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Rachel Michl

St. Cloud State University, [rachelmichl99@gmail.com](mailto:rachelmichl99@gmail.com)

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# Reiki and Well-Being in Minnesota

R. R. Michl<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Anthropology Department, St. Cloud State University*

Mentor: Dr. Kelly Branam Macauley

## Abstract:

Reiki is an example of a holistic healing practice that can be used for the participants overall well-being. Well-being can be seen through mental, emotional, and physical forms with my participants. Some examples include the calming effect Reiki was said to have on my participants, and its ability to help with pain, in my personal experience it reduced the irritation from my poison ivy and hives. Reiki can be described as a holistic energy healing that focuses on moving of energy through the body to help realign or balance the recipient's energy and help heal ailments. Previous research shows that Reiki and other forms of holistic healing have been used for well-being for a number of years. Hahn, Reilly, & Buchanan(2014) discuss the use of Reiki in helping hospital patients cope with their pain and anxiety. Through the use of participant observation I was able to experience how and why Reiki is used and directly see it's influence on the recipients well-being. In this paper, I argue that Reiki is used as a method of well-being, in similar ways that yoga, massage, and meditation. Rosenbaum, & Van de Velde (2016) discuss their research and describe that Reiki is even more effective in reducing pain in cancer patients compared to other methods such as massage and yoga.

## Introduction:

It was a warm Wednesday evening in Hackensack Minnesota, I was standing in a small room with a singular massage table strategically placed in the middle of the room. N was laying down with a pillow placed under her head and knees. All of my participants did an energy scan. Starting at her arms and shoulders I held my hands gently on her imaging myself sending loving energy through me to her. I eventually made my way to her feet to ground her and soon be done. While making my way down to her feet Karlene told me to ground her and pointed at a picture of tree roots on the wall. With my hands placed gently on top of N's feet I imagined her as a tree with roots digging deep into the ground. Karlene then told me to call my grandma Rose and make the connection to Nicole through her (this connection is referring to Nicole being Native and my unknown Native ancestors through my grandma). Immediately I lost all strength in my body and slumped to the ground. Hands still on top of her feet I became overwhelmed and began crying. Karlene locked eyes with me and told me to ground this energy. I calmed myself and shortly after we were done. I chose to share this experience because this was the first moment I was able to truly feel the power behind Reiki that I had heard about. In this paper I will begin by discussing the methods used for this ethnographic study, I will continue with a discussion of my field notes, and end with a literature review connecting my work to previous work done with Reiki and well being. I argue that Reiki is used for the participants well-being both mentally and physically in a format

that can reduce stress, anxiety, and pain as seen in Hahn, Reilly, & Buchanan(2014) discussion of the use of Reiki is helping hospital patients deal with their pain and anxiety, and Rosenbaum, & Van de Velde(2016) discussion of pain reduction in cancer patients.

### Methods:

For my research I focused on a method called participant observation. Schultz and Lavenda, discuss participant observation is a technique of field research were “fieldworkers gain insight into another culture by participating with members in social activities as outsiders”(2018, pg.43). This method is the most effective way to gather an understanding of why and how people do what they do. I believe that when researching Reiki I was only able to truly understand this practice when embodying it the way my participants did. DeWalt and DeWalt explain this experience as “tacit” understanding stating, “tacit aspects of culture largely remain outside of our awareness or consciousness. It is the feeling of discomfort we have for example, when someone stands too close to us or touches us in a way that seems too familiar”(2011, pg. 1-2). I utilized this method while having conversation with my participants about Reiki as well. Some of the things I participated in included the procedures that lead up to Reiki sessions and the Reiki sessions themselves, referred to as Reiki share when working with a group. Reiki as described by my participants, is an energy practice that creates balance or realigns the recipients energy facilitating in healing, or returning their bodies back to harmony. The practitioners are a vessel through which the Reiki energy flows and goes wherever it is needed.

I went to my field site once a week for two to four days at a time to meet with with my participants over a period of six weeks. My field site was located in and around Hackensack, MN which is a two hour drive north from my home. I worked out of my Aunt’s shop which is a two room building which is shared with a chiropractic clinic in Walker, MN. Once in awhile I worked at a participants house and when needed I worked on myself at my own home in Waite Park, MN. The drive allowed for me to have separation from my site and give me time to experience the authentic feeling of going to a field site. I was expecting to be spending more time outside and at participants’ homes but instead I spent a lot of time at my Aunt’s shop.

I think it is also important to mention my positionality, and use of participant observation as situated knowledge in this research. Schultz and Lavenda (2018, pg. 51) describe situated knowledge as making explicit what your nationality is, class background, gender, and why you chose your research influences and effects of your research. I am a middle class white female from a college educated family who grew up in central Minnesota. I chose to work with my Aunt which gave me an in into the community. Karlene has been practicing Reiki for around twenty years and has worked her way up from a practitioner to a master/teacher in these years. All of my participants which I met through my aunt know her because they were reaching out to her for assistance in receiving or learning how to do Reiki. All of my participants are Minnesotan women who found Reiki when looking to expand on their belief system. Based on this information we all seemed to have similar backgrounds and a connection through my Aunt making it easy for me to communicate and work with them. It is within this context that my research is uniquely situated within time and space.

### Week one

I began my fieldwork on Sunday June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The two hour drive up to Hackensack, MN was filled with conversation with my older sister who was joining me. We arrived at our family cabin around 12:15pm and got unpacked before heading to Karlene’s house which is about five miles away. After catching up and eating our chicken salads we headed over to the town Nevis for a singing bowl meditation

where I hoped to make some contacts for my research. At 3:00 we arrived at an art gallery that had blue walls and painted chairs hanging upside down on the ceiling. Paintings lined the walls all the same size about a foot apart. The large rectangular room had the meditation leader sitting up against the middle of the wall with different sized bronze bowls scattered around in a semi circle. About thirty women of different ages lay in front of her on yoga mats on the floor in a semicircular shape. We placed ourselves in the back of the room. The meditation lasted about an hour. We all closed our eyes and listened to the meditation leader create a song using the tones from ringing the bowls. When we were done around 4:30 I introduced myself to the group and explained my project asking if anyone was interested in discussing and practicing Reiki with me. I was informed that this practice of using Reiki on each other is called a Reiki share. I received three business cards from women interested in meeting with me and practicing Reiki.

That evening I did my first personal Reiki session on myself at 8:00 it lasted about 40 minutes. I laid in my bed placed my hands on my head then my throat, my heart, and then on my stomach. I spent about 10 minutes holding each position slowing my breathing down with my eyes closed. The lights were off making the room very dark. This process felt like a very deep relaxation. I found my body becoming more relaxed and my muscles feeling looser. My thoughts became more contained and I felt very calm. My hands felt warm and tingly like when your arm starts to fall asleep. The decision to start a reiki session felt more like a decision but when I was done I just knew I was done. After this session I noticed that I slept really well I didn't wake up at all the entire night.

10:00 am I headed to the beach at Leech lake in Walker. I reviewed the folder of notes I have about reiki. This includes hand positions, a few examples of people using reiki and then some notes about reiki with animals. I was focusing on reiki with people this day because I was going to go work on a client with my aunt. I reviewed these notes for 45 minutes at the lake. It was windy and you could hear the waves hitting the rocks. This is not a sandy beach but a rocky one with benches to sit on.

At 10:45 Karlene picked me up so we can head to the clients session. We arrive for the session at 11:15 at the clients home in Walker. Karlene asks me about any concerns I have and I state that I'm worried about doing it wrong, she told me to just trust the process and let what ever happens happen. To prepare for this session we first wash our hands to prepare our hands as conduits for the reiki energy to flow through. The client laid at the foot of her bed giving us direct access to three sides of her body. She laid under a white sheet with a pillow below her head and feet. The temperature was set at a cool 70 degrees for the clients comfort. The only scent was that of the lemon soap I had used when washing my hands. Time seemed to go rather slowly during this hour and thirty minute session.

Karlene had me choose to start at her head or feet. I choose feet. Placing one hand above and below each foot I went into a slow meditation like breathing and paid attention to the clients reaction. During this session I would feel a pressure in my body until I went to that area on the client. My throat began to feel heavy and sore like when you are holding back tears. When this happened I went to her throat and placed my hands on either side eventually the pressure dissipated in my throat and she said wow I really felt that. I did this same process from head to toe. At the end I went to her feet and my aunt placed herself at the head. We then pushed the energy towards each other through the clients body by placing my hands on her feet and my aunts hands on her head. We ended the session at 12:37pm. This client mentioned that she would be interested in doing a weekly session with me. Once we were done we again washed our hands to cleanse the leftover energy off of us.

As soon as we walked outside I immediately noticed that everything was louder and brighter. The sun was almost unbearable and the birds sounded like they were yelling. We stopped at the gas station and the smell of the gas was obnoxiously strong. This sensitivity diminished throughout the day. I did another personal Reiki session in my bed in the dark around 9:00 this night to avoid the light sensitivity I followed

the same process as the night before but it only lasted about thirty minutes this night. I again slept very well. This first week was a very overwhelming experience for me. It was filled with lots of observation and learning all of which were good and interesting things.

## Week Two

8:40 am I began the twentyish mile drive from my cabin to Karlene's shop in Walker to do a Reiki session on one of the women she connected me with. This woman is in her mid to late twenties and is pregnant with her second child. My car was running on empty so I had to make a stop to fill up on the way cutting my time line pretty close. This made me anxious making it harder to focus. When I arrived the client was lying on a massage table in the center of a small white room with a pillow below her knees and head. The temperature wasn't too hot or cold and a small fan in the corner helped keep me cool off as well. Karlene said hello when I walked in and asked me to do an energy scan. Not knowing exactly what this meant and not wanting to interrupt the session in some way I followed Karlene's lead and walked alongside the client hands at my side trying to see if I could feel anything different when I did so. I didn't notice anything when I walked alongside of her other than the desire to start this session up by her head. Karlene then asked where I wanted to start and I said at her head. I made my way over to her head starting there after about five minutes I then placed my hands above either shoulder staying there for about ten minutes. I then felt the need to move above her heart. I lastly worked on the baby after Karlene asked if I would like to, I worked on the baby for about ten minutes. This meant using Reiki on N's stomach focusing the energy towards the baby through her. After about thirty minutes Karlene told the client to take a deep breath and come back slowly and told her that she was very balanced and handling her pregnancy very well. The client and I then went into the hall and made plans for doing a weekly session together.

On Friday I sat down and reviewed all my notes that I have on Reiki with animals. The notes stated that when doing Reiki your goal is never to diagnose or know exactly the ailment to properly perform Reiki. Animals are said to respond intuitively and will move to receive the Reiki where they need it. We become an empty vessel for Reiki to pass through and create healing possibilities to exist. Most sessions last 30-60 minutes depending on what the animal decides. First ask the animal if they would like to participate. My understanding is that you just verbally ask the animal if they want to participate and they will leave if they don't want to, or use other body language to sure their unwillingness to participate. You are to then set intention of being an open vessel. Cup small animals in your hands without pressure, if animal is asleep do not use hands on. I finished reviewing around 1:15 and then reviewed the easy twenty minute nine step self Reiki session for thirty minutes.

1. Ground and protect yourself
2. Set intention
3. Check your energy centers
4. Start at your head and work down
5. Put yourself in bubble of color
6. Say prayer and thanks to your healing team
7. Recheck energy
8. Ensure your session is complete
9. Bring yourself back and drink some water

I have notes to ask Karlene about this because this did not all make sense. I finished reviewing these at 1:45. At 2:00 I attempted to do a Reiki session on my cat Charlie. He is a five year old orange domestic short hair. He walked into my room heading towards my window I stopped him and gently pet him from head to tail for about five minutes before he got up and walked away. Before bed I noticed that I had developed hives due to an allergic reaction from Anchovies.



On Saturday around 9:00 am I decided to do a quick 9 step session on my self before work following the notes that I took on Friday. Starting above eyes, I move above the cheeks, than above the occipital, then on the throat, next above the heart, above the rib cage, next above the pubic bone, and lastly on the upper thighs. I stay at each position for about two minutes. This session lasted for about twenty minutes. Because of my hives I found it hard to focus but noticed that afterwards I felt wide awake and ready for the day.

Sunday I started my day working on other homework. Also made note that my hives have spread to my legs and ears making it almost impossible to ignore them. I intended to do Reiki on animals at work but something came up with the owner and we were not able to meet. At 9:20ish pm I decided to do another nine step session on myself. The order once again was eyes, cheeks, occipital, throat, heart, rib cage, pubic bone, and upper thighs. Each position was held about three minutes making the session about twenty minutes long. My hands became warm and tingly as they hovered above each step. This session was interesting because my hives were not itchy at all and I was very relaxed afterwards. I headed straight to bed after this session.

### Week Three

Wednesday July 10<sup>th</sup>, began with me and my friend Liz heading up to my cabin at 10:00am. We arrived in town around 12:00 stopping to eat and met my aunt at the flea market confirming a meeting time for the Reiki refresh at 4:45 at Karlene's shop in Walker. We then picked up a few snacks around 3:30 and got to Karlene's shop around 4:10. She was still with a client and popped her head out of the door to ask us if we would set up the food on a small table with the food in the fridge. We set up the food and the client was done and left around 4:30. I asked if it would be alright if Liz stayed and Karlene said yes. While waiting for the other three women to arrive Karlene asked about my poison Ivy and noticed my hives. I was really itchy all day from my hives which I knew was going to affect my Reiki for the day. At about 4:45 two older women maybe in their sixties arrived. When the first two women arrived I was a bit nervous to meet them but they were just as open and willing to learn as me which was helpful. We had created a semi circle of chairs in the entry way of the shop for all of us to sit. Around 5 the last woman arrived. While waiting and before introducing ourselves we snacked on veggies and chips. Karlene sat down and asked who wanted to introduce themselves first. I volunteered myself to go since I was part of the reason why this meeting was created. I explained my project and my previous contact with Reiki.

One of the older women went next. We will call the first woman J, and the second woman, T. J was in a blue top and T was in white. Woman one introduced herself next explaining that she has a background in multiple healing energies and uses Reiki alongside them. Woman two talked about using other healing energies alongside Reiki as well, she also mentioned the recent loss of her mother and how Reiki seemed to help her mother pass on. My friend Liz was next explaining that she was there because she was interested in what I was doing and had no idea what Reiki was. N was next explaining that she is excited to bring her baby into the world with Reiki, and she discussed how she has been working to break cultural barriers combining Reiki with her Native traditions.

Karlene then told us to focus on our energy. When asked to find my energy and hone into it I imagined a bubble of energy around me growing stronger, and noticed I didn't itch anymore. I did this because I didn't know what else that would mean and it seemed inappropriate to ask because everyone else seemed to know. She then continued by explaining the history of Reiki. It began with a monk in Japan named Dr. Usui. He went to a mountain top to meditate and fast where he was enlightened with the knowledge of Reiki. He then spent time turning this knowledge into words so he could teach others. His first student was a man named Dr. Nayashi who travelled to Hawaii and taught a woman named Dr. Takata. This then lead to people being taught in the U.S.. Karlene then asked how our hands felt we all

agreed they felt warm and kind of tingly, J said she felt nothing, and how she hasn't done any energy work in a year. Karlene then tells a story about my great Aunt Marietta who is a Benedictine sister. She learned Reiki and never felt a thing but made it apparent that that doesn't mean it's not working, and that you must trust the process. I never knew this about my great aunt and was surprised to hear the story. Karlene then led the conversation to ask us how we scan others energy. There as a general consensus that you walk next to them trying to feel what each area feels like. T however stated that she stands still scanning each area in her head.

We then discussed who wanted to be worked on first and if we wanted everyone to work on us at the same time. I was first on the table. My session lasted about twenty minutes. We were all moved into a small room with a massage table in the middle, essential oils on shelves around the room gave it an earthy aroma and a wooden fan hung on the ceiling. There was a pillow under my head and knees and I took my shoes off just because it was more comfortable. When I was on the table I began focusing on my breathing and soon noticed I was seeing blue green and purple under my eyelids. I also was hyper aware when someone touched my arm and it felt like a buzzing all over that area that stayed their until the end of the session. There were no words saying we're done we just knew when we were done. Sometimes seemingly taking cues from others letting go and backing away. At one point during my session I also noticed that my head felt really small and a beam of light was shining down on me my eyes were still closed though. Once open I noticed that the fan blades seemed orange instead of brown and that I felt more awake. Discussing my session Karlene explained that the colors I say were my upper three chakras opening. Everyone washed their hands and drank water after each session to hydrate and as Karlene says to clear the energy from one person so you are ready for the next.

N was next, her session was also about twenty minutes she positioned the same as me on the table and everyone washed their hands and drank water after. We all did an energy scan and I felt like I wanted to start at her head but I started where there was room which was her arms and shoulders. I held my hands gently on her imaging myself sending loving energy through me to her. I eventually made my way to her feet to ground her and soon be done. My aunt then told me to ground her and pointed at a picture of tree roots on the wall. I thought this was interesting because I was already doing this and imaging her as a tree. Karlene then told me to call on my ancestors for help, I said okay in my head and thought nothing of. Next, Karlene told me to call my grandma Rose and make the connection to N through her (this connection is referring to N being an indigenous woman and my unknown Native ancestors through my grandma). Immediately I lost all strength in my body and slouched over hands still on top of her feet, I was overwhelmed and began crying. Karlene looked at me and told me to ground it I calmed myself and shortly after we were done. My body felt weak and shaky after. I shared what happened and how it was like I was consumed and had no control over what happened. Karlene told me that my grandma didn't know her ancestors when she was alive but now knows them in spirit and brought them to me. N then said she would be interested in teaching me some Native traditions to help me connect to my cultural heritage more. I was super excited but also amazed at what had happened. After this session I couldn't focus on the others I tried to get into it but I couldn't.

T was after her same position on the table, same washing and drinking after about twenty minutes. I was sitting out of the room for this session so I don't have notes on her response. Then it went woman one and lastly my friend Liz all in the same position and the same washing hands and drinking water after. J was next and seemed very calm, she didn't cry and she barely moved at all on the table. I did the same for her going where there was space and observing the others because now I was getting tired. Karlene half way through placed an orange dragon made from stone on the J's chest and I imagined it blowing fire across her body. We were done shortly after. Interestingly J sat up and said she wanted to scream and yell the whole time, that she hasn't released that much anger in a long time, and that she felt like she had let

something big go. Karlene then informed the rest of us that J is a medium and was carrying around energy from the individuals who connect with her and she had finally let all of them go. She said she felt like a new person.

My friend Liz was last and she was really excited. I held her hands for part of her session and wanted to make sure she felt comfortable so focusing on thinking about very calm things. Karlene placed a rock with a bee painted on it on her forehead and when she removed Liz opened her eyes and started laughing uncontrollably. This continued for about ten minutes. At one point Liz said she couldn't help it. That she didn't know why she was laughing. Karlene explained it as spiritual laughter, and said it happens a lot when people experience an energy surge for the first time because it raises their energy levels so high. Liz said surge was the right word and that she didn't expect to feel a thing but once the rock was set on her forehead she felt this buzz all the way through her body almost making her pee her pants. After this we discussed a bit more, Liz was still shocked she felt something and continued giggling on and off for another hour or so. She was also amazed that I cried saying after seven years of friendship she's never seen me cry. I was also shocked, excited, and a bit overwhelmed. When my friend Liz was done we concluded the night by scheduling a level two attunement which was explained as an opening of your energy pathways further so you can receive and be a better vessel for the energy.

#### **Week Four**

Tonight I decided to do a short twenty minute session on myself in hopes of relieving a migraine I had. I laid on a pullout couch at the house I was house sitting with an ice pack on my forehead. I placed my hands above my eyes, over my throat, on either side of my head covering my ears, and on the crown of my head. I set the intention of relieving my headache (I did this by saying it in my head). My nausea seemed to abruptly disappear and the constant itch from the hives on my hands was soothed. The practicality of Reiki was made apparent at this moment as I knew I had to get other things done and it helped me to function on better level. There is also an ease when working on myself because there is a lack of judgement and concern about doing it "right".

I began the next day around 10:00 am when I started my drive up north to my cabin. Knowing this is going to be the first time staying alone at the cabin has made me very anxious. Arriving around 12:00pm gave me ample time to get situated as I waited for my meeting with Nicole at 3:30. Before we started, N immediately noted that she could sense my nervousness and reminded me to just trust the process and let my worries fade. She then shared her story of finding my aunt by just walking into her shop after seeing the word Reiki on her business sign. Her story was complex as she explained her struggles with substance abuse and the internal battle to live up to her Indian name Medicine Woman. She also explained how Reiki has helped her overcome these substance abuse problems and create a better life for herself and her children.

After our discussion she then laid down on the table with a pillow under her head and knees. I started at her feet after doing an energy scan (I did this by closing my eyes and walking beside her, hands at my side to try and see if any area felt different then the others). I went from her feet to her knees, hips, shoulders, head, and then back down in the opposite order. My hands weighed down my arms feeling as though there were weights on them. This sensation caught my attention as it was different than the normal warm tingly feeling my hands develop. The image of what I can best describe as a loading symbol kept lingering in my mind as I worked on her, giving me the knowledge to start and end at her feet. The inability to explain what I saw weighed on me after but Nicole explained that it is not my job to know but to deliver the message. She stated that allowing the words to flow out of you after like word vomit is the best way to get everything that needs to be said out.



Before wrapping up our meeting she reminded me to not worry. Something about this triggered a memory of mine about my Reiki 1 attunement years ago, and how that experience lead me to believe I was doing it wrong from the beginning. Karlene told me to go on a path in my head. I was to go on this path and meet my spirit animal at the end. Well I didn't meet one animal I met the entire forest of animals and I really felt I did something wrong. N was able to talk to me about this just being proof that I have a great connection to nature and animals. After this I went and met Karlene to share and return her keys. She agreed with everything N had told me and again reassured me that I wasn't doing anything wrong, and to not be nervous.

### Week Five

I started the day hanging out with Liz and going to Karlene's shop to prepare for N to show up. We arrived around 2:30 expecting N to arrive around 3:30 like last week. After waiting to hear from N for twenty minutes I decided to try giving Liz a massage while doing Reiki with her for a bit, to test out my skills and see what other things I could possibly do with this. I worked on her shoulders and neck, then on her legs, all while she laid face down on the massage table. I didn't feel like I was doing anything because my hands weren't warm or tingly, and Liz couldn't focus enough to tell me if she experienced anything. We then traded placed and just talked waiting for N to respond. She finally messaged me at 4:00 needing to reschedule because something came up. I decided to just work on Liz some more since we were already there. I mentally set the intention of sending whatever Reiki energy she needed her way. I turned on music in the background. It was a beautiful soothing combination of flutes with birds chirping and the whooshing sound of water flowing. After placing a pillow under her head and knees I did an energy scan breathing deep, with my eyes closed to see where I should start. I felt the desire too start at her head so that's where I went first. I would lightly touch or hover my hands above each area. Beginning at her head, then going to her feet, then back up to her arms.

The familiar warm tingly feeling crept into my hands as I began to imagine Liz and her boyfriend dancing in a field to the music playing in the background. When I was down at her feet I was thinking about how much I'm gonna miss her when she moved in a month, because she is my closest friend. When I was back up by her arms I began thinking about what we were gonna do the rest of the day. Eventually just stopping when I felt like I was done. Liz described her experience and visual. She didn't really feel anything but she said she could see a rainbow of colors moving like a mood ring. When I was thinking of her and Jack dancing the colors were two bubbles moving around each other. When I was at her feet the colors were pouring from the top and pulling down like raindrops, and when I let go of her feet and went back up by her arms, the color went completely red and burst making everything go black for the rest of the time. I noticed that this twenty minute session felt just as long as my hour session with Nicole, and found that interesting.

Today is Liz's birthday! We spent the morning at the farmers market waiting to hear from one of my original contacts we will call C. Liz came with me to C's house at 2:00. We started by looking at her screened in porch where she said she does Reiki with clients. The room was only large enough to have a massage table and her desk in it. We then went outside and sat on a swing under a beautiful oak tree with it's branches surrounding us. She told us about her life with Reiki and how she came to find it. Originally she had no contact with energy work at all. She was an EMT in walker and wanted to find something she could use to help patients calm down and find peace when on the way to the hospital. A friend of hers then introduced her to the woman who eventually taught her Reiki. C thought Reiki was a perfect fit to use in the ambulance and decided to then go through all the levels over a six year span. She talked about how it has helped make her jobs easier, and helps calm her daughter down when having panic attacks. She then showed us her barn and told us about her family and a bit about her past before Reiki. I ended up

taking Saturday and Sunday off because I got road rash on my left leg, lower knee and upper left shin and had to clean it which hurt, and was exhausting.

I received a message about preparing for my Reiki 2 class from Karlene today. It includes cutting back on meat, sweets, caffeine, smoking, drinking, and screen time. It also suggests doing self treatments and meditation or going for walks. It says doing this will help detox our body from the chemicals and hormones in these products and help clear your brain (notes from Karlene). I also need to get permission from someone to do a distance Reiki treatment on them (I asked my sister Michaela and she said yes). I did a session on myself focusing on my leg as suggested by Karlene around 1:00. I went around the injury and hovered my hands above it. There was so specific order or time in each spot. I verbally set the intention of healing and took deep breaths before beginning. I then went for a walk as suggested this was about an hour and was just around my neighborhood. This session was interesting because my hands felt cool instead of warm, but they were still tingly. My leg felt a sense of relief while doing this. The throbbing subsided a bit and the tingling also stopped. Once I was done it began to hurt once I stood up, and hurt on my walk.

### Week Six

This is my last week and the time to prep for my level two attunement. Karlene told me we were meeting at 10:00 am the next morning and to bring some fruit to share, a chair, water, a notebook, and anything else I needed to be comfortable. She shared the number of a woman I would be carpooling with in the morning and I messaged her to check on a time to meet. I was also supposed to get permission from someone to do a long distance reiki session on them sometime the next day. I asked my sister, she said yes. I would also need a picture of her with me which was easy to find.

The next day at 9:15am I met with N and one other woman to carpool to T's house which is where the attunement was being held. On the way we talked about our busy schedules and I explained how I got the road rash on my leg. When we arrived at 10:00 we pulled up to a beautiful two story log home situated on the lake with trees surrounding it. In total there were six women there. There was an abundance of fruit and other food covering the counter available for us to eat throughout the day. We began by introducing ourselves to the one woman we did not know there which goes by K. After grabbing some food we all headed down to the lake to sit on the pontoon. We sat in an oval with Karlene on one end and a make shift alter on the other. The alter was made of a chair with a baby blanket, lots of stones, and any personal items we wanted blessed on it. This was to be blessed and given to N after the attunement was done so she could carry the Reiki energy with her. Karlene gave each of us a packet filled with notes to keep. The first couple pages include breathing exercises for meditation. With Karlene leading us we all starting breathing together eyes closed. The sun was very hot and you could hear the bugs and the fish smacking the water around us. We breathed in and out our noses holding the breath in and focusing, holding it behind our belly buttons. We did this for awhile before Karlene told us to add the sound. This was done as we exhaled saying ohhh ahhh mmmm. She said this is supposed to help move the energy.

After doing the breathing exercises for awhile for N lead us in a traditional Anishinabe prayer. This began with lighting sage in large rainbow colored shell and pouring the smoke over your body with an eagle feather, each of us did this once. N said this is done to cleanse your soul. Next she took out her pipe. She did not explain everything she was doing but said she would point to all four directions starting from the east, and this was done to thank all the parts of the universe. We were then to smoke a tobacco pipe she was given as a baby around in a circle until the tobacco was gone (I was extremely excited and thankful to be able to participate in this). I knew I didn't have the right words but the only way I could express my gratitude and excitement of this experience was that it felt like being at the right church for me, and the combination of practices was truly comforting.

After this was done we then headed back into the yard and congregated in a screened in tent to do the attunement. Karlene told us to take our chairs and put them in a circle with enough room that she could walk around each one of us. The attunement process as explained by Karlene is the placing of the Reiki symbols into our energy field giving us the ability to use them. When we started Karlene asked us to close our eyes. I sat in my chair and was able to hear Karlene walking around us. When she reached me she placed my hands into the prayer position in front of my chest for awhile I could tell she was standing next to me but could not see what she was doing. She then unfolded my hands and drew symbols in my palms. A light blue and green fluttered under my eyelids during this process. Once done she folded them back together and moved them in front of my forehead then back down to my chest. I stayed like that until she was done with everyone else. My body felt like it was almost buzzing as I sat and waited for the others to be done.

Once we were all done Karlene told us to open our eyes and go spend some time by ourselves, eat, and drink some water. I went and laid in the house with my leg elevated because it was swollen. When I looked at the clock it was already 1:30. Around 2:00 everyone gathered in the living room. Karlene had us flip to the page with symbols on it and had us practice drawing them. It was made very clear that these are sacred symbols not to be shared with people who are not attuned so they can't be used for ill intentions. Once we had done this we then were supposed to pull up a picture of the person we wanted to practice long distance Reiki on. We were to practice the breathing from earlier and imagine this persons laying down as one would for a session and draw these symbols over their picture. I didn't feel anything during this and later found out that my sister had no awareness of anything happening to her.

We continued by going over the notes about sending Reiki into the future or past and even to the dead. You do this by imagining the person, place, or thing in that time and performing a session on it. When talking about distance Reiki and sending it to the deceased or through time K brought up that the previous day a friend who had passed came to her when she thought about this idea. This stood out to me because right before the feast K left to take a phone call and returned to tell us that her good friend had committed suicide. It was his sister who had come to K the day before and she told us that she came to her to tell her this was going to happen. We all sent her our love and best wishes before she left.

After this we all stretched and decided to start preparing the feast. We had Salmon, wild rice salad, bread, and fruit. We were told by N this was a traditional feast done by her people and she wanted to share that with us as we shared a very special journey together. We all brought a dish to share. It was about 5:30 when we started the feast. I note the time because this day seemed to fly by. Each new thing we did seemed to last only a short time, but in reality lasted hours. At dinner we discussed N's pregnancy and other things going on in life. This was my last day of field research and as everything came to a close. We all made it apparent that we would see each other again, and I expressed my gratitude to the women who let me share in this experience with them.

### **Literature Review:**

As stated before I argue that Reiki is used for the participants well-being both mentally and physically in a format that can reduce stress, anxiety and pain. For the purpose of this research well-being is defined as mental and emotional happiness, and physical health as the absence of illness or pain. My literature review consists of multiple previous studies and discussions of how Reiki can be beneficial to those who receive and provide it's power for their well-being, along with the connection to Reiki being used alongside other methods of health and well-being such as yoga and meditation. I found it interesting to mention that almost all of my sources were journal articles discussing the use of Reiki in formal medical

settings. Although my research was situated uniquely and separately from previous research there was a similar understanding of the definition of well-being, and Reiki's use and importance in achieving that.

As stated by Burden, Herron-Marx, and Clifford "Anecdotal evidence suggests that through its profound relaxation effect, reiki alleviates anxiety, stress, perception of pain, and promotes a feeling of wellbeing"(2005, pg. 250). This directly connects to my findings postulating that Reiki can be used on yourself or others for well-being through the form of stress, pain, and anxiety relief. Referring back to week three of my research I would like to focus on the effects of Reiki being used on my participant T. She states during this Reiki share that her experience was one of relaxation, stress relief and release. I found this to show just how similar my participants experience was to previous research.

Many articles mention how Reiki is used in a hospital setting, more specifically with cancer patients and their treatments, focusing on it's use in relaxation, and pain reduction. The article I am going to focus on is by Hahn, Reilly, & Buchanan (2014). Because this article specifically discusses the use of Reiki in pain reduction, I would like to reference back to week two of my field notes when I first developed my poison ivy and hives. Similar to the patients in this article I was able to use Reiki to reduce the pain and uncomfotability from my own personal ailments during that time. There were also a number of articles discussing the use of Reiki in hospital settings put into use for the staff. (Tang, Tegeler, Larrimore, Cowgill, & Kemper 2010; Mangione, Swengros, & Anderson 2017) have an interesting discussion of the use of Reiki's benefits in a hospital setting similar to my previous articles. The difference is that this article focuses on the use of Reiki for the staff and not the patients in forms of anxiety and stress reduction. The connection I found most relevant was to that of my participant N's experience. Throughout the research setting she talked about the use of Reiki helping her to feel calm and less anxious or stressed about giving birth, which I felt directly connected to the use of Reiki being used to reduce stress and anxiety.

(Rubik, Brooks, & Schwartz, 2006; Garrett , 2001; Rosenbaum, & Van de Velde, 2016; and Haines 2016) have very interesting discussions about the effectiveness of Reiki alongside other forms of well-being including yoga, meditation, and medication. In these articles it is concluded by the participants that Reiki was seen as more effective compared to the other methods used to achieve well-being. This was an important discovery in my literature review because I was not able to compare multiple different healing methods to document effectiveness. During my healing process specifically with road rash I was able to make a small connection to this discovery. When using antibacterial ointment or other western medicine forms of treatment my road rash made no improvement. With Reiki I was able to see more drastic improvement including less redness, itching, and pain.

Beeler (2018, pg. 82-86) has a discussion about the experience of Reiki and what it feels like. Describing an instance where the practitioner felt a warm tingling sensation in their hands. I found this research interesting because it was the only one I could find describing the physical experiences I had. In my participation I was able to feel a warm tingling sensation in my hands as well when using Reiki. Karlene noted that this was a normal and often common sensation.

## Conclusion:

To conclude, I used participant observation to collect research on Reiki finding that this form of energy healing was most often used for my participants well-being. I argue that Reiki is used for the participants well-being both mentally and physically in a format that can reduce stress, anxiety, and pain. For my research I focused on a method called participant observation. This method was the most effective way to gather an understanding of why and how people do what they do. I believe that when researching Reiki I was only able to truly understand this practice when embodying it the way my participants did. I utilized this method while simultaneously having conversation with my participants about Reiki. Some of



the things I participated in included the procedures that lead up to Reiki sessions and the Reiki sessions themselves, referred to as Reiki share when working with a group. Reiki as described by my participants, is an energy practice that creates balance or realigns the recipients energy facilitating in healing, or returning their bodies back to harmony. The practitioners are a vessel through which the Reiki energy flows and goes wherever it is needed.

I went to my field site once a week for two to four days at a time to meet with with my participants over a period of six weeks. My field site was located in and around Hackensack, MN. I worked out of my Aunt's shop which is located in a two room building which is shared with a chiropractic clinic in Walker, MN. Once in awhile I worked at a participants house and when needed I worked on myself at my own home in Waite Park, MN. The drive allowed for me to have separation from my site and give me time to experience the authentic feeling of going to a field site.

My literature review has shown that my research is a continuation of previous findings that Reiki can be used for the recipients well-being in solidarity or alongside other methods of well-being such as yoga and meditation. I was able to see this in my own personal healing process with poison ivy, hives and road rash. Along with the mental and physical healing my participants experienced as well.

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