From Mandala Creation to Individuation: A Personal Journey

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FROM MANDALA CREATION TO INDIVIDUATION:
A PERSONAL JOURNEY

By

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This Thesis is dedicated to Papa Denny (1949 – 2003) who wanted for me the best gift of all: the ability to laugh at myself. His loving and often time's humorous inspirations have given me the courage to experience with enjoyment my journey through life.
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ABSTRACT

According to Jung, one’s uniqueness and individuality comes from his or her natural development towards wholeness. Much of this development is seen through symbols of the unconscious. The use of mandalas as a creative tool allows these symbols to emerge. The anticipation of these symbols that appear from the unconscious to the conscious is that one will transition towards individuation. Jung stated that individuation is a harmonious unity of the personality with the Self. The purpose of this case study, my personal journey, is to uncover how mandala creations coincide with individuation.
CHAPTER 1
FROM MANDALA CREATION TO INDIVIDUATION:
A PERSONAL JOURNEY

The process of individuation is a concept that many individuals strive to attain during their lifetime. According to Jung, one’s uniqueness and individuality comes from his or her natural development towards wholeness. Much of this development is seen through symbols of the unconscious. These symbols often appear in dreams and artwork such as in the healing circles of the mandala. Jung states that “the result of individuation is a harmonious unity of the personality with the Self serving as the central unifying principle” (Fincher, 1991, p. 2). Jung continued to explain:

The mandala is the most genuinely perfect symbol of the Self, referring simultaneously to its wholeness (Self) as well as to the center of the total personality (self)… the circular image afforded by the mandala compensates the disorder and confusion of the psychic state – namely, through the construction of a central point to which everything is related… this is evidently an attempt at self-healing on the part of Nature, which does not spring from conscious reflection but from an instinctive impulse (Casado, 2002, pgs. 66-67).

Mandala drawings are spontaneous and children are known to draw mandala forms such as circles, suns, and faces. “Creating seems to be natural to our species, involving a spontaneous impulse, if not an actual need. Making marks comes so easily in fact to infants and toddlers, that we were not terribly surprised to learn… that our closest animal relatives – apes and chimpanzees – also love to draw and paint” (Rubin, 1999, p. 86). From this art, we learned that from the beginning children start to learn consciousness of the self (Fincher, 1991).
Art has been used as a form of communication and leisure as far back as prehistoric times; however in the profession of art therapy the use of art as a means for self-development is a recent occurrence. Art therapy has become accepted in aiding individuals with self-expression and self-exploration. Making mandalas is an art therapy tool which aids in creating harmony, balance and healing for an individual (Barber, 2002). “In Tibetan Buddhism, the process of making a mandala is considered as important as the end product itself – a way of calming the mind and body” (Barber, 2002, p. 43). In the art therapy profession, the process of creating is often more important than the product as it allows the therapist and client to delve into insights that may not have otherwise been uncovered.

Throughout this paper, the reader will begin to understand the impact mandala creations has for centering of the self and how it aids in the individuation process. Case studies and mandala reflections by Jung; the history of mandalas; different techniques of creating mandalas; and my personal journey of mandala creations working towards the individuation process will be discussed in detail. It is my hope that the reader will be able to reflect on this paper and gain the knowledge needed to strive for his or her own means towards individuation.

**Research Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to record a qualitative case study in which a journey explores the effects of creating a mandala series and how this exploration relates to the Self in the individuation process. The process of individuation represents the continual becoming and unfolding of the self. Through the creation of mandalas – where it is believed that the unconscious mind appears into consciousness – I am striving to explore Fincher’s (1991) idea that the process of creating mandalas becomes a self analysis and a self discovery of one’s own psyche and life. I created a series of mandalas and collected data in the form of journal entries and reflective distancing in order to investigate the theory that mandalas cooperate with the individuation process. I
used Fincher's (1991) technique of mandala creation and journaling while also using a phenomenological approach. This approach meant creating mandalas in the here and now when appropriate. Through this qualitative study, Jung’s ideas on mandalas and their representations of wholeness of one’s personality were explored and the usefulness of this process for the journey towards individuation was examined.

**Justification**

While there are books and articles that address the healing possibilities of mandalas there are only a few case studies and personal journeys that support the use of mandalas in the individuation process. Out of these few, Jung’s case study of Miss X was the main study found that had specific reference to individuation. She came from an upper class American family and was an academic who studied the field of psychology. In 1928, at the age of 55, she went to Europe in order to study under Jung. Miss X painted twenty-four paintings, primarily mandalas, which for Jung, illustrated the beginning stages towards her journey to individuation (Jung, 1972). This case will be examined in Chapter 2.

From data that I have been able to collect, it appears that professionals in the field of art therapy and psychology who discuss the history and benefits of mandala creations tend to have common characteristics in their research. More case studies need to be conducted so that there is a broader reference of study in order to gain more insights on the power of mandala creations and its power to aid in individuation. Jung’s study of Miss X is important in history; however since this was completed in the 1930’s, the profession of art therapy needs more updated case studies. A case study through the individual’s experience of mandala creation will bring further understanding of how mandalas aid in personal development, balance, centering and individuation.
Research Question

The purpose of this case study explored how the creation of mandalas aid in the individuation of the Self. This research attempts to answer how the creation of a series of mandalas coincides with individuation. Specifically:

1. What does the use of diverse media during the process of creating a mandala contribute to the individuation process?
2. What is the nature of the creative process involved in creating mandalas to support self individuation?
3. Is processing each mandala through journaling a necessary step in the journey towards individuation and wholeness?

Definition of Terms

Art Therapy

The following is a definition of art therapy as defined by The American Art Therapy Association:

Art therapy is a human service profession which utilizes art media, images, the creative art process and patient/client responses to the created art productions as reflections of an individual’s development, abilities, personality, interests, concerns, and conflicts. Art therapy practice is based on knowledge of human developmental and psychological theories which are implemented in the full spectrum of models of assessment and treatment including educational, psychodynamic, cognitive, transpersonal, and other therapeutic means of reconciling emotional conflicts, fostering self-awareness, developing social skills, managing behavior, solving problems, reducing anxiety, aiding reality orientation, and increasing self-esteem.
**Individuation**

Individuation is “any process in which the various elements or parts of a complex whole become differentiated from each other, progressively more distinct and individual... In psychoanalytic theory, [individuation is] the process of becoming an individual who is aware of his or her individuality” (Reber & Reber, 2001, pgs. 348-349). Individuation is a lifelong journey that is a transformation of the psyche – the ideas of development, independence, and psychic wholeness and the realization of the self (Smith, 1951).

**Mandala**

In Jungian theory, “mandala, the Sanskrit word for circle, is the symbol of the self, wholeness, and healing” (Pakula, 1997, p. 220). According to Jung (1969), the mandala is a symbol of individuation. In addition, as defined in the *Penguin Dictionary of Symbols*, a mandala is a “visual aid to spiritual instruction and enlightenment” (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1982, p. 632).

**Mandala Creation**

For the use of this case study, mandala creation refers to the process of creating mandalas regardless of the length of time it took to make each mandala or the materials used.

**Reflective Distance**

According to Lusebrink (1990), reflective distance is the ability of a client to verbalize what he or she has visually created. Kagin and Lusebrink (1978) explained that reflective distance is a feedback system for the individual’s interaction with the media; the cognitive distance between the art experience and the individuals reflection upon that experience.

**Phenomenology**

Patton (2002) explains phenomenology as the exploration of how one makes sense of his or her own experiences, bringing those experiences to a conscious level. Consciousness requires one to connect him or herself to the world he or she lives in. This phenomenon involves perceiving, describing, feeling, judging, remembering and making sense of a direct, lived experience – unlike secondhand experience.
Self

When the word self is used with a capital “S” it is part of the self that is spoken of in the previous definition by Reber and Reber (2001) of individuation: the part of the individual who is aware of his or her individuality. According to Jung, this Self is equal to wholeness. Jung also states that the self with a lower case “s” is part of the self that is “the center of the total personality” (Casado, 2002, pgs. 66-67). In the course of the individuation process while one becomes whole and aware, the self becomes the Self.

Brief Overview of the Study

This study is being conducted in the form of a personal journey taken by me in order to explore mandala creations following Fincher’s technique. Fincher’s (1991) technique is used as a guide in this exploration and then the process evolved as needed. The qualitative case study being presented is autoethnography using data collected from mandala creations, journaling and reflective distancing. Carolyn Ellis and Arther Bochner explain that “autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural…” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739). The emphasis in this case study will be on the personal narrative as this will allow the author to take on the dual identities of the academic and personal self to tell a story regarding an aspect of daily life experiences through mandala creations.

The focuses of the mandalas are personal perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes that come about through creating the series. Because these perceptions are evolving, the mandala series aids in my journey towards individuation. The mandalas and journaling are the communication tools for self reflection. Given that the researcher and participant is the same individual, there is less chance for misinterpretation in regards to data collection and analysis; however, because of
the personal narrative nature of this case study, the hope is also that this thesis will serve as an inspiration for reflective distance for readers on the way towards his or her individuation.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review will address areas such as the overview of art therapy; the history of the mandala; Carl Jung’s, Susanne Fincher’s, and Joan Kellogg’s views, similarities and differences regarding mandala creation techniques and purposes; as well as mandala case studies.

The literature search included psychological abstracts from PsycINFO, JSTOR, FirstSearch, Google Scholar, and PsycFirst databases. Keywords that were used are as followed: art therapy, mandalas, individuation process, individuate, mandala case studies, individuation case studies, journey, and Jung. For journal articles, a return of key words such as art therapy, individuation and mandalas did not appear in abundance; however, a number of articles were found through the previously mentioned databases in professional journals such as: The Arts in Psychotherapy, Art Therapy, Family and Community Health, and Psychotherapy. Not all of the journals were psychological in nature; however it was interesting to find that the use of mandala healing was used in a number of business professional areas as well. In addition, due to a lack of art therapy resources in University libraries, books were purchased through searches on amazon.com and ordered by bookstores throughout the local area. Information reviewed from the collected literature aided in synthesizing the author’s journey towards individuation.

Overview of Art Therapy

Judith Rubin (1999), in her book Art Therapy: An Introduction explained that the term art therapy has not been around as long as the “idea” of art therapy. Jung stated it clearly when he said “A patient needs only to have seen once or
twice how much he is freed from a wretched state of mind by working at a symbolical picture, and he will always turn to this means of release whenever things go badly with him” (p. 85). As mentioned in Chapter 1, creating comes naturally to humans and even though the art therapy profession is a newly-defined profession, its inspiration goes back to ancient times and are universal in nature. Rubin (1999) stated that throughout time, there have been cave drawings of animals and fertility figures; symbols on Egyptian sarcophagus; creations of Buddhist sand mandalas; African ritual masks; Ethiopian parchment healing scrolls and many more all leading to the idea of what we know of as modern art therapy. Jung has spoken of the unconscious mind. This unconscious mind is part of all human condition. “Art historian/psychoanalyst Ernst Kris called the ‘magic power of the image’ is very real for human being, and we who work with art in therapy know and respect it. Man’s profound belief in this phenomenon may even be the primary reason that art has always been so therapeutic (p. 89).

Rubin (1999) continued by clarifying that during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, psychiatrists had become fascinated by the art of the mentally ill. Spontaneous art that was created by this population came about during psychotic breaks or loss of contact with reality. They began to create images as a way of coping with the unknown. As the years went on, psychiatrists became more intrigued with the art being produced. Organizations and conferences began being held around 1959 to enable professionals from all over the world to exchange ideas in this new realm of expression as a healing power and tool for assessing individuals. Children and the mentally ill were primary populations of interest.

According to Rubin (1999), two women by the name of Margaret Naumburg and Edith Kramer who pioneered what is known today as art therapy. Although both relied on psychoanalytic theory, their definitions of art therapy were very different. Naumburg focused more on the therapy aspect and saw art as a form of symbolic speech. She saw symbolic speech “coming from the unconscious like dreams, to be evoked in a spontaneous way and to be understood through free association, always respecting the artist's own
interpretations... unconscious symbolic contents, a means of both diagnosis and therapy, requiring verbalization and insight as well as art expression” (pgs. 98-99). Kramer viewed art as a royal road to sublimation, “a way of integrating conflicting feelings and impulses in an aesthetically satisfying form, helping the ego to synthesize via the creative process itself” (p. 99). As time went on, other professionals began to see the powerful impact that art therapy had on individuals. A German poet by the name of Joann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote: “We ought to talk less and draw more. I, personally, should like to renounce speech altogether and, like organic nature, communicate everything I have to say in sketches” (p. 106).

Today, there are organizations and journals that help promote the art therapy profession that these aforementioned professionals have tried hard to distinguish. The American Art Therapy Association (AATA) is a member organization and was incorporated in 1969. “It’s mission was to serve it’s members and to protect the general public by providing standards of professional competence, and developing and promoting knowledge in, and of, the field of art therapy” (http://www.arttherapy.org). The AATA sponsors conferences; provides education and training in the field of art therapy; and publishes the journal Art Therapy. According to the AATA, in 1961 the first journal called the Bulletin of Art Therapy was published which today is known as the American Journal of Art Therapy (http://coloringtherapy.com/art_therapy.htm).

Then around the 1980’s, the AATA felt that it was necessary to look into certifying art therapists. This organization, the Art Therapy Credentials Board (ATCB), is different than the AATA in that its mission is to protect the “public by promoting the competent and ethical practice of art therapy. This includes developing and promoting the strongest possible credentials for art therapist, establishing the highest standards for the ethical practice of art therapy and adjudicating complaint involving ethical violations” (http://www.arttherapy.org). According to the AATA, during the 1970’s the first art therapy degrees were awarded and today there are both undergraduate introductory courses as well as more than 27 master’s programs approved by the AATA.
(http://coloringtherapy.com/art_therapy.htm). Because of these organizations, art therapy as a profession is able to be positively promoted.

**Historical Overview of the Mandala**

According to Fincher (1991) circles have been apart of human culture since ancient times. Circles, spirals and such designs have appeared in ancient rock carvings in Africa, Europe and North America. Although it is not known the exact reason for the creation of circles, we do know that the shape shows up within our natural history in many forms. Examples are: rotation of the planet around the sun; the actual shape of the planet and sun, the egg born out of the womb of the mother; hunters gathering food under the sunlight and then huddled at night in a circle around the campfire for light and warmth – all powerful forces in how humans live. It appears that human beings both ancient and modern are predisposed to respond to the circular shape. Early ritual ceremonies revolved around the mandala form of the sun. Ancient mandala drawings have been found around the world to suggest that the sun and moon have been natural elements that put humans in wonder. These carvings also suggested how humans started to define the conscious and unconscious life. In simple terms, night with the moon is when one sleeps to suggest the unconscious where the sun, when one is awake suggested the conscious. Ancient carvings of sun, stars and moons suggested the “step from instinctive group mind to individual consciousness of self” (p. 3). This implies that humans began to think beyond their instinctual capacity.

Leidy and Thurman (1997) found that over the past century, westerners have long been fascinated with the sacred mandalas of the Hindu-Buddhist world of Asia. Here, the term mandala “readily evokes an elaborate painterly or three-dimensional image of a sacred space filled with exquisitely rendered figures and objects” (p. 8). Within Asia, there are a number of different mandala inspirations throughout the country.
Leidy and Thurman explained that mandalas as a sacred space are among the most well known Buddhist icons around the world. Although mandalas are made of many materials such as sand, thread and even butter, it is the brightly colored paintings with which most westerners are familiar. These paintings are often referred to as palace-architecture mandalas. They have an inner circle which contains a main deity. This deity is enclosed by a square palace that has openings on all four sides. This palace is then placed within a multitiered larger circle with additional figures painted outside. These mandalas “are seen as sacred places which, by their very presence in the world, remind a viewer of the immanence of sanctity in the universe and its potential in himself. They thereby assist his progress toward enlightenment” (p. 17). In Tibet, mandalas are mainly used to decorate or sanctify homes and temples – they are a visual synthesis of a number of core concepts of Buddhist imagery.

These include the use of a sacred space for a spiritual process; the existence of innumerable Buddhas, some of whom are not bound by time and space; the ability of these deities to create and maintain their own worlds; and the importance of mandalas as symbols of those worlds and the processes that occur within them. An understanding of the ways in which palace-architecture mandalas exemplify these ideas provides a paradigm for the development of Buddhist imagery in Asia…” (Leidy & Thurman, 1997, p. 18).

Part of the spiritual process is making the spiritual journey in a sacred place and this lies at the heart of Buddhism. In 563-483 BCE Siddhartha Gautama wandered through India trying to satisfy his questions by studying under the most noted religious teachers of his time. When he was not satisfied, he sat under a sacred Bodhi tree and said he would stay there until he had reached enlightenment. The story of Siddhartha is taught by many because he is worshiped as the Historical Buddha whose journey successfully brought him through the stages of enlightenment (Leidy & Thurman, 1997). Later, his journey towards enlightenment was the foundation for many mandalas that were created as part of Buddhist art.
Jung’s View on the Mandala from a Psychological Perspective

Carl Jung was the first person to bring the idea of creating mandalas from our dreams to western society. Jung described the mandala as a center, circumference, or a magic circle. For him, it was equal to the Self, the center of our personality (Fincher, 1991). Jung stated:

I sketched every morning in a notebook a small circular drawing, a mandala, which seemed to correspond to my inner situation at the time... Only gradually did I discover what the mandala really is:... the Self, the wholeness of the personality, which if all goes well, is harmonious (Fincher, 1991, p. 1).

Jung believed that finding the mandala as an expression of the self was the ultimate. This finding gave him a feeling of inner peace. Discovering the mandala became key to his entire system – he let the mandala lead him along which to him led back to a center point. He stated, “it is the exponent of all paths. It is the path to the centre, to individuation” (Jung, 1972, p. v). Jung gave attention to the unconscious symbols and their spontaneous appearances in mandalas gave him evidence that individuation was taking place. These symbols, he believed, also showed up in our dreams, artwork and imaginations (Fincher, 1991).

Jung’s case study of Miss X was the main study found that had specific reference to individuation. She came from an upper class American family and was an academic who studied the field of psychology. In 1928, at the age of 55, she went to Europe in order to study under Jung. Miss X painted 24 paintings, primarily mandalas, which for Jung, illustrated the beginning stages towards her journey to individuation (Jung, 1972).

Our case shows with singular clarity the spontaneity of the psychic process and the transformation of a personal situation in to the problem of individuation, that is, of becoming whole, which is the answer to the great question of our day: How can consciousness, our most recent acquisition, which has bounded ahead, be linked up again with the oldest, the unconscious which has lagged behind? (Jung, 1972, p. 66).
The case study of Miss X was an attempt to make the unconscious work of the mandala more understandable. Beginning with her first painting, which was difficult for her as she was a beginner at art, the picture she finished stayed in the unconscious. “Her inadequate relation to her mother had left behind something dark and in need of development” (Jung, 1969, pg. 292). Since Miss X was already familiar with the process of imagination, it was up to the therapist to continue her on her path. Suggestions from the therapist included not being afraid of using bright colors and to use her imagination to help with any technical difficulties. In Miss X’s second painting, a transformation was already beginning. The boulders that were painted in the first painting are still in the picture; however they have changed into circular forms. There was a flash of lightening that also entered the painting. The circles are symbols of eggs which according to Jung (1969) are the “germ of life” and the lightening bolt signifies a “sudden, unexpected, and overpowering change of psychic condition” (Jung, 1969, p. 295). The mandala form also emerged in the center of this painting for the first time, another symbol of the expression of the changing self.

Throughout the series of paintings numbered one through ten, Miss X continued on her path towards individuation. Each picture painted changed and affected the psychic individuation of Miss X. This was seen through examples of continued mandala forms; increased use of light which symbolized “conscious realization: the liberation that has become a fact that is integrated into consciousness” (Jung, 1969, p. 307); and images such as crosses, golden rays, and snakes that showed Miss X’s defense mechanisms for experiences that were coming to consciousness (Jung, 1969).

In painting 11, Miss X had quadrants of stars inside the mandala with a band of silver encompassing its perimeter. The outside environment of a moon and sun were brought together with the interior mandala through bursts of penetrating golden rays. According to Jung (1969), the encompassing silver band “veils the true personality” (p. 345). He continued to add that the outside environment was becoming strong and was trying to devaluate the mandala. However, as Miss X continued to paint, signs of psychic individuation began to
develop. Miss X appeared to be resolving some inner conflicts as evidenced by painting symbols within the mandala form that represented continued development of the self. She began to put images of humans and animals inside of the mandala.

In painting 13, the source of radiation that was seen in picture 11 was no longer in the mandala and appeared to turn into a rainbow outside of the mandala. At this point in time, Miss X returned to New York and her paintings began to introduce Manhattan landscapes – all while keeping the mandala form in the middle. According to Jung (1969) this may have been a slight regression in the psyche due to the shock of being back in New York. However, as Miss X continued on, her paintings from 16 through 24 began to show improvement in technique. In picture 17, symbolic eyes emerged which Jung explained as the possibility of the unconscious breaking out in a form of “multiple consciousness” (p. 346). From here on, Miss X’s paintings continually showed healthy symbols of the self and life such as four-rayed stars in the center of the mandala; animals; flowers; and a “rainbow-colored radiation” (p. 348) that is maintained in her mandalas through paintings 18 to 24. These rainbow colors continued to be portrayed in Miss X’s mandalas that were completed after the study throughout the next ten years of her life (Jung, 1969).

Jung had made many mandalas himself and he wanted to put to test the idea that mandalas produce spontaneous symbols and that they were not just coming out from his own fantasies. He was convinced through his studies that mandalas were created in all parts of the world during all times. They were being created long before he studied them himself and with his patients. He believed that the mandala symbol was “one of the best examples of the universal operation of an archetype” (Jung, 1972, p. 69).
Kellogg’s Great Round of Mandala

Joan Kellogg, an art therapist who pioneered mandala creations for personal development during the 1970’s interpreted thousands of mandalas for identifying different forms of the mandala. She agreed with Jung regarding the idea concerning symbols that show up in mandala creations come from the unconscious (Fincher, 1991).

Jung used what is referred to as the fourfold pattern of the mandala which came from patterns of four that most often showed up in his patient’s mandalas. Examples of these patterns were (1) four colors (2) four-armed crossed or (3) four objects (Fincher, 2004). His case study with Miss X is an example where Jung stated that mandalas are “not intended to demonstrate how an entire lifetime expresses itself in symbolic form. The individuation process has many stages and is subject to many vicissitudes” (Jung, 1969, p. 348). Joan Kellogg; however “conceptualized the growth and development of the psyche as an ongoing cycle through twelve stages. Each stage encompasses certain developmental tasks and is characterized by a particular state of consciousness” (Fincher, 2004, p. 6). Kellogg stated:

I found the mandala as an art form, or perhaps the mandala found me as an art form; the ambiguous and spontaneous experiences in life speak so eloquently of chance meetings. One wonders at these happy “accidents” in retrospect, one wonders at accidents in general and finally one just wonders. Out of the feeling of wonder flows understanding, not a universal, but a very personal understanding. Reading about Mandala is interesting, but the making of them is a rite (Kellogg, 1978, pg. ix).

Kellogg took Jung’s idea of the purpose of mandala creation toward individuation a step further by creating what she called the Great Round of Mandala (see Appendix A). Kellogg explained that the series of the Great Round is cyclic. Each archetypal step reveals the consciousness of the human psyche and the path will lead forward or show regression depending on the state of mind of the being at that moment in time. One does not necessarily follow the steps in order toward
re-birth or transformation; but can cross through the middle towards other states of consciousness (Kellogg, 1978). Jung, Fincher and Kellogg all believed that the creation of mandalas would lead to individuation; however, Kellogg used the Great Round of Mandala after a mandala is created in order to further see where an individual's psyche lies at that moment. Kellogg used the analogy of the mandala as a mirror and stated:

Mirror Effect The mandala on paper, drawn by a human being, reflects the consciousness of that human being. One can infer from a movement in a clockwise direction, the bringing into conscious awareness of unconscious material. If the movement is flowing in the reverse direction, counter-clockwise, one can infer regression. This flux of heightened and/or deepened awareness seems to be a rhythmic play of the human psyche in continuous dialogue with subjectivity and objectivity (Kellogg, 1978, p. 9).

Kellogg used the mandala form as the mirror that she called consciousness. Because humans move forward and regress at any given moment, Kellogg suggested that overly repeating these steps of comparing mandalas to the Great Round of Mandala is wrong. The process is cyclical so that the moving towards individuation through the use of mandala creation with The Great Round of Mandala comparison needs to happen many times during one’s lifetime (Kellogg, 1978). It is emphasized that the Great Round of Mandala generally shows where an individual is at that moment in time.

Kellogg also emphasized that the use of color is “extremely important in work with mandalas as the final result is a synthesis of form and color” (Kellogg, 1978, p. 23). She continued to explain that color philosophy should be put aside and to just learn from the artwork of the client. Over time Kellogg saw through analyzing many mandalas that a philosophy did in general exist. This was the chakra system “which uses the body of man as a teaching guide... chakras, which serve to mediate specific types of energy for the emotional and physical well-being of an individual” (p. 23). Through this philosophy, chakras – psychic constructs – related directly to a physical point on one’s body (sacral); a color (red); and lastly a statement (I need). This example is from the chakra
Muladhara. There are seven chakras in this philosophy each pointing to a physical point, a color and a statement. (Kellogg, 1978).

**Susanne Fincher’s Technique**

Susanne Fincher (1991), in her book *Creating Mandalas: For Insight, Healing, and Self-Expression* stated that she became interested in the healing power of mandala creations after suffering the death of a child and going through a divorce. After withdrawing from previous enjoyable activities, she felt compelled to draw. She started by just drawing designs and letting her imagination go where it would. At one point, when out of energy, she felt the urge to draw a circle. She drew circles within the circle using various colors. Afterwards, she felt for the first time a little better. Since then, she began to look for times to herself so that she could draw and began to realize that this was going to be part of her healing process.

Over time, she realized that there were professionals called art therapists that help heal psychological wounds through drawing. She then realized this gave some meaning to her life and pursued a career in art therapy. Later in her career, she brought back the circular form to her clients’ sessions that had made her own previous healing better. After this, she learned that these circular shapes were called mandalas and were used by Jung and Kellogg “as a guide for understanding the personality of the individual who creates them” (p. xii). Over time, Fincher also learned that the creation of mandalas is a natural part of the individuation process.

When we create a mandala, we make a personal symbol that reveals who we are at that moment. The circle we draw contains – even invites – conflicting parts of our nature to appear. Yet even when conflict surfaces, there is an undeniable release of tension when making a mandala... The mandala invokes the influence of the Self, the underlying pattern of order and wholeness, the web of life that supports and sustains us (Fincher, 1991, pg. 24).
Fincher (1991) continued to state that mandalas become our sacred space, as was theorized by Jung and Kellogg. It is a space where we express unconscious conflicts in a symbolic way. We are then able to project these conflicts outside of ourselves.

Fincher (1991) came up with a technique of creating mandalas using information that she had learned from Jung and Kellogg as a base. She described step by step instructions for these creations (see Appendix B). Fincher recognized that creating mandalas can be done in many ways; however felt that coming up with steps gave individuals a foundation process of mandala creations. Fincher continued with Kellogg’s idea of the use of color and form being an important component of mandala creation. Fincher believed that adding the process of journaling to Kellogg’s idea of the importance of color and form, while putting associations with these colors and forms created a silent “Ah-hah” moment for the individual. She emphasized that this may take time and may occur only after the creation of many mandalas. Along this idea, finding a theme within these colors, forms and associations in the mandala journaling also became important to Fincher’s belief that this would aid in individuation. Fincher believed that journaling in this fashion helped amplify these themes. She continued:

> Your reactions to amplification will not always be so easily understood, however. You may experience a total lack of response, or even revulsion, to symbolic meanings which may be valuable for amplifying symbols in your mandalas. The real test of validity is whether your inner work is fed with the addition of the information. If you feel the urge to draw more mandalas, the amplification may be considered successful (Fincher, 1991, p. 32).

Fincher (1991) believed that this process helps to “cooperate with the process of individuation” (p. 32). She stated that the mandala creation gives support to the ego while at the same time giving one a sense of the larger context of the Self. Fincher continued to explain that mandala creations also serve as a centering tool which helps bring order out of confusion: that it’s a celebration of life.
Mandala Journey Case Studies

A paucity of case studies was found in the course of the literature review. Two particular case studies will be discussed in order to support the process of individuation by means of mandala creation. Joan Pakula’s (1997) case study will be reviewed as it reflects on her personal journey of recovery from a traumatic event. Susanne Fincher (1991) wrote four case studies; however I have chosen to discuss one that I believe best demonstrates how the creation of mandalas coincide with individuation.

When individuals go through trauma or a change in their lives and use mandalas as a way to heal the psyche, a transformation often occurs. This transformation is part of their journey towards self-healing and individuation.

Healing after Trauma

Joan Pakula, an art therapist, worked on the psychiatric unit in a prison. On her last day of employment there, while she was running an art therapy group one of the inmates took the room hostage. Pakula at first could not believe what was happening. Time passed and one by one the hostages were released. The staff negotiators had been able to de-escalate the inmate. Although the hostages were released, they were all left frightened and confused (Pakula, 1997).

Pakula (1997) had been trained in Joan Kellogg’s Mari Mandala Assessment (Great Round of Mandala). She had used it with the prison inmates. Just as was mentioned previously, Kellogg felt that color choice, symbols and form were important in assessing mandala creations. Pakula (1997) agreed and always had mandala circles around for inmates to draw within. They had mentioned to her that drawing inside the circle reduced their anxiety. After the hostage incident, Pakula turned to this mandala ritual in order turn off from the outside for awhile. She created over sixty mandalas in the year after the hostage crisis.

Within the first months, her mandalas showed what she referred to as the “raw side of the hostage event” (Pakula, 1997, p. 221). Even through the regressive symbols such as sharklike teeth and blood showed up in her
mandalas, she felt better after completing them. She felt scared; however at the same time felt that she was releasing her fear. She stated:

I believe that we have answers inside of ourselves, a body wisdom which can be tapped into in many different ways. Mandalas are one of the ways to reach our body wisdom. Mandalas give freedom, within a perfect containment – the circle (Pakula, 1997, p. 221).

As her mandala journey continued, Pakula noticed that colors and forms became important in her healing. She mentioned that the more open she became to the symbols in her mandalas – symbols that represented life – the more open she was able to be towards the process. This gave her the ability to become more focused and see the progress that she was making emotionally through her mandala creations (Pakula, 1997).

Pakula (1997) ended by stating how being taken hostage had changed her life. She was able to heal and in the healing process was able to learn about herself. Jung would say that Pakula’s process of making mandalas started from the unconscious and ended with conscious symbols that allowed transformation to take place – all leading towards a more individuated self.

**Journey into Wholeness**

Fincher’s (1991) case study of a woman in her mid 40’s showed how progress towards individuation is achievable. Nita Sue went to a mandala workshop after she had been in counseling both with her husband and individually. Many changes had been going on in her life and she felt that she was not getting what she needed out of traditional counseling – that it was going too slow. She noticed a conference that Susanne Fincher was offering on Carl Jung and since it was being held at her favorite place, the Mo-Ranch Presbyterian Assembly, she saw that as a sign that she needed to attend. When she got to the conference, the first instruction was to “draw a circle and fill it with color” (p. 172). Surprisingly, she felt worse after doing the mandala which made her feel separate from the group. After the conference, Nita Sue was intrigued with her experience and started creating one mandala per day. She felt that she was incapable of using color. In this case Jung (1972) might say that she was
trying to impose her conscious mind on what is an unconscious act – the act of creating mandalas. Nita Sue appeared to not be ready to let go of her control over her surrounding of change. Over time, Nita Sue was able to let go and forget any preconceived rules she had and let the colors lead to wherever they wanted to go. This was the start of her individual mandala progression.

At times, Nita Sue was so upset with her creations that she ripped them up; however when she calmed down, she was able to create another one. Starting from the beginning, her mandalas predicted an “intensification of feelings of conflict” (Fincher, 1991, p. 175). As was mentioned earlier, Jung stated that mandalas are fourfold; however, Nita Sue was not able to show this wholeness that comes out of the association with four. Instead, her early mandalas showed tension of dark, murky colors and pointed symbols within each quadrant showing a very self critical analysis of herself. There appears to be some unconscious conflicts that had been hidden away. As Nita Sue continued to create mandalas, gradually, each one unfolded and transformation was to be seen through the use of brighter colors; less conflict within the quadrants; symbols of eyes and rainbows; and finally a three-dimensional box in the center of a mandala with bright colors around it representing a flower. The “six petals of this flowerlike form suggest the coming together of spirit and body in a dynamic connection… this mandala is an affirmation of the rewards to be gained by staying open to the unconscious during a difficult period of growth” (p. 176). This last mandala created showed the progress that Nita Sue was making towards individuation.

Synthesis

Throughout this literature review, it became evident to me that research is often compounded. Jung’s idea of mandala creations and how they help one individuate became a starting point for Kellogg’s creation of the Great Round of Mandala. She used this tool for assessing where one’s development is during the individuation process. Combining both Jung and Kellogg’s research was a foundation for Fincher’s belief regarding how mandala creations cooperated with
individuation. Fincher came up with a technique that she felt would aid individuals in learning how to create and analyze their mandalas. It appears that adding journaling to Kellogg’s analysis of color and form became the primary difference between their two techniques.

It is my opinion that Fincher took a profound proposal of mandala creations cooperating with the process of individuation and simplified a technique on how to reach this end. Her case studies were enlightening and it would have enhanced my knowledge of mandala creations coinciding with individuation if Fincher’s book would have had more of these. Jung had already written about the power of mandalas and individuation. Kellogg had investigated color and form in mandalas to reflect on the developmental stages of where an individual lies in his or her journey towards enlightenment. Fincher’s idea of adding journaling to aid in reflective distancing is a positive contribution; however people journal and create in his or her own way and I feel that coming up with an absolute “technique” simplified a process that takes a lifetime for one to achieve – that of individuation. Fincher allows that one may create mandalas using materials other than the ones she suggested; although it appeared that she was firm on the way to journal these mandalas. The process of journaling is as personal as the mandala creations themselves.

Jung (1969) stated it well when he broke off from Freud because he felt that as a therapist his job was to aid in the therapeutic process by not telling the individual what their dreams and pictures were about. He was there only to guide in the process. This idea applies to Fincher as well. It is my opinion that she gave too many directives on how to create and analyze mandalas. Although this technique can be used as a starting point, it is only that. In order for one to individuate and become whole, I do not trust it can be achieved by following a technique created by someone else. This is where phenomenology plays a part. People must create (or journal) when it feels needed – when the psyche requests it. Only then, I trust, will true individuation occur.

In the course of this qualitative research, I am attempting to tackle the theories of Jung, Kellogg and Fincher and update a case study through my
personal journey towards individuation. This journey will be through an autoethnography personal narrative approach. My journey will be taken by creating a series of mandalas. The nature of a journey is to allow one to progress, regress and reflect on one’s life ultimately finding their “Self.” In this sense, Jung’s case study of Miss X is relevant in history; however is outdated given that it was conducted in the 1930’s. Kellogg’s idea of the Great Round of Mandala is useful for analyzing where one’s conscious psyche is at any given moment. It appears to be a more useful tool for assessing than it is for following one’s journey towards individuation. Lastly, Fincher’s theory on mandalas coinciding with individuation is solid; however her simplified “technique” of the process is not good practice. It generalizes and does not allow an individual the spontaneity needed for a personal journey.

The use of mandalas in art making, art therapy and individuation is powerful. It is my hope that through this qualitative personal narrative case study that the reader will reflect on this thesis and gain the knowledge needed to strive for his or her own journey towards individuation.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

The following qualitative research case study involves my seven month personal journey as I work towards my individuated Self through the creation of a mandala series. This chapter describes the research question, the research design, the background of the researcher, inspirations for the case study, the materials used, the data collected and its analysis, as well as assessing validity and ethical considerations.

Research Question

The purpose of this case study explored how the creation of mandalas aid in the individuation of the Self. This research attempts to answer how the creation of a series of mandalas coincides with individuation. Specifically:

1. What does the use of diverse media during the process of creating a mandala contribute to the individuation process?
2. What is the nature of the creative process involved in creating mandalas to support self individuation?
3. Is processing each mandala through journaling a necessary step in the journey towards individuation and wholeness?

Participant

I am the only participant in this case study, acting as both researcher and subject. I am a 38 year old white female with a history of chronic illness and perfectionist issues while striving for a healthy sense of self. I owned a graphic design business and decided to change careers to art therapy in order to help
others on a more personal level. In order to help others I feel as though a therapist needs to have a strong sense of self. This interest is how utilizing mandalas as a centering tool and aiding in individuation became of such personal significance.

There were a few personal biases in this case study due to the qualitative autoethnographical nature of this research. Writing in the personal narrative made reflective distance more subjective. I focused more on the process of the mandala creations than to the end product. It was through the process where transitions towards individuation occurred. I let my journey flow and take me where it spontaneously went. I let go of controlling the outcome of my mandala creations in order to document a true journey.

There were three main concepts, when put together, became the initial inspiration for this case study: (1) keeping a dream journal for four months and then creating a mandala synthesizing the main symbols (2) reading Siddhartha by Hermann Hesse (1951) which is a myth about an individual on a personal quest for enlightenment of the Self and (3) learning about Susanne Fincher’s technique of creating mandalas and her idea that journaling a series of mandalas “helps you cooperate with the process of individuation” (Fincher, 1991, p. 32). The connection between mandalas and individuation became a focus in my personal life because I was going through many life changes and felt a connection to each one of these inspirations.

The desire to attempt a personal case study creating a series of mandalas became an aspiration in an attempt to move towards personal individuation. The relationship between mandalas and individuation is powerful and this research is an attempt to contribute to the profession of art therapy a case study in a manner that Jung did with Miss X.
Research Design

A qualitative case study format was used for this study. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) qualitative researchers are interested in individuals, thus making the process of gathering data as important as the product. The collection of data is best when done in a natural setting so the activities can be observed. In this case study, the activity is also being experienced since the researcher and participant is one in the same. During data collection, mandala creations and journaling were used to aid in the reflective distance process. The qualitative case study being presented is autoethnography. According to Carolyn Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner (2000) who wrote a chapter in the Handbook of Qualitative Research:

Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural… Usually written in first-person voice, autoethnographic texts appear in a variety of forms – short stories, poetry, fiction, novels, photographic essays, personal essays, journals, fragmented and layered writing, and social science prose. In these texts, concrete action, dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality, and self-consciousness are features, appearing as relational and institutional stories affected by history, social structure, and culture, which themselves are dialectically revealed through action, feeling, thought, and language.” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739).

There are different types of autoethnographers and they vary depending on the emphasis of the research process (graphy), on culture (ethonos), and on self (auto) (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). The emphasis in this case study will be on the personal narrative as this will allow the author to take on the dual identities of the academic and personal self to tell a story regarding an aspect of daily life experiences through mandala creations.

Ellis explained that she started “with my personal life. I pay attention to my physical feelings, thoughts, and emotions. I use what I call systematic sociological introspection and emotional recall to try to understand an experience
I’ve lived through. Then I write my experience as a story. By exploring a particular life, I hope to understand a way of life…” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 737). The case study being presented using mandalas to cooperate in the individuation process will be an autoethnography and personal narrative in order for the reader to experience the journey that is being told. Hence, the case study will be written in first-person voice.

**Procedures**

This study began with my interest in Susanne Fincher’s (1991) technique of creating mandalas. Fincher stated that journaling a series of mandalas “helps you cooperate with the process of individuation… [and] can give you contact with the deeper wisdom within” (Fincher, 1991, p. 32). I created mandalas and journeled those using Fincher’s technique (see Appendix B for details on this method). The journal was analyzed for re-occurring symbols or themes. In order to approach this study using a phenomenological approach I used Fincher’s technique as a starting point, but allowed for flexibility as the processes needed. During the case study, there was no time set for creating each mandala. There was no set limit on how many mandalas were to be made at each sitting. Fincher’s (1991) technique allotted about one hour to complete each mandala and then to journal each one.

**Creative Materials**

Fincher (1991) stated that materials to create mandalas are limitless; however for her technique of creating and interpreting mandalas she has a base list. These include: white or black drawing paper 12 x 18 inches, oil pastels, colored chalks, markers, or paints, 10-inch paper plate, notebook and pen or pencil and a ruler and compass as optional. These materials were used as a starting point for this research.
Data Collection

Data was collected for this study through mandala creation, journaling and reflective distancing. Data collection occurred over a span of seven months.

Mandala Creation

The size of the mandalas ranged from five inches by five inches up to roughly three feet by three feet. Mandalas were originally created according to Fincher’s technique (see Appendix B). I used oil and chalk pastels and after several weeks, I changed media to paint since Fincher’s technique felt too restrictive. During this time I began to stray further from Fincher’s technique to a more phenomenological approach. This allowed me the freedom of using added media such as flowers, rubber bands, marine life, hand made scarves, the computer and other images that came to me. I created 3-D mandalas on the floor and tables; used white, black and grey colored paper to paint or draw on; and utilized the computer as a tool for creating mandalas in graphic programs. Some mandalas created using the computer were from previously created mandalas that were altered or were from images taken by a digital camera. In the beginning of the seven months I was using only oil and chalk pastels on white and black paper; however, by the end, I was creating mandalas from many different types of media and objects.

Journaling

To begin my journey, each mandala was journaled according to Fincher’s technique (see Appendix B). As with the mandala creations, this also became too restrictive so I chose to journal in a fashion that was free association writing. This evolved to were after each mandala creation or series of creations was finished I chose to write in my journal depending on whether or not the occasion felt appropriate. Sometimes I journaled a few days after creating the mandala because the creation of the mandala felt more important than the journaling. This happened during times of centering when I needed to go onto another project and there was no time for journaling. This will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 4. I then organized the series of mandalas by photographing each one
and assigning a number and title for each on the computer. Small versions of the mandala creations were placed on their own page in the journal above the journal entry so that I would be able to place the image with the writing. This also saved time in trying to draw mini versions of the mandala or trying to describe what I was going to write about. These small mandalas became helpful during journaling. About three months into the journaling I found that I stopped giving the mandalas a title because what they were about was in the free association writing and giving them a title felt like I was trying to stick to Fincher’s technique which I had, for the most part, dropped about a month into the journey.

**Reflective Distancing**

Having the completed mandalas both on the computer and in order in the journal made analysis and reflective distancing easier. The mandalas in the same folder on the computer were useful because by using a word document, they could then be placed and lined up in order by date. The computer technology made this aspect helpful since being able to visually line up the mandalas in a row showed my journey in an organized way which allowed symbols and themes to show up easier and within a manageable space. Because mandalas were created in various sizes and using various mediums, being able to photograph them for reflective distancing when it came to looking at the entire series as a whole was useful (see Appendix C). I also wrote a reflective distance journey paper at the end of the mandala series which tied together the mandalas, journaling and events that were going on in my life that led towards personal insights, developments, and changes (see Appendix D). This reflective distance paper was completed using free association writing.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis and collection was on-going throughout the case study. Due to the qualitative and personal narrative nature, triangulation was a fundamental approach for analysis. For this case study, this involved creating the mandalas, journaling, and actively participating in reflective distancing. According to
Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) “a person’s or group’s conscious and unconscious beliefs, attitudes, values, and ideas often are revealed in their communications” (p. 483). In the process of individuation, the communication or uncovering of the unconscious to the conscious is an important component. This applies directly with the research question: How does the creation of a series of mandalas coincide with individuation?

According to Valerie Janesick, because qualitative design is holistic – looking at the picture as a whole – triangulation is often used. She defines data triangulation as “the use of a variety of data sources in a study” (Janesick, 2000, p. 391). In my case study, the three points of the triangle were: mandala creations, journaling, and reflective distancing. These coincide with the three subsequent questions to the original research question which will be discussed as how data was analyzed.

Fincher (1991) stated “symbols contained in your mandala can be translated from visual to verbal. This allows you to process the information more completely by using both visual/spatial and verbal capabilities of your brain… so that added information about yourself becomes available” (Fincher, 1991, p. 30). During data analysis, in order to look at the whole picture and process emerging symbols and themes, I printed out my two pages of mandala creations (see Appendix C) and laid them out next to my journal and reflective distance paper (see Appendix D). I read through my journal and reflective distance paper while having the mandala creation images in eye sight. During this process, I color coded each of the three subsequent research questions. This was done in both the journal and reflective distance pieces. After color coding, I was then able to better analyze the journey as a whole since themes and symbols began to emerge.

**What does the use of diverse media during the process of creating a mandala contribute to the individuation process?**

This question was color coded in green for my journal and reflective distance paper. I pulled out sections from my journal and reflective distance paper that were green and wrote them on a separate piece of paper. I looked for
symbols and themes in the writings as well as comparing the written words to the mandala creations. I reflected back on the idea of mandala creations – where it is believed that the unconscious mind appears into consciousness. According to Jung, the mandala is the “symbol of the self, wholeness, and healing” (Pakula, 1997, p. 220). Following Jung’s idea of unconscious symbols appearing into consciousness, I was able to analyze the media and observe that healthier symbols that coincide with individuation developed through the use of more fluid media. Healthier symbols would be those that reveal development towards self enlightenment. This will be discussed in depth in Chapter 4.

On my journey towards individuation: the “transformation of the psyche – the ideas of development, independence, and psychic wholeness and the realization of the self” (Smith, 1951) it became invaluable for me to use media that would support mandala creations that aided in the individuation process.

**What is the nature of the creative process involved in creating mandalas to support self individuation?**

This question was color coded in orange for my journal and reflective distance paper. I pulled out sections from my journal and reflective distance paper that were orange and just as with the previous research question, I wrote them on a separate piece of paper. I looked for different creative processes that were used and compared these processes to the mandala creations. These creative processes ranged from Fincher’s technique (see Appendix B) moving towards a more phenomenological approach. Barber (2002) stated that “In Tibetan Buddhism, the process of making a mandala is considered as important as the end product itself – a way of calming the mind and body” (p. 43).

Throughout my journey the process of creating mandalas was analyzed through constantly reviewing the mandalas, journal, and reflective distance paper. Through this analysis, symbols and themes towards enlightenment of individuation appeared to surface more often when mandalas were created in the “here and now.” Jung (1972) supported that unconscious symbols and their spontaneous appearances in mandalas gave evidence that individuation was
taking place – also more successful for me by using a phenomenological approach. This will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 4.

**Is processing each mandala through journaling a necessary step in the journey towards individuation and wholeness?**

This question was color coded maroon for my journal and reflective distance paper. I pulled out sections from my journal and reflective distance paper that were maroon and again, I wrote them on a separate piece of paper. These were then analyzed alongside the mandala creations to see if symbols or themes emerged throughout the journaling process. Analyzing the technique of journaling became an important component of whether or not journaling each mandala was a necessary step in the journey towards individuation and wholeness. Journaling ranged from Fincher’s technique (see Appendix B) to free association journal writing to not journaling every mandala creation.

Each of these three techniques of journaling was analyzed for effectiveness of emerging symbols leading towards individuation. Within the journal, mini versions of the mandala were put at the top of the page so that the journaling and mandala were next to each other. This enabled me to keep thoughts and potential emerging symbols and themes in close proximity, making analyzing effectiveness of journaling useful. Jung sketched his mandalas in a journal, supporting the idea of placing the mandala creations next to the journal entry. Jung stated:

I sketched every morning in a notebook a small circular drawing, a mandala, which seemed to correspond to my inner situation at the time… Only gradually did I discover what the mandala really is:… the Self, the wholeness of the personality, which if all goes well, is harmonious (Fincher, 1991, p. 1).

Jung believed that finding the mandala as an expression of the self was the ultimate. The usefulness of journaling and its different techniques being a necessary step in my journey towards individuation and wholeness will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 4.
Validity

Ellis and Bochner (2000) in the Handbook of Qualitative Research write of validly in qualitative personal narrative journeys.

I start from the position that language is not transparent and there’s no single standard of truth. To me validity means that our work seeks verisimilitude; it evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable, and possible… or [validity] offers a way to improve the lives of participants and readers…” (Ellis & Bockner, 2000, p. 751). This case study is aimed at not only researching the use of mandalas to coincide with individuation, but to help others experience feelings that they may not have otherwise known. The largest part of this being that the “truth” for the reader may be different than my “truth”; however, it hopefully will be a small part of his or her own journey towards individuation.

The use of triangulation is used in this case study as it “establishes the validity of an ethnographer’s observations. It involves checking what one hears and sees by comparing one’s sources of information – do they agree? ... [Triangulation] improves the quality of the data that are collected and the accuracy of the researcher’s interpretations.” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, pgs. 520-521). Triangulation is used through mandala creations, journaling, and reflective distancing.

Summary

This chapter explained the research methodology used in this case study. The author is both the researcher and the participant of the study. The research attempts to answer the question: How does the creation of a series of mandalas coincide with individuation? Mandalas in this study were originally created according to Fincher’s (1991) technique and then evolved into a more phenomenological approach. Data collection such as journaling evolved in much of the same manner. Autoethnography and personal narrative were used to
enhance the personal nature of the journey and aid in the reader’s feelings behind the study. Chapter 4 provides more in depth specifics of the mandala series that coincides with the individuation process.
CHAPTER 4
OBSERVATIONS

This chapter presents the observations and findings culled from the data collected. It is divided into several sections beginning with the subsequent research questions. Subsequent questions which divide this chapter are (1) what role does the diverse medium during the process of creating a mandala contribute to the individuation process (2) what is the nature of the creative process involved in creating mandalas to support self individuation and (3) is processing each mandala through journaling a necessary step in the journey towards individuation and wholeness? The concept of individuation will be threaded throughout each of the three questions, culminating into a synthesis of the three questions, in response to the overall research question: How does the creation of a series of mandalas coincide with individuation?

What does the use of diverse media during the process of creating a mandala contribute to the individuation process?

Presented in Figure 1 are the first five mandalas created according to Fincher’s (1991) technique (see Appendix B) using oil and chalk pastels. They appear to have similarities of materials, structure, and depth.

![Figure 1. Fincher’s Mandala Technique](image-url) using fundamental materials of oil and chalk pastels illustrating media constraints.
I felt that the medium constraints were hindering the creative process and it became too cognitive for me. Instead of letting possible symbols emerge spontaneously from the unconscious, I was thinking too much about what I perceived I should be drawing. This led to pondering about what the next mandala would look like instead of letting whatever emerges, come to fruition. It became clear that the medium was an integral part of mandala creations. Working with more fluid media enabled me to create instinctually rather than using more restrictive materials such as markers and pastels which forced me to stay on a cognitive level. Pastels are not normally considered a restrictive material; however for my mandala creations, it became restrictive since it was one of the few media listed by Fincher (see Appendix B) and using it repeatedly caused it to become restrictive for me. For this case study, fluid media ranged from paints; computer aided mandalas created using “fluid” techniques such as watercolor attributes; ocean life in sand and water; and found textured objects.

Through mandalas – where it is believed that unconscious symbols emerge into consciousness – using fluid media that aided in this phenomenon was useful. According to Jung, the mandala is the “symbol of the self, wholeness, and healing” (Pakula, 1997, p. 220). On my journey towards individuation, the “transformation of the psyche – the ideas of development, independence, and psychic wholeness and the realization of the self” (Smith, 1951), it became invaluable for me to use media that would support creating mandalas that aided in the individuation process.

Figure 2 depicts two ocean mandalas that were created. These natural ocean mandalas in their own environment; being able to look at them; and being able to touch them was more healing to my psyche than if I had sat down and drawn a mandala of what I had seen.
Nature is powerful and made me think of where I belong; supporting the self is important in the process of individuation. According to Jung, this self is “the center of the total personality” (Casado, 2002, pgs. 66-67), and in the course of individuation, when the self becomes whole and aware, it becomes the Self. Being out in nature, interacting with its elements, it was hard for me to ignore this powerful medium and its healthy impact on the psyche.

Margaret Naumburg saw art as a form of symbolic speech (Rubin, 1999). She saw symbolic speech “coming from the unconscious like dreams, to be evoked in a spontaneous way and to be understood through free association, always respecting the artist’s own interpretations… unconscious symbolic contents… requiring verbalization and insight as well as art expression” (pgs. 98-99). Figure 3 utilized her idea of free association and respecting the artist’s interpretations of unconscious symbolic content. The mandala shaped basket top (found media) had an association to my safe place mandala drawing which later brought to light the idea of creating mandalas through computer imagery. The unconscious symbolic content was the link between the basket and the safe place mandala – both media were different yet had the same meaning (see Appendix D).
The journey towards individuation encompasses all of one’s life experiences and bringing back computer creations for me became an essential part of recognizing part of the self that had been missing. Prior to attending graduate school for art therapy, I owned a graphic design business and for years designing and creating on the computer was an integral part of my self.

Naumburg’s idea regarding unconscious symbolic content coincides with Jung’s idea of symbolic content in mandala creations aiding in the individuation process. It was interesting that throughout the course of working with different media, there were ten images out of a series of 50 mandala creations (20%) that had a symbol of an eye in it. In the series, the eye developed into a more powerful symbol as the media went from restrictive to fluid. See Figure 4.

![Figure 4. Eye Mandalas](image)

**Figure 4. Eye Mandalas** presenting restrictive to fluid media allowing for evolution towards individuation.

According to the *Penguin Dictionary of Symbols*, the eye “is the organ of visual perception… its function as a recipient of light… [and] of spiritual enlightenment” (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1982, p. 362). It seems that the symbol of the eye became more powerful as the media became more fluid. As with the case study of Jung’s (1969) Miss X, he stated that the symbolic eye that emerged may have represented the unconscious breaking out in a form of consciousness, indicating that individuation was occurring.
My most influential mandala creation completed in this series which utilized diverse medium can be seen in Figure 5.

![Figure 5. Mom Mandala](image)

**Figure 5. Mom Mandala** using diverse media representing family symbolism leading towards self individuation.

Additionally, in Jung’s (1972) case study of Miss X, he discussed the question of how the unconscious is linked to the conscious. Linking the unconscious to the conscious through the transformation of a personal situation is supported in the above mandala creation as he stated:

> Our case study with singular clarity the spontaneity of the psychic process and the transformation of a personal situation into the problem of individuation, that is, of becoming whole, which is the answer to the great question of our day: How can consciousness, our most recent acquisition, which has bounded ahead, be linked up again with the oldest, the unconscious which has lagged behind? (Jung, 1972, p. 66).

This mandala was created out of diverse medium which came from the unconscious psyche; however the conscious self was revealed. Much in the same manner that Jung referred to Miss X as “her inadequate relation to her mother had left behind something dark and in need of development” (Jung, 1969, p. 292), through my chronic illness of 22 years, I felt as though my own development was left behind and I could only survive through the help of others, especially my parents. Upon reflection, I found this mandala, created with such diverse media, represented my mom. The two handmade scarves and paper sunflowers that she had given to me since moving have felt like a connection
back to home. Therefore it symbolized my parents and this led to a realization that supported Jung’s idea of individuation. I realized that the only way my “self” would evolve into my “Self” was to acknowledge that I no longer needed the approval of my parents – a leap towards self individuation, being whole and independent. Just as with Miss X, I felt that I was beginning to resolve inner conflicts that became evident through symbols that emerged in my mandalas. It is my conviction that this enlightenment would not have occurred if I would have stuck to the restrictive media put forth by Fincher’s technique.

**What is the nature of the creative process involved in creating mandalas to support self individuation?**

Making mandalas is an art therapy tool which aids in creating harmony, balance and healing for an individual (Barber, 2002). “In Tibetan Buddhism, the process of making a mandala is considered as important as the end product itself – a way of calming the mind and body” (Barber, 2002, p. 43). During my journey, I started with Fincher’s technique of creating mandalas (see Appendix B) and found the process too restrictive. Following steps in her technique made creation too cognitive for me. Therefore, my process of creating mandalas evolved into a more phenomenological approach. Patton (2002) explained phenomenology as the exploration of how one makes sense of his or her own experiences, bringing those experiences to a conscious level. Consciousness requires one to connect someone to the world he or she lives in. This phenomenon involves perceiving, describing, feeling, judging, remembering and making sense of a direct, lived experience.

Betensky (1995), in her book *What Do You See? Phenomenology of Therapeutic Art Expression* explained “the vagueness of the stirrings toward an object yet to be identified in a visual field, classified in phenomenology as pre-conscious and pre-intentional, is probably the closest point of meeting between unconscious-minded psycho-analysis and consciousness-minded phenomenology” (p. 10). She continued to explain that all humans have a need
for expression and often, when individuals cannot express verbally, they are able to express through the creation of art. Betensky (2001) supported the power of phenomenological creations when she stated: “… revealing the hidden aspects of man’s being as phenomena accessible to consciousness and to conscious investigation. Art therapy can best achieve this aim phenomenologically by means of free expressive process, with art materials freely chosen by the client…” (p. 124). I found this to be true while I was creating mandalas. The mandalas that showed symbols or themes towards enlightenment or individuation were ones that were created in the “here and now” with materials that felt right during that moment – not ones created according to Fincher’s “steps.”

An example is a series of four mandalas that were created one after another in a span of roughly one hour. I had received an upsetting phone call and felt the need to pull out some paints. I began making perseverating marks on the large sheet of paper. When completed, the mandala appeared drab; however, upon closer inspection, there were many bright colors that had gotten mixed together. I then felt the urge to try another one. I noticed I felt more freedom with the brush and the paint was more fluid with brighter colors. Upon reflection of both mandalas, I felt empowered by their sense of energy. The second painting reminded me of the center of a large burning candle. I turned and lit a large round candle which inspired me to put three candles together in a round form. See Figure 6.

Figure 6. Energy Mandala Series created using diverse media which represented self empowerment.
I was drawn from painting to candles, yet the similarities in quality of appearance took me by surprise. It was as if I painted the mandala with the candle in mind, which evidently was not the case.

I thought back on Jung and how he believed the unconscious came to consciousness when brought to paper. Jung believed that finding the mandala as an expression of the self was the ultimate. This finding gave him a feeling of inner peace. Discovering the mandala became key to his entire system – he let the mandala lead him along which to him led back to a center point. “It is the exponent of all paths. It is the path to the centre, to individuation” (Jung, 1972, p. v). Jung gave attention to the unconscious symbols and their spontaneous appearances in mandalas gave him evidence that individuation was taking place (Fincher, 1991).

The series of mandalas in Figure 6, created first from a “dark” mandala to a “light” mandala had significant implications for individuation. According to Chevalier and Gheerbrant (1982), “light is paired with darkness to symbolize the complementary or sequential qualities of an evolution” (p. 600). Furthermore, “light symbolizes the maturing of the personality in harmony with the higher levels of being to which it rises” (p. 606). Having created this series, I felt as though my spiritual unconscious self met my conscious self. This phenomenon became an enlightening turn in my journey supporting my sense of self towards wholeness. Kellogg (1978) supported the idea of phenomenology when she wrote “the ambiguous and spontaneous experiences in life speak so eloquently of chance meetings. One wonders at these happy ‘accidents’ in retrospect, one wonders at accidents in general and finally one just wonders. Out of the feeling of wonder flows understanding, not a universal, but a very personal understanding” (pg. ix). My conclusion is that this small series of four mandalas would not have transpired using Fincher’s technique. A phenomenological approach was needed to create in the “here and now” which enabled a transition towards individuation.

Two mandala creations manipulated from photographs on the computer also represented how phenomenology as a process to aid in individuation
occurred. Both photographs were taken from the inside stairwell of a lighthouse. The first example can be seen in Figure 7.

\[\textbf{Figure 7. Spiral Stairway Mandala},\] a photograph which was artistically altered using the computer. The spiral stairway rising to the top of a lighthouse symbolizes a healthy transition towards individuation.

The spiral stairway rises to the top of the lighthouse. According to Chevalier and Gheerbrant (1982) “the stairway is the symbol of the acquisition of learning and of the ascent to knowledge and transfiguration. If it rises skywards, the knowledge is that of the divine world” (p. 923). The stairway is spiraling upwards which supports the journey towards individuation as Chevalier and Gheerbrant (1982) also stated that the spiral “conjures the development of strength… it is an ‘open’ and optimistic motif… [it symbolizes] emanation, evolution, cyclical but progressive continuity and rotational creation” (pgs. 906-907). The spiral symbolizing a cyclical progression is supported by Kellogg’s (1978) idea of the Great Round of Mandala (see Appendix A). She explained that each archetypal step reveals the consciousness of the human psyche and the path will lead forward or show regression depending on the state of mind of the being at that moment in time. The spiral stairwell leading upwards would have healthy symbolic development of the self towards individuation.

The second computer mandala from the lighthouse can be seen in Figure 8.


**Figure 8. Window Mandala**, a second computer enhanced photograph symbolizes transition towards enlightenment via its elements of water, light, window, and round mandala form.

According to Chevalier and Gheerbrant (1982) “in so far as it opens to air and light, the window symbolizes receptivity. If the window is round, the receptivity is the same as the eye’s and that of consciousness” (pgs. 1112-1113). The window is also looking out towards water which symbolizes the “source of life, a vehicle of cleansing and a centre of regeneration” (p. 1081). The round window mandala relates back to what was discussed earlier about the eye which symbolized spiritual enlightenment. This combined with themes of water, light, and regeneration all lead towards the suggestion of healthy individuation.

**Is processing each mandala through journaling a necessary step in the journey towards individuation and wholeness?**

During the beginning stages of my journey, I journaled according to Fincher’s technique (see Appendix B); however, I began to realize that the journaling was becoming redundant. I felt that her steps for journaling, although useful to start thinking about reflective distance, ended up producing strained writing (see Appendix E). Journaling is personal and ought to be done according to what fits the need of the individual doing the journaling. I felt for my journey, free-association writing worked best (see Appendix F). I do agree with Jung regarding journaling and discovering symbols and themes that aid in individuation. Jung stated:
I sketched every morning in a notebook a small circular drawing, a mandala, which seemed to correspond to my inner situation at the time… Only gradually did I discover what the mandala really is:… the Self, the wholeness of the personality, which if all goes well, is harmonious (Fincher, 1991, p.1).

During Jung’s journaling is where he gave attention to the unconscious symbols and their spontaneous appearance in the mandalas which was proof to him that individuation was occurring. Fincher agreed with Jung as well in the use of journaling to aid in finding themes and symbols to support individuation; however, it appeared that during my journey, her technique for journaling was too stringent for me and free association writing worked best. Using Fincher’s technique I found that I was trying to come up with associations to fit her style instead of writing in a natural way for me which explained more effectively the mandala creation. I also found that while creating mini series of mandalas within the larger journey that journaling was not always necessary. As was previously mentioned, creating using a phenomenological approach was invaluable and I found at times, the process of creating was more important and stopping to journal after each mandala creation would have interfered with creating in the “here and now” – especially when one mandala creation led into another.

For my journey, I also discovered that journaling became something that I did after some reflective distancing of the mandala. There were times where I felt the need to write after the mandala creation; however I mostly created the mandalas – many times a series of mandalas – until my psyche got the support that it needed. This meant not stopping to journal at that time. Often, I journaled two to three days after the mandala had been created. Journaling became a good form of keeping records to later reflect on; however many times it became a hindrance for my spontaneity to try to stick to Fincher’s technique. Over time, thoughts associated with each mandala creation did get forgotten so in this sense, journaling was invaluable to the journey. If I had not journaled, then I would not have been able to write my reflective distance paper (see Appendix D) which became the foundation for remembering what many of the mandalas
represented. This paper revealed clearly what themes and symbols emerged which gave support that individuation was occurring. The key insight behind journaling is that I needed to journal in a way that felt natural to myself so that the process of journaling was as “true” as possible. I found that free association writing was the most effective way for me to journal that was productive and true to the individuation process during my journey.

Journaling is a necessary step in the journey towards individuation and wholeness. This step allows symbols and themes to emerge which create patterns for one to reflect back on; however I do feel that finding a way to journal that is natural for oneself is most important. Along with this, just as in my own journey, journaling each mandala is not necessary. The important aspect regarding journaling is that it provides a strong foundation for reflective distance so transitions towards individuation can be observed and reflected back on as the journey continues.

**Synthesis**

The three subsequent questions to the research question discussed in this chapter enabled me to write a reflective distance paper (see Appendix D). This paper tied together additional themes and symbols from my journal and mandala creations to what was going on in my life during my journey and even before my journey began. The triangulation method of data collection via creating mandalas, journaling and reflective distancing enabled me to analyze and respond to the three subsequent questions which aided in answering the overall research question: How does the creation of a series of mandalas coincide with individuation?

This answer was found by combining (1) diverse, and often times more fluid media (2) a phenomenological approach creating in the here and now and (3) free association writing and not restricting myself to journaling every mandala creation was how my journey became a more natural process for me. This combination aided in bringing about symbols and themes that supported my
research question regarding how mandala creations coincide with individuation. Throughout this chapter, many examples were given in support of forward movements toward individuation.

This journey of creating mandalas has shown me that in order to attain a true sense of my whole Self – reaching towards individuation then it can be accomplished by consistently supporting my psyche. I trust that this journey was a creative beginning towards individuation. Jung makes this point valid in regard to Miss X’s journey:

Our series of pictures illustrates the initial stages of the way of individuation. It would be desirable to know what happens afterwards. But, just as neither the philosophical gold nor the philosophers’ stone was ever made in reality, so nobody has ever been able to tell the story of the whole way, at least not to mortal ears, for it is not the story-teller but death who speaks the final “consummatum est.” Certainly there are many things worth knowing in the later stages of the process, but, from the point of view of teaching as well as of therapy, it is important not to skip too quickly over the initial stages. As these pictures are intuitive anticipations of future developments, it is worth while lingering over them for a long time, in order, with their help, to integrate so many contents of the unconscious into consciousness that the latter really does reach the stage it sees ahead (Jung, 1972, pgs. 64-65).

Jung stated that individuation was a process. In my research, I chose to call it a journey towards individuation. I experienced how even a short journey is capable of unleashing unconscious symbols and themes which support the psyche enabling a transition of the “self” to the “Self.” Mandala creations are a powerful tool which coincides with the individuation process.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The following chapter provides a discussion of the results of my personal narrative qualitative study including implications for observations that emerged. Limitations of the case study, implications for the use of mandala creations as an art therapy tool, and suggestions for future research are also presented.

Observations that Emerged

According to Jung, one’s uniqueness and individuality comes from his or her natural development towards wholeness. During this development, the use of mandalas as a creative instrument, symbols stemming from the unconscious emerge. The optimal result of the unconscious to the conscious is that one will transition towards individuation. Jung stated that “the result of individuation is a harmonious unity of the personality with the Self serving as the central unifying principle” (Fincher, 1991, p. 2). The purpose of this case study was to see how the creation of mandalas coincided with individuation.

The case study was my personal journey in which 50 mandalas were created over a period of seven months. Data was collected using triangulation which came in the form of mandala creations, journaling and reflective distance. As was discussed in the previous chapter, symbols emerged such as light; eyes; spirals; water; bright colors; windows and other symbols that supported the beginning of my transition towards individuation. The benefits and drawbacks of following Fincher’s technique (see Appendix B) were discussed as this became one of the main foundations for my need to create a phenomenological journey that aided in my progress towards individuation. Fincher’s technique was too generalized. Her theory was strong; however her directives were too restrictive.
Theorists such as Jung and Kellogg were also discussed as a support of individuation through the creation of mandalas. Including Fincher, all three theorists agree that the creation of mandalas becomes a self analysis and a self discovery of one’s own psyche and life. Hence, the idea that mandala creations coincide with the journey towards individuation.

Following will be the response to the subsequent research questions which synthesize into the overall research question: How does the creation of a series of mandalas coincide with individuation?

**What does the use of diverse media during the process of creating a mandala contribute to the individuation process?**

It became apparent during my journey that the use of diverse medium was an integral part of mandala creations contributing to the individuation process. I strayed from Fincher’s use of more restrictive media (see Appendix B) since the use of fluid media became an important element for symbols and themes to emerge. Using diverse media which included fluid media enabled me to create instinctually which aided in the emergence of symbols and themes. Other diverse media included computer graphic programs, natural elements (sand, water, and ocean life), and “found objects” (scarves, paper sunflowers and candles) that were discussed in the previous chapter. Through mandalas – where it is believed that unconscious symbols emerge into consciousness – using fluid and diverse media that aided in this phenomenon was helpful. According to Jung, the mandala is the “symbol of the self, wholeness, and healing” (Pakula, 1997, p. 220). On my journey towards individuation, the “transformation of the psyche – the ideas of development, independence, and psychic wholeness and the realization of the self” (Smith, 1951), it became helpful for me to use media that would support creating mandalas that aided in the individuation process.

The example of the “eye” from Chapter 4 draws attention to this experience using diverse media. In the series, the eye developed into a more powerful symbol as the media went from restrictive to fluid. Within this series, diverse media such as the computer was also utilized. As was viewed in the previous chapter, the symbolic eye that emerged may have represented the
unconscious breaking out in a form of consciousness, indicating that individuation was occurring. During my journey, it is my conviction that enlightenment would not have occurred if diverse media had not been introduced.

**What is the nature of the creative process involved in creating mandalas to support self individuation?**

Throughout my journey, I experienced that using a phenomenological approach to creating mandalas supported self individuation. I started with Fincher’s technique (see Appendix B) and found the process too restrictive. The process of creating mandalas became more important than the end product. It was within the process where symbols began to emerge. Betensky (2001) supported the power of phenomenological creations when she stated: “…reveling the hidden aspects of man’s being as phenomena accessible to consciousness and to conscious investigation… by means of free expressive process, with art materials free chosen by the client…” (p. 124). The mandalas that showed symbols or themes towards enlightenment or individuation were ones that were created in the “here and now” with materials that felt right during that moment – not ones created according to Fincher’s “steps.”

Figure 6, from Chapter 4, was an example of how phenomenology brought about spontaneous changes that allowed symbols such as light and energy to emerge. These four mandalas started out as perseverating on paper which led to creating a mandala out of candles. These symbols of light and energy supported that self individuation was occurring. This phenomenon was especially enlightening as it started with paint and ended with candles which also supports the previous question regarding how the use of diverse media aid in individuation. The combination regarding the nature of the process and the diverse media used during my journey reflected how both became important elements towards enlightenment.

Jung believed that finding the mandala as an expression of the self was the ultimate. This finding gave him a feeling of inner peace. Discovering the mandala became key to his entire system – he let the mandala lead him along
which to him led back to a center point. “It is the exponent of all paths. It is the path to the centre, to individuation” (Jung, 1972, p. v). Jung gave attention to the unconscious symbols and their spontaneous appearances in mandalas gave him evidence that individuation was taking place (Fincher, 1991). The series of mandalas mentioned above created first from a “dark” paint mandala to a “light” candle mandala had significant implications for individuation. This phenomenological approach to creating mandalas was essential in my journey supporting my sense of self towards wholeness.

Is processing each mandala through journaling a necessary step in the journey towards individuation and wholeness?

Journaling was a necessary step in the journey towards individuation and wholeness. This step allowed symbols and themes to emerge which created patterns for me to reflect back on; however I do feel that finding a way to journal that felt natural was most important. Along with this, just as in my own journey, journaling each mandala was not necessary. The important aspect regarding journaling was that it provides a strong foundation for reflective distancing so transitions towards individuation could be observed and reflected back on as my journey continued.

During the beginning stages of my journey, I journaled according to Fincher’s technique; however, I began to realize that the journaling became redundant. I felt for my journey, free-association writing worked best. I agree with Jung’s idea on journaling where he gave attention to the unconscious symbols and their spontaneous appearance in the mandalas which was proof to him that individuation was occurring. As was previously mentioned, creating using a phenomenological approach was invaluable and I found at times, the process of creating was more important and stopping to journal after each mandala creation would have interfered with creating in the “here and now” – especially when one mandala creation led into another. In this sense, the key insight behind journaling was that I needed to journal in a way that felt natural to me so that the process of journaling was as “true” as possible. I found that free association writing was the
most effective way for me to journal that was productive and true to the individuation process during my journey.

**Limitations of the Study**

Time became an important limitation in my journey. Although mandalas were created over a period of seven months, stopping the process of creating mandalas while writing this thesis became complicated. This thesis was researched and written in a span of two months and due to putting all of my energy into researching and writing, I found that the very tool which helps support one’s psyche was not used due to lack of time on my part— that is the creation of mandalas. It would have been interesting to find out due to the stress level of researching and writing this thesis under difficult circumstances if my mandalas would have shown progression or regression of the psyche. Since my chronic illness symptoms increased due to stress, would the mandalas have helped in this area as well? Along these lines, would the creation of mandalas during the research and writing portion of this thesis have helped with my stress so that there would have been an opportunity for psychic support for more effective reflective distancing as well as health related issues?

Mandalas used as a tool for centering is powerful and what outcomes might have been different if I were to have been creating while writing this thesis? In addition, the mandalas created while writing would have been apart of this thesis so would the observations and reflective distance have had a different outcome? Mainly, would continued progression towards individuation surface or would there have been some regression such as Kellogg stated in her idea of the Great Round of Mandala where creating mandalas and supporting the psyche is a cyclical process.

Another limitation was that due to time constraints and meeting university human subject approval deadlines, I was not able to use human subjects. For the journey, that was not an issue since I was the individual following the journey; however, I originally wanted to visit Fincher and talk to her in more detail.
regarding why she came up with the technique that she did. It appeared in reading her book that she agreed that any materials could be used for mandala creation, although it was not explained in detail why she chose to limit the reader to what appears to me as a simplistic technique of mandala creation.

This idea carried over to Kellogg. While she died two years ago, there was another individual close to her that I would have benefited from talking with in order to explain in more detail the Great Round of the Mandala. I feel that reading one’s book is useful; however if I would have had the opportunity to talk to these two individuals in person, I wonder what additional information I would have been able to get that would have supported this thesis more effectively.

Mandalas as an Art Therapy Tool

Throughout this thesis, the main goal of discussing mandala creations was in support of individuation. I feel as an art therapy graduate student that it should be mentioned that mandala creations for centering; self-esteem; goal setting; safe place images and general support of the psyche is invaluable for helping clients develop. The idea of individuation may be too complex for young clients or clients that have had trauma; however mandala creation for other purposes still serve in their psychic development that unconsciously would aid in even little movement towards individuation. Mandalas for centering are powerful with individuals that have behavioral problems. Teaching coping skills to individuals that need de-escalating may mean the difference between feeling centered or getting themselves or others hurt. Having worked with children with behavioral problems and past traumas, I have seen the power of mandala creations for centering, self esteem and creating safe place images. In short, mandala creations do coincide with individuation; however they also serve therapeutic purposes on many levels.
Suggestions for Future Research

As was discussed under justification of this case study, while there are books and articles that address the healing possibilities of mandalas there are only a few case studies and personal journeys that support the use of mandalas in the individuation process. More case studies need to be conducted so that there is a broader reference of study in order to gain more insights on the power of mandala creations and its power to aid in individuation. Jung’s study of Miss X is important in history; however since this was completed in the 1930’s, the profession of art therapy needs more updated case studies. A case study through the individual’s experience of mandala creation will bring further understanding of how mandalas aid in personal development, balance, centering and individuation.

Personal journeys, such as the one that I took, are important as the researcher as the subject can shed light on themes and symbols that correspond to life experiences that may be hard to gather from researchers that conduct mandala journeys on another individual. Having said this, I do believe that the benefits of conducting updated case studies of journey’s leading towards individuation would be invaluable whether the researcher was the participant or not. It would be my wish that art therapists would publish more regarding journey’s on individuation. My emphasis was on mandala creations; however I do believe that many art media where symbols and themes occur would be conducive for a case study or journey towards individuation. My suggestion to an individual thinking of conducting such a research would be to allow at least one year for the journey so that themes and symbols will be more reliable when put together with one’s life experiences. This would appear to benefit in the reflective distance and see more transitions that may occur towards individuation.

I began with Fincher’s technique as a foundation. If one were to readdress Fincher’s technique, then it would be my suggestion that the researcher look at participant’s mandalas and recognize if and at what point in the journey did he or she break away from Fincher’s technique. Some individuals may need the “step
by step” process more than other’s. It would be interesting to know if all individuals would feel the need to deviate from this restrictive process of mandala creations, journaling and reflection.

**Conclusion**

Throughout my journey, many transitions towards individuation have been addressed. It is also important to note that part of these transitions involved the ability to “let go.” It was by letting go of Fincher’s stringent technique that I was able to utilize a more phenomenological approach that allowed symbols and themes to emerge. Stemming off of this idea, by using diverse media such as the handmade scarves and paper sunflowers my mom had given to me, I was able to see how letting go of parental approval empowered me to pave my own path towards becoming an individual; the transition towards self enlightment. Also through letting go, I was able to realize that being “perfect” was the end product and it was the process that made the journey fulfilling. This was experienced in many areas. An example was being able to see that the process of learning was more important than the end product of the grade. Finally, having been a graphic designer for 13 years and owning a graphic design business for seven years I realized that I could let go of my past profession to be an art therapist; however I am still able to acknowledge that creating on the computer will always be a part of my “self.” This was seen as my mandala creations transitioned into computer generated mandalas.

Overall, as an art therapy graduate student and intern, this journey was enlightening and will benefit not only myself but my clients as well. Both for me and clients, the power of gaining self-awareness are beneficial to one’s psyche. As Jung (1969) stated, the Self is equal to wholeness. In this sense, the ability to center one’s self and gain personal awareness will help to support the psyche and empower the self on the journey towards wholeness and enlightenment.
APPENDIX A

Stages of the Great Round of Mandala

(From J. Kellogg, 1978, p. 48, Fig. 3)
APPENDIX B

Susanne Fincher’s Technique for Mandala Creation

Materials.
1. White or black drawing paper, 12 x 18 inches (black enhances colors)
2. Oil pastels, colored chalks, markers, or paints
3. 10-inch paper plate
4. Notebook and pen or pencil
5. Ruler and compass as optional.

Space.
1. Sit in quiet space with bright light and soothing music
2. Put roughly an hour aside per mandala creation
3. Lighting a candle or burning incense may increase one’s ability to concentrate and make a special place for a regular routine of creating

Mental State.
1. Find a comfortable seating position
2. Relax one’s mental state
   a. Enhances the creative process
   b. Aids in blocking out thinking and judging
   c. Sets up an atmosphere where the unconscious instinct comes in and starts to choose colors and forms
3. Take few deep breaths and wait a moment before beginning
4. Do a number of stretches to loosen up any tension
5. Close eyes and begins to focus inward

Mandala Creation.
1. Use any colors, shapes or forms as the starting
2. Begin by drawing circle using the paper plate or freehand
3. Start filling in the mandala with anything that comes to mind
4. When finished, turn the paper for orientation of the design which feels like the best sense of balance
5. Put a small “t” at the top of the paper
6. Date mandala for future reference

Journaling.
1. Look at the finished mandala from about an arm’s length away
   a. Gives feedback regarding the mandala creation experience
   b. Ask yourself how you feel to be with your mandala
2. Give the mandala a title with as little thought as possible
3. On a journal page, put this title at the top
4. List the colors by order of prominence in the mandala
5. After each color, write down associations that come to mind such as words, feelings or images
6. List numbers and shapes in that show up in the mandala.
   a. Numbers are normally not in the literal sense
   b. Count shapes or objects that appear
   c. Some shapes may be vague such as squiggle and others will be clear such as stars
7. Write down associations next to each of these shapes or objects
8. After the list is compiled, read down page to find a theme
9. If a theme is found, write a sentence or two at the end of the journal entry that tie the theme to the mandala
APPENDIX C

Mandala Creations
APPENDIX D

Reflective Distance Overview

Appendix D was written as a free association paper in which the format does not follow the formal writings of the body of the thesis paper.

I began with Fincher’s technique of creating mandalas for the modality used in beginning my personal journey towards individuation. I was fascinated by her book, Creating Mandalas for Insight, Healing and Self-Expression. I had felt as though I had been searching for a way to make meaning of my life and all that had and was happening. Although going to therapy has been useful, I felt that I needed more – a form of self-expression that would aid in my own transformation and understanding about my life and why I am here.

Having been a graphic designer for thirteen years and wanting more with my career to a change in helping others through art therapy was already a transition for me; however, I still wanted more. I wanted to understand why I craved helping others even though I had owned a successful graphic design business. I wanted to understand why I could not let go of the anger and frustrations I feel at times with having had a chronic illness for 22 years. I wanted to understand why I felt that I had to “be perfect” and what part of this feeling led to the end of a seven and a half year marriage to my partner and what part of it has to do with my illness. It was as though the harder I tried to control my life, the less I was actually in control but I did not know how to fix it. I needed some guidance and tools to help myself.

All of these questions hit hard when my surrogate dad, whom I call Papa Denny, passed away a week before I was to enter graduate school for art therapy. He was only 54, and spent his life being an inspiration to others, including myself. After he passed away, it was as though I felt the need to find meaning to my own life because while I felt I was failing, it only added to the pain of why would someone who was offering so much to others’ lives, be taken away.
From his death, I made a promise to myself that I would honor his existence by helping myself. The culmination of figuring out how to help myself came partly in the form of mandala creations. Throughout this journey, questions that were stated in the research question will also be addressed. These were: How does the creation of a series of mandalas coincide with individuation? Specifically:

1. What does the use of diverse media during the process of creating a mandala contribute to the individuation process?
2. Is processing each mandala through journaling a necessary step in the journey towards individuation and wholeness?
3. What is the nature of the creative process involved in creating mandalas to support self individuation?

The Journey

Two specific mandala creations helped to begin my journey. The first one was from Susanne Fincher’s (1991) technique that I did in my personal symbols class. When I arrived to class that day, I was frustrated and sad about being ill and feeling as though I was not able to serve my clients at my internship the way I thought I should be able to. I was frustrated, feeling ill and was having a hard time concentrating. The instructor was teaching Fincher’s technique that day in class. In chapter 2, Fincher’s technique was described in detail. In class I welcomed the time to close my eyes and relax. The color blue popped into my head. I opened my eyes and began to draw with chalk pastels. The result is the following mandala creation.

![In Class Mandala Creation according to Fincher's Technique](image)
I titled the mandala “Warmth” because of its associations with the island, Kwajalein, in the South Pacific where I grew up on and then went back to in 2000 after my marriage ended. This mandala reminded me of Kwajalein’s water, sunsets and bright sun. According to Fincher’s technique, I followed the instructions, gave it a title which was “Warmth”; I listed the colors in order of prominence which were blue, yellow, orange and black; I then gave these colors associations. I wrote: blue = calm, cool, deep; yellow = Kwajalein, hot, inspiring; orange = comfort, far distance; and black = inspiration, scary, exciting. In the next step I listed the numbers and shapes. I listed “1” since there was one swirl, one patch of yellow, one patch of blue and one patch of orange. The shapes I listed were sun swirl, running black, cool splash, hot horizon and joining. I sat back and thought about the theme and turned it into a couple of sentences. I wrote “Inspiration within a warm environment. It is calm yet exciting.”

After completion the bit of despair I was feeling concerning my illness and career choice then became a feeling of hope. I was able to concentrate better in class and upon leaving, I felt my mood had uplifted noticeably. I remember as I walked out the door, turning to my professor and saying “This really works, I was upset coming to class and now I feel better.”

The second mandala creation that inspired me to write this thesis paper was one that was created in my interpretation of symbols class. We were to keep a dream journal and at the end of the semester, synthesize the symbols that were in the journal and create a mandala from the three or four main symbols. I was also becoming more intrigued by Jung’s (1969) statement that dreams are a secret door at night and are inner aspects of one’s soul – that they are important to our psychological health. Dreams create an avenue to work out daily problems; they recognize possible conflicts; express hidden wishes; warn us of dangers; and can be a memory recall. He believed that dreams open doors to archetypes which appear to us in the form of symbols (Jung, 1969). I remember thinking that I would love to be able to recall my dreams and how that might help all the things that were worrying me at the time. I did start to remember my
dreams and I called them “stress dreams” because it appeared that my most intense dreams came when I was worried, scared or obsessing about something – mainly my illness or the fear of failure.

The four symbols that continually emerged in my dreams were the sea, the sky – encompassing stars and a sun – a blue eye, and yellow sunflower fields. In researching these dream symbols, I found three common themes that crept up a lot. These themes were life, light and transition. I realized that this has been the essence of what my experiences over the years have been about – especially recently with my health issues and psychological development and transition. Graduate school has been a time of transformation for me and through my dream journal it was interesting to see the connection between Jung’s belief that dreams are a secret door at night – the inner aspects of our soul – and how they are important to our psychological health.

This mandala creation became very powerful for me and a turning point in a journey that I had not yet known that I had begun.

![Dream Journal Mandala](image)

Originally, I had been disappointed throughout the semester that all my dreams appeared to stem from stress and illness. But, when I went back through my dream journal, I found something very interesting – a steady and comforting symbol that kept appearing in different forms throughout. That symbol was of my surrogate dad, Papa Denny, who had passed away a week before graduate school started. My grief was intensified by the fact that I was attending graduate
school at his alma mater and he appeared to be everywhere I looked. I lived with
him and his wife when I was in the twelfth grade and went to Florida High, the
Developmental Research School for Florida State University so I was always on
campus to see him while I lived there. I was very shy growing up and he was an
inspiration for me by always trying to teach me that it’s ok to be different and to
have fun with life. Most importantly, he taught me that it was ok to laugh at
myself.

It was fascinating that all the times he popped up in my dreams, I thought I
was only grieving for him; yet when I look at dream interpretations through Jung’s
views and thinking that dreams are a way of helping us problem-solve through
our stresses, then I believe Papa Denny popped up in many different forms to be
my symbol of comfort – not a symbol of grief. That was very enlightening for me
and made a big impact on the way I began to look at life.

After the previous two mandalas were created, I found myself becoming
more and more fascinated with the idea of mandala creations. I began to use the
mandala as a mode of expression for clients and then I felt that I couldn’t ignore
the desire to create my own mandalas. My fascination of the idea that mandalas
coincide with the individuation process became such an interest in my life that I
had to see for myself whether or not it was true. I had read Jung’s theories and
case study of Miss X and Fincher’s techniques and her belief that mandala
creations aid in the individuation process. Looking back, I feel that
subconsciously I began to use the mandala in class creations. An example of this
is when I read Siddhartha’s journey towards individuation and we were asked to
create a reflection drawing. I became intrigued that when mine was complete, the
main idea – the “om” in the flowing water – was created in a mandala form. Also
throughout the water which was so alive in the story, I put mandala shaped swirls
which appears to emphasize its powerful life-like quality.
I then began created mandalas on a regular basis by following Fincher’s relaxation technique and then journaling them. While it was an enjoyable experience and gave me time to myself, I quickly began to feel like I was becoming redundant in my creations. I found that I began creating other mandalas that were not according to her technique to keep myself interested and feeling like I was utilizing my creativity to aid in the process. Following are four mandalas that were created within what I saw as the stringent constraints of Fincher’s technique.

As one can see, the mandala creations all appear to have similarities of materials, structure, and depth. Their titles from left to right are “turmoil”, “sun”, “dream”, and “seeing.” In “turmoil”, the theme was: a dark day just trying to make it to the next day; in “sun”: a marble version of my safe place. The blue is the water with the horizon and the sunshine encompassing the sky; in “dream”: is
hope jumping out of the background – not to be defeated by that which appears to be holding it onto the page and lastly in “seeing”: looking towards the future. Coming out of darkness into the light. In the second mandala, my safe place image is always a stylized palm tree which many times is surrounded by the sea and sky – this one the palm tree is left out. This palm tree symbol represents my life before my illness when I was growing up in the South Pacific.

The last mandala creation titled “seeing” is the first one that appears to stray from only color to becoming a form that is recognizable. It was also created with oil pastels instead of chalk pastels. Although the form is not necessarily important, it does show that in a short time, transitional images will emerge; however, even with this shown early on, I still felt as though following “rules” per se made creating the mandalas a more cognitive process and did not allow for the spontaneity as was seen in some of the previously mentioned reflective mandalas. I believe that it is important to note that while the constraints of Fincher’s techniques felt like I was being “cornered,” that would certainly not be the case for every individual.

Quickly after feeling too constrained, I was at a local bookstore trying to write a paper that I was having a hard time with. I was feeling ill and as usual when I feel this way, it’s hard to concentrate. I sat back, trying to compose myself and thought of trying a mandala. I created one; however only became more frustrated as the mandala appeared to show my fear and frustrations even more.
There is one tiny eye poking out in the upper middle which feels as though I’m physically behind a wall and am not able to get myself out from behind it. I became anxious looking at it so quickly drew another mandala, not journaling the one that was just created. I did a scribble drawing in the form of a circle and started to color in the spaces. I did this to try and turn off the cognitive part of my brain that was becoming anxious with thoughts of illness and failure of not being able to complete my paper but also of not being able to complete graduate school because my illness was going to get the best of me. When the mandala creation was completed, I looked down only to see a face that was trapped in a tight space. This mandala was used as an example of journaling in chapter 3 where the “face” is outlined in more detail. This mandala did not help my anxiety so I continued on, again without journaling, to draw a mandala with my safe place symbol inside. After creating the safe place mandala, I felt much better and was able to return to writing my paper. Following are the three mandalas in order of creation.

![Series of Mandala Creations to Aid with Frustration and Fear](image)

I ended up later going back to my journal and writing; however I just wrote whatever came to mind and my experience with each mandala. The only part of Fincher’s technique I followed as far as journaling was concerned was that I titled each one. From left to right, their titles are: “stress”, “face”, and “calm.”

From this set of mandala creations, I realized that during some sittings, one mandala led into another, creating sets of mandalas. Also, each mandala
took anywhere from five minutes to ninety minutes to create instead of the hour that Fincher suggested be put aside for each creation.

**Phenomenology**

Fincher’s (1991) own experience with mandala creating for her to get through personal struggles, loss and grief was an inspiration; however throughout my own series, it became obvious that one needs to follow their own phenomenological approach in order for that journey towards individuation to come to fruition. Because of this, the research design changed from following one person’s technique to a more phenomenological approach – a personal enhancement to an already effective technique.

Just as was seen through the previous set of mandalas, during my journey, I found many instances where it was another trigger such as seeing an object or doing something active like kayaking that led me to create a mandala so the relaxing technique of Fincher’s was surpassed. This is when I became fascinated with the phenomenological approach to mandala creations. As a result, the creation of these small sets of two or three mandalas in one sitting also opened my eyes to the understanding that the small journeys within the larger journey are just as significant. Some of these small journeys became turning points within the larger journey and, at times, were used as a centering tool to get through a difficult moment. In either case, I realized the power of the mandala. It was during these times where I put aside the journaling and focused on the internal reflective distancing in the phenomenological “here and now” and how what I learned about myself in that moment shaped how little changes about me came to be.

An example of a more phenomenological approach to mandala creations was one day I was on a weekend camping trip and went kayaking. I love the water as it calms me in much the same way as it has done throughout my life which is most likely due to growing up on an island and constantly being on the water, in the water, or by the water listening to the soft lapping of the waves. During my kayak trip, I was out walking the shallow shores and noticed natural mandala images and I felt that being in their environment, looking at them, and
touching them was just as centering or was apart of my journey as actually creating the mandalas on paper.

Because of my illness and other stressful events that had happened in the past few years, my focus was mostly on school and I did not allow myself too much fun. I began to change this, realizing that maybe my health was suffering from lack of mental and physical enjoyment, and these natural mandalas put an emphasis on this. I stayed looking at the starfish, shells and other water critters for hours. I decided to take out my camera and make my own mandalas right in the water. I photographed them to put into my journey because they felt like they should be there.

Ocean Mandalas

This also began my thoughts regarding what role does the diverse medium during the process of creating a mandala contribute to the individuation process? If the above mandalas felt as centering as creating mandalas on paper, then what other mediums would contribute to my journey and towards the process of individuation?

My answer came soon after while I was writing another paper. Again, I was tired and having a hard time concentrating so I sat back to stretch and saw a canister of brightly colored rubber bands on my desk. Without much thought, I took them out and arranged them on my desk, unconsciously moving each rubber band around. I went with what just felt right both physically and visually.
This process took about fifteen minutes and I was then able to get back to work and I found that my concentration was much better.

*Rubber Bands for Centering*

Using different medium to create mandalas also coincides with the question: What is the nature of the creative process involved in creating mandalas to support self individuation? I found that a phenomenological approach worked best for me and combined with using different media, creating in the here and now and only journaling when I felt the need to is how my journey became a more natural process for me.

An example of all three came at a time where I was cleaning the house. I was cleaning in order to not lie in bed because sleeping during the day only makes my illness feel worse and I was not up to studying. I began to think of my life and what I was doing with it. This led me to thinking about my family up north and how I missed them. I left New England to follow my dream of becoming an art therapist and also I felt a need to get away and find myself after my divorce; however many times, I was afraid of failing and ending up with nothing. As I was roaming around the house cleaning, I came across two soft scarves my mom had made for me. My eyes also happened upon the large paper sunflowers that she had given to me years before. I had a sudden urge to touch these objects as if it would bring me closer to my mom and family. I sat on the floor and starting arranging them in a mandala form, paying careful attention to detail as if the love
for my family was sitting right in front of me. The colors were bright and beautiful and reminded me of the last time that I had visited them.

Mom Mandala

My last visit was during the summertime and in time for my mom’s “annual summer birthday bash.” I was going to be in town for medical reasons so it was nice to be there for the summer birthday celebrations, which my birthday coincided with. And with such a loving gesture, my mom had decorated the party that year with sunflowers – she always has a theme – and my older sister made a birthday cake decorated with sunflowers made out of frosting. I was very touched as even though a number of us were celebrating birthdays, since I was up for a visit, my family made the extra effort to welcome me with my favorite flower as the theme of the party. I knew as I looked at the scarves and paper sunflowers that I had carried that memory with me because while creating the mandala out of scarves and sunflowers, I remembered a mandala shaped bowl that I had made for my personal symbols class where the theme was all about the birthday party with a picture of the cake being in the center of the bowl. I had incorporated sunflowers on the bowl with my nieces and nephews around the inside and outside as well.
After creating my “mom” mandala and remembering back on the birthday bash, I began to realize again why I came to Florida. The thought of changing careers to help others gave me an uplifting feeling and realizing that if I had not made the choice to change careers when I did, I would have missed out on the powerful event of being by my Papa Denny’s bedside when he died. I felt myself beginning to trust in the journey I was on and that there were so many things out there that I have yet to experience that would lead me into enlightenment one day. I thought to myself: trust in the process of the journey and everything will take care of itself.

**Journaling**

I came back to the question: Is processing each mandala through journaling a necessary step in the journey towards individuation and wholeness? I had been creating many mandalas and completely broke away from Fincher’s suggestions on how to journal – which was described in length in chapter 2. While this may be a valuable way to start after about ten mandalas, I found that it became a very cognitive way of journaling. I ended up thinking about the next mandala before I began to create it. Because of this, I adjusted my journaling to writing down my feelings and thoughts associated with the mandalas I created. At times this became free association writing – whatever came to mind in the moment during and after the creation of the mandala. It is important to note that in my own personal journey, there were times when journaling did not feel necessary.
I journaled because I thought it was important within the whole triangulation process; however, my journaling became non-systematic and many times I journaled not on the same day that I created the mandala. For my purpose, I found that journaling became something that I did after some reflective distancing of the mandala and it was then that I wrote my thoughts down. There were times where I felt the need to write after the mandala creation; however in all reality, I created the mandalas – many times a series of mandalas – until my psyche got the support that it needed. In this sense, I do believe journaling is a good form of keeping records to later reflect even more upon but it was not a necessity – going so far that the pressure of sticking to one person’s technique – became a hindrance for my spontaneity. By this time in the journey, when I did journal, I had dropped “titling” the mandalas. I just wrote what came to mind.

Throughout this evolution, I was able to observe personal developments that were organized through photographed computer images of the mandalas and journal entries that helped in her personal journey towards individuation.

Creative Process in the Journey

There are a number of mandala series that supports the question that was mentioned earlier regarding: What is the nature of the creative process involved in creating mandalas to support self individuation? I will describe two. The first one happened on a day that I received an upsetting call from my lawyer who is helping with a situation where my illness came out of remission due to a pharmacy giving me the wrong medication. When I got off the phone, I pulled out my paints. I just began making marks on the paper. I felt as though I was perseverating my way through this mandala. The end project appears rather drab; however looking closely, it’s all bright colors that got mixed together during the perseverating process. The acrylic paints used for this mandala covered an area of roughly three feet by three feet. This was a bit larger than I had been producing. I then pulled out another sheet that was roughly the same size. I noticed that while painting this mandala, the colors were bright and the paint was much more fluid. I took out oil pastels and drew lines and spirals over the paint. The fact that oil and water repel had become a fascination for me and I was
intrigued during the reflective distancing, how two paintings produced within ten minutes of each other could look so different. I felt empowered by this mandala as its energy appeared boundless. When I completed it, I was able to reflect back on the conversation with the lawyer and tell myself that no-one was going to discredit me and I know what is right and wrong so I need to stick to what I believe and not let someone scare me off. With this feeling in hand, I looked back at the painting and for a moment I saw a candle in it. The center spiral appeared to be what a large round candle would do after being burned a number of times. I love candles and often light them for a feeling of peace or to say a prayer on. I looked over at the shelf and saw one of my collections of candles and felt compelled to light one.

I was drawn from painting to candles, yet the similarities in quality of appearance took me by surprise. It was as if I painted the mandala with the candle in mind, but this was not the case. I thought back on Jung and how he believed the unconscious comes to consciousness when brought to paper. I feel as though my spiritual self met my conscious self at this moment. When I realized this, I went on to the light three candles, all different colors and heights to make a spiritual mandala. This became a very enlightening turn in my journey in supporting my sense of self. Following are the four mandalas created in order.

![Perseverating to Spiritual Mandala Creations](image)

Another mandala creation series that coincided with the feeling towards enlightenment was found when I was having a day where I felt especially sick. I was trying to take a nap which I do not normally do and found that I could not fall asleep because I was worrying that my school work was not getting completed.
got up to get a drink and passed my Micronesian basket from where I lived over seas. It was handmade by the Marshallese and I stopped to look at it. At first I was taken back by its natural mandala shape and intricate handiwork. I remember thinking “I wish I were back on my little island.” I went and got a drink and went back to bed. The basket was on my mind so I got up and took a picture of it. I was intrigued that when I found myself awake in bed hours later, that after taking the picture of the basket top that it had relaxed me enough so that I was able to crawl back into bed and fall asleep.

When I woke up I went to pull out my safe place mandala (the palm tree, ocean and sky) because the basket reminded me of it since my safe place mandala is created after the South Pacific and I bought the basket from the islanders. After reflecting on the basket top awhile, I had the urge to take the basket top and see if I could use the computer as a media to create mandalas. Having been a graphic designer for 13 years, there are many times where I miss working and creating on the computer. This appeared like a perfect chance to see if mandala creations and the question I have regarding using other media than what Fincher suggests would be beneficial in the journey. I took the basket and put it into Photoshop, created with it awhile and I felt that a part of me that I had just dropped from my life was coming back.
Through the experience of not being able to sleep and finding a centering tool that reminds me of my safe place to ending up with the idea of adding computer imagery in creating mandalas was a fascinating evolution. I feel that the journey towards individuation encompasses all of one’s life experiences so how could I think that I could just forget my once love of computer creations and just move onto the next career as though the other had not been apart of me? This opened my eyes to see that I do not have to be black or white – I only need to take all of my experiences and learn and develop from each one – with the goal of eventually leading to an individuated Self. Following are a few examples of mandala creations using the computer as a tool that enabled me to learn this about myself and how it fits in the process.

Creating mandalas on the computer brought back great memories and remembrances of accomplishments and failures of owning a business. It began to hit home in a way that felt honest and “true” that I will have this illness for the
rest of my life, regardless of the severity at each given time, so why not embrace it and have fun while I’m still living. There’s always that choice to “sink or swim” and through this short journey, I have chosen to “swim” and hopefully inspire others along the way. My doctor was the one who suggested I get into a field where I did not work 80 hours a week and have the responsibility of owning a business as it was bad for my health. I understood her concern; however I took it as some sort of failure on my part. Now, I look at owning that business as one of my accomplishments in life and that there is no “failure” in taking care of my health and changing careers. That this, too, is all about the journey and I feel that where my journey has led me to thus far, I am in a much healthier psychological state and am open to just about anything life throws at me. Through ups and downs this journey through creating mandalas has shown me that if one desires to attain a true sense of the Self, conquer my shadow and reach individuation then it can only be done with open eyes and heart. It is hard to accept all that comes my way but as long as I am not afraid to ask the questions and seek out the answer – if there is one – then I believe that this journey is a productive beginning towards individuation. Jung put it nicely by writing about Miss X’s journey:

Our series of pictures illustrates the initial stages of the way of individuation. It would be desirable to know what happens afterwards. But, just as neither the philosophical gold nor the philosophers’ stone was ever made in reality, so nobody has ever been able to tell the story of the whole way, at least not to mortal ears, for it is not the story-teller but death who speaks the final “consummatum est.” Certainly there are many things worth knowing in the later stages of the process, but, from the point of view of teaching as well as of therapy, it is important not to skip too quickly over the initial stages. As these pictures are intuitive anticipations of future developments, it is worth while lingering over them for a long time, in order, with their help, to integrate so many contents of the unconscious into consciousness that the latter really does reach the stage it sees ahead (Jung, 1972, pgs. 64-65).
Jung is correct in stating that the process of individuation is just that – a process. In my case, I chose to call it a journey and how exciting life will be to continue on with my journey towards individuation. I saw first hand how even a short journey made such a difference in my life and how much stronger I feel about my “self.” I know throughout life, I will turn to the mandala as a tool for continuing on in my journey.
APPENDIX E

Fincher’s Journal Technique

Title:  Warmth
Colors:  Yellow, Black, Blue, Orange
Word Color Associations:
  Yellow:  Kwajalein, Hot, Inspiring
  Black:  Inspiration, Scary, Exciting
  Blue:  Calm, Cool, Deep
  Orange:  Comfort, Far distance
Numbers and Shapes:
  Sun Swirl, Running Black, Cool Splash, Hot Horizon, Joining
Theme:  Inspiration with a warm environment. Calm yet exciting.
This started out as a circular scribble drawing. I do not feel well and wanted to create something that was “nothing” – to just keep my hands moving. The vibrant colors on the black however do not say “illness” to me but excitement. I’m intrigued with the “face” that I see protruding out of the scribble. Two eyes, a nose and a mouth.

It appears to be someone trying to push themselves out of the form – somewhat from the unconscious to the conscious. It feels powerful to me. Maybe it’s the healthy part of my physical and mental being trying to get out of the illness part of me. I’m so tired of being sick but I’ve always gone into remission and these bright colors, seeking eyes and smile on the face in the mandala remind me of that hope.
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