World Dignity University Initiative in the Amazon rainforest:
A Transformational Learning Experience

Mariana Ines Vergara
Universidad Técnica del Norte, Ecuador
Columbia University Teachers College, USA
MIA® Institute

ABSTRACT

This study explored the apparent experience of cognitive transformation of participants over a four-week period following the implementation of MIA®. Psychological tools were used to evaluate the evolution before, during, and after the MIA® process. Implementation was made with students who took the course "Mindfulness into Action (MIA®) Research with Grounded Theory" at Columbia University. Weekly sessions were held (once a week) during the semester. Each session lasted two hours. With the permission of the participants, the sessions were recorded and then the evaluations were done before and after the MIA® process. In addition, participants answered questions about their process before, during and after the MIA® intervention. This study was done with the research methodology called "Grounded Theory", in order to identify subconscious self-sabotage behaviors. These students were under greater stress due to demanding academic work at Columbia University. However, participants in this study became are clear-minded and grounded, capable of moving into action in complete mindfulness. This chapter includes the qualitative, quantitative analysis of this transformation, as well, comments from the MIA® conference about the student's presentations of the process, and reflections from students at the field research study in the Amazon rainforest in 2016.

Keywords: Transformational learning, subconscious behavior, mindfulness, stress reduction, effectiveness, leadership development.

INTRODUCTION

In June 2009, expanding on my work as a practitioner I began to work with an indigenous community in the Amazon rainforest. At that time, this community was experiencing the intrusion of a mining company in their land (Vergara, 2016). After the MIA® intervention, by July 2010, this community has expulsed 4 mining companies. I sought to convey sustainability to the intervention in the Amazon rainforest by reaching out to universities to bring students to perform research. In December 2010, I met Dr. Evelin Lindner and Dr. Hroar Klempe at the "Workshop on Transforming Humiliation and Violent Conflict" at Columbia University Teachers College. My interactions with Evelin facilitated the development of a relationship with the World Dignity University (WDU) Initiative, and, she ultimately founded a branch in the Amazon rainforest. My interactions with Hroar facilitated him to become part of my dissertation committee, and later on to provide scholarships through Erasmus Plus to fund dissertations developing the MIA® research studies in different contexts, including in the Amazon rainforest.

In 2011, as a result of a presentation at Washington & Jefferson College, two students displayed interest in supporting this effort. By October 2011, I began introducing my practice to these students via Internet. In June 2012, after the Kichwa community completed the road into Rio Blanco, these participants came to the Amazon rainforest. Both students received grants from Washington & Jefferson College to perform their research. The grants included lodging and meal expenses that provided a financial income for the indigenous community. During one month, they performed research in Sociology and Environmental Science. In July 2012, Evelin Linder arrived to the Amazon rainforest and funded the branch of the WDU. She recorded a video documenting the experience of these students with MIA®. This video of participants confirmed that they did not only apply their knowledge about Sociology and Environmental Science, but they also learned about human development regarding co-creation (doing research with people) rather than top-down approaches (doing research on people) (Vergara, 2016). In November 2012, Hroar invited me to present this video from the WDU brand in the Amazon rainforest as part of a presentation at a "Community Psychology Conference" at Norwegian University of Science and Technology.

In April 2013, I was a speaker at the Earth Summit Columbia University and at the TEDxTeachersCollege (2013). After these presentations, students began to approach me and asked me to teach them about transformational learning. Soon after, with the support of Dr. Lyle Yorks, the Mindfulness into Action Initiative began when three students started meeting every week as part of the activities for the Organizational Leadership Association under the sponsorship of the Vice President's Grant for Diversity & Community Initiative at Teachers College (2013).

Furthering the efforts to understand and promote diversity, Teachers College sponsored the "Experiencing Diversity at TC study" (Carter et al., 2013). This multi-year and multi-phase study aimed to explore diversity in varying contexts. The study had three data-gathering phases and a fourth phase that integrated the findings from the prior three phases.

The first phase of this study sought to understand the existing context of Teachers College as it relates to diversity. The authors conducted mappings and visual inventories of images displayed across campus, and analyzed Teachers College's historical documents relating to diversity. The second phase involved interviews with students, faculty, and staff. The third phase of data gathering consisted of focus groups that were divided by status and race, providing racial majority and minority groups in varying status positions. The final phase consisted of integrating the findings from the three previous phases and developing a survey instrument about the climate for diversity at Teachers College. In this fourth phase, the authors concluded that the "lack of institutional spaces and the absence of a collaborative dialogue about diversity and diversity work render the climate silo-ed, disaggregated, with well-intentioned but relatively short-lived efforts toward inclusivity" (p. 5). Furthermore, a finding from the second phase concluded that "White participants of the survey felt as though the campus climate for diversity was constantly improving and inclusive of difference" (p. 5). However, "People of Color at the institution who participated in our survey generally

viewed the climate as hostile and unwelcoming, especially in terms of the lack of awareness of discrimination that occurs at the College and the dearth of spaces to grieve and cope with such discrimination" (p. 5). Concluding this study, the authors provided five recommendations that aimed to create a climate of inclusivity of diversity across the institution and academics (Vergara, 2016).

In line with the findings of this study, Mindfulness into Action began as an initiative to address these diversity issues that caused "humiliation" from a student perspective with the creation of a "space" for communal understanding of diversity work and shared meaning about what constitutes diversity work. This space is created at weekly meetings applying organizational learning techniques, such as Collaborative Developmental Action Inquiry (Rooke & Torbert, 1999) to facilitate inclusivity with a dialogue about diversity and diversity work to address this sense of separation and the silo-ed climate at Teachers College (Vergara, 2016).

Based on data from the interviews and focus groups from the "Experiencing Diversity Study at TC," our work addressed assumptions about diversity through organizational learning techniques. In the TC study, the authors described: a) the "lack of space" to discuss diversity that they found while doing their study, and b) assumptions about diversity (Carter et al., 2013, p. 5).

For the last two decades, the demographics at Teachers College have reflected a mainstream culture. Over the last decade, various neo-institutional scholars have discussed the relationship between institutions and humans. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1991), institutions do not merely constrain human agency; they are first and foremost the product of human agency. We have the tendency to believe that institutions and their policies have always been there and, as a result, many of us allow ourselves to be constrained by them (Vergara, 2016).

In November 2014, I went to the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) as a visiting scholar. During my time at NTNU, I presented my research work in the WDU branch of Amazon rainforest to about 400 students. Sixty students signed up and 20 followed through the intervention. I created two groups that met weekly and we called it a science project. Many students wanted to go to the Amazon rainforest, and since I was developing a doctoral program for the Universidad Tecnica de Norte (UTN), NTNU students began an exchange program with UTN. This science project was called the "Mindfulness into Action Initiative." The goal of this project was to develop meaningful and effective interactions between Norwegian and Latin Americans participants, and the research goal was to detect factors that provide better interaction. Currently, stereotypical views of Latin American societies and cultures still exist due to news and information filtered through European and North American channels. These stereotypical views reflect our taken-for-granted assumptions (Fals Borda, 2006) that hinder meaningful and effective interaction between Norwegians and Latin Americans. From these NTNU participants, three students came to Ecuador to support the Mindfulness into Action Initiative on a volunteer basis. In July 2015, one participant came to Ecuador to visit the Amazon

rainforest in order to come back to Norway and recruit more students from NTNU. Later, in August 2015, two other participants came and we went to the Amazon rainforest to do research with the Kichwa community of Rio Blanco. In September 2015, one participant that was part of the exchange program began the implementation of the Mindfulness into Action methodology with 10 Ecuadorian students at UTN. The other participant went back to Norway to continue with the implementation of the methodology at NTNU with 10 Norwegian students and to recruit more students to go to Ecuador (to UTN or the Amazon rainforest) in the future. From this work we published a simultaneous study of the implementation of MIA® (Vergara, Tjernstad, Mac Quarrie, & Tamariz, 2017).

On December 17th 2015, I was asked by Professor Barbara Wallace to teach in January 2016 the Mindfulness into Action methodology as an action research class using grounded theory. This chapter is about the transformational experience of the students using the MIA® process in this action research class. This transformation is explained in a qualitative and quantitative analysis. In May 2016, the MIA® conference was held, and in July 2016, a group of students from Columbia University, NTNU and UTN arrived to the WDU branch in the Amazon rainforest. By 2017, the MIA® Institute was created.

BACKGROUND
This project began in 2009 using organization theory as method approach to the task of how to build, nurture, manage and sustain change at the NKRBNO community (Nationality Kichwa of Rio Blanco Napo-Orellana). Currently, corporate America uses organization theory to build effective corporations in making profit. Therefore, why not use the same techniques to build effective communities in preserving the Amazon rain forest?

This background section outlines some of the dynamism technology occurrence at the implementation of the Amazon project as an initiative of the World Dignity University (WDU). It describes the implementation of this project from an organization theory lens as we use IT as a vehicle to achieve this implementation. A chapter was published about this effort using technology to move forward this effort to help the indigenous community in the Amazon rainforest (Vergara, Wallace, Du, Marsick, Yorks, Gordon, & Tamariz, 2017).

When we think about organization theory, we think about global corporations, such as, mining companies. Mining companies are intruding (legally and illegally) into the Amazon rain forest. Mining companies use an organization theory called transaction cost economizing approach. Transaction cost economizing approach (TCE) has played a constructive role in pushing ahead the frontiers of organization theory (Aldrich, 2001). However, its critics point out that TCE draws on an under-socialized conception of human because individuals are presumed to behave individualistically, as isolated actors. Under-socialized people act without regard to the social damage they do, or the impressions they leave with others (Vergara, Wallace, Du, Marsick, Yorks, Gordon, & Tamariz, 2017). Thus, TCE theorists stress materialistic or self-serving

motives, as Aldrich (2001) states about Loasby's description of TCE; TCE "follows the standard American practice in constructing self-interest as narrowly focused selfishness". Thus, this approach promotes humiliation and understates the importance of social exchange: reciprocity, cooperative, and trusts.

On other hand, the core philosophy of WDU is reciprocity, cooperative and trusts. WDU is a community of practice. Langer states that a community of practice is very much a social learning as oppose to one that is based solely on the individual (Langer, 2005).

As Evelin Lindner stated (2012), the WDU Amazon project has the aim to promote "the Amazon as a university for the world". The indigenous population invites people from all over the world to learn everything about how sustainable livelihood has traditionally been achieved in the rain forest. Sustainable livelihood, rather than jobs, is what the world needs to learn more about in the future. The world population is in need to learn and accept help from the indigenous population, rather than the other way round.

CORE PHILOSOPHY

I am a Global Core and Education Team member at the Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies (HumanDHS) Network. This organization has evolved to create the World Dignity University (WDU). At the HumanDHS network, we are a global transdisciplinary network and fellowship of concerned academics and practitioners. We wish to stimulate systemic change, globally and locally, to open space for equality in dignity and mutual respect and esteem to take root and grow, thus ending humiliating practices and breaking cycles of humiliation throughout the world. We suggest that a frame of cooperation and shared humility is necessary - not a mindset of humiliation - if we wish to build a better world, a world of equal dignity for all. We are currently around 1,000 personally invited members, more than 2,000 more people support our work, and our website is being accessed by 40,000 people from more than 180 countries per year (Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies Network, 2011).

It is in the interest of global society not only to protect the rainforest and its biodiversity, but also to learn from the cultural diversity of its indigenous population. Particularly the notion of sustainable livelihoods is important. To do this, the indigenous community has to be enabled to act as a resource community for global learning about social and ecological sustainability (Lindner, 2012).

MINDFULNESS INTO ACTION (MIA®) APPROACH

In January 2016, at Columbia University Teachers College, the Mindfulness into Action (MIA®) with Grounded Theory course was created. This is a hybrid (online and in-person) qualitative and quantitative research course that uses the MIA® platform-- which goes beyond traditional paradigms. MIA® uses Indigenous knowledge to take action, given that Indigenous people have a broad knowledge of how to live sustainably. This course teaches students how to use grounded theory, as well as the use of NVivo

in data analysis, while focused on leadership skills development in the area of diversity issues within organizational settings.

Regarding individuals' context, students are from different cultural background and ethnicity, with different life experiences. With MIA®, we got together to reflect as part of a conscientization process. This concept of conscientization, which is at the heart of Paulo Freire's theory pedagogy of liberation (Freire, 1970); connotes both consciousness and conscience and thus captures the cognitive and normative processes that constitute this form of reflective knowledge. In our interactions, we emphasize the learning process, such as single-loop learning, double-loop learning and deuteron learning (Argyris and Schon, 1996) with different focus on behavioral and cognitive change. With the MIA® process, we are trying to address very difficult problems, problems related with "humiliation". Therefore, we cannot stay on the single-loop learning, we must reflect and move to the double-loop and deutero-loop learning. In the development of organizational learning is mediated through multiples levels. At the individual level, interpretation of the environment leads to the revision of individual knowledge structures (Walsh, 1995). At the group level, individual knowledge structures are synthesized to create shared beliefs. At the organization level, the routinization of shared beliefs leads to organizational knowledge and transform individual experience into group knowledge. Transforming individual knowledge into organizational routines leads to complex and embodied knowledge. Organizational learning contributes to the strategy perspective by conceiving the organization as a dynamic, integrated system that constantly changes (Aldrich, 2001).

MIA® is co-inquiry, most concisely defined as doing research with people, rather than on them (Bray, Lee, Smith, & Yorks, 2000; Heron, 1996; Reason, 1988). This is a participatory action research initiative, Park (1999) states that "in participatory research people who share problems in common decide what problems to tackle and directly get involved in research and social change activities". In our work with Indigenous community Kichwa in the Amazon, this approach of participatory action research is conducive to the outcomes we are working for dignity for all. We want this community to go through emancipatory learning as a way to co-create a sustainable way to preserve the Amazon rainforest. The reason for this emphasis on popular participation is that participatory research is not just a convenient instrument for solving social problems through technically efficacious means, but it is also a social practice that helps marginalized people attain a degree of emancipation as autonomous and responsible members of society (Freire, 1982). It is allied to the ideals of democracy, and in that spirit it is proper to call it research of the people, by the people, and for the people (Park, 1997).

In this way, we have concrete tools to evaluate our social interaction because it is through social interactions between individuals that knowledge is synthesized. As Wiley states, 'intersubjectivity is emergent upon the interchange and synthesis of two, or more, communicating selves' (1998:258). The interaction creates agreements in a communication process and thereby leads to shared beliefs. As David Teece (2001)

states "knowledge is not primarily about facts and what we refer to as 'content'; rather, it is more about 'context'".

The MIA® process does not include mindfulness techniques. It uses Indigenous practices with organizational learning techniques, which includes cycles of reflection (reflexivity). Data has suggested (Vergara, 2016) that after 4 weeks participants trained in this methodology develop a sense of being in a constant state of awareness (mindfulness)—as an attribute deemed vital for leaders being able to work in tune with those around them in diverse organizational settings.

ORGANIZATION LEARNING

Essentially, the organizational learning theory has transported the idea of individual learning to the organizational level (Probst, Buchel, and Raub, 1998). However, they state that Weick and Westley raised the issue of whether the literature on organizational learning is really about an organizational level phenomenon, or simply about individuals learning within organizations. They argued that some theorists have ignored the issue by simply treating organizational learning as learning by individuals within an organization context, but what about the individuals' context? These individuals have mental models that shape the organization; they evaluate their work which is shaped by their ways of seeing and understanding themselves in context.

Organizational learning builds on the idea that individual learning is not sufficient for organizations to be successful, organizational learning proposes that organizations need to be able to transform and distribute individual knowledge (Kim, 1993) and acquire new knowledge (MacDonald, 1995) in order to create a whole which is more than the sum of its parts.

METHODOLOGY

Phenomenology - Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis
Phenomenology (Husserl, 1964) is a study of phenomena that manifest themselves. The methods of analysis have the following objectives: 1) Pre Application of Instruments to identify the initial situation, 2) Follow-up of the reflection processes to create effectiveness and sustainability about solving their problems, 3) Post Application of the Instruments to evaluate the improved areas. Additionally, an interview was done with questions describing human behavior before, during and after the implementation of MIA®.

TYPE OF RESEARCH

This is a participatory action research that is a form of research that is often summarily described as research with people and not with them as subjects (Bray, Lee, Smith, & Yorks, 2000; Heron, 1996; Reason, 1996). Such a position requires recognition that academic researchers are not outside the system, but are an elementary part of the composition of the system involved in the study. Therefore, their intentions, decisions, contributions to conversations and actions are among the many factors that influence the results that arise from the activities and interventions in the study.

TECHNIQUES

The techniques are organizational tools and indigenous practices of the methodology Mindfulness into Action (MIA®) Research with Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2006). MIA® was developed in the dissertation of Dr. Vergara (Vergara, 2016) at Columbia University (Department of Organization and Leadership). Later in 2016 it became a qualitative and quantitative research course (Department of Health and Human Behavior Studies) with transformative results (Vergara, 2017).

INSTRUMENTS

The instruments are Global Leadership Profile (GLP), & Vulnerability to the stress test. GLP is a leadership development framework developed by Torbert and Herman-Barker 2004, with the original factors arising from the University of Washington Prayer Terminator Test (WUSCT) instrument to assess personality development. GLP is an eight-stage model that identifies the logic of action or the mental complexity of individuals using vertical learning (of how an individual knows and tries to transform, how an individual interprets, understands and reacts to the world). GLP characterizes the problem solving tendencies of an individual and their daily interactions with others using different styles of leadership (based on their psychological development). Another instrument is the assessment of stress vulnerability that includes anxiety, depression, stress, to determine the changes before and after the implementation of MIA® with respect to levels of stress, depression, and anxiety.

FINDINGS

At the end of the 4 weeks, the interview protocol was provided to participants. The interview protocol has questions about how the participants felt before, during and after de implementation of MIA®. This chapter includes the answers to 3 questions from 5 participants:

Below are their responses before the implementation
Please describe how you felt about yourself before doing Mindfulness into Action?

PARTICIPANT 1
I had been dealing with interpersonal and work-related stress, family issues, and addiction issues. When I began, I was in therapy for these issues (and still am), but I hadn't been able to fully implement my healthier behaviors regularly.

PARTICIPANT 2
Prior to MIA, I often struggled with self-doubt about my ability to embody the dispositions of an effective leader. I felt I was lacking essential knowledge and skills set to facilitate professional growth in leadership. I did not embody the 5 agreements of Indigenous practices. I carried with me emotional baggage from the past that inhibited my growth.

PARTICIPANT 3
I was considering not returning to school because of the stress with home factors. So I was quite stressed, feeling unsure of my ability to accomplish goals, confused.

PARTICIPANT 4

I am naturally a very organized person and typically function is a very strict environment and can be very harsh on myself when things don't go as planned or when I make mistakes.

PARTICIPANT 5

I was a practical person and most of the time I also always think on the basis of causality and the rational causes of particular things, but I can only think about "now". I normally push myself to be able to achieve things, thus I sometimes tried to do "beyond" my best/capability, nearly sometimes- I also demanded anyone who worked with me to be able to achieve almost everything we wanted to do. I perhaps also couldn't really focus on what I want to do.

Below are their responses during the implementation
Do you feel different from the time you began Mindfulness into Action and now?

PARTICIPANT 1

I feel immensely different. I know how to take care of myself. I am more in tune with what my body needs in order to connect with others and be productive at work (I am in a direct service position so this is important).

PARTICIPANT 2

I feel as though the cloud of unknowing has been lifted. My daily experience is more joyful, and grounded in admiration of life. I have found that the willingness to be vulnerable with others is a source of strength and a position of mutual power. I am no longer fearful of being vulnerable (exposing my authentic self). I am content with who I am and the growth that I am and will continue to experience. I am pleased to be able to observe my feelings, actions, and those of others and respond in thoughtful and productive way that build relationship.

PARTICIPANT 3

At first it seemed very self-indulgent to pay attention to myself every hour and give this time to me for practice. But MIA is not selfish, rather, this practice gave me more energy to give outward to others. Also, some things around me began to change without my making decisions… things started to 'work out' more easily.

PARTICIPANT 4

I think the puzzle really came together for me around the third week of the MIA exercise. I began to notice the change in my mood and social interactions as well as my energy. I felt more and more positive as the days and weeks went on. I didn't necessarily notice the changes slowly as they were happening, but rather all at once. I think my first "aha moment" came on a day when I was walking to work and all off the sudden it was like a light switch came on for me mentally and I was able to associated the change in my mood with the MIA exercises.

PARTICIPANT 5
One small but meaningful thing is I found myself currently be a more open mind person and have an awareness that failure is not a big mistake that I have to blame myself (for not being able to do/achieve/change something). I feel that if there is something that I cannot do as what I planned before is not a big deal, and that subsequently I have a belief that a much better achievement is waiting for me soon. Over the past 4 and half weeks, I feel that this practice helps me to achieve more and at the same time I learn what so called "self-appreciation" on whatever I did, whether it worked or it didn't. In addition, the hourly reflection practice helps me to let go all the negative moods and feelings and "clean" my mind to stay focus on my goals at that time.

Below are their responses after the implementation
Do you look at your life differently? Have you accomplished a goal that you felt unreachable? If so, what changes or goals? Please describe.

PARTICIPANT 1
I look at my life very differently than I did before I started MIA. I used to sacrifice my own health and happiness for work and for other people. Now, I know how to take care of myself first. This goal seemed unreachable to me before starting MIA. I didn't know if I would ever understand self-care, or ever be able to implement it. It has made me a better employee, a better mentor to students, and kinder to myself, and others. It has helped me become aware of all the ways I used to contribute to my own unhappiness and the unhappiness of others. Now I feel like I am in complete control of my reactions to everything that happens to me or around me. I am so much more equipped for what life brings, and completely at peace.

PARTICIPANT 2
Through MIA I have developed a sense of belonging to a greater cause/energy. This is important to me because I have felt like an outcast in my family for many years. Now I am detached from this feeling/experience and feel as sense of belonging. I became more of an observer of various situations throughout the day. In essence I became more reflectively response and less reactive. I also became more fully present in my interactions with others as I sought to listen to hear the intent and message of what was being said.

PARTICIPANT 3
Yes. It is the same life but with the edges smoothing out more… in process. My life is changing, I am ready for change, and I assist this transformation through action. With MIA I can better observe myself to move forward and not go in circles.
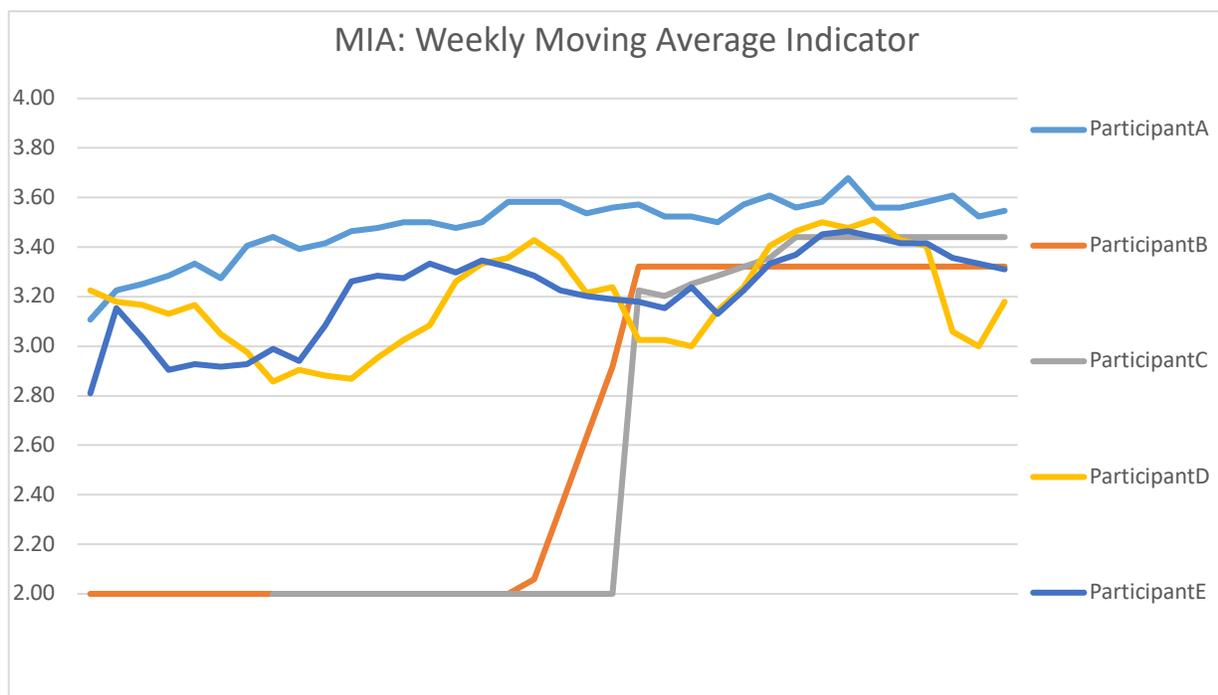
PARTICIPANT 4
I feel that my entire mentally has changed, including the way I approach my day to day and the way that I think forward. Before I was so intent on having a clear idea of what I needed to do, 1 week down the road, 1 month down the road, 1 year down the road (and etc.), that I wasn't experiencing my life as it was happening, rather just planning for the next thing and the thing after that. After having a constant Mindfulness into Action

practice, I feel that while at my core, I am still a planner, I have noticed a shift in my experiences, in summation, I feel that MIA has helped me to strike a balance between my life and my goals and has given me the tools to experience both fruitfully.

PARTICIPANT 5
I think, yes I do. I appreciate my life more than before. I appreciate any achievements or changes that I and someone else made. I also feel an increased concentration, productivity, and my ability to respond mindfully to stressful or unexpected situations. The hourly reflection also helps me to decrease emotional reactivity.

Quantitative analysis of MIA® (Vergara, 2018)

MIA: Weekly Moving Average Indicator

Observations:
*3 participants started in the neutral zone and 2 in the negative zone
*4 participants completed the 4 week cycle in the positive zone, and 1 in the neutral zone
* 2 participants show an oscillatory behavior with 3 peaks and period of about 10 days
*1 participant grows during the first half of the program and stays up with little variation for the second part
* 2 participants jump from negative into the positive zone and stay there

Values in Table:
2.00 to 2.80 Negative emotions
2.80 to 3.20 Neutral emotions
3.20 to 3.80 Positive emotions

This table shows data from 5 participants, all of them achieved the "third head". Three students began their journey in the neutral zone. They did the methodology consistently and achieved the "third head." The other two students were resisting the methodology. These two students are African Americans. In the table, two of them begin in the negative emotions zone. But, as they observe the reflection from other students, they decide to do the MIA® practice and immediately they achieved the third head, and stayed in the positive emotions zone.

Qualitative analysis of MIA® (Vergara, 2016)

First-level Coding	Second-level Coding
PHASE 1 **a) Before the Intervention**	
1. Initial "Reactive" State	2. Conflict 3. Resistance 4. Stress 5. Victim Identity
PHASE 2 **b) During the Intervention**	
6. Identified Awareness	7. Exercises, Steps
8. To Be Present	9. Surprise 10. Connectedness
11. Observing Behavior	12. Cohesiveness
PHASE 3 **c) After the Intervention**	
13. Aha Moments	14. Control 15. Stepping Back
16. Identification of Third Person	17. Internal Reflection 18. Suspension 19. Reflection
20. Reflection of the Third Person	21. Writing (Journaling)
22. Coping Action –After Shift	23. Tolerance
24. Happiness	25. Being at Peace
26. Effectiveness	27. Personal Effectiveness 28. Academic Effectiveness 29. Professional Effectiveness

All students achieved what Vergara calls the "third head" (Vergara, 2016; 2017; 2018).

Definition of the "third head": The "third head" is a place of neutrality; when a person is in this place, it is without emotions. Participants in the "third head" are clear-minded and grounded, capable of moving into action in complete mindfulness. Data suggest (Vergara, 2016; 2017; 2018) that the achievement of the "third head" usually happens within four weeks of practicing MIA® consistently. Data suggest that when a participant stops doing MIA® for two days, the "third head" disappears. However, if the participant began to do MIA® again, it takes one and a half week to achieve the "third head".

MIA® CONFERENCE

The Mindfulness into Action for Cultural Humility and Awareness conference was held from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Friday, May 13th 2016 at Teachers College, Columbia University. There were 69 attendees.

The event was sponsored by the Center for Health Equity and Urban Science Education (CHEUSE), Department of Health and Behavior Studies, with the support from The Office of the Provost, and The Office of the Vice President for Diversity and Community Affairs. Sixty-nine individuals attended the conference on May 13, 2016. Out of that number, twenty-three individuals (33%) filled the evaluation form.

The feedback from participants from the MIA® Conference, both via a formal survey and from anecdotal conversations on the day, indicated a very high level of satisfaction with the event. Please see below some of their comments:

- I enjoyed the opportunity to share more about the content of the conference and the benefits of the practice of MIA with attendees at the reception. Thank you!
- Having an open forum to share thoughts and experiences, without judgment really allowed for a deeper conversation to take place
- Excellent MIA presentation. Thank you.
- When Mariana spoke, it was clear. She was speaking from her heart and it touched my heart. This conference was excellent - informative and inspirational!
- It was an amazing experience! Thank you!
- This was a different type of conference! Thank you for the experience!
- This was truly an inspiring experience for me. It went beyond my expectations.
- This was a new experience for me and I loved it.
- How things are connected to us and at times we are not aware. Loved this conference. Needs more exposure.
- It is so impressive how MIA can change lives.
- Dr. Wallace and Mariana along with testimonials about the third head were inspirational.
- An excellent, informative, life-changing conference and experience that I was blessed to experience today. Thank you.

At the conference the keynote speaker were Dr. Emdin, Dr. Wallace, Dr. Vergara, and students John-Martin Green and Susan Tirhi with Dr. Yorks describing the subject-object perspective in transformational learning in the morning session. The afternoon session was open with Dr. Edmund W. Gordon, followed by a scholarly

discourse regarding Mindfulness and how Mindfulness into Action (MIA®) does not include meditation or yoga to achieve "mindfulness". Mindfulness is achieved through indigenous practices with organizational learning techniques.

Then, the following presentations were from implementation of MIA® in Norway by Carl Tjernstad from NTNU, in Ecuador by Adam Mac Quarrie from UTN, in India by Apeksha Mewani, and a high school in New York by Adriana Reyes. At the end to the conference there was a panel discussion where Irma Hidayana joined the conversation about implementing MIA® in Indonesia, and Dr. Yorks summarized his observations of the MIA® presentations as the possibility to transfer this methodology.
Dr. Lyle Yorks https://youtu.be/GVud9KwSzWk

TC, UTN and NTNU students presented their MIA® process at the Conference. Please see below links of the videos from their description of the MIA® process. Students are from different race, gender, age, demographics and location; and all of them achieved the "third head":

Caucasian female online participant at Columbia University - Susan Tirhi
https://youtu.be/sxfYy11HcfQ

African American male participant at Columbia University - John-Martin Green
https://youtu.be/SErw9D8hnbI

Norwegian male participant in Ecuador - Adam Mac Quarrie
https://youtu.be/lsVEVjpCj38

International female student at Columbia University - Apeksha Mewani
https://youtu.be/63td4AQx6Rs

Norwegian male participant in Norway - Carl Tjernstad
https://youtu.be/UALnWNaYukU

FIELD RESEARCH IN THE WDU BRANCH IN THE AMAZON RAINFOREST
In July 2016, students went to the Amazon rainforest as part of a new summer cross cultural fieldwork practicum. Their experience emphasized cultural exchange, humility, and ethics. Therefore, MIA® participants from three universities (NTNU, UTN and TC) went to the Amazon rainforest.

Please see below some of student's reflections:

"The trip has helped me, not only to understand the power of a culture and the importance of preserving traditional practices and rights, it has given me a new sense of searching in order to help create a better future, I went on the trip wondering if I could finish my Master's program and came back a person who now wants to pursue my PhD in this field."

"Going to the forest and staying at the village of Ruku Samay among the indigenous Kichwa people was an opportunity to expand my knowledge on multicultural populations. Living with members of this population taught me a lesson for life. Firstly, I felt privileged to observe every minute gesture, habit, ritual and learn to 'penetrate' their culture. I was able to observe closely the family dynamics and the manner in which mother and son, brothers and sisters interacted on a daily basis. They seemed bounded, remarkably genuine and proud to be a close-˘knitted family. They were extremely warm people. They opened up their home to foreigners [that we were] and ensure that we were safe and well taken care of."

"After a five-˘hour bus ride from 12 am to 5am, from Quito to Tena in the Napo Valley, we were all very anxious to arrive in the jungle. We waited 2 1/2 hours for the van that would take our group to the drop off place to hike and forge a river that would lead us to our jungle habitat. I can hardly express my surprise at what would be my lodgings for the next four days.

We walked up three flights of wooden slated stairs to our room. My roommate put her things down on the cot against the bare wood wall. Three feet across from her was my cot under the "window," a 4x6 opening to the treetops outside. I looked at the empty rope above our cots and felt chills pass through me. "Where is our netting for sleeping," I questioned. My roommate shrugged. I took off my backpack and began to pull out my bug spray and hat for our first hike into the jungle. As I prepared for our first hike into the jungle, I made a note to myself: Ask Mariana if the family has a net to put over our cots while we're hiking. I could feel my stomach tighten as I kept imagining trying to sleep in the jungle without a net. I sat down on my cot to lace up my hiking boots, when I looked out my "window." I caught my breath when I registered two spider webs that overlapped and covered the entire span of the window opening. Just off center, sat a black spider in each web. Each one was the size of my outstretched hand. It's body was the size of my palm and its eight legs were the size of my fingers. I can't sleep here, I panicked. I grabbed my daypack and raced down the stairs to find Mariana.

I could see Mariana from afar, talking under the thatched roof gathering area. I quickened my steps. I didn't notice the butterflies. I didn't notice the foliage. This is an emergency, I reasoned.

"Excuse Mariana, but I have a big problem." I interrupted.

Mariana turned to me.

"There are no nets above our beds and I have two behemoth spiders on my window opening." I shrilled.

Mariana smiled, "Don't worry. If you want netting, they have it and will put it up for you while we hike."

I opened my eyes wider. What could she possibly mean, If I want it? Of course I want a net over my bed. I thought. I continued. "OK, but I are you sure they will have it? I need it."

Mariana shook her head, "No problem."

I could feel myself breathe deeply as I pictured the netting tucked around my cot. "But what about the spiders? Are they outside spiders?" I blurted out.

Mariana smiled again, put her arms on my shoulders, and looked into my eyes, " You must manage your thoughts. The spiders won't come to you if you don't invite them with your energy."

I opened my mouth to protest.

"Remember, everything is perfect." Mariana said as she released me and walked over to discuss the details of our hike with our Shaman guide.

The hike was hot, humid, as we traversed 3 hours through many plants and herbs, learning from our guide about medicine and sustainable farming in the jungle. I listened to the talk and practiced MIA with each step I took. When we returned to our lodge, I went up to the room to see if the spiders had left and netting had arrived. There above my bed was beautiful purple hued netting dangling from the rope above my cot. I then looked out the window. My shoulders dropped. I would be sleeping with the two largest spiders that I had ever seen or imagined existed. The horn blew a second time for dinner, but I stood at the doorway. Everything is perfect, I thought.

I walked over to the spiders and looked closely at them. The webs were stunning intricate designs. Something other than fear was emerging. Something like awe and grace was pushing through. I looked up at the spiders and faced them the way Mariana had talked to me and I said, " Spiders, you are so capable and strong and have made beautiful web homes. I respect you and will honor your homes and not touch them or you. This is my home in the jungle." I pointed to my cot and netting. "Please respect my home and honor where I live and do not touch me."

I smiled as I walked down the stairs and on the path to join the others for dinner. I felt the grace of oneness with all living things. My well-being and the spiders' well-being were equal. We both had to be okay. The jungle is a great equalizer: size and titles don't matter. Respect and honor matter. I was filled with gratitude. I was filled with peace. I knew that everything was perfect."

These participants were from diverse background, culture and nationalities. Please see below a table describing their background.

Participant ID	Inst.	Major	Degree	Gender	Ethnicity	Country	Age
Professor A	TC	Leadership	EdD	Female	Latina	Chile	50
Professor B	TC	Literacy	Masters	Female	Caucasian	USA	53
Student C	TC	Intern. Dev.	Masters	Female	Chinese	Malaysia	34
Student D	TC	Health Ed.	Masters	Female	Indian	India	25
Student E	TC	Health Ed.	Doctoral	Female	Black	Haiti	60
Student F	TC	Psychology	Masters	Female	Caucasian	USA	63
Student G	TC	English	Doctoral	Male	Latino	Mexico	26
Professor H	UTN	Architecture	Masters	Male	Latino	Ecuador	49
Student I	NTNU	Psychology	Bachelor	Male	Caucasian	Norway	24

CONCLUSION

In order to deal with the mental demands of modern life, adults thinking needs to continue to evolve through higher level of consciousness. All of us (indigenous, scholars, practitioners and students) are co-creating a sustainable way to preserve the Amazon rainforest. The task at these meetings is to bring together all relevant participants or stakeholders through inclusive processes of 'organic' or naturalistic recruitment' (Wadsworth, 2008). The MIA® meetings provide with the opportunity to use ecological, hermeneutical, or 'big picture' systems thinking to assist us to see the challenges we are facing and through action reflective collaborative inquiry enable us to draw the best "theoretical maps" by which we could navigate until better ones were found.

This is an emergent process, what we are trying to do, does not exist. We need to shift our paradigm before we go into action. Currently indigenous communities in the rainforest are experiencing the forces of globalization by the intrusion of mining, logging, oil companies in their territories. Transnational companies go into the Amazon rainforest and take its resources, and it is destroying the live hood of these indigenous communities. This process has happened before around the world. Now, we have to use this same system (globalization) regarding organization theory to preserve the Amazon rainforest. In July 2009 this intervention began with the Kichwa community. And as a result by July 2010, the Kichwa indigenous community has expulsed 4 mining companies. As argued by Heron and Reason (1997, p. 283) "having a critical consciousness about our knowing necessarily includes shared experience, dialogue, feedback, and exchange with others."

Ultimately, knowledge is socially constructed. Reflective knowledge has to do with critical engagement because it produces changes in participants that go beyond intellectual understanding. From the MIA® course, the anticipated result is a new generation of researchers with a different paradigm. Through participation in the MIA® leadership skills development methodology that incorporates indigenous knowledge and organizational learning techniques, students gradually become more aware of their own unconscious behaviors, in tune with the people surrounding them, and increasingly skillful in engaging in conscious and intentional action (Vergara, 2016).

This change of paradigm, it is an action that invariably entail modifying or going against existing social arrangements that actors perceive to be at the top of their problems. In dealing with the social forces that stand in the way of change in such ways, in the process these new generation of researchers come to feel the power they gain by engaging in actions as autonomous agents (without self-sabotaging unknown behaviors holding them back). Through MIA® we learn how the world works, what we can do, and who we are; this is how we become aware and emancipated. They become what Boyatzis and Mckee (2005) call, "resonant leaders." This means that they are capable of achieving a new awareness that is vital in cross-cultural interactions while overcoming self-limiting mindsets that promote humiliating behaviors against others.

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