

Sensemaking and Identity in Complementary Alternative Medicine: Communication Study on Reiki

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SENSEMAKING AND IDENTITY IN COMPLEMENTARY ALTERNATIVE
MEDICINE: COMMUNICATION STUDY ON REIKI

By,

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ABSTRACT
SENSEMAKING AND IDENTITY IN COMPLEMENTARY ALTERNATIVE
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Caroline Reese

Marquette University, 2019

Complementary alternative medicine (CAM) is rising in popularity, in particular, the practice of Reiki. While there is substantial research that focuses on the medical benefits of Reiki, little work has been done that addresses what reiki means to participants and how it impacts an individual's sense of self. This study seeks to fill that void. To explore this, I argue that Reiki practice should be viewed through a communication lens that draws from theories of identity and sensemaking. Results show that identity is not seen as an individualistic concept but rather as a social process that shifts to a more intrapersonal understanding of the self.

Keywords: Reiki, identity, sensemaking, complementary alternative therapies

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Caroline Reese

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Chapter One:

Introduction

Diagnosed with stage four colon cancer and told the approximate period left of her life was six to nine months my sister sought alternative therapies, alternative being practices that are not part of standard medical care that she can incorporate with her traditional health plan to prolong her life. Reiki was one of the therapies she desired, but her medical insurance did not cover it. Having lost my sister in 2014 has led me to become a Reiki practitioner so I could offer Reiki to those who want it with or without payment.

Practicing Reiki on people for the past five years has been not only rewarding but life-changing for me, witnessing people shift their perspectives about themselves to a healthier state of being. I have become motivated to dig deeper to understand how energy healing can contribute to changes in one's identity and how they communicate their experience.

Our identity is always shifting, and the willingness to embrace uncertainty contributes to how we shape who we are. "How we respond to the fundamental uncertainty of life shapes everything we do and is driven in part by how we think about our place in the world, our sense of identity (Eisenberg, 200, p.534).

Despite little scientific evidence backing complementary alternative medicine (CAM), people across the country are seeking CAM, with increasing frequency. While CAM use continues to increase in the United States, CAM history dates much further back than American medical practices with ancient origins in the traditional Chinese and Indian Ayurvedic systems of medicine (Tabish, 2008). People are seeking

complementary therapy to incorporate with their existing health plan or to try something new.

To date, there is not enough scientific evidence to accept or reject CAM. Most of the current research is based on efficacy, mechanisms of action, and safety of complementary and traditional therapies (Coulter & Willis, 2004). Many early clinical trials investigating complementary and alternative medicine have had serious flaws. The use of CAM within industrialized Western nations is not well understood. Growth is occurring in countries where Western science and scientific method are largely understood as the primary foundations for healthcare, and ‘evidence-based’ practice is the dominant model (Coulter & Willis, 2004).

“Societal trends have influenced healthcare trends, with individuals being less prepared to accept traditional authority, such as doctors, and seeking greater levels of control and empowerment over their lives” (Coulter & Willis, 2004, p. 588). The aging population and a growing emphasis on chronic illness and lifestyle-related morbidity are some of the explanations of CAM growth (Coulter & Willis, 2004). It is essential to consider the reasons why people are choosing alternative therapies. There is very little research on how an individual ascribes using, CAM, and how they make sense of their experience.

We know that millions of Americans use CAM for health concerns and general wellness, spending, tens of billions of dollars each year on such care (National Institute of Health [NIH], 2012). We know CAM is incorporated into many managed health care plans, and conventional practitioners are incorporating CAM into their practices. Pharmacies are promoting information about vitamins, herbs, and are adding

homeopathic remedies to their inventory (Torma,1999). While we know that individuals are opting to seek out CAM, the way identity construction contributes to understanding the increase of CAM and how communicating the benefits of receiving CAM impacts the sense of self remains unknown. To date, there is little research that has explored or evaluated how identity plays a role in a patient's experience using a CAM.

This study seeks to examine how identity construction contributes to the patient experience with an exclusive focus on using Reiki, vibrational, or subtle energy therapy and the post-therapeutic meaning they ascribe to receiving Reiki. The use of modalities such as Reiki, continues to increase, and, there is little information available about how it impacts the sense of self. This thesis seeks to fill that void by exploring how identity and communication play a role in people's experience with Reiki therapy.

Literature Review

The following literature review focuses on (1) an overview of complementary medicine as a trend, (2) defining complementary alternative medicine and examples of some therapies, (3) how complementary alternative medicine is understood in society, (4) history of Reiki (5) benefits of Reiki and (6) Reiki research. Following this literature review, I introduce the theoretical framework of identity construction, which draws from both theories of sensemaking and identity. The theory of identity construction will enable me to explore how the participants adopt their perspective as their own.

The findings of this study may contribute to the ongoing dialogue regarding shifting trends within the field of health communication. The challenge lies in discovering how an individual makes sense of their experience and, how they communicate their experience.

Overview of Complementary Alternative Medicine as a Trend

Despite little evidence, we know the trend of CAM use is continuing to rise, especially when conventional treatments are not offering relief for pain or suffering (Kempfer, Cassileth, & Ferris, 1999). Studies have indicated that patients try CAM because of dissatisfaction with their physician and feel that CAM practitioners are empathetic and take the time to listen (Torma, 1999). Despite limited scientific evidence, hospitals affiliated with top universities, including Yale, Duke, and John Hopkins are offering a variety of alternative therapies (Ross, Blau & Sheridan, 2017).

Between 1990 and 1997, CAM therapies increased from 34% of Americans to more than 40%, with a specific increase in energy healing (Engebretson & Wardell, 2002). There are over 3,000 nurses who practice touch therapies, including Reiki (2002).

National Center of Complementary Alternative Medicine reported that 0.5% of people in the United States have reported using Reiki (vanderVaart, Gijzen, de Wildt, & Koren, 2009). Data from 1997 revealed that Americans spent more than \$27 billion on alternative therapies (NIH, 2000). In 2002, the budget for CAM in the United States was \$104.6 million (NIH).

The 2012 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) reports that more than 30% of Americans are using health care that is not typically part of routine health care. NHIS 2017 survey data suggest that more people are turning to mind-body approaches more than ever before. One theory about why people elect to use CAM is their dissatisfaction with traditional medicine and the severity of their symptoms, encouraging them to take a more holistic route (Rao et al., 2012). Some other reasons are a belief in personal control over health outcomes and holistic beliefs such as mind-body-spirit connectivity.

The National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health and the National Center for Health Statistics of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2017) reports that yoga, meditation, and chiropractic care has increased since 2012. Yoga has increased from 9.5% to 14.3%, meditation from 4.1% to 14.2% and chiropractic care went from 9.1% to 10.3% (<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis/>).

Defining Complementary Alternative Medicine and some examples of CAM

Before delving into examples of CAM, it is essential to understand the terms ‘complementary’ and ‘alternative’ which are used interchangeably, with CAM as the term used for medical practices that are not part of standard Western medical care (<http://www.cancer.gov>). In the United States, people use traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) primarily as a complementary health approach. Both TCM and

traditional Western medicine (TWM) share several common aspects, both founded on a personalized approach (Roth & Zhejiang, 2016).

The National Center of Complementary Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) defines CAM as “a group of diverse medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are not presently considered to be part of conventional medicine” (2002). In 2014 the NCCAM was renamed the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH).

According to NCCIH, complementary changes regularly, and a non-mainstream practice is used together with conventional medicine it is then considered to be complementary. If a non-mainstream practice used in place of conventional medicine, it is considered to be alternative. Integrative medicine often brings both conventional and complementary approaches together. “It emphasizes a holistic, patient-focused approach to health care and wellness-often including mental, emotional, functional, spiritual, social, and community aspects- and treating the whole person” (NCCIH, 2018).

The NCCIH divides complementary and alternative medicine into five forms, (1) whole medical systems which consist of homeopathy, naturopathy, traditional Chinese medicine, and Ayurveda, (2) mind-body medicine which consists of meditation, prayer, mental healing, art therapy, music therapy, and dance therapy, (3) biologically based practices which consist of, dietary supplements, herbal supplements, and scientifically unproven therapies, (4) manipulative and body-based practices, massage, spinal manipulation (both chiropractic and osteopathic and (5) energy therapies, Reiki, therapeutic touch, qigong, and electromagnetic therapy (NCCIH, 2012). The most

common CAM therapies (excluding prayer) are natural products, deep breathing, meditation, chiropractic, yoga, massage, and diet (NHIS, 2012).

Harvard researchers report a trend in the implementation of certain types of therapies over the decades, influenced by culture. During the 1970s, biofeedback, energy healing, herbal medicine, and imagery were high in demand. During the 1980s, massage and naturopathy were dominant while the 1990s showed increases in yoga, massage, energy healing, and aromatherapy (Fagan, 2001). As society continues to explore and supplement their healthcare with CAM, they are using more integrative therapies with the approach of treating the body as a whole.

How CAM is Understood in Society

Today the focus of Western medicine is more on the group versus the individual, with recommended therapies based on results from large-scale clinical trials. Modern health care systems focus on the biomedical model, which most physicians use when they are diagnosing patients, even though it is relatively new in comparison with alternative therapies that have been around for thousands of years (Geist-Martin & Bell, 2009).

Roth (2016) an international historian and theorist of Western medicine, affirms that both Western and Eastern medicines originated with a personalized approach to healing, but the recent focus has turned more toward the population than the individual (Roth & Zhang, 2016). Zhang, a Chinese scholar who works on traditional Chinese medicine, agrees that treating the body as an organic whole and not just treating illness is developing more every day. Medicine prescribed is based on a clinical trial of a group rather than an individual, and the treatment of the body as a whole is missing in traditional western medicine (Roth & Zhang, 2016).

Many Americans are using CAM therapies in combination with conventional medicine, not as a replacement for it. Society understands CAM as a complement to the other health services they are utilizing. The 1997 Eisenberg study reported that 96% of respondents who saw a practitioner of alternative therapy for a first condition also saw a medical doctor during the prior twelve months (National Academies Press, 2005).

The number of US hospitals offering integrative therapies is growing, acupuncture, massage therapy, therapeutic touch, and guided imagery has increased from eight percent in 1998 to 42% in 2010 and continuing to grow (Ananth, 2005). “Integrative medicine now has a broad presence in medical education, having evolved because of public demand, student and resident interest, increased research, institutional support, and novel educational programs” (Sierpena & Dalen, 2013, p. 662). Integrative defined as “the practice of medicine that reaffirms the importance of the relationship between practitioner and patient, focus on the whole person, is informed by evidence, and makes use of all appropriate therapeutic approaches, healthcare professionals and disciplines to achieve optimal health and healing” (<https://imconsortium.org>). The shift of focusing on the ‘whole’ person created a path for offering fellowships in integrative medicine in many academic health centers (Sierpena & Dalen, 2013).

The trend of accepting that not all things are explainable via a scientific medical solution and understanding that there is an interconnectedness among human beings creates a more open-minded perspective of how environmental factors in our lives can affect how we feel. “We find that who we are is bound up with and relative to our environment. The inability to catch one’s self without perception, to separate the self

from the world, can lead to anxiety, restlessness, and self-grasping” (Eisenberg, 2001, p. 537).

People are exploring more traditional ways to feel balanced and heal the mind-body as a whole. Traditional, indigenous, and prescientific medical systems have documented that a balanced pulsing biofield is a foundation of treating the mind-body-spirit. Biofield therapies, such as Reiki are believed to be low-risk interventions. Energy used in therapeutic touch and Reiki is conceived of as higher levels of vibrations beyond our normal perceptual abilities (McGoldrick, 1997). The concept of energy has been part of history dating back to the Greek physician Hippocrates who is considered one of the most prominent figures in the history of medicine. Hippocrates referenced biofield of energy flow from people's hands (Kleisiaris, Sfakianakis, & Papathanasiou, 2014).

Reiki History

Reiki (pronounced Ray-Key) is the Japanese term for universal energy originated thousands of years ago in Tibet. Reiki has roots in Tandai Buddhism, a mystical form of Buddhism and Shintoism the indigenous religion of Japan (Potter, 2007: & Nield-Anderson & Ameling, 2000). Rei means universal, and Ki means life energy or universal life force. Together they mean universal life force. Ki has the same meaning as Chi in Chinese and Prana in Sanskrit (Rand, 1991).

Dr. Mikao Usui, a scholar of religion, and a Tao Buddhist from Japan reintroduced Reiki in the 1900s. It was in 1922 when Usui offered his spiritual teachings to more than 2,000 beginning students but training only 16 as Reiki Masters. One of his master students, Chujiro Hayashi, opened a Reiki clinic in Tokyo where 16 practitioners gave treatment in pairs. It was one of Hayashi's clients, Hawayo Takata, a first-

generation Japanese-American who experienced relief from some medical conditions and then became a devoted student and Reiki Master.

Takata brought Reiki to Hawaii in 1937 she practiced and taught Reiki for 40 years before she began training Reiki masters, practitioners trained to teach others and moved to the mainland in 1973. She taught in the United States for the last seven years of her life. After Takata's passing in 1980, her 22 Reiki master practitioners continue to practice and teach (Miles & True, 2003).

The practice of Reiki is a light placing of hands on the body in a series of ordered positions to aid in increasing energy flow throughout the body. Reiki practitioners do not direct energy; instead, they claim that Reiki energy facilitated through the practitioner's hands and the subtle energy travels to the places in the body that needs healing (Nield-Anderson & Ameling, 2001). It is important to note that there is no religious belief system attached to Reiki. The premise of Reiki is how energy flows in the body to create balance.

Benefits of Reiki

Reiki treatment helps lessen the impact of stress, releasing tension from the entire system. Not only does the person move toward his or her unique balance in body, mind, and spirit, but also, depending on the level of physical health when Reiki begins the body's healing mechanisms often begin functioning more effectively (Miles & True, 2003). The NCCAM studies suggest that Reiki reduces anxiety, depression, and relieves pain, especially postoperative pain (vanderVaart, Gijsen, de Wildt, & Koren, 2009). Reiki is increasingly used in a variety of medical settings (a) hospice care settings to assist patients through the physical and emotional effects of dying (Sadock & Sadock, 2003);

(b) emergency rooms settings (Eos, 1995); and (c) psychiatric settings to assist patients that have anxiety and depression (Niell-Anderson & Ameling, 2001).

Reiki Research

Although Reiki is widely used and integrated with hospice care, emergency rooms, psychiatric settings, operating rooms, gynecology, neonatal and as an additional treatment for cancer, HIV/AIDS, autism, and fatigue syndrome (Miles & Gala, 2003), it has not been studied in depth.

To date, most studies done on Reiki were on pain, anxiety, stress, including heart rate and blood pressure. There is no scientific measurement to measure this 'energy' that Reiki refers to during a healing session. Reiki is often viewed as a mystical experience or a form of vitality that is essential for keeping life moving. Society is accepting this healing modality, and the growing interest in Reiki suggests that people and medical institutions are more concerned with the results of the therapy than how it works.

Although some studies are in the biomedical literature, conducted with small nonclinical samples of healthy volunteers (Niell-Anderson & Ameling, 2001), there is a need for more studies on Reiki.

Despite minimal research, many top hospitals are offering Reiki, and it is growing. Columbia Presbyterian was one of the first hospitals to include Reiki as part of their Integrative Medicine Program. Mayo Clinic Hospitals are using Reiki and healing touch therapies as part of their Complementary and Integrative Medicine Program. Trained certified Reiki practitioners are volunteering their services to both patients in Mayo Hospital and some Rochester outpatient areas (<http://mayoclinic.org>).

It is important to note that I am a practicing certified Reiki practitioner in Milwaukee, WI, and I was the practitioner who delivered Reiki therapy to the participants in this study. As a practitioner, I believe Reiki is a useful tool that integrates the mind, body, and spirit. “Reiki is passive like meditation; it involves no diagnosis, and much of the skill involves *not doing*” (Miles, 2007 p. 22).

In what follows, I introduce a theoretical framework which builds on Eisenberg’s (2001) *Toward New Theory of Communication and Identity* and draws from identity theory, and sensemaking theory. The framework studies how barriers are created that get in the way of discovering one’s real identity.

Theoretical Framework

To address questions of how an individual ascribes meaning to their post-therapeutic experience is significant because “human emotions are largely determined by our beliefs about the future, by our degree of confidence that things will turn out well for us” (Barbalet, 1999 as cited in Eisenberg 2001, p.535). Supporting this claim a theoretical framework that studies identity not seen as an individualistic concept but rather as a social process is presented. I argue that results of Reiki should be viewed through a communication lens that draws from theories of sensemaking and identity.

Sensemaking

Sensemaking is a process, and Weick suggests “that an underlying assumption of sensemaking is identity construction, through which answers to the question of whom one is indicated by the discovery of how and what one thinks” (McAvoy, 2004, p. 59).

How an individual seeks healing is a process that involves adjusting, readjusting, and modifying patterns of behavior through social interactions. The process of ascribing

their experiences is part of how they make sense of their experience and explain their experience. People's sense of what constitutes a good explanation as taking place is central to the evaluation of explanations of phenomena of a complementary therapy. Studies have suggested that humans have an innate sense of what counts as a good explanation: (1) People can draw conclusions that do not follow logically from principles, but instead based on assumptions about what would be the best explanation (Harman, 1965) (2) they can become aware of gaps in their understanding when asked to explain (Keil, Rozenblit, & Mills, 2004; and (3) they use their naive knowledge to make sense of the world (Carey, 1985; diSessa, 1993, 2014; Inagaki & Hatano, 2002). Mandler (1984) believes that sensemaking occurs when a feeling of unfamiliarity disrupts life's continuous flow; it is how we move through our everyday lives. Sensemaking is a systematic process that starts from birth and includes all that one has gained through his or her experiences (Eisenberg & Goodall, 2001). The ability to recognize the differences of a continuous process that involves culture, societal beliefs, values, etc. within one's life and constructs one's identity requires going inward.

Identity Theory

The core of identity, according to Eisenberg (1998), is the story one tells about whom they are a story derived from discussions and competing dialogues. Erickson states that identity is experienced as a sense of one's self resulting from the integration of past, present, and future experiences (Erikson, 1963). McCrae and Costa (1990) viewed identity as the central and changeable part of the self, whereas personality consists of the stable parts of the self (Clancy & Dollinger, 1993). Identity theory suggests that our actions trigger different brain functions, a relationship between the mind and body.

'Identification' is the term used in identity theory by putting oneself in a category or categorized into roles. Hecht's communication theory of identity incorporates three contexts, identity, communal, and social. Hecht suggests that identity is the hook that connects the individual and society (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011).

This study revealed the importance of personal values in explaining the identity and identity formation process. The challenge lies in seeing identity as situated in how a single individual contributes to isolation and anxiety (Eisenberg, 2001). Rather than seeing identity as an individualistic concept, the approach taken here is one in which identity construction is a social process.

Reiki Communication and Identity

Reiki communication involves communicating thoughts and feelings based on experience which can be challenging because thoughts and feelings are typically constructed based on societal and cultural influences. Also, many energy therapies face challenges in demonstrating validity (Schiller, 2003). The development of identity requires a willingness to embrace uncertainty as an essential part of everyday life (Eisenberg, 2001). "Notions of identity in the West have been largely individualistic people are taught to feel they are born *into* the world, and that they must establish and maintain boundaries between themselves and others" (Eisenberg, p.535). According to Miles (2007, p.25) "Reiki can help patients recontextualize their illness in a way that empowers them to heal". The process of constructing one's identity involves shifting perspectives.

Identity Construction

Identity is the story individuals tell of who they are; a story stemmed from the mediation of multiple and competing discourses (Eisenberg et al., 1998; Holmer-Nadesan, 1996; Kondo, 1990). Variations in communicating with others can be challenging due to the shifts that happen in one's life. It is significant to understand how 'the self' experiences and explains Reiki. Before delving into the results, it is essential to dig deeper into understanding how we construct our identity and communicate our thoughts and feelings. Understanding the self is one of the most difficult mental journeys. "Identity is not a fixed 'thing,' it is negotiated, open, shifting and ambiguous, the result of culturally available meanings in everyday situations" (Kondo, 1990, p. 24). Drummond and Orbe (2009) focus on the four layers of the communication theory, personal, relational, enacted, and communal. They explicate how thoughts and feelings are significant components for how individuals define themselves and fit into society. The idea that identity is formed and then altered through social interaction begins with how one sees them self internally, cognitively, and then how they communicate with others. How one sees them self internally and what they communicate can vary due to cultural beliefs. "How we respond to the fundamental uncertainty of life shakes everything we do and is driven in part by how we think about our place in the world our sense of identity" (Eisenberg, 2001). How an individual becomes part of a group, social setting, or how to talk about a topic such as health communication requires much interpersonal dialogue. There is a connection between identity and context, and if people are taught that they come out of the world and are part of a network (2001), then spirituality and religion play a significant role in representing the importance of the interconnectedness of all life.

Exploring ways how people construct their identity drawing upon, interpersonal, societal, and cultural resources generate patterns of thoughts and how people make sense about who they are (2001). Eisenberg (2001) argues that a person's choices of spirituality, religion, and culture create perspectives that influence how identity and communication form. The ways people communicate vary with their narratives their accounts with their body experience of emotionality and mood. Understanding the emotions and attitudes of constructed personal narratives are beneficial to this study.

Dialogue values many perspectives and inspires a different worldview but there are factors that might influence a person either for or against dialogic communication (Eisenberg, 2001). Choices people make with their own personal narratives that involve mood, and emotion shift thought patterns and help manage uncertainty allowing permission to talk about what is authentically being experienced. Drawing from Eisenberg's, *Toward New Theory of Communication and Identity* (Appendix C) the elements of his process that contribute to shaping one's identity provide insight to how individuals make sense of their Reiki experience. Eisenberg refers to the total of environmental influences as the 'surround'. Some identifiable elements that characterize the 'surround' are:

- Spiritual: cosmological concepts, values, and behaviors
- Economic: ideas and behaviors regarding the exchange of material resources
- Cultural: assumptions, values, rituals characterizing social groupings
- Societal: acceptable rules, roles, and laws that pertain to membership in a society
- Interpersonal: rules, values, and patterns of behavior that define intimate relations
- Biological: electrochemical and genetic patterns that shape human development (Eisenberg, 2001, p.543).

Eisenberg suggests that people draw from the surround to make sense of their lives. When we enter the world at birth, we enter a world that is in motion with networks, culture, preexisting languages, relationships and patterns of behavior that create influence in our lives from the very beginning (Eisenberg, 2001). The environmental influences, spiritual, cultural, biological, economic, and interpersonal all contribute to three significant areas, mood, personal narratives, and communication. Eisenberg breaks his model down into three identity phases that contribute to the ongoing formation of identity. The three phases lead to a springboard of a new way of communication where the self has an opportunity to unhook from a standard rooted way of communicating due to the choices people make.

The first identity phase deals with emotions, brain chemistry, and mainly biological mood. According to Eisenberg, there has been a revival of interest to study ways in which biological elements affect communication. Changes in the brain chemistry can change mood and behavior; therefore, change how people make sense out of their experiences and how they communicate certain mood-states encourage particular interpretations of the events in one's life and a set of life stories and communicative choices. A person who is anxious about his or her future is less likely to perceive multiple narrative possibilities and will likely communicate in ways that are self-defeating (Eisenberg, 2001, p 545). A person who is feeling good about their life will likely be more positive and have more open communication. When thoughts are processed the human experience receiving these thoughts is reflected in how we communicate and if we are open or more closed in our communication. Scientific research confirms that biology has a role in influencing behavior (Eisenberg, 2001).

The second identity process involves the personal narrative one creates, their ongoing authorship, and editing of their life story. This process involves attachments, interpretations, and the views one perceives. A personal narrative is a primary tool used in how people make sense of their lives, and the resistance to change their behavior is high. Research in psychotherapy has indicated that when people re-story their lives, and when the story changes the behavior of the person changes. Therefore, the attachment to the story changes (Eisenberg, 2001). "New life stories are meaningful for people because they lead to new patterns of relationships and enhanced moods" (Eisenberg, 2001, p. 547).

When new configurations of thoughts and feelings occur, how you think, how you act, and how you feel changes, your mood and personal narrative changes. Therefore, the possibility is greater for communication to change because of altered moods. Hence dismantling of cultural and societal barriers and giving birth to a new perspective on the self and life is achievable. The notion that people must establish and maintain boundaries between themselves and others is no longer true because Eisenberg's third identity process validates communication is a process. Eisenberg's main point on the communication phase is that changing communication is rarely enough to change social systems of relationships unless these changes can also be tied to altered moods, narratives and elements of the surround (Eisenberg, 2001, p.548).

All three phases suggest altering or changing genetic patterns that shape human development, releasing attachments, interpretations, and creating a new personal narrative to promote behavior change. Given that individual identity is constructed primarily through interactions with other individuals Eisenberg suggests that traditional

ways of communicating are dissatisfying and “there is a growing consensus that there must be a better way” (p.548). I agree with Eisenberg that traditional ways of communicating are dissatisfying because there is a lack of freedom for people to communicate authentically because the past is constantly determining our present actions.

Using Eisenberg’s identity process model, with the three subprocesses operating within a surround is significant to this study because it provides a pathway to face the challenges of who we are and what we believe as both an individual and interconnected. This framework allows us to study how a Reiki experience becomes meaningful and becomes part of the story individuals tell about their experience. This study explores these questions:

RQ1: What is the impact of Reiki on the identity construction process?

RQ2: How do Reiki participants make sense of the experience?

Chapter Three:

Methodology

To understand how individuals, experience, and communicate Reiki, the diary method and interviews were utilized to collect data. The initial interviews focused on the individual's knowledge about CAM and if they had any experience with any forms of CAM. All participants received a blank notebook to collect their experiences before and after receiving Reiki over the four-month study period. The final interviews focused on the individual's experience after receiving Reiki treatments and how they would communicate their experience to others. In this section, I describe the participants and outline the procedures that were used.

Participants and Context

Ten participants were recruited from my network. All the individuals responded enthusiastically about the nature of the study and expressed interest in helping. Some participants had prior experience with Reiki, and others knew very little to nothing about Reiki. The demographic composite of the participants includes eight females and two males between the ages of 23 to 55. All participants were assured of anonymity. For reporting purposes, each has been assigned a fictional name, but necessary demographic information remains the same.

Each participant was given an informed consent form to read and sign; the informed consent explained that they are invited to participate in a study about experiencing Reiki. They were informed of (1) two audio-recorded interviews one at the start and one at the end of the study, (2) would receive two Reiki sessions a month for a period of four months, (3) will receive a journal so they can document experiences before

and after Reiki sessions, (4) receive no immediate and direct benefit from this study, it is hoped that in the long run this understanding will contribute to an understanding of the ways in which Reiki is understood, (5) there are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study and as that no personally identifiable information will be collected, (6) audio recordings and journals will be kept at the studio locked in a file cabinet, and written notes will not contain any identifying information, (7) pseudonyms will be used in all transcriptions and any resulting presentations and/or publications.

Procedures

To describe the procedures I used to collect data, I begin this section with a description of the original interview question form (Appendix A) final interview question form (Appendix B) procedure of coding both interviews and diaries followed by an explanation of the methods I used to analyze the data for this study.

Interviews varied in length from the shortest interview, which was 30 minutes to the most extended interview that was 45 minutes. All interviews were audiotaped using my iPhone. The initial interview was structured to gain the most considerable amount of information possible on CAM and how they interpret the mind body and spirit in connection to their identity and health. The final interview was approximately 30 to 45 minutes. It was structured to obtain insight on their overall experience participating in the study and revisiting how they understood CAM and their view of self. Many research concepts emerged with themes that allowed for coding to provide insight into how identity construction plays a role in how one makes sense of their experience with Reiki.

Data Analysis

The interviews and journals were transcribed and did not include pronunciation, emphasis, and pauses reflected in their response. In analyzing the data, I drew mainly from the assumptions of the grounded theory developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. "In grounded theory, the researcher uses multiple stages of collecting, refining, and categorizing the data (Kolb, 2012 p. 83). I used the constant comparative method to develop concepts, so I can code, categorize, and compare meanings across the categories (Maykut & Morehouse, 1995). Coding involves three levels of analyses: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding in order to collect a complete picture of information obtained (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Selective coding identified core categories. Only after the process of refining categories can grounded theory emerge (Strauss & Corbin). "The concepts and relationships that are developed through the coding process help guide the data collection and the analysis process referred to as theoretical sampling" (Kolb, 2012 p.84). The process of theoretical sampling, combined with constant comparative, is an important method used by researchers in the development of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The themes that emerged allowed for insight into the core of how participants make sense of their experience and the impact on their identity construction.

Chapter Four:

Results

In this chapter, I explore the answers to the two research questions guiding this study: How do Reiki participants make sense of their experience? What is the impact on the identity construction process? I discuss the findings in each of the procedures used and provide an analysis that brings meaning to the data with a specific focus on three themes that emerged from the data.

Theme One: Impact of Culture

The initial interview questionnaire was primarily focused on finding out how much information participants knew about CAM and what their interpretation on the mind-body-spirit connection meant to them. Beliefs, values, societal influence surfaced in many of their answers. The theme, *impact of culture* represents how an individual understands himself or herself varies. In American culture identity is focused on the individual, people are taught to feel they are born *into* the world, and that they must establish and maintain boundaries between themselves and others (Eisenberg, 2001 p. 535). While individuals and society create a relationship between identity and communication, there is much variation on how the identity construction process works.

Discussing what information was known about CAM specifically Reiki most of the participants had minimal experience with the use of alternative medicine. Yoga, acupuncture, and chiropractic are therapies participants were familiar with or experienced. Only two participants had received Reiki before the study. Donna, a real estate agent, was asked about why Reiki is not as popular as yoga, she stated:

I think the unknown. Like what to expect. Listening to what has been said about alternative medicines. I mean, think about yoga. Yoga, everybody thought was whacked out, how could that be exercise? And now it's what, one of the biggest you know health industries that are out there. I think it until you participate and have an understanding you know to just go to a yoga class and follow somebody and not know what yoga is supposed to be doing or the breathing that is so important with yoga — or breathing in life. Now I hear a lot of people saying I'm yoga breathing; I'm trying to calm myself because they understand what it does for them, the benefits it has.

This comment further supports the claim that societal beliefs and assumptions influenced when yoga was to be accepted. Her statement, "I think most people are just always a little bit nervous about the things that they don't understand" suggests that people rely on the public perception for something to be valid. When Jane, a mom of two and owner of a medical supply company, was asked about what she knew or understood about CAM, she stated:

You know, from things I read they seem to be quite effective. I mean just stuff that I read feels like more and more it's covered, kind of... there are stories and stuff in the news. And I follow some mind, body, wellness sort of pages... read things like that. Yeah, it's appealing, and I totally believe that eastern medicine does a lot more than western medicine.

Similar to Donna Jane relies on the media and the internet to retrieve information about CAM therapies. Despite CAM research evolving, there are not many concrete answers. It is through collaboration and education of all involved such as physicians, practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and consumers that some of the challenges can be diminished (Tamayo, Boon, Ghishan, & Trinh, 2002) Likewise, Rupesh, an executive in a corporate company shared how eastern medicine should be integrated with western medicine; he stated:

I think there is a place for it along with conventional medicine and surgery. I think a holistic medicine, mind, body, and spirit, along with medication and surgery, whatever be needed, could be... integrative medicine is a much better approach than just taking pills. And I do believe there is a time for taking that too or having surgery or whatever, but we got to incorporate more of the western with the eastern medicine, which has been around for thousands of years, there must be something to it. I'm open to it, but I'm also a healthy skeptic. An engineer by training, so I question things. I do not just take it; I have to internalize it, feel it, sense it, to experience it to believe it.

Despite Rupesh stating that he is a “healthy skeptic, an engineer by training” he also states that he is open to integrative medicine. His statement of how he must internalize it, feel it, sense it, to experience it and to believe it all links to sensemaking. The use of CAM within industrialized western nations is not well understood. The focus on western medicine is more on the group versus the individual. Despite not having the scientific backup, people are shifting from the biomedical model of wellness to more integrative medicine. “There is a clear evidence that integrative medicine is becoming part of current mainstream medicine (Sierpina & Dalen 2013 p. 662).

When asked if religion influenced how Reiki or any other CAM was viewed, Jane stated:

I mean people say the same thing about yoga and stuff too. I was trying to get it started at the schools, and the superintendent was like "Well you know that is like against religion? So, you know there are always people out there that are afraid of something that challenges their beliefs that they already have established. I'm not worried about that. I'm open-minded.

Jane’s response aligns with how cultural beliefs and values influence people’s perspectives and choices.

Similarly, Laura, a mom, and a part-time administrator, stated:

Some people think yoga is religious; I know some people who have done yoga. Even my parents said something about it. Now it's kind of mainstream.

Donna stated:

I think naivety, not opening their minds to other alternative thoughts, philosophies, ideas. It's kind of looking even like theologies. Some people can only talk about being Catholic vs. being a Christian. And it's the same thing with medicine. They would rather use ibuprofen because that is scientifically ok and it's more accepted than the alternative.

All these comments suggest that the assumptions, values, rituals that characterize social groupings determine what is socially acceptable (Eisenberg, 2001) and have a powerful influence on how an individual makes decisions. People are responding to the uncertainties in life, supporting Eisenberg's theory that how we respond to uncertainty shapes what we do, how we think, how we see ourselves in the world and our sense of identity (2001). With more information readily available along with expanded perception, more people who are suffering will be able to research different types of CAM that can bring healing into their lives. There is a shift of alternative medicine into mainstream medicine. "It is hoped that the perspectives offered by integrative medicine will eventually transform mainstream medicine by improving patient outcomes, reducing costs, improving safety, and increasing patient satisfaction" (Sierpina & Dalen 2013 p. 662).

Culture impacts our assumptions and values about others and ourselves. When asked about the overall health of participants mind, body, and spirit connection words and phrases that emerged were "mind chatter", "complicated", "mind constantly going", "mind stress", "low energy", "fear", "societal beliefs", "religious aspects", "stigma", "naivety", and 'influences.'" These words provide essential insight into how personal narratives, mood, and communication are the result of the *Surround* the total of environmental influences (Eisenberg, 2001 p. 543). Donna commented on how balance is

significant to her health. She stated:

My health is best when it's all in balance, and I try to keep it in balance, or at least maybe work or investigate when something is out of balance. If I am out of balance, I'm just not right. I'm either emotional, or I'm clumsy, can't sleep. My mind is spinning, and it's not necessarily on one thing or an issue, it's just I cannot collect my thoughts.

Jason, a dance teacher, used the word "re-center" regarding his health. He stated:

It has been a shaky two weeks. I've been trying to re-center myself. I've been climbing up and this week with the sun coming out and everything I've been feeling a lot better.

Jane said:

I have been in better health previously. You feel like when you are not as healthy as you once were you feel it kind of and I don't know if it's a little bit of getting older or just not paying as much attention to myself. I feel like the world around me is stressful, and I just feel like it manifests itself physically.

These comments suggest the importance of balance, centering, and how one views the world can affect their health. This matters because how one thinks is connected to how one feels and acts in the world. Carrie, a recent graduate, commented on how she views her mind, body, and spirit connection. She said:

My mind, I think, has been deteriorating more than getting better in the past several years. So, I have developed a mental disorder, I have been diagnosed as bipolar, and I have depression and anxiety. I have seen health to try to treat my mind and my sort of spirit in a sense because it's all connected. But right now, I'm not seeing anyone because I'm too busy with school. So right now, I'm on no medication. The side effects were too much for me at this time, so I went off, and I'm not seeing anyone because I don't have time.

This comment supports Eisenberg's theory that how we respond living a life with uncertainty shapes what we do, how we think, how we see ourselves in the world and our sense of identity (Eisenberg, 2001). Carrie shares her mind is deteriorating more and how

her life is so busy she is unable to seek a therapist to help her with her depression and anxiety. Carrie's personal narrative has attachments to depression, and anxiety. Her interpretation that she is too busy with school is what justifies her not to seek help. Linking to the sensemaking process Carrie makes sense using the surround subprocesses mood, communication and personal narrative to share her story.

Laura said:

I think that's important. I think it's an essential element, and you need to focus on each individually. Cause just exercising the body might not be exercising the mind. Cause the body is kind of like a defined time you set aside for exercise, which your mind is constantly going. So, I don't know if I'm really explaining myself that well. You need to set time just to focus on your mind.

Rupesh shared his connection of mind, body, and spirit. He said:

It's not good. They say if your mind, body, and spirit are all healthy and connected, then that's when you are in a good place, and I'm not there. Physically might be ok, but mentally, a lot of anguish, a lot of pain. Spirit is broken sometimes. And those dark days and dark times, I need to get out of it and learn to build that mind and spirit along with the body.

I think the spirit is conscious; it's what connects us all. People call it god or whatever. It's a piece in all of us that is this consciousness which never dies and never will. The body moves on, but the spirit is there, and that's what connects us all as a human race.

Interestingly Rupesh said, "*they say* if your mind, body, and spirit are all healthy and connected, then you are in a good place" this is a great example of how the self is looking outward to understand how one should know when they are in a good place.

Diane, a dance instructor, said:

I would say if you took a blood test from me, there would be no significant like oh she has any sort of disease or a cold or anything. On the surface, it looks fine, but I can tell you my body feels tight and my muscles don't feel as open. My body

doesn't feel open like I can feel it texturally when I'm moving around, but I'm not coughing, and I'm not sick.

I guess when I say that my body is healthy, you can't put a word on an illness. I don't have pneumonia or a cold, and I'm not throwing up sick or in bed. I don't have to call in sick for work because my body doesn't function. It functions, but it's just how I feel.

Overall, these comments suggest that the participants value the mind, body, and spirit connection; however, their responses are concentrated more on the mind.

There was not much conversation regarding how the body is connected other than it needs to be in balance. There was minimal shared on how the spirit fits in. People generally understand the mind-body-spirit connection as interwoven but failed to see how they could heal all three pieces. As Donna said, her body does not appear sick, but the mind's stressors physically manifest. Exhibiting the acute relationship between the spirit and the body's response to stress, these comments also show how little is understood about balancing all three.

In what follows is the second theme that emerged after transcribing and coding the diaries, *clarity*. Clarity produces detachment from outside influences, and a more cognitive experience begins to take place. It is shifting from the outside to a more inward state of awareness that changes mood and perception.

Theme Two: Shift to Clarity

Words and phrases that emerged in the diaries are 'energy', 'awakened', 'clarity', 'peace', 'centered', 'grounded', 'balanced', 'motivation', 'more confident', 'happier', 'trusting self', 'connected', 'clean sweep' and 'identity'. The theme of clarity demonstrates how Reiki can facilitate a change of self-perception and shifts in the

elements of the *surround* influence changes in the personal narratives, mood, and communication of the participants.

Diane's story shows how the shift to clarity facilitates a change in self-perception.

Diane: I'm starting to get more clarity on what I want, and I am grateful. I have also realized that my session gave me some peace. I am a lot happier at work. And saying that I am a lot happier is an understatement. I find that the little things that I used to be so frustrated about don't upset me as easily. I find that I am complaining less. And when I do express that I am frustrated, I can move past that emotion quickly and return to a more positive state. I have more energy. I find that I am more at peace with my future. My goals, desires, wants, needs, are becoming clearer as to who I am as a person, what I have to offer this world, and what I want out of life. Overall my energy and attitude feel different than before. I feel happier about changing the direction in my life to focus more on me, and I do not feel guilty anymore. So grateful to this journey and finding my sense of self again. I feel like I can breathe again fully. I am taking control over my life again and spending my time doing what I want to do for the first time.

Diane's entry, "I feel like I can breathe again" comes partly as a result of the peace of mind along with the physical benefit of feeling less burden throughout the chest. Once the symptoms are alleviated, physically, and mentally, people can focus on their highest calling. Her entry "it is time to figure out whom I am without everyone telling me who I am, or what I do. I feel human again" is an example of a shift of perspective and self-perception that results from having self-confidence. The clarity comes from her changing how she views her world. Her narrative has changed and the clarity she receives from her going inward and discovering how she feels and organizes her thoughts are reflected in her new way of seeing her new self. Similarly, Janet shares increased energy, clarity, and balance from receiving Reiki.

Today I noticed that I'm feeling more determined to find my purpose. I feel a buzzing in my body. I'm feeling very sensual. I'm easily aroused. I feel the flow of my energy. I'm feeling introspective. I'm thinking a lot about what matters in this life. Love is what matters. I feel the energy that love creates in the core of my being — feeling alive. I'm able to listen with better understanding. I'm grateful for my openness. Reiki feels like a release of negativity. When my energy flows, I feel

secure and at peace. I understand my power. My power is love. I'm finally feeling secure that love is the answer. I'm feeling much more balanced. I am feeling more settled. What that means to me is that my mind does not feel as scattered as it did a few days ago. I'm more focused on what's in front of me. I think the Reiki helps me come back to what's important. LOVE. Reiki allows my body to reset. Reiki allows my mind to focus on letting the positive vibrations dominate. I'm allowed to experience a bad day or a crappy mood- but I know I'm able to come back to love if I allow myself to focus on... LOVE.

Rupesh shares in his entries how Reiki is difficult to understand and explain but, yet he feels energized and allows his mind to slow down.

My scientific thinking brain doesn't really understand what is going on, but it does work. Afterward, I feel energized — a feeling I rarely have as of late. My scientific mind has a difficult time occasionally, to really understand how Reiki energy works. How does it? Some people say it is a placebo effect, that I want it to work and so it does. But I know it is real. The effects are real. I'm so tired and stressed. Reiki has been really helpful with that. It tingles, it feels warm, it's hard to explain. Reiki has been like therapy for me. I stopped my three years of therapy. Reiki is less clinical; it also allows my mind to slow down. Something I've really struggled with.

From Rupesh's entries, you can begin to see the shift of letting things go, a state of awareness has activated his senses to feel and slow down. Jason, like Diane, connected with his identity again,

I was able to really just find myself, find the beauty in the now and learn about the now and everything in between. I would say that because of these Reiki sessions, I have become more intuitive with myself, I have become more wholesome, and I just feel happier, overall happier. I don't question many things and there is more of a spiritual side to that, but I don't know if I need to get into that. But in terms of how I feel on the daily, I feel very centered with that. I can also say that Reiki has definitely helped with my mood and energy as well. I also get a whole new sense of clarity each time I go in, so nothing new.

Jason's mood, narrative and communication about himself shifted. The clarity created permission for him to release attachments of the past and stay more present. His feeling centered created a mood and energy change which allowed him to tap into the spiritual element.

Jason shares more on how Reiki has helped him have more clarity:

It definitely allowed me to reconnect with my spirituality. Because of Reiki, I was able to really just find myself, find the beauty in the now and learn about the now and everything in between. There were some spiritual changes and physical changes like sleeping better, being in a better mood, but I do give credit to just being spiritually aware, so there's a lot more of that and just being that.

Clarity comes from inner knowing, knowing everything is taken care of, even if it doesn't feel that way. Each of these participants started to surrender their ego to their soul and brought forth clarity about their mission. Once the physical body and its ailments no longer distract people, they can free themselves from life's distractions and to go inward to discover peace in their mind. For instance, the original concept behind Ayurveda, one of the world's oldest holistic healing systems stems from the belief that poor physical health took away from one's ability to connect with their spirit. The same stands true in each of these Reiki experiences. Once one part of the trio moved into alignment, the other two follow suit. In what follows is the last theme, *shift from interpersonal to intrapersonal*.

Theme Three: Shift from Interpersonal to Intrapersonal

The final interview questionnaire primarily focused on sharing their experiences and how they feel after receiving Reiki. Describing their experience, adding Reiki into their lives, each of the individuals surrendered to something they couldn't quite describe and invited healing in. A few said they stopped forcing and just let go, and that is when the true self steps forward, without the trappings of the mind. Janet refers to her past four months of Reiki as a "spiritual cleaning house."

I was looking back in my journal and looking at some things I had written, and kind of the way that it felt to me was a spiritual cleaning house in a way. Like sweeping some things away, and then maybe organizing some things that were

there. Not necessarily changing it but making it more accessible and also just accepting of what's there. That's the way that I felt about it — and going places that I had been avoiding, like the dark corners.

Janet shares that Reiki has helped her find her purpose and has created balance and peace in her life.

Having Reiki twice a month regularly changed me tremendously. Before having reiki, I felt scattered and unbalanced, and I struggled to find my purpose. After every session with Reiki, I would have emotional breakthroughs. Life seemed to flow better, and things became clearer. I was calmer and just had an overall sense of well - being.

Likewise, Diane found direction and purpose while being less anxious. She shares how she was able to figure out what she wants, as opposed to what others want her to be.

Over the last couple of months it's been a lot of growth in terms of who I think I am as a person, and what I want out of my life, cause when I came I was at a crossroads of what direction I was going to go to next, and I really was 50/50 split on what I should do. I was feeling very anxious about it all the time, and I was losing sleep, and I couldn't eat, and all of those very fun things. And it has helped me to figure out what direction to go in and make peace with it and let go of the other things that I was holding onto. And it's forced me to take time for myself which I did not do before and figure out what I want out of my life opposed to what I think everyone else wants me to do with my life.

Valerie uses “harmony” to describe how she feels after the sessions. Valerie also shares both physical and emotional benefits she received while receiving Reiki.

Well, the past four months have been very enlightening, because when I first came here, I could not even turn my head to the right physically, so I had physical/emotional changes that are very visible and very significant in my life. So physically, I can now turn my head all the way, so physically I have so many physical changes, and I wrote a lot of them in my book as they were occurring, I haven't re-read my book. Emotionally I have been able to stop and pause before I speak. I've been more positive, trying to just allow things to pass. I realize I need to worry about me, and if I worry about me, everything else will just fall into place that I am a piece of this harmony. I don't have to force harmony. The harmony will come if I just love myself and take care of myself. If I can love myself, I can guide others in a positive manner and sometimes that's more difficult.

Jason shares about becoming more self-aware this is a great example of how Jason is shifting inward to a more intrapersonal place. The fact he stops and pauses before speaking and trusting that things will fall into place is also an intrapersonal feeling of trusting the self.

He shares more about his Reiki sessions:

From the beginning to the end, I have become more self-aware of what and where I needed to be and what I needed to do. I really didn't fight the current of life. I guess this is more the spiritual sense of it all. Now I'm at a point where I feel free and detached from everything. In a physical sense, I just feel very content. I feel like I have definitely gone through a change. I'm still changing, I'm not here in a single place, but I do feel a change in who I am, and I'm great with it. I love it.

Jason's narrative is all about becoming self-aware and he is able to communicate his mood has changed, his view and he even mentions his physical body as being more content. He said, "I feel free and detached from everything" and that he is changed and still changing.

Rupesh shares a little about his life experience before being in the study he said:

I was going through a sort of transitional time in my life, with my job change and all that, so it was quite difficult and uncentered. Anguish I would say was there. When I came here for the first time, I had a lot of anxiety, but after each session, I started feeling a little more centered for lack of a better word or at peace that life is energy and that we are all connected and that it is about love and it is about peace. We are energy beings, connected in some way. And each time I felt different. I mean, it was different senses. Sometimes the anguish, sometimes this. But more importantly, it was like healing. The wound remained, but it sort of healed, and now it's a scab. And last night I was telling this lady why she should go for, and she seems like a spiritual being and struggles having moved from the south to here, and she was like is it massage, is it this? And I'm like no it's not massage, but it's just energy, and it is sort of centering your energy, and it's different. It's not going to be a cure-all, kind of see how you press a button, and everything becomes good, but sort of reflection and going inside. So, there's a lot that you feel. It's sort of an emotional rollercoaster, and then you want to get centered and calm. Even today, when I came, it was different than where I am now.

Carrie shares how her experience with Reiki allowed her to calm down and breathe she said:

Well, the past four months have been quite crazy for me. I've finished my second master's degree, I moved apartments, I got a job in Europe that I'm preparing to leave for, and I've also been dealing with being off medication for my mental illness, and other things. So, it's been a lot of different challenges that I think Reiki has helped me address it some way, in a way that is different from the traditional therapy that I was going to. First, I think being able to relax is something I struggled with, whether that's being stressed about school or stressed about my emotions or whatever, so having a period where I could actually calm down, slow my breathing, I mean I could feel my pulse slowing down. It really helped give me the energy boost and revive me to help me make it through the rest of the week or the next few weeks, so that was a big thing, realizing that I could do some of that meditation on my own and kind of use some of those techniques of just breathing and focusing on sort of positive images and mantras I guess.

These sentiments suggest a state of awareness of the self and shifting of how these participants view themselves differently from the start of the study. One person said they saw their wounds as a healed scab after a session rather than the center of who they are. Reiki helps people move past their physical body and old traumas to find peace regardless of outside circumstances. They start to understand that the body is simply a vehicle for the soul and can answer its call.

Eisenberg's Subprocesses and Reiki Communication

Eisenberg suggests that the three subprocesses operating in the *surround*, mood, personal narratives, and communication are part of the ongoing process of how identity is constructed. I agree with Eisenberg's theory because the narratives participants shared from the start of the study have changed after receiving Reiki. Their mood was altered, and the story changed and how they communicated their experience also changed. In the final interviews they shared how they have increased energy and felt more confident and connected to who they are.

Chapter Five:

Discussion of Findings and Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to uncover how people make sense of their Reiki experience and their impact on the identity construction process. Analysis of the interviews and diaries produced comprehensive data from which the three themes emerged: (1) impact of culture, (2) shift to clarity and, (3) shift from interpersonal to intrapersonal. These themes provided a context for explaining how individuals ascribe meaning to their Reiki experience outside the biomedical model. In this last chapter, I review the findings of this study, underlining how individuals ascribe meaning to their post-therapeutic experience with Reiki.

Summary of Findings

To help answer research question one: What is the impact of Reiki on the identity construction process? I have explored the ways people construct their identity drawing upon, interpersonal, societal, and cultural resources that generate patterns of thoughts and how they make sense about who they are (Eisenberg, 2001). A person's choices of spirituality, religion, and culture create perspectives that influence how identity and communication form (2001). The ways that the participants communicated their narratives, their accounts with their body experience receiving Reiki was more with emotions. Understanding the emotions and attitudes of constructed personal narratives are beneficial to this study. Looking back on the initial interviews and asking the question of how the mind, body, and spirit is connected, there was very little information on how the spirit fits in the trio. The focus was primarily on the mind. Phrases such as *going to rewire the brain, mind chatter, dark days, and complicated* were used to describe how

they felt. To answer the question, the impact on the identity construction process was tapping into the intrapersonal system. According to Hefferline (1947) the intrapersonal system is not directly observable we are accountable only for the directly observable behavior. The behavior of the participants from the beginning of the study to the end changed immensely. The integration of the spirit to the body and mind through receiving Reiki created the individual to be part of a larger system. Looking at identity as a social process shifting to create an intrapersonal dialogue that contributes to mood and personal narrative change.

Answering research question two: How do Reiki participants make sense of the experience? Specifically focusing on the three themes that emerged, each of the participants describes their experiences as a way to let go and understand their lives. They find the journey inward to be a way for them to reconnect with what is real and differentiate between what they want and what they've been told they want. They each could begin to find peace in the present moment, just as they are, understanding they are whole as it is. They find clarity through surrender. They surrender to themselves, their spirit, and source. After Reiki helps heal the parts of the ego holding them back, pieces they thought they needed to fall away to show what their soul is yearning for.

The shift to clarity comes from inner knowing, knowing everything is taken care of, even if it doesn't feel that way. Each of these participants started to surrender their ego to their soul and brought forth clarity about their mission. They went inward and Reiki was a tool that encouraged the spiritual element of the *surround* to be part of their environment.

What I learned was that even though participants said they didn't understand how energy worked or Reiki in the final interview; they stated changes and said that they have more energy, more peace, and harmony. They were not very concerned about how it worked. Rupesh stated:

Even in science, there is a limit, and you just can't get proof for everything, when you see a phenomenon, and you know that it works. I have seen and experienced, and I come from the east, from India. So, people call it miracles, people call it whatever, but a person can heal without medicine too because your body is the biggest pharmacy if you will, within you. I mean if you read Deepak Chopra or others, we are energy at the end of the day, and you can make those chemicals that medicine will give you already in your mind if you can, and not everybody can. But if you do the right things... so, by skeptic I mean it's not blind faith. You've got to experience and feel it, and I'm not one of those who will believe it only when I see it. You have to believe it to see it sometimes, and that's ok.

Results of this study revealed that Reiki activates the spiritual part of the mind, body, spirit connection. The theoretical contribution is that the intrapersonal aspect of the being is what awakens, and sense of inner peace is introduced — shifting from interpersonal to intrapersonal creates the freedom to allow the self to emerge, a more authentic self. Activating the spiritual element of the *surround*, the concepts, values, and behaviors (Eisenberg, 2001) which then changes the mood, personal narrative, and communication of the individual shift. Participants' reported feelings of safety, awareness, and self-understanding that allowed them to activate a more inward view of their thoughts and emotions. Reiki creates a safe place for people to go inward, to awaken, to listen to themselves. It was not until the final interview the participants spoke of themselves as a whole connecting to all three, mind, body, and spirit. A few said they stopped forcing and just let go, and that's when the true self steps forward, without the trappings of the mind.

Reiki connects with the spiritual being of the individual. Reiki breaks down the walls we've built around ourselves. Without the labels, titles, and appearances, Reiki brings you back to what's real. Rather than living a life for the person your ego has created, it calls your soul forward to lead. Each of these people surrendered to something they couldn't quite describe and invited healing in. Once the mind, body, and spirit are aligned with their highest calling, magic happens. Reiki facilitates this process and helps people who don't know their next step find their answer. Having the clarity to awakening to who they are and wisdom of what they need to feel joy. A few participants said they allowed themselves to relax, sleep more, and trust that their life was unfolding as it should.

Limitations

This study has three notable limitations. First, this study examined a small subject pool within the context of my personal network. Thus, this study is limited by the fact that it represents only one particular group. Second, this study had one Reiki practitioner providing therapy, thus limiting the experience of different practitioners, which may have different outcomes. Third, the study is limited because of the duration of the study; it could be strengthened by an extension of six months or longer.

Theoretical Implications

This study presents a number of significant findings that can provide contribution to identity construction and communication via Reiki therapy. This information will help lay the groundwork for future research on how tapping into the body's own frequencies can permeate several areas of one's life. The dismantling of cultural barriers achieves spiritual peace and there is a sense of permission to talk about how Reiki heightens

awareness and enhances mental, emotional and physical wellness. Disassociating from past experiences gives freedom to go inward and create new personal narratives.

Suggestions for Future Research

Reiki implementation is gaining more popularity, and the need for more research is warranted. Researching a larger population, increasing time allotted for the study and more than one practitioner would be beneficial to the study. Based on the findings of this study it is significant to fathom Reiki from all facets of its purpose, effects, and multiple uses. Research on demystifying the process of how energy used in Reiki affects the genetic patterns that shape human development can contribute to identity construction. Among the issues that need exploration in more detail is an understanding of how practitioners of Reiki incorporate this into their lifestyle and subsequently, their identities.

Concluding Thoughts

I began this study with the desire to study and understand how people ascribe meaning to Reiki and to also add to the phenomena of how Reiki can be understood. The results of this study reveal ways that the participant's mood, personal narratives, and communication shift from the beginning of the study to the end. When people do not go inward and listen to how they are in relationship with their mind, body and spirit clarity is lost. Taking the time to go inward and listen allows for detachment of environmental factors and makes room to shift from a view of the body as a physical mechanism into a body that shares information to know what is needed to create balance.

Hospitals don't know how to explain it but "Reiki is offered to patients in local hospitals, community centers, anticancer support groups, and at leading cancer treatment

facilities such as Memorial Sloan Kettering cancer center New York, Dana Farber Cancer Center, Boston, and M. D. Anderson Cancer Ctr., Houston (Miles, 2007 p. 22). Maybe the best reason for people to receive Reiki is simply because it helps them feel better, relieving symptoms such as anxiety, pain, fatigue, nausea, and insomnia, and imparting a sense of centeredness” (Miles, 2007 p. 25).

I conclude that applying the elements of the *surround* to better understand how participants construct their identity and make sense of their Reiki experience provided great insight to this study. “How we respond to the fundamental uncertainties of life shapes everything we do and is driven in part by how we think about our place in the world, our sense of identity” (Eisenberg, 2001, p.534) .

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. How would you describe complementary alternative therapies?
2. Have you ever used any form of complementary alternative therapies?
3. How did you find out about them?
4. How much information do you know about complementary alternative medicine?
5. How affective do you think complementary alternative medicines are?
6. Thinking about the mind, body, and spirit connection how would you describe it?
7. Have you ever had Reiki before? or heard of Reiki?
8. If you heard of Reiki, why do you think some people look at Reiki or energy therapy as taboo?
9. If you never used any form of complementary alternative medicine, why?
10. Do you know anyone currently using a complementary therapy?

Appendix B

Final Interview

1. Looking back on the past four months how would you describe your Reiki experience?
2. How would you describe your overall health now?
3. Thinking about the mind, body, and spirit now after the study how would you describe it?
4. Did you experience any shift on how you view Reiki or any other healing modality?
5. Would you suggest Reiki to family and friends?
6. If you would suggest it how would you describe Reiki?
7. Is there any other information you would like to share about your experience?

Appendix C

Eisenberg's, Toward New Theory of Communication and Identity (2001)