Introduction

In today's modern world, medical technology has made great strides in treating, and
even curing, a variety of imbalances and ailments of the human body. Working
alongside the scientific and medical communities, as a complement to modern medicine,
is a growing movement that focuses on a natural method of healing using a "laying of
hands" technique on clients as an alternative to traditional and mainstream medicine.
This healing method is widely and simply known as "Reiki." It is practiced by
"practitioners" who have been empowered by a Reiki Master-Teacher through a series of
"attunements."

Reiki practitioners—those who offer healing through this energy source—are quick to
point out that it is not a religion. At the very least, however, it could be categorized as a
form of "spirituality" in that the Reiki energy is believed to be a part of a higher power or
realm, coming from a divine source which some people refer to as God; the Creator; the
Almighty; a Supreme Being; Great Spirit; or Infinite Intelligence.

Reiki is regarded as the Universal Life Force Energy that is present in all living and
non-living things. The Chinese call it ch'i; the Japanese call it ki; and Hindus call it prana.
(Barnett and Chambers, 1) It is a part of the divine-source energy that assists in healing
and giving those who receive it a sense of equilibrium and well-being.

Reiki is a gentle, powerful, hands-on healing technique. It is based on a
specific energy attunement process in which ancient mantras and
symbols are used to amplify the flow of life force energy and to open up
the inner healing channel. ...Reiki revitalizes body, mind, and soul,
relieves pain and stress, and helps in many conditions, always supporting
the natural healing process. (Honnervogt[a], 12)

The technique for harnessing this energy is ancient, originating in records of cosmology
and philosophy delineated in Tibetan Buddhist sutras (Müller and Günther, 13). The
particular method that is the focus of this research study is called Usui Shiki Ryoho in
Japanese (known as "The Usui System of Natural Healing" in English). This system of
healing is a holistic therapy which supports the effectiveness of traditional and
complementary treatments. As mentioned earlier, it is not categorized as a religion, as it
does not have a creed or doctrine.

Reiki energy is a smart energy that automatically goes to the area in the body that
needs healing. The Reiki treatment is a non-invasive healing method that offers those
who receive it relaxation, peace of mind—and in many cases—a physical, mental or emotional healing, relieving pre-existing conditions.

Reiki is different from other healing methods and forms of bodywork in that the practitioner has been attuned with “empowerments” which serve to fine-tune the physical and etheric bodies to a higher vibratory level. Through the attunement process, a person’s energy centers are opened up and aligned to allow the person to channel the life force energy more ably and in greater amounts.

A Reiki practitioner is attuned by a Reiki Master-Teacher who is able to impart into the person’s aura the symbols used in Reiki. Practitioners can be attuned to Level I (allowing them to give treatments to themselves and others); Level II (enabling them to send Reiki to someone in a distance healing); Level III-a (being attuned with the Master symbol); and Level III-b (empowering them to teach and attune others to Reiki, becoming a “Master-Teacher”).

The Reiki practitioner channels this Reiki energy through their hands to the recipient. Never does the recipient have to remove any clothing. The therapy is non-intrusive, merely a “laying of hands.” There is no manipulation of the body or deep tissue massage involved in a Reiki treatment. The practitioner is not a healer in the true sense of the word, but only a “channel,” acting as a vehicle for the healing Reiki energy to pass through his/her body and hands. The recipient draws the needed energy offered from the channel (Reiki practitioner).

Anyone can offer another magnetic energy by laying his/her hands upon the other person. The difference, however, between someone who has not been attuned to the Reiki energy, and one who has, is the tremendous amount of energy transferred to the person. A Reiki graduate’s hands are much hotter and the energy is more noticeable from a Reiki practitioner.

A Brief History of Reiki

Reiki was rediscovered by Dr. Mikao Usui who is believed to have read the original sutras in Sanskrit, translating them into Japanese. Still, the secret to how the healing took place eluded him until he experienced a 21-day fast and meditation on a sacred mountain called Kurama-yama, in his native Japan. On the last day of his meditation and fast, a speeding ball of light appeared in the sky and rushed toward him; he decided to allow the light to penetrate his being, wherein he experienced profound spiritual enlightenment. The ancient symbols appeared to him in clear bubbles hovering in the air; he memorized each one and how it was to be used in the attunement process of the healing system.

Usui-sensei quickly left the mountain to make his way back to the Buddhist monastery where he was living. As he hurriedly ran, he stubbed his toenail, causing it to bleed profusely. He intuitively placed his hand over the toe and the bleeding ceased. This is considered by Reiki adherents to be the first healing miracle associated with Reiki.

As he descended the mountain, Usui-sensei came upon a roadside restaurant. He ordered rice, vegetables, and hot tea. The proprietor could see he had been fasting on the mountain and insisted Usui-sensei wait for him to prepare a softer food made of rice

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Footnotes:

1 The title “doctor” is often afforded to Mikao Usui—not through higher academic learning—but through his healing work. (Petter [a], 18) The Japanese honorific title “sensei” (meaning “teacher”) is also used in conjunction with the surnames of the prominent figures in Reiki’s long and colorful history. To view Dr. Usui’s photo, see Figure 1.

2 To view the Shinto shrine located on top of Mount Kuramayama, see Figure 2.
gruel so as not to overwhelm his digestive system (having not eaten solid food for three weeks). Usui-sensei insisted upon eating the cold, leftover rice. He ate it and had no ill effect from doing so. This is considered to be the second miracle associated with Reiki.

As the proprietor's granddaughter was serving the food to Usui-sensei, he noticed she was wearing a white cloth around her head and jaw. Realizing she was suffering from a toothache, he put his hands on her cheeks, and nearly instantly, the pain was gone. He had healed her toothache with his healing touch. This is considered to be the third miracle associated with Reiki.

Figure 1.

Upon arriving at the monastery, he learned that the head-monk was bedridden from an acute case of arthritis. He immediately healed the monk, experiencing the fourth miracle of Reiki.

This story of the four Reiki miracles has been passed down through the ages from Reiki Master-Teachers to their students. Nearly all of the versions are basically the same concerning Usui-sensei's fast, enlightenment of the Reiki symbols, and four miracles. However, other aspects of Usui-sensei's original motivation to rediscover the ancient healing technique are disputed.

The traditional Reiki story begins in the mid-1800s with Mikao Usui, who was principal of Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan, and also a Christian minister. Asked by his students to be shown the method by which Jesus did healing, Usui began a ten-year quest to find and learn the skill. When Christian authorities in Japan told him that this healing was not talked about, much less known, Usui sought the information through Buddhism. There are striking resemblances between the life of Buddha in India (Gautama Siddhartha, 620-543 BCE) and the life of the historical Jesus.
Usui was told by Buddhist monks that the ancient spiritual healing methods had been lost, and that the only way to approach them was by entering the Buddhist teachings, the Path to Enlightenment.

Mikao Usui then traveled to the United States, where he lived for seven years. When he received no further answers from Christians there, he entered the University of Chicago Divinity School. He is said to have received his Doctor of Theology degree there, where he studied comparative religions and philosophies. He also learned to read Sanskrit, the ancient scholarly language of India and Tibet. Usui still found no answers in his quest to learn the methods of healing. There is no further mention of Mikao Usui as a Christian or minister, but only as a Buddhist, who after his return to Japan, resided in a Zen monastery. (Stein, 9)

Several Reiki researchers have meticulously researched this story, only to find that Mikao Usui is not listed as ever having been involved with Doshisha University—as a teacher, researcher, minister, or student; nor can university archivists at the University of Chicago find any information connecting him to their institution (Stein, 9; Petter [], 18)

It is now believed by a growing number within the Reiki movement that the “Christian connection” was most likely included later when it was being exported to the West. (Stein, 9; Petter [], 18) It was perhaps felt by later Reiki adherents that an aspect related to the Western-Christian tradition was needed in order for such a healing therapy to be accepted by the general public. By connecting the healing energy to Jesus, who was also a healer, and by portraying Usui-sensei as a Christian minister in search of a basic Christian belief and truth, would make it more appealing to fundamental and mainstream Christians who tend to dismiss categorically any belief that is not explicitly rooted in Christianity.

Figure 2.

A Shinto shrine on Mount Kuramayama.
Usui-sensei named Reiki by combining two Japanese characters: rei which can mean spirit, soul, or ghost; and ki which can be interpreted as energy, mind, atmosphere, heart, soul, feeling, or mood. (Petter 29) When the two are combined, it can be translated in English as “life-force energy.”

With this new healing energy, Dr. Usui wanted desperately to assist the downtrodden, poor, and destitute beggars of the Kyoto slums. He was discouraged, however, after healing a number of people because they returned to their old ways. He realized then that unless people have some type of personal commitment, like an investment, into their own healing, it was of no use.3

Usui-sensei then set out as a pilgrim, journeying with a torch in daylight—signifying “lighting the way”—offering lectures on his newly rediscovered healing method. This attracted a number of disciples to him, one of which was Chujiro Hayashi, a retired naval officer still on reserve status (Stein, 13) Hayashi-sensei eventually received the attunement for Master-Teacher in 1925 and set out to begin his own Reiki healing practice, setting up a clinic in Tokyo. He is attributed with establishing an organized framework for Reiki, including the specific hand positions and levels of attunement that are still used today.

In 1935, a Japanese-American woman, Hawayo Takata, was visiting Japan from Hawaii to break the news of her sister’s death to her parents who happened to be in Japan for a year visit (their first trip back since their immigration to the United States some 40 years before). Suffering from a variety of illnesses and chronic conditions, and in need of an operation, Mrs. Takata checked herself into a hospital; as she was being readied for the procedure, a voice not of this world rang out to her “The operation is not necessary.” (Haberly, 19) Heeding this voice, she asked the surgeon if there were any alternative treatments she could pursue. He directed her to Hayashi’s clinic where she was treated and ultimately healed.

Takata lived at the clinic and was completely healed in body, mind and spirit in four months. She asked to be trained in Reiki but at first was refused, not because she was a woman but because she was a foreigner. Hayashi did not want the practice of Reiki healing to leave Japan at that time. Eventually, he relented because of the intervention of the surgeon [who referred her initially]. Hawayo Takata received Reiki I training in spring, 1936. She joined the teams of healers that worked at the clinic, and in 1937 Takata received Reiki II and returned to Hawaii. She had lived in Japan for two years. (Stein, 13)

In 1938, Hayashi-sensei visited Takata in Hawaii, where they lectured about Reiki around the Hawaiian Islands. On February 22, 1938, before departing for Japan, Hayashi-sensei announced that he had attuned Takata to Reiki Level III-a and b, as “Master-Teacher”. (Haberly, 31)

As mentioned earlier, in the beginning, Dr. Usui was discouraged when he offered Reiki to beggars in the slums of Kyoto. He had hoped that by giving them the gift of Reiki, they would go out and make an honest living, bettering their lives in the process. After giving attunements and classes free for some time, he noticed a pattern which

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3This is the justification today for some Reiki Master-Teachers charging a tremendous amount of money to attune practitioners to the Level of “Master-Teacher.”
4To view Hayashi-sensei’s photo, see Figure 3.
5To view Takata-sensei’s photo, see Figure 4.
emerged where soon the beggars were back on the streets begging. He realized then that without some type of exchange, people would not invest the necessary effort into their own healing or condition. The easiest and most practical way to make sure that people followed it was to charge for it. When people invested in their own healing, they were more apt to continue it.

Hayashi-sensei felt the same, and when Takata-sensei asked if she could teach Reiki for free to those who helped her establish her Reiki Center in Kapaa, Hawaii, he admonished her, saying: “Never teach a Reiki class free. For then, it has no value. The people will not value it enough to use it. You can return your gratitude to them by treating them when they need a treatment.” (Brown, 64) Takata-sensei followed his advice and in order to make sure students were completely dedicated to teaching Reiki, she charged each $10,000 to become attuned to Level III-b, Master-Teacher.

Today, opinion is divided on this point. A number of Reiki Master-Teachers follow the tradition of charging for attunements—some a token amount, others the $10,000 fee. There are other Reiki Masters who charge nothing, maintaining that Reiki, as a universal energy source, should not have a price and should be available to all and anyone who wants to use it and teach it. Purists believe that giving away Reiki for free detracts from the original intention of having the therapy done by only those who are completely committed, maintaining a degree of semblance in how it is taught.⁶

⁶ Diane Stein, a Reiki Master-Teacher, caused a huge furor among the Reiki community when she published a book, Essential Reiki, wherein she revealed the attunement process and secret symbols used to attune practitioners. In the foreword to her book, Ms. Stein says: “In this time of change and crisis for people and the planet, healing is too desperately needed for it to be kept
This triumvirate set of personages in early Reiki—Dr. Mikao Usui, Chujiro Hayashi, and Hawayo Takata—were quite influential, but in different ways. Usui rediscovered the energy therapy, named it, and built up a discipleship of adherents, which included Chujiro Hayashi; Hayashi eventually organized it into a codified therapy, relying on his military background to standardize aspects of the healing technique (like specific hand positions, the various levels of attainment, and the idea of having Reiki given as treatments in a clinical setting); and Takata was largely responsible for keeping Reiki alive during World War II, and in promulgating it into the worldwide phenomenon it is today.

Figure 4.

Hawayo Takata

An Introduction to the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine what religious influence, if any, is present in a Reiki practitioner’s healing work; and if there is a direct link, or relationship, between Reiki as an alternative healing therapy and the practitioner’s spirituality or belief system. As delineated earlier, Reiki is not a religion, strictly speaking, as it has no real creed, code of ethics, or dogma; but, it is spiritually-based because its adherents and practitioners often use prayerful intentions before beginning a treatment and all possess a belief in a higher power which they call upon to access and use the Reiki energy source.

In addition, the study endeavored to learn the religious and/or spiritual backgrounds of the participants of this study, their attitudes toward religion and spiritual-based beliefs, and what role, if any, these play in their Reiki healing work with regards to the actual secret or exclusive any longer. Always have respect for the sacredness of the information that follows… (Stein, 1994)
Reiki treatment when given to a client. A further intention of this study was also to qualify the process and ritual involved in preparing and executing a Reiki treatment.

A number of questions were set forth in a questionnaire⁷ to postulate these hypotheses. For instance, is a personal ritual (that is spiritual in nature) performed to ready the practitioner, space, or client before the actual treatment? Is the client consulted about the ritual or Reiki treatment before it is given? Is some type of religious or spiritually-based prayer, intention, devotion, and/or invocation rendered before beginning the Reiki treatment? Are other therapies or techniques used to complement the Reiki treatment or is it strictly Reiki that is given without the aid of other tools? How long does a typical treatment last? And how often are self-treatments given, as well as to others?

The results of the study, which are described in the following sections, provide a contemporary overview of how a modern Reiki practitioner’s religious upbringing and spiritual beliefs affect his/her attitude toward Reiki healing. As well, it details the manners and procedures of how Reiki practitioners’ beliefs and spirituality play a role in giving treatments to clients.

**Descriptive Analysis of the Participants’ Demographic Data**

The study was conducted using Reiki practitioners who either have been attuned to Reiki I, II, III-a and/or III-b. The only criterion was that the participants had to be attuned to some form of Reiki to be eligible to participate in this study. Interestingly, all the subjects (100%) were attuned by a Reiki Master who specialized in the *Usui Shiki Ryoho* System of Reiki Natural Healing (sometimes referred to as *Usui Shiki Ryoho School of Reiki*),⁸ and the overwhelming majority was attuned to Reiki III-b, making them Reiki Master-Teachers (82%). A majority of the subjects were selected through referral, meaning that once a core group of Reiki practitioners was selected through personal contacts, these people then forwarded the questionnaire on to Reiki practitioners that they knew. This type of research data collection is referred to as “snowball sampling.”

In snowball sampling researchers identify a small number of individuals who have the characteristics in which they are interested. These people are then used as informants to identify, or put researchers in touch with, others who qualify for inclusion and these, in turn, identify yet others—hence the term snowball sampling. This method is useful for sampling a population where access is difficult, maybe because it is a sensitive topic or where communication networks are underdeveloped. The task for the researcher is to establish who are the critical or key informants with whom initial contact must be made. (Cohen, et al., 104)

The entire questionnaire was conducted via the Internet.

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⁷ See Appendix A.

⁸ In addition to the *Usui Shiki Ryoho* School of Reiki, a number of subjects also listed other energy therapies they used in cooperation with the traditional form of Reiki: *Karuna Reiki, Kundalini Reiki, Lightarian Reiki, Siddhearth Reiki, Reiki Jin Kei Do*, etc. Purists who subscribe to the traditional form of *Usui*-based Reiki view “other” Reiki traditions, which were primarily created using the *Usui* Method of Reiki Healing as a prototype, as less effective. Adherents to these alternative Reiki therapies insist that the energy channeled using these other methods is as powerful and effective (and sometimes more so) than the traditional *Usui* Method of Reiki.
A decision was made early on to keep the study small in order to extrapolate data in a manageable manner. Although the primary instrument (fieldwork questionnaire) utilized a Likert scale (e.g. “please mark accordingly—strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree”) to some extent, the majority of the questionnaire involved open-ended questions, generating a large amount of research data that needed to be collated and interpreted.

In retrospect, perhaps a survey that encompassed only a rating method (e.g. a checklist—please check the items that pertain to you; or Likert scale) for gathering research might have made it easier to collocate and analyze the data generated, but ultimately it was decided to combine both configurations in the question design in order not to limit the subjects in their responses. Also, I could not assume to know all the possible responses that subjects might be able to provide—which certainly was the case, as many of the respondents mentioned areas and activities I would never have thought to include in a checklist or Likert format. The responses, in general, were thoughtful, lengthy, and rich with detail.

The survey was actually divided into four different sections. The first section dealt with demographic data; the second section focused on the subjects’ religious and/or spiritual backgrounds; the third section concentrated on the Reiki treatments; and the fourth section allowed the respondents to write freely about any aspect they wished to comment upon that perhaps was not covered specifically within the perimeters of the survey.

Statistics on the Sex and Age of the Participants

The age of the participants ranged from 37 to 63; the mean was 52. Their sex was predominately female (66%) with a smaller percentage being male (34%). Within the female group, the youngest subject was 37 and the oldest was 63 (with a mean of 51.5 years-of-age). Within the male group, the youngest subject was 45 and the oldest was 57 (with a mean of 52.5 years-of-age).

The data is especially telling in that the majority of the subjects were women. This is most likely quite representative of the entire Reiki practitioner population, even though this data is generated from a small, but somewhat random sampling. Generally, women tend to be more attracted to this type of healing technique because of the subtleness of the energy involved. Of course, this type of healing work requires a person to be attuned to the Universal Life Force Energy source, but it also requires one to be comfortable in accessing both male and female based energy, which women seem to be less apprehensive in doing.

Historically, Reiki was predominately administered by men when first introduced by Dr. Usui, with the “Master-Teacher” attunement given to men. Women eventually did break this sex-barrier, but it was still reserved for “Japanese-only.” (Brown, 26; Haberly, 24) Although Mrs. Takata was ethnically Japanese, she was an American citizen, legally, socially and culturally. Initially, she was viewed suspiciously as an outsider—even though she looked Japanese and spoke the language fluently. Through the help of a medical surgeon who wrote a personal appeal on her behalf to Hayashi-sensei, Takata-sensei broke this nationality barrier when she convinced him to attune her to the Reiki

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9 When Mrs. Takata first asked if she could learn Reiki, she was told: “Reiki is a closely guarded Japanese treasure. It is for Japanese people only and you are an American. I think it is quite out of the question.” (Brown, 26) Being American, she was relentless in her pursuit and finally was afforded the opportunity to study Reiki.
energy. He was so impressed with her dedication that he eventually attuned her to all three Reiki levels.

In 1938, Hayashi-sensei attuned Takata-sensei with the Master-Teacher attunement; he encouraged her to continue her healing work with Reiki. (Borang, 33; Brown, 39; Haberly, 31) Later, this would have a profound affect on Reiki as a movement. Before Hayashi-sensei went into transition (which he consciously caused by psychically shutting down various major organs of his body) shortly before he was to be re-commissioned as a naval officer to serve in the Pacific War with the United States, he selected Takata-sensei to be the “Grand Master,” allowing her to carry on the movement with his blessing. As a former military officer, he knew that Japan was going down a road that would have grave consequences. (Haberly, 41) He instructed Takata-sensei to return to Hawaii and told her where she should go to be safe. (Brown, 59) During and after the war, she was instrumental in spreading Reiki to the West, attuning 22 people (the majority women) to the level of Reiki Master-Teacher before passing into transition on December 12, 1980.

The statistics generated in the research for this study show that women still play a key, if not integral role, in utilizing Reiki by giving treatments and in attuning other women to the Reiki energy.

The average age of the participants was higher than anticipated. One prior assumption was that this type of alternative therapy most likely would be embraced by younger people who are seeking spiritual fulfillment through a method that does not involve mainstream or organized religion. The participants all were well into middle age, which suggests that the desire to be a healer in the service of others attracts people of all ages, making Reiki especially attractive to middle-aged people. Also, this may have something to do with the fact that many Reiki Master-Teachers who follow the traditional Usui System of Natural Healing often charge a sizeable amount of money to be attuned to each level, with the final attunement for Master-Teacher costing up to $10,000. Older, more well-established people have more disposable income to invest into this type of pursuit.

As will be delineated later, also, many of the participants had jumped from a variety of religious traditions, seeking a spiritual purpose. Perhaps this, too, is a reason why the participants tended to be older because they had more opportunity to experience mainstream medicine and other spiritual outlets, before deciding to embark upon Reiki as a way to heal and be “spiritual.” Although Reiki is not a belief system, has no dogma, per se, and is not a religion, it does offer practitioners an avenue to explore their own spirituality and beliefs in a higher power or force, whether that is God, or another Supreme Being.

In recent research conducted by Frank Arjava Petter, no records in Japan can be found to suggest there was originally a custom of having a “Grand Master” who carried on the Reiki ideals as a de facto leader. This might have been something that Hayashi created, perhaps along with Takata, in order to keep some type of control or regulatory oversight on the rapidly expanding Reiki movement. (Petter [b], 40)

Mrs. Takata attuned 22 people to the level of “Master-Teacher”: George Araki, Dorothy Baba, Ursula Baylow, Rick Bockner, Patricia Bowling, Barbara Brown, Fran Brown, Phyllis Furumoto [Takata’s granddaughter and next Grand Master after Takata], Beth Gray, John Gray, Iris Ishikuro, Harru Kuboi, Ethel Lombardi, Barbbara McCullough, Mary McFadyen, Paul Mitchell, Bethel Phaigh, Shinobu Saito, Virginia Samdahl, Wanja Twan, Barbara Weber Ray, and Kay Yamashita (Brown, 99)
Responses to the survey statement which read, “I consider myself to be a religious person,” elicited varied, but interesting, results. Only 17% of the respondents indicated the response “strongly agree,” where 58% marked the item “somewhat agree.” Only 8% checked “somewhat disagree” and the remainder of the subjects (17%) indicated that they “strongly disagree” with the statement.

The definition of “religious” was explained in the survey instructions as: “Religious meaning you regularly attend a mainstream church and/or subscribe and follow a set dogma affiliated with an organized religion.” Respondent A (female, age 57) noted in her response: “I consider myself [to be] very religious, but I am not religious by your definition.” This attitude indicates a flaw in the design of the question itself, perhaps, as one’s definition of religion is often a personal one, making it difficult to define categorically something as intimate and abstract as religion.

This is an example of how an open-ended question may have elicited more concrete results. It would have been interesting, in hindsight, to research how each person individually defined religion and how this personal definition related to their attitude of regarding themselves as being “religious” or not.

The next survey statement the subjects were asked to indicate (using the same answer criteria as the previous statement) was: “I consider myself to be more spiritual than religious.” Overwhelmingly, the respondents indicated “strongly agree” to this statement (75%), with the remainder of the subjects indicating “somewhat agree” (25%).

When comparing the results which required the subjects to differentiate between being “religious” and being “spiritual,” the participants were much more agreeable to the notion of being “spiritual” as opposed to being “religious.” This was not surprising, considering the subjects are involved in the practice of a healing therapy that is not based on any religion, has no set dogma, or organized church. Seemingly, all the respondents (100%), when combining the two categories indicated they are more inclined to regard themselves in the “spiritual” rather than “religious” category when obliged to make a choice.

This attitude, however, is in direct contrast to the next statement, which basically canceled out the previous statement’s results. It read: “I consider myself to be a spiritual person, but not religious.” Fifty percent (50%) of the participants marked “somewhat disagree” to this statement, with only 33% indicating they “strongly agree,” and 17% characterized their answer as “somewhat agree.”

It is important to note that the more abstract statement: “I consider myself to be more spiritual than religious” was interpreted by a higher (and in a more favorable manner) percentage of the surveyed subjects. When the statement was altered slightly to include the phrasing “to be a spiritual person, but not religious” as opposed to the phrasing “…to be more spiritual than religious,” the respondents were not as comfortable in labeling themselves as a “spiritual person” but perhaps related more positively to being a “religious person.”

This differentiation was deliberate on my part in the design of the survey statements. I wanted to see how the respondents viewed being “spiritual” in the abstract in contrast to a more concrete description. Generally speaking, these results suggest that there

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12 Strictly speaking, perhaps, the Reiki Principles written by Mikao Usui, which head this paper under the main title, could be categorized as “dogma.” However, generally a dogma is defined as a more extensive set of beliefs or doctrine that incorporates a body of material into a specific belief system. The Reiki Principles are basically a guide to right living, which is based more on common sense than on a belief system.
tends to be a type of discriminatory attitude against the label of “a spiritual person.” This is possibly a throwback, considering the higher age average of the participants, to the time period of the 1970s when a clear differentiation between being spiritual and religious was brought to the forefront of the New Age movement when it first began to gain widespread attention among ordinary people. New Age adherents often stridently and vociferously opposed organized religion, preferring to follow a more inclusive and open-style of spiritually-based beliefs that were drawn from a variety of religious traditions and belief systems. Hence, the “religious” connotation was viewed negatively. Many of these New Age people chose to embrace a more inclusive spirituality, clearly differentiating them from being categorized as “religious” (because religion was often viewed as being inflexible, narrow, and not accepting of those with alternative beliefs). Being “spiritual” meant being able to practice any prescribed belief system or religious tradition in an all encompassing way, choosing and combining opposing aspects which mainstream religion frowned upon doing.

Mainstream religions tend to look upon the New Age movement suspiciously, negating many aspects of the movement because they do not conform to the strict definition of religious dogma or doctrine espoused by organized religions. This type of prejudice by mainstream and organized religions toward alternative spiritual movements could be a factor in why the subjects responded the way they did concerning labeling themselves concretely.

Perhaps due to religious indoctrination and practice throughout their childhoods and into their adult lives, when faced with identifying themselves with a specific label, the respondents preferred not to categorize themselves as being a “spiritual person.” The first statement presented bears this out in that a combined percentage of the subjects (75%) marked either “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” to the statement: “I consider myself a religious person.” According to the data gathered for this study, the subjects—through either experience or habit—seem to prefer the label “religious person” instead of “spiritual person.”

This result was indeed surprising, considering the participants’ backgrounds as Reiki practitioners. It was assumed initially that the subjects, because of their work in an alternative healing therapy that requires belief in a higher-power and a Universal Life-Force Energy source (that is not religiously-based or part of a mainstream religion), would be more comfortable being referred to as a “spiritual person” rather than as a “religious person.” The fact that they clearly differentiated between the two in the three statements that were designed to reveal whether labeling made a difference, is insightful and revealing. It must be noted, however, that the results may be skewed due to a misinterpretation of “religious” because (as mentioned with regard to the first statement) the subjects’ personal definitions of the word may vary a great deal. In a future study, a clear delineation and interpretation of the terms “religion,” “religious,” “spiritual” and “spirituality” may make the results more revealing.

In order to procure a more in-depth understanding of the participants’ attitudes and backgrounds of religion and spirituality, an open-ended statement was presented to them: “I would describe my religious upbringing and/or spiritual life until now as....” To clarify to the subjects what type of information was desired, an example answer was given to them: “e.g. I was raised Methodist, attending church regularly, but converted to Catholicism in college. Later, I went through a phase of being agnostic, but had a personal awakening when I was 25 and currently adhere to a more all encompassing type of spirituality that is in line more with a New Age belief system than an organized religion-based one.”

The reason for giving a sample answer was to direct moderately the focus of the respondents to comment specifically on their religious upbringings and spiritual lives with
precise references to religious and spiritual experiences. Without an attempt to focus the attention of the subjects, it was felt that the participants might misinterpret the statement and give widely varied personal accounts relating to their religion and spirituality that would be more allegorical in nature, rather than specific examples of religion and belief systems they ultimately pursued (and were involved in) throughout their childhoods and adult lives.

This proved to be a most fascinating aspect of this study, with the respondents relating their religious upbringings and spiritual lives in great detail. Some examples are as follows:

Subject A, Female (age 57)—American
I was raised Southern Baptist in a home with parents who were missionaries. I left that belief at the end of university. About 10 years later, I came back to a relationship with God due to the writings of Catherine Ponder, and I have attended New Thought churches when I have found them. ...My spiritual life is very active and fulfilling. New Thought, particularly the teachings of Catherine Ponder, remains at the core of my belief. I regularly ask for prayer support from Silent Unity, a New Thought organization. Also, I often take classes taught by teachers of the Spirit Unfold Network. They have contributed enormously to my spiritual development.

Subject B, Female (age 38)—Japanese
My family’s religion is Buddhism. But in my childhood there was no religious person around me. My family visited graves once a year [a Buddhist practice is to attend to ancestors’ graves], and have visited a shrine or temple at the beginning of the New Year. When I was in my 20s, I began to practice Yoga, and my master told me about Sai Baba. Since then, I have looked to spirituality and think about GOD.

13 “Catherine Ponder is considered one of America’s foremost inspirational authors. She has written more than a dozen books, which include such bestsellers as her Millionaires of the Bible series. She is a minister of the non-denominational Unity faith—long known as the “pioneer of positive thinking”—and has been described by some as ‘the Norman Vincent Peale among lady ministers.’ She has served in Unity Churches since 1956, and heads a global ministry in Palm Desert, California.” (http://catherineponder.wwwhubs.com, retrieved February 2, 2007)

14 New Thought churches teach that “thought” is central to one’s place in the universe; through meditation, prayer, affirmations, positive intentions and thinking, adherents can create their own destinies through conscious thought because it is constantly evolving and unfolding. Unity Churches are a part of this movement.

15 Silent Unity is affiliated with the Unity of Churches network. It consists of a 24-hour, 7-day a week prayer request line.

16 The Spirit Unfold Network offers classes that promote the idea of self-enrichment and help through positive thinking and intention, similar to the Unity Church teachings.

17 Bhagavan Sri Sathya “Sai Baba” a guru from southern India, heads an ashram where devotees go by the millions to see him perform miracles and to listen to his messages. He is well-known for materializing vibhuti, sacred ash, from the palms of his hands which adherents use for healing purposes.
Subject C, Female (age 37)—British
Brought up Church of England by a lapsed Catholic mother (!) and never really went to church apart from functions (e.g. weddings, etc). Always believed in God until I became a Buddhist in 2002...now a practicing Buddhism in the Tibetan Mahayana\(^{19}\) tradition.

Subject D, Male (age 57)—American (Native American and European ancestry)
I was raised Methodist (by a Methodist mother). My father was Baptist. I studied most religions and spiritual practices to some extent. I found the sources/founders had value and the institutions that followed them moved away from that value. I dubbed that process the “battle of the budget.” At the moment, I find the teachings of Gangaji, Papaji, and Sri Ramana\(^{20}\) the “answer” I’ve been seeking. I have had many experiences with grace. I now recognize those as the gifts they were.

Subject E, Female (age 56)—American (Hispanic ancestry)
I was raised Pentecostal and went to church (at times) 3 times a week. After acquiring a divorce, I was not accepted as a MEMBER of the church. I was told I could not participate as a member to vote, etc. Yet, they did want my tithes. At that time, I stopped going to that church.

Subject F, Male (age 56)—British
I was brought up in an atheist family, but have always been interested in spiritual healing since the age of 17.

Subject G, Female (age 53)—American
I was raised Catholic. I attended church service every Sunday and other days that were required to attend. Later, after I moved out of the house, I attended services when I felt like it. I do not believe you have to go to church in order to BELIEVE that there is a GOD or Infinite Intelligence or Great Spirit.

\(^{18}\) The (!) was the subject’s emphasis, not mine.
\(^{19}\) The Tibetan Mahayana tradition is one of two major Buddhist Schools which evolved after Buddha’s death; the other being Theravada.

\(^{20}\) “Gangaji, born Merle Antoinette (‘Toni’) Roberson in Texas in 1942, is an American teacher or guru who regularly gives Satsangs [sitting in the company an enlightened guru to receive knowledge through lectures, meditation, and discussion] around the globe. She is said to have attained self-realization in 1990 after an encounter with Poonjaji, a disciple of [Sri] Ramana Maharshi, who sent her back to the West to teach. In 1990, her second husband, Eli Jaxon-Bear, traveled to Lucknow, India to meet Sri H.W.L. Poonja, or “Papaji,” on the advice of a friend. Six weeks later, after receiving a letter from her husband, Toni left to join him and meet with Papaji. In this encounter, she says, the fulfillment she had sought was revealed to her. Papaji gave her the name “Gangaji,” after the river Ganga (Ganges), and sent her back to America to teach. Gangaji has described contracting an illness and high fever while in India, which preceded her experience of realization.” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gangaji, retrieved February 3, 2007)
Subject H, Female (age 58)—American
I was raised Catholic, attending church services regularly. When I married, I married a man who had previously been married and could not marry in [the Catholic] church. I studied my husband’s religion and converted to Lutheran, however, I did not attend church services regularly. I have since been attending and following the Spiritual beliefs regularly. I find spirituality fits my beliefs and needs. I believe that this is in line with the New Age belief system. I love it!

Subject I, Female (age 63)—Mexican
I was raised Catholic, and I do Reiki, which is not a religion, but Reiki fulfills my spiritual needs allowing me to connect to the Divine. I believe strongly in the divinity of Jesus Christ, and pray to him for strength and guidance.

Subject J, Female (age 50)—Australian
I attended a Methodist Sunday school as a child, and then dropped out of church attendance from age 16, or so, once the family moved and I went away to another city for university [study] and work. I started attending Christmas services in Tokyo for a few years as an adult, and have enjoyed about 20 years (on-and-off) of meditation with Orin and Daben’s [sic] work, as well as a stint of Vipassana and some Buddhist meditation. Now, back in Australia, I am a member of an Anglican church and we attend services about once a month and help with some charity work, and I teach in a Christian school. I have been influenced by profound experiences of connection with Oneness/the Divine, mainly through meditation and the Reiki attunement process, rather than the Church.

Subject K, Male (age 45)—American
Raised Protestant, converted to Catholicism in university. I practiced this for a number of years before becoming disenchanted with religion in general. I followed New Age spirituality for a time before finding Spiritualism, which is what I now consider to be my religion.

Subject L, Male (age 52)—American
I was raised Catholic. Very interested in learning more, always felt a spiritual longing/interest but not satisfied/convincied with conventional religions. Equally interested in philosophy and science, studied

21 Orin and DaBen are entities channeled by Duane Packer. The book Opening to Channel details messages received through Duane Packer from Orin and DaBen, who offer guidance and advice about channeling spirit.
22 Vipassana, which means to see things as they really are, is an ancient meditation technique from India which is more than 2,500 years old. (http://www.dhamma.org, retrieved on February 3, 2007)
23 Spiritualism is an American-made religion that is centered on mediums that make contact with those who have passed over to the other side. The main focus of Spiritualism is the demonstration of the continuity of the spirit after the physical death through messages given in church services, in private readings, and in séances.
meditation, spirituality New Age, and many, many things, and similar, to verify to myself. I had an out of body experience.²⁴

A majority of the respondents indicated some type of affiliation with—either being raised in or converting to as an adult—Catholicism. This is interesting because of the ritual that is associated with the Catholic mass, which may be one reason these people were eventually attracted to Reiki. There is a certain amount of ritual involved in not only the healing aspects of the therapy in preparing to give a treatment (and the systematic manner—i.e. hand positions—in which a treatment is given), but also in the attunement process itself.

In nearly all the cases, the subjects seem to have done a fair amount of “religion hopping,” a term I coined to describe the tendency of the subjects to go from one religion or spiritual tradition to another in search of a religion or belief system that fulfilled their spiritual needs.

Since Reiki has its roots in ancient Buddhist teachings and practice, and since Buddhism comes from Hindu traditions and beliefs, it is interesting to note that a number of respondents indicated their affinity for and/or belief in Buddhist or Hindu teachings. Again, Reiki perhaps resonates with these people because of the familiarity and complementary way in which Reiki can be combined with their own religious belief systems or spiritual practices.

In an attempt to discern the subjects’ views on religion and spiritual beliefs, a transition question was included on the survey to ascertain what role their spiritual belief systems or religious backgrounds play in giving Reiki treatments (either to themselves or to clients). The question asked: “Do your religious/spiritual beliefs and/or background play a part in your Reiki treatments? Please explain in detail.”

This question was designed to move from the religious/spirituality-based portion of the survey into how these affect, if at all, the Reiki treatment the practitioner offers. Again, the respondents’ answers were enlightening, explaining more clearly how their religion or spiritual beliefs affect or enhance their ability to heal through Reiki.

Subject A
Only as they play a part in the rest of my life. I believe strongly that we are to help one another. I teach Usui and Kundalini Reiki free to people who are interested, and I make the arrangements for a twice-a-month Reiki Share²⁵ at which people give and receive Reiki and at which I teach Reiki to anyone who is new and who wants it. This is my way of helping others. Yet I do other things to help others. Thus, my spiritual beliefs have led to what I do in Reiki—but also what I do with other kinds of energy work and other areas of my life.

Subject D
My understandings are foundational to my sharing of Reiki. I prefer to teach/attune others and let them do their own healing. I believe that I cannot heal anyone but myself. Others do not understand this

²⁴ An “out of body” experience is an “awareness of the astral body detaching from the physical body, either voluntarily or involuntarily, awake or dreaming.” (Jack, 145)
²⁵ A Reiki Share is the practice of exchanging Reiki energy with other practitioners; each person receives a Reiki treatment, as well as assists in giving treatments. Often, several tables will be set up and each person receives a 15-20 minute treatment. Many practitioners may be working on one person at a time.
They believe the healing comes from Reiki or me. I believe I only hold the space of healing and provide access to the energy. Once the other understands, then I am not “needed.” But I never was!

**Subject E**
Yes, because I do believe in God. As God assisted in the healing, I know we can, as well, make a difference in the world.

**Subject F**
From the age of 17, I was astounded at the accuracy of things told to me by spiritual leaders. Things that only could be known by me. And I was also told of future events that eventually came true. This gave me knowledge that there was healing energy that could be harnessed for use in helping people. So, I always had confidence in knowing that spiritual guides would be on hand to help.

**Subject G**
YES, I believe that I am just the hollow bone for the Great Spirit to use to help all those in need. Prayer is so important in the healing of others. I call upon Spirit to be with me and surround the person I am trying to help. My intention is to see that person healthy and whole.

**Subject H**
Definitely. Prayer and meditation, lots of talking with God assist me to be a clear channel to do God’s healing.

**Subject I**
Yes. I pray before Reiki asking Jesus Christ to assist me in my Reiki healing. I also ask the Virgin Mary to assist in the healing.

**Subject J**
Yes, I silently ask, “God make me a channel for your love and healing,” and I feel that Source energy is being called upon to bring the person back into balance, and for them to summon their own divinity within to balance themselves.

**Subject K**
Absolutely. Belief in a Supreme Being, angels, guides, and the Universal Life Force Energy that pervades all is the outcome of all my religious experience while growing up and as an adult.

Overwhelmingly, the respondents indicated that, indeed, their religious backgrounds and/or spiritual beliefs do influence their Reiki practice as they invoke some sort of religious or spiritual conviction into their Reiki treatments. This is not surprising because the idea of an unseen energy force is basic to the therapy. When Reiki students first begin to learn about the healing technique, they are influenced by their mentor, or Master-Teacher, who in turn was influenced by his/her Reiki teacher.

From the beginning, Reiki has been based on the belief that a Higher Source is responsible for the healing, and in order for a healing to take place, this source of energy must be accessed. The general belief in a Supreme Being as the source of the energy
that is all pervasive is an accepted belief, which was proven in this study by analyzing the responses of the subjects. An atheist, or even an agnostic, would obviously not be the least bit interested in pursuing Reiki because it is necessary to believe in a Higher Power that is omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent.

**Research Data on the Reiki Treatment**

Before beginning any Reiki treatment, whether it is a self-treatment or a treatment for someone else, often practitioners will create a “healing space.” This often involves clearing their minds through meditation or prayer, as well as clearing the room where the treatment will take place. The personal ritual involved in preparing to do a Reiki treatment for each practitioner varies slightly, but usually involves some type of meditation, prayer to the Creator, and/or an intention to the Universe asking that a healing take place during the treatment.

A number of the subjects indicated that they incorporate a combination of all of these: Meditating before the start of the treatment to put oneself in a frame of mind more conducive to healing; a prayer offered with purity of motive to help the practitioner to center and concentrate on the purpose of offering Reiki to oneself or to another; and an intention to make it clear to the Universe what it is intended to be done with regards to the treatment.

For instance, Subject B meditates for a bit to focus and to center herself, while Subject C offers a prayer for protection, using the Reiki symbols, as well as bringing in Reiki guides to assist in the healing. Subject E has a more involved ritual she performs before giving a treatment; specifically, she cleanses the space and Reiki table energetically, lights a white candle, decides which essential oils she wants to include, as well as using incense at the entry of the room. Subject J related: “I clear and clean the healing space and myself both physically and energetically, so that I can be the clearest channel possible.

Subject K detailed his personal ritual in great detail:

I believe strongly in “setting the space.” Before I give a treatment to myself or another, I always make sure that the room has been cleared of any negative energy that may be lurking about. This can be done in any number of ways, but the easiest way is to raise the vibratory energy of the room through sound. I sometimes use a bell, gong, Tibetan cymbals, a Tibetan singing bowl, or drum; these are all vibration-rising tools to carry off any stagnate energy that may be stuck. This can also be achieved by playing a soothing CD that resonates positively within you and the client—something that is relaxing, putting both at ease.

Another option is to smudge the area with sage where the treatment will be done. Sage, or something similar, has been used since time immemorial by indigenous peoples all over the world in shamanic rituals to clear negative energy during ceremonies, treatments, and in their daily lives. The aromatic smoke of the sage plant traps negative energy and carries it off and away from where the treatment will take place. However, if this is not a viable option, then regular incense can be used to achieve the same results. If I am treating a client, I first ask if the person is sensitive to sage and incense before using these
items. If so, then I do it well in advance of the person’s arrival so the odor will have dissipated before the treatment begins. The end result, whether done immediately before the treatment or several hours before, are the same.

As well, fresh flowers offer vibrancy and positive energy to any room where a treatment is done. Basically, any preparation that is made to enhance the Reiki treatment, which is positive and beneficial to the healing process, will aid in offering yourself or the client a treatment that is fulfilling and healing.

Interestingly, only one respondent, Subject A, said that she did not do any type of preparation or personal ritual to ready her or the space before giving a Reiki treatment:

Reiki is so much a part of me that I just intend to use it (or use a Reiki symbol) and it starts working. It’s not a formal procedure. I’m as comfortable with it as I am in slipping on a comfortable, old pair of shoes—and I give about as much thought and preparation to using it as I would in slipping on the shoes (i.e. almost none).

The question which asked: “Do you consult your Reiki client about the treatment he/she will receive?” the majority of the respondents indicated that they do not; but, many did add that if a client is new or has any questions, then they will consult the client. Perhaps Reiki is becoming so well-known that people who seek out a Reiki practitioner for treatment needs no explanation or consultation because they are quite familiar with the energy and treatment involved.

Subject J appears to be quite professional in her Reiki practice as she requires her clients to sign a type of release form before receiving a treatment. She was the only practitioner to indicate this type of condition before beginning a treatment:

Yes, they are required to fill in a form giving details of their condition and disclaimer for my own legal protection (e.g. that Reiki does not replace medical treatment, that medication should not be adjusted without consultation with their doctor, and so on), which I check and go through first. I discuss with them why they have come and what their expectations are, then I discuss the procedure and what they might expect during the treatment. Afterwards, I talk with them about possible aftereffects and post and follow-up care.

A few respondents indicated they sometimes ask their clients if they have any "special requests," or will consult with them if the client is "interested in spirituality." Subject C wrote: “I don’t have clients…I just practice on friends.” This answer is in stark contrast to Subject J who is very thorough and conscientious about client protocol and the legality of offering a healing therapy to people. Subject E pointed out that a consultation is usually necessary because “not every Reiki session is the same.”

Several of the participants mentioned that they explain to the client what to expect during the treatment, but do not consult the client specifically, allowing the client to naturally broach the topic in a way and at a time which is comfortable for them. This is an important point, because a person’s health condition can be very personal, and by not pressuring the client to consult about a specific health concern before a treatment, allows the client to offer information as they feel inclined. Also, Reiki practitioners are
not physicians, and do not (or should not) diagnose, prescribe, or make any type of health-related suggestions to their clients. Subject J certainly understands this and takes great effort to inform her clients through the disclaimer that they are not to substitute traditional medical treatment for Reiki sessions without first consulting a medical doctor.

The responses were varied, encompassing many additional methods, when asked whether practitioners strictly offered Reiki in its purist form, or if they combined Reiki with other tools or techniques. A number of the respondents indicated using crystal therapy in conjunction with their Reiki energy. Others confessed to using essential oils during treatments, while some of the respondents mentioned aligning the clients’ chakras, smoothing their auras, and dowsing the clients before beginning a treatment. Only one participant, Subject K, indicated he only used Reiki energy during his treatments.

When asked: “How long is a typical treatment?” the majority of the respondents indicated that Reiki sessions usually last an hour; the next most common time was 20 - 30 minutes. Several practitioners suggested they allow intuition to decide the length of a treatment, which depends upon the person’s condition, and how much energy is being channeled during the treatment. Subject D rather matter-of-factly revealed: “I get bored after 5 minutes. So treatments are that long....”

Most practitioners are taught the hand positions in a systematic manner which, if done completely to the front and the back of the body, takes around 45 minutes to an hour to complete. The results seem to indicate that this is common practice, as most treatments seem to fall within this time frame. Indeed, it is important for the practitioner to feel energetically how much Reiki is being pulled through his/her hands, and this will often determine how long a treatment takes, depending upon how much energy is being drawn.

The final item in the section relating to Reiki was designed to reintroduce the idea of religion and spirituality of the participants as it related to their Reiki work. It read: “Please explain what role your religion/spirituality/belief system plays in your capacity as a Reiki practitioner and adherent of Reiki energy as a healing technique.”

Overwhelmingly (95%), the respondents remarked that their Reiki work was fueled by a desire to serve others.

Subject A
I believe strongly that we are to help one another. One way I can help others is by teaching Usui and Kundalini Reiki free to people who are interested and by making the arrangements for the twice-a-month Reiki Share at which people give and receive Reiki and at which I teach Reiki to anyone who is new and who wants it. Yet I do other things to help others, too. Thus, my spiritual beliefs have led to what I do in Reiki—but also what I do with other kinds of energy work and in other areas of my life.

Subject C
I believe that helping others is the most important area to progress as a human and since we are all interconnected and dependent on each other then this is selfish wisdom (i.e. helping self through helping others).

Subject D
We are each a part of the universal consciousness. “There is only one of us.” The belief in separateness is a function of mind (thought).
Healing energy is freely available to anyone who chooses to receive. This energy is part of Life. It is free.

Subject E
To me, it is all about the intent and willingness to assist.

Subject G
I believe that the Great Spirit uses me to help others. I know it is not me who is doing the healing. I am just the hollow bone. I believe prayer and positive thinking will increase one's chances of a healthy life. I AM SO BLESSED TO BE GIFTED WITH THIS GIFT TO HELP OTHERS IN THIS FASHION.

Subject H
I truly believe that it is my dedication to serving in God’s name to serve someone that truly assists me while doing Reiki. It is the love I have to serve others that helps me to be a clear channel for the energy to flow through.

Subject I
I am Catholic and I strongly believe in God, Jesus, and the Virgin Mary. I think it has a lot to do with my healing work. I believe in the power of God, his omnipotence and omnipresence. I have experienced miracles in my Reiki work. To me, I think when we receive the attunements, we receive the Holy Spirit, that God-energy, and it is our duty to use this in a way to help others.

Subject K
Being a child of God, it is my obligation as a spiritual person to assist my brothers and sisters on their journey. Reiki allows me to accomplish this by offering healing energy to those who are in need. The Sai Baba says, “love all, serve all” which I believe to be good words to live by. The Golden Rule, or a rendition of it, is found in every religious tradition from the monotheistic and polytheistic religions, to obscure African tribal religions. This is what religion and spirituality is—helping others and treating them as you would want to be treated.

The heartfelt sincerity evident in the respondents' answers in wanting to make a difference in peoples' lives through service and help is most impressive. The idea of being of service to others is seemingly central to why they decided to learn and practice Reiki. The influence of religion upon them as they grew up is apparent in their answers. In part, their experience in Christianity (since nearly all the subjects were exposed to Christianity as children) indeed seems to play some role in their later beliefs and spiritual practices. Certainly, the idea of “serving others” is a fundamental or key doctrine taught by Jesus in the New Testament, which at some level, has influenced the subjects to a certain degree in their current belief system. In addition, the concept of “laying of hands” to heal the sick is another aspect of Christianity that may have influenced the subjects' decision to embrace Reiki as practitioners.
In Conclusion

In point of fact, there were a number of surprising conclusions that came out of this research study. Prior assumptions regarding the age and sex of the participants were contrary to the reality of current trends in the Reiki practitioner community. It was found that women have enjoyed an important role—historically and currently—with regard to not only giving Reiki treatments, but in promoting and teaching the therapy to other women. Although it is gaining in popularity among men as well, women Reiki practitioners are still more numerous than men.

The candidness and honesty of the respondents’ answers was refreshing and very much appreciated by this researcher. The rich details of the subjects’ beliefs and practices related to religion, spirituality and Reiki offered unprecedented insight into the modern Reiki movement and how one’s upbringing does in fact influence one’s current belief system and spiritual practices, either positively or negatively. In the majority of the cases, the participants indicated they did a fair amount of “religion hopping” until they found a belief system which suited their needs; however, they still associated their beliefs with a traditional view of “religion” or sense of being “religious,” being more comfortable labeling themselves as such.

This was an interesting outcome of this study—how the participants chose to label their spirituality. Most felt comfortable to indicate readily that they considered themselves to be “spiritual,” but then contradicted this assertion when asked to select more definitively between the terms “spiritual” and “religious.”

It is quite evident, as well, that purity of motive factors into a Reiki practitioner’s decision to pursue Reiki as a student; then to offer it as a practitioner to clients; and then to offer it as a teacher to other aspiring Reiki practitioners. Most significantly, as a practitioner of Reiki, the majority of the subjects indicated that their motivation was based upon the need to assist or serve their fellow human beings. This data was extrapolated from the open-ended portion of the survey where the respondents made these assertions without any prompting or selection of appropriate responses.

The attitude of “service to others” is espoused in all organized religions and spiritual traditions, but is rarely realized to the extent it is within the Reiki community. Offering Reiki healing to others is a tangible and clear way to gauge such altruism. It is not known, however, how many of the participants actually charged a fee for their Reiki treatments, which would certainly cancel out any purely altruistic tendencies since there would be an element of “self-gain” involved in these instances. Reiki practitioners, however, are quick to point out and make it abundantly clear that the client who receives a treatment is not offering a donation, paying a fee, or making some other type of monetary exchange for the “healing,” per se, but only for the time of the practitioner who is offering it.

In this sense, just like medical doctors, therapists, or any other healthcare professional who charges for their services, Reiki practitioners do have an investment of time in giving a treatment, which makes it reasonable to expect some type of compensation, whether that be cash, a gift, or a bartering of goods. From the beginning of Reiki, as outlined in this paper, it is an inherent conviction that some type of exchange is needed between the Reiki practitioner and client to ensure that the client will be personally invested—and in the end, responsible—for his/her own healing. In today’s society, an exchange of currency is the most common and easy way to achieve this.

The study did have a variety of limitations. Perhaps a larger sampling of subjects would have been preferable in order to get a more concrete idea of how religion and spirituality affects a practitioner’s attitude and practice of Reiki. Also, clearer definitions of the terms “religion,” “religious,” “spirituality,” and “spiritual” might have proven more
useful in ascertaining more definitively how the respondents (as individuals) define these somewhat abstract and potentially confusing notions. It would have been interesting to know, as well, how many of the Reiki practitioners charged for their treatments; and how much was charged per treatment; and how many practitioners simply offered Reiki healing with no expectation of an “exchange” of goods or money.

In the end, however, this study offers new research and data about modern Reiki and its practitioners which have not been sought prior to the writing of this paper. It is hoped that future researchers will be able to uncover more in-depth data through research studies on Reiki practitioners themselves; the religious and spiritual attitudes, practices and beliefs of Reiki healers; and how these are utilized in conjunction with their work with the Reiki energy in healing clients.

Even though the research for this study showed that today the majority of Reiki practitioners may follow a less rigid belief system than that which they may have experienced as children and young adults, it is clear that the high level of spirituality present in their belief and practice of Reiki is indisputable. Hence, repeatedly it was emphasized that one’s spirituality is not necessarily rooted in what one says, but is better gauged by what one does. Actions do speak louder than words.

Bibliography


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This paper was presented at the annual meeting for the *Association for the Scientific Study of Religion* (ASSR) on March 3, 2007 in Dallas, Texas. This paper was published in the official proceedings for the ASSR conference in March 2007.
Appendix A

Dear Reiki Practitioner:

I am conducting a study on the relationship between "spirituality" of Reiki practitioners and how it relates to the Reiki treatments given to clients. Thank you for your assistance with this study and survey. By completing this anonymous survey, you are granting me permission to analyze and present your answers and comments in an academic paper and lecture to be published and given in March 2007 at the annual conference for the Association for the Scientific Study of Religion (ASSR) in Dallas, Texas. Thank you for your time and assistance with this survey.

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Demographic Data:
Sex: Male ____ Female ____ Age: _____ Nationality: ________________________

Please mark all that apply:
Reiki Training: Level 1 _____ Level 2 _____ Level 3a (pre-Master) ____ Level 3b (Master Attunement) ____
Were you attuned by a Reiki Master? Yes No
If yes, where? __________________________________________________

How many years have you been practicing Reiki? ________________________

What type of Reiki do you practice? [e.g. Usui Shiki Ryoho School of Reiki, Karuna Reiki, etc.]
__________________________________________________________

Religious/Spiritual Background*

[*"Religious" meaning you regularly attend a mainstream church and/or subscribe and follow a set dogma affiliated with an organized religion.]

Please circle (or Check) the most appropriate response to the following statements.

-I consider myself to be a religious person.
Strongly Agree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Disagree Strongly Disagree

-I consider myself to be more spiritual than religious.
Strongly Agree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Disagree Strongly Disagree

-I consider myself to be a spiritual person, but not religious.
Strongly Agree Somewhat Agree Somewhat Disagree Strongly Disagree
"I would describe my religious upbringing and/or spiritual life until now as…”:
[e.g. "I was raised Methodist, attending church regularly, but converted to Catholicism in college. Later, I went through a phase of being agnostic, but had a personal awakening when I was 25 and currently adhere to a more all encompassing type of spirituality that is in line more with a New Age belief system than an organized religion-based one.]

Do your religious/spiritual beliefs and/or background play a part in your Reiki treatments? Please explain in detail.

Reiki Treatment

Before offering a client a Reiki Treatment…

1. Do you have a personal ritual you perform regularly? Please explain.
[e.g. setting/clearing the space energetically, placing Reiki symbols, meditation, aura cleansing, chakra alignment, bringing in your Reiki Guides or other notable Reiki personages, etc.]

2. Do you consult with your Reiki client about the treatment he/she will receive? Please explain.

3. Do you offer a prayer/intention/devotion/invocation, etc before beginning the treatment? Please explain.

4. In your Reiki treatments, do you solely offer the client Reiki energy or do you supplement the treatment with other techniques or tools? Please explain.
[e.g. crystals, dowsing, color therapies, chakra alignment, etc.]

How long is a typical treatment?

How often do you give treatments to clients in a month?

How frequently do you give yourself a Reiki treatment?
Please explain what role your religion/spirituality/belief system plays in your capacity as a Reiki practitioner and adherent of Reiki energy as a healing technique:

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Please feel free to offer any additional comments in the space below:

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for your time and assistance with this survey. 
Please mail to the address above, or email to: tleonard@infoaomori.ne.jp

About the Author: Todd Jay Leonard is a professor at Hirosaki Gakuin University, Japan, where he teaches history, comparative culture, and cross-cultural studies. He is the author of 15 books—on topics ranging from American religious history, cross-cultural understanding, English as a Foreign Language, and spirituality.