in Pearce & Jobson, 2002, p.6)

4.1 THE "LANDSCAPE OF ACTION"

As discussed earlier there are two distinctly different yet interconnected aspects to this inquiry. My initial concerns when beginning this research centered on the "how" of the changes, or "landscapes of action" (Bruner, 1986), and guided the initial framing of the study. By this I mean that I structured my original considerations and questions around the visible, or "landscapes of action", rather than the unseen, or "landscapes of consciousness" (Bruner, 1986), which only came later after I engaged in conversations with the participants and their personal and professional experiences shaped the "why" of the study.   In the above quote Heidegger draws on the metaphorical image of the bridge to link two landscapes, which simultaneously alters the image we attain from either side of the bridge by making it possible to view them from one vantage point. Through the connection of the bridge we are afforded a new perspective, new possibility, seeing how the two sides are both contrasted and connected. "The bridge affords a new perspective on a particular, and perhaps familiar, location. It enables a location to be seen

from a wholly new standpoint, and in so doing reveals something new of that place" (Pearce &
Jonsby, 2002, p. 7).

My understanding of the work of the educators and the changes that occurred at Ishikawa
Elementary School was constantly being drawn into new perspectives depending on where I was
focusing my attention and gaze for this work as I moved between the landscape of action and
landscape of consciousness. In this short section I discuss the theoretical frames that guided the
earliest part of this inquiry into the landscape of action. I draw on two overarching yet
distinctive theoretical frames that guided my first questions into the how of the school change,
which later become elucidated and more clearly understood through metaphorical expressions
and descriptions of actions based on pedagogical belief systems centered on open-mindedness,
responsive relationships, and connectivity.   What follows is a discussion of the theoretical
frames that shaped the inquiry as it emerged and crossed the two landscapes of story discussed
early. I will speak on how I came to link bridging from the open systems theory within
organization theory to culturally responsive pedagogy as I centered my earliest questions for this
inquiry around concepts of opening up and connecting to others across difference which later
crystallized as resonant metaphors and emergent themes when I interpreted and coded the
narratives of Principal Ishiyama and Takeishi-sensei.

The use of bridging as both metaphor and conceptual foundation is significant within the
fields of organizational theory and education, particularly with regards to schooling for cultural
and linguistic minority children. While these two fields remain distinct and separate within the
oeuvre of educational studies the linkages have become clear through this work. To provide an
idea for the extensive use of the pairing between the terms *bridging* and *cultural and linguistic
minority education* a search on Google Scholar for articles or books with these terms yielded

13,000 titles.[24]   Within the literature on culturally responsive education bridging is most often used with reference to crossing the cultural and linguistic chasm that divides the mainstream, majority culture, curriculum, teacher or school, and the cultural and linguistic minority student. As I engaged this work I found that the metaphorical use of *bridging* was broadened to include conceptualizing bridges spanning the school to the home community of the children at the school, crossing cultural divides, bridging teacher and child, connecting the child to the curriculum, linking teacher to teacher, bridging professional knowledge communities, and bridging past, present and an imagined future.

Explanations for failure of cultural and linguistic minority children in the general literature often point to cultural difference or deficit theory.   This theory states that the cultural and language gap between the mainstream teacher and her minority student contributes to the school failure of cultural or linguistic minority children rather than to her own inadequacy to teach across difference or positively respond to, and incorporate the child's culture and linguistic patterns into the classroom and curriculum.   (Au,1980; Erickson, 1987; Valdes, 1996;Vogt, Jordan & Tharp, 1987). The culture and language of the child are not seen as merging with mainstream sociocultural ideas of appropriate behavior (based on middle-class, majority sociocultural norms), the blame for educational failure falls on either the child or the home environment perceived by the teacher and other members of the school community as culturally impoverished (Valdes, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999).

The negativity arising from insufficient knowledge about the child's racial or ethnic culture, limited understanding of the home situation and parental values, and narrow-mindedness on the part of the teacher directly impact the perceptions of and experiences of culturally and

---

[24] Some of these were related to other fields such as healthcare and counseling, but the majority referred to articles on schooling across cultural and linguistic difference.

linguistically diverse students within the school resulting in disassociation, disengagement, and too often, academic failure. Perceiving one's responsibility for creating this perceptual gap, and subsequently bridging it, rather than simply standing on the opposing bank unwilling or unable to span the divide requires a crossing over that becomes possible once educators, students, and communities find a way to open up to each other and relate across difference (Cummins, 1986; 2000; Dehyle, 1999; Eldering, 1997; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008; Valenzuela, 1999).

Proponents of both culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2000) and culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) stress the importance of mainstream teachers and school staff to accommodate, affirm, and positively represent the heritage culture of cultural and language minority children to bridge the divide. Despite the apparent interchangeability of these two theories they are quite distinct in their use of critical theory and the political, even emancipatory, intention of the educative experience. Ladson-Billings' (1995) culturally relevant theory, like culturally responsive theory, claims that culturally and linguistically different children will engage in schooling experiences that affirm, value and respond to their difference positively. This theory addresses the problems arising from cultural difference or deficit theory by attributing a child's school success to the inclusion and recognition of their cultural and linguistic heritage, rather than attributing the child's school failure to those differences. Ladson-Billings (1995) very clearly defines culturally relevant pedagogy as based within a critical pedagogy that seeks a transcendence of consciousness for cultural and linguistic minority children who suffer the culturally and linguistically oppressive institutional structure and normalizing practices of schooling. As well, her theory has grown out of her early work on exemplary pedagogic practice to reverse the traumatizing effects of the oppressive, unethical, and inequitable education that

many black children experience in both urban and rural settings[25]. She defines her theory of culturally relevant pedagogy as focused on accomplishing the following: "[to] produce students who can achieve academically, produce students who demonstrate cultural competence, and develop students who can both understand and critique existing social order" (p.474).

On the other hand, Gay's (2000) culturally responsive pedagogy takes a slightly less political stance with regard to culturally responsive teaching and is more applicable to the work of the educators at the center of this inquiry because of the less explicit critical stance. Additionally, culturally responsive pedagogy takes a broader view of culturally responsive pedagogic practice in that the theory has been formulated across a diverse community of culturally and linguistically diverse students as opposed to the more narrow focus on the achievement gap of black students and the black-white cultural divide that drives so much of the literature on school failure of cultural minorities in the United States[26]. Like Ladson-Billings (1995) culturally relevant pedagogy, the academic engagement and success of culturally and linguistically different children is enhanced when their culture and language are represented and positively responded to within the school community, curriculum, and classroom. When mainstream school culture represses, ignores or worse denies the expression of culturally and linguistically different students it imposes limitations on their ability to fully engage in the life of the school as individuals of value. Gay (2000) provides her definition of culturally responsive

---

[25] Her seminal study looked at the practices of eight exemplary teachers of black children in a school in North Carolina (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

[26] Over the past decade the scope of this research has widened greatly to include volumes of work on the various ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups that make up the growing minority populations around the world. The bulk of such research is generated from nations with long histories of immigration or colonization (Bishop et al, 2003; Dehyle, 1999; Eldering, 1997; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Over the past decade in the United States an impressive number of ethnographic and narrative studies highlighting the inequitable schooling and undereducation of Latino/a students in American public schools as well as their resiliency to succeed (Olmedo, 2003; Valdes, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999; Garza, et al, 2004) .

pedagogy as, the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance

styles of ethnically diverse students [making] learning encounters more relevant to and effective

for them. It teaches *to and through* the strengths of these students. It is culturally *validating and*

affirming (Gay, p.29).

Culturally responsive pedagogy seeks to rectify this situation by bridging the gap and

opening up spaces for relationships to thrive and supports the full expression of culturally and

linguistically different children and their families as equally valued members of the community.

Rather than closing the school community off to these children and their families the borders are

opened-up to expand across difference forming mutual bonds of respect that enhance both the

teaching and learning experience.

The two defining aspects of culturally responsive pedagogy, opening up and bridging,

take on greater significance when widening the view beyond the teacher-student relationship and

classroom to broader institutional and school culture forces when considering school-wide

change. Valdes (1996) claims that too often educational research on language and cultural

minority children has been limited to a single view of their personal difficulties within the

school, but rather argues for a more expansive understanding that would consider, "the societal,

the institutional, the interpersonal, and the interpsychic" (Persell cited in Valdes, p. 19).

Drawing on the use of bridging from open systems theory helps me to better conceptualize the

shift toward opening up and bridging the communities within and beyond the boundaries of

Ishikawa Elementary School.

Institutional organizations reflect the philosophical, ideological and sociocultural

perspectives of the individuals and groups that create them. For the purposes of this work I

became interested in the move away from the closed system that separated the two cultural

communities of the school, and the teachers to their students before Principal Ishiyama took up his post and pushed open the boundaries, to create opportunities for teachers to bridge the gaps between their students, themselves, and across the distinctly different cultural communities that had divided them. The school wide changes that took place at Ishikawa Elementary School were founded on deeply held convictions by the educators who believed in an open-minded and open-hearted education. This openness paired with bridging the personal, cultural, curricular and communal gaps that divided the school communities set into motion positive interactions that created opportunities for relationships to form and more active learning take place.

Open systems theory defines an organization type that seeks to push open the borders that separate individuals within an organization, as well as to reach out to the exterior environment not only as a matter of necessity, but as a gesture of openness and interdependence. It is an organizational stance that privileges relationships and structures the organization and environment to support the growth of relationships and build stronger links between communities and individuals. "In relational approaches, if structures exist it is because they are continually being created and recreated, and if the world has meaning, it is because actors are constructing and reconstructing intentions and accounts…thereby, their own and others identities" (Scott, 2003 p. 101).

The mechanism by which an open systems organization actively seeks to bond individuals to their environment is called bridging. Bridging strategies, or expanding the boundaries of the school and opening it up to the outside environment and community, have been shown to be particularly influential with low-income populations of families who tend to feel shut out and excluded from the community life of the school.

Bridging strategies to cultivate parental support have been found to be influential in fostering student achievement. …Bridging strategies are associated with improved student performance and attendance, and decreased student dropout and delinquency rates. Fostering parental support was found to be second only to classroom management in relation to improved student learning. (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2005 p. 64)

Educators do not work in a vacuum, yet the bulk of literature on minority education attends to the work of individuals confined within classrooms and is dominated by stories of exclusion, discriminatory practice, low teacher expectations, and student disengagement. The all-too-common story of these children is of life in schools that disregard their specific cultural and linguistic needs often devaluing their home cultures and neglecting to foster their individual, social and academic potential (Books, 2007; Cummins, 2000, 1986; Darder, 1991; Davidson, 1996; Dehyle, 1995; Flores-Gonzalez, 2002; Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2004; Partington, Godfrey & Kaye, 2001; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco & Todorov, 2008). This work seeks a counter-view to the many stories of despair that, while necessary, leave one feeling overwhelmed by the weight of the structural, economic, and socio-cultural forces that too often weaken individual teachers, children and their families from retaining hope to forge different and possible futures for themselves and the world.

5.0   CONTEXTUALIZING THE NARRATIVES

In this section I provide the contextual information within which the three central participant narratives are immersed. I give historical background on the school and discuss its relation to other schools in the district. Thereafter, I briefly introduce the backgrounds and relationships of two peripheral participants, Professor Kato and Superintendent Abe. Both of these participants are made reference to in both Principal Ishiyama and Takeishi-sensei's narrative portraits. Superintendent Abe and I spoke twice for an hour of formal, taped conversations. Professor Kato and I have had several formal conversations, but we have also become quite close and have met casually often. As well, he graciously offered my family and me accommodations at his home in the area near Ishikawa Elementary School where he grew up, when we visited Ishikawa Elementary School together for the Saturday Night School event in July, 2009. Following the introduction to these peripheral, but important individuals I give background information and provide short experiential texts drawn from my field texts on the individualized education course (*maru maru gakushu)* and the *waku waku free time* period. Following these descriptions I briefly introduce three events that have become central to the folklore and community building project of the school: The Japan-Brazil 2006 World Cup Viewing Event, Saturday Night School, and International Friendship Day.

5.1 THE SCHOOL, PERIPHERAL PARTICIPANTS & THE PROGRAMS

5.1.1 Ishikawa Elementary School – The Place, The History & The Space

Ishikawa Elementary School is located in one of the seven residential areas that make up Urata Township. Urata town, or village as it is officially designated, is located in the northeastern region of the Chita peninsula, a rural area with a total population of 516,063 residents. The peninsula juts out like a crab claw south of Nagoya, the third largest metropolitan area in Japan, and has experienced a population boom over the past two decades since I resided there in 1991. New industries, mostly related to automobile manufacturing, particularly the large Toyota plant, brought the Japanese-Brazilian (im)migrants down to the peninsula in the mid 1990s. A second influx of a different sort of newcomer, weary urbanites seeking a quieter, more peaceful life are now also settling in this community. Their presence is largely responsible for the continued development of suburban communities and large shopping areas that now dot the landscape along either of the two train lines that run down to the tip of the peninsula and back up to Nagoya. In 2005 a new international airport was completed making access both to and off the once insular peninsula much easier. This newly built airport forced great expansion into the interior of the peninsula with an increased flow of trains, development of new roads, and a new train line for greater access to the airport. Of all these changes, by far the most salient feature of change that has taken place is the visibility and the number of foreigners I noticed while waiting on the platform or standing on the train as I made the half hour journey down to Urata town.

Urata town was incorporated as a village in 1906 when it merged the six main residential areas within its borders. With a population of 49,010 residents the town's status as a village gives the local government slightly more autonomy than it will have once the population

surpasses the 50,000 mark, which requires it to change its official status to that of a city. A change in status will have repercussions for the fairly autonomous school district, which is quite well known for its two open structure schools, innovative educational programs, and large Japanese-Brazilian student population.[27] The loosely coupled system, as it stands now, allows the schools to function fairly independently and introduce programs and activities that might otherwise force them to succumb to more oversight from the prefectural board of education once the status to city occurs.

Among the population of this tightly knit community, which prides itself as a "wholesome town, which has both peace and prosperity" (according to a town hall document) live 1,532 registered foreign national residents. The break down of these foreign residents goes against the national trend of Koreans as the most populous foreign national group, followed by Chinese, Brazilians and then Filipinos (refer to footnote #3 on p.5). In Urata Township the largest group of foreign residents is made up of the 938 registered South American *Nikkeijin* residents, with Brazilians making up sixty percent of that total equaling 871 individuals. The second largest group consists of Filipinos at 12 percent of the population, followed by Chinese at ten percent and lastly Koreans who make up six percent of the total. The most striking feature of this breakdown is that 85 percent of the Brazilian population in Urata Township live in the subsidized housing complex located across the road from Ishikawa Elementary school. The total number of school age foreign nationals in the district in 2009 equaled 174. Of this number 144 are Brazilian students with seventy-nine students registered in Ishikawa Elementary School and

---

[27] The school has received a great deal of attention over the past several years. It has been visited by many outsiders for observation and research, the previous principal, Principal Ishiyama, was interviewed for a local television station during the 2006 World Cup viewing event (to be described later), and the school was filmed for an open-air university education course (which I observed), among other accolades and press that have been directed to the school.

43 registered in the local junior high school where the Ishikawa graduates attend along with students from three other local elementary schools. The remaining numbers of foreign national children are concentrated in the preschools, and two other traditional elementary schools in the district. These schools mirror more closely the national norm with only one or two foreign national children in the school, which is the case in 80 percent of the schools with registered foreign national students (Kanno, 2008b). Ishikawa Elementary School is an outlier as it is categorized in the remaining 20 percent of schools with more than five foreign national students, with the Japanese-Brazilian student population making up a third of the total student population.

Ishikawa Elementary was the last of the seven elementary schools to be built in the rural school district of Urata Township. Construction on the new building was concluded in 1982 and shares some features found in the two open structure schools built during the period of expansion that took place in the late 1970's and early 1980's. Currently Ishikawa Elementary has the smallest population among the seven schools, with a third of the attendance of the neighboring school, Fujino Elementary, which has 565 students. The largest elementary school in the district has a population of 605 students, with the average school size population around 500 students. At only 253 students the children at Ishikawa Elementary School enjoy more space, freedom of movement, individualized instruction than their peers in the neighboring schools. Many of the teachers who visited the school during the two professional meetings I attended were astounded by these qualities and many simply marveled, exclaiming "this can only happen here because the school is small yet they have access to resources and extra teachers" (field text, 9.24.08). This is true. But, likewise it is not the complete story. Shifting the culture, curriculum and pedagogy of the school was no easy battle, though it may appear so to those who only see the present condition of the school, but look no further to understand the struggles of the past.

The small size of the student population has made it easier for the teachers to implement many of the curricular, pedagogic, and organizational changes that have shifted the school culture and supported more engaged learning amongst the most disadvantaged students in the district. Additionally, the increased staff members and assistant language teachers have decreased the student: teacher ratio to a much more manageable size. These assistant teachers provide much needed support for the homeroom teachers with full capacity classrooms of 40 students. Yet, the number of students has not changed significantly over the past decade[28] when other educators were unable to make good use of the extra space available, control the unruly children or manage to entice them into actively participating in their learning. In fact, Ishikawa Elementary has always suffered a dismal reputation as the lowest level school in the district and was well known in the past for its depressed teachers and disruptive, undisciplined, low-income students.

There is historical precedence for both the construction of the school and the proximity of the low-income population of students who attend Ishikawa Elementary. In 1959 the region suffered a devastating typhoon, famously called the *Issei Wan* typhoon, which killed over 5,000 people, demolished towns, ravaged farmlands and destroyed the weak traditional wooden houses where many of the local farming families lived. The prefecture built make-shift homes for these displaced farmers, many of whom were never able to return to farming and found themselves depending on social welfare for assistance. Eventually, the prefecture constructed a housing complex for these families, which currently is home to both the low-income Japanese and Japanese-Brazilian children who descend the concrete stairs of their apartment buildings to cross the road each day that leads to Ishikawa Elementary School.

---

[28] The population of the school in 1998 was just over 300 students. At this time there were only 3 Brazilian students enrolled in the school (Kato, 2009).

With an increase in school aged children residing in the newly constructed housing complex the nearby elementary school, Fujino Elementary, was overrun and unable to manage the large population of students. Additionally, the parents of the more middle-class students at Fujino Elementary School were unhappy with the incoming children from the low-income subsidized housing complex and may have had some influence with the school board. Ishikawa Elementary was built to redistribute the flow of the burgeoning population of these "undesirable" children and their families. Professor Kato, one of the peripheral participants in the inquiry but a central figure in the innovative educational practices implemented in Ishikawa Elementary School, was born in the region and is responsible for introducing the open structure schooling and individualized educational programs at the two open structure schools in the area. He has been involved with Ishikawa Elementary School at different points throughout his career and is well aware of the difficulties and struggles associated with the school. During one of our first recorded conversations he provided a good description of the general malaise of the school and its general reputation among the community since it opened its doors to the children of the housing complex over thirty years ago.

> K: The surrounding community has always suffered since the *Issei Wan* Typhoon. Their condition has been bad, economically and mentally…and also the teachers who were assigned there felt hopeless from the beginning. They lacked energy to teach the children and felt they were very unfortunate. Because, you know… the kids always have trouble. And the families also have their own trouble, and the single [parent] family is common. Almost all the kids from the subsidized apartment complex go to Ishikawa Elementary. From the beginning the teachers, maybe, lost their energy and hope when they are assigned to this school. Then, over the past 10 or 15 years the people who live in these apartments changed from the poor Japanese to the….foreign workers. Because that's the prefectural, very cheap, apartment building. So, the people there… they changed from the Japanese who suffered from the typhoon to those foreign workers. (9.17.09)

68

Today Ishikawa Elementary has a very different atmosphere despite little change to the Japanese student population, 25 percent of whom come from families receiving social welfare assistance, and 31 percent being raised in single-parent (mother) homes many of whom are also on social welfare (Kato, 2009). The teachers in the school today invest great amounts of time and energy to teach both their Japanese and Japanese-Brazilian students and do not reflect the desperate state of the teachers in the past as described above. While I did see overwhelmed and flustered teachers this was nothing out of the ordinary and more often than not I saw positive, responsive and caring relationships between the teachers, staff, and the students. Even when disciplining students the corrective action, which at times was intense, did not seem to carry over into succeeding lessons or get in the way of the teacher-student relationship.

Interestingly, my first impression of the school is in contrast to that of Dr. Kato's portrayal when the teachers there opened the doors of Ishikawa Elementary to its first set of students. I found the atmosphere to be welcoming, students congenial, and the environment bright and energetic. The school's structure and teaching style, particularly in the upper elementary grades, rests somewhere between the four more traditional elementary schools in the district and the two open structure schools where two of the educators highlighted in the participant portraits developed in their pedagogic philosophy. In comparison to Sakanoue Elementary School, the first of the two open structure schools opened in the area, Ishikawa Elementary was designed according to a more traditional pattern, though elements of the open structured design are apparent.

Sakanoue Elementary School, situated on the first and oldest school site in the district, was redesigned to reflect the open structured schooling popular in the United States in the 1960's

and 1970's.[29] The old school building was renovated in 1979 and is like no other school I have entered in Japan. Upon entering the wooden paneled entrance the colorfully painted walls and large open windows invite the visitor into the school. Throughout the school students wander freely and enjoy open spaces, some with sofas and carpeting, where they can be found working individually on projects or in small groups. All of the classrooms are open with only partitions separating them, and all homeroom areas enjoy a communal space where teachers work together with different students from adjoining classes, or the children work on their individualized lessons and projects. The lower elementary enjoys its own space and is spread around a semi-circular area divided by a large papier-mâché tree that brings a playful atmosphere to the space. As I wandered around the halls of this elementary school memories of my own early childhood schooling experiences came flooding back to me. I could immediately see the influence of the environmental structure, pedagogical style, and freedom of movement that is apparent in Ishikawa Elementary School, despite the more traditional design and teaching style.

Ishikawa Elementary School, encircled by gentle sloping hillsides covered with Japanese cedar trees, is almost hidden from the main road that runs alongside it. The quiet, green enclosure belies both the traumatic beginnings and tumultuous changes unbeknownst to the energetic and active children who spill into the school and fill the classrooms each day. From the outside the façade of the school resembles most public schools in Japan. The school is a plain concrete two-story structure, which shares a similar design and feel to most Japanese public elementary and junior high schools I have worked in and visited. In fact, the defining characteristic of most Japanese public schools is the bland architecture and nondescript nature of

---

[29] The history and significance of these schools is more fully discussed in the following section.

70

the building and interior creating a sameness similar to the socialist buildings I saw while living in communist Poland as a child.

All preconceptions of the school being like any other are swept away from the first step into the entry way, where bilingual signs in Portuguese and Japanese greet the visitor and large poster-sized photos draw attention to the many community events and activities that have taken place to bridge the gap between the Japanese-Brazilian and Japanese student populations. Of course, the most striking feature of the school is the vitality and diversity of the faces among the children. It is a refreshing sight and one I had not expected to see when I first visited in September 2008. "Is this really a Japanese school?" appears to be the exclamation most frequently heard by visitors to the school as proclaimed in the opening pages of the book written by the teachers, university professors and administrators to describe the changes that occurred and the programs that have been initiated at the school (Kato, 2009).

Upon entering the school today, the newly painted mural on the stairwell created by the outgoing sixth grade class of 2009 beckons visitors up the stairs leading to the large open space that is the most defining feature of the physical space within the school. This large space is the only aspect of the building to benefit from the open structure schools built thirty years earlier in the district. This area is used daily when students engage in their individualized and small group lessons that distinguish the curriculum of Ishikawa Elementary School from the other four traditional schools in the district, aligning it more to the two open structured Sakanoue and Nishikawa Elementary Schools. The main homeroom classrooms run along both floors of the long corridor to the right of the entrance and look out across the large sports ground, which backs up against a lush hillside and playground on the opposite side. There is also a large garden space

just opposite the entrance where the children plant rice and sweet potatoes in the late spring and early summer.

The class grades are divided between the upper elementary and lower elementary homerooms, which are organized on the second and first floors respectively. Each grade is made of two classes. The numbers of students per class do not always equal out as classes are split only after the 40-student capacity is reached. As is common in Japanese elementary schools one of the upper and lower grades has been interspersed on either floor, with the fourth graders set up in two rooms on the first floor next to the second graders. All other homerooms are located on the second floor with the first grade class directly down the hall from the six graders. This allows the children to share in the care of each other and creates a sense of community across the school by supporting the shared experience and responsibility for each others' school experience. This is a common feature of traditional Japanese schooling (Cave, 2008; Rohlen & Le Tendre, 1998).

Additional resource rooms are located on the three floors to the right of the entrance and run parallel to the courtyard at the entrance of the school. The science room and the life studies room (or home economics) are located on the first floor and are often used freely by students after school or during the *waku waku free time* on Thursdays (to be described in a following section). The second floor of this wing has the Japanese as a Second Language room (referred to as the *nitteki* room, short for *nihongo tekkiou kyoushitsu*),[30] and the computer room. On the backside of this wing the outdoor pool and large gym are joined by a covered promenade. The school is well equipped and clean. Images of students' work and documentation of the learning

---

[30] In Japanese, 日本語適応教室

and activities that take place are clearly visible and posted throughout the school adding a strong sense of care for the environment and for the individuals that inhabit the space.

I spent several hours observing lessons in the *nitteki* room observing lessons on different days to get a better feel for the lessons and atmosphere of this once isolated and excluded zone in the school. Today, the *nitteki* room is a welcoming space decorated with poster-sized sheets of pictures of the Japanese-Brazilian children involved in various learning and school activities. Bilingual signs fill the available spaces next to the blackboard and a variety of Brazilian household products and food containers are placed atop one of the cabinets near the entrance to the room. There is a long row of plastic cabinets, each with ten drawers, which are full of bilingual language sheets organized by grade level. The two Japanese as Second Language teachers have created bilingual worksheets, with the assistance of the Portuguese language teachers, to facilitate more parental involvement due to the Portuguese vocabulary provided.

The tables in the room have been arranged into rectangular shaped tables where four to six students can work together. The students tend to be seated by grade level where more advanced students provide support for those less proficient students in their group rather than studying together as one large mixed group, which was the predominant teaching-learning style in the past. In the hallway outside of the classroom are several of the projects the children have created during their lessons in the *nitteki room*. When I first visited the school in 2008 there were bilingual projects on the history of Japanese emigration to Brazil and the subsequent return of their descendants. On a different visit a new project consisting of photo essays of Japanese-Brazilian life in Sao Paulo, the largest Japanese-Brazilian *Nikkeijin* community in Brazil, and essays written in both Portuguese and Japanese were on display outside the *nitteki* room. On one of my last visits to the school in January 2010 I saw two articles on President Obama's election,

one in Japanese and one in Portuguese. From my first to my last visit I could see that the work being done in the Japanese as Second language support room went beyond the basic remedial language instruction, though these lessons do occur. Additionally, the amount of time children requiring language support spend in the *nitteki* room is minimal compared with the period when the Japanese-Brazilian student population rapidly increased between 2000 and 2005.

The atmosphere of the *nitteki* room has been transformed from the earlier years that the Brazilian and Japanese Brazilian assistant language teachers spoke to me about. During the first years after entering the school the Japanese-Brazilian children spent several hours out of each day in the *nitteki* room. Teachers too exasperated to manage the language barrier and tension in their classrooms often resorted to sending the Japanese-Brazilian children to this exiled location where they whiled away the hours, excluded from the lessons and activities taking place in their homerooms. The Japanese as a Second Language curriculum had not been established, nor had there been much of an attempt to allow the Japanese-Brazilian children to openly express themselves culturally or linguistically. Prior to 2005 the children were prohibited from speaking Portuguese and intercultural conflict was rampant. I was told this story over and over by all of the participants in this inquiry and wondered how it was possible for teachers and administrators to become complicit, or feel too helpless to take action to change such a negative and desperate environment. The people, their pedagogic ideas, life experiences, and openness to others make the difference.

5.1.2 Peripheral but Important Participants

5.1.2.1 Professor Kato

The reach of Dr. Kato's influence on the educational reforms that have taken place at Ishikawa Elementary School extends far beyond the decade and half since the first Japanese-Brazilian child entered the school in the mid-1990s. In fact, the web of educational pedagogical, structural and curricular transformations that have resulted from Dr. Kato's dedicated service to alternative forms of educating children in Japan is profound and far-reaching.

Dr. Kato first entered into the story of Ishikawa Elementary when he received a plea for help in the mid-80s from the first principal of the school. He is a native son of the peninsula and has spent the majority of his life involved in schooling reforms in the region. By the time the principal called upon Dr. Kato for assistance he had become a well-known educational researcher for his work establishing the open-structure school and individualized education movement (*koseika kyoiku*).

Dr. Kato completed his teacher training at the Aichi School of Education where he received a dual certification for both elementary and junior high school, he specialized in social studies for his junior high School certificate. He was determined to continue his education and returned to university to begin a graduate course of study at Nagoya University, where he received his master's degree in education. During this time he became very interested in the liberal educational reforms occurring in the United States and applied for a Fulbright, which he received from the University of Wisconsin. He spent four years working under the guidance of the famed curricular theorist and educational historian, Herbert M. Kleibard, as his teaching assistant and lay researcher, which provided him extensive opportunities to visit public schools

and observe the progressive educational practices occurring in this area. During his time under Dr. Kleibard's tutelage Dr. Kato was more deeply exposed to Deweyan pedagogic philosophy and introduced to open-structure (or open-space) schooling and individualized education. He was captivated by both the fluid-nature of the open space that supported a sense of community across teaching staff and students, while simultaneously the individualized instruction nurtured each child's engagement with self-directed learning and discovery. Upon his return to Tokyo in 1973 he began working within the Ministry of Education's National Educational Research Institute where he put his newly refined pedagogic philosophies into action.

During this time, Dr. Kato was given an unforeseen opportunity by the Mayor of Urata township to develop a new conceptual school. He was given free reign to redesign a new junior high school in 1974, which became the first open-structure school in Japan. Soon to follow would be construction on a newly designed facility for, Sakanoue Elementary School, which has stood atop the hillside overlooking the rice fields and village of Urata town for 100 years. The expansion of the open-structure design continued with the construction of Nishikawa Elementary, completed in 1976, followed by the building of the last school in 1982, Ishikawa Elementary School.

Dr. Kato's work at the National Education Research Institute required that he travel across Japan to observe instruction in the open-structure schools. It was then that he recognized many teachers were not effectively transforming their practice to best utilize the benefits of the open-structured space. He saw a need to help the teachers shift make changes to their practie to better match the open structural design of the school, rather than to simply transfer traditional *issei* (uniformed, group-oriented) teaching practices onto a new design palette. He began teacher-training sessions to help the teachers move beyond the constraints of the centralized

curriculum and teaching practice.   First and foremost he worked with them on how to individualize instruction and support students in self-directed learning. Eventually he established the Tokyo Educational Research Center where he devoted himself to training teachers in individualized instruction and curriculum development at Sophia University in Tokyo.   He spent the remainder of his career there furthering his reach as a professor in the Education Department and developed the Japan Society for Individualized Education Development in 1984.

Due to his continued association with the open-structure schools and individualized education in his native region the teachers at Ishikawa Elementary School asked him to lend his support as they struggled to communicate with, instruct, and relate to their non-Japanese speaking (im)migrant students. This time when he, once again, passed through the doors of Ishikawa Elementary school in 2006 he brought with him all of the wisdom and experience of his past three decades working as a radical curricular reconceptualist, pedagogic philosopher, and political activist. The circle had become complete as both the principal of Ishikawa Elementary, Principal Ishiyama, and the head teacher of the sixth grade, Takeishi-sensei had taught within the collaborative and open-minded teaching community in the open-structured schools in the district where they developed their philosophy of an individualized education and child-centered pedagogy.

5.1.2.2. Superintendent Abe

I officially met with Superintendent Abe twice for two formal hour-long taped conversations at the local board of education office. We have had several opportunities to meet at the annual school wide events at Ishikawa Elementary, as well as when I attended the prefectural

professional development seminar at the local junior high school where the students from Ishikawa Elementary go after graduation from elementary school.

Superintendent Abe has been the superintendent of the district since 1999. He took up his position in the local board of education upon his retirement from his public school service. He has spent the entirety of his professional teaching career working in both elementary and junior high schools around the Chita peninsula, though he has more years teaching and acting as a principal in elementary schools. He also worked for two years in the Aichi Prefectural Board of Education office, which allowed him an opportunity to visit schools across the breadth of the Chita peninsula. Additionally, he taught learning disabled students at the local junior high school for three years. This teaching experience initiated a shift in his pedagogical philosophy away from the traditional *issei* (uniformed, group-oriented) style of teaching that is most common in Japanese schools, particularly at the junior high school level. During our first conversation I discovered that Superintendent Abe worked within the open structured, Sakanoue Elementary School, as a principal for two years before he was asked to take up the superintendent position in the district. He spoke of his association, personally and professionally, with Dr. Kato, as well as with both Principal Ishiyama and the head of the sixth grade at Ishikawa Elementary, Takeishi-sensei. All of these participants in the study are actively engaged in the National Individualized Education Society founded by Dr. Kato.

His specialized field is in social studies and geography and he has a great interest in other cultures. He believes the diversity the Japanese-Brazilian children and their families bring to the school district provides valuable experiences to the Japanese students at school. Once we spoke more deeply about his personal background I learned that his acceptance of the foreign families at the school was born out of his experiences living in Shanghai as a child during World War II.

Particularly influential were the positive experiences he had living among the Chinese community during his early years[31]. Superintendent Abe hand-picked Principal Ishiyama to fill the new principal position that opened up at Ishikawa Elementary School in 2005 when the outgoing principal was transferred to a different school.   Thereafter, he, Principal Ishiyama, and the head teacher of the sixth grade, Takeishi-sensei spent long hours discussing the best moves to initiate changes into the school. Superintendent Abe is a committed believer in individualized education and attributed the development of his belief in this pedagogical approach to his experiences teaching children with learning disabilities. His experience of teaching children with special needs was the first time he recognized the limitations of the traditional *issei* teaching style of educating children. He began experimenting with his pedagogical philosophy and shifted his view to seeing more deeply into the individual nature of each child and teaching to their unique needs and learning styles several years before taking up his post at the open structured Sakanoue Elementary School. Once he took the principal position there his belief in the benefits of individualized education were solidified.

Superintendent Abe has been present throughout all of the unusual events designed to build a stronger community within Ishikawa Elementary School and among the children and their families. He keeps a keen eye out for these children, and continues to support the work of the teachers and new principal who are charged with reinvigorating and protecting the changes that he unassumingly nurtured.

---

[31] Many Japanese who spent the early years of their life in the Japanese controlled territories in China before and during World War II did not share in this positive experience or feel any affinity to the Chinese people who worked for them.   Upon defeat and subsequent invasion of the Russo Army into China the backlash of the many years of discrimination and inhumane treatment at the hands of the Japanese military, and some amongst the Japanese civilian community, was severe.

5.1.3   Pedagogic Reforms, Extracurricular Programs & School-Wide Events

5.1.3.1 The Individualized Curriculum or *Maru Maru-gakushu* (00-gakushu)

One of the most compelling aspects of the approach to working with the Japanese-Brazilian children at Ishikawa Elementary School is the inclusive and individualized nature of the education provided.   Japanese schools have generally been admired for their inclusive, eqalitarian, and supportive learning environments, particularly in the elementary schools (Cave, 2008; Fujita, 2010; Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999). Additionally, Japanese elementary teachers, in particular, are often commended on their caring and holistic view of the child, attending as much, if not more, to the heart of the child as well as her head (Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999; Rohlen & Le Tendre, 1998).   Yet, this view of happy children in active classrooms working within an inclusive environment where all children are equally summoned upon to enrich their classroom community is based on work done in classrooms populated exclusively with native Japanese children (Cave, 2008; Rohlen & Le Tendre, 1998). Despite the predominant images found in the literature there are many children who huddle in the margins, are rendered invisible, or traumatized by their peers to suffer in an exiled state (Okano & Tsuchiya). This image more realistically describes the scene when the view shifts to schools with populations of foreign national children who are often found waiting out hours of their school days in the Japanese as a Second Language classroom, or biding their time during whole class instructional time unable to follow along with the others who go about business as usual. These children's lack of language

skills, cultural difference, often seen as a deficit, provide convenient excuses to let the child disengage (Burgess, 2007; Gordon, 2007; Kanno, 2008b; Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999).

To gain a better understanding of the philosophical ideas that shaped the shift in pedagogy and development of the individualized curriculum at Ishikawa Elementary School, a discussion on how "individualism" is understood within Japanese education is required. Individualism is not a concept often associated with the homogenous and group-oriented ethos of the Japanese, yet primary school educators especially are charged with the task of developing autonomous, self-regulating *and* interdependent individuals (Cave, 2008). A child's individual expression is certainly nurtured, but seldom at the expense of the cohesiveness of the group and outward expressions of difference often become stigmatizing. Activities designed to promote self-expression and individual choice do, of course, make up part of each child's school day, but these are often contingent on approval by the teacher (Cave, 2008). Teachers take as one of their greatest tasks not only the nurturance and care of the individual child, but also the management of learning and socializing activities that promote the interdependence of the individual to the group (Cave, 2008; Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999; Rohlen & Le Tendre, 1998).

Participatory learning aimed at group cohesiveness claims a central position in much of the elementary school student's life. Throughout a child's elementary years they will be associated with a small group of students selected from their homeroom class to be their school "family" or *han.*[32] The child's identity is interrelated and interdependent with that of her *han*. The tension between reconciling one's individual expression with one's social group, or even the society at large is a matter of nuanced balance. I would argue though, that the power of the group in Japanese schools exerts great influence and control over the acceptable amount and type

---

[32] This traditional idea is born out of Confucian educational philosophy (Cave, 2008).

of self-expression, or open acceptance of difference. This openness and acceptance to difference and nurturance of self-expression are striking features of the school culture I witnessed both within and outside of the classrooms at Ishikawa Elementary School, for both Japanese and Japanese-Brazilian children.

The individualized educational program developed at Ishikawa Elementary has benefited from a 30 year history and association across likeminded educators who share their ideas and philosophical ideas of individualized education to draw on the child's desire to learn when provided opportunities to engage more fully in the decision making and production process of their own knowledge construction. This is not to say that the child is left with no instruction or isolated in their learning.   Quite to the contrary, the teachers who engage this type of individualized education work diligently to design learning opportunities that both guide and enrich the learning that the child chooses from a set of options and then undertakes either alone or with her peers. The major difference between the traditional idea of Japanese education, so called *issei kyoiku* (uniform education) is that the group is not the defining target of learning or expression of understanding, but the individuals in the group are promoted to direct their own learning and express their understanding of what they have internalized in alternative and varied ways.

The term *kosei-ka kyoiku* (individualized education) has been used within the educational discourse among Japanese educators to support reforms based on differing ideological, economic and philosophic positions.   There are three conceptions of individuality within the educational debate on this subject: the classical liberal understanding of the autonomous or independent individual, the neo-liberal rationalist perspective that seeks a better prepared workforce determined by the needs of the changing economic structure, and the

proponents of a progressive and humanizing view that seeks self-expression, self-responsibility and child-centered education[33] (Kariya, 2010). The latter was introduced at the end of World War II when the Americans dismantled the militaristic education system and based the new educational system on a Dewyan ideal of democratic schooling (Saito & Imai, 2004). There has been ongoing debate since the mid-1980s on the importance of loosening the constraints of the centralized curriculum and traditional structure of the group-oriented, exam focused, uniformed instruction to place greater emphasis on nurturing the individuality of students, particularly at the elementary school level (Cave, 2008; Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999).

The Ministry of Education introduced two new educational reforms. The *yutori-kyoiku* (relaxed education) reform, conceptualized in 1984 and slowly instituted from 1992 when the school week was shortened to five instead of six days, and the later *sogoutekina-jikan* (integrated studies) reform, instituted in 2002, are defined as, "efforts…to fully realize education which give thorough guidance on basic content and makes the most of individuality. Also to be fostered are motivation to learn for oneself, and the capacity to cope as an independent subject with changes in society" (Cave, 2008, p.17). The focus on individualizing education was in direct response to criticisms fired at the traditional educational system's *issei kyoiku* (uniform education) teaching structure which has enforced group-oriented, uniformed, passive transmission models of teaching that require regimented practice, self-discipline, and a model of interdependence at the expense of independent thinking, individual expression and creativity (Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999). A necessary point to mention here is that there tends to be a misconception about Japanese schools based on contradictory images of the middle and elementary schools, the former having a much more rigid and disciplinarian focus than the elementary school system, where teachers have a

---

[33] The educators at Ishikawa Elementary School fall into this camp.

great deal more freedom and do experiment with the curriculum creatively to enhance their students learning (Cave, 2008; Kanno, 2008b). The importance of these reforms is directly related to the work and backgrounds of Principal Ishiyama and Takeishi-sensei, who were able to make effective use of these government sanctioned policies to benefit the children at Ishikawa Elementary School. Both, of these educators have been involved in the progressive individualized education and open-structure movements that long preceded the new educational reforms initiated by the Japanese Ministry of Education.

The difference between the philosophical underpinnings of the educators at Ishikawa Elementary (and Sakanoue and Nishikawa Elementary Schools) is that their conceptualization of individualized learning is focused on a "barrier free learning" experience (informal conversation with Dr. Kato, 1.8.2011) that is not bound solely to the mandated curriculum or limited to the structure imposed by the text books. Education students, generally, are trained to teach in the traditional *issei* style that narrows the subject matter of lessons to digestible bits and design learning activities according to the national curriculum that all children do simultaneously. This teaching style facilitates the control and outcome of a unified learning experience across the group. When individualized teaching does occur in traditionally conceived elementary schools teachers still do a lot of the directing and control much of the decision making over the self expression of the child (Cave, 2008). At Ishikawa Elementary school the teachers work collaboratively to develop extensive units of learning in a course of individualized learning to broaden the scope of the national curriculum, that the children then take control of and manage themselves, either alone or in groups. The children determine which tasks to do, decide how much time is need to complete each activity, and choose the appropriate level of language card they require. The teacher sets up the impetus and general design of the various learning projects,

84

which are associated with a theme related to the curriculum and let the children control the bulk of their learning.

In a traditional *issei* (uniform education) classroom the teacher often has up to 40 students in a class and little time to individually assess or instruct students with particular learning needs or those who need a different pace or special support. Even when students are broken up into smaller family groups (*han*), which is common, the sheer number of students gathered in one classroom means that individual children can easily get lost in the crowd, or lose their voice. Alternatively, the individualized lessons at Ishikawa Elementary integrate classes and break the students up into flexible study groups, or provide opportunities for students to work alone in the upper elementary level for the third, fourth, fifth and sixth grade classes. Some of the sixth graders for example may work on individualized science lessons, while others will involve themselves in a social studies project. The teachers coordinate these forty-minute classes during the individualized instructional periods to move about and aid students as needed. This freedom of movement and choice reduces the number of students engaged in any one particular task. By providing courses across the grades students are able to learn from and with each other freeing the teacher to better guide understanding and attend to students who require more assistance.

All of the lessons are designed around three basic components: explorative themes that children can choose according to their interests; hands-on experiential activities; and peer-guided learning. One very important feature of the individualized lessons are the learning cards and packets that the teachers have created to go along with the courses they designed to supplement and expand the textbook lessons. The Japanese-Brazilian students' language level ranges from quite fluent to very low. Additionally the literacy skills of these students generally fall below

85

grade level, sometimes by several years. To facilitate more engaged and successful learning the teachers designed all of the learning cards to coordinate with the individualized lessons across the various literacy levels.

The Japanese writing system is made up of two syllabic phonetic scripts and the pictographic Chinese characters, which are incrementally introduced across the six years of elementary school, making this is no small task. Each unit that is created has corresponding instruction cards and worksheets written across these six levels. This allows a fifth grade child who reads at a second grade level to engage in the same learning experience as a child who reads at grade level. As the children's literacy skills increase they are free to challenge themselves and draw an instruction card from the drawers further up the shelf that are marked according to reading level. This is a tremendous benefit to the children and aids their independence and successful learning simultaneously. I would also suggest that this system greatly benefits the Japanese native speaking children who read below grade level as well.

There is also an ability-based grouping system in place for mathematics that allows for flexible movement between the groups. There are four groups (A, B, C, D) that the children can decide to join, after consultation with their homeroom teacher. The children are able to move either up or down depending on their ability to manage the lessons during any particular unit of instruction. I observed several of these lessons and the difference in both instruction and material between these lessons was striking. I was able to speak with a Japanese-Brazilian mother of one of the sixth grade boys during an open visitation day at the school. The mother proudly told me that her son was in the highest group, the A group. She mentioned that he slipped to the second, B, group once and worked very hard to re-enter the upper level group again. I asked if the groups caused some problems for the children, since all the children are

clearly aware of which group is for which students. She said, that yes they are aware, but the children move across groups depending on the particular focus of the unit and their skill level in that unit that it seems more like a game to them. I thought that this was an interesting antidote to the entrenched form of grouping that is so prevalent in the United States. Actually, most teachers in Japan are resistant to organizing any sort of ability grouping because it is seen as endangering the cohesive nature of the group and enforces a stratified system onto the class. This is rather interesting considering the system is heavily dependent on its stratification from junior high school onwards and is based on a rank and order system.

I do not want to create the impression that the learning and teaching that goes on at Ishikawa is comprised solely of these individualized and student-directed lessons. The first and second grade classes do not have the individualized lessons and resemble more closely the *issei* style of instruction. However, I did not spend much time in the lower division of the elementary school. Nor is it my intention to dichotomize the more traditional classrooms as solely teacher-directed, rigid and discipline-oriented. Japanese teachers are innovative, creative, caring and do individualize their instruction as evidenced by the many ethnographic studies on schooling in Japan (Cave, 2008; Kanno, 2008; Rohlen & Le Tendre, 1998). The trend in contemporary Japanese elementary education over the past decade has been to seek a balance between the group-oriented, textbook driven curriculum and a looser, more individualized experience. The difference which I am stressing between the educational style that occurs at Ishikawa Elementary School is that the boundaries remain generally loose, even during the teacher-directed lessons, and the group does not take precedence over the individual with regard to learning needs and style. In fact, in the upper grades the famed *han*, or family grouping within a class, does not exist. Most importantly, the Japanese-Brazilian children are included at all levels of the learning

and schooling experience.   I did observe many of the individualized lessons and came to

recognize the unique qualities and clear benefits of this pedagogic style, but I also observed

many teacher-directed lessons and whole group instruction classes where the children were as

engaged and expressive as in the individualized lessons. That said, I noticed more disciplinary

measures during the whole class periods. I came to realize that the philosophical and personal

stance of the teacher may prove more influential than the external structures that tend to

constrain one's practice. An open-minded, open-hearted teacher with a clear view of each

child's unique characteristics is capable of individualizing her lessons, though doing so in a

classroom of forty fourth graders would certainly be a challenge.

Below I provide a glimpse of one of the individualized lessons I observed to provide a

clearer image of what goes on and how the children actually do direct and engage in their

learning. The following excerpt is from my extended field notes of one of the sixth grade

science lessons. I have significantly cut down on this experiential text to focus on the work the

children were, or were not, engaged in.   As is typical half of the class came down to continue

working on their anatomy unit experiments and activities while the second half of the class

worked on their math projects upstairs in the open space area which is often utilized for the

individualized lessons.   The children were in the middle of this unit and some were completing

projects they had begun earlier, though most had moved on to a new activity or experiment. This

is a common set-up for the individualized lessons where the foundational information is

introduced to the whole class and then the students complete the various learning tasks

associated with the individualized course during the remainder and bulk of the learning unit.

When I entered the science lab I was surprised that there were only a few (5) students in the room beginning to set up their workstations. There was one boy at the back table who was pulling a chicken leg out of a pink bucket that had been soaking in formaldehyde water. He put it on a dissecting tray and reached back in the bucket to grab the little scrap of fat that was still floating around in the water. I commented that I didn't like touching chicken fat and asked if it bothered him. He looked at me with no noticeable surprise at my "foreign-ness" and said, "yes, I find it disgusting". I asked what he was doing and he said that he was supposed to scrape the meat off the bones to expose the internal bone and joint structure. While I was talking with him some other children streamed in and immediately went to work on their activities. Two boys joined the boy I was talking to, though they did not have a dissecting tray, one carried a camera

Several girls (3) came in and took seats at the front table, at the far end of the room by the window. Takeishi-sensei also came out of the back room carrying a life size model of a skeleton and placed it near the table where the girls were seated. She looked over and nodded her head at me in a silent greeting. The girls had a large sheet of construction paper in front of them and some modeling clay and I soon realized that they were working on a skeletal reproduction of the human body. These girls were speaking Japanese, but I was unsure whether they were Japanese or Japanese-Brazilian. Another set of three girls entered and took their place at the opposite end of the same table and were clearly Japanese-Brazilian, not only in appearance, but also in their unconstrained use of Portuguese. They, too, took to crafting a skeletal representation out of modeling clay. I went over to the pair of girls who had begun reproducing their skeletons in earnest and commented on their skillful work recreating the rib section. As with the boy I had previously spoken to, they responded to me quite naturally saying that they found it difficult to get the ribs to look "just right". Seated across from them was a boy working alone meticulously on his own clay skeleton, though he kept having to rotate his body around to check the model skeleton which was placed at the table next to the girls.

While I was watching the children craft their skeletal representations several more boys came in along with another Japanese-Brazilian girl. Neither teacher seemed concerned that they were late for class, and I was actually surprised at the freedom of the children to come and go. Two boys took their place at the front middle table. One of the boys went over to grab a bucket with the chicken wing, and the other carried over the dissecting tray and scalpel. These two boys were very loud, though neither teacher made any move to quiet them down. The boys sat down and one of them, Japanese-Brazilian, picked up the scalpel and started to cut into the chicken wing. The other boy, Japanese I believe, was joking with his friend about something and they continued their disruptive banter in Japanese. There was clearly more jesting going on than science work.

89

Just next to these boys was a Japanese-Brazilian girl I have met on my other two visits who was seated alone, working diligently on a page in her packet of worksheets. The skeletal representation made from clay and the dissecting activity would also have a corresponding worksheet. Once the children had worked through all the activities in the packet they then complete the assessment sheets and turn their activity booklets into their teacher. This girl was using a packet that was at grade level, distinguishable by the number 6 on the top of the sheet, and she was checking her worksheet with the matching section in the nationally designed science text.

The pair of girls that I first approached continued to work and remained on task, but the group of three Japanese-Brazilian girls were more engaged in chatting than their work and I saw them several times crumble up their partially created skeletons and start from scratch. Several times they had made good representations of the face, spine or pelvis, but each time they took one of these parts, rolled the clay back up into a ball and started over. Takeishi-sensei and the assistant teacher did not spend much time engaging in conversation over the students work or mulling about the room checking on student's progress or redirecting students who had lost their focus. The only time I have witnessed any serious disciplinary action or harsh treatment has been when a student is disrespectful, behaving in a manner that is harmful to self or others, or disrupting a planned, or organized event. (field notes, 9.18.09)

This was one of the first individualized science lessons that I observed and was one of the most uneven with regard to student engagement. It may have been because the lesson took place on Friday afternoon, or that the children had tired of the unit, or any number of reasons that determine why some children engage and others don't. There is a strong tendency in Japanese education to leave the learning up to the student; ultimately they are responsible for how much they invest and get out of their educational experience. In this respect, despite making allowances for students to make choices about their tasks and the self-directed aspects of student learning, teachers at Ishikawa Elementary School are similar to their peers in more traditional classrooms. However, unlike this lesson, I did witness many lessons in which the teachers actively provided guidance and I recorded several instances of dialogic interaction between teachers and students.

5.1.3.2 Waku Waku Free Time

"Waku waku" is a common expression used in Japanese to describe an event that is meant to stimulate the senses, excite, and bring joy to the participants. Prior to the educational reforms the children at Ishikawa Elementary School had experienced little excitement and joy at school.

When the new incoming principal, Principal Ishiyama, took over the position in 2005 the school atmosphere was dismal and truancy rates were very high with up to thirty students not attending school during the winter months (Kato, 2009). Close to a third of the truant students not attending school for these three months of the year were Japanese-Brazilian. When they were in school they were disengaged and unhappy. Principal Ishiyama recognized the need to make school more enjoyable for the children as a way to entice them into coming to school while simultaneously providing them a chance to release some of the tension they were experiencing throughout the day. Knowing that the open-structure school where he used to work had introduced a student directed studies period Principal Ishiyama visited the school to see how they had organized their weekly integrated studies period. Using this as his guide he worked with the teachers to develop the schools most prominent in a series of "special lesson" periods[34], *waku waku free time.*

This "free" period was first introduced in 2007 by adjusting the regularly scheduled periods to free up time on Thursday afternoons between 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. fourteen times in a year. This period has been designated for the fourth, fifth and sixth grade classes only. The lower elementary grades are released early on these days. *Waku waku free time* usually falls on

---

[34] The school time table was significantly adjusted over a four year period to create various time slots to allow for various activities and breaks for the children during the day.

the third Thursday[35] of the month allowing me several opportunities to observe the children and teachers during this "special lesson" period. The principal decided Thursday was an opportune time in the week as the children tended to become weary of school toward the end of the week. This "free" period began just as its name implied, free. There were very few activities scheduled and the children really had the freedom to choose where and how they wanted to spend their time: in the gymnasium, in the computer lab, out on the school grounds, in the life studies room, music room or remain in their homeroom. From my understanding this first year was a gestation period and rather chaotic. The teachers realized that this could not continue for long, though the children did seem to look forward to the time to be free from the pressures of the classroom and spend the last part of these days with their friends.

By the end of 2007 the teachers began to realize that the true potential of this period for the children, and eventually for themselves. Until this point there was little structure to the activities and teachers simply monitored the children as they moved about freely playing soccer, practicing with the instruments in the music room or shooting baskets in the gymnasium. With the help of a visiting professor, Dr. Saito[36], from a university in Tokyo who has close ties to both Principal Ishiyama and the head teacher of the sixth grade, Takeishi-sensei, the teachers devised a restructured plan to present to the upper elementary classes. The new changes took place and transformed the once chaotic and very free period to a more collaborative teacher-student event, though mostly student-directed period.

---

[35] My regularly scheduled visits fell on Thursday and Friday once every 3 weeks for the first 4 months of the study.

[36] A second professor from Nagoya University became engaged in the development of *waku waku free time* from this period and visits the schools several times a year. I attended one of the staff professional development meetings one Thursday after school to focus on the development of *waku waku free time* and discuss the potential for its continued development.

The new *waku waku free time* required the children to work in groups to devise a schedule of activities for the fourteen periods across the year designated for *waku waku free time*. They were to write up either fourteen separate ideas for activities or create a flow of activities across the fourteen weeks allotted to *waku waku free time*. Once the plans had been written and submitted the homeroom teachers would share their class ideas and set the plan. The children were responsible for arranging any and all materials required to realize their plans, as well as for the organization of any necessary equipment, which they had to receive permission to use. Some of the typical plans that the children create for this period were: craft making, cooking and baking, organized games of soccer or softball, dance lessons, musical arrangements (which would need to be performed), gymnastics. The teachers also became more engaged in organizing events by drawing on their talents and specializations to plan various activities to engage the children in science experiments, art lessons, environmental education, Korean language lessons, chorus and the like. The last *waku waku free time* period each year is designated for the students presentations on the success of their plans. Any woodworking, music, or art projects that were created during this time were put on display.

The value of the *waku waku free period* cannot be overstated, though not all children participate in all activities and some end up aimlessly wandering the halls of the school or pass the time in their homerooms reading, playing games, or chatting with friends. Generally, though, once the shift to making it a more structured and organized event the teachers found the children engaged and enjoying the activities they had planned for themselves. The teachers and children are released from the pressures placed on them in the formal learning environment of the classroom allowing them to participate with each other in a variety of activities therefore broadening the contours of their relationships. The most significant aspect of this period is the

emotional support given to the children and the chance for the children and teachers to see each other in a new and different light.

Several of the children's comments about *waku waku free time* have been recorded in the text published by the teachers in the school (Kato,2009).   Some of these comments are: "At home I can't cook with my friends, but at *waku waku* I can enjoy cooking with my friends"; "I can enjoy things during *waku waku* that I cannot do at home"; "I enjoy *waku waku* because I do what I want" (Kato, 2009, p. 59).   Below is an excerpt from one of the science lab activities that Nishida-sensei had organized (his junior high school certificate is in science).   In this case the number of children was limited to 14 participants because he was having the students work with fire to melt the beeswax the children were using to mix the colors for their candles.

I had spent the morning observing the lower elementary classes and returned to the staff room to jot down some notes when suddenly the sound of pounding feet echoed down the hallway. The teachers all recognized this rumbling sound as signaling the beginning of waku waku free time and everyone jumped to their feet. Nishida-sensei came into the room carrying a box of materials and told me to follow him to the science lab because he was going to work with the children on making colored candles. I told him I would be there after a few minutes and he charged out of the staffroom yelling to some children to stop running in the hallways as he scuffled down the hall.

I decided to take a detour on my way to the science lab via the second floor and passed the large open space where I stopped to watch a teacher and a group of students who were doing a kind of a dance I recognized from a children's television program. It was a very engaging and interesting activity and the children, and teacher, seemed to be enjoying themselves.

I came to the stairwell that led down to the first floor and could hear Nishida-sensei's voice as I descended the stairs. I entered through the first door of the science lab and there he was at the teacher's station surrounded by the group of mostly boys. He saw me immediately and smiled, then continued explaining to the children what they were going to do. He said that they were each to take a container (similar to a plastic film container), a wick and one rectangle of colored wax. As the children were grabbing up their materials one of the boys said to him, "Sensei, you are going to run out of materials and you won't have

*enough for your own candle". Nishida-sensei responded that he was he didn't need to make a candle. The boy looked at him and said, "Don't worry I am going to take some for you and put them aside so you can make one, too". Nishida-sensei looked over at him, smiled and said "Thank you". At that moment I understood more fully the value of waku waku free time as one of relationality. Here, a student was in a position to be the carer, as opposed to the cared-for, which is the traditionally defined relational roles between teacher and student. In this instance, the student was in a position to show his appreciation for and care of his teacher.(*Field Notes, 9.18. 09*)

This excerpt provides a glimpse into the world of *waku waku free time*. To fully visualize the extensive nature of this extra-curricular event it is necessary to imagine classrooms devoid of students and teachers who are located throughout the school engaged in any number of fun and experiential activities. One of the most important aspects of *waku waku free time* is that teachers can step outside of their authoritarian roles to rather engage their students in a more human-to-human relationship. At any one time there will be a group of students and teachers in the gymnasium playing various indoor sports, or children making cookies or flavored popcorn in the life studies room. Out on the sports ground the children might be making large bubbles or playing a game of soccer. Once every three weeks on Thursday afternoons the school turns into a carnival where children and teacher are free to let loose and each enjoy the activities they have planned to share with each other.

5.1.3.3 Bridging the Gap – The World Cup Event, 6.23.2006

The greatest barrier to shifting the atmosphere and culture of the school during the early years of the school changes was the antagonism and divide between the Brazilian and Japanese-Brazilian and Japanese community. Most of the families whose children attend Ishikawa Elementary School live in the subsidized housing neighboring the school. Local tales of the animosity

animosity among the community are common and stories of children screaming at each other in the hallways of the school were frequently told to me. When Principal Ishiyama took up his post in 2005 he searched for an opportunity to help him find a way to bridge the gap between the two communities of the school. When the Japanese national soccer team placed in the 2006 World Cup he discovered his chance and acted on it. Brazilians are famous for their passion for soccer and Japan has become a nation of soccer lovers since professional teams became established and started playing in televised games in the early 1990s. As fate would have it the Japanese team continued to move up in the preliminary games of the World Cup and eventually was paired to play Brazil on June 23, 2006 at 4:00 a.m. in the morning.

Principal Ishiyama made an executive decision to open the school gymnasium for an open viewing of the world cup match between Brazil and Japan. Upon receiving approval from Superintendent Abe to open the school at 4:00 a.m. he enlisted the support of his teaching staff. The teachers and administrative staff were incredulous when Principal Ishiyama gave the directive to begin organizing the event (Kato, 2009). After several meetings where Principal Ishiyama explained the merits of the plan the teachers set to work to make the arrangements and organize the event. An invitation was sent out to the 253 families of Ishikawa Elementary School informing them that only parents accompanied by their children could attend, and that the children needed to come prepared to stay at school for the lessons once the game ended at 6:00 a.m.. The school day would be shortened to allow the children to return home earlier than usual.

The teaching staff arrived at the school at 3:00 a.m. to prepare for the event. Local news station reporters and newspaper journalists arrived to film this unprecedented event. The doors of the gymnasium were opened at 4:00 am as streaming rays of light permeated the darkness that surrounded Ishikawa Elementary School. All of the teaching staff and Superintendent Abe were

in attendance eagerly awaiting the first families to make way through black night over to the school. At first only a third of the expected families dragged themselves through the door to find a spot on the wooden floor and it seemed that the plan would fail. Within thirty minutes of the start of the game the remainder of the 200 families arrived, 80 percent of them Japanese-Brazilian. With each goal scored by either team the excited tension in the gym would rise. The Brazilian team claimed victory and the Japanese-Brazilian families burst out in cheers. At the end of the game the parents sent their children off to school and made their way back in the early morning light of the new day. This event signaled the beginning of a shift in the openness of the school to the Japanese-Brazilian families and eased the tension between the families in the subsidized housing complex. There is large photograph at the entrance of the school of the crowd of families and teachers jumping up and screaming during the final moments of the world cup when the Brazilian team sealed its victory. This is an enduring image of the power of the imagination to visualize possibilities for change and then take action to realize it.

5.1.3.4 Saturday Night School & International Friendship Day Annual Events

Two times a year Ishikawa Elementary School welcomes the surrounding community of families, friends, and extensive network of professional colleagues from both within and beyond Urata township to showcase the talents of the children, hard work of the teachers, and the unique culture of the school. These events are festivals in the truest sense of the word and have grown in grandeur and popularity since they began in 2007. The Saturday Night School had rather humble beginnings as an alternative open house for parents who were unable to visit their children's classrooms during the day time, when the open house is normally held. Principal Ishiyama saw that there was little parent turn-out during the open house and understood that the

97

reason for their absence had more to do with their busy lives working than with their lack of desire or disengagement with their children's schooling. To better meet the needs of the parents he suggested opening the school up on Saturday night in early July and turn the normally placid open house into a school wide event to welcome the families and create a more enjoyable community event. To his surprise the first Saturday Night saw an enthusiastic response and the teachers and children have continued to turn it into a grand event.

I have been twice to enjoy this festive night at the school, once with my family in July in 2009 and then again alone in September 2010. The school is full of parents and siblings who either participate in activities with their children in their classrooms making some crafts or they enjoy a performance put on by one of the grades. The first time I visited with my children we watched a wonderful performance of the fifth and sixth graders in the music room where they put on a concert playing the Japanese koto, a large stringed instrument. A professional koto teacher has been helping the children for the past three years and the children played skillfully. After the in-school activities and performances the entire community spilled out to the school grounds at 8:30 p.m. for the nighttime dance and music performance. The koto teacher and some of her students were set up on the stage and soon began to play a hybrid mix of traditional Japanese and samba into a rhythmic and melodic performance that captivated the Japanese and Brazilian, Japanese-Brazilian audience. At the end of the night the sixth grade students put on a fire dance and lit a message in fire that read *kakehashi*, or "bridging". One of the students made a speech about their school being a bridge to the future of Japan where Japanese, Brazilian, and Japanese-Brazilians will live together happily. It seems the school has an appropriate motto.

The International Friendship Day is similar to the Saturday Night School in that it is open to the community, but it is more formal in that the main venue in the morning is held in the

gymnasium. The floor of the gymnasium is covered with folding chairs and by 8:30 a.m. the large space if full of families, school board members and other invited guests. I visited the school in November 2010 to attend this event and was impressed by the children's well-rehearsed performances. Each grade put on a well-executed performance culminating in the last event of the morning, the fifth and sixth graders' stunning finale. For several months prior to the November performance the children had been practicing a dramatic reenactment of the cherished Japanese folktale, *Princess Kaguya*. The dramatization of the folktale combined both individual and choral storytelling with musical accompaniment on the koto, a traditional Japanese string instrument. The opening of the main performance was signaled by the dimming of the lights in the auditorium when the main actor, a Japanese-Brazilian sixth grader, appeared in the distance as a seemingly far off voice begin the tale of a forlorn ghost bride. The spirit bride then began slowly "floating" through the hushed crowd in darkness as a single spotlight encircled the central character of the play shrouded in white. The intensity with which the audience experienced the creative portrayal of this sad folktale was testimony to the skillful execution and organization of the production, which was designed to mesmerize and move the audience. The head of the sixth grade, Takeishi-sensei, mentioned to me the importance of the children and the teachers being "moved" by their actions, and being able to "move" the audience, which they succeeded in doing.

> T: If we were going to do a play, it has to be moving. By moving the audience, the children would be moved too. We cannot make mistakes during this major annual event. In the small events the children can make mistakes, but here we had to be moving. For that we needed to show our will, our ambition to make this work. In order for the children to be moved, the teachers must be moved. (1.19.10)

After the morning performances the crowd exits to freely move about the school and enjoy the many activities that the teachers and their children have created for the families and visitors to enjoy. There is also a small café and baked goods corner where both Brazilian and Japanese foods and drinks are offered. As well, the library is set up with information in Portuguese, Tagalog, Chinese and Japanese on the many local non-governmental and non-profit organizations that are available to assist the foreign community. It is a whirlwind of activities and fun that opens up the school to not only the school community but the whole of Urata town and is an exhibition of pride for the school and the work they have and are doing.

6.0   FRAMING THAT WHICH CANNOT BE SEEN: "LANDSCAPES OF

CONSCIOUSNESS"

Earlier I wrote on the theoretic frameworks that guided my initial questions into the "landscape of action" (Bruner, 1983) around the changes that took place at Ishikawa Elementary School. As noted, I came to shift my original guiding questions to move into a deeper, and more insightful inquiry into the personal and professional experiences of the educators most associated with imaging and enacting those changes. In this section I provide three distinct, yet connected narrative portraits of those individuals. Each educator provides a vantage point from which to view these changes from their differing positions, which guided the actions they took. The first narrative portrait is of Leticia, the Fighter, who is a Brazilian educator, mother and advocate for the Japanese Brazilian children providing an important perspective to the Japanese educators' narratives that follow. Principal Ishiyama, the Bridge Builder, entered the school in 2005 and took action to open up and bridge the divided communities, shifting pedagogic practices to alleviate the dismal conditions that afflicted teacher and student alike. Lastly, Takeishi-sensei, the Yankee Teacher, provides a view from within the classroom. Her narrative highlights the tensions she experienced entering not only a radically different school and teaching environment from any she had previously experienced or known, but also her struggle to relate, and then teach students who were different from any she had encountered before.

Each narrative portrait expresses its own stance and voice(s). Both my own voice in relation to each educator, as well as the textual representation of these narrative portraits take on the unique qualities of these encounters. I have chosen to represent these individuals' stories separately to retain the singularity of each individual's experience. Yet the interconnectedness and interrelated themes, which emerged from each life story becomes evident. The narrative portraits define the bulk of this project, and are each followed with theoretical or philosophical reflections drawn from the narratives. These are meant to be complimentary. As I worked through each of the many conversations that I had with these individuals I discovered emerging themes and coordinated the narratives around these themes. For Principal Ishiyama and Takeishi-sensei, who I had several conversations with across the first five months of the study, I assembled their narratives into what I call composite quotes. These composite quotes draw on the several themes that emerged from each of our different conversations. When writing up the narrative portraits I organized these composite quotes around the themes that had emerged.

6.1 THE NARRATIVE PORTRAITS & PHILOSOPHIC REFLECTIONS

6.2 THE FIGHTER: LETICIA

Community Activist, Cultural Broker & Assistant Teacher

(2.20.2010)

When I started work here I had to talk to Brazilian mothers about conflict and cultural difference. Just as teachers do not understand the children and parents, the mothers do not understand the teachers (and culture of learning). I had to tell them why the teacher does such and such. They could not understand each other. They can only compare to their own culture and think about things from their view. Everyday, I would come home and think, what can I do.

6.2.1 First Impressions

I first met Leticia when I visited Ishikawa Elementary School as a guest participant at the prefectural professional development seminar on the Teaching Foreign Children and the Japanese as a Second Language program in September 2008. During the seminar we were allowed to roam the halls of the school and observe lessons in the classrooms. I stood out among the majority Japanese group of teachers and was the focus of much attention among both the children and their students when I entered one of the rooms. I had made my way to the first grade classrooms and entered the room along with a small group of fellow participants. As soon as I entered the room my face met with Leticia's, who was squatted next to one of the Japanese-Brazilian boys in the class who required her assistance. Her arm was rested on the back of his small chair, his head tilted close to hers enabling him to better hear Leticia as she whispered

Portuguese into the young child's ear. After several minutes I moved on and continued my tour of the school.

Later in the afternoon I was able to formally introduce myself and Leticia greeted me warmly and openly. She was surprised that I was from America thinking I was Brazilian, and asked about my interest in the school (I was often mistaken as a Brazilian when I visited Ishikawa Elementary). When I told her that I was hoping to conduct research on the process of change and the schooling experience of the Japanese-Brazilian children in the school she opened her eyes wide and nodded, saying there were many changes. It became readily apparent to me that Leticia is a central figure in the school and outer community and I mentioned that I would like to speak with her sometime if her schedule permitted. She agreed and we exchanged our personal information before parting ways. Since that first meeting I have been fortunate to spend time with Leticia throughout the year and a half that I have visited the school. While there are other Brazilian and Japanese-Brazilian[37] assistant support teachers, Leticia stands in a class of her own, though I do not think she would admit this herself. She is too humble.

6.2.2   First Encounter

Despite Leticia being in the school for a half day every day it was very difficult for us to arrange an extended period of time for a formal conversation in private. Eventually we were able to schedule an hour and a half when she was free in the late morning on the day of my last "official" visit in February 2010. This narrative portrait is built around our long conversation

---

[37] Throughout this text I use the ethnic markers Brazilian and Japanese-Brazilian when referring to the assistant language teachers and broader Brazilian and Japanese-Brazilian community because many of the spouses of the Japanese-Brazilians are ethnically Brazilian not Japanese-Brazilian descendants. The children on the other hand are referred to according to their bi-ethnic/bi-racial identity as Japanese-Brazilians.

104

that afternoon. I was unable to record this interview but took extensive notes while Leticia and I spoke. Leticia does speak English, though said she didn't have confidence to express herself as well in English as in Japanese, so we spoke in Japanese. I often asked Leticia to wait while I jotted down direct quotes and confirmed that I was not misinterpreting anything she said. I later sent this account to Leticia for further confirmation and clarification so as not to misrepresent her experiences or life story. Leticia is able to read and write English better than speak it and had no trouble reading the narrative I sent to her written in English.

It would be an understatement to say that Leticia is busy. She has been employed by the Urata local government office since 2003 and has a variety of duties related to her post as teaching assistant, local township language assistant, and cultural liaison for the large Japanese-Brazilian community who make their home in the area   She also frequently visits schools to provide cross-cultural lessons on South American culture and her home country of Brazil. She spends her mornings in and out of classrooms at Ishikawa Elementary School assisting teachers in any capacity she may be needed. She was first assigned to the school as a Portuguese language assistant teacher and was expected to help the teachers better communicate with the Japanese-Brazilian children in their classrooms. Over the years, Leticia's work has grown requiring more of her than translating Japanese to Portuguese, or Portuguese to Japanese. She is a caregiver, confidant, translator, assistant teacher, and community liaison to the school.

I waited for Leticia in the staff room on the day we had our scheduled meeting at the beginning of the third period of lessons in the mid-morning. Leticia hurriedly entered the staff room and came over to me apologizing for keeping me waiting. I told her that I had not been in the room long and that there was no need to apologize, though I have come to recognize this as an integral part of her personality, which fits well with a Japanese sensibility. Leticia is married

to a Japanese-Brazilian man and came to Japan in 2000, when she was 42 years old. Her medium height appears slightly collapsed creating the impression that she is shorter than she actually is. Leticia spends much of her time either hunched down or squatted beside a child's desk and it is not surprising that her posture appears slumped. Her short, wavy hair is a grayish-silver and distinguishes her from the three other, younger Brazilian and Japanese-Brazilian assistant teachers in the school. Leticia dresses as a professional, always coming to school dressing her part as a teacher and commands the respect she deserves quietly. She moves quickly and speaks in a hurried manner, though is able to assume an air of patience and understanding. We left the staffroom and headed to the life studies classroom where Leticia suggested we talk. We took a seat at one of the cooking stations near one of the large open windows that run along the outer wall of the room. The well-equipped cooking room is located just off the main entrance of the school and look out to the front courtyard and across a small grove of trees that lead out to the large playing field at the back of the school. The curtains were open and the sun warmed our space at the corner of the table as we began our conversation. I began by asking Leticia to tell me about her background, life in Brazil, and her decision to immigrate to Japan.

6.2.3   The Early Years: Leticia's Story of Migration, Struggle and Transformation

Leticia was born in Italy to Brazilian parents and came to Brazil as a young child. She was raised and educated in Brazil and attended university specializing in Arts & Multimedia, eventually graduating with a master's degree. During her studies at university she acquired an interest in Japanese arts and took Japanese as an elective. There she met her husband, a Japanese-Brazilian (*Nikkeijin)*, they eventually married and had two children, a boy (now 26)

and a daughter (now 13). She spoke enthusiastically about her work in Brazil teaching in a girl's

high school and then later of her career at university conducting research in the methodology of

arts. Prior to immigrating to Japan she was poised to establish herself as an academic though the

pressures that came with that life strained her relationships with her husband and children.

Leticia was happy with her life in Brazil and she felt able to offer her children

opportunities to lead fulfilling lives there. She and her husband could afford to put her son in

private schools, she was satisfied, if busy, with her work, and her husband was securely

employed in the family-run business in the food industry. I sensed Leticia's strong memories of

happiness while she spoke of this period in her life and wondered how difficult it must have been

for her to leave this all behind to join her husband as he sought out his own roots and fortune in

the country of his ancestors.   She spoke of her husband's long-standing dream to live in Japan

and experience life in his "other" country as a Japanese-Brazilian. When the Brazilian economy

took a downturn her husband began to think more seriously about opportunities in Japan. When

his father's business fell into bankruptcy he decided it was time to fulfill his life long dream to

move his family to Japan.

As with the thousands of other Japanese-Brazilians who shared Leticia's husband's

dream, he decided to take advantage of the renewed immigration law in Japan allowing South

American *Nikkeijin* to return to Japan on a three-year renewable visa that also permits family to

enter and live in Japan (as described in introduction). In 1998 Leticia's husband decided to make

his move and left Brazil for an automobile manufacturer job just outside of the Urata township

area. He worked long hours and made the necessary preparations to bring his family over. After

much hardship Leticia arrived in Japan in 2000 with her then 3-year old daughter and fifteen-

year old son. Her Japanese-Brazilian husband had introduced her to traditional Japanese culture

while living in Brazil, and she arrived in Japan with a deep respect and cultural understanding of Japanese culture. This, though, did not prepare her for the trials and tribulations that awaited her.

When Leticia first arrived in Japan her husband secured a residence for the family in the local subsidized housing apartment block across the way from Ishikawa Elementary School. Leticia's family lived in these apartments for four years from 2000 to 2004, until moving into a private residence in 2005. She decided that living in the cultural enclave of the Japanese-Brazilian community would not help her integrate into Japanese society, which she understood to be vitally important to her children's and her ability to succeed in their new country. She and her husband took decisive action and chose to move away from the subsidized apartment block, *"We had to insert ourselves into Japanese society. So we bought a house and moved into a Japanese neighborhood"*. She realized that if she and her family remained in the subsidized housing complex they would not have the same opportunity to integrate into the outer Japanese community and society as permanent residents. This move would aid them in their quest to assimilate and claim a status as residents easing the burden of the (im)migrant classification that most of the Brazilians and Japanese-Brazilians are categorized, and negatively perceived as by the outer Japanese community.

Leticia's most important task upon moving to Japan was to get her children enrolled in school and daycare. Her son would not have been able to enter Japanese public high school without passing the required entrance exam so he entered the best ethnic Brazilian school in the area and succeeded in graduating. Though, the transfer into his new school drastically affected his commitment and engagement with his studies, which took a serious downturn after moving to Japan. Leticia paused several times as she reflected on her son's difficulty after coming to Japan. I recognized a tension in her voice as she forced out the words to describe this period in her and

her son's life. She spoke of her son's struggle during the final two years of high school, saying that he was unable to continue his studies into university. Having graduated from an ethnic Brazilian school it would have been too difficult to pass the entrance exams required for enrollment in Japanese universities, and returning to Brazil was an unrealistic and impossible choice so early after moving to Japan. Much to Leticia's dismay her son took a job working at the Toyota manufacturing plant after graduating high school to work alongside his father. Leticia stopped speaking, which created a long silence inside which we both lingered for several seconds.

Leticia spoke in slow, deliberate sentences when recounting these traumatic years of relocating and then deciding to remain in Japan. It was clear to me that she suffered much as she told the story of her own, and her children's experiences in a slightly melancholic manner. As much as I want to say that I understand her pain, my experiences living as an (im)migrant in Japan are so far removed from what she, and her children have had to endure and I could never imagine myself uttering the following lines.

> L: I had to change everything to stay in Japan – this was a very dangerous choice. I had to consider everything carefully. Do I stay in Brazil and enjoy a comfortable, wealthy life? Do I move to Japan and live a difficult life with a lower economic status. Is it better for me to give up the pressure of being an academic in Brazil and having to publish to continue the work of my mentor?

These words struck me deep to my core, because I had not considered the ways that I myself had changed or adjusted who I "am" to remain in Japan. I have had to make adjustments, of course, but generally have moved through life remaining "intact" personally and culturally, so to speak. Yet, Leticia seems to have had to make accommodations, culturally, linguistically and personally in many more conscientious and determined ways than I have. When preparing this narrative sketch I found myself reflecting on the influence of our age and life circumstances when first

109

coming to Japan, the differences in our cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds and how these have impacted our very different experiences living as (im)migrants here. These are vitally important when trying to understand how any one immigrant's story and experience differs from another's, which became readily clear to me when listening to Leticia.   I do not count educational or class differences between us as significant because Leticia is a highly educated woman who lived a comfortable life in Brazil, similar to me, though in my home country, America. This fact has likely distinguished her from the community of her fellow Brazilians and Japanese-Brazilians with whom she shared her first living space at the subsidized housing complex.

6.2.4   Dealing with Difference: One's Own & The Other

Leticia's daughter was three years old when she arrived in Japan and would benefit from the cultural and linguistic socialization she has received throughout her years of schooling in Japan. Initially, though, her experiences at the local city-run daycare were traumatic for both her and her mother. Leticia realized that she needed to find a way to better support her daughter's cultural and linguistic needs at the daycare.   Each day she would witness the difficulties her daughter had relating to the other children and trying to express her needs to her teachers. Leticia's daughter could not speak Japanese when they arrived nor was Leticia's Japanese proficient enough to help ease the stress on her daughter. She soon realized that her greatest chance at advocating for her daughter, and herself, was to gain a greater grasp of the language.

She began working as a volunteer in her daughter's day care to both keep an eye her daughter and intervene on her behalf with her teachers. She spoke of this time in shortened phrases, often repeating the Japanese word for severe, *"taihen deshita, taihen deshita."* I could

understand her distress and shared my sons' experiences from when they struggled to express themselves and adjust to a sociocultural learning environment that was unaccepting of their need to remain American-Japanese, rather than be forced into a Japanese identity that did not readily fit. She reached out and touched my hand, which I quickly embraced. We sat for a minute holding each other's hands knowing the difficulties and pain each had experienced. She broke the silence that encircled us when she said.

> L: I felt the same as you. I think the teachers are well meaning and kind. They have patience but they simply do not understand. I have to explain everything to teachers about how we do things in my culture. For example when there was conflict I had to find a way to explain about how we handle such situations in my culture, it is very different. We have to explain everything.

Leticia quickly realized that she needed to be able to communicate not only via language, but also culturally, to advocate for her children, and eventually for those from the other Brazilian and Japanese-Brazilian families. She put her energy into educating herself in the ways and hows of the Japanese educational system. She has continued her education over the past decade to include not only studies in traditional Japanese arts, but also subjects taught in the elementary school like history, Japanese, and basic math. After volunteering at the daycare for two years she became an official employee of the local government in 2003 and was placed at Ishikawa Elementary School as a Portuguese language assistant for the large Japanese-Brazilian student body. This placement set her on a learning curve that she could not have anticipated and provided her an opportunity to cross the vast gap that existed between the Brazilian and Japanese-Brazilian community, the school, and the outer Japanese community. This became the work of her life and she has become a central figure in creating the bridge that is now securely in place between these two once disparate communities.

> L: I consider this work in the context of research, as I did in Brazil, then my work in Brazil was like being in a Swiss lab. Here, at Ishikawa Elementary School when I began, it was like Africa. But, it has become the job of my life.

I was unsure about the connection she was making to Africa, though I believe she meant this to signify the great desperation of the teachers and students she saw when she, and her daughter, entered into the life world of Ishikawa Elementary School. These words were spoken with joy and confidence, which was refreshing after listening to her story of despair and difficulty that she spoke of during the first part of our conversation.   While these words cannot displace the pain and suffering that Leticia had earlier spoken of, they signal her perseverance to push beyond the hardship of those earlier days to find her place, and passion, in this community that she now calls home.

6.2.5   A Renewed Sense of Purpose: Finding an Answer & Acting Toward Change

Leticia continued talking about her first experiences at Ishikawa Elementary School saying that her years as a mother of a Japanese-Brazilian child in the daycare provided her the background experience she needed to support the Brazilian and Japanese-Brazilian mothers at the school. These mothers were having difficulty with the teachers as they struggled with many of the same issues she had lived through earlier with her daughter's teachers.

> L: When I started work here I had to talk to Brazilian mothers about conflict and cultural difference. Just as teachers do not understand the children and parents, the mothers do not understand the teachers (and culture of learning). I had to tell them why the teacher does such and such. They could not understand each other. They can only compare to their own culture and think about things from their view. Everyday, I would come home and think, what can I do?

Leticia had already begun to find an answer when she started to act on behalf of her daughter to learn Japanese and become immersed in the multi-faceted aspects of life in Japan. Her desire to learn more led her toward discovering different approaches to better bridge the gap that divided these two strikingly different communities, which she was positioned between.

Leticia's early experiences at the school add color and depth to the stories of the other educators at Ishikawa Elementary School. She entered the school at a time when chaos was the order of the day, teachers and students were at complete odds, and everyone, including Leticia, was on edge. Leticia recalls that when she took up her assistant language position at the school there was one Spanish-speaking assistant teacher who Leticia befriended and relied on. At the time Leticia began working at the school her daughter was also beginning first grade there, and so daughter and mother entered the Japanese public educational system at the same time. Leticia's daughter would subsequently transfer to the local public school in the area where they eventually bought a house, about half an hour from Ishikawa Elementary School. Interestingly, the school Leticia's daughter transferred into and the junior high school she currently attends has no Japanese-Brazilian children.

Leticia recalls that the younger children had less difficulties interacting with the native Japanese children and engaged in their lessons better than the older children. Leticia struggled along with the other Brazilian and Japanese-Brazilian parents to help their children with their school work, but most could do little more than help with the math homework, which became increasingly more difficult the more advanced the math became. Many of the Brazilian and Japanese-Brazilian parents do not speak Japanese, much less read it, further compounding their inability to help their children or communicate with the teachers at the school. The Spanish teacher was a great help and Leticia watched as she tried to reach out to the many children and

families, both in and outside of school, by providing tutoring services after-school in the subsidized housing complex.

Leticia spoke about these early years as terribly difficult with regard to simply exchanging information because there were so few people in the school who could speak both Japanese and Portuguese. Understanding the specialized academic language used in the lessons, and then translating these to the upper elementary students or assisting them with their homework was particularly difficult. She mentions that during these early years the conversations between teachers and parents would often cross three languages, from Japanese-to-Spanish (teacher-to-assistant teacher), to Spanish-to-Portuguese (assistant teacher-to-Leticia), to Portuguese-to-Portuguese (Leticia-to-parent). Because Portuguese and Spanish are quite similar Leticia would be able to translate the Spanish into Portuguese to express a teachers' concerns to a Portuguese-speaking parent. This took time and energy and was clearly not an efficient or effective way to manage the many issues both parents and teachers had. At this time Leticia recognized that she would have to work very hard to help her own children succeed as well as the many other parents that were experiencing many of the same difficulties as she was.

In the early years at the school there was no organization or system set-up to best utilize her time there, and yet every teacher needed help with translation and the children were desperate for someone to support, understand, and comfort them. At this time the Japanese as a Second Language class was already established but no official curriculum or materials had been created. Nor did the teacher in charge of the Japanese as a Second Language program have any training in teaching non-Japanese speaking students.[38] The Japanese as a Second Language

_____

[38] This is still common as there is no university certified teaching program for Japanese as a Second Language. The best training for teachers is through the Ministry of Educations Japanese as a Second Language training course and professional development seminars, which I have attended twice (once at Ishikawa Elementary School and once at

114

room (*nitteki*) was located in the far corners of the school on the second floor, as now, but at that time Leticia said the isolation felt much more severe and alienating than at present. The principal at the time had little experience dealing with non-Japanese speaking children and resorted to extreme measures in an attempt to retain some sense of order. He banned the use of Portuguese enforcing infractions of this policy severely. Communication with parents was beyond his capability and the truancy rate at this time was very high (as discussed earlier).

She told me that any child who was unable to keep up with the mainstream classes was sent to the Japanese as a Second Language room (*nitteki*). The majority of the children sent were the older non-Japanese speaking Japanese-Brazilian children.[39] Leticia also mentioned that the children sent to the *nitteki* room experienced a sense of relief because they were able to spend time with other children who were experiencing the same difficulties trying to understand, and to be understood. I have frequently heard the teachers at the professional development seminars I attended who work with non-Japanese speaking children comment on the therapeutic aspects of the Japanese as a Second language classroom.   When Leticia first entered the *nitteki* room she was surprised to find children from all different ages and abilities grouped together regardless of their different academic, emotional, social, or linguistic needs. The teacher worked very hard to try to teach the children Japanese as best she could with so few resources, but Leticia recalls that she was a very strict teacher and seemed unable to connect with the children. The children received instruction in both Japanese and math during their time in the *nitteki* and spent several hours out of the day there. Leticia could see that the teacher was overwhelmed with her task, but

---

the local junior high school). At the junior high school very often Japanese English teachers are made to take over this position, though they lack training in this area and find it very difficult to accommodate their students needs.

[39] Currently the majority of the Japanese-Brazilian children at the school are born in Japan, but at this time many of the older children were born in Brazil and (im)migrated to Japan with their families. Today, despite being born in Japan many of the 1st grade children are raised in Portuguese speaking homes and continue to experience their first consistent exposure to Japanese at daycare and school (personal communication with Nishida-sensei, curriculum coordinator at Ishikawa Elementary School).

also felt that there was little else for the principal to do at this point since the homeroom teachers had their hands full trying to retain order so as to instruct the children in their classrooms. Relations were tense between the Japanese and Japanese-Brazilian children, and the teachers had severe difficulties trying to bring some sort of normalcy to their day under such strained and desperate conditions.

6.2.6   A Return to The Basics: (Re)Learning to Learn How to Teach

Leticia's position as a translator began to broaden into that of a teaching assistant's role when she was asked to help the children with their math work. Leticia had a difficult time following the teachers' instructions and struggled with how to translate the lessons into Portuguese, much less explain to the children how to perform mathematical operations according to the Japanese manner of doing math. She felt inadequate because she could not help the teacher or the children and this became very frustrating for her.   At this time Leticia's voice became soft and reflective and she said, "It was at this time that I could understand what work I had to do." Leticia was becoming a cultural liaison between the school and the Brazilian and Japanese-Brazilian community, and she would eventually deepen her position with both as she developed her pedagogic and linguistic skills to take on the work of an instructional assistant. She continued.

> L: I don't have a strong background in Japanese education or knowledge production so I studied at Japanese *juku* (cram school). I studied math, history and also dance. Because I study art, I understand the world through art. It helps me to know and understand.

Leticia is a scholar and has spent a significant part of life in Brazil teaching at university and researching the arts. She has drawn on both of these aspects of her personal and professional background as resources to guide her out of the dilemmas she faced. These two elements of her

116

past experience have been directly linked to her ability to survive and thrive during these difficult years of her early life in Japan. She continued speaking about her drive to learn as much as she could so that she could better support the teachers in their task to educate the Japanese-Brazilian children who mystified and troubled them. Additionally, by studying the Japanese method of instruction in subjects like math, Leticia was able to understand the difficulties the Brazilian and Japanese-Brazilian parents were having when trying to help their children with their schoolwork.

> L: I studied math like the children because I am from South America and we do it differently than here in Japan. If I know how the children learn I can better help the parents to understand how to teach them. We do some of the math differently. For example, when we divide, we use the opposite form than in Japan. The parents want to help their children with the homework, but they do not know the Japanese way of doing math and so I have to try to teach them. They must know this so they can help their children.

Leticia does not place the responsibility solely on the school for educating the Japanese-Brazilian children, nor does she expect complete accommodation for their particular ways of learning. Here she speaks to the importance of the Brazilian and Japanese-Brazilian parents' responsibility to also accommodate to the Japanese teachers and manner of teaching. She speaks here about a reciprocal form of accommodation that is necessary for smoother communication with the teachers and greater support of the child's learning.

Leticia experienced other difficulties outside of the linguistic and pedagogic support she was expected to provide. She had only ever taught at university and was not prepared for the radically different teaching style required when educating small children, particularly in a foreign language. Leticia does not discriminate when a child requires her help. She is hired to support the Japanese-Brazilian children, but she attends just as readily to the Japanese children's

needs. She spoke of her difficulty simply dealing with the children, trying to explain to them about all of the things that are required when working with small children.

> L: It was so difficult just to communicate with children. You have to explain all the reasons and then help them with their feelings. You also have to know how to tell them the way to climb up a jungle gym, or how to button a coat. I have to stop and think about every movement in the process to try to tell them. It was the 1st time I have to think about such simple things because I don't have experience working with children, only adults.

Leticia is always where the children are. This is true from her earliest years volunteering at the day care, and is true still today. I imagine her standing out in the expansive playground surrounded by both Japanese and Japanese-Brazilian children not only trying to think through the process of how to instruct these children in the minutiae and mundane activities that were as foreign to her as the language and culture she was desperately trying to learn.

 She mentions feeling as though she had to relearn all of her notions about instruction and teaching, regardless of the language she was speaking in. She said that the children never cease to impress her because they were always helpful and acted as translators for each other. I see this today as well. It is a common sight to see the children whispering back and forth in Japanese and Portuguese as they provide each other the support and help that many need to manage their lessons. It is not only the new, in-coming students who do this, but also the older students who have experienced the entirety of their schooling at Ishikawa Elementary School. Many of the older children are regarded as "fluent" because conversationally they have no difficulties in Japanese, though the teachers, and children, know all too well the difference between conversational fluency and the academically specific language required to succeed in the formalized learning environment of the classroom. Many of the Japanese-Brazilian children continue to struggle throughout their elementary years despite the significant changes initiated

118

through the individualized courses of study and the introduction of the Japanese as a Second

Language curriculum introduced to ease the linguistic burden on these children

Leticia has a deep and enduring respect for most of the Japanese teachers at the school.

They have created a space in both the school and the curriculum for a group of children who are

not required by law to attend school, and they take the education of these non-Japanese children

seriously.   There is a sense that these teachers are working above and beyond their training,

contractual commitment, or expectations as far as the system is concerned.   For many of these

teachers their work and investment in these children is a labor of love, as it is with Leticia, and

their concern for the children's futures is a driving force.   She recognized the devotion of the

teachers early on and supported them in any way she could to help them as they struggled to

teach the Japanese-Brazilian students despite the lack of support, funding or resources that are

available today.

> L: The teachers were so unfortunate. The Japanese teachers are very kind to the
> children and try so hard to teach them. Of course, there are strict teachers, but
> they are not all strict, and they are not strict to all children. But, most of them
> really try their best. There are so many resources available for the teachers. The
> schools in Japan are very rich compared to my country. The system here is
> fantastic. Here teachers have time to develop lessons and attend to the children,
> they have resources available to them. This is my dream education.

I should clarify what I believe Leticia is referring to when she mentions Japanese schools

having "so many resources". Here, I believe she is referring to the school facilities and its many

resources with regard to music (there are fully-equipped orchestral instruments available to the

children), a completely stocked art room, science lab, library, computer room, pool, gym,

outdoor sports equipment, expansive grounds and a nutritional lunch for every child. From the

perspective of Leticia, coming from Brazil where the public schools may lack such facilities, this

appears to be a truly privileged education and resource-rich facility.   Additionally, the

educational experience that the children are receiving today at Ishikawa Elementary School is inclusive, individualized and responsive to the children's cultural needs.

I understood that Leticia believes the Japanese-Brazilian children are receiving a superior education here in Japan despite the difficulties many of them face due to linguistic and cultural differences. Her fellow Brazilians and Japanese-Brazilians may not have the same vantage point of comparison and may even believe the public schools in Brazil are adequate, or even preferable, from a socio-cultural standpoint. In fact, there are many Brazilian and Japanese-Brazilian parents who prefer to send their children to the ethnic Brazilian schools rather than have their children suffer discrimination and a diminished education in the public schools in Japan, despite the resources and well-equipped facilities (Kamiya, 2008; Wakamatsu, 2010). Her enthusiastic response to the public schools in Japan also differs from my own, and many of my fellow non-Japanese friends, who have enrolled their children in the local public schools only to withdraw them within a few years. These parents felt that the cultural insensitivity and rigidity of the system repressed their children's international perspectives or open expression and acceptance of their bicultural, bilingual, or biracial identity.

6.2.7   Living with Difference & Imaging a Different Future

I asked Leticia to speak more about the relational aspects of the school and her position as a Brazilian in the school. I wanted to get a feel for how she felt about the overall cultural atmosphere of the school and the quality of the teacher-student relationships, as she perceived them. She spoke quite strongly here, mentioning her struggles living across and within two cultural and linguistic worlds. "Generally, in Japan there is no patience for human or individual difference. The teachers are very nice to me, but the cultural difference is always the focus of

attention". Leticia continued to talk about her dislike of this separation, often imposed upon her

by the Japanese. She spoke of her experiences with Japanese in a strained and melancholic tone.

> L: I feel forever the foreigner. When I am with Japanese and I say "*itadakimasu*"
> (bon appetite) before eating or receiving something[40], I really feel it.. Japanese
> don't understand that I feel Japanese culture in my soul**,** but they never
> completely see it or understand it. In school, I like the teachers and they like me,
> but they can't really know me, and why I say "*itadakimasu*" this has real meaning
> for me. But, they can't see it because they can only see me as Brazilian.

Here Leticia and I share much more than separates us culturally, individually and

linguistically. In the eyes of outer Japanese society we are outsiders. No matter how much we

have internalized and *live* Japanese culture or the language we are always in a position of

exhibiting our embodied understanding of Japanese culture in a kind of performance, rather than

it being understood as having become a part of who we are. Particularly for racially marked

(im)migrants and bicultural Japanese, meaning individuals who are marked and identified as

racially and ethnically different, this is a divide that is almost impossible to breach until intimate

relationships are formed. We are forever on view, and our difference is forever in the spotlight

often creating a barrier to entering into authentic relationships that is pervasive and resistant to

change. Leticia feels very strongly that until this divide is breached there will be no freedom for

her, or the Japanese-Brazilian children she advocates tirelessly for.

Leticia spoke of her concern when she and her husband finally found a home in a quiet

neighborhood they could afford and recalled her fear before leaving the subsidized housing

---

[40] "Itadakimasu" is used in any situation when you receive something, and always before beginning a meal. It is
appropriate to use this as an honorific form of the verb, "to receive" when showing respect with regard to any form
of receiving or speaking about receiving something from another person of a higher status.

complex to move into her house and begin immersing herself completely in to the Japanese community.

> L: I prayed when moving to have a good place, a good home and good neighbors. I was afraid of being discriminated against. We have a joke in our [Brazilian/Japanese-Brazilian] community that we are just like Americans in Japan because they are also discriminated against! This is a problem for us. I cannot change it. I have this face, this body.

When Leticia spoke these words they resonated down to the soul of experience from which they were uttered. Leticia seems to experience a sense of urgency to breach the difference that encases and thus limits her and those in her community. "We are the first generation in this place". These words take on a new level of depth as I came to understand that Leticia recognizes her position, the position of her children, and that of the families and children at Ishikawa Elementary School, as the newest group of (im)migrants in a country new to immigration. I have a sense that Leticia sees her place within her community as vitally important for laying the groundwork of future generations of (im)migrants in Japan. In this sense she sees herself as a cultural ambassador; she is creating an image and place for future generations of (im)migrant children within Japanese society to even the odds and remove the stigma she and her children live with everyday. Her work in this school and community is much bigger than this moment in her life or even of her own personal experience.

As members of this new generation the Japanese-Brazilian children and their Japanese peers are positioned to forge new ground. I asked Leticia to tell me more about the relations between these two groups of the children at the school. She said when she first entered the school in 2003 many of the Japanese-Brazilian children felt they were being excluded and she saw open expressions of negativity and some physical bullying. Leticia spoke about the efforts of the educators at Ishikawa Elementary School to address the strained relations between the

Japanese and Japanese-Brazilian children. She said that tensions began to ease with the start of the community building events, which began in 2005 after Principal Ishiyama took up his post, and have had a greater impact on creating an accepting atmosphere in the school. She also mentioned that most of the younger children (lower elementary grades) grow up together and know each other before coming to school. The subsidized housing complex has a daycare on the grounds where most of the children who attend Ishikawa Elementary School go before entering the school. "All the children are together. They grow up together. There is no problem. Sometimes the mothers complain or fight amongst themselves, but the children…they are fine". Though, the language barrier continues to pose a problem for the Japanese-Brazilian children who are only exposed to Portuguese in the home, though the hours in day care certainly better prepare them for their years of study in Japanese public schools.

6.2.8   Conflict & Challenges: Concerns Over the "Best" Education for the Children

I wanted to move on to Leticia's thoughts on the changes that have occurred in the school since 2005, when Takeishi-sensei and Principal Ishiyama entered the story and began overhauling the system and culture of the school. I asked Leticia to tell me about her experiences with the community-building events like the 2006 World Cup viewing at the school, Saturday Night School, International Friendship Day, and the many performances outside of the school that the children have participated in. Leticia sat for a minute to mull over her thoughts. Her expression changed from the soft, gentle, even melancholy look she had kept throughout parts of her earlier conversations to a hardened and serious gaze.

> L: I have tried to be kind and accepting about all of the extra-curricular events, but I am hard. I have high expectations for the children. They need more education. I understand that we need the Saturday Night School and International

Friendship Day, but these take money and time. But we don't need all these parties. We need to teach the children to study hard. We need to make materials, we need to get them to work. In my country we have social programs arranged by the government. It is not the school's business to take care of the social problems. We come from poor countries in South America. Many of us can read & write, but not all of us.. When we study we can raise ourselves up from this low level and can have a good job in Japan. We can have a kind of a paradise. But we have to work hard!

She spoke with an indignation that I had not anticipated, and her words echoe the sentiments of many (im)migrants worldwide who emigrate from countries with relatively low educational levels to host countries with higher educational levels and qualifications. In many ways I support what Leticia is saying here because I, too, have felt that the children could be engaged in more focused learning activities, even when participating in the more open-structured, free time like *waku waku free time* (described earlier). Leticia understands the many burdens the children will face when they leave the forgiving and relaxed environment of Ishikawa Elementary. Particularly, she seems to feel that the upper elementary levels students need to focus as much as possible on their language, science and math skills to prepare them for the rigidly enforced structure of the junior high school, and subsequent exams that are required to enter high school. So many of these children leave the elementary school with a fairly solid foundation, only to have it crack and buckle under the strict, conformist and textbook-driven instruction they receive in the junior high school. Many of the Japanese-Brazilian students do not make it past junior high school and end up like Leticia's son, working in the nearby car manufacturing industry.

On the other hand, the community building events are extremely important for teachers and students to build relations that support more engaged and committed learning in the classroom. As well, these relaxed learning conditions provide opportunities for teachers to *see*

the children as complex and multi-faceted individuals allowing them to more fully expose their capacities to learn and express themselves and in multiple contexts. I am not sure that Leticia recognizes the importance, or educative value, of the extra-curricular events that she perceives as supercilious and unnecessary, from her more traditional view of education. Yet, as she continued speaking she referred to the importance of these events with regard to reaching out to the Brazilian and Japanese-Brazilian community and parents.

> L: The school is very important. Our project is very important. It is important to see the relationship between Japanese & Brazilian. Maybe we need to better express how we get along and live everyday with each other. But is it not enough to publish the book [referring to the book written in 2009 by the educators at the school on the community-oriented, pedagogical and curricular reforms that have taken place]. The school is the center of the community, but we need more research on how to help the children learn. We have to work hard with the education of the children. We need education to move you. The children have to be able to insert themselves into society. Of course, the school has to help with this.

Leticia makes a division between the extracurricular actives and community building events from their educative value. She mentioned that the children need "education to move you". Here I do not believe she is referring to the emotive or motivational understanding of *move.* I understand this statement as referring to the power of education to elevate ones social and economic status in society. Leticia is an immigrant and recognizes the limited chances for her children if they do not succeed in the system, and learn the ways of the Japanese. I believe the shock of seeing her son fall beneath the ever-widening cracks of the system reinforced her traditional views on the role and necessity of education to attain and secure a place within Japanese society. I asked Leticia to speak about the most severe problems that the Brazilian and Japanese-Brazilian community faces. She did not hesitate to consider her answer.

> L: First, we come from South American countries. We have a strong cultural identity and we are strong. We feel a great tension between our own cultural

125

practices and those of the Japanese. I am Protestant, and many of us are Catholic. We go to church but there is a conflict with this for children in junior high school because of their club activities are on the weekend. It is important to the parents that the children go to church, but the children also need to participate in club activities because they become members of the school community that way.

Here Leticia makes explicit the cultural conflict that the Brazilian and Japanese-Brazilian parents feel with regard to nurturing their children's ethnic identity or accommodating the demands of the school structure. On the one hand, she, and the other parents feel it is important to pass on their cultural heritage and instill the specific cultural values and religious practices that define their community. Yet, the school requires the children to be available for club activities on the weekends (this is not necessary for elementary schools, unless they belong to a sports team and are required to attend practice or games). The after school and weekend clubs are a very important part of junior high school life and define ones membership within their group.

The parents, and children, are forced to make decisions that pit transmitting their cultural heritage against the pressures imposed by the Japanese school system to conform to group practices that lead to cultural integration. She continued speaking about the school's role in providing the necessary opportunities for the Japanese-Brazilian children to integrate into Japanese society, seeing this is as the ultimate role of the school. It seems a dichotomous choice. If the children are not fully prepared for the difficulties they will face upon graduation from the elementary school Leticia feels they will become dependent on others throughout their lives.

> L: It is very hard for the children when they go to junior high school. They are not prepared for that experience. The children become more dependent on translators if they do not learn how to study and work in Japanese, or are accommodated by the system.

This last utterance made me wonder if Leticia felt that too much accommodation on the part of the teachers at Ishikawa Elementary School in accepting and nurturing the Japanese-Brazilian children's cultural expression and identity was ultimately putting them at a disadvantage and enforcing their outsider identity in Japan.   After making this statement she thought for a minute and then looked me straight in the eye, holding a steady gaze that punctuated the seriousness of her statement.

> L: The parents have to work hard to help their children. Teachers work very hard and the principal (Principal Ishiyama) has gone to the municipal government to get as much support as he can for our children. Because of the work of the teachers the children have been able to move away from always feeling incapable or unable to understand. They have gone from *wakarana*i (I don't understand) to being able to say, *wakatta*! (I understand). This is a very powerful feeling. To be able to understand what is going on around you, just like them [Japanese]. The children are given the same opportunities and tasks as the Japanese students and can accomplish them.

I found Leticia's praise of the hard work of the teachers and the ingenuity of Principal Ishiyama to seek out extra funds to enhance the programs offered at Ishikawa Elementary slightly contradictory to her earlier statements. Previously she spoke strongly about the need to provide a harsher educational environment for the children and be less accommodating to their cultural and linguistic needs. Yet, the educational changes that have brought the transformation in the children's ability to "understand what is going on around [them], just like [the Japanese]" is directly related to the loosening of the traditional learning structure the children had originally rebelled against so severely.

I wondered if Leticia was interpreting the accomplishment of the children at Ishikawa Elementary through her own experience of achievement. Leticia worked hard to position herself within Japanese society. She followed along with the children on the same journey and can identify with their academic, linguistic, and cultural competence she has seen them gain for

themselves. She has moved herself from a position of not understanding to one of understanding. Here Leticia also draws on the inclusive reforms that moved the Japanese-Brazilian children out of their marginalized and isolated position in the school to a centralized one within the school community, giving them a chance to succeed at the same tasks and learning opportunities *as the Japanese* children. This is of utmost importance to Leticia. She sees a future for these children where they will have to compete and coexist with members of mainstream Japanese society who will likely not make the kind of accommodations and adjustments for them as the administrators and teaching staff at Ishikawa Elementary School have.

We had come to the end of our conversation when she said that she had something else she wanted to tell me. It was very important to her that I understand the struggles the Brazilian and Japanese-Brazilian parents face and the necessity of them finding a way to integrate themselves and their children into Japanese society and live *as Japanese*.

> L: Most of the Brazilian children's parents work late and cannot help with the schoolwork or support the teachers. This is why the Saturday Night School is so important. But, there is not enough support for parents so that they can help their children. We need programs to teach parents what they can do to help their children succeed better in school. For example, we need to help fathers to understand how to teach math in a Japanese way. We have to do what we have to do to be Japanese. We don't have benefits, social security or social support like Japanese. It is very important that we learn how to be Japanese so that we can gain access to social support systems for our families.

This last statement really sums up the driving force behind Leticia's actions and concerns. While, I believe she wants to see the children retain their cultural and linguistic heritage she also recognizes the necessity of these children to learn how to navigate the social and cultural systems they encounter *in* Japanese and *as a Japanese*. For many of the Japanese-Brazilian children who look Japanese, they will likely succeed because it is easier for them to

pass themselves off as Japanese and be treated as such, as many generations of Koreans have felt forced to do in the past in Japan (Lie, 2001;Murphy-Shigematsu, 2006). But, for the racialized Brazilian children, who like Leticia, wear their culture on their face, this will be a more difficult task. No matter how well they speak Japanese or internalize Japanese customs and culture they will always struggle to be accepted *as Japanese.* As Leticia said, they too will "feel forever the foreigner".

Through this conversation my impressions of Leticia deepened and the added layers of her life story provided me an understanding of her motivations and actions. Despite the many different angles that Leticia presented to me of her life there is one constant, unchanging and enduring impression of her that will linger long in my mind. Leticia's sole aim is to build a better future for the children she nurtures every day in the many different capacities she cares for them. She not only works tirelessly for this "first generation", but for these children's children. She is committed for the long haul, and future generations will reap the rewards of her hard work, as will her own children and their children. Hers is an unfolding story of the power of one woman to traverse and change the lives of many.

6.2.9   Teasing out the Tensions

The contested spaces that Leticia lives within and across are representative of the lives of many Brazilians, and Japanese-Brazilians who have made Japan their home. Yet, Leticia, unlike many of the documented stories of her peers (Linger, 2001; Tsuda, 2003) seeks to join the Japanese community and be regarded by them as *one of them*. This personal drive permeates her position with regard to the best schooling practices for the Japanese-Brazilian children at Ishikawa Elementary School. While recognizing the importance of the various activities, events and

teaching practices that have narrowed the gap between the Japanese, Brazilian and Japanese-Brazilian communities she does not see the educative value. Leticia can only see hardship in the future for the Japanese-Brazilian children without dedication to studying hard in school. For Leticia, this is the only route to succeed in Japanese society. Yet, as mentioned earlier the children were unengaged in their learning under the traditionally imposed learning style that was typical of the school prior to the reforms. The tension here is if a dualism exists between learning that is enjoyable and supportive of the individual needs of the child (educational, personal, cultural and linguistic), versus the demanding a rigorous learning environment that prepares the children academically for the less forgiving environment of the junior high school. It appears that for Leticia, these are two separate matters.

6.3   THE FIGHTER: PHILOSOPHIC & THEORETIC REFLECTION

To be and to become a self is to insert oneself into webs of interlocution; it is to know how to answer when one is addressed and to know how to address others. We become aware of who we are by learning to become conversation partners in these narratives. …Our agency consists of our capacity to weave out of those narratives our individual life stories, which make sense for us as unique selves.   (Benhabib, 2002, p.12)

Leticia was thrown into a world of social and cultural narratives that did not make sense to her when she first arrived in the small town of Urata. As she navigated and inserted herself into the different story lines she would reconstruct her own narrative away from the ones that had been laid upon her, confining her to an image of herself she did not, and does not, accept. In doing so, she would come to redefine her life story. She spoke passionately about her sense of being

130

othered as a member of an ethnic community she both claims, yet has made instrumental moves away from. Her desire to actively engage as an accepted member within a society with firm boundaries of insider and outsider has disrupted her notions of self in relation to others, and provoked action to ease the personal turmoil of the cultural dissonance she suffers. This is a common experience for foreign nationals in Japan and can easily define one's existence making it difficult to feel at "home" in one's community, forever gazing into faces that reflect your strangeness as an unfamiliar *other* back at you.

Leticia is unable to consider a future where she is forever the outsider in need of proving her cultural knowledge and competence. She took action to insert herself into the local school, working tirelessly to reduce the boundaries that divide her Brazilian and Japanese cultural and linguistic homes. In doing so she positioned herself to take part in a collective challenge to create community where there previously had only been animosity, misunderstanding, and pain. She committed herself to claiming responsibility for her own future and that of others. In bell hooks' (2009) words she came "to share responsibility for what happens" for the others she lives with and among.

> The challenge, these days, is to be somewhere as opposed to nowhere, actually to belong to some place, invest oneself in it, draw strength and courage from it, to dwell not simply in a career or a bank account but in a community…Once you commit yourself to a place, you begin to share responsibility for what happens there. (p.68)

Leticia could have chosen to simply dwell in her place, uncommitted to her community or the possibility to live differently. She chose the alternative, and has continued to ground herself to living fully within the two worlds she has struggled to merge.

These are the major themes around which this philosophic and theoretic reflection center. Leticia's story is complicated and crosses several related, yet distinct, themes that are introduced

in the following two narrative portraits of Principal Ishiyama and Takeishi-sensei. Hers provides a glimpse from a radically different, and very important angle. The conflicts and tensions of her story overlap and yet diverge in insightful and contradictory ways with that of these Japanese educators. To understand the various positions Leticia occupies and the complicated themes of her story I draw predominantly on research from (im)migrant assimilation/integration theory, cultural, linguistic minority education literature, Polyani's (1962) tacit knowing and Benhabib's work which problematizes essentialist notions of cultural identity and cultural relativism. Through these various theoretic and philosophic renderings I have come to make partial sense of the complicated narratives that Leticia traverses and transforms as she makes a life and home for herself and her family in Japan.

6.3.1   Migration, Struggle and Transformation

Leticia arrived in Japan to face the same cultural, linguistic and social differences that greet all foreigners upon arrival, but she also encountered a loss of her economic standing. In Brazil, she mentions having lived a privileged life where she worked in a respected position at university, her son attended private school, and her husband worked in the family business. Leaving that behind, she found herself living in conditions she had not experienced before when she moved her children and herself into the public subsidized housing complex across from Ishikawa Elementary School. At the beginning of our conversation she spoke of the importance for the Brazilians and Japanese-Brazilians in the community to insert themselves into Japanese society, to be able to live "like them". Spending everyday surrounded by her fellow Brazilians may have brought comfort to her, but may also have exaggerated her sense of being *othered* among the native Japanese residents of the housing complex. I did not ask, but was curious if these *other*

Japanese did not either fit with her anticipated image of the Japanese as she imagined them when in Brazil, or represent the social location within in Japan she was seeking to insert herself and her family.

As a woman of means in Brazil she would have recognized the lower status of the Japanese working class families and single-parent homes that she shared her living space with. She had come to Japan with a fifteen-year old son, who could easily have become involved with adolescents Leticia would not have approved. This is a common story and a great fear for many (im)migrant parents who enter their host society at a lower socio-economic level than the one they claimed in their home country (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Portes & Zhou, 2005). Portes and Rumbaut (2001) considered differing patterns of social incorporation across second generation immigrant children according to the economic and social location their families entered into the host society.[41] Later in the development of this theory Portes and Zhou (2005) coined the term, segmented assimilation, to refer to linkages between an (im)migrant family's social and economic location upon arrival into the host country and the differing trajectories of assimilation into subgroups of the dominant social body, (often determined by their incoming economic, political, and educational status). They found that the socioeconomic and geographic location in which (im)migrants enter their host society is very often a greater determinant to successful integration and subsequent inclusion of their children into the mainstream society than are the benefits of the social and human capital the parents bring with them.

---

[41] Their work focused on social incorporation and integrative/assimilationist strategies of second generation (im)migrant children in the economically segmented society of America (UNESCO). Japan now has the second highest relative poverty rate among the OECD nations and the poverty rate continues to rise (Japan Times, July 21, 2006). Therefore, the work of Portes & Rumbaut (2001) and Portes & Zhou (2005) is relevant to the context of (im)migrants in Japan despite the differences in immigration history, policy, and sociocultural aspects of the host nations.

To a greater extent than at the beginning of the twentieth century, second-generation youths confront today a …fragmented environment that simultaneously offers a wealth of opportunities and major dangers to successful adaptation. In this situation, the central question is not whether the second generation will assimilate…but *to what segment* of that society it will assimilate. (p.55).

Leticia made a calculated decision to move her family out of the subsidized housing complex and into a residential community half an hour away from her Brazilian community and Ishikawa Elementary School. Because there are no residential areas close to the school Leticia had little choice but to relocate her family quite a distance away from their ethnic community in the housing complex. It is not readily apparent to me that Leticia wanted to remove herself from the Brazilian community within which she is clearly invested, though, is for the sake of her children's future, particularly her daughter, she chose to relocate her family and immerse them, or to use Leticia's language, "insert themselves", into a different economic and sociocultural position.

Shibutani and Kwan (2005) consider the individual processes that determine the different paths to social integration (im)migrants take by asking the question, "why are some receptive to new possibilities while others resist change?" (p.65). There are various reasons based on individual desires, access to financial resources or networks, and capacity to make and then act on their choices. For those, like Leticia, who choose to place themselves within the mainstream host society success depends on opportunities to engage in primary contact, (intimate and immediate relations), with members of the host society (Park, 1914/2005). While for others it becomes a matter of agentic choice whereby a person "believes his personal values can't be realized in the conventional roles open to him" in the social location in which they are positioned (Shibutani & Kwan, 2005, p. 65).

By moving her family out of the subsidized housing complex Leticia has created opportunities for herself and her children, especially her daughter, to insert themselves into Japanese society as members of the local community. It was not clear to me which cultural practices are most dominant in Leticia's home and if her daughter will be raised bilingually or monolingually and I felt it was too sensitive a topic to breach. Leticia speaks of her husband as having a strong ethnic identity as a Japanese descendant. Even in their home in Brazil Leticia learned how to integrate her husband's Japanese cultural needs to create a bicultural home, though her son seems to identify himself more strongly as a Brazilian, as opposed to a *Nikkei* or Japanese-Brazilian, and has had many more difficulties finding a place for himself in Japan, despite Leticia's efforts to create assimilative opportunities for him. For Leticia her survival and her children's future was dependent on creating an opportunity for them to assimilate and insert themselves into Japanese society, even though Leticia seems aware of the impossibility that she will ever be received in Japan the same as *a Japanese.*

6.3.2   A Renewed Sense of Purpose: Seeking Answers & Acting Toward Change

Leticia was not prepared for the severity of challenges she would experience when when she passed through the doors of her daughter's daycare. Leaving one's child in the care of others is a stressful and emotional experience, but to do so when neither parent or child have a grasp of the language and institutional culture is exasperating and worrying. Very often small children who are unable to communicate within their new environment will withdraw and become unresponsive. They do not recognize the linguistic isolation their foreign language positions them within as solely related to language difference and often, after repeated failure for successful communication, become silent (Siraj-Blatchford & Clarke, 2000). Leticia recognized

that her daughter's needs were not being met, or were possibly misinterpreted, leaving her little choice but to take a more active role by offering to volunteer at the daycare so that she could be close at hand.

These earliest years of Leticia's life in Japan were distressing and disruptive forcing her to make decisions that would ultimately led to empowering herself, and others, in ways that were unimaginable at the time she offered her services to the daycare. Leticia, acting as an agent, intervened in the circumstances she felt threatened her daughter's well-being, knowing that inaction would be unbearable for both herself and her daughter. Giddens (1984) describes agentic behavior as one's ability to "act otherwise" to bring about change in one's circumstances or that of others. Giddens (1984) continues by saying, "action depends upon the capability of the individual to 'make a difference' to pre-existing state of affairs or course of events. An agent ceases to be such if he or she loses the capability to 'make a difference'" (p.14).

Leticia acted and made a difference in her and her daughter's daily life, which brought about future changes reaching far beyond the boundaries of her personal circumstance. She became exposed to the cultural dissonance that Brazilian and Japanese-Brazilian mothers encounter when dealing with the socializing practices of the educational system to better navigate and eventually change the conditions of their life. She immediately set herself a task to first become proficient in Japanese. Leticia recognized that the language barrier was the greatest impediment to her future life in Japan and full integration into Japanese society. Learning the language enabled her access to the knowledge required to better support the teachers in their task to educate the Japanese-Brazilian children, and positioned her as a highly valued member of both the Japanese, Brazilian, and Japanese Brazilian community.

Within two years of her volunteer work Leticia moved into her current position as a teacher's assistant. Almost immediately upon taking on this responsibility she was thrown into cultural conflict again, this time between the teachers and the Brazilian and Japanese-Brazilian mothers. The cultural difference in attitudes and expectations around schooling between the mothers and the teachers at school were seemingly unsolvable. Leticia was pitted in the middle trying to work out how best to mediate both sides. The tensions of cultural difference with regard to schooling is commonly one of the most disheartening and troubling experiences an (im)migrant parent experiences (in this case almost exclusively mothers), which affects both the parents' attitudes and interactions with the school, and can negatively impact a child's schooling experiences and relationships with her teacher (Valdes, 1996). Leticia was put in a position to mediate between the cultural values of her ethnic peers, which closely matched her own as a mother of a Japanese-Brazilian in the school, against the teachers, who may have been approaching this group of mothers from a cultural deficit view on the one hand (Valdes, 1996), or simply lacked any cultural understanding to communicate across difference. These two communities, fixed in their culturally embedded ideas and perceptions of the other were unable to communicate across difference to reach agreement over their common concerns, the education of the children. Benhabib (2002) would call these episodes of cultural conflict, "contested accounts" by which the other is judged or evaluated through the inescapable cultural narratives that drive our accounts of an *other's* actions.

Benahabib (2002) seeks to engage a cultural dialogue across difference whereby moments of "contested accounts" are used to reshape the narratives that divide us.

> It is not a visual but an auditory metaphor that guides my understanding of a complex cultural dialogue. We should view human cultures as constant creations,

137

re-creations, and negotiations of imaginary boundaries between "we" and the "other(s)". The "other" is also within us and is one of us. Struggles for recognition among individuals and groups are really efforts to negate the status of "otherness", insofar as otherness is taken to entail disrespect, domination, and inequality. (p. 8)

Certainly both the Japanese-Brazilian mothers and the teachers were struggling for recognition by the other yet neither group was able to hear the other's voice because of the entrenched cultural boundaries that had set them against each other. Leticia found herself in a position to create a "new narrative of joined interest and mutual respect," and set a course of action to eventually begin engaging the members of both the Japanese and Japanese-Brazilian communities in a new dialogue. This would take a great deal of effort and energy on her part before she would begin to see change within this community that was struggling to face the challenges of rapid sociocultural alteration.

This was a trying time for all of the individuals in the school community. The teachers lacked the support, skills and resources needed to manage the Japanese-Brazilian children in their classrooms, while the children suffered exclusion, lack of understanding, were prohibited from speaking Portuguese, and rebellious to the entire system of schooling. These circumstances would pit parent against teacher making a miserable situation almost unbearable. The Japanese-Brazilian students became excluded from the life world of the school by being sent away to the Japanese as a Second Language room (*nitteki)* thus denying them opportunities to become active and engaged members of the school community. Under these circumstances the children did not benefit linguistically or socially from contact with their peers.

Cummins (2000) has devised a conceptualization of the interpersonal relationships and power structures within schools that helps explain the success or failure of schooling for language minority students.   He has created a typology between exclusionary/ assimilationist

138

policies and practices, which are closely aligned with the subtractive schooling practices described by Valenzuela (1999), and the more positive, achievement oriented schooling he terms collaborative/transformative policies and practices (p.44). These are more in line with practices associated with cultural responsive and relevant pedagogy. According to Cummins' model (2000) exclusionary/assimilationist models of education result in academically disabled or resistant students responses to schooling. Schools that function according to this model create relationship based on coercive power, which aim "to contribute to the disempowerment of the culturally diverse students" (p.44) and "exclude certain groups from the mainstream of society or assimilate them completely" (p.45). It may seem incongruent to classify exclusionary and assimilationist practices as two sides of the same coin. Cummins (2000) sees these as paired because often the student seeks to alleviate the discomfort and discrimination she suffers *because of her cultural identity* that she will discard it as an act of self-defense and adopt the dominant group's sociocultural practices and language.

Cummins (2000) is also attributed with defining the Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS)/ Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) distinction, highlighting an important division when determining the linguistic proficiency of children school. Teachers often mistakenly decide that a child no longer requires additional language support when they deem the child communicatively proficient, a judgment determined on the basis of communicative competence rather than the abstract and specialized language associated with formalized learning settings. Basic interpersonal communicative skills refers to language that all speakers (native and non-native of any language) first develop due to social interaction and engagement with the world in highly contextualized communicative settings. Cognitive academic language proficiency is understood as the analytic and highly decontextualized form of

139

language nurtured in school requiring requires progressive introduction to complex grammatical and semantic structures to function in linguistic environments created around higher order reasoning and analytic functions (Cummins, 2000).

This distinction is particularly salient for (im)migrant children who enter the mainstream school system at the upper levels of elementary and junior high school because of the increased difficulty of concepts and language use required to succeed at such levels. Frequently teachers and administrators (and parents) assume that non-native or immigrant students who have attained communicative competence in the dominant language will also be able to manage competently within a mainstream classroom. This distinction has particular bearing in Japan where schools receive resources based on the number of language minority children enrolled in the school. False classification into a non-language minority category because of a misinterpretation of the child's fluency based on communicative competence alone, effects access to funding used to aid the child in their development of academic language through the added support. Most educators in Japan falsely assume that when a language minority child becomes "proficient" in Japanese they no longer need language support, and will easily merge into the social climate of the school. Additionally, there is little regard for the cultural needs of the child and how this impacts both the child's learning, but also her sense of belonging.

6.3.3 A Return to The Basics: (Re)Learning to Learn How to Teach

Soon after Leticia began her work at Ishikawa Elementary School she recognized the limitations of her position as a translator. While she was fulfilling an important and supportive role for the teachers and the children, she saw a need to provide more academically focused assistance. This became particularly apparent to her when trying to explain mathematical formulas and concepts

140

to the children in Portuguese. She had been seeking an answer on how to better assist the teachers and bridge the gap between the children and their learning. She took the rather unconventional route of attending *juku* (cram school) to learn the ways of Japanese instruction and methods of knowledge production.

Leticia has spent much of her adult life involved in academia and she drew on this epistemological and ontological foundation when faced with the sense of helplessness she was struggling to take action against. Drawing on her tacit knowing (Polyani, 1962) to guide her she refocused her attention on her new endeavor to relearn the basic, and explicit knowledge, she would require to better teach the children within the new epistemological landscape of Japanese knowledge production. Polyani (1962) states,

> The most striking powers of tacit knowing …[is that] it represents our capacity to know a problem. A problem designates a gap within a constellation of clues pointing towards something unknown. If we hold a problem to be a good one, we also imply that this unknown can yet be discovered by our own efforts, and that this would be worth these efforts. (p.611-612).

Leticia's tacit knowing *as a scholar and researcher* led her in the direction of the clues, to follow Polyani, which would allow her to discover the as yet unknown solution to the problems that confounded her. For Leticia the way out of her dilemma was to re-educate herself, which seemed the "natural" answer to the problem. She pulled her focus away from attending to the particulars of her daily trials to readdress her attention tacitly, "to the whole which they constitute" (Polyani, 1962, p. 601).

I have had to stretch Polyani's theory here beyond the discrete tasks and use of tools that he uses as examples to better express the integrated nature of knowing between what he calls, subsidiary knowledge, that which is "knowing by relying on" as opposed to focal knowledge, which he defines as "knowledge by attending to" (p. 601). Polyani (1962) declares that we

cannot perform a skill, or use a tool, if we impart our attention exclusively on the particular tool or skill. Rather, it is by way of the *act that is engaged with* using the tool we *learn to use* the tool, and *come to know the tool* through our interaction with it (Zhenhua, 2010). It is only by attending to the entire process within which the act occurs that we come to know and enact that knowledge in our use of the tool, rather than the particulars of the tool having any meaning separate from our interaction with it. "We know subsidiarily the particulars of a comprehensive whole when attending focally to the whole which they constitute; we know such particulars not in themselves but in terms of their contribution to the whole" (Polyani, 1962, p. 601).

Leticia made meaning of the problematic situations she faced by stretching her own epistemological position to make meaning out of the confusing particulars of the circumstances she daily found herself in. The actions that she took positioned her directly within the center of Polyani's (1962) epistemological challenge as she confronted the limitations of her knowledge to engage a new knowledge production system that required both explicit and tacit knowing, to guide her through the experience. Leticia makes this point beautifully when she describes her struggle to help the children with the most basic of actions when she said, "I have to stop and think about every movement in the process to try to tell them how to button a coat, for example". Leticia was regularly placed in positions where she was asked to complicate her epistemological position by drawing on her tacit knowledge of experiences and actions that had long been "things that [she] knew but [could] not tell" (Polyani, 1962, p.601).

Leticia enlarged her understanding of the dilemma she faced and bore the fruits of her labor as she came to position herself more centrally in the classrooms and within the community at Ishikawa Elementary School. She found renewed clarity, which helped her better comprehend the troubles facing the Brazilian and Japanese-Brazilian parents, recognizing that it was not

simply a matter of ontological difference based in cultural perceptions, but an epistemological one as well. She spoke about the need of the parents to better understand the cultural differences of knowing, which limited their capacity to help their children. She urged them to redefine their embattled stance with the teachers by taking the time and effort to also reeducate themselves about the ways of learning and teaching in Japan.

I found this an interesting and important point because Leticia seeks accommodation both ways, asking that the teachers, Brazilian, and Japanese-Brazilian parents come to terms with the differences that divide them. Culturally responsive pedagogy asks teachers and administrators to represent, respect and positively respond to the epistemological and ontological positions of the cultural and language minority students within the school, curriculum, and community. Generally, culturally and linguistically different students, and their families are expected to accommodate to the mainstream culture and educational structure to succeed within the mainstream learning environment. If students are unable to succumb to the epistemological, linguistic, and sociocultural forces acting on them they are often blamed for their own failure, which can become internalized leading to low levels of self-worth and lack of confidence (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Murrell Jr., 2008; Valenzuela, 1999).

Displacing the academic failure of students away from inadequate school policies and teaching practices, but rather onto their cultural or ethnic upbringing is the basis of cultural difference theory that culturally responsive pedagogy seeks to reverse,[42] Here, though, Leticia is claiming that this is not a one-sided stance whereby only the schools need to accommodate their

---

[42] There are critiques that culturally responsive pedagogy does not address the larger social and economic structural barriers that impact minority children's success or failure at school (Levinson, Foley & Holland, 1996; Ogbu, 1991, 1987;Valdes, 1996) Ladson-Billings (1997) culturally relevant pedagogy was conceptualized to address the lack of a critical stance. Yet, the promise of culturally responsive pedagogy as an ethically grounded pedagogy to create caring and responsive learning environments is little disputed (Cummins,2000, 1986; Erickson, 1987; Gay, 2000; Valenzuela,1999).

cultural and language minority children, but rather there is a reciprocal relationship that requires engagement, accommodation, and action from both communities. Ogbu (1987) backs her up on this. "It is not only school personnel who have an obligation to understand and accommodate cultural differences; minority children [and their parents] have an obligation to understand and accommodate school culture. It's a two-way thing" (p. 319). It appears that Leticia was urging the parents to educate themselves about the practices of learning and teaching that occur in the school to empower themselves to better support their child's learning *at home.* Similarly, she worked to help the teachers better support and empower the Japanese-Brazilian children's learning *at school.*

6.3.4   Living with Difference & Imaging a Different Future

Leticia has experienced extreme feelings of displacement and dislocation since here arrival in Japan as an immigrant. She has faced myriad barriers and challenges that have forced her to confront the many sociocultural constraints faced by many (im)migrants trying to make a life for themselves in Japan. Leticia struggles to be accepted on equal terms with the Japanese she works with and encounters each day. The rituals and rules of life here are deeply rooted to conceptions of Japanese-ness and seen as somehow uniquely paired with Japanese sensibilities.[43] Linguistic expressions which are used when receiving presents of food, *"itadakimasu"*; the habit of sitting properly on the tatami mat; rituals of entering and leaving a formal space or as a guest

---

[43] Any discussion of "Japanese-ness" essentializes and reduces what constitutes Japanese-ness and I am well aware of the diversity and difference in opinion even among Japanese regarding what constitutes such a classification (Befu, 2006). My point here is that the ritualized practices and rules in Japan are understood by the Japanese and non-Japanese alike as deeply embedded in the cultural psyche of Japanese people (Creighton, 1997).

144

in a home; the proper etiquette for eating particular foods and using chopsticks. The list appears endless.

Accurate and well-timed cultural performances can be learned, and often are by the foreign nationals who come to call Japan home. This is not a pre-requisite to live here, but eventually most foreigners do learn and adopt many of these cultural customs *as their own* yet seem unable to publicly claim then *as their own.* Butler (2003) would call this an interruption, seeing any interaction with an *other* as possible grounds for normative positioning or *othering* . "There is the operation of a norm, invariably social, that conditions what will and will not be a recognizable account, exemplified in the fact that I am used by the norm precisely to the degree I use it" (p36).

For foreign-nationals, like Leticia, and myself for that matter, who have adopted these customs there remains an enduring experience of being addressed as a stranger unable to fully express, or give an account of oneself in relation to another fully accepting *other* who sees beyond the appearance of difference.   To see beyond, "this face and this body" as Leticia exasperatedly stated. Leticia has a strong sense of having internalized these qualities as a part of her being. Yet, her appearance denies that her actions are understood as being authentic, nor does she gain full acceptance from the Japanese.   Regardless of Leticia having incorporated certain Japanese traits into her embodied experience, her physicality creates a barrier to complete acceptance or expression of that sense of being. She is unable to perform the normative culture she herself is appropriating, as Butler (2003) states above.

Leticia has located herself within the Japanese community, and clearly has a strong personal investment in expressing herself to Japanese according to their cultural mores and manners she has adopted. By doing so, she has attempted to distant herself from the negative

image most Japanese have of the Japanese-Brazilians, though she cannot escape either her difference or the discrimination associated with her ethnic group. Leticia has found herself thrown into cultural and economic categories that do not define her as she understands or identifies herself as a Brazilian woman from a privileged background with a post-graduate education.

> Although the Japanese-Brazilians are a socially successful middle-class minority in Brazil that is culturally respected for its "Japanese" qualities, they become low-status factory workers in Japan who are culturally disparaged to a certain extent for the 'Brazilian' behavior. As a result, they are subject to both social class prejudice and ethnic prejudice in Japan. (Tsuda, 2003, p. 104)

Leticia goes against the grain of many in her ethnic community who openly express and assert their Brazilian identity despite their racial status as Japanese-Brazilians. Several scholarly works have identified the exaggerated performance of ethnicity among Brazilians and Japanese Brazilians who upon arrival to Japan encounter disruptions to their ethnic identity and perceptions of difference (Linger, 2001;Tsuda, 2000; Sasaki, 2002). For many Japanese-Brazilians who were perceived positively as Japanese in Brazil arriving in Japan highlights their differences to the native population of Japanese rather than confirming the sense of themselves as Japanese which they anticipated before embarking on their existential journey "home". Leticia, has not been confronted with this problem, though her husband may have, because she is Brazilian and not Japanese-Brazilian. In fact, unlike the documented actions of her ethnic peers she has come to claim a strong affiliation and sense of identity with the Japanese.

There is much in her conversation to lead me to believe she is strongly attuned to an assimilationist perspective. This does not mean she would willingly forfeit her ethnic identity, but she has invested a great deal of her energy into immersing her *self* into Japanese culture and society by making moves to distance herself from the Brazilian and Japanese-Brazilian

146

community of the subsidized housing complex. I stand with Benahabib (2002) in her understanding that our received ethnicity and culture need not be an oppressive or determinate force in our life, that we actively create and mold ourselves into cultural beings.

> We always have options in telling a life story. …Just as the grammatical rules of a language, once acquired, do not exhaust our capacity to build an infinite number of well-formed sentences in a language, so socialization and acculturation do not determine an individual's life story or his or her capacity to initiate new actions and new sentences in conversations. (p. 15)

I often wondered if the difficult choices Leticia has made and the challenging tasks she has put before herself are directed to providing her daughter access to the necessary sociocultural resources to enable her successful integration into Japanese society, *as a Japanese*. Every move Leticia has made will have repercussions for her daughter and can be considered an act of love if viewed from this perspective. But, as a mother she will have had her daughter's future in mind being that she is young enough to reap the rewards of the sacrifices Leticia has made. In an interesting reconceptualization of what constitutes a mother tongue, Bammer (1994) draws on the work of Karla Schultz who is credited with the reconsideration of the phrase, "it 'may also be understood as the language the mother learns from (or for) her children. The traditional definition thus is enlarged from being the language *originally* spoken by the mother to include the language *newly* learned by her for the sake of those whom she loves most (p. 96). Leticia not only learned a new language for her daughter, and her own agentic purposes, but she adopted a whole new way of life.

6.3.5 Conflict & Challenges: Concerns Over the "Best" Education for the Children

Leticia is at odds with the educational philosophy that has driven the reforms at Ishikawa Elementary School.   Despite her gentle and caring way with the children she would like to see them given a more rigorous educational experience. She claims, "they need more education". This is a loaded statement; particularly as for Leticia "education" seems to be defined by the institutionalized conception of instruction in a traditional teaching environment. The reforms that were introduced at Ishikawa Elementary School were in direct response to the high level of truancy and low level of engaged learning that was going on at the time Leticia entered the school. The atmosphere of the school and the engagement of the children in their lessons has been transformed since that time. In order to create this environment the educators, with a deep philosophical grounding in individualized and experiential education, dismantled much of the traditional learning structure that had been in place, and is taught commonly in the majority of elementary schools in the district.

These educators see value in the so-called "parties", to use Leticia's terms, which for the most part, are actually organized, student-direct events where experiential learning, community building and positive relationships are formed. Though, these do take away from in-class instruction time, which provides the academic foundation the students require. Though, there is quite a bit of "free" time where the students could be engaged in more directed learning, which Leticia may be responding to. There is a tension here. Going over the conversation I had with Leticia I was reminded of Lisa Delpit's (1995) work on the importance of instructing children from low-income, undereducated homes, and culturally and linguistically different children in the "codes of power" that are required to succeed within the dominant, mainstream institutions that will greatly determine the trajectories of their lives. Delpit (1995) claims that,

Students must be *taught* the codes needed to participate fully in the mainstream of American life, not by being forced to attend to hollow, inane, decontextualized subskills, but rather within the context of meaningful communicative endeavors; that they must be allowed the resource of the teacher's expert knowledge, while being helped to acknowledge their own expertness as well. (p. 45)

Leticia relates the hard work of learning to the hard work of making a life for oneself, which I understand is determined by the conventional avenues of economic success that she herself attained in Brazil. She also understands the severe challenges facing the Japanese-Brazilian children when they enter the junior high school, knowing the danger of not succeeding and possibly dropping out. This is a very personal issue for Leticia because she witnessed the educational demise of her son after moving to Japan. He was positioned in Brazil to follow along his mother's and father's footsteps to enter university and set a course for his life that was of his own making. The slippage that occurred within his life, even though he graduated from an ethnic Brazilian school, was directly related to the cultural, linguistic and structural barriers he encountered upon coming to Japan.

Leticia claims that it is not the job of the school to take care of the social problems of the children and yet, in Japanese education the teachers' job in the elementary schools is based on a holistic concept of educating the child. This is a cultural orientation and not determined by the teaching method or culturally determined social structure of the classroom. All Japanese teachers are trained according to a concept known as *kizuna* in Japanese. This is defined by Okano & Tsuchiya (1999) as,

An intimate interpersonal relationship that fosters empathy, characterized as the 'touching of the hearts' [where] teachers share intrinsic and unpretentious interpersonal experiences that engage children. …*Kizuna* is not a means to an end but a cultural attribute, although it is said to be a paramount principle promoting effective classroom management. (p.173)

While the lived reality of *kizuna* as it is practiced in classrooms is demonstrated variously, Japanese teachers place high value on the interpersonal relationships that are used to foster the group identity and obligations of the members of the class to create harmony among the group and control their actions.   As argued before, I believe the notion of *kizuna* becomes complicated when teachers are asked to open the boundaries to include foreign national children.

Leticia finds it hard to reconcile her desire to see more rigor and less heart in the classroom at Ishikawa and I wonder how her own class consciousness plays into her perception of the needs of the children there. The children do have quite a lot of freedom, yet I witnessed many classes where the children were deeply engaged in their work and the artifacts of their past and current work are displayed in classrooms and along the corridors throughout the school. Leticia may sense the various free activities and breaks that have been included in the time schedule as taking precious time away from the many hours required by the Japanese-Brazilian children to catch up to their Japanese peers. For Leticia, the time spent on nurturing the relationships and activities created to provide joy to the children may appear permissive and undirected, if considered in the conventional sense of the word.   Yet, the children are not given complete freedom to do as they please, despite the loose grip of the teachers with regard to the self-directed learning activities in the upper grade levels created for the individualized curriculum. Freire (1995) makes an interesting case, which Dewey (1918/2009, 1938) similarly claimed regarding the fine line between loosening pedagogic control and giving up one's pedagogic authority entirely.

For Freire (1995), a permissive educator misinterprets freedom as granting permission to let everyone be and do as they like in a kind of pedagogical relativism. This is an abuse of freedom and lacks conviction to work toward a human project founded on dialogic and

150

democratic principals of self-transformation.   "Permissiveness, which at times gives the impression of leaning toward freedom, ends up working against it. The climate of lawlessness, of free-for-all, that it creates reinforces the authoritarian position" (p.65). It is curious that Leticia would seek a reinforcement of the very conditions based on the authoritarianism that the children in the school so strongly resisted and rebelled against when she first entered Ishikawa Elementary in 2003. There is a delicate balance between the necessary freedom demanded by a democratic, humanizing education and the transmission of the skills and knowledge the stratified and structurally resistant system will require of them. Again Delpit (1995) has a clear voice on the necessity of balancing out the two.

> A 'skilled' minority person who is not also capable of critical analysis becomes the trainable, low-level functionary of the dominant society, simply the grease that keeps the institutions, which orchestrate his or her oppression running smoothly. …Yes, if minority people are to effect the change which will allow them to truly progress we must insist on 'skills' *within the context of* critical and creative thinking. (p 19)

Toward the end of our conversation Leticia moved toward a reconciliation of her strong sentiments about the need for the students to "study hard". She admitted that the various events and activities at Ishikawa Elementary have helped the children and the Brazilian and Japanese-Brazilian communities form stronger bonds and interact more positively. She attributes the children's shift in their attitude toward school, and their enhanced engagement with their learning as directly related to the teachers' hard work. She speaks about the children moving from a position of "not knowing" to "knowing", "just like the Japanese" and how powerful this is. Yet, she does not attribute this directly to the pedagogic changes that have been brought about by the more inclusive and individualized teaching practices that seem to have made this possible.

Leticia ends on a very strong note affirming her ultimate position with regard to the importance of schooling in the lives of the Japanese-Brazilian children and the experiences of this "new generation". She is clear that the only way to succeed in Japan is through assimilation into Japanese society. This is not so easily done. For many of the Japanese-Brazilian children the more rigorous schooling that Leticia seems to desire may work at cross-purposes. If the children are coerced into fitting themselves back into a system that denies their linguistic and cultural needs forcing an assimilative/coerce model of schooling on them they will likely, once again rebel. The trade-off here is that even if the children succeed at *becoming Japanese* in order to succeed in Japanese society there is no guarantee that this will serve them well in the future as they negotiate their individuality as an ethnic *other* in a still tightly bound and unaccommodating society. If Japanese society is going to change, I would argue that creating educational environments that invite and welcome difference into the classrooms and school community will have far greater effects than expecting foreign national children to mold themselves into a "Japanese" identity. Despite Leticia's strong desire to see the Japanese-Brazilian children succeed her personal perspective, which seeks that they "learn how to be Japanese", may ultimately result in the further marginalization and decreased chances for many of the children she advocates tirelessly for.

(Im)migrant students who encounter schools where their ethnic identity is disregarded, assimilationist rules prohibit heritage language use, and educators dismiss their full participation within the school community as culturally/linguistically valued members of that community are given little option other than to turn away from the painful practices inflicted on them. Many become marginalized and alienated within school, at home, or in the worse case, from both (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). If cultural and linguistic minority children feel

coerced into shedding their ethnic, linguistic and cultural identities as a trade-off for inclusion there is the danger that they may become alienated from their own communities and families, yet still linger on the margins of the mainstream society as well (Davidson, 1996). Valenzuela (1999) documented (im)migrant student responses to schooling practices in her study of Mexican-American youth who encountered discrimination, cultural and linguistic insensitivity, or self-devaluation within mainstream American schools.

> While abandoning one's original culture may seem appropriate to the teacher, principal, district-level administrator…for whom the worth of dominant culture is simply self-evident, it is inherently alienating for Mexican youth whose lived ethnic experience requires that they retain some measure of competence across the varied contexts that characterize their existence. (p. 264)

The changes in schooling practices and the accommodating environment at Ishikawa Elementary is linked to the Japanese Brazilian children's increased engagement within the life of the school and their inclusion in the learning that takes place in the classrooms. How well these experiences will position them to succeed as they continue their education and move on to claim positions for themselves in Japanese society is unknowable at this time. Leticia's concern is for the future as she sees it in its present condition. However, this future that Leticia considers and possibly fears for the children is but one possible future. A differently imagined future may not require the assimilative practices she sees as a prerequisite for success in Japan.

153

6.4   THE BRIDGE BUILDER: PRINCIPAL ISHIYAMA

Principal of Ishikawa Elementary School (2005-2009)

> No matter what their native tongue is, we should educate the children so that even when they go back to their homeland, they will have good memories of Ishikawa Elementary School. … Even if the adults are struggling, I want the children to be happy and to come to school. And when these kids who have experienced the mixed raced classes growing up, in 10-20 years, and have children of their own, I think the world will really change. If we treat them badly now, they will seek vengeance later on in their lives. That's why I feel such a huge responsibility in teaching these kids. Regardless of whether they are Japanese or Brazilian. (10.23.09)

6.4.1   First Impressions

Principal Ishiyama is a confident educator and has left an enduring mark on Ishikawa Elementary School where he ended his career in 2009 after thirty years of teaching. He is identified as the driving force behind the changes that have taken place at the school, which were designed around his open-minded and open-hearted style of individualized education.   I often return to the lingering image I have of this confident, grounded, and deeply philosophic man, standing, arms firmly placed on his hips, at the entrance of the school as the soft, diffused light of a late September afternoon washed over him.   I was attending the first of two professional development seminars that brought me to Ishikawa Elementary School when my attention was drawn to the courtyard at the entrance of the school where the children were loudly passing on their way home.   Careful not to disturb the wrap-up of the day–long seminar Principal Ishiyama's voice remained within the perimeter of space he occupied as he called out to each child that passed before him, either alone or frolicking with friends; "*Edo-kun, kaerimichi ki o tsukete kudasai!"(* "Edo, Take care on your way home"), *"Yuka-chan, Okaasama ni yoroshiiku o*

tsutaete kudasai" ("Yuka, Say hello to your Mom"), *"Antonio-kun, mata gakko ni kuru made itazura shinaide kudasai!"* ("Antonio, Try not to get in any trouble until tomorrow"). I marveled as he adjusted each phrase toward one particular child, modifying and selecting the appropriate farewell for each student that passed. The children, some responding in kind, glided past turning to either nod or take their leave for the day with a smile. This memory holds firm in my mind and remains unchanged across the two years since I have met, spoken at length with, and enjoyed learning from, and about, Principal Ishiyama.

Despite Principal Ishiyama's mandatory retirement in March 2009 [44] his presence is both tangible and visible throughout the school. Upon entry to the school several large poster board size photographs greet visitors with images of Principal Ishiyama surrounded by the children of the school as they pose for photos taken to document one of the many successful performances and events the children and teachers have organized and participated in since 2005. It is impossible to walk past the large bulletin board spread along the wall between the staff room and the Principal's office on the first floor without noticing the many snapshots of the children and Principal Ishiyama taken to document the changes that have occurred at the school throughout the past four years. In fact, new poster sized photos have been added to the large display at the entrance to the school showcasing the current principal standing proudly among the now older students that once flanked Principal Ishiyama at the same events and public performances. These visual artifacts showcase the continued commitment of the in-coming principal, and community of educators, to honor Principal Ishiyama's vision for the school and the future of the children. I often wondered how many years would pass when, or if, the presence of this man would fade.

---

[44] Teachers in public schools are considered public servants and are required by law to retire at the age of 60, as is the rule of thumb for all government employees.

6.4.2 The Early Years: Turning Away from The Traditional

For Principal Ishiyama, standing side-by-side others is not enough. He is drawn to connect himself to the teachers and students under his charge, and them to each other, by bridging gaps that separate the community within the school. In his 30 years of teaching and administering he has remained weary of traditional instructional and organizational models that contradict his personal and professional creed of opening up, crossing over, and standing *with* and *in relation* to his students and teaching staff. His story begins on a path no less extraordinary than most Japanese educators, but his personal readiness to proactively face the many challenges he has confronted gave rise to school transformation, and personal and professional triumphs few educators can hope to experience.

Principal Ishiyama entered the teaching profession after completing his university studies and pedagogic training at Nihon University in Tokyo in 1971. He chose to study away from his home region in Aichi prefecture, where the majority of the educators in his professional knowledge community (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996) gained their training, As well, most of the teachers he has worked alongside during his three decades in the public school system also hail from this area. Tokyo is approximately 300 kilometers from the small, rural area of Principal Ishiyama's hometown, but worlds away if measured in terms of cultural, environmental, economic, and lifestyle distance. We didn't speak at length about the impact of this time in his life, but I often wondered if having breached the gap between rural and urban Japan stimulated his understanding, appreciation, and openness to difference. He has had limited international experience other than a two week overseas vacation. Upon completing his formal education in 1971 he returned to the region of his birth to unexpected professional opportunities and teaching-learning experiences.

Principal Ishiyama was not aware that during the early years of his career as a public school educator a growing interest in individualized and open-structured schooling was sweeping across a small, but influential community of educators. During his first years of teaching he did not receive exposure to alternative methods for educating children outside of the traditional practices and spaces where he gained his initial experiences as an educator. Concurrent with his first years of teaching the first of the three open-structured schools, a Jr. high school, had just been built in the school district. This newly designed school took up great interest in the staff rooms of the local schools and Principal Ishiyama soon became aware of this radical new educational project. He put in a request for a teaching post in the second open-structured school in the district in 1979, Sakanoue Elementary School. It seems that even in his earliest years as a young educator he was seeking to open himself up to new experiences and ways of better understanding his role as an educator in relation to the institution of schooling, per the following comment. "There was a middle school that was built. It was quite spacious and I thought they were trying out something new there. I just wanted the challenge…it wasn't something I'd thought that deeply about. I was young and was ready for a challenge" (10.23.09). I found it curious that he sought out this new and unchartered educational experience where other educators were doubtful of the radical structural departure from the traditional construction style, organization, and pedagogy in light of the similarity to his enthusiasm for taking on the challenge of working with cultural and language minority students at Ishikawa Elementary School, another pedagogic first for him, and his colleagues.

Principal Ishiyama continued speaking about his early years as a novice teacher interested in pushing the boundaries of his pedagogical training and made a remark regarding the responses of his colleagues in the traditional elementary school when he left for his new post at the open-

structured school in 1979. "They didn't say many good things about it, no. They were saying it would be hard. There were no open spaced schools in Japan. In private schools there were, but there weren't any open spaced public schools" (10.23.09). This would not be his first time for him to utter such words. Several conversations later, Principal Ishiyama would repeat a similar sentiment when describing the comments his colleagues made at the open-structured schools where he spent 14 years of his career prior to his re-assignment as principal at Ishikawa Elementary School. This time the negativity was centered on the Japanese-Brazilian children rather than on a radically new teaching style and building. "Oh yes, my fellow teachers' made strong comments about my move to Ishikawa Elementary School. Even more so than when I entered into the open-structured school. They said, 'the foreign children can't study and they don't understand what you're saying, the parents don't have much interest in education… but it has been worth it" (10.23.09).

Looking back on Principal Ishiyama's early desire to challenge himself as a novice teacher to usher in a new and radical educational style I began to form a clearer picture behind his responses to the challenges he faced at Ishikawa Elementary School. He came to his post there with a predisposition that enabled him to face the overwhelming task of initiating change in the troubled and chaotic school. He worked closely with the teachers to create an inclusive, loosely structured, responsive, and individualized program centered on engaging the low-income Japanese and Japanese-Brazilian children who attended the school. Clearly, he is no stranger to adversity or controversy and it seems that his has been a pedagogic life positioned not only to face, but also to welcome the challenges presented to him.

When Principal Ishiyama spoke about his early years of teaching in the open structured schools he recounts stories of mentorship, self-reflective learning, and philosophical discussions

158

with Dr. Kato and his colleagues there about pedagogy.   When he began teaching there he faced

personal barriers put in place by his own incapability to create order where no physically

imposed structure defined the learning space, as is the case in conventional schools. He slowly

came to shape the educational experiences and activities on the individual needs and interests of

the children he was teaching. He was moved to push open the boundaries of both his mind and

heart to trusting the children and using the space that flowed unhindered around them. Speaking

about this time he recalls the struggle as worthy of the outcome, and it is evident that he has

centered the remainder of his professional life and pedagogic philosophy around these early,

difficult years of discomfort.

> I: In the beginning it was hard. With regular schools we would have textbooks
> and manuals for teaching, but when you hold classes that suit the needs of each
> child…there was nothing for reference. Open-school doesn't educate children
> altogether but each student. There was a lot of open space, but at the time I didn't
> fully understand how you taught with it (10.23.09).   If you have only pedagogic
> principles or techniques you can teach in an open-school. But even if you are
> guided by these principles, you can have a closed heart (9.25.09).   So it was hard
> in the beginning.   But once you get going – you realize the word "open" also
> means "no borders", so it's open minded… it doesn't matter if there is an open
> space or not. It is the mind frame that matters. You can make a building with no
> walls, easy. But an open mind – that involves the teachers, the children, the
> parents…the community around the school…you need all to have an open mind
> for all of these factors in order for it to be established for open school.   But I
> wasn't familiar with it at the time, so it was difficult. Before that, I was still
> teaching through the *issei* style education, and the space was just there. It took me
> about two years to broaden my mind frame and really use the potential of the
> space. (10.23.09)

He continually stressed the importance of having both an open-mind and an open-heart as

being central to successfully teaching within the open and free space of the open-structured

school. He also mentions the mismatch between transferring the *issei* style of instruction that he

had been inculcated and trained in while a student and novice teacher. At other times in our

conversations he emphasized the importance of a community of teachers to help bridge the gaps

between the traditional teaching styles they had been trained to use, to embracing the potential of the new, open space that confronted them in these new experimental schools. This shift required the teachers to move away from a one-for-all *instructional method* to an individually centered *educational experience* that seeks ways to maximize opportunities to relate individually to students and optimize their engagement with learning. In order to succeed they needed to work collaboratively to ease the burden of dealing with the pedagogical and organization discomfort associated with the new educational structure and teaching style. This transformative shift was not an individual but collective shift experienced by many of the new, young teachers in this professional community who today continue to support and advance the work of the open-structured and individualized education movement in Japan.[45]

6.4.3   Bridging Professional Communities & Linking Networks

Principal Ishiyama often mentioned his indebtedness to Professor Kato who introduced the concept of open-minded pedagogic philosophy and designed the first open-structured schools in the district thirty years earlier. During the early years of his career Principal Ishiyama actively worked out his own pedagogic philosophy through self-reflective practice, collaborative teaching, professional development seminars on individualized education, and in association with a small, but devoted community of educators supporting individualized education in Japan.

---

[45] There is a professional and scholarly community based at Sophia University in Tokyo that organizes seminars and conferences in universities and schools around Japan to nurture education students and teachers in the philosophy and practice of individualized education and to support the teachers who struggle to implement its philosophy within their classrooms around Japan. This community celebrated 32 years of individualized educational practice in Japan in March 2010.

These professional networks became even more vital for Principal Ishiyama when he took up his post as principal at Ishikawa Elementary School.

Principal Ishiyama is a commanding and compassionate educator who speaks honestly about his active role in bringing about change at the school. He is also humble and generous when it comes to sharing the accolades of the successful changes that have taken place at the school with his colleagues seeing his role as one among the many influential educators in this story. When speaking about the early years of the school change I asked him to clarify who was primarily responsible for initiating the many radical ideas that turned the school around. He claimed many of these actions as his own, but always referred to his pedagogic roots and support of his professional community as instrumental in aiding him to transform the school.

> I: … I could manage the change at this school because I had an open mind, nurtured by my experience in the open-structured schools here. It was good this place was near those schools, too. Because these schools honor individualized instruction it has an influence. If this school were too far away, it wouldn't have been good (10.23.09). …Teachers usually teach students altogether, but Dr. Kato's concept was not like that. His concept was to cherish each student. As our face differs from person to person we have to think, "what is the best education to meet each person"? (9.25.09). …And I've continued to carry out that theory. It's just that I felt that even more strongly because there were foreign children too. So we managed to talk to the other teachers here about that too. …We couldn't do this alone, only our school. That's why we have the university teachers who came and worked with the teachers here. When they talked about *koseika* (individualized education) you could feel that what you were doing is right, again. That's why we have people come into the school from outside. It's not just teaching how to do this inside the school or directly from me. It was better for the teachers to understand the idea of individualized education from a university professor. When they came and talked about that, instead of saying it myself I asked them to say certain things. (1.18.2010)

Principal Ishiyama keeps his eyes open for opportunities to act and draws on support from his colleagues from within his professional knowledge community to help impart his vision onto the teachers under his charge. He is slightly mischievous in this way. He arranged the

professional development meetings for the teachers to meet with and discuss the deeper ideas around their pedagogic practice. Rather than taking control of these meetings he shifted the voice of authority to the professors to better capture the attention of the teachers under his charge, possibly offsetting any resistance to his vision for future action.

Principal Ishiyama has spent his professional life cultivating his pedagogic philosophy and practice through association with other like-minded educators and mentors. In many ways he, and the children of Ishikawa Elementary School, benefited from simply *being* in the right place. The small school district is unusual by any measure within Japan having two open-structured schools with individualized education programs and Ishikawa Elementary School now claiming itself as also having an individualized education program within a culturally responsive environment. Superintendent Abe supported Principal Ishiyama's actions throughout the early reforms giving him the freedom to initiate any changes, or engage in activities, he felt necessary to creating a more conducive and congenial learning environment. Additionally, and maybe more importantly, he was also able to reach out to distant scholars from within this professional knowledge community to exchange ideas about how best to institute the many changes he envisioned while easing the tensions between himself and his teaching staff. This external support played an important role as the reforms where beginning to take hold and established sustainable links to universities that would keep the school connected to these outside institutions after he retired in 2009. This has, indeed, been the case and seems likely to remain so for years to come as the school continues to be the focus of research and media attention [46] two years after Principal Ishiyama's retirement.

---

[46] During July 2009 the open-air university, Hosou Daigaku, interviewed both Dr. Kato and Principal Ishiyama for materials to be used in one of the free, televised academic programs for teacher educators. The filming took place at

6.4.4   Building Trust & Believing in the Children: Bridging Relations Between the

Teacher & Child

Principal Ishiyama has always been guided by his deep commitment to, and belief in children. He is clearly at home and very comfortable with and around them. Despite the meanderings in our conversations to cover the multi-layered aspects of his professional life and experiences at Ishikawa Elementary School the constant thread that binds these stories is the deep commitment Principal Ishiyama has to nurturing the positive and sustainable growth of the children. During our first encounters I focused our conversations on the steps Principal Ishiyama took to build community and create an inclusive atmosphere within the school when he first took up his post in April 2005. Regardless of the many times we spoke the children were, and remain, central to his philosophy and action.   Repeatedly he proclaimed, "It is all about the children". The composite narrative below is his description of the first steps he took to fix the gaze of the teachers and staff onto the children rather than away from them.

> I: There wasn't a feeling of openness when I first came here. The most important thing is to trust the children. As a teacher you have to instruct the children in particular subjects, but you also have to realize the children's potential. This is regardless of their race. There are children who are good students and who are not, who are well behaved and who are not – but you need to put all that aside and believe in the children. I wanted to make the teachers understand this. I stopped the bell at school. I wanted to make everyone see the clock, like they do in their daily lives. No one gets ordered around to go somewhere by a bell at home, do they? When I suggested this, all the teachers were against the idea. They said that there are enough children playing around even when the bell does ring – things were bound to get worse if we stopped using the bell. But that's proof you don't trust the children. You have to teach them responsibility by making each child check the time for themselves. That's what the kids do at home, isn't it? .They make plans with their mothers, or plan times to go home…I wanted to make them do the same thing at school. There was another reason I did this as well – there

one of the open-structured schools as well as at Ishikawa Elementary School. I was invited to tag along during these two days of filming.

was a large number of absences here. There were 300 students, and about 50 or 60 were absent. They're not good with dealing with time. I wanted them to handle time better. The aim was to decrease the number of absences, but the real goal was to allow the children to handle time better. And in order to do that, we as teachers needed to really believe in the children. So that's why I stopped using the bell. The result was, the children actually do check the time for themselves and come to class. The teachers saw this and thought, "We really do have to trust the kids". That was really an important beginning to the change (10.23.09)

Principal Ishiyama does not pay much mind to conventional practices and is not limited by the structures within which he works, be those physical or metaphysical. He functions according to a creed that does not adopt an attitude of limitation or unnecessary control. He entered into a radically different school climate from any he had experienced before, yet was unable to impose the restrictive policies of the school as it had functioned prior to his arrival. Once Principal Ishiyama proved his commitment to the children and their parents he then turned his attention to sway the teachers to seeing the importance of placing their trust and belief in the children. He stopped the chime among protests from the teachers who complained that the children were unruly to begin with and feared that without the structure and control of the chime the already loose command they had over the children would turn into sheer chaos. Despite the resistance from the teachers Principal Ishiyama remained committed to ending the chime and put his trust in both teacher and child to manage their schedules and claim self-responsibility. Per his comment in the quote above the teachers did indeed come to trust the children and believe in their own ability as evidenced by the increasing freedom the children gained over their actions and learning.

One of the most noticeable aspects of daily life at Ishikawa Elementary School is the absence of the pervasive and controlling chime that rings throughout schools and across the surrounding neighborhoods in every village, town, and urban enclave in Japan. Japanese society

is highly regimented and punctuality is a national virtue. Trains, generally, arrive and depart on the minute or hour they are scheduled, meetings and classes throughout universities are called to order at the first beats of the melodic chimes all Japanese have been conditioned to respond to. Principal Ishiyama saw the children's and teacher's internal lack of control over their schedules and time management as symptomatic of deeper and more grave issues than that of the daily time schedule for lessons and school activities. He wanted to remove the artificially designed barriers that separated school life and teaching-learning from the children's and teachers daily lives. By doing so he was able to reinstate the natural rhythm and pulse of life associated with engaged living and learning *in the world* rather than the heavy hands of the clocks as they extend each moment of a day darkened by the despair he encountered upon his arrival to the school.

In the first months after taking up his post Principal Ishiyama demonstrated to the Japanese-Brazilian children and their families that truancy was unacceptable, even if the law did not require he make them come to school.[47] The truancy rate remained consistently low for the Japanese-Brazilian children from the time he entered the school and Principal Ishiyama found this unacceptable. Foreign-national children are not required to attend school, though the city government encourages their parents to enroll them. Teachers are not obliged by law to ensure these children come to school, and there is not check by the local board of education to confirm their attendance, unlike Japanese nationals. Principal Ishiyama spoke about his ceaseless efforts to physically wrest the children from their beds and get them to school. Day after day he would make the walk across the narrow lane that leads out of the school, cross over the two lane road

---

[47] Japanese law only requires national citizens to attend school from 1st grade – jr. high school graduation or age 15, whichever comes first. Japanese-Brazilian children, and any other non-nationalized children are not required by law to attend school. Schools are required to accept children that have been registered as residents at the local governmental offices, but no action is required by teachers or administrators to make sure they attend, as is the case with naturalized citizens (Himeno, 2003; Willis, 2006).

that skirts around the outside of the town and make his way into the subsidized housing property where the majority of the Ishikawa Elementary School students live.   He mentioned that he often passed parents on the stairwells as he climbed to the third or fourth floor apartments to wake the children left on their own after their parents left for work in the early hours of the morning.   Principal Ishiyama would take note of those children responsible for getting themselves to school and would later make changes to the time schedule shifting lunch an hour earlier two days a week to accommodate for those children not coming to school well-fed in the morning.

Through these actions Principal Ishiyama proved his legitimate concern for the education of the Japanese-Brazilian students as equal to their Japanese peers, by crossing over into their world and physically nudging them into school. Likewise he turned his attention to disrupting the teachers' non-examined prejudices of the children (and, by extension, their parents) as non-academically oriented degenerates incapable of trust or self-responsibility. These teachers had effectively displaced their responsibility to nurture these qualities in themselves onto an externally controlled system that claims no accountability for the children's presence or absence from school. Here Principal Ishiyama exposes his deeper motivation behind stopping the chime and nudging the teachers toward turning their attention toward, rather than away, from the children, which allowed them to bridge the relational gap that had previously divided and encapsulated them:

> I: The children's scholastic level was very low, and the teachers disapproved of that. The parents were not expecting much from their children, either. They're too busy living their lives and at home that they don't, or can't, really do the homework or help with the children's studying. The teachers had the same mind frame – they didn't think they were worth teaching. Because the children weren't performing, the teachers slacked off and weren't trying their best at teaching. And the parents don't complain about it either, making the situation worse. It was a snowball effect – the teaching was bad, so the children didn't get any

166

brighter, and the teaching got worse. It was all going in a negative direction so I stopped using the bell and made the children think for themselves. And there were a lot of absences that we needed to think about too, but we really had to try and make the children begin to perform scholastically and engage in school. **…** But if you act, things can change drastically. I think everyone sensed that. They [the teachers] thought, "Wow, the children are so engaged. Maybe we'll try it out. And the positive result in the children made us teachers make that change quicker (10.23.09).

6.4.5   Taking Trust to Its Fullest Limits: Reciprocity & Freedom

In an earlier section of the dissertation I introduced an extra-curricular activity called *waku waku free time*, which was initiated by Principal Ishiyama to provide the children an opportunity to explore a broader scope of learning and engage more freely with teachers and peers outside of the classroom.   The initial success of *waku waku free time* was dependent on the reciprocal exchange of trust that Principal Ishiyama fostered between teacher and student when he stopped the chime at school as introduced in the earlier section. Consistent with his focus on, and belief in, the children the *waku waku free time* was originally targeted toward getting the children more engaged with school by exposing them to shared experiential learning opportunities focused on enjoyment and exploration.

During one of the conversations we had about the development and importance of *waku waku free time* I asked him about the reciprocal nature of these weekly out-of-the-classroom free time learning experiences that I saw as benefiting and opening up the teachers to the students as much as the students to the teachers. Interestingly, Principal Ishiyama admitted that, yes, the teachers did enjoy designing their own lessons and drawing on areas of expertise they were

unable to fully explore during regular classroom instruction,[48] but ultimately the purpose of *waku*

waku free time was to "think solely about the children" (1.18.10).

> I: …When the children have fun, they won't be absent from school. In the winter a
> lot of children would not come to school, and we came up with *waku waku* to try
> and make them come to school more. That was the idea. What we did was think
> solely about the children. We suggested creating a lesson where we can teach the
> children anything, so they can have fun – the aim was to decrease the number of
> absences. The teachers were shocked that the children "could do anything" and
> thought the concept of *waku waku* was strange. But once it started, the children do
> *do* something. There are a few children who don't do anything, but that's okay too,
> we don't push them during this time. And the teachers can teach them, like you
> said before, their strong fields. …They get to teach their interests and fields they are
> good at …but that is not the main focus. …It is not about the teachers but the
> children. It's about what the children want to learn, and we teachers have to prepare
> ourselves to teach them what they want to know. The main focus is on the children.
> The second priority is about the teachers. …They can have the children who are
> interested come over and listen to him. The teacher doesn't force them. For
> example, they say "I'm going to make a big bubble so come and look if you're
> interested" and they come over of their own free will. The teachers begin to be
> creative with their ideas to lure the children over. If the Brazilian children are
> having fun with something, the Japanese children copy what they're doing, and vise
> versa. (1.19.10)

Every activity and event that has been initiated at the school has a regard for the children

behind it. The focus of the events or activities may be different, but at the root of any action

taken by Principal Ishiyama the children are at the center. The first activity to be put in place

was the *waku waku free time*, which was designed to bring enjoyment and fun in to the lives of

the children while in school. Simply put, Principal Ishiyama recognized that there was nothing

pleasureable to entice the children to come to school. Slowly after the introduction of *waku*

waku free time the children began to relax and enjoy their experiences at school. These

enjoyable activities had great benefit for the teachers as well as the children. The teachers

---

[48] Teachers in Aichi prefecture may take a duo elementary/junior high school teaching certificate and many
elementary school teachers have had experience teaching in their specialized field in the junior high school. For
such teachers *waku waku free time* allows them an opportunity to introduce the students to activities they might
otherwise not engage them and many enjoy the enthusiastic response from the students.

experienced a loosening in their relationships when the learning was taken out of the classroom and the pressures and constraints of the standardized curriculum were released. Conversations with Takeishi-sensei (head of sixth grade division), as well as informal remarks made by other teachers, confirmed the positive relational shift between teacher and student that resulted as an unintended consequence of these changes focused "solely on the child". I asked Principal Ishiyama about the reciprocal opening-up that resulted from this extra-curricular weekly period.

> I: The children get a sense of fulfillment when they achieve something. It's not like when they're taught and instructed by the teachers and feeling irritated by the patronizing instructions, you know? They feel good when they learn for themselves and find things out. I mean, with education, you can't get a result straight away. But, the children can sense the excitement, they are having fun. And the teachers saw that in the children, so – we changed, too" (10.23.09).

Waku waku free time also created more opportunities for the Japanese and Japanese-Brazilian children to more fully interact with each other during the experiential learning opportunities they later developed after the teachers modified this period to be slightly less "free". The open-structure, ability to choose, and freedom of the *waku waku free time* exposed the children to each others', and their teachers', hidden selves allowing them to engage and excel in areas that may not have been fostered within the traditional classroom setting.

Leticia previously mentioned a concern about the amount of "play" time the children have. I share in her concern, though not so severely. Originally, *waku waku free time* was developed to relieve the undue stress and negativity of the school when Principal Ishiyama took up his post and it has been effective in doing so. As I said, there is great value in this a program, and it has been under constant development to refocus the activities to student and teacher designed and directed rather than the free-for-all it started out as. There are other empty spaces

169

of time though, and the children appear to have a lot of freedom to move between their lessons sometimes filtering in classes late further reducing time for their focused and engaged learning of the curricular subjects.[49] This is particularly the case in the upper elementary division. On the one hand, this is a direct result of the implementation of the individualized curriculum, and I believe the system works well for these lessons. On the other hand, the children would benefit from more engaged and focused activities that broaden the work they do during these lessons per Leticia's concern that they have too much "play" time.

6.4.6   Letting the Child Lead: Bridging the Curriculum to the Child

Principal Ishiyama is very clear that the kind of open-minded, individualized education he endorses and practices is quite distinct from the traditional, more widely implemented model. He firmly believes that the two are very different expressions born out of counter philosophies of teaching and learning. He spoke ardently of the importance of self-guided learning within a wider conceptualization of when, how and where teaching and learning occurs. His use of the plural possessive pronoun underlies his association with the open-minded and open-hearted pedagogic practices from his earlier years teaching in the open-structured school despite no longer working within that system.   Existentially he remains rooted in the open-minded, open-hearted, and barrier-free space which he has dedicated the last years of his career to recreating in Ishikawa Elementary School.

---

[49] The school calendar has gone under extensive revisions changing each year between 2005-2009. Many of the changes were centered on creating "break" times to allow the children time to freely engage with each other, others were directly focused on academic work. The significant changes were: altering lunch time twice a week to an earlier period; reducing content lesson instruction from fifty to forty minutes, creating twenty minutes of quiet and mentor reading time three times a week, extended break period between third and fourth period to twenty minutes, reduced drill time from twenty to ten minutes a day and "outdoor play time" on Fridays after lunch. *Waku waku free time* occurs fourteen times a year on the third Thursday as mentioned in the section on school programs.

I: Open-school doesn't educate children altogether in the same way, but educates each student individually. In traditionally organized elementary and junior high schools, there are the mandatory subjects like Japanese, science, and math. Teachers teach them as a subject of instruction to all students the same. But in open-school, we don't teach them as a subject, we teach students how to learn, or study these, by themselves. For example, now I talk to you one by one. There is a way to study through talking. It can help students communicate with others. And sometimes you move yourself, you go out to do exercise. You can see and touch something. It is also a form of "study". And now you can learn something from computer, technology, or books. There are a lot of ways to study and learn. And it is good for students to find the best way of studying for them, and to study many different things in many different ways. When the same teachers always teach students subjects like Japanese, science, social studies, and math all together in the same way it is not the open-school way. (9.25.09)

The pedagogic and curricular changes that Principal Ishiyama implemented required the foundation of trust and freedom he had earlier established among the teachers and their students. When I asked if he believed that his leadership was required to design and implement the individualized curriculum he quickly reminded me that instituting such a change is not possible by way of command, but requires collaborative and cooperative effort. Unlike stopping the chime at school, which was a directive from him as the top administrator in the school, the individualized curriculum required that, first, the teachers opened themselves up to trusting and believing the children could manage the freedom necessary to introduce an individualized learning style. Below are two conjoined conversations taken from discussions we had about the first steps taken to introduce the individualized curriculum to the teachers at the school.

E: It sounds like something you can't achieve on your own. Everyone has to come together as a team. Is that right?

I: Right…The fourth – sixth graders – I think if at least two grades became motivated to make the effort, I think it would be possible. You can't do it on

your own. And with things like *maru maru* [50] – everyone has to really be able to believe in the children. If, for example, you were holding *maru maru* but were teaching in the same *issei* teaching style, it's pointless. I can't stress enough that you need an open mind for *maru maru*. Otherwise, even if the children are doing things individually, teaching to each child, if the thinking is still focused on one way for all like with *issei* (unified) instruction then it cannot work. So it all depends on how much you can trust the children. (10.23.09)

E: So you came after Takeishi-sensei. Was the atmosphere at the school very different then….more traditional?   I wonder if she might have wanted to carry out something like *maru maru*, but it …

I: …Didn't succeed, right. It used to be like that. But the *koseika* (individualized) education is not like that. The children who do not do well at studying have a hard time coming to school, unlike the children who can do well and enjoy school, generally. *Koseika* education is about making the children who have difficulties learning feel a sense of achievement and enjoy school. The traditional way of studying at the time I came to the school was about endurance and discipline, and that was not good.   You were saying before that there are teachers who sometimes abandon the foreign children who don't understand Japanese. With the traditional way of Japanese teaching, that happens, did happen when I arrived. The foreign children do not understand Japanese or cannot study as well as the Japanese children. We teachers wouldn't – couldn't- take care of those foreign children. So what we did was apply the *koseika* education that Professor Kato taught us. The concept was to suit each child's needs and not stick to the traditional way of teaching. We had Professor Saito and Dr. Kato come over and talk to the staff. When we apply *koseika* education, we're suiting each child's needs in a way that the traditional methods do not. And as a result, the children are happy. The staff then realized how effective this teaching method is. (1.19.10)

Here Principal Ishiyama comes back to the necessity of trusting the children, believing

that the children are the best guides to direct the best way of learning for themselves.   When

Principal Ishiyama speaks about teachers needing to learn to trust the children he implicitly

indicates his own responsibility as an administrator to trusting the teachers under his charge. We

never spoke directly about this despite my attempts to direct the conversation in that direction.

Principal Ishiyama clearly is, and has always been, solely focused on the children and doing

---

[50] The individualized curriculum designed and implemented at Ishikawa Elementary School is called *00-gakushu,* (maru maru gakushu).

whatever needed to be done to ensure their active and engaged learning under his guidance. The teachers at the school deeply respect and admire the work of this visionary educator and he seems to have harnessed the support of the teaching staff with little conflict. His early efforts at reform were occasionally met with resistance, though eventually his committed actions, personal involvement, respect, and belief in both teacher and student convinced the staff to trust in him and act in accordance with his vision for change. The head teacher of the sixth grade, Takeishi-sensei, made the following comment to me when I asked her about the attitudes of the teachers when they first began designing the individualized curriculum. "When we all moved in the same direction, it wasn't so tough – on the other hand, it brought joy. I think that Principal Ishiyama had a big influence in not making the other teachers complain" (1.19.10).

6.4.7   Seeing Difference Differently: Bridging the Language & Cultural Gap

From the moment I first entered Ishikawa Elementary School I found myself distinguishing between the Japanese-Brazilian children and the Japanese children. I spent many of my earlier observations trying to sort out the relational space(s) that existed between them, when and where they were engaging with each other, and how the groups interacted in classroom or learning activities, shared friendships, and generally consorted with each other. I also focused significant portions of my questioning, initially, on the differences between these two groups of students to get a sense of how, or if, the teachers differentiated their behavior, attitudes, and instruction between the students. Principal Ishiyama is a patient and generous man. He spoke openly about his experiences working with the teachers, students, and parents, and spoke about the stories of change that he was largely responsible for initiating at the school. He usually remained fairly steady in his responses, not overly emotional or critical, and seemed to carefully select his

comments when speaking of his fellow educators and the actions (or inactions) of the principal who preceded him. It became readily apparent, though, that he was unable to retain his composed demeanor when the conversations centered on discussing difference between the Japanese Brazilian and Japanese children solely based on racial or cultural attributes. Very often he would stop me, sometimes laying a hand on my forearm to further drive his point home that basing actions or instruction determined by cultural difference alone was limiting to the children and got in the way of *seeing the whole child*. He repeatedly pointed out to me that all children are different, even those from within the same racial, cultural, linguistic, gendered or economic group.

> I: Hmm…regardless of their race, they [teachers] have to think about how to teach the child. I think that's where the philosophy lies. The Brazilian children and Japanese children have inevitable differences – not just their appearance, but their learning skills, everything is different. We didn't think about "dealing" with the Brazilian children – the *koseika* education made us treat each child differently, because each child *is* different, regardless of their race. That's the same everywhere. (1.19.10)

On the surface some of Principal Ishiyama's responses to my questions regarding the differences between the two main groups of students in the school would appear to expose a perspective of color-blindness, but this would be misinterpreting his sentiments, and reducing the underlying personal and pedagogic philosophy that guides his actions, worldview, and practice to one based on seeing culture or race as the defining characteristic of a human being. These are certainly vitally important attributes that ultimately make each one of us unique individuals and shape our ontological and epistemological stance, but these are not the only attributes to define who we are. At the root of his actions, and advocacy for *all* children in his care, lies a deep belief in the power of individualized education to bring out the full expressiveness and talents of each child, which he sees as the ultimate responsibility of the

teacher. There is no doubt that Principal Ishiyama recognizes the complex and multidimensional

nature of all children as *being different*, regardless how of similar or dissimilar they may appear

on the surface to each other.   In one of our conversations he focused his comments directly on

the power of the pedagogic relationship to release a child's potential through responsive

pedagogic action that *sees the whole child*.

> I: Like I've said many times before, we as teachers are responsible for taking care
> of the children no matter what race they are, whether they are Japanese or
> Brazilian. You have to take care of the Brazilian children, too. You can't just take
> care of the Japanese kids and leave the Brazilian kids to themselves, just because
> it's a Japanese school. You have to take care of both types of children. And the
> way to do this is by really looking at each child, being responsible for that child,
> suiting each child's needs – it's the essence of *koseika. …* And when you're
> looking at the child, you have to think about his parents too. Only looking at the
> child is not enough. His grandparents, his siblings, his friends. It all expands. It's
> important for you to broaden your horizons of what makes up the child to be able
> to teach better. ... So my teaching philosophy hasn't changed because I came here
> or anything. That's why I must pay attention to Brazilian culture, talk about Brazil
> in class, that's why I allow the kids to speak Portuguese. I wouldn't say that you
> can't speak Portuguese. It's important for them. This is the same for Japanese,
> right? That's what it's like, to be bilingual. (10.23.09)

Principal Ishiyama has spent twenty-six of his thirty years of his professional career as an

educator teaching Japanese children, yet he recognizes and nurtures the open expression of

difference in a social institution designed to emphasize sameness, interdependence, and

uniformity. He has refused to reinforce repressive linguistic, cultural, or racial narratives of

sameness that exclude those who are different, but rather seeks to cultivate a sense of community

that positively recognizes, accepts, and welcomes difference. Seeing children as individuals

constituted with cultural, linguistic, gendered, economic, cognitive, and physical differences

positions Principal Ishiyama to both recognize difference through a discriminating pedagogy that

supports the full acceptance and expression of these differences while simultaneously looking

beyond attending to any one of these attributes as definitive of the whole child. To do so would

175

be to discriminate against the child by singling out any one characteristic of the child and targeting pedagogic behavior or relations fixed on that one trait.

Principal Ishiyama and I spent many hours in conversation about the educational philosophy and organizational changes that occurred during his time as principal at Ishikawa Elementary School. As we grew to know each other more deeply the contours of our conversations became shaped by more impassioned expressions of deeply held personal beliefs. One afternoon we sat deep in conversation as the low lying sun spread angled shadows across the wooden walls, tables and floors of the principal's office. It was during this conversation when Principal Ishiyama explicitly stated his disdain and impatience for any sort of discriminatory behavior, both in and outside of school. I was moved by his convictions, open expression, and acknowledgement of the pervasive discrimination that exists in Japanese society and within the educational system.

> I: Ishikawa Elementary School is a Japanese school, so they used to make the Brazilian children speak in Japanese and ban them from speaking Portuguese. But, the Brazilian children think in Portuguese, so banning them from speaking their native tongue was wrong. However a lot of teachers used to think that way. Of course, the Japanese and Portuguese children cannot communicate to each other if they both speak their native tongues – but banning Portuguese was wrong. Like the Japanese children think in Japanese, the Brazilian children think in Portuguese. Like for Japanese. Just because you can speak a little bit of English, that doesn't mean you think in English, right? So we let them speak in Portuguese and displayed many signs in Portuguese. But before it was like that. It was rather like, "this is a Japanese school, so you have to speak in Japanese and not use Portuguese". It was like that before, yes, a lot of discrimination. It was amazing. …By banning the Brazilian children from speaking Portuguese, you are – like I said yesterday – discriminating against them. We are all human, they are all children – it's just that they happen to be Brazilian. Our job is to think about how to raise good human beings. In order to do that we have to first acknowledge their differences of nationality, race and gender in subtle ways so that we do not discriminate on such a basis. They're both children, they're both human. We don't separate the two nationalities. When you separate, it's discrimination. Before teaching them we have to recognize and appreciate these differences, then we can teach them. That is what *kosieka* education is all about. (1.19.10)

Principal Ishiyama uses the expression, "that is what *kosieka* education is all about" as a personal mantra. It is as though he could extinguish the devastating impact of the discriminatory education he encountered when first entering Ishikawa Elementary School through the sheer power of pedagogic will by introducing teachers to the promise of individualized education. Principal Ishiyama's commitment to his philosophic standpoint led him to move in the direction of supporting an additive view of the Japanese-Brazilian children that recognized and celebrated their lives, histories, culture, and language. The combination of individualized curriculum and culturally responsive reforms has distinguished Ishikawa Elementary School from most other public school responses to the foreign children that are increasingly passing through their doors. These two pedagogic reforms overlap and intersect as both invite students to express themselves openly in a school environment that is responsive to their linguistic and cultural identity and welcomes them into the fabric of the community. This, in turn, opens the door to better relations and more engaged learning in the classroom.

Principal Ishiyama spoke about the interdependence of these pedagogic practices, when I asked him whether the impact of the undeniable cultural and linguistic differences of the Japanese-Brazilian children made it easier to support the shift from the traditional *issei*, one-for-all education implemented before he came into the school to an individualized and responsive curriculum.

> E: If all the children are Japanese it may be easier for teachers to clump them into a group-oriented mindset, but with Brazilian children their difference is so pronounced and explicit do you think that the teachers had to change their thinking in order to teach them?

> I: I guess, on the one hand the Brazilian children are different, of course, but, in the end, you're the same regardless of whether you're Japanese or Brazilian because each need to be seen as individuals. It was easier for us to suggest *koseika* too because of that reason – you know, "There are foreign children and Japanese

177

children, so we won't be able to hold a class unless we think about the needs of each and every child." It's easier to suggest, and it's easier for the parents to understand. There's a bigger difference between foreign children and Japanese children, than between just Japanese children, so that created a gateway for us to suggest *koseika (individualized)* education with ease. It was a good opportunity…chance. (1.18.10)

Principal Ishiyama is open to seeing and then acting on the opportunities that seem to have evaded others who walked the same path before him. In the case of Ishikawa Elementary School School it seems clear that his first instinct was to see the challenges that confronted him upon accepting his post as opportunities to impart change rather than as a burden to endure. As we continued our conversation Principal Ishiyama talked at length about his conceptualization of multicultural education (*tabunka-kyoiku)* as based within an open-minded, open-hearted, and anti-discriminatory philosophy perfectly paired to individualized education or *koseika*. I was shocked to hear Principal Ishiyama speak so candidly about his fellow Japanese as espousing an appreciation of multiculturalism, a fairly recent phenomenon expressed as *tabunka-kyosei* (living together in a multicultural society), yet acting in a narrow-minded and discriminatory manner. Rarely have I heard a Japanese speak as openly as he did about this socially dissonant subject.

> I: Yes. I did "open mind" teaching in Sakanoue Elementary School – and it's the same here, just with children from a different culture and who speak a different language. It's the same theory. I didn't know much about Brazil, but all these kids have goals and aims, and teaching them – it's the same way as doing the individualized education (*koseika)*. The same theory. And I haven't changed much when I came here, but I was shocked at the different culture. (10.23.09). … There are many places in Japan with large populations of Brazilians. In Aichi prefecture there is Okazaki and Toyota, cities, etc. …There are lots of apartments nowadays with Brazilian families living in them, and I think the schools have such a huge responsibility in taking care of these children. But here in Aichi– I don't think they are aware enough of the importance of multicultural education and there is not enough focus on this (9.25.09). … The Japanese don't consider Brazilians as being "multicultural", they see them as a race below Japanese. So it's not multicultural in the positive sense, they're only seeing that the culture is different, less that Japanese – do you know the word *sabetsu* (discrimination)? *Tabunka-kyosei* is about *not* discriminating. The Japanese discriminate against the Brazilians, the Japanese also

178

discriminate against each other. ….. there has always been discrimination in Japan, amongst foreigner, against each other, against the ill and the healthy. …There's more discrimination between Brazilians and the Japanese because they look different. They make them look stupid and treat them badly. The Japanese – the people – with immature hearts are like this. They discriminate. They can't see people to be the same. So, on the one hand they stress *tabunka-kyosei,* but make fun of the Brazilians, or blame them if anything goes wrong. In Japan, they always separate by who is Japanese and who is the outsider, they say "The Japanese and the *foreigners*", not "*Brazilians*". *Tabunka-kyosei,* in its positive sense, is about creating minds that do not discriminate. We need to create minds that don't discriminate through *tabunka-kyosei.* (1.18.10, p.10)

From my first meeting with Principal Ishiyama he continued to speak about the political repercussions of ignoring the needs of, and discriminating against, the Japanese-Brazilian community. The statements made above distinguish his notion of discriminating against people based on difference rather than seeing difference positively *and then seeing past difference* to our shared human experiences. Recognizing difference, and then seeing beyond it makes possible our ability to interact with each other from a human standpoint, rather than one fixed on a racially, culturally or linguistically distinct, and thus disconnected position. To Principal Ishiyama we always engage each other across difference. He saw firsthand how a discriminatory educational system and school culture created chaos and negativity within the small community of Ishikawa School until he entered the school community to became an example among many of the educators he is now revered by. He stated repeatedly that he conceptualizes his actions within a future-oriented view of the children in his charge, recognizing his responsibility as an educator for both their futures and the future of Japanese society.

179

6.4.8   A Place to Call Home: Bridging Life as It is to What it Can Be

Principal Ishiyama's life and work seems defined by his openness to difference, recognizing and then taking advantage of the opportunities around him, and the broad reach of his heart to connect himself to the children and the larger sphere of their lives. He takes direction from the children, first and foremost, and then acts accordingly. In the case of the Japanese-Brazilian children and their parents his concern has remained deeply rooted in creating a community where they feel valued, included and "at home". From our first meeting in September 2009 to our last conversation to January 2010 one of the salient focal points of his actions remained fixed on creating good memories of "home" for the children of Ishikawa Elementary School. His motivation and future-oriented view is grounded both in and outside of the personal lives of the Japanese-Brazilian children. Principal Ishiyama understands his work as an educator within a political framework by expressing his responsibility, as a Japanese, to provide a quality education to the Japanese-Brazilian children as a matter of personal and social responsibility. He looks beyond the daily regime and accountability of transmitting the knowledge required by the centralized curriculum, which is very much oriented to the intellectual, moral, civic and social development of Japanese children, to a more refined notion of accountability as being one necessarily matched to the life-long well-being and individual fulfillment of the children under his charge, both Japanese-Brazilian and Japanese. One of his greatest concerns is echoed in his desire to create a sense of place of home and positive memories of belonging that will sustain the children as they move in and out of physical and existential locations throughout their lives.

Through his actions to establish a strong sense of place and create memories of acceptance and inclusion in the community for these children, who stand at the margins of

Japanese society, he claimed his responsibility as a political agent responsible for the development of a more tolerant and accepting society.

> I: Because the system is insufficient, I think that the schools don't get criticized too much for abandoning the foreign children if they cannot understand the classes. Teachers thought that way quite strongly when I entered the school. The teachers here, before, felt they didn't need to take their responsibilities seriously and let the Brazilian children do as they liked or sent them to the *nitteki* classroom. The Brazilian adults came here as migrant workers (*dekkasugi*) [51] and they brought their children with them. Because they are migrant workers, they will inevitably return to their homelands. So teachers would think they won't have to teach the Brazilian children so hard if they are going to go back. But that's wrong. No matter what their native tongue is, we should educate them so that even when they go back to their homeland, they will have good memories of Ishikawa Elementary School School. … Even if the adults are struggling, I want the children to be happy and to come to school. And when these kids who have experienced the mixed raced classes growing up, in 10 or 20 years, and have children of their own, I think the world will really change. If we treat them badly now, they will seek vengeance later on in their lives. That's why I feel such a huge responsibility in teaching these kids. Regardless of whether they are Japanese or Brazilian (10.23.09). … But, if these children have permanent residency in Japan, when they become adults, it's plain to see they won't turn out well because they have been isolated within the schools when they were little. So the problem will come back to us. We have to think about the foreign children as our problem, as a Japanese social issue. If you think of them as "foreign" and isolate them, 10 or 20 years later they will cause a riot. In about 2006 or 2007,[52] there was a riot in France. I saw it on the news. If we treated the Brazilian children badly here it'll be like the French situation, right? I figured the kids would grow up and create a similar uproar. I didn't want that. So, what I'm doing is not for us, it's for Japan (9.25.09).

Japanese teachers are classified as public servants who are required to serve their posts as educators according to a nationally certified moral creed and contract (Linicome, 2009; Tsuchiya & Okano, 1999) yet one rarely hears educators in Japan, today,[53] speaking so openly about the

---

[51] This is the Japanese term used to describe migrant workers who come from Latin America to work temporarily in Japanese factories. (The term is also spelled d**e**kasegi or dekasegui).

[52] The (im)migrant riots in France occurred in 2005 and Prime Minister Chirac announced a state of emergency because the rioting was so extensive with "gangs set[ting] fire up to 228 vehicles in 13 poor, immigrant towns and communities"(Moore, 2005).

[53] There is a history of radical activism among Japanese teachers and unions in opposing the state-controlled curriculum and educational policies, particularly during the shift from a democratically centered education in the

political nature of their work. Principal Ishiyama began our first discussions about the increased

(im)migrant student population at Ishikawa Elementary by referring to the flawed nature of the

new immigration laws.   He has come face-to-face with the children and families who are the

blood and soul of those self-serving laws. Their realities have become his reality and he has

come to care for them, and feels concern over their future. By caring and acting ethically on

behalf of this community Principal Ishiyama has enacted his personal politics. Unlike his

counterparts in many other parts of the world who can openly contest their role, or that of

education, as politically neutral, these liberal Japanese educators are much less verbal, though no

less active in advocating for their students, as is clear from their actions in this small rural

school.

In line with his earlier statements about his disdain for discriminatory educational

policies and practices he sides with the low-income children from single parent homes who also

live in the shadows of Japanese society, experience school failure, and are neglected by short-

sighted governmental policies (Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999).   Principal Ishiyama does not

discriminate with regard to his good wishes for the children at Ishikawa Elementary School. His

is a total vision and one which he hopes is far-reaching and transformative to Japanese society.

> I: …I want the poor kids with single mothers, who struggle with not having enough,
> to at least have good memories here; otherwise I don't think they will have an
> enjoyable life once they're older if they don't carry with them strong memories of a
> good school life. Regardless of their race, I want them to be happy and to be proud
> of the school they went to. To believe, "I am so grateful I was able to attend

---

early 20 century to the militaristic education system of the 1930's and 40's, and then again during the 1970's when
the humanistic and democratic reforms introduced in the 1957 Fundamental Law of Education began to be
dismantled by the increasingly conservative, neo-liberal government. (Linicome, 2009; Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999).
In fact, current reforms focusing on "a love of Japan" sparked severe dissent among many educators, who were
subsequently strongly punished, when the government wanted to reinstate the singing of the national anthem, *kimi
ga yo,* and they refused to enforce this policy (Linicome, 2009).

Ishikawa Elementary School" (10.23.09). …We have to think about how the 10 year old we're teaching now will turn out when he reaches 20 or 30. We all have that in mind. That is not a dream, it's a strong hope we have for the children – we're all looking at things in the long term. Our job doesn't involve manufacturing products – it's about shaping human beings so they will contribute goodness to our Japanese society and to the world. …Even after they have returned to Brazil I want them to feel as though they might want to visit Japan again. I talked about that in the staff meeting. …Last year when the third year students graduated from middle school, the representative who read the message was Brazilian. Also in the high school, the representative was Brazilian. When a Brazilian child becomes representative of the grade, the other Brazilian children become inspired. But the results weren't instant - you can't look at things on a four or five year span. I'll be happy if the children turn out well in ten or twenty years time. (1.19.10)

Principal Ishiyama, may stand in a class of his own due to his open expression of his rather radical political views and educational policies of inclusion, cultural responsiveness, and anti-discriminatory education. He spoke of his last years at Ishikawa Elementary School as the work of his life and an experience that profoundly affected him. Throughout his career he has advocated for the power of individualized education to draw out the unique expressiveness of each child. This is a powerful stance to take in Japanese public schools where the individual is often subsumed within the group and the teacher is expected to develop interdependence as a personal, cultural and social virtue. After his experience at Ishikawa Elementary Principal Ishiyama has come to see that this pedagogic stance has the power to bring educational opportunities to culturally and linguistically different children as well.

I: I didn't know about Brazil, but over the past four years. I have been able to teach children other than Japanese, but also Brazilian children. I have had confidence in teaching the different raced children. The teachers and the community have greatly changed. The Japanese and Brazilian parents. The parents and teachers helped out too. The parents couldn't come to our open house events (*jugyo sankan*) in the afternoons, [as is customary] so we held them at night. They were happy about that. When we were holding them in the afternoons, only about half the parents showed up, because the rest of them were out working. It's better for them at night. About 90 percent show up. The grandparents show up too. And

183

we held events encouraging Brazilian culture. The children were happy to see their flag hanging in the school, and the teachers and students changed. And we even managed to publish a book based on multicultural classes – not many people get to do that. (1.18.10)

With each event and successive change Principal Ishiyama renewed his passion for the importance of both the individualized, and non-discriminatory education he saw benefit the children and their families at Ishikawa Elementary School. Principal Ishiyama's commitment to ethical pedagogic action allowed him to advocate for children others had ignored and reaffirmed his deeply held disdain for discriminatory and exclusionary practices.   Despite having retired he has retained his influential position in the district by taking up a post in the regional Board of Education and has expanded his reach to bridge other communities confronting the same challenges as Ishikawa Elementary School.

6.4.9   Building Bridges Across the Nation

In our last conversation Principal Ishiyama and I discussed the broader range of problems public teachers and schools in Japan increasingly face as the foreign population continues to grow. Retirement came too soon to this energetic, passionate, and committed educator.   Principal Ishiyama's life has been defined by a succession of pedagogic shifts and challenges he perceived as opportunities for action.   Retirement provides a new chance for him to consider other possibilities to further the reach of his experience to build community across a network of schools, which currently stand in isolation. Principal Ishiyama intends to use the knowledge and experiences he has gained over the four years he acted as principal at Ishikawa Elementary School within a wider context. He would like to increase the visibility of the successes he

engendered at the school by establishing an extensive network of schools with Ishikawa Elementary School as a kind of model or central point of action.

I: There are areas where a lot of Brazilians are living, like here. In these areas the educational support is getting better. But, the important thing to focus on is how schools where there are only two, three, four, or five foreign students keep in touch or communicate with each other. This sprit is really needed. An area where there are a lot of foreigners living together has no problem. There are schools that aim to apply multicultural education (*tabunka kyosei)*, or individualized education (*koseika)*. But there are not really any schools that have combined the two. We have to think of schools like Ishikawa Elementary School as the center of organization and the government needs to think of these schools and about what kind of policy and Japanese school network system is needed to help the foreign children get in touch with each other. Unless the system is improved, children can't have a good time if they come to school (9.25.09). …The other day I went to Aichi University, and Toyohashi town to participate in a discussion about multicultural education. I spoke about Ishikawa Elementary School and how the children are enjoying this reformed educational system. I think that is my role now as a retired teacher, is to spread this message. Japan is beginning to change in the sense that we are thinking about how to teach these foreign children better. But Japan isn't thinking about this very strongly. I think if other small towns make an effort to change, as we did here, or are thinking very deeply about how to manage this new situation, it won't be sufficient unless the country itself changes too. In Aichi prefecture, there are areas that are committed to working in the right direction, but – they are making an effort alone. The country is not moving together. We need a network. We haven't got there yet. I have already suggested that we want this kind of network to the prefectural educational ministry, and they did it last year (2009) a couple of times, but none this year. I think we need to think about providing foreigners with a right to vote too. These things, however, need the administrations' help but they're not making an effort. They're leaving the schools to do everything themselves. (1.19.10)

Principal Ishiyama has centered his gaze on the broader political repercussions of his actions remaining ever cognizant of the future of both the individual children he has come to care about as well as the country he loves. In our last conversation, as in our first, he broadened the scope of his experiences within this small rural area to bridge current realities to an imagined future. In his future oriented vision he simultaneously sees both the possibility of a promising

future for Japan if schools and communities open their hearts and minds to the incoming (im)migrants and their families, as well as the probable peril if the same communities and schools remain closed and shut them out from full participation in school and civic activities.

As we came to the end of the last of our four conversations I regretted that I would no longer be able to engage in discussions with this captivating educator. I was surprised when and he took my hands in his, looked me straight in the eye and thanked me for my interest in the work he and the teachers at the school have been involved with over the past five years. I, in turn, thanked him for always treating me as an equal, and more importantly, for responding to me as one committed educator to another, who happened to be an English speaking, American woman. He grabbed his jacket and was just about to make his way out of the nurse's office where we had our last conversation when a couple of girls called out to him as they passed the open door, *"Ishiyama-sensei! Mata kaerimashita! O genki desu ka?"* ("Hey! Principal Ishiyama! You came back! Are you well?"). He responded in kind, calling each by their name and ended by sending off a greeting to their mothers. He turned one last time to me and bowed slightly as he took his leave.

6.4.10 Teasing out the Tensions

Principal Ishiyama is clear in his convictions about his pedagogic beliefs and the power of his practice to focus on and draw out the goodness of each child. There is no doubt about this. Nor do I doubt the importance of the emotional and psychosocial aspects of such a humanizing and ethical position. Yet, I do wonder about the many free and open activities where the children are left to their own devices designed to allow them time to release the stress of their day. At first, these "free" times certainly played an important role in convincing the children to come to

school, and then stay in school. However, I wonder if once they became settled in their place if these activities remain as important. It seems they take away time for the children to more fully engage their academic studies, and may even be distracting to the flow of the day. The children *do* study and I saw them focused and engaged in their lessons, both the individualized and whole class participation lessons. That said, I did make several entries in my field texts about the amount of unstructured and free time. There is a narrow range between pushing too much and not pushing enough. Principal Ishiyama clearly seeks success for the children of Ishikawa Elementary School, yet the structural constraints these children face upon graduation from this school will be unforgiving. The question is are the good times and positive memories enough to sustain the children in light of the difficult challenges that lie ahead if they are to succeed in the highly stratified educational system that awaits them?

6.5   **THE BRIDGE BUILDER**: PHILOSOPHIC REFLECTION

> To live in openness toward others and to have an open-ended curiosity toward life and its challenges is essential to educational practice. To live this openness toward others respectfully and, from time to time, when opportune critically reflect on this openness ought to be an essential part of the adventure of teaching. (Freire, 1998, p. 121)

> What we want is to have the child come to school with a whole mind and a whole body, and leave school with a fuller mind and an even healthier body. (Dewey, 1915/2001, p.50)

"To live in openness toward others" writes Freire (1998) "is essential to educational practice" (p. 121). This very sentiment could have just as easily slipped off the tongue of Principal Ishiyama. His deep commitment to an open-minded and open-hearted education allowed him to create spaces of learning and individual open-expression that bridged teacher to child, child to curriculum, and the school to the communities it serves. It may seem incongruous to draw on the philosophy of a Brazilian educator famous for his radically political, anti-oppressive stance as an educator to open this philosophic interpretation of Principal Ishiyama's pedagogic philosophy and actions. Yet, an underlying devotion to a humanizing, caring, ethical, and action-oriented pedagogy underlies the philosophic foundations of both of these educators. Additionally, echoes of Dewey's call for schools that nurture socially responsible, democratic ideals in public learning spaces rich with possibility where children can be free from the "patronizing teachers" (Ishiyama, 1.19.10) to quote Principal Ishiyama, who seek to merely instruct children in fragmented abstractions and disconnected knowledge is audible throughout Principal Ishiyama's narrative.

There is a strong link between all three of these educators who speak on the risk of disconnected instruction based on objective truths and knowledge when learning is understood

merely as acquisition (Biesta, 2006). Very often this narrow interpretation of learning distances the child from seeking his own answers to questions that arise out of his innate curiosity to know the world or direct his attention to matters that lie outside the boundaries of the predetermined curriculum. I found myself continually drawing on the ideas of both Dewey and Freire as I contemplated Principal Ishiyama's narrative, trying to make sense of his pedagogic stance and actions. Despite their differences historically, geographically, culturally and theoretically from each other, and from Principal Ishiyama, there are strong philosophical linkages (Fishman & McCarthy, 2007) coupled by their shared passion for ethical, reflective and responsive pedagogical practice that does not wither in the face of change or conflict, but rather affirms itself in dark times because it is bound to nurturing goodness and "right thinking" (Freire, 1998).

Another consistent theme running through Principal Ishiyama's narrative is his proclivity for an individually focused, responsive, and anti-discriminatory relational ethics that defines his personal stance toward all the children, teachers and parents within the community of the school. He recognizes that each and every relationship with the children under his charge is determined by an openness to welcome and respect the difference that defines the face of the other that he addresses (Butler, 2006). I draw on Sharon Todd's (2003) interpretation of Emmanuel Levinas' theory of ethical relationality as it pertains to the pedagogical relationship to make sense of Principal Ishiyama's dedicated work to nurture the wholeness of the Other within ethical pedagogic encounters that welcome, respect, and support the full and open expression of the other without laying claims to, or on, that Other. I follow the dominant themes within Principal Ishiyama's narrative of openness, education for goodness, trust, care, responsibility, and a future-oriented view by pulling from across a diverse range of theorists and philosophical ideas that I see embodied and acted upon in Principal Ishiyama's responses to the challenges he faced.

6.5.1 Making an Ethical Choice and Taking Ethical Action

> We can only consider ourselves to be subjects of our decisions, our searching, our capacity to choose – that is, as historical subjects, as people capable of transforming our world – if we are grounded ethically. …In other words, our being in the world is far more than just "being". It is a "presence," a "presence" that is relational to the world and to others. A "presence" that can reflect upon itself, that knows itself as presence, that can intervene, can transform, can speak of what it does, but that can also take stock of , compare, evaluate, give value to, decide, break with, and dream. It is in the area of decision, evaluation, freedom, breaking with, option, that the ethical necessity imposes itself. (Freire, 1998, p.26)

Principal Ishiyama was immediately met with a myriad of challenges and choices when he took up his post at Ishikawa Elementary School in April 2005.   He could have taken the path of least resistance, or non-action, by excluding the Japanese-Brazilian children from the life of the school community, denying their open cultural expression and use of Portuguese as the educators did before he came to the school. For Principal Ishiyama not acting to change the culture of the school to include and educate the Japanese-Brazilian children would have gone against his sense of "response-ability" (Noddings, 2003).   Having faced the discriminatory and dehumanizing educational context that separated, alienated, and excluded the Japanese-Brazilian children from the academic and social life of the school Principal Ishiyama was driven to act against the discrimination and negativity he encountered. The school culture and policies at that time stifled the full and open expression of the Japanese-Brazilian children's active presence within the school thus suppressing the relational conditions necessary to support the project of "becoming" so fundamental to an action-oriented pedagogic project based on "right thinking" and "right doing" Freire (1998).

> It is in our becoming that we constitute our being so. Because the condition of becoming is the condition of being. In addition, it is not possible to imagine the human condition disconnected from the ethical condition.   Because to be

190

disconnected from it or to regard it as irrelevant constitutes for us women and men a transgression. …Whoever is engaged in "right thinking" knows only too well that words not given body (made flesh) have little or no value. Right thinking is right doing. (Freire, 1998, p. 39)

Almost immediately upon claiming his post Principal Ishiyama took action and instituted changes based on his "right thinking" in the Freirean sense, that directed his "right doing". Where other educators were indifferent and unresponsive to the Japanese-Brazilian children's truancy and exclusion in the school Principal Ishiyama took action to bring them into the life world of the school, where they eventually claimed a central position. Reaching out and crossing over to the children and their families was one of the most important actions he took. Once he convinced the children to come to school, he then became responsible for finding ways to *keep* them in school. van Manen (1990) considers the act of indifference as a "refusal to dwell together" (p. 108).

The notion of refusing to enter into, or dwell within, an ethical relationship grows out of an indifferent stance that neglects the individual as deserving our ethical attending to his "presence" or being. Indifference is the failure to recognize the other human being in a genuine encounter or personal relation. Indifference is a failure or crisis of 'we'. (p.108)

Principal Ishiyama proved himself legitimately and genuinely concerned about the Japanese-Brazilian children who had previously been disregarded by the teachers at the school as peripheral to the community, and therefore rejected their responsibility to teach them. Whether out of fear of the extreme Otherness of the Japanese-Brazilian children or lack of professional capacity and personal will, the Japanese-Brazilian children were excluded and secluded from the life of school. Such pedgagogic transgressions were unacceptable to Koyama who sought to nurture the goodness, open-expression of self, and self-fulfillment of each child through his responsive and inclusive reforms.

191

Freire (1995) points out the relationship between a teacher's capacity to respond to challenging learning experiences and pedagogic situations dependent on the perception of fear or of the difficulty of the task itself.

> I wish to emphasize that *difficulty* is always in direct relation to an individual's capacity to respond to it, in light of his or her own evaluation of the ability to respond. One may experience more or less fear or unfounded fear; one may even, when realizing that a challenge surpasses the limits of fear, drown in panic. Panic is the state of mind that paralyzes an individual faced with a challenge that he or she easily identifies as absolutely beyond any possible attempt to respond. (p.28)

There is no doubt that the situation Principal Ishiyama confronted when he walked through the doors at Ishikawa Elementary School was difficult, yet he came to his post with both a personal and pedagogic capacity to take action that allowed him to open spaces whereby his fellow educators began to engage the children, perceived as lacking the will to learn, on a more trustworthy, engaged, and ethical level. When I write of Principal Ishiyama's actions as being ethical I am drawing on the notion of ethical relationality specific to the pedagogic relationship as an encounter that must, beyond all else, be responsive to the Other in their singularity. Though, we do always put ourselves at risk and are vulnerable to the harm that can be done when we come face to face with an Other. The ethical pedagogic relationship focuses its attention on nurturing an openness to the Other that shares in an ever-expanding space of becoming for both teacher and student within the unique nature of the pedagogic encounter. Todd (2003) writes that the pedagogic encounter is ethical when understanding of the Other is born, not out of knowledge merely *about* the other, but rather on the openness to learning *from the* Other as a wholly different human beyond the institutionalized responsibilities imposed on that relationship. First and foremost teacher and child must stand before each other as complete and distinct human beings both responsible and vulnerable to the face they look upon and learn from.

Turning our attention to the conditions for ethical possibility means giving up on the idea that learning about others is an appropriate ethical response to difference. Rather, if we place susceptibility, vulnerability, and openness at the core of relationality, then the question that begins to emerge is how we *learn* from the other. This focus on learning *from* means having to consider not only *what* we learn when we learn – narrowly defined, …rather, the shift I am making here involves investigating what is at stake in the *process* of learning from, and what the Other signifies in such a relation. What happens to ethics and education when learning is not about understanding the other but about a relation to otherness prior to understanding? (p. 9)

6.5.2 Taking Trust to Its Fullest Limits: Self Discipline, Responsibility & Freedom

Principal Ishiyama speaks about his ability to be open-minded and open-hearted as rooted in his philosophical pedagogical position which positioned him ethically to the Otherness of the Japanese-Brazilian children and the low-income children who daily faced him at Ishikawa Elementary School. Freire (1998) claims openness as a central element to his pedagogy of humanization and freedom.

When I enter a classroom I should be someone who is open to new ideas, open to questions, and open to curiosities of the students… . In other words, I ought to be aware of being a critical and inquiring subject in regard to the task entrusted me, the task of teaching and not simply transferring knowledge. (p. 49)

The first task Principal Ishiyama set before himself was to engage the teachers "in the process of learning from" (Todd, 2003) the children they had previously only come to see as irresponsible, untrustworthy, and disengaged. He saw the teachers' distrust and disbelief in the children as the root cause of their inability to "stand with" (van Manen, 1990) the child in an ethical pedagogical relationship. Principal Ishiyama did not need to be convinced that the children had the potential to be self-responsible because he looked beyond the deficit view of

193

these children, as either low-income or Japanese-Brazilian, to the deeper individual nature of each child as capable and deserving of the teachers' trust.

Because Principal Ishiyama takes pedagogic direction from the children in his midst he approached the serious problem of truancy in the school at the time he took up his post from the children's vantage point. Rather than dismiss the children as lazy and indolent, effectively displacing his own responsibility to get them to school, he targeted the disability inherent in a system that nurtures compliance and obedience, not self-responsibility and self-efficacy, on both the teacher and the students. As he says, he "wanted to make everyone see the clock, like they do in their daily lives. No one gets ordered around to go somewhere by a bell at home, do they?" (10.23.09). He had faith in the children that they would learn how to manage their schedules and get to school on time in the morning as they do home. Many of the teachers under his supervision did not.

In the *Child and the Curriculum,* Dewey (1902/2001**)** discusses the overly rationalized, fragmented, and disconnected nature of the traditional school curriculum and environment as imposing boundaries on the child that force him to acquiesce and conform. These curricular and environmental (or structural) constraints effectively limit his potential to grow in a fullness of being necessary for self-directed and independent thinking within, and in response to, the life of the community. At the end of this highly critical commentary Dewey, like Principal Ishiyama, returns to the child and the necessity of believing in the power of the child, as an actor capable of acting in their own interest when attentively and ethically guided by an educator cognizant of the trust and freedom required to do so in an educative manner.

> There is no such thing as sheer self-activity possible-because all activity takes place in a medium, in a situation, and with reference to its conditions. But, again, no such thing as imposition of truth from without, as insertion of truth from without, is possible. All depends upon the activity which the mind itself undergoes in

194

responding to what is presented from without. Now the value of the formulated wealth of knowledge that makes up the course of study is that it may enable the educator *to determine the environment of the child*, and thus by indirection to direct…Now see to it that day by day the conditions are such that *their own activities* move inevitably in this direction, toward such culmination of themselves. Let the child's nature fulfill its one destiny, revealed to you in whatever of science and art and industry the world holds as its own. (p.123, italics in orginal)

Principal Ishiyama focused his attention on challenging not only the teachers' inability to trust the children, but also nurtured the teachers' self efficacy to trust themselves to take control over their own actions rather than remain complacent and mechanistic in their practice, which had distanced them from being able to "learn from" the children, in the sense Todd (2003) speaks of.

The children at Ishikawa Elementary School are easy to dismiss as lacking desire to learn or take school seriously because they require more patience, creativity, individual contact, and above all else, care. These children would be defined as "at risk" in much of the educational literature and frequently are considered difficult to teach as most come from low-income, language minority, and single-parent homes. Principal Ishiyama refused to see these children according to social, economic, or cultural and linguistic deficiencies that pervade common perceptions of these children, and believed that given the chance they would prove themselves worthy of trust and capable of fully engaging in school life as responsible members of the community, both at school and at home. Principal Ishiyama's "right thinking" is backed up by Dewey's (1915/2001) strong belief that the bridge between home and school should be well constructed and strong.

I have attempted to indicate how the school may be connected with life so that the experience gained by the child in a familiar, commonplace way is carried over and made use of there, and what the child learns in the school is carried back and applied in everyday life, making the school an organic whole, instead of composite isolated parts. (p. 55)

195

Principal Ishiyama also sought to create opportunities whereby the children and teachers could ease the tension of institutionally imposed controls on their daily lives to link learning more directly to their life experiences outside of the school. This required purposeful action that led to redefining the relationships between teacher and child reshaped by a newly formed shared trust, respect, and responsibility and that allowed the child to claim a more active and engaged role in the relationship. The anxiety over breakdown of order and subsequent chaos anticipated by the defragmentation of time and loss of authoritarian control on the part of the teacher was too frightening and risky for most teachers to consider. As Dewey (1915/2001) emphatically claims the system as traditionally conceived has been created "for the teacher, not for the child" (p. 123).

Ultimately, the teacher who does not trust himself enough to manage within this more democratic and free space thus limits both his own and the child's freedom to act responsibility by adhering to external controls, regimented behavior, and fragmented time and space that allow greater control. Both Dewey (1938) and Freire (1998) have centrally defined freedom as a necessary tenent of an ethical and democratic education, recognizing the tension between the dialectical nature of freedom in need of self-other responsibility so as not to become repressive. First, turning to Dewey (1938)

> The only freedom that is of enduring importance is freedom of intelligence, that is to say, freedom of observation and of judgement exercised in behalf of purposes that are intrinsically worthwhile (p.61). …The ideal aim of education is creation of power of self-control. But the mere removal of external control is no guarantee for the production of self-control. It is easy to jump out of the frying-pan and into the fire. It is easy, in other words, to escape one form of external control only to find oneself in another and more dangerous form of external control. (p.64)

Likewise, Freire (1998) speaks of the necessity of risking loss of control for greater freedom and self-responsibility required to foster independent thinking, but warns of loosening

196

the boundaries too widely before having grown into one's own self-disciplined action that does not tread on the freedom of the others to exist fully within a shared space.

> Teachers who exercise their freedom will feel that it becomes greater and more integrated to the degree that they ethically assume responsibility for their actions. To decide is to break with something, and, to do this, I have to run a risk. ...Even so, coherently democratic authority does not usually sin by omission. On the one hand, it refuses to silence the freedom of the students, and on the other hand, it rejects any inhibition of the process of constructing good discipline. (p. 87)

Creating an opening for teacher and student to redefine and express their capacity for freedom and discipline was one of the many changes that Principal Ishiyama initiated to entice the children, and their families, to join in the life of the school. The second important action Principal Ishiyama undertook was to bridge the wide gap between the Japanese-Brazilian families and the school. He recognized early on that the Japanese-Brazilian children and their families were severely marginalized and discriminated against. The barriers to the school were so deeply entrenched that it took a broad imagination, expressions of cultural responsiveness through symbolic actions, and an opening of the school to the families in welcoming acts that accommodated the cultural and linguistic needs of the Japanese-Brazilian community. Being open to others and creating connections are the foundations of Principal Ishiyama's pedagogic actions. He acted in whatever capacity was necessary to ensure that the educational environment was open and connected to the families of the school, as well as to the professional network that he has consistently been nurtured and supported by.

6.5.3   Opening Up & Bridging Across Communities

By all accounts the systemic change initiated by Principal Ishiyama can be conceptualized as an opening up: of the school, of the teachers, of the children, and of the community in general. Due to Principal Ishiyama's personal open-minded and open-hearted stance he was bound to act in a manner whereby he opened up the school to the Japanese-Brazilian children and their families, the teachers to the children, curriculum to the children, and the school to the broader professional community he called upon in times of distress. "That a system is open means, not simply that it engages in interchanges with the environment, but that this interchange is an essential factor underlying the systems viability" (Buckley in Scott, 2003). In this instance it is clear that opening-up and bridging the relational, community and educational borders that fragmented the school were central to the viability and success of the reforms clearly focused on creating community and engaged learning opportunities for the children at Ishikawa Elementary School.

The importance of Principal Ishiyama's reaching out to the Japanese-Brazilian community premised on engaging them in the life of the school community were vitally important for establishing an inclusive and welcoming environment wherein the children felt safe to expose themselves on their own linguistic and cultural terms. By incrementally introducing opportunities and reforms that brought the previously divided communities of the school into contact a communal bond was beginning to adhere. Activities and events were designed not only to address the needs of the Japanese-Brazilian children, such as: the displays of bilingual signs, permission to speak Portuguese where it was once forbidden, projects posted in and around the international classroom highlighting the cultural and historical identities of the children as descendants of Japanese immigrants to South America, and The 2006 World

198

Cup viewing in the school gymnasium at four o'clock a.m., but also the school-wide activities that promoted acts of collaboration between the Japanese-Brazilian and Japanese community, like the Saturday Night Open School, International Friendship Day when the teachers organized performances and activities with the children to welcome the parents to actively participate in the life of the school and create shared, communal memories of belonging.

These events were organized purposefully by Principal Ishiyama to open the school up and bring the community together to establish a stronger communal bond and legitimize the school to the parents, both Japanese-Brazilian and Japanese. Erickson (1987) comments on the importance of establishing legitimacy within communities traditionally marginalized by educators and communities in mainstream, dominant culture schools.

> If the ordinary public school is to be perceived as legitimate, the school must earn
> that perception by its local minority community. This involves a profound shift in
> the direction of daily practice and its symbolism, away from hegemonic practice
> and toward transformative practice. In the absence of special effort by the school,
> the deep distrust of its legitimacy that increases among students as they grow
> older and the resources for resisting by developing oppositional identity that the
> school provides pose serious threats to the school's perceived legitimacy. (p. 355)

One of the necessary aspects of Ishikawa Elementary School becoming a legitimate educational institution in the minds of the parents and children was the opening up and bridging initiated by Principal Ishiyama. Through these actions, some merely symbolic, but some more deeply rooted in transformative and communal change fostered alteration in the attitudes and behaviors of the majority of the members of the community. Prior to such events as the Saturday Night School and the International Friendship Day the parents only came into contact over cultural disputes or problematic issues related to the their children. The school was not a place to enter for convivial conversation or when feeling the need to advocate for their children.

199

By opening up and bridging the school to the parents they became viewed as valuable members of the community, which would eventually reposition them to better support their children's education and interact with the teachers.

> With community in place…empowerment of teachers, students, and others focuses less on discretion and freedom per se and more on commitment, obligations, and duties that people share together. And collegiality results less from organizational arrangements that force people to work together and from other external forces, and more from within. Community members connect with each other as a result of felt interdependencies, mutual obligations, and other ties. (Sergiovanni, 1994, p.5)

6.5.4   Letting the Child Lead: Bridging the Curriculum to the Child

The greatest change to creating a sense of interdependency and mutual obligation may have come from within the school among the teachers, teacher and student, and between student and student. The discussion earlier of the importance of teacher and student having to risk relinquishing a reliance on external control for self-disciplined and responsible action proved instrumental to establishing the boundaries necessary to loosen the grips of the curriculum and traditional pedagogy that many students were disengaged from.   After opening up and linking the families of the children to the school, Principal Ishiyama worked closely with the head of the sixth grade, Takeishi-sensei, to introduce the *maru maru gakushu* (individualized curriculum) that has come to define the open culture and teaching practice of the school for the upper elementary grade students.

Despite Principal Ishiyama having focused on the enjoyable engagement of the children in their studies by introducing *maru maru gakushu* and the much looser *waku waku free time*, the

focus is firmly on providing positive relationships and student-directed educational experiences. The design of the individualized curriculum allows the children to actively participate, coordinate, and initiate learning experiences for themselves that are worthwhile and take place both within and outside of the classroom and school. This is very much in line with Dewey's design of a properly implemented individualized education, couched as it were in a Japanese cultural context, that supports the full expression, interest and cognitive development of the child while retaining a strong sense of intellectual discipline and attentiveness required for the full act of learning.

> When it is said that the objective conditions are those which are within the power of the educator to regulate it is meant, of course, that his ability to influence directly the experience of others and thereby the education they obtain places upon him the duty of determining that environment which will interact with the existing capacities and needs of those taught to create a worth-while experience. The trouble with traditional education was not that educators took upon themselves the responsibility for providing the environment. The trouble was that they did not consider the other factor in creating an experience: the powers and purposes of those taught…This lack of mutual adaptation made the process of teaching and learning accidental. Those to whom the provided conditions were suitable managed to learn. Others got on as best they could. Responsibility for selecting objective conditions carries with it, then, the responsibility for understanding the needs and capacities of the individuals who are learning at a given time. (Dewey, 1938, p.45)

The individualized curriculum and pedagogic changes initiated were designed with the specific community of children at Ishikawa Elementary School. Because thirty percent of the student population were Portuguese speakers of varying levels of proficiency in Japanese the individualized curriculum was tailored to meet both the needs of the Japanese language learners as well as the needs of the Japanese children, who also performed at a lower academic average than their counterparts in the neighboring elementary schools in the district (see footnote #68, p. 249). The traditional methods of instruction previously employed at the school did not bring any

sense of achievement, but rather disengaged the students, and in fact, turned them away from the teachers and their own learning.

6.5.5   Seeing Difference Differently: Bridging the Language & Cultural Gap

Principal Ishiyama remained vigilant in his focus on the individual needs of the children under his charge while recognizing the very important role difference in culture and language plays in the lives of the two groups of children in the school. Unlike many multicultural school policies and practices that place culture and language as the definitive focus in addressing the needs of culturally and linguistically different children, Principal Ishiyama seeks to address the child from a holistic and multi-faceted perspective that sees both culture and then beyond culture.   He spoke about the transferability of having an open-mind born out of an individualized pedagogic philosophy but applicable to a broader, deeper open-mindedness across cultures and languages. He was able to expand his philosophical orientation into a greater, even transformational shift to an open-mindedness toward all humanity that allowed him to institute culturally responsive reforms without having had any knowledge of such practice.

Mostly because Principal Ishiyama holds himself ultimately responsible for the educative experiences of the children under his charge, he acts to guarantee that the relationships, learning experiences, atmosphere and environment of the school reflects the kind of open-minded, open-hearted and non-discriminatory education that defines his personal philosophy. During our last conversation Principal Ishiyama spoke passionately about his disdain for any form of discrimination, particularly when it relates to actions taken by educators toward any child, or individual for that matter.   He drew on his pedagogic convictions in support of individualized education to introduce culturally responsive reforms that would engage the Japanese-Brazilian

children but not box them into a cultural category or essentialize them. It is helpful here to return to his words.

> I: Our job is to think about how to raise good human beings. In order to do that we have to first acknowledge their differences of nationality, race and gender in subtle ways so that we do not discriminate on such a basis. They're both children, they're both human. We don't separate the two nationalities. When you separate, it's discrimination. Before teaching them we have to recognize and appreciate these differences, then we can teach them. (Principal Ishiyama, 1.19.10)

This is a very nuanced and complicated discussion of two very different conceptions of discrimination where cultural or language difference is used both for a discriminating pedagogy that nurtures difference and as the target of discriminatory behavior dependent on the perspective of the educator. *Discriminatory*[54] *pedagogic action* against difference does not see beyond difference to deeper human qualities, in any capacity, but rather defines the individual by that which is *different*, as determined by the socio-cultural norms of the institution (be it language, culture, race, religion, sexual orientation, learning disability, physical disability, economic status, and gender). In this case difference is used to repress the full expression of the individual and determines a limited range of responses that may eventually seep so deeply into the individual as to be self-defining and stifle authentic engagement with the world. Principal Ishiyama spoke about the discrimination toward and silencing of the Japanese-Brazilian children that existed before coming to Ishikawa Elementary School and immediately took action to reverse the indifference and openly discriminatory actions that he witnessed. In this regard his actions were politically motivated as he was unable to remain neutral in the face of such an oppressive environment. Freire (1998) based his educational philosophy and actions around enriching and promoting an individuals' on-going authentic becoming, as historical figures inserted within a

---

[54] The Encarta World English Dictionary defines *discriminatory* as, "treating a person or group unfairly, especially because of prejudice about race, ethnicity, age, or gender" and I would add, language.

particular historical time. Any act, which denies the full capacity of an individual to act on the world, in their fullness of being therefore limits and oppresses them.

> If I am prejudiced against a child who is poor, or black or Indian, or rich, or against a woman who is a peasant or from the working class, it is obvious that I cannot listen to them and I cannot speak *with* them, only *to* or *at* them from the top down. Even more than that, I forbid myself from understanding them. …The different becomes not an "other" worthy of respect, but a "this" or "that" to be despised and detested. This is oppression. (p. 108)

On the other hand, *discriminating[55] pedagogic action* works in support of difference, per Principal Ishiyama's discussion of individualizing or distinguishing the unique attributes that define one person from among others. Seeing the singularity of the individual allows the teacher to better nurture that individual's development according to his needs, interests, growing capabilities and desires within a public space that is inclusive of these differences and supports the expression of them.   Both terms are used to describe actions, as well as inaction, under girding an individual's perception of their responsibility, or lack of, for the well-being and care of an Other and defines an individual's capacity for a humane and human pedagogy. Principal Ishiyama uses these terms side by side, yet also oppositionally with relation to stigmatizing a person's social or class status, race, language, gender, physical ability, or culture.   He is passionately opposed to such actions that marginalize, disenfranchise and minimize individuals by assigning them limiting categories that impede their continued growth as autonomous, complex, cultural and unique human beings.   Additionally, he speaks of the necessity to individualize education in a *discriminating* manner.   This *discriminating pedagogy* draws on *and* draws out the goodness of the child by recognizing the value of the experiences he brings with him when entering into the pedagogic relationship and utilize these in his continued

---

[55] Defined by the Encarta World English Dictionary as, "able to identify subtle differences".

development as he continues in his *becoming*. In this sense Principal Ishiyama promotes a discriminating education that recognizes and values difference as an integral aspect of the educative quality of an experience bound within a continuum of each individual's on-going unique experiences per Dewey's theory (1938).

> Does not the principle of regard for human freedom and for decency and kindliness of human relations come back in the end to the conviction that these things are tributary to a higher quality of experience on the part of a greater number than are methods of repression and coercion or force? …If the answers to these questions is in the affirmative (and personally I do not see how we can justify our preference for democracy and humility on any other ground), the ultimate reason for hospitality to progressive education, because of its reliance upon and use of humane methods and its kinship to democracy, goes back to the fact that discrimination is made between the inherent values of different experiences. (p.35)

Here Dewey (1938) focuses his discussion on his principle of the continuity of experience as it relates to the modified and many forms experience takes throughout the life of a human being. The educator's task is to discriminate between those experiences which lead to further educative experiences and those which prove to be miseducative. By taking direction from the children when designing educational experiences Principal Ishiyama commits himself to seeing the whole child and directing experiences that support all that the child is, not just one facet of being. This is evident throughout his conversations with me where he supports his position that focusing too heavily on the Brazilian children's cultural difference results in discriminating against them rather than recognizing and valuing their cultural difference as only one aspect, albeit a very significant one, of the qualities that distinguish each child as a unique individual. For Principal Ishiyama culture is only one, but one very important, part of the whole child who is uniquely and distinctly different from the others regardless of the child being Japanese or Brazilian.

Freire (1995) provides support for Principal Ishiyama's position both to see culture and to see beyond culture to the child in all his multi-faceted wholeness. Educational response solely focused on cultural or linguistic aspects of a child's being runs the risk of reducing and essentializing any one particular aspect of the child's identity and unwittingly limiting his growth and full expression of self. This is particularly important for bi-cultural, bi-racial and bi-lingual children who oscillate between cultures and languages, constantly adjusting, exposing, and shielding their cultural and linguistic selves dependent on the sociocultural contexts they experience.

> The so-called strength of blood … exists, but it is not a determining factor. Just as the presence of the cultural factor, alone, does not explain everything. In truth, freedom, like a creative deed of human beings, like an adventure, like an experience of risk and of creation, has a lot to do with the relationship between what we inherit and what we acquire. …The impediments to our freedom are much more the products of social, political, economic, cultural, historical, and ideological structures than of hereditary structures. We cannot doubt the power of cultural inheritance, cannot doubt that it makes us conform and gets in the way of our being. But the fact that we are programmed beings, conditioned and conscious of the conditioning and not predetermined, is what makes it possible to overcome the strength of cultural inheritance. (Freire, 1995, p.70)

Freire makes an important distinction here because cultural inheritance can both comfort and free an individual to move beyond the constraints imposed by the reflection of the socially projected image of himself that limits his agency to choose how, and when, he expresses his cultural inheritance or identity. These images and relationships founded on narrowly conceived concepts of one's personhood based on culturally, racially, or linguistically defined categories impede opportunities to fully realize our humanity and unite with others different from us because they focus on *what is different* and separate, rather than what unifies us in our human experience. Freire (1995) reminds us that we must respect the cultural inheritance we possess as

well as those possessed by others, what we must not do is become trapped or limited by them so that our ability to openly communicate and engage fully in the world is impeded (p.71).

Noddings (2005) makes a similar claim as Principal Ishiyama that we must first and foremost encounter each other as we present ourselves at any particular time in all our fullness of being:

> We need to recognize multiple identities. For example, an 11th-grader may be Black, a woman, a teenage, a Smith, an American, a New Yorker, a Methodist, a person who loves math, and so on. As she exercises these identities, she may use different languages, adopt different postures, related differently to those around her. But whoever she is at a given moment, whatever she is engaged in, she needs – as we all do – to be cared for. Her need for care may require formal respect, informal interaction, expert advice, just a flicker of recognition, or sustained affection. To give the care she needs requires a set of capacities in each of us to which schools give little attention. (p. 173)

Principal Ishiyama's individualized education (*koseika)* is all about discriminating the qualities of each child and nurturing each as unique, yet it does not separate or divide children according to their differences. Rather it enriches all children's experiences by making space and opening them up to both their differences and similarities as human beings in a non-discriminatory manner. I see Principal Ishiyama's actions very much grounded in an ethic of care that seeks to remove any barriers to seeing the whole child in order to care wholly for the child. Throughout our many conversations he always came back to such phrases as: "it's all about the children", or "you have to trust the children", and "you have to believe in the children." It appears that before many of the teachers at the school could come to care for and see the children as Principal Ishiyama was philosophically predisposed to do, precisely because he both saw culture and then saw beyond their cultural difference, he needed to create the conditions for the teachers to care for the children so the ethical pedagogic relationships could begin to thrive.

207

6.5.6   Clear Vision Opens Up the Way

Principal Ishiyama came to Ishikawa Elementary School armed with an open-minded and open-hearted personal view on the world and eighteen years teaching experience in the two open-structured schools in the district. The disequilibrium Principal Ishiyama confronted when he started this last teaching assignment of his career required that he return to the power of his philosophical grounding in individualized, open-minded and open-hearted education to guide him. He needed an innovative approach to address the linguistic and cultural needs of the large group of Japanese-Brazilian children, who presented him with a kind of difference he had never experienced before. Principal Ishiyama saw opportunity where others fixated only on the chaos and confusion. Rather than becoming paralyzed by the challenges presented to him he drew on his philosophical grounding and professional experiences to embrace the disruptions he encountered as an opportunity for reflection and action.

In Deweyan terms, Principal Ishiyama acted with "intelligent wholeheartedness" (Fishman, 2007, p.8), which is crucial to understanding both the creation and sustainability of the reforms enacted at Ishikawa Elementary School. Dewey's concept here is very closely linked to Freire's (1998) understanding of "right thinking" mentioned early.   "Intelligent wholeheartedness helps us focus more on what we can control (our planning, action, and critical reflection) and less on what we cannot control (the consequences of our reformist efforts)" (Fishman, 2007, p. 9). Not only did Principal Ishiyama carefully consider and reflect on his actions through intelligent wholeheartedness, but he also supported and engendered reflective practice among the teachers.   In Dewey's words,

When we have used our thought to its utmost and have thrown into the moving
unbalanced balance of things our puny strength, we know that though the universe
slay us still we may trust, for our lot is one with whatever is good in existence. We
know that such thought and effort is one condition of the coming into existence of
the better. As far as we are concerned it is the only condition, for it alone is in our
power. (Dewey in Fishman, 2007, p.9)

Principal Ishiyama seeks out goodness in children and is therefore motivated to create

goodness for and with the children in his care. He used the power of his philosophical

convictions, or intelligent wholeheartedness, to guide his actions that transformed a school that

has long suffered despair, discrimination, and divided communities. When we came to the end

of our last conversation Principal Ishiyama returned to a matter of great concern, which he spoke

about at our first meeting in September 2009. At that time he spoke about his distress for the

future of Japan if the educational system does not begin to take the education of the Japanese-

Brazilian (im)migrant children more seriously. He understands his role as an educator

encompassed within the broader national narrative of sociocultural change that is undergoing

Japan. Yet, he takes a decidedly different stance than the majority of educators who remain

disinterested in the futures of the Japanese-Brazilian in their midst because they do not feel

accountable for the future of these children they see as peripheral to the future of Japan and

therefore beyond the boundaries of their contractual responsibilities.

6.5.7   A Place to Call Home: Bridging Life as It is to What It Can Be

Principal Ishiyama repeatedly spoke of his responsibility for the futures of all the children at

Ishikawa Elementary School, regardless of where they may eventually lead their lives. While the

future of Japan is clearly present in his mind, and thus his actions are politically conceived and

motivated, he does not distinguish among the children and his responsibility to them as

incumbent on whether the children claim Japan as their home, though he clearly has a wish for them to do so. Dewey (1938) terms Principal Ishiyama's understanding of the present moment within an imagined future, as an "end-in-view" (Fishman, 2007, p.11) where he recognizes that he has a hand in influencing the future of the children in his charge with regard to the children's memories of place and belonging. Human beings generally experience time within the particular space of the present, but this is most often regarded as isolated from that which comes before it and how the current moment has an influence on the future. We do, of course, make plans and seek to fulfill goals and dreams, but Dewey's concept of end-in-view is different because he sees the past, present and future as always determining each moment we live *if we live mindfully* (Fishman, 2007, p.11). Fishman (2007) gives a good interpretation of Dewey's concept.

> Dewey underlines the benefits of unifying the past and present when he tells us that the importance of the past is to help "increase present alertness". …when the past functions properly it informs the present. Likewise, the function of future goals and hopes is to help us be interested and alert right now. (p. 11)

Principal Ishiyama feels a great responsibility for the lasting effects and impact of the experiences, understood here as the totality of educative experiences, that he is capable of controlling, providing, and nurturing. He is deliberate and purposeful about his ethical role as an educator and recognizes the cumulative and long-term possibilities of schooling on the students' current sense of becoming as well as their future selves while under his charge. The generative and future memories born out of the present schooling experiences are well-formed in his mind as he sees the children one to two decades down the road reflecting back on a time of belonging to a community in a place that welcomed and accepted them when confronted with times of hardship. For (im)migrant children his gift of good memories may be particularly significant to the children as they move across cultural spaces and between countries in search of a "home". "Remembered

places have … often served as symbolic anchors of community for dispersed people. …'Homeland'… remains …the most powerful unifying symbols for mobile and displaced peoples, though the relation to homeland may be very differently constructed in different settings" (Gupta & Ferguson, 2001, p. 39).

The idea of "homeland" is a fairly romantic Japanese view that forms a deeply embedded cultural narrative linked to the nostalgia of *furosato,* or "hometown" and is often linked to the caring, dedicated and accepting teachers at the local school who are glorified in television dramas, literary texts like Natusme Soseki's, *Botchan* (year), and movies. This notion of *furosato* represents an era lost to the modern world yet remains firmly rooted within the national memory and nostalgic narrative of times past. The interesting aspect of Principal Ishiyama's desire to recreate this memory is that he passes it along to the Japanese-Brazilian children as readily as he does to the Japanese children. There is an interesting conflict in his imagined future where he recognizes the civil unrest that can occur if the Japanese-Brazilian children come out on the other end of this romanticized version of the future. In that picture of the future, the possible life trajectory of many Japanese-Brazilian children in public schools in Japan who have not been so warmly welcomed and accepted is one that may find them feeling disjointed, disconnected and lost in the world with few positive memories to hold on to and nowhere to call home.

Principal Ishiyama remains committed to his vision and the work he began at Ishikawa Elementary School in 2005. If his vision is kept alive and expands beyond its current reach the future of Japan may, indeed, prove to be much more open and welcoming to the growing number of (im)migrants who seek to live their lives and make their homes here. Principal Ishiyama entered retirement in 2009 and has set himself a new task, one where he seeks to bridge the many

211

school districts still finding their way in the dark of this new era of multiculturalism and (im)migration. Principal Ishiyama instituted changes that claimed a space for children who had been disregarded, opened-up and bridged relationships that led to ethical pedagogical encounters, and nurtured the children's self-responsibility allowing them to engage in learning they were able to take part in and direct. Most of all, Principal Ishiyama created a community that learned to care for and learn from the children beyond the differences that mark, but do not define or limit them. I am drawn to Freire's (1998) hopeful, yet grounded message regarding the tension between romanticizing a utopian dream that engenders false hope to nurturing each individual's potential to live a fulfilled life shared equally with others.

> I ought not too easily encourage impossible dreams, on the other hand, I ought not deny a dreamer's right to dream. I am dealing with people and not with things. And, because I am dealing with people, I cannot refuse my wholehearted and loving attention. (p. 128)

If the possibilities created for the children of Ishikawa Elementary School are any indication, then maybe we have the right to dream. I draw this philosophical reflection to its conclusion by pairing Principal Ishiyama's words with those of Freire (1998) expressed above.

> The children we are teaching now…we have to think about how the ten year old we're teaching now will turn out when he reaches 20 or 30. We all have that in mind. That is not a dream, it's a strong hope we have for the children – we're all looking at things in the long term. Our job doesn't involve manufacturing products – it's about shaping human beings so they will contribute goodness to our Japanese society and to the world. (Principal Ishiyama, 1.19.10)

Principal Ishiyama sees a direct link between the relationships he has with the children at Ishikawa Elementary School and their future potential as human beings capable of carrying their goodness into the world. He rightly recognized that his response-ability for the children has far greater repercussions in the lives of these children than the day-to-day organization of managing

212

their daily lives within the school and claimed that response-ability in every action he took. He imagined the individuals they will become in the future when he looked into their faces in the present. He holds hope for the future in these children, and enacted that hope in his ethical relationships with them and their families. To close with Todd (2003), "it is precisely in our relationality with others where hope is to be found" (p.25).

6.6   THE YANKEE[56] TEACHER: TAKEISHI-SENSEI

Head Teacher, 6th Grade & In-Residence Officer of Research

"I'm not the most elegant woman myself. I don't speak that politely. I used to be fairly rough myself ... it is not as though I became rough after coming here... so I have the same kind of qualities as the yankee children. I can relate to their cuteness, their naivety and their rebellion." (Takeishi-sensei, 10.22.09)

6.6.1   First Impressions

Takeishi-sensei's self-description does not correspond with my first recorded impression of her. However, after a year and a half of speaking with her and observing her as she interacts, teaches, disciplines and jokes with the "yankee" children she describes above, I have come to see some of these qualities. The descriptors used in my field notes after my first meeting with her focus on words such as: professional, confident, committed, disciplined, forceful, and intimidating. While these descriptors still ring true, I would also add caring and respectful to the list

I first saw Takeishi-sensei when I attended the Teaching Foreign Children and Japanese Second Language Curriculum Professional Development seminar in September 2008 at the Ishikawa Elementary School. The meeting was held in the home economics room, which had already begun to fill up with the 38 teachers in attendance.   Soon after choosing a seat at an empty table one of the men I had met earlier during registration walked over to ask me to move out of the main seating area. Despite having decided on an isolated seat at the back of the room I

---

[56] "Yankee" in Japanese usage differs from its associative American meaning, and is used to describe someone who is rebellious, rough, and disregards socially imposed standards of behavior.

was considered an outsider and sharing a space with the teachers was, apparently, over-stepping my welcome. I was redirected to a stool placed beside two Japanese educators who were sitting next to the table where the guest speakers and presenters were seated. I took my place on the small stool next to a Japanese woman dressed rather casually in slacks and a pale pink short-sleeved polo shirt. She had short black hair and wore glasses. She positioned herself on her stool with her feet firmly set and back straight. She held a set of papers in her hands and looked out across the audience of teachers in front of us. I recall rearranging my own posture as I struggled to find a comfortable, yet acceptable position on my small stool. I lamented having lost my more comfortable spot at the table where I could have more easily jotted down my observations and thoughts of the meeting. I remember thinking it odd that my neighbor did not turn to acknowledge me, or even nod her head in the subtle, veiled greeting that Japanese are particularly skilled at making.

Minutes after the seminar was called to order and Principal Ishiyama ended his welcoming remarks the woman seated next to me was called to the front of the room. She took her place at the center of the table, faced the crowd confidently, and with no hesitation introduced herself as Takeishi-sensei, the head of the 6th grade classes and in-residence officer of research. She spoke in a commanding voice as she discussed the importance of individualizing instruction to aid the comprehension of the non-Japanese speaking students. She continued to remark on the merits of such a program and gave detailed accounts of the many ways the Japanese as a Second Language Curriculum can be integrated into the mainstream lessons to support the success of the foreign children in their classrooms. She again made the point that the teachers have to be willing to adjust the curriculum and seek out lessons that both draw out and build upon the individual talents and skills of the students if they wish to enjoy the same level of

success they have experienced at Ishikawa Elementary School. When she returned to her place next to me, I felt an urge to express my appreciation of her educational philosophy and commitment to her work with the Japanese-Brazilian students, but she took her seat, placed her hands in her lap and continued to stare straight ahead.

The next chance I would have to see Takeishi-sensei was under similar circumstances when I visited Ishikawa Elementary School again in February 2009 for the locally organized professional development seminar on individualized education for local educators and university education students. Again, Takeishi-sensei took a central position as one of the speakers and was joined by some of her colleagues who spoke on the philosophy and practice of an individualized approach to teaching. She once again commanded the large space with her strong voice, confident demeanor and professionalism. I soon began to understand that she was as central a figure in the story of Ishikawa Elementary School as was Principal Ishiyama, though I would later learn that these two educators' earliest experiences in the school were very different.

6.6.2   First Encounter

My first official meeting and interview with Takeishi-sensei came rather unexpectedly when I made my third visit to the school in September 2009. I had arranged to meet with Principal Nishiyama, new to the school, and Nishida-sensei, the curriculum coordinator to discuss my visitation and interview dates over the next six months. When I arrived that morning Takeishi-sensei had already left for her classroom and had missed my introduction to the teaching faculty and office staff. There is always a great deal of ritual in Japan with regard to entering an established group, and I had expected such an affair.

216

After we finished discussing the visitation dates and interview schedules, Nishida-sensei informed me that he had gone ahead and arranged two interviews for me; one with Takeishi-sensei arranged to take place during lunch, and the other with Principal Ishiyama for the following day after school. In addition to this first meeting with Takeishi-sensei I would have two subsequent hour-long formal taped conversations, many informal talks during and after class observations, and enjoy an afternoon with her and two professors from a university in Tokyo in March 2010 when she visited Tokyo for a professional development seminar. After finishing my meeting with Principal Nishiyama and Nishida-sensei I decided to take advantage of the hour I had to observe the Japanese as a Second Language classroom. I then returned to the staff room and waited for Takeishi-sensei.

When she entered the room she nodded to me in a slightly informal manner, greatly alleviating the tension I was feeling over our first formal meeting. She was wearing a white sports jacket with blue stripes down the sleeves and trousers, not unusual attire for an elementary school teacher in Japan. I often saw the teachers dressed in athletic wear on my visits to the school. Teachers in Japan are responsible for all aspects of their children's experiences, including physical education, and I assumed that she must have had her scheduled gym day with her sixth grade class. Takeishi-sensei's hair is short and the cut is better described as functional rather than fashionable. She is medium height and stocky in her build, though not over-weight. Her metal, oval shaped glasses do not draw attention to her eyes, which belie a delight and compassion not readily apparent. Her lighter side is revealed when her slightly tense expression loosens into a smile, exposing her more playful, caring nature.

It is curious now to write of my nervousness during our first meeting because our relationship has grown into a personal, collegiate and friendly one, no longer constrained by the

formal manners that defined our first meeting.   At first I was concerned that she would not open up to me, but I was mistaken and taken aback at how readily and completely she responded to my questions. She began telling me her story, looking straight ahead rather than at me.   She continued speaking this way (which is quite common in Japan), only turning to look me in the eye when I stopped to ask for clarification or made a comment she found intriguing, which, fortunately, was often.

I have grown accustomed to the lack of eye contact in Japan**,** though still marvel at train passengers who sit parallel to each other deeply engaged in conversation, eyes looking straight ahead.   However, Takeishi-sensei's forward-looking gaze startled me a bit as I kept my eyes on her profile listening intently to understand the complex vocabulary and philosophic ideas that make up her pedagogic beliefs.   The sheer number of words, which continued to stream out of her mouth as she looked at a spot in the distance, seemed to come automatically, as though she had memorized them.   I was not wrong in thinking of her words as rehearsed because often after mentioning something she would follow-up with "as it is written in the book."   I told her I was doing my best to work through the book that she, Principal Ishiyama, and the other teachers and professors associated with the changes initiated at Ishikawa Elementary School had written (Kato, 2009), but it was taking quite a lot of time and struggle to tackle the Japanese.   I may have imagined it, but I believe I received a nod of approval for my perseverance with such a challenging task.

6.6.3　The Early Years: Finding a Philosophic Home & Professional Community

Takeishi-sensei has been teaching for close to thirty years, transferring into her position at Ishikawa Elementary School twenty years into her career as an educator. She accepted her first teaching position fresh out of university at the first open-structure elementary school built in the area, Sakanoue Elementary, where she stayed for ten years. She then moved on to teach at the second newly built open-structure elementary school, Nishikawa Elementary for another 10 years, until moving to her present post in 2001. Similar to Principal Ishiyama's teaching experience, Takeishi-sensei's early years introduced her to the individualized education teaching style and crystallized her philosophical orientation and pedagogical stance.   She would often mention these early years of her teaching career fondly. I recall her strong affirmation of Sakanoue Elementary School when I commented on how impressed I was after having spent a day observing there , "Well, of course!" she exclaimed, "No one visits there and has any other impression" (informal conversation, 7.9.09).   Prior to working with Principal Ishiyama, at Ishikawa Elementary School, she was associated with him in district activities or events, through the local school network, and during their shared membership in the The National Individualized Education Society of Japan established by Dr. Kato (as previously described).

When we spoke about these early years of her career, Takeishi-sensei focused on the many hours of work she put in as a novice teacher at Sakanoue Elementary to develop and design the individualized curriculum implemented there, called *shupro*[57]. She also spoke of the tremendous influence of the acting principal at the time who supported her as a nascent educator

---

[57] This course resembles and informed her development and implementation of the 00-*gakushu* (individualized) curriculum at Ishikawa Elementary School.

by providing opportunities for experimentation with the individualized curriculum and reflective practice that helped her develop the pedagogic philosophy that continues to guide her actions. She reflected on the joy of having others recognize and affirm her professionalism and hard work during her earliest years teaching and spoke of these moments as having made a lasting impression on her.

> T: When I first went to school during my probation period as a new teacher (*kyoiku jisshu*)**,** the school I was appointed to only had *issei jugyo* (traditional, group-oriented, teacher-directed instruction). But when I came to Sakanoue Elementary they introduced me to these new types of classes. *Shupro* was the most interesting. They said that the three experienced teachers would hold the *shupro* classes first, and I would be allowed to do it the following semester after observing them. At the time [early 1980s], Sakanoue Elementary School held professional development workshops (*kenkyu kai*) to showcase the new type of education we were doing, and about 1,000 people came from around the country. So I prepared for that – I was in charge of the science *shupro* the following semester, I really did that on my own. But when it was all over, the teacher in charge (*shunin*) came up to me – he was a shy man, and never really gave much praise – said, "You tried really hard for *shupro*. The principal was also there at the time and told me, "Well done." I remember being really happy then. I knew I had made an effort, but I was happy they understood. I was prepared to work hard for myself, but did not expect to receive praise from others. Of course, I worked hard to teach the children well, that sense of satisfaction is always there (1.19.10).

At the end of this quotation Takeishi-sensei speaks of the enduring satisfaction she continues to experience for having her hard work noticed, and affirmed, as a novice teacher. Unfortunately, in her first years teaching at Ishikawa Elementary she would find little affirmation from those around her, and even less to praise in the children she was teaching. After a period of deep despair soon after taking up her post at Ishikawa Elementary School she found comfort in these earlier memories to get her through periods of crisis. She also returned to, and deepened, her philosophic convictions by connecting with the professional knowledge community, which guided her when she felt at a loss to bridge the gaps required to teach her students in ways she would not have originally thought possible.

6.6.4   A Crisis of Confidence: Seeking Out and Finding Goodness in the Child

Unlike Principal Ishiyama, who spoke of his colleague's negative reactions to his being sent to Ishikawa Elementary, Takeishi-sensei described her sense of dismay when she learned of her transfer to the school. Not only did the school have a dismal reputation among educators in the district as a troubled school with low-income, defiant students and depressed teachers, but also a new story was emerging of Japanese-Brazilian families who were seen as invading the school and lowering the already dismal reputation. Additionally, the physical space of the school and pedagogical structure mirrored the traditional *issei* teaching style (uniformed instruction), with which Takeishi-sensei had little affiliation or experience. She spoke about undergoing a crisis of confidence, feeling isolated, and suffering the harsh reality many teachers struggle with when trying to educate disengaged, disruptive, and rebellious students.   She faced many challenges, not the least of which was to teach the many Japanese-Brazilian students in her class that were either unable to speak Japanese, or unwilling to express themselves and take part in the lessons.

An important aspect of Takeishi-sensei position within the broader story of Ishikawa Elementary school is that she entered the school four years prior to Principal Ishiyama. The environment and school culture she met with may not have been radically different than that which Principal Ishiyama entered, but she was in a disempowered position with little access to the type of camaraderie and support she was accustomed to receiving.   As well, the Japanese-Brazilian student population at the school had exploded between 1993 and 2001 when Takeishi-sensei entered the school. There was a subsequent increase by ten percent before 2005**,** when

Principal Ishiyama entered the school[58] (Kato, 2009). Takeishi-sensei not only faced a radically different student population from the middle-to-upper class native Japanese students she had taught previously, but was also isolated and alone in her pedagogic philosophy and practice. In many ways she was not unlike the Japanese-Brazilian students in her class who were also alienated and stigmatized due to their cultural and linguistic differences. Takeishi-sensei was quite alone among her peers since she had come from such a radically different pedagogic background and philosophy. She mentioned feeling that the professional knowledge and practice she gained in the open-structure schools was not transferable to this new population of students.

On the other hand, similar to the other teachers in the school, Takeishi-sensei had no experience teaching linguistically and culturally different children or knowledge of multicultural education upon which to draw. The combination of these two facts highlights the tremendous strain that she experienced upon taking up her post at Ishikawa Elementary School.

> T: When I first came here, Ishikawa Elementary was fairly ordinary. I mean, I don't have anything against *issei shido* (traditional teaching style), I thought I could cope either way (1.19.10). Everything I had been doing over the past 20 years didn't work at this school. I soon realized I couldn't carry out *koseika* (individualized) education in the first place, which is why I thought applying the *issei* system – a system that focused on order, and disciplining the children, was so important. I mean it's not that I don't think that's important now but…When this concept of discipline clashed with the children, it made me realize how inexperienced I was as a teacher. Even though I had gained some confidence over the past 20 years… it was a big blow. Especially the first two to three months, I struggled with that. I couldn't feel any affection towards the children, and I think they saw through that. I knew it in my head that if I don't open up to them, they won't open up to me. But I just couldn't feel affection towards them. I was not able to see the goodness in the children and therefore I could not come to like them. If you think about it from the opposite perspective, there were children

---

[58] The total number of students increased from nine Japanese-Brazilian students enrolled in 1993 to approximately 60 students in 2001 (Kato, 2009). The population continued to grow to the current population of 79 students (due to the economic downtown several Japanese-Brazilians families have returned to Brazil or moved to other areas of Japan in search of work).

who opposed me because I couldn't see any goodness in them. That was the toughest thing. (10.22.09)

These earliest teaching experiences of Takeishi-sensei's life at Ishikawa Elementary forced her to question her ability as an educator and caused her to doubt the applicability of the individualized teaching practice she had perfected and believed in during the first two decades of her career. She not only carried the positive memories working within the progressive and privileged environments of Sakanoue and Nishikawa Elementary Schools, but these memories may have overshadowed her experience upon entering Ishikawa Elementary, thus interfering with her ability to see goodness in the children as they moved in and out of the noisy, chaotic classrooms and halls of Ishikawa Elementary School.

I asked Takeishi-sensei to speak further about her early struggles after being posted to Ishikawa Elementary because I wanted to get a sense about how her experience teaching the students at Sakanoue and Nishikawa Elementary Schools differed from those at Ishikawa Elementary School. I was curious why she felt her individualized teaching style would not work with the Ishikawa students and why she felt it necessary to teach in the traditional *issei* style, which ran counter to her deepest pedagogic beliefs.   She provided a comparison between the sorts of students she had grown accustomed to teaching at the two open-structured schools to her students at Ishikawa Elementary. I was surprised by her response because she spoke more of class difference, than the cultural and linguistic differences between the groups of children she taught in these vastly different schools. She contrasted their family backgrounds, overall demeanor, behavior, academic engagement, and participation of both parents and children within the life of the school. The children at the open structure elementary schools were behaved, well groomed, well spoken and academically oriented. She spoke about the overall highly educated

parent population and the attentiveness and eager participation of the parents from those schools.[59]

As she had expected before entering Ishikawa Elementary, the children's parents were generally disengaged, especially the Japanese-Brazilian families, and did not readily participate in, or attend school functions for the first several years after she took up her teaching post. Additionally, the academic support she had come to expect from the parents at the open structured schools was not forthcoming from the many single-parent Japanese or Japanese-Brazilian homes of her Ishikawa Elementary School children. I interpreted this comparison as coming from a cultural deprivation lens, which at first may very well have been the case, but seems to have changed to a more understanding, supportive and well-informed position. It appeared that Takeishi-sensei's first impression of her students was that they came from culturally impoverished homes as evidenced by their improper use of language, undisciplined behavior, low academic skills and general malaise with regard to school involvement. This early view of the children and the strong focus on discipline and control over the children severely limited her ability to relate to, or find any positive attributes in them.

When I asked Takeishi-sensei to differentiate between her earliest impressions of the Japanese-Brazilian and Japanese students at the time she entered Ishikawa Elementary, she did not comment on many distinctions beyond the obvious cultural and linguistic differences. She mentioned that the Japanese-Brazilian children are very expressive, friendly, and physically and verbally energetic. These cultural traits would stand out in comparison to the generally shyer, less demonstrative and expressive Japanese students. Interestingly, the Japanese government

---

[59] It is difficult not to write "mothers" here since overwhelmingly mothers are seen as the most important and engaged family member with regard to Japanese children's education and school relationships with the home. Because of the slowly changing family dynamics in Japan though, I prefer to use the more inclusive term "parent" because there is an increasing population of stay-at home fathers.

selected the Japanese-Brazilian descendants specifically because of their supposed nearness (racially) to the native Japanese. Yet, when positioned side-by-side in the classroom the Japanese-Brazilian children's cultural, and linguistic differences become obvious, and even exaggerated (Okubo, 2009).

I asked Takeishi-sensei if she could recall an aspect of the Japanese-Brazilian students' behavior that was difficult for her to accommodate or adjust to when she first started teaching them. Without hesitation she mentioned that it was difficult to manage the classroom at times because the Japanese-Brazilian children were unable to "read the air" (*kuki ga yomenai)*, an expression in Japanese used to describe a person who is incapable of taking in the social atmosphere of a room or actions of others enabling them to adjust their own behavior accordingly. She mentioned the difficulty the Japanese-Brazilian children had in learning how to properly enter or exit a group, a rather ritualized and nuanced cultural trait that also has given my Japanese-American sons trouble. She also spoke of the disruptive nature of the Japanese-Brazilian children's behavior during whole group instruction time or when others in the class were beginning to settle into their studies or engage in individual seatwork.

As we continued to talk about these earliest memories of the Japanese-Brazilian children, Takeishi-sensei slowed her pace as she seemed to be searching for a distant image, one that may no longer match with the children as she has come to see them. She then stated that at first she found the abrasive and voluminous tone of Portuguese hard to listen to. She has no international experience and has had little, if any, interaction with a foreign community so culturally distant as the Japanese-Brazilian children and families she has come to accept and interacts with on a daily basis. In fact, for many of the teachers in the schools the only contact with foreigners has been the Japanese-Brazilian children, their families and the English language teachers who come to

the school once a week. I began to wonder how many other adjustments she has had to make in order to understand, teach, and accept the foreign students she claims responsibility for.

I did have a sense that she continues to struggle with the foreignness of the Japanese-Brazilian children and may never fully feel at ease with their zealous behavior, or the perceived harshness of Portuguese. One afternoon Takeishi-sensei and I were walking several meters behind a group of three Japanese-Brazilian students who were ahead of us speaking loudly and joking around in Portuguese as we were returning to the staff room after one of the individualized science lessons I had observed.   I turned to Takeishi-sensei to ask a question when I noticed a strain on her face as though it pained her to listen to the loud voices of the children. At that moment, I realized that she continues to make adjustments to the cultural and linguistic differences around her despite the many years she has spent opening herself up to and educating these Japanese-Brazilian children. I thought to myself that I, too, must expose my aversion to the shrill-like voice of Japanese children when they shout to each other and speak in, what I perceive as, an abrasive and grating tone. I pondered about the daily adjustments and accommodations that go on in the school between the members of these two culturally distinct communities. Reflecting on my own experience of living in Japan for almost two decades I realized that sometimes regardless of the amount of time one is exposed to a foreign culture or language, some aspects of the difference may always remain strange and even unbearable.

6.6.5   "Finding a Place to Shine": Building Trust & Coming to *See* the Child

It was difficult for me to imagine the woman seated next to me in a state of confusion and lacking confidence in her pedagogical skills. I wrote of my initial and lasting impression of Takeishi-sensei as a highly professional and competent educator and I had difficulty visualizing

226

her as conflicted, strained and bewildered over how best to connect to and educate the children in her charge. I became increasingly curious about how she came to shift her view of the children, in her classroom so to build the current caring relationships she believes paramount to effective and engaged teaching and learning. She mentioned the repeated failures she experienced in her first few months at Ishikawa Elementary School and knew that something had to give.

Takeishi-sensei set her sights on utilizing the first school-wide event[60] she participated in with her class during her first year at the school. She came upon an idea and decided that organizing a dance for the children to perform at the annual fall school event would provide such an opportunity. These seasonal events are integrated into the national school calendar and normally students perform short plays, recite poetry in unison, or sing traditional songs during these annual fall festival held by schools across Japan, almost simultaneously (Cave, 2008). Not only would it have been impossible for Takeishi-sensei's class to manage performing a play because of the Japanese-Brazilian students' lack of Japanese proficiency, but also the organizational task required to successfully put on a theatrical performance may have been beyond her capabilities in that first year with her class.

Takeishi-sensei believed that she might have greater success with the children through a physically oriented rather than verbal activity and turned to one of her acquaintances from her professional community at Sakanoue Elementary to aid her in her efforts. This move set into motion a collaboration and connection across these two vastly different school communities that continues to exist today. At first, the Kid's Dance Salon, as she named it, did not take off, nor did it have the impact Takeishi-sensei had hoped it would have. Regardless of the initial failure she

---

[60] These are called *happyokai* in Japanese.

continued to pursue this idea because she had little hope that much would change if this activity

did not turn things around. After the third meeting things began to look up and by the fourth

practice the children were responding positively to the dance instructor's directions.   This

marked the turning point when Takeishi-sensei began to engage with the children in the positive

and responsive manner she had hoped the Dance Salon meetings would provide.   As it turned

out, the dance performance not only altered her view of the children, but also transformed the

relationships she had with them, as well as changing their image within the school.

> T: The first change came when we did the *Soran Bushido* dance at the
> *happyokai* [in fall 2002]. We connected a little then**.** The students here are kind
> of "yankee". This kind of dancing made them look cool, and really showed their
> strengths. This has now become a school tradition.   First, students disapproved
> of the dancing – about half of them didn't want to do it. So I asked the dance
> teacher at Sakanoue Elementary to teach them. Now that person choreographs
> for our festivals. She really did me a favor. She's a professional choreographer
> and is brilliant with the children – they seemed to enjoy it. In the beginning there
> were some students lying down on the corner of gym, not wanting to do the
> dance. It really happened one by one, with me and the dance teacher coaxing
> each child to join, and eventually they all joined. In the end, all of them danced.
> Students who were unwilling to dance, danced with attitude. We performed in
> the middle of the stage. The practice was tough, but they were confident in
> themselves the moment the curtain rose. They were applauded and admired by
> the teachers even though they had had a bad reputation. I felt I could bring out
> the best in them and they also thought that they could trust me. And also, their
> parents opened up to me a little. It was the fall, I think about half a year after I
> came here. They gradually started to trust me after that. So we connected then. I
> had a difficult time trying to find something where they could really shine. I used
> to force them into things they weren't good at, and we wouldn't get along, but
> with this, I felt I had found them a place where they could really shine.
> (10.22.09).

I have seen the children at the school perform this dance several times. As well, this is

the dance they performed before the emperor in Tokyo to celebrate the commemoration of the

100th anniversary of the Japanese emigration to Brazil in 1908.   The song for this dance

combines rhythmic elements of Brazilian samba with Japanese singing.   The dance steps

emphasize the energy of the students that Takeishi-sensei mentioned when she spoke of her earliest impressions of the Japanese-Brazilian students yet allows the Japanese students to engage as readily through the singing. In many ways, this dance and song has become the anthem of the school and signifies the union and expression of both these communities.

Takeishi-sensei sees both the struggle and success of the dance performance as the beginning of her own shift in consciousness toward these students, which was simultaneously met by a shift in theirs toward her. She had become so overwhelmed with her daily existence and malaise that she lost sight of the individual children and the positive qualities they possessed. She said that she remembers "seeing the children anew" and thinking, "this child really is very clever, and has been all along, but my teaching method until now has not brought this aspect of the child out" (9.24.09). This regenerative experience provided the incentive she needed to reevaluate her pedagogic practice and relational stance to the children in her class. She decided that she needed to take her renewed clarity of vision and understanding of her students into the classroom to engage them in the type of lessons she had enjoyed with her students at Sakanoue and Nishikawa Elementary Schools. She was unaware at that time of the radically different future she and the children at Ishikawa Elementary School would build, and share together.

6.6.6 Pushing the Limits: Challenging the Children & Exceeding Expectations

When Takeishi-sensei spoke about the shift that occurred in her relationships with the children after the dance performance she revealed the foundation of her pedagogic beliefs that she has been cultivating for two decades. Not only did she want to challenge the children in her class, who other teachers had written off as uneducable or too troublesome to bother with, but she wanted to introduce them to the joy of reaching higher and succeeding at a task that they

perceived as beyond their reach. She was cognizant that pushing the students toward tasks beyond their perceived capabilities might crumble the fragile foundation of trust she had just begun to build or threaten to undermine the belief the children began to have in themselves and her. To keep their energy and engagement from waning it was imperative that the students experience incremental moments of success, while also being given guidance and support as they struggled with materials and content matter they had not previously been taught. Below she speaks about these early experiences when she and the children started to push themselves further academically.

> T: I think my classes are a little difficult for the children. It's not that I want the children to understand everything in my classes – it's that I want them to *try* and understand. That's my main priority (1.19.10). I made my students read difficult poems and memorize the whole of the Constitution of Japan when they were fifth graders. It is pretty difficult. They often said, "I don't want to memorize. It's too difficult"; "I can't memorize this." However, I always made them do only an amount that they can manage. I made them stop saying, "I can't do this" before they even started at something. That was a kind of a promise we made to each other. When we first did the *Soran Bushido* dance the children couldn't, wouldn't, remember the songs and dance steps. So I grouped the children so they could remember each verse. I made them think they can do it. I wanted them to feel that if they tried their hardest they would be able to manage the difficulty of learning the dance. Just as I did when I asked them to memorize the Japanese constitution. I always say, "I won't make you do things you can't do. I only make you do things you can do. I believe in you". Even if the children feel they cannot do something I believe they can. I don't ask them to do something I don't think they can do. (1.19.10). …How can I say this… it's about thinking that one particular piece of work is more interesting than another, because it is a little bit more difficult or involves more effort, you know? I don't want the students to simply choose the easy way out or make decisions for their studies based on which problems are the easiest to solve. I think that they have grown in this aspect but rather choose things that interest them or they want to learn regardless of the level of difficulty**.** … I think that is why they have improved. That is what I hope anyway, but I really do believe that. Growth and motivation have to do with really connecting with something or someone, being involved – and if you can find something you're confident in doing. I think a successful class is about the students thinking, "I tried hard" or, "I'm great at this" (10.22.09).

This conversation is reminiscent of the one I had with Principal Ishiyama when he spoke of the task to help the teachers learn to trust and believe in the children. In this case, Takeishi-sensei recognized that without the foundation of trust she had begun to establish with the dance sessions she would not have been able to push the children further in their lessons. Just as she had to believe and trust in them, they had to believe in and trust her. She wanted to help the children exceed their own expectations, which they were able to do. The task she speaks of involves using a complicated and densely rich language exercise. It would have been very difficult for the Japanese children who are native speakers, not to mention the Japanese-Brazilian children who would not have been exposed to many of the words or phrases used in the language of the poems and constitution.

Many of the Japanese-Brazilian children could not read Japanese and the only way to involve them in the lessons was to have them orally repeat the course texts. Rather than single these children out, or send them to the Japanese as a Second Language room (*nitteki*) room as was common in the practice, Takeishi-sensei decided to assign the entire class the task of oral recitation and memorizing the constitution. She first started this activity by having the students recite and memorize simple poems and stories and slowly built them up to manage the more difficult, grade level work required by the national curriculum. It is impossible to know how much children take in when they are simply asked to memorize. Yet, if considered as a task to develop speaking skills while promoting successful learning experiences, memorization can accomplish both of these tasks. As language learners, this task provided the Japanese-Brazilian students repeated opportunities to practice pronouncing words and develop the flow of the language. Additionally all students were exposed to a rigorous mental activity they may not have had an opportunity to prove themselves capable of in the past. With each success Takeishi-

sensei and the children were able to push themselves a little further and deepen the bonds of trust they had fostered.

During one of my observations at the school I witnessed one of her social studies lessons on the Japanese constitution and the rights of the citizens. The lesson she was conducting was a standard teacher-directed discussion on the importance of citizen rights and responsibilities in a democracy and how we gain information to help us make informed decisions. The students were to create vocabulary lists of words related to civic rights and democracy by watching the news or scanning through newspapers and developing these into sentences as a group. This was a rather controlled activity, yet the students seemed engaged and focused on the discussion. I was surprised at the high level of conversation that was taking place and thought to myself how difficult it would be for my own children, or even myself, to manage this level of discussion in Japanese. I wondered how the Japanese-Brazilian parents with little or no Japanese speaking ability managed to help their children with such complex homework. In this instance, the students did not ask for much clarification of terms, though did struggle a bit trying to build sentences by pairing the words on the board together. Takeishi-sensei later informed that me they were nearing the end of this unit and that most children had become fairly well informed on the topic. She said that this is always one of the toughest units to teach, but that she and the other sixth grade teacher have developed a set of individualized activities to provide them with the support to tackle the difficult language and concepts. Most importantly she wanted to expose them to the idea of informed consent within a democracy.

> T: For example, there are a lot of children who don't and haven't watched the NHK channel (Japanese national television channel). I'm not saying that NHK is great, but watching that and the news …there are a lot of households that don't watch them, and a lot of families that don't buy newspapers. I mean, you can check the news on the internet nowadays, so just because you don't buy newspapers, that doesn't mean you don't have much interest in educating

232

yourself .   Though, I think it's not the norm here, but…I think finding importance in the news and so on is the basis of Democracy.   So what people always say at the elections is, "It doesn't matter if you thought hard about who to vote for, or if you just chose someone randomly. The votes are worth the same." Democracy is based on the fact that people should really think hard about such things before voting, but in reality that is not the case. I want to ask the parents that, too. The children don't know about the news because the parents don't watch it either. If, for example, they talked about these issues at the dinner table…I personally think it's a problem. I want to say that to the parents. (1.19.10)

When Takeishi-sensei speaks about pushing the children to think beyond the scope of the

lessons or to try tasks that at first appear intimidating or beyond their reach she reinforces her

belief in them, which stimulates the students to further challenge themselves. By asking the

children to consider issues as deeply important as their civic responsibility to become informed

on matters influencing the state of democracy, she expresses her intent that they are valuable

citizens in society and should take their role in that position seriously.   She sees her task as

having repercussions beyond the classroom or school, possibly extending to the home, and

maybe eventually filtering into society.   I wondered if her expectations for home support are

unrealistic based within a middle-class perspective that appears in conflict with the realities of

the pressured lives of the low-income and linguistically different homes the children come from.

Interestingly, she returned to this topic in a later conversation, distinguishing herself from her

fellow teachers with regard to just this point.   I was under the impression at the time she made

this comment that it may have been directed to the Japanese children in her class who she may

have been targeting because the topic of the lesson focused on civic responsibility and

participation.   As foreign nationals the Japanese-Brazilian students and their parents are not able

to take part in local or national elections, though the notion of civic responsibility and informed

consent certainly is of importance to all, which I believe Takeishi-sensei recognized.

Having built up the trust with her class Takeishi-sensei further extended the textbook lessons to enliven her classes and more deeply engage her students. She sought to expand the boundaries of the students' academic experiences by providing alternative forms for both the creation and expression of knowledge, believing that the students were willing and capable of meeting her expectations. In this way she created opportunities for them to shine, which reflects her attentiveness, competence, and talent as an educator. She spoke to me of a student who was often disengaged during lessons because he is not proficient in reading or writing and dislikes activities solely centered on these skills. Rather than force an activity on him that might further marginalize him she found an alternative way for him to engage with the material of the lesson and take part in the class activities.

> T: The other day I spoke about the Pacific War, World War II – why we started the Pacific War, how we got involved in it. I spoke about the casualties, the damage, and the way the citizens lived at the time. War hasn't ended even now and – how to end war and why it begins in the first place is…I mean there is no answer, but just because it is a difficult problem it's wrong to give up on the answer or feel helpless and say "there is nothing I can do about it". Thinking about difficult issues like war that have no answer, and discussing about them, is important. Thinking about the large issues of humankind helps you to grow and change. I think it's important for the children to be introduced to these ideas and words. There were children who did research, but the individualized course is designed around finding a way to create a message. Some children wrote poems and stories – Nohata, Kazuki,[61] a Japanese student, did this dance. There are folk songs about war, and he performed in front of the class. I don't know how much educational effect that had on him, but I am hoping he will be reminded of war every time he hears that song. Maybe not just him, but the other children may be reminded of him dancing when they hear that song. It's good to use your strong points – Nohata-kun[62] hates writing and reading, and he tries to do these activities without writing. *00-gakushu* creates opportunities for these types of students…he also performs well in the individualized science lessons. I think that his uniqueness helps him to raise his self-esteem and have confidence in other classes because he has had success in these alternative ways to express his learning or understanding. If the classes are all held in the same way, it will

---

[61] pseudonym

[62] The diminutive use of –kun for boys or –chan for girls at the end of a child's name is common in Japan.

always be the same kids getting praised and the same kids getting scolded**.** It's good to have classes held in different ways so different kids can show their strengths (1.19.10).

Here Takeishi-sensei offers the example about Nohata-kun as an illustration of what is possible when a space is created that honors the individual needs and creativity of students allowing them to engage in lessons they might otherwise turn away from or resist.   She recognized that coercing the students into learning within a narrowly defined and constrained teaching style limited their opportunities for personal engagement and self-expression. The strict boundaries ultimately alienated her from the children and forced her to question her belief system and pedagogic stance. Once she began to open herself up to the children and sought out their goodness, she regained confidence in herself and laid the groundwork to return to her pedagogic roots.

6.6.7   The Power of Pedagogic Philosophy: Nurturing Philosophic and Pedagogic Growth in Self & Others

During this early period at Ishkawa Elementary, Takeishi-sensei was functioning within a disconnected and isolated position within the overall school environment and community. While she was slowly instilling components of the individualized curriculum in her classroom, the outside world of the school operated within a traditional structure and *issei* teaching culture. The tides were due to shift four years into her post when a new principal was selected. In April 2005 Principal Ishiyama took charge of the school and soon thereafter joined forces with Takeishi-sensei to once again reshape the teaching and learning environment of Ishikawa Elementary School. When I asked her to recall her feelings at that time her normally well-paced rhythm of

her speech quickened, signaling the importance of Principal Ishiyama's debut into both her own story and that of the school. She mentioned that she believed she would not have been able to implement her ideas about individualized instruction and collaborative teaching had Principal Ishiyama not been assigned the principal position. I asked if she felt his coming to the school was a kind of destiny and she paused repeating that word, "*unmei*" in Japanese. She then looked at me and said rather contemplatively, "yes, it may have been" (9.24.09). In a later conversation, we returned to this discussion when I asked her to describe the difference between her relationship with the previous principal and with Principal Ishiyama.

> T: The principal before Principal Ishiyama took care of the *yankee* children and often praised them for their good qualities. However, I thought that was because he didn't teach them. I don't think you can really see the children, with their naughty qualities too, if you only see them and communicate with them after school. I feel strongly about that, but the principle wanted to raise children freely. The ex-principal didn't really let us do much regarding the matter of making changes that would bring more advantages to the children. He disapproved of me being opinionated. However, Principal Ishiyama did [care about changing things], and I wanted to do something to make things better. Principal Ishiyama was also in Sakanoue and Nishikawa Elementary, and I was confident I would get his approval for my ideas. But I had no idea how to get approval from the ex-principal. (10.22.09)

With the arrival of Principal Ishiyama, Takeishi-sensei no longer felt marginalized and alone. In fact, she was given support to extend the scope of the individualized lessons she had been teaching in isolation.[63] To create more opportunities to help other teachers *see* the students as capable and engaged learners, she began a practitioner-research project within her classroom by recruiting some of her colleagues in the upper elementary division to observe her lessons and then reflect on and discuss them with her. She was no longer an island.

---

[63] She actually started slowly implementing the individualized curriculum in a rather primitive form from her second year on with a group of children for both 5th and 6th grade.

The first two years after Principal Ishiyama took up his post heralded many significant changes, not only the development of the individualized curriculum. The slow transformation of the school culture, inclusion and visibility of the Japanese-Brazilian students, growing interest and subsequent implementation of the individualized curriculum all intersected to support the various efforts and successes of each of these inter-related projects. Takeishi-sensei began her research project with her incoming fifth grade class in the spring of 2006, but found that these new students were divided in their response to the individualized curriculum: some liked it and did well with the individually paced lessons and self-directed learning, while others did not.[64] She also found that some teachers showed an interest in what she was doing while others openly questioned her pedagogical practice. Despite wanting to share her techniques and philosophy with her colleagues, she soon discovered that "collective effort is not always collective" (9.24.09). By this she meant that no action or initiative occurs with complete acceptance or engagement by all; there will always be those who do not fit or agree with the change and resist.

Takeishi-sensei decided to fix her efforts on nurturing the younger teachers who came into Ishikawa Elementary School for their first teaching positions and appeared to be more flexible than the senior teachers. She had come to claim a position that allowed her to introduce a novice group of teachers to her pedagogic philosophy and mentor them as they worked together to develop the individualized curriculum.

> T: They [the teachers at Ishikawa Elementary] don't talk about philosophy in the first place. When I was in Sakanoue Elementary, the principal there told me that at the end of the day, it's about philosophy. But the teachers [here] don't think they really need it (10.22.09). It's just that not having a strong philosophy and

---

[64] These students had not been exposed to this teaching style before because the school-wide implementation of the individualized curriculum had not yet been instituted.

not having any will to try is different. I don't think there is a need to hire particularly intelligent teachers. We just need normal teachers who have the will to teach and develop their practice. If they learn to think about how they teach then they can really put their strong points into practice. I think we have that kind of system at the present point. That is how I feel. Primary school teachers generally teach the children so they can simply master reading, writing and sums. Of course that is important too, but even when you remove those three points there has to be something more important left (1.19.10). Do you know the national curriculum guidelines? It is the law and decided by the Ministry of Education. So, we have to carry it out. It contains various things and can be used in many ways, but the contents are decided according to how the companies publish the textbooks. So, the teachers become worried when they can't cover all the content in the textbooks. Being able to go over the textbooks brings a sense of achievement to the teachers, but that doesn't mean the students understand the lessons completely. Many teachers only check they do the exercises in the textbook and can feel satisfaction that they have accomplished their task as dictated by the text. This is separate from the actual experience of the students and whether they have learned anything or not, say for example in a science lesson. Many teachers only check to see if they do the experiments in the textbook. They don't care about the students expanding their knowledge on science or other subjects. There are many teachers who feel this way (10.22.09).

Takeishi-sensei was no longer stuck within her negative cycle. Feeling enabled to better connect to her students she began to teach them differently from that point on. She invited her fellow teachers into her classroom to observe how she engaged these "troublesome" students using the individualized curriculum, hoping that her fellow educators would also come to *see* the children differently. Opening herself, her classroom, and her practice up to others helped her reclaim her pedagogic stance and she felt empowered to disrupt her fellow teachers' complacency. She created opportunities for her colleagues to engage in new ways of thinking about their practice and to consider the influence this new style of teaching had on the children's learning and actions. Backed by Principal Ishiyama, Takeishi-sensei sought to introduce the teachers at Ishikawa Elementary School to the power of individualizing instruction and to push learning and teaching beyond the boundaries of the textbook-driven curriculum, mandated by the Ministry of Education. She wanted them to see that their narrow focus on the textbook lessons

was not only limiting their own growth as educators, but constrained the learning opportunities of the children.

> T: …I think *maru maru (individualized lessons)* is effective in helping these teachers attain better teaching skills. For example, the fifth graders are making houses. They are making Okinawan houses. …Simply speaking, what we want the students to learn through making houses is to learn that we are coexisting with nature and each is built in accordance with its environment, and we need to cherish its history and tradition as we all share in it in our own way. In the staff meetings we discuss these things hoping that if the teachers can feel strongly about the deeper meaning behind the activity and express this opinion that would make the house making activity effective. The textbooks and resources don't cover the small details – how the houses in cold areas are designed, or what the people suffered from living in such conditions, and what brings them joy. *Maru maru* is especially a kind of "course" [not just supplemental lessons]. I think that the best thing about *maru maru* is that through making these courses, the teachers get a chance to discuss these deeper issues with each other and grow in their teaching. … All the teachers who are in charge of the third to sixth graders create their own schedules for *maru maru*. Children and teachers alike, they will trust you if you praise them for something they have worked really hard at. On the other hand, they won't trust you if you praise them for something they haven't worked hard at. …The students respond well when the teachers work hard. If they don't work hard, they will have struggles getting the children to want to learn. I think this idea has blossomed over the years. …I think I have come to a point where I know each teacher's strong points fairly accurately. There are not so many teachers who are unmotivated, and even if they are you can't really moan about it here. In other schools, they don't have to work so hard. (1.19.10)

I asked her to speak more about the time-consuming task of writing the multi-tiered curriculum for the core subjects that were restructured around the individualized curriculum -- Japanese, math, history, and science. Following the national curriculum guidelines Takeishi-sensei and several other teachers in the upper elementary division worked to develop the multi-leveled, individualized project sheets that coordinate the individualized lessons with the stated national curricular guidelines. Nudging the teachers away from the safety and security of the textbooks required a coordinated effort amongst Takeishi-sensei's and Principal Ishiyama's peers within their professional knowledge community. Through their efforts the teachers learned how

to open themselves up and teach in a different way. Professor Saito,[65] a scholar from a prestigious university in Tokyo, has been an instrumental figure in setting the curriculum in place and encouraging the teachers in the school as they created and became adjusted to the new curriculum.

> T: Professor Saito sometimes visits and we tell her how the students responded to the lessons. We inform her of the students' perspectives. She often tells us how to take care of the children. At first glance, the students may look like they're messing around. But they're not just playing the whole time – there are times when the children are involved and learning, and at times they are messing around. So she tells us that there are many things going on in the 40 minutes. She doesn't talk to us a lot about specific ways to make the learning cards, or how to create an effective learning environment. We also have meetings held just by the teachers for each grade and they are divided into groups. The teachers of other grades consider the course again and give advice. In these meetings, the teachers talk really specifically about the actual state of the students. It's important that we have two different types of meeting and gather the opinions. We have been doing this for about three, four years, and it is very valuable. … I think there is a difference in motivation between the teachers. That's natural and normal – that is the situation of public schools**.** And also, the most influential teachers say that they are researching solely for research. …I think almost all the teachers want to do their best if they can find the right way to do so. That's why they became teachers - they want to work hard if only they get to see the children studying hard. The fact that there is always someone watching motivates us to work hard, too. Even when there is no one coming from outside, the other teachers here watch each other. I think that's really important in this research. (1.19.10)

Takeishi-sensei has a deep respect for Professor Saito and believes that her role has been vital in garnering the support of the teachers to consent to making the shift to an individualized, open, and student-directed curriculum. Principal Ishiyama also spoke about the important connection between the university professors and other outsider resource people who have become so instrumental in the sustainability of the reforms and success of the school's individualized educational program. Takeishi-sensei feels that it is not only the professional

---

[65] pseudonym

development and practitioner-researcher support that has been valuable, but also the sense of accountability and visibility of the work being carried out at Ishikawa Elementary. Though, as she mentions below not everyone at the school is comfortable or in-line with the curricular changes, particularly because it requires more work from the teachers and they are often asked to open their classrooms and teaching practice up for observation from both within and outside the school.

> T: There are people, of course, who find that a burden. But just because the classes are hard to teach, or the work is difficult, that doesn't mean you should complain. I still hear comments that the middle-aged teachers who have influence create a bad atmosphere. I think these teachers don't have to play that active a role, but I do want them to keep quiet. You have to do the work regardless because it is your job. I have this same attitude with the children. I am strict to everyone, but secretly kind to children who need it. It's like that with the teachers too. We have to help each other out. (1.19.10)

Like Principal Ishiyama, Takeishi-sensei sees herself outside of the main circle of teachers at the school who come out of a traditional *issei* professional history. She clearly has little patience for teacher's who "take the easy way out" and opt for the textbook driven, instruction-oriented, traditional style. Rather than struggle to convince them of the merits of the individualized curriculum, she prefers they stay out of the way of her research groups' hard work to develop the *maru maru-gakushu* (individualized) curriculum. However, these less than enthusiastic teachers have little choice but to engage in the individualized instruction at some level because all teachers are required to attend the staff-wide research development meetings regardless of their involvement with, or approval of, the individualized lessons. In the past several years, Takeishi-sensei has seen and supported the growth of several teachers at Ishikawa Elementary in their deeper engagement with individualized education and has nurtured their

philosophical awakening. In the same way that she formed a bond of trust to further engage the children's learning, she also committed herself to supporting these new teachers as they grew in their pedagogic practice and philosophy.

6.6.8   A Full & Forgiving View of the Child

Similar to Principal Ishiyama, Takeishi-sensei tended to downplay the cultural differences that divided the students, but rather focused on the holistic needs of the individual child.   When Takeishi-sensei spoke of her students she did so in a non-discriminatory and thoughtful manner, neither focusing solely on their class, linguistic, or cultural differences, yet she was aware that each of these characteristics played a part in the development, personal expression, and possible life trajectory of each child. Each phrase or word she used when describing her students seemed deliberate and carefully chosen to exactly express her ideas, experiences or thoughts regarding any one particular child. She spoke firmly and at length on the necessity of seeing the child from many different angles.

It is easy to teach a child who is perceived as complacent and well-behaved, although even such a child exposes a different side of herself when given freedom to act according to her own direction, or liberated from the rules that constrain her creativity and self-expression. Takeishi-sensei is weary of teaching approaches that unduly restrict, control, and encourage children to behave passively, despite this being the image of a model student. She is well aware that children are far more complex beings. To truly teach a child it is necessary to *see and care for the child fully*, for both her pleasant, but also her devious side.   She spoke about the difficulty trying to explain this concept to the teachers.   She mentioned the resistance of the teachers when explaining the educational merits of giving children more opportunities to make

decisions for themselves and claim more responsibility for their actions. By providing the children more freedom and the trust required to nurture self-responsibility, the children face the possibility of making errors in judgment or feeling tempted to misbehave. Yet, these are the experiences where they grow as unique individuals and expose aspects of themselves that would otherwise be hidden from view.

> T: I distributed a manual to the teachers when we started *maru maru* and informed them there is a chance the equipment would be broken. It's meaningless if they keep the equipment away from the children, being afraid the students would break them. If they break the equipment, then they can figure out why it broke and discuss it with others. This is also a kind of education, isn't it? We have to make up our mind about our behavior. …It doesn't mean students can do anything that they want. People make mistakes, so we discipline the children and then forgive them. Many people actually don't think like this. They understand when a child has made a mistake, but they can't forgive the mistakes. I also can't forgive sometimes and speak strictly to the children. But mistakes are what bring out originality in the children. Children should not only be kind and pure. They are not solely bad, either – every child is both angelic and devilish. We tell the children about their angelic side, and I think that making them feel comfortable expressing their angelic side is what traditional education is all about … to get the wrong-doing down to zero percent. But we can't do it perfectly. Even if we think we did this perfectly, there are bound to be students who slack off or don't finish on time. And also, there are children who copy other children's answers. Teachers want to decrease these problems to zero, don't we? However, I think it would also be strange if there were no problems at all. So, I want to discipline them and get things right to about 80percent. If it becomes one 100 percent, it would be strange. I think where you feel comfortable depends on each person. Some feel better around 70, some around 80, others expect 90. It also depends on what you're doing. You may think, "This should be 90percent", or, "This is fine at 70 percent". We are in the middle of finding a place we all feel comfortable. (10.22.09)

Takeishi-sensei has grown to appreciate and see the "yankee" children of Ishikawa Elementary School within the full spectrum of their being. She describes herself as identifying with them and their rebellious, marginalized, and unappreciated characteristics. She does not fall within the zero-tolerance form of discipline these children are so often subjected to, and subsequently learn to manipulate or resist. She prefers to see the child holistically, the angelic

and the devilish, knowing that she will deepen her relations with each child learning how best to draw out the child's goodness if she also faces each child's darkness. There is no other way to authentically assess how the children have grown in their learning, or genuinely care for and praise them without understanding the many different aspects of each child's personality, life circumsances and learning style.

Takeishi-sensei has a very nuanced understanding of the children's characters and boundaries that they learn, behave, and interact within and across. The freedom required by the individualized lessons makes allowances for the children to make errors of judgment, mismanage time, and face the consequences of such misjudgments and behavior. Children are given second chances to prove themselves worthy and capable of managing the freedom they have earned when they reflect on their misbehavior and redeem themselves when successful on subsequent activities, projects, and lessons. Takeishi-sensei understands that each child function s within a different range of limits and require the freedom to assess each situation permitting them to determine what and how much they are willing to invest in, and expose of themselves.

6.6.9 Cultural & Pedagogical Clash: Beyond Difference in Ethnicity & Language

Takeishi-sensei, like Principal Ishiyama, recognizes the limitations economic and social structural constraints impose on the children at Ishikawa Elementary School. The Japanese-Brazilian students who are not proficient in Japanese have the added burden of succeeding at school in a second language they have not made their own. Additionally, most of these children are forced to make concessions to negotiate the socio-culturally different environments between home life and school. Takeishi-sensei spoke about her surprise at the pronounced difference in the limited life chances she has come to see for the children at Ishikawa Elementary despite their

intelligence and talents. In fact, she surprised me when she mentioned her bewilderment at the advancement of some of the students she taught at Sakanoue and Nishikawa Elementary Schools into good senior high schools and universities when some of the brightest students at Ishikawa Elementary don't graduate from junior high school. In a related vein, she spoke at length about the difficulty many of her colleagues have relating to the children at the school, focusing almost exclusively on the economic class rather than the cultural difference of the students as the greatest barrier for these teachers.

> T: In Nishikawa Elementary, I would often think, "How did that student enter such a good university?" But here, it's the opposite. I think, "Why didn't they graduate junior high school or get into a better high school?" There is not much difference in ability with the two groups of children. However, it really depends on how the parents support the child when they are in the middle school. It's also about how much money you spend on education, but children who go to university have been raised with the same values as their parents, so the children themselves would be encouraged to want a better education if you invested in them.   All teachers have graduated from university. That doesn't necessarily mean they are upper class, but they grew up in fairly normal families with standard values. The teachers are therefore a group of people like this. So, I think they think they are in the right – they think that's normal. . Most of these children [at Ishikawa Elementary School] have parents like themselves [low income or under-educated] [66].   I don't feel embarrassed about or troubled by these households. I'm not the most elegant woman myself – I don't speak that politely. I used to be fairly rough myself … it is not as though I became rough after coming here – so I have the same kind of qualities as the *yankee* children. I can relate to their cuteness, their naivety and their rebellion (10.22.09, p.8**). If** parents want to really let the children grow their strengths, I'm sure they can because I think the children have the potential. But the parents have different values because they also grew up in that kind of environment – I'm not saying which values are correct. But there are many people who live here that are not like the teachers, and some of the teachers immediately clash with those families. When the parents feel that they are being rejected by the teacher, and when the child feels it, it's impossible to connect. (1.19.10)

---

[66] Most of the Japanese-Brazilian parents have graduated high school and many hold post-secondary degrees. (Personal conversation with Rika, Japanese-Brazilian teaching assistant, 7.7.09). In fact, two of the Brazilian teaching assistants at Ishikawa Elementary School have received a prefectural grant to return to university.

In this conversation I understood that Takeishi-sensei's strongest comparison among the children is not based on linguistic or cultural difference, rather she recognizes the economic and cultural gap between children coming from middle-class homes with university educated parents and those from low-income, undereducated, working-class homes. Again, there is a hint of a cultural deprivation lens here when she relates the parents' upbringing, education level, and access to financial resources with the child's prospects for academic success. I do not think she views her children, or their families, through a cultural deficit lens, though. Rather, Takeishi-sensei has come to recognize the direct link between a child's academic success and a parents' ability to provide financial support via extracurricular instruction or work with the child at home. The families of the children she teaches at Ishikawa Elementary are generally unable to provide either form of support, particularly at the secondary level, because of the parents' working schedules, inadequate funds, undereducated background, or inability to manage the complex language required to do the homework. This is particularly problematic for the Japanese-Brazilian parents who are not proficient in Japanese, or lack a strong Japanese cultural background to manage much of the culturally specific curriculum. Though, this also applies to native Japanese parents who may not have not completed their secondary education and simply do not have the academic skills to support their child's education at home.[67]

Takeishi-sensei explicitly focuses on the cultural mismatch between the Japanese teachers and their students' backgrounds, *both Japanese and Japanese-Brazilian*. The immediate assumption would be that the cultural mismatch occurred solely between the

---

[67] As stated previously, compulsory education in Japan is only required through junior high school or age 15, meaning a child can legally withdraw from school at age 15 if he so chooses. The system greatly disadvantages children from under-educated and low-income homes because of the entrance exam system that requires rigorous study at the costly cram schools and lack of adequate or sufficient preparation at the public junior high school level, which tends to teach to the lowest common denominator (Okano & Tsuchiya, 1991).

Japanese-Brazilian and Japanese teachers, but Takeishi-sensei spoke about the class difference and the barrier this creates between the teachers, their students and their families. Here she is speaking about the vastly different class-based influences on students' access to institutional resources that exist within the so-called egalitarian Japanese public school system. Takeishi-sensei had come face-to-face with the reality of the economic and socio-cultural realities that shape the educational opportunities available to children across the gaping economic divide. Nowhere is this more apparent than when the sixth graders graduate and move onto junior high school.

Takeishi-sensei, like Principal Ishiyama, repeatedly made comparisons to the traditional vs. individualized curriculum. Applying the individualized curriculum for the low-income and culturally and linguistically different children that make up the main population of students at Ishikawa Elementary has highlighted the value of such a teaching method because it focuses on the needs of each child; it is harder for a child to be left behind or ignored. Takeishi-sensei is particularly attuned to the gap between these two teaching styles after the difficulty she experienced teaching in the uniformed, group centered manner, which required greater coercive measures and discipline. She mentioned the problem that occurs within the traditional *issei* style classroom when, "material gets pushed through regardless of whether it is learned or not" (10.22.09). Because of the strong focus on the centralized curriculum and pacing of teaching to correspond with the textbooks, this system is very effective for moving whole classes of students along a continuum. Individual children, though, can easily pass through material they have not mastered or internalized, especially those in need of special support. She continued to say that this situation may not appear to be an issue in second or third grade, but when students enter the rigid and generally unforgiving secondary school system designed to sort and rank students, the

247

residual affects can be life altering. This is especially true for non-Japanese speaking children, who find the struggle to manage the accelerated pace of learning and complex material at the upper levels of junior high school too difficult and often end up dropping out by the time they reach 15 (Riordan, 2005).

> T: Most of the students here don't go to *juku* (cram school) so they act pretty honest with me and I can know what they have learned because it is happening between us, in our classroom. They feel like they can trust the teachers. The students who go to *juku* [to enter good junior high schools] often say that they can understand better in *juku* and trust the *juku* teachers better. At least, my students are not like this, so they respond fairly well to my lessons (10.22.09). I think teachers from other schools or primary schools don't approve of their students entering the same junior high school as Ishikawa students. The Ishikawa students get – how can I say this - deprived of their confidence in middle school. The graduates say that despite their perseverance to learn it did them no good – that *waku waku* free time was useless. But there is a possibility that someone else told them this. Either way, in the middle school, they are ranked according to their grades. At the end of the day, middle schools use the entrance exams as an excuse. The middle schools think that students get along okay in primary school, but would ruin everything once they enter middle school because they don't have discipline. They think that if they give the students too much freedom, they would get out of hand. In my opinion, I don't think that would happen. I also don't think our students will be at a disadvantage for *juken* [entrance examination for junior high school]. On the achievement tests, the 6th grade students have improved in Japanese and mathematics.[68] It doesn't mean we made them read, write or do calculations in isolation or as drills. I don't think it's related to increasing grades. I want to say it's important they are interested in studying, that they have the desire to study. (10.22.09)

As the head teacher of the sixth grade classes Takeishi-sensei is cognizant of her responsibility to prepare her students for the rigorous and exam-based method of instruction all too commonly found in junior high schools across Japan. She again raises the issue of trust, but

---

[68] I received a document from Nishida-sensei charting the gains of the children for grades 2-6 across an eight year period from 2002-2009, which shows incremental gains in both Japanese and in Math beginning in 2005. Though the overall school average still falls short with overall scores ranging in the 40th fortieth percentile overall, they had increased up from scores in the mid-30th thirtieth percentile prior to the introduction of the school reforms. The average grades nationally for these subjects is between the 50th and 70th percentile. I was not provided documentation of the average scores for the other schools in the district.

here she refers to the purity of the learning experience and the importance of the pedagogic relationship that encircles the child and teacher. She speaks here about monitoring the child's growth and understanding through continued observation and assessment of the learning-teaching experience that occurs each day in the classroom. Teachers of students who attend cram schools (*juku*) can never be sure if their students' achievement in school is a result of what they have learned in the classroom or what impact their teaching style has on the child's learning because of the influence of the many hours of lessons students are enrolled in the cram schools each week.

Takeishi-sensei is also aware that her students suffer shock and disillusionment when they enter the junior high school and expresses concern that they are reprimanded for their less-disciplined, self-directed and expressive learning style. She toys with feelings of guilt for having educated them according to her pedagogic philosophy and teaching style that seeks to inspire a desire to learn, explore their own questions, seek out their own truths, and make decisions for themselves. This type of self-directed learning and teaching style is generally not accepted, particularly in the firmly established social hierarchy and exam-based instruction of the junior high school. Just as Takeishi-sensei may feel the need to un-educate the children coming out of the traditional *issei* instructional style classrooms from the lower division at Ishikawa Elementary, the teachers who yearly face the "yankee" children from Ishikawa Elementary may feel obligated to re-train and re-program them to function according to the rules, regulations and standards of junior high school life and study. The children seem caught in the crossfire of a pedagogic and ideological tug-of-war.

> T: The students from Ishikawa are ranked low [at the junior high school]. Students who have been instructed in a system of drills and completing handouts will do better in comparison when ranked according to test scores. The Ishikawa students start thinking that they can't get high grades because of the education they had

249

here at primary school. But that's not true (10.22.09). It is difficult to think of ways to support the development of students who do not gain confidence through this type of grading and ranking. This is the third time I'm teaching sixth grade. The first children I struggled with they were in fourth, fifth, and then sixth grade. Though most of them have moved on to the junior high school. Those children, you could tell, would turn out rough from the beginning. There were children who simply stopped coming to school altogether, and there were children who rebelled viciously. We began *maru maru* when they were in the fifth grade (2006) and then *waku waku* free time when they were in sixth grade (2007). But they didn't really succeed in junior high. How can we help such students feel confident and find their goodness when the standard instructional style does not work? I think about how to raise their confidence, but in reality it's difficult. I personally think things wouldn't be like this if there was a middle school solely for the Ishikawa students. If you consider from the middle school teachers' view they might think that we were spoiling the students. They might even have thought, "This outrageous grade belongs to Takeishi-sensei again". I think this 6th grade is fine and will not be disapproved of so much... I see students gaining confidence or becoming calmer in class, but then I feel a hunch that they will change for the worse in middle school. Those hunches really do turn out to be right. Many students don't even go to high school. It's tough for those kids – it's an academic background-oriented society out there. So you have to be really skilled at something in order to survive. (10.22.09)

Despite her concern over the mismatch between the learning and teaching style she has

nurtured in the children that she graduates, she is unapologetic for either her philosophical

beliefs or pedagogic practice. Rather she laments the rigid environment of the junior high school

that places an emphasis on ranking students according to their potential to pass the exams, which

act to separate and divide the children.   These institutionally sanctioned pathways lead a child

on a journey determined by their ability to perform on and pass these tests. To do so requires

hours of extracurricular learning in cram schools (*juku)*, often beginning in elementary school

and continuing throughout junior high school, which costs hundreds, if not, thousands of dollars,

depending how long the child attends.⁶⁹ These are the pre-requisites to achieve academic

---

[69] Many elementary school students attend cram schools in preparation for junior high school entrance exams and then continue their preparation for the high school exam, and then again, for the university exam. This is the pre-

success, thus access to the necessary credentials to move beyond the manual labor and factory work that many of the Ishikawa students opt for instead of high school. This is the reality the Ishikawa Elementary School teachers struggle with and the structural conditions the children and their families face for social and economic advancement.

6.6.10 Teasing out the Tensions

After my last conversation with Takeishi-sensei I found myself pondering both the similarities, as well as, the striking difference in tone and color between her and Principal Ishiyama's perspectives and interpretations of the children, school, and changes that took place. Takeishi-sensei is firmly rooted in the daily lives of the children and feels directly responsible for preparing them for advancement into junior high school. Despite her awareness of the vast gap between the pedagogical approaches of the individualized educational program compared with the textbook-driven, exam-based system of the junior high school, she remains firmly rooted in her convictions. The pressure of the system imposed a logic on her that she could not reconcile. The students at Ishikawa Elementary did not respond to the coercive and non-forgiving teaching methods required by the traditional *issei* educational system that was in place, but rather resisted engaging in schooling altogether. Having come to her post at Ishikawa Elementary with deeply rooted convictions in a philosophy of individualized education, Takeishi-sensei was able to recognize that the Japanese-Brazilian children were not uneducable. Rather, they were rebelling against a pedagogic, curricular and structural system that forced them to the margins, making

---

determined path to academic success that disadvantages many low-income and (im)migrant children in Japan (Himeno, 2001; Kanno, 2008b; Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999).

little space for them to reveal their inner talents and goodness or partake fully in their learning experiences.

Throughout our three formal interview sessions and the many hours of observations I made of her classroom I could not fathom the depth of despair and confusion that Takeishi-sensei spoke about in our earlier conversations. Nor, would I have expected that she suffers the contradictions of the system as heavily as she does. Her pedagogic aims go much deeper than increasing the test scores of her students, yet in the end this is the criterion against which they are judged. A lingering question remained in my mind long after our last conversation: How can a teacher reconcile the good work that she does in support of her children's holistic growth by providing opportunities for engaged learning, increased self-confidence, and personal expression within a system that seeks to undermine her pedagogical efforts and philosophy? It seemed clear to me that Takeishi-sensei faces the burden of this reality on a daily basis, yet has remained firm in her convictions to continue drawing on and drawing out the goodness of each child she commits herself to teach.

6.7   THE YANKEE TEACHER: PHILOSOPHIC REFLECTION

Many of us live one-eyed lives. We rely largely on the eye of the mind to form our image of reality. But today more and more of us are opening the other eye, the eye of the heart, looking for realities to which the mind's eye is blind. Either eye alone is not enough. We need "wholesight", a vision of the world in which mind and heart unite "as my two eyes make one in sight." Our seeing shapes our being. Only as we see whole can we and our world be whole.
(Palmer, 1993, p.xxiii)

"Wholesighted" vision is an apt term to aid my conceptualization of the central themes that run throughout Takeishi-sensei's narrative. Upon entering Ishikawa Elementary School Takeishi-sensei came to understand that within the traditional schooling system "Yankee" children are seen as uneducable, impolite, disruptive troublemakers who require a tighter rope, more discipline, and less freedom of choice.   Rather than further tightening the reigns and forcing the children into a system designed for efficiency and external control, she desired to loosen the constraints imposed by the curriculum and traditional pedagogic style she tried and failed to master.   She broke away from her self-imposed limitations to create opportunities for the children to make mistakes, struggle with the freedom they slowly learned to enjoy, and claim responsibility for both self and other.   She had come to merge two fields of vision by redirecting her gaze both inward and outward, ultimately leading her back to the pedagogic philosophy and teaching style she came to identify with throughout her twenty years teaching career.

Maxine Greene (1988) claims, "relatively few people are...courageous enough to actually 'see'"(p. 131). Greene (1988) makes this statement in reference to educators who are bold enough to be concerned about 'the birth of meaning' in their classrooms, about breaking through surfaces, about teaching others to " 'read' their own worlds" (p. 131). In this statement Greene

(in a discussion on the value of the arts in education) is calling on educators to see beyond the appearance of things, to go farther and seek deeper educational experiences for themselves and their students. A definitive quality of Takeishi-sensei's pedagogic style & professionalism is her deep commitment to both a personal and pedagogic creed (Dewey, 1918) that is built on providing more to the child than what is available in the daily repertoire of lessons in the textbooks and nationally defined curriculum. Her pedagogy depends on reciprocal trust, recognizes the complexity of each child when they enter the life world of school, and subsequently claims "response-ability" (Noddings, 2003) for the whole child.

In this philosophic reflection of Takeishi-sensei's narrative portrait I draw on educational ideas from Maxine Greene, Nel Noddings, John Dewey and Sharon Todd, among others. Considering Takeishi-sensei's story through the lens of these separate, but related educational philosophers helps me to make sense of the resonant themes that run through the narrative of her experiences at Ishikawa Elementary School, which proved to be the greatest pedagogic challenge of her career, as well as her greatest achievement. In many ways, Takeishi-sensei may have found her home in the most unlikely of places, Ishikawa Elementary School. She, too, came to shine alongside the least privileged children in the district whom she challenged to meet her expectations and release their goodness onto the world.

6.7.1 Disruptions: A Crisis of Confidence & Conflict in the Classroom

When Takeishi-sensei first entered the life world of Ishikawa Elementary School she was met with both personal and professional discontent. She soon came to discover that her pedagogic style, and indeed philosophy, was in conflict with the realities of the school, traditional teaching style and structure of learning, all of which impacted her interactions with the children in her

classroom. She experienced a crisis of professional identity, lost confidence in her pedagogic skills and philosophic beliefs; in essence, she was adrift, unable to anchor herself to anything that felt familiar or comfortable.

Periods of personal and professional disruption create the necessary conditions to renew one's vision of living alongside others. The moments when teachers struggle to make sense of their place in the classroom teachers are opportunities to free themselves from a limiting pedagogic vision that comes from seeing out of "one eye" (Palmer, 1993, p. xxxiii). Greene (1988) broadens Palmer's (1993) statement to consider the countless influences that define and guide the directions of our actions, the scope of our view of the world, and our place within it.

> Freedom cannot be conceived apart from a matrix of social, economic, cultural, and psychological conditions. It is within the matrix that selves take shape or are created through choice of action in the changing situations of life.   The degree and quality of whatever freedom is achieved are functions of the perspectives available, and the reflectiveness on the choices made. (p. 80)

Freedom, as defined by Greene (1988) entails active engagement with, and an awareness of, the complexities of the lived social world and the environments that shape our interactions and responses to those worlds. Takeishi-sensei found herself in unchartered territory when she faced the children in her classroom desperately trying anything to assuage the discomfort she was experiencing.

Feeling embattled, both from within and without, Takeishi-sensei reached a breaking point. Eventually the daily enforcement of the group-oriented, disciplinarian style of the traditional teaching method employed at the school took its toll on her psychologically and emotionally. The coercive nature of teaching in this manner forged a barrier between her and the children in her class leaving all feeling exhausted, violated, and antagonistic to one other. Dewey, (1938) asks educators to consider the limitations imposed on one's individual freedom,

255

in the sense here of living openly and fully in relation with others, when coercive methods are used as a means of education,

> Does not the principle of regard for individual freedom and for decency and kindliness of human relations come back in the end to the conviction that these things are tributary to a higher quality of experience on the part of a greater number than are methods of repression and coercion or force? (p.34)

Dewey recognizes coercive educational relationships as antithetical to the creation of educative experiences, bound as they are to the creation and enactment of freedom and positive growth. Alternatively, coercive relationships are defined by an unethical enforcement of power by one individual over another more vulnerable or weakened individual, ultimately diminishing that individual's freedom to act. The pedagogic relationship under these conditions is defined by the institutionalized nature of that relationship, which sanctifies the enactment of the teacher's power over her students.

Noddings (2003) asks the question, "Can one be really happy working to promote products or practices that are injurious to others?" (p 230). Her subsequent answer brings with it a call for action that seeks to alleviate the disillusionment and contradictions one experiences when personal convictions are pitted against the demands of an institution, understood here in its broadest sense as defined by sociocultural practices, economic structures, and political mechanisms of the state. "When people feel that they are forced by circumstances to promote products or activities they find morally abhorrent, they may become deeply unhappy. …They may lose entirely that part of happiness derived from self-respect and inner contentment" (p.230).

The systemic constraints and radically different sociocultural context of her new teaching experience forced Takeishi-sensei to question her pedagogic position within the institution of

schooling and determine what role she was willing to play in the education of this new set of students. She found her answer by turning her gaze back to the children forcing her to reconsider the teaching style and conditions of their learning experience which she had created and inflicted upon them.   By redirecting her attention to the children she found that rather than nurturing goodness she was nurturing rebellion and imposing violence on the children. Todd (2005), working within a Levinasian ethics of relationality, discusses the act of teaching and learning as one defined by violence. "Violence" here is understood in the sense that, as shapers of their students' subjectivity, teachers are forced to impose change in their students through the act of teaching.

To further extend Noddings' (2003) query I draw on a provocative question posed by Sharon Todd (2005) to further contemplate the institutionally sanctioned coercion teachers are expected to engage for the good of the child, thus society. Sharon Todd (2005) asks, "Does becoming a teacher necessarily mean learning to make certain concessions to rules and routines that might be hurtful, at times, to students in the class?" (p.26). As a preface this question Todd (2005) concedes that there is no way to escape violence in education because teaching is *an act that forces change* to one's subjectivity. She therefore provides relief to educators like Takeishi-sensei who find the coercive aspects of education "morally abhorrent" (Noddings, 2003, p. 230).

> Education by its very socializing function and by its mission to change how people think and relate to the world, enacts a violence that is necessary to the formation of the subject. …Violence is a necessary condition of subjectivity. Thus the question is not so much whether education wounds or not through its impulse to socialize, but whether it wounds excessively and how we (as teachers) might open ourselves to nonviolent possibilities in our pedagogical encounters. (Todd, 2005, p.20)

Takeishi-sensei's narrative of her early experiences at Ishikawa Elementary School seem defined by her discomfort at the violence she felt compelled to inflict on her students as she

257

struggled with her self constitution of "teacher as an institutional figure" as opposed to "teacher as a compassionate person" (Todd, 2005, p.26). Takeishi-sensei was driven to find a way to open herself up to the ethical "nonviolent possibilities" of her pedagogic encounters with the children at Ishikawa Elementary School. In order to authentically engage in shifting her pedagogical relationship to an ethical one she needed to find a way to incite confidence, self-responsibility, initiative and desire in the children to want to engage more fully in their own learning. She recognized that if she were to have any success in the wilds of this new environment and grow to care for these children who were so different from any she had previously encountered she would have to find a way for them to release their goodness on to the world.

6.7.2   Learning to Care For & Seeking Out Goodness in the Child

Takeishi-sensei sought out *goodness* in the children knowing that if she could not respond positively to them she would not be able to teach them. She recognized that her negative perceptions had been reflected back onto the children and they were merely responding in kind. To borrow Merlau-Ponty's (Baldwin, 2004) terms, the children stood at "the other end of " Takeishi-sensei's "gaze" and were therefore "inseparable from the person perceiving it" (p.139). The children, themselves perceivers and therefore "in communion" with Takeishi-sensei's gaze, could not put their trust in her because they perceived her negativity and lack of care. Johnston (2006) suggests that both positve and negative learning experiences are based on perceptions of trust and the subtleties that define relationships between a teacher and her students.

> Relationships affect students not only in how they think and act, but also in what kinds of intellectual risks and ethical stands they take. …The ability to speak out, and possibly seem different or articulate a different view, is linked to the trust that

258

students have in the teacher and in one another. …We are not explicit that the power of relationships is connected to both good and bad outcomes in the classroom. (p.16)

There was certainly no doubt about the negative classroom outcomes that Takeishi-sensei had been experiencing because of the strained relationships she had with her students. Setting the boundaries of learning to the textbooks, and teaching according to the traditional *issei* group-oriented method created normative constraints resulting in her seeing only undesirable qualities in them, which they perceived, and acted upon. This constrained learning environment suffocated any potential for engaged teaching or engaged learning. Adichie (2007) speaks about the danger of "the single story" when we categorize others or limit them to behaving within the confines of the "one story" created about them, which can easily become "the only story" within which we see or engage them (p.43). Takeishi-sensei was aware that her children had many stories to tell and the only way for her to hear their stories and *see* the children more fully was to push back the boundaries that confined them to the negative relationship they were functioning within.

The first step Takeishi-sensei took was to find a way for the children to reveal more of themselves, "to find a place to shine" as she put it. When she suggested they work on the *Soran-bushido* dance for the fall festival she experienced resistance from the children. She was once again faced with having to coerce the children to perform for her. Yet, this coercion was less devastating and soon cracks in the hard exterior of the children began to reveal a lightness and joy she had not seen, or directed her attention to seeing, before. Noddings (2003) claims that "coercion always damages caring relationships", but also recognizes that at times there is little choice but to coerce a child to act. "If a need can be met without it, it is better to avoid coercion.

If not, then the act of coercion must be followed by explanation, discussion, and perhaps consolidation" (p. 67).

In this instance, Takeishi-sensei had to balance out her need to get the children to work with her, and the colleague she had enlisted to help her, against the possibly damaging aspects of forcing the children to do something they appeared to not want to do. There was a risk here. Takeishi-sensei was trying to develop a foundation of trust that would nurture a deeper connection, leading to a more ethical and caring pedagogic relationship. In Biesta's (2006) conceptualization of education risk is inevitable, therefore the educational relationship, to be ethical, must be founded on trust. Risks cannot wholeheartedly be taken without trust to carry an act through.

> To engage in learning always entails the risk that learning might have an impact on you, that learning might change you. This means that education only begins when the learner is willing to take a risk. …Why are risk and trust connected? This is fundamentally about those situations in which you do not know and cannot know what will happen. Trust is by its very nature without ground. …To negate or deny the risk involved in engaging in education is to miss a crucial dimension of education. (p.25)

Not knowing the outcome of her efforts Takeishi-sensei had to not only put her trust in the children, but they had to reciprocate by putting their trust in her. Eventually, this led to her being able to *see* the children from a different angle, and thus respond to them differently. Not only did she see new aspects of the children's personalities, she saw that they were willing to open themselves up to risk and therefore, become able to trust her. Additionally, she was able to watch the children from afar as they responded more positively to her colleague who came to help with the dance rehearsals and might have been someone the perceived as less threatening. This outside view may have allowed Takeishi-sensei the distance needed to reevaluate her own practice and reconsider her stance toward the children. Like stepping back from a painting, the

shades, lightening, contours of shapes, and depth of field may have shifted to reveal characteristics of the children which had remainded hidden from both Takeishi and possibly the children themselves. Taking the risk and pushing the children to work hard for her, and ultimately themselves, proved worthwhile. The dance performance was hailed a great success. The children had bravely put themselves into the spotlight, dancing defiantly and feeling a great sense of pride, which Takeishi-sensei shared with them. There is no question that this was a hard won success, which marked the beginning of an ongoing transition and transformation between Takeishi-sensei and her students.

6.7.3 Pushing the Limits: Challenging the Children & Exceeding Expectations

Once a positive, trusting, and caring relationship had been established the children were open to taking on the challenges Takeishi-sensei continued to present to them. Through their shared struggles and successes they established a foundation of trust that allowed both Takeishi-sensei and the children to push the boundaries of their relationship further. Noddings (2003) defines the foundation of an ethical pedagogic relation as one based on a renewed understanding of "response-ability", which she defines as, "the ability to respond positively to others and not just fulfill assigned duties". (p.35). This is reminiscent of Todd's (2005) conflicted pedagogic identity of "teacher as institutional being" or "teacher as compassionate being" (p.26). These split positions do not need to be considered as dichotomous. In fact, an ethical teacher is called upon to embrace both of these roles, sometimes alternating between them simultaneously when weighing decisions for the good of both self and student. The problem arises when one position shuts the other out, specifically when the voice of the compassionate teacher becomes silenced by the institutional teacher voice.

Takeishi-sensei understood her pedagogic "response-ability" first and foremost as directed to the needs of her students. She takes her job as an educator seriously, facing her responsibility to fulfill her duty "to teach" the children according to the mandates of her job as a public servant, as well as her "reponse-ability" to fully nurture her students in their *becoming* complete and fulfilled human beings (Noddings, 2003). In order for her to perform both of these response(abilities) she knew that she would need to push the children to reach higher and experience success within the classroom as well as outside of it.

When she started to introduce the children to more challenging material she had to do so in a way that would meet the needs of both the Japanese-Brazilian and the Japanese students. She sought a way to include them by straddling the gap between them. She focused on building community and increasing confidence, in the same way she had done to prepare them for the dance performance, one by one through a community creating activity that would foster success for all. Considering Takeishi-sensei's actions from Dewey's (1938) theory of continuity, she was building on the positive experiences the children had at the dance performance to engage them further in their learning.

> There is some kind of continuity in any case since every experience affects for better or worse the attitudes which help decide the quality of further experiences, by setting up certain preference and aversion, and making it easier or harder to act for this or that end. Moreover, every experience influences in some degree the objective conditions under which further experiences are had. (p. 37).

Before Takeishi-sensei would be able to fully incorporate aspects of the individualized curriculum she was beginning to develop, she needed to continue nurturing the positive learning experiences of the children leading them toward more advanced and challenging learning activities. She understood the need to incite confidence and chose an oral language activity to build on the active engagement she saw was possible when the students were all fully able to

participate. This was particularly important for the Japanese-Brazilian children who lacked the academic language necessary to become more fully involved in the classrooms. Had she chosen to focus exclusively on the academic development of her Japanese students she could have sent the Japanese-Brazilian children to the *nitekki* room as the teachers around her tended to do. Though, doing so would have disrupted the trust she had forged and the development of community that was growing in the classroom, thus reversing the positive impacts of the dance performance.

One important aspect of the approach that Takeishi-sensei was fostering in her classroom was to develop an inclusive classroom environment. Takeishi-sensei decided early on that the Japanese as a Second Language pull-out program put the Japanese-Brazilian children at even more of a disadvantage because the children's opportunities to interact with their Japanese peers was significantly reduced and further marked their difference from the mainstream children as outsiders (Davidson, 1996). By keeping the Japanese-Brazilian children in the class during the mainstream lessons Takeishi-sensei was not only showing them that she valued them as members of the classroom community, but she transmitted an affirming message that she believed they could succeed if they tried. Referring back to our conversation, she told the children repeatedly, "I only make you do things I can think you can do. I believe in you" (1.19.10). This is a powerful message for children who have gotten used to hearing the opposite and not been given the chance to prove they are capable learners and valued individuals.

Cummins (2000) has long championed the influential aspects of the teacher-student relationship and the affect this relationship has on linguistically and culturally different students' school engagement and on-going identity formation. Cummins (2000) is quite clear about the influential nature of the teacher-student relationship in nurturing, and affirming, the development

263

of linguistically and culturally diverse minority students' as valued members of the classroom and school community.

> There is a reciprocal relationship between cognitive engagement and identity investment. The more students learn, the more their academic self-concept grows, and the more academically engaged they become. However, students will be reluctant to invest their identities in the learning process if they feel their teachers do not like them, respect them, and appreciate their experiences and talents. In the past, students from marginalized social groups have seldom felt this sense of affirmation and respect for language and culture from their teachers. Consequently their intellectual and personal talent rarely found expression in the classroom. (p.126)

With each success the children responded more openly to her suggestions and began to engage the lessons she had created for them more enthusiastically. Takeishi-sensei sees the work that she does with the children as having the potential to influence them beyond the required preparation for their next year of school, and certainly beyond the narrow and ideological mandates of the national curriculum. She seeks to instill a desire for them to pursue their interests and actively participate in the life world of their community. She would like to see the discussions and experiences that the children take part in her classroom spill over to conversations with their parents at home to better bridge the divide between the two. Dewey (1915/2001) was a champion of bridging the artificial world of school and the outer world (social and natural) seeing the isolationist and stratified learning most children experience at school as detrimental to the child's full enrichment as a human being.

> We live in a world where all sides are bound together. All studies grow out of relations in the one great common world. When the child lives in varied but concrete and active relationship to this common world, his studies are naturally unified. …Relate the school to life, and all studies are of necessity correlated. (p.55)

Takeishi-sensei understood that she was in a position, as an educator, to introduce the children to the broader life issues they may not come into contact in their daily lives either within or outside of school. In particular, she spoke to the children about the importance of informed democratic participation, trying to help them understand their future role as citizens with an obligation to seeking out the information necessary to actively participate within their community. There is no knowing if the Japanese-Brazilian children in her class will enjoy the benefits of citizenship in Japan to take advantage of this introduction into the ideals of informed democratic participation, but including them in the conversation empowers them to consider the possibilities of such participation.

Takeishi-sensei had made the shift to confirming her students as valuable members of her classroom community and increasingly motivated her students because she opened up spaces for them to express themselves and move beyond the limiting categories that had confined, and previously, defined them. She allowed them to exhibit their knowledge of the concepts and content beyond the traditional assessment evaluation system that places an emphasis on quantifiable expressions of mastery (as in writing and testing) to allow the children more creative avenues to engage with the learning and then exhibit what they have internalized in myriad ways. Because she pushed the boundaries of the students' academic experiences and was open to alternative forms of creation and expression of knowledge she proved her belief in the students. Again Noddings (2005) is helpful.

> A faithfully caring relation allows children to select and affirm their own interests after initial exposure. It lays heavy responseabilities on carers to manage the trust placed in them wisely. We have to know when to push a little and when to draw back. In many children's lives, however, human relations are simply irrelevant to the knowledge we profess to value. There is no connection at all. (p.37)

As each child is unique, so are the challenges each faces and their different approaches to learning and expressing their understanding. Takeishi-sensei was struggling to survive and continue to grow as an educator committed to an enduring pedagogic philosophy, which eventually proved more valuable than she had ever anticipated. Her shift toward individualizing the curriculum altered the ideal of "normal" among her students. Each child's performance was no longer judged according to the other children in the class, nor to a normative ideal-type, but rather by each child's own interests, and expressions of learning. The formation of an ethical pedagogic relationship was fundamental to her being able to create an educational environment where they learned how to educate themselves and better interact and engage each other.

6.7.4   The Power of Philosophy: Nurturing the Philosophic and Pedagogic Growth of Self & Others

> Most …teachers worry about the *content* of what they teach, especially what matters in the discipline, than the *process* they use to motivate students and help them learn. There are exceptions, but many teachers act as if there are not significant, much less important, questions about pedagogy. They do not worry about pedagogy, either the effectiveness of traditional methods they inherited or their own teaching. (Kytle, 2004, p.12)

Takeishi-sensei is an exception to Kytle's (2004) disillusioning statement. She has reflected on her practice and grown in her pedagogic philosophy since the earliest days of her career. She was fortunate, as was Principal Ishiyama, to have been welcomed into a nascent practitioner research community to develop theories and innovative practices associated with the emerging open structured school and individualized curriculum of Sakanoue and Nishikawa Elementary schools. Teacher practitioner research in Japan is not unusual. In fact, every school community and almost all teachers engage in practitioner research and there are extensive journals published

by and for teachers in Japan (Cave, 2008; Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999). These practitioner research journals generally provide ideas on how better to implement the national curriculum and enhance learning experiences in the classroom, though some deal in theory development (Cave, 2008). These are important and necessary endeavors that ease the burden on the overly worked teachers and provide a sense of camaraderie.

This type of classroom research may lead to better practice, but it does not necessarily lead to the development of a philosophical orientation or the deeper questions that ultimately lead to changes in a teacher's consciousness about her role and the purposes of education in the lives of the students she teaches. Greene (1973) seeks to guide educators to ask the sorts of questions that lead toward "discovering what the known demands" (p.21).

> In philosophic questioning, we continually ask what the known demands of the teacher. …The individual must continually struggle to clarify, to pattern (without losing sight of 'the chaos against which that pattern was conceived'). And he must recognize the multiplicity of options to be confronted, the difficult choices to be made. (p.21)

These are the bigger and more important questions that will lead to transformative relationships, knowing, and educative experiences for both teacher and student. Takeishi-sensei mentioned that the teachers she encountered at Ishikawa Elementary School did not think about philosophy, and questioned if, at first, teachers come to their first experiences with any "intelligent" thoughts about pedagogy. This is not to say that she does not feel it necessary they be given an opportunity to develop "intelligent wholeheartedness" to use Dewey's (Fishman, 2007, p.8) term. Takeishi-sensei experienced hardship when she took up her post at Ishikawa Elementary, but the philosophic grounding and personal practical knowledge she drew upon provided an answer to her struggles and positioned her to act, and enact change, where other teachers lingered in a void of complacency and inaction.

Johnson (1989) provides a concise definition of teachers' personal practical knowledge as "includ[ing] the entire way in which they have a structured world that they can make some sense of, and in which they can function" (p.363).   Going further,

> The relevant knowledge here is thus knowledge that grows out of one's experience and is the very means of transformation of that experience. It both emerges from and restructures our world and it has meaning and value only within the context of that experiential process of growth and change. (p.364)

All teachers have personal practical knowledge and draw on this knowledge to guide them in their practice, but not all knowledge that teacher's draw on is transformative *to their practice*. Referring once more to Johnson (1989) will help to clarify the difference.

> Personal practical knowledge is quite similar to the classical Greek conception of *techne'* (translated typically as "art" or "craft"). …One who possesses *techne'* has a mode of understanding and knowledge such that, with respect to some part of life, they are not at the mercy of *tuche'* ("chance", or "that which merely happens"). (p. 364)

In many ways, Takeishi-sensei was at the "mercy of chance" similar to her fellow teaching colleagues when she was posted to Ishikawa Elementary School. But, unlike her colleagues she was able to tap into the *techne'* of her personal practical knowledge in a reflective and action-oriented way.   Takeishi-sensei came to reevaluate the value she placed on her pedagogic philosophy in light of the new circumstances and pedagogic relations she had become entangled within. Schon (1983) calls this "reflection in action" (p.50) describing it as a kind of practitioner's art. "It is the entire process of reflection-in-action which is central to the "art" by which practitioners sometimes deal well with situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict" (p.50).   Note the similarity to Johnson's (1989) *techne'*, which is distinguished as "knowledge in process" (p.364). This reflective and refocused insight renewed Takeishi-sensei's convictions to rethink the applicability of the individualized pedagogy within

the foreign territory of her new school and re-envision new possibilities for herself and the children in her classroom.

It took a couple of years for her to shift her classroom practice until she felt confident enough to extend an invitation to teachers in the school to observe her lessons before any real work could begin. The development of the individualized curriculum and the budding practitioner researcher project were implemented simultaneously. Takeishi-sensei called on members of her knowledge community to aid the development of the individualized curriculum and set into motion the collaboration needed to extend the practice. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) describe professional knowledge communities as "seeding grounds" claiming that they provide fertile connections for emerging ideas that initiate educational change. "Knowledge communities promote this kind of growth. They are important during times of transition" (p.141).

The transitions that were taking place at Ishikawa Elementary School were brought to life by drawing on the established professional knowledge community that Takeishi-sensei and Principal Ishiyama had been engaged with for close to two decades. Yet, they expanded that community by building a new one with the teachers involved in the practitioner research project at Ishikawa Elementary. "Knowledge communities emerge and grow as teachers come together in their professional knowledge landscapes. They cannot be imposed or mandated. They involve people in different places on the matrix of relationships of the landscape" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 141). The "matrix of relationships" that was beginning to form among the teachers at Ishikawa Elementary School would eventually grow to include individuals from across several universities, cross-regional communities and span both time and space to create an intricate web of shared experiences, experimentation and transformation within the school.

Takeishi-sensei described the research meetings the teachers participated in on their own, as well as those they had with the visiting university professor who helped broadens their conceptualizations of the work they were engaging. Through these meetings the teachers opened themselves up to presenting their ideas about the curriculum, expressed their opinions, and openly critiqued each others' ideas through reflective practice and dialogue. Wells (1999) provides a useful understanding of the dialogic nature of this type of inquiry, "…there is a dual transformation: the individual is transformed in terms of his or her understanding and potential for action and, in putting these resources to use, he or she transforms the situation in which they are used" (p.228).

Through these dialogic inquiry sessions (Wells, 1999) the teachers developed a deeper manner of thinking about the contents of the individualized course and become enthusiastic about creating lessons and educative opportunities for more engaged learning and teaching. The teachers were able to more deeply explore the material provided in the textbook and question for themselves the value of the chosen content by enhancing it and expanding it to aid deeper educational experiences for both student and teacher. The teachers who joined Takeishi-sensei in her further exploration and development of the individualized curriculum experienced a renewed enthusiasm for teaching and began finding joy alongside the children they had begun to claim "response-ability" for. This is not to overly glorify either the benefits of the individualized curriculum nor diminish the struggles these teachers faced, and continue to face. There were many other aspects of change occurring simultaneously, as mentioned in Takeishi-sensei's narrative portrait, but the shift in pedagogical style did bring about real change in the lives of many of the teachers and their children in the school. Ultimately, through reflective practice, dialogic inquiry, and practitioner research centered on both child and teacher an extended

270

professional knowledge community was established that spawned the curricular and pedagogic practice that redefined and reframed the story of the school, and the individuals within the school community.

6.7.5   A Full & Forgiving View of the Child

Takeishi-sensei spoke about the difficulty she had in convincing her fellow teachers to allow the children the freedom to use the school equipment as needed to perform their required tasks for either the individualized lessons or the school clean up which is an important ritualistic and community building activity in Japanese schools (Cave, 2008).   At Ishikawa Elementary, in the upper grades, the children take to their work without direction and make the decisions for themselves depending on what needs to be done, rather than following a prescribed pattern of duty.   In this way, the equipment is available to them to use as they see necessary.   During the *waku waku free time* the various tools and equipment the children need for their planned activities children are also made available, but they must make a request to one of the teachers before being allowed access to them.   The children in this instance become responsible for not only the equipment, but also for being truthful in the event they break or misplace the equipment. The difference between Takeishi-sensei and her fellow teachers is that she seeks to decrease the control an authoritarian pedagogy imposes *for the sake of control*, to rather increase the authority of the child over the directions of his action.   One of the tenets of the individualized education program is that the children learn to take responsibility for their actions, allowing them to make myriad decisions on their own, not all of them according to the teachers' preference or consent.

Takeishi-sensei sees these moments as opportunities for the children to learn from possible lack of foresight over their control of the situation and the influence of their actions on

271

others. "Individuals are certainly interested at times, in having their own way… But they are also interested, and chiefly interested upon the whole, in entering into the activities of others and taking part in conjoin and cooperative doings" (Dewey, 1916/2009, p. 75). The individualized program at Ishikawa Elementary has designed opportunities for the children to take control over the social activities within the school because it is precisely in working out the tension, between self-interest and "cooperative doings" where the children learn to direct themselves in Dewey's (1916/2009) "right direction", thus enabling them to grow into "socially intelligent" (p. 96) members of the community.

In an extension to the discussion on developing children's self-responsibility, and the teacher's role in understanding and controlling the children, Takeishi-sensei moved into a more deeply nuanced discussion about the importance of attending to *degrees of difference* between the children (and teachers for that matter). "Effective" classroom practice, and the overall social milieu of a school, is often gauged by the behavior of the children who live and learn within its environs. Teachers praise positive behavior as a normative measure to define what is acceptable and unacceptable within the classroom, remaining vigilant to control as many aspects of the learning, organization and physical movement of the children to assure that everyone's "needs" are met, and each aspect of the lesson or activity follows as planned. Noddings (2005) discusses her two-sided relational ethic of care with regard to the "carer and the cared for" (p. xv) by providing an in-depth view of the complexities surrounding these two aspects of a caring relationship. She sets up an understanding of the frequent clash between inferred and expressed needs and the way these can impede or enhance an ethical caring pedagogic relationship.

In discussing virtue as "belonging to carers", Noddings (2003) extrapolates the meaning of virtue in a negative sense when carers solely act on inferred needs. On the other hand, the

"virture of caring" is seen as responding ethically to the cared-for's expressed needs, Noddings (2003) claims,

> From this perspective, carers, in what they see as the best interest of those for whom they care, may decide what those best interests are without listening to the expressed needs of the cared-for. …Biography, fiction, and history are filled with stories of well-intentioned carers whose efforts turned out for the best in the long run, of others who so alienated the cared-for that an objective outsider would have to say there was complete failure of caring, and of still others whose effects were accepted to the unacknowledged detriment of the particular cared-for for generations. (p. xvii)

Teachers often feel compelled to infer their students' needs, making choices for them or reacting to their physical behavior in ways that often misinterpret, and at times, disregard the actually needs of the child, or the circumstances within which the child is responding. Genuine conversations and discussions related to the expressed needs of the child are, in reality, few due to the packed schedules, number of children the teacher is required to attend to, and sometimes simply because the teacher has made up her mind about a child and becomes incapable of seeing, hearing, or recognizing her expressed needs. To fully see and understand a child means that a teacher needs to take the time, and care enough, to guide her decisions about the child only after inquiring about and listening to the child's expressed needs before acting on the inferred needs she has perceived.

Takeishi-sensei spoke of the need for teachers to get "the wrong-doing down to zero percent, and sees this as not only an unrealistic goal, but as an unnatural and detrimental view. Himel and Carini (2000) provide an apt and well-grounded explanation in support of Takeishi-sensei's sentiments.

> Some children incline toward imaginative, poetic comparisons with an eye to surprising likenesses between objects or events that on the surface are quite different. …Or there may be a philosophical, reflective, and speculative talent… There may be an experimental or problem-solving slant on the world and an

273

interest in causal relationships. …So, even if there is a strong bent in one direction, don't overlook others that may be there. One of the things about us humans is that we are complicated. Given that complexity…creating types or categories of thinkers and learners tends not to do a child (or adult) justice or be especially helpful…for that child's learning and education. (p.62)

The child is never one thing or another because the child, like the teacher, is constantly interacting and responding to the environment around him in unique and different ways. The teacher who has limited her view of the child to "one story" (Aidichie, 2007) is unable to regonize the complexity of the life world and the child's position within it making it impossible to educate and learn from, and about, the child fully.

6.7.6   Cultural Clash: Beyond Difference in Ethnicity & Language

Takeishi-sensei entered Ishikawa Elementary school not only unprepared and inexperienced to teach linguistically and culturally different children, but her experience had been limited to educating middle-to-upper middle class children in a progressive school culture. In this environment the children were given much freedom, urged to be self-directed learners, and trusted by their teachers to make the right decisions for themselves and those around them *as a matter of fact*. On the other hand, Takeishi-sensei did not feel this looser teaching style would work with the low-income and culturally and linguistically different children at Ishikawa Elementary. Rather, she forced herself to teach in the discipline-oriented and controlling structure implemented at the school as it was when she entered it, though she soon recognized this was exasperating an already desperate situation. Takeishi-sensei had came face to face with the structural inequalities based on economic class that so greatly influences the life trajectory of children (Anyon, 1981; Kanno, 2008b; Lareau, 2003).   She struggled with her own cultural

274

deprivation lens through which she appears to have at first viewed the children, and may still view the parents despite knowing the challenges they face. Eventually, she made the connection between the way this influenced her pedagogic relationships and impeded her ability to teach the children so to draw out their goodness, incite confidence, and spark a desire to learn.

Recognizing the impact her negative view of the children had with regard to her choice to instructional style and relational stance she came to shift her view of the children. In so doing, she began to question the system rather than the children for their subsequent lack of success as they passed on from Ishikawa Elementary School to the local junior high school.   As the school culture and pedagogical style of Ishikawa Elementary began to come more in line with that of the open-structure schools through the implementation of the individualized curriculum Takeishi-sensei began to see more clearly the class-based advantages her students from those schools received and the benefits from schooling they received based on their class-based positions. Lareau (2003) working within Bordieau's social and cultural reproduction framework defines the middle-class approach to child rearing as "concerted cultivation". Her work links economic class to specific socializing practices in the home, of both White and African Americans, that either benefit or detract from their child's schooling experiences and success.   The teachers in the study overwhelmingly responded more positively and reinforced more directly those behaviors and attitudes associated with the middle-class socializing practices of "concerted cultivation" further benefiting the already well-positioned children for success.

It is not my intention to compare the actual socialization or cultural home practices here, but rather to consider the similarity between the teachers' and schools' responses to these socializing practices.   There are obvious linguistic, socio-cultural and political differences between not only the groups of individuals in discussion here, but also within the national and

275

regional contexts. What is applicable here is the discussion of economic stratification and the schooling benefits associated with being socialized in an economically stable and relatively privileged home environment. Japanese middle class parents, particularly mothers, partake in many of the same " concerted cultivating" practices as do those American parents in Lareau's study (2003), either African American or White.

Additionally, parent participation is almost a mandate of Japanese elementary school requiring home support for the many projects the children are obliged to prepare at home, signatures and responses in the daily message books, and preparation of the various items, often hand-crafted, required for use by the children at school (these are all, of course, on view for all to see). Additionally, the modern middle-class Japanese mother (generally) is just as likely to be sending her child off to piano, ballet, swimming lessons, or soccer club as her American counterpart. One of the main differences, I would posit, is that Japanese children coming from homes with the financial resources to afford it, also attend some form of English lessons and attend *juku*, or cram school, several hours a week, further benefiting their successful studies at school and thus life chances. A survey conducted at Ishikawa Elementary on the children's out-of-school activities shows that less than 10 percent of the students engage in extracurricular scholastic activities. Children taking piano lessons ranked at just 12.3 percent, with the highest percentage of 22 percent being allotted to participation in sports related activities at the public sports complex. In comparison to the norm (which I don't have available statistics for), these percentages are very low (Kato, 2009).

There is no question that the normative standard of "mother" in Japan is held up to this middle-class image. Some of the teachers at Ishikawa Elementary School based their perceptions on this image of parenting, which interfered with their ability to positively relate to

276

or understand the difficult life circumstances of the many single-parent and culturally different socializing practices in the low-income homes many of the children come from. Lareau's (2003) makes the following claim.

> Different family backgrounds engender different levels of benefit in educational fields. In this instance, the cost to working-class families for their lack of capital takes the form of an ongoing feeling of the threat of a looming catastrophe. This gap in the connections between the working class and poor families and schools is important. It undermines their feelings of trust or comfort at school, a feeling that …is pivotal in the formation of effective and productive family-school relationships. (p. 231)

To bring this around to (im)migrant children, many who enter their host society in the lower tier of the economic structure, may be doubly disadvantaged when considering the challenges they and their parents face to make sense of, and interact with, the foreign culture of the school in a language they may not understand. This difficulty is compounded when immigrant parents are viewed through a cultural deficit lens that does not recognize the positive attributes of their cultural parenting practices or recognize the toll merely surviving from day-to-day takes on their lives (Valdes, 1996).

Unlike the teachers Takeishi-sensei spoke about, she never spoke negatively of the parents of her students, nor did she appear to look down on them in the way it seems her colleagues might have. She did, however, lament the lack of more parental involvement in the children's schooling, but points to a desire to see more active engagement with their childrens' schoolwork rather than the extracurricular activities that take up so much of a child's life after school. In fact, she had become aware that the gains the children she was teaching at Ishikawa Elementary were directly related to the work they did within the classroom. Takeishi-sensei believed she could better gauge the impact of her teaching, and the learning experiences of the children, because they did not attend the cram schools that supplement so many other children's

in-school experiences.   It does appear, though, that becoming aware of the structural inequities bearing down of the children at Ishikawa Elementary School has placed a greater burden on her.

Takeishi-sensei has had to struggle with conflicting outcomes based on tensions between the pedagogic philosophy that underlies the pedagogical and curricular reforms at Ishikawa Elementary, which are focused on the saliency of the learning experience, acceptance of individual differences, and the expressions of these, with the narrower and more immediate outcomes of a traditional instructional style. Upon graduation from Ishikawa Elementary the children are unprepared for the regimented, teacher-fronted, textbook driven lessons, and rigid rules of the junior high school. Many appear to look back on their elementary school experience and see gaps between the loose structure of their elementary schooling and the highly structured atmosphere of junior high school. On the other hand, prior to the reforms when Ishikawa Elementary was more stream-lined in its pedagogic and curricular structure to the local junior high school the students were disengaged, truant and excluded from most learning occurring in the classrooms, for the most part. (personal conversation with Leticia, 11.14.09).

The disconnect between elementary school and junior high school is not an unfamiliar experience for most children as they make the leap between the generally looser, more enjoyable, and forgiving experiences of elementary school to junior high school. But, for the children at Ishikawa Elementary, particularly the Japanese-Brazilian children, the transition is often devastating with many of the Japanese-Brazilian children not advancing to graduation (Principal Ishiyama, 1.19.10, Takeishi-sensei, 1.18.10). The academic pressure is intense and the pace is fast because junior high is the terminus of the public school system and teachers face the task of setting students on their future paths into continued study requiring a no-nonsense focus on exams.   Fukuzawa (1998) found that public junior high school teachers in Japan believe that

278

"disregarding the text will handicap students in the competition for places in high school. …Teachers are under pressure to provide "equal" education geared to the most efficient transmission of material for entrance exam preparation. Consequently, most classes were text-centered lectures" (Fukuzawa, 1998). This is the reality Takeishi-sensei bears and the future educational experience awaiting each group of sixth graders she graduates. In addition to this radically divergent educational atmosphere, few of the students from the other three elementary schools that feed into the junior high school have had any association with the Japanese-Brazilian students from Ishikawa Elementary. Though, the local junior high school does have the largest population of Japanese Brazilian students among the three junior high schools in the district, 43 in 2009, with a total population of 933 students they quickly become marginalized, unlike at Ishikawa Elementary where they are included as valued and visible members of the school community.

Takeishi-sensei is well aware of the lowered expectations and severe academic environment of the junior high school, where her students will be judged solely by the rank and file system which devalues and destroys much of the work she has put into building up their self-confidence and self-worth. She suffers the tension of the mismatch between her teaching philosophy which places authentic learning and individual expressiveness at the center of the curriculum to the demands of the instruction-oriented system based on "a mere serial aggregate of acts" (Dewey, 1916/2009, p. 290). Ultimately, this is a conflict not only over conceptions of the needs of the child, or the role of the school to provide a foundation for the future growth of the child, but is a negation of educational aims.

> To talk about an educational aim when approximately each act of a pupil is dictated by the teacher, when the only order in the sequence of his acts is that which comes from the assignment of lessons and the giving of directions by another, is to talk nonsense (p.290).

I believe Takeishi-sensei would wholeheartedly agree with Dewey's (1916/2009) sentiments, seeing the lack of a humanizing pedagogy in the junior high school as more than nonsense, but as detrimental to the continued positive growth of her students. Despite the looming shadow of junior high school Takeishi-sensei remains committed to instilling confidence in her students, despite the possibility this may be taken from them; creating opportunities to explore their own interests, though they will no longer be able to choose their own direction; making space for them to expressing their difference, although this may be forced down; and finding joy in learning, which may prove more difficult than they can imagine.

7.0   PULLING THE THREADS TOGETHER & TEASING OUT THE TENSIONS

> The extent to which an action is an appropriate response to the needs of others is constituted as much by the possibilities it creates as by its immediate results. Responsible action does not mean one individual resolving the problems of others. It is rather, participation in communal work, laying the groundwork for the creative response of people in the present and in the future.   (Welch, 2000, p. 75)

The pieces of the tale have been told laying bare intersecting narratives of shared experience and action. Each narrative adds richness to the story of Ishikawa Elementary School filling it with personal struggle, conflict, disruption, agency, and transformation. Resonant themes run across the three individual educator's narrative portraits, yet each has a salient quality unique to the perspective of that individual's location within the school and the life experiences, which frame their view. I reflected on the individual themes that emerged from each narrative and provided an interpretation crafted from the singular experience of each educator. Here I seek to draw across the theoretic and philosophical reflections to make more significant meaning of these conceptual interpretations. I also aim to work out the tensions that were left hanging at the end of each narrative portrait. In doing so, I will work across the central resonant themes generated from the narratives. Specifically these are: Openness & Bridging, Responsibility & Response-ability, Teaching for Joy & Teaching for "Learning," and Imaging the Future.

7.1   THE CHICKEN OR THE EGG? OPENNESS & BRIDGING

Throughout the conversations I had with Leticia, Principal Ishiyama and Takeishi-sensei the importance of reaching across difference and opening up to those differences claimed a central theme in their actions and narratives. What is not so readily apparent is which had the greater influence on the other. By this I mean, does it require an open-mind and an open-heart to enable one to reach out to bridge the gaps that divide, or does bridging the gap lead to opening one's heart and mind? This may be a classic chicken and egg quandary with no answer. But, it seems important because if the open-heart and mind is required to urge one to reach across the unknown, and thus risky divide (Biesta, 2006; Freire, 2001), then it would be important to focus on how educators can come to open their minds and their hearts to *others* they may shut out because they presume to *know* what *type* of child any particular student might be, or the child may be too troublesome or unknowable for them to open to, and thus care for. Considered from this standpoint it seems important to understand how the hearts and minds of teachers can be opened-up to offset the violence they can commit through their inability to *see* the child in her singularity (Todd, 2003). The ethical pedagogic relationship is dependent on this capacity to act towards each other ethically. For as Takeishi-sensei showed through her narratives the children will respond to the vision projected on to them by their teacher.

Freire (2001) considers openness to others, specifically through dialogic encounters, as fundamental to his pedagogy of freedom because without it we close off possibilities to ourselves, and others, in our project of unfinishedness. Unfinishedness, or incompleteness, is necessary to live ethically, for oneself and with others, because it leaves open the possibility for

change and allows us "to intervene" in the conditions of our lives. Openness becomes the space with which this is possible.

> The experience of openness as a founding moment of our unfinishedness leads us to the knowledge and awareness of that unfinishedness. It would be impossible to know ourselves as unfinished and not to open ourselves to the world and to others. …Closing ourselves to the world and to others is a transgression of the natural condition of incompleteness. (p.121)

Education is an act of securing the possibility of keeping the project of incompleteness alive for our students whereby they can renew themselves within that incomplete space of possibility. Arendt (1998) sides wih Freire here and adds to his "unfinishedness" with her famed concept of natality. Natality is the ever-present opportunity to embrace newness by taking action to alter our place in the world and change our future. Human beings, by the right of their birth, enter the world as singular and unique. With this uniqueness and singularity comes the possibility for the unexpected to occur when action is taken. "It is in the nature of a beginning," Arendt (1998) writes, "that something new is started which cannot be expected from whatever may have happened before. …The fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from him, that he is able to perform what is infinitely improbable" (pp.177-178). Performing that which is improbable first requires an openness to act. In the story of Ishikawa Elementary School all three participants acted where others did not. They engaged in the unexpected, willing to take the risk to remain open to the unknown.

There are differences in the way each approached, or attended to, the needs of the situation, though. Principal Ishiyama spoke about the importance of bridging, or *kakehashi* in Japanese, and directed most of his actions in the direction of opening up and connecting individuals through: community organizing events; restructuring the curriculum to better bridge the distance between the child and the subject of study; bridging the gap between the teachers

283

and their children; and removing the barriers that limited the freedom of the children and the teachers to come to know, trust and believe in each other. Prior to initiating any of these actions, Principal Ishiyama *saw* the school, the children, their families, and the teachers through his open-mindedness and sought ways to bring the school into a space that would foster open and connected relationships. Connectedness claimed the central motive for Principal Ishiyama as he sought openings and opportunities to bridge the gaps that had severed the community.   He recognized opportunities, and created spaces for openings to occur. Having worked in the open structured schools   Principal Ishiyama had shifted his consciousness to conceptualize space around him as a projection of his open-mindedness. Palmer (1993) claims that

> To create space is to remove the impediments to learning that we find around and within us… . We not only 'find' these obstacles around and within us; we often create them ourselves… . So creating a learning space means resisting our own tendency to clutter up our consciousness and our classrooms. (p.71)

 On the other hand, Takeishi-sensei was unable to open herself up to the children without first reaching out and over to them in search of their goodness, which was hidden from her. Here, the openness that pushed back the barriers to ethical relationality first required a crossing over to the other. Freire (1998) again helps out here. "In relation to my students, I diminish the distance that separates me from the adverse conditions of their lives to the degree that I help them to learn" (p.123).   Takeishi-sensei did not know her students and could not *see* them beyond the difficulties of teaching them. She had to bridge the gap between them, to learn about them, and come to know their worlds to before being able to draw out their interests and teach them. She had limited her perception of the children by blocking herself off from them, and was only able to move beyond this self-imposed boundary after reflecting on that which had created the barrier.   By first confronting her dissatisfaction with the conditions that defined her

284

pedagogic choices and then looking deeper into both her own and the children's emotional needs Takeishi-sensei was able to connect to her students and discern a purposeful approach that then opened up space for the children to risk more fully revealing themselves. "Emotions … are necessary to bridge across the unexpected and the unknown to guide reason, and to give priorities among multiple goals" (Oatley & Jenkins in Hargreaves, 2001, p. 1066). For Takeishi-sensei moving in the direction of her students was determined by her own emotional need to first connect to them, which enabled her to better discover her students' needs.

Leticia, too, took action guided by her perception of what the children needed to succeed at school rather than focusing on her own needs, at first. Whereas Takeishi-sensei felt compelled to look inward, reflecting on the barriers she had created between herself and her students, Leticia was in clear view of the closed spaces around her. She spread herself across the boundaries that divided teacher and child enabling them to move through her to aid their communication and understanding. She, herself became the bridge to the child's learning. In Arendtian terms Leticia had acted "in-between", in her usage of the intersubjective "in-between". "Subjective in-between" claims Arendt, "is overlaid and, as it were, overgrown with an altogether different in-between which consists of deeds and words and owes its origin exclusively to men's acting and speaking directly *to* one another" (Arendt, 1998, p. 183). Leticia was the intangible "in-between" that facilitated the direct communication between the child and the teacher thus creating a space of relational newness, to again draw on Arendt's important idea of natality. This renewed space constituted a beginning of relations that would open up communication and build community in the classroom where there had previously only been silence and dissonance.

This, of course, was the task that all three of the educators featured in the narratives undertook. The children were always at the center of every action, though each action took its own form, molded out of the individual needs and position of each individual child. Yet, at the center of these actions was the need to connect and relate. Bridges were built to connect communities and positive, caring relationships where none had existed. Each sought their own paths to cross the bridges that divided them, and each crossing led to renewed opportunities for deeper connections and action. The idea of relationality as a driving force behind education is a provocative one that often gets lost in the drive to meet narrowly defined curricular deadlines, prepare children to "prove" their knowledge, and lock-step teaching practices. Greene (1978) writes of the "we-relation" and, "the mutual tuning-in relationship" (Shutz in Greene, p.29) that is central to the act of education, if positioned on the side of supporting Freire's (2001) project of unfinishedness, dependent as it is on our ability to enter into dialogic communion with others. "It appears to me that without the ability to enter into a "mutual tuning-in relationship," the teacher is in some manner incapacitated; since teaching is, in so many of its dimensions, a mode of encounter, of communication" (Greene, 1978, p.29).

Takeishi-sensei was certainly incapacitated when she was unable to join in Greene's "mutual tuning-in relationship" with her students, which she was eventually able to enter in to once she and her students crossed over to one another. For Takeishi-sensei the relationship had to come first. Only then was she able to open her eyes and heart to these students who had once confounded and troubled her. She had to "go beyond created structures" (Merleau-Ponty in Greene, 1978) to *see* the children. Yet, Principal Ishiyama seemed to depend on his openness first to then build the bridges that connected and opened the communities of the school, the teachers to the children, and the children to their own learning and self-expression within the

school. To Principal Ishiyama the world is full of possibilities for openness and connection; one feeds the other. The two are one in the same and co-constitutive. Maybe, then, this is the answer to the perplexing question that opened this section. It may not be important which comes first, opening up to or bridging difference, as long as both are present.

7.2 BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE: CARING AS RESPONSIBILITY AND RESPONSE-ABILITY

In all three of the narrative portraits a tension arose around the responsibility teachers, and education for that matter, have for the children in their charge. In Takeishi-sensei's philosophical reflection I drew on Noddings' (2003, 2005a) notion of responsibility as a sense of duty as opposed to response-ability as one's ability to respond to another human being as an ethical and caring act. Stengel (2003) modifies this reconstruction to more specifically locate the act of responsiveness within the pedagogic relationship coining the phrase, "pedagogical response-ability" (p. 196).   This is a very complicated conceptual and personal problem with various angles to consider, not the least of which is where the responsibility – response-ability lies, with the self or with the other, or in Levinasian terms, with both simultaneously (Todd, 2003). How, and who, we claim responsibility and response-ability for is linked to our relations with any one individual, the confines within which that relationship exists, and the investment we place in that relationship. I would also argue that this applies to the non-human world as well. It has to do with our ability to perceive the other as worthy of taking the risk to claim responsibility or response-ability for an Other.   The external and internal forces, which determine how and if we are responsible for another, as well as the proximal distance that may

287

determine if we are indeed response-able or responsible for another at all (Noddings, 2005b). I will not attempt to address all of these considerations, but pose these thoughts to complicate the notion of response-ability and responsibility.

The salient tension raised by Takeishi-sensei and Leticia is related to the strain and dictates that institutional responsibility puts on the teacher's response-ability for her students. In some ways, the teacher's responsibility in her task is clearly defined by the institution of schooling. She has been trained to transmit a pre-determined, and defined amount of content to develop the objective knowledge of her students, within a particular period of time that is sequenced out in manageable bits. She must check understanding, make assessments, care for the safety and well-being of the students, and train them in the culturally accepted mores and manners of her society. This is a necessarily generic view of what a teacher does, but it gets to the point, that if the teacher views her responsibility through a lens of "embodied performances of a sterile script" (Todd, 2005, p.42) then she can manage her task much more easily, and with less personal risk. On the other hand, if she enriches her role, relationally, by claiming response-ability then she runs a risk. Or, as Todd (2005) prefers, a "fine risk".

> It seems to me that one way of living well within the ambiguities of the institution is to reconfigure the relationship between the personal and the institutional, not so as to eradicate the tensions, but so as to acknowledge the ethical significance of the quality of human contact which necessarily involves a little risk-taking. For it is through the possibility of a fine risk that responsibility can be recentered in educational institutions. (p.35)

Here Todd (2005) provides a place to move forward. The teacher who claims to act within an ethical relationship will need to be able and willing to risk entering into a responsive relationship with her students. There is risk to self and risk to Other. What is the risk when acting response-ably? Welch (2000) provides an answer. "The fundamental risk constitutive of this ethic is the decision to care and to act although there are no guarantees of success. Such an

288

action requires immense daring and enables deep joy" (p.68). Welch's response to the place of risk in the ethical relationship is reminiscent of Biesta's (2006) "trust (without grounding)" (p.25) and "responsibility (without knowledge)" (p. 29). When engaging in an ethical act of responsive relationality trust is an imperative called up by the risk that precedes claiming response-ability for an Other. There can be no entering into an ethical, response-able relationship without risk. Risk requires trust. Pedagogic ethical relationships require both.

Moving beyond the institutional, the dutiful, the risk to claim response-ability shifts into a deeper and more dangerous space as the teacher becomes directly response-able for the human being that *is* the student, rather than claiming her *actions for* an institution. This is not to say, that the act of educating an Other is not a worthy responsibility in its own right. Leticia, would claim, along with Delpit (1995), that it is the teacher's main responsibility to prepare the child academically to succeed in the world. Not doing so, is unethical because it shows a disinterest in the future growth of the child. I would agree, as does Freire (1995). But, this cannot be the only claim for the child's future that the teacher makes, nor do I think teachers act solely according to their vocational rather than their relational response-abilities. I do believe, though, that the institutional and vocational responsibilities of the teacher easily overwhelm the relational response-ability that nurtures and deepens the act of teaching and learning as an act in support of "unfinishedness" (Freire, 1995). I would argue that the daily, in fact momentary, acts of responding ethically are as, if not more important to the child's future, as are the more clearly defined acts of instruction or preparation for that future, which is as yet unknown. It seems that the more convincing argument would be to claim ethical response-ability for the child *as she is* now (in the Arendtian sense) simply because *she is*.

Taking responsibility for the singularity of the student, for the uniqueness of this particular student is not something that has to do with calculation. …It rather belongs to the very structure of responsibility that we do not know what we take responsibility for – if *taking* is the right word. (Biesta, 2006, p. 30)

Principal Ishiyama spoke several times about his responsibility to the children while they were under his charge because he does not know what the future holds for them. Unlike the children he taught during the first twenty six years of his career who he could more easily imagine a future for, the Japanese-Brazilian and single-parent children's futures are much more difficult to visualize. He recognized his response-ability for these children each day he faced them at school, relating to them ethically for the individuals they *were at that time* in their relationship with him. He also had an eye on their future, claiming responsibility for the people they will become, rather than the occupations they may or may not enter. Principal Ishiyama held the children within "a fullness of time in which past, present, and future are held together" (Baker-Fletcher in Welch, 2000, p. 36). The face begs a response regardless of how different or seemingly unknowable it is. In Todd's (2005) words, Principal Ishiyama was "receptive to the discourse of the face, to hear and listen for meanings that students work out for themselves" (p.31).

The teacher enveloped within an ethical pedagogic relationship recognizes the singularity of the individual child and is responsive to that singularity. This has little to do with one's "duty" to "teach", but is rather defined by a pedagogy of care; caring both for the child, and about how the child learns to care for herself and others (Noddings, 2005a). In so doing, the broader questions of responsibility fall into place. Leticia's concern that the children "study hard", or Takeishi-sensei's tension between the "teacher as an institutional figure" and the "teacher as a compassionate person" (Noddings, 2005a) begin to dissolve once entering into the

290

ethical relationship because both teacher and child have deepened their response(ability) to the other and risked entering a relationship that opens up to Freire's (1995) unfinishedness. Referring back to Todd (2005),

> For Levinas, teaching and learning, like ethics, lie in the "insurmountability of the duality of beings". The Other signifies a limitless possibility for the self ... . In this view, teaching is only possible if the self is open to the Other, to the face of the Other. Through such openness to what is exterior to the I, the I can become something different than, or beyond, what it was; in short it can learn. (p.30).

7.3 ALL WORK & NO PLAY? ALL PLAY & NO WORK?: TEACHING FOR JOY OR "LEARNING"

Each educator in this inquiry took action dependent on their position within the school and in relation to their perceived response(ability) to the children. There are the obvious links between Takeishi-sensei and Principal Ishiyama because of their shared pedagogic philosophy and experience working in the open structure schools. Yet, Principal Ishiyama spoke continuously about the need for the children to enjoy school. This was paramount for him. Whereas, Takeishi-sensei rarely, if ever, mentioned the need to make learning fun, though this is not to say that she feels teaching and learning should be drudgery. Quite the opposite, she feels the enjoyment of learning comes from engaging with the act of learning that will lead to more such acts. Here, the joy of learning is understood in Dewey's (1938) terms as being defined by their quality "to live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences" (p. 28). She is a tough, but caring teacher. Yet, she is not tough in the sense of enforcing action onto the students *to learn*. Rather she seeks to create a space and opportunities for the children to engage their own learning

within the perimeters of the individualized courses she and the other teachers have created for the students hoping they also enjoy the learning experience that comes with it.

Principal Ishiyama, as an educator grounded in the same philosophy as Takeishi-sensei-senei, sought to develop the professional development of his teaching staff to join freely and enjoyably into the learning-teaching relationships with their students. Yet, he was positioned to view the school community in its entirety and sought to bring the community together through activities that were joyful, seeing that these, too, were educative. Taking the "learning" outside of the classroom and out into the educational space within and around the school allowed the teachers and students to reinvest in the pedagogic relationship in new and redefined ways, which enhanced their teaching and learning upon returning to the classroom. Leticia did not see the educative value of these events. Being concerned about the children's economic future she was unable to recognize the carry-over value of these unconventional educational practices back in the classroom. I am not convinced, though, that Leticia would prefer a return to the stricter, discipline-oriented teaching practices that existed in the school in the past. She is unequivocally clear that she wants to see more "studying," which I understand here in the traditional meaning of the word as direct-instruction, focused task-based learning, and standardized assessment of comprehension. These skills are transferable to the teacher-fronted, textbook driven, exam-based instruction of the junior high schools, which the children will be exposed to upon graduation from Ishikawa Elementary School. Takeishi-sensei also spoke about her concern over the mismatch between her student-directed, broad-based, individualized teaching and learning style with that of the junior high school where the children will likely suffer shock and distress over their lack of preparedness to manage the traditional classroom environment, lack of freedom, and rigid teaching practices.

So, the question becomes, what does teaching and learning look like from these three perspectives? Does it have to be serious, intense, and "hard", for it to seem "real"? Can we define activities where the children are self-directed and engaging themselves in organizing a game of soccer, for example, as "learning"? Can teaching be considered valuable, in the institutional sense, when it moves away from the confines of the curriculum and textbooks to more enjoyable "play" like activities? Dewey (1916/2009) is one place to seek an answer.

> Experience has shown that when children have a chance at physical activities which bring their natural impulses into play, going to school is a joy, management is less of a burden, and learning is easier. There is no reason, however, for using them merely as agreeable diversions. Study of mental life had made evident the fundamental worth of native tendencies to explore, to manipulate tools and materials, to construct, to give expression to joyous emotions, etc. When exercises which are prompted by these instincts are a part of the regular school program, the whole pupil is engaged. …In short, the grounds for assigning to play and active work a definite place in the curriculum are intellectual and social, not matters of temporary expediency and momentary agreeableness. (p. 554)

This lengthy quote would seem to be directed specifically to the value of the *waku waku free time* period initiated at the school and then later modified. The modifications made to this "free" period allowed the children to retain the exploratory and joyous benefits of this time within the school day while legitimizing it as an important part of the curriculum of learning, as defined by the individualized pedagogical philosophy of Principal Ishiyama, Takeishi-sensei, and the professors who helped to create the program. To Leticia, who stands on the other end of the dichotomy between formalized and progressive, or holistic learning the "free" activities do not have educational value (not to be mistaken with Dewey's (1938) educative value of an experience). Her image of schooling, like many conventionally minded educators confines "learning" and "education" to the distinct act of instruction whereby the teacher promotes the acquisition of objective knowledge and students display that knowledge within a structured space

that facilitates control, surveillance, and as little distraction as possible. This is necessarily an extreme image, and matches fairly closely the type of learning the children can expect in junior high school, thus Takeishi-sensei's conflict. Yet, is it any more extreme than the opposing view, which sees children engaged in non-scholastic activity at school as simply participating in hapless, "invaluable" learning, or merely "messing around". Again, Dewey (1916/2000) helps to work out the tension Leticia seems to experience.

> Doubtless the fact that children normally engage in play and work out of school has seemed to many educators a reason why they should concern themselves in school with things radically different. School time seemed to precious to spend in doing over again what children were sure to do any way. (p. 556)

One of Leticia's greatest concerns is precisely that the Japanese-Brazilian children are not exposed to the knowledge *at home*, understood here as sociocultural as well as epistemological, that they need to function within Japan *as a Japanese* and should not be spending valuable time at school engaged in activities they can do outside of school. When she speaks about the importance of living in Japan *as a Japanese*, it is not clear if she means this culturally, as in to fully assimilate oneself into Japanese society *as a Japanese*, or to be given the same life chances *as a Japanese*. Either way, Leticia does seems to have a particular type of Japanese in mind, which does not appear to be the lower class Japanese residing in the subsidized apartments. I believe it is likely not an either-or matter, but a combination of the two. For Leticia, school, specifically the classroom, is the obvious place for these children to level their chances at moving beyond the limitations of their social, cultural, and linguistic position in Japanese society. She holds the school accountable for their future and cannot forgive the extra time allotted for "playing" around at school. The stakes are simply too high and the future of the children too uncertain.

Yet, this "playing" around has very important social and cultural aspects, which Leticia does appear to recognize, per her comments at the end of our conversation. The driving force behind her criticism of the loose school policy concerns her understanding of the duty of the teachers to be responsible in their capacity to transmit both the cultural and scholastic knowledge required by the children to succeed in Japanese society, (as it is wrapped up in the Japanese language). For Leticia, the urgency is so great that it appears she sees little time for much else. This is a common take on schooling for many voluntary minorities as Ogbu (1991,1998) classifies (im)migrants of Leticia's status.

Ogbu's (1987) prolific work on the perceptions of, and adaptation strategies for, schooling of cultural and language minority children has been influential in widening the view beyond the narrow perspective of the, often negative, influence of cultural difference on the teacher-student relationship. Rather his work takes into account the broader structural forces at work and the perceptions (im)migrants have of these on the child's success.

Ogbu (1978, 1991, 1998) devised his famous typology of caste (pariah communities), involuntary (indigenous or colonized peoples) and voluntary minorities (immigrants) by looking across community cultural practices, historical precedent, and minority status within the social and cultural structure to help him better locate the causes of the success or failure of minority children in schools. For this discussion, his account of the school success of voluntary minorities, as opposed to the failure of involuntary and caste minorities is applicable to Leticia's view of the educational needs of the Japanese-Brazilian children. Though, I would argue, as I have done in the past (Motohashi, 2007), that his typology is problematic and requires reconsideration.

Leticia's view of school is very much in line with Ogbu's (1987) "folk theory of making it" component of his theory. This aspect of his theory explains that the (im)migrant looks to successful members of the host society as models to gauge appropriate action required to move into the same social and economic position, in essence to "get ahead" in society. In this case, where the (im)migrant parent or child perceives the "folk theory" of getting ahead as available to them, and attainable *through schooling practices,* they will demand the kind of schooling that will lead to "credentialing young people to enter the work force" (p.324). This is, of course, the reality of schooling in the post-industrial era all over the world, and a particularly salient feature of Japanese schooling and work (Okano & Tsuchiya, 1999). The key point here is the narrow view of education and schooling for the purposes of "credentialing". Which is precisely the tension expressed by Takeishi-sensei, on the other side of this contentious issue (which is, in reality not a dichotomous issue and one Dewey (1938) was opposed to bifurcating.

There is a problem with Ogbu's (1991, 1987) typology in the case of the Japanese-Brazilan (im)migrant population, which Leticia is not, because they are positioned in a space that does not exist in the typology (which is the problem with typologies). There is a real possibility that the second, and subsequent generations of this large (im)migrant population will become a caste minority unable to move out of their low social status position. In this case, the discrimination leveled at them is not seen as something they can overcome easily through hard work, but is perceived as directly related to their cultural or ethnic identity (Ogbu, 1991, 1987). When this happens, the perception that hard work at school will pay off in economic opportunities, per the "folk theory of making it," does not work out as neatly as Obgu (1991, 1987) would have it. In this case, the credentialing notion of schooling can be more damaging to the cultural and linguistic minority child because they risk supplanting their cultural identity and

heritage language to assimilate into Japanese society *as Japanese*, and may find this a risky loss (LaFromboise, et al.,1993).

For these children, school must bring them something more than the conventional concepts of "learning" and "teaching". It must engage them, with their teachers, in a process of reciprocal care and ethical relationality that affirms their value and encourages their open expression of self within the community of the school, while engaging in the pedagogic act of continued educative growth. This is not to say that middle-class or upper-class mainstream children do not deserve the same joy and ethical relationships as culturally and linguistically different children, or children from low-income homes. All children and teachers deserve, in fact, may require, teaching and learning conditions defined by humane, caring, and ethical relations to support the project of education as one of "unfinishedness" (Freire, 1995) or "natality" (Arendt, 1998). Children, like those at Ishikawa Elementary School, though, have the odds stacked against them and will likely encounter many discriminatory and violent encounters in and outside of school based on their social position, culture, and language. "The troubling feature of the conventional educational ethos and practices with respect to improving the achievement of ethnically diverse students is the "deficit syndrome" (Gay, 2000, p.23). I interrupt Gay here to add low-income and children from single-parent, and under-educated homes to her discussion of the damaging affects of a cultural deficit lens, per Takeishi-sensei's narrative.

> Far too many educators attribute school failure to what students of color don't have and can't do. …Trying to teach from this "blaming the victim" and deficit mindset sounds more like a basis for "correcting or curing" than educating. Success does not merge out of failure, weakness does not generate strength, and courage does not stem from cowardice. Instead, success begets success. (pp. 23-24)

Creating opportunities for success through response(able) care and responsive and joyful learning is what the educators at Ishikawa Elementary School have kept in their view and acted on. This is why the work of the educators there is so important. It redefines the role of schooling in the lives of these children by providing them positive associative experiences, memories of schooling, and engaged learning, despite not always matching the conventional image of "learning" and "teaching" that so effectively filters the "educable" out from the "uneducable".

7.4 RENEWING THE VISION: ACTING IN THE PRESENT, IMAGINING THE FUTURE

Greene (1979) refers to Hannah Arendt's central project for education as seeing each child as a "newcomer" who brings with him the "advent [of] a new beginning, the person who is born a member of a community and survives only 'if he is welcomed and made at home in it'" (Arendt in Greene, p. 633). Making a child feel at home within a community creates possibilities to "renew the common world" (Arendt, 1960/2006, p.193). This "creating the common world" is all the more significant when outsiders are welcomed into the community to add new voices, and new possibilities, for their common future. Of the three educators in this inquiry Principal Ishiyama and Leticia were most explicit about their responsibility and vision for the children's future, thus their own. Though, their educational positions may have been at odds there is convergence in their desire to see a postive future for the children.

When Principal Ishiyama took up his position at Ishikawa Elementary School he saw the Japanese-Brazilian children suffering isolation and neglect. He became aware that the emotional

and psychological damage from the ongoing negativity the children experienced could have ramifications in the future for both the child and Japanese society and acted to change the conditions that shaped their experiences at school. His was an "end-in-view" per Dewey (Fishman, 2007, p.11) that was two-fold. On the one hand he sought to create a sense of place for the children, a home they can existentially return to in their mind when feeling out-of-place in their world. The children from Ishikawa Elementary School have made the subsidized housing complex their home, but in Principal Ishiyama's vision the physical structure is less important than the emotional attachment to *the place* in which they have lived and grown. This was the task of Principal Ishiyama. By creating a joyful association with their time in Ishikawa Elementary School he would be rooting them to a "home" in Japan. This feeling of "home", denied to many foreign-national children, is vitally important to developing a sense of belonging to a place. Many of the children at Ishikawa Elementary have been born in Japan and consider it *their home*, even if some of them don't look the part. Retaining their memories of acceptance and belonging may help them as they navigate the difficulties of claiming a rightful place for themselves in Japan, if they remain. Leticia shares these goals with Principal Ishiyama seeking to situate the Japanese-Brazilian community as recognized and accepted members of their local community. She is committed to the communal project of joining these two separate communities into a world equally shared and participated in.

Noddings (2003) considers the conflict that can occur when education focuses solely on preparation for an economic future that will drive many young people away from their home. Particularly, when it comes to rural regions that suffer outward migration to cities and points beyond, which has been a serious problem in Japan. Noddings (2003) claims that educating to "*transcend place*" while realistic in the sense that children do move on, we deny them

opportunities for groundedness in their memories of life as a child in a place they can return to, if in memory only.

> Economic success is not everything in life; moreover there seems to be no cogent reason why preparation for occupational life should be at odds with an education that respects and recognizes joy in the very place where it is undertaken. We need not *insist* that students love the region in which they grow up, but we should acknowledge the possibility and help them to develop an appreciation that may well bring them a lifetime of joy. (p.120)

Many of Principal Ishiyama's actions were based on creating memories of joy that he hopes will be sustaining for the children, and even draw them back to Urata township if they journey outward. To create this imagined future in the present he had to make the children feel at home in their surroundings and in the school. He did not simply make a space for them, but created one together with them and the teachers in the school. In this sense the children were also responsible for the creation of their own sense of home. They chose to engage and enter into it. In the same way they will have to choose to engage and enter into the life world of the outer community and claim responsibility for it once they become adults. A sense of "home" cannot be a place that is given as a gift, rather each individual is responsible for how they engage their world, claim a place for themselves within it, and take its common interest as their own.

Each of the individuals in this inquiry have their own conception of the future they would like to see for the children, which directs their actions toward that "end-in-view" (Fishman, 2007, p. 11). Leticia's future view of the children is instrumental and urgent. She sees their lives in the bigger project of their membership within the "new generation" of Brazilian and Japanese-Brazilian (im)migrants who stand to greatly shift the sociocultural fabric of their community, and possibly Japan as it opens itself to more (im)migrants. Takeishi-sensei's view is closer at hand, yet no less long term. She is the direct link to the children's next transition in

their lives and she feels the weight of their needs pressing against her philosophic and pedagogic ideals. Takeishi-sensei's pedagogic philosophy seeks a more fulfilling educational experience than the short-sighted instructional practice represented in the text-book driven, exam-oriented instruction of the junior high schools.

Arendt's (1960/2006) concern was that children learn the world *as it is*, not as they wish it to be. To renew the world means to take action in the world to change the world. This applies to adults as well, and is our path to natality, or renewal. Principal Ishiyama acted and intervened in the world *as it was* in the school to bridge the gap that divided and create community. The key term here is "common", and in this sense the community that the teachers, families and children created at the school is important for retaining hope. They reached across the differences that divided them to come together for the children in the hope of creating a shared place, a more engaged and responsive space. "Our hope always hangs on the new which every generation brings" (p.189).   The "hope.. which every generation brings" that Arendt here writes of is hinged on the power of individuals to claim their voice within their communal space as existing alongside each other in their fullest and most ethical human capacity to act together toward realizing that shared hope. In this sense Dewey (1916/2009) has something to add, "Each generation is inclined to educate its young so as to get along in the present world instead of with a view to the proper end of education: the promotion of the best possible realization of humanity as a shared response(ability) (p. 273). Here Dewey speaks to the "proper" end-in-view, of the pedagogic act, to claim and act response-ably for the possibility of joining others to bring about the realization of humanity as humanity. I would add, considering the extreme environmental concerns we all face in our common humanity, that we place as much focus on realizing our

ethical stance to the non-human world as we do to our human world. I can think of no greater, or more worthwhile task for education or educators.

7.5   TYING UP THE ENDS

Here I have come to the end of the project. The stories that have been told, interpreted and reflected on are all personal and yet interconnected. Mine has now become part of the educators' who participated in this project and theirs have become part of mine as well. The question is what can we *do* with these stories. There is always the driving need to seek out some basis of action from knowledge. Taken at face value it is easy to consider these stories as singular events with little reach beyond the small school and community of Ishikawa Elementary School. I would say that this disregards and limits the potential of the work and lives of these educators. Each life and experience that has been illuminated and considered in this work has something to teach to others. We cannot recreate the actions of Principal Ishiyama, Takeishi-sensei or Leticia, but we can look at their lives and consider the work they have done, what drove them to do so, and reflect on our own response(ability) to act ethically in our pedagogic relationships as educators.

None of these individuals stood still in the face of unethical pedagogic conditions and behavior. They drew on their philosophical and personal experiences to make choices. Teachers, particularly young teachers, need to be given opportunities to grow in their philosophical groundings. Practice and technique are never enough, especially when facing the challenges that greeted the three educators in this inquiry. When the established pedagogic practice failed Takeishi-sensei she drew on her philosophical grounding to guide her actions.

This is the power of viewing the act of teaching through a philosophical lens, and one this work suggests should be given more opportunities to nurture. "A great deal depends on how the teacher adjusts his perspectives on human beings and the institutions they have made. Much also depends on how he chooses himself as a teacher, how he decides to act on what he has come to know" (Greene, 1973, p.65). Having a philosophical foundation, something to guide the eye, the mind, and the heart help the teacher to find the clues into the unknown of the pedagogic perplexities teachers daily face that lead to "right thinking" and subsequently "right acting", to return to Freire (1998).

This is the value of this work. I came at this project with a question about how things at the school came to change and ended up discovering why the educators who enacted the changes I saw were able to do so. Of course, there is practical, even transferable, knowledge here as well. The community building events, individualized instruction, culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy, creation of small peer group learning, teacher collaboration, professional networking, and practitioner driven research all are vitally important to the success of the changes and applicable in other schooling contexts. The focus here is not the replicability of these programs, but the more important point that these innovative reforms materialized because of the philosophic position of the educators who took action to change the school's learning, teaching and living space. These individuals did not suddenly come to see what had to be done, but rather reflected on their pedagogic position within spaces that disrupted their total sense of being and understanding of the potential of schooling and education to repress or draw out goodness in both teacher and student. By drawing on their personal practical knowledge and tacit knowing of their past experiences they were able to intervene in the circumstances of their lives to change them. The physical structure remained the same, but the openings and crossing

over between the individuals in that space took place because *in the minds and hearts* of Principal Ishiyama, Takeishi-sensei, and Leticia they saw spaces for relationships to grow and schooling practices to change. Ultimately, this is the work required by, and accessible, to all educators.

7.6   FUTURE VISIONS (NEXT STEPS)

> It is very hard for the children when they go to junior high school. They are not prepared for that experience.   The children become more dependent on translators if they do not learn how to study and work in Japanese, or are accommodated by the system. (Leticia, 2.20.10)

> Last year when the third year students graduated from middle school, the representative who read the message was Brazilian. Also in the high school, the representative was Brazilian. When a Brazilian child becomes representative of the grade, the other Brazilian children become inspired. (Principal Ishiyama, 1.19.10)

> I see students gaining confidence or becoming calmer in class, but then I feel a hunch that they will change for the worse in middle school. Those hunches really do turn out to be right. Many students don't even go to high school. It's tough for those kids – it's an academic background-oriented society out there. So you have to be really skilled at something in order to survive. (Takeishi-sensei, 10.22.09)

I have opened this section by returning to a selection of quotations pulled from each of the narrative portraits. Leticia, Principal Ishiyama and Takeishi-sensei all expressed concern about the limited life opportunities for the Japanese-Brazilian children, as well as the hope they hold for those that succeed academically, socially, and emotionally after graduating from Ishikawa Elementary School. In conversations with my old colleague and gatekeeper I learned of the tremendous educational gap that occurs when Japanese-Brazilian children enter Jr. high School.

Takeishi-sensei spoke most poignantly and appears to be most directly affected by the dim prospects her 6th grade students face upon graduating from Ishikawa Elementary School. As previously mentioned, a large percentage of Japanese-Brazilian students do not continue their studies in to high school, with many dropping out mid-way through junior high school (Hoffman, 2006). Taking the educators' concerns to heart I have begun to the lay the foundations for a longitudinal life history narrative inquiry of several of the Japanese-Brazilian students' schooling experiences once they have entered into the local junior high school. I believe a study that reaches across the span of these students' junior high school experiences would provide insight into the strategies, struggles and support systems these children do, or do not, have in place upon leaving Ishikawa Elementary School.

All children experience stress when transitioning from the lighter and more enjoyable elementary school experience to the more rigid and severe schooling experience they encounter upon entering junior high school. However, this experience is compounded for the Japanese-Brazilian graduates of Ishikawa Elementary School because they have to reorient their learning style to fit a homogenizing school culture, traditionally organized classrooms, and instructional style they have had little exposure to. Their social experiences will also likely force them to repress their cultural and linguistic expression if not welcomed or accepted as openly as they were during their years at Ishikawa Elementary (for the Japanese-Brazilian students). As well they may struggle to establish the caring and responsive one-on-one relationships and self-directed learning, which are inherent to the pedagogical style of the individualized curriculum (*maru maru-gakushu & waku waku free time*). The children will move out of their small school where inter-cultural relations are congenial to enter a large school community with 933 students

coming together from the four elementary schools in the district. Ishikawa Elementary School being the only one with a large population of Japanese-Brazilian students.

Last year I spoke with the principal of the local junior high school when I attended the Teaching Foreign Children and Japanese as a Second Language professional development workshop held by the prefectural board of education at his school in November 2010. At that time we spoke briefly about the experiences of the Japanese-Brazilian students and the difficulties some have had acclimating to the new school culture. Additionally, I have mentioned my interest in extending this research project to the current principal of Ishikawa Elementary School, Principal Nishiyama, Takeishi-sensei, and Superintendent Abe. I envision conducting a collaborative three and a half year longitudinal study across the elementary and junior high school to document the experiences of the children as they live through the shift from Ishikawa Elementary School to the local high school they will enter. There seems to be agreement that such a study would greatly enhance our understanding of the individual resources these children draw on as they navigate their new academic and social environments and how the institutional, pedagogic, cultural and social changes they encounter influence their experiences in junior high school.

I envision a research project whereby we closely follow the educational experiences of eight high achieving Ishikawa Elementary graduates through their three-year experiences at the local junior high school, beginning six months prior to their graduation from Ishikawa Elementary. To get a more complete picture of the various factors that impact the children it is important to have a representative population of Ishikawa Elementary school students, therefore four Japanese and four Japanese-Brazilian students (two girls & two boys in each group) would be asked to participate in this study. I would like to ask Takeishi-sensei to choose the top eight

students in the sixth grade class (2011-2012) because we should be focusing this research on what influences might impact these students' continued success in schooling as they move forward in their learning and discern those that are pedagogic, institutional, organizational, cultural/linguistic, and personal/familial. The narrative inquiry would focus on observations in both schools (initially then moving exclusively into the junior high school), conversations with the students' teachers, extended and frequent conversations with the students and reflective journal entries they will be asked to keep (in either Japanese or Portuguese), and conversations with the students' parents. I would also like to speak with past Ishikawa Elementary School graduates to gain a better understanding of the longitudinal differences in their schooling experiences in relation to the educational reforms described in this paper. By focusing the next research project on the students' experiences I believe we can better understand the impact of the many aspects of their lives that determine how students respond, and adjust to this important educational, emotional, psychological, social and cultural transition in their lives.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A.1   GENERAL QUESTIONS FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS

General Background Information

Full Name:

Age:

Birthplace:

Residence:

Professional Background Information:

- Educational Background
- Number of years teaching
- Age entering teaching profession
- Location(s) of teaching experience
- Number of years @ Ishikawa Elementary School
- Specialization area (special training)
- Administrative experience (years in principalship)
- Special duties @ Ishikawa Elementary School

Personal Experience/International Experience & Understanding:
Overseas travel/living experience
Acquaintance/friendship with non-Japanese
General opinion of growing non-Japanese population in Japan
Languages spoken other than Japanese.

First experience meeting a non-Japanese. Change in attitude?
How do Japanese and non-Japanese differ?

General Categories for Interview Questions
   I.   Early Memories of Ishikawa Elementary School (Stories of the Past)
   II.   Developmental Period of Reforms (Recreating the Narrative of School & The Lives Within)
   III.   Impact of Pedagogical, Organizational & Curricular Reforms (Stories of Change: Institutional, Personal & Professional)
   IV.   Changes in Relationship/Attitude/Expectations toward Students (Stories of Self & Other)
   V.   Ishikawa Elementary School's Guiding Philosophy & Core Values (Linking Individual Stories Together & Living Change Together)
   VI.   Outsiders View of Ishikawa Elementary School (External Stories of Ishikawa Elementary)

A.1.1 Questions for Administrators

I.   Early Memories of Ishikawa Elementary School (Stories of the Past)

1. What stories of Ishikawa Elementary School do recall hearing before beginning your post as principal?
2. Did your past administrative experience help you better understand the changes that needed to occur at Ishikawa Elementary School?
3. What are some of your most salient memories of the new, in-coming Brazilian students?
4. Can you describe some pedagogical/personal experiences of that time that do not match current practices?
5. Describe your Brazilian/Japanese students' attitudes toward school/learning before the school underwent its transformation.
6. Describe your relationships with the Brazilian/Japanese parents before the reforms. How would you describe their involvement in the school and with their children's learning?

II.   Developmental Period of Reforms (Recreating the Narrative of School and The Lives Within)

1. Describe your participation in the early reforms? What were your immediate concerns? How did you begin addressing these? Who/what did you turn to for support/ideas?

2. How would you describe your administrative style before/after your time at Ishikawa Elementary School?
3. Many of the initial reforms were targeted to meet the needs of the Brazilian students. Did you feel that things also needed to change to meet the Japanese students' needs? Was this part of the original discussion/ planning?
4. Describe the sequence of changes that occurred?
5. How would you describe the classroom environment and overall teaching style before the reforms? Have these changed?
6. What kind of disciplinary problems did you experience before the reforms that do not exist currently?
7. How/why were the reforms developed? Did they start out according to individual teacher demand/needs or as community-oriented change?
8. Who decided what needed to be done and how to go about doing it?
9. Was there consensus on how the school needed to change to meet the needs of the Brazilian students? Was there any external pressure (school board? Superintendent?)
10. What, if any, teacher resistance to the school changes occurred?
11. How did you cope with these teachers? Did they eventually come around to participating in the reforms?

III. Impact of Pedagogical, Organizational & Curricular Reforms (Stories of Change: Institutional, Personal & Professional)

1. What pedagogical changes brought about the most dramatic change in student performance and engagement within the school?
2. Have you noticed increased student learning and engagement after initiating the individualized curriculum (*00-gakushu*)?
3. How much collaborative team-teaching occurs? Have you had experience with this before?
4. What aspects of team-teaching appear to be the most challenging? Beneficial?
5. Discuss aspects of curricular changes that have most benefited the students How did these come about? Individual/Collective?
6. How have these curricular changes impacted the teachers' pedagogical style and teacher engagement with students and each other?
7. Are the teachers more committed to their work since these changes have been instituted?
8. What if any pressure did you experience when Ishikawa Elementary School became a prefectural model JSL school?
9. Have any external pressures affected the in-school changes positively/ negatively? Has there been resistance to outside interference?

IV. Changes in Relationship/Attitude/Expectations toward Students (Stories of Self & Other)

1. Has your impression of your Japanese-Brazilian students' academic capabilities changed since you first entered Ishikawa Elementary School? What about the Japanese students?
2. What, if any, changes in your relationships with the students occurred that may have been related to changes in organization? Structure? Do these changes surprise you?
3. Have your relationships change with the teaching staff as a result of the changes that occurred? Do you think others view you differently? Why?
4. Have you been surprised by your own actions? Changes in your understanding of yourself as a teacher/administrator? As a person?
5. Do you feel the administrative/organizational changes helped you get to know your teachers/students better? Please explain.
6. Have you noticed changes in the social environment of the school between the Japanese and Brazilian children? Please describe this?
7. What future do you envision for the Brazilian students? Is this different from the Japanese students?
8. Have the Japanese students benefited alongside their Brazilian peers? How is this different/the same as the Brazilian students?

V. Ishikawa Elementary School's Guiding Philosophy & Core Values (Linking Individual Stories Together: Living Change Together)

1. What is your personal pedagogical philosophy? Has this always been in sync with the general philosophy of the school? Did you feel you had to create a new philosophical foundation for the school upon entering your post as principal?
2. Describe the process you underwent in developing the philosophy that would guide the future reforms?
3. Do you feel that there was a sense of shared core-values that guided the reforms that occurred at Ishikawa Elementary School? How did these develop?
4. What was your initial reception at Ishikawa Elementary School? Did your personal administrative style easily transfer to your new position? If not, how did you adjust yourself to the culture of the school?
5. Have you changed any of your beliefs about the way students learn and the influence of curriculum/organization on student learning after the changes took place?

VI. Outsiders View of Ishikawa Elementary School (External Stories of Ishikawa Elementary)

1. Have there been any changes in the way administrators/teachers from other schools in the area relate to you before and after the reforms? Has this changed since the school became a model JSL school? Please describe these?
2. What is your impression of others' opinions/attitudes of Ishikawa Elementary School? How has this changed over the past 10 years since the Japanese-Brazilian student population has increased?

3. Do you feel other schools in the area are interested in initiating some of the same changes that Ishikawa Elementary School has undergone to support their Japanese students?
4. How would you describe Ishikawa Elementary School to someone who doesn't know about the school? Students, teachers and community?
5. What, if any, concerns do you have about your students after they leave Ishikawa Elementary School to enter Jr. high school?

A.1.2 Questions for Teachers

I. Early Memories of Ishikawa Elementary School (Stories of the Past)

1. What are some of your most salient memories of the new, in-coming Brazilian students?
2. Can you describe some pedagogical/personal experiences of that time that do not match your present experiences?
3. Describe your Brazilian students' attitudes toward school/learning at that time.
4. Describe your relationships with your Brazilian students before the reforms.
5. Describe your relationships with the Brazilian parents before the reforms.

II. Developmental Period of Reforms (Recreating the Narrative of School & The Lives Within)

1. Describe your participation (or non-participation) in the early reforms?
2. How would you describe the classroom environment and your teaching style before the reforms? Have these changed?
3. What kind of disciplinary problems did you experience before the reforms that do not currently exist?
4. How/why were the reforms developed? Did they start out according to individual teacher needs or as community-oriented change?
5. Who decided what needed to be done and how to go about doing it?
6. Was there consensus on how the school needed to change to meet the needs of the Brazilian students?
7. Talk about your personal experiences with engagement/resistance to the school changes that occurred.
8. If you did not agree with the proposed changes how did you cope with them, as they became a part of your daily experience as a teacher and member of the school?

III. Impact of Pedagogical, Organizational & Curricular Reforms (Stories of Change: Institutional, Personal & Professional)

1. How have the reforms affected your personal pedagogical freedom to create/teach according to your personal style?
2. How much collaborative team-teaching occurs? Have you had experience with this before?
3. What aspects of collaborative teaching are challenging? Beneficial?
4. Discuss aspects of curricular changes that have benefited students.
5. Have you noticed increased student learning and engagement after initiating the individualized curriculum (*00-gakushu*)? What impact has it had on your teaching style?
6. Describe how restructuring your learning/teaching space has influenced your teaching.
7. What if any pressure have you experienced since Ishikawa Elementary School became a prefectural model JSL school?
8. Have any of the external pressures affected the in-school changes negatively? Has there been resistance to outside interference?

IV. Changes in Relationship/Attitude/Expectations toward Students (Stories of Self & Other)

1. Has your impression of your Brazilian students' academic capabilities changed since the reforms have taken place?
2. What, if any, changes in your relationships with your students have occurred? Do these changes surprise you? Do you think your students view you differently? Why?
3. Have you been surprised by your own actions? Changes in your understanding of yourself as a teacher? As a person?
4. Have students changed with regard to their attitude toward school and their engagement with learning?
5. What surprises you about your understanding of your Brazilian students since the changes have occurred?
6. How would you describe your relationship with the Brazilian/Japanese students' parents before and after the changes that have taken place?
7. Have you noticed changes in the social environment of the school between the Japanese and Brazilian children? Please describe this?
8. What future do you envision for your Brazilian students? Is this different from your Japanese students?
9. Are there differences in the way you teach your Brazilian students & Japanese students? Do they learn differently? Is it cultural? Personal?
10. Have Japanese students benefited alongside their Brazilian peers? How is this different/the same as the Brazilian students?

V. **Ishikawa Elementary's Guiding Philosophy & Core Values (Linking Individual Stories Together: Living Change Together)**

1. What is your personal pedagogical philosophy? Has this always been in sync with the general philosophy of the school?
2. How would you describe the shared core-values that guide the work of the teachers/ administrators at Ishikawa Elementary School? How did these develop?
3. Have you changed any of your beliefs about the way students learn and the influence of curriculum/organization on student learning after the changes that have taken place?

VI. **Outsiders View of Ishikawa Elementary School (External Stories of Rocky Beach)**
1. How have teachers from other schools in the area related to you before and after the reforms? Has this changed since the school became a model JSL school?
2. What is your impression of others' opinions/attitudes of Ishikawa Elementary School?
3. Do you feel other schools want to initiate some of the same changes that Ishikawa Elementary School has to support their non-Japanese students?
4. How would you describe Ishikawa Elementary School to someone who doesn't know about the school?

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION TO PARTICIPANTS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Ellen P. Motohashi, Doctoral Candidate
                                 University of Pittsburgh, School of Education
                                 Dept. of Adminstrative & PolicyStudies
                                 Sophia University, Jr. Visiting Researcher

                                 1-34-7 Honcho, Kichijoji
                                 Musashino-shi, Tokyo 180-0004
                                 Tel/fax: (0422) 22-6121
                                 E-mail: ellenmotohashi@yahoo.co.jp

          Research Advisor & Doctoral   Dr. Noreen Garman, Committee Chair
                                 University of Pittsburgh, School of Education
                                 WWPH 5712
                                 Pittsburgh, PA 15260;
                                 Telephone: 412-648-7111
                                 E-mail: ngarman@pitt.edu

     Dear Participant

     You are being asked to participate in a qualitative research study that aims to better understand the history and process of the educational reforms that occurred over the past six years at Ishikawa Elementary School. Through observation and open-ended interviews an image of the personal and the institutional will be blended together to better understand the collaborative and collective work of this school community that restructured and re-storied the narrative of the school and the lives of those actively involved in creating, supporting and living these reforms. I am particularly interested in how organizational/structural and curricular reforms created opportunities for better relationship building between teachers-administrators, teachers-teachers and teachers-students, which appear to be the foundation upon which the other transformations have occurred.

You are among several participants being asked to participate in this study because your position in the school and individual experience engaging with and enacting the educational reforms that are the focus of this study is important. By pairing individual administrator, teacher and student stories to the broader story of the transformation of the school community and culture I hope to better understand the multi-layered process of school reform focused on meeting the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse student populations.

You will be asked to provide time to engage in a directed conversation about your experiences and involvement with the school reforms that have taken place at Ishikawa Elementary School over the past six years. I would like to record the interviews, but you are free to decline if you are uncomfortable with me recording our conversation. The reason I am recording the interviews is that I am concerned about missing some of the interview as I take notes and possible struggle with vocabulary in Japanese that I may not be familiar with. Having the interview on tape will allow me to return to the conversation and confirm any words or ideas I may have misunderstood.

I expect each interview to last about an hour and may ask for a follow-up interview to obtain more details or clarification on what was discussed in the first interview. The interviews will be scheduled according to the participant's schedule and do not necessarily have to occur on school grounds.

I will also ask to observe the classroom to get a sense of the overall atmosphere and the interactions between students-to-students and teacher-to-students. I am very interested in the way the physical and structural design of the classroom environment may support greater engagement and interpersonal connections between teacher and student and feel I can only gain a sense of this by actually observing the life of the classroom and school.

This is a minimal risk study and there should no unintended or negative affects from participating in this research project. I will be seeking participant feedback on the information I will use in the final write-up of this study and will ask participants to confirm that I have not misrepresented or misinterpreted any part of their stories or experiences. Participants are free to ask me to remove any part of the analysis they feel misrepresents them or the school according to their lived experience throughout the changes that have occurred.

Because of the open interview and conversational style of this narrative inquiry the participants are likely to benefit from reflecting on their experiences as they tell their story and probe more deeply into their engagement with the school reform and subsequent pedagogical and personal growth. One of the strengths of qualitative research, and narrative inquiry in particular, is that through the focused discussion with the researcher the participant is in a position to benefit from the recollection of past experience and reflection on their actions as an agent and author of their own story and the stories they create of others.

I, as the primary researcher, will be the only one to have access to any identifiable contents of this study and will secure all documents to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants. Any identifying characteristics will be carefully monitored and individual,

317

institutional and geographical information will be provided as pseudonyms. The taped interviews will be translated by an outside party and any sections that may threaten to expose a subject will be blocked out or deleted from the taped interview. The translator will be required to sign a document agreeing to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the subjects participating in the study and also be required to delete any files pertaining to the interviews.

Your participation in this research study, as described above, is completely voluntary. You may withdraw your consent for participation in this research study, at any time, including the use and disclosure of your identifiable information for the purposes described above. Any identifiable information resulting from your participation in this research study *prior* to the date that you formally withdrew your consent may continue to be used and disclosed by the researcher, unless otherwise requested.

To formally withdraw your consent for participation in this research study you should provide a written and dated notice of this decision to the principal investigator of this research study at the address listed on the first page of this form.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study. Please feel free to contact me with any concerns or questions that come up during the duration of the study.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Achinstein, B. & Aguirre, J. (2008). Cultural match or culturally suspect: How new teachers of color negotiate sociocultural challenges in the classroom. *Teachers College Record, 110 (8) 1505-1540.*

Adachie, C.N. (1999). African "authenticity" and the Biafran experience. *Transition 42-53.*

Amanti, C. (2005). Beyond a beads and feathers approach. In Gonzalez, N., Moss, L.C. Amanti, C.(Eds.). *Funds of knowledge.* Mahweh: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Arendt, H. (1960/2006). The crisis in education (D. Lindley, Trans.). In *Between past and future: Eight exercises in political thought* (pp. 173-196). New York: Penguin. Original work published in 1960.

Arendt, H. (1998). *The human condition* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Original work published in 1958.

Atkinson,B.(Ed.)(2000). *The essential writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson.* New York: The Modern Library.

Au, H.A. (1980). Participation structures in a reading lesson with Hawaiian children: analysis of a culturally appropriate instructional event. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 11 (2) 91-115.*

Baldwin, T. (Eds.) (2004). *Maurice Merlau-Ponty: Basic writings*. London: Routledge

Bathmaker, A.M. (2010). Introduction. In A. Bathmaker & P.Harnett (Eds.). *Exploring learning, identity & power through life history & narrative research.* (pp. 1-10) Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Bammer, A. (1994). Mother tongues and other strangers: Writing "family" across cultural divides. In A. Bammer (Eds.) (1994). *Displacements.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Befu, H. (2006). Conditions of living together. In S. Lee, S. Murphy-Shigematsu & H. Befu,(Eds.). *Japan's diversity dilemmas: Ethnicity, citizenship, and education.* (pp.1-10)   New York: iUniverse, Inc.

Behar, R. (1996). *The vulnerable observer.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Benhabib, S. (2002). *The claims of culture: Equality and diversity in the global era.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Biesta, G. (2006). *Beyond learning.* Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Bishop, e. a. (2003). *Te Kötahitanga:The experiences of year 9 and 10 Mäori students in mainstream classrooms, report to the Ministry of Education*. Retrieved March 4, 2005.fromhttp://www.educationcounts.edcentre.govt.nz/publications/downloads/te-kotahitanga.pdf.

Boscardin, M.L. & Jacobson, S. (1997). The inclusive school: Integrating diversity and

solidarity through community-based management. *Journal of Educational Administration, 35 (5) 466-476.*

Brody, B. T. (2002). *Opening the door: Immigration, ethnicity, and globalization in Japan*. New York, London: Routledge.

Burgess, C. (2007). 'Newcomer' children in non-metropolitan schools: The lack of state support for children whose first language is not Japanese. *Japan Forum 19 (1)1-21*

Burgess, C. (2004). Maintaining Identities: Discourses of Homogeneity in a Rapidly Globalising Japan [Electronic Version]. *electronic journal of contemporary japanese studies*, *1*. Retrieved March 30, 2008 from http://www.japanesestudies.org.uk/articles/Burgess.html.

Burgess, R. (1988). Conversations with a purpose: The ethnographic interview in educational research. *Studies in Qualitative Methodology, 1, 137-155*

Bruner, J. (1986). *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Carman, T. & Hansen, M.B.N. (2005). *The Cambridge companion to Merleau-Ponty.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Cave, P. (2008). *Primary school in Japan: Self, individuality and learning in elementary education.* New York: Routledge

Chase, S.E. (2005). Narrative Inquiry: Multiple lenses, approaches, voices. In N. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research. 3rd ed.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Clandinin, J. & Connelly, M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Clandinin, J. & Connelly, M. (1996). Teacher's professional knowledge landscapes: Teacher's stories, stories of teachers, school stories, stories of school, *Educational Researcher 25 (3) 24-30.*

Clandinin, J. & Connelly, M. (1995). *Teacher's professional knowledge landscapes.* New York: Teacher's College Press.

Clandinin, J. & Connelly, M. (1990). Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry. *Educational Researcher 19 (5) 2-14.*

Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Cummins, J. (1986). Empowering minority students: A framework for intervention. *Harvard Educational Review, 56*(1) *82-95.*

Craig, C.J. (2003). *Narrative inquiries of school reform: Storied lives, storied landscapes, storied metaphors.* Greenwich,CT: Information Age Publishing.

Craig, C.J. (1999). Parallel stories: a way of contextualizing teacher knowledge. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 15 397-411.*

Creswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & design: Choosing among five approaches 2nd ed.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications

Crites, S. (1971). The narrative quality of experience. *American Academy of Religion 39 (3) 291-311.*

Creighton, M. (1997). *Soto* Others and *uchi* Others: Imagining racial diversity, imagining homogenous Japan. In Weiner, M. (Eds.). *Japan's minorities: The illusion of homogeneity.* (pp. 211-238) London: Routledge.

Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Cummins, J. (1986). Empowering minority students: A framework for intervention. *Harvard Educational Review, 56*(1) *82-95.*

Darder, A. (1991). *Culture and power in the classroom.* Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.

Davies, C. A. (2008). *Reflexive ethnography: A guide to researching selves and others* 2nd ed. ed.). London: Routledge

Davidson, A.L. (1996). *Making and molding identities in schools: Student narratives on race, gender, and academic engagement.* Albany,NY: State University of New York Press.

Delpit, L. (1995). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom.* New York: The New Press.

Denzin, N.K. (1997). *Interpretive ethnography: Ethnographic practices for the 21st century.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education.* New York: Collier Books.

Dewey, J. (1918/2009). *My pedagogic creed.* Floating Press. Original work published in 1918. ebook

Dewey, J. (1916/2009). *Democracy and education.* Floating Press. Original work published in 1916. ebook.

Dewey, J. (1915/2001). *The school and society & The child and the curriculum.* Mineola, NY: Dover Publications. Original work published in 1915

Deyhle, D. (1995). Navajo youth and Anglo racism: Cultural integrity and resistance *Harvard Educational Review, 65*(3), 403-444.

DiPaola, M.F. & Tschannen-Moran, M.(2005). Bridging or Buffering? The impact of school's adaptive strategies on student achievement, *Journal of Educational Administration 43(1) 60 -71.*

Douglass, M., & Roberts, G. S.(Eds.) (2000). *Japan and global migration: Foreign workers and the advent of a multicultural society.* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Eisenstadt, S.N. (1966). *Modernization: Protest and change.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Eldering, L. (1997). Ethnic minority students in the Netherlands from a cultural-ecological perspective. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 28*(3), 330-350.

Erdinast-Vulcan,D. (2008). The *I* that tells itself: A Bakhtinian perspective on narrative identiy. *Narrative 16 (1) 2-15.*

Ezzy, D. 2002). *Qualitative analysis: Practice and innovation.* Crows Nest, NSW: Routledge.

Flores-Gonzalez, N. (2002). *School kids/street kids: Identity development in Latino students.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Freeman, D. (1996). "Take them at their word their word": Language data in the study of teachers' knowledge. *Harvard Educational Review, 66, 732-761.*

Fujita, H. (2010). Whither Japanese schooling? Educational reforms and their impact on ability formation and educational opportunity. In J. Gordon, H. Fujita, T. Kariya, & LeTendre, G. (Eds.). *Challenges to Japanese education: Economics, reform, and human rights.* New York: Teacher's College Press.

Garman, N.B & Piantanida, M. (2006). *The authority to imagine: The struggle toward representation in dissertation writing.* New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing.

Garza, E., Reyes, P., & Trueba, E. T. (2004). *Resiliency and success: Migrant children in the U.S.* Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research and practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Gordon, J.A. (2006). Assigned to the margins: Teachers for minority and immigrant communities in Japan. *Teaching and Teacher Education 22 (2006) 766–776*.

Graburn, N.H.H., Ertl, J. & Tierney, K.(Eds.) (2008). *Multiculturalism in the new Japan.* New York: Berghahn Books.

Greene M. (1979). Liberal education and the newcomer. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 60 (9) *633-636.*

Greene, M. (1988). *The dialectic of freedom.* New York: Teacher's College Press.

Greene, M. (1978). Teaching: The question of personal reality. *Teacher's College Record, 80 (1) 23-35.*

Greene, M. (1973). *Teacher as stranger: Educational philosophy for the modern age.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing

Gunzenhauser, M. (2006). A moral epistemology of knowing subjects: Theorizing a relational turn for qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 12*(3), 621-647.

Gupta, A. & Ferguson, J. (2005). Beyond "culture": Space, identity, and the politics of difference in A. Gupta & J. Ferguson (Eds.). *Culture, power, place: Explorations in critical anthropology.* (pp. 33-51)   Durham, NC: Duke University Press

Gurowitz, A. (1999). Mobilizing international norms: domestic actors, immigrants, and the Japanese state. *World Politics, 51*(3), 413-445.

Hatch, J.A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in education settings.* Albany: SUNY.

Heshusius, L. (1994). Freeing ourselves from objectivity: Managing subjectivity or turning toward a participatory mode of consciousness?. *Educational Researcher 23*(3), 15-22.

Himel, M. & Carini, P. (2000). *From another angle: Children's strengths and school standards*. New York: Teacher's College Press.

Himeno, Y. (2003). The Education of Foreign Children in Japan. *The Margins* Online Publication.: http://themargins.net/fps/student/himeno.html. Retrieved March 31, 2008.

Hoffman, M. (2006, June 11). Tale of a rejected Brazilian child in Japan*. Chuo Koron*. Retrieved June 15, 2009. http://michaelhoffman.squarespace.com/the-japanese-family/.

hooks, b. (2009). Belonging: a culture of place. New York: Routledge.

Japanese Ministry of Justice Immigration Bureau. (2005). Heisei 16 nen matsu genzai ni okeru gaikokujin tourokusha toukei ni tsuite (2004 Annual data for registered foreignnationals). Ministry of Justice, Japan. Retrieved July 15, 2007 http://www.moj.go.jp/.

Japan Times (July 21, 2006). Japan relatively poor: OECD. Retrieved, January 9, 2010. http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi- bin/nb20060721a1.html.

Johnson, M. (1989). Embodied knowledge. *Curriculum Inquiry, 19 (4) 361-377.*

Johnston, M. (2008, January 26). Japan's population decline: Shaping the future as an immigrant nation. *The Japan Times*. Retrieved November 17, 2010 http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20080126f1.html.

Kambayashi, T. (2008, January 18). Japanese youth help compatriots embrace diversity. *The Christian Science Monitor*. Retrieved June 9, 2008. http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-Pacific/2008/0118/p04s01-woap.html.

Kamiya, S. (2008, November 14). Education woes beset Brazilian children. *Japan*

Times. Retrieved April 7, 2010. http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi
bin/nn20081114f1.html.

Kanno, Y. (2008a). Language minority education in Japan. In A. Creese, P. Martin &
N. Hornberger (Eds.). *Encyclopedia of Language and Education, vol. 9:
Ecology of Language, (*pp. 237-248)*. New York: Springer.

Kanno, Y. (2008b). *Language and education in Japan: Unequal access to bilingualism*.
New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kanno, Y. (2003). *Negotiating bilingual and bicultural identities: Japanese returnees,
between and betwixt two worlds*. Mahwah: Lawrence Ehrlbaum Associates Inc.

Krall, F. R. (1988). From the inside out: Personal history as educational research. *Educational
Theory, 38*(4), 467-479.

Katz, S. R. (1999). Teaching in tensions: Latino immigrant youth, their teachers, and the
Structures of schooling. *Teacher's College Record, 100*(4), 809-840.

Kuntz, A.M. (2010). The politics of space in qualitative research. In M. Savin- Baden &
C. Howell Major (Eds.). *New approaches to qualitative research: Wisdom and
uncertainty,* (pp. 145-153) Oxon: Routledge

Kytle, J. (2004). *To want to learn: Insights and provocations for engaged learning.* New
York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American
Educational Research Journal, 32*(3), 465-491.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *Dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American
children.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

LaFromboise, T., Coleman, Hardin, L.K. and Gerton, J. (1993). Psychological impact of
biculturalism: Evidence and theory. *Psychological Bulletin, 114*(3), 394-412.

Lareau, A. (2005). *Unequal childhoods: Class, race, and family life.* Berkeley: University
of California Press.

Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. (2000). *Respect: An exploration.*San Francisco: Basic Books.

Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983). *The good high school: Portraits of character and culture.* New
York: Basic Books.

Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman-Davis (1997). *The art of science and portraiture.* San
Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Lee, S., Murphy-Shigematsu, S., & Befu, H. (Eds.) (2006). *Japan's diversity dilemmas:
Ethnicity, citizenship, and education*. New York: iUniverse.

Lesser, J. (1999). *Negotiating national identity: Immigrants, minorities, and the struggle for
ethnicity in Brazil*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Levinson, B.A., Foley, D.E., & Holland, D.C. (1996). The cultural production of the educated
person. Albany: State University of New York Press

Lie, J. (2001). *Multiethnic Japan*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Lincicome, M. (1993). Nationalism, internationalization, and the dilemma of educational
reform in Japan. *Comparative Education Review, 37(2), 123-151.*

Linge, D.E. (1976). Hans-Georg Gadamer: Philosophical hermeneutics. Berkeley:
University of California Press.

Linger, D.T.(2001). *No one home: Brazilian selves remade in Japan.* Stanford: Stanford
University Press.

Matsumoto,K. (2009). Current status of and challenges facing education for foreign
children in Aichi prefecture. International Organization for Migration. Annual

Report. Retrieved September, 12, 2010
http://www.iomjapan.org/archives/presentation_summary_AichiShukutoku.html.

Mertens, D.M. (20050. *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods 2nd ed.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

MEXT. (2005a). Nihongo shidou ga hitsuyou na gaikokujin jidou seito no ukeire joukyou nado ni kan suru chousa (heisei 16 nendo) no kekka. (2004 Annual report on registered Foreign national students requiring Japanese language assistance). http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/houdou/17/04/05042001.htm Retrieved July 14, 2007.

Moore, M. (2005). Immigrant riots worry French government. *The Washington Post*, November 5, 2005. *http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/nationworld/2002600812_france03.html.* Retrieved 10/14/2010.

Motohashi, E. (2007). Despair turned to hope: A theoretical reconsideration of the Maori as a caste minority. *Educational Foundations, Summer-Fall 73-88.*

Murphy-Shigematsu, S. (2006). Dilemmas of Korean-Japanese interpersonal relations. In S. Lee, S. Murphy-Shigematsu & Befu, H. (Eds.). *Japan's diversity dilemmas.* New York: iUniverse, Inc. *212-232.*

Murrell, Jr.,P.C. (2007). *Race, culture and schooling: Identities of achievement in multi-cultural urban schools*. New York, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Nakagami, M. (2009). Approaches to multicultural co-existence in Aichi prefecture. International Organization for Migration. 2009 Annual Report.   Retrieved September, 12, 2010. http://www.iomjapan.org/archives/presentation_summary_AichiShukutoku.html.

Nieto, S. (1994). Lessons from students on creating a chance to dream *Harvard Educational Review, 64*(4), 392-426.

Noddings, N. (2005a). *The challenge to care in school: An alternative approach to care in school.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Noddings, N. (2005b). Global citizenship: Promises and problems. In N. Noddings (Ed.). *Educating citizens for global awareness* (pp.1-21) New York: Teachers College Press.

Noddings, N. (2003). *Happiness and education.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Olmedo, I.M. (2003). Accomodation and resistance: Latinas struggle for their children's education, *Anthropology & Education Quarterly 34 (4) 373-395.*

Ogbu, J. (1991). Immigrant and involuntary minorities in comparative perspective. In M.Gibson & J. Ogbu (Eds.). *Minority status and schooling*: A comparative study of immigrant and involuntary minorities. New York: Garland Press

Ogbu, J. (1987). Variability in minority school performance: A problem in search of an explanation. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 18 (4) Special Issue: Explaining the School Performance of Minority Students 312-334.*

Okano, K., & Tsuchiya, M. (1999). *Education in contemporary Japan: Inequality and diversity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Okubo, Y. (2008). "Newcomers in public education: Chinese and Vietnamese children in a Buraku community. In N.H.H. Graburn, J. Ertl & R.K. Tierney (Eds.) *Multiculturalism in the new Japan.* (pp. 171-187) New York: Berghahn Books.

Palmer, P. (1993). *To know as we are known.* San Francisco: HarperCollins.

Park, R. E. (1914/2005). Racial assimilation in secondary groups with particular reference to the negro. In P. Kivisto (Eds.), *Incorporating diversity: Rethinking assimilation in a multicultural age* (pp. 33-46). Boulder, CO: Paradigm Press. Original work published in 1914.

Partington, G., Godfrey, J., & Kaye, R. (2001). *"The principal is hopeless. She needs a good boot in the rear end"*. Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education. Retrieved February 23, 2005 http://www.aare.edu.au/01pap/par01107.htm.

Phillion, J., He, M. F., & Connelly, F. M. (2005). The potential of narrative and experiential approaches in multicultural inquiries. In J. Phillion, M. F. He & F. M. Connelly (Eds.). *Narrative & experience in multicultural education* (pp. 1-14). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pierce, M. & Jobson, R. (2002). *Bridge builders*. West Sussex: Wiley-Academy

Polkinghorne, D.E. (1988). *Narrative knowing and the human sciences.* Albany: SUNY Press.

Polkinghorne, D.E. (2005). Language and meaning: Data collection in qualitative research. *Journal of counseling psychology 52(2) 137-145.*

Polyani, M. (1962). Tacit knowing: Its bearing on some problems of philosophy. *Review of modern physics, 34 (4) 601-616.*

Portes, A. & Rumbaut, R.G. (2001). *Legacies: The story of the immigrant second generation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Portes, A., & Zhou, M. (2005). The new second generation: Segmented assimilation and its variants. In P. Kivisto (Eds.), *Incorporating diversity: Rethinking assimilation in a multicultural age* (pp. 213-234). Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Reissman, C.K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Richardson, L. (1997). *Fields of play: Constructing an academic life.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Riordan, B. (2005). Language policy for linguistic minority students in Japanese public schools and prospects for bilingualism: The Nikkei Brazilian case. *Indiana University Linguistic Community Working Papers Online Journal. Vol. 5 1-3 3* Retrieved June 9, 2008   https://www.indiana.edu/~iulcwp/.

Rohlen, T. & LeTendre (Eds.) (1998). *Teaching and learning in Japan.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rumbaut, R. G. (1994). The crucible within: Ethnic identity, self-esteem, and segmented assimilation among children of immigrants. *International Migration Review, 28*(4), 748-794.

Saito, N. & Imai, Y. (2004). In search of the public and the private: Philosophy of education in post-war Japan. *Comparative Education 40 (4), Special Issue (29): Philosophy, Education and Comparative Education 583-594.*

Seidman, Irving (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences 3rd ed.* New York: Teacher's College Press.
Sergiovanni, T.J. (1994). *Building community in schools.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Shibutani, T., & Kwan, K. M. (2005). Assimilation into the larger society. In P. Kivisto (Eds.), *Incorporating diversity: Rethinking assimilation in a multicultural age* (pp. 59-81). Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Siraj-Blatchford,I. & Clarke, P. (2000). *Supporting identity, diversity and language in the early years.* Berkshire: Open University Press.

Stengler, B. (2003). "As if we were called": Responding to (pedagogical) responsibililty.

Philosophy of Education 195-256.

Suarez-Orozco, C., Suarez-Orozco, M. M., & Todorova, I. (2008). *Learning in a new land: Immigrant students in American society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Suarez-Orozco, C., & Suarez-Orozco, M. M. (2001). *Children of immigration*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Sunstein, B.S. & Chiseri-Strater (2007). *Fieldworking: Reading and writing research*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins.

Todd, S. (2005). A fine risk to be run? The ambiguity of eros and teacher responsibility. *Studies in Philosophy and Education 22   31-44.*

Todd, S. (2003). *Learning from the other: Levinas, psychoanalysis, and ethical possibilities in education*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Tsuda, T. (2003). *Strangers in the ethnic homeland: Japanese Brazilian return migration in transnational perspective*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Tsuda, T. (1999). The permanence of "temporary" migration: The "structural embeddedness" of Japanese-Brazilian immigrant workers in Japan. *The Journal of Asian Studies, 58*(3), 687-722.

Tsuneyoshi, R. (2004). The 'new' foreigners and the social reconstruction of difference: The cultural diversification of Japanese education. *Comparative Education 40 (1) 55-81.*

Valdes, G. (1996). *Con respeto: Bridging the distances between culturally diverse families and schools*. New York: Teacher's College Press.

Valenzuela. A. (1999). *Subtractive schooling: U.S.-Mexican youth and the politics of caring*. Albany: SUNY Press.

van Manan, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Villenas, S.A. (2005). Between the telling and the told. In Phillion, J., He, M. F., & Connelly, F. M. (2005). In J. Phillion, M. F. He & F. M. Connelly (Eds.), *Narrative & experience in multicultural education* (pp. 1-14). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Vogt, L., Jordan, C., & Tharp, R. (1987). Explaining school failure, producing school success: Two cases. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 18*(4), 276-286.

Wakamatsu, R. (2010). Migrant children struggle in public schools. *Japan Times, April 6, 2010.*

Welch, S. (2000). *A feminist ethic of risk.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Wells, G. (1999). *Dialogic inquiry: Toward a sociocultural practice and theory of education.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Willis, D. B. (2006). Learning culture, learning citizenship: Japanese education and the challenge of multiculturalism. In S. i. Lee, S. Murphy-Shigematsu & H.Befu (Eds.). *Japan's diversity dilemmas: Ethnicity, citizenship, and education* (pp. 47-74) Lincoln, NE: iUniverse.

Zhenua, Yu (2010). Being in the world in a Polyanina perspective. In T. Margitay (Eds.). *Knowing and being: Perspectives on the philosophy of Michael Polyani.* (pp. 50-67) New Castle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.