ST. STEPHEN'S COLLEGE

THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPERIENCE OF ZENTANGLE® AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR ART THERAPY

by

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Dedication

I dedicate this paper to my family, my husband Fred, and my children Laura, Thomas and Albert Jr. Their support and confidence in my ability has provided encouragement and motivation for the course of this thesis, and throughout working on my Master's degree.

Abstract

In this phenomenological study I explored the lived experience of Zentangle practice and its link to mindfulness, spirituality and Art Therapy. This study was informed by personal experience of Zentangle as a means of creative self-expression and mindfulness meditation. Van Manen's (2014) interpretive-descriptive phenomenological approach, along with arts-based (McNiff, 2013a) and phenomenology of art expression methods (Betensky, 1995) were used to describe the lived experience of Zentangle. Seven experienced Zentangle practitioners, including five Certified Zentangle Teachers, participated. Findings were based on a variety of sources including focus group discussion and artwork obtained following a Zentangle re-enactment, and two semi-structured, follow-up interviews. Data extracted from transcriptions of the focus group and follow-up interviews were thematically analysed and organized according to four stages of experience common to meditation: entering, mindfulness meditation, awareness, and outcomes. The predominant description of outcomes associated with Zentangle practice was its centring effect. Zentangle provided a means of connecting with and integrating the self. It also served to enhance confidence, and fostered a sense of connection and community. The results suggest that Zentangle can be considered as a mindful/spiritual practice that promotes self-awareness, insight, creative problem solving and can also positively affect emotional and physical well-being, which make it potentially applicable as an Art Therapy tool.

Limitations of the study include the number of participants, and bias of participants and researcher. Additional studies regarding the use of Zentangle in therapeutic environments and with different populations are needed to expand understanding, generalizability of findings, and application as an Art Therapy tool.

Key words: Zentangle, mindful art therapy, art therapy, mindfulness, meditation, self-confidence, self-awareness, interpretive phenomenological method, art as research.

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I acknowledge Rick Roberts and Maria Thomas, for their development of, and sharing the Zentangle method.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1. Introduction

This research study aims to describe the lived experience of Zentangle®[1] as a spiritual/ mindful art form and explore its application as an Art Therapy tool.

The Zentangle method was developed by Rick Roberts and Maria Thomas to foster a state of relaxation and enable creativity to emerge. Zentangle is designed to facilitate art making and meditation using simple materials. It is an enjoyable, easy-to-learn approach that involves the repetitive drawing of structured patterns (Roberts & Thomas, 2012). Bremner (2011) states: "As your eye follows your pen, your attention shifts to a state that allows fresh thoughts, new perspectives and creative insights to flow unhindered by anxiety or effort" (p. 1). The creation of repetitive-element patterns assists in focusing on the simple act of drawing, rather than focusing on what the finished object should look like. As an intriguing outcome, the process leads to the creation of intricate and stunning art.

There are limited studies on Zentangle. I wanted to explore this experience by constructing a thick description of Zentangle practice informed by different lived experiences of Zentangle. I chose van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenological approach to develop an understanding of Zentangle and examine ways in which it may relate to mindfulness, spirituality, and Art Therapy. For many years there has been increasing interest in mindfulness as an approach to promoting health and wellness, particularly in the fields of psychology and medicine. However, the incorporation of mindfulness within Art Therapy remains relatively new, with formal studies first conducted by Monti and Peterson (2004). There is however growing evidence that mindfulness-based Art Therapy

[1] Zentangle® is a term that is a registered trademark. The ® will not be used hereafter. See https://www.zentangle.com/policies/trademarks-copyrights-and-patent for more information.

and art-based therapy activities are associated with beneficial health outcomes (Ando & Ito, 2014; Chandraiah, Annand, & Avent, 2012; Coholic, 2011; Davis, 2015; Monti & Peterson, 2004; Monti et al., 2006; Peterson, 2015).

The core research question which informed this study was "What is the lived experience of Zentangle, and how does the experience of Zentangle relate to mindfulness?" Related questions which were explored include: Can Zentangle be described as being a spiritual activity? Can Zentangle be used in the context of Art Therapy? If Zentangle can be used within an Art Therapy context, what are the implications for its use?

Zentangle

Autobiographical origins of the researcher's interest. I have been quilting for 16 years, and have owned a business offering a machine quilting service to combine customers' quilted tops with batting and backing for 11 years. As part of a quilting forum in 2009, I stumbled upon a drawing method called "Zentangle" and saw an opportunity to improve my stitching vocabulary. It quickly became my go-to method for both learning new quilting patterns and overcoming creative blocks. At the same time, customers asked me to teach them how to create similar wonderful stitching patterns, and I fumbled for answers about how to share this skill with them. In 2010, after using Zentangle to assist my own creativity, I decided to enrol in a 4-day training seminar and became a certified Zentangle teacher. The training was inspiring and empowering.

Soon I was teaching Zentangle classes and observing powerful effects on my students and clients. There was no doubt that I observed a positive emotional effect on my clients and myself from engaging in this creative act. Around this time, my family

underwent a change when our son experienced an acute psychotic episode and was hospitalized. Over the next several years, we struggled to cope with the impact of our son's illness, experiencing a mixture of anxious parenting, conflicts, medical appointments, and finally a rehabilitation program for our family. I accepted responsibility for my own dis-ease relating to my mental health, job, and life satisfaction and decided to change careers. Counselling assisted me in uncovering my personal desires, goals and cultivated my ability to fulfill my own needs.

The course of our lives changed as we attempted to cope with mental health challenges, family demands, stresses and conflicts, and work obligations, while also learning to be supportive and honest with one another. Although I had previously associated my creative abilities with improvements in my health, during this time I used art, quilting, and Zentangle to assist in understanding how I wanted to interact in this world.

Through this process of change, I began to explore new questions. I struggled with feeling whether there was more that I could contribute beyond my own personal artistic activity practice, and if I needed a greater purpose by contributing in other means. Believing that art has the potential to heal, I felt that combining creativity and helping others was appropriate. I decided that I would like to share the healing potential of art with others. As a Certified Zentangle Teacher (CZT) and Art Therapy student, I wanted to learn more about how art and creativity affects people and incorporate that knowledge via therapeutic work.

Most often clients participate in Zentangle classes as a creative interest. As they leave feeling refreshed, rejuvenated, and inspired, the outcome is more than just a casual

"hobby." Anecdotally, several clients have contacted me, thanked me for sharing Zentangle and told me they have seen significant changes in their lives, including job and family, decreases in depression, and increases in enjoyment of the world around them. One could assume these changes are circumstantial and unconnected. However, my own personal experience and the perceptible shift in the atmosphere of a class that I observed, I believe, suggests otherwise. The positive affect of Zentangle on me and my students influenced my decision to complete a degree in Art Therapy. My initial wondering continues to drive my studies. What happens within Zentangle that allows for such moments of insight and healing? How does the activity of Zentangle lead to new ways of being in the world?

Terms. Key terms are defined in this section.

Art response activity: An art activity that uses art to respond to an experience. The art response explores the meaning in visual and nonverbal ways of an activity, idea, and experience.

Art Therapy: Art Therapy uses a number of mediums, including painting, drawing, clay work, photography, song, dance, drama, and art journaling to facilitate the therapeutic process (Moon, 2008; Rubin, 2010). Art Therapy provides a non-verbal mode of identifying, organizing and expressing feeling states and processing experiences (Monti & Peterson, 2004) within a therapeutic relationship.

Certified Zentangle Teacher (CZT): A person who has been trained and certified to teach Zentangle with this patented method, by the creators Rick Roberts and Maria Thomas. Zentangle is primarily taught in a class facilitated by a CZT. Zentangle is shared informally and formally in different communities.

Decentering: Mental distancing or “distancing oneself from ordinary logic” (Davis, 2015, p. 58).

Flow: A state of concentration or complete absorption with the activity at hand and the situation (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Meditation: Shapiro (2012) defines meditation as “a family of techniques which have in common a conscious attempt to focus attention in a non-analytical way, and an attempt not to dwell on discursive, ruminating thought” (p. 2). Focusing meditation concentrates on a single external or internal object, e.g. breath, a word, a mantra, in order to focus on new positive thoughts.

Mindfulness: According to Kabat-Zinn (1994), mindfulness is “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally” (p. 4). Mindfulness is a practice where we learn to pay attention to ourselves, to what we are doing, and to be in the moment. The practice of mindfulness helps us focus our thoughts and emotions on the present rather than on ruminating and thinking about the past or anticipating and preparing for the future.

Mosaic: The term “mosaic” refers to the placement of two or more completed Zentangle tiles to be viewed together as a display of art from a class (Roberts & Thomas, 2012).

Spirituality: Lifestyles and practices that embody a vision of human existence and how the human spirit is to achieve its full potential (Sheldrake, 2012). Spirituality may incorporate personal, cultural, religious, transpersonal, and transcendental beliefs that answer existential questions.

Tangle: As a noun, tangle is the word for a Zentangle pattern that can be drawn with a particular sequence of elemental strokes (Roberts & Thomas, 2012). There are over 400 tangle patterns with instructions. As a verb, to tangle means to actively draw patterns using the Zentangle method.

Zentangle: A patented method for creating beautiful images using repetitive patterns. The materials are low-tech and inexpensive. Zentangle is both facilitated by a CZT and practiced as an individual mindfulness art activity.

The Zentangle method. Through the creative method, Zentangle invites the participant to access his or her own meditative process. The Zentangle method is a way to create beautiful images by drawing structured patterns (Roberts & Thomas, 2012) that are unplanned, unexpected, and unique. Zentangle as a formalized process was created after Roberts observed Thomas' experiencing a focused, trancelike state, similar to what occurs in Zen meditation, during an art session. Roberts and Thomas developed the Zentangle method in order to recreate the experience and to assist other people to create art. Zentangle is accessible to a wide range of ages and skill levels, as it can be done by anyone who can hold a pen or pencil.

Zentangle is promoted as being accessible to anyone because it requires basic, portable materials, and can be completed in 15 minutes. The Zentangle ceremony enables the development of creative expression through the process of simply focussing on the act of drawing shapes and symbols on paper. The use of pen and paper in this nontechnical, nonrepresentational artistic method enables people to become comfortable with art making. The Zentangle motto, "anything is possible one stroke at a time," empowers

individuals to connect easily with the method and move straightforwardly into the focusing aspect of the activity (Roberts & Thomas, 2012, p. 49).

To create a Zentangle, one needs only a pencil, a piece of 89 mm square paper called a “tile” and a fine-tip black pen (Sakura Micron 01 recommended). The marks that are made on the paper are simple symbols, such as lines, circles and dots, which can be joined together to make patterns that are more complex. To produce a Zentangle, the participant must engage in a number of steps that include both mindfulness practices and simple art forms.

The practice of creating a Zentangle starts with a deep breath, followed by a pause and the invitation to appreciate the moment. Using the pencil, each of the four corners of the tile is marked with a dot and then the dots are connected to create a border. The tile is divided with a thin pencil line in a variety of shapes (“strings”) across the remaining tile, thereby creating several sections (see Figure 1). Then, after another breath and pause, one begins to create a pattern in one of the sections using the pen. With deliberate and repetitive strokes, the tangle fills the space (see Figure 2).

Once that section is complete, the tile is held at arm’s length. The person takes a moment to pause, look at the beginnings of the design, and feel the paper and the pen in hand. The person then continues by filling in another section with a new tangle pattern. This process continues until the sections in the tile are completely filled (see Figure 3). Finally, one holds up the completed tile again, breathes, and regards the artwork. The tile can be finished by shading and colouring, or the artist can simply initial the front and sign the back of the tile.

This completes the formal Zentangle process.

Certified Zentangle Teachers and Art Therapists. This study bridges the world of Certified Zentangle Teachers (CZTs) and the world of Art Therapists (ATs). The uses and applications of Zentangle vary between these two worlds because the training and professional abilities of practitioners in these two groups differ. The instruction of Zentangle by facilitators in different contexts affects the experience and outcomes of the participants.

The CZT community is comprised of individuals who have received training regarding the method and philosophy of Zentangle from the creators of the Zentangle method, Roberts and Thomas, in Rhode Island, United States. The 4-day class certification training includes 30 hours of classroom instruction. It incorporates information about the history and philosophy of Zentangle, the recommended teaching plan for the introductory class, and instructions on facilitation and specific Zentangle techniques. Individuals from all over the world take courses for both individual personal growth and professional development. Certification as a CZT includes access to support and supplies from the Zentangle Corporation, as well as networking opportunities.

Zentangle, along with several related terms is trademarked, and the Zentangle teaching method is pending patent (Roberts & Thomas, 2006; Zentangle.com, 2016a). Zentangle is copyrighted as follows: “Many aspects of the Zentangle Method, including our materials and teaching tools, as well as the material on this site, are covered by copyright which is owned by Zentangle, Inc. All rights reserved” (Zentangle.com, 2016a). While only certified teachers can officially teach Zentangle, sharing in a non-commercial setting is allowed (Zentangle.com, 2016d).

There are no prerequisites related to previous art experience, business acumen, or therapy training that are required to enrol in CZT training. Thus, CZTs come from a variety of professions (Roberts & Thomas, 2012). The diverse and varied group of CZTs who teach and practice have a variety of aims and intentions. Some CZTs teach Zentangle as an art form, others share it an as approach for promoting health and well-being, complicating its classification and use as an Art Therapy technique.

In contrast, the Art Therapy community is comprised of professionally trained art therapists. To practice, art therapists complete graduate-level training at an accredited school which includes 450 classroom hours of education and training in psychology and Art Therapy techniques and interventions, and a minimum of 700 hours of practicum experience. In addition, a thesis related to an Art Therapy study or intervention is required. Art therapists are trained in different approaches, including psychodynamic, phenomenological, expressive, gestalt, and cognitive behavioural, among others. Art Therapy is very effective in populations where non-verbal expression provides a means to integrate issues and healing. For instance, Art Therapy is applied in a therapeutic context with a variety of populations such as individuals with developmental delays, those who are on the autism spectrum, and those who have varying degrees of trauma, addictions, and dementias.

Phenomenology, Art-based Research and Integral Theory

This study of Zentangle incorporates an interpretive phenomenological inquiry (van Manen, 2014) with arts-based methods (McNiff, 1998). Phenomenology, like mindfulness, involves an open, inquiring attitude comprising a heightened, “attentive awareness” that is used to explore the phenomenon of lived experience (van Manen, 2014,

p. 41). I considered the lived experience of Zentangle to explore whether, and how, it can be considered a mindfulness and spiritual art activity that can be used in the context of Art Therapy.

I used phenomenology as a method for exploring and describing the lived experience of Zentangle. I attempted to develop a "thick description" (Denzin, 1989) providing details regarding the physical, emotional, and cognitive aspects of the experience of Zentangle across a variety of contexts. Art as research was also used as a method. Visual representations provided additional information that was used to develop an expanded description of the experience of Zentangle.

I have aimed to describe and understand, together with the research participants, a shared understanding, or mutual reality (Wilson, 2008), of the lived experience of Zentangle and its connections with mindfulness and spirituality. My approach has been informed by an ontology where experience and multiple ways of knowing in the world intersect. This approach, encompassing interior and exterior, subjective and objective, collective and individual experiences, is known as integral theory (Wilber, 1997). An underlying assumption of this method is that any exploration or explanation of knowledge and reality will only provide a partial understanding of what may be taken to be "real" or "true," as our realities and experiences are constantly changing, evolving, and integrating.

Zentangle: Connections with Meditation, Mindfulness and Spirituality

According to Roberts and Thomas (2012), the drawing of a Zentangle is both a mindful and creative act. According to Hall (2012) through the Zen and drawing you become connected to your inner self and peace. Zentangle has been described as providing a means for connecting to something deep inside which leads to a transcendental

experience (Miller, 2010). Mindfulness meditation has been described as proceeding through four stages of activity. These stages are: (1) entering, (2) meditation, (3) awareness, and (4) outcomes (Nash and Newberg, 2013). Anecdotally Zentangle practitioners describe their experiences as similar to these stages (Hall, 2012; Letourneau and Yencer, 2014; Roberts and Thomas, 2012). This research study explores the lived experience of Zentangle in relation to these stages, and explores how Zentangle as a mindfulness-based creative activity might also enhance a spiritual connection.

Davis (2015) identifies mindfulness and meditation as being important for self-regulation and self-awareness. Newberg and Waldman (2010) describe mindfulness and meditation as providing a means for connecting with a transcendent, spiritual presence in the world. Through ongoing creative acts, we reconnect with life, spiritual activity, and the transcendental presence (Gormley, 2003). Art is the soul's expression, and is intimately connected with providing a voice for our unconscious, our internal knowing, our creative source, and our reason for being. McConneghey (2003) has stated that "Art is a correspondence with the soul" (p. 11). The soul is recognized as part of one's central being, the intuitive core self. In the creation of our art, and by following a ritual of meditation, we reconnect with what is fundamental to our humanness and to our connection with the divine (Moon, 2001; Levine, 2003).

Zentangle as an Approach to Integrated, Mindful Art Therapy

Art Therapy activities offer a means of creatively expressing and exploring difficult issues in artwork that clients create to reflectively explore personal, often spiritually relevant meanings. Mindfulness-based Art Therapy integrates basic meditation principles as part of Art Therapy combining processes directed to healing, insight, and

spiritual connection with creative expression of thoughts and feelings. Mindfulness-based art activities have encompassed many different modalities and structures, such as visual art, photography, dance, and somatic movement (Peterson, 2015; Rappaport & Kalmanowitz, 2014).

As originally intended by its creators, Zentangle was created as a form of mindfulness meditation. One of the hesitations regarding the use of Zentangle in Art Therapy is that the repetitive drawing of patterns in a structured manner limits personal creative expression, which is the cornerstone of Art Therapy. In my experience, I have received queries about Zentangle concerning its similarities to the defined and success oriented activity of colouring books. In this study I explore how Zentangle can promote mindfulness, creative expression, and therapeutic outcomes in Art Therapy.

Chapter 2. Review of Literature

In this chapter, literature on Zentangle practice is reviewed, along with relevant literature on meditation, mindfulness, contemplative arts-based practices, and Art Therapy.

Literature on Zentangle

Zentangle offers a unique approach to merging mindfulness and meditation within an art activity. It has been designed as a tool that can heighten focus, promote group dynamics and individual creativity, and relieve stress (Roberts & Thomas, 2012, p. 5). It was developed at a time of increasing interest in simple, direct art activities, such as doodling (Jenny & Jones, 2013; Scrace, 2013). A leading international expert in the area of Art Therapy, Malchiodi (2014a, 2014b) has promoted the use of both doodling and Zentangle as a way to incorporate art into regular creative practices (also see Andrade, 2009).

Previous empirical studies. In addition to materials originally published on the Zentangle approach (see Roberts & Thomas, 2012, Zentangle.com, 2016b, 2016c), numerous books have been written which elaborate on the process and include additional ideas on incorporating Zentangle into crafts, hobbies, and daily living (see Bartholomew, 2010, 2011a, 2011b; Bremner, Burnell, Raile, & Williams, 2013; Browning, McNeill, &Bartholomew, 2012; Fink, 2013; Letourneau, 2013, 2014; McNeill, 2013; McNeill & Shepard, 2013; & Paglio, 2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2014). Along with Roberts and Thomas, others, including CZTs, have also shared anecdotal reports on the positive benefits of Zentangle practice. Hall (2012) and Krahula (2012, 2013), for example, have described stress reduction as a benefit associated with practicing Zentangle (also see Hollibaugh,

2012; Poggenberg, 2012). To date, however, as a recently developed method Zentangle has not yet been widely described in the literature or evaluated.

An unpublished manuscript by Yuhas and Cooper (2012) provides preliminary findings that suggest positive effects of Zentangle practice on mindfulness among people experiencing poor mental health, high blood pressure, and chronic pain. Post-test mindfulness scores of those who participated in a facilitated one-hour Zentangle session were similar to the scores of those who completed a 16-week mindfulness training course.

An unpublished thesis by Nordell (2012) explored the health benefits of Zentangle among seniors with addictions and cancer. The Edmonton Symptom Assessment Scale (ESAS) was used to assess physical discomfort and the Spielberger State Trait Anxiety Index (STAI) was used as a measure of anxiety. A majority (76 %) of those who participated in the Zentangle session experienced a reduction in anxiety from pre- to post-assessment periods (a control group was not included in the study).

Moore (2013) wrote a dissertation on the importance of self-care and support for those involved in providing therapeutic care for those who have experienced trauma. Her participants described Zentangle as a helpful tool that contributed to the coping skills of both therapists and clients. The use of Zentangle provided lessons around the value and importance of self-care for those involved in supporting others experiencing trauma, and uncovered difficulties with self-care of mental health providers. Mental health providers shared that they gained appreciation for their client's difficulties learning new coping skills and their resistance to change. Zentangle helped them develop resonance with their clients. Her research also pointed to important barriers in using Zentangle, including issues with perfectionism, lack of time, and fear of not being creative.

All three of these studies used a relatively small sample of individuals, and included a relatively narrow research focus. Additional insights regarding the experience of, and potential beneficial effectiveness of Zentangle can be gleaned through the literature on meditation, mindfulness, contemplative arts-based practices, and Art Therapy.

Literature on Meditation as a Contemplative Practice

The originators of the Zentangle method likened the artistic processes, which they later identified as Zentangle, to Zen meditation. Focused activity encourages slowing down and being present within the act of drawing using structured patterns, similar to the act of meditation using repetitive phrases or focusing on a particular object (Davis, 2015). Thomas, a professional lettering artist who first discovered Zentangle, described being completely and effortlessly absorbed in creating a piece of calligraphy without experiencing worries or thoughts outside of her activity, an experience which is similar to *flow* which was first described by Csikszenmihalyi (1990).

Meditation is a tool that has been around for thousands of years and encompasses many different physical and spiritual practices. Meditation is used as a means of 'refining awareness' and 'dis-identification' (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006). Meditation uses a method of ritual that creates a safe place to decenter and enter into a transitional space. Decentering is mental distancing and is the activity that moves the individual away from a current reality to interact and focus on an alternate one (Davis, 2015). It is integrated in several eastern religions, as well as physical practices like Qigong, Tai Chi, and Yoga. In Zen Buddhism, the focus of meditation is on the present activity. The use of brushstrokes and creativity in Zen Buddhist practices and meditation are part of living in the moment and

participating in the creative energy of the world (Frentiu, 2014). It is also part of Christian, Judaic, and Islamic traditions. Within the Christian tradition, meditation and centring prayer is used as a means of encouraging "presence of mind, acceptance, internal observation and experiencing the presence of God" (Rappaport & Kalmanowitz, 2014, p. 27). In Judaism, meditational practices are a part of the practice of mindfulness and "kavannah," the intention to be in the awareness of God's presence (Rappaport & Kalmanowitz, 2014, p. 27). Within Islam, meditation is grounded in the branch of Sufism, where awareness, mindfulness, and compassion are central to creating relationship with the divine (Rappaport & Kalmanowitz, 2014, p. 28).

Previous empirical studies. Due to the many different practices of meditation and the varied names of these methods, it is difficult to compare meditation studies (Nash & Newberg, 2013). Numerous studies have examined the impact of meditation practices on health outcomes. For instance, one of the first medical studies on meditation was conducted by Benson, Rosner, Marzetta and Klemchuk (1974) who identified the "relaxation response" as effective in reducing blood pressure. Chiesa (2009) completed a comprehensive literature review of the Zen Meditation literature to evaluate studies of the "electroencephalographic, neuroimaging, biological, and clinical evidence of the effects of Zen meditation" (p. 590). Chiesa's study suggested positive effects but no conclusions could be drawn because of the wide variations in meditation forms. In addition, Ospina et al. (2008) reviewed studies on the use of meditation and its benefits and concluded that meditation is promoted regularly for its ability to reduce hypertension, improve mood, decrease pain, improve responses to chronic illness, deal with addictions and anxiety, and promote self-care and living.

In yet another study, Newberg and Waldman (2010) showed that relaxation through meditation disrupts the habitual patterns of responding to the world. In their study, they showed how meditation improves cognition, memory, neural health, and regulation mechanisms in the brain (Newberg & Waldman, 2010). Newberg (2011) provides a helpful overview of the many areas that meditation has been scientifically shown to improve health and well-being. Specifically, according to Newberg (2011) meditation has been shown to improve heart rate and blood pressure, lead to electroencephalographic changes, and improve hormonal and immunological functions, as well as improve physical and psychological conditions, including hypertension, cancer, depression, and anxiety.

Literature on Mindfulness as a Contemplative Practice

Mindfulness, similar to meditation, is the cultivation of psychological presence within activities of meditation and all of life. Both meditation and mindfulness promote non-judgmental, present-centred awareness in which whatever arises to attention is accepted as it is (Wallace, 2012; Franklin, 2010). Mindfulness is defined as "an openhearted, moment-to-moment, non-judgmental awareness" (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 145) or the maintenance of awareness on the present moment, with the quality of that awareness being one of acceptance and compassion (Bishop et al., 2004). Bishop et al. (2004) add that mindfulness is also an "orientation to experience" (p. 55) while Wallace (2012) sees mindfulness as the attention directed at one's state of consciousness and mental activities. Davis (2015) states, "One does not need to meditate to be mindful" when explaining why mindfulness can be incorporated into Art Therapy (p. 21).

Mindfulness assists people in developing awareness, which in turn can lead to the openness to personal transformation based on deeper insight and the motivation to change. A meta-analysis by Hofmann, Sawyer, Wit and Oh (2010) showed an important effect of the mechanisms of mindfulness-based therapies "that [they] may not be diagnosis-specific but, instead, may address processes that occur in multiple disorders by changing a range of emotional and evaluative dimensions that underlie general aspects of well-being" (p. 180). The fundamental function of mindfulness techniques attend to one's inner mental processes with focused awareness that relaxes the body, enhances emotional understanding and self-regulation (Davis, 2015; Newberg, 2011). Awareness leads to a change in response to hyperarousal, altering the typical instinctual reactions (Kass & Trantham, 2014; Siegel, 2007). Through mindfulness, one can effectively find answers that are not "out there" but within, reawakening intuitive knowing and self-reflective awareness. Mindful awareness helps create a new relationship with mind and body (Siegel, 2007; Brown & Ryan, 2003).

According to Davis (2015) mindful awareness offers a means of mental distancing, that enables one to observe patterns of reactivity and respond differently. From this, one develops a new ability to understand deep-felt emotions. The process also promotes strategies that utilize healthier neural patterns and functioning. Mental distancing is a key function of mindfulness that promotes health and well-being.

Mindfulness has been incorporated into many spheres of psychological treatment: it is used in cognitive therapy with mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002), dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) (Linehan, 1993), and mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) (Kabat-Zinn, Massion, & Kristeller, 1992).

Mindfulness-based programs are now offered in hospitals and clinics around the world, as well as in schools, workplaces, corporate offices, law schools, adult and juvenile prisons, inner city health centres and a range of other settings. Williams and Zylowski (2009) documented use of mindfulness-based treatments across a variety of medical conditions, mental disorders, and patient populations, including:

- Medical conditions: brain injury, cancer, chronic fatigue, chronic illness, chronic pain, diabetes, fibromyalgia, headache, heart disease, HIV/AIDS, multiple sclerosis, obesity, obstetrics/gynaecology, transplant, psoriasis, rheumatoid arthritis, sleep disturbance, smoking, stoma and tinnitus.
- Mental disorders: addiction/substance abuse, ADHD, aggression/anger, anxiety, depression/mood disorders, eating disorders, mental retardation/developmental disorders, personality disorders, psychosis, suicidal ideation/self-harm, and PTSD.
- Populations: bilingual, children and adolescents, teachers, inner city, inpatient, marriage and relationships, medical and mental health providers and students, mindfulness meditators, older adults, parents, criminal offenders and employees.

Previous empirical studies. The predominant meditation practice in clinical fields is mindfulness meditation as an approach to promoting better health. Numerous empirical studies of mindfulness meditation interventions provide evidence of improvement in health and well-being measures across a wide variety of groups, including people with depression, anxiety, chronic pain, chronic fatigue, cancer, heart disease, and ADHD (Bohlmeijer, Prenger & Taal, 2010; Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt & Walach, 2004; Hofmann, et al., 2010; Niazi & Niazi, 2010; Vollestad, Sivertsen, & Nielsen, 2011). Given the evidence that has accumulated, there is increasing acceptance of mindfulness as a prevention and wellness technique in health care (Newberg, 2011; Walsh & Shapiro, 2006).

Brown and Ryan (2003) have suggested that positive health outcomes associated with mindfulness meditation are achieved through its promotion of self-regulation and

enhanced coping. Non-reactivity to inner thoughts and experiences is achieved by observing thoughts and feelings, enhancing ability to act with awareness, improving concentration and reducing distractibility, being non-judgmental of one's experiences, and gaining ability to describe and label experiences. Centring is recognized as an important part of mindfulness meditation. Centring refers to the aspect of non-reactivity to thoughts and feelings that occur in the present moment and disengaging the overactive amygdala and neurologically shifting away from reactivity (Davis, 2015; Rappaport & Kalmanowitz, 2014). By focusing on oneself and becoming aware of the present moment, the individual connects with his or her prefrontal cortex that utilizes logic and intuition to recognize one's deep emotions, inner self, and experience rather than one's reactive and instinctual responses (Davis, 2015). Kabat-Zinn (1990) has argued that the practice of centring during mindfulness meditation promotes neural integration, which is experienced as unity and congruence between inner and outer experiences.

Literature on Spirituality, Mindfulness and Art

The use of meditation as a means to spirituality and a higher personal purpose is found in several spiritual traditions. Spirituality provides a human and transcendental connection and meaning. Sheldrake (2012) explores various religions and spiritual approaches, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as well as neo-paganism, esoterica, and secular spiritual, to identify the underlying basis for spirituality. Through his work, we see that meditation and the search for a universal energy is coexistent with one's desire for meaning and interconnectedness (Sheldrake, 2012).

The contemplative practices of Buddhism (Zen meditation), Hinduism (Vipassana meditation), Judaism (Kavannah), Christianity (Centring Prayer), and Islam (Sufism), as well as other secular spiritual traditions, promote the use of stillness to foster connection with self and transcendental presence. Spiritual practices have been show to change neural connections and patterns within the brain that shape our consciousness as well as our perception of the world (Newberg & Waldman, 2010).

Spirituality can improve mental health functioning by providing purpose and a greater sense of interconnectedness with others. Greeson et al. (2011) studied the connection between spirituality and mindfulness and found that a sense of spirituality achieved through MBSR showed an improvement in individuals' mental health. This association through mindfulness provides "an awareness of and sense of connection with the transcendental in daily life" (Greeson et al., 2011, p. 8). Spiritual practices, whether connected to religious beliefs or not, provide an enhancement to physical and emotional health (Newberg & Waldman, 2010).

Art as a mindful, contemplative practice. Art is an activity similar to mindfulness, which promotes personal insight and connecting with the transcendental presence through deep contemplation. Although mindfulness meditation has been introduced across a number of clinical settings, many individuals report difficulty meditating (Newberg & Waldman, 2010). Issues include inability to remain quiet or still for extended periods due to chronic pain, lack of time, and difficulty staying focused (Newberg, 2011).

Art as both a human and spiritual creative activity has been associated with mindful awareness. Art therapists have advocated their own version of this perspective

(Allen, 1995, 2013; Farrelly-Hansen, 2001; Franklin, 2010; Malchiodi, 2002; McNiff, 2011). The intention of the artist to sit for a time before creating is the invitation to the soul and creative source to join the process. This is similar to intention and mindfulness practices, wherein the individual becomes quiet and present to the moment. Allen (1995, 2013) does not see these acts as connected to a specific religious discourse, but rather to our own human connection with a creative source and energy within the world. “Art is a spiritual path to the true indigenous soul of the ordinary person” (Allen, 2013, Loc. 3065).

Engaging in art making, especially within Art Therapy encourages the verbal and non-verbal expression of emotions through images, songs, and dances. Art interventions can provide an experience of mindfulness that transcends pain and emotional difficulties, similar to MBSR (Kabat-Zinn, 1992) and MBCT (Segal et al., 2002). Art making provides a way to orient oneself to internal methods of knowing, similar to mindfulness meditation. Mindful art activity brings awareness and engagement with the body (Davis, 2015). The awareness to the body and focus on creating integrates mind and body (Rappaport, 2009). This integration yields a greater internal knowing and helps connect physical, emotional, and cognitive experiences (Levine, 2010).

In the recently published *Mindful Art Therapy,* Davis (2015) outlines a strong theoretical basis for combining Art Therapy and mindfulness. Davis identifies the philosophical background of mindfulness, as well as the neuropsychological and physiological effects of mindfulness, and then identifies new theories regarding the influences of art on brain plasticity and trauma. Davis uses a phenomenological approach to show how art and mindfulness complement each other. The use of case studies assists in exploring and identifying how art and mindfulness work in helping clients to explore

and change their relationships with depression and anxiety. Davis shared that mindful awareness of body and inner consciousness gives rise to inner knowing, which can then be worked through in the art. Davis also explores the use of mindfulness and art in various theoretical psychotherapeutic approaches, including Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, MBSR, positive psychology, and DBT. This book provides an exploration of the foundations for mindful Art Therapy, and its grounding in neuroscience, and gives examples of the use of art with psychotherapeutic approaches, creating a framework for how art and mindfulness are compatible and can be integrated.

Art as a way of knowing has also been connected to the divine through deep contemplation, and the exploration of one's soul (Allen, 1995). Art is considered by many to be a spiritual practice (Allen, 1995, 2013; Farrelly-Hansen, 2001; Grey, 2001; Valters-Paintner & Beckham, 2010). Art is a way of exploring divine images and the spiritual (Grey, 2001; Valters-Paintner & Beckham, 2010; Valters-Paintner, 2011). Likewise, art can be a means of communicating with the soul (McConeghey, 2003). Art and creative acts provide our soul with a voice through imagination, expression, dialogue, and connection with the mysterious creative force within the world. We create as we are created in God's image (Allen, 2013; Cameron, 2002). We reflect God's image by being part of God and by participating in expression and creativity in the world (Farrelly-Hansen, 2001; Moon, 2008). We are extensions of God's working in the world. Thus, art making is a spiritual activity that, with mindful intention, becomes integrated as a spiritual practice.

Previous empirical studies. Research shows that non-verbal Art Therapy interventions can be used to identify, organize, and express feeling and process

experiences (Monti & Peterson, 2004; Rubin, 2010). Research studies also provide evidence that Art Therapy can lead to improvements in mental and emotional states, development of positive experiences, and greater self-reflection (Stuckey & Noble, 2010). Art Therapy has been shown to improve mood, anxiety, and quality of life in women with breast cancer (Reynolds & Priori, 2006; Thyme et al., 2009). Art Therapy promotes mastery, renews identity, and improves locus of control in seniors, and individuals with mental health and psychiatric illnesses (Chandraiah, et al., 2012; Johnson & Sullivan-Marx, 2006; Uttley, Stevenson, Scope, Rawdin, & Sutton, 2015). Art Therapy has been used in prison populations to improve mood, depression symptoms, and locus of control (Gussak, 2006, 2007, 2009). Art activities have been shown to promote healing and decrease psychological distress in children (Coholic, 2011; Malchiodi, 1998). Art activities promote mindfulness, self-regulation, identity development, and coping skills (Reynolds & Priori, 2006; Stevenson-Taylor & Mansell, 2012).

Art Therapy has also been shown to be an effective complementary treatment for several psychological and physical illnesses. For example, Chandraiah et al. (2012) found that a group Art Therapy intervention offered in conjunction with medication management was associated with a statistically significant improvement in depressive symptoms, interpersonal skills, and expression and processing of emotions among a heterogeneous group of psychiatric outpatients. A review of Art Therapy research from 1999 – 2010 conducted by Slayton, D'Archer and Kaplans (2010) concluded that Art Therapy was an effective complementary therapy for cancer, chronic pain, depression, sexual deviancy, post-traumatic stress disorder, personality disorders and sexual trauma.

Art Therapy has been shown to be a cost-effective method for improving health. Uttley et al. (2015) reviewed 11 studies published between 2006 and 2013 that assessed the effectiveness of Art Therapy. They identified statistically significant health improvements among participants who had engaged in Art Therapy, along with evidence of cost effectiveness. Uttley et al. (2015) concluded that Art Therapy was effective in improving quality of life, despite varying techniques and populations. Van Lith (2015) used an interpretative phenomenological approach to study the long-term effects of Art Therapy on those coping with severe mental health issues. Participants shared that Art Therapy provided a means of expressing and coping with mental health issues and an opportunity to develop new insights. Art Therapy is used frequently to treat those with cancer (Bar-Sela, Atid, Danos, Gabay & Epelbaum, 2007; Boehm et al., 2014; Nainis et al., 2006; Thyme et al., 2009). These studies showed that integration of Art Therapy into cancer treatment led to improvements in health and well-being, depression symptoms, and quality of life.

Studies that have assessed interventions that have combined mindfulness and art have also found evidence of positive physical and emotional effects, including reduction of stress, anxiety and depression (e.g., Ando et al, 2016; Monti & Peterson, 2004; Monti et al., 2006). There are several different arts therapies that incorporate mindfulness. These include Mindfulness-Based Art Therapy (MBAT) (Monti & Peterson, 2004; Monti et al., 2006), Mind-Body Awareness in Art Therapy (Fritsche, 2014), Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction and Expressive Arts (Isis, 2014), Person-Centred Expressive Arts Therapy (Rogers, 1993), and arts-based mindfulness combined with Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) (Coholic, 2011).

Mindfulness-Based Art Therapy (MBAT) is the most researched of all the mindfulness art therapy approaches (see Ando et al., 2016; Ando & Ito, 2014; Monti & Peterson, 2004; Monti et al., 2006, 2012, 2013; Peterson, 2000, 2014; Nainis et al., 2006; Klatt et al., 2013). In MBAT, mindfulness methods are introduced as the first component of the program. Subsequently Art Therapy is introduced using various art mediums to assist participants in expressing their conscious and unconscious feelings regarding a topic, including sharing their art work and experiences in a group environment (Monti & Peterson, 2004; Peterson, 2000). The MBAT studies by Monti and Peterson (2004) and Monti et al. (2006, 2012) showed a clinically significant reduction in global severity scales, a statistically significant improvement on emotional and mental health subscales, and a reduction in distress levels among individuals in active cancer treatment or in remission.

Monti et al. (2012) demonstrated favourable physical changes in the cerebral blood flow of MBAT participants, confirming the physical effects of meditation and art interventions. This study on women recovering from cancer assessed the contribution of art interventions that had been introduced as part of an established MBSR program. Increased cerebral blood flow among participants, compared to the control group, suggested that these activities improved insula, caudate and amygdala functioning, areas of the brain associated with emotional processing (Monti et al., 2012). While anxiety levels were reduced in the short term, this study had a small sample size and did not include an assessment of the long-term effects.

Peterson (2014, 2015) directly integrated Art Therapy activities in an established MBAT program such as by combining mindfulness walking meditation, photography and

collage art expression. The use of art materials was offered as a means of mindfully working with the world and one's emotions. Peterson's (2014; 2015) "Walk-About" is the only program which integrates mindfulness with art expression, and has not been researched. The new way of seeing cancer and life through the MBAT program increased participants' ability to cope and creatively construct ways of dealing with illness. This program enhanced coping strategies; however, it did not encourage regular, long-term art based meditation practices.

MBAT was used by Coholic (2011) and Klatt, Harpster, Browne, White and Case-Smith (2013) with youth and children to introduce art and mindfulness in a "fun" environment where verbal skills are not the focus. Coholic (2011) provided a mindfulness Art Therapy program that enhanced children's ability to learn to be mindful, express emotions, and develop better interpersonal skills. This study did not use a mindful art intervention, but, through the mindfulness training, incorporated art activities as a way to express what is happening. Participants reported that they found the group "fun" and therefore there was minimal attrition. The students enjoyed coming to the group and through the activities developed a better sense of self, improved self-confidence, and improved their abilities to express themselves in daily life.

Other MBAT methods promote the connection between mind and body (Fritsche, 2014; Herring, 2014; Isis, 2014). These mindfulness and physically oriented Art Therapy programs develop a meditational activity separate from the artistic activity, which then elicits connections through a group follow-up reflection. The study of mindfulness within the artistic activity promotes a different awareness, where the physical and visual experiences can be directly translated to real-life interactions (Herring, 2014).

Mindfulness, when combined with Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) and creative arts components, has also been shown to be effective in improving emotional regulation, reducing stress, and promoting self-awareness, and resilience (Coholic, 2011; Monti & Peterson, 2004).

Rappaport (2009) developed a Focusing-Oriented Arts Therapy (FOAT) that integrates Eugene Gendlin's (1981) focusing exercises with Art Therapy (Rappaport, 2014, p. 193). FOAT is a six-step practice (rather than an integrated methodology) that uses focusing exercises to assist the client to become more aware of feelings and sensations, and move towards acceptance, similar to mindfulness. Person-Centred Expressive Arts Therapy (Rogers, 1993) and Creative Mindfulness (von Daler & Schwanbeck, 2014) also combine mindfulness with expressive arts. Although mindfulness and art were introduced as separate components, it was found that awareness and openness was enhanced.

Ando and Ito (2014) compared the use of Mindful Art Therapy (MAT) and Art Therapy among college students. The study evaluated the effect of two sessions of MAT and recorded changes with the Japanese Profile of Mood States tool. For those attending MAT, there was a significant reduction on tension-anxiety, depression-dejection, and fatigue-inertia subscales (Ando & Ito, 2014). Ando, Kiro, and Hayashida (2016) used the same short session MAT with a group of advanced cancer patients. The significant results showed that "the MATS including both mindfulness and Art Therapy activates the sympathetic nervous system and increases vigor" (Ando et al., 2016, p. 15), indicating that physical vigor and ability to cope with cancer improved.

Literature on Phenomenology as Method and Art-based Inquiry Approach

Phenomenology refers to an approach to inquiry that involves rich description of lived experience. The interpretative-descriptive approach to phenomenology described by van Manen (2014) involves a thorough exploration and unpacking of the lived experience of an activity to provide deeper understanding. The interpretative phenomenological method seeks to understand lived experience by viewing it through different lenses and then labelling the different perspectives. This study integrated the different lenses of a personal experience of Zentangle, a practice of experience, and an observer view of Zentangle.

Phenomenological Art Therapy uses a stage approach to understanding the therapeutic art experience. Betensky (1995) describes the approach as beginning with a scribble activity, which is followed by a more directed art expression, and ends with a reflection on the process and created artwork. This structured approach to creation and exploration of meanings associated with the art image, utilizing the senses, intuition, inner and outer consciousness, is very close to the experience of Zentangle, with the exception of explicit mindfulness. However, the intentionality that Betensky identifies as key in bringing awareness to one's acts, is closely related to being present in mindfulness. Betensky identifies how engaging with the materials and the creative activity, as well as seeing the artwork, provides a complete therapeutic art experience. The phenomenological Art Therapy experience has been included as part of my research methodology because it is similar to a Mindfulness Art Therapy.

Summary

There is a very limited empirical research base on Zentangle. Despite the minimal studies on its effectiveness Cathy Malchiodi, a renowned art therapist and psychologist, regularly expounds the positive effects of Zentangle as an Art Therapy intervention (2014a, 2014b). According to Malchiodi (2014a), “Zentangle has become an international phenomenon that now has applications in stress reduction, education, therapy and even motivational training” (p. 1). Malchiodi promotes its use as a method of self-care that fosters relaxation and inner focus. She has described repetitive drawing as a form of “creative aimlessness” that enhances connectivity to the present and releases one from past and future thoughts.

Zentangle has been described as a meditative approach to art making that can enhance relaxation and connection to self. This complements Walsh and Shapiro’s (2006) view of meditation as a self-actualization strategy directed to enhancing qualities such as wisdom and compassion. Research studies on MBAT provide insight into the contributions of mindfulness meditation and art making in promoting expression of unconscious emotions. There are, however, relatively few studies regarding the lived experience of Zentangle as a meditative art intervention.

Chapter 3. Methods

Phenomenological and arts-based research approaches were used to explore the lived experience of Zentangle. Rather than focusing on positivist-empiricist approaches, this research is located in an ontology in which physical and kinaesthetic awareness provides a dominant knowing in life, affirming both the exterior objective reality and the subjective interior experience. This integral approach encompasses interior and exterior, subjective and objective, collective and individual experiences (see Wilber, 1997; Fidyk, 2013). van Manen (2014) has observed that our internal knowing and bodily sense is where our being and everyday life function. My approach was based on an understanding of knowledge that is informed by empirical and factual evidence, as well as intuitive and nonlocal reality (Malchiodi, 2012). Specifically, I used an interpretive-descriptive phenomenological approach (van Manen, 2014), along with arts-based (McNiff, 2013a), and phenomenology of art expression (Betensky, 1995), to explore the lived experience of Zentangle as a mindful art activity.

Phenomenological Approach

According to van Manen (2014) the primary aim of phenomenological research is to "provide a thorough description of the primordial meaning structures of lived experience" (p. 61) in a way that allows the truth and inherent nature of the experience to be known. Our initial understanding and vision of the lived experience is not what is known on the surface, but rather encompasses a deeper set of meanings, experiences, and realities. van Manen (2011) has identified three key phenomenological research phases: 1) epoche and reduction; 2) practice, and 3) reflectio.

Epoche. The first phase of a phenomenological approach involves *epoche* and reduction. Epoche involves understanding our biases and presuppositions, bracketing or suspending our everyday "natural attitude," to get at the deeper set of meanings, the current lived understandings of a phenomenon (van Manen, 2014, p. 215). The goal of *epoche* is "access to the living meaning of the phenomenon" (p. 215). Phenomenology requires one to inquire into a phenomenon with an attitude of wonder, to view a lived experience as utterly strange, being open, aware, and curious to listen to and allow the experience to speak to us. By its reduction to elemental understandings, this lived experience becomes alive to us with new meanings, and we are awakened to new patterns, new ways of being in the world, through the form and structures that we observe (Davis, 2015; Spinelli, 2005). Through "radical reflection" (van Manen, 2011, /methodology), questioning of lived experiences, and "bracketing of everyday life," a deeper and fuller understanding of a particular experience, and focusing on the *what* and *how* of an experience occurs (van Manen, 2014, p. 41; p. 62).

Practice. The second phase of phenomenological inquiry involves *practice*, in this instance, practice of the phenomenon of Zentangle. In his book, *Phenomenology of Practice* (2014), van Manen states that the "phenomenology of practice is for practice and of practice" (p. 15). The role of practice in this study, was to engage in the practice of Zentangle to understand Zentangle with fresh perspectives, in order to gain thick descriptions of the lived experience. The phenomenology of practice aims to elicit the experiences of practicing in the world, professional and otherwise, record and describe them.

Reflectio. Reflective inquiry, or *reflecto involves* activities aimed at interpreting "aspects of meaning or meaningfulness" that are associated with a phenomenon" (van Manen, 2011, /methodology). In this study, reflective inquiry involved identifying preconceived ideas and understanding of what Zentangle is or should be, and listening and trying to open to new insights and understandings. For example, while Zentangle is called a mindful art activity, what is this experience? What is mindful? What is art? How is Zentangle both an art and mindfulness activity? How is Zentangle experienced? In addition, reflection also involved reflecting on the artwork created as part of this study, and also reflection during the process of writing of this thesis report.

Phenomenological Art Therapy and Art as Research

The primary aim of Phenomenological Art Therapy and research is to understand the visual structures and non-verbal components of a lived experience (Betensky, 1995; Davis, 2015). Phenomenological Art Therapy seeks to understand reality as the "meeting of multiple material, immaterial and human elements in a creative experience that is happening" (Stitelman, 2012, p. 109). Thus, Phenomenological Art Therapy uses art as a means to experience phenomena through multiple senses and ways of knowing.

Davis (2015) identifies phenomenology as providing a basic foundation for Mindful Art Therapy, as it promotes curiosity and a "beginners mind" in viewing art and lived experiences. Betensky (1995) focuses on the exploration of the phenomenon of art activities to understand lived experience and the revealing of man's being through the activities of art and Art Therapy. Phenomenological inquiry uses intuitive scanning of evidence, including the use of artistic modes of knowing, to understand and access the unique distinguishable characteristics of the experience (van Manen, 2014).

Arts-based inquiry is built on lived experience through art expression, experiencing, and viewing. In this study, art making was used to experience the phenomenon of Zentangle and to gather visual data. By including arts-based inquiry, the artistic process and the making of the artistic expression become a primary mode of understanding and examining experience (McNiff, 1998). In arts-based research, the phenomenological experience is also represented through the creative act and image (Kossak, 2013). van Manen (2014) includes art making as part of practice in his book on *Phenomenology of Practice*.

Art provides a complete and encompassing experience of a phenomenon because it grasps and holds our intuited and perceived experience along with the sense and visual experience of the art form (Gerber et al., 2013). To fully participate in arts-based research is to use "art (as) a way of knowing, problem solving, healing and transformation that we marginalize if we do not embrace it as a vehicle of research" (McNiff, 2013a, p. xiii). Using art as a tool in the research process is congruent with my belief that art is effective in understanding and transforming our world.

The outcome of the process—the artistic piece—is both an image, a reflection of the experience, and an image that provides information to be understood and used as part of the research. "One significant aspect of the arts – they not only describe experience, they directly manifest experience" (Franklin, 2013, p. 90). By recognizing and including the artwork of the participants, as well as the responsive artwork of the researcher, the research is informed by a wide array of sensory, visual, kinesthetic, and unconscious information about both the process and direct experience of Zentangle.

Research Process

The research process involved recruitment, experience of the phenomenon, data collection, review of data, and writing about the phenomenon of Zentangle.

Recruitment. Participants[2] who had previously taken my Zentangle classes and current CZTs in my geographical area were invited to participate in this study. The invitation to CZTs was intentional as these participants had longer experience with Zentangle as well as experience with those they have taught. The initial email invitation included the objectives of the research study, the proposed plan for participation, the obligations for commitment to the research study, and the confidentiality and consent forms (Appendix A). Potential participants were provided with an outline of the study and its intentions, and were requested to complete the "Consent for Sharing of Information" form (Appendix B).

Four possible dates for the focus group were suggested. Individuals responded with the dates they were available, and a date was chosen to accommodate the most participants. Participants were chosen by a process of elimination. This was a convenience sample—I wanted to have at least four to six participants for the focus group and expected a number of participants to be eliminated through attrition. This meant that although ten participants initially indicated they wished to participate, the final number of participants for the focus group was seven.

Participants. All participants in the study were familiar with Zentangle. Five of the seven participants were CZTs. Although inclusion of CZTs meant that the data was

[2] The term participant is used in this research study to identify focus group members and research participants. They had no obligations or gains in this study. I chose not to use the term co-researcher, which indicates a more formal and influential role.

biased, it also ensured an opportunity to develop a thick, rich description of the Zentangle based on the depth and range of their experience of Zentangle, both in relation to their individual practice and also their teaching experiences.

The participants were all females, ranging in age from 52 – 74 years. Six of the participants were currently employed, although this varied from contract work to full-time employment, and one was retired (see Table 1). All of the participants were from a middle-income background, with six having a minimum of a college education (see Table 1).

Table 1
Identification of Participants and Demographics

Identification Number	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Vocation	CZT	Years practicing Zentangle	Artwork
1	60	F	Caucasian	Art Teacher, Artist	Yes	7	Figure 5 & 12
2	55	F	Caucasian	Criminal Analyst	Yes	3	Figure 6 & 13
3	55	F	Caucasian	Minister	No	5	Figure 8 & 14
4	53	F	Jewish	Occupational Therapist	Yes	1 ½	Figure 9 & 15
5	52	F	Asian	Project Manager	Yes	2	Figure 11 & 16
6	74	F	Asian	Retired Seamstress	No	½	Figure 7 & 17
7	65	F	Caucasian	Art Teacher, Artist	Yes	5	Figure 10 & 18

Data collection. Data was collected from a focus group discussion and two semi-structured, follow-up interviews. Both empirical and reflective data were gathered "to collect examples of possible human experiences in order to reflect on the meanings that

may be inherent in them" (van Manen, 2014, p. 313). As part of this process, the review of the data from the beginning focus group experience, the art making, the individual phenomenological interviews, and thematizing occurred in collaboration with the participants.

Focus group. The first phase of data collection involved a Zentangle re-enactment, sharing experiences about Zentangle, and an art response to the Zentangle experience in a focus group setting. Collective exploration of the experience encouraged participants to go deeper in their understanding of their experience, which in turn provided a richer and thicker description.

I chose my studio which participants had previously attended as the setting for this initial meeting. This setting was deliberately chosen to encourage participants to return to their original felt experience (van Manen, 2014). The group met and was introduced to the process of the focus group discussion. There was camaraderie among the participants. They were accustomed to the Zentangle experience and shared a common reality. This familiarity promoted safety and a feeling of belonging to a shared and common existence. As Willis (1991) writes, "Phenomenological states are known through direct evidence of one's own primary experience and indirect evidence of the primary experience of others" (p. 178).

The focus group took place over two hours, which included time for introductions, and overview of the research process. Confidentiality and informed consent forms were reviewed, discussed, and signed. Each participant was provided with a copy of the consent form. Participants consented to participating in the study and having the sessions recorded.

The group participated in a 60-minute Zentangle session which was audio- and videotaped. The first part of the session involved a re-enactment and refreshing of a Zentangle art experience. Unfamiliar tangle patterns were used to evoke a novel experience. Participants were provided with 8.5" x 11" bond paper, and were then invited to participate in an art making activity in response to the Zentangle experience. The instructions were provided for this responsive art activity:

> I invite you to do an art response to your experience. What were the feelings, what were your thoughts? Is there an image that comes to mind from doing today's Zentangle? You can just draw… here's some markers, some crayon pencils, some crayons. Or you can just colour an emotion. Put down a colour on the page. Pastel crayons. Pick your passion. I will give you about 10 minutes.
> The group created a piece of art for 10 – 15 minutes.

Discussion about Zentangle was initiated by inviting participants to present their art response piece and their reflections about their experiences with Zentangle. Questions that guided the group discussion included: What was your felt and emotional experience when you practiced Zentangle today?, How and what did you feel when practicing Zentangle?, What were your thoughts when you drew today? During the group session, participants were asked to elaborate on their experiences, seeking information and clarification through a multi-layered exploration and explanation of what occurred.

Initial follow-up interview. A transcription of the focus group discussion was prepared and emailed to participants for their review, and a follow-up interview was scheduled with each participant approximately one month after the focus group. Follow-up interviews were done at places chosen by the participant, either a residence or a coffee shop. Participants met with the researcher in a one-on-one interaction, where the situation was comfortable and an environment of "intimacy" was possible. This provided a safe space for participants to share and enter into deeper reflection regarding both the focus

group experience, including the Zentangle and art response piece, as well as their own personal experience with Zentangle.

The first interview was an inquiry into the "pre-reflective experiential account" (van Manen, 2014, p. 311). According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), questions and interviews should seek to uncover meaning and an understanding of the experience. Thus, the intent was to further explore what the experience of Zentangle was like for the participants and how the experience of Zentangle affected their lives. The guiding questions focused the conversations and allowed for expansion on the themes that arose from the focus group.

The semi-structured interview began with questions about their experience of the focus group (e.g., What was it like practicing Zentangle in a group again?; What did you experience in last session's Zentangle? How did you feel when you were drawing?). Participants were also asked a range of questions about their personal experience of Zentangle, such as: How did you start Zentangle?, What happens when you are doing Zentangle?, Has Zentangle practice influenced your spiritual life?, Or your attitude or approach toward life?, Have you noticed a change in your behaviour or mood since you began to practice Zentangle?, Your way of knowing in the world? They were also asked to reflect on the art pieces created in the focus group session. Interview data was recorded through written notes and an audio recorder, and then transcribed.

This was followed by a thematizing of the data according to Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). In addition, a visual map of the results from these interviews was created to organize and develop themes (Appendix E,

Figures 21 & 22). This visual display of the themes helped expand the descriptions and make connections between them.

Second follow-up interview. A third collection of data and verification of the previous data was conducted through an email or phone conversation to identify the main themes from the interview and to discuss any further clarifications. The second follow-up interviews were approximately 20-30 minutes and provided additional information and reflection upon what was learned and recorded. This completed the data collection phase.

Data analysis. After all the data was collected, the transcriptions were read to identify the themes throughout. Themes identified from the focus group and follow-up interviews were categorized in an Excel spreadsheet by the researcher. This was done through Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013) and an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Van Lith, 2015). Particularly evocative phrasing, themes, references, and comparisons that referenced deeper meaning and description were pulled out. From this, categories and subcategories from the information were created (see Appendix E, Figure 20). A mind map, a visual display of words that relate to a topic, was created (see Appendix E, Figures 21 & 22). Mind maps of each category helped to identify overlaps and provide further insight into the connected meanings. A summary of these themes and subcategories provided a base from which to answer the initial question, "What is the phenomenological experience of Zentangle?"

Trustworthiness and rigor. Research validity in a phenomenological study is achieved by examining the accuracy and logic of the data that arose from the lived experiences. Four modalities were used throughout the study to ensure that the information was true and consistent. These included (a) the initial focus group data, (b)

the Zentangle art, (c) the response art, and (d) the individual interviews. Consistent and repetitive themes that emerge across the modalities provide validity and trustworthiness. A follow-up interview reviewed the collected data and outlined the main themes from both transcripts, with participants providing further details or enhancements on their data, strengthening data validity.

Research reliability was sought by verifying the transcription data and the experience through multiple reviews by the participants and researcher. The transcription of focus group and individual interviews was reviewed and corrected by participants and the researcher, providing another layer of clarification to the experience of Zentangle. This verification confirmed and provided credibility that the information that was provided was accurate.

Conflict of interest. This study and the resulting thesis were conducted as part of the requirements for obtaining a Master of Psychotherapy and Spirituality Degree at St. Stephen's College, Edmonton, Alberta. All costs were paid for by the thesis student. There were no external financial interests (honoraria, grants, employment, and ownership, consultancies, or equity interest) or non-financial interests (personal or professional relationships or affiliations) existing between the researcher and the creators of Zentangle or its products.

Research ethics review. This research study was approved by the St. Stephen's College ethics review board. Ethical issues were addressed using St. Stephen's College *Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*; these guidelines were followed both during the development of the research study and during the research. An overview of the project, with the obligations for participation in the research study, and all required forms

were provided to those invited to participate in the study. This allowed for transparency from the beginning regarding obligations, potential risks and benefits, and contributions to the research study.

Participants were given opportunities to exercise their right to withdraw from participating at each step of the process, through the provision of full disclosure regarding their time commitment and the expectations of the research study. Participants were reassured that their non-participation would not influence any ongoing contact or relationships with the researcher or St. Stephen's College and that any identifying information would remain confidential.

Upon agreeing to participate in the study and at the beginning of the focus group session, participants were provided an outline of the study, including intentions for the study, and then completed a "Consent to Counselling/Art Therapy Services" form (Appendix B) and an "Informed Consent Form – Zentangle® Research Study, 2015" (Appendix C).

The researcher addressed anonymity and confidentiality issues by informing participants of their rights and the researcher's confidentiality obligations, and by completion of the consent to participate form (Appendix B). The researcher assured participants that the research data would be kept secure and the final thesis or any publications would not include personal names or any other identifying information. The Consent to Participate form (Appendix B) included a statement for obtaining consent for photographing the participants' artwork and reproducing these photographs in the thesis. Participants were asked to agree to maintain confidentiality among group participants both verbally and by signing the confidentiality agreement. Artwork was shown as part of the

discussion, exploration of the experience, and reviewed in conjunction with the interview for meaning. The artwork provided a record of the initial focus group research data. The thesis includes examples of my own Zentangle as well as the artwork of participants.

Information to the participants regarding any follow-up issues was provided through the invitation letter and in a letter of thanks following the completion of the study. All documentation was stored securely and all identifying information was removed. The data of the recorded sessions was saved on a solitary hard drive with the data encrypted, and kept in a locked storage facility. If there were areas of concern relating to personal health issues, contact information and appropriate referrals were provided by the researcher.

Additional anecdotal data was included in the research from practicum participants, who were provided with consent forms (Appendix B & C). There is no identifying information in the data. Information gathered through the practicum experience was collected and stored according to the research protocol and per St. Stephen's College practicum outlined on the Consent to Counselling form (Appendix C).

Chapter 4. Findings

A Phenomenological Exploration of Zentangle: What is this Experience?

I am exploring…. I have been a quilter for a while. I draw as part of practicing my hand-brain muscle memory development, for creating when quilting. So when I find an email stating there is a new drawing method called "Zentangle," I feel compelled to investigate. The person calls it a drawing practice. What is it? How can it be different from the continuous line drawings that I practice repeatedly in my notebooks and art journals? I am bored with the repetitious lines that swirl across the page. They are calming but lack creativity, and the movement is a well-worn pathway in my brain. I need new movements to learn. I need inspiration.

I investigate further. How can this drawing be so different from practicing loops in a nine-patch or feathers along a border? I open Google and in the search line I type "Zentangle," and up pops a website: "Zentangle Method is an easy-to-learn, relaxing, and fun way to create beautiful images by drawing structured patterns." Hmm. Sounds interesting. The designs on the site are amazing. Surely I can do this … or wait, can I? How is it possible to draw with such fabulous artistry? I have been drawing swirls, and wiggly lines, and feathers, and zig zag patterns. I look further, and see that there are different symbols and patterns in the same small image. How is that possible? And it works? It looks beautiful.

I take a small piece of paper, and I draw the simple outline of a leaf. And then I divide the image, and fill in different segments of the image with lines, dots, and circles. I begin to copy the images from the website. There are grids and then leaves. Hmm. Semi-representational. Soon, I am practicing this new drawing method in my "church book," the

small journal where I practice the hand-brain movement to keep my brain flexible. I begin to draw new patterns based on a grid like a checkerboard. I fill the squares with wiggly lines and straight lines. I combine them with some swirls. Then I fill in another area with leaf shapes. I am immersed in the drawing. I am focused on the pen and the paper connecting. My eye follows the lines and the developing patterns. I forget about the day and my obligations. Soon 20 minutes have passed. I do not have the anxiety in the pit of my stomach. My heartbeat has slowed down; I can tell by the steadiness in my ears. I can feel my body relaxed. There is no tension in my back; my arms are steady but not tense. I feel my mind has slowed as well. There is none of the ongoing self-talk that usually carries me through my activities. I haven't felt this refreshed in a long time. I feel a buzz in my mind, with new ideas of what to draw, and happy anticipation of possibilities of patterns.

I test out the new method of drawing when I feel stuck before beginning to design a client's quilt. Instead of procrastinating, and eating some chocolate, I sit down and draw a Zentangle. Lines, dots, and X's. I look back at the quilt on the machine and I have a new idea. Quickly, I draw it on a fresh piece of paper. I've got it; I have created a new pattern … not only am I less stressed about "what am I going to stitch on this quilt?" but I have come up with a new design. Fabulous. I feel confident again. I begin quilting. I see new possibilities. I need to practice more and share it with others. I investigate how to become a certified Zentangle teacher.

I attend the certification course where the process and philosophy of Zentangle drawing is taught by Rick Roberts and Maria Thomas, the creators of this method. In this old church retreat centre, they impart on all the participants the slowing of the person and

the creating of a Zentangle. My experience of being part of this retreat with so many other interested and passionate artists is energizing and inspiring. Drawing Zentangle together is like a virus spreading among the participants. We become infected with this need to draw, to continue learning and sharing, and stay connected to this creative energy. The excitement is contagious, and multiplying.

As I leave the course, I realize that my creative vision has changed. I see patterns more than before; in the carpet at the hotel, the sidewalks on the street, the waves on the seashore, the leaves on the trees, the clouds in the sky. I feel like I was not seeing all these years. The world becomes a complex array of colour, pattern, unique artistry, and beauty. And I can draw all of it—another shift in my thinking. Before I felt my creativity was limited to fabric and quilt patterns and blocks, like the log cabin. But now I see how I can draw the patterns in the chair at the restaurant. Now I can figure out how to draw the leaves on the trees, not just the overall shape of the tree. My artistry has not just shifted from being able to draw new patterns, but now I am better able to see possibilities and new beauty in the world around me.

After completing certification, I experienced another shift. My Zentangle drawings became even more focused and deliberate. I gained new awareness and understanding as to how and why there is an outlined method. The drawing activity is structured; there is little hesitation when I approach the blank tile. The only intention I have as I sit down to draw is to “just create with pen and paper.” I have no predetermined idea of what I will draw.

At the moment when I enter into the drawing, I say, “Just one section, complete one pattern in a section on the tile.” In that moment, as I frame my square 3 ½ inch piece

of paper with a pencil line, I have left the routine world of chores, cooking meals, and quilting. I have entered the space within my tile.

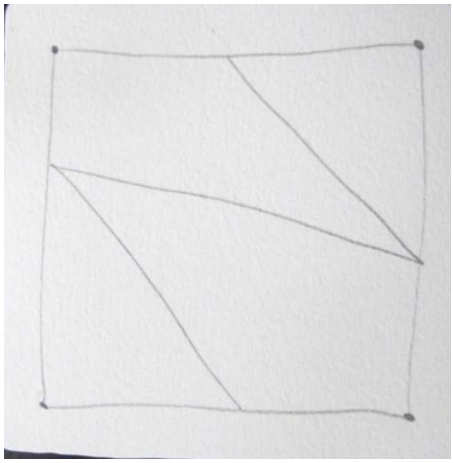

Figure 1. Zentangle step 1

I take a deep breath. And another. The soft texture of the paper calms me. I feel its freshness, its newness, and it feels like possibility. A small tile of hope. I pencil in a line that divides the paper, and then another. I know that I only need to fill one section at a time with a small symbol or pattern. I concentrate on that one area. With purpose, I draw the line, and repeat it with another. As I hold the pen, its smoothness and firmness in my hand feels like a part of me. The tip's nub rubs against the grain of the textured paper with a soft grab. I feel its tension, and the line emerges. And another. I relax into the lines, and then I add more lines that cross. The same line is created in different directions across the small area of the page. I don't know how it will finish. I draw the short lines in one direction and then another. A pattern emerges. My mind shifts from "what's for dinner" to "how cool is that pattern." A sense of wonder emerges. I finish a section.

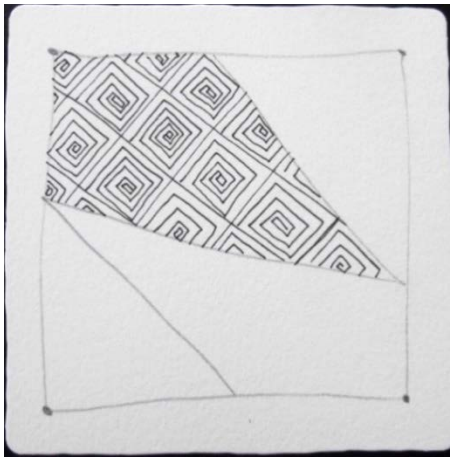

Figure 2. Zentangle first pattern

I move on to another section. I breathe. My thought focuses on what to draw next. What shape emerges in my mind's eye? Dots begin to spread across the surface; I connect them. They become a wavy web. My mind wanders to thoughts of the day. But then the pattern emerges more strongly, and I am pulled back to the paper and pen in front of me. A bubble forms around my awareness. I am calm. My breathing has slowed. I feel the pen "scratch" and move across the surface. Its resistance encourages me to keep drawing. Another section is filled in. I move on to another section. I begin to draw another shape. Two rows of lines form in relaxed parallel. Then I fill between the lines, with small circles. The circles sit on top of each other and fill in a space. I colour in between the circles. I add a thicker line to one side of each circle. They pop out as if to say "here I am."

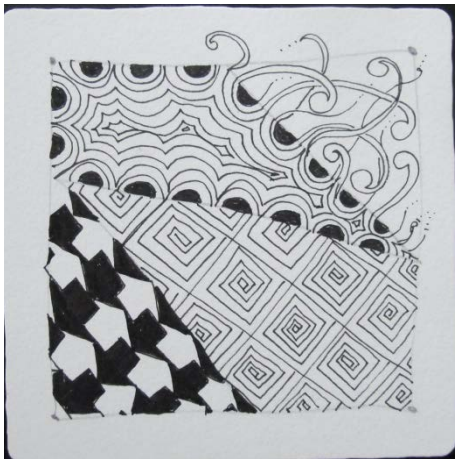

Figure 3. Completed Zentangle

I am more engaged in the drawing than in passing thoughts of the day. I am not wondering or worrying about what has happened or what hasn't happened yet. That can wait. I can draw. I hold up my piece of paper. I ask myself, "How did those patterns fit together?" But they do! I do not know what my end image will look like, nor does it matter. I shade with my pencil around some shapes, making the texture and value change. I hold it up again.

Figure 4. Zentangle with shading

Some patterns flow from one to another. Some patterns have no relation … but on the paper they work. There is a connection and congruency within the page. I return to the

activity of the day. My heart and head is filled with pleasure and satisfaction. I have completed a "task." I have created some artwork. My mind and soul refreshed. I have new ideas and energy to complete the cleaning of the kitchen, to quilt another quilt, to call the doctor's office. I do not know that there is a shift in my attention or awareness … but I have completed my Zentangle drawing, and am confident I am able to accomplish more today. My heart is full. My brain feels light. My physical being relaxed.

This is my everyday experience of drawing a Zentangle. Unfocused and unsure about what to do next, I am shifted during the time I spend drawing Zentangle—the 20 minutes where I sit relaxed and engaged at the same time, my brain and body and emotions come together. I am connected at the centre. And when the drawing of the Zentangle is finished, I not only have artwork that seemed to emerge from nowhere, but I also have completed an activity. Following this, I feel reenergized and readily shift my focus as I set out to accomplish other tasks.

This is one experience of being engaged in Zentangle. Each person who participates in this drawing method has a unique response and engagement. Thematic descriptions of the Zentangle experience, obtained through the process of completing this phenomenological research study, are presented below.

Research Findings

Data extracted from transcriptions of the focus group and follow-up interviews were thematically analysed and organized according to four stages of experience common to Zentangle and meditation (also see Nash & Newberg, 2013): Entering, Mindfulness Meditation, Awareness, and Outcomes. This organization of the experience according to the stages of meditation provide a comprehensive approach to understanding Zentangle,

and describing Zentangle as an experiential, multi-layered tool which can lead to an enhanced sense of well-being. Some individuals who practice Zentangle may not identify the stages of awareness and outcomes, and only link these descriptions of their experience in hindsight. I have developed this understanding based on my experience as an art therapist and Zentangle practitioner, following ongoing reflection on my phenomenological experience of conducting the study and analysis and reflection on the data.

Zentangle Stage 1: Entering. This stage involved developing an interest in Zentangle and finding the practice enjoyable. This led to development of a continuing Zentangle practice, and experience of the meditative aspects of Zentangle.

Interest in Zentangle. The first stage of entering identifies the focus of the individual on experiencing a creative outlet through his or her senses. Six out of seven participants began drawing Zentangle from a recreational art perspective because of their interest and motivation in experiencing a new creative outlet. This is consistent with the initial entrance into art making, similar to the "intention to begin." The individual is aware of him or herself, and the desire to make art.

Four of the seven participants noted they found Zentangle because an event in their lives encouraged them to seek a new creative activity. One participant was having difficulty with pain in her back and hands and Googled "creative mindfulness." A friend referred another participant to Zentangle after she had become depressed following a job loss. Another participant had experienced the loss of three close relatives and was searching for respite through a new creative activity. Another participant, who was

looking for “something different in her life due to several stressors,” was with friends at a scrapbooking event when she saw a Zentangle demonstration.

Five of the seven participants were attracted to Zentangle because of their interest in artistic expression and the beauty of the images they found online (websites, videos, etc.) and in-person presentations. They were attracted to various aspects of creative process of Zentangle, commenting on its “simplicity,” and “interesting but complex looking, artistic patterns” which fascinated them. Participants also noted the “inexpensive requirements,” and “portability” of Zentangle as attractive features.

Positive Experience. An important part of this entering phase involved enjoying the experience of Zentangle, and anticipated positive feelings around art making. While the participants may not have experienced this the first time they created a Zentangle, they all came to develop positive expectations of the pleasures and rewards of Zentangle practice. The “structure providing quick results” was intriguing and important as it provided the ability to “see the path” to creativity and thus could be understood as a facilitative tool. Participants said they thought of Zentangle with a “warm feeling,” as a “personal time out,” and as a “recess.” They also stated that they experienced it as “a soft pillow,” a “fun and enjoyable tool,” a “joyful happy spot,” and “like chocolate… a treat.” Zentangle was viewed as “fun” and “life enhancing.”

Continuing Zentangle. Five participants became CZTs. This influenced their experience by providing a more in-depth understanding of the method. The two other participants received their initial experience with Zentangle from CZTs, which gave them an understanding of the method but not the background philosophy. One participant

declared that she viewed Zentangle as primarily a “meditative tool,” and another shared it had provided her with a “way to creativity, the greatest gift one can give.”

Meditative aspects. In a Zentangle group led by a CZT, participants experience a sense of immersion, or letting go into the experience as they listen to and follow instructions. Similar to yoga and led meditation, the person follows the instructor and becomes immersed in the process. If the person is alone, their familiarity with the process provides a sense of confidence and safety. Making a border and placing the string across the page provides a means of orienting and immersing oneself in the activity. Additional meditative aspects of the activity are introduced through the repetitive actions. Two participants identified that the focus on drawing simple patterns and repetition of strokes, whether circle or lines, assisted their “brain in becoming settled.” This first stage of Zentangle created a positive base for ongoing practice and engagement.

Zentangle Stage 2: Mindfulness Meditation. All participants agreed that Zentangle helped them be more present and mindful. Zentangle begins by drawing attention to, and focusing on the present moment, “creating a centring affect.” The meditative aspects of Zentangle develop through the structure of the ritualized steps involved in entering into the activity, and use of limited materials.

Structure through ritual method. The Zentangle method involves the creation of a meditational space through a ritual. The structure of the Zentangle method provides knowledge of how and where to begin on the blank page. First, there is the mindful exploration of the art making materials, the feel of the pen, and texture of the paper. The individual takes several deep breaths as they anticipate beginning the creative activity. They focus on the present moment before beginning to make any strokes on the paper.

The sensory experience of holding the pen, the feel of the paper as they experience the urge to begin creating engaged the participants. The person breathes deeply as the pencil lightly strokes the border around the tile and then draws the string across the centre of the tile. The marks with the pencil provide a softening and entering into the meditative space.

This focusing through attention to breathing, and the ritual method of drawing helps to narrow one's attention. Participant 3 noticed a "shift, physically providing a calming effect." Following a familiar process reduces the sense of intimidation often associated with creative expression. Participant 3 shared "that there is less anxiety due to the boundaries." The boundaries, structures and guidelines that are part of the Zentangle process provide a way for participants to become fully engaged in the activity with minimal need to cognitively evaluate and decide on what to do next. Minimal decision-making enhances the sense of safety and confidence. The fact there are no absolute rules (Roberts & Thomas, 2012) also enhances the sense of safety. For example, a Zentangle tile can be created with the same patterns used in previous tiles. This repetition does not limit the experience, rather repetition and the ritualized structure of Zentangle facilitates a sense of immersion in the activity, a "freeing of the mind," so that one can "get into the zone."

Structure through limited materials. Structure is created in Zentangle by the limited materials required. There is less anxiety about starting the creating process because there is a small space to fill and only a pencil, pen, and tile. Participant 7 described the limitations as being "simple to use and affordable" and that limited choices "don't overwhelm [their] senses." Drawing the Zentangle is about "being in the moment—present and creative" rather than worrying "about what to draw or [being] self-

conscious about art expression." This means that it is easy to enter into the meditative experience and stay in the present. The choices are limited, creating safety, and this places the focus on the activity, rather than on deciding what to draw. Participant 7 stated: "Just having one colour, one tool, one paper, you can't worry about [whether] anyone has something that you are missing, you just simplify your life, and you stay in the present."

Safety in limits and non-representation. Four of the seven participants shared that the sense of safety created by the ritualized approach, structure, and limits of Zentangle drawing provided them with a sense of freedom that helped them to relax and allow their natural creative tendencies to surface. According to Participant 5, the structure of the Zentangle forms a means and method to "develop artistic ability … (by) offering a jumping off point." In addition, the limited materials, lack of expectations, and emphasis on making a non-representational image removed a sense of "obligation" and "provided an opening" or "lead-in." Not needing to commit to a specific or exact image, was viewed as "freeing." Participant 7 stated that there is a "clarity and non-judgment as part of the philosophy of 'no mistakes'" in Zentangle, which promotes a sense of safety and freedom that helps the person relax. According to Participant 5, Zentangle is "a very low-risk way of being able to provide that positive experience and environment" given the limited resources, time, and skill required.

Centring. One of the participants described Zentangle as a "self-centring activity." Centring is the felt experience of becoming singly focused on one activity, one thought, and one feeling. All seven participants experienced Zentangle as "centring." One becomes engaged in the drawing activity though the physical act of repetitively marking the paper with strokes. According to all seven participants, Zentangle had a calming effect. Six of

the seven participants shared that Zentangle helps them become relaxed physically, emotionally, and cognitively. The focus on breathing and physical movement involved in the drawing activity lowered awareness of other competing stimuli, including inner, cognitive thoughts. This letting go, helped them to "focus on the present." They centred their attention as they focused on the current step in their drawing process, and not on any other thoughts or activities in the world. Participants identified the ongoing repetition involved in Zentangle drawing and need to concentrate on line making resulted in a shift in thought processes as one's wandering mind focuses on the present. The intention and deliberateness involved in the process of mark making in Zentangle is important in creating the mindful presence.

Participants described their experience of entering into the activity of Zentangle as "meditative," "quiet space," "calming," "soothing," "stops the negative chatter," "a refuge," "lightness and freeing," and "calmness." Zentangle is the centre amidst the swirling energy (see Figure 14). Zentangle is a "meditative tool" according to Participant 3. Participant 2 stated after her first experience of drawing a Zentangle: "I love how peaceful my mind felt." Participant 1 described how Zentangle gave her a "nothing brain," providing her with mental space that was peaceful and restful, with "no thoughts of other demands on her life." Zentangle is a "happy place," designated by the common red dot and circle in the midst of Participant 7's artwork (see Figure 18).

Several of the participants described the experience of Zentangle as providing a "recess for the brain" or a "vacation for the mind." Participants stated that Zentangle provides a way to "focus, staying with the task," without feeling "any pressure or requirements." Participant 6 stated: "[Zentangle is] very relaxing to me. And yet my brain

is working very actively." Zentangle is the place of "centring, to kind of staying in place while other things are going on" and a "ceasing of activity and striving." The focus is only on the artwork. The focus is on the here and now, and not on worries or other preoccupying thoughts, or concerns about whether the creative activity is actually beautiful or art. This is the focusing element of meditation.

The repetition of the activity and the safety provided through the structure enables the individual to enter into a "trance-like experience." Two participants identified that the focus on drawing simple patterns provides a physical movement to focus on. This repetition of strokes, whether circle or lines, assists the "brain in becoming settled." The person becomes fully engrossed in the activity, and he or she is distracted from previous thoughts or even physical discomfort, achieving relaxation. Participant 7 called the experience entering into a "primal state" where there is a "clear channel" with "no interference" from other thoughts. The activity becomes a "calm centre in the storm" (see Figure 14). According to Participant 3, the focusing of the thoughts and the physical activity brings the individual into the "eye of the storm." Participant 4 stated, "By doing a Zentangle I can calm down and focus on what I need to do." This centring is the meditative aspect of Zentangle. Some may experience it more deeply than others; however, the calming effect is experienced by most.

Peace. In the meditative stage, a quieting of the mind is experienced. The participant becomes focused on the materials in front of them, and grounded in the breath and sensory experience. Participants shared that they experienced a sense of peacefulness. Participant 2 stated, "I loved how peaceful my mind felt." Participant 7 noted that this "inner calmness" is the "Zen," and she was able to "exhale and breathe." Participant 4

described Zentangle as an activity in which "magic" happens. She perceived a "decrease in heart rate, deeper breathing, and relaxed muscles." As negative self-talk is replaced by a focus on art making activity there is a "removal of the chaotic, anxious feelings," allowing for one to experience more enjoyable, peaceful feelings.

Zentangle Stage 3: Awareness. Awareness is the shift that occurs through the active drawing process. This movement was described by Participant 4 as "being in the zone." Participant 7 described this as a shift to a "reflective space" that touches the "tender spot in the psyche." Awareness promotes new insights and a sense of optimism leading to growth, development, and integration of the self.

Self-awareness. Five of the participants stated that while they were creating a Zentangle they returned to their "core self," they began to see the art and themselves with "an awakened eye." They experienced a "congruence" within their selves. They were able to see "beauty in the simplistic form." Participants shared that they were able to "see a new path" and "get rid of the clutter" in their minds. Participant 5 stated that Zentangle is "so neat, that it changes participants' mood, their mindset with the positive outcome. They can't do anything but smile at the results." Participant 4 shared that using Zentangle allows her to "exist, kind of in balance with self." Participant 2 stated that Zentangle is the place where "[you get] that breath balance. It's more than just your brain, it's your body, it's your heart, it's your emotions, can come into tune with each other. And you can kind of get that equilibrium back."

This theme of returning to core, and congruency with self, resonated with several participants. They described a return to awareness of self, and ability to recognize and feel more connected to their true self. Participant 2 asserted that being in the "creative centre

helps me feel more complete." She shared that "Zentangle created a path to connect all parts of my life." Participant 2 continued to note that Zentangle "loosens me up and helps me let go of unimportant things in life. By being in the centre, there is a shift in how I make my decisions, I am more aware" and "I focus on what is happening now." This return to core and connection with one's intuitive self was identified as a way to become connected to others and the spiritual. This self-awareness is integral to making change and fostering a healthy integration of mind, body, and spirit.

Several participants shared that Zentangle introduced them to a new experience of consciousness, or a "new territory" in their mind. Once they began to experience the flow of the activity, new insights and ideas begin to surface. Zentangle provided space for innovation and expansion of creativity through art and meditation. Participant 6 shared that while she experienced Zentangle as "very relaxing," her brain was at the same time "working very actively." She added, "Zentangle has different combinations, because there are no errors, but rather places to capitalize on what has been done yielding new possibilities and opportunities for innovation and change."

"Happy place." All seven participants agreed that Zentangle transported them to a "happy place." Participant 2 stated that she experienced Zentangle to be very "freeing." The image she created in response to the Zentangle experience introduced as part of the focus group was a bird (see Figure 13). This image represented "freedom" and reflected how she felt Zentangle had given "back her wings to trust herself." Zentangle brought her back to her "teenage years, where there were no problems," where she was her "core person." Another participant stated that she was able to return to her "creative centre."

Belonging. Another theme associated with heightened awareness leading to growth and integration of the self was the feeling of belonging that participants experienced after they began their practice of Zentangle. All participants identified this as important to their belief in the Zentangle process and their growth as individuals.

The five CZT participants in this study, a core group in the Zentangle community, as well as those who practice, but do not teach Zentangle identified this as important to their ongoing involvement in Zentangle. CZTs described an incredible sense of belonging to the Zentangle community, and belief in the founders, philosophy, and power of the Zentangle method. Participant 1 described how important the sense of belonging to the CZT community was to her, including how it had helped her to trust people again. Having a shared experience of connection and possibility was vital to her healing process. Participant 4 shared that being part of a group of committed Zentangle practitioners had helped to enhance her ability to believe in herself and others. Connecting with others who had experienced Zentangle was important to feeling safe, and had provided her with a sense of belonging.

Participant 7 observed that students became synchronized through their practice of Zentangle. According to Participants 1 and 7, students become "connected but not the same." Participation in the group process provided a collective energy that heightened the experience and improved communal creativity. Participant 7 said, "The alignment with others, especially within the positive atmosphere provided an uplifting experience and promoted positive energy." The group activity enhanced the shared knowledge. By drawing similar patterns in a group, group members believed they could "share experiences with others" and learn from others. The group process is important, according

to Participant 1, because every participant's Zentangle is "different, from the same instructions, and all are valid and all are beautiful."

Class mosaic. The class mosaic, which is the display of every participant's completed artwork, was important in sharing this common reality. Participants 1 and 7 shared, through anecdotes, that the class mosaic provided a way to promote the positive characteristics of each individual's expression. The class mosaic enhanced empathy building by helping each individual see the value in his or her individual art pieces and by fostering the ability to learn from one another. Participant 3 stated that through the process of creating the same patterns, but with individual perceptions, the "art making playing field is levelled and [fewer] comparisons" are made. The competitiveness of whose art looks better is reduced, and instead the artwork is seen as important and unique displays of acceptable variations. Participant 1 stated participants are able to "speak with their own voice" and the mosaic "promotes beauty in uniqueness, teaching acceptance for their own voice and for difference in others."

Zentangle Stage 4: Outcomes. Stage 4 represents the ongoing "outcomes" from the Zentangle activity.

Openness. All seven participants shared that they experienced a sense of enhanced "openness" as a significant change in their outlook toward themselves and others. In Zentangle, they experienced the freedom to innovate creatively. They could adapt and expand on basic pattern structures, which led to being able to see "new opportunities." Participant 6 stated that when she noted a change in the pattern, "you would perceive it in a different way, an innovation. So it would become a new item and pattern than what you originally intended. So capitalize on it."

The Zentangle philosophy of “no errors, only opportunities” shifts individuals’ self-limiting beliefs so that problems become a means of developing new skills and becoming more innovative with ideas. Participants 2 and 3 use Zentangle as a way to assist in their work, by allowing subconscious processing about a problem. Zentangle provides a way to create order and think in alternative ways, without directly focusing and worrying about an issue. Participant 2 shared that she tries new things, and has become a “more rounded person, more accepting, understanding and willing to trying new things,” since she began Zentangle. Participant 2 had come to believe that she can “try anything once and nothing is lost.”

Participants attributed the practice of Zentangle to an increased ability to become open to new perspectives. Participant 7 compared Zentangle to a window, “a window which you did not see before, and now you do, and you become open to a new way of thinking.” Participant 7 noted that Zentangle can change individual belief systems. She observed that peoples’ “belief systems [are] so limiting, they don’t think they can go there,” but by opening to new opportunities, you become more aware of your world which can empower you to make changes you weren’t able to imagine or accomplish before (like “cleaning out the junk drawer”). Participant 4 shared that Zentangle had provided her with a new way of looking at what she has done. Even if the artwork doesn’t meet her expectations, she is fine with the outcome. Letting go of perfectionism, has helped her to accept other outcomes. As noted by Participant 4, “Things don’t need to be perfect all the time.”

Worldview change. The participants described experiencing a shift in their view of the world. The activity of the mindfulness meditation combined with an art experience

provided a way of both connecting with their inner self, and developing a new means of experiencing the world. The participants described having a sense of “enhanced openness,” and “improved confidence.” Additionally, their worldview changed through their improved interaction with the world and self-growth. Through Zentangle, participants had come to believe that “all things are possible.” They described having “increased creativity,” and more “problem solving and adaptation” abilities. They reported being able to “remember so much more.” They felt “more integrated,” and had “improved physical presentation.” They felt “connected with others,” and “more flexible in their beliefs.” These changes in thought patterns, emotional and physical systems signal a new, healthier and more adaptable way of being in the world.

Deconstruction. The theme of deconstruction, which is connected to openness and perspective taking, was evident from participants’ responses. Deconstruction is the ability to breakdown a pattern and be able to recreate it again, which is relevant to both art making and life. Three participants shared that Zentangle had enabled them to see structures and patterns in art which they then compared to patterns they experienced in their life. The participants described how their enhanced perspective taking ability had helped them to recognize “positives and outcomes” rather than being stuck in old patterns. This was influential in developing new thought and behaviour patterns. Participant 2 agreed, “I can see things in a new way by having it broken down” and Participant 1 stated, “I see things differently.” Participant 5 had learned that “you can deconstruct life into three or four repeatable steps and form new habits.” She noted that “three or four repeatable steps are not overwhelming,” which supported belief in the idea that change was possible.

Empowerment. Zentangle was described as "empowering." It provided participants with a feeling of accomplishment and confidence. One participant linked the empowerment she had experienced to being productive, directly through being able to make art again. In addition, several CZTs shared that the formal training they had received had helped them to contribute to their families and communities. Participant 4 declared that "Zentangle rocked my world" meaning that it had empowered her. Zentangle made her feel productive again and in control, as well as reducing the stress and pain she experienced. Participant 4 indicated that Zentangle helped her focus on her "capabilities" rather than remaining stuck in "perfectionistic expectations." Participant 3 asserted that Zentangle helped "give me grace toward myself," reducing the need to impose perfection on her artwork, and on other areas of her life. Having experienced a "shift to not judge myself so harshly" Zentangle had enhanced her experience of self-love. Participant 6 stated that Zentangle, by "opening up creativity to everyone" and "providing self-confidence," was a wonderful gift.

One of the core philosophies of Zentangle is all things are possible, "one stroke at a time" (Roberts & Thomas, 2012), which promotes confidence. Zentangle was used by Participant 7 as a way to ground her art activities (it "anchors me"). She experienced Zentangle as a way of "slowing down the body and the brain, it puts me back into a place where I can, the brain waves are reconnected." Participant 5 stated that Zentangle had provided her with the feeling that she could "accomplish anything, it is empowering creativity." The method of Zentangle shows people they can do what they thought they couldn't. Roberts and Thomas (2012) often ask those who previously doubted their ability "Now, what else can you do?"

Health benefits. Participants described a variety of physical and psychological benefits they had experienced. Participant 2, who suffers from anxiety, stated that Zentangle not only reduces her anxiety and helps her feel physically and psychologically calmer, but it also provides a space to figure out what the anxiety is about and gain insight about herself. For Participant 2, Zentangle provided a means to "get rid of the crap that is filling my mind" and remove the focus on the anxieties and feelings of depression. Participant 4, who was looking for a mindfulness practice to alleviate chronic pain, found that the pain is reduced after practicing Zentangle. Participant 1, who had lost her job, found that the practice had alleviated her depressed feelings and provided her with new sense of confidence. Participants 5 and 7 observed the benefits of Zentangle in relation to enhanced self-esteem and confidence among their students. Participant 1 used Zentangle as a meditation to control her high blood pressure. Three of the participants noted that using Zentangle during meetings improved their memory of events and discussions, allowing them to capture a "snapshot of the moment."

Core integration. Another important theme involved the integration and expansion of self. Several participants described the importance of Zentangle in providing a way to "integrate all areas of my life." Three participants stated that Zentangle "bridges the gap" between different knowledge and skills. Additionally the three participants said that Zentangle "opens things up for you" by helping them see more opportunities and connections in life and helped them to incorporate all of their gifts. The skills and philosophy that were gained from Zentangle were applied to other parts of their life. Participant 1 stated that her response artwork was very "analogous, representing how the experiences from Zentangle became part of other areas of life." Participant 1 said,

"Zentangle is not one small part of life, but rather part of an expansion of self." Participant 5 stated, "Zentangle is a jar full of energy, providing limitless potential—to people, abilities, opportunities, and to self." As we studied the Zentangle she had drawn, Participant 3 noted how she had drawn an element extending behind another pattern. She stated in "Zentangle—the thoughts end up coming out somewhere else," alluding to how Zentangle is connected to, and shows up in all parts of life. Similarly, Participant 7, described Zentangle as being about integration. She described how Zentangle opened up parts of your mind, and also helped "to integrate the different parts of your mind so that they work together better." Zentangle was described as a way to integrate both self and world, making a greater connection to the spiritual in the world.

Art work. Three thematic components were identified in relation to artwork that was created through the research process, including the tiles that were created as part of the Zentangle re-enactment during the focus group, the participants' art response pieces to Zentangle, and my own response to the outcomes of the study. These themes included: the production of unique, pattern variations, centring, openness, and growth through reflection.

Facilitated Zentangle. Zentangle tiles completed by the participants as part of the focus group revealed both similar and idiosyncratic interpretations on patterns created by the individual participants, with differences noted in pattern size, depth, and detail. Participant 6's tile (see Figure 7) showed an openness different from other tiles, which was paralleled in her interview in how Zentangle has made her more open and aware of experiences in the world. Participant 3's tile (see Figure 8) was unique in that she drew some of the centring "Mirasu" pattern exiting in different areas of her tile. She had

described how “Zentangle shows up in different areas of your life, just like the Mirasu pattern in the tile.” Each individual created the “Shattuck” pattern differently, with either straight, curved or both lines in the interwoven pattern (see Figures 5-11).

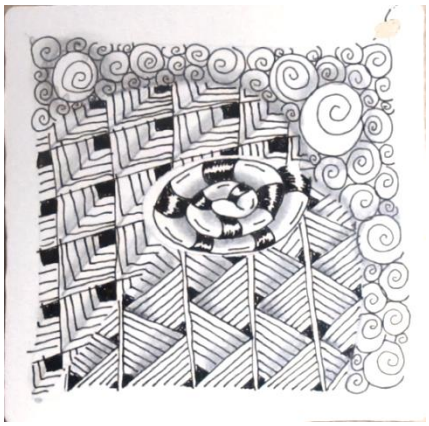

Figure 5. Zentangle A

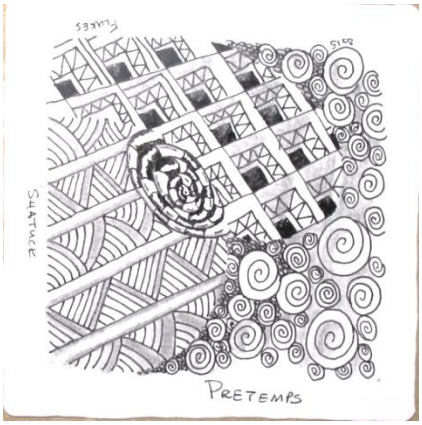

Figure 6. Zentangle B

Figure 7. Zentangle C

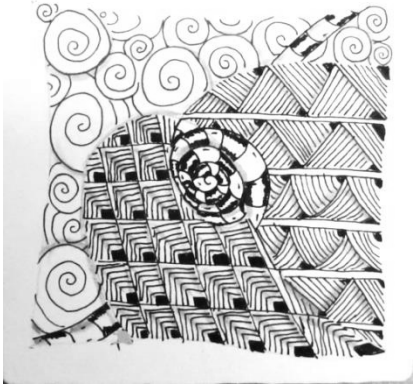

Figure 8. Zentangle D

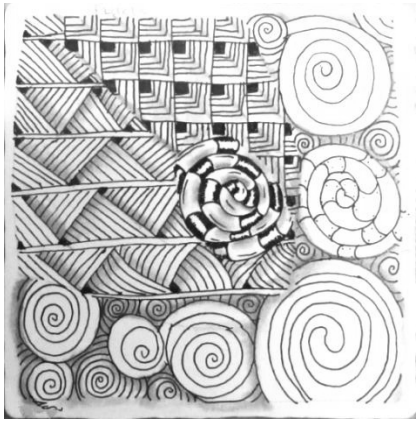

Figure 9. Zentangle E

Figure 10. Zentangle F

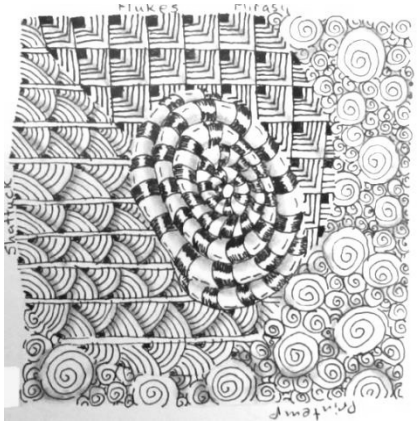

Figure 11. Zentangle G

Art response. The second group of artwork is composed of the participants' art response to Zentangle. The major theme from these pieces was that five of the seven showed a "centring" or "circle activity." These circular shapes represented the "eye of the storm" (Participant 3); the "warm centre, in my brain and heart" (Participant 4); the happy rose flowers (Participant 5) represent a centring; the comforting circle of Participant 7; and Participant 1's smooth connecting shape with circles. Participant 2 drew her "happy place" with a bright bird representing the freedom that Zentangle brings her. Participant 6 drew a tree branch opening up, which represented her theme of "openness and growth."

Additionally, the experience of the art response was compared to the creation of a Zentangle. Three out of seven participants noted that the freedom to create an art piece

without any structure created anxiety. They were hesitant and unsure about where to begin creating.

Figure 12. Participant 1 "Smooth connecting shape with circles"

Figure 13. Participant 2 "Happy place - freedom"

Figure 14. Participant 3 "Peaceful eye of the storm"

Figure 15. Participant 4 "Warm centre in my brain and heart"

Figure 16. Participant 5 "Happy rose flowers representing centring"

Figure 17. Participant 6 "Openness and growth"

Figure 18**. Participant 7 "Comforting circle"**

Thesis artwork. The last piece of artwork is my own response to the study and research process on Zentangle (see Figure 19). I used watercolour pencils to create "growth through reflection." I began with two blue shapes that are mirror reflections of each other, representing the mirroring that occurs in the Zentangle experience between the CZT and the students, from which growth develops. For each person, growth is unique, and this is expressed through the different coloured circles. The branches reflect expansion and openness from the experience. The centre is the space of sharing, learning, and belonging with one another through creativity. Each of us is unique, but each share in experience and grows in special ways. Zentangle provides that space to share, to become centred in the experience, and this provides support for personal insight and growth. The branches represent solidity and support through structure, and the fruit that results is ability and confidence.

Figure 19. Researcher art response "Growth through reflection"

Conclusion. The findings from the phenomenological experience of Zentangle provided themes that suggested Zentangle can be considered an art-based mindfulness activity. Zentangle was confirmed through this data collection to be a simple drawing method and meditative tool. Zentangle practice provided a means of connecting with and integrating self, enhanced confidence, and fostered a sense of connection and community. As Participant 4 said, “This is a new opportunity to grow and change; not just my own life. But in other people’s as well.”

Chapter 5. Discussion of Zentangle

The findings of this study, along with previous research provide evidence that supports recognition of Zentangle as a spiritual and mindful art form. This study extends previous knowledge of the positive benefits of Zentangle. The common initial experience of practitioners is that Zentangle is an "art for everyone," but this study revealed a broad array of dynamic spiritual, psychological and physical effects.

The interpretive-descriptive phenomenological approach (van Manen, 2014) I used, along with arts-based (McNiff, 2013a) and phenomenology of art expression inquiry (Betensky, 1995) provided an excellent method for exploring present-oriented experiences of Zentangle. The awareness that was developed from the meditation and mindful art experiences provided a base from which to describe a broader understanding of Zentangle. I developed this study during a significant period of change in my own life as I transitioned from being a secretary to an art therapist. Once I became a CZT and taught Zentangle classes, I observed powerful emotional and physical effects on my students, my clients, and myself. The transition from CZT to art therapist has given me a deeper awareness of the experience of Zentangle. In conducting this research, I was able to draw on my experience as a Zentangle practitioner, CZT, and art therapist to explore different aspects of Zentangle. Having access to these multiple viewpoints was helpful to me in making connections and developing insights throughout this phenomenological inquiry.

Findings were described primarily in relation to four stages commonly associated with meditation: entering, meditation, awareness, and outcomes. In this chapter, I consider the findings more broadly in relation to the connections between Zentangle and

mindfulness meditation, Zentangle as a spiritual method, and Zentangle as an Art Therapy tool.

Zentangle as Mindfulness and Meditation

The results of this study show that Zentangle is a mindfulness and meditation art form. Zentangle includes components of ritual, mindful presence, centring, peace, awareness, and openness. Zentangle is first experienced as an art activity; however, through its embedded practice of mindful meditation, it leads to personal deeper knowing. Currently most mindfulness art activities (for example, MBAT) used in therapeutic settings separate meditative and focusing activities from art making. MAT developed from both the recognition of the inherent mindfulness process in art creation, and the direct application of mindfulness techniques to therapeutic art interventions (Davis, 2015; Rappaport & Kalmanowitz, 2014). However, this study identifies how mindfulness and art making complement and enhance each other by focusing on present-oriented experience. The uniqueness of the Zentangle experience is that the creative act occurs within mindfulness, so that meditation and art become fully integrated. This integration of mindfulness and art making produces a deeper meditational experience. This not only leads to relaxation, but also to personal insight and spiritual connection. Incorporating art activities with mindfulness resembles mindfulness awareness practices and offers a useful alternative to sitting-focusing meditation practice. This is important in engaging people who may not otherwise try meditation and art as a health practice.

Stages of mindfulness meditation and Zentangle. The stages of Zentangle are prescriptive, similar to meditation practices, and were followed in this study. This is

critical in understanding Zentangle's role as an effective mindfulness meditation and Art Therapy form. These roles will be discussed below.

Zentangle Stage 1 Entering. The first stage of Zentangle is entering and included interest and fun in the artistic form and the development of a ritual, which integrated a mindfulness and sensory experience. This engagement in the Zentangle process due to intrinsic motivation and enjoyment promoted ongoing practice. According to Ryan and Deci (2000) intrinsic motivation is key to beginning and continuing new habits and fundamental to making changes to health and well-being. Part of the beauty of Zentangle is that any health benefits or self-actualization tendencies are generally unforeseen by a new practitioner, making any meditational outcomes intriguing. Thus, it is highly likely, as demonstrated here, that participants who are enjoyably engaged in a repetitive creative practice will continue to use the practice, thereby leading to greater positive outcomes.

In the second part of the entering phase, Zentangle introduces mindfulness through sensory engagement in the art making. It does this by combining sensory experience and art, and by slowing down the physical activity, breathing consciously, and directing the participant's attention to the present moment and materials, thus creating mindful awareness. CZTs are taught that breath is an integral part of the Zentangle ritual, as well as an important component in mindfulness meditation. Participants in this study identified that this initial stage of mindfulness meditation is important to create a grounding for the Zentangle experience. The first stage of entering engages the participant and encourages an environment for ritual, structure, and safety.

Zentangle Stage 2 Mindfulness Meditation. The second stage of Zentangle experience and mindfulness meditation includes the orientation to the present and the establishment of ritual, safety, centring, and peace.

The Zentangle introductory experience is similar to "beginner's mind" in meditation that entails learning to be present and not worrying about meditating *correctly.* When creating a Zentangle, the experience takes one into a calm and peaceful mood, and by repetition, into a state of flow similar to that described by Csikszentmihalyi (1990). Ultimately the centring and repetition creates an alternate experience of meditation. This is effective with individuals who have problems focusing on their breath and experience a wandering mind in regular meditation. The focus on breath and drawing through the ritual creates a meditation and mindfulness experience that "cultivates and attracts awareness" (Franklin, 2010, p. 187). This active engagement through art and breath deepens the experience of awareness and concentration (Kass and Trantham, 2014). The ritual of the meditation and outlined drawing method provides safety through familiarity, limited choices, and elimination of the need to focus on artistic process and product. This safety is important in establishing a therapeutic environment that is similar to a therapeutic relationship, which is discussed under Art Therapy tool.

The most identified trait of Zentangle occurs in this second stage, which is centring. This is a trait of mindfulness meditation and is important to being grounded. All participants in this study found that Zentangle helped them have a focused, calm, relaxed, and quieted mind, where they were able to understand internal selves and needs rather than react to external experiences. Centring also leads to the feeling of peace. The feeling of peace is important in providing a place where they felt safe and could become

refreshed, and where minimal decision making was required. It was a place to become calm—the "Zen," the "quiet space,"—as represented in the response artwork. Newberg (2011, 2015) stated a key outcome of meditation is experiencing centring, peace, and compassion, which strengthen the neural circuits that connect our cognitive skills with our social skills and emotions. This second stage is important in creating a safe holding environment for the creative and therapeutic activity to take place.

Zentangle Stage 3 Awareness. Stage three was described as a feeling of awareness, which is increased by meditation, mindfulness, and art. According to Siegel (2007; 2009), synaptic plasticity allows the neural circuits of the brain to rewire as we become more deeply aware. Through self-awareness and reflective moments in mindfulness and Zentangle, we begin to better understand our consciousness and self-consciousness, and better recognize behaviours and states of being. Participants noted that part of this awareness was being in one's "happy place," creating positive attitudes about art and mindfulness meditation, and becoming self-aware. This third stage of awareness is important in making changes to one's beliefs, behaviours, and emotions, and in connecting to others. In this study, participants were able to make changes in their life after practicing Zentangle, which is discussed in health benefits.

Zentangle Stage 4 Outcomes. The fourth stage of outcomes identified that, through Zentangle, participants improved their life by being more aware and responsive to new experiences and patterns, and by embracing uncertainty. Part of the benefit of openness is improved self-confidence and health. These outcomes seem to correlate the use of Zentangle to improved health. These benefits will be described under implications as an Art Therapy tool.

Zentangle as a Spiritual Method

Zentangle as a *spiritual* practice was not specifically identified by the participants, however Zentangle was identified as a way to manifest meaning, connection, purpose, and hope within the individual's life. Findings from this study suggest that Zentangle can be considered a spiritual method. Spirituality is enhanced in Zentangle by helping the practitioner connect with his or her core authentic self, awareness of a transcendental presence, and community. Giblin (1996) identifies these three components as the way individuals make meaning and value in life and derive life satisfaction—key components to overall health.

Core self. Zentangle offers a way to connect with one's authentic core, open to new insights, and develop an expanded or integrated sense of meaning in life. The results indicated that four out of seven participants identified the theme of reconnection with their core self, which is part of Sheldrake's (2012) definition of spirituality. Connection with the authentic core and soul occurs in Zentangle through the meditative state. Zentangle becomes a link between meditative and art activities, allows for exploring one's soul, and opens one to internal knowing and connection with one's authentic core. The integration of art making and meditation enhances this connection (Rogers, 1993; Valtners-Paintner & Beckham, 2010), providing a flow experience that brings one to an altered state of consciousness and enhances one's sense of purpose and meaning (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Through Zentangle, we create, engage with our soul, affirm our aliveness, become reinvigorated, and connect to the source in life (Cameron, 2002). This assists individuals in accessing a deeper personal and transpersonal knowing, which is important in enhancing health through making meaning and connections.

Transcendental presence. Zentangle becomes a way to link the practitioner to the transcendental presence. This occurs through connection with one's authentic core and deeper personal knowing through meditative art making, which fosters connection to the divine through deep contemplation and creating. Participants in this study identified that through the meditative state, they were connected with their internal knowing and intuitive self. This allowed participants to be open and available to listen to their soul, and the spiritual source. The artistic act in Zentangle then becomes a way to communicate with the soul and transcendental presence and create as we are created in God's image (Allen, 2013; Cameron, 2002). Zentangle can be a method of prayer, where one becomes still and awake to transcendental presence and communication. This provides the individual with a feeling of external connection, power, and meaning.

Belonging and community. This study revealed that Zentangle creates a feeling of community and belonging, which is spiritual connection with others. Creating within a group, according to Van Lith (2015), is an enhanced process, which is the basis for both the group collective experience and the common reality of CZTs. Through ritual, Zentangle creates a known experience, which can lead to comfort and meaning through shared practice, connection, energy and reality. Community is built through parallel creation and interchange of energy, which continues through the sharing of artwork in the mosaic, a display of the session's artwork incorporated at the end of the Zentangle workshop. The results in this study showed that in Zentangle, as in art making in groups, there is an element of giving and receiving—of building human exchange and thus a spiritual community (Levine, 1992). Participants shared how Zentangle art making in a group develops empathy, promotes learning and accepting individual uniqueness, similar

to McNiff's (2011) description of art making. Siegel (2007, 2009) identifies this interconnectedness as a mindfulness awareness outcome, which promotes internal integration that strengthens both self and interpersonal attunement.

Additionally, part of this spiritual connection was a feeling of belonging through common reality in Zentangle that establishes safety, familiarity, human and spiritual connection and a shared knowledge. The results indicated that participants developed a bond with others through Zentangle. In addition, CZTs share a common experience of training, instruction, and understanding of the philosophy, creating a deeper bond and network than the common language of Zentangle method and patterns alone can provide. This sense of belonging decreases feelings of isolation, creates human bonds, and promotes acceptance of self and others. Zentangle creates spiritual connections with our inner soul, the transcendental and outer community.

Zentangle as an Art Therapy Tool

The results from this study describe the experience of Zentangle as potentially functioning as an Art Therapy tool by: 1) establishing safety, 2) promoting self-expression, 3) focusing on process oriented art-making, and (4) promoting psychological and physical health through self-awareness, distraction, openness, and self-confidence.

Safety. It is commonly understood that for patients to make positive behavioural changes, it is critical that an environment of safety is created. It is clear from these results that Zentangle is inherently an art form that promotes safety. Thus, the current findings point toward the creation of safety through ritual in the second stage of Zentangle as being one of the most critical stages in its potential as an Art Therapy tool. Safety is created in a number of ways.

First, safety in the Zentangle art form is created through structured ritual and limited materials. These limitations include minimal materials (a small tile, black pen and pencil), several guidelines, and a defined process. These limitations provide safety by decreasing the need for decision-making, enabling Zentangle to act as both meditation and art practice. The individual knows how to proceed because there are minimal decisions about materials and steps. As described by Hsu, Bhatt, Adolphs, Tranel, and Camerer (2005), an increased number of choices coupled with ambiguity increases anxiety and decreases the ability to make decisions. The use of patterns through lines and simple shapes produced with only a black pen on white paper makes it easier to make decisions about what to draw. The limitations in Zentangle create an art-oriented decentering that provides "a coping experience in a situation of restriction which has the effect of discovering resources" (Knill, 2005, p. 87). In addition, because of the meditational ritual, structure, and limitations, Zentangle creates a transitional space (Winnicott, 1971). Within the safety of the transitional space, decentering, and therapeutic relationship, a place of play and experimentation occurs, discussed in process-oriented art experience.

Second, Zentangle creates safety by providing a familiar and successful outcome through the known method of drawing. This was identified from the follow-up comments of the focus group art response, where some participants expressed not knowing what to do with the open art invitation. In the follow-up discussion after the art response activity, they reflected on Zentangle. The results showed that Zentangle provided a means of creative expression without requiring them to identify an emotion, meaning, or image to communicate, and establish whether they were able to represent it artistically. Participants felt safe by believing the outcome of drawing a Zentangle would be successful.

Third, in Zentangle there is no intention for the art to hold meaning, and no concern that one's result may be misunderstood due to an unrecognizable shape. The shapes provide simplicity, clarity and safety, and an abstract means of expression (Betensky, 1995). Participants identified that the repetitive lines and shapes provided a way to express themselves without the need to make sense or communicate a specific idea or internal image, removing anxiety about creating representational art.

Fourth, the results showed that by using repetitive patterns, Zentangle created safety by creating order from chaos. By drawing a Zentangle, participants could control and make sense of self and thoughts in a visual way, enabling underlying consciousness to be processed and understood (Moon, 2008). This process is isomorphism, a convergence of similar ideas across sources where the mental and physical experience creates similar meaning across paradigms (Betensky, 1995). Zentangle allows processing of issues to occur in the subconscious through the repetition and creation of order.

Self-expression. Zentangle provides a means of self-expression. Zentangle is important as a method of externalization of issues, as a way to create art through symbols, and as a method of personal expression. In Zentangle, the removal of focus and stress on making meaning through representational drawing encourages expression, providing a freedom for externalization of issues. Zentangle is a powerful art-making tool that bridges simple mark-making and self-expression. The purpose in Zentangle is not expressing emotion or unconscious content; however, the outcome can provide a means for unconscious content to surface.

The results in this study showed that Zentangle provided a way to externalize issues. By virtue of the drawing being a human function, expression through art conveys

connections, meanings, and emotions. Although Zentangle is non-representational, it can provide information and externalization of issues. Participants in this study indicated that their anxiety regarding representational art making was removed in the Zentangle process. This allowed expression to happen, which stimulated release of issues. This is an important part of an Art Therapy process.

In addition, expression in each Zentangle is unique through different patterns and traits, like a signature, and conveys the meaning and expression of that person. Betensky (1995) stated that abstract art has information through shape, line, and symbol to both conceal and reveal meaning and expression, whether intended or not. Zentangle provides a way to express oneself in abstract shapes in unique and personally representative ways. Participants in this study noted that Zentangles carried uniquely personal signatures that enabled them to communicate and express themselves. This is important in identifying Zentangle as a unique expression of each person.

Process-oriented art experience. The results in this study identify the art experience of Zentangle as process-oriented, rather than product and success focused. This means that the outcome and attention to directly expressing issues is not the focus of the art making, but important in providing an alternate method of working through issues. As a process-oriented Art Therapy tool, Zentangle incorporates decentering, deconstruction, play, working through, improvisation, imagination, and problem solving to promote insight. This is important in understanding the mechanisms and power of the Zentangle activity.

Decentering. This study identifies decentering as a key component of the Zentangle activity. This is where the shift from art activity to Art Therapy tool occurs. The

decentering process in Zentangle occurs through the safety of the ritual, by becoming present with the art making, and through drawing of patterns. The creation of art through symbols and basic lines enables the focus to be on the art through the physical and repetitive activity, distracting the maker from other thoughts, which allows subconscious mental processing to continue. This refocusing from the usual awareness and logic aids the participant to become open to unconscious issues, new insights, and fresh ideas. Decentering is important in helping participants shift their focus so that new ideas can surface. Decentering is the key to how Zentangle invites insight and self-awareness, shifting the activity from expression to deeper knowing. Slowing down and focusing on the current experience promotes the integration and processing of other areas of one's life (Van Lith, 2015).

Play, working through, and deconstruction. Decentering can lead to an arena for play and working through. Play in the Art Therapy discipline, with limits and boundaries, provides an arena for experiential learning (Knill, 2005). Zentangle is an example of play for adults as it provides limits and boundaries that help create a trance-like presence on the surface while allowing underlying issues to be processed in parallel. Play, as "working" of the materials, is a way to experiment, rehearse, test, and understand the materials externally, which acts on internal processing of issues. Zentangle is an art medium that can be manipulated, like clay. Lines, circles, shapes, and dots all become fragments of a larger tool to be handled, broken down, reshaped, built on, and smoothed over in the process of drawing, similar to working with clay or paint. However, Zentangle uses simple materials and a guiding principle of no mistakes to encourage the decentering process and play.

Zentangle is an example of the expressive art therapy process of "working out" (Stitelman, 2012, p. 109). "Working out" is where the art is neither a direct externalization of particular thoughts, feelings, or issues, nor a means for identifying psychological problems, but rather it is the "place of holding" and "working through." In Zentangle, through the manipulation of lines and shapes, the person works through issues in the subconscious. The lines and shapes become a physical and visible expression of the internal wrestling and processing.

Deconstruction is the breaking down of patterns into steps and is part of awareness and openness in mindfulness, Art Therapy, and Zentangle. In Art Therapy, deconstruction occurs by clients breaking down the problem, working through it, and reconstructing their solution (Lala, 2012), similar to Levine's (1992) "poiesis." In this study, the method of learning the steps to creating patterns in Zentangle was identified as a demonstration of how to break down problems. Through improvising and imagining new patterns, the participant is led to thinking of new ways to solve problems in the art. This is then transferred to the real world to reconstruct new ways of being.

Improvisation and imagination. Zentangle is also a method of improvisation and working imaginatively. Working imaginatively begins in decentering, aided through a framework and safe boundaries, and leads to play, working through, and improvisation (Levine, 2005, 2013). Improvisation is the experimentation with materials, which works alongside imagination. Without direct attention to the issues, there is an unravelling and revealing of internal processing that occurs through working imaginatively and processing through artwork. Improvisation and imagination is a function of Zentangle creativity through play, which leads to new solutions. Improvisation encourages an opening to

uncertainty, attuning to difference, being in the moment, and responding to what is available (Sajnani, 2013). Class mosaics demonstrate the ingenuity and improvisation that is rife in most classes: despite using the same tools and patterns in the same order, results are unique and beautiful. Through improvisation and imagination, the participant is invited through Zentangle to work with patterns that can be repeated, changed, and manipulated. This often leads to the development of new patterns. These activities parallel the reshaping and experimenting with life experiences. Zentangle is similar to Phenomenological Art Therapy (Betensky, 1995) and Rogers's Person Centred Expressive Art Therapy (1993), where there is an exploration of our personal energy and expression through shapes, lines, and symbols. Through this exploration in the art making we become aware and attuned to our creative energy, thought, emotional, and spiritual sense making. Zentangle promotes an integration of inner and outer worlds, with a processing of subconscious issues and playing with possibilities, which leads to problem solving in life.

Psychological and other health benefits. There were several anecdotal health benefits of Zentangle identified by the focus group participants. Participants recognized that the primary effect of Zentangle on their health was their improved ability to become more present and calm, and become less aware of anxiety, depression, and physical pain. There were also reports of improved memory, focus, and self-esteem. This supports findings from other practitioners of Zentangle, such as reports of reduced symptoms of pain and chronic illness, and improved coping skills with eating disorders, addictions, ADHD, and other health issues (Nordel, 2012; Yuhas & Cooper, 2012; Zentangle, 2016b; 2016c). As Uttley et al. (2015) identified, and as the findings of this study support, if Zentangle is used as a regular art practice, it can improve quality of life. Zentangle offers

a unique means to effectively change people's relationships with their emotional and physical pain through awareness, distraction, expression, and self-confidence.

Self-awareness. Zentangle promotes self-awareness by providing a centring activity that helps participants become open and aware to their core self, and aware of their physical, mental, and emotional experiences. In this study, participants noted that there was a change in reaction to experiences through Zentangle. This change promotes healthier responses to mental, physical, and emotional discomfort, as increased self-awareness can lead to improvements in health and well-being. Zentangle participants noted a change in attention to stress and increased ability to respond more favourably to emotional situations, similar to the development of self-regulatory skills in DBT, MBCT and ACT. In addition, the participants in this study acknowledged their ability to become mindful of personal states of reactivity and be more attuned to themselves and others in situations where they responded reflexively. This study found that through mindfulness in Zentangle, participants had a greater awareness of their own and others' needs. It can be argued that this awareness is important for developing new relationships with self, others, and the world.

Additionally, this study found that Zentangle is a centring activity that is similar to non-directed Art Therapy practices. Non-directed Art Therapy practices with a focus on a single action remove the activity of assessment and evaluation. This enables the creativity of the brain to be used, allowing the unconscious to surface, revealing new insights, and then bringing greater self-awareness. The integration of brain functions occurs when the creator mindfully draws the patterns, permitting awareness of new insights and ideas (Bos, Dijksterhuis & van Baaren, 2012; Bursley, 2013; Dijksterhuis, 2004). From their

experience of Zentangle, several participants noted that, through mindfulness, we learn to be present, to observe, to acknowledge, and to endure physical and emotional discomfort in order to shape a new relationship with our bodies and emotions (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Rappaport & Kalmanowitz, 2014). This helps individuals assess situations in internal and external environments, identify strengths, and choose new ways of operating in the world. "Mindful awareness expands our sense of self by dissolving the prison of repeating patterns of thought and response" (Siegel, 2009, p. 146). Thus, this study showed that the single focus action of Zentangle provides a way to change one's beliefs, behaviours, and relationships, leading to better health.

Distraction. This study further identified that another way Zentangle promotes a change in perception of physical, emotional, and mental pain is through the distraction of repetitious activity and kinesthetic grounding. The academic literature affirms that art activities can contribute to improved physical and mental functioning by refocusing attention and awareness from physical symptoms to an alternative activity (de Petrillo & Winner, 2005; Van Lith, 2015). Zentangle drawing is repetitive and distracting, and therefore can contribute to shifting an individual's focus and attention. Zentangle incorporates repetitive strokes that create an alternative focus and physical awareness. This is similar to a practice of Qigong or Tai Chi, where the physical movement is slow and methodical, bringing an alternative focus to the mind and allowing cognitive chatter to "fall away" (Schure, Christopher, & Christopher, 2008). Participants noted the importance of the repetition in leading the individual into a trance-like state. Through the repetition and art making, participants noted a reduction in symptoms, which they perceived as improving their quality of life and ability to cope. According to Newberg and

Waldman (2010), this disruption of habitual patterns of responding to the world through mindfulness and meditation can improve cognition, memory, and regulation mechanisms in the brain. Participants of this study noted these changes.

Zentangle as a mindful art activity helps to disassociate one's mind from judgment and, using mind and body together, establish a kinaesthetic grounding. In this study, participants observed that Zentangle created a kinaesthetic experience. This sensory experience assists the meditational component by promoting neural integration, calming of the primal response system, and allowing new learning and ideas to erupt (Davis, 2015; Levine, 2010; Lusebrink, 2004; Kass & Trantham, 2014; Rogers, 1993; Seigel, 2007). Zentangle, as both art and physical expression, provides a means of connecting the individual with their somato-sensory brain (Lusebrink, 2004; Rogers, 1993). Zentangle relaxes the instinctual response system by shifting the focus of attention through repetition and physical expression. This assists in developing a new relationship to thoughts and emotions, and in expressing them physically through the art.

Openness and expression. Mindful awareness in Zentangle leads to openness. A component of openness is the ability to accept what one observes and become open to change and new possibilities. Mindfulness operates from non-judgmental and compassionate activity (i.e. no rules), which leads one to be open, receptive, and fully engaged (Brown & Ryan, 2003). As previously discussed in the section on process-orientated Art Therapy, Zentangle promotes insight, ability to handle uncertainty, make changes through playing and testing, and become more accepting of differences. Following the state of openness, Zentangle provides an indirect method of expressing

individuals' emotional and physical discomfort. This externalization is possible after they become aware of the issue and then express it in the art making.

Self-Confidence. Another component of health is feeling self-confident. A sense of self-confidence was identified by the participants, who identified with the mottos "What else can I do?" and "One stroke at a time" (Roberts & Thomas, 2012, p. 5). Zentangle can reverse people's preconceived notion that they lack creative ability through the motto "Anything is possible" if you try (Roberts & Thomas, 2012, p. 5). The individual learns a new mantra about him or herself, building confidence and self-esteem. Buchalter (2015) stated that improving self-esteem is the first step towards healing and improving self-confidence, and is a building block towards recovery. Healthy self-esteem is the cornerstone for learning to cope with problems, bounce back from stress and loss, and develop resilience and autonomy. Thus, the results of this study suggest that Zentangle can improve self-confidence and establish a more resilient self through six mechanisms: mastery, empowerment, problem-solving skills, self-acceptance, success, and external affirmation. In this study, Zentangle helped participants improve their self-efficacy and resilience in several ways.

First, Zentangle showed individuals that their previous self-concept could be changed through mastery. Repetition and rehearsal supports mastery where trial and error can occur safely (Knill, 2005). Participants learn that they are able to do tasks they thought were previously unattainable, and they do it by believing and integrating the notion that "anything is possible one stroke at a time" (Roberts & Thomas, 2012, p. 5). In Zentangle, the use of repetition promotes self-confidence, mastery, and ability.

Second, Zentangle promoted non-judgement of self and self-empowerment, reinforced by the mantra: “There are no mistakes, only new opportunities” (Roberts & Thomas, 2012, p. 43). With self-compassion comes improved self-confidence and letting go of perfectionistic expectations; instead, individuals become more accepting and less judgmental of the moment (Siegel, 2007, 2009). By focusing on opportunity and curiosity, Zentangle changes our perspective and promotes empowerment and autonomy. Through Zentangle, unseen abilities are made visible and participants begin to courageously try new things and make self-determining decisions. Non-judgmental awareness leads to openness, curiosity, innovation, and opportunities.

Third, Zentangle promotes self-confidence through problem solving and encouragement through the art process, trial and error, testing, and trying new solutions. This creative problem solving and adaptation, part of imagination and improvisation, is practiced first in Zentangle and then transferred to life experiences. Thus, there is a healthy exploration of solutions rather than the expectation of perfection (Buchalter, 2015).

Fourth, Zentangle is a means to make oneself and one’s art visible. Similar to phenomenology of Art Therapy (Betensky, 1995), Zentangle helps the creator express and view his or her artwork. The artwork is an expression of self, and so acceptance of the artwork is also an acceptance of one’s self. One’s abilities become visible and known, and the individual accepts the art as part of him or herself, enhancing self-esteem, self-knowing, and personhood (Betensky, 1995). The Zentangle artwork represents the externalization of a creative self, acceptance, and sharing in the group, and it represents a new and positive perspective of self.

Fifth, Zentangle provides a positive experience because the final product is beautiful. One of the themes of the focus group was that the outcomes were the creation of beautiful, joyful, and acceptable (in their eyes) art works, making the experience a success (again, in their eyes) and changing participants' beliefs about being unable to create acceptable and beautiful art. A positive experience improves one's confidence through success.

Sixth, Zentangle promotes confidence through affirmation and the positive and reflective modelling of the facilitator. The Zentangle facilitator can be a positive role model, reflecting acceptance of individuals and their art. This relationship has an element of mirroring and attachment through the demonstration and meditative art atmosphere. According to Brown (2013), a facilitator plays a significant role in leading the group. Thus, it is important that the CZT is confident, encouraging, and supportive in the relationship, and provides safety in the environment (Brown, 2013). It was noted by the CZTs in this Zentangle study, that they observed their participants increase in confidence through their support. Thus, because of a supportive relationship with a CZT, participants felt accepted and developed confidence.

This study showed that Zentangle promotes self-confidence in individuals through these six mechanisms. As identified by Buchalter (2015), self-confidence is important in building new concepts of self and in promoting abilities to live resiliently and with capacity. Thus, self-confidence is integral to improving health by empowering individuals to make changes in life.

Implications for use in Art Therapy

This research suggests that Zentangle can effectively be used as an Art Therapy tool. Several implications should be considered when integrating it within a therapeutic framework. There are several concerns when considering Zentangle as an Art therapy tool, which include (a) use with specific populations, (b) being a structured method, and (c) uncovering personal issues.

Different populations. This study suggests that Zentangle's method of structure, and limit of choices and materials can provide safety for some, but creates challenges when working with others. Participants noted that there are various deterrents to Zentangle's effectiveness with some populations. A CZT who is also an art therapist understands the Zentangle tool and his or her client; therefore, the CZT/art therapist can skilfully address the individual's unique needs, make adaptations, and facilitate safety. The size of the paper and drawing instruments provide challenges for individuals who have difficulty holding and controlling materials. Individuals and seniors with declining eyesight or hand tremors, and individuals with poor fine motor skills, brain injuries, or neurological damage may find the small size of the paper confining and the narrow nub too delicate or unstable.

As in any Art Therapy session, ego strength, cognitive ability, and physical limitation need to be assessed and accommodated to ensure safe and therapeutic environments. In addition, individuals may require adaptations to ensure psychological safety. For example, an art therapist can make adaptations to ensure the safety of clients with autism, developmental delays, psychiatric illnesses, or cognitive impairments. These adaptations could include a change in size of paper, step-by-step visual instructions, or

one-to-one facilitation. Individuals with memory and auditory problems will need to have Zentangle taught with alternate instructions and at an accommodating pace, with modelling and increased support by the facilitator. The participants and the researcher in this study identified that Zentangle does not appeal or work for every person, and is not appropriate in every therapeutic environment. It was noted by participants and by the researcher that some individuals they have taught have difficulty with the structured process that needed to be followed, perfectionism, and the lack of freedom. While one of the strengths of Zentangle is the ability to instil confidence, the process can still be a hurdle for participants who have self-limiting beliefs and struggle with self-confidence and self-efficacy. This is where the facilitator plays an important role in creating a safe space and developing therapeutic support through establishing accessibility, acceptability, and simplicity as integral to the method.

Structured method. As noted earlier, the structure creates a psychological safety which can be an effective activity for entering into a relationship and developing rapport between an individual and an art therapist. The structure and safety of Zentangle provides a place of decentering, which allows uncovering of emotional and psychological issues. In addition, Zentangle can be used as an Art Therapy tool to assist participants who are hesitant about creating art. An art therapist can encourage the use of abstract shapes and Zentangle as an alternative method of self-expression and remove focus on the need to make representational art. The structure and safety of Zentangle can also be used to provide therapy through skill development, self-esteem building, and reflective capacity in participants. In addition, modelling by a CZT can be effective in promoting positive

relationships. This study shows how structure can be an effective component of an Art Therapy relationship.

Uncovering personal issues. As identified in this study, Zentangle, when facilitated by an art therapist and in accordance with the mindfulness stages, is a therapeutic activity. Zentangle brings awareness to one's core self, and its ability to access this can bring up emotional and psychological issues (e.g. low self-confidence, perfectionism, loss, etc.), as well as unconscious expression. A Zentangle class, when facilitated as an art class, generally does not stimulate emotional and psychological issues, but CZTs should be aware that this can happen when it is an integrated mindfulness art practice. Therefore, as part of this study's results, the facilitation of Zentangle must also be addressed as an important mechanism of its function. The presence of an art therapist who has been trained to support individuals therapeutically will provide the necessary safety to ensure that Zentangle has positive outcomes when unconscious content surfaces. An art therapist who is also trained as a CZT will provide the greatest benefit in promoting healthy outcomes. An art therapist who has been instructed by a CZT can share the Zentangle art making with others in one-to-one sessions in non-commercial settings but cannot formally teach the Zentangle method (zentangle.com, 2016d). It is important that the stages of the process are followed to benefit from the processes of mindfulness, spirituality, and Art Therapy. The role of the CZT/facilitator is important in introducing the method, and establishing safety and process. However, once Zentangle is learned, practitioners can integrate it into a regular mindfulness art practice.

Recommendations for Further Research

Phenomenological approach. The strength of the current study is that it provides a solid picture of several individuals' experiences with Zentangle. This basic description of Zentangle serves as a starting point from which further exploration can be done to determine the full positive impact of Zentangle. As a phenomenological study, this study of Zentangle described experiences that can be integrated into other Art Therapy and mindfulness practices.

Mindfulness practices and health practices. Given that this study identified Zentangle as a mindfulness practice, future research should test the effectiveness of Zentangle among diverse populations and for diverse conditions. Based on these preliminary findings, it is recommended that further studies focus on exploring the potential health benefits of Zentangle. It would be important to study its use across a wide range of populations and for a variety of conditions, including for mood disorders, affective disorders, pain, chronic illnesses, and cancer, as well as for promoting self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-efficacy. Additionally, studies aiming to understand the underlying neurobiological mechanisms of Zentangle and the observable physiological changes would enhance our understanding of both Zentangle and MBAT. Studies could also assess the long-term effects of Zentangle practice on quality of life, mood, and pain management, among others. Health and wellness professionals would be more likely to use this technique in treatment if a broader base of evidence were established. However, anecdotal evidence and case studies continue to remain important in describing the positive and negative effects of Zentangle. It would be helpful to record and study the anecdotes that are shared on the Zentangle.com website.

Theoretical questions could consider the use of Zentangle as a modified scribble exercise, similar to Winnicott's (1971) scribble drawings, to develop relationships and promote rapport building. Additional questions to consider are: How does Zentangle provide ways of expressing and then visualizing new information about self in symbolic language? Is Zentangle predominantly the method of processing internal issues, the working through and opening up to internal knowing? Over time, do the repeated shapes and lines become one's personal metaphorical and symbolic language and vocabulary?

Limitations of Research

It is important to recognize three limitations inherent in this study that need to be considered when extrapolating implications from the results. These included: (1) the small number of participants; (2) the demographics of the sample; and (3) the biases of the researcher and participants. First, this study had only one focus group composed of seven participants. Furthermore, the participants in the study were from a narrow demographic and all were known to the researcher. Second, six of the seven participants had already been fully involved in Zentangle. Consequently, these findings may differ in a population new to Zentangle. Thus, the nature of the sample likely biased the results in favour of its impact. However, by recruiting CZTs, a deeper exploration of a familiar experience and thicker descriptions of what has been experienced was provided from participants' own practices and from their teaching practices. Recruiting participants with an ongoing experience with Zentangle provided a rich base from which to explore the Zentangle experience by providing an understanding of a continued creative art practice. Finally, this study was done by a single researcher, with a single viewpoint and area of expertise,

thereby limiting the extent to which larger implications can be drawn from the current findings.

Changes in this study of Zentangle could include providing more time for the art response activity, as well as a variety of art materials. I would also have additional researchers review the data for multiple viewpoints and observations. This study would provide a more generalizable result if there were more participants and they were from a wider age range, ethnic diversity and economic status.

Despite these limitations, current findings lead to important questions about the creative and therapeutic ways that Zentangle, as an art form, can be used as a healing practice.

Summary

This research study uncovered the lived experience of Zentangle and identified that Zentangle can be considered an art-based mindfulness activity, with potential as a spiritual practice and art therapy tool. Most of the participants entered the world of Zentangle through creative interest and curiosity, and found it to be fun and enjoyable. Many moved on to become certified to teach the method due to its influence on their art, mindfulness presence and health. Participants identified ritual and meditation as creating a structure which influenced their centring, mindfulness, and feeling of safety. In addition, through the connection with self and openness, as well as creativity and focus on process, Zentangle promotes inspiration and imagination which is fundamental to Art Therapy. The lived experience of Zentangle is an art activity where the art and mindfulness are integrated.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Invitation Letter for Participants

Dear Zentangle® Enthusiast,

My name is Deborah Kopeschny, and I am a Certified Zentangle® Teacher (CZT) and an art therapy student at St. Stephen's College. As part of my art therapy training I am required to do research for a thesis. I have been teaching Zentangle® for 5 years and I have seen its powerful effects on participants. In my thesis I would like to continue to explore the effects and experience of Zentangle®. The research question to be explored is: "What is the phenomenological experience of a mindful art activity, like Zentangle®, and its implications for art therapy?"

As a previous participant in one of the Zentangle® classes that I facilitated, I believe you have an important understanding of the experience. And I would therefore like to invite you to participate in my research study. As a participant your commitment would involve attending three separate meetings as listed below:

1) A 60-90 minute Zentangle® experience with a focus group of 4-6 people followed by a discussion session in which participants will be invited to reflect on the experience. All materials will be provided at no cost to the participants. The Zentangle® session and discussion will be video-recorded and transcribed. Participants will be provided with a copy of the transcription to review either by regular mail or by email (encrypted document).

2) After reviewing the transcription, participants will be requested to engage in a 60 minute interview to validate the transcription of the Zentangle® focus group as well as to document any further insights and understandings.

3) A final 30-60 minute meeting will involve interviewing each participant for a final review of the transcriptions, and to assure the safety and well-being of each study participant. Referral information to an appropriate therapist would be provided as needed.

Research activities will be scheduled by the researcher to take place within the next six (6 months). Prior to the first meeting or at the first meeting, research participants will be required to sign an informed consent form and a confidentiality form. No identifying information will be indicated in the research data or thesis to protect the privacy of the participant. All video recordings, data, and materials related to the research project will be stored securely on an encrypted device. I would assist the participant(s) to find therapeutic help if the need arose during or following the research study. A copy of the thesis will be provided to the participants if desired.

Please contact me before (Date) regarding your willingness to participate in this study. While there is no financial compensation available, your participation will provide valuable support for the advancement of the field of art therapy and the practice of Zentangle®.

Thank you for your time.

Deborah Kopeschny deb@xxx.ca/ 416 xxx-xxxx

Appendix B

ST STEPHEN'S COLLEGE
8810 112 Street NW
University of Alberta Campus
Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2J6
Phone 780-439-7311 • Fax 780-433-8875
www.ualberta.ca/ST.STEPHENS/

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOTHERAPY AND SPIRITUALITY
PRACTICUM

CONSENT TO COUNSELLING/ ART THERAPY SERVICES INFORMATION FOR NEW CLIENTS (ADULT)

Name of Agency	
Practicum Student Name	

What is confidentiality?
Confidentiality is an essential aspect of counseling services. It is important for a client to be able to feel open and comfortable during counselling and/or art therapy sessions. This means that information about a client will only be accessed by those who have authorization. All case notes and/or art work collected will be kept confidential.

What are the exceptions to confidentiality?
There are important exceptions to confidentiality regardless of the counselling setting. A client's information may be used and disclosed as authorized or required by law. Some examples when a counsellor is required to share confidential information are if there are:

1. Concerns about client's harm to him/herself, including suicidal ideation and behaviours
2. Concerns about client's harm to others, including threats of violence
3. Concerns of child abuse, elder abuse, dependent adult abuse
4. Orders by the court of law

Consent

	Initial	*Date*
I agree to participate in and receive counselling and/or art therapy services from a Practicum Student/Counsellor enrolled in a graduate program in the Department of Psychotherapy and Spirituality at St Stephen's College. This Practicum Student/Counsellor is training as a psychotherapy counsellor and/or art therapist. I understand that the Practicum Student/Counsellor is being supervised by a Registered Mental Health Professional, which means my case will be discussed with the clinical supervisor, and that case notes may be read and co-signed by the clinical and site supervisor(s) in the educational setting.		
I grant permission for my case notes and/or art to be shown to professionals for supervision and educational purposes. I understand that such materials may be shared confidentially via email and/or shown in-person.		
I grant permission for my case notes and/or art to be shown to students for educational purposes. I understand that such materials will be shared confidentially and that in doing so will not contain any identifying personal information.		
I grant permission for the use and verbal description of my case notes and/or photos of artwork to be used by the Practicum Student/Counsellor for academic assignments and research purposes, including a case study.		
I understand that the case notes and/or art work collected will be securely stored at the practicum site and that my counselling file is required to be securely kept for 7 years following the completion of counselling.		
I give permission for pertinent case notes and/or artwork to be included in the Practicum Student/Counsellor's graduate thesis and educational case study presentations. This permission is given with the understanding that identities will be protected to prevent public disclosure.		

	Initial	Date
Permission for Digital Recording: I give permission to the Practicum Student/Counsellor to digitally or video-record any counselling/art therapy session in which I am involved. I have been informed and understand that all digital recording will be done with my full knowledge and will be used solely for counsellor training, supervision, and/or consultation purposes. [*Students in the MPS and PMATC programs at St Stephen's College are required to complete a process and integrative paper as part of their practicum assignments, both of which require recording a counselling session. The focus of these papers is to reflect on the student's work.*] Any other use of this material is unauthorized unless I give informed written consent. I understand that the material is kept strictly confidential and that the record will be deleted or otherwise destroyed at the completion of the Practicum Student/Counsellor's practicum. I understand that I may withdraw this permission to record my sessions without penalty by informing the Practicum Student/Counsellor or the Agency/Organization supervisor orally or in writing, at which point any recordings that have been created of my sessions will be immediately destroyed.		
Optional: I give permission for pertinent case notes and/or artwork to be included in the Practicum Student/Counsellor's publications outside of the classroom. This could include conferences, courses, articles and books. This permission is given with the understanding that identities will be protected to prevent public disclosure.		
Optional Consent for Obtaining Confidential Information: I authorize the Practicum Student/Counsellor to request and receive information concerning me from _____, (ie. my doctor) which by law or otherwise, would be considered confidential or privileged. This information will be used for_____.		
Optional Consent for Releasing Confidential Information: I authorize the Practicum Student/Counsellor to release information concerning me from _____, (ie. my doctor) which by law or otherwise, would be considered confidential or privileged. This information will be used for _____.		
I understand my right to withdraw my participation in counselling at any time.		

Signatures

Client Name: _____ Signature: _____

Practicum Student/Counsellor Name: _____ Signature: _____

Site Supervisor Name: _____ Signature: _____

Clinical Supervisor Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

The co-signature of the Practicum Student/Counsellor on this form acknowledges responsibility for the professional use and appropriate security of my personal information, protection of and disposal of recorded material. The Site and Clinical Supervisors' signatures are verification that this consent form has been reviewed and accepted by the Agency and Clinical Supervisor. **ORIGINAL:** kept in Client file at Practicum Site. **PRACTICUM STUDENT TO PROVIDE COPIES TO:** (1) Supervisor(s), (2) Client or their Guardian, (3) St Stephen's College

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form – Zentangle Research Study, 2015Date: **Study Name**: The phenomenological experience of a mindfulness art intervention, like Zentangle.

Researcher: *Deborah Kopeschny, xxxx, Toronto, Ontario, xx xxx; 416-xxx-xxxx*

Purpose of the Research: To gather data that will provide a deeper understanding of an art mindfulness practice like Zentangle®.

The Research Study: The participants in this research will be part of a focus group that will experience Zentangle® and then discuss the experience. Participation will include:

Meeting 1:

a. Introduction to the research study Signing of a confidentiality and an informed consent forms
b. Creating art through the Zentangle® method
c. Discussion of the experience through verbal means and art-making

Meeting 2:

d. An individual interview for reviewing the transcript from the initial focus group to ensure accuracy and completeness

Meeting 3:

e. A second individual interview to for final clarification
f. The research data and thesis will be made available to the participants.

Risks and Discomforts: This research will explore via verbal and art expression the experiencing of Zentangle®. No risks or discomforts from participating in the research are anticipated. To ensure the safety of participants the researcher will assist the participant to access an accredited counsellor as needed.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from the research study at any time and for any reason. Your decision to withdraw from the study will be without penalty and will not influence the nature of your relationship with Deborah Kopeschny, St. Stephen's College or any other group associated with this project, either now, or in the future. In the event you withdraw from the study, all pertinent data will be immediately destroyed.

Confidentiality & Anonymity: Group participants will be asked to keep personal sharing confidential and will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement (Appendix B). All information you supply during the research study will be held in confidence and your name will not appear in any transcript, or thesis or publication of the research. The data for the study will be recorded via a video recording device as well as handwritten notes. The data, notes and artwork will be stored on an encrypted USB drive, and stored in a locked cabinet. The data will be stored for a total of 2 years after the study has been compiled into the thesis document, in a safety deposit box. The data may be referred to at a later date, and any future use of the data will follow the confidentiality and rights of the participants as outlined in this agreement, and in Appendix B, the St. Stephen's "Consent to Counselling/Art Therapy Services." The anticipated date of publishing of the thesis will be Jan. 2016.

Questions about the Research? If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please contact Deborah Kopeschny either by telephone at (416) xxx-xxxx, or by e-mail (dxxx@xxx). This research has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, St. Stephen's College Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Chair of the Master of Psychotherapy and Spirituality Program, Ara Parker, at St. Stephens College, 1-800-661-4956.

Legal Rights and Signatures:

I *(fill in your name here)*, consent to participate in *(insert study name here)* conducted by *(insert investigator name here)*. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature_____ **Date**_____
Participant

Signature_____ **Date**_____
Principal Investigator

Appendix D

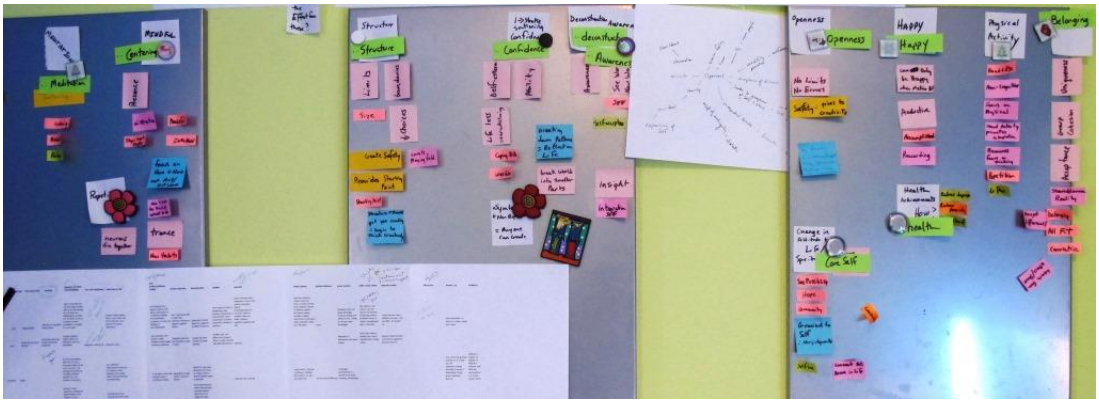

Figure 20 Visual Thematic Categories

Appendix E

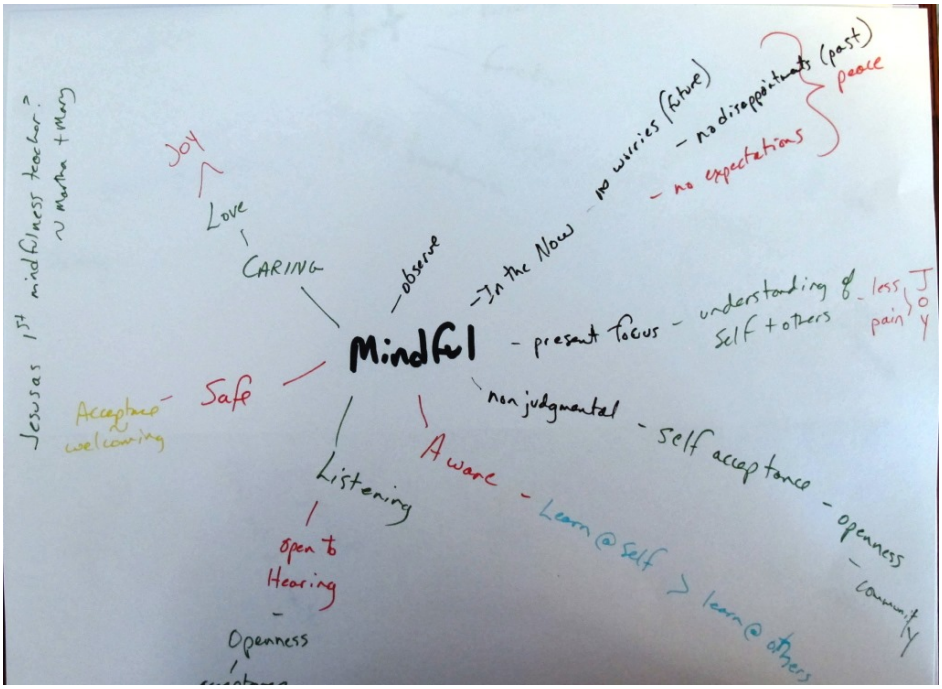

Figure 21. Mind map of mindfulness

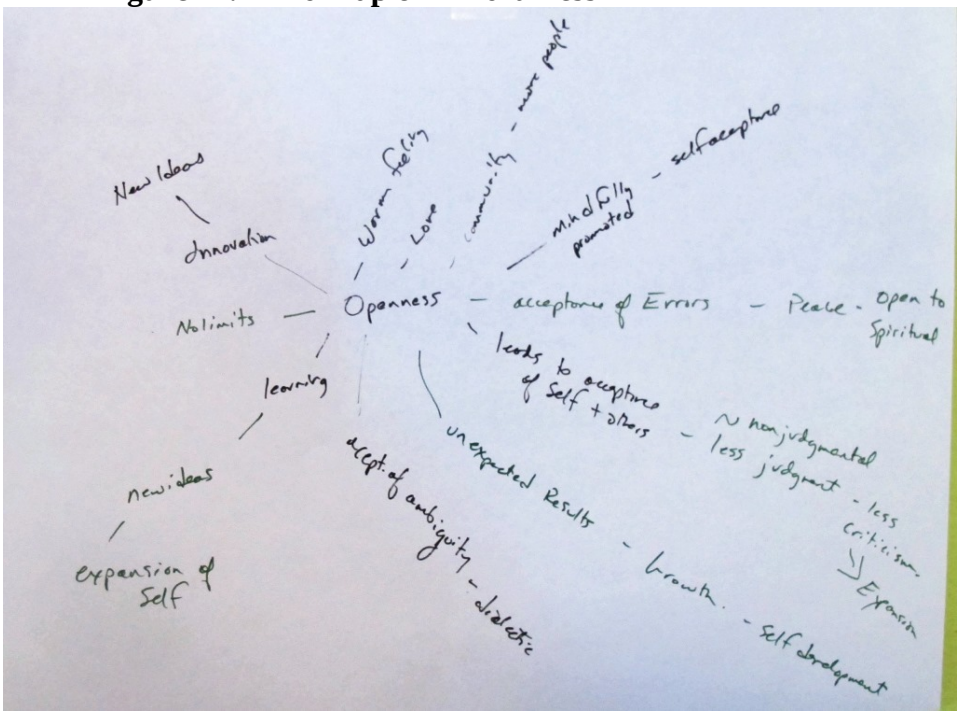

Figure 22. Mind map of openness