Research Article

Cultivating Researcher Self-Reflexivity and Voice Using Mindful Inquiry in Intercultural Education

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Abstract

Mindful Inquiry (MI) has been my choice of intercultural education approach for working with graduate students because it is particularly suitable for attempts to capture the dynamic, developmental, and complex nature of communicating with people of diverse cultures. MI is a learner-centered approach to pursuing research that is personally meaningful as well as intellectually rigorous. MI is the answer to my pedagogical research question of how to help students to cultivate their self-reflexivity and voice as researchers.

Two case studies of students using the MI approach will be described and discussed. Both students are studying international relations in a Japanese university and made excellent use of the opportunities afforded in this class to become more self-aware of how they were communicating across cultures and their standpoint and voice as researchers. These two cases were selected because they were both interesting in themselves and representative of the types of questions the other students posed. They also provide various contrasts of cultural and educational background, gender, identity, and emphasis. Two gratifying characteristics of student MI work, rigorous personal engagement and high quality products, have encouraged me to continue developing this type of pedagogy in my classes. This article is devoted to detailing two actual MIs to illustrate how this approach can be put into practice with valuable results.

The courage and honesty students displayed in the self-examinations they undertook as part of their MIs were impressive. Working with them during the semester as they were pursuing an MI increased my appreciation for its power as a learner-centered approach to the bodymindful development of the knowledge, motivation, and skills competency factors that promote appropriate, effective, and satisfying intercultural communication. Bodymindfulness is a term I coined for the process of attending to all aspects of the bodymind—body, emotion/feeling, mind, and spirit—in order to grasp the holistic personal meaning of an internal event and to use the resultant understanding to communicate skillfully. MIs are ideal for developing self-reflexive intercultural researchers who are able to see and to give voice to themselves as intellectuals who are functioning in a particular context while carrying specific biases and identifications.

Mindful Inquiry Pedagogy

Mindful Inquiry (MI) has been my choice of intercultural education approach for working with graduate students because it is particularly suitable for attempts to capture the dynamic, developmental, and complex nature of communicating with people of diverse cultures (Nagata, 2003, 2005). MI is the answer to my pedagogical research question of how to help students to cultivate their self-reflexivity and voice as researchers. MI is a learner-centered approach to pursuing research that is personally meaningful as well as intellectually rigorous. Because it offers a way to combine theory, practice, and research, it is particularly effective for scholar-practitioners, who are applying what they are discovering to their work in the world.

MI is an essentially, but not exclusively, qualitative research approach formulated by Valerie Bentz and Jeremy Shapiro in *Mindful Inquiry in Social Research* (1998). It is based on four knowledge traditions which Bentz and Shapiro describe as follows:

- **Phenomenology:** a description and analysis of consciousness and experience
- **Hermeneutics:** analysis and interpretation of texts in context
- **Critical Social Theory:** analysis of domination and oppression with a view to changing it
- **Buddhism:** spiritual practice that allows one to free oneself from suffering and illusion in several ways, e.g., becoming more aware (1998, p. 6)

MI is based on 13 philosophical assumptions, which are listed in Appendix 1.

The process of pursuing an MI begins with identifying a personally important question that intrigues or troubles us and proceeds by using the above four knowledge traditions as applicable during the course of the inquiry. The methodology of MI is characterized by circular movement that spirals into new experiences and understanding and returns repeatedly to different aspects of them on other levels or in other contexts. There is no fixed order for using them. They can be used flexibly according to the learner's need. An MI question provides a focus throughout the course that helps students to identify and to engage with whatever is most relevant to them of what they are learning. The MI question may remain the same, may evolve into a slightly different question as new understandings emerge, or it may change significantly, even completely.

The two students whose MIs are featured here with their permission studied in English in one of my graduate classes in a Japanese university that was described in an article, "Promoting Self-Reflexivity in Intercultural Education" (Nagata, 2005). The updated course outline is included here as Appendix 2. This article is intended to provide an in-depth look at what students actually do as they pursue MIs and to consider their educational impact. Both students were studying international relations and made excellent use of the opportunities afforded in that class to become more self-aware of how they were communicating across cultures and of their standpoint and voice as researchers. The class size over the three years that I have taught this course has usually been around 10, and all eight of the students in this most recent class applied themselves very sincerely to their MIs with valuable outcomes. These

two characteristics of student MI work, rigorous personal engagement and high quality products, have been gratifying and have encouraged me to continue developing this approach in my classes. This article will be devoted to detailing two actual MIs to illustrate how this approach can be put into practice with good results.

There are two definitions of reflexivity that I have found to be important for doing intercultural communication research. The first is what I think of as the "on-the-feet" type of reflexivity that is needed in live interactions. "To be reflexive is to have an ongoing conversation about experience while simultaneously living in the moment" (Hertz, 1997, p. viii). This type of self-reflexivity involves bodymindfulness, metacommunication, and communicative flexibility, which were explored in an earlier article (Nagata, 2005). *Bodymindfulness* is a term I coined for the process of attending to all aspects of the bodymind—body, emotion/feeling,[1] mind, and spirit—in order to grasp the holistic personal meaning of an internal event and to use the resultant understanding to communicate skillfully (Nagata, 2004, 2005).

The second type is a higher level of reflection that results in being able to see ourselves as intellectuals in our particular contexts with specific biases and identifications. Reflexivity is the way to instruct ourselves about how to be critically and explicitly conscious of what we are doing as intellectuals (Jung, 1993). When we represent ourselves in the field we are studying and later in writing, this level of consciousness gives our informants and our readers the opportunity to evaluate us as what qualitative sociologist Rosanna Hertz terms "*situated actors* (i.e., active participants in the process of meaning creation)" (p. viii). In discussing the writing of critical ethnographies of the self, sociologist Laurel Richardson (1997) notes, "We are always present in our texts, no matter how we try to suppress ourselves" (p. 2). Although both types of reflexivity may be part of the same process and are evident in the MI case studies, the emphasis in this article is more on the second type, on uncovering the self of the researcher.

The class is structured to help students to become intellectually self-conscious, to understand their standpoints. According to communication scholar Julia Wood (2004), *standpoint* is a point of view shaped by material, social, and symbolic conditions common to a group. The way we perceive the world and ourselves is shaped by our experiences as members of the particular groups to which we belong. To promote awareness of their standpoints, students are encouraged to consider their various identities (Ting-Toomey, 1999), how their research interests are related to them, what biases they have that result from their background and experience (Nakkula & Ravitch, 1998a), and how these biases might affect their research.

Class discussions and frequent writing assignments–ongoing journaling in Analytical Notebooks (Wagner & Magistrale, 1997) and six papers during a 14-week semester—help students to begin to find their voice and to consider how to present themselves as researchers. MI gives them the opportunity to probe deeply into their lived experience and research interests in order to understand what the real meaning of their thesis topic is for them. *Lived experience* is a phenomenological term that refers to our reality and how we experience our lifeworld (van Manen, 1997). Once researchers understand the deep meaning of their research, they can be explicit about the *story behind the story* of their work.

> Telling the story behind the research is a common tradition in feminist research. In fact, conventional feminist wisdom holds that the story behind the story is crucial to understanding research because all research-feminist or otherwise-is value-laden and cannot escape being influenced by the history, life situation, and particular worldview of the researcher. (Fletcher, 1999, p. 7)

Pursuing an MI contributes to preparing student researchers for making themselves visible in this way that is especially relevant when working across cultures.

Two Cases of Mindful Inquiry

These two cases were selected because they were both interesting in themselves and representative of the types of MI questions the students posed. They also provide various contrasts of cultural and educational background, gender, identity, and emphasis that typify the range of students I have been teaching in a Japanese university. The class was taught in English to students with a variety of educational, linguistic, and national backgrounds. They ranged fairly widely in their ability to write English, and the syntax of student writing included in this article has been corrected for clarity. Although some of the students did not write English easily, they were all able to express their insights into themselves as researchers and evaluated the course highly on the official university course evaluations, which suggests that excellent English is not necessarily a prerequisite for having a valuable academic experience.

Each case will be described and discussed here with a focus on the MIs and how the students approached them by utilizing the various offerings of the curriculum. These included: 1) concepts absorbed from the readings and lectures; 2) knowledge, personal insights, and communication skills gained in group activities and from the various self-report instruments the students filled out—Social Styles Inventory (Bolton & Bolton, 1996; Merrill & Reid, 1991), Intercultural Development Inventory (Hammer & Bennett, 2001), and Intercultural Conflict Style Inventory (Hammer, 2003); and 3) self-knowledge that emerged from their reflective writing and assigned papers. Both cases illustrate the effectiveness of identifying a compelling personal question related to the student's academic work and to the subject of the course (in this case, communicating across cultures) as a means of integrating and using what is being learned in order to develop greater consciousness of self as a communicator and as a researcher.

Reflection was constantly encouraged and required in class, in writing, and in feedforward sheets[2] (FF) after every class. At high points, the students reported moments of being self-reflexive, this is, being aware in the midst of intercultural interactions of how to apply what they were learning. One particular value of self-reflexivity in intercultural communication is being able to metacommunicate about what is happening and to make skillful communicative choices in the moment (Nagata, 2005).

After describing how the two students pursued their MIs, how new questions

emerged as they went along, and what they discovered, I will discuss how their work illustrates some of the philosophical assumptions of MI as a method of social research particularly appropriate for intercultural education. This discussion will also briefly compare and contrast the two cases.

Taro's Beginning Point: "Why Did I Start to Research Migration and Love It?"

Taro is a Japanese man in his early twenties, who is a graduate student in the second year of a master's program in international relations. The first writing assignment is an autobiographical essay focused on the student's experience and conceptualization of cultural differences. This assignment is an adaptation of Michael Nakkula and Sharon Ravitch's "Where We Come from, What We Bring" (1998b) that is intended to "clarify a conscious starting point for [student]….activities and for their interpretations of their activities" (p. 63). Taro introduced himself in his autobiographical essay as having an unusually traditional Japanese background with no contact with people from other cultures until he sought it out through short trips abroad in his university days. In this essay he posed an MI question for himself to investigate during the 14 weeks of the course. As he stated it at the beginning, his question focused on his choice of research topic: "Why did I start to research migration, and love it?" He recognized that this choice was unusual for someone of his background and that he was unconscious of the reason for his fascination with and devotion to this area of study.

In his essay, Taro described his personality as being different from *ordinary* Japanese, but he noted that he did not know what *ordinary* Japanese meant. He said that he liked to meet people and was very talkative and communicative. This sociability was often in evidence in class, particularly during Intercultural Group Relations exercises.

At the end of the course, the students were asked to give each other individual feedforward about what they had appreciated about their classmates. They wrote their comments on each person and sent them to me with their final informal course evaluation. I then collated and distributed them to the students individually. What his classmates shared about how they experienced his presence in class confirmed his self-description.

- "You are probably the only Japanese guy who is as outspoken as an American, and I mean that in a positive way." (Chinese woman educated in Asia and North America)
- "He contributed a lot to the class discussion. He often brought up good, insightful questions, and that way I could also understand the course contents better. In the group discussion, he always had his own ideas and opinions, and he was very good at expressing them. At the same time, he was also good at asking questions to others. He made the group discussion very active." (Japanese woman educated in Japan and North America)
- "Very energetic and participative. You have some qualifications rarely seen among Japanese." (Thai man educated in Thailand and Japan)

As Taro explored his MI, he described the research he had done during the pre-

vious year on Asian men who had long overstayed their visas and were engaged in the kind of work that Japanese no longer want to do, jobs that were so-called 3D —dangerous, dirty, and difficult. He was deeply affected by seeing their injuries and getting to know them as people whom he came to like and to respect. His first realization about why he was committed to studying migration was that he wanted to help these people by working through an NGO to change their bad situation. He also recognized that his images of this type of people had been formed by the media, and he began to trust his own experience gained in face-to-face interactions rather than to rely on the reports of others.

His contact with his informants' cultural differences and his anger at the Japanese authorities who deported them made him aware of issues of nationality and called his own cultural identity as a Japanese into question. Although he had to discontinue this specific line of research because his informants were gone, he had begun to develop a critical consciousness of power relations and had identified that he needed to be aware of his biases; his teachers had also previously pointed out that he was being subjective and too emotional.

When considering what he could do, he described his clear realization about how he could help migrants through his research even though he had not been able to save his informants from being deported:

> One of my answers is that I must not run away from thinking about nationality. I understand it is quite important to think about nationality issues when doing research on migration. People say this is the era of globalization, and we can cross borders freely. However, it is also a fact that we still have national borders and nationality. To consider research on migration, I cannot dismiss nationality. I will try to face it.

Recognizing his bias about nationality and its impact on his research, he began to confront it. Throughout his MI, he consistently demonstrated this willingness to deconstruct his assumptions, biases, and prejudices and their influence on his research.

The process of developing critical consciousness that Taro displayed in his writing about his NGO and research activities is an example of what Judith Jordan, a relational-cultural psychologist and feminist theorist associated with the Stone Center at Wellesley College, describes in her paper, "Learning at the Margin: New Models of Strength" (2000). Developing this critical consciousness begins with an awareness of the process of disempowerment, names it, moves to finding like-minded people, connects with them as allies, and takes action to confront and challenge stereotypes. Taro's case is remarkable because he was not born in a marginal position; he chose to work with illegal foreign workers. These are people who are the farthest out on the margins of Japanese society. This experience has been transformational for him, and his MI facilitated his becoming conscious of how and why these changes in himself were occurring.

Changes in Taro's Mindful Inquiry Question

Taro's self-knowledge of his biases and the proclivities revealed through use of a variety of self-report instruments were valuable for recognition of his standpoint and how he was using himself as an instrument of communication in his research. As he was learning new concepts and reflecting on their bearing on his MI question, he restated it:

> I have developed my Mindful Inquiry question, and finally decided to ask myself "Why am I researching people from different countries qualitatively?" I have changed the word from "migration" to "people from different countries." Moreover, I have added the word "qualitatively" to the former question. As I said in No. 1, the origin of my Mindful Inquiry question is the Bangladeshi man who lost his fingers. At that time, I found that people who had overstayed their visas had good personalities. Before that, I had considered that they must be dangerous people as the media said. But, in fact, it was different. From this experience, I have learned not to have stereotypes. Instead, I found the importance of face-to-face communication. I believe what I have felt rather than what others or the media say. From my youth, I have loved to talk with people. Talking with people makes me understand their real state and situation.

In his writing describing the various NGO activities he continued to be involved with and his new research into international students' attempts to develop careers in Japan and their ethnic identity issues, he consistently showed that he was applying concepts we had discussed in class. The instruments we used in the course provided significant self-knowledge for Taro, and he immediately used the models to analyze important intercultural interactions from his past experience and in his current research.

The *Social Styles Inventory* (Bolton & Bolton, 1996; Merrill & Reid, 1991) suggested that he had an *Expressive* communication style that was characterized by directness and an orientation toward relationships and emotional expressiveness. In his paper on what he had learned about his verbal and nonverbal style, he agreed with this label for his style and specifically analyzed how it had been instrumental in helping him succeed in interviewing a reticent student from Southeast Asia. The self-awareness engendered reinforced his preference for doing interviews as a method of data collection.

When reflecting on the experience of writing his MI paper, he described the self-reflexivity that resulted from the insights he developed so that he was able to metacommunicate and to function differently in another interview later:

> When I have been conducting an interview, I remember what I have written in my paper. I wrote that when I expressed myself to the person from Myanmar, then the interview went well. So, I try to express myself to create mutual understanding with the interviewee this time, too. Thanks to this process, the interview can be a great one.

The *Intercultural Conflict Style Inventory* (Hammer, 2003) revealed that he has an *Engagement* conflict style with a preference for dealing with conflict in a direct and emotionally expressive way. This result really helped him to analyze how satisfying he found communicating with foreigners openly about cultural differences, opposing interpretations of history, and varying opinions:

> This engagement style is quite rare among Japanese people. So, I tried to adapt to these people in Japan. When I had a conflict with Japanese people, I tended to disguise my conflict style. However, when I have a conflict with foreign people, I can be open about my conflict style. When I can use my own conflict style, I feel satisfied.
>
> My engagement conflict style contributes to making me and others really good friends. I heard, "You are my first Japanese friend." "I really appreciate that you sincerely recognize the differences and consider our issues." This time [at a student conference in Korea] was very precious to me. It was the first time I could use my engagement conflict style fully.

The self-knowledge he gained helped him understand how he was culturally unusual for a Japanese with an entirely domestic educational background and why he might be comfortable with and welcome contact with foreigners whose styles were different.

The answer he found to his MI question was succinctly expressed in the following comment on his experience of writing a paper on his conflict style:

> In my heart, my conflict style and my Mindful Inquiry question match. I was seeking a place where I can use my Engagement conflict style. I found the place when interacting with foreign people. This contributed to motivating me to research foreign people and their migration.

His results on the *Intercultural Development Inventory* (IDI; Hammer & Bennett, 2001) helped him to understand how he was dealing with issues regarding cultural difference, such as those related to nationality discussed above, by reversing ethnocentric bias for his own culture and replacing it with a preference for that of another culture. This realization led him to challenge himself with a second MI question, "How can I love my country, Japan?" In reflecting on what he learned from the IDI, he wrote: "The IDI result is a very surprising one. To be a real multicultural communicator, I need to know and respect my own culture more." From this point onward, he continued to try to find answers to both of his MI questions.

As the semester progressed he became increasingly aware of and interested in questions of ethnicity and identity, both his own and those of the people he was researching. Ultimately he recognized his preference for a micro level of interaction and analysis:

> The other finding I made was to try to see individuals more, rather than as representatives of their nations. I met one juvenile school officer who

took care of foreign children last week. I had imagined that he would be very bureaucratic because he was also an officer of the Ministry of Justice. However, his attitude toward the children was so humane. He really thought about each boy's life. If I see people as individuals, I can find their goodness. When I consider people in collectivistic groups (e.g., bureaucratic immigration officers), I cannot find the individual's good heart. Having an eye to see individuals is my first step to love my country, Japan, more. It is also valuable for my future research. I should not hesitate to find my own stereotype. I must find it. Then I can get a chance to overcome it.

Taro began to consider face-to-face communication as a solution for how he can begin changing his attitude toward his own country. The above passage that was the closing of his final paper, a revision of his autobiographical essay, expresses his sincere and impressive commitment to deconstructing his own standpoint and speaking as a researcher with an honest voice.

Taro's Results

Taro chose an MI question that he had wondered about and explored it at a deep level with significant results for him as a person and as a student. In his final evaluation of the course, he wrote, "I really love the idea of Mindful Inquiry. Before taking this course, I was always just a "Doing person." Thanks to this course, I have found the importance of being a "Being person." In classes by the end of the semester, Taro seemed to be more self-aware, more comfortable with himself, and more able to choose how he interacted with people, not just using his default style. His question evolved as his self-knowledge grew, and he concluded his MI with significantly greater self-understanding and clarity about his research.

Amy's Starting Point: "Where Do I Belong? Why Can't I Fit In?"

Amy is a multicultural, multilingual woman in her early twenties, who is studying in the same program as Taro. Amy was born in Taiwan but immigrated to Canada with her family when she was 11 years old. She now has dual citizenship. Because of the educational law in Quebec requiring children whose parents have not received education in English to attend high schools in French, her education was in French prior to university. In addition to two dialects of Chinese, she has studied in English and French and is now living and studying in Japan.

Amy's autobiographical essay described her experiences of feeling displaced and lonely until she became part of a group of Taiwanese émigrés like herself when she was preparing for university. She recognized, however, that because of her move to Japan for graduate school, she would lose these friendships that had been so important to her just as she had lost her elementary school friends when she left Taiwan:

Suddenly, the world that I once found comfort and belongingness in collapses. Once again, I find myself lost. The realization came faster than last time, probably because I am alone here in Japan. Except this time, I

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have three places where I can call home. I start to wonder if I will, in the words of Chow (1999), "forever [hold] the contradiction of belonging and not belonging, of feeling 'at home' and wondering where home is" (p. xii).

It is under this pretext that I had started my Mindful Inquiry, in the search of home. I asked myself, what exactly is "home" anyway? Is it the physical residence in which we live or the place in which we were born? Or is it the intangible psychological sensation of "belongingness"? What, then, constitutes that feeling of "belongingness"? Is it the feeling of familiarity or of being able to fit in?

At the first class, Amy had stated her expectations for taking the course as, "I want to learn more about myself and the issue of belongingness." She also explained that her intention was to do her thesis on people who had lived in different cultures and had decided to move back to where they were born. This research topic will give her the opportunity to hear about the life choices of a variety of people whose early lives were similar to her own.

Her initial statement of her MI question in her autobiography was, "Where do I belong? Why can't I fit in?" Her MI was a way of preparing herself to do this research by deepening her understanding of the phenomenon she wanted to study. She described her lived experience and interpreted the patterns she found as she carefully considered both past and recent experiences. This phenomenological and hermeneutical writing may serve as data on herself as one of her informants (Davies, 1999) and may contribute to her qualifications for doing her research as an insider (Coffey, 1999). Rosanna Hertz (1997), Charlotte Davies, and Amanda Coffey have explored this trend in qualitative research in their books on issues relating to identity and self-reflexivity in writing ethnography.

Throughout the course, Amy was unusually skilled at identifying concepts and practices that would contribute to her ability to understand herself and to improve her ability to communicate across differences. Within five days after each class, students were required to submit feedforward (FF) by e-mail. These contained a series of questions designed to provoke reflection on all aspects of the class. The FF also helped me to understand what the students were thinking and feeling even if they did not speak up in class or address the questions in the papers they submitted.

The following series of questions and answers are examples of how this method of interacting with the students can promote their customizing the class material to serve their own interests. These questions also suggest how the various exercises provide opportunities for students to apply what they are learning. In her FF after class four (Topic: Communicating Across Cultures), when answering what she had learned from the Intercultural Relations Group exercises that week in class, Amy wrote, "I learned a little bit about my conflict style….I felt that I probably was too strong in my verbal expression…(note to self—need to control my temper)." She reflected that the idea she found most useful from that class was the bodymindfulness exercise. The Bodymindfulness Practice is a simple breathing exercise intended as a means of attuning to one's feelings, diagnosing one's own internal state, and then changing it if

deemed desirable (Nagata, 2004, 2005).

After identifying this interpersonal need for self-monitoring and a practice that might help her to meet it, two weeks later after class six (Value Orientations), she was alert to the O-D-I-S method (observing, describing, interpreting, suspending evaluations) when it was explained in the textbook (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 83). She chose it as the most relevant recommendation for her in that chapter. In her FF after class eight (Nonverbal Communication), she answered that the O-D-I-S exercise and bodymindfulness exercise done that week were the most useful ideas from that class. In her paper on her verbal and nonverbal style written at this point, she expressed concern about the effect that her tendency to jump to conclusions might have on her research, especially when interviewing. After class 10 (Intercultural Personal Relationship Development), she found the following related idea to be the most useful:

> The idea of holding a space open before reacting. I think, if I can step back before I do anything, I might be able to reflect, analyze, then project in a shorter amount of time, without having to regret the things that I said or did afterwards.

Amy is describing in-the-moment self-reflexivity. This is the conceptual ideal I recommend to students for the bodymindful practice of intercultural communication. In her final evaluation of the course in response to the question of what she would remember most about the course, she wrote:

> Bodymindfulness practice. Although I am tempted to say everything that I've learned from this class, but I know my memory does not last as long as I wish it would. But I think this is probably the only class that I took here that leaves me with such an impact after walking out of the classroom at the end of the semester.

As is evident in Amy's choices, she was extremely alert to practices that would help her to communicate better.

Changes in Amy's Mindful Inquiry Question: "Who Am I? Construction of Self"
Amy was also quick to focus on concepts that would increase the self-knowledge she was seeking through her MI and that would contribute to her thesis research. In addition, she did extra reading on relevant topics. In her FF after class nine (Identity Contact and Intergroup Encounters), one of the ideas she found most useful from that class was Janet Bennett's concept of cultural marginality (1993), which she immediately realized related to her own identity questions and her thesis research topic.

> I am interested, not so much in the intercultural sensitivity, but rather in how a person perceives his or her own identity having lived in two or more cultures. Thus, the only aspect of IDI that I am actually interested

in is the encapsulated marginality (EM) analysis. Since I have not yet seen my own personal result, I don't know how detailed the IDI is in the analysis of EM. Thus, how relevant do you think the IDI would be for my thesis topic?

From class 11 (Constructive Intercultural Conflict Management) onward, she started to state her MI question as "Who am I? Concept of self-identity." She began to ask herself some increasingly hard questions:

> I wonder if it is because I do not want people to know the real me or if it is because I do not want people to know that I, myself, do not know who I really am. Maybe that is why I never feel I belong anywhere: because I never feel close enough to anyone in order to reveal the real me to them, if I know who I am….Maybe I am too distant from everyone and I have become marginalized in my own circle of friends.

As her self-knowledge increased, she began to get ideas about how she might shift the way she approached relationships:

> Applying what I had learned about my own communication and conflict styles to what had happened to me during the course of the term, I realized that many conflicts that I had with people could have been avoided had I been more mindful of my own cynicism. Furthermore, I started to feel that my way of behaving towards others might have been the source of the problem of not being able to find a place where I fit in. How can I find a place that I belong if all I do is focus on the differences between other people and me?

Amy's Conclusion

"Who Am I? Construction of Self" was the title Amy gave her final paper that revised her autobiographical essay and reviewed her MI. She had significantly shifted her external focus of searching for where she might belong to looking within at how she was constructing herself. In closing her final paper, she wrote:

> Looking closely at my own communication and conflict styles, I cannot draw any box and label it as "my communication style." As Peter Adler suggested, for people who are multicultural, "life is an ongoing process of psychic death and rebirth," (1998, p. 235) because we are constantly going through personal transitions, trying to adapt from one culture to another. Although I do not think that I will ever find a definite answer to my Mindful Inquiry, I do believe that I have a lot to learn about myself.

The resolution she expresses to her rigorous, semester-long self-examination was highly positive. With new self-understanding, she was now focused on how she could use her own resources creatively, rather than simply looking outside herself to find a

place to belong.

This optimism was echoed in her overall course evaluation in her reflection on doing an MI. She wrote:

> It was not as easy as I expected it would be. Digging through my past and experiencing what had happened in my life in order to find an answer to a question as broad as mine was certainly not easy. It has been a bumpy ride, but, in the end, I believe it is worth it.

By working hard to develop self-awareness, she was able to relieve some of her feelings of isolation and distress. By sustaining her inner work, she developed insights and the recognition that it was within her power to use her own resources to reduce her suffering.

Mindful Inquiry: Knowledge Traditions and Assumptions

The four knowledge traditions of MI—phenomenology, hermeneutics, critical social theory, and Buddhism—are explained in class lectures and readings, but they are not taught explicitly as methods because of lack of time. In doing their MIs, both students engaged in activities that were phenomenological and hermeneutic. Throughout the course, they described their lived experience in writing and articulated the patterns they discovered and how they made meaning of the texts they had written. Critical social theory is useful for clear recognition of standpoint and attendant biases. Taro's case provides an example of the development of critical consciousness of oppression and a commitment to alleviating it. Buddhism promotes the development of the inner resources of mindfulness (Young, 1997), which is emphasized throughout Ting-Toomey's text (1999) and which both students displayed in their Intercultural Relations Groups and in their writing. Amy was attracted to the Bodymindfulness Practice that is based on Buddhist meditative and yogic breathing techniques, and she found it especially valuable for self-monitoring and management of her tendency to jump to conclusions.

MI is based on 13 philosophical assumptions (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, pp. 6-7) that are listed in Appendix 1. The discussion here will focus on some of them that are particularly related to intercultural education and demonstrated clearly in Taro and Amy's MI case studies.

- MI Assumption #1: Awareness of self and reality and their interaction is a positive value in itself and should be present in research processes.

The first assumption emphasizes the importance of mindfulness, being present in the moment, throughout the process of inquiry. This is particularly appropriate for interculturalists and researchers, who focus on face-to-face communication in which we need to be aware of our state of being in order to communicate skillfully. Both students increased their self-knowledge and reflected on how what they discovered about their biases and styles of interaction would affect their research.

- MI Assumption #3: It is important to bracket our assumptions and look at the often unaware, deep layers of consciousness and unconsciousness that underlie them.

Bracketing assumptions is emphasized in phenomenology and is also one of the main outcomes of working hermeneutically when interpreting texts. Intercultural encounters offer ongoing opportunities to develop awareness of our assumptions. Taro did this when he committed to trying to learn to appreciate and learn more about his own nationality and culture, especially when he recognized the good intentions of the immigration officer whom he had initially been disposed to dismiss as a bureaucrat.

Amy came to realize that there was a deeper question about how she was constructing her self underlying her concern about a place where she could feel she belonged. She shifted her focus from one that was primarily external to one that was mainly internal, and that shift was crucial in helping her to recognize that she has the power to construct her sense of self in a potentially more satisfying way.

- MI Assumption #4: Human existence, as well as research, is an ongoing process of interpreting both one's self and others, including other cultures and subcultures.

Both Taro and Amy did this throughout their writing as they described and interpreted their experiences interacting with people of different cultures. Taro's upbringing was monoculturally Japanese, and he sought contact with people of other cultures after becoming aware of subcultures in Japan during his undergraduate days. The contacts he had with non-Japanese people stimulated self-examination and appreciation for the transformative impact of intercultural communication.

Amy is a multicultural person with dual nationality. Her family's stated goal in emigrating was that she should have a Western education but maintain traditional Chinese values. Her life situation created what Janet Bennett (1993) refers to as *internal culture shock* (p. 112), the recognition of conflicts between two cultural voices competing for attention within oneself. After reading Peter Adler's "Beyond Cultural Identity: Reflections on Multiculturalism" (1998), Amy began to access resources within herself that could help her to begin resolving some of her questions.

- MI Assumption #5: All research involves both accepting bias—the bias of one's own situation and context—and trying to transcend it.

Taro repeatedly stated that he was becoming aware of his own biases and stereotypes and committed to confronting them. Amy realized the profound influence of her tendency to emphasize only differences rather than also to seek commonality with other people. Recognizing how this may have limited her, prepared her for change.

- MI Assumption #6: We are always immersed in and shaped by historical, social, economic, political, and cultural structures and constraints, and those structures and constraints usually have domination and oppression, and therefore suffering, built into them.

Both students considered these but in different ways. Taro focused particularly on the economic and political structures and constraints at this time in history that resulted in his informants' being injured on the job and ultimately deported. Interacting with non-Japanese people, both Asian students and illegal foreign workers, as well as representatives of the Japanese state, prompted him to begin exploring his experience of being culturally Japanese.

While Amy's experience of studying in three different countries and cultures

opened opportunities for her that have only recently become available to many students, she also suffered from a sense that she did not belong anywhere. In her writing, she carefully probed the factors of her particular situation that were most important for her to consider as she makes future life choices.

- MI Inquiry #13: The development of awareness is not a purely intellectual or cognitive process but part of a person's total way of living her life.

Doing MIs had a significant impact on both Taro and Amy as student researchers and as people as can be seen in their comments on their final evaluations. Taro's recognition of the importance of *Being* as opposed to only being concerned about *Doing* is the clearest general statement of how undertaking an MI affected him. Amy summarized by saying that the class had had more impact on her than any other.

The Power of Mindful Inquiry in Intercultural Education

The courage and honesty all eight of the students displayed in the self-examinations they undertook as part of their MIs were impressive. Working with them during the semester as they were pursuing an MI increased my appreciation for its power as a learner-centered approach to the bodymindful development of the knowledge, motivation, and skills competency factors that promote appropriate, effective, and satisfying intercultural communication (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Bodymindfulness contributes to the cultivation of the whole range of competency factors that make important contributions to self-reflexivity during face-to-face interactions. In addition, MIs are ideal for developing self-reflexive intercultural researchers who are able to see and to give voice to themselves as intellectuals who are functioning in a particular context while carrying specific biases and identifications. Increasing awareness of our own standpoint and voice also contributes to our ability to recognize those of others in our intercultural interactions and studies.

Notes

[1] The neuroscientist Antonio Damasio's distinction between *emotion* and *feeling* is particularly useful for interculturalists. Emotions are actions or movements that precede feelings. Many are public and perceptible by others as they occur in the face, the voice, and specific behaviors. These displays provide particularly valuable cues for interculturalists, especially when they are learning new nonverbal codes. Feelings are always hidden, like all mental images necessarily are, the private property of the organism in whose brain they occur. (Damasio, 1999). Ting-Toomey (1999) recommends perception checking as a way of avoiding misunderstandings that arise when we think we know what others are feeling without asking them.

[2] *Feedforward* is a term coined by Marshall Goldsmith (2002) to emphasize the expansive and dynamic possibilities people have in the future rather than focusing on their limitations in the past. I have been using feedforward with students to emphasize developing new ways of feeling, thinking, and behaving in the future rather than dwelling on the past, because it seems more appropriate than *feedback* for students who are oriented to putting what they are learning to work. Feedforward sheets (FF) require students to reflect on how they will apply their learning from reading, writing, and class experiences and are submitted by e-mail after each class.

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Appendix 1: Mindful Inquiry Assumptions (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, pp. 6-7)

1. Awareness of self and reality and their interaction is a positive value in itself and should be present in research processes.
2. Tolerating and integrating multiple perspectives is a value.
3. It is important to bracket our assumptions and look at the often unaware, deep layers of consciousness and unconsciousness that underlie them.
4. Human existence, as well as research, is an ongoing process of interpreting both one's self and others, including other cultures and subcultures.
5. All research involves both accepting bias—the bias of one's own situation and context—and trying to transcend it.
6. We are always immersed in and shaped by historical, social, economic, political, and cultural structures and constraints, and those structures and constraints usually have domination and oppression, and therefore suffering, built into them.
7. Knowing involves caring for the world and the human life that one studies.
8. The elimination or dimunition of suffering is an important goal of or value accompanying inquiry and often involves critical judgment about how much suffering is required by existing arrangements.
9. Inquiry often involves the critique of existing values, social and personal illusions, and harmful practices and institutions.
10. Inquiry should contribute to the development of awareness and self-reflection in the inquirer and may contribute to the development of spirituality.
11. Inquiry usually requires giving up ego or transcending self, even though it is grounded in self and requires intensified self-awareness.
12. Inquiry may contribute to social action and be part of social action.
13. The development of awareness is not a purely intellectual or cognitive process but part of a person's total way of living her life.

Appendix 2: Outline of "Communicating Across Cultures" Course

Class	Topic	Videos/Group Exercises/ Activities	Assignments for This Class
Class 1	Introduction: Integrating Experience/Practice, Theory, and Research	Self-introductions	
Class 2	Mindful Inquiry: Learner-Centered Research		Bentz & Shapiro, Ch. 1; Wagner & Magistrale, Ch. 2
Class 3	Autoethnography I: Reflecting on Cross-Cultural Encounters	Exercise: Fill out Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)	• Bentz & Shapiro, Ch. 3; Wagner & Magistrale, Ch. 3 • Write 3-5 page autobiographical essay focused on cultural differences identifying Mindful Inquiry (MI) question
Class 4	Communicating Across Cultures	Form Intercultural Relations Groups (IRG)	• Ting-Toomey (1999) *Communicating Across Cultures*, Chapter 1 • Write & hand in 5-6 pages of Analytical Notebook (AN)
Class 5	Autoethnography, II: Positioning the Ethnographic Self	• Exercise: Locating Your Standpoint • IRG Discussion of Readings	• Ting-Toomey, Ch. 2; Aptekar (1992) or Coffey (1999) • Write in AN
Class 6	Value Orientations	IRG Exercise: Value Wheel	• Ting-Toomey, Ch. 3 • Write & hand in 5-6 pages from AN
Class 7	Verbal Communication	IRG Exercise: Social Style Model	• Ting-Toomey, Ch. 4 • Write in AN
Class 8	Nonverbal Communication	• Video: *A Chairy Tale* (McLaren & Jutra, 1957) • IRG Exercise: Observe-Describe-Interpret-Suspend Judgment (ODIS)	• Ting-Toomey, Ch. 5; Anderson (1999) • Write in AN
Class 9	Intergroup Encounters	Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) & IDI Group Feedforward	• Ting-Toomey, Ch. 6 • Write in AN & hand in 3-5 page paper on own verbal and nonverbal style
Class 10	Intercultural Relationships	IRG Discussion of Reading	• Ting-Toomey, Ch. 7; Ravitch (1998) • Write in AN

Appendix 2: (Continued)

Class	Topic	Videos/Group Exercises/ Activities	Assignments for This Class
Class 11	Conflict Management	IRG Discussion: ICSI	• Ting-Toomey, Ch. 8 • Write in AN • Fill out Intercultural Conflict Style Inventory (ICSI)
Class 12	Intercultural Adaptation	Exercise: Use of Self as an Instrument of Intercultural Communication	• Ting-Toomey, Ch. 9 • Write in AN & hand in 3-5 page paper on own conflict style
Class 13	Transcultural Communication Competence	IRG Discussion of Readings	• Ting-Toomey, Ch. 10; Rosaldo, M. (1984) or Rosaldo, R. (1993) • Write in AN
Class 14	Sharing Mindful Inquiries	Individual Presentations of MIs	• Prepare MI presentation • Final paper: revised autobiographical essay & MI report