The potential of Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy from the perspective of the licensed mental health practitioner and/or equine specialist in South Africa.

by

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For entrusting me with strength and talents, to God be the Glory.

DECLARATION

<div align="right">Student number: **53592433**</div>

I declare that THE POTENTIAL OF EQUINE-ASSISTED PSYCHOTHERPY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE LICENSED MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER AND/OR EQUINE SPECIALIST is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

_____   _____

SIGNITURE   DATE

(Ms. Elaine Koekemoer)

The essential joy of being with horses is that it brings us in contact with the rare elements of grace, beauty, spirit and freedom.

Sharon Ralls Lemon

ABSTRACT

Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) is a form of Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) used to treat individuals' psychological problems. EAP is an interactive process in which a licensed mental health practitioner, a credentialed equine professional and suitable equines work together to address psychotherapy goals. Since the 1990s, research on EAP has grown rapidly in the United States of America (USA) and Europe, however research in the South African context is lacking.

This descriptive and exploratory research study explored and described the experiences of licensed mental health practitioners and/or credentialed equine specialists who have included EAP within their practise by focusing on the role that equines play within the psychotherapeutic process. The knowledge of this study was derived from a Constructivistic epistemology. Constructivism argues that humans attain and build knowledge and meaning from their experiences. Participants were selected based on purposeful criterion sampling. Only licensed mental health practitioners or credentialed equine specialists who included EAP within their practise, registered at the Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy Institute of South Africa (EAPISA) or the Equine-Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA) were considered for participation.

Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted with six participants. A post-interview follow-up email was used to gain additional feedback from each participant. Finally, data was analysed using thematic analysis. As EAP is a fairly new modality of therapy within South Africa, the contribution of this study is to add to the growing body of professional EAP literature.

Thematic analysis identified seven main themes: shifting dynamics in the therapeutic relationship, setting the scene for storytelling, the equine as an intermediary and therapeutic tool, what the equine sees is what you get, instantaneous but lasting results, variations and similarities in approach and activities, the emotive motives of EAP practitioners. These themes are discussed in relation to the research findings. Findings of this study showed substantial agreement in what the equine brings to the psychotherapeutic session: unique equine attributes, opportunities for metaphorical learning, and relational aspects. The participants demonstrated

a consensus in the belief that EAP can be beneficial to a large spectrum of psychotherapeutic populations in South Africa.

A recommendation for future research is for larger, international studies that explore the viewpoints of psychotherapists who practice equine therapies in other countries in order to expand the knowledge base and address the competency and standards discussion in the EAP field.

Keywords: Animal Assisted Therapy, Equine, Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP), Equine-Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA), Equine-Assisted Psychotherapeutic Institute of South Africa (EAPISA), Equine Facilitated Mental Health/Educational Services (EFMH/ES), Equine Specialist.

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M. Adelia Ellis Ramey

I ride because I rode as a child when life was simpler
and somehow more complete.
Only the whiff of a clean horse is needed to remind of days gone by.
For always there have been the horses.

I ride because of all the great horse souls who have shared their lives with me
and taught me more than I can say.
Their names and faces flash before me as old friends.

I ride because of all the horses I shall never ride.
Those I have watched and marvelled at from afar for all their grace and beauty.
This the stuff of a child's dream, the kind that doesn't die with time.
Always there are the horses.

I ride because the seasons call to me.
Each unique in its appeal and all quite frequently best viewed
from the back of a favorite horse.

I ride because, of all things, horses are my passion.
They inspire and encourage, energize, and challenge in ways
I cannot explain to the un-initiated.

I ride because of the rush of stretching one's self
just a bit farther today than before, both mind and body.
Always there are the horses.

I ride because of those briefest of spans when the partnership comes to full promise.

When the path twists and barriers fall,

each footfall is measured and balanced between the two as a dance.

There are no others - only this moment and this single step to ride.

The memories of those times stand vivid in my mind to be recalled

with all the freshness of the day at will and in times less grand.

But if I must choose, I ride because I have dreams yet to live.

I ride because I have dreams yet to have

and what exactly they will be tomorrow I cannot say

but always, there will be the horses.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

"Something about the outside of a horse is good for the inside of man"

(Winston Churchill).

For many years animals have been used for therapeutic benefits for humans in a variety of settings. The use of animals in therapeutic practice is coined *animal assisted therapy*. An important bond between the animal and the client forms during therapy. This bond helps the client in psychotherapy overcome numerous psychological difficulties such as mistrust, low self-confidence, trauma, disabilities, team-building or learning how to handle different relationships in one's life (Lubbe & Scholtz, 2013). Originally, only small animals such as dogs, cats, birds, rabbits and guinea pigs served as effective adjuncts in psychotherapy for many years.

However, during the past two decades a new trend of psychotherapy has been growing, and has become an integral part of the psychotherapeutic process. The use of *Equus ferus caballus,* otherwise known as the modern-day equine, in psychotherapy refers to Equine Facilitated Mental Health/Educational Services (EFMH/ED). EFMH/ED can be viewed as an umbrella term referring to numerous different therapy forms which involve the use of equines. (Hallberg, 2008).

For the purpose of this study, I will only be focusing on one specific therapy form called Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy. This technique of therapy is regarded as being a very effective psychotherapeutic approach in many settings by psychotherapists (Boyd, 2013). In an environment where equines are used for therapeutic purpose, clients have reported feeling safe enough to explore their psychological problems and to work towards change (Paquette, 2010).

I will embark on this research study with the goal of exploring and describing the impact that equines have in psychotherapy from the perspective of a licensed mental health practitioner and/or credentialed equine specialist. This qualitative research study will be utilising semi-

structured interviews, to examine the perspectives of the licensed mental health practitioner and credentialed equine specialist of how equines are used in the psychotherapeutic process.

1.2 Research rationale and problem statement

Although, internationally, EAP has been a fast-growing field of psychotherapy over the past two decades, there is still a limited amount of information regarding the details of how licensed mental health practitioners and/or equine specialists apply the use of equines into the therapeutic environment (Paquette, 2010).

As part of looking at the role equines play in the psychotherapeutic process one also needs to explore the effect that equines have on the psychotherapeutic process, and, unfortunately, only a few empirical studies have looked at this.

Those who have researched EAP programmes agree that the lack of sufficient research is a huge barrier to future programmes and funding (Weideman, 2007). The limited amount of research available has also led to confusion amongst the licensed mental health practitioners, equine and clients with regards to the different roles that the licensed mental health practitioners, equine, the client and the equine plays in EAP (Hallberg, 2008).

According to Abrams (2013) future research studies need to explore the viewpoints of therapists to expand the knowledge base and address the competency and standard discussions in the field of EAP.

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe the impact equines have on the psychotherapeutic process within the South African context. This study will bridge the gap in literature available on this topic of EAP. By adding to a growing body of literature it can also result in resolving confusion within this field of EAP.

According to Dakin and Arean (2013) one developing area in EAP research is the qualitative exploration of clients, equine specialists and mental health practitioners' experiences. This area of research is important because qualitative research can help to identify the mechanisms through which a particular intervention generates an impact. Dakin and Arean (2013) state that:

Determining how an intervention brings about client change is particularly challenging with respect to EAP because it involves a complex treatment team consisting of one equine specialist, one mental health practitioner, and one or more equines. Equine specialists and mental health practitioners come from a wide variety of training backgrounds, so they may have different perspectives on how equines can help clients. Likewise, clients may perceive therapy differently from equine specialists and mental health practitioners, so it is important to consider perspectives and experiences from all three groups (p. 10).

1.3 Aims of the research study

The aim of this study is to gain a better understanding of the role that equines play in EAP from the perspectives of a licensed mental health practitioners and/or equine specialist. For example, the primary question in the research asks: What is the purpose of equines in psychotherapy?

1.4 Brief overview of research methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore and describe the effect that equines have on individuals attending psychotherapy. This descriptive and exploratory research study will explore the experiences of six mental health practitioners and/or equine specialists who include EAP within their practise with the intent to explore and describe their perspectives within the South African context. Participants were selected based on purposeful criterion sampling.

Only certified mental health practitioners and equine specialist who included EAP as a form of treatment and registered at The Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy Institute of South Africa (EAPISA) or Equine-Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA) was considered for participation. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with each participant. A post-interview follow-up email was used to gain additional feedback from each participant. Finally, data was analysed by using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

1.5 Structure of dissertation

Chapter 1: Introduction to the study

 This chapter introduced the study and included a background description of the context within which the study took place. The purpose, aims and objectives of the study were discussed.

Chapter 2: Literature review

 This chapter provides an overview of the literature related to EAP and conceptualisation of definitions of EAP. Literature includes discussing the origin of EAP, different methods of incorporating equines into therapy, theoretical principles of EAP, a case study from the literature to demonstrate the theoretical principles of EAP, as well as benefits and limitations of EAP will be outlined.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

 This chapter focuses on a qualitative research design for the study and discusses the sampling strategies of this study. This section explains the data collection tools and analysis techniques used for the study, including measures of trustworthiness applied within the research process. This chapter also contains an indication of the ethical principles considered for the study.

Chapter 4: Findings and discussion

 This chapter contains the findings of the research study divided into seven main themes.

Chapter 5: Conclusion, limitations and recommendations

This section describes the conclusions in terms of the objectives of the study together with a discussion about the strengths and limitations of the study. Recommendations for EAP are made together with possible further research directions.

2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept definitions

Below a description will follow on different concepts used throughout the research process:

Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT): According to Serpell (2010) Animal Assisted Therapy is an intervention used to achieve therapeutic goals. This intervention exists out of two parties, namely the health/human service professional accompanied by an animal that meets the criteria for the treatment process. Nimer and Lundahl (2007, p. 264) state that AAT is "the deliberate inclusion of an animal in a treatment plan" where "the introduction of the animal is designed to accomplish predefined outcomes believed to be difficult to achieve otherwise or outcomes best addressed through exposure to an animal".

Equine: The word equine refers to horses or ponies (Stevensen, 2010).

Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP): EAP refers to "incorporating equines experientially for emotional growth and learning" (Equine-Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA), 2009, p.1). Therapy should be seen as a collaborative effort from the licensed therapist, an equine specialist, the equine and the clients. These four parties work together in order to achieve or address treatment goals. As part of the treatment process the clients learn about themselves and others by participating in activities with the equines, and then processing thoughts, feelings, behaviours and patterns.

The focus of EAP is not on riding or horsemanship, but rather on setting up ground activities involving the equines and clients applying certain skills. Non-verbal communication, assertiveness, creative thinking, problem-solving, leadership, work, taking responsibility, teamwork, relationships, confidence and attitude are examples of the tools used and developed by EAP (EAGALA, 2009). Cave (2012) describes EAP as being a form of psychotherapy conducted by a trained psychologist and assisted by an equine behaviour specialist. The information gained through the interactions between the equine and client is used in order to reach therapeutic goals.

Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH): PATH is a non-profit organisation founded in 1969 as the North American Riding for the Handicapped

Association to promote equine-assisted activities and therapies (EAAT) for individuals with special needs. The aim of the organisation is to serve a network of centres in the United States of America (USA) and internationally in the promotion of Equine-Assisted activities and therapies for individuals. PATH also takes the responsibility of certification of instructors, centre accreditation and provision of educational resources (PATH, 2011).

Equine-Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA): EAGALA is a leading international non-profit organisation for professionals making use of equine therapy to address mental health and developmental needs. EAGALA (2009) provides the individual with training and certification in equine therapy. What makes EAGALA unique is the focus they place on solely groundwork with equines instead of horseback riding.

According to Shumbashaba (2013) the EAGALA model provides a standard structure for providing Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy. The EAGALA model helps to establish a foundation of key values and beliefs, and provides a basis of good practice and professionalism. This model also aims to provide a framework of practice, but within that framework, there are opportunities for creativity and adaptability to various therapeutic styles.

The four mainstays of the EAGALA Model are: The Team Approach – An Equine Specialist, a Mental Health practitioner, and equines work together with clients in all EAGALA sessions. Focus on the ground – All EAGALA sessions are on the ground with equines (no mounted work). Solution-Oriented – The belief that clients have the best solutions for themselves forms a foundation for the EAGALA approach. Rather than instructing or directing solutions, clients experiment, problem-solve, take risks, employ creativity, and find their own solutions. Code of Ethics – EAGALA has conceptualised a code of ethics, and has a standard of professionalism and ethics (Shumbashaba, 2013).

Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy Institution of South Africa (EAPISA): EAPISA is a South African organisation that was founded in 2007 by Kim Kidson, a registered senior Clinical Psychologist. EAPISA's mission is set out to promote EAP as a profession and enhancing human well-being through therapeutic encounters with equines (EAPISA, 2014).

Assisted vs. Facilitated: Within the body of this research project the terms assisted and facilitated will be used at different times and signify different meanings, it is therefore important to note the difference between these two terms as they refer to very different methods. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2014, p.208), *facilitated* refers to

"help bring about", whereas *assisted* means "to give support or aid" or "to be present as a spectator.

According to Hallberg (2008) equine-facilitated work consists out of methods where the human professional needs to step back and allow the equine to help bring about change in the client. Equine-assisted work on the other hand is where the equine takes on a less active role in the process, either acting as support staff or just being present during the session (Hallberg, 2008).

Mental Health Practitioner: According to EAGALA (2009) the term Mental Health Practitioner can be viewed as an umbrella term for people who include mental health into their scope of practice. Mental Health Practitioners needs to have college-level educational training and degree in a mental health field, such as social work, psychology, marriage and family therapy, or others that include mental health as its scope of practice. The professional needs to be under a governing board/body or member of an association that can hold him/her accountable (or under professional supervision by a supervisor that is held accountable by a governing board/association), i.e. a board that can revoke registration, certification, accreditation, or licensure for ethical or scope of practice violations relating to mental health practice such as the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA).

Equine Specialist: According to EAGALA (2009) and EAPISA (2014) in order to become an equine specialist one needs to have completed a number of hours of hands-on work with equines. Professionals must also have completed a number hours of continuous education in the equine profession. Some of the education needs to include aspects covering groundwork experience, knowledge of the psychology of equines and the ability to read body language/non-verbal communication of equines.

2.2 Literature review

2.2.1. Origin and history of Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT):

According to Pugh (2010) for as long as humans can remember they have made use of animals, whether it was for food, transportation or companionship. The therapeutic use of animals, however, at least in its modern and organised form, is a far more recent phenomenon. According to Kemp et al. (2013) animals have also been known to provide an important

emotional bridge to foster the therapeutic alliance. The first documentation of how animals were integrated into psychotherapy, and included as socialising agents for psychiatric patients, were present during the 18th century at the York Retreat in England. Here the internal courtyard of the psychiatric hospital was filled with small animals that roamed freely and allowed for interaction between the animals and psychiatric patients (Serpell, 2010).

During the 19th century, Florence Nightingale, as a world-renowned nurse in England, recognised the therapeutic effect of animal companionship for patients suffering from chronic physical impairments. The notion of animals as encouraging socialisation continued through the 19th century (Abrams, 2013). Animals as a therapeutic tool again resurfaced in literature during the mid-1900's when child psychotherapist Boris Levinson reported how animals could encourage therapeutic rapport between patient and clinician (Serpell, 2010). Levinson, (1997) identified as the first person to address professional concepts within the field of AAT, asserted that "a connection to animals, positively affects the human condition (p.1)."

According to a study done by Black, Chur-Hanson and Winefield (2011) with a companion animal present, all research participants believed that they were able to establish rapport and build trust more quickly, than when an animal was not present during therapy. Within this research study dogs were most frequently mentioned as therapy animals; however, other companion animals including cats, guinea pigs, equines, or snakes were also acknowledged.

Noteworthily, one of the research participants from Black, Chur-Hanson and Winefield's (2011) study, sceptical of AAT's benefits, nonetheless perceived companion animals as enhancing a therapist–client relationship. Another participant identified the relevance of companion animals in clinical interventions and believed that companion animals were integral to the therapeutic relationship

While talking therapy was purported as an important factor in the above study, participants insisted that companion animals offered a unique and experiential dimension to therapy. Companion animals were believed to communicate unconditional positive regard for clients, offering and reciprocating affection and providing warmth and soft touch in a way that the psychologist could not. Participants also believed that the presence of a companion animal might enhanced the therapeutic relationship by providing an opening for clients to discuss more difficult emotions or topics (Black, Chur-Hanson & Winefield, 2011).

2.2.2. Equine Facilitated Mental Health/Education services (EFMH/ES):

Just as the value of AAT has been recognised, the value of using equines in psychotherapy has been acknowledged. Equines have different therapeutic aspects beyond those obtained through the use of smaller companion animals (Yorke, et al., 2008). According to Yorke et al (2008) because equines can be ridden, it fosters an intimate connection that is more physical in nature.

The equine played an important role in the world of humankind. The interaction that takes place between the equine and the human can be seen throughout history and in almost every culture. The Greeks were one of the earliest and most prominent cultures that created a relationship with the equine by representing them as mythical beasts. Equines were also used for competition, entertainment by chariot races, and throughout the practise of using warequines for battle (White, 2011).

Human-equine relationships can easily be traced back to modern roles that equines fill, such as the sport of equine racing and the use of mounted police forces. These roles continue to change as they help humans not only in physical sense, but also now in mental health sphere as well. The integration of equines into psychotherapy for many people has existed for a number of years (Wilson, 2012).

Equine Facilitated Mental health/education services (EFMH/ES) can be viewed as an umbrella term used to describe the different types of therapy which involves the equine-human partnership that fosters growth and change (Hallberg, 2008). This field of EFMH/ES has been developing and growing fast during the past seventeen years, especially in the USA (Hallberg, 2008). In 2001, Linda Kohanov, author, speaker, riding instructor, equine trainer and also best known in the field called Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy started defining the field and the human-equine relationship in this context.

Professionals with more than ten years of experience in the field of EFMH/ES, are seen as pioneers in this field. These pioneers identified eight main types of Equine Facilitated Mental health/education services, with many other types in which people provide EFMH/ES in their own private practises. These EFMH/ES methods have been divided into two categories – those who apply learning strategies and those who provide mental health services (Hallberg, 2008).

According to Hallberg (2008) the eight main forms of EFMH/ES are Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy (EFP), Equine Facilitated Counselling (EFC), Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy

(EAP), Equine Facilitated Brief Intensives (EFBI), Equine Facilitated Learning (EFL), Equine-Assisted Education (EAE), Equine Facilitated Professional Coaching (EFPC) and Equine Facilitated Human Development (EFHD). The first four methods mentioned are considered being mental health services, the fifth and sixth method mentioned are educational methods, whereas the last two methods mentioned are 'other' methods (Hallberg, 2008). I will define the eight main forms of therapy that involves the use of equines, and for the purpose of this study go into extensive detail on one of the main forms – Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy.

Hallberg (2008) describes EFP as:

> experiential psychotherapy that includes equine(s). It may include but is not limited to a number of mutually respectful equine activities such as handling, grooming, lingering, riding, driving and vaulting. EFP is facilitated by a licensed, credentialed mental health professional working with an appropriately credentialed equine professional. EPF may be facilitated by a mental health professional who is dually credentialed as an equine professional (p. 276).

The goal of EFP is to help the client make the unconscious conscious as well as to help the client realise the power of choices. According to Hallberg (2008), in EFP the equine is viewed as the 'psychotherapist' whereas the psychotherapist fulfils the role of interpreting and analysing the client's experience of the equine, and the equine's experience of the client.

Furthermore, Hallberg (2008) describes EFC as offering clients the opportunity to develop abilities such as important life skills, communication skills and identifying mentorship which provides for a caring relationship. Hallberg (2008) states that the reason for making use of the term counselling is to suggest that not all clients making use of counselling do so neither because of psychopathology nor for psychological reasons.

The primary goal of EFC is to help the client adjust their thinking to one of health and wellness (Quiroz, Jimenez, Mazo, Campos & Molina, 2005). According to Hallberg (2008) in EFC the equine becomes the co-facilitator or an employee, helping to reflect specific tools, lessons or skills to the client. The counsellor on the other hand acts as an active facilitator by creating activities according to the client's needs.

Hallberg (2008) describes EAP as a method of EFMH/ES almost solely based on the experiential model of therapy. EAP makes use of equines as a therapeutic tool that provides the clients with an experience where they learn about themselves and how they impact the

world around them (Hallberg, 2008). In EAP, the focus is not placed on the facilitation but rather on the treatment that capitalises around the experience that clients have when attempting to achieve a set goal or series of goals that involve equines (Hallberg, 2008).

According to Hallberg (2008) activities and games are created which challenge clients to take responsibilities for themselves and others. Furthermore, the goal of EAP is to help the client bring about awareness, growth and change. In EAP the role of the equine is to participate in activities with the client created by a licensed metal health professional. The role of the licensed mental health practitioner is to remain objective providing the client with open-ended questions without giving the client the answers (Hallberg, 2008).

Notably, a client may become stuck during traditional psychotherapy. EFBI offers the client and the licensed mental health practitioner the opportunity to reach new levels within both the therapeutic environment as well as in their therapeutic relationship (Hallberg, 2008). Hallberg (2008) describes EFBI as a method used by a licensed mental health practitioner, without any understanding of equines or comprehension of the benefits of EFHMS (Hallberg, 2008).

According to Hallberg (2008) the main goal of EFBI is to help clients move through challenging or 'stuck' times of traditional therapy. In EFBI the equine's role is very versatile, ranging from the facilitator to the co-facilitator to an employee. The equine engages with the client in a reflective feedback or psychodramatisation process (Hallberg, 2008). The psychotherapist enables the role of the facilitator. The facilitator brings about a heightened awareness, increases a 'present moment' focus and help clients achieve new goals in therapy.

Hallberg (2008) describes EFL as teaching life skills, social skills, communication skills, vocational skills and work ethics. EFL is intended to have the same purpose as EFC, without the deeply probing nature of the service. Hallberg (2008) describes the type of person seeking EFL as one with dysfunctions in the brain such as cognitive disabilities and processing issues, and not one with emotional problems.

The role of the equine in EFL is either a co-facilitator or an employee, meaning that certain activities are initiated by the equine adding to existing activities created by the instructor (Hallberg, 2008). The expectation of the instructor in EFL is to be trained and experienced in a multitude of disciplines, which include education, counselling or psychology and well-versed in a specific method of EFMH/ES (Hallberg, 2008).

Hallberg (2008) describes EAE as a method which enhances the clients' educational endeavours and helps promote a deeper understanding of the subject matter being taught. EAE is designed to work specifically with school learners. According to Hallberg (2008) EAE maintains its educational scope by focusing on skills and team-building initiatives and not on personal reflection. In EAE the role of the equine is to assist the instructor and the learner by providing reflective information about a students' style of leadership, facilitation or therapeutic skills (Hallberg, 2008). According to Hallberg (2008) the role of the instructor is to be an educator in the process of EAE.

Hallberg (2008) describes EFPC:

as a triad relationship between the coach(es), the specially selected equine(s), and the client(s). It incorporated a mind-body-spirit awareness process that encourages the client to maximise his/her personal and professional potential. EFPC is an adaptation used by professional coaches (p. 393).

In EFPC the role of the equine is considered as being a partner (Hallberg, 2008). By leveraging qualified coaches and equines as partners, clients can set an objective, use insights of the equine experience and allow outcomes to emerge from this process.

Hallberg (2008) describes EFHD as being a method where education, therapy and learning are incorporated. This method is designed to serve functional individuals in expanding their human potential, communication skills, leadership skills, developing creativity and engaging in meaningful relationships (Hallberg, 2008). However, the individual client must be emotionally and developmentally stable in order to receive this therapy. According to Hallberg (2008) the equine is the facilitator in EFHD, whereas the facilitator is seen as the co-facilitator.

According to Frame (2006) there are a few other EFMH/ES methods used in private practice, these include hippotherapy, therapeutic riding, and vaulting. Hippotherapy refers to a physiotherapeutic exercise in which the movement of the equines replicates the movement of the human. Hippotherapy is especially used with patients who are physically disabled, and are not able to access response in specific motoric functioning (Frame, 2006).

According to Abrams (2013) therapeutic riding can be defined as activities that involve traditional horseback riding or other adaptive therapeutic ways of utilising the equine's movement. This form of therapeutic practice does not require the services of a licensed mental health practitioner.

Vaulting refers to an equine sport in which the rider does acrobatics on the back of the equine while moving. Vaulting is a collaborative effort between the therapist, equine and client who work together to reach common therapeutic goals. The focus of vaulting is on the structure and techniques of the sport. Emphasis is placed on self-expression, teamwork, communication, comfort and balance (Whitely, 2009).

Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP):

Specifically, according to Bachi (2012) Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) is used to treat individuals' psychological problems by employing equines in and around the natural surroundings of the equine stables. The Professional Association of Therapeutic Equinemanship International (PATH, 2011) describes EAP as an interactive process in which a licensed mental health practitioner working with or as an appropriately credentialed equine professional, partners with suitable equine(s) to address psychotherapy goals set forth by the mental health practitioner and the client. Using equines in the therapeutic environment is a form of physical therapy for individuals suffering from a wide range of disabilities; these include physical, emotional, cognitive and social disabilities (Bachi, 2010).

EAP organisations argue that equines powerfully contribute to therapy due to being naturally intimidating to many, because of the animal's size and power (EAGALA, 2009). This creates a natural opportunity for some to overcome fear and develop confidence. Working alongside an equine, in spite of those fears, creates confidence and provides insight when dealing with other intimidating and challenging situations in life.

Another reason for using equines in the therapeutic environment is due to the amount of care that these animals need. The client is provided with the opportunity to put their problems aside and focus on the immediate job of caring for the equine. Furthermore, equines are large and strong animals which challenge the client to overcome his/her fear in order to work with the equine.

Equines also mirror the moods of the individual client (EAGALA, 2009). They respond negatively to negative moods, which teach the client that his/her behaviour can affect others. This makes the individual go through behaviour change in order to work successfully with the equine.

According to Human through Equines (2010) based in England, equines experience all kinds of emotions, as human beings do. When a human being interacts with an equine, often

mirroring what the individual is feeling, moving right to the 'inner truth.' When the right facilitation is made use of, the equine's ability to rapidly engage the participant on this level can be catalytic for long lasting change. Individuals become aware of their here-and-now, achieving emotional insights in their lives through EAP.

According to EAGALA (2009) EAP is a very powerful and effective therapeutic approach that has a notable impact on individuals and groups. EAP addresses issues such as mental health and human development needs which include behavioural issues, Attention Deficit Disorder, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), substance use disorders, eating disorders, depression, anxiety, relationship problems, and communication needs (EAGALA, 2009).

Researchers Cumella and Simpson (2010) state that therapists who practice EAP address areas in psychotherapy such as self-efficacy, self-concept, social skills, assertiveness, communication, trust, perspective, anxiety reduction, and decreasing isolation.

Confidence refers to the self-esteem of an individual that can be enhanced when becoming skilled at a new activity, such as horsemanship. Within the framework of EAP, self-concept is linked to the rational view that it developed by an individual of themselves due to the equine's large size. Communication is linked to the development of improved consciousness of one's emotions and the importance of this awareness in interacting with others due to an equine's sensitivity to one's body language and non-verbal communication. Trust is developed with an equine which could enable the individual to develop the ability to trust, when the ability has been debased due to past experiences.

Furthermore, perspective is gained through care-giving activities for a given equine. This is done by redirecting the client's focus from their internal problems towards external nurturing interactions. Anxiety reduction takes place as soon as the individual experiences the authenticity and warmth of the equine. Decreasing isolation takes place through experiencing the equine's unqualified acceptance and encourages individuals to take part in life. Social skills are developed through the meaningful relationship that is formed with the equine, which is regarded as a step towards developing closer relationships with people. Assertiveness refers to the ability to express one's needs and wants in a social relationship, which can only be developed through successful communication. The individual develops this skill through EAP (Cumella & Simpson, 2010).

According to Shumbashaba (2013) EAP takes on a non-traditional approach to mental health care. The therapeutic intervention goes far beyond the clinical treatment of mental health disorders from a psychopathological stance, placing its focus on harnessing the strengths of the individual to facilitate the prevention and resolution of emotional and behavioural difficulties.

This experiential approach (utilising equines) allows the client to become aware of their thoughts, words and actions, thereby providing the tools through which the individual can better manage their lives and foster better relationships, whilst also teaching positive problem solving, conflict resolution, communication and social skills; as well as self-confidence. (Shumbashaba, 2013).

Equines react to the client's body language, giving immediate feedback to both the verbal and the non-verbal communication. They demand emotional and behavioural consistency, as well as require individuals to be actively engaged in activities in an open and honest manner (Hallberg, 2008; Shumbashaba, 2013).

Participants learn that if they want to change the equine's behaviour they have to change their own behaviours, thoughts, and feelings. It has been speculated that no animal is more sensitive to human moods and non-verbal communication than an equine. The equine-human bond mirrors the inner private world of the individual. Equines elicit a range of emotions and behaviours in humans, which can be used as a catalyst for personal awareness and growth (Shumbashaba, 2013).

EAP also offers a variety of opportunities for projection and transference. Hence an equine walking away, ignoring, being distracted by other equines, sleeping, wanting to eat at the wrong time, biting, urinating, and neighing are common equine behaviours to which clients respond (Shumbashaba, 2013). Clients can also often relate to an equine's natural hypervigilance and impulse to escape when the equine feels frightened or threatened. A client's interpretation of an equine's movements, behaviours, and reactions determines the meaning of the metaphor and, as such, provides a portal for the resolution of unfinished business by bringing forth— and addressing — transference reactions in the here-and-now of therapy (Shumbashaba, 2013).

Reflection and metaphor of EAP:

According to Klontz, et al, (2007) the main purpose of EAP is to utilise the reflective qualities as a therapeutic tool to bring about positive change in the client's life. In this manner, the equine becomes a promoter of metaphorical learning by bringing the client's clinical issues

to the surface by eliciting a range of emotions from the client. The interventions within a psychotherapeutic session are planned based on the equine's behaviour (Schultz, et al, 2007).

The equine therefore, acts as a 'mirror', reflecting the client's internal and external world (Ewing, et al., 2007). When the client is able to overcome a fear such as standing next to a large equine, the psychotherapist uses this example as a metaphor for challenges faced by the client in his life. According to Yorke et al., (2008) the client starts to utilise the same strengths and resiliency to overcome life difficulties.

The importance of metaphor is appropriately illustrated by EAGALA:

> Equines are very much like humans in that they are social animals. They have defined roles within their herds. They would rather be with their peers. They have distinct personalities, attitudes, and moods. An approach that seems to work with one equine, does not necessarily work with another. At times, they seem stubborn and defiant. They like to have fun. In other words, equines provide vast opportunities for metaphorical learning. Using metaphors, in discussion or activity, is an effective technique when working with even the most challenging individuals or groups (EAGALA, 2009).

The client's own life and feelings are reflected in the equine's response and life events. Vidrine, et al. (2002) provides several examples of reflection in EAP, including processing death and loss with clients by discussing the death of an equine and the loss the herd is experiencing. Children in foster care can come to terms with their multiple placements and life transitions by discussing what it is like for an equine to be sold and sent away to a different farm (Vidrine, et al., 2002).

Similarities between equines and humans were highlighted by Schultz, et al. (2007) as the primary reason for reflection and insight gained through EAP. Equines are prey animals, naturally hypervigilant and sensitive to external predators. Thus the client can relate to the equine's fear and flight response, as well as their anxiety in new situations (Vidrine, et al., 2002).

The client receives feedback once the equine reflects a concept back to him (Schultz, et al., 2007); in terms of anxiety, the equine acts as the client's 'hypervigilance mirror', reminding the client of his/her own internal anxieties (Klontz, et al., 2007). The equine reacts to the client's behaviours and does so quickly, frequently reacting to non-verbal cues due to the equine's extreme sensitivity (Schultz, et al., 2007; Vidrine, et al., 2002).

Another important aspect of the equine's reflective capacities is the inherent authenticity and honesty that comes from interaction with an animal. The equine provides unconditional responsiveness and accessibility (Yorke, et al., 2008). Equines are regarded as non-judgmental, accepting, and able to provide and receive unconditional love when many humans are not forthcoming (Bizub, et al., 2003; Frewin & Gardiner, 2005; Yorke, et al., 2008).

Vidrine, et al. (2002) describe equines as "naked and unashamed" and without ego (p. 595). Transference with the equine (rather than the clinician) is, therefore, less threatening and leads to accurate and unbiased feedback that could not be accomplished in the traditional therapy setting (Klontz, et al., 2007). The client's interpretation of the equine's behaviour determines the meaning of the metaphor and, therefore, brings transference to the surface. The transference is regarded as easier to address, in this case, because the focus is the equine rather than the psychotherapist (Klontz, et al., 2007).

2.2.3. Roles assumed in EAP:

The equine plays a very important role within EAP. Different researchers describe this role differently. Namely, the equine as co-therapist (EAGALA, 2009); therapeutic co-facilitator (Ewing, et al., 2007); education enhancer (Ewing, et al., 2007); therapeutic tool (Bizub, et al., 2003; Schultz, et al., 2007); catalyst and metaphor (Klontz, et al., 2007); vehicle towards therapeutic change (Ewing, et al., 2007); healer (Bizub, et al., 2003); and beacon of hope (Bizub, et al., 2003).

The psychotherapist also plays an important role within EAP. Vidrine, et al. (2002) and Ewing, et al. (2007) agree that the therapist acts as a role model, setting limits and acting as the equine's supporter. In this manner, the therapist-equine relationship and the therapist's concern for the equine's safety can lead to increased empathy in clients (Vidrine, et al., 2002). The client sees the therapist through the equine's eyes, as caretaker or nurturer, and this view may allow the therapist to appear less threatening to the client (Vidrine, et al., 2002).

Whereas, the role of the equine specialist is to observe the behaviour of the equine and report back to the psychotherapist. The equine specialist also determines how much a client will be able to gain from an EAP session (Mandrell, 2006). According to Mandrell (2006) an equine specialist may in some cases be the heart of an EAP session. The equine specialist has many vital duties and responsibilities, some of these include the responsibility of the clients

and the equine's safety, for matching of appropriate equines with clients, helping to design activities based on knowledge of the equine's behaviour, for interpreting the equine's behaviour to real-life situations and to aid the psychotherapist in understanding the equine's behaviour.

2.2.4. Theoretical principles of EAP:

The epistemology of this study is based on a social constructivistic perspective. Social constructivism is a philosophy of learning founded on the premise that, by reflecting on our experiences, we construct our own understanding of the world we live in. Each of us generates our own "rules" and "mental models," which we use to make sense of our experiences. Social constructivism emphasises the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society and constructing knowledge based on this understanding (Derry, 1999; McMahon, 1997).

According to Castello and Botella (2006) social constructivism is a view in philosophy according to which all knowledge is a compilation of human-made constructions and not the neutral discovery of an objective truth. Constructivism proposes new definitions for knowledge and truth that form a new paradigm, based on inter-subjectivity instead of the classical objectivity, and on viability instead of truth (Jonassen, 1991).

Social constructivism is based on specific assumptions about reality, knowledge, and learning. Social constructivists believe that reality is created through human activity. Members of a society together invent the properties of the world (Kukla, 2000). For the social constructivist, reality cannot be discovered; it does not exist prior to its social invention. To social constructivists, knowledge is also a human product, and is socially and culturally constructed (Gredler, 1997).

Individuals create meaning through their interactions with each other and with the environment they live in. Thus, social constructivists view learning as a social process. Importantly, learning does not take place only within an individual, nor is it a passive development of behaviours that are shaped by external forces (McMahon, 1997). Meaningful learning occurs when individuals are involved in social activities.

According to clinical psychologist Cave (2012) EAP, within a South African context, contains three basic principles, namely, that EAP is an interactional process, experiential in nature and that it takes a Person-centred approach.

Cave (2012) also states that the Person-centred approach is the basic foundation for interactional therapy as well as in EAP in particular. Thus, it is of importance for an Equine-Assisted Psychotherapist to be skilled in the Person-centred approach of Rogers (1942). According to Rogers (1951) the basic underlying assumption of the Person-centred approach is that:

> the individual has within himself or herself vast resources for self-understanding, for altering the self-concept basic attitudes, and his or her self-directed behaviour – and that these resources can be tapped if only a definable climate of facilitative psychological attitudes can be provided (p.1.).

Rogers (1957) explains that the Person-centred approach has three basic attributes, namely congruence, unconditional positive regard and empathetic understanding. These three attributes are foundational in EAP beyond any other theoretical framework.

Specifically, experiential therapy can be described as learning through doing (Cave, 2012) as also stated by Aristotle "For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them". Experiential therapy has been utilised within various learning environments and programmes including the practises of EAP programmes and services.

> The mission of experiential therapy as used in EAP is to use equines, activity, and recreation to help people deal with problems that serve as barriers to health and to assist them in growing towards their highest level of health and wellness (Mandrell, 2006, p. 5).

For the intention of this study, Kolb's model of experiential learning was utilised as the main theoretical framework to understand EAP. Kolb's model of experiential learning derived from previous models such as those of Kurt, John and Jean (Kolb, 1984). Kolb's model of experiential learning (see Figure 1) consists of a cycle of four processes: Concrete experience (CE), reflective observation (RO), abstract conceptualisation (AC), and active experimentation (AE).
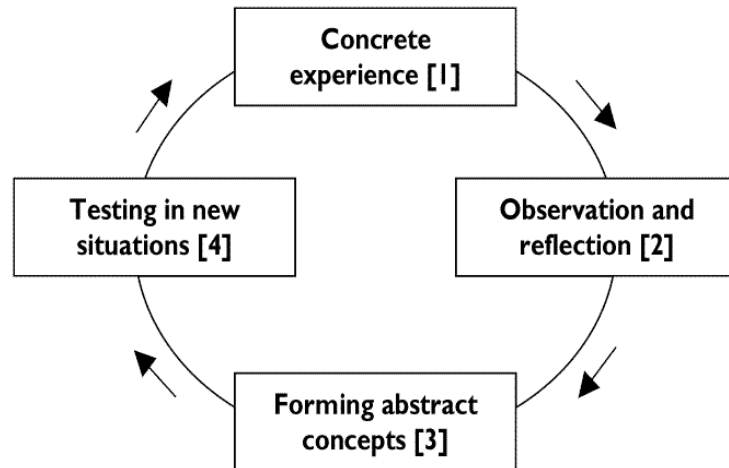
Figure 1: Kolb's model of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984).

Kolb perceived immediate experiences as the foundation for thought and reflection from which concepts are assimilated and then actively tested. This testing gives rise to new experience, and the whole cycle begins again (Sugarman, 1985). Sugarman (1985) stated that Kolb's model integrates into a single framework the dimensions of cognitive growth and learning typically employed by cognitive psychologists: the concrete-abstract dimension and the active-reflective dimension.

These dimensions can be interpreted as referring to types of involvement and chosen learning roles. Kolb also combined individual learning styles into the four-step process. Kolb held that each stage of the process placed different difficulties on learners. These difficulties were identified as: (a) CE: concrete experience abilities; (b) RO: reflective observation abilities; (c) AC: abstract conceptualisation abilities; and (d) AE: active experimentations (Kolb, 1984).

A second model was developed by Kolb (1984), (see Figure 2). This figure illustrates the four cycles along with learning style preferences, labelled as diverging, assimilating, converging and accommodating, which Kolb assigned to each of the four quadrants of the cycle as indicated by the below figure:
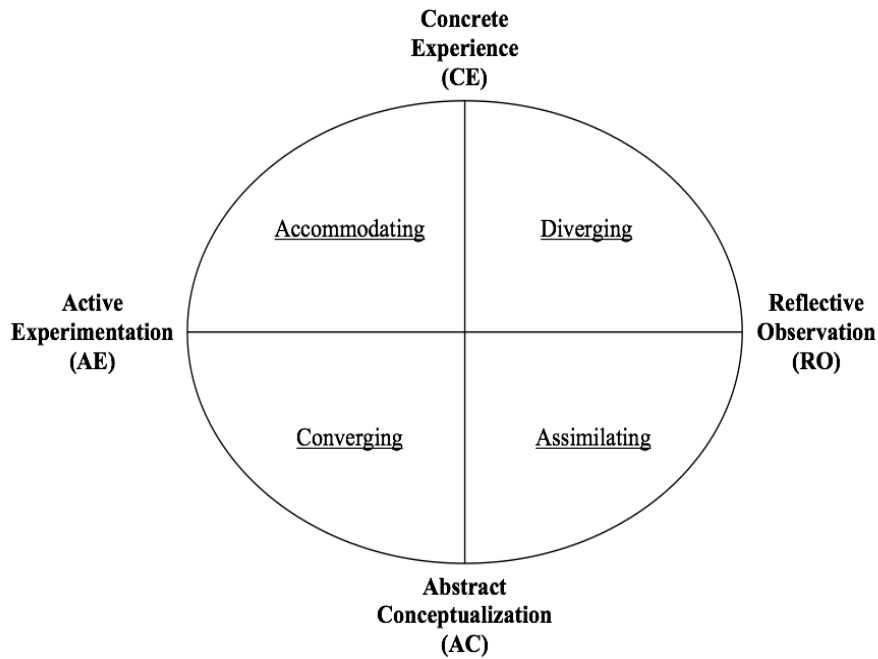
Figure 2: Kolb's Four Learning Style Preferences (Kolb, 1984).

Sugarman (1985) described Kolb's Four Learning Style Preferences in depth. Sugarman (1985) described the diverger as one who "prefers concrete to abstract learning situations and reflection to active involvement. The assimilator prefers reflection and abstract situations" (p. 265), while the "converger prefers to experiment actively with ideas and test the practical relevance of these ideas. The final preference, the accommodator, prefers active involvement in concrete situations" (p.265).

Kolb's experiential learning model aligns well with the frameworks of programmes and services that provide EAP. EAGALA (2014) described EAP as an experiential modality. EAGALA allows their participants to learn about themselves and others through hands on learning activities with equines. With this in mind, participants are then asked to examine their thoughts, feelings, views and behaviours.

2.2.5. EAP Case Study and practical example:

On 20 April 2013, a practical demonstration on Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy in South Africa (EAPISA) was done at University of Stellenbosch Equestrian stables. This demonstration was led by Kim Kidson, chairlady of EAPISA and a registered clinical

psychologist, joined by her two colleagues (one a psychologist and one an equine expert) (Boyd, 2013).

Pegasus and Holden were the two equines used for this demonstration. After introducing the two equines to one another in the arena, observers of the demonstration were allowed into the arena with these two equines (about 15 observers entered the arena, and about 15 choosing to remain outside the arena). They were first instructed to become acquainted with the equine in their own time, however Pegasus and Holden had their own agenda of getting acquainted with the equines on the outside of the arena (Boyd, 2013).

After the introduction, the participants were called back to Kidson and her team and asked to speak about their approaches and experiences with the respective equines. It was at that time in particular according to Boyd (2013) that two amazing scenes occurred, demonstrating the power of equines and their intuition. Two participants had stated their fear of touching the equines and related it to their personal lives; when the first participant was speaking about her fear, Pegasus came up to her (out of 15 other possible attention-givers) and dropped his head in front of her, asking her to give him affection. This participant was so touched that she started crying, and the moment led to a personal realisation for herself. Five minutes later a similar experience occurred with the second participant. Boyd (2013) stated that it was just amazing how Pegasus chose these two people specifically, and these moments gave everybody goose bumps.

The rest of the demonstration involved an example of a task that took place during a therapy session. The task involved going to halter an equine as a group, with every person in the group having an experiential disability (such as being blindfolded, not being allowed to talk, or not being allowed to use your hands). While the task was being performed, Kidson and the equine expert explained the equines' behaviours as well as the participants' behaviours to the observers. Once the equines had been haltered and the task completed, the participants were asked to talk about the task and how they had experienced it (Boyd, 2013).

Where indicated, Kidson would go psychologically deeper with the participants to relate their present experience to past experiences or personal characteristics and it was observed how accurate these interventions could be.

2.2.6. Benefits of EAP:

The Equine as a Therapist: EAP has proved to be effective in a number of very different disorders, among a variety of age groups, and people with different experiences (Bachi, 2012). There are many factors or aspects that an equine provides for mental health professionals to treat patients/clients. This involves the relationship with patient and animal, the unique traits to equines, the mental stimulation that comes from the experience, and the guidance offered by the mental health professional (Bachi, 2012).

According to Roy (2012) and Masini (2010) to understand where the functional development comes from, one must understand the human-equine-therapist relationship. In all forms of animal assisted therapy attachment theory is used to explain one of the reasons of benefit (Dyk, Cheung, Pohl & Lindgreen, 2013). Bachi (2013) explains Attachment theory as being the idea that human existence revolves around relationships and the foundation is based off of interactions with initial caregivers. There is also belief that in the absence of adequate caregiver relationship other interactions later in life can become chances for healing and balance restoration for clients. In theory the human-animal bond and the human-therapist bond become chances for developing relationship skills (Bachi, 2013).

In traditional attachment theory there are goals set to establish through the human therapist bond. That is a secure holding environment, affect mirroring, metalising and reflective functioning, and non-verbal communication and body experience as said by Bachi (2013). These goals are the same when applying attachment theory to EAP except the equines offer some additional opportunity if used correctly.

Opening Up: According to Bachi (2013) the first goal set by Attachment theory is the idea of security in a relationship and environment. This security allows the patient to open themselves up to learn from their own experience. All animals, including equines, are non-bias so people with failed past relationships often have a natural attraction toward developing a relationship with an animal before developing a relationship with another person (Altschiller, 2011).

The trust that may initially be given to the equine may allow the person to become more vulnerable in situations which include the therapist (Masini, 2010). One example was described in a case study in which a child refused to get out of the car when arriving at the stable for her EAP session (Masini, 2010). "The child remained in the back seat, closing her eyes, and would not budge to her caregivers' or therapist's sweet-talking. The equine was then brought to the

car and without instruction gently stuck his head in the door and nuzzled the girl. The girl uncovered her eyes and felt such an initial bond with the equine that she exited the vehicle and was attentive to instruction throughout the remainder of the session" (Masini, 2010). In this case the equine's nature was deemed non-threatening to the child so it helped her let down her defences and have better interactions with the therapist and her caregivers.

Overcoming Fear and Developing Self-Confidence: In the initial event of being fearful of equines, the patients who may have little or no knowledge or confidence in interacting with an equine may look to the therapist for guidance (Brandt, 2013). As the therapist guides the patient safely through activities with the equine the patient comes to trust the therapist as a leader and valuable resource. By completing tasks as ordinary as leading the equine the patient develops trust in themselves which is essentially the beginnings of self-confidence and a necessity for formation of new healthy relationships (Masini, 2010).

Real-time Feedback: Equines being both herd animals and prey animals make them an interesting element in the therapeutic setting. Prey animals are naturally very alert which makes them very receptive to small changes in a person's mood and behaviour (Pendry & Roeter, 2013). In addition, the equine's herd instincts make them very responsive to those small changes that they perceive (Pendry & Roeter, 2013). One quality about therapy equines is that they are regularly commended of their ability to essentially mirror the patient's emotions (Bachi, 2013). According to Jarrell (2009) this is why patient's self-trust and confidence-building is such an inherent result of working with equines.

For example, according to PATH (2014), if an individual walks up to an equine very fearful the equine will respond to that body language, by becoming tense and distrustful. If the individual were to try to lead the equine the equine would likely resist because they could not trust the person's ability to lead them. In contrast, once the individual becomes confident in their own abilities the equine would be able to detect that there is no fear and would readily follow the patient. A quote among equine riders is that "an equine is a mirror to the soul." This unique truth offers so many opportunities for patients to develop relationship skills. The equines give honest, real time, biofeedback for the individual's emotional state (PATH, 2014).

Mirroring Effect: Not only are equines able to interact with the patient through mirroring, they also are honest and consistent in their reactions to behaviours and situations (Jarrell, 2009). This again gives immediate feedback to the patient on how to behave both mentally and physically (Bachi, 2013).

According to Bachi (2009) as patients progress from initial trust-building with the equine, and then through self-reflection, the next step is for them to become in harmony to body language and understanding appropriate communication. It is convenient that the behavioural expectations the equine requires of the patient for positive outcomes promote qualities that are desired in human interactions (Pendry & Roeter, 2013).

An example for how this applies is a young boy in school who is not getting along with his peers because he is too abrupt and invades personal space. The boy's peers do not communicate what behaviours they like and do not like and the boy does not understand why the other children avoid him. When placed in a situation with an equine, if the boy rushes immediately to the equine's head and tries to put his hand on the equine's face the equine will respond by shying away. Unlike his human reactions though, the boy can be immediately permitted to try again with a more gentle approach whereby he will receive acceptance from the equine (Zeleznik, 2014).

Through the boy's interactions with the equine he may learn to approach his peers with different body language and behaviour that could result in more positive relationships (Bachi, 2013). "Equines accept a narrow window of behaviour during interactions that is a balance between aggressiveness and timidity. Until the patient's behaviour falls into that window then interactions with the equine will not be harmonious" (Bachi, 2013, p. 3). Again, this feedback promotes more abrupt patients becoming gentler and shy patients becoming assertive (PATH, 2014).

Emotional Intelligence: Bachi (2013) describes equines as being honest in their reactions to other equine's behaviours as well as human behaviour. Patients may be asked to examine interactions between equines and understand why different equines get along and why some are disliked. A patient's view on this may provide insight to the therapist on how the patient views their own roles in relationships in their life (Bachi, 2013). It may also promote understanding of others and empathy in the patient's relationships (Pendry & Roeter, 2013).

By observing the workings of interactions the patient will ultimately learn to understand how their own behaviours play a role in relationships. They will begin to notice body language and cues during interactions to anticipate the directions the interpersonal situation could go (Bachi, 2013). Eventually the patient will learn how to adjust their own behaviour in regards to the other's body language to form more positive interactions. This is the concept of emotional

intelligence that is often needed and one of the most promoted aspects of EAP (Pendry & Roeter, 2013).

The Therapist's Role: Equines have distinctive qualities that make them well suited for psychotherapy, however the importance of suitable use and therapeutic guidance should not be underestimated according to Brandt (2013). While some benefits of EAP may be obtained by average riding instruction, many lessons and insight-gaining experiences will be underplayed or missed entirely without a therapist and session plan (PATH, 2014).

Within the EAGALA model, the equine as a therapist serves to respond to non-verbal communication, provoke behaviour and attitudes, and act as a metaphor for relationships (EAGALA, 2014). An example is having a patient explain certain areas in an arena as transition zones that correlate with transition zones in their life (EAGALA, 2014). The session involves creating obstacles common to equine riders like small jumps or cones and then the patient is asked to guide an equine through those obstacles (EAGALA, 2014).

The therapist then has a discussion with the patient on why they chose certain obstacles in each area, if some areas were more difficult than others, and what it means that they move the equine through the obstacles (EAGALA, 2014). This approach offers experiential learning and provides an environment that is in some ways better for interaction than a traditional office setting (EAGALA, 2014).

2.2.7. Limitations of EAP:

Lack of Literature: The first and foremost limitation to EAP is the lack of literature on this topic, its effectiveness and program development (Bachi, 2012). According to Selby and Smith-Osborne (2013) most research done on EAP includes individual case studies and pilot studies. These studies also contain many flaws such as small a sample size and/or no control group. One of the major difficulties is to quantify the value and benefits from the therapy because most research is strictly qualitative (Selby & Smith-Osborne, 2013).

Another area of research that is lacking is what techniques work best. Fundamentally, all the research on equine therapy is about results of different approaches or programmes but the details of the specific therapy that took place in those programmes is scarce or absent (Selby & Smith-Osborne, 2013).

Patient Access: Another limitation of EAP is it's availability in terms of both location and cost. Some programmes also limit their client population to certain disorders like PTSD (PATH, 2014). The basis of EAP entails the patient to be in the equines' milieu, so even in the event that an appropriate EAP programme is near a patient it often requires transportation to the equine facility.

According to Altschiller (2011), unlike dogs or other small animals used in therapy, equines cannot be easily transported to patients. This also limits accessibility to hospitalised patients who cannot be released for therapy (Altschiller, 2011).

Another limitation of accessibility, according to Gergely (2012), is the cost of the therapy for the client/patient. The average cost of therapy has not been researched broadly so the figures cover a wide range. Currently, it generally appears to be anywhere from R350 -R1750 for a 45-60 minute session (EAGALA, 2014), whereas medical aid rates in South Africa for traditional psychotherapy are in the region of R720-R800 for a 50-60 minute session. Furthermore, the amount of sessions necessary for improvement is dependent on the patient and their situation (EAGALA, 2014). Many programmes operate on a once or twice-weekly schedule from anywhere from 5-12 weeks or longer if necessary. Overall, this can amount to a significant cost to the patient especially if their mental illness has affected their functioning to the point that it affects their income.

According to the 2004 update by the World Health Organization (2004) mental illness is the leading cause of disability. If patients do not have sufficient funds to pay for EAP then benefit is obviously impossible without insurance coverage. Additionally, with research being limited, many international insurance companies do not recognise EAP as an approved treatment for many clinical conditions.

Cost of Operation: According to PATH (2014) the costs of running an EAP practice can span a vast range depending on the type of operation. PATH (2014) highlights a number of considerations regarding the cost of operation, this includes: cost of the equines, the cost of farm/land usage, the cost of liability insurance, the cost of staff training and wages, the cost of equipment, and the cost of transportation. EAGALA requires at least one equine and a fenced area of 60 foot diameter at a minimum (EAGALA, 2014).

However, practitioners recommend that practices have multiple equines with suitable area space to help facilitate the maximal benefits of therapy. In EAGALA, since patients do not do

any riding activities, equines can be obtained at a low cost or even free because they can be older and no longer suitable for riding or even rescued equines that are not trained to be ridden. Beyond the cost of obtaining equines there is also the additional cost of equine upkeep such as feeding, hoof care, and veterinary care according to the Wind Reach Farm (2014).

DeBose (2015) also identified that an aspect that is often overlooked when creating an EAP program is the facilities and actual equipment that is needed by the equine and client. EAP facilities will include having an outdoor fenced (this is a requirement for the safety of the patient) arena, a mounting block (some patients will be able to use a traditional mounting block, but many others will need to have a higher platform constructed, large enough to manoeuvre a wheelchair, plus have room for assistants to get the patient onto the equine's back) and aisle-ways where the equines are prepared before the session (allowing the equine and patient to interact outside of the working session is often rewarding for both the equine and the patient, but safety is the top concern. Ensure that the aisles are wide enough and lit brightly enough for more than one person to walk by the equine safely. If the aisle does not pass these requirements, the area will often need to be cordoned off for passing by on the side, but the equine can be made accessible to patients from the front end) (DeBose, 2015).

In addition to the facilities needed, equipment is also an important aspect for utilising equines in EAP that is very costly (DeBose, 2015). Essential EAP equipment includes helmets, a halter, a lead rope, bridals, saddles, lunge ropes and also a variety of items that might be used in a session—including large and small balls, cones, rings, sticks, and Frisbees, which needs to be considered when offering EAP services.

Liability: Risk of harm is another limitation of EAP according to PATH (2014). In general working with equines can be hazardous. It can also be argued that introducing mentally unstable patients to equines can increase the risk of injury says PATH (2014). Liability insurance is essential to all EAP programs. In addition malpractice insurance should be carried by the staff providing the service to protect against suit from alleged poor professional judgement PATH (2014). The cost of insurance can be quite significant depending on the program. Providers are urged to get their operation certified by a well-respected association like EAGALA, to ensure the lowest cost of treatment.

The Unsuitable Patient: The last limitation to EAP is purely that it is not well suited for all patients (Bachi, 2012). According to Jarrell (2009) like all therapy modalities, contraindications have to be studied as well as symptoms before selecting a patient for

treatment. Most contraindications can be relative and may not apply depending on the therapy operation being utilised. For example, some physical disabilities or injuries may be a contraindication for riding because of increased risk of injury.

However, in the setting where certified trainers are present treatment can be used with minimal risk (EAGALA, 2014). Other relative contraindications include, fear of equines, lack of interest in equines, unstable mental state, and lack of accessibility according to Jarrell (2009). An absolute contraindication would be significant allergies to equines or allergens that the patient may come into contact with at the EAP facility such as hay or dust (Jarrell, 2009).

2.3 Theoretical and conceptual framework

Typically with EAP, the psychotherapists incorporate equine activities within their broader theoretical framework. Many EAP psychotherapists make use of Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) that uses direct experience as the primary avenue to change (Mahrer, 1983). ELT is a form of therapy that motivates clients to identify and address hidden or subconscious issues through different experiences such as the use of props or guided imagery (Corey, 2013).

ELT draws on the work of prominent 20th century scholars who gave experience a central role in their theories of human learning and development, notably, John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget, William James, Carl Jung, Paulo Freire, and Carl Rogers, to develop a dynamic, holistic model of the process of learning from experience and a multi-linear model of development. According to ELT, learning can be defined as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 41).

ELT is rooted in Fritz Perl's Gestalt therapy, which is a form of psychotherapy that places emphasis on taking personal responsibility. Examples of ELT include recreational therapy, equine therapy, expressive art therapy, music therapy and play therapy (Corey, 2013). ELT is used to help clients examine personal relationships and initiate self-discovery on how those relationships affect current behaviour.

Experiential learning incorporated in therapy helps the client to identify negative emotions triggering compulsive behaviour. Rather than talking, or being given a book or list of things to

work on, clients participating in ELT may create situations or experiences that trigger difficult emotions or feelings that can be addressed (Corey, 2013).

According to EAGALA (2010), ELT involves the use of equines to address treatment goals related to emotional growth and learning in order to achieve a higher level of wellness. This approach gives clients the opportunity to work through unfinished business, relieve psychological distress, live more fully in the present and change destructive patterns of behaviour. ELT allows clients to utilise their actual experiences with the equine as the actual foundation for therapeutic exploration (Karol, 2007).

According to Robinson (1999) EAP is an experiential, strengths-based therapy with the emphasis being placed on one's abilities that than on one's deficits. Though the client's interactions with the equine and their environment, they are able to learn about themselves.

According to EAGALA (2010), EAP is primarily activity based. EAP licensed mental health practitioners and/or equine specialists present their clients with a problem which can either be worked through independently or in a group format in order to find the solution. This approach is used to elicit a wide range of emotions and responses; however, the role of the licensed mental health practitioners and/or equine specialists is to allow the client to experience their emotions without rescuing them, but instead provide support and encouragement (Trotter et al, 2008). By giving the client the opportunity to experience the consequences of their choices and emotions, positive or negative, the client is able to 'own' their experience (Gilbert, 2009).

2.4 Summary

In conclusion, just as the value of animal therapy has been acknowledged, so has the value of utilising equines specifically in psychotherapy has been outlined. Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy is viewed as an effective treatment method due to its inherent nature. Clients have reported feeling safe enough to explore their psychological problems and to work towards change in EAP (Paquette, 2010).

Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy is a new and inventive treatment modality emerging in the mental health field. Research has proposed its worth in treating many disorders such as PTSD,

autism, ADHD, anxiety/depression, schizophrenia, and a number of other diagnoses. Some disadvantages of the research include lack of quality data collection, small sample sizes, lack of control groups, and procedure inconsistency. Despite these disadvantages many psychotherapists are beginning to employ EAP with reported success.

The American Psychiatric Association's Committee on Research and New Treatments quoted that "while we acknowledge the usefulness of conventional treatments in psychiatry, it is also important to consider alternative or integrative approaches" (as reported by Moran, 2005, p. 40). Thus there is a call for research to examine EAP more scientifically and in more detail to encourage better acceptance and acknowledgement in the scientific community.

Though quality primary research studies are lacking there is an overwhelming amount of theoretical literature on the topic of EAP. People who have had any experience with equines readily recognise the outstanding potential equines possess to change lives. Much of the literature theorises that because of equines' unique combination of being a prey and herd animal equines, arguably, are better suited for psychotherapy than other available therapy animals.

There is also additional therapeutic opportunity gathered from riding equines, however some of the professional associations for EAP have chosen not to incorporate riding into the therapy. The reason for this being that psychotherapy does not focus on riding the equine, as in horsemanship, but rather on the relationship between the equine and human being (EAGALA, 2014). As more practices begin utilising EAP and different models of treatment arise and are tested there is hope that a better understanding for appropriate use of equines will be reached.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

For this study I, as the researcher, decided that a qualitative research method will be utilised as it is well-suited to explore an emerging field. According to Denzin (2000) qualitative research is an activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research sets out to study different phenomena including experiences in their natural environment. As such, qualitative researchers attempt to make sense out of experiences by interpreting experiences in terms of the meaning that people attach to experiences.

Merriam (2009) describes qualitative researchers as being interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, in other words, how people make sense out of their world and the experiences they have in the world (Patton, 2001). According to Merriam (2009) qualitative research has four key characteristics.

The first characteristic is the overall purpose of qualitative research which is to achieve an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives. In this research study, I aim to describe the role that equines have when used in psychotherapy within the South African context.

The second characteristic of qualitative research is that the researcher is regarded as the primary instrument of data collection. In this study, I collected data by means of semi-structured face-to-face interviews. A third characteristic of qualitative research is that the process is inductive. In other words, researchers gather data in order to build theories and concepts. Finally, Merriam (2009) states that the product of qualitative research is richly descriptive, as instead of relying on numbers, descriptive words are used to describe the phenomenon in detail.

Hancock (2007) has described qualitative research as being at attempt to broaden and deepen our understanding of how things came to be the way they are. The qualitative method is used for research such as exploring how people experience phenomenon, looking at different viewpoints, exploring new issues if not yet understood or properly identified, assessing whether a new service is implementable, looking at real-life contexts or where flexibility is needed to avoid causing distress if handling a sensitive topic (Hancock, 2007).

My research will be focussing on both exploring a new area of psychotherapy in South Africa as well as looking at the viewpoint of the licensed mental health practitioners utilising EAP and/or equine specialists.

Developing descriptions of social of social phenomenon is the main concern of qualitative research according to Hancock (2007). Thus the aim of qualitative research is to help understand the social world in which people live and why things are the way they are. Qualitative research seeks to answer the following questions: describe the way people behave, how opinions and attitudes are formed, how people are affected by the events that go on around them and how and why cultures and practises have developed in the way they have within society (Hancock, 2007).

According to Weideman (2007) qualitative studies pave the way for quantitative studies by allowing the researcher to understand what is happening in a particular field. Though internationally EAP has grown steadily over the past 40 years, literature in this field is still lacking. As result, it is of value to contribute to the fledging field of EAP within the South African context with an exploratory study using a qualitative research approach that aims to understand the role that equines have when used in psychotherapy before quantitative studies can be done on more specific aspects (Weideman, 2007).

3.2 Research strategy

According to Nieman (2005) a research strategy can be defined as a set of guidelines to be followed when addressing a research problem. For the purpose of addressing the primary research question of this study, the research strategy will follow a combination of descriptive and exploratory research. This combination of research strategies is possible according to Mouton and Marais (1990).

Mouton and Marias (1990) outline that descriptive studies include in-depth descriptions of a specific phenomenon. Grobbelaar (2000) defines descriptive studies as providing more specific details of a phenomenon. According to Neuman (1997) descriptive research aims at providing an accurate profile of the research, describing a process, collecting information that can create new possible explanations and providing a detailed context. As such, descriptive studies investigate the 'how' of the matter.

Whereas, according to Mouton and Marias (1990) an exploratory study aims at exploring a relatively unfamiliar field. Grobbelaar (2000) defines an exploratory study as research done in a particular field in which little knowledge exists. As such, an exploratory study investigates the 'what' of the matter. An exploratory study aims at obtaining new insights about a field, investigates central concepts and determining priorities for future research (Neuman, 1997), which is the underlying goal of the current research.

3.3 Sample and selection of participants

For the purpose of this study the sampling technique that will be made use of is purposeful criterion sampling. According to Maree (2010) purposeful sampling specifically selects the individuals that have experienced what the study is aimed at investigating.

Purposeful criterion sampling includes a sample being chosen based on specific characteristic or feature, which enables detailed exploration and understanding of central themes and puzzles which the researcher wishes to study. Members of this sample are chosen with the purpose to represent a type in relation to a key criterion. During this sampling technique, decisions about which criteria are used for selection is based upon the research question of the study (Maree, 2010).

The inclusion criteria are as follows: for this study only certified mental health practitioners and/or equine specialists registered who have been trained and accredited at a recognised organisation, such as EAPISA or EAGALA, were considered suitable for participation.

According to Morse (1992) a sample size of six is often recommended for a qualitative study. However Morse (1992) adds that sample size depends on a number of factors that need to be taken into consideration, which are:

> the quality of data, the scope of the study, the nature of the topic, the amount of useful information obtained from each participant, the number of interviews per participant, the use of shadowed data, and the qualitative method and study design used (p.1).

A sample size of six participants will be selected for this study, however when theoretical saturation is reached the data collection process will be completed. According to Hancock (2007) the researcher will know when he/she has an adequate sample when have theoretical

saturation is achieved, in other words, when additional cases do not modify their coding frame. Furthermore, theoretical saturation occurs when new data from new cases do no longer contribute to the development of a theory (Hancock, 2007).

Out of the six participants sampled, two of these participants were registered at EAGALA and four participants were registered at EAPISA. All six research participants have been practising EAP for a minimum of one year. All six of my research participants reside and practise in Gauteng, South Africa. These participants were also all females. A potential mail participant was identified, he, however was still in the process of being trained through EAGALA. All six of my research participants aged between 25 and 55.

Out of the six participants sampled four participants are registered at the HPCSA. Two of the participants are registered at the HPCSA for being counselling psychologists, the third participant for being a clinical psychologist and the forth participant as a pastoral therapist. The other two participants practise as equine specialists. Equine specialists refer to being an equine specialist. Equine Specialists are the specialist on the EAP team that knows the most about the equines. Equine specialists should not only have not only worked in the equine industry for many years, have had equines themselves, and have participated in formal equine training, but also have studied equine behaviour so they can be sure to include the equines in the EAP sessions. They should also become certified though EAGALA or EAPISA, as this process helps them become sensitive to mental and behavioural health issues (EAGALA, 2014).

3.4 Data collection

For this study, data was collected by means of making use of semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with licensed mental health practitioners and/or equine specialists. According to King and Horrocks (2010) making use of interviews during qualitative research is one of the most frequently used methods for gathering data.

Smith and Osborn (2008) state that with semi-structured interviews the investigator has a set of questions as an interview schedule, the interview is, however, only be guided by the schedule and not be dictated by it. Hancock (2007) describes interviewing as having two extreme poles. At the one extreme, interviews can be structured with questions that have been prepared and presented to each participant in an identical way. At the other extreme, the

interview can be completely unstructured, meaning that the conversation between the interviewer and interviewee is completely free-flowing.

According to Hancock (2007) qualitative researchers, mostly, make use of semi-structured interviews which involves a number of open-ended questions based research questions under investigation, semi-structured interviews also provide the opportunity for the interviewer and interviewee to discuss some aspects in greater detail. In the event that the interviewee experiences difficulty in answering a question or provides the interviewer only with a brief response, the interviewer can use cues or prompts to encourage the interviewee to consider the question again or elaborate upon their initial answers or to move onto the following question.

The purpose of this interview guide is not to restrict the interview and therefore should not have been viewed as a schedule of questions, but rather as a guide that allows following up on point of interest to the interviewer and the interviewee (Hancock, 2007). In addition to the topic guide the interviewer may also have the need to approach the interview with written prompts in order to make sure that the necessary ground is covered during the interview (Hancock, 2007). In preparing for the semi-structured interviews of the current study I drew up a topic guide which consisted of a list of topics, based on my literature review, that I as the interviewer wished to discuss during the interview (Hancock, 2007) (Appendix D).

Due to the semi-structured interview, the interview was structured in a straightforward and organised fashion. However this does not mean that it is easy to conduct good qualitative research interviews (Hancock, 2007). Hancock (2007) describes skills that a good interviewer should possess, namely, a good interviewer has the ability to put the interviewee at ease, has good listening skills and has the ability to manage an interview situation so as to collect data that truly reflects the feelings and thoughts of the interviewee.

Before the interviews were conducted the interviewer and interviewee needed to decide on a location for the interview to take place. Comfort and peacefulness should be taken into account when the venue is chosen according to Hancock (2007), and therefore the interviews took place in the participant's office.

The interviewing process was also audio-recorded by making use of a digital voice recorder. Research participants were notified and asked to give consent to do so. (Appendix C). Hancock (2007) also describes the method or form of interview that can be conducted which is via email. This form of interview generates qualitatively different types of responses from

the participants due to the participant's ability to delay response until they have thought about what to say. This form of interview is also convenient for both the interviewer and interviewee may here be distance between these two that is hard to breach (Hancock, 2007). As my research participants were all easily accessible to me face-to-face interviews were conducted, prior to email follow-up.

Prior to the first interview of the current study, a pilot study took place. A pilot study can be defined as preparation that is done in the form of a trial run in order to prepare for the complete study (Calitz, 2009). According to Blaxter (as cited in Calitz, 2009):

> You may think that you know well enough what you are doing, but the value of pilot research cannot be overestimated. Things never work quite the way you envisage, even if you have done them many times before, and they have a nasty habit of turning out very differently than you expected (p. 257).

The advantages of a pilot interview is the warning in advance about where the research project may fail, an indication is given on research protocols that might not be followed, the identification of practical problems of the research procedure and an indication of whether selected questions are too complicated to use (Calitz, 2009).

The use of an audio-recorder during the interviews allowed me to transcribe the entire interview, which allowed for a more comprehensive analysis to be done on the data collected from the research participants. Consent to make use of an audio-recorder was received from each participant prior to the interview beginning (See Appendix A).

For the purpose of this study, a pilot interview was undertaken for two main reasons. Firstly, to identify and avoid any confusion or complications that may take place during data collection and secondly, to determine whether the interview questions were appropriate and held the potential to reach the outcomes of the study.

As part of the data collection process, I made use of data triangulation. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000) data triangulation can be defined as looking for consistency between different data sources. However, data triangulation is not always used to check for consistency, but also to gain an understanding of when and why there are differences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). For the purpose of this study, I adhered to the basic principles of methodological triangulation by checking for consistency between my transcribed data of the face-to-face

interviews, the follow up emails to participants pertaining to the interview questions and my field notes collected.

3.5 Data analysis: Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data gathered in this study. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis is rarely acknowledged, yet widely used in qualitative studies. Thematic analysis can be defined as being a generic method of data analysis where one identifies, analyses and report on patterns and themes found within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Namey and MacQueen (2012) define thematic analysis as:

> moving beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focus on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is, themes. Codes are then typically developed to represent the identified themes and applied or linked to raw data as summary makers of later analysis (p. 10).

According to Braun and Clarke (2006) the following figure can be used as a step-by-step guide of how to do thematic analysis:
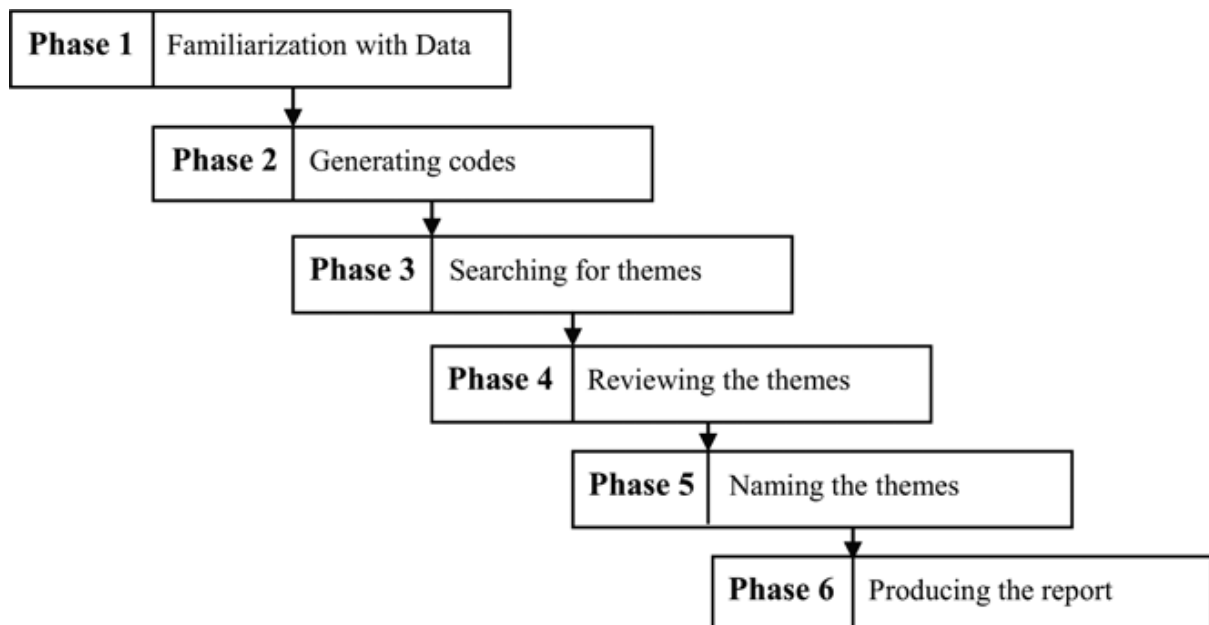

Figure 3: Thematic analysis: step-by-step guide (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In this research study, I began the process of analysis by making copies of the relevant interview transcripts. I read through the interview transcripts and follow-up emails carefully in order to familiarise myself with the depth and breadth of the data. During this first phase I also started to make notes and created ideas for coding which I could go back to in subsequent phases. Once this was done I moved to the second phase of the process.

Within the second phase, I produced the initial codes from the data. With a highlighter I marked all descriptions that were relevant to the topic of inquiry. From the highlighted areas, each distinct unit of meaning was marked. Meaning units were separated by a break or change in meaning. I then put similar units together and noted divergent units.

Each theme was then labelled by making use of keywords or phrases from the highlighted text. Themes, labelling, units of meaning were continuously revised as I analysed the data. Careful consideration was paid to whether the units were too small or too large or if there are too few or too many categories to describe the data effectively. At the end of this micro-process I produced a report for each theme identified.

As part of this study an inter-coder was made use of in order to contribute to the credibility of data (Shenton, 2004). After the raw data was coded, the coding consistency was checked through making use of an inter-coder agreement (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2005). If it so happened that there was no or little consistency between the inter-coder's analysis and my analysis, coding was revised by mutual agreement of what codes, themes and higher-order categories best represented the raw data.

According to Weber (1990) the process of coding sample text, checking coding consistency, and revising coding rules is an iterative procedure and should endure until sufficient coding consistency is achieved between the researcher and the inter-coder. Dependability of this study was also adhered to by the transparent coding process and inter-coder verification (Shenton, 2004). Coding was guided by the following research question: What is Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) in general and what is the role of the equine in EAP in particular? Analysis of the text has resulted seven themes to be discussed in Chapter Four.

The following steps were followed in the co-coding process: the co-coder obtained a sense of the whole by reading through the transcriptions independently from myself as the primary researcher (See Appendix E for coding procedure). Ideas that came to the co-coder's mind were

jotted down. The co-coder then selected one interview and read carefully through it. When the co-coder had completed this task for several transcriptions, each interview was coded separately; thereafter themes were abstracted from the coded text segments.

Themes were selected based on saliency, frequency, or value. Similar sub-themes were clustered together and further refined to be specific enough to be discrete, whilst still being broad enough to encompass a set of ideas contained within the data. The co-coder then endeavoured to reduce the total list of themes by grouping together those that related to each other under larger, unifying or global themes. The co-coder took their own list and returned to the data. The co-coder then tried out their own preliminary framework to see whether new themes and codes emerged. The data belonging to each global theme, sub-theme, and evidence from the data supporting each theme was then assembled into a table format, followed by a consensus discussion between the researcher and the co-coder.

3.6 Ethical considerations

According to Kendler (1993) the study of ethics has to do with morality, in other words, what people regard as being right or wrong in respect of behaviour that can influence the welfare of humans. Ethics is not aimed at forcing people to do what that believe to be right, but rather at helping people decide what is right and what the correct means are of achieving the correct results (Jones, Sontag, Becker & Fogelin, 1977). This research is guided by the Health Professions Council of South Africa's (HPCSA) professional code of conduct for psychologists (HPCSA, 2008), and, in addition, the ethical aspects outlined by Allan (2011).

Firstly, the right to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity was ensured. According to Warren and Brandeis (as cited in Allan, 2011) privacy has two dimensions. The first dimension refers to the right against intrusion or the right to be left alone, this regulates the extent to which a psychologist can reach into the client's sphere of intimacy. The second dimension refers to the right to confidentiality. This regulates the extent to which information should be kept confidential. The right to confidentiality can be overwritten when it is necessary to protect others, him/herself or the general public (Allan, 2011). Anonymity refers to the name and identifying details of a person to whom information relates remains unknown in reports or publications (Allan, 2011).

In relation to the present study I ensured privacy by acting sensitively to matters by means of building rapport, being open and honest and clarifying throughout the process of research. All data obtained from the participants of the study was handled in a confidential manner. Participants were assured of anonymity in the covering letter as well as verbally before the interview took place. Only the researcher, the supervisor and the professional transcriber had access to the data gathered. Findings are published anonymously with all identifying details removed.

Secondly, the right to equality, justice, human dignity/life and protection against harm was prioritised. All participants in the research study were treated equally. No discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability or socio-economic status took place.

Informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to the study and debriefing contact details were made available if deemed necessary. This research subject is not particularly of a sensitive nature, however, if the research participants felt any discomfort he/she may had the opportunity to withdrawn from the study at any time without any consequences.

Thirdly, the right to freedom of choice, expression and access to information was ensured as participation in the research study was entirely voluntary; therefore participants could have withdrawn from the study at any time. According to Evans (2007) it is of great importance to ensure that participation in the research study is entirely voluntarily. The purpose of the study, research methods, recording of data, duration and nature of participation as well as possible advantages and disadvantages were made clear to the potential participants prior to the data gathering phase of the study.

Possible advantages of this study, for the research participants, was that the findings add to a growing body of literature which they could benefit from as EAP practitioners. A possible deterrent to participation in this study could have been that the research participants would have to complete or reply to a post-interview follow email if any additional questions were added after the interview.

Finally, the rights of the community and the science community was ensured through the quality of the research by adhering to the highest standards of research planning, implementation and reporting. To ensure credibility of the data and appropriate researcher

conduct I, self-reflexively, made use of bracketing of my own views and experiences (Shenton, 2004). The findings of the study were fully reported.

3.7 Measures of trustworthiness

Guba (1981) points to the following four constructs when referring to the trustworthiness of a qualitative research study: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994) these four measures are of vital importance to a qualitative research study when evaluating its worth.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) describe credibility as the confidence of the 'truth' of the findings. Merriam (1998) states that a qualitative investigator deals with the question of, "How congruent are the findings with reality?" According to Guba (1981) ensuring credibility is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness. Credibility of this study was enhanced by making sure the semi-structured interview questions investigate what they have been reported to investigate. By formulating questions based on previous research in the field of EAP, I stayed close to the defining aspects of EAP (See Appendix D).

Guba and Lincoln (1994) provide a description of data verification techniques to establish credibility, namely, prolonged engagement, peer debriefing, negative case analysis and member checking. Prolonged engagement refers to spending a sufficient amount of time in order to understand the culture, social setting or phenomenon of interest. This time involves observing various aspects of a setting, speaking with a range of people within the field of EAP and developing relationships with members in that setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). Guba and Lincoln (1994) also state that the researcher should spend sufficient time in the field of interest in order to understand and appreciate the context of the situation, be able to detect distortion in the data, so that the researcher can rise above his/her own preconceptions and to build trust.

For this research project the process of prolonged engagement started very early during the research proposal phase. I started off with familiarising myself within the field of EAP by introducing myself to leading EAP licensed mental health practitioners and/or equine specialists in the South African context via email and meetings. I also attended a conference track held on EAP where I introduced myself to key speakers and people with an interest in the field of EAP who practise in South Africa and the USA.

In the process of developing relationships with EAP licensed mental health practitioners and equine specialists trust was also established. I have gained a worthwhile understanding of the professional subculture and therapeutic setting of EAP and plan to continue this process in the future. Knowledge that I gained during this process of prolonged engagement is that many different forms of equine therapy exist, and for each different form of equine therapy the equine assumes a different role. I hope to keep building on my professional and social network with EAP licensed mental health practitioners, equine specialists and people with an interest in this field of EAP in order to understand and appreciate the context of EAP on an ongoing basis.

Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 308) define peer debriefing as "a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytical sessions and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind". The purpose of peer debriefing according to Guba and Lincoln (1994) is to overcome biases, perspectives and assumptions from the researcher's part, to become aware of his/her position towards the data and the data analysis and provides the opportunity for catharsis.

In order to adhere to this process myself, as the researcher, met with my supervisor and research colleagues on a regular basis during which we discussed the interviews and research process. My supervisor assumed the role of assisting me in overcoming unhelpful or distortful subjectivity, perspectives and assumptions. This process helped me in becoming aware of my position towards the analysing of the data.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) define negative or deviant case analysis as looking for and discussing elements of data that appears not to support or contradicts patterns that emerge from the data analysis. Deviant case analysis can be seen as a process for refining the data until it explains the majority of cases.

Deviant case analysis was applied for this research project during the data analysis phase. As the researcher I looked for data that either showed contradictions or seemed not to support data patterns, and reported on each participants' views.

The final technique to establish trustworthiness in qualitative data according to Guba and Lincoln (1994) is member checking. This technique is said as being a very crucial part of establishing credibility. Member checking can be defined as a process whereby data is reviewed by members from whom the data was originally obtained. This technique can be either formally conducted or informally during the process of observation and conversation.

A positive aspects of member checking is that it provides each of the participants the opportunity to assess what they intended to do or say during the observation or conversation (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). A negative aspect of member checking is that it relies on the assumption that there is a fixed truth of reality that can be accounted for by a researcher and confirmed by a respondent (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). As the researcher, I adhered to member checking after transcribing the data from the interview session. I emailed the transcripts to the research participants and allowed each participant the time to go through the transcripts to test the data. Two of the research participants returned with added information to their transcripts, whereas the other four participants were satisfied with the data that they have originally given me.

Transferability according to Guba and Lincoln (1994) refers to showing that the findings of one's study can be applied to other similar contexts. A technique used to ensure transferability in qualitative data is to make use of thick descriptions. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994) thick descriptions can be defined as describing the phenomenon of interest in great detail in order to evaluate the extent to which the conclusions drawn are transferable to other times, settings, situations, and people. Thick descriptions can be contrasted to thin descriptions, which amount to merely a superficial account (Lincoln & Guba, 1994).

According to Shenton (2004) detailed description in this area can be an important provision for promoting credibility as it helps to convey the actual situations that have been investigated and, to an extent, the contexts that surround them. Without this insight, it is difficult for the reader of the final account to determine the extent to which the overall findings "ring true". Thick descriptions was achieved by describing EAP as viewed by the participants in sufficient detail by means of extensive reporting of data extracts.

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994) dependability indicates that the findings of the study are consistent, as such if the study were repeated, in the same context, with the same participants and methods, similar findings would be obtained (Shenton, 2004). According to Guba and Lincoln (1994) dependability in qualitative data can be established through an inquiry audit or external audit.

Guba and Lincoln state that:

> external audits involve having a researcher not involved in the research process examine both the process and product of the research study. The purpose is to evaluate

the accuracy and evaluate whether or not the findings, interpretations and conclusions are supported by the data (1994, p. 2).

An external audit contains both positive and negative aspects. A positive aspect of an external audit is that is provides the opportunity for participants to challenge the process and findings of a research study. It thus allows for preliminary findings, creates the opportunity to assess the adequacy of data and gives important feedback to the researcher that can lead to additional data gathering (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). Guba and Lincoln (1994) also caution that a potentially negative aspects of an external audit is the underlying assumption that there is only a fixed truth that can be accounted for by a researcher and confirmed by an outside auditor. A negative aspect unique to external audits is that the auditor may disagree with the researcher's interpretation of data. The dilemma then occurs when having to make the decision between whose data is interpreted more accurately (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). All transcripts, emails and field notes are stored should an audit be warranted in the next five years.

Confirmability refers to ensuring that the findings of a study are representative of the experiences and ideas of the participants and not of the characteristics and preferences of the researcher (Shenton, 2004).

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994) confirmability refers to the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not by the researcher's bias, motivation, or interest. To ensure confirmability of data in a qualitative study, Guba and Lincoln (1994) describes making use of techniques such as confirmability audits, audio trails and self-reflexivity of the researcher in terms of their subjectivity. Confirmability audits also refer to external audits which have already been discussed. An audit trail refers to "a transparent description of the research steps taken from the start of the research project to the development and reporting of the finding. These are records that are kept regarding what was done in an investigation (Lincoln & Guba, 1994, p. 1).

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994) audit trails refers to "a transparent description of the research steps taken from the start of a research project to the development and reporting of findings. These are records that are kept regarding what was done in an investigation (p. 1)."

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994) there are a few important factors when developing an audit trail. It is of importance to have a clear research plan which includes the research

design, data collection decisions, steps taken on data analysis and report writing. Information such as the sampling technique, the role of the researcher and the role of the different data sources were also prioritised in this report of the study.

The final technique to establish confirmability in qualitative data is self-reflexivity. Reflexivity can be defined as "an attitude of attending systematically to the context of knowledge construction, especially to the effect of the researcher, at every step of the research process" (Malterud, 2001, p. 484).

To establish reflexivity two steps need to be followed. The first step entailed, I, as the researcher keeping a reflexive journal and the second step entailed reporting personal perspectives, positions, values and beliefs in this report of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1994).

A reflexive approach urges researchers to talk about themselves, their presuppositions, choices, experiences, and actions during the research process (Mruck & Breuer, 2003). Journal notes that were made by myself included writing on my experiences of the interviewing process: "Remember to not be biased about my research or research topic during my interviews, E.G.: commenting about how powerful this form of psychotherapy is." Another concern that I was faced with was whether I was willing to write on EAP if it was portrayed as not being powerful by one of my research participants, I wrote: "Please remember to accept any kind of response from your research participant, as it might it be not what you though you would find or wanted to find."

3.8 Conclusion

Methodologically, this descriptive and exploratory research study aimed to explore and describe the experiences of licensed mental health practitioners and/or credentialed equine specialists who have included EAP within their practise by focussing on the role that equines have on the psychotherapeutic process, from a constructivistic epistemology and theoretically drew upon mainly Kolb's Experiential Learning Model. Participants were selected based on purposeful criterion sampling. Only licensed mental health practitioners or credentialed equine specialists who included EAP within their practise, and were registered at the Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy Institute of South Africa (EAPISA) or the Equine-Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA) were considered for participation. Semi-structured face-to-

face interviews were conducted with six participants. A post-interview follow-up email was used to gain additional feedback from each participant. Finally, data was analysed using thematic analysis and the data was verified by employing Guba and Lincoln's guidelines for trustworthiness of qualitative data.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Discussion of findings

In this following section, I discuss the themes that emerged from the co-research process. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed by myself. The themes I had analysed were then given to the co-coder to look over, in order to make any changes or suggestions as we agreed were necessary. The reported themes are the result of this working together.

The themes were organised into seven main themes: Theme 1 focusses on shifting dynamics in the therapeutic relationship. Theme 2 sets the scene for storytelling. Theme 3 looks at the equine as intermediary and therapeutic tool. Theme 4 makes the statement that what the equine sees is what you get. Theme 5 looks at instantaneous but lasting results. Theme 6 identifies variations and similarities in approach and activities. Theme 7 looks at the emotive motives of EAP practitioners.

The themes emerged directly from the content of the interviews, follow-up emails and my field notes. Themes were further divided into sub-themes for the sake of order and understanding. However, often themes overlapped between different categories. In these cases, I have placed them within the category where they seem to fit most comfortably and reflect what the interviewees emphasised. Within this content grouping, themes were also analysed on different levels.

4.1.1. Theme 1: From dyad to triad: Shifting dynamics in the therapeutic relationship
1.1. On Orthodoxy and alternatives: Making space for both

EAP is fairly new modality of therapy, especially within the South African context (Hallberg, 2008). As EAP grows in its popularity, it would seem that the old proverb, 'There is nothing as good for the inside of the man as the outside of an equine' is true, with regard to the intuitive understanding of humans. Taking therapy outdoors, allows for the opportunity to move the therapeutic process beyond self-reporting and allow for direct observation of real-time behaviours, responses and patterns (Hublou, 2015).

Moving the therapeutic process beyond self-reporting allows the client to become 'unstuck' in situations where he or she might find them stuck. Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy may be the way to help get "unstuck" (Risso, n.d.). Sometimes, individuals

can feel "stuck" in psychotherapy and here Equine-Assisted psychotherapy can assist to rejuvenate psychotherapy (Risso, n.d.). Hublou (2015) states that Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy offers a treatment option that is more active and engaging than traditional talk therapy.

Participant A highlighted where patients often get stuck in traditional talk therapy, despite a number of sessions, EAP allows one to move forward within the healing process. Especially, if patients are resistant or incapable of verbalisation, EAP allows for these patients to also heal, by experiencing rather than talking. Participant A describes this process of experiencing healing rather than talking about one's problems:

"Clients differ and some of the clients come and they just want to talk. Then you get the others that struggle to speak. You get that feeling that they do not want to talk and then you send them out to the horses."(A)

"People that have certain problems and you need to speak to someone where there are other problems that people experience that would be better resolved by working with the horses." (A)

It is however important to note that for most of my research participants the starting point of EAP would be a traditional talk therapy session before going into the arena with the horses. This first session is to mainly inform the psychotherapist on what the individual is experiencing and to develop a sense of who the individual is. Participant F reported on this

"...the client will go to a traditional therapy session in the office with a psychologist first... and then when the psychologist feels... they can move...over to EAP..." (F)

EAP should therefore not be seen as an alternative to the traditional talk therapy, but rather as a form of therapy that builds on talk therapy and allows one to move forward when feeling stuck in traditional talk therapy. As a therapeutic tool, the ability to escape from a 'confining' office is deemed effective in quickly reaching the heart of the person's concerns.

1.2. A collaboration of three: The triad as meaning-making system

EAP is described as being a collaborative effort between the licensed psychotherapist, an equine specialist, and the client. These three parties work together in order to achieve or address treatments goals (Cave, 2012). These parties together make meaning from how the

client and equine interacts with each other. The information gained through the interactions between the equine and client is used to reach therapeutic goals (Cave, 2012).

Each of the participants clearly agreed with the literature as mentioned above by Cave (2012). Each participant explained this collaborative effort, as discussed above, by making use of a triangular example:

Psychotherapist

Equine Specialist   Client
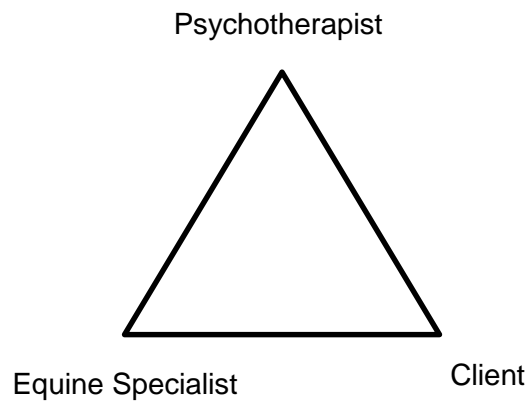
Figure 4: EAP: Collaborative effort (Cave, 2012).

"So, it works like a triangle. You have got your therapists and then you have got your horses and then you have your clients… For me it is like the therapists, the horses and then the client, everything comes together..." (A)

"You would have your, for argument's sake, mental-health specialists: psychologists and your equine specialists then the horses" (C)

Participant A agreed with EAGALA (2009) that the psychotherapist, equine specialist and client each have different roles and responsibilities to play out within the therapeutic environment and therapeutic team. Each of these different roles is based on equal partnership within the healing process as stated by participant A and E:

"...so all of them have a role to play." (A)

"The whole session has three parts so it is an equal partnership between the therapist, the horse and the client." (E)

4.1.2. Theme 2: On myth and metaphor: Setting the scene for storytelling

      2.1. My kingdom for an equine: The equine as archetype

For over 5000 years equines have been an ever-present ally in war and peace. Civilisations have risen and fallen on their backs and evidence of the equine's use is everywhere to be seen (Lubbe & Scholtz, 2013). An example of what equines have been used for in the past is given by The British Museum (2012): the only way to travel on land faster than human pace was by equine. Since travel is one of the defining features of human development, so the history of the equine is the history of civilisation itself. Participants of my research study also acknowledged the long path that human and equines have walked together:

"...the horse and man we do have a history together..."

"Our civilisation happened because of a horse so I believe that we have some connection to them in some way or form that we possibly cannot describe..."

Equine symbol meanings also date back to prehistory, and the first civilised, written acknowledgement of the equine comes in the third millennium BC where historian's uncovered slate tablets in Elam which refers to this noble, wild beast (Garcon & Nosrati, 2013). Due to its natural companionship with man in both work and art, the equine easily becomes symbolic. Serving man in war, mobility, productivity, agriculture, development of all kinds, the equine is regarded as one of the largest contributors to the enhancement of civilisation (Garcon & Nosrati, 2013). Common symbolic meanings attached to equines include power, grace, beauty, nobility, strength and freedom (Garcon & Nosrati, 2013). The meaning and symbolism of the equine varies depending on whether this animal spirit guide is represented as wild, tamed, moving freely or constrained. One of my research participants also attached the symbol of freedom to equines:

"If you want to describe something that represents freedom in the media, you will use a loose horse that is running." (D)

How individuals resonate with equines will contribute to their decision of what they attach to the horse during psychotherapy and therefore what equines symbolise to them in their psychotherapy and meeting their therapeutic goals.

2.2. Artistic licence: Constructing analogies that fit

Due to the symbolic meaning that has been attached to equines over the past decades, the freedom to come up with interpretations which are extended metaphorically to create a viable story between the horse and the client becomes possible.

Metaphorical constructs are the primary mechanism utilized for change (Irwin & Weber, 2001; Karol, 2007; Kersten & Thomas, 1999). A prime target area in EAP is for the psychotherapist and equine specialist to work together in order to facilitate metaphorical learning experiences for the client (Cave, 2012). The psychotherapist and equine specialist then attends to the clients' verbal and non-verbal responses to concern areas and then the psychotherapist and equine specialist designs or constructs metaphors to help clients develop and adjust their emotional responses.

An example of where metaphorical learning of the clients' personality aspects took place was described by participants B and C:

"If a client is scared of working with the horses, generally that client will be fearful of other things so it is very valuable then to expose the client to working the horses. If they can overcome that, it is a beautiful metaphor for them to overcome almost everything that they might be stuck with in life. Nine and a half times out of 10 where there is fear in the arena there is fear in other aspects of their lives or phobias."(B)

"When I first started doing EAP, I did the eight office sessions with him and he was a very isolated gentleman, mid-30's still staying at home, never promoted at work, very rigid and very lonely, very isolated, very sad. Long story short, we made a decision to go across to the equine therapy. The first session on the day that he arrived there, the first 10 or 15 minutes of that session we were standing in the outside just observing, just preparing him to go in. He was asking a lot of questions which I was processing.

We then made the choice to go in and the mare that I was working with at the time turned her back on us and looked in the opposite direction keeping in mind this man did not ever express emotion how he was feeling. He held it all in. As a result of that he became physically ill because what you do not manifest verbally can actually become a physical symptom and it can escalate. We were just explaining to him what was going on and the minute he shared his first emotion, she turned around and she walked straight to him and put her head on his shoulder.

This man just sobbed for the rest of the session and that was the beginning of them most beautiful, powerful process I have ever seen. He was one of my very first clients and to this day I still use this as an example and I can see that it is having an impact on you. He then moved out of home, got the promotion at work, he met someone and started a relationship and this was years of ineffective process for him of living which changed in 15 minutes. No therapist in an office, it does not matter how good you are would have been able to have touched that part of him because he was so skilled at holding it back but that horse just knew exactly what to do."(B)

"So, she would only go to these smaller horses and she would not go to the bigger horses. The horses became a metaphorical representation of her inner child and of her adult self so there was the child self and the adult self." (C)

Research participants agreed that EAP creates a very powerful space for metaphorical learning to take place as stated in literature and pioneers within the EAP field above. As a situation plays out within the EAP session, the client can apply it to their life and generalise the experiential learning to their daily lives. Participant A described this process as:

"...you make what happens in the arena about your life and the things that play themselves out in the arena is what is happening in your life." (A).

2.3. Found in translation

The metaphorical learning that takes place within the EAP session is found within the translation of the EAP session. Literature on exactly how the metaphorical learning takes place and who the translation of the metaphorical learning within EAP is done by was very limited. According to my research participants in most cases the psychotherapist and equine specialist leave it up to the client to apply and interpret the interaction between him/herself and the equine, and, in other cases, the interaction between the equine and the client is translated or interpreted by the therapeutic team who then feeds this information back to the client. Who the interpretation is done by depends mainly on the individual case.

Participant A and E reported on individual cases where the metaphorical link was made by the clients themselves and thereby benefiting from self-insight:

"... she realised it by herself, so, lots of the clients make those links themselves." (A)

"...the client will come up with what it means to them..." (E)

In cases where the client needed assistance with applying the metaphoric learning to their own lives, the psychotherapist probed the situation by asking questions such as:

"We noticed when you did this the horses kept stomping its foot, what could that mean to you? You feeling a bit frustrated?"

Participant A stated that may it be the case where they have to facilitate the learning experience, there is an exact time at which this needs to be do done as the psychotherapist and equine specialist do not want to interfere with this process of learning. Participant C reported:

"... you just know it is strategically now the right moment to intervene and say something, comment on something, ask a question and facilitate..." (C)

Psychotherapists and equine specialists compare themselves to being like scaffolding to the client within the therapeutic session:

"We call it scaffolding like when you are building a building, we are just the scaffolding and the client has to build his building and then we can clear the scaffolding away and leave and the client should stand." (E)

2.4. The 'outsider' illusion

As part of helping the client interpret the metaphorical learning and apply it to their own lives, the psychotherapist becomes involved, thus being an outsider of the situation seems to be only an illusion. The involvement of the therapeutic team is thus a reality.

The therapeutic team has the tendency to view themselves as being separate from rather than a part of the meaning-making process. Knaus (2010), from within a social constructionist epistemology adds that any and all interpretation commits us to a version of reality that carries with it, a set of implicit and culturally relative values. All role players are thus a part of the system. Some of my research participants are aware of the fact that in order to facilitate this process they need to put their beliefs and agenda's aside. For example, Participant E emphasised:

"I have got to be very clear in keeping my mind clean of my agenda, my issues..." (E)

"The trick is not to imprint on a session..." (E)

The research participants of this study are aware of the fact that one can possibly become too involved in the psychotherapeutic process. The over involvement of the psychotherapist can have a negative impact on the client. May the psychotherapist encompass on the therapeutic process, non-beneficial countertransference can be caused. According to Rockville (2000) countertransference refers to the range of reactions and responses that the counsellor has toward clients based on the counsellor's own background and personal issues.

In a negative countertransference situation, the counsellor may push a client to deal with his/her issues before the client is ready - out of the psychotherapist's own emotional needs. For the same reason, a psychotherapist might discourage the client from talking about their issues, saying it is not the right time. With this in mind, participants emphasised how important it is in EAP to let the client determine when and at what pace to work on their issues.

4.1.3. Theme 3: A buffer and a bridge: The equine as intermediary and therapeutic tool
3.1. Equine as Healer

According Lee and Makela, (2015) equines are not seen as doing something specific for clients or therapists. Their presence and natural characteristics simply promote positive changes in therapy. Equines have similar characteristics to humans, which promote healing in therapy - equines are playful, big, and calm; they respond to clients in the present, raise clients' awareness, and their physical presence can be comforting. Equines also bring individuality to the therapy session with their different characteristics such as different personalities, issues, and life stories (Lee & Makela, 2015).

Because of this therapeutic element that equines possess, they have been regarded as being a co-therapist within EAP (Cave, 2012 & Hallberg, 2008). Participant C and F highlighted this role of the equine:

"They are very much a co-therapist in the therapeutic team." (C)

"...we see the equine as a therapist." (F)

Participant A argued that just as a client would talk to a therapist about their problems, clients can also talk effectively to the equine about their problems:

"...they can talk to the horses and explain to the horses. They do not necessarily have to share it with the counsellor." (A)

Equines are viewed as being excellent communicators. EAP emphasises the impact of non-verbal communication by using the relationship between humans and horses. Equines are prey animals and due to their natural instincts, they respond honestly to how a person presents himself, both physically and emotionally, and provide immediate feedback. They react to the environment and energy through non-verbal communication, creating an opportunity for humans to understand what we are actually communicating, instead of what humans think they are communicating (PATH, 2014).

3.2. Fodder for thought

As mentioned above by PATH (2014), equines respond and give immediate feedback based on how the individual presents him/herself to the equine. Equines are perceived as non-judgmental and yet intuitive. If a client is not congruent with their feelings and actions, the equine will non-verbally confront the client by reacting to the client's authentic emotions beyond the client's 'surface presentation' (PATH, 2014).

Going into the space of the equine the client is forced to think about how they are going to present themselves to the equine. Participant D stated that one of their clients gave feedback about the EAP process disclosing that the equine taught them him about respect. Humans, in essence, have to show the equine respect as equines have straightforward preferences. If the client presents themselves to the equine in a manner that equine does not approve of, the equine will give direct feedback:

"They said this equine taught us respect... we had to realise that this equine has things that he likes and things that he doesn't like and if we do the things he doesn't like then he is going to let us know..." (D)

Clients process their feelings in the moment with facilitators while doing the activity, and will take the experience home to reflect on their patterns of behaviour and new skills learned. The equines are regarded as frequently teaching clients that when they change their approach in interpersonal relationships or unfamiliar situations they are likely to achieve a different, more beneficial outcome due to the client's newfound perceptiveness, flexibility in responsiveness (PATH, 2014).

3.3. Fear factor

Equines are large and strong animals which challenge the client to overcome his/her fear in order to work with the equine. Learning and mastering new skills with large animals such as equines enhances the client's confidence and ability to tackle new projects/challenges. Working alongside and establishing a relationship with such large and intuitive animals instils a sense of self-worth and self-confidence. This can be of extremely powerful benefit to those people who as a result of extensive distress or abuse, have often experienced themselves as being powerless (EAGALA, 2009). Participant B, C, D and F agreed that being fearful of an equine can in itself be therapy and a learning experience for the client:

"A lot of people are scared of horses but that also feeds into the whole EAP process. They are these amazing, powerful strong, weighing so many animals that you are then able to work with, interact with, and if I can do this with an equine, I can do this with anything." (B)

"I can make a 500kg equine move out of my therapeutic space... walk through a maze, walk over a jump, sometimes without a halter, sometimes without any form of contact, I am so much more in control than I think I am. " (B)

"If a client is scared of working with the horses, generally that client will be fearful of other things so it is very valuable then to expose the client to working the horses." (C)

"We see people growing in confidence because if you come into an environment that you are a little bit frightened or unsure, insecure and you can go into that space... that boosts your self-esteem." (D)

"Horses are big and scary, they are intimidating so for the clients to step into the ring for the arena and still achieve their goals in therapy despite how scared they are or how intimidated they are by these horses- that is also empowering." (F)

3.4. Coming unstuck

As mentioned in theme 1, EAP can be viewed a form of therapy that helps one to become 'unstuck' in therapy. Knaus (2010) states it is common for clients to get stuck in therapy. As sometimes a client stops progressing or at other times a client starts regressing or relapsing. Fortunately, according to MacIlwinen (2015), a way forward is through Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy. EAP provides groups the opportunity for clients to get unstuck, move to the next level, and/or deepen in their therapeutic work.

Participant F mentioned that she has experienced this herself:

"...we have seen it before where ...the psychologist that I work with will be sitting in sessions in the office with clients for months on end and she will bring them to the horses and we do one or two EAP sessions and so much comes out of it." (F)

"...in traditional therapy clients can sit with a mask on and be very close and yes Sir, no sir, horses do not allow you to do that. Horses bring about what you are thinking and feeling..." (F)

To become unstuck, traditional therapists have suggested that their individual clients make use of EAP. Participant E also recommended that may a client become stuck within any form of therapy, a complete shift can happen in EAP:

"When someone has been in talk therapy for a number of weeks without really having any breakthrough, I would then recommend maybe to take it outside." (E)

"When you get stuck, you need a complete shift and sometimes the equine therapy just gives you that break..." (E)

3.5. Room to move and sharing the stage

Participant C has found that the formal environment as in an office during talk therapy can be very intimidating to therapy clients and can make the individual feel pressurised to talk:

"...it is not the formal office environment where it is one-on-one and they feel on the spot..." (C)

Therapists know there are immense benefits to "outside four walls" therapy. The benefit of being in the outdoors during EAP is also highlighted by participant C, D and E:

"...it is out in the elements, in the cold and in the sun and the rain..." (C)

"...they can be outside and I think that takes away a lot of the pressure that you may feel in a traditional psychotherapy space. (D)

"...it is a big open space, it is not confined..." (E)

"...it gives us self-distancing capacity so where I find office therapy very intimidating and very upfront and quite severe or harsh for a lot of people, as soon as you use animals

...you are giving people something to reflect off of. So that changes how they are able to interact...” (E)

By incorporating equines into therapy and talking the client outdoors allows for the client to feel less pressure to talk and perform as highlighted by participant A and B:

“...do not even need to speak to the horses because there is no pressure on them.” (A)

“...it makes the client think about something other than how they are performing.” (B)

“I think that takes away a lot of the pressure that you may feel in a traditional psychotherapy space. That pressure to talk...” (D)

3.6. No judgement here

Another benefit of EAP is the fear of being judged that is not present. Equines are non-judgemental and honest, and for some individuals these are invaluable qualities. Equines possess “unique attributes...as members of the therapeutic milieu” (Vidrine et al., 2002, p. 590). As equines are inherently non-judgemental, representing the true unconditional positive regard so crucial in helping relationships (McLeod, 2009). Participant B, D, E and F highlighted the benefit of clients being in a non-judgemental environment:

“...we have our guards down and we are open to experience...” (B)

“We experience them as unconditional and non-judgemental.” (D)

“...the client perceives a forgiveness there and an acceptance there...” (E)

“...what better way to do it, than a non-threatening environment with animals...”(E)

“... the clients do not feel as guarded...” (F)

“...clients find it easier to open up around horses.” (F)

4.1.4. Theme 4: Mirror, mirror on the stall: What the equine sees is what you get
4.1. One of the herd

Equines are herd animals, which means they naturally desire company and often want to be led. This makes them very social animals that want to create bonds - and this can be

especially touching when it comes to humans. Equines are therefore ideal for Animal-Assisted Therapy (EAGALA, 2014), as they will be inclined to develop a relationship with clients who demonstrate a readiness. Participant C, D and E reinstated the fact that horses are herd animals and will therefore naturally want to form a relationship with human beings:

"...you are entering their system so they will treat you like they treat any other equine and they will take in as part of their herd..." (C)

"...they react to man on the ground exactly the same way as what they would react to other horses in the herd..." (D)

"...they are herd animals so there is another creature in the arena and they want to put that in the mix." (E)

4.2. Deep cries unto to deep (The emotional connection between human and horse)

The non-verbal communication and emotional connection between the client and equine provides an alternative to the traditional view of therapy which emphasises the spoken word as the only means to gain insight and/or achieve healing. EAP taps into evocative healing power and the idea that trauma and/or struggle can also be understood and transformed in the absence of speech (Cave, 2012).

Participant C and D agreed that one can heal in the absence of speech, or more specifically speaking, during EAP. Equines might not understand what humans communicate to them verbally, but they certainly pick up on non-verbal communication and respond accordingly to:

"The horses do not understand what they (clients) say but they definitely react to the emotions behind what is being said." (C)

"...their way of communicating is non-verbal ..." (D)

4.3. Mirroring

According to PATH (2014) equines are very effective in creating a rich learning environment. Their heightened sensitivity, instant feedback and ability to mirror human's emotions create opportunities to increase a client's awareness, congruency and effective use of non-verbal skills. Equines also mirror the moods of the individual client (EAGALA, 2009). The equine-human bond mirrors the inner private world of the individual. A quote among

equine riders is that "an equine is a mirror to the soul." This unique truth offers so many opportunities for patients/clients to develop relationship skills.

Participant A, C and E highlighted that the mirroring effect of the equine, is what gives the client the feedback that is needed. The clearer the message from the client's side, the easier the equine is able to comply with or react to the intent:

"...what happens in the arena is a mirror of what is happening in their lives..." (A)

"...the horses mirror the human behaviour..." (C)

"...all of that is reflected back at you because of what you are doing with your interaction." (E)

"...a big mirror to show you..." (E)

Equines respond negatively to negative moods, which teaches the client that his/her behaviour can affect others. This makes the individual go through behaviour change in order to work successfully with the equine (EAGALA, 2009). Similarly, participants C, D and E have found in practice that:

"...it allows people to see what they are doing ineffectively." (C)

"...if you want an equine to do something you have to change yourself in order to get the equine to do what it is you want it to do..."(D)

"...all of that is reflected back at you because of what you are doing with your interaction." (E)

4.1.5. Theme 5: Swiftly but surely: Instantaneous but lasting results

5.1. Immediacy and feedback

Equines being both herd animals and prey animals make them an interesting element in the therapeutic setting. Prey animals are naturally very alert which makes them very receptive to small changes in a person's mood and behaviour (Pendry & Roeter, 2013). In addition, the equines' herd instincts make them very responsive to those small changes that they perceive (Pendry & Roeter, 2013). As mentioned, one quality about therapy equines is that they are regularly commended of their ability to essentially mirror the patient's emotions (Bachi, 2013).

According to Jarrell (2009) this is arguably the reason the patient's self-trust and confidence building is such an inherent result of working with equines.

Equines react to the participants' body language, giving immediate feedback to both the verbal and the non-verbal communication. As such equines, demand emotional and behavioural consistency, as well as require individuals to be actively engaged in activities in an open and honest manner (Shumbashaba, 2013). Participant A and B also emphasised that the feedback that clients get from equines are immediate:

"...the equine gives them immediate feedback." (A)

"...feedback is immediate..." (B)

For example, if a person walks up to an equine very fearful the equine will respond to that body language, by becoming tense and distrustful. If the patient were to try to lead the equine, the equine would likely resist because they could not trust the person's ability to lead them. In contrast, once the person became confident in their own abilities the equine would be able to detect that there is no fear and would readily follow the patient. Equines give straightforward real-time, biofeedback to therapy clients (PATH, 2014).

5.2. Grounded in the here-and-now

EAP prompts for metaphors consistent with the identified treatment issues and goals and fosters working towards improvement of these. Through the course of treatment, specific goals, objectives and interventions are identified and documented (Windhorse Farm, 2009). EAP allows a client to actually respond to difficult and challenging situations in the here and now through the activities with the equines. Participant C, D and E highlighted the fact that the learnings that take place during the EAP session happens in the here-and-now:

"...it is in the here and now, it is powerful..." (C)

"They respond in the here, and the now in the moment to how they experience you..." (D)

"...you can experience that change in the here and now so I think it is a major benefit from that space." (D)

"...and that is where their learning is, in that moment." (E)

The learning that takes place within an EAP session, thus, helps with a variety of behavioural and psychological challenges and issues. Clients learn about themselves and others by processing the equine's response and their own feelings, thoughts and behaviours during the session.

5.3. Sticking power

The long-term effects of EAP continue after treatment because the patient/client has learned skills that continue to improve long after treatment have been completed. Individuals attributes many life lessons and invaluable skills such as compassion, teamwork, support, and responsibility to equines. Participants within my study agreed that the lessons that are learned during the EAP session are lessons that stay with their clients for a long period of time, thus making these lessons very impactful.

"...it is something that stays with them" (A)

"...it has a very, long-lasting effect..." (C)

"It is an ongoing almost movie in a way that plays in their head...Sometimes for days, weeks, months afterwards." (C)

"It is not just for that moment, it goes on. It has its own longevity." (E)

The term 'sticking power' has been attached to these types of lessons learned as mentioned above by three of the research participants. Participant C

"We call it sticking power." (C)

5.4. A treatment in brief

Berg (2015), a professor of animal science at North Dakota State University in the USA, is studying the therapeutic benefits of equines. Berg collaborated with a residential childcare facility to compare 12 weeks of traditional talk therapy to 12 weeks of Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy in adolescents identified as having problematic behaviours, such as aggression, lying and defiance. These youth are at greater risk for anti-social behaviours later in life. Measures used in his study focused on the degree of psychopathology, empathy and self-concept of the participants. Preliminary evidence indicates the problematic behaviours in the Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy group normalised in all areas. For those in 12 weeks of

traditional talk therapy, results were less dramatic. Behaviours did not return to normal levels in all areas. Participant A, C and F experienced EAP as also being a brief form of therapy:

"When you compare it to traditional psychotherapy, it cut therapy in half..." (C)

"So it is quicker, it is very powerful..." (C)

"It is a very quick form of therapy because so much comes out so quickly..." (F)

According to EAGALA (2009) because of EAP's intensity and effectiveness, it is considered a short-term or "brief" approach. EAP is generally a short-term therapy that receives quick responses especially from younger clients (Schultz et al., 2007).

5.5. Experiential learning

Experiential learning can be defined as learning through doing (Kolb, 1984). As embodied by Confucius: I hear and I forget; I see and I remember; I do and I understand. EAP is experiential in nature. Experiential learning is a process through which individuals develop knowledge, skills, and values from direct experiences. Clients learn about themselves and others by participating in events with the equines, and then processing feelings, behaviours, and patterns (EAGALA, 2009). Participants have agreed that clients learn better during EAP as they are actually involved in experiential activities:

"...with the horses they actually experience it" (A)

"Also the experiential nature in experiencing this stuff." (A)

"...they do not just talk because they go out and they experience it actually." (A)

"It is experiential and it is hands on..." (C)

"...we are working in an experiential space so it is about learning and doing." (D)

"It is learning by doing...it is experiential learning..." (F)

4.1.6. Theme 6: Purview and preference: Variations and similarities in approach and activities

6.1. Variations and similarities in approach

Literature on the exact formalities and administration on how an EAP session works was not found. However, from information gathered through my research participants EAP approaches differed from participant to participant within the South African context. Most participants agreed that an intake session is essential before going into the arena with the horses. The intake session provides the psychotherapist with a general background on the client and what presenting problem the client needs addressed. Participant A, C and F agreed that they believed this intake session is essential for a behavioural assessment and gaining a general sense of the client:

"...I believe that you need to do your assessment; behavioural assessments." (A)

"You take the history and then you decide what is required for this client to achieve their goal..." (C)

"...I always start in the office, take down the history and do the IPA (Interactional Pattern Analysis, Vorster) and that will tell me where to go." (C)

"It even starts before the client gets into the arena. It obviously starts in the office and you get to know the client and their behaviour and interactional patterns..." (C)

"...she advises the clients to come in for a background intake sessions at sometimes she will just do one in the office and then we will move straight to the arena. Other times she will have clients in the office for two or three months..." (F)

Participant E, however, differed in approach from the rest of the participants. She stated that her approach is to take the clients straight into the arena with the equines as it makes it difficult for the clients to be moved from the office to the arena:

"So in my opinion is if you are going to do equine therapy, take them from session one out with the horses... it is very difficult to have someone in office-based therapy and then try and bring them into a whole other world" (E)

6.2. Variations and similarities in activities

According to Kakacek (2007), EAP activities are designed to enable clients to have the opportunity to solve problems. For example, one of the first activities is to catch and halter an equine. The equines can appear to "not cooperate" and move away or the halter for the equine may not fit. Youth usually have no conception of how to approach an equine, let alone to halter

one. The goal of all EAP activities is experiential, thus, directions are not provided. This creates a challenge for clients and engages them in creative solution problem-solving to succeed.

A more challenging activity, such as constructing an obstacle course, is regarded as an excellent model for adjudicated youth to discuss what their obstacles are to succeed outside the arena, or in their community (Kakacek, 2007).

According to PATH (2014), EAP activities are designed by the psychotherapist and equine specialist to provide opportunities for the participants to explore how they move through life, how they react and respond to challenges and how they are perceived by others. Participant c indicated the range of complexity of tAsks assigned to clients in the EAP session, as such, clients to do simple activities such as grooming the equine, while more complex activities, as would involve the client building an obstacle course:

"They are asked to do simple activities with the horses for example groom an equine or put a halter on the equine..." (C)

"...we tell them to build an obstacle and name it whatever your worries are." (E)

6.3. The types of clients and/or issues in EAP works well with

According to EAGALA (2014) EAP is a powerful and effective therapeutic approach that has an incredible impact on individuals, youth, families, and groups. EAP addresses a variety of mental health and human development needs including behavioural issues, attention deficit disorder, PTSD, substance abuse, eating disorders, depression, anxiety, relationship problems and communication needs. By looking at literature it was hard to find a set list for what EAP can treat effectively. This thread was also evident from my participants' responses to what EAP works well for. Some participants named specific disorders or problems, while other participants believed the psychological problems or disorders that could be addressed via EAP is never-ending:

"...with clients that have got ADHD so with the horses it is beneficial because the horses tend to slow them down..." (A)

"...in my experience were clients battle with assertiveness, communication, boundaries, distance in their relationships, self-esteem." (B)

"...I think EAP works exceptionally well for, people will with a lot of self-doubt, people with low self-esteem, people who struggle to feel they have worth..." (B)

"...you can use EAP for any behavioural, emotional, psychological problem." (C)

"I think that you can use EAP in most challenges that people face. People that feel that life is not quite what they wanted to be and what is their purpose..." (D)

"I would recommend EAP for most things. I have seen it work really well with clients who have concentration issues. It helps big-time for kids with confidence issues. Anything relating to self-concept." (E)

4.1.7. Theme 7: An enduring love affair: The emotive motives of EAP practitioners
7.1. Ties that bond

To create a meaningful relationship between the equine and the client, and in order for the therapist to facilitate such a relationship, a positive bond between the therapist and the equine is very necessary (Parish-Plass, 2013). Participants also highlighted that they each have an emotional bond with the equines:

"I started out with this because I love horses..." (A)

"I have had a lifetime interaction with horses..." (D)

7.2. The horsey history

There are many equine-assisted psychotherapists who have become therapists due to their personal history and bond with equines which formed early on in their lives as evident in the current study. Literature on this topic is however silent on this aspect, possibly because a personal history or love of equines is seen as self-evident. Almost all of my participants went into EAP due to their long history with these animals, dating back to their childhood:

"I have been riding horses since nine years old, so most of my life I have been involved with horses." (A)

"...my mom was eight months pregnant with me she was still jumping in shows, so it started from before I was born..." (C)

"I have ridden horses probably the majority of my life, so horses have been a part of my life for 40 years." (D)

"I used to ride as a child..." (E)

"I started riding when I was 13, I think." (F)

4.1.8. Theme 8: Limitations of working with equines in a therapeutic context

8.1. A matter of logistics

A limitation of EAP is its availability within South Africa. Participant F stated that a limitation of EAP could possibly be because of only a few EAP programmes exist thus making it difficult for all potential clients to access:

"The limitations: I guess you cannot take the equine anywhere. The clients had to go to the horses and they are not many equine farms that are available for this type of work..." (F)

8.2. Mother-nature: A double-edged sword

Segal et al. (2002) and Moss, Waugh and Barnes (2008) write about how mindfulness is a way of being rather than merely a doing mode. Segal et al. suggest that being mode "is characterized by a sense of freedom, freshness, and unfolding of experience in new ways" (2002, p. 74). A sense of freedom gained from being outside in nature was articulated by some of the participants. Participant E referred to how one gets to fulfil the longing to be in the outdoors:

"...you get the outdoor element that most people do not get enough of at the best of times..." (E)

Participant C also describes the benefit of being outside as she is less likely to experience fatigue as when sitting in the office:

"I compare working in the arena versus working in the office, I fatigue here a lot quicker than when I am there. Even though I am on my feet there and it is pretty intense because you have got to be concentrating all the time..." (C)

Even though working outside with equines has so many benefits, there are also limitations to it. Participant C and E describe these weather-related limitations:

"...you cannot be out in the elements in case someone gets struck by lightning or if it is pouring down ..." (C)

"...limitations would definitely be the geographical stuff...it is weather-related..." (E)

8.3. Allergies

Some people do not like equines, as some greatly fear them, and others may be limited due to health conditions such as allergies or other neurological disorders (Burgon, 2011). There is limited research in terms of the diseases and injuries that may be associated with interacting with animals (Beck & Katcher, 2003). Participant C stated that some clients will not choose EAP as treatment method due to their allergic reaction towards equines:

"...if someone is hectically allergic...that could be one of the reasons why you would not continue with equine-assisted psychotherapy." (C)

8.4. Cost

With research being limited, many medical insurance companies internationally and including South Africa do not recognise EAP, currently, as an approved treatment for many clinical indications. Participant E agreed that the cost of EAP makes it inaccessible to a number of psychotherapy clients:

"It is an expensive therapy and it is not always accessible..." (E)

Participant C stated that a possible factor contributing towards the costs of EAP could be the fact that instead of having one therapist as in talk therapy, one now has two therapists – the psychotherapist and equine specialist:

"...it is an expensive form of therapy because remember you have two therapeutic team members that need to be paid..." (C)

8.5. Safety

Risk of harm is another limitation of EAP according to PATH (2014). In general, working with equines can be potentially hazardous. It can also be argued that introducing patients with a mental disorder to equines can increase the risk of injury (PATH, 2014). Participant A verbalised that equines can be dangerous due to their unpredictable nature:

"...a lot of times I worry a bit about safety because the horses can react very unpredictably."
(A)

Although the potential of danger does exist in EAP, participant E reported not having witnessed any incidents within her five years of practising EAP:

"I suppose that there is the injury potential although in all five years of us doing it, I have never seen anyone injured." (E)

Rather, the participants emphasised equines as being "incredible teachers and therapists" and as having a "profound effect" that extends beyond the scope of talk therapy. Participants admitted struggles faced in a therapeutic practice involving equines, but all confirm that the positive effect that equines have on clients greatly outweighs these difficulties.

4.2 Conclusion

EAP was described by the research participants as being a collaborative effort between the licensed psychotherapist, an equine specialist, and the clients. These three parties work together in order to achieve or address treatments goals. EAP is deemed as effective due to the e therapeutic process moving beyond client self-reporting their concerns and rather allowing the client to become 'unstuck' in situations by literally being confronted with experientially difficult situations within the EAP arena which then need to be successfully overcome.

From the data analysed it is evident that EAP is deemed a successful therapeutic technique according to EAP specialists within South Africa due to its experiential nature. Participants reported that their clients learn about themselves through their experiences with the equines in the arena. The arena is also a space that represents the client's life and thus creating a space for metaphorical learning.

The metaphorical learning that takes place within the EAP session is found within the translation of the EAP session according to the research participants. Due to the symbolic meaning that has been attached to equines over the past decades, the freedom to come up with interpretations which are extended metaphorically to create a viable story between the equine and the client then becomes possible.

According to the research participants how their clients resonate with equines will contribute to their decision of what they attach to the equine during psychotherapy and therefore what equines symbolise to them in their psychotherapy and meeting their therapeutic goals. As a situation plays out within the EAP session, the client can apply it to their life and generalise the experiential learning to their daily lives.

The research participants also stated that EAP has been viewed as being successful due to the immediate feedback that equines present therapy clients with. This allows the client to assess their behaviour and make the necessary changes to their behaviour when faced with the same or similar situation. The immediate feedback received from the equines also allows the clients to learn in the here and now.

The participants also reported that EAP faces a few limitations as a treatment option. The main limitations of EAP involves the accessibility of it as well as the cost of the psychotherapy modality. These two factors can make receiving a session in EAP unlikely for a number of therapy clients especially within the South African context. Other limitation of EAP includes individuals being allergic to equines and equines being a safety hazard due to potentially an animal's unpredictable behaviour.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter functions as a summary of the current study and highlights the contribution of this study. Shortcomings of this particular study are presented and recommendations are made for further research within the EAP field.

5.2 Purpose of the research

The aim of this study was to gain a better understanding of the role that equines play when used in EAP from the perspectives of a licensed mental health practitioners and/or equine specialists. In order to do so a qualitative study was undertaken to explore the perceptions of licensed mental health practitioners and/or equine specialists on EAP. In addition, the study also explored the participants' experiences of using EAP.

5.3 Literature summary

The value of animal therapy and specifically, the value of utilising equines in therapy has been acknowledged (Paquette, 2010). Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy is viewed as an effective treatment method due to its nature. Clients have reported feeling safe enough to explore their psychological problems and to work towards change in EAP

Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy is a new and inventive treatment modality emerging in the mental health field. Research has suggested its worth in treating many mental disorders such as PTSD, autism, ADHD, anxiety/depression, schizophrenia, eating disorders, sexual abuse and a number of other diagnoses (Earles, Vernon & Yetz, 2015). Some disadvantages of research done on EAP include lack of quality data collection, small sample sizes, lack of control groups, and procedure inconsistency (Gergely, 2012). Despite these disadvantages many practices are beginning to employ EAP with stated success (Boyd, 2015).

Though quality primary research studies are lacking there is a notable amount of theoretical literature on the topic of EAP. People who have had exposure or experience with equines readily recognise the outstanding potential equines possess to change lives. Much of the literature theorises that because of equines unique combination of being a prey and herd animal they are better suited for psychotherapy than other available therapy animals (Boyd, 2015).

There is also additional therapeutic opportunity gleaned from riding equines, however some of the professional associations for EAP have chosen not to incorporate riding into the therapy. As more mental health practicners begin utilizing EAP and different models of treatment arise and are tested there is hope that a better understanding for appropriate use will be reached.

5.4 Implications and limitations of the research

A number of important limitations need to be considered for this research study done. A few limitations were identified: having a lifelong relationship with equines, EAP is a fairly new modality in South Africa, participants were recruited from two different organisations (EAPISA and EAGALA), most of my participants interviewed had prior to becoming EAP practitioners experience of working with equines.

Firstly, I have a lifelong relationship with equines, which means that I come to EAP with my own experiences and knowledge, but this also means that I have some deeply ingrained ways in which I relate to equines. It was challenging to find a point of equilibrium in terms of the researcher's role in the investigation. For example, when my personal voice and experiences added value to the study and when they interfered with analysing, interpreting and reporting the participants' experiences.

It was important to find the balance between distance and embeddedness in my investigation. Therefore during the course of writing my dissertation I have informally consulted with colleagues in the equine community who have helped me to improve my approach and conclusions throughout the process of peer review.

A second limitation of this study is due to the fact that EAP is a fairly new modality in South Africa, which led to having a very limited scope of participants to select from. From

both EAGALA and EAPISA there are only a few people practising within the South African context. For my study these few people were identified and interviewed.

A third limitation of this study is that participants were recruited from two different organisations (EAPISA and EAGALA). As seen in this study, both organisations support different approaches and models to EAP which influences the way in which the clinicians practise. Other equine organisations and individuals practising EAP could potentially provide additional information and insights that were not addressed in this sample. However, the South African context does not yet have recognised or established organisations outside of the scope of organisations included in this research study.

A fourth limitation to this research study is the fact that most of my participants interviewed had prior to becoming EAP practitioners' experience of working with equines. This could have possibly caused the participants to overestimate how equines can assist in psychotherapy. Personal experience in equine-centred activities could influence the way in which participants became involved in this type of therapy, as well as influencing their perceptions regarding the efficacy of EAP. Additionally, all of the participants a strong belief in future research of EAP. This could have also influenced the participant's responses to the researcher, promoting positive outcomes of EAP. Bias is a threat in quantitative studies and can be defined as allowing a particular influence to have more importance than it really warrants. However, in a qualitative research, the main aim is to provide credible descriptions of participants' experiences. This study in the emerging field of EAP in South African has shown that EAP practitioners who are trained and practice EAP have achieved successful outcomes. However future studies may wish to focus on clients' perceptions of EAP within the South African context. Such client-focused studies potentially could add to EAP being a wider treatment option within South Africa.

5.5 Recommendations for future research directions

This research was an exploratory and descriptive study aimed at increasing awareness amongst healthcare organisations and professionals of EAP in South Africa, however, more research is needed to enhance the current knowledge base and EAP treatment services. There are various recommendations that stem from this study. Despite the long tradition of therapy involving equines the majority of the evidence that exists is exploratory in nature rather than

empirical. The examination of the data gathered during this study highlights future research needs and recommendations that have become apparent as a result of this study.

Although international EAP literature is replete with qualitative studies, particularly, case studies, much work remains to be done in the quantitative design if this treatment approach is to gain credibility; well-designed, controlled, replicable research on the efficacy of equine-assisted/facilitated interventions is lacking. The specific directions for future research studies are described below:

5.5.1. Use of consistent definitions of components of Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy

Currently, some equine-assisted/facilitated therapeutic approaches utilise un-mounted activities, while others integrate riding into the treatment plan. It would be helpful to investigate which aspects of which approach are helpful for which client populations. Some studies investigate EAP, while others investigate a combination of therapeutic horseback riding and EAP (Selby, 2009).

5.5.2. Use of comparison groups receiving established interventions and receiving EAP as an adjunct or complementary therapy

According to Selby (2009) there is a shortage of information comparing this treatment approach to other psychotherapeutic techniques that have been shown to be effective both statistically and clinically. Future EAP studies should include the use of comparison groups receiving established interventions, such as cognitive behavioural therapy and systematic desensitization. Also needed are studies examining EAP used as an adjunct or complementary therapy to established treatments. These studies should seek to establish the dosages, diagnoses, and outcomes for which adjunctive use is effective (Selby, 2009), particularly in South Africa where many clients rely on third-party payers, namely, government services and medical aids which are both focused on cost-effective treatments.

5.5.3. Longitudinal designs investigating effects of EAP on humans and equines

Longitudinal studies that investigate the expanded psychosocial effects of interventions that use equines in service of healing are, to date, scarce in existence and limited in scope; as such there is a visible gap in the literature that remains to be filled with more longitudinal EAP studies.

In addition, it would be useful to explore the physiological responses that occur when clients interact with equines in a therapeutic setting. Even fewer studies exist on the

physiological and behavioural effects of this application on the equines that are integral to this approach- three studies were to date identified (Kaiser, 2006; Kaiser et al, 2006; Pyle, 2006; Suthers-McCabe & Albano, 2004).

5.6 Conclusion

Equines and humans have a long history together. The civilisation of human beings played out as is, largely because of equines according to Pugh (2010). Equines are described as being phenomenal animals by many people due to their natural instinct of reacting to situations. Equines act on situations based on a fight instinct or a flight instinct. Equines also react to humans on the ground exactly the same way as what they would react to other equines in the herd (EAGALA, 2014).

From what the research participants have observed and understand about equines' herd behaviour is that there is definitely an organisation in the herd, therefore making their behaviour not random. This organisation within the herd is made up of their hierarchies and social structures. Equines have their own instinctual rules and regulations and ways of communicating non-verbally, for example through the slightest flick of an ear for a move of their tail or shift of their weight.

The fact that equines are prepared to react to humans in exactly the same way as they react to the other herd members, gives humans an opportunity to go into an interaction with another live being in a way that one can learn about oneself. Therapy clients can become aware of nonverbal communications signs and what they might be portraying towards people around them. If one wants the equine to react differently, it requires the individual to change their approach and attitude towards the equine, thus creating an optimal environment for experiential learning to take place.

Another reason why equines are used in psychotherapy is because they do not carry a grudge. Research participants reported experiencing equines as unconditional and non-judgemental. This creates the opportunity to do things differently in order for the equine to respond differently. Equines respond in the here and now, based on how the equines experience the client.

A third element of why equines are successfully used in psychotherapy is due to the metaphorical learning experience that it provides. In EAP, the client is provided with the opportunity to create a space that represents the client's life and interpersonal dynamics. The arena becomes a space that represents the clients' life. The metaphorical learning experience happens due to equine mirroring the human behaviour within the session. The client is exposed to activities with the equines. Clients are asked to do simple activities with the equines, for example, groom an equine or put a halter on the equine and the mental-health specialist observes the therapy client's (human behaviour) interactions, verbally and non-verbally with the equine, and the equine specialist observes the equine's behaviour, the non-verbal communication of the equine.

The two team members then speak and observe the interaction between equine and human and then at the right time strategically feedback is given to the client. For example, if the client is being incongruent, the equine picks up on or senses empathetically the client's incongruence and they will behave accordingly which provides the therapeutic team an opportunity to give the client experience-based feedback. In essence, the purpose of equines in psychotherapy is to serve as a very effective, non-judgemental, experiential healing agent.

In order to further develop and improve EAP programmes such as EAGALA and EAPISA's work, programme evaluation research must be conducted to assess impacts and outcomes, and to examine the effectiveness of these programs using educational frameworks such as Kolb's experiential model of learning discussed above (Hallberg, 2008).

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Appendix A: Information letter to participant

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Miss Elaine Koekemoer and I am currently completing a research report in fulfilment of my MA degree in Psychology at the University of South Africa with Miss Christine Laidlaw, a lecturer in the Department of Psychology at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: The power of using equines in Equine–Assisted Psychotherapy from the perspective of the licensed mental health practitioner and/or Equine specialist.

TITLE:
The power of using equines in Equine–Assisted Psychotherapy from perspective of the licensed mental health practitioner and/or Equine specialist

WHAT IS THE AIM/PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?
The aim of this study is to gain a better understanding of role that equines play when used in EAP from the perspectives of licensed mental health practitioners and/or equine specialists.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY / WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH INVOLVE?
The role of the participant in this research project will be to be interviewed to provide in-depth answers to the research questions.
The study involves audio-taping semi-structured interviews. The primary question of this research study is: What is the purpose of equines in psychotherapy? The secondary research questions of this study aims at helping the participant to answer the primary question.The interviewing process will not exceed a one-hour time frame. The participant may be contacted after the interviewing process via email if any additional questions need to be answers or if clarification is required.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY?
Being in this study is entirely voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation.   If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time of the research study without any consequences.

WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

The participant's name will not be recorded anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Any identification details of the participant will be removed. Your answers will be given a fictitious code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings.

Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to the researcher. Participants anonymous data may be used for other purposes, e.g. research report, journal articles and conference presentation. Privacy will be protected in any publication of the information.

HOW WILL INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Information will be destroyed after five years by means of making use of a paper shredder for all hard copies; and permanently deleting all electronic copies form my computer's hard drive.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the College of Human Sciences at UNISA. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact the researcher, Elaine Koekemoer on ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or email elainekoekemoer1@gmail.com. The findings are accessible for a period of five years. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Elaine Koekemoer. Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact her research supervisor, Christine Laidlaw, on 012 429 8294 or email on laidlc@unisa.ac.za

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

You are in no way required to participate in this study. If you have any queries, please feel free to ask me. It is necessary for me to obtain your informed consent before I can begin the study.

Yours faithfully

Researcher: Ms. Elaine Koekemoer

Email: elainekoekemoer1@gmail.com

Supervisor: Ms. Christine Laidlaw

Tel: +27 12 429 8294

Email: laidlc@unisa.ac.za

Chair of Department of Psychology Ethics Committee: Prof. Piet Kruger

Tel: +27 12 429 6235

Email: krugep@unisa.ac.za

Appendix B: Letter of participant consent

Dear Participant

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be anonymously published into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings.

I agree to the audio-recording of the interviewing process

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant name & surname…………………………………………

Participant signature…………………………………………..Date…………………

Researcher's name & surname: Elaine Koekemoer

Researcher's signature *E.Koekemoer*   Date…………………

Witness name & surname...

Witness's signature…………………………………...............Date…....................

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Thank you for your support.

Yours faithfully

Researcher: Ms. Elaine Koekemoer

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Appendix C: Letter of consent to audio-recording

Dear Participants

The interview which you will be participating in will be audio-recorded. The recordings are intended to allow the researcher to transcribe what was said during the interview. All facts that may lead to the identification of a participant will changed in the final transcription. This will apply to names and any identifying statements made.

Once transcriptions are completed all recordings will be stored safely for five years and then subsequently destroyed.

You are no way compelled to participate in this study and you may withdraw as you wish. The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed. It is imperative that I obtain your informed consent before I can begin this study. Your signature below indicates that you understand and consent to the above conditions.

Thank you for your support.

Yours faithfully

E.Koekemoer   --

Researcher: Ms. Elaine Koekemoer   **Participant**

Email: elainekoekemoer1@gmail.com

Laidlaw

Supervisor: Ms. Christine Laidlaw

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UNISA | university of south africa

Appendix D: Semi-structured interview guide

General information:

1. Name:
2. Location:
3. Email:
4. When did you start your training in EAP?
5. When did you finish you training in EAP?
6. How long have you been practising EAP?
7. What organisation are you associated with? (Cave, 2012).

Primary Question:

8. What is the purpose of equines in psychotherapy?

Secondary questions:

9. What are some of the reasons that mental health practitioners and/or equine specialists may choose equines as a treatment feature or option in psychotherapy? (Abrams, 2013).
10. How do licensed mental health practitioners and/or equine specialists conceive or of or employ EAP as a treatment method within South African context currently? (Abrams, 2013).
11. What role do the equines play in your psychotherapy process from the beginning of the EAP session to the very end? (Stebbins, 2012).
12. What for you are the intrinsic processes of the licensed mental health or equine specialist (your intrinsic process) during an EAP session.
13. What are the reasons that lead to clients deciding to make use of EAP?
14. What is the importance of the equine-client relationship? (Cave, 2012).
15. What are the benefits of making use of equines in psychotherapy? (Bachi, 2010).
16. What in your opinion are the possible limitations of making use of equines in psychotherapy?
17. In what ways have you seen clients benefit from psychotherapy where equines are involved? (Cave, 2012).
18. Tell me about your experiences of working with equines?
19. Please supply me with an example of a client whom EAP has worked on, describe the case

Appendix E: Coding Summary

Analysis of the text has resulted in the following seven themes (listed here with their respective sub-themes):

Theme 1: From dyad to triad: Shifting dynamics in the therapeutic relationship

      Sub-theme 1.1: On orthodoxy and alternatives: Making space for both

      Sub-theme 1.2: A collaboration of three: The triad as meaning-making system

Theme 2: On myth and metaphor: Setting the scene for storytelling

      Sub-theme 2.1: My kingdom for an equine: The equine as archetype

      Sub-theme 2.2: Artistic license: Constructing analogies that fit

      Sub-theme 2.3: Found in translation

      Sub-theme 2.4: The 'outsider' illusion

Theme 3: A buffer and a bridge: The equine as intermediary and therapeutic tool

      Sub-theme 3.1: Equine as healer

      Sub-theme 3.2: Fodder for thought

      Sub-theme 3.3: Fear factor

      Sub-theme 3.4: Coming unstuck

      Sub-theme 3.5: Room to move and sharing the stage

      Sub-theme 3.6: No judgment here

Theme 4: Mirror, mirror on the stall: What the equine sees is what you get

      Sub-theme 4.1: One of the herd

      Sub-theme 4.2: Deep cries unto deep

      Sub-theme 4.3: Mirroring

Theme 5: Swiftly but surely: Instantaneous but lasting results

Appendix F: Coding Table

Theme 1: From dyad to triad: Shifting dynamics in the therapeutic relationship

Theme	Sub-themes	Extract
Theme 1: From dyad to triad: Shifting dynamics in the therapeutic relationship	Sub-theme 1.1: On orthodoxy and alternatives: Making space for both [EAP posited as being an alternate or complimentary therapeutic option, one which is able to "shift the focus" from a one-on-one situation onto multiple role players, at the centre of which, is the equine]	*"People that have certain problems and you need to speak to someone where there are other problems that people experience that would be better resolved by working with the horses." (A)* *"Clients differ and some of the clients come and they just want to talk. Then you get the others that struggle to speak. You get that feeling that they do not want to talk and then you send them out to the horses." (A)* *"...if it is indicated after a number of sessions in talk therapy, it can be very powerful..." (B)* *"...it changes your perspective on how you work with children, relationships,... spouses, everything...To really shift the focus." (E)* *"...the client will go to a traditional therapy session in the office with a psychologist first...*

		and then when the psychologist feels... they can move...over to EAP..." (F)
	Sub-theme 1.2: A collaboration of three: The triad as meaning-making system [EAP made up of the client, equine, and therapeutic team (i.e. therapist and an equine specialist)]	*"So it works like a triangle. You have got your therapists and then you have got your horses and then you have your clients." (A)* *"It is like a system basically." (A)* *"For me it is like the therapists, the horses and then the client, everything comes together..." (A)* *"...so all of them have a role to play." (A)* *"Where in the EAP it removes that human on human, where it makes human animal human..." (B)* *"The horse is constantly feeding back information and then Sharon will whisper that my ear and I feed it back to the client." (B)* *"You would have your, for arguments sake mental-health specialists, psychologists and*

		your equine specialists then the horses" (C) *"The whole session has three parts so it is an equal partnership between the therapist, the horse and the client." (E)* *"... clients already build up a relationship with their therapist in traditional sessions in the office. Then you bring them to the farm and you bring them into the arena and now there is a horse, another living being and there is a horse specialist..." (F)*

Theme 2: On myth and metaphor: Setting the scene for storytelling

Theme	Sub-theme	Extract
Theme 2: On myth and metaphor: Setting the scene for storytelling	Theme 2.1: My kingdom for an equine: The equine as archetype [i.e. a symbolic icon embedded in our psyche, likely the result of a historical and enduring relationship between us and them]	"...the *horses and man we do have a history together..." (D)* *"Our civilisation happened because of a horse so I believe that we have some connection to them in some way or form that we possibly cannot describe..." (D)* *"If you want to describe something that represents freedom in the media, you will use a loose horse that is running..(D)."*

	Sub-theme 2.2: Artistic licence: Constructing analogies that fit [i.e. The freedom to come up with interpretations which are extended metaphorically to create a viable story. In the instance of EAP, this entails mapping/superimposing an interpretation of the interaction between equine and client onto the clients personal story and vice versa] (Metaphor: representative of or symbolic of something else. Metaphors occupy an intermediate realm. They are tentative, partial, exploratory – inventive in their origin, content, and implications)	*"...you make what happens in the arena about your life and the things that play themselves out in the arena is what is happening in your life." (A)* *"If you have a client that is very ineffective in relationships in general, cannot have a solid ongoing effective relationship, it is going to play out in the arena." (C)* *"It creates a very powerful space for metaphoric learning." (D)* *"All of those then become players the person's story because we are ultimately setting up a space for projection and for storytelling..." (D)* *"So she would only go to these smaller horses and she would not go to the bigger horses. The horses became a metaphorical representation of her inner child and of her adult self so there was the child self and the adult self. (D)*

		"...she could see what these things would equate to in life..." (D)

"I think there is the situational experience and then there is the making meaning of it..." (D)

"We see a client and a horse interact and the horse runs away and then be immediately think that she is dealing with aggression issues..." (E)

"We often ask the clients questions like does this horse remind you of anyone?" (F)

"The message that comes across is baby steps. You cannot try and tackle a big obstacle because it is not going to work." (F)

"...she unclipped that lead line because this is an umbilical cord to her mother. It is now time for her to unclip and get going on her own and start moving in life on her own." (F)

"The things that you put in there is a representation of your life." (A) |

		"They have got their own best solutions and that is the belief behind this..." (A)
		"The mother is pulling her from this side and the father was pulling her from the other side so there is an example of a link that they made immediately." (A)
	Sub-theme 2.3: Found in translation [this sub-theme is linked to and overlaps with the previous sub-theme (2.2). The interaction between client and equine is 'translated'/ interpreted by the therapeutic team who then feed this information back to the client. The interaction between the equine and client occurs as a result of both orchestrated activities and through the client interacting freely with the equine/s (see sub-theme 4.1). Where the therapist has pre-existing knowledge of the client, this knowledge is used to direct activities, and in the interpretation of the	*"The reason I can connect a lot of the horse behaviour to the person's interaction styles is because I already know the person..." (B)*
		"We noticed when you did this the horses kept stomping its foot, what could that mean to you? You feeling a bit frustrated?" (B)
		"...it is a beautiful metaphor for them to overcome almost everything that they might be stuck with in life..." (C)
		"...the point of lunging is assertiveness." (F)
		"We call it scaffolding like when you are building a building, we

| | interaction between the equine and client. The client is also invited and/or encouraged to contribute to this meaning-making process] | *are just the scaffolding and the client has to build his building and then we can clear the scaffolding away and leave and the client should stand."* (E)

"...and then S will whisper that my ear and I feed it back to the client." (B)

"The two team members then speak and observe the interaction between horse and human and then at the right time strategically speaking, feedback is given to the client." (C)

"...which gives us an opportunity to give the client feedback in a nutshell." (C)

"The way that we operate in this type of work is as a mental health professional I do not ever go into the arena with the client without a horse specialist with me." (E)

"...we are a treatment team and everything is done together as a treatment team." (D)

"...she does not want to take responsibility for her life..." (D) |

| | | "The horse is constantly feeding back information and then S will whisper that my ear and I feed it back to the client." (B)

"...it is also my job to interpret the horse behaviour, read the body language of the horse, interpret the horse behaviour and then relayed this information back to the client and my colleague." (F)

"I will tell S this person struggles with distance and closeness with relationships, she will then say ok lunging, lunging will be our task, because in lunging you need to focus on creating distance..." (B)

"...they were pulling and pulling and the horse did not want to move. Then the one boy came over to the other boy's side and they walked together and then the horse started moving. Then they realised that if they work together they can go through it if they support each other." (A)
Do you think that the little boys ...realised it themselves or did you...help them make the link? |
|---|---|---|

		"...with the two boys you have to facilitate it" (A)
		"... she realised it by herself so lots of the clients make those links themselves." (A)
		"...you cannot really assess this so you give your own interpretation of what you think..." (A)
		"... you just know it is strategically now the right moment to intervene and say something, comment on something, ask a question and facilitate..." (C)
		"...it is ambiguous so we are creating ambiguous experiences with horses..." (D)
		"...with the environment in which a person is challenged to make meaning..." (D)
		"Go do it and see what happens and what meaning do you make from that experience. (D)
		"...it will have some kind of meaning depending on how we

		question it and we bring the client into a relationship with what he sees and observes and that kind of thing...” (E)
		“...the client will come up with what it means to them...” (E)
	Sub-theme 2.4: The ‘outsider’ illusion [The tendency of the therapeutic team to view themselves as being separate from rather than a part of the meaning-making process. From within a social constructionist epistemology, any and all interpretations commit us to a version of reality that carries with it, a set of implicit and culturally relative values. All role players are a part of the system]	*“So the science behind it is pretty in-depth...”* (C) *“...is not necessarily coloured by our perception of how we should or should not be...”* (D) *“...the ability to minimise cultural impact in the horse space really depends on how culturally skilled the facilitators are...”* (D) *“...as a horse person I have a very specific culture about how to be with horses...”* (D) *“... how are you assisting them to discover ... being able to solve a problem for themselves? I think that is a major space of challenge.”* (D)

		"The horse is the focal point of all of that and we cannot interfere with that..." (E)
		"I have got to be very clear in keeping my mind clean of my agenda, my issues..." (E)
		"The trick is not to imprint on a session..." (E)
		"There are two living beings in the environment." (E)
		"It is not our wisdom." (E)
		"So the more learning and education that you get in this field, you are able to say I know so much. The more we can say we can get this client to figure this out..." (E)
		"...depending where the psychologist wants the session to go, that is how the horses are incorporated..." (F)

Theme 3: A buffer and a bridge: The equine as intermediary and therapeutic tool

Theme	Sub-theme	Extract

| Theme 3: A buffer and a bridge: The equine as intermediary and therapeutic tool | Sub-theme 3.1: Equine as healer [EAP emphasises the centrality of the client-equine relationship - the equine is viewed as being a type of "co-therapist" and is utilised as such in the therapeutic process. Even if the equine responds badly to the client, this is still regarded as a learning opportunity, as stubbornness or defiance from an equine is interpreted as being the result of a lack of engagement or thoughtfulness on the clients part] | *"...they can talk to the horses and explain to the horses. They do not necessarily have to share it with the counsellor." (A)*

"They are very much a co-therapist in the therapeutic team." (C)

"Equine assisted psychotherapy is about the relationship between the equine and the human and how that unfolds so it is critical, it is the key..." (C)

"The fact that they are prepared to react to us in... the same way as they react to the other herd members... gives us an opportunity to go into an interaction with another live being in a way that we can learn about ourselves..." (D)

"The horses are very good in giving communication like back-up..." (E)

"...fact that it is not human it really help sometimes but it is still living..." (E)

"...we see the horse as a therapist." (F) |

		"So the relationship between horse and human or horse and client is very important because they need to learn how to trust the horses." (F)
	Sub-theme 3.2: Fodder for thought: [using the equine, especially the size and strength differential between client and equine, as a tool to invoke: thoughtfulness/mindfulness; the need to be careful and therefore fully engaged/present/attentive; and to command respect. This sub-theme is linked to and overlaps with sub-theme 3.1]	*"...they cannot just rush in and do whatever they want to because this is a big animal that they have to have respect..." (A)*
		"They cannot just bombard the horse and they have to think clearly and it slows their thought processes down." (A)
		"...they realise how big the animals are and they are scared and they do not form a relationship with them immediately...got to do with self esteem and overcoming fear but eventually they get to the horse" (A)
		"... a huge message people take from EAP, how to be assertive without coming across as rude, forceful, hurtful." (B)
		I think you could always work with fear. Overcoming fear is a massively powerful lesson. It can be taken... in a lot of other situations..." (B)

		"They said this horse taught us respect... we had to realise that this horse has things that he likes and things that he doesn't like and if we do the things he doesn't like then he is going to let us know..." (D)
		"Of course it is a large animal so the courage that is required to even be in its presence I think is therapy in itself." (E)
	Sub-theme 3.3: Fear factor [utilising the clients initial fear of the equine and the subsequent overcoming that fear as a confidence booster and self-esteem builder. This sub-theme is linked to and overlaps with sub-theme 3.1. & 3.2]	*"A lot of people are scared of horses but that also feeds into the whole EAP process. They are these amazing, powerful strong, weighing so many animals that you are then able to work with, interact with, and if I can do this with a horse, I can do this with anything."* (B)
		"I can make a 500kg horse move out of my space... walk through a maze, walk over a jump, sometimes without a halter, sometimes without any form of contact, I am so much more in control than I think I am. " (B)
		"If a client is scared of working with the horses, generally that client will

		be fearful of other things so it is very valuable then to expose the client to working the horses.” (C)
		“We see people growing in confidence because if you come into an environment that you are a little bit frightened or unsure, insecure and you can go into that space... that boosts your self-esteem.” (D) *“Horses are big and scary, they are intimidating so for the clients to step into the ring for the arena and still achieve their goals in therapy despite how scared they are or how intimidated they are by these horses, that is also empowering.” (F)*
	Sub-theme 3.4: Coming unstuck [using EAP as a point of leverage i.e. as a means of interjecting into a system that has become stuck and/or stagnant]	*“We get very stuck in how we do things. EAP definitely helps that, big time...” (B)* *“When someone has been in talk therapy for a number of weeks without really having any breakthrough, I would then recommend maybe to take it outside.” (E)*

		"When you get stuck, you need a complete shift and sometimes the equine therapy just gives you that break..." (E)
		"...we have seen it before where ...the psychologist that I work with will be sitting in sessions in the office with clients for months on end and she will bring them to the horses and we do one or two EAP sessions and so much comes out of it." (F)
		"...in traditional therapy clients can sit with a mask on and be very close and yes Sir, no sir, horses do not allow you to do that. Horses bring about what you are thinking and feeling..." (F)
		"...they...open up..." (F)
		"...getting people that have been immobilised, mobilised through our activities and our horses." (F)
	Sub-theme 3.5: Room to move and sharing the stage [Diverts focus from client and from therapist in a one-on-one scenario onto the	*"...it makes the client think about something other than how they are performing." (B)*

	equine/s, and onto establishing a relationship with or interaction between the equine/s and client. Provides space/distance both in a physical sense (being outdoors) and in a metaphorical sense (tentative, partial, exploratory thinking space). By introducing additional role players into the therapeutic context i.e. the equine specialist and the equine/s, the pressure on the client to perform is alleviated]	*"...it is not the formal office environment where it is one-on-one and they feel on the spot..." (C)* *"...it is out in the elements, in the cold and in the sun and the rain..." (C)* *"...they can be outside and I think that takes away a lot of the pressure that you may feel in a traditional psychotherapy space. (D)* *"...do not even need to speak to the horses because there is no pressure on them." (A)* *"...it gives us self distancing capacity so where I find office therapy very intimidating and very upfront and quite severe or harsh for a lot of people, as soon as you use animals ...you are giving people something to reflect off of. So that changes how they are able to interact..." (E)* *"...it is a big open space, it is not confined..." (E)* *"People feel like they are less threatened, they feel less overwhelmed..." (B)*

		"...the fact that we are focusing on the horse behaviour often takes quite a lot of pressure off the client...(C) *"I think that takes away a lot of the pressure that you may feel in a traditional psychotherapy space. That pressure to talk..." (D)* *"...it gives the client an opportunity to go and explore something on his own without being intimidated by this full-time pressure of questions that we have to do in office therapy..." (E)*
	Sub-theme 3.6: No judgement here [Clients experience the equine/s as non-judgemental and/or non-threatening and are therefore more likely to let their guards down in an EAP setting]	*"...and they do not judge so people can share anything with them." (A)* *"I think there is an element of fear of being judged, but... animals are less threatening." (B)* *"...we have our guards down and we are open to experience..." (B)* *"We experience them as unconditional and non-judgemental." (D)* *"...the client perceives a forgiveness there and an acceptance there..." (E)*

		"...what better way to do it, than a nonthreatening environment with animals..."(E)
		"... the clients do not feel as guarded..." (F)
		"...clients find it easier to open up around horses." (F)

Theme 4: Mirror, mirror on the stall: What the equine sees is what you get

Theme	Sub-theme	Extract
Theme 4: Mirror, mirror on the stall: What the equine sees is what you get	Sub-theme 4.1: One of the herd [The equine/s regards the client as being one of the herd - A equines ability to intuit fear for the purpose of survival also means that they have an innate ability to discern the clients emotional state (this sub-theme is linked to and overlaps with sub-themes 4.2 & 4.3)]	*"...because they pack animals they have to pick up on changes in our heart rate, changes in our body languages, the changes in our skin and they know that they need to move away from anything that does not feel authentic, they need to react to that." (B)* *"...you are entering their system so they will treat you like they treat any other equine and they will take in as part of their herd..." (C)* *"...they react to man on the ground exactly the same way as what they would react to other horses in the herd..." (D)*

		"...he would do that with his own peers within the herd." (E)
		"...they are herd animals so there is another creature in the arena and they want to put that in the mix." (E)
		"...the horses pickup on that incongruence and they will behave accordingly ..." (C)
	Sub-theme 4.2: Deep cries unto to deep [Non-verbal communication and emotional connection between client and equine provides an alternative to the orthodox (reductionist) view of therapy which emphasises the spoken word/verbal articulation as the only means to gain insight and/or achieve healing. EAP taps into evocative healing power i.e. the idea that trauma and/or struggle can also be understood and transformed in the absence of speech. Client is engaged on multiple levels including a spiritual level. Client-equine	*"...it is natural to people to feel like animals get them..." (B)*
		"It works incredibly well to get people to acknowledge verbal and non verbal communication, the power of others, as well as the power of your own..." (B)
		"The horses do not understand what they say but they definitely react to the emotions behind what is being said." (C)
		"No therapist in an office, it does not matter how good you are, would have been able to have touched that part of him..." (C)

| | interaction creates a metaphorical space that is representative of the client's existential plight and therefore also holds the key for a way forward.] | *"...we definitely have some kind of fascination and some kind of connection with horses on a deep level..." (D)*

"...their way of communicating is non-verbal ..." (D)

"...gives us the opportunity to go out and engage our physical self, our psychological self and our spiritual self ..." (D)

"...it is a powerful way to access the unconscious mind..." (D)

"...horses illicit a flood of emotions in humans." (F)

"Horses teach you so many qualities that you are not taught or that you lose day to day." (F) |
| | Sub-theme 4.3 Mirroring [Equines innate ability to intuit fear and other emotions (see sub-theme 4.1) also mean that they are able to mirror these emotions back to client. The clearer the message the more easily the | *"...what happens in the arena is a mirror of what is happening in their lives..." (A)*

"...the horses mirror the human behaviour..." (C) |

	equine is able to comply with or react to the intent.]	*"...it allows people to see what they are doing ineffectively." (C)* *"...if you want a horse to do something you have to change yourself in order to get the horse to do what it is you want it to do..."(D)* *"...all of that is reflected back at you because of what you are doing with your interaction." (E)* *"...a big mirror to show you..." (E)* *"The horses offer like a mirror to our soul so they are a mirror to human behaviour." (F)*

Theme 5: Swiftly but surely: Instantaneous but lasting results

Theme	Sub-theme	Extract
Theme 5: Swiftly but surely: Instantaneous but lasting results	Sub-theme 5.1: Immediacy of feedback [Equines respond/react immediately to client's intent and/or emotional state. This sub-theme links to and overlaps with sub-theme 4.2 & 4.3]	*"...the horse gives them immediate feedback." (A)* *"...feedback is immediate..." (B)* *"...the horses will react to a certain thing and then your awareness is drawn to that." (D)*

	Sub-theme 5.2: Grounded in the here-and-now [The practical hands-on aspect of EAP (see sub-theme 5.5) means that the client learns/experiencing things in the present and in a particular locality. Horse/s command attention.]	*"...it is in the here and now, it is powerful..." (C)* *"They respond in the here, and the now in the moment to how they experience you..." (D)* *"...you can experience that change in the here and now so I think it is a major benefit from that space." (D)* *"...and that is where their learning is, in that moment." (E)*
	Sub-theme 5.3: "Sticking power" [Although there is a strong emphasis on experiential here-and-now learning in EAP, the nature of this type of learning is also pervasive and has a lasting impact on clients – likely due to the strong emotive component (see sub-theme 4.2)]	*"...it is something that stays with them" (A)* *"...it has a very long lasting effect..." (C)* *"...it is very difficult for them to forget what happened there..." (C)* *"We call it sticking power." (C)* *"...it does not just happen at the session, it also can happen afterwards..." (A)* *"It is an ongoing almost movie in a way that plays in their*

		head...Sometimes for days, weeks, months afterwards." (C)
		"...so there is a future orientation..." (D)
		"It is not just for that moment, it goes on. It has its own longevity." (E)
		"The sticking power of EAP is phenomenal." (F)
	Sub-theme 5.4: A treatment in brief [The intense and evocative nature of EAP (see sub-themes 4.2) shortens the duration of therapy required]	*"When you compare it to traditional psychotherapy, it cut therapy in half..."* (C) *"So it is quicker, it is very powerful..."* (C) *"It is a very quick form of therapy because so much comes out so quickly..."* (F)
	Sub-theme 5.5: Experiential learning [EAP is an experiential learning (hands-on) approach i.e. a process of learning through reflection on doing]	*"...with the horses they actually experience it"* (A) *"Also the experiential nature in experiencing this stuff."* (A)

		"...they do not just talk because they go out and they experience it actually." (A) *"It is experiential and it is hands on..." (C)* *"...we are working in an experiential space so it is about learning and doing." (D)* *"It can be therapy by doing so you do not have to sit and speak about every single process..." (D)* *"It is learning by doing...it is experiential learning..." (F)*

Theme 6: Purview and preference: Variations and similarities in approach and activities

Theme	Sub-theme	Extract
Theme 6: Purview and preference: Variations and similarities in approach and activities	Sub-theme 6.1: Variations and similarities in approach [which occur primarily around; intake procedures/assessments; starting off with office based therapy and then moving over to EAP later vs. utilising EAP from the outset; selecting the equine for the client vs. allowing the client to select an equine for themselves]	*"...I believe that you need to do your assessment; behavioural assessments." (A)* *"You take the history and then you decide what is required for this client to achieve their goal..." (C)* *"...I always start in the office, take down the history and do the IPA and that will tell me where to go." (C)*

		"It even starts before the client gets into the arena. It obviously starts in the office and you get to know the client and their behaviour and interactional patterns..." (C)
		"We work on the EGALA model so we will always work with horses that are loose in an arena and in the herd..." (D)
		"...there is this immediate debriefing before we enter the arena between my co-therapist and myself..." (E)
		"So in my opinion is if you are going to do equine therapy, take them from session one out with the horses... it is very difficult to have someone in office-based therapy and then try and bring them into a whole other world" (E)
		"...she advises the clients to come in for a background intake sessions at sometimes she will just do one in the office and then we will move straight to the arena. Other times she will have clients in the office for two or three months..." (F)

		"...they go into a space and choose the horses that they want to work with...(D)
		"...so you also need to think about your clients experience... if you have a more confidant client, he is going to want a horse that is slightly more confident, if you have a very nervous client ...you are going to want a horse that stands dead still." (B)
		"So it is my duty or my job to choose the activity, to choose the horses according to the clients...." (F)
	Sub-theme 6.2 Variations and similarities in activities [occur primarily around the extent to which the activities are directed]	*"...the horses walk around freely." (A)*
		"We try not to be too directive..." (B)
		"They are asked to do simple activities with the horses for example groom a horse or put a halter on the horse..." (C)
		"...we tell them to build an obstacle and name it whatever your worries are." (E)

		"...horses are in the arena and they are allowed to respond freely to their own needs..." (F)
		"Other examples of activities that we do; we do have a whole lot of building equipment, safe building equipment in the arena." (F)
	Sub-theme 6.3: The types of clients and/or issues EAP works well with [some participants consider EAP's scope of effectiveness and appeal to be extensive. Others feel that it is a particular type of client as well as particular types of issues and difficulties that EAP works most effectively with and for]	*"...with clients that have got ADHD so with the horses it is beneficial because the horses tend to slow them down..."* (A)

"...in my experience were clients battle with assertiveness, communication, boundaries, distance in their relationships, self-esteem." (B)

"There is a very specific type of client in my limited experience that I feel EAP works well with. It has to be clients that are able to receive feedback..." (B)

"...I think EAP works exceptionally well for, people will with a lot of self doubt, people with low self esteem, people who struggle to feel they have worth..." (B) |

		"...you can use EAP for any behavioural, emotional, psychological problem." (C)
		"I think that you can use EAP in most challenges that people face. People that feel that life is not quite what they wanted to be and what is their purpose..." (D)
		"I would recommend EAP for most things. I have seen it work really well with clients who have concentration issues. It helps big-time for kids with confidence issues. Anything relating to self-concept." (E)

Theme 7: An enduring love affair: The emotive motives of EAP practitioners

Theme	Sub-theme	Extract
Theme 7: An enduring love affair: The emotive motives of EAP practitioners	Sub-theme 7.1: Ties that bind [Therapists and/or horse specialists deep emotional bond with equines]	*"I started out with this because I love horses..." (A)* *"I have had a lifetime interaction with horses..." (D)* *"...it just resonated with me." (E)* *"...it is horse, horse, horse. That is all it is. Whenever I get a chance I*

| | Sub-theme 7.2:
A horsey history [Therapists / and/or equine specialists pre-existing history with equines (prior to practising EAP)] | *just study and read about horses...” (F)*

“I have been riding horses since nine years old so most of my life I have been involved with horses.” (A)

“...my mom was eight months pregnant with me she was still jumping in shows so it started from before I was born...” (C)

“I have ridden horses probably the majority of my life so horses have been a part of my life for 40 years.” (D)

“I used to ride as a child...” (E)

“I started riding when I was 13 I think.” (F) |

Theme 8: Limitations of working with equines in a therapeutic context

Theme	Sub-theme	Extract
Theme 8: Limitations of working with equines in a therapeutic context	A matter of logistics	*“The limitations I guess you cannot take the horse anywhere. The clients had to go to the horses and they are not many horse farms that are available for this type of work...” (F)*

	Mother-nature: A double-edged sword [being outdoors has both its pros and cons]	*"I compare working in the arena versus working in the office, I fatigue here a lot quicker than when I am there. Even though I am on my feet there and it is pretty intense because you have got to be concentrating all the time..." (C)* *"...you cannot be out in the elements in case someone gets struck by lightning or if it is pouring down ..." (C)* *"...you get the outdoor element that most people do not get enough of at the best of times..." (E)* *"...limitations would definitely be the geographical stuff...it is weather-related..." (E)*
	Allergies	*"...if someone is hectically allergic...that could be one of the reasons why you would not continue with equine assisted psychotherapy." (C)*

	Costly	*"...it is an expensive form of therapy because remember you have two therapeutic team members that need to be paid..." (C)* *"It is an expensive therapy and it is not always accessible..." (E)*
	Safety concerns	*"...a lot of times I worry a bit about safety because the horses can react very unpredictably." (A)* *"...outside you have to move. For a lot of the people that we have worked with on heavy psychotic medication, they get tired and when they get tired they get disengaged so I think that can be a limitation." (D)* *"... there is no miracle and if someone is not interested or not motivated to change, then this is not going to make a difference either." (D)* *"I suppose that there is the injury potential although in all five years of us doing it, I have never seen anyone injured." (E)*

		"... parents are nervous of releasing their children into *the care of equine psychotherapy..."(E)*

Appendix G: Coding certificate

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT

Jennifer Graham, in my capacity as an independent Research Consultant, has co-coded the following qualitative data

for the study exploring:

The role of the horse in
Equine Assisted Psychotherapy

I declare that I have reached consensus with Elaine Koekemoer on the major themes of the data during a consensus discussion. I have also provided her with a coding report.

Sign:

Date: 26 - AuGusT - 2015

Appendix H: Confidentiality clause from co-coder

CONFIDENTIALITY CLAUSE

between

Jennifer Graham

and

Elaine Koekemoer

for the study exploring:

The role of the horse in
Equine Assisted Psychotherapy

The research code of ethics mandates that confidentiality should be maintained throughout data collection, data analysis and report writing.

As a research consultant I understand that I have access to confidential information. By signing this statement, I am indicating my understanding of this responsibility and agree to the following:

- I understand that all information obtained or accessed by myself in the course of my work on this project is confidential. I agree not to divulge or otherwise make known to unauthorised persons any of this information, unless specifically authorised to do so.

- I understand that names and any other identifying information about study sites and participants are completely confidential.

- I agree to use the data solely for the purpose stipulated by the client.

- I agree to maintain the confidentiality of the data at all times and keep the data in a secure, password protected location.

- The data will be stored for a period of approximately three years for the client, after which time it will be deleted from the hard drive using a secure delete application which renders the file unrecoverable

_____
Signature

26 - August - 2015
_____
Date

Appendix I: Ethical clearance certificate

UNISA | university of south africa

Department of Psychology

Ethical Clearance for M/D students: Research on human participants

The Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology at Unisa has evaluated this research proposal for a Higher Degree in Psychology in light of appropriate ethical requirements, with special reference to the requirements of the Code of Conduct for Psychologists of the HPCSA and the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics.

Student Name: Elaine Koekemoer   **Student no.** 53592433

Supervisor: Christine Laidlaw   **Affiliation:** Dept. of Psychology, Unisa

Title of project:

> The Power of Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy from the Perspective of the Psychotherapist

The proposal was evaluated for adherence to appropriate ethical standards as required by the Psychology Department of Unisa. The application was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology on the understanding that –

- All ethical requirements regarding informed consent, the right to withdraw from the study, the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the information will be explained to the research participants and signed consent forms will be obtained from them;

- All conditions and procedures regarding access to members for research purposes that may be required by the Equine Assisted Psychotherapy Institute of South Africa or Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association, are to be met.

Signed:

Prof. M Papaikonomou   Date: 2014/11/04

[For the Ethics Committee   ]
[Department of Psychology, Unisa]