

DISSERTATION

FROM TRADITIONAL TO EQUINE-ASSISTED PSYCHOTHERAPY: MENTAL HEALTH
PRACTITIONERS' EXPERIENCES

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ABSTRACT

FROM TRADITIONAL TO EQUINE ASSISTED PSYCHOTHERAPY: MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONERS' EXPERIENCES

This study explored equine-assist psychotherapy (EAP) mental health practitioners' experiences with horses and EAP, examined the differences between EAP and traditional psychotherapy from these participants' perspectives, and developed the biophilia hypothesis as a potential theory for EAP.

This study was conducted using a constructivist narrative approach. It was guided by Wilson's (1984) biophilia hypothesis, which suggests that humans have an innate tendency to pay attention to animals and nature. The biophilia hypothesis also suggests that the more humans come to understand other creatures, the more humans value both other creatures and themselves. The primary analytic strategies were a zoom model and a thematic analysis. The zoom model focused on how participants told their stories and attempted to keep each participant's overall story intact to preserve sequences. The thematic analysis emphasized the content of stories and focused on finding patterns in segments of the participants' stories. Using concepts from the biophilia hypothesis, I suggest that the zoom model is analogous to art and that the thematic analysis is analogy to science.

I conducted two semi-structured, individual, face-to-face interviews with eight participants (four social workers and four counselors) who had at least two years of experience with practicing both traditional psychotherapy and EAP. Each interview lasted one to two hours.

After transcribing each interview, I combined inductive and deductive coding and utilized the computer-assisted qualitative software N-Vivo 10 to assist with the thematic analysis.

Participants described evolving relationships with horses they started from low awareness to high awareness about their relationships with horses, and then they moved to value horses' roles as teachers in their lives. Participants described practicing EAP for both personal and professional reasons. Furthermore, they indicated that they drew from horses' strengths to complement their therapeutic work. Participants indicated that they are much less active in EAP sessions than they are in traditional psychotherapy. Specifically, participants indicated that in EAP sessions they stay quiet, are guided by horses, ask important questions, and accept that the therapeutic environment is much less controlled than in traditional psychotherapy settings. Drawing from the biophilia hypothesis, participants' roles and strategies in EAP are similar to naturalists' roles and strategies in a field, and this view of therapists represents a paradigm shift in psychotherapy. Participants stated that EAP decreases the power differential between clients and therapists. They also indicated that it provides a non-verbal and masculine approach that may be appealing to clients who are not comfortable in traditional psychotherapy settings.

I discussed various theoretical and practice implications from this study for social work and the larger field of mental health treatment. Furthermore, I provide recommendations for future studies, including studying equine specialists, conducting interdisciplinary research, and exploring the uniqueness of EAP.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
DEFINITION OF TERMS.....	ix
Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
Introduction.....	1
EAP and This Study.....	1
Theoretical Background-Biophilia Hypothesis in EAP.....	1
Relevance of the Study to Social Work Practice.....	4
My experiences.....	4
Psychotherapy in social work practice.....	6
EAP as a form of psychotherapy in social work practice.....	9
EAP in social work education.....	13
Significance of the Study.....	14
Chapter Two: Literature Review.....	16
Introduction.....	16
Background of EAP.....	16
Therapeutic Techniques of EAP.....	18
Relationship between Animal-Assisted Therapy and EAP.....	21
Theoretical Perspectives of EAP.....	22
Reality therapy.....	22
Brief therapy.....	23
Gestalt therapy.....	23
Psychodynamic theory.....	24
Anthropomorphic theory.....	25
Social support theory.....	26
Biophilia hypothesis.....	26
Research Gaps in EAP.....	27
Gaps in EAP research content.....	27
Gaps in EAP research methodology.....	29
Advantages of EAP.....	31
Disadvantages of EAP.....	32
Limitations of Prior Research.....	34
Research Questions.....	36
Chapter Three: Inquiry and Analysis.....	38
Introduction.....	38
Why the Constructivist Narrative Approach.....	38
Ontology.....	39
Epistemology.....	41
Participants.....	43
Interview.....	45
Interview Guide.....	47
Ethical Cautions.....	48

Approaches to Analysis.....	49
Zoom model.....	49
Thematic analysis.....	51
Validity.....	57
Pilot Study.....	61
Personal Stance.....	67
Chapter Four: Zoom Model.....	69
Introduction.....	69
Data Analysis.....	69
About Kriss.....	70
Macro-zoom.....	71
Meso-zoom.....	78
Micro-level zoom.....	80
Interactional-zoom.....	81
About Michael.....	82
Macro-zoom.....	82
Meso-zoom.....	89
Micro-level zoom.....	91
Interactional-zoom.....	92
About Pia.....	93
Macro-zoom.....	93
Meso-zoom.....	99
Micro-level zoom.....	101
Interactional zoom.....	101
About Becky.....	102
Macro-zoom.....	102
Meso-zoom.....	109
Micro-level zoom.....	112
Interactional-zoom.....	112
About Jean-Jacques.....	113
Macro-zoom.....	114
Meso-zoom.....	121
Micro-level zoom.....	122
Interactional-zoom.....	123
About Sue.....	124
Macro-zoom.....	124
Meso-zoom.....	130
Micro-level zoom.....	131
Interactional-zoom.....	132
About Julie Anne.....	133
Macro-zoom.....	133
Meso-level.....	140
Micro-level.....	141
Interactional-zoom.....	142
About Thom.....	143
Macro-zoom.....	144

Meso-level.....	150
Micro-zoom.....	154
Interactional-zoom.....	154
Summary of Analysis.....	155
Chapter 5: Thematic Analysis.....	160
Introduction.....	160
Question 1-1: What are Horses' Roles in Participants' Lives?.....	160
Theme 1: Participants with low awareness about their relationship with horses.	161
Theme 2: Participants with high awareness about their relationship with horses.	164
Theme 3: value of interacting with horses for raising awareness about self and the world.	168
Question 1-2: What Experiences Led Participants to Practice EAP?.....	173
Theme 1: personal reasons for practicing EAP.....	173
Theme 2: professional reasons for practicing EAP.....	177
Theme 3: borrowing from horses' strengths.	183
Theme 4: sense of being destined to practice EAP..	186
Question 2-1: What are Therapeutic Factors in EAP?.....	188
Theme 1: horses actively use non-verbal language to communicate with therapists and clients.	189
Theme 2: horses are naturally therapeutic just by being themselves.....	195
Theme 3: clients actively do something with horses in EAP.....	203
Theme 4: therapists actively adapt strategies with horses..	207
Question 2-2: What are Therapists' Strategies in EAP?.....	209
Theme 1: Therapists practice therapeutic skills on themselves.....	210
Theme 2: therapists practice therapeutic strategies on clients.....	211
Question 3: What are the Differences Between EAP and Traditional Psychotherapy from Participants' Perspectives?.....	220
Theme 1: relationships between therapists and clients.....	221
Theme 2: therapeutic techniques.	224
Theme 3: characteristics of therapy..	229
Conclusion.....	237
Chapter Six: Discussion.....	241
Introduction.....	241
The Relationship between Zoom Model and Thematic Analysis.....	241
Summary and Discussion of Research Questions.....	246
Research question 1-1: what are horses' roles in participants' lives?.....	246
Research question 1-2: what experiences led participants to practice EAP?.....	249
Research question 2-1: what are therapeutic factors in EAP?.....	255
Research question 2-2: what are therapists' strategies in EAP?.....	264
Research question 3: what are the differences between EAP and traditional psychotherapy from participants' perspectives?.....	268
Connections between Findings and Biophilia Hypothesis.....	276
Limitations of the Study.....	282
Implications of the Study.....	283
Theoretical implications.....	283
Practice implications.....	285

Implications for social work.	286
Recommendations for Future Research	287
Study equine specialists.	287
Study across disciplines.	289
Study the uniqueness of EAP.	290
Conclusion	291
REFERENCES	293
Appendix A: Guide for Interviews.....	309
Appendix B: Recruitment Letters	312
Appendix C: Demographic Form	317
Appendix D: Codebook	319
Appendix E: Consent Form	332

DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. Traditional Psychotherapy: Therapeutic sessions are practiced in a therapeutic room with a verbal rather than experiential orientation.

2. Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP): It is the EAGALA model. “Equine assisted psychotherapy (EAP) incorporates horses experientially for emotional growth and learning. It is a collaborative effort between a mental health professional and a horse professional working with clients and horses to address treatment goals” (EAGALA 2009, p.13). EAP uses a team approach, which means an equine specialist and a mental health practitioner will work together. The equine specialist focuses more on the physical safety of clients and horses’ nonverbal communication. The mental health practitioner focuses more on the clients’ emotional safety and nonverbal communication. All EAP activities are on the ground.

3. Mental Health Practitioner: In this study, mental health practitioners are from different fields, and can be social workers, counselors, marriage and family therapists or psychologists with at least 2 years of experience conducting both traditional psychotherapy and EAP. Participants can have both experiences at the same time.

4. Hippotherapy: It is a treatment strategy which is provided by physical therapists, occupational therapists and speech-language pathologists. Therapists utilize equine movement to improve clients’ neuromuscular function. In hippotherapy, a client is positioned on a horse and actively responds to the horse’s movement instead of controlling the horse or learning riding skills (The American Hippotherapy Association, 2013).

Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore equine assisted psychotherapy (EAP) mental health practitioners' personal experiences with horses, their professional experiences with EAP, and to compare the differences between traditional and equine-assisted psychotherapy. Furthermore, this study was to fill the gap between EAP practice and EAP theory. This chapter introduces equine assisted psychotherapy (EAP) and this study and provides the overview of the biophilia hypothesis, this study's theoretical framework for understanding EAP. Following this is a discussion of the relevance of EAP to the social work profession, a definition of terms used in the study, and a discussion of the study's significance.

EAP and This Study

The Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA) is a nonprofit organization that connects mental health practitioners and equine specialists who practice equine assisted therapy (EAP) and equine assisted learning (EAL) all over the world. EAGALA also provides professional training and conferences for EAP and EAL practitioners to get the newest information and share their experiences.

I attended the 12th EAGALA annual conference in March 2011. The research discussion leader, Dr. Paul Haefner, encouraged EAP practitioners and researchers to conduct more quantitative research in EAP. The goal is to validate that EAP is an evidence-based therapy, and so insurance companies are willing to support this therapy. A clear need for EAP research to demonstrate the effectiveness of EAP has been noted (Dell, Chalmers, Bresette, Swain, Rankin & Hopkins, 2011; Trotter, 2006). Further, at the 13th EAGALA conference in March 2012, Dr. Paul Haefner expressed "the existing EAP studies use similar assessment tools, mostly

self-report, which accomplishes a narrow goal and does nothing to advance our understanding of fundamental questions like how or why change occurs and what horses' roles are in EAP..." Dr. Paul Haefner suggested that qualitative research can play an important role in EAP and foster creativity in the development of new assessment strategies. I would add that, if EAP researchers want to take the EAP research to the next level, they need to listen to the experiences of EAP therapists, equine specialists and clients first. From their experiences, EAP researchers can get some creative ideas to conduct quantitative research.

In May 2010, I received EAGALA level one training from Patti Mandrell and Randy Mandrell. In the training, Patti Mandrell shared that the more she practiced equine-assisted psychotherapy with at-risk teenagers, the more she could not go back to practicing traditional psychotherapy because it is easier to build rapport with teenagers in EAP sessions. Shultz (2005) described that, due to the challenges of working with at-risk teenagers, there are more and more mental health professionals seeking non-traditional therapies to provide effective interventions, such as experiential therapies, expressive therapies, animal-assisted therapies and adventure-based therapies. They are all part of EAP.

Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA, 2009, p.13) states that "EAP incorporates horses experientially for emotional growth and learning. It is a collaborative effort between a mental health professional and a horse professional working with the clients and horses to address treatment goals." Every activity in EAP contains meaningful metaphors which are related to therapeutic goals. Clients' behavioral patterns and emotions can be elicited from ground work with horses. During an EAP activity, a therapist's and an equine specialist's roles are to observe clients' and horses' behaviors and emotions. After finishing the activity, the

therapist and the equine specialist bring what they observe to discuss with the clients, which helps clients develop self-awareness.

Recently, more and more mental health practitioners have been incorporating horses into their practice. Every EAP therapist's experiences are unique, but some patterns can also be found from their experiences. Pugh (2010) stated that the dearth of research in the EAP area makes this field relatively uncharted. So far, EAP mental health practitioners' experiences have not been explored systemically and deeply. Most EAP research literature focuses almost exclusively on clients' experiences (Foley, 2008; Frame, 2006; Tetreault, 2006; Shultz, 2005; Trotter, 2006). Several practitioners have developed clinical guides for EAP which focus on therapeutic skills and activities (Keeler & Russell, 2010; Mandrell & Mandrell, 2008). In addition to the lack of research in therapists' experiences with EAP, there is little research that examines the reason which led EAP therapists to conduct this type of work. Thus, my study was motivated by a variety of questions. What kinds of experiences led mental health practitioners to practice EAP? How do they incorporate EAP into their work? What do they perceive therapeutic factors in EAP? After practicing EAP, what kinds of characteristics in EAP do mental health practitioners perceive differently from traditional psychotherapy?

Theoretical Background-Biophilia Hypothesis in EAP

So far, the research in EAP mostly focuses on mental health practitioners' therapeutic approaches, for example practicing EAP from gestalt or person-centered approach (Chardonens, 2009; Kirby, 2010). The skills that they practice in the EAP sessions and the way they look at their clients are based on their chosen therapeutic approaches. However, practice theories such as gestalt theory and person-centered theory never explore directly how the connection between human animals and non-human animals can be therapeutically beneficial. In other words, mental

health practitioners usually emphasize practice theories, but they neglect to look at a higher level theory which may help explore how EAP and horses affect therapeutic changes. Therefore, there is a need to draw up an additional theory. EAP researchers and practitioners often voice having a hard time finding a solid theory to support their practices. It is not unusual to have practice develop before theory. This is a common situation that a new practice emerges prior to a theory. In the 12th Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association conference, Dr. Paul Haefner led a discussion for EAP practitioners on the importance of finding or creating a solid theory in EAP to support EAP as an evidence-based practice.

In 1984, Edward O. Wilson, the Harvard biologist, advanced the biophilia hypothesis, which provides a reasonable explanation to understand the relationship between humans and animals. Wilson's (1984) book, *Biophilia*, describes values and concepts of the biophilia hypothesis that are quite consistent with EAP. Wilson (1984, p.1) defined biophilia as the "innate [human] tendency to focus on life and lifelike process" which suggests that people have a built-in tendency to pay attention to animals and nature. Animals and the natural environment provide cues for people. Because humans co-evolve with animals in their natural settings, humans rely on animals' signals to tell whether the environment is safe or not (Melson, 2000). For example, humans may associate the calmness of a horse with safety and feel relaxed. If a horse is agitated, humans may associate that agitated state with danger or something that they have to pay attention to. When a friendly animal is presented in a therapeutic setting, people derive reassurance and security from this animal presence (Melson, 2000). On the other hand, an anxious animal may lead people to explore what happens in the environment or what happens to people's inner selves.

Wilson (1984) suggested, “to the degree that we come to understand other organisms, we will place a greater value to them and on ourselves” (p.2) and “humanity is exalted not because we are so far above other living creatures, but because knowing them well elevates the very concept of life” (p.22). Wilson emphasized how non-human animals can help human animals lead a better life. In EAP, practitioners and clients understand and respect the wisdom and characteristics that horses have, and these understanding and respect can help them place a greater value to horses and on themselves. EAGALA (2009) suggested that in therapy sessions horses may sense more about clients than therapists do because horses mirror clients and respond naturally and spontaneously to clients’ needs. Sometimes horses become teachers; practitioners and clients become students who learn life lessons from horses (Smith, 2012). This explains how horse can help people’s mental health.

Some EAP researchers (Johnson, 2001; McConnell, 2010; Toukonen, 2011) mention the biophilia hypothesis in their research; however, it is usually described only briefly and cursorily. The biophilia hypothesis is a potential approach to understand the nature of EAP, but the use of the biophilia hypothesis falls short in some important ways. For example, Toukonen (2011) uses one page to introduce the biophilia hypothesis in the literature review, but does not explore how the biophilia hypothesis connects to her study. In my research, I try to get a better connection between the theory and the constructivist narrative approach, the research method used in this study. The theory is to open the inquiry and help me understand the observed phenomena, not to narrow and focus it (Josselson & Lieblich, 2002). When Wilson goes into the field to collect samples, he holds the similar perspective, Wilson (1994) described “I was well aware of existing theory and the conventional wisdom of my discipline, but I would hold my mind open to any phenomena congenial enough to enter it [field]” (p. 168).

Relevance of the Study to Social Work Practice

There are some debates which start with clarifying the difference between social work and psychotherapy (Dean, 1998; Specht & Courtney, 1994; Wakefield, 1988). People ask questions such as “Has social work abandoned their mission of promoting community-based social care and enhancing social justice?” and “Could psychotherapy help social workers deal with great social problems?” In this section, I explore my own experiences as using the term “psychotherapy” and “animal assisted therapy” in the social work program. Furthermore, I discuss how psychotherapy is related to social work practice and why EAP is a form of psychotherapy in social work practice and education.

My experiences. *The social work PhD program has provided opportunities for me to introduce my research topic to professors and other students. One day when I talked about animal-assisted therapy and equine-assisted psychotherapy in class, I started to realize that the terms “therapy” and “psychotherapy” that I was using were making me feel uneasy and distanced from the social work program. Where did these feelings come from? I realized that I sensed some pressure from the classroom. Since the pressure was invisible, I could not tell where it exactly came from. Perhaps the pressure that I was feeling came from within myself because I have learned that social work’s mission is much bigger than psychotherapy. The main mission in social work is to change injustices in society and create a better environment for vulnerable populations. While I totally agree with the mission, I understand that I am not a person who is filled with ambition to change the society. In other words, I never “set a goal” to change society. I am a person who tends to believe that taking care of myself and taking my full responsibility in my life are the best ways for me to contribute to society. One day if I am strong enough inside and outside, larger goals will come into my life naturally without being forced, and the universe*

will let me know that it is time for me to assume a larger responsibility. Since I am more interested in exploring people's inner selves and show less aspiration to social structure and policy in this life stage, sometimes I ask myself "Did I go into the wrong profession?"

However, when I searched for programs related to human and animal bonds, most of them were under social work programs, and I went to EAGALA conference, I saw that many EAP practitioners were social workers. Furthermore, the founder of EAGALA, Lynn Thomas, is a social worker. This tells me probably I am on the right track. If I am on the right track, why do I not feel confident enough to say that my interest is in working with people and animals?

Another pressure may come from other people's response. When people hear animal-assisted therapy, they usually think it is about people who bring their dogs into schools or hospitals to make clients happy. Happiness seems to be a tiny achievement in the social work profession compared to social change. Sometimes I ask myself whether I need to have more ambition to be a social work doctoral student. Is it ok for me to only work on individual problems instead of solving social problems? Different voices and questions come and go in my mind repeatedly.

I agree with Specht's and Courtney's (1994) statement "...a number of the problems we experience as individuals can be dealt with most effectively when they are perceived to be social problems that require social solutions" (p. 130). However, at the same time I wonder whether there are multiple ways to change society, and social work is just one way. The way that social work believes is visible and measurable, so we believe in it. A lot of time change can be invisible. For example, Dr. Ihaleakala Hew Len (Vitale & Len, 2007) shared he worked at Hawaii State Hospital with criminally insane patients for four years. Working in the highly stressful setting, psychologists quit on a monthly basis. When he started to work in the hospital, he never worked

with patients in person. The only thing he did is to study patients' file, and then he worked on himself, which means he looked within himself to see how he created patients' illness. The healing method he practiced called ho'oponopono. When he improved himself, patients started to heal and the whole working atmosphere started to have positive changes. The healing process was mysterious and was impossible to measure. However, he did create the change. Right now Dr. Ihaleakala Hew Len's healing philosophy is spread all over the world. It is another way to change society.

Psychotherapy in social work practice. Differentiating psychotherapy in social work from psychotherapy in other mental health areas requires first defining the social work profession itself (Wakefield, 1988). According to the National Association of Social Work Code of Ethics (NASW, 2008), promoting human wellbeing in a social context and helping all people meet basic human needs is the primary mission of the social work profession. Social workers particularly provide their services to people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. In other words, pursuing social justice is one of the core values of the social work profession. Furthermore, pursuing social justice is an organizing value which distinguishes social work from the other therapeutic professions. The concept of distributive justice is when entitlements to economic goods are allocated to people as they should to be, distributive justice is achieved. From Wakefield's (1988) perspective, social work can be conceived as a profession which aims at decreasing deprivation from economic needs to psychological needs. Psychotherapy is a way for social workers to promote distributive justice. Social work profession focuses on minimal distributive justice, which means that everyone should have equal access to a basic minimal level of economic basic needs and mental health care. This concept differentiates clinical social work from traditional psychotherapy, which does not necessarily consider social justice implications.

In contrast, social workers have an extraordinary breadth of concerns about clients' economic, social, and psychological needs. Social workers conduct psychotherapy to work with clients who are most disadvantaged with psychological needs. Wakefield (1988) uses the concept of "minimal distributive justice" to determine when psychotherapy in social work is justified and determines that social work should specifically focus on populations lacking basic needs. If clients' psychological problems cause them to not have basic needs, then they are the populations for social workers to provide psychotherapy. For example, if clients' mental health problems affect them to keep a job and make a living, social workers need to provide some mental health interventions.

Wakefield (1998) suggests that treatment of mental disorders is a legitimate derived task, as opposed to essential task of the social work profession. This means psychotherapy is a task which is assigned to the social work profession on the basis of societal need rather than on the basis of essential mission of the profession. I am personally skeptical of Wakefield's perspective because I believe in practice it is hard for social workers to draw a clear line between whether clients' psychological problems have affected their abilities to maintain the basic needs or not. Sometimes the relationship between cause and effect can be very complicated, and social workers may not foresee how clients' psychological problems will influence their basic needs.

Dean (1998) replied to Wakefield's perspective of psychotherapy in social work, arguing:

Dr. Wakefield's conceptualization of minimal distributive justice as social work's essential mission is commendable...If, however, social justice distinguishes social work's essential mission at the cost of delimiting its actual role in the treatment of mental disorders, then the profession is torn conceptually. Social work plays a significant role in the treatment of mental disorders and accordingly, any conceptualization of its essential mission must incorporate that role. (p. 58)

From Dean's (1998) perspective, many social work interventions potentially involve a psychological component. Psychotherapy plays an important role in the social work profession.

Therefore, social workers should not narrow down the concept of social justice to be minimal distributive justice. In other words, Dean's concept of social justice provides much more space for social workers to practice psychotherapy than Wakefield's (1988) concept of minimal distributive justice. Wakefield's concept of social justice mainly focuses on the equality of people's basic needs, which is a narrower definition of social justice. Dean's believes social workers can promote social justice and human rights in their everyday practice, which is a broader definition of social justice.

Under the political reality, governments may restrict human rights, and they have done this repeatedly. Social workers may want to redistribute goods and services to vulnerable people, but they may not be free to accomplish their mission under the restriction of policies. In other words, it is not always easy for social workers to take action for human rights and social justice because there are always some conflicts between government and human rights activities (George, 1999). Social workers can empower themselves and their clients instead of feeling helpless in the big social structure if they work to enhance social justice and human rights in their everyday practice. For example, if social workers are aware of themselves as powerful, privileged, or oppressive, they may be less likely let their clients increase the psychological experience of injustice (Swenson, 1998). This is a feasible and easy way for social workers to promote social justice and human rights in their everyday practice. In sum, I tend to agree with Dean's perspective that psychotherapy is an essential part of social work and that the goal of psychotherapy in social work is to enhance human wellbeing and promote social justice.

According to NASW Standards for Clinical Social Work in Social Work Practice (NASW, 2005, p7):

Clinical Social Workers represent the largest group of behavioral health practitioners in the nation. They are often the first to diagnose and treat people with mental disorders and

various emotional and behavioral disturbances... Clinical social work has a primary focus on the mental, emotional, and behavioral well-being of individuals, couples, families, and groups. It centers on a holistic approach to psychotherapy and the client's relationship to his or her environment...

These standards further state, "Psychotherapy is a specialized, formal interaction between a social worker or other mental health professional and a client (either individual, couple, family, or group) in which a therapeutic relationship is established to help resolve symptoms of mental disorder, psychosocial stress, relationship problems, and difficulties in coping in the social environment..."(NASW, 2005, p.9). Therefore, both Dean (1998) and the NASW Standards for Clinical Social Work hold that psychotherapy plays a fundamental role in social work. Since social workers are often the first to diagnose and work people with mental disorders, it is impossible for social workers not to include psychotherapy as an essential task in the social work profession.

EAP as a form of psychotherapy in social work practice. Social justice is the most important reason for the existence of psychotherapy in social work (Dean, 1998), and clinical social workers practice psychotherapy under from a professional foundation of systems theory (NASW, 2005). In this section, I define equine assisted psychotherapy (EAP) in social work from social justice and system perspectives. Vogel, Wade, and Ascherman (2009) found that people decide not to seek psychotherapy because they are afraid of being stigmatized, and the social stigma of psychotherapy is the most cited reason why people avoid psychotherapy. Corrigan (2004) suggests that people receiving psychotherapy may be stigmatized and labeled as mentally ill. This public stigma of being labeled as mentally ill can harm people in several ways. The stereotype, prejudice, and discrimination can rob people's social opportunities. People who are labeled as mentally unhealthy may have a hard time obtaining a good job or leasing a suitable place to live. This is the reason that people with concealable stigmas try to avoid this harm by

hiding their symptoms and rejecting mental health treatment. When people with mental illness internalize the public stigma, they tend to believe that they are less valuable and they suffer diminished self-esteem and self-efficacy (Link, Struening, Neese-Todd, Asmussen, & Phelan, 2001).

Equine assisted psychotherapy is practiced on farms. People usually do not associate farms with the mentally unhealthy; therefore, clients feel more comfortable to go to a farm than go to a mental health agency. For example, an EAP practitioner I spoke with (M. Nancy, personal communication, September 5, 2011) described having a client who does not want to go to her office for traditional psychotherapy, but is willing to go to her farm for EAP sessions. Stigma is a form of social oppression which causes inequality, and creates an obstacle to social justice. EAP offers a means for clients to access psychotherapy that comes with less social stigma and discrimination. Providing a less stigmatized means of enhancing clients' mental health is one way for social workers to promote social justice.

Furthermore, EAP views horses as having inherent value, rather than seeing them from the perspective of their financial worth. This is another way to show justice. In contrast to the human centered approach, the interspecies approach emphasizes that compassion and a sense of justice extends to all species and ecosystems (Andrzejewski, Pedersen, & Wicklund, 2009). Expanding our conceptualization of social justice from human animals to non-human animals is consistent with EAP, which EAP recognizes the dignity of different kinds of horses. In the traditional horse industry, people train horses to increase their worth. If horses do not perform well in horse shows or in their duty, or horses have problems of body conformation, they become less valuable to people. In EAP sessions, horses do not need to be trained for a specific sport or riding purpose; they just need to be themselves (EAGALA, 2009). This means that EAP

programs are able to save many horses which may be abandoned or killed sometimes by people due to their decreased value. Andrzejewski, Pedersen, and Wicklund (2009) describe that some oppressed people feel a strong empathy with animals because they perceive a shared oppression from humans. EAP programs recognize the dignity of horses regardless of their age and performance in a specific sport, which is consistent with and extends the social work profession's social justice mission.

Social workers view their clients from the "person in environment" framework of the ecological perspective. Systems theory distinguishes social work from other professions. Social workers recognize that all parts of any clients' systems are interconnected, and they evaluate how various systems and subsystems influence clients' function (Andreae, 1996). Andreae (1996) states:

Social workers possess an in-depth understanding of the relationship of the individual to various environments and the synergistic relationship that each entity has to the other. It is this contextual understanding of the holistic nature of human functioning that is unique to social work practice as opposed to most other helping professions, which tend to adopt a more individual-centered perspective to treatment. (p. 601).

Systems theory is very applicable to EAP. By bringing clients into the natural environment, EAP practitioners are able to work within the systems perspective in a more holistic way. The bigger and natural environment symbolizes a multilevel system.

Strozzi (2012) designed an activity involving three layers of energy, whose equine guided education (EGE) model aligns with systems perspectives. Strozzi suggests there are many ways to study energy and there are many layers of energy. In the EGE model, Strozzi conduct 3 layers of energy for clients to explore how their and horses' communication change as they approach or are approached (see Figure 1.1).

In the EGE model, a larger of energy may be understood from the standpoint of personal space. In the third layer of energy (outer circle— at a distance from the horse personal space), when any change (such as a movement, voice, or emotion) happens, people and horses are aware of the change; however, they do not need to react to the change because they do not perceive a potential threat. If there are any change in the second layer of energy (middle circle— somewhat closer to the horse), horses and people sense the change, but they do not perceive it as urgent. Therefore, they may or may not coordinate or negotiate in response to the change. In the third layer of energy (inner circle— very close to the horse), any change, horses and people feel a need to coordinate or negotiate the change immediately. In a word, a horse or person is a system that extends beyond the physical boundary of their body and also includes multi-layers of energy surrounding their physical form, will cause the horse or person to coordinate or negotiate the boundary in response to the change.

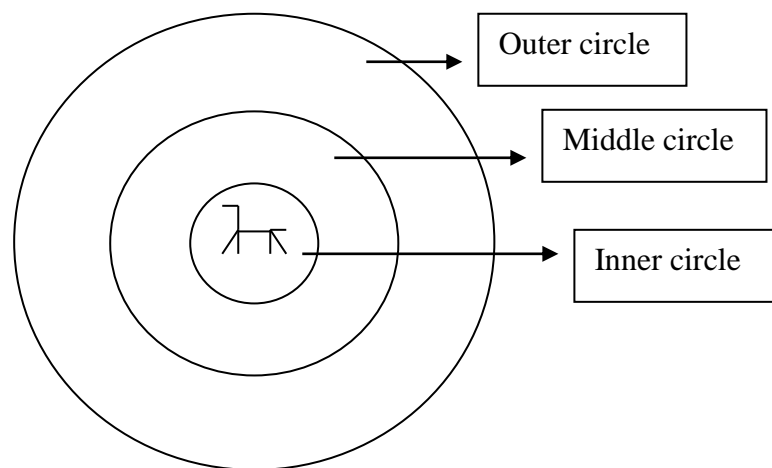


Figure 1.1 Three Layers of Energy

In this activity, participants practice to find horses' layers and other participants' layers in an arena. Clients get opportunities to know how they interact with people's and horses' different levels of energy, which symbolize subsystems within a larger system. EGE/EAP practitioners

may ask their client “How do you find this horse’s first and second layer? Does this horse invite you to come closer? How do you feel when you go to the horse’s first layer? ” Some people may not go to a horse’s first layer until they know the horse feels safe. Some people may go to a horse’s first layer without any invitation from the horse. This activity mirrors clients’ personalities and behavioral patterns in their lives. Horses listen and react to energy (Strozzi, 2012). On some levels, horses’ reaction provides valuable feedback that clients can use to explore themselves.

Furthermore, outside information from an outside arena can be meaningful for EGE/EAP practitioners to incorporate therapeutically. Birds, trees, winds, airplanes, and so on can provide meaningful information in EGE/EAP sessions. For example, EGE/EAP practitioners may ask a client “When you talk about your marriage, horses start to chase each other. Winds start to blow hard. I even cannot hear from you. What does this mean for you?” In a word, EAP practitioners incorporate different levels of the system in their work. The concepts of EAP align with systems theory in the social work profession.

EAP in social work education. The Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA) and the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.) are two major associations in the U.S. at the forefront of developing mental health interventions incorporating horses. Equine assisted psychotherapy (EAP) is the EAGALA’s approach, which emphasizes that all activities are on the ground. Equine facilitated psychotherapy (EFP) is the PATH Intl. approach, which involves mounted and unmounted activities. It is hard drawing a clear line between EAP and EFP because some mental health practitioners receive training from both associations. PATH Intl. (2006, as cited in Selby, 2009) states that in 2005 there were 692 PATH International member centers in the United States. There

were 277 mental health practitioners who work at PATH Intl. member centers, of these, 135 of whom are social workers. Social workers are the largest group to provide service. I tried to contact with EAGALA in November 2012 and I asked for information about members' backgrounds in mental health areas, but learned that EAGALA does not have this information.

Notgrass (2011) conducted an online survey to gather information regarding the roles, activities, beliefs, and professional development of EAP professionals. The survey was sent through EAGALA members' email list. The respondents included equine specialists and different kinds of mental health practitioners: licensed professional counselors (n=47), licensed clinical social workers (n=32), and licensed psychologists (n=13) is the third largest group among the mental health respondents. McConnell (2010) conducted an online survey of EAGALA and PATH International members. The most highly represented professional affiliations were counseling (n=57, 31.7%), social work (n=48, 26.7%) and psychology (n=20, 11.1%). If we apply the concept of statistical inference from sample to population, social workers are probably the first or second largest professional group represented in EAP or EFP membership. Therefore, this study is relevant for social work education, which will train many future EAP practitioners.

Significance of the Study

Equine assisted psychotherapy is a developing psychotherapy with most research to date exploring its use in different population (Foley, 2008; Frame, 2006; Shultz, 2005; Tetreault, 2006; Trotter, 2006); however, mental health practitioners' experiences in EAP have not been explored deeply. What kinds of experiences bring them into EAP? As I know, a lot of EAP mental health practitioners have special connections with horses, but their stories are seldom shared through articles or books. They have beautiful stories about how clients get transitions and insights through EAP, but they do not write articles to share their experiences.

There is a need for further research that helps to clarify the specific value of EAP within the larger field of mental health treatment and specifically within social work practice. Learning about therapists' EAP experiences and their EAP perspectives on the differences between EAP and traditional psychotherapy may help them identify their roles in a larger mental health system and in social work practice, and so they can cooperate better with other therapists who practice other therapies.

Furthermore, since EAP is an emerging area, the practice and theories are not co-developing at the same time. EAP practice is developed more quickly than theories, and there is a strong need for theory development in this emerging area of practice. I chose narrative inquiry and the biophilia hypothesis to explore mental health practitioners' experiences with the aim of helping to fill research gaps in this developing treatment approach. I also aimed to fill theory and practice gaps by exploring relevance of biophilia to EAP in this study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter describes the background of equine-assisted psychotherapy (EAP), explores the relationship between animal-assisted therapy (AAT) and EAP, discusses advantages and disadvantages of EAP, and examines gaps and limitations of prior EAP research. This chapter concludes with the study's three primary research questions, which were drawn from identified gaps in EAP research.

Background of EAP

Traditionally, people incorporated horses to treat physical illness through hippotherapy or therapeutic riding (Pugh, 2010). Newer approaches incorporating horses into mental health treatment are equine-assisted psychotherapy (EAP), equine-assisted learning (EAL), equine-facilitated psychotherapy (EFP), and equine-facilitated learning (EFL). EAP, EAL, and EFP approaches are provided in a collaborative interdisciplinary manner by two professionals: a mental health practitioner and a horse specialist. According to PATH Intl. (2012), EFL does not necessary need to have a mental health practitioner involved. The EFL practitioners can be teachers, equine specialists, equestrian instructors, or life coaches, and EFL can be provided either by one professional or by a team. If riding, vaulting or driving will be part of the EFL curriculum, one of the professionals in the team need to have training and credentials in that area. EAL and EFL focus on learning goals (e.g. problem solving abilities); EAP and EFP address treatment goals (e.g. personal issues). EAP and EAL are the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning models which all involve ground (unmounted) activities (EAGALA, 2009). EFP and EFL are Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH International) models which involve both mounted and unmounted activities (See Table 2.1).

Mounted activities require more instruction, add more risk, and generally involve teaching and modeling approaches (Cepeda, 2011). In contrast, ground work is safer, it increases opportunities for insurance companies to accept this model. In addition, in unmounted activities, horses are not controlled by riders, so they can act more naturally (EAGALA, 2009).

Table 2.1

Differences Between EAL, EAP, EFL and EFP

		Mounted	Unmounted	Learning Goals	Treatment Goals
EAGALA	EAL		X	X	
	EAP		X		X
PATH International	EFL	X	X	X	
	EFP	X	X		X

The reviewed literature for the current study focuses on EAP and EAL. However, I also included some literature related to EFP and EFL for three reasons. First and foremost, some studies include EAP and EFP practitioners in their research (Esbjorn, 2006; Frame, 2006), and therefore it is difficult to separate them in the literature review. Secondly, EFP and EFL include unmounted activities which are related to the concept of EAP and EAL. In other words, there are some overlaps between the EAGALA and the PATH Intl. model. Furthermore, some mental health practitioners receive training from both associations, so it is hard drawing a clear line between both. For example, horsemanship is taught in EFP sessions instead of EAP sessions, but some EAP practitioners also teach horsemanship to their clients.

The EAP literature is organized into two parts: journal articles and unpublished research which includes doctoral dissertations or master's theses. The electronic databases which were searched included Social Work Abstracts, Social Sciences Abstracts (H.W. Wilson), Science

Reference Center, PsycINFO, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, PsycARTICLES, MEDLINE, CINAHL, ERIC, Academic Search Premier, and Dissertation & Theses (ProQuest Collection). The keywords/search terms which were used were equine-assisted psychotherapy, equine-assisted learning, equine-facilitated psychotherapy, equine-facilitated learning, equine-assisted therapy, and equine assisted activity. I excluded articles focusing mainly on therapeutic riding or hippotherapy from my literature review. In this chapter, I discuss the following regarding EAP: therapeutic techniques, theoretical perspectives, research gaps, advantages and disadvantages, and limitations of prior research.

Therapeutic Techniques of EAP

EAGALA (2009) states that, “Equine assisted psychotherapy (EAP) incorporates horses experientially for emotional growth and learning. It is a collaborative effort between a mental health professional and a horse professional working with clients and horses to address treatment goals” (p.13). EAP uses a team approach, which involves an equine specialist and a mental health practitioner working together. The equine specialist focuses more on the physical safety of clients and horses’ nonverbal communication, whereas the mental health practitioner focuses more on clients’ emotional safety and nonverbal communication.

Strozzi (2012) describes how mental health practitioners incorporate passive and active activities into their equine guided education work. In passive activities, clients observe horses and they are just being with horses without asking anything from horses. Mental health practitioners provide some guidance for clients. If the goal of the activity is to focus on clients’ somatic awareness, practitioners may guide clients and say, “Let your body lead you to a place that it wants to go, and notice how your body reacts to the horses and the environment. If any thoughts come to your mind, let them go...”

In active activities, clients interact with horses directly. For example, clients may lead a horse in hand into an arena. Practitioners may guide a client to make a declaration related to what the client wants to change or accomplish in her/his life, and then the client leads a horse to a place that the client decides to go (Strozzi, 2012). The process of leading a horse is a metaphor for the client. A horse may respond differently to different clients.

The aspects of treatment that are therapeutic to the client include how a horse responds to a client, how a client reacts to a horse's behaviors, and how a client interprets the horse's reaction. For example, a mental health practitioner may ask a client, "What does the horse mean here?" The client may say "The horse is my mother. She supports me no matter where I go." or "The horse represents my internalized and critical parents stopping me from going in the career direction that I want." In this case, the client sees the horse as being critical of her.

Strozzi has her own model for incorporating horses into mental health treatment called equine guided education (EGE). I cite Strozzi's material because I found that the historical background and concepts of EGE and EAP cannot be separated. Ariana Strozzi is one of the pioneers in the U.S. in incorporating horses into humans' healing process. The EAP training under the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EGAGLA) had invited Strozzi to provide workshops for EAP practitioners at the beginning years when the EAGALA was founded. As the researcher, I found the EGE has influenced the work of EAP. I received training from both associations. I have found that the EAGALA model has taught me concepts and skills of incorporating horses into practice, while the EGE model has taught me the philosophy, soul and skills in this work.

There are two primary skills in EAP sessions. First, mental health practitioners and equine specialists use the SPUD'S model to observe clients and horses. Second, mental health

practitioners and equine specialists decide how to apply their observations under SPUD'S model (EAGALA, 2009). I use the activity "lead a horse in hand" (Strozzi, 2012, p. 49) as an example to explain both skills.

In SPUD'S observational model, S means shifts. EAP practitioners observe any shift that occur in horses' and client' behaviors (EAGALA, 2009). For example, EAP practitioners may point out "When you kept pulling the horse, the horse stood still there. There was a moment when you loosened the lead rope and the horse took one step toward you." The feedback helps the client notice how s/he interacts with the horse (or environment) and how the horse (or environment) react to his/her behavior. A shift represents that the change is possible.

The P in the SPUDS model stands for patterns. If the behavior of a horse or client occurs three or more times, EAP practitioners generally assume that there is something meaningful behind that behavior (EAGALA, 2009). If EAP practitioners decide to bring up the pattern, they may say some thing like, "There were a couple of times when you put your head down and the horse stopped walking (EAP practitioners' observation). What do you think was happening there (EAP practitioners apply their observation)? " The pattern presented in the arena tends to parallel other patterns in the client's life. For example, the client could respond, "When I doubt myself, I do not feel confident about leading anyone— the horse or myself."

The U in the SPUDS model stands for unique. Horses or clients may act unusually in EAP sessions (EAGALA, 2009). For example, a horse may stretch its head and make unusual noise, leading a practitioner to respond, "When you said that that you decided to quit drinking, the horse started to stretch his head and make noise. What does this mean for you?" The client may answer, "I think I am pushing myself too much, and I am actually not ready to quit drinking—that's more than I can do right now." The EAP practitioner will ask an open-ended

question so the client can make his or her own meaning regarding the horse's unique behavior. In this example, when the client notices that he/she is not ready to quit drinking, he/she can create a new, more realistic goal.

The D in the SPUDS model stands for discrepancy. EAP practitioners pay attention to discrepancies between clients' verbal and non-verbal language (EAGALA, 2009). For example, a client may feel frustrated because a horse is unwilling to walk with him/her but yet, the client still smiles to EAP practitioners. When EAP practitioners point out discrepancies, they bring clients' unconscious behavior to a conscious level, allowing clients a chance to change.

The S in the SPUDS model stands for self-awareness. EAP practitioners need to raise their self-awareness so their own past experiences do not affect how they interpret horses' and clients' behaviors (EAGALA, 2009). In a word, the skills of SPUD'S help EAP practitioners observe clients' and horses' behaviors through a neutral lens. Based on objective observations, EAP practitioners ask clients open-ended questions, and then clients find their own answers.

Relationship between Animal-Assisted Therapy and EAP

Animal-assisted therapy (AAT) is an umbrella term for describing the incorporation of different kinds of animals into therapeutic sessions (Arkow, 2011). The definition of AAT is:

Animal-assisted therapy (AAT) is a goal-directed intervention in which an animal that meets specific criteria is an integral part of the treatment process. AAT is directed and/or delivered by a health/human service professional with specialized expertise, and within the scope of his/her profession. AAT is designed to promote improvement in human physical, social, emotional, and/or cognitive functioning. AAT is provided in a variety of settings and may be group or individual in nature. This process is documented and evaluated. (Arkow, 2011, p. 12)

EAP is one of the branches under this umbrella. Therefore, theoretical perspectives of EAP are related to theoretical perspectives of AAT. Reality therapy, brief therapy, gestalt therapy, psychodynamic theory, anthropomorphic theory, social support theory, and the biophilia

hypothesis have been applied to explore their relevance to AAT. In this section, I discuss these theories respectively.

Theoretical Perspectives of EAP

EAP is an adjunct to existing therapies; therefore, EAP practitioners can incorporate horses into their own pre-existing professional theoretical approaches (Chandler, 2005). Because EAP mental health practitioners have diverse theoretical perspectives which are reflective of their differing professional backgrounds, some authors have discussed how to incorporate EAP into reality therapy, brief therapy, and gestalt therapy (Mandrell, 2006; Trotter, 2012). However, there has been limited research or theory development about the relevance of these practical theories to EAP. These therapeutic approaches do not concern the human animal bond; rather, EAP practitioners incorporate their EAP knowledge into their therapeutic approach.

Reality therapy. William Glasser's choice theory is the foundation of reality therapy, which posits that people are born with five genetically encoded needs, which are for survival, love and belonging, power, freedom, and fun, with love and belonging being the primary need. People put the actual people that they want to love and want to connect in their quality world (Corey, 2001). Glasser (1998) explained the quality world as:

Beginning shortly after birth, we learn to remember all that we do, or all that happens to us, that feels very good. We then collect these very pleasurable memories into what is best called a quality world, and this memory world becomes the most important parts of our lives. (p. 62)

However, not everyone has someone in their quality world to connect with. From Missel's (2001) perspective, the possibility of having therapy be successful hinges on a therapist's or therapy animal's ability to enter a client's quality world. Reality therapy emphasizes the importance of keeping the focus during therapy in the present with the view that the past is over, and that all people are able to do is to change their present behavior (Corey,

2001). Working with animals (including horses) helps clients focus on the present (Missel, 2001). The experiential modality of EAP helps clients stay in the here-and-now experience, give them opportunities to understand and discover themselves (Trotter, 2012).

Brief therapy. The main features of brief therapy are: 1) a focus on the here and now; 2) acceptance of the client's definition of the problem; 3) the therapist learning from the client (O'Connell, 2005). Brief therapy also emphasizes paying attention to the current experiences instead of focusing on the past (O'Connell, 2005). Change happens and new appropriate relational patterns occur when clients take new actions and participate in new experiences (William, 1999). In EAP, therapists try to create a therapeutic environment that reenacts clients' various patterns through interactions between clients and horses this allows clients to have an opportunity to work on their issues in the present and gain insights into the problem-solving process (EAGALA, 2009). In other words, therapeutic sessions are focused on practicing and developing new skills in therapeutic sessions as opposed to talking about past experiences in therapeutic sessions.

In brief therapy, therapists believe that clients are the experts on their personal circumstances, and that clients will understand what they need to change if they want to lead their own ideal lives (Pichot, 2012). This concept is similar to EAP. In EAP, therapists do not teach clients how to work with horses or how to get the task done, even if a client has never been around horses. EAP therapists believe that choosing to teach these to clients will cause clients to lose an opportunity to develop in various ways, e.g. insight and problem solving ability (EAGALA, 2009).

Gestalt therapy. Gestalt Equine Institute of the Rockies (GEIR) and Gestalt Equine Psychotherapy Australia (GEPA) are the two programs providing gestalt equine psychotherapy in the world (Kirby, 2010). The basic goal of gestalt therapy is to help clients attain awareness

which includes knowing and accepting themselves, becoming more aware of all of their senses, and knowing the environment. From gestalt perspective, humans exist within the systems of relationship. With awareness, clients get a chance for personality change, and to develop an integrated, unified sense between body and mind, person and situation, self and others, organism and environment (Corey, 2001; Parlett, 1997). Gestalt therapy also emphasizes direct and immediate experience instead of talking about abstract situations (Corey, 2001). EAP has strong underpinnings in this experiential and phenomenological approach (Trotter, 2012). Horses live in the essence of gestalt, which means that they naturally have awareness, congruency, and contact. This is consistent with therapeutic factors of EAP (Kirby, 2010). As herd animals, horses tend to sense other animals' intentions, which allows them to keep themselves safe from predators. When people whose emotions and behavior are incongruent approach horses, horses respond to them with confusion or stress because horses tend to respond to the inner experience instead of people's outside behavior (Kirby, 2010). Because horses respond to people's inner status authentically and immediately, this gives clients the opportunity to be aware of their body and mind.

Psychodynamic theory. Sigmund Freud, the psychoanalyst and founder of psychodynamic theory, recognized the benefits of animals for clients, and let his chow-chow, Jo-fi, stay in a therapy room (Missel, 2001). Psychodynamic child psychologist Boris Levinson incorporated his dog, Jingles, as an accessory in the treatment with severely withdrawn children (Levinson & Mallon, 1997). Levinson argues that people's emotional problems are partly due to their withdrawal from the healing force of nature. Reestablishing their bond with the animate and inanimate may enable them to regain some emotional harmony.

Psychodynamic theory indicates that an animal present during therapy sessions offers additional opportunities for emotional transference and projection (Chandler, Portrie-Bethke, Barrio Minton, Fernando, & O'Callaghan, 2010). For example, in EAP sessions, a client may say, "The horse likes me. She follows me everywhere." The interpretation may come from the client's projection. The client projects how he/she feels to the horse, but the horse does not necessarily feel the same way. Chandler (2005) suggests therapy animals are affectionate and responsive, unlike a toy or blanket. Also, they are nonjudgmental, unlike most humans. People feel safe viewing animals as their transitional objects which comfort them when they need emotional support. According to Winnicott (1953), transitional objects are attachment objects which help infants lessen their anxiety and feel secure when they need to separate from their mother. Transitional objects in childhood typically provide tactile comfort during periods of separation and stress. Levinson and Mallon (1997) suggest that transitional objects help children reconcile reality and fantasy. Transitional objections are usually something soft, warm, and cuddly, which satisfies some of the children's inner needs. This is why a soft, cuddly animal has become a symbol of security and a comfort.

Anthropomorphic theory. Anthropomorphic theory suggests that people tend to attribute human characteristics to animals or natural phenomena. An animal's behavior can trigger people's emotional responses, and people interpret this behavior based on their own needs or wants instead of the real meaning of the animal's behavior (McConnell, 2010). In anthropomorphizing animals, people may talk to animals, and animals create the safe space for people to express their emotions. In short, people project their feelings or issues onto animals. When a client is aroused by an animal's behavior in an EAP session, this provides an opportunity for the EAP practitioner to explore and work on the client's issues.

Social support theory. Social support theory indicates that social support leads people to believe that they are cared for, loved, esteemed, and a member of a network of mutual obligations (Johnson, 2001). Animals are a source of social support, demonstrated by the many Americans who say that their companion animal is a member of their family (Cain, 1983). They talk to their companion animal, and consider it to be a trusted confidante (Beck & Katcher, 2003). In EAP, sometimes a client connects with a specific horse and seeks support from that horse first because the client feels that he/she is accepted or loved by the horse. Although initially a client may feel more safe engaging with the horse, after the client begins to feel more secure in EAP sessions, he/ she will begin to feel more comfortable disclosing and exploring their difficult issues with therapists. This makes the horse somewhat of a bridge between clients and therapists.

Biophilia hypothesis. Edward Wilson, originator of the biophilia hypothesis, defines biophilia as the “innate [human] tendency to focus on life and lifelike process” (1984, p. 1). This suggests that people have an instinctive and genetically-determined tendency to deeply connect with natural environment (including non-human animals). Wilson (2002) contends that human affiliation with non-human organisms and the eco-system have complex benefits which not only promote psychic and physical well being, but also help humans evolve adaptive skills for survival.

My study emphasizes the biophilia hypothesis (explored further in chapter three), which addresses the nature of human-animal relationships and originally came from an evolutionary perspective that assumes that human animals and non-human animals co-evolve in the environment. This theoretical perspective also posits that animals have been essential to our physical survival and the source of personal companions (Besthorn & Saleebey, 2003).

Research Gaps in EAP

Since incorporating horses into psychotherapy is a new approach, only a limited number of empirical studies utilizing EAP as a treatment modality have been conducted (Burgon, 2011; Delgadillo, 2011; Graves, 2010; Pugh, 2010; Whitely, 2009). Therefore, there are some gaps in both EAP research content and methodology.

Gaps in EAP research content. The first research gap in content is that most participants in EAP research are teenagers (Bachi, Terkel, & Teichman, 2012; Chardonens, 2009; Cohen, 2011; Delgadillo, 2011; Dell, Chalmers, Bresette, Swain, Rankin, & Hopkins, 2011; Ewing, MacDonald, Taylor, & Bowers, 2007; Foley, 2008). Notgrass (2011) surveyed 328 EAP mental health practitioners and asked them what age groups they worked with using EAP. Teenagers were the most frequent client age group (80.2%), while pre-school children (ages under 6) were the less frequent age group (11%). Elderly (ages over 65) were the second less frequent age group; however, the researcher did not provide a percentage for this group. Shultz (2005) describes that, due to the challenges of working with at-risk teenagers, more and more mental health professionals are looking towards non-traditional therapies—such as experiential therapies, expressive therapies, animal-assisted therapies and adventure-based therapies—in the hopes of finding more effective interventions. On some level, equine-assisted psychotherapy is a part of these four non-traditional therapies, which can explain why most EAP research focuses on at-risk teenagers. However, as a reader, I may inquire “Why do EAP practitioners not work with pre-school children and elderly very much? What kinds of considerations are involved when EAP practitioners work with these populations? Are there any limitations to using EAP with these populations?” So far, there has been limited research focusing on pre-school children or older adults, so it would be valuable to study EAP mental health practitioners’ experiences in

working with these populations. While not focusing exclusively on preschool age children, Schultz, Remick-Barlow, and Robbins (2007) research on a mental health promotion/intervention modality for children who have experienced intra-family violence had participants age 4 to 16 years old. The researchers found that the youngest participants showed the greatest improvement in the EAP sessions in comparison with older participants after family violence. If pre-school children have potential to benefit from EAP, EAP practitioners should further develop their abilities to work with this population, aided by research specific to this population.

The second content research gap in EAP is the lack of attention paid to equine specialists' experiences in EAP research prior to the current study. Some researchers (Dell, Chalmers, Bresette, Swain, Rankin, & Hopkins, 2011; Foley, 2008; Hayden, 2005; Peterson, 2010; Toukonen, 2011; Whitely, 2009) have conducted interviews to explore clients' experiences in EAP, while other researchers (Cohen, 2011; Devon, 2011; Esbjorn, 2006; Frame, 2006; Pugh, 2010) have conducted interviews to explore EAP mental health practitioners' perspectives. However, there has been no qualitative research prior to the current study that explores EAP equine specialists' experiences. Netgrass' (2011) web-based survey which examines certified U.S. EAGALA practitioners' demographic information, types of training, professional experiences, and the extent to which certified EAGALA practitioners conform to EAGALA's model of EAP has been the only research prior to the current study to include some EAP equine specialists. Since equine specialists come from a variety of different professional backgrounds which also differ typically from EAP practitioners' backgrounds, they may interpret EAP experiences from different angles. When equine specialists join EAP sessions with clients and horses and share duties with their mental health practitioner partners, the dynamic of therapeutic sessions can be more diverse and complicated. Therefore, greater knowledge about the experiences of equine

specialists will be important for understanding and improving EAP practice. Furthermore, research concerning equine specialists raises such a variety of important ethical issues. For example, could an equine specialist be a client's riding instructor at the same time? What kinds of ethical issues may appear in the case of this type of dual relationship?

The last research content gap is that EAP mental health practitioners' general experiences have not been explored systemically and deeply. Cohen (2011) conducted phenomenological research with therapists who incorporate horses into their practice; however, the participants in this research practice EFP instead of EAP. Devon's (2011), Esbjorn's (2006), and Frame's (2006) studies combined EAP and EFP, and Devon and Frame also focused on very specific topics, such as therapists' experiences with youth diagnosed attention deficit disorder/attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and therapists' experiences with youth diagnosed with depression. Pugh (2010) interviewed three EAP mental health practitioners who worked at the same agency, received graduate degrees in transpersonal counseling psychology from the same university, and used attachment theory to understand their clients. The similarity in these participants and the extremely small sample size, even for qualitative research, may limit the study's findings.

Gaps in EAP research methodology. Research methodology refers to the techniques used in research for acquiring knowledge. The first research gap in methodology is that terminologies for therapies that incorporate horses into their treatment are not standardized (Pugh, 2010; Selby, 2009). This makes these terms very confusing. For example, Christian (2005) uses the term "equine assisted therapy" as the title of her article. However, the content of the article is about equine facilitated psychotherapy. When I visited Christian's website, she uses the term equine assisted psychotherapy to introduce her work even if she she is actually using equine facilitated psychotherapy. Although Korell-Rach (2011) uses the term equine assisted

psychotherapy in her/his dissertation title, s/he refers to all therapy activities which involve horses as EAP. In other words, s/he includes hippotherapy and therapeutic riding when referring to EAP, but these are not correctly included within EAP. Graves (2010) conducted a meta-analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of equine assisted psychotherapy with severely emotionally disturbed and autistic children and adolescents. Under Graves' definition, the term equine assisted psychotherapy actually includes EAP, EFP and therapeutic riding. Basile and Antoon (1996) examined the impact of EAP on self esteem and behavior among children with ADHD. However, this study mainly focused on therapeutic riding, which involved different practical skills and core concepts than EAP. It is better for research to clearly distinguish between therapeutic riding, EAP, and EFP because combining different therapeutic approaches within research creates difficulty in interpreting research results. For example, McConneall (2010) conducted a national survey on equine assisted therapy and included EAP, EFP and therapeutic riding practitioners in the study. Two hundred and three participants were asked if their program had any exclusionary criteria for clients. Twenty participants (14.5%) answered that clients' weight is one of the exclusionary criteria in their programs; in EFP and therapeutic riding programs, weight can be a problem because clients ride horses. However, in EAP programs, all activities are on the ground, so clients' weight will not cause a problem. Therefore, although this research included EAP practitioners, these results do not have much meaning for these practitioners. Recently, some researchers (Devon, 2011; Teteault, 2006; Pugh, 2010; Notgrass, 2011; Wilcox, 2010) have clearly defined EAP in their research so that EAP and EFP are not confused. So far, no research has differentiated between the effectiveness of EAP and EFP in various populations, and this can be the direction for future research.

Another research gap in methodology is studies in EAP area are mainly conducted under post-positivist and constructivist paradigms. Chalmers and Dell (2011) suggest that the participatory paradigm is another potential approach to EAP research in the future, especially when researchers intend to focus on a specific cultural group and develop a cultural intervention. The participatory paradigm focuses on problem-solving and societal change (Marcia Hill, & Mullett, 2000). My opinion is that EAP research is still in its infancy, so the overall therapeutic effectiveness for specific population has not been well established. The research from different paradigms will all make some contributions in this area, depending on the research questions that researchers want to solve.

Advantages of EAP

Two advantages in EAP includes that EAP is an experiential therapy and horses can speed up the process of change. It has been estimated that people remember 20% of what they hear, recall 50% of what they see, and retain 80% of what they do and experience (Mandrell, 2006). This suggests the value of EAP as an experiential therapy. Silberman (2007) suggests processes for changing attitudes and behaviors through experiential activities, including creating openness, promoting understanding, considering new attitudes and behaviors, experimenting, and obtaining support. These processes are applicable to the skills of STUP'S in EAP by helping clients to raise their awareness, discover new attitudes and behaviors, and experiment with new skills. The experiential nature of EAP is understood as providing a variety of ways for clients to explore their personal issues. Additionally, horses' here-and-now presence allows them to provide immediate feedback, and their non-judgmental nature provide a supportive environment, both of which help clients sustain their efforts at change. The skills of STUP'S in EAP help

clients raise their awareness, discover new attitudes and behaviors, and experiment with new skills.

Another advantage is that horses can speed up the process of change. In traditional psychotherapy, when a therapist confronts a client, the confrontation is much more complicated than when horses act out clients' discrepancies. Clients' reaction is related to whether the therapeutic alliance has been built and is strong enough. Chutinho, Ribeiro, Hill, and Safran (2011) found that the alliance's ruptures seem to be associated with therapists challenging clients when clients are not ready to be challenged, while horses, in contrast, are less of a threat to clients. Kohanov (2001) posits that horses are very honest in showing people what they have sensed without sugarcoating. It is not as threatening when horses see through clients because clients know that horses do not have any ulterior motives, and instead are just responding honestly in the moment. This honesty of horses can speed up the treatment because clients tend to accept horses' responses instead of trying to defend himself/herself.

Disadvantages of EAP

There are also some disadvantages to EAP. First, taking care of horses requires a substantial time and financial commitment. Additionally, compared to more traditional forms of talk therapy, there is an increased risk for potential physical injury when clients interact with horses (Korell-Rach, 2011). Therefore, EAP practitioners must always have informed consent from clients (Cepeda, 2011), which much include a warning to clients about the possibility for accidents to occur during EAP. For example, even if it is a rare occurrence, horses may bite, kick or step on a client in a session. In addition, EAP is sometimes restricted by the weather. For example, in personal conversations with some EAP practitioners living in Washington State, they shared the need to have an indoor arena to practice EAP because of the heavy rainfall there.

It is sometimes hard drawing a line between advantages and disadvantages in EAP practice. EAP is an emerging area, so there are many places for practitioners to develop creatively. Some practitioners may see barriers and stop practicing EAP, while other practitioners may instead see these as opportunities. For example, Cepeda (2011) developed an EAP manual for therapists in private practice. At first, the manual suggested that clients who are afraid of horses, are overly anxious, or have anti-social characteristics may not be suitable for EAP. However, after 12 EAP experts reviewed the manual, some experts suggested that these clients may actually benefit from the therapy. In my personal EAP experiences, some clients feel scared to work with horses, and they finally decide to drop out the treatment. EAP practitioners may encourage clients to overcome the fear; however, clients always have a right to decide whether they want to continue the EAP or not.

McConnell (2010) conducted a national survey from EAP, EFP and therapeutic riding practitioners. Participants were asked if there was any population that was not suitable for equine assisted therapy (EAT), and 30.3% (n=50) of the participants expressed that there was no specific population/ diagnosis that was contra-indicated. However, 68.5% (n=113) of the participants replied that some populations are contra-indicated including persons who are violent (n=53, 46%), are suicidal (n=29, 25%), have a history of animal abuse (n=26, 23%), psychotic (n=20, 17%), actively use abuse alcohol or other drugs (n=14, 12%), have a history of fire starting (n=9, 7.8%), are young children (n=9, 7.8%), and so on. Because the research did not separate EAP, EFP, and therapeutic riding, these contraindications may not be specifically relevant to EAP. According to Cepeda's (2011) and McConnell's (2010) studies, clients' anti-social characteristics do stop some EAP practitioners from working these populations because they are concerned about the safety of clients, horses, and farms.

However, some researchers (e.g., Dell, Chalmers, Bresette, Swain, Rankin, & Hopkins, 2011; Korell-Rach, 2011) have studied the effectiveness of EAP with at-risk youth with anti-social characteristics and find the positive change in these populations. Dell's et al. (2011) studied First Nations and Inuit youth who abuse solvents. After the thematic analysis, the study showed equine-assisted learning (EAL) program provided a space for the participants to connect with horses, and offered an opportunity for the participants to sense body language with horses and then transfer this to humans. Furthermore, EAL gave the youths opportunities to express affection and take care of another being. From an Aboriginal worldview, EAL provided a culturally-relevant space which helped youths' healing process. Korell-Rach's (2011) study showed a reduction in symptoms among participants with substance abuse or anger management problems. EAP therapists should use cautions in saying that EAP is contra-indicated in certain populations, because people with anger or substance abuse problems were both identified as contra-indicated populations, yet these research studies found a benefit in using EAP with them. In other words, if EAP therapists do not set some limitation in advance, there are some opportunities that their clients can benefit from this treatment.

Limitations of Prior Research

To date, there have been only a few quantitative studies about EAP. One of the common problems of these studies is their small sample sizes (Brouillette, 2006; Tetreault, 2006; Whitely, 2009). A small size of participants increases the probability of Type II statistical error which means researchers accept the null hypothesis when it is right (Whitely, 2009). Also, these studies typically involved a one-group pretest-posttest design (Brouillette, 2006; Korell-Rach, 2011; Whitely, 2009). The lack of a comparison group means that other extraneous variables may have

influenced the study (Gliner, Morgan, Leech, 2009), which means that researchers cannot be confident that the change from pretest to posttest is due to the EAP treatment.

In addition, participants in EAP research usually lack diversity in ethnicity of participants. For example, Notgrass (2011) conducted a web-based survey to explore EAP practitioners' experiences through EAGALA. Members in EAGALA are from 38 countries, but the 328 EAP practitioners in this study all were from the United States. Openness to EAP may vary across cultures and individuals. Some researchers in Canada (Dell, Chalmers, Bresette, Swain, Rankin, and Hopkins, 2011; Chalmers & Dell, 2011) have started to explore how First Nations with substance abuse react to EAP or EAL. Some First Nations view horses with a profound sacredness, and they believe that horses' spirits can lead people to understand their life. These researchers have tried to develop culture-based interventions in EAP areas. International research and experiences in EAP are still very limited. It will be meaningful to understand how people in different cultures react to EAP.

The study addresses some gaps in EAP. First, I clarify confusing terminologies which help distinguish EAP from EFP or therapeutic riding. This avoids the confusion of previous research which stated the use of a particular therapeutic modality, but actually used a variety of therapeutic modalities. This allows the findings of this study to more clearly applicable to EAP research and practice. Second, I explore EAP mental health practitioners' experiences deeply, and explore the relevance of the biophilia hypothesis as a theoretical framework for EAP. Third, I recruited participants from different educational or training backgrounds so participants have diverse experiences and perspectives on EAP.

Research Questions

I developed three primary research questions and four secondary questions to address gaps in the EAP research literature. For the first primary research question, I intended to explore the kinds of personal experiences that led the study's participants to become EAP practitioners. Because the participants in this study had experiences as traditional psychotherapists and EAP practitioners, the first research question explored why they incorporate EAP into their practice.

1. What are participants' experiences with horses in their personal lives?

1.1 What are horses' roles in participants' lives?

1.2 What experiences led participants to practice EAP?

For the second primary research question, I intended to investigate participants' professional experiences with EAP. The goals of this research question were to identify the horse-specific therapeutic factors that effect clients' changes in EAP and to explore participants' therapeutic strategies in EAP. This research question clarifies the specific value of EAP within the larger field of mental health treatment, and examines participants' meta-cognition when they practice EAP.

2. What are participants' professional experiences with EAP?

2.1 What are therapeutic factors in EAP?

2.2 What are participants' strategies in EAP?

The goal of the third primary research question was to examine the essential differences between traditional psychotherapy and EAP, and the specific value of EAP. These questions have not been explored in any prior research, yet they are critical to understanding and developing EAP as a unique treatment modality.

3. What are participants' views about the differences between EAP and traditional psychotherapy (TP)?

Chapter Three: Inquiry and Analysis

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss my rationale for selecting a narrative research methodology and describe how the biophilia hypothesis aligns with constructivist narrative research. The ontology and epistemology of the constructivist approach are included in this discussion. This chapter also reviews my procedures for participant recruitment and interviewing. Finally, I describe my data analysis strategy, interview questions, validity issues, pilot study, and personal stance.

Why the Constructivist Narrative Approach

Kuhn (1996) said, “Since no paradigm ever solves all the problems it defines and since no two paradigms leave all the same questions unsolved, paradigm debates always involve the question: Which problems is it more significant to have solved?” (p. 110). In other words, the research method chosen by researchers depends on the kinds of research questions the researcher wants to solve. Chase (1995) described the narrative approach as having a fundamental interest in making sense of experience and in constructing meaning. Narrative inquiry tries to understand an individual’s life experiences with the concepts of continuity and wholeness (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This study’s research questions are related to participants’ life stories and participants’ subjective experiences of EAP; these questions explore the personal construction of past experiences. Therefore, a narrative approach aligned with the goals of my research.

Furthermore, Guba (1996) said constructivism is an approach that helps to fill in the gaps between theory and practice. In other words, scientific generalization (e.g. positivism and post-positivism) might not be a suitable method to solve practical problems that involve a major gap between theory and practice, such as the gap between EAP theory and practice. This gap is one of the most important issues in EAP. Scientific generalizations might not be the best fit in

EAP, which is still in the developmental stages of exploring practical skills and theoretical foundations. Therefore, in this study, I plan to use a constructivist narrative approach, which is embodied in Deweyan theory. In the following sections, I discuss Dewey's conception of experiences and how Dewey's theory matches Wilson's biophilia hypothesis.

Ontology

When we talk about ontology, we ask "what is the nature of the knowledge?" and "What is the nature of reality?" In other words, ontology reflects the worldviews and assumptions researchers operate from in their search for new knowledge.

John Dewey was an American philosopher and educator; his writing on the nature of experience strongly influenced the constructivist narrative approach (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). A Deweyan theory of experience emphasizes the temporality of knowledge, which means that experience is always more than we can know and represent in a single statement (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007).

Wilson, the originator of the biophilia hypothesis, similarly believed reality to be diverse in nature, with multiple truths. In *Biophilia*, Wilson (1984) described:

The role of science, like that of art, is to blend exact imagery with more distant meaning, the parts we already understand with those given as new into larger patterns that are coherent enough to be acceptable as truth. The biologist knows this relation by intuition during the course of field work, as he struggles to make order out of the infinitely varying patterns of nature. (p.51)

This excerpt from Wilson's book, with its focus on "intuition" and "blend[ing] exact imagery with more distant meaning" highlight his belief that the essences of science are like the essences of art. Both art and science rely on humans' intuition. When we talk about art and intuition, we are concerned more with issues of personal perception, experience, and interpretation than with cause and effect or predicting or controlling. When searching for new

knowledge, researchers may blend exact imagery with their own interpretations, thereby creating multiple interpretations of reality. Therefore, when interpreting participants' experiences, I made an effort to describe my standpoint in addition to using quotations to show exactly what participants expressed. Because knowledge is multiple and temporary, readers may have their own interpretations as well.

Dewey's conception of experience was that experiences grow out of and lead to other experiences (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Wilson (1984) mirrored Dewey when he stated, "continuity is essential for comprehension" (p. 80). Wilson held evolutionary perspectives to understand and explain human nature and behaviors. Based on the Deweyan theory of experience and Wilson's evolutionary perspectives, I emphasized the continuity of participants' experiences. In other words, I analyzed how participants' past experiences influenced their career choice in EAP, and how they incorporated EAP into their therapeutic approaches and different populations.

Furthermore, Dewey emphasized (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007) that participants' experiences cannot be isolated from their environments. Communities, culture, and the world shape participants' experiences. Dewey's perspective matches Wilson's (1984) biophilia hypothesis, which suggests that both human and non-human animals are co-evolved in the world. As an evolutionary biologist and sociobiologist, Wilson (2002) believed that human animals' and non-human animals' social behaviors could be understood from an evolutionary perspective. Because human animals and nonhuman animals live in and interact with the environment, their evolutionary process is influenced by their surroundings. Wilson's (1984) perspective showed that people's experiences are related to those of other animals as well as the larger environment. Therefore, in this study I explored how participants and their living environments (e.g. including, but not limited to culture) interacted with each other.

Epistemology

When we talk about epistemology, we are asking about the nature of the relationship between the knower (the inquirer) and what is being known (the subject of inquiry; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In other words, epistemology is the philosophical examination of knowledge and its acquisition. Dewey said (as cited in Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 39) that, “every experience is constituted by interaction between subject and object, between a self and its world....” This indicates that researchers and participants co-create findings when they interact with one another.

As a sociobiologist, Wilson (1984) had a similar perspective, namely that subject and object interact with each other. Wilson spent a lot of time in the wild observing the dynamics of ants, birds, and different kinds of animals. His sociobiology studies relied heavily on careful and repeated observations to obtain empirical and objective knowledge. However, at other times Wilson’s research reflected more constructivist epistemological assumptions. For example, he emphasized the value of knowledge to the well-being of humanity. The knowledge that a naturalist gets from nature helps people elevate their spirituality, understand their hearts, and put more value on non-human animals (Wilson, 1984). The purpose of the dialogue between humans and nature is to enable people to learn more about themselves. The concept of EAP is aligned with Wilson’s views because EAP therapists and equine specialists bring the knowledge they have learned from horses into human mental health; they use EAP to help people develop spiritually by understanding themselves well and strengthening their connection to the larger natural environment.

When Wilson wrote the book *Biophilia* (1984), he created a dialogue across numerous academic areas. Since then, the biophilia hypothesis has been applied to different professions in a variety of ways. Wilson’s followers create knowledge by applying the biophilia hypothesis

within their own professional domains, which is a co-creative process between Wilson and his readers and followers. For example, Wilson's sociobiological description of the biological basis of social behavior and culture has influenced and motivated the development of evolutionary psychology (Naour, 2010).

Narrative research has certain assumptions that align closely with the biophilia hypothesis. For example, narrative researchers work not only with their participants, but also with themselves (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This means narrative researchers cannot distance themselves from their research because when they conduct narrative research, they disclose and know more about themselves at some level. Wilson's biophilia hypothesis (1984) similarly posits that animals and nature tell us about ourselves and about the world. We need animals and nature for our imagination and for our sanity. As Orr (1993) writes, "To recognize animals and wildness is to decide to admit deeper layers of our consciousness into the sunlight of full consciousness again" (pp. 434-435). In other words, researchers' thoughts and feelings will be affected when they include themselves within their research. Both during the interview process as well as in the data analysis phase of the study, participants' experiences inspired me to explore my personal experiences relative to my development as an EAP practitioner.

Throughout this document, I indicated myself as the personal narrator with *italic* typeface or I shared my reflections on my journey as an EAP learner in the chapter 4 (the findings of zoom model). I tried to approach the study with an open stance, allowing myself to look at my own experiences. In summary, the biophilia hypothesis was in alignment with the constructive approach of narrative inquiry.

Participants

One of the goals of my research was to understand the differences between traditional psychotherapy and EAP from EAP therapists' perspectives. I found eight mental health practitioners who had at least two years of experience with practicing both traditional psychotherapy and EAP. Internship experiences could be included in the required two years of experience, and participants could have experiences with both therapies separately or simultaneously. However, an inclusion criterion was that every participant must have a graduate level professional degree relevant to mental health. Overall, participants were recruited mainly by convenience and snowball techniques. Specifically, the participants were recruited in three ways. First, I invited EAP mental health practitioners that I had known. Through this method, three participants Michael, Pia, and Thom, were identified. Second, I sent a recruitment email to Colorado attendees of the 2011, 2012, and 2013 annual EAGALA conferences. Through this way, two participants Becky and Kriss, were found. Third, I did an internet search to identify and contact eligible participants. I found one participant using this method, Jean-Jacques. Fourth, I recruited participants through EAGALA's community network. The EAGALA website listed many certified EAP practitioners in each state. I sent a recruitment email to these certified EAP practitioners who live in Colorado and New Mexico and found two participants, Sue and Julie Anne.

Diverse participants can bring different perspectives to the research; therefore, I recruited participants from different professional areas. Four participants were social workers, and four participants were counselors. Because of the cost of traveling, I focused on local participants; seven participants lived in Colorado, and one participant lived in Arizona. Because

generalizability is not a goal of narrative research, it was not a problem that my research participants were from fairly local settings.

I interviewed eight participants with the goal of having enough material to represent the richness and diversity of EAP practitioners' experiences (Josselson & Lieblich, 2003). Table 3.1 represents participants' demographic information. Even if the participants were primarily from Colorado, their backgrounds were diverse. It is common in the psychotherapy profession for there to be more female than male therapists. In this study, there were three male therapists and five female. The ethnicity and cultural backgrounds of the participants were also diverse. Michael is an Africa American; Jean-Jacques is originally from Switzerland; Pia is originally from the Netherlands. Becky, Julie Anne, Kriss, Sue, and Thom are White Americans. Participants' ages ranged from 47 to 65. Their years of practicing traditional psychotherapy ranged from two to 38; their years of practicing EAP ranged from two to 14. Some participants chose to use their real names in this study, while other participants chose to use pseudonyms.

Table 3.1

Participants' Demographic Backgrounds

Name	Kriss	Michael	Pia	Becky	Jean-Jacque	Sue	Julie Anne	Thom
Gender	F	M	F	F	M	F	F	M
Professional background	counselor	Counselor	Social worker	Social worker	Counselor	Social worker	counselor	Social worker
Ethnicity	White	Africa American	White	White	White	White	White	White
Educational background	psychology	Counseling	social work; child and family study	social work; human service	counseling; political science	social work; psychology	counseling; zoology	social work; animal husbandry
Original From	US	US	Netherlands	US	Switzerland	US	US	US
Age	57	61	54	49	51	50	47	65
Years of practice traditional psychotherapy	35	38	31	4	5	20	7	2
Years of practice EAP	12	14	4	3.5	4	10	3	2
Professional license	LPC	LPC	None	LCSW	LPC	LCSW	LPC	LSW
State	CO	CO	CO	CO	CO	CO	CO	AZ

Interview

In my study, I interviewed each participant twice, and each interview lasted between one and two hours. I sent each participant the interview guide (Appendix A) four to seven days prior to the first interview so he or she could formulate initial thoughts. Table 3.2 represents the duration and the date of each interview. There were a number of reasons why I limited my contact to only two interviews. For one, many EAP practitioners not only conduct EAP, but also take care of horses and work with clients and I wanted to be respectful of their time. I also needed to limit my costs associated with travel as the longer each trip lasted to interview a

participant, the greater the cost. Fortunately, because I previously met some of the participants at EAGALA conferences, I had already established rapport with several of them prior to the study. I decided that I needed to interview each participant at least twice because I had developed many interview questions, to further establish rapport with each participant, and also to allow time between the first and second interviews for each participant to reflect and possibly gain further insights that could then be explored in the second interview. I believe that two meetings with each participant achieved a balance of being logistically feasible while still allowing time to establish rapport and reflect following the first interview. I decided to conduct the two interviews on different days to avoid participants being fatigued from a long interview, and to provide participants with time to reflect and digest their experiences, thereby allowing for deeper responses during the second interview. Furthermore, each interview had a different focus. The first interview primarily focused on participants' life stories and personal experiences with horses, while the second interview primarily emphasized participants' professional experiences and perspectives with EAP. The first interview provided opportunities for me to know more about participants' life stories and enabled me to better understand participants' professional experiences in the second interview. The participants' two interviews occurred during a period ranging from two days to three weeks.

The first interview primarily focused on participants' life stories. I invited participants to share anything that they would like for me to know about them. I also invited them to share their experiences with horses and the turning point at which they began to incorporate horses into their practice. In the second interview, I prepared questions that elicited participants' experiences and perspectives on both EAP and traditional psychotherapy. When there was information from the participant interviews that I needed to clarify, I asked for one more in person meeting or

collected data via emails. I had an informal meeting with Pia and sent an email to Jean-Jacques to clarify the interview content.

Because participants shared very personal experiences with me, it was important for participants to be interviewed in safe and secure settings. Therefore, interviews were conducted in the participants’ therapy rooms (Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, Kriss, and Michael), participants’ house (Becky, Pia, and Thom), my house (Pia), and my hotel room (Sue). Each of these locations was quiet and provided privacy.

Table 3.2

Interview Date and Duration

Name		Kriss	Michael	Pia	Becky	Jean-Jacques	Sue	Julie-Anne	Thom
1 st Interview	Date	6/20/13	6/28/13	7/2/13	7/13/13	7/22/13	7/23/13	7/25/13	8/15/13
	Duration (minute)	80	77	62	60	110	66	91	66
2 nd Interview	Date	6/26/13	7/2/13	7/10/13	7/18/13	8/12/13	7/24/13	7/26/13	8/16/13
	Duration (minute)	82	83	94	80	100	76	114	125

Interview Guide

Chase (2003) suggested that narrative research interview questions should ask people about their life experiences as opposed to sociological questions, which only direct participants to generalize about others’ experiences. It is also important to organize questions so they flow logically from topic to topic. The interview questions in my research focused on participants’ personal experiences, and I have organized the questions by topic. I conducted semi-structured interviews with the interview questions (Appendix A). These open-ended questions and in-depth interviews aimed to elicit mental health practitioners’ experiences and perspectives. At the end of the interview, I asked participants “How was it for you to be talking to me in this way?” and “What questions do you have for me as we end our time together?” Josselson (2007) suggested

that these questions help provide closure for participants and allow them to ask whatever questions that they may have.

Ethical Cautions

Participants shared their life stories in interviews, so maintaining confidentiality was important. Before the first interview started, participants chose a pseudonym to disguise their identity. In the demographic form and consent form, I asked each participant to select a name of his or her choice for use in reporting the results of this study. Some participants chose to keep their real names. The participants also needed to maintain their clients' confidentiality. Because the participants were therapists, they were already familiar with confidentiality issues. However, when I had any concerns that a client's identity may be recognizable, I took care to protect confidentiality by deidentifying any personal data.

In narrative research, there is the potential for participants to disagree with the researcher's interpretation. This is another ethical consideration in narrative research (Josselson, 2007). Palmer (1987, p. 22) wrote that, "Every epistemology tends to become an ethic, and that every way of knowing tends to become a way of living ... every mode of knowing contains its own moral trajectory, its own ethical direction and outcome." The epistemology of the constructivist narrative approach emphasizes that people construct their own understanding of reality. People construct meaning based on their interaction with their surroundings. In other words, narrative researchers refuse to adopt any permanent, unvarying standards by which truth can be universally known (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Based on this epistemology, I made an effort to clearly state my biases and personal stance that might have influenced the study, and I took full responsibility for what was written. I also left space for participants and audiences, so they could have their own interpretations.

Approaches to Analysis

My primary analytic strategies were a zoom model and a thematic analysis of my interview transcripts. In thematic analysis, researchers are especially concerned with the content of the interview, which means what participants say is emphasized. However, in thematic analysis, researchers do not pay as much as attention to how a story unfolds in a conversation (Riessman, 2008). For me, how stories were told by participants—in addition to focusing only on the words themselves— was important, too. Furthermore, thematic analysis focuses on segments rather than sequences (Riessman, 2008). In order to cover some aspects of sequences, and interactions between participants and me that thematic analysis did not cover, I used Pamphilon’s (1999) zoom model as a dynamic framework to analysis participants’ stories. Pamphilon’s (1999) zoom model was developed to maximize the multiple levels of meaning found in life stories.

Table 3.3 presents the method by which each research question and sub-question was analyzed.

Table 3.3

Research Questions

Research questions	Sub-questions	Methods of data analysis
1. What are participants’ experiences with horses in their personal life?	1.1 What are horses’ roles in participants’ lives?	Zoom model, thematic analysis
	1.2 What experiences and reasons did lead participants practice EAP?	Zoom model, thematic analysis
2. What are participants’ professional experiences with EAP?	2.1 What are therapeutic factors in EAP?	Thematic analysis
	2.2 What are participants’ strategies in EAP?	Thematic analysis
3. What are the differences between EAP and traditional psychotherapy?	(none)	Thematic analysis

Zoom model. A photography metaphor “underpins” the zoom model. The zoom model, which explores the multiple levels of meaning in a life story, compensates for the limitations

found in thematic analysis, which focuses mainly on segments rather than sequences of stories (Pamphilon, 1999; Riessman, 2008). The macro-zoom focuses on the sociocultural collective dimensions of life history (Pamphilon, 1999). I used the macro-zoom to examine the cultural perspectives revealed in the EAP therapists' personal narratives. To summarize, the macro level focuses on the relationship between participants and their culture or historical events, similar to how the Deweyan theory of experience (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007) emphasizes the "social dimension" of the participants' experiences. In the study, I also used macro-zoom to explore any events which are related to participants' personal history.

The micro-level zoom focuses on "how stories are told." In other words, researchers attend to the oral aspect of the accounts, such as pauses and emotional undertones (Pamphilon, 1999). The micro-level was the lens through which I presented the EAP therapists' linguistic form and emotional dimension.

The interactional-zoom helps researchers increase their self awareness, and record ways in which they may have impacted interviews. The interaction between participants and researchers can influence how a story is told and what is told because both of them bring different background, content, and performance factors to the process of interviewing. Also, the researchers' role is active, which means that researchers decide what to elicit, emphasize, and make visible (Pamphilon, 1999). I kept a record during my interviews of any subjective experiences or emotional responses that may have influenced the interviews and data analysis.

In the meso-level, researchers focus on narrative process, key phrases, and narrative themes. The "narrative process" means that researchers examine the silence and absences in participants' stories. As researchers re-listen to a life story, they can find parts of the story flow easily and parts of the story seem irrelevant and incongruent. The incongruent or absent data can

be indicative of a need for attention to a different understanding of the interview data (Pamphilon, 1999). For example, Kehily (1995) and Pamphilon (1999) believe the silence within life stories can be interpreted as a gatekeeper between the private and the public, or a lack of engagement with an issue. The “key phrases” term means that participants may use particular phrases in the interview that indicate the relationship between themselves and society. For instance, the phrase “you know” may show that participants seek validation from listeners (Pamphilon, 1999). The “narrative themes” mean that researchers seek out the themes present in an individual’s narrative. When a researcher pays attention to what is selected and what is left out in an individual’s stories, personal values within life stories emerge (Rosenthal, 1993). For example, “horses teach me how to be a good therapist” can be an EAP therapist’s narrative theme; however, the therapist rarely tells the researcher directly because they have not thought about it.

Thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was the other primary method of analysis. Using thematic analysis, I focused on the actual verbal content of the interview. In contrast to thematic analysis, Riessman (2008) argued that narrative research attempts to keep a story intact and to preserve sequences, so the process of analysis will be more case-centered, as opposed to being based in thematically coding segments. However, Gibbs (2007) argued that even though narrative researchers stress identifying the uniqueness of the case and understanding the narrators’ experiences in a holistic way, there is no reason why researchers cannot conduct case-by-case comparisons. I agree with both Riessman’s and Gibbs’s perspectives. The case-centered analysis and case-by-case comparisons functioned differently in my research. For example, the data from interview questions 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4 were more related to participants’ life histories, so a case-centered analysis helped retain the sequences of the stories. However, other questions were related to participants’ practical experiences in EAP, and although

the uniqueness of the case was important for these, the case-by-case comparisons allowed me to uncover thematic patterns across narrators. Therefore, I both explored the uniqueness of each story and sought patterns across stories.

There were several steps within the thematic analysis. First, I transcribed all the interview recordings, which was the first time I immersed myself in the data. The process of transcribing interviews was the first step of the preliminary analysis of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I noted initial ideas when I was transcribing and re-listening to the recordings. After finishing the transcript, a native English speaker who was a graduate student in a social work program listened to the recordings and checked the transcripts. After receiving the native English speaker's revisions, I read and corrected the transcripts (the second time I immersed myself in the data) and then sent the individual transcripts to each participant via an e-mail. Each participant's transcript combined the first and second interviews and was between 50 and 83 pages (double space). Total, there were 483 pages of transcripts. Participants had two weeks to check their own transcriptions, but only one participant sent revisions back to me. Some participants sent me an e-mail and told me that they were too busy to read and revise the whole transcript; instead, they skimmed them and noted grammar mistakes, but the content was correct.

In the coding process, I combined inductive and deductive coding. "Coding is how you define what the data you are analyzing are about. It is a progressive process of sorting and defining and defining and sorting those scraps of collected data" (Glesne, 2011, p.194). In the first coding, I conducted deductive analysis, which tends to be driven by researchers' theoretical and analytic interests (Braun & Clarke, 2006). My interview questions, which were derived from my research questions, guided my data collection. Table 3.4 shows the relationship between research questions and interview questions. After getting the feedback from participants, I read

the transcripts and follow these research questions to develop codes and the codebook (Appendix D).

Table 3.4

The Relationship between Research Questions and Interview Questions

General Research Question Therapists' experience with EAP and horses		
<u>Research Question 1</u>	<u>Research Question 2</u>	<u>Research Question 3</u>
What are participants' experiences with horses in their personal lives?	What are participants' professional experiences with EAP?	What are the differences between EAP and traditional psychotherapy (TP)?
<u>Sub-questions</u>	<u>Sub-questions</u>	<u>Sub-questions</u>
1.1 What are horses' roles in participants' lives? 1.2 What experiences led participants to practice EAP?	2.1 What are therapeutic factors in EAP? 2.2 What are therapists' strategies in EAP?	(No)
<u>Interview Questions</u>	<u>Interview Questions</u>	<u>Interview Questions</u>
1. What are your experiences with horses? 2. What kinds of experiences brought you into EAP or an EAP-related area? 3. What was the turning point that led you to begin to incorporate horses in your practice? 4. How has EAP influenced you in your personal life?	1. From your perspective, how do horses help you when you conduct EAP sessions? 2. From your perspective, how do horses help your clients in EAP sessions? 3. How do horses react differently to different clients in your EAP sessions? 4. How do you incorporate EAP into your personal therapeutic approach or therapy? 5. How have your experiences practicing EAP influenced your views of therapy? 6. What, if any, limitations have you encountered when you practicing EAP? 7. What kinds of adjustments do you need to make when you conducting EAP with different populations? 8. What have you observed about how different populations have reacted differently in EAP sessions? 9. How do differently EAP settings influence clients and horses? 10. Some related interview questions from research question 3 may answer this question. 11. What kinds of adjustments do you need to make when conducting EAP with different age groups (e.g.,	1. From your perspective, what kinds of skills do EAP mental health practitioners specifically need to have that are different from skills needed by traditional therapists? 2. From your perspective, how do clients react differently to EAP versus traditional psychotherapy? 3. From your perspective, what kinds of clients are more suitable for EAP, and what kinds of clients are more suitable for traditional psychotherapy? 4. Some related interview questions from research question 2 may answer question 3. Those interview questions, and vice versa.

-
- children, teenagers, and adults)?
12. What kinds of adjustments do you need to make when conducting EAP with populations who have different presenting mental health symptoms (e.g. eating disorders, trauma, and ADHD?)
 13. What have you observed about how different populations have reacted differently in EAP sessions?
 14. How do different EAP settings (e.g., arena, round pen, pastures, indoor setting or outdoor setting) influence clients and horses?
-

I conducted an inductive analysis in the second coding. This form of thematic analysis is data-driven (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I did not focus on research questions so much because they could limit my thoughts at a certain level, which meant participants may have provided information that I had not anticipated. Instead, I read every sentence carefully, and focused on what the sentences wanted to tell me. Inductive analysis may bear little relation to the specific research questions or researchers' theoretical or analytic interests (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this stage, I kept developing codes and a codebook. The codes that were discovered at this stage may or may not have been sorted into different research questions or sub-questions. I kept for future use those codes that could not be sorted into any research questions or sub-questions.

After the deductive and inductive analyses, I sorted each code to each research question and utilized the computer-assisted qualitative software NVivo 10 to help me organize the data. In total, there were about 100 to 120 codes developed during the thematic analysis process. Glesne (2011, p. 196) suggested, "Coding and organizing data is an analytical step, but not the end-all to data analysis. Your codes are the starting point from which you go on to look for patterns, make comparisons, produce explanations and build models." After coding, I searched for categories, sub-themes, and main themes. In this phase, codes from one research question were moved to other research questions to form a better fit. After discovering the potential themes, I reviewed

the themes to consider whether there was internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity, and whether the extracts under each theme were coherent. After reviewing the themes, I started to define and name them.

Braun and Clarke (2006) discussed “What counts as a theme?” and “What size does a theme need to be?” Braun and Clarke stated:

Ideally, there will be a number of instances of the theme across the data set, but more instances do not *necessary* mean the theme itself is more crucial. As this is qualitative analysis, there is no hard-and-fast answer to the question of what proportion of your data set needs to display evidence of the theme for it to be considered a theme...the “keyness” of a theme is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures – but rather on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question.” (p. 82)

In my study, I used the “keyness” as the guideline to develop themes instead of depending on quantifiable measures. In other words, if participants’ experiences captured an important element to answer the research questions, I developed a theme for the important element. At the same time, I indicated how many participants shared the same element in a theme, so readers had the quantity of the participants in their minds.

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested that thematic analysis can be conducted within both realist and constructionist paradigms, which reflect two different research epistemologies. The research epistemology guides the meaning that researchers can make from data. Namely, the realist paradigm argues that meaning and experience inhere in individuals, so researchers can understand people’s motivations and experience under individual psychologies, while the constructionist paradigm believes that meaning and experience are socially produced and reproduced, so people’s motivations and experience are understood under the sociocultural context. Because my thematic analysis was conducted within a constructionist framework, reflecting my belief that meaning and experiences are produced and reproduced in the culture

rather than inherently within individuals, participants' sociocultural context was considered in the data analysis process.

Validity

Lincoln et al. (2011) suggested that research validity is important because it helps audiences answer questions such as “Are these findings sufficiently authentic that I may trust myself in acting on their implications?” and “Would I feel sufficiently secure about these findings to construct social policy or legislation based on them?” However, traditional criteria such as generalizability and replicability are not appropriate for narrative research. In narrative research, researchers have the responsibility to show the validity of their research process (e.g. the process of data collecting) and their research report (McNiff, 2007).

There are four ways that the research process can threaten validity in narrative research, however, the researcher can take various steps to ensure trustworthiness and limit these threats. First, language is limited in its ability to capture “experienced meaning” (Polkinghorne, 2007). In other words, the complexity and depth of experienced meaning can be very difficult to express with words. EAP is an experiential therapy, so sometimes it may not be easy for participants to describe their inner experiences. As a researcher, I encouraged participants to use figurative expressions, meaning symbolic and metaphorical language, to express the meaning of their experiences.

As a foreigner, I added an extra another dimension to the limitation of language. Because English is not my first language, I may not have fully understood participants' experiences. In order to overcome this problem, I found a native English speaker to listen to the recordings and check the transcripts. Member checking is a technique used to ensure validity in qualitative research, which means researchers ask participants to comment on researchers' interpretations of

data and ask whether the researchers' interpretation captures participants' perspectives (Merriam, 2002). As previously reported, I sent individual transcripts to each participant via an e-mail, so they, too, could double check the transcripts. Also, I sent each participant their individual life story from zoom model analysis. Both transcripts and individual life story provided participants information and gave them an opportunity to offer feedback.

Second, experienced meanings are greater than the surface phenomenon. Some experienced meanings can be below participants' conscious awareness. Through focused listening and exploration, researchers may help participants bring more of their experienced meaning into the conscious level (Polkinghorne, 2007). As a researcher, my interview questions and reflective listening skills served as the medium by which participants became more aware of their experiences.

Third, participants sometimes resist revealing the complexities of their experiences to others, especially strangers (Polkinghorne, 2007). To ensure rapport, I recruited some participants I already knew and with whom I had already established rapport. In the case of brand-new participants, I hoped that my active listening and empathy were sufficient for rapport-building.

Finally, participants and interviewers co-create the process of the interview, and interviewers may affect participants' responses (Polkinghorne, 2007). To minimize this, as a researcher, I made an effort to remain neutral in my responses so that I did not direct participants' responses and participants did not feel that they were judged by me.

Furthermore, Lincoln et al., (2011) suggested that criteria for quality are rooted in epistemology. There are five authenticity criteria for judging the processes and outcomes of constructivist inquiry: fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic

authenticity, and tactical authenticity. “Fairness” means that all participants’ voices should be equally apparent in the report, and that neglecting certain participants’ voices is a form of bias (Lincoln et al, 2011). To address this concern, I tried to include each participant’s voice equally in the narrative of the analysis. “Ontological authenticity” means that participants are more aware of their experience and their perspectives become more sophisticated after the research. This also includes a more complete and complex understanding of themselves and others after the research (Lincoln et al., 2011; Rodwell, 1998). “Educative authenticity” means participants become more understanding and respectful of the values of others, and they understand how others’ values frame their own perspectives. Participants may agree or disagree with others’ constructions, but they appreciate their diversity and complexity (Lincoln et al., 2011; Rodwell, 1998). “Catalytic authenticity” means the process of research stimulates and evokes action on participants. For example, in the follow up researchers may hear from participants that they have taken action for positive social change (Lincoln et al., 2011; Rodwell, 1998). “Tactical authenticity” means that the process of research may empower action on the part of the participants, but the change must be effective and desired from the point of view of the participants (Lincoln et al., 2011; Rodwell, 1998).

In addition to achieving fairness, my study achieved ontological authenticity through the in-depth interviews with participants. The study may achieve educational authenticity after I finish the dissertation and send a cope to each participant. During the second interview, I asked participants, “How was it for you to be talking to me in this way?” All of the participants confirmed the positive value of interviews:

I just realize how much I like this kind of work. I wish I did more of it. (Kriss)

It was interesting. I have to talk about a lot of things and reflect on some of reasons why I do the work. That is good for me. (Michael)

I am always kind of amazed about what comes out my mouth. It is just kind of rolling out and I am ok...It is just an opportunity for the word to get spread again. I was comfortable both times and I didn't feel intimidated by your questions. (Pia)

I love talking about this... People are always asking me to talk about it, capacity or another...I love sharing the work that I am doing with horses, and how impactful it is for clients and why it makes sense to do it...If it gets published, let me know, so I can read the article. I would love to see what your conclusion from all the research you have done. I love just read it, if that is ok. (Becky)

I am an extrovert, talking out loud allow me to refine my thinking. You see what I mean. So, it is very helpful for me actually. It helps me. You asked very good questions, really, so it helps me see more clearly where I am at now at this juncture in my life with this work. It is a wonderful, wonderful opportunity. Thank you. (Jean-Jacques)

It is fun for me to do...like I said before putting these things into words are just so hard... it is really forcing me to think about and put together my thoughts into words. And I have not done that really, out loud or on paper about what it is. So just got me to think about a lot of things. "What do I think about this? How does it impact me? How does it impact therapy?" I like that part. (Julie Anne)

It is being reflective because people may ask me questions but not to this depth you know that we are going to. It is being good for me to be able to think about what is really going on and put some order to it you know and put words to it...whenever this project is completed that I may have an opportunity to read. I love to read it and see how you (uncompleted) cause I can learn a lot from it. Because we were all asked the same questions, I would love to have that whenever happens. (Thom)

It is kind of listening to myself. That was kind of fun, too. Just realizing I am very passion about it. I love the work and felt good about being able to share because I think it is very important. (Sue)

All participants shared directly or indirectly that the interviews helped them to be more aware of themselves or their EAP experiences. Four participants (Michael, Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, and Thom) confirmed that the interviews helped them have a complex understanding about EAP. Ontological authenticity was achieved after the interviews.

Both participants, Becky and Thom, mentioned that they would like to read other participants' perspectives directly after our second interview. The study opened up their curiosity and they want to know other participants' perspectives. Each participant will be provided a copy

of the completed dissertation. Part of the educative authenticity will be achieved after participants read the final report.

Because I did not conduct follow up interviews or discuss study results with participants after the interviews were complete, I do not know whether the research prompted participants to take action, or whether the change that participants made was effective and desired. Therefore, the catalytic authenticity and tactical authenticity might not have been achieved in this study.

My study was based on a constructivist epistemology, which is illustrated through a metaphor involving crystals.

Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends upon our angle of repose ... Crystallization, without losing structure, deconstructs the traditional idea of validity. (Richardson, 1997, p. 92)

In other words, a solid object (e.g. text) can be turned many ways. I recognized that participants, audiences, and I might interpret participant narratives from different angles. In this research, I clarified my standpoint, while also leaving room for other interpretations.

Pilot Study

I conducted three “pilot interviews” before conducting this research. The interviews took place over the course of three semesters in 2011, 2012, and 2013. In Fall of 2011, I took a Narrative Research class. In this class, I got a chance to interview an EAP therapist, Sara (pseudonym). In Spring 2012, I took a Qualitative Data Analysis class, and had another chance to interview another therapist, Jessie (pseudonym). In Summer 2013, after the proposal hearing, I revised and added some research questions and had the other chance to interview Lucy. Prior to conducting the third pilot interview, the researcher questions were slightly revised.

The third pilot interview was conducted over the phone because I wanted to feel what the differences between face-to-face interviews and phone interviews. Without the face-to-face

interaction, I felt I lost some connections with my participants. For example, sometimes the signal was not good, so we had a hard time hearing/understanding one another. Furthermore, when Lucy shared emotional experiences—for example, losing her horses—I noticed that some of the meaning was lost because facial expressions cannot be conveyed over the phone. As a result of this, I only conducted face-to-face interviews with eight participants in the formal study. Table 3.5 represents the pilot study participants’ background information.

Table 3.5

Background Information of Participants in Pilot Study

Name	Sara (pseudonym)	Jessie (pseudonym)	Lucy (pseudonym)
Type of profession	Licensed clinical social work	Psychologist	Licensed professional counselor
Gender	Female	Female	Female
Age	Around 55	Around 50	40
Number of interview	2 (each session lasting approximately 1 hour, total 2 hours)	2 (each session lasting approximately 1 hour, total 2 hours)	2 (each session lasting approximately 1 hour, total 2 hours)
Time	Fall 2011	Spring 2012	Summer 2013
Type of interview	Face to face	Face to face	Over phone
Interview setting	Sara’s therapy room	Jessie’s hotel room	(Over phone)
Race	European American	European American	European American

Sara, Jessie, and Lucy have at least two years experience conducting both traditional psychotherapy and EAP. Sara was recruited through the EAGALA network. She is about 55 years old and a European American licensed clinical social worker (LCSW). The interviews were conducted in the Sara’s therapy room, which was quiet and provided privacy. I conducted two interview sessions with Sara, with each session lasting approximately 50 minutes. I did not prepare any specific questions for the first interview. I invited Sara to share anything that she

wanted me to know more about her. Sara chose to share her experiences with horses when she was a child, and then Sara shared how she became involved with EAP.

I prepared questions for my second interview with Sara, which included: 1) What is your experiences with horses? 2) What was the turning point for you to begin to incorporate horses in their practice? 3) From your perspective, what are the differences between EAP and the traditional psychotherapy? 4) How do horses help clients in EAP sessions? 5) What kinds of clients are more suitable for EAP? 6) How do clients improve from EAP? 7) How do you modify their EAP practice when working with different populations (e.g. children, teenagers, and adults)? These questions were open-ended, aiming to elicit mental health practitioners' experiences and perspectives.

The second participant was Jessie. We met in the 13th Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association conference. I guess that she is about 50 years old and a European American psychologist. The interviews were conducted in the Jessie's hotel room. I conducted two interview sessions with Jessie, with each session lasting approximately 50-60 minutes. The interview questions are similar to the questions that I asked Sara, and I also added a few questions related to her professional identity formation process in EAP.

The third participant was Lucy. We met in the EAGALA level one training in 2010. Lucy is 40 years old and a European American counselor. Both interviews were conducted by phone, and we did phone interviews on purpose because I wanted to explore the differences between face-to-face and phone interviews to see if I was open to conducting any of the study's interviews by phone. I sent Lucy the interview guide (appendix A) four days prior to the first interview to allow her to collect her thoughts about the questions and their wording prior to the interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. The interview questions are listed in

appendix A. After the second interview, Lucy gave me some feedback about interview questions and the interview modality. Lucy thought the interview questions were interesting and thoughtful, and she felt comfortable about phone interviews. She also thought that receiving the interview questions ahead of time was helpful for beginning to formulate responses. Therefore, I decided that I would send each participant the interview guide along with the demographic form (appendix C) prior to the first interview in the formal study.

However, without the face-to-face interaction, I felt I lost some connections with my participants. For example, sometimes the signal was not good, so Lucy and I had a hard time hearing/understanding one another. Furthermore, when Lucy shared emotional experiences—losing her horses, I noticed that some of the meaning was lost because facial expressions cannot be conveyed over the phone. As a result of this, I only conducted face-to-face interviews with eight participants in the formal study. The total data set consisted of six interviews, two for each participant in the pilot study.

From the pilot study, I found that three participants tended to share with me their life stories which were related horses even if I just asked “Tell me anything about you that you would like me to know more about.” I inferred that participants had anticipated my research direction, so they tried to narrow down their stories to fit the study. Moreover, both Sara’s and Jessie’s stories represented some silence and absences. As an interviewer, I realized that the missing parts of the stories were very personal and may be very emotional, so the participants decided to skip these in the first interview. I cautiously chose not to make inquiries about these missing parts to avoid taking the interview into areas that could be uncomfortable to these participants. The silence within life stories can be a gatekeeper between the private and the public (Kehily, 1995). It is not easy for a participant to uncover their sensitive stories in the first meeting. However,

these missing parts can be very meaningful to their stories. In this study, sometimes I tried to ask for the missing parts of stories gently in the second interview to see if participants were ready to share these missing parts with me; sometimes I chose not to make inquiries when the missing parts were related to deep emotions or I did not clearly understand my intention. For instance, when I was not sure whether making inquiries were for the purpose of the study or for my personal curiosity, I chose not to explore the missing parts.

Furthermore, I noticed that three participants were very busy, so it was not easy to set up an interview schedule or to obtain additional information. For example, despite her best efforts, the interviews with Sara had to be rescheduled one time. When I contacted Jessie via e-mail, sometimes I waited a long time for a response. I decide to conduct two interviews for each participant for these reasons. In figure 3.1, I represented and summarized the research process and what were accomplished in each step.

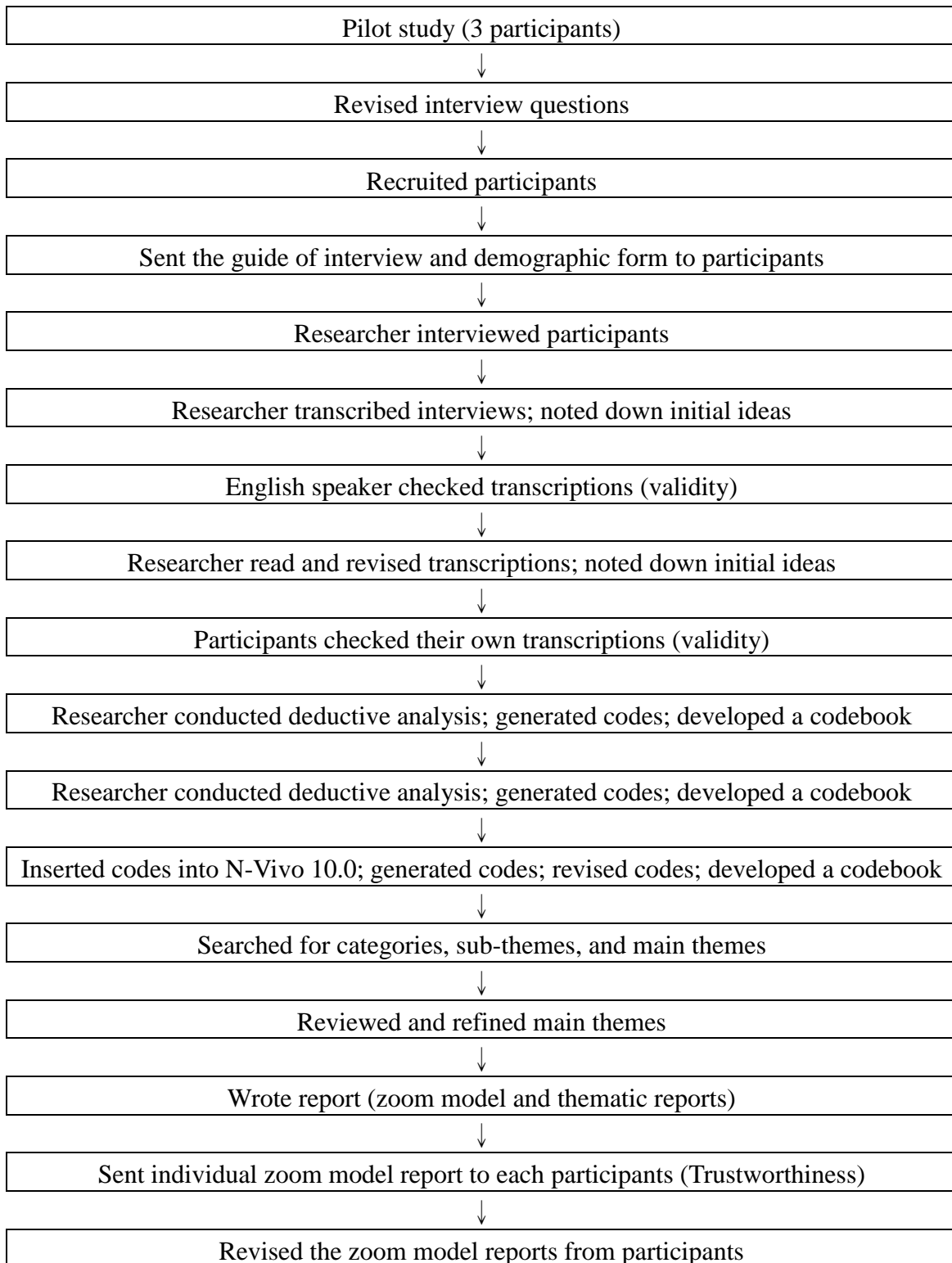


Figure 3.1 Research Process

Personal Stance

Researchers themselves are the tools in narrative inquiry, so as a researcher, it was important for me to reflect on how my personal experiences related to the research. As a learner, my Taiwanese cultural background, skin color, age, and gender made some people curious about me, as well as willing to help. I supposed they saw that I was passionate about EAP, and that I looked young, and perhaps they had a natural instinct to try and take care of or help a younger person. Before the interviews, I was afraid of these characteristics becoming an obstruction. For example, interviewees were usually older than me, and sometimes I wondered whether they might think that I was too young to understand their experiences. After the interviews, I found it was less about age; it was more about the fact that two people (each participant and I) shared common passion in EAP.

Before the interviews, another concern was that Western American culture is foreign to me. Also, participants might have mentioned specific terms related to the horse industry that I was unfamiliar with. In other words, not knowing the horse industry and Western American culture, I may have had a hard time understanding what they wanted to share with me. I may have needed to interrupt a participant's response and ask him or her for further explanation. In order to overcome these potential drawbacks, I took two courses—Therapeutic Riding and Introduction to Equine Science—at the Equine Science Program of Colorado State University. Both courses helped me to learn more about horses. Furthermore, the past three years I have attended the EAGALA annual conference and training, so I am familiar with the newest developments in EAP. After the interviews, I found while it was important to have some level of knowledge of EAP so participants and I could have a deep conversation, it was less about how much I knew, it was more about how much I wanted to know more about participants'

experiences. Sometimes when I exposed my curiosity and showed I did not know about something, participants were more motivated to explain and share their experiences and knowledge with me. My aim as an interviewer was:

Knowing enough about their [participants'] mores and expectations so as not to appear rude, insensitive, or intrusive—but knowing little enough to be able to inquire deeply about those aspects of the world of the participants one wishes to learn about. (Josselson, 2007, p. 547)

Because EAP is my passion, as an EAP researcher, I needed to ask myself, “Can I remain impartial in interpreting participants’ words?” or “Am I open enough to accept feedback from someone who is not an EAP therapist?” For example, some non-EAP therapists may think that horses’ accurate responses to clients are coincidental, or they think that the beautiful stories between human and horses are anecdotal. “How will I respond to them if their belief is different from mine?” Keeping those questions in mind helped me solve some of these questions in my data analysis. These questions also helped me stand neutrally and reduce some potential bias in my study.

Chapter Four: Zoom Model

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine mental health practitioners' experiences in equine-assisted psychotherapy (EAP). This chapter reports findings from the zoom model, while chapter five discusses findings from the thematic analysis. Three primary research questions guided the inquiry process; four sub-questions allowed for follow up or greater detail. Question 1 was answered by answering question 1.1 and 1.2; question 2 was answered by answering questions 2.1 and 2.2.

1. What are participants' experiences with horses in their personal lives?

1.1 What are horses' roles in participants' lives?

1.2 What experiences led participants to practice EAP?

2. What are participants' professional experiences with EAP?

2.1 What are therapeutic factors in EAP?

2.2 What are therapists' strategies in EAP?

3. What are the differences between EAP and traditional psychotherapy (TP) from these participants' perspectives?

Data Analysis

Two levels of analysis were conducted in this study: the zoom model and thematic analysis. First, the zoom model was used to explore the multiple levels of meaning in each participant's life story. Table 4.1 represents the zoom model's organizational structure. This chapter discussed the findings from the zoom model, and I used the zoom model to answer questions 1.1 and question 1.2.

Table 4.1

Structure of Zoom Model (Pamphilon, 1999)

Zoom construct	Content
Macro-zoom	Researchers focus on the relationship between participants and their culture or historical events, such as socioeconomic group and family types
Meso-level	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Key phrases: Researchers focus on the use of a particular key phrase (e.g. I don't know) found in personal narratives that indicate the relationship of Self to society 2. Narrative process: Researchers focus on irrelevant or incongruent data; There will be parts when the story flows easily and parts that are more problematic for participants in their telling 3. Narrative theme(s): Researchers seek out the thematic fields constructed by each participant across the whole of a life story
Micro-zoom	Researchers attend to the oral aspect of the accounts, such as pauses and emotional undertones; How stories are told?
Interactional-zoom	Help researchers increase their self-awareness and record any way in which the researchers may have impacted interviews

After completing the zoom analysis, a second level of analysis, thematic analysis, was conducted to explore each research question and each sub-question. The results of the thematic analysis were reported in chapter 5.

In reporting the results of the zoom analysis, the eight participants' life stories were presented in chronological order by the date of the first interview: Kriss, Michael, Pia, Becky, Jean Jacque, Sue, Julie Anne, and Thom.

About Kriss

Kriss, an outdoor person who loves animals, majored in psychology and has about 35 years' experience as a therapist; she is also a Unity minister. About 12 years ago, she started to practice equine-assisted psychotherapy. Unity is a spiritual nondenominational organization that believes that the divine is within everyone. Kriss' therapeutic concept is influenced by this notion.

She said, “The divine is within us, but you don’t have to call this your true self, your divine nature, you call it whatever you want to; so I combine psychology and spirituality.”

After Kriss read her story, she added:

The presence of the Divine is within all of life. Some might call this our true or authentic self. Others may prefer to think of their true self as their “higher self” and may have nothing to do with the Divine or religion. Others may call their higher self, their spiritual self as well. Because of my journey through Psychology and Spirituality, my practice is influenced by both of these areas.

Kriss separates her spiritual teaching from her therapeutic work, but she does not separate both in her personal life. She believes the goal of both spirituality and therapy is to help people reconnect to their true and authentic self. Kriss said, “Being a minister and a therapist ... enables me to help people from many perspectives”. Some clients might seek Kriss’ help because they think she has a connection to God. In the therapy room, she uses a magic wand to show clients the only magic power that she has is to help them touch their true self.

The interviews were conducted in Kriss’ office. In the waiting room there were two life size stuffed miniature horses “greeting” clients; there was a big quilt with horse images hanging on the wall. In Kriss’ office, there were different kinds of horse decorations. As an interviewer and visitor, I could tell how meaningful it was for Kriss to incorporate horses into her professional work.

Macro-zoom.

Love horses, but never imagined having one. Kriss did not grow up with horses, but she has loved horses since she was a child. Still, it was not easy for her to imagine having a horse in her life. Kriss said, “I always loved horses. When I was a small child, my dad would put me on a pony at a zoo. I loved it, but I never imagined I would have my own horse ever...” Kriss added:

I always like horses, but I just never allowed my conscious mind... it always seems like such a huge far off dream. I never allowed it to even come into my field of vision. You know when I was in Michigan, I met my friend Debbie. Everything changed.

I was curious about why Kriss loves horses even if she did not grow up with them. Where does this come from? Kriss explained, "I think it just comes from within ourselves, our truest selves. I think we hold dreams within ourselves. We sometimes keep ourselves from really connecting to and believing in our dreams because the world teaches us to not believe in our dreams." Kriss added:

I think the dream is deep within us. It is in the soul level you know, I don't think it comes from outside of ourselves. It is just like something within. It's just part of who each person is. They have dreams, passions, gifts that are meant to be identified and expressed. You know, that is kind the therapy I do—help people connect to their dreams.

Kriss believes that when we connect to our truest self, we know what we love and the love starts from the childhood. In *Biophilia* (1984), Wilson observed his and other scientists' life experiences, and he found that scientists' love and obsession with a subject begins in childhood.

From this personal experience and the impressions recorded by others, let me offer the following rough map of innovation in science. You start by loving a subject. Birds, probability theory, explosives, stars, differential equations, storm fronts, sign language, smalltail butterflies—the odds are that the obsession will have begun in childhood. The subject will be your lodestar and give sanctuary in the shifting mental universe. (Wilson, 1984, p. 65)

I interpreted this quote to mean a child is drawn to science by love and does not carry many social expectations. When he/she loves something, it comes from his/her truest self. I further interpreted that some people know what their callings are when they were in their childhood. Languages provide and help with abstract thinking; images connect to primal instincts (Wilson, 1984). From Kriss' story, I interpreted when she was a child, she had a beautiful and vague image about her dream in the mind. The primal image connected to her truest self, but the child has not developed the ability to make a plan for the dream. Life experiences help develop

the ability, and so the child can fill in details about the vague image. Kriss did not have skills to make details on her dream until she met her friend Debbie. When Kriss said, “I never allowed it to even come into my field of vision,” it seems she blocked her dream intentionally because the dream was far from her life experiences. Debbie knows horses and she helped shorten the distance between Kriss and Kriss’ dream.

Met a good friend: Debbie. When Kriss moved from Michigan to the state of Washington with her husband, she developed a desire to live on a small farm and have her own horses. Kriss believed that it was synchronicity to meet Debbie, who taught Kriss how to ride and take care of horses. As Kriss described it, “I was in such a miraculous situation.” The word “miraculous” expresses how much Kriss appreciates this experience. According to Kriss’ spiritual belief, she might interpret this synchronicity as being created by God. Debbie walked with Kriss and guided her walking toward the dream. As I mentioned earlier, a child’s dream without any life experience or guidance can be very vague, and the vagueness prevents a person from taking action because it is far away from the life experience. A big gap between a person and a dream can be scary because it is full of unknowns. Debbie helped Kriss build her skills related to working with horses and introduced EAP to her. Kriss said:

She and I became very good friends. I rode with her every Monday for 5 years. She taught me so much about riding and horses’ care, and she actually let me do equine-assisted psychotherapy with her horses. So it was a life changing experience meeting her.

Kriss added:

Again, so serendipitous was my meeting with Debbie... When we moved to Washington, I think I just wanted to get a horse. I did not think about equine-assisted psychotherapy at that time... I just wanted to get a horse, and then I met Debbie. One day she brought a newsletter from EAGALA... There is the training in California; so my first training was in California with EAGALA in 2000. So, again Debbie is like a contact. She was the one that found this. She did not care about equine-assisted psychotherapy. She is a horse shoer. She’s great and loves horses, but she does not care about therapy at all. She thinks I’m a

little wacko in that way. She gave me the flyer on EAGALA, and I did my first training and that's how I got involved with equine-assisted psychotherapy... Like a just kind of divine meeting. A meeting meant to happen.

Meeting Debbie helped Kriss shorten the distance between her reality and her dream. It influenced Kriss to practice EAP and adopt her first horse, Harmony.

Having a first horse. About four years ago, Kriss adopted Harmony from the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation in Lexington, Kentucky. Kriss described the process of adopting Harmony as a dream come true. She said, "I teach people that their dreams are meant to come true. Thus I believed that it was time for me to make that happen, too. In order to make that happen, you need to take action. My horse is beautiful. Her picture is right there (oil painting)."

During the whole interview, I could tell how Kriss feels fulfilled after adopting Harmony. She had excitement in her voice when she mentioned Harmony. The process of adopting Harmony was magical to her, too. Kriss said:

Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation (TRF) in Lexington, Kentucky made the partnership, EAGALA with Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation. They said therapists like me certified with EAGALA can get free thoroughbreds... it is a very intuitive thing. I went to the website. Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation listed all of the horses that are available. This is another magical story. I went there. I always wanted to have a palomino... I looked for a palomino on the web-site... I just kept locking eyes with my Harmony and I thought "that is the one that I want". I called TRF and I said, "I am a certified therapist with EAGALA, and this horse I would like to adopt." They said, "She is not available." I said, "She is on the website." "She is not available. We are going to sell her about 10 thousand dollars. We have someone to adopt her tomorrow." Ok~ I am sad. I would even cry. I know she is my horse. I waited for a few weeks, and go back to the website. She is still on the website. I call again. "She is still on the website." "That one did not work out. We are going to sell her next week. Someone is going to use her as a jumper." Ok~. It is a magical story. Three weeks later, I go back, and she is still on the website. I took the picture from the website, and printed it out about 4 or 5 copies and put it all over my house and put in my office. You are my horse. They think you are not, but I still think you are. So anyway, one day we had a very bad snow storm, and the power was going to go out, and I got a call from Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation. They said, "We have a horse for you." "What is its name?" They said, "Lu Lu's Dream." That was not the name of my horse. I go "Ok. All right. That is fine." Then the power went out. I cannot talk to them for four or five days, and then I called them back. I told them, "We lost our power, you know. But I want to talk about getting this horse— you said Lu Lu's Dream." This makes me cry when I say this part. The woman tells me "We decided that

instead you should get Code 40.” That was Harmony’s legal pedigreed name. That was my horse (excited, high tone)...I was willing to say, “Ok, I will take Lu Lu’s Dream.” You know. It just did not feel right, and then there she is.

Kriss had an explanation for the process of getting her first horse. She said, “Believe in magic, your dream.” The way she described the process of her dream of getting her first horse coming true was similar to the way she described EAP work. The experience of getting her horse was intuitive and magical. EAP for her is also intuitive and mystical. When she talked about EAP, she said, “Miracles happen all the time.”

Having her own horse is meaningful in Kriss’ personal life; it is also meaningful in her professional work. She said:

I think I just became much more confident in myself as a therapist as a result of getting my horse. Because being in the pasture, I cannot go to my files and print out handouts and give to my clients. It is either me keeping the conversation going which is a no-no in EAP, or just allowing it to unfold and to be present to the experience the client is having with the horse. This is the essence of EAP: the experience the client has with the horse. My job is to create opportunities for this to happen and to ask the right questions to facilitate a therapeutic experience.

As a reader, I noticed a similarity between how Kriss views life and how she views EAP work, because she views both as a process of connecting to the inner true. She said, “In EAP, I need to get out of the way.” For her and her clients’ self-actualization she believes, “Often the EAP therapist needs to get themselves out of the way of the therapeutic process.” This means she thinks humans’ rational mind sometimes can block the flow of connecting to our inner selves. “Their mind can sort of get in the way”, she said.

Perspectives about EAP. Kriss said, “The reason I like to help others is because it has been my journey as well.” Reconnecting to her childhood dream to have a horse is an important part of Kriss’ life journey; it influences her view of therapy. In therapy, she believes clients have their own answer inside, and she just needs to help people connect to their inner self.

Kriss is modest about sharing that her journey to becoming skilled in EAP has been a process, one in which she continues to learn and grow. From her perspective, the skill piece of EAP seems easier for her to understand, but the art piece of EAP has taken her a long time to pick up. She said:

I went from no experience with EAP 12 years ago. Now I am very good with horses. I have learned the art of equine therapy as well as the science of it. I'm always learning and growing. There is an art to EAP that I am really beginning to pick up. It is not about what I say or do, it is about me holding a space for the clients and the horses. Miracles happen all the time.

Kriss' statement, "It is not about what I say or do, it is about me holding a space for the clients and the horses" reminds me of Pearson's (1989) perspective in her book *The Hero Within*. Pearson believed everyone takes their heroic journey to discover the treasure of our true selves. She introduced six archetypes, and the last archetype is the magician. Magicians do not follow the conventional, linear, cause-and-effect thinking, and they do not force others to change. When magicians are there, change and growth occurs. Pearson (1989) shared a story:

When a village in India experienced a drought, they would send for the rainmaker. Rainmakers do not do anything to make the rain happen; they just come to the village and stay there, and the rain comes. They do not make the rain come, they allow it or, more exactly, their inner atmosphere of allowing and affirming what is creates a climate in which what needs to be happens (p.130).

Kriss' description of a therapist in EAP is the same as the concept of the magician. She is not a fixer to fix clients' problem. Her role is to create a space and an atmosphere that allows things to unfold naturally. Kriss has found that there is a mystical side of EAP, which therapists have to accept. She stated that once they create a space in which things can unfold naturally, then the mystery works by itself:

If you want to really get into the art of this work, you need to be willing to almost quote unquote be in the mystery of it. Again, it about try not to fix it. If someone has a question and does not know what is going on with the horse, initially people try to fill in the answers, or try to direct it. If they do not know how to lead a horse, you want to tell them

how. That is not therapy. That might be good horsemanship... You just need to be willing to pay attention to your own feelings, not try to fix it for the clients. My job is not to fix it. My job is to allow them to be with horses and experience what the horse is showing them, and what the feedback they get from the horse is. So it just takes a while because you just need to stay back. I mean be present in the moment, but not fill up the space with your own stuff.

Kriss emphasized the art and the mystery of EAP work. A mystery usually cannot be understood by a rational mind, and art usually does not need to follow logic. The gestalt principle of figure-ground is relevant here. Ground means the part that people do not focus on and figure means the part that people focus on (Verstegen, 2005). Applied to EAP, my interpretation is that when Kriss practices EAP, she has to let herself and her logical mind stay back, to become the background; this allows Kriss to let clients and horses become the figure. As human beings, we are trained and familiar with using the mind rationally all the time. I conjecture that this training and familiarity with using the mind rationally is the reason that Kriss needed to spend a long time learning to deeply and intuitively understand EAP work.

EAP and traditional psychotherapy. After practicing EAP for many years, Kriss found she could not really catch the essence of EAP work until two or three years ago. The way she practices EAP has influenced the way she practices traditional psychotherapy. She said:

I think I have grown in my ability to do office therapy in the same way I'm growing [in EAP]. They are so parallel, you know. My opinion is I am not an expert on anyone. They (clients) are the experts, and my job is to connect with them, establish good rapport and reflect in many ways...creating a safe environment for a person to connect to their truth self, heal what's in the way of that. That can really translate to EAP as well. In EAP, you have a big beautiful thousand pound mirror. I don't have to point out too much because the horses continue to point out. I may draw their attention to it, but I don't have to lay my theory on it.

Kriss' perspective as an EAP therapist, seen in the below quote, is similar to Wilson's (1994) perspective as a naturalist. As a naturalist, Wilson is still aware of existing theories, but does not let theories guide what he sees and thinks. He holds his mind open to be present and to let any phenomenon enter it. Kriss similarly stated:

It takes a while. You know. I think it just been in the last 2 or 3 years that I can really deeply and intuitively understand this kind of work. It is really between the clients and the horses. I am important, and the horse professional is important. We are there creating a space and asking the right questions for the clients and horses, but it's not our great theories or whatever that we may lay upon them. You know. In my office work, I try almost to be like a horse... You know, just try to be very fully present to the person and having them access their own wisdom, and their own answers rather than me telling them...

In EAP, Kriss creates a space for clients and horses to interact with each other. "I don't have to point out too much because the horses continue to point out [what is important to clients]." Kriss takes her "expert hat" off, and the horses put it on." Horses aren't "taught" how to do therapy. What horses do naturally is be fully present with clients; they give clients authentic feedback. The way horses accompany clients inspires the way Kriss plays her role in the office. When Kriss described her role in the office she said, "My job is to connect with them, establish good rapport, and reflect in many ways."

Meso-zoom.

Key phrases. When Kriss talked about her horse Harmony she said, "She is so wonderful" or "She is so perfect." For example, in the winter, Kriss needs to drive to the mountains and take extra food to Harmony at least five days a week so Harmony can maintain her weight. Kriss said, "Going out and feeding her is just part of the thing that I'm supposed to do in order to have this magnificent relationship with her, which is magnificent. She is so wonderful." Later in the interviews, Kriss shared that Harmony has some problems, such as wind-sucking and bucking.

The word "perfect" means without having a flaw. I realized actually Harmony is not perfect and taking care of Harmony is not easy. My interpretation is that Kriss appears to have a broad interpretation of "perfect." It is not about being flawless. It is about how to stay with the flaws and let the flaws make a stronger relationship between Harmony and her. When Kriss said,

“Harmony is perfect,” that comes from her acceptance and unconditional love for Harmony, not that Harmony is perfect as a horse.

Narrative process. Kriss shared how she met her friend Debbie, who taught Kriss how to ride a horse and introduced Kriss to EAP. During the interview, Kriss said:

It is just a life changing experience meeting her... she just changes my life. Then I had to move again because my husband’s job. I should’ve just stayed in Seattle, *but* I came along. *But* when I got here, I still had this deep need to do equine-assisted psychotherapy.

Kriss used “but” twice in the quote. “I should’ve just stayed in Seattle, but I came along.”

I interpreted this to mean that Kriss had an emotional conflict between seeking self-fulfillment with her dream and maintaining her intimate relationship with her husband. During the interview, Kriss focused on how a friendship helped her to make her dream come true, but she did not share how the role of the intimate relationship played in her journey of self-fulfillment. As an interviewer, I saw it was private and I chose not to make inquiries about this part of the story. The second “but” showed that even though Kriss chose to follow her husband, her dream did not disappear. The first and second “but” are related. It seems Kriss believes if she knows she still wants to practice EAP, staying in Seattle probably is a better choice for her.

Narrative Themes.

Positive and appreciative attitude. From Kriss’ story, I found that she has a positive attitude about her journey to make her dream come true, which helps her accept both the “dark and bright” sides of the process. Her positive attitude also helps her use fresh eyes to create more possibilities. For example, Kriss decided to put Harmony in a pasture instead of putting her in a stall because Harmony has a wind-sucking behavior when she stays in a stall. In the winter, the grass can be very scarce and the hay is not as appealing for Harmony as the lush pasture grass in the spring, summer, and early fall. Therefore, Kriss has to bring extra food for Harmony in the winter to help maintain her weight. Kriss said:

During the cold winter days when it is ten, zero degrees and I need to take my horse extra food at least five days a week. Because if I don't, she will lose weight. This is not the most fun thing. But in a way, it is really fun. Once I am there, I am with her. It is beautiful. She is eating. I couldn't be any happier in that moment. Do you know that book— Chop Wood Carry Water. Have you ever heard of that book? It is a really cool book. It talks about before I am enlightened, I would chop wood and carry water. After I am enlightened, I would chop wood and carry water...Going out and feeding her is just part of the thing that I am supposed to do in order to have this magnificent relationship with her, which is magnificent. She is so wonderful.

I interpreted Kriss' description of taking care of Harmony as an experience of simple joy, allowing Kriss to be in the present moment. Kriss also realizes a magnificent relationship is built by accepting both the convenient and inconvenient parts of a relationship.

Kriss sees Harmony's thinness during the winter as an opportunity to help clients work on their body-image issue. She said, "In the winter she (Harmony) is all thin; so people can deal with any issues they have about weight or image." Furthermore, Harmony has a cribbing addiction and windsucking problem, which are "stall vices" created or stimulated by humans who are not caring for the horse as it needs to be. When horses are penned up in a stall for a long time and feel bored, they can get these vices. Kriss sees these vices as another opportunity for her and Harmony to help clients work on their addictions. Kriss' attitude of appreciation and acceptance helps problems become gifts.

Micro-level zoom.

In the interviews, Kriss said, "The ranch Harmony is on, Broce Ranch, is like a horses' heaven on earth," and "I am so lucky with my horse right now," and "I think she is the most beautiful horse there." Every time Kriss mentioned Harmony, it was as if I saw a young child experiencing the pure satisfaction and treasure of what she has achieved.

Kriss shared her experiences of conducting EAP with me. When she practices EAP, she just needs to stay back and be in the moment with clients and horses. She tries not to fill up the space with her own interpretations. We had a conversation about this:

I: Do you mean in the EAP you let horses be the main roles and you become the second? Sometimes you may become the main role to give reflections. Am I right?

K: Um~Yep (said in a high tone). I think I grow my ability to do office therapy in the same I'm growing [in EAP]. They are so parallel. You know. My opinion is I am not an expert on anyone. They are the experts, and my job is to connect with them, establish good rapport and reflect in many ways...

In this conversation, when I said "main role" and "second role," actually I meant "main character" and "second character" as a therapist in therapy. Those are the misuse of vocabulary. Kriss still understood what I meant, but when she said, "Um~Yep (said in a high tone)," my interpretation was that she probably did not totally agree with what I said because it was hard to separate the main character from the second character in therapy. As an interviewer, I asked the question and had an assumption under this question. The question was not easy to answer. Kriss did not show her disagreement to me directly. Kriss probably chose not to disagree to a new friend in her polite way.

Interactional-zoom.

During the interviews, Kriss was excited when she talked about her horse, Harmony. In the first interview, she spent a lot of time sharing the process of adopting Harmony. I re-listened to the interview and I found I was actually very interested in knowing her emotional transition when she was in the process of adopting. I may have subconsciously guided and encouraged her to share it because I was experiencing the same thing in my life. One month before I interviewed Kriss, one of my friends called me if I wanted to adopt her horse. My friend told me, "Sassy (horse's name) will be open to be adopted soon. I know you love her; so I want to ask you first." At the time that I interviewed Kriss, I had not yet decided whether I wanted to adopt this horse or not. I wanted to invite the horse into my life, but the fear, responsibility, and unknown stopped me. I was confused about what my "true self" was. Having the conversation with Kriss seemed to create a conversation with my inner self. Because Kriss' first horse experience resonated to my

life experience, I found I asked Kriss some questions to elicit more information. In other words, when I brought my unsolved question into the interview, in some level it subconsciously influenced the interview process.

About Michael

Michael is an African American. His father was an agricultural teacher, and they lived on a farm in southern Oklahoma. After growing up on a farm with an agricultural teacher, the first thing that he did was to study animal husbandry in a college. He wanted to be a veterinarian, but it did not work out for him. He earned a degree in speech, with minors in history and music, tried law school, then took a friend's advice and ended up getting a master's degree in counseling. Counseling jobs were scarce, so he didn't work as a counselor long, and instead ended up in business, while serving as a pastor at the same time. Many years later, he returned to counseling.

He said:

I thought I'd probably go into a full time ministry, but the circumstance kind of led me back into something that exposed me to my mental health training again. And while I was there the bug to be a counselor bit me again. I decided, "Wow, I need to get back into that." And at the same time, I was introduced to EAGALA. So I got back to this field and, at the same time, I was introduced to equine-assisted psychotherapy.

Michael has several identities. He is a counselor, pastor, musician, and cowboy, among other things. He described his life as, "I have been a horse fanatic since I was a baby." As an EAP therapist, he combines his professional training with his personal interest in horses. Further, he said, "I can see the effectiveness of the work." It seems he has found the calling in his life.

Macro-zoom.

EAP and Michael: finding each other. Michael had explored different career tracks before he decided to move back to counseling. He described how EAP work helps him connect to his inner self.

In the late 90s, I got back into it [means counseling]. At the same time I was introduced to equine-assisted psychotherapy. I was studying at school where I ... just had to take a couple of classes to upgrade my old degree in order to be licensed in Colorado in the 90s. And during the time when I was studying there, I also had come into interest in equine-assisted therapy in general—therapeutic riding. I got involved in that. I started to have a desire to do more with therapy to help people with their emotional problems. So the counselor in me kind of started bubbling to the surface again, and I knew there was a new organization that focused on training therapists to do therapy using horses... That organization was called EAGALA— Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association... They were brand new at that time, and I got involved with them, and got basic training from them. And in their second year of existence, I spoke at the second annual conference where 150 people attended the conference in Amarillo, Texas. Well, you know how big the conferences are now- hundreds of people, and thousands of members around the world. I have been involved in the organization for quite a while... When I got in that organization, I felt like I was reconnected to what I was trained to do years before. And I have a new framework for doing it that suited me because of my love of horses and I can see the effectiveness of the work.

Equine-assisted psychotherapy gives Michael more motivation in practicing counseling.

Michael felt excited about this new approach because he loves horses and is interested in human emotions at the same time. Once he went back to counseling, he was introduced to EAP, which connects his professional path to his personal interest in horses. It was synchronous for both to happen at the same time. Michael and I had a conversation about his EAP journey connected so naturally with his personal interests and background:

I: Your family history really brings you into this area because you are already familiar with horses, and you love them, so it just moves very smoothly.

M: Oh, not even a move. It is just something that kind of found me because my mind is so involved, or engaged in being involved with horses. So much a part of my life that it was not even a move. It is just about bringing that skill set involved with equine therapy into my life which revolved around horses a lot.

Michael said that he was “found” by this work. I interpreted he believes that he has a calling in his life, and if he connects to his inner selves, the calling will find him. Probably it is the best part of him that he can contribute to the society and following the calling lets he feel self-fulfilled. Michael believes that EAP came into his life naturally and that he just needed to accept it.

Reconnecting with horses. Michael said he was found by EAP work. I would say he was also found by horses. In this study, some of the participants had to make an effort in order to incorporate horses into their life; but for Michael, it happened naturally during his childhood. He shared the history of his relationship with horses:

I just love them. My older brother said I would crawl across the floor and try to touch them through the television screen when I was a baby. So I just always loved them, and I always wanted to be around them. And when I learned people use them to help other people, I was hooked. I have had my own horses since I was young. Horses were a regular part of our farm. My dad grew up on a farm, but he really was not a farmer per se during most of my formative years because he was a school teacher. So, that's what he did. He taught at school. We had a farming lifestyle and part of it was horses. I did things related to rodeo and chased cows around the farm, and wanted to find cows on the neighbor's property... Whatever excuse that I could use to be on a horse, I was just hooked on that. But, I left horses behind when I left the farm. When I grew up, I thought I probably would not get involved again. But after meeting my wife and getting married, I learned my father-in-law owned horses, which my wife did not even know because he kept that secret from his family for some reason.

Michael did not invite horses into his life in the adulthood even if he loves them, but I also wonder, "If he loves horses and he had a lot of joyfulness with horses, is it easy for him to let horses go? Will he miss horses in his life?" Michael said "But after meeting my wife and getting married, I learned my father in law owned horses..." The word "but" is the transition in the sentence, and it also symbolizes the transition in Michael's life. He has horses in his life again, or horses found him again. The way Michael leads his life is similar to the essence of EAP, which means he just let things unfold naturally. Probably it was because he did not force things to happen; things that meant to happen can happen.

Connect to inner self, three generations, and family history. In addition to connecting Michael's professional training and personal interest, the fact that horses came into Michael life again has other significant meanings. Michael said:

He [Michael's father-in-law] was an interesting guy because he was the only child and there was times when he would hide things from his mother. He was a funny guy even

until he was an old man. But his family did not have anything to do with horses and I did. So it became our thing. We thought we would not even be friends because we were so different. ... it became the thing that bonded us together, and the horse that I own now was the horse that he raised.

Horses allowed two men to reconnect to their inner self. I do not know why horses are important in Michael's father-in-law's life because this part was left out of the story. It appears, however, that when Michael's father-in-law leads a life he likes and connects to his inner self, he is able to also nurture other people around him. From the family systems perspective, horses connect both men and both families together. Michael said, "We thought we would not even be friends because we were so different." Horses shorten the distance between two different men.

Furthermore, horses connect three generations in Michael's family:

He [Michael's father-in-law] died in 2008, so that is a very special horse and a very special part of our history. But I have done some horse show experiences with my oldest daughter, when she was in junior high. We showed together in the Palomino Association and other venues and grappled with training and helping out in the training barns because I enjoyed that...I just always want to become, I always want to improve myself as a horseman, and improve the horses that I am involved with.

Horses are part of Michael's family history. Farms and cowboys are also an important aspect of identity in Michael's extended family. When he brings his daughter with him and they engage with horses together, it seems that he is passing down the family history to his daughter.

Michael and I had a conversation about this:

I: Part of you is a cowboy.

M: Yep. A little bit of me is a cowboy. One of my dad's cousins has been inducted into a Western Heritage Hall of Fame that honors cowboys and people of color who contributed to the western lifestyle and the westward expansion. There is a national association, in Fort Worth, Texas, that my dad's cousin will be inducted into. He was a rodeo cowboy in the days when not very many African American cowboys could officially be admitted to the professional rodeo associations. But he competed in some of the biggest rodeos in the country, and was very, very good. I mean he won the events he competed in. I did not realize how big a deal he was as a cowboy because when I grew up so many members of my family were cowboys. And I could see them, they were around horses. They were roping or ranch workers or something like that in the area that we lived. But this guy is like a national figure, and I did not know it until later on. So he is being inducted into this

hall of fame. We are having sort of a family reunion around that event. I will be in Texas to take part in that.

Being an EAP practitioner enables Michael to bring the cowboy part of himself into his work. There is also a common theme of Michael and his forebearers perhaps being ahead of their time. Michael's father's cousin was a rodeo cowboy when doing so was unusual for African Americans. Michael is an EAP therapist and there are not many Africa American therapists who are involved in EAP work. In other words, Michael and his father's cousin have each in their own way made their family proud through their journeys with horses.

Less structure; more freedom. Working as a pastor helped Michael learn about his true passions, and that led him to become a counselor. He said:

I got into ministry as a pastor. I found myself counseling people all the time and that was what I loved as a pastor. I loved that more than doing the millions of hours of research to prepare the perfect sermon on Sunday morning. I just loved it, and that told me something about what was really in my heart to do.

“Millions of hours of research to prepare the perfect sermon...” is hyperbole. It symbolizes long hours of individual work without human contact and it is a structured work. Michael seems to prefer human interaction to structured work, which reflects the essence of EAP. He shared how he practices EAP:

We do not necessarily dictate to people what takes place in that world. So how things go in that world is kind of up to them. There is always the freedom of the client to elect how they are involved with the horses...there is always that freedom. They can engage or disengage. They can be close. They can be distant. They can make of it what they want to make of it, you know. So, I try to ... keep in mind that is something that I want people to know that they always have freedom to do.

Being an EAP therapist is the contrast to being a pastor. As an EAP therapist, Michael emphasizes providing clients as little guidance as possible. Under this modality, he encourages clients' creativity; clients have a lot of freedom to think outside of the box. It is totally different

from serve as a pastor. As a pastor, he has to work along and prepare for a perfect sermon and direct parishioners.

Awareness in natural horsemanship and psychotherapy. Parelli (1993) suggested, “Horse-Man-Ship is three words linked together. It is a horse and a human going willingly together. Horse-Man-Ship is for horses as well as humans, and the horse comes first” (p. 14).

Michael practices natural horsemanship and psychotherapy. He found the professions have something in common:

I learned to have a horse execute a skill that would be necessary to show in a particular event. As I worked on that skill, if I got anxious just before we got to the skill, my horse would get anxious too. And it is really more about me being anxious than it was about the horse worrying about executing the skill because usually the horse does not really care, unless I care. So the fact was that I was causing the problem for the horse and really understanding that, was sort of the beginning of a lot of self-reflection, self-examination, and self-awareness, you know. It teaches me the need to be more and more aware of myself. And I recognize as a therapist, in general, whatever the setting— one of the biggest problems people have in addressing whatever their needs are, their issues are, and their concerns are in their life is always about something that they have not observed, or they are not aware of, you know. Horses are great for proving to us that there are things that are going on that we are not aware of. That is a perfect example of that. That is one of the most foundational principles of natural horsemanship— you have to begin by being aware of yourself. There is no point of being aware of horses if you are not aware of yourself. Or, what you are aware of about the horse will not mean anything unless you also are aware of yourself.

From Michael’s perspective, horses function like psychotherapists on some level.

Therapists help clients raise self-awareness; horses help raise self-awareness in the people who work with them. Awareness provides people choices, and the choices open up freedoms, which means people may be less inclined to act out their old behavioral patterns unconsciously or automatically if they have a higher level of awareness. Michael sees a lack of awareness as one of the biggest reasons that people get “stuck.” Michael and I had a conversation about the relationship between psychotherapy and natural horsemanship.

I: It (means natural horsemanship) is like therapy too. I mean when you go to a therapy session, we raise our self-awareness to a higher level. When you practice natural horsemanship, it is the same thing. What is the difference?

M: What is the difference? I do not see the difference. There is not any difference to me. It is just another way of revealing it. It is a different perspective for being able to observe what is going on.

This conversation reminded me of something that Buck Brannaman (a noted horseman) said, which was that people cry in his (Buck's) clinics because their awareness is opened up and they see parts of themselves they don't like to see.

Easy transition to EAP. In the first interview, Michael said, "Natural horsemanship informs everything that I do with the horses, including what I do with clients and therapy. It is not something that I can switch on and off." These sentences represent how Michael transfers the philosophy of the natural horsemanship to the psychotherapy. These sentences also catch why he said EAP found him. My interpretation of this quote is that, because of natural horsemanship, which he has participated in since childhood, Michael has developed the skills used in EAP before he was introduced to EAP. The essence of natural horsemanship is very much like the essence of EAP. Because Michael practiced natural horsemanship, he was able to grasp the concepts of EAP very quickly. A relationship between a horseperson and a horse is very much like a relationship between a client and a therapist. Both natural horsemanship and EAP help people know more about themselves. Michael said:

I don't think it was difficult for me, in the beginning, because when I started I had enough skills that I could actually offer myself as an equine specialist in the EAGALA model. That was good for me because I had enough horse skills to really be a valuable asset to the therapists, who may have less horse skills... So it was not hard for me because I... had that little bit of cushion, so I could think about those skills as a therapist as I was actually doing the work of equine specialist. So it was not terribly hard, but you know, at the end of the day it can still be challenging.

Some mental health practitioners may need a period of time to really grasp the concepts of EAP, or they may feel overwhelmed due to so many dynamics between clients and horses.

Michael illustrated these ideas in describing his experiences with guiding his student interns in EAP. He said:

I actually have student interns. When they first go into the arena, because they are studying very hard to be good therapists, sometimes their first session with horses present there is so much going on to become aware of ... The horses are alive. There are all these dynamics to these living animals, and living people, and more than one person, and you have a therapy team, which is just more than one person. And sometimes they (the student interns) are overwhelmed because it is so dynamic. But I enjoy it.

“But I enjoy it” simply showed after exploring many career choices, Michael found his calling in his life.

Meso-zoom.

Key phrases. Michael used to be a teacher who taught counseling courses. He shared his experiences as an interviewee in my study:

It was interesting. I have to talk about a lot of things and reflect on some of the reasons why I do the work [EAP]. That is good for me. I am kind of a teacher too, so I almost feel like I am teaching when I talk about things [when he shares his EAP experiences with me]. That’s the curse for me. My parents were teachers. I am kind of stuck with that.

Michael had a sense of humor about his role as a teacher when he said, “That’s the curse for me.” I found during the interviews he was very aware of what he said and what he knew. For instance, when we talked about the parallel between EAP and sandtray therapy, he said, “I don’t consider myself to be an expert in the traditional sandtray; so I don’t know if I can say what they might say about that. They probably are more accurate than me...” When we talked about how the theory of client-centered therapy complemented EAP, he said, “Actually I have something that I have written about that. I actually want to develop it a little more. I am not sure if I can articulate on the fly for you...” As an interviewer, I could tell that if he would tell me directly if he did not know something. His modesty in expressing himself increased the trustworthiness of his sharing.

Narrative process. Michael has been a pastor, associate pastor, and institutional chaplain. It seems religion plays an important part in his life, but during the interview, I did not see him put his religious beliefs into the way that he interpreted his life journey or how his religious beliefs influence his EAP work. I was curious whether he separated his religion beliefs and EAP on purpose during the interviews after reading his transcriptions many times. In his real life, does he see some connections between both? For example, some participants (Jean-Jacques, Kriss, and Thom) talked about their religion during the interviews, and indicated how their religious beliefs influence the way they see EAP.

Narrative themes.

Care about the EAP community. Practicing EAP is Michael's passion. It started from his personal fulfillment, but during the interviews I found Michael's ambition was showed in different areas of the interviews. For example, he provides his office for regular EAP meetings and built an EAP support group for anyone who is interested in it. Michael said:

I am very interested in advancing this field. A very important part of being involved in it for me is if I can help this field move forward. We actually have been asked to do a study with a medical facility here. This is one of the things that I really hope we can do to help advance the field. It is Rocky Mountain Cancer Center, which is part of the medical system, and we have a proposal before their IRB right now for a pilot program that they are interested in ... I am pretty excited about that. I am very interested in the advancement of the field. To me, it is not just about me, and what I do. It is about the value of this work to the world... We should be concerned with doing it well, and we should be concerned with demonstrating there are very, very good reasons for doing what we do, above and beyond just liking horses.

Michael practices EAP because he sees the values and the effectiveness of this work, not only because he loves horses. At the end of the second of interview, Michael asked me, "How do you believe this project will impact the practice of equine-assisted psychotherapy? What do you think will come from this research project that will influence equine-assisted psychotherapy?"

Those two questions also validate Michael's interest in the development of this field beyond his own personal or professional interests.

Unpretentious. Michael expressed both confidence and modesty during the interviews. "Unpretentious" is the word that I choose to describe who he is and how the story is told by him. After many years of practicing EAP, Michael wrote a book about EAP and grief and loss. I read the book before the interview and we discussed it. During the interview, I learned that he had spoken at the second annual conference of the EAGALA, and I said, "You are like one of the pioneers." He responded, "Haha. No, I don't think so. I've been with them for a while. When I got in that organization, I felt like I was reconnected to what I was trained to do years before..." I found Michael put the attention on his EAP journey instead of emphasizing on how much he has accomplished.

Another example is when he talked about his natural horsemanship skills, he said, "...I had enough skills to really be a valuable asset to the therapists who may have less horse skills." This is his confident part. On the other side, he showed his modest and genuine personality. He said, "...It was not terribly hard, but you know at the end of the day it can still be challenging." He also shows he is a lifelong learner in natural horsemanship. He said, "...always want to improve myself as a horseman and improve the horses that I am involved with... Yep, a little bit of me is a cowboy." One side of Michael is like a confident teacher who is ready and willing to share his knowledge; another side of him is like a student who is open to learn.

Micro-level zoom.

During the interviews, Michael rarely expressed obvious emotions, but I could still sense his emotions and passion when he talked about the EAP network, a group of people who incorporated horses into psychotherapy whom he had connected with more than 10 years ago:

We started banding together, networking and talking about these things...very big networking group. Maybe 50 or 60 people...A couple of people who were leaders died a few years apart, one about 2006 or 2007 and the other one in 2008 or 2009. And with those successive deaths of people, it kind of caused— nobody really pulled it back together as was in the past. But we are working on it now...

When Michael said nobody really pulled the group back together, his voice was normal and calm. However, it's clear that Michael is now assuming the leadership role in bringing this group back together. Michael expresses his passion for EAP through doing instead of expressing feelings.

Interactional-zoom.

Teachers look authoritative which can be intimidating symbolize authority. Teachers also symbolize a passion for teaching, which means they can be very relatable to their students. During the first interview, Michael seemed very authoritative which was a bit intimidating to me. I was a little nervous that I might be taking too much of his time because he was busy. However, after the first interview, I started to see his passion for teaching and sharing, which made him seem less intimidating. He spent about 20 more minutes sharing the prospective developments for EAP. His passion for the field is evident in his statement, "I am very interested in advancing this field. It is very important."

Michael provides his office for an EAP group meeting every month, and he also leads that group. I joined the group before our second interview. One of the participants in the group is Michael's student. After I saw how Michael interacted with his students, I knew more about him. He is a teacher who likes to help students and has a sense of humor. He started the group because EAP conferences and training are expensive, and the student cannot afford it. From this group, his student can get the training hours and accumulate EAP knowledge for free. During the second interview, I shifted my attention from Michael's authoritarian role to his supportiveness. I

was not nervous or afraid of making mistakes during this interview. Sometimes my English can be confusing, and this time we could laugh about it.

About Pia

Pia was born and raised in the rural Netherlands; she was surrounded by animals growing up. When she was seven years old, her family moved next door to an equine facility. All of a sudden, she was surrounded by horses. Pia assumes that this is the reason she loves horses. Currently, Pia lives on her farm with her partner and animals. Pia's love of horses inspired her to learn natural horsemanship. From Pia's perspective, the essence of natural horsemanship is similar to EAP; therefore, moving from natural horsemanship to EAP was natural for her.

When Pia was in college in the Netherlands, she majored in social work and practiced adventure therapy with at-risk adolescents at a residential facility. She took adolescents out into nature and believes that nature can teach people about themselves. Pia is an outdoor person and she said, "I think it is my personality. I am really not that interested in sitting in an office with clients. That is not me. I feel more comfortable when I can be on the playing field with clients...I feel the power differential isn't so big..." Adventure therapy and EAP are both experiential therapies, which makes it easier to understand why Pia practices EAP.

Macro-zoom.

Bringing horses back at 40-years old. Pia loved horses when she was a child. She said, "I begged my parents to give me my riding lessons. My parents were not very interested..." As a child, she mucked (cleaned out) stalls and fed horses at an equine facility in exchange for free riding lessons. While away at college, Pia did not have many chances to be around horses. In her young adulthood, she had a riding lesson now and then. By middle adulthood, Pia chose to bring horses into her life and see horses as family members.

It was not until when I was 40 before I really got back into horses and purchased another horse, and then another horse. Now I have seven equines. So, hahaha...I decided to live here in Colorado. I really have missed them in my life. Off and on I'd gone to barns, and taken lessons, I rode other people's horses. But I did not have them with me and I really felt that I wanted them to be part of my family, and that how I started out with the first one at the age of 40, and he is still here. He is my oldest horse. What happened that was different this time around, when I was forty is that I really started to look at them as individuals, as partners, as part of my family. I started to look at their "horsenalties." Instead of thinking of horses as animals that you ride because I always come from a perspective that whenever I can, I want to hop on a horse. The relationship became more important to me. That is a really different perspective that I want to know who these creature are, I want to know why they do what they do, and why they live the way they live. That's also the reason why I do not have horses that live in separated stalls. I have horses live together as a herd.

From personal conversations, I knew Pia used to travel a lot. For example, she used to be an English teacher in China. When Pia said, "I decided to live here in Colorado." I interpreted that to mean she is ready to settle down and sees Colorado as her home. Including horses as family members is a major commitment with major responsibilities. For Pia, seeing horses as family members means they are not just temporary companions for leisure or for sport. I interpreted Pia describing horses as part of her family to mean that horses symbolize Pia being settlement emotionally or physically. The way that she incorporates horses into therapy sessions also shows how she cares about her four legged family members' welfare, and that she sees them as sentient beings rather than just animals for serving human needs.

I seldom have clients back to back, and I do schedule time base on the needs of the horse because I believe that horses always need to transition between people. They need half hour or an hour break. They need to graze for a while or stand in the shade or check their buddies.

Pia also shared the cultural difference between the Netherlands and Colorado. She said:

P: I would say that the culture that I came from, mostly horses are luxury items... They are the animals that are purchased by people who have more money... And here in Colorado, it is like horses are not cheap, but the fact that you have horses in Colorado does not mean you are upper class.

I: It is more like a lifestyle.

P: Yes, it is a lifestyle...

I interpreted the term “luxury items” to reflect the view of horses in the Netherlands as objects instead of sentient beings. According to Pia’s observation, horses do not reflect different social classes in Colorado. In other words, inviting horses into her life is more reflective of Pia’s lifestyle than her social class status.

Self-awareness and natural horsemanship. One of America’s well-known horse trainers, Buck Brannaman, said in his film *Buck*, “Your horse is a mirror to your soul, and sometimes you may not like what you see. Sometimes, you will.” One of Pia’s horses mirrored her interpersonal dynamic, and it became a life changing experience for Pia. She said:

One day I was working with my horse and a lot of pushing and pulling was involved. Um~ actually the farrier [person who puts on horseshoes] and I were working together with one of my horses. The horse was being difficult, difficult behavior. I would not recognize he was afraid, that it was fearful for him. He was tied up. I could see the white in his eyes. All of a sudden, something clicked for me. Actually clicked as he pulled back, reared, broke the rope and ran into my strawberry patch, and right there and then I had this “a-ha” moment, and I thought I have been doing this all wrong. That got me really involved in Parelli and really started working with concepts of the 7 games, and the idea of partnership, and all these P words Pat Parelli uses like proper preparation, and all these kind of things. So slowly I began to see the light, I began to see the light about myself, too. As an individual, I have a tendency to push and pull, not only with horses, but with others as well...

My interpretation of Pia saying “I have been doing this all wrong” is that Pia thought that she had not really listened to her horse and had not really worked on that relationship, even if her horse tried to communicate with her. This significant event brought Pia into the area of natural horsemanship and started the process of self-exploration. The attitude of natural horsemanship is to develop the rapport with horses. In other words, it is a person to do things with horses and for horses instead of doing things to horses (Parelli, 1993).

Pat Parelli is another well-known horse trainer in the United States; his training principles are based on the idea of partnership between person and horse. Pia was influenced by his training philosophy. Parelli (1993) suggested, “Horse-Man-Ship is three words linked

together. It is a horse and a human going willingly together. Horse-Man-Ship is for horses as well as humans, and the horse comes first” (p. 14). Pia reflected further on this:

When you have a push pull personality, you go to a place, the place that you go to when you do not know how well to respond in a proper way is to either to push people away and make them stay away from your vulnerability or really want to pull people in, and really want them to know you and be really close with you, and know all about you. So, it is an either/or type of thing. And how that is related to natural horsemanship and how that is related to that “a-ha” moment that I had with my horse that broke free of that situation which made him extremely fearful was when I did that with that particular horse to push and pull. His response was, “Please do not do that. That is not respectful, and that makes me feel fearful. I don’t want to be close to you. I don’t feel we are in the partnership here.” When you look at the method that I used in natural horsemanship, Parelli more particularly, but Buck Brannaman, Ray Hunt they all use the same kind of method is horses respond to the release of pressure, not to pressure itself; so to push on horses does not provide release, it is only when you stop pushing that you will see what occurs for the horses. That is a really interesting principle. That really ties into what I needed to learn about myself, and my go to push and pull method...

Buck Brannaman (2013) said, “Horses will make their feelings known, even though they cannot talk. If you mistreat them because of YOUR inadequacies, their behavior will tell you.”

Pia’s horse let her know how he felt, and she saw this as a learning point for her. Now that Pia is aware of her working style with horses, she has more choices in deciding how to treat horses and how to react in interpersonal relationships. She said:

Once I had the awareness that [push pull dynamic] was something I did, I started to play with it. I started to play with the idea that I can be with people, with a person, with an individual without having to do any of that. And just kind of feel into the relationship, and say “ok, this is what is happening right now”, and just sit with it, be mindful of what is going on instead of wanting something to happen. When you have that push and pull personality, you always want something to happen.

Once Pia noticed she had choices, it brought her freedom, which means she does not necessary need to act out the “push and pull” pattern subconsciously. The problem behind “push and pull” is about controlling. When she engages in the pattern of push and pull, she usually wants to control something and expect things can happen in the way she wants. The lesson that she learns from horses is to be mindful and present in the moment instead of forcing something

to happen. The concept is similar to the role of an EAP therapist. EAP therapists learn to step back in EAP sessions and be present with clients and horses without forcing anything to happen.

Rethinking professional identity. The push and pull pattern also inspired Pia to see her professional role as a therapist. She noticed that she sometimes brings her expectations into therapy sessions and subconsciously wants to make something happen.

So with that awareness, I really started to play, and it was interesting because I really went through stages that maybe I did not want to be a therapist anymore because I did not want that power differential. I am rather to be a facilitator, facilitate of the process of change. And then I need to incorporate that awareness into my therapeutic practice, and say “yes, I can be a therapist, I can be a clinician with this awareness and bring mindfulness and awareness into the therapeutic relationship.” And say “This is how I want to work with clients, and just being in the mindfulness of the moment, and noticing what is happening instead of pushing for what I feel needs to happen because it is not mine, it is the client’s. Does that make sense?”

Pia referenced a “power differential.” When she wants to lead the therapy into a certain direction, she subconsciously sees herself as an expert or authority. It is not an equal relationship with clients. However, Pia also shared how EAP influences her to consciously want to shed her expert role and reduce this power differential.

I think prior to working with horses in EAP, I really feel maybe there was a sense of pride in my knowledge as a clinician that I feel I was going to heal this client. And where I am at and what I learn every day is that the healing comes from within the client and that doesn’t come from me. The only thing that I need to do is to hold the space for the client and ask the questions, so they can give the answers. And that really horses taught me is to not assume anything because I really don’t know. That makes sense?...I think it humbles me both as a clinician and as an individual...I don’t put on a big old cape and say, “I am gonna save the day because I am pretty good at saving the day.” But just to say, “...I don’t need to be a hero here. All I need to be is to be present for something to happen, for some shifts to happen for the clients, for some shifts to happen for me, for some shifts to happen for me and my relationship with other people. So in that sense to me the humbleness of knowing that the more I think I know, the less I know...

In this statement, I saw that Pia intentionally wanted to shed her expert role. Before practicing EAP, she wanted to “heal” clients and make clients feel better. After practicing EAP,

however, she identifies her role as one where she “holds a space” for clients and horses for clients to heal themselves.

Vulnerable horses; vulnerable clients. I volunteer at an EAP program where Pia works. One day I brought a filly, Sassy, to take a walk. When I wanted to bring Sassy in, she resisted going back into the stall. I was pulling her, but the more I pulled, the more she resisted. Pia saw the scene and she helped me by demonstrating a more effective way. During the interview when we had a conversation about push and pull, we talked about what had happened that day.

I: When I pulled Sassy to go inside...I used the “push and pull.”

P: Yes, and horses tell us that doesn’t work. That doesn’t work to try to push and pull me around. What works is to get my mind off something that’s freaking me out or whatever reasons. And I think, also what I learn from horses is that there is a lot more that is based around fear than the idea of that they don’t want to do it. And the work with the clients I get that a lot better, too. It is not that they don’t want to do this or that or do something what I recommend, but it is their fear which is in the way.

Pia identifies herself as a therapist, facilitator, and an equine specialist. She has practiced natural horsemanship for more than 10 years and understands horses’ behavior. It is interesting to see how Pia makes an analogy between horses’ behaviors and clients’ behaviors. Horses resist doing what a horseperson asks them to do because they are afraid; clients resist making a change because they are afraid. It may not be accurate to use “resistance” to describe horses’ or clients’ behaviors. It can be simply that they are not ready. Underneath, the lack of readiness may be related to relationships. Horses will try many things for a horseperson if they have a trusting relationship (Parelli, 1993). Clients may have more courage and feel more comfortable to change if they have a trusting relationship with their therapist.

Many people’s first impression of horses is that they are big, fast, and powerful. Pia, however, is aware of horses’ vulnerable side. She said:

You look at a horse and it looks really powerful, yet it stands on these tiny little hoofs...it’s a prey animal; so it is a hunted animal. ... I think that where a lot of clients

are at too. Here is where we see the correlation with trauma survivors. They feel very vulnerable. Horses are very vulnerable; so there is a very interesting dichotomy between powerfulness and vulnerability.

Pia really understands the strength and the vulnerability of clients and horses. My interpretation of the above quote is that she sees each as a “whole” horse and a “whole” person. In other words, she understands that vulnerabilities and strengths are parts of any living beings, and she has an empathetic heart to understand her horses and clients.

Meso-zoom.

Key phrases. During the interview, Pia said, “I decided to be an art history teacher because my mom said ever since I was a really little girl, I was like a natural teacher...” I found that Pia had natural teacher characteristics that were evident in our interviews. For instance, she naturally asked, “That makes sense?” or “Does that make sense for the answer?” or “That work?” or “Am I making my answer too long?” She kept checking to make sure I understood her. Many times she ended a sentence with a question mark. For instance, she said, “Clients are in a great amount of emotional pain, right?” I interpret that question mark as an invitation to interact. It might also invite agreement from the listener. The question mark also provides flexibility because those are rhetorical questions; the listeners can choose whether or not to respond. Questions naturally create interactive dynamics between speakers and listeners, and of course between teachers and students.

Narrative process. When Pia described her push and pull pattern, she gave me an example about what happened between her horse and her. However, Pia did not share any example of push and pull pattern in her interpersonal relationships. I was aware of Pia’s sense of privacy and chose not to ask for an example during the interviews. I found that some of the other participants in this study did the same thing. It seems that there was invisible line to separate the

public area and the private area. However, I wondered whether this was not only about privacy, but whether it was perhaps also that participants were not sure how much personal information they should share in a formal research interview. Perhaps they thought that such information would diverge from the research questions because they were aware my topic was about EAP.

Narrative themes.

Process of humbleness. I found humbleness everywhere in Pia's story. Pia is aware of her limitations as a human being and this awareness makes her both confident and modest at the same time. While this might seem to be contradictory, when Pia accepts her limitation as a human being, she is more comfortable accepting who she is. Acceptance and nonjudgment for ourselves are related to confidence.

Because Pia is aware of what she does not know and that horses can do something that she cannot do, she is also more humble as a therapist:

I really believe that the fact that we can speak language is actually an interference because it makes it very complicated and difficult and hurtful that things are being said. We don't understand each other, and you speak Chinese and I speak Dutch. It gets really complicated. So the more we can get back to this pre-verbal and non-verbal level and really look at and see what is going on with clients in a relationship to another individual. Because I am so flawed, because I am human, I have the tendency to engage in more verbal pieces than I am into other components.

Pia also said,

Because we always have our lens to see the world ... because of our experiences, there is not a neutral for us. As much as we try to be neutral, you can't be. We are not a blank page.

From Pia's perspective, using nonverbal communication and providing a clear lens in therapy to understand clients are two things that horses can do better than her, and that humbles her as a therapist.

Micro-level zoom.

Pia was good at using metaphors to express herself during the interviews. A bird learning how to fly was a metaphor that Pia used to describe how she runs her EAP program. For example, she said, “I really think when you really passionate about something like this [EAP], there is a short amount of time you are thinking about learning how to fly, and you just have to go and spread your wings.” Another example is she said, “When someone starts to sit on the fence, that is a really good metaphor for me, right? ... They are not here. They are not there. They are on the fence.” Creating and seeing metaphors is one of the therapeutic components in EAP. It was interesting to see how Pia represented this therapeutic component during the interviews. It seems she blends her professional self and private self together, and that she lives with what she believes in. Her professional and private selves are naturally aligned and integrated with one another.

Interactional zoom.

Pia and I are friends. I know she has passion for practicing EAP and sharing her experiences so we both seemed very comfortable during the interviews. Even though sometimes I felt a little bit pressure from the limited time, she was generous to offer more time for me and the study. Before our first interview, Pia invited me to go to a horse clinic with her, and then I got a free ticket from her to attend another horse clinic. Those experiences reignited my interest in learning natural horsemanship. Before the horse clinic, I was not able to make a decision about whether I wanted to adopt Sassy, who is the horse in this story. Pia and I had a personal conversation after the interview and she told me, “They (horses) will change your life.” I had seen how horses have influenced Pia’s entire lifestyle, but I was not sure if I was ready to be changed at that time. Finally this conversation ignited the spark that helped me make a decision,

and I invited the horse into my life. I think the interviews leading me to invite the horse into my life reflected synchronicity.

About Becky

Becky was a professional artist before she practiced therapy. When she was an artist, she had an opportunity to be a volunteer doing art work with women at a homeless shelter in Denver. Every year there was an art show that showcased the women's art; it was a fundraising event for the shelter. Becky noticed that when women were creating their art, they would naturally open up and share their stories. As an artist, she did not have the professional training to deal with the women's emotions; she was afraid of saying or doing something wrong. The volunteer experience, however, motivated her to go back school for social work at the University of Denver.

Becky currently lives with her husband Tony on their farm. Tony joined the first interview because he sometimes works with Becky at EAP sessions as an equine specialist. Becky's described her therapeutic approach as being client-centered. She practices art therapy and talk therapy with clients, and implements body work such as meditative and relaxation yoga. The theoretical model that she practices from is Carl Jung's transpersonal psychology. Becky said, "Carl Jung, he is very experiential; so I kind of follow his philosophy and stuff. I think it just naturally translates to the work with horses because we cannot plan..." Becky also described herself as athletic, artistic, and musical, so she thinks practicing experiential approaches just fit who she is.

Macro-zoom.

Small step for the dream—having a horse. Becky's husband Tony is the person who originally wanted to have horses in his life. Becky's path to EAP emerged from her husband

Tony's desire to have a horse. Tony started to connect to his childhood dream in middle adulthood, and Becky became the catalyst to support the dream. Becky said:

Well, we never had horses until we moved here to Elizabeth. Elizabeth . . . and Elbert County, in general, is known as the place where people who want to have horses live because I bet there are more horses in Elbert County than there are people. So when we moved out here, we lived in a different neighborhood on a small property. And you couldn't have horses in that neighborhood, but Tony really wanted a horse. And he said, "Let's just go to buy a horse, and we'll stable it somewhere." And I said, "We do not know anything about horses. We need to take lessons." So that's what we did. He, and I, and our younger daughter went and took riding lessons. . . Willie is the horse that Tony always took lessons on. He came up for sale and the trainer called me, and she's like "We're gonna sell this horse. Would you guys like to buy it?" And it was his birthday and so I was like "Ok."

Becky did not want to make any mistakes with horses, and so she suggested if Tony wanted to have horses, then they would have to learn something about horses first. From this short statement, I saw a sense of realism in Becky that played a key role during the process of getting a horse. Becky was supportive of Tony's dreams and made a plan for the dream to become reality. She said, "It was Tony my husband's desire to have horses. So he is the one who kind of started it, but then I was like, 'if we are gonna do it, we have to do it in the right way.' That is how it happened."

The beauty of the story was how often Becky used the term "we." It could have been Tony's individual dream, but Becky chose to join it and accompany him. The process is full companionship and love. In the first interview Tony said, "We've been married for 30 years, and I know I picked up a lot of positive changes just with her personality. . . ." It shows they both really treasure each other and appreciate taking their life journey together.

Big step for the dream-living on a farm. After Willie (horse) joined their life, Becky and Tony got Randa, another horse, for their daughter. They stabled both of them on a farm, but it was expensive. They decided to have their own place to raise horses. Becky described Tony as

always having a desire to live on a big farm or ranch with big animals. The decision to have their own farm made Tony's childhood dream come true. Becky said:

We both grew up in a rural town in Ohio, but neither one of us had horses. So, when we moved out here and had an opportunity to get horses, it was like his (Tony's) childhood dream had been fulfilled. So, I do not really know where the desire came from. Yesterday, actually, we had a little mentor group. We're both involved in a mentoring program out here now. And we had a group of teenagers out here. Somebody asked him (Tony), who his hero was when he was growing up? He said John Wayne, who I do not know if you ever heard of him or not... He was actually a movie star. He was in a lot of cowboy westerns. And as we were growing up, he was the man's man you know. And that was who his hero was, so I think that played into his desire to get horses.

While this statement came from the second interview, which only Becky participated in, she still used "we" to tell the story. I could feel the supportive and an intimate relationship between Tony and Becky flowing naturally when she talked about how they built their farm together. During the first interviews, Tony always wore his cowboy hat. He even has his office in the barn to do his engineering work. That is the place he can smell horses and hear horses neigh. Taking care of horses and managing the farm has become parts of his everyday life. It seems that being a cowboy is a part of his identity now.

Encountering EAP. In the beginning, Tony just wanted to have his own horse and put the horse on a boarding farm. Becky joined Tony's dream and co-created the dream. The dream ended up much bigger than they expected. It turned out that their dream was not just only for their personal fulfillment, but also had a mission that neither Becky nor Tony anticipated until it showed up later in their life. Becky said:

During my MSW training, one of my supervisors has asked me "Did you hear about equine assisted psychotherapy?" And we had horses, but we weren't living here [mean the ranch] yet. And I thought: *what the hell in the world would you use a horse in a therapy situation for?* So I went to the first training through EAGALA, and was hooked. Like after the first day, I was like "wow, this is amazing." And so I ended up getting the second training and becoming certified and all that. Actually I have been doing EAP almost as long as I have been a therapist. ... Through my agency where I work now, we

donate the facility and the horses, and I am able to offer it to clients through that agency because all we really have to pay for is the equine specialists and it's not that expensive.

Becky wanted to be a therapist, and Tony wanted to live on a big farm. The dreams did not seem related in the beginning of the story. However, when they were on their own path and following their hearts, the dreams were woven together. As a reader, I see this as an example of synchronicity. Becky and Tony donate their facility to the agency that Becky works for, and this provides Becky with the opportunity to practice EAP, which she really loves and believes in. She said:

I never had a bad EAP session. You know, sometimes, somebody will leave my office, and I will sit there and think "Am I doing any good?" hahaha, you know. "What are we doing?" But I never ever have that happen in the sessions with horses. Something always comes from that. So, I feel really good being able to offer that to the clients.

Tony's realization of his desire for a horse opened an opportunity for Becky to experience fulfillment as a therapist. When they donate their farm to practice EAP, they nurture other lives who walk on their path.

Personal experience with horses. Before receiving EAP training, Becky already had personal experiences with her horses, which motivated her to learn EAP and helped her understand the essence of EAP very quickly:

We had three [horses] here at that time, and they were just for our pleasure to ride, you know. But, I knew if I was in a bad mood, and I just went down to the barn to hang out with my horses a little while I would feel better when I was done. ...I knew there were therapeutic benefits. I have been around the horses, but I wanted to find out how you do a therapy session with a client and a horse because that is what I did not know.

Becky further shared how horses reacted to her hidden emotions, and helped her stay present and raise her own self-awareness:

Whenever I am in a bad mood and around my horses, the horses will tell me that I am in a bad mood by doing something, if I would just pay attention to it. Like, I think every time when I have been kicked, bitten, stepped on, or throw off from a horse, it's been because I was not with the horse. I was somewhere else in my head, and I was not

focusing on what I was doing. So, it really helps me to become more focused, even in my everyday life. I am way better off, checking in with myself and saying, “Ok, what is going on with me?”

Becky noticed it is important for her to stay in the present with horses; otherwise, horses will react to her unspoken emotions and force her to be present. Most of Becky’s clients have experienced trauma and usually do not live in the present moment; they either live in the past or worry about the future. Becky’s personal experiences with horses helped her understand the therapeutic factors of EAP easily because she experiences how good horses are at bringing her back to the here and now. She said, “After the first day of the [EAP] training, I thought this is what I need to be doing.”

Art and EAP. Because Becky used to be a professional artist, she adds some elements of art into her EAP work. She also created a meaningful metaphor between a real canvas and an equine canvas. Sometimes she will tell clients, “Artists call their canvases their support. That’s what they paint on. It is their support. Here’s the horse. This is your canvas. This is your support.”

We will take a horse and have a client actually use ... animal friendly paint, so it is non-toxic. They make it specifically for painting on animals. But, we’ll have them use the horse as a canvas. And then sometimes I’ll give them a prompt and they’ll paint. “Paint what this particular situation feels like or how it looks to you” or whatever. Or Sometimes I just say: “Here is some paint. Paint some things on the horse.” We have some really interesting things appear in the art work. I have a brother and sister, who were working together, so I put the brother on one side of the horse and the sister was on the other. They could not see what each other were doing, but they both painted pictures of their family which I thought was really neat. One time we had a girl, Tony and I worked with a teenager, who was a victim of sexual abuse. She said, “I don’t know what to paint. I don’t know what to paint.” I said, “You know, just take the paint and just start painting.” And so she was standing up close to the horse painting. And then when she finished, she said: “I do not know what I painted, but here it is.” And she stepped back and looked and there was a really scary face in the painting on the side of the horse. It is like a subconscious thing that came out. She saw it when she stepped back. But, as she moved up against the horse she couldn’t see it. She thought she made some random design. So we have pretty cool stuff combining art work with horses. And then if it is not like, the dead winter when we do that project, we will show the client how to put the horse in the shower stall, and shower the horse, and wash the paint off after they are done.

I can see how thoughtful Becky and Tony are when they combine art into EAP. They do not do this activity until clients have bonded with a particular horse. This means clients and horses have developed some level of trust with each other. Based on the relationship, horses can really support clients to explore their inner world. Becky and Tony also observed some differences between a real canvas and an equine canvas. Becky found that painting on a horse has more dynamics than painting on a canvas. Becky said, “It is a live being that responds to their touch. And a lot of time you know the horse will sort of tickle like this if they touch it with their brush in a certain spot or whatever.” Tony has found that some clients feel less pressure to paint on an equine canvas because their work is erasable instead of lasting for a long time:

I’ve heard this a couple of times. Somebody may not, you know, they think they can’t paint. So they don’t want to paint on a piece of paper that’s going to be a record of what they make. I’ve heard you [Becky] a couple of times say, “You know, we’re going to wash this off when we’re done anyway. So it kind of like frees them up. They don’t have to worry that it looks good or somebody’s going to be critical of that...”

Balance between privacy and calling. Becky treasures her privacy, and so practicing EAP and opening the farm to clients is a big decision, and means she loses some privacy and may gain some risks. When I read Becky’s story, I automatically connect it to Erik Erikson’s psychosocial development theory. In middle adulthood, the psychosocial conflict is about generativity versus stagnation, and the major question people at this stage would ask is, “how can I contribute to the world?” I feel this is relevant in Becky’s story. Becky and Tony are in middle adulthood. Their three children have grown up and left home, and they have accomplished some of their goals in life. It is time for them to nurture their childhood dreams and create positive changes that benefits other lives. Becky said:

This place we found came up for sale and we wound up buying it knowing ahead of time that we were probably never gonna fill all these stalls. We did think about it. When we bought this place, we were thinking, “Should we bring a trainer in and have it be like a stable where people can rent a space whatever?” But being a therapist, and especially

working with domestic violence, I kind of value my privacy. I do not really want everyone to know where I live, and I did not feel comfortable just having strangers in and out all the time. So we decided no based on that. And then when I heard about EAP and went to the training, it suddenly made sense: This is why we're here. We should be using this facility to help other people and we have some great horses. We got Rissy [name of horse] for our third one, that little white mare. Those three, we had only those three for quite a while. And that's the three that we started doing EAP with. But they are just perfect for EAP. All three of them, as solid as they can be. They would never hurt anybody purposely. They are amazing to do this work. And then, we started adding to the herd.

When Becky said, "It suddenly made sense this is why we're here. We should be using this facility to help other people", it seems meaningfulness guides her life even if fear is still there. This sense of meaning was also present when Becky said, "It will be a waste to live here and not use that (means facility) for something." The meaningfulness in her current life stage is to promote the personal growth in other people. Even if she worries about the issue of safety, this does not stop her from doing something that she feels it is important.

Become each other. In the first part of the story, I saw how Becky supported Tony's dream; in the latter part of the story, I saw their roles shift. Tony supported Becky's interest and passion. When I tried to interpret who supported who in their different life stages, I may have seen their relationship in a reductionist way, meaning that I missed the art and complexity of their relationship. Perhaps working together is natural and enjoyable to both of them. Tony went to the EAGALA conference with Becky, and practiced some EAP sessions with her (referred to earlier). During the interview, Tony reflected on learning about EAP:

That is kind of interesting. My background is engineering and so when she started doing this I, kind of, was pretty skeptical of it. (I'm) kind of used to dealing with black and white, and I've been pretty amazed at some of the stuff that we've seen, mostly her, but you know, I observe.

When Tony engages with Becky's work, the ways he sees things and people changes. The beauty of their relationship is they are open to let each other add new elements in their life and

grow together. Their nurturing relationship also motivates Becky to want to work with Tony in EAP as a team doing couples work:

What I really want to get into, which I have not done yet, I really want to do couples' work with horses because I think that will be completely different too. I think doing a premarital workshop with couples and horses will be awesome. I would love to do that...And I think I would use Tony to be my ES. You know, a husband and wife team working with couples. I think that will be very cool. Will that be cool?

“We become each other” is the way that Becky described how the roles and relationship reversed between Tony and her. When Becky was a professional artist, she worked all day from home without human connection. She craved talking to Tony and the children after they came home. Now, those roles have reversed, she is a therapist who has to talk all day; Tony chooses to work from home by himself. He has now become the person who desires the human interactions:

Now it's actually switched because at that time I was working in downtown Denver. Now I work from home, so I don't have anybody to talk to all day. And she talks all day. So it's like role reversal, I'd say. Because when she comes home, I'm ready to talk and she's ready to go run or sit and veg out. It's kind of interesting. I think.

I found that the concept of “we become each other” was apparent in different parts of Becky's story. Becky and Tony are individuals, but when one's dream comes out in different life stages, they support each other. They built individual dream together, and that dream became each other's dream. They have been a couple for about 30 years. After seeing the way they interacted with each other, it is easy to understand this long shared history and where their 30 years relationship comes from.

Meso-zoom.

Key phrases. In the ways that Becky told her story and interacted with me, it was clear she is a person who cares about relationships and that she naturally builds positive interactions in interpersonal relationships. As I mentioned in the macro zoom, Becky frequently used “we” to tell her story. The word “we” conveyed the importance of the relationship between Tony and

Becky. During the interviews, Becky asked me some questions, like “Are you a horseperson?” “Do you ride?” “Is that cool?” I interpreted those questions as a way of inviting some level of interaction. I remember at the end of the first interview, Becky asked me, “Ping, do you need more participants?” This question not only invited interaction, it also offered help. It created more interaction. Furthermore, in the second interview, Becky said:

I am really interested in domestic violence. I have never experienced domestic violence. My mom and dad have a very good marriage. I have a very good marriage. It is not part of my world, but when I learn more about it, I feel very deep empathy for people who experience that. And I love working with women, and they seem to like working with me.

“And I love working with women, and they seem to like working with me.” This sentence depicted a mutual and nurturing relationship between Becky and her clients, again reflecting her relational ability. The way she told the story, the way she interacted with me, it was clear she is a person who cares about relationships and she naturally builds positive interactions in interpersonal relationships.

Narrative process. When Becky shared her personal experiences as an artist and as an EAP therapist, it seemed at first like these experiences were unrelated. However, after reading the transcripts of Becky’s interviews several times, a connection between them seems to appear. Becky shared her experience as an artist:

B: When I was a professional artist, I noticed some of the best art work I created was when I was in a dark period in my life. It might not even have been the subject, but no matter if it was a dark subject or it might be a landscape or something, you know. Those pieces always turned out way better than anything I painted when I am happy-go-lucky.

I: Why?

B: I think, probably, I just reach deeper parts of my psyche and somehow that just translates into better artwork. I think when you are an artist you can look at the piece of art and you can see whether or not the artist just used technical skills to create a painting, or if there is really a compassion or feeling in the piece. So, when I was going through stuff, the passion and feelings came out in a piece.

Becky’s statement, “I think probably I just reach deeper parts of my psyche and somehow just translate into better artwork,” is the key sentence that I want to emphasize because in the latter interview, Becky shared a related perspective of EAP:

There is something about adding animals into the work that ... just resonates with people on different levels than if you are just doing traditional therapy in the office. I do not mean that to sound like it is not worthwhile because ...I mean I spend 80% of my practice just in the office with people, you know. Um~ when you add the animal to the work, it just really seems to hit a deeper place with people. And it happens more quickly than just talking.

From Becky’s experience, when her deeper psyche is “touched”, she creates better art works. Similarly, in discussing EAP, Becky indicates that animals seem to touch a deeper part of clients, and that helps clients and her have a more therapeutic session. That is the reason that Becky said, “I never had a bad EAP session.” Thus, there is an analogy between art and EAP (see Figure 4.1)

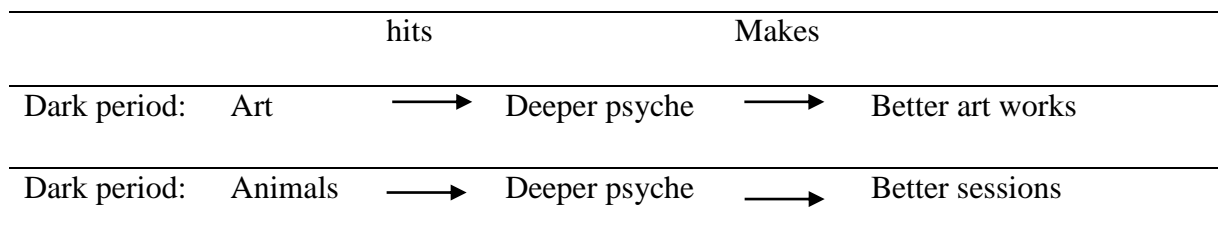


Figure 4.1 The Analogy between Art and EAP

Narrative themes.

Do things in the right way. Doing things in the right way is the main theme in Becky’s life; this motto guides her to make important decisions and opens her up to many opportunities. When she was a volunteer at a women’s homeless shelter, she was afraid of doing something wrong to hurt clients, which motivated her to pursue a master’s degree in social work. Finally she made a career transition and became a therapist. When Tony wanted to invite horses into

their life, Becky thought they needed to do so in the right way. They started to take riding lessons and learned how to take care of horses from experienced horsepersons. Those experiences led her to live on a farm and practice EAP.

Micro-level zoom.

During the interview, Becky said:

You saw the Porta-potty, I am sure, when you came in. That was one of my biggest concerns. How am I gonna do this work from my home and the barn does not have a bathroom? If somebody needs to go to the bathroom, I am not gonna say, “you cannot use the bathroom in my house.” So, we got the Porta-potty so that solved that problem. And really (sighed), I think I am always very aware of safety. There are a lot of people that we work with whose perpetrators are still involved in their lives in some capacity. So my phone number is not published in the telephone book, and therefore neither is my address. We’ve talked about putting a fence up, or a gate up, at the bottom of the driveway with one of those code things, but we have not done it yet. Eventually we will. We try to be aware and it’s not been an issue so far. We decided we were going to try this out and see how it works, and so far so good.

The sigh during the interview was very meaningful because Becky had a bright tone during the whole interview. She sighed in front of me, which means she really cares about the safety issue. The courage does not simply exist without fear. I saw Becky really wants to do something important for other people who cross her path. She knows that there are some potential risks, but she is still willing to do it.

Interactional-zoom.

Before the first interview started, Becky and Tony brought me to the barn and introduced every horse to me. They told me each horse’s history, which gave me a big picture of their herd and made it easier for me to connect with her story. The introduction also helped build our relationship and know each other a little bit before the interview started. During the interview, Becky talked about caring for their horses:

We try to do things that really take care of the horses, like brush the horses again, give horses treats, talk to the horses, walk them around a little bit, ... cause I don’t know if

the horses are really absorbing their (means clients') energy or not, but I feel like we need to be there for horses too.

When she said this, it was easy for me to grasp the deeper connection between Becky and her horses because I had seen how she took care of and interacted with the horses on the barn.

Tony joined the first interview, which I did not anticipate. I was a little bit uncertain and uneasy at the beginning because when I submitted my proposal to the IRB, I did not mention interviewing an equine specialist, and knowing an equine specialist's perspectives was not my research purpose. However, I felt it would be an interesting interview because I discussed with the committee members the idea of interviewing EAP therapists and equine specialists at the same time before submitting my proposal. In other words, interviewing EAP therapists and equine specialists was the original idea of this study. Tony joining the interview really brought an interesting dynamic and perspective, and I could see the value of interviewing both EAP practitioners at the same time.

About Jean-Jacques

Jean-Jacques is from Switzerland and his first career was as a diplomat at Switzerland's Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. As a diplomat, he worked in different countries and saw many dark sides of the world. Being a therapist is Jean-Jacques' second career. In 2006 he moved to the United States and attended Naropa University, a Buddhist-inspired institution, to pursue a degree in counseling. He currently lives on his farm with his wife, daughter and animals. Incorporating horses to practice mindfulness-based psychotherapy is his specialty. He became a therapist because he had a passion for human contact and he loves horses. As a therapist, he works with children, adolescents, and adults who are survivors of torture, human rights abuses, or different kinds of traumas, as well as people struggling with anxiety and/or

depression. He still sees the dark side of the world through his clients' life experiences. The environment Jean-Jacques has worked in, and populations that he has worked with, influence the way he sees the world and the way he told his story for this research. He emphasized that a person should be understood within the social context. The individual narrative cannot be isolated from the collective narrative.

Macro-zoom.

Dark side of the world—first time having a deep connection with a horse. When Jean-Jacques was a diplomat, he traveled and worked in different countries. From 2001 to 2003, he worked in the field of war crimes. It is the dark side of the humanity, and it is about death and despair. In his personal life, his wife and he were planning to have a baby. A new life symbolizes birth, love, and hope. It was a hard time for him to invite in a new life because emotionally he was angry and frustrated about the cruelty and heartlessness of the outside world. Jean-Jacques and I did not spend very much time talking about the inner transition he experienced. I interpreted, however, that there was a huge gap between his outside world and his inner desire—having a baby—which means his outside world and inner desire were conflicted. We had a conversation about this:

J: War crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity in The Hague in the Netherlands. I was the advisor to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. We were constantly visiting mass graves in Kosovo, and Bosnia. I was not depressed, but I was (uncompleted) then it was 9/11. And then my wife and I expected (uncompleted) We started expecting a baby which was totally a surprise, we had given up completely. On the one hand, I was working with the dark side of the world, you know, war crimes, cruelty, and torture, and on the other hand, I was expecting a baby. So, I found I needed to do something about it because I viewed the world as getting darker and darker. So, I bought a horse in Holland. Every night after work I would ride her. It was in a city. The riding stable was in a city. I was riding from there to the beach, and then rode on the beach.

When Jean-Jacques said “I found I needed to do something about it,” he decided to invite a horse into his life. The horse bridged or helped him transition from the despair or death in the

outside world to hope or birth in his inner world. Different people may choose different ways to cheer themselves up and represent who they are. A horse was a Jean-Jacques' choice. He consciously invited a horse into his life to light hope for himself. In Jean-Jacques' story, the horse symbolized the bridge between death and birth, meaning horses led Jean-Jacques from the dark side of the world to the bright side of the world. It was the means for him to invite a new life. It ended up the horse did much more than Jean-Jacques anticipated. He said:

J: But every night when I came to the stable, the horse would not engage with me... I was stressed. I was angry, frustrated, or depressed by my work. And I think "now it is 9:00 pm. Got to see my horse." Putting on a big smile. I would come to the stable, saying "Hi, horse"... pretending to be happy, and the horse would not have it. She would put ears back, and she would turn around, and she would cringe, hide in the corner of her stall. And when I brushed her, she'd be uncomfortable, and it happened day after day after day. Sometimes I was walking to the stable, and her head would come out the stall. All the horses would look out, and she would be the only one to go back in. All the other would say "Hi" except her.

I: Wow, but she is your horse.

J: It is my horse. Just my horse. And so one day, I was alone, no human being. I was with her in her stall, no human being around. It was very late 10:30 at night. And I talked to her, and I said, "I do not understand what is going on. I feel rejected. I feel you do not like me. I feel you might see something ugly in me." And I started crying, you know. I'm standing there with the brushes in the stall with my horse. I was crying. When I started crying, the horse came to me for the first time. She came to me. She put her head on my heart and stood right there. She lowered her head, and she stood with me... That was, Ping-Tzu, the beginning of an amazing friendship. So what that horse taught me in that evening was that if I can show up as I am, you know, bringing myself honestly into her field, with the reality of my emotion, then we can have a relationship.

The horse also symbolized a bridge between Jean-Jacques' public self and private self.

When he said, "Big smile. Come to the stable...pretending to be happy..." he was bringing his public self to interact with his horse, and the horse did not appreciate it. When Jean-Jacques said, "One day I was alone, no human being..." he felt comfortable enough to remove his public self in front of the horse. The horse was a bridge that connected his public self and authentic self. This significant event planted a seed for him to change his career.

Synchronicity: second career. After Jean-Jacques' mission ended in Holland, he stayed four years in Palestine as a diplomat. He was the representative of the Swiss government to the Palestinian Authority. At that time he started to think, "I am not sure if I want to continue this career because I love what I have done so far, and but what will come next? I think I will like it less. I will have less freedom, more mainstream assignments, more seniority and strings attached as an ambassador, and I didn't want that..." When he was thinking his next step, the synchronicity came. He said:

That day my computer was out of work. My server was down, so I was in my office in Ramallah in the West Bank. And I could not check the news online because the server was down. So, I went out for lunch. I took a newspaper. The paper copy which in three years I had never read. Maybe once or twice because I would have always read the news online. So, I took the newspaper, and I went out for lunch by myself. And I thought, "Ok. I need to think about a new career." What am I going to do? I don't know. And I opened the newspaper. It was about politics, the Wall, Sharon. I was bored, so I kept turning the pages. Then it was a sport. I am not interested in Israeli soccer, so I kept turning the pages. Then just one page left, "Judaica." It was a page on religious issues, you know Judaism. There was a full page biography of Rabbi Zalman. You know, the founder of Jewish Renewal, who lives in Boulder. And I did not know Boulder that time, so I said, "ok, let's read." I read. He was a very interesting priest. He had spent time with Indians in the Amazon, had learned the way of Shamans and medicine men, was interested in Zen Buddhism and Sufism as well. And I said, "oh~ interesting guy." And the middle of the page, I saw he has taught at a Buddhist-inspired university in Colorado, Naropa University. I thought, "Wow, Buddhist-inspired university in Colorado?" Anyway, I thought it was strange. I went back to my office. By then, the server was functioning. So, before resuming my work, I think I just wanted to check that Naropa University. So, I googled Naropa University. There are a lot of things coming out. I clicked the first link and what do I see in the first link? I see a picture of a man and a horse. And a comment on equine-assisted psychotherapy. I said, "What? You can do psychotherapy with horses?" I decided that that was what I wanted to do from then on.

That was the synchronicity in Jean-Jacques's life. He was interested in psychology, but he knew nothing about psychotherapy with horses at that time. The picture of a man and a horse reminded him of his deep connection with his mare in the Netherlands. He resigned from the Foreign Service, moved to the United States, and began his studies at Naropa University.

Jean-Jacques explained that he is a person who was always interested in religion. At Naropa, he learned about Buddhism and became a Buddhist. He said:

I have been searching for a long time, exploring my own spiritual tradition Christianity and then Sufism - so Islam - and then Buddhism, so many branches of Buddhism. There are (he states different kinds of Buddhism) Buddhism ... Zen. So, I found my way, and I think I am feeling very at home in the practice of Zen.

In this extract of Jean-Jacques' story, horses symbolize a bridge, again. A bridge took him from his first career to his second career. It was also a bridge that helped him find his spiritual beliefs because of learning about psychotherapy at a Buddhist university.

Synchronicity: finding a home. Six months before Jean-Jacques graduated from Naropa University, he was thinking about where he wanted to go and what he wanted to do. He said, "I have a little bit lost track with horses when I was in Boulder. I did a few courses, gestalt with horses, but I was a little bit confused. I did not know what I was going to do." This time Jean-Jacques's wife co-created the journey with him.

My wife suddenly had an "a-ha" moment, you know. She was in a field doing tai-chi. And suddenly she saw cowboys and horses running near Boulder in the fall. It was a beautiful day. You know, in the fall here with all the trees, yellow, golden, beautiful. She said, "We need to reconnect with horses now. Let's buy a nice small place, just to have one or two horses." And we called a friend who was a real estate agent. And he told me about this place. I said, "This is way too big for us." You know, 65 acres. It is ridiculous. He said, "No. Come and see it." So, I came visit it, and I loved it.

As a diplomat, Jean-Jacques worked in different countries and moved around. In Egypt (referred to earlier) he had to lease a horse; ten years later, he had to find a new home for the horse he had brought from the Netherlands to Switzerland, because he could not bring her into the US. Right now he lives with horses, llamas, and goats on his own farm. From moving around to settling down, I saw horses as a key component for him and his wife to make the life transition or decision to settle down. When Jean-Jacques said, "I resigned from the Foreign Service and I

came to Naropa, and here I am...Thanks to the horse”, I saw a man who listens to a horse and follows his heart.

Synchronicity: after Practicing EAP. Jean-Jacques’s therapeutic concepts are mainly from transpersonal counseling psychology. Carl Jung is the one of the pioneer thinkers in transpersonal psychology, and one of his concepts is synchronicity which refers to a meaningful coincidence that cannot be explained by causality-based science (Jung, 1955). After practicing EAP, Jean-Jacques had a variety of existential experiences that he considered to be meaningful coincidences.

When you get into a space when you accept that things happen for which you have no explanation, then a lot of things start happening. Because I work with a lot of women who were traumatized, incest and sexual abuse... I wanted to have a big black draft horse, draft mare, ok. I want to have a female horse, powerful, grounded, quiet, and gentle; so these women could integrate, internalize the power of the horse and find it in themselves, feel and connect with their own power. Sort of empower them. And I looked on the web. I found this horse in Fort Collins. I went there. It was winter. She was in the backyard of a small house that was covered with snow. We could hardly ride her. I thought she was great. She was very reserved. She kept her distance (stayed away). She was friendly. She was polite, but she did not open up completely. I said, “I like this horse.” But the problem was she was too cheap.

I: Too cheap?

J: Too cheap.

I: The price.

J: The price was too low...I thought “something is wrong, here” (uncompleted)

I: Probably she is not good.

J: Yep...Something must be wrong. So, I did not call back. And a week later, the owner called me and he said, “You know, I know this horse is the horse you are looking for. I know it. If she is too expensive for you, I will cut the price in half. And I will drive her to the vet, the veterinarian for the pre-purchase check. And I drive her to your farm, and if you are not happy with her, I will buy her back from you as the same price within the next 12 months.”

I: Wow. It is like you have one year (uncompleted)

J: Yep. One year free trial... I said, “Ok. Yes. Sure. Would you sign me a paper?” He said, “Yes.” I said, “Ok.” She arrived the vet. He tested her and the vet told me (whispered), “She is an amazing horse.”... Since then she has been the most amazing horse. And I can tell you, Ping-Tzu, I think that horse has saved lives. I can think a number of young women, not just young, who sometimes express intense despair and pain, and she will come and run to them and be with them. These women have truly internalized her; so whenever they are in a situation in their life where things look

hopeless, they remember the horse. The horse is a manifestation of the basic goodness in the world. Do you see what I mean?

Jung (2006) noted that instincts are extremely old, and that they appear as images when they are represented to the consciousness. In other words, it is natural for an instinctive impulse to be represented in a visual and concrete way. I am amazed to see how Jean-Jacques followed his inner instinct and took action for his vision. He has eyes to see the synchronicity in his life. When he wanted to have a big, black, draft mare, a great one showed up in his life. However, his rational mind may become a barrier. When he doubted the quality of the horse, the ex-owner provided one year free trial for him. I believe that the universe joined the co-creating process with him to let a meaningful thing happen.

Evolving relationship between Jean-Jacques and horses. I found the relationship between Jean-Jacques and horses to be evolutionary across different stages of his life. Jean-Jacques has loved horses since he was a child. Because he lived in a city, he only rode horses once or twice a week. During college and young adulthood, he almost never rode. He said, “I have ridden a lot when I was a kid, but from the age of 18 until 38 occasionally on vacations, but nothing very serious.”

When he worked and lived in Cairo, Egypt, for one year, he leased a horse every day and rode in the desert around the pyramids. He described the relationship between him and the horse as minimal: “It could have been a bicycle.” When he went to the stable, people had saddled the horse for him to ride. When he returned, people took the horse back into the stable. At this stage in Jean-Jacques’ life, horses were more like tools or objects for exercise or recreation.

From 1998 to 2000, Jean-Jacques lived in Chile. During that time he started to experience intense relational connections with his horse, both somatically and emotionally. He said, “I felt I can ride this horse without saddle, tried to teach voice cues to this horse, worked on my

breathing with the horse, make the horse slower or faster depending on my breathing...” From here, he started to see his horse as a partner and a sentient being. He said, “When the horse stopped being an object of gratification and became a partner in the relationship, again, I-Thou, in the horse and human relationship.”

I interpreted that the way Jean-Jacques rides horses also symbolizes the way how he sees the relationship between him and the horse. It seems the less tack or equipment he uses, the more important his relationship with the horse. Sometimes he canters with his horse without any equipment in the arena. He said:

J: I am scared sometimes. And I notice the fear. I need to tell the horse I am afraid, so I will not try to conceal that from the horse. And I relax into holding my fear. You see what I mean? It is paradoxical.

J: I am afraid (uncompleted)

I: But you relax to hold that fear.

J: And there you go. I am not acting out my fear. Acting out my fear would be “Oh~my gosh. What is going to happen?” In here, I notice I am afraid. I tell the horse, “You know what, I am really afraid. This is wonderful and I am afraid. I think it will be ok.” ...As you acknowledge that, you get to move to something else.

I: It just shifts.

J: It shifts. Things are impermanent.

Riding a horse without any equipment is the way that Jean-Jacques experiences intimate relationships and practices mindfulness with his horses. As a therapist, he likes to experience what his clients experience. He is the therapist who is humble in front of horses, which means he respects and believes horses can help him and clients work on self-awareness and self-development. For example, during the interviews he said, “I have tremendous respect for her (big, black, draft mare)”, “It (EAP) is a very humbling work” and “Thanks to the horse.”

Attunement—talk to horses. The first deep connection between Jean-Jacques and his horse influenced the way he practices equine-assisted psychotherapy. As a result of this connection, he understands how horses can help people become attuned to their mind, body, and emotions. For example, one of his Arabian horses will challenge people when people are fighting

or are not in touch with their emotions. The horse will push them with her nose, pull them around, or become aggressive. As a therapist, he will tell a client:

I am gonna step back. I don't need to hear, but I want the horse (uncompleted) I want you to speak to the horse." What happens when you speak, when you use words out loud to describe the emotions, you need to be precise. Because if you are saying, "you know what, I am angry." When you hear yourself saying this, you will notice if it is exactly that...As you speak little by little, you align your cognition with your emotions. And when you really nail it, "Yes, that is exactly what it is."...When the person finds a right word, the horse relaxes. And I see that horse just like my mare. You know, when I started crying, she came to me. This mare calms down completely when people are able to align their cognition with their emotions. So, she is a great demonstration of people's state of mind.

Meso-zoom.

Narrative process. Jean-Jacques and I had a conversation about the limitations of EAP.

He said:

I don't think that anybody [uncompleted] I cannot think of any person who cannot benefit from this work. And I would say any limitation that I can think of has more to do with my own limitation than with clients' limitation...If I am not quite comfortable with my limitations, I might tend to gently push people to traditional therapy rather than horses...Some clients bring challenging issues that maybe start a long term clinical work, but I am not being challenged by individual, you know, the type of personality. I enjoy working with all those clients. But in the first two years of my work, I had a few clients that I was not quite comfortable with [working with in EAP] because they brought issues that were very close to mine.

Jean-Jacques said any limitation in EAP is more about his own limitations. I think this is a humble attitude for him to have. He also pointed out if he was not comfortable with his own limitations, he tended to conduct traditional psychotherapy with those clients. I was curious about why he had to gently push clients to do traditional psychotherapy. This was unclear in our conversation. I wrote an e-mail to ask him this question after the interviews. He responded, "Working with horses is more challenging and demands more clarity from the therapist—you need to know your limitations and have acceptance (NOT indulgence!)." I interpreted this to mean if Jean-Jacques is not congruent in EAP, horses will react to his incongruence in therapy.

During the interviews, Jean-Jacques mentioned he hesitated to work with certain people in the first two years as a therapist. It is important to see how his limitation limited EAP work. He said:

I might have difficulty for some types of clients. Ultra-rational. I've worked with lawyers and I am trained as a lawyer. Of course, I am not a lawyer, but I am trained as one. I worked in a very structured and rational environment; so when I work with males who have that kind of worldview, I am triggered... And I found I am not effective at all and feel protective of all the horses and think this person is not suitable for this type of work, but it probably has less to do with the clients than it has to do with me. It is typical counter-transference, I will say.

Jean-Jacques added this perspective after reading his story:

I used to think that working with horses implied a worldview that was not compatible with the dominant rational, materialistic mainstream paradigm. I have come to realize that this was not correct, that any person who comes here has just what it takes in terms of curiosity to be able to challenge his or her worldview and benefit from this work.

Narrative themes.

Bridge. When I read Jean-Jacques' story, the image of bridge appears; therefore, I named the theme for his story "bridge." Horses symbolize bridges in many parts of Jean-Jacques' story. Horses served as a bridge between careers for Jean-Jacques as they moved from an avocation to a vocation. Horses connected the dark side of his external world to the bright side of his internal world, which was about birth and hope. Horses also served as a bridge that helped him move past his public self to his private self. When he practices EAP, he might have an agenda, but horses connect his rational mind to his more intuitive nature (see example in chapter 5).

Micro-level zoom.

Some of my interview questions were challenging; they were not even listed on the interview questions and came out spontaneously during the interview. For instance, some traditional therapists might ask, "If you are good enough as a psychotherapist, why do you need to incorporate horses to help your sessions?" I brought this question to ask Jean-Jacques. He

paused for a while, and then he responded, “First...second...third...” The way he expressed his perspectives was very organized. This is his rational part showing in the interviews.

Jean-Jacques was very comfortable telling me when he did not know the answer during the interviews. When he said, “I don’t know,” I could tell he did not want to discourage me. That was his relational and sensitive part. For example:

I: What kinds of skills do EAP therapists specifically need, but for traditional therapists, they do not necessary to have these skills...

J: (paused 8 seconds) Yep. I am not sure. I do not know.

Another example:

I: what kinds of adjustments you need to make when practice EAP with different population who have different symptoms?

J: A-um~(thinking, paused 7 seconds) I am not sure, but it is a good question. All your questions are excellent, are wonderful... generally I would say the same adjustment that you do in traditional therapy.

Interactional-zoom.

When I interviewed Jean-Jacques the first time, he did not follow my interview questions. This does not mean he was distracted from the questions. Actually he read every interview question before we met and he already had a big map in his mind. At the beginning, I was a little nervous about that he did not follow the questions because I had to make sure the interview covered the information that I was searching for. As an interviewer, I had an agenda and I wanted to bring that structure back a little bit. I did by asking each interview question, even if I felt he had answered these questions in different parts of the conversation. I felt insecure during the interview. After the interview, I was surprised by how much information he had shared with me. The information and the time he shared with me were much more than I expected. Suddenly I felt he was like a horse who threw my agenda away. The experience seemed to tell me, as a researcher, I just needed to trust the participants and the process because they will be the best narrators for their life stories and experiences. When Jean-Jacques shared his experiences with

horses and EAP, he said, “I hold on lightly to it (agenda)...keep the idea but sometimes for the session we’ll do something totally different.” I felt that the dynamics in EAP could transfer to the dynamics of the interviews.

About Sue

Sue is a social worker and has practiced EAP for about 10 years. Sue described herself as an outdoor person who does not like to sit in the office. This is one of the reasons she likes practicing EAP. Sue also loves art and color so she incorporates some painting activities into EAP. Sue said “I love color. I love the outdoors. I love cooking. Anything that is visual or sensory. You know, anything that is sensorial and powerful.” Sue lets her clients paint on the horses. Sue also does a lot sensory integration work with children so she incorporates horses to help children with their sensory problems. Children can watch the horses’ movement, feel horses’ different textures, and smell the horses. When Sue talked about EAP, she said:

I get jazzed by it. I am very passionate about it. I love to research and think about concepts and activities and ideas. I mean, it just really gets my creative juices going. I am very analytic and visionary. I love to think about possibility and how things can play out. It just really gets my creativity going...It influences where I live, influences me financially.

Sue emphasized how EAP stimulates her creativity. “Thinking outside the box” is one of the hallmarks of EAP. I think EAP just fits who Sue is. She said, “I always stay certified [with EAP], even though a period of time I was not providing EAP directly. Just because I always knew I want to continue doing that.”

Macro-zoom.

Relationship with horses in different life stages. Sue had horses during her childhood and adolescent years; she reconnected with horses when she was about 40 years old. I found that Sue’s relationships with horses have changed through her different life stages. Sue said:

I had a horse as a child. And actually my horse was a big, beautiful, powerful, Guerilla mare. She was something, My family had moved to my grandmother's farm in North Dakota after my dad retired from the Air Force. And of course, it was a small farm and ranch. They first bought my sister and I some Welsh mares; so we learned how to ride on them. I think I was probably about 9 or 10 years old at that time and through adolescence, I had horses. They were our pals. We showed them and rode a lot with friends. And then I went to college, I didn't have a lot of contact with them. I didn't have horses on my own until the last 12 years.

I encouraged Sue to share her experience with her first horse.

They were Welsh ponies, mares. Mine was quite stubborn. She was a dapple grey. My sister had a little sorrel, she was a little more calm. We were just out with them a lot, riding bareback. (We were) just going, go, go, go, out through the ranch.

When Sue was a child and an adolescent, she viewed her horse as a friend or playmate.

The way she described the relationship with her horse focused on playfulness. I interpreted the sentence "Riding bareback. (We were) just going, go, go, go, out through the ranch," as a child who was having a good time with her playmate. Sue focused on having fun riding her horse rather than on a mutual relationship.

When I interviewed Sue, she was 50 years old. About 12 years ago, Sue and her husband's finances were more stable, so she brought horses back into her life again. The way Sue saw horses changed by the time she had reached middle adulthood:

Not only do I have to care for the horses, I have to weed and water and irrigate. So, you know, I learned all kinds of new things... We also have three big dogs, a kitty cat and the two horses and, no kids. So they are really like our kids.

When Sue talked about her relationship with horses in middle adulthood, she focused on responsibilities. She sees herself as a mother and her horses and other pets are her kids. Horses have become Sue's family members, and learning how to weed, water, and irrigate is similar to learning parenting skills to raise her children. Sue and Pia have a very similar path. They both reconnected to horses when they were in their middle adulthood, and the way they saw horses was different than it had been when they were children. When they were children, they interacted

with horses from anthropocentric perspective. In middle adulthood, they focused on mutual relationship between them and horses.

Horses' influences: house and relationship. Horses influenced Sue and Ted's (Sue's husband) decision about where they wanted to live. It also showed what Sue and Ted treasured and cared about in their lives:

When we first bought the horses, and we lived in our first little house and boarded, we were doing well and making more money. Ted just had a career change. We were more financially stable. We wanted to get a new house. Of course we wanted to get a place where we can have horses and they could live with us. So we made that happen. They really influenced a pretty significant life change for us. You know, so you can go to a beautiful suburban house and keep boarding or you can move on two acres and have horses. So that was a big influence. I think that is pretty big. That is a big life change. They give us a lot of joy every day...I mean because I can choose to spend money on something else, like a new carpet and sofa. You know what I mean.

“A beautiful suburban house” and “a new carpet and sofa” symbolize the comfort of the material life. “Two acres and have horses” and “have to weed, water, and irrigate” symbolize a simple lifestyle with much more physical work. Sue and Ted chose the latter. Sue said, “They [horses] give us a lot of joy every day.” It seems the joyfulness and spiritual satisfaction that they receive from horses is much more important for them than material comforts.

Horses also bring a new element into Sue and Ted's relationship:

I think part of it was we decided not to have kids early on in our relationship. At that time we were not making a lot of money either. Horses are expensive... So I think it's just a matter of life circumstances then and I didn't even consider getting a horse. I was off doing other things. I love my husband and he is a river rafter, and we did a lot of rafting-white water rafting in this area and in Grand Canyon. And I did a lot of shift work back in those years, three and half on and three and half off. And honestly I didn't really think about it, you know, just did other things. Always have dogs.

I can see a connected relationship between Sue and Ted. Although rafting is Ted's thing, Sue is willing to participate to share time together. After they brought horses into their life,

horses brought another element that Sue and Ted could share with each other. Originally working with horses was Sue's thing, but Ted left his comfort zone to engage in Sue's interest:

My husband loves his horse. He used to be terrified of horses...but it wasn't long and he actually fell in love with my mare. We had gotten her first ... She is an Anglo Arabian. They are beautiful. So we ended up getting my mare's full blood sister. And Ted ends up learning to ride. He trained in dressage. We had found a very good trainer, who is now one of our best friends after all these years. He can ride beautifully. It is just amazing. He is this, tall, handsome guy, and he will put on his dressage tights, go in the arena and do shoulder fore (dressage movement). It is fantastic.

Sue was full of appreciation when she described Ted's relationship with the horses. Thus, horses became the new element in Ted's and Sue's life and introduced new dynamics:

Just really create a really unique space for us to be, and some things new to do together and grow together. Interesting for me to share some of the knowledge and experiences that I had and to give him because it is something that I knew a little bit about, and he didn't. We always had three big dogs. Now kitty cat and two horses and no kids; so they are our kids.

Sue and Ted see the horses as their kids. When Ted practices dressage with his horse, it is like a father having a good time with his kid. When they learned how to take care of the farm, it was like they learned how to raise their family and their kids together. I interpreted Sue's descriptions of the farm and horses to mean that they brought depth to Sue and Ted's relationship. While rafting symbolized the outdoors adventures, running a farm and caring for pets symbolized becoming more inwardly settled. It was a shift. I also noticed that the way Sue shared her story was similar to the way Becky shared her story. They used "we" to include their partner in the stories. It was clear from their descriptions that they both care about relationships and connectedness with others.

Horses complement Sue. As a therapist, Sue notices that her personality can be overpowering for some clients. She has found that horses' characteristics can help balance out her strong presence in therapy sessions. Some non-animal-assisted therapists or non-EAP therapists may question animal-assisted therapists or EAP therapists: If you are a good therapist,

why do you need to incorporate another species to help you in therapy? However, I see Sue as being accepting of her own limitations; Sue is comfortable with who she is, and she is aware of the interactions between her and clients. Her incorporation of animals in her work reflects this self-awareness:

I am an Aries type, very influential, strong, and can be overpowering. And so I think animal-assisted work really helps me temper this... It mellows out my presence. So, as I am facilitating therapy when I have a horse and my other human partner, all the focus isn't on me because I can be very intense. I have been told that, you know, for many, many years. But I can be very gentle, too.

Sometimes Sue finds that she can partner with horses to do something that she cannot do by herself:

Kids are more motivated to engage and work with a horse rather than to sit there and answer questions for me as an adult. So, the horse becomes a partner and the kids are able to go through the process of self-discovery. We can see what is going on with the kids because the horse is mirroring them.

Sue further explained how she partnered with a horse:

If a client is stuck and there is a big animal that they care for and interact with there, that animal can help them get unstuck. I can partner with the horse in that way to help them get unstuck. I think through that process then that allows for increased rapport and relationship with each other.

Arena as a canvas. EAP is an experiential therapy and it is practiced outdoors, which fits well with who Sue is. Because Sue also loves colors and art, she sees an arena and horses as a canvas and incorporates art into EAP.

A lot of the time, I view an arena as a canvas for clients because they can go and create what they need to heal or to discover. I do a lot of painting with the horses; I have the clients use color to help with visualization and relaxation, so, I incorporate a lot of color, too.

Artists usually see the canvas as their support. Canvas supports artists' creative ideas and help artists explore and convey their emotions. Sue sees the arena as the clients' support, where they can explore their inner self. In EAP, an arena is a place for clients to safely explore

relationships with horses and therapists. Sue said, “I think that [in an arena working with horses] is how change happens and that is how hope is created. You know. That is what we’re all about, isn’t it?... Having relationships and safety.”

Synchronicity—met a friend practicing hippotherapy. Because both hippotherapy and therapeutic riding have longer histories than EAP, some therapists (Pia, Michael, Julie Anne, and Sue) got involved in hippotherapy or therapeutic riding first, and then found that EAP fit better with their professions and interest. Sue learned about hippotherapy first, and then she got to know EAP from a friend. Sue said:

The friend and the colleague that has a ranch that did hippotherapy. I don’t know how she initially became involved with EAGALA, but I learned about it through her... She was a nurse and a mental health practitioner that we worked with for years and she had her own ranch and horses. She functioned in the horse specialist role. Through our work together and me being a therapist you know, it was the classic in EAGALA model.

When Sue recalled her journey in EAP, she said:

I just think somehow things are just supposed to happen. Who knows why I connected with people that chose to [do] equine assisted work? ... It was not a planned thing at that time. It was more like circumstances in my life, the horses come back in, we reconnected with them and then, the satisfaction that I got from the EAP work and seeing how much it really helps the kids

Value of EAP for children with trauma. Sue practices EAP with traumatized children and their families. She shows empathy for those children and believes in the healing power of EAP. She shared her journey and experiences with EAP:

I knew about the power of horses, the impact that they can have. I just wanted to do equine assisted work, and am very passionate about it. My specialty is working with kids and families, especially group therapy modalities. All my early EAGALA work was designing social skills groups for really traumatized foster care and adopted kids. We actually had a summer program that I helped co-design. It was just powerful stuff. I mean, just huge healing for those kids. I think the biggest thing was watching and knowing these kids were so hurt, so traumatized, over and over again. Some of these kids had failed adoptions, had gotten re-abused, physically or sexually, parents’ rights terminated. Awful stories. But they would come and spend a day with us and the horses and, you knew they had some joy. It is powerful.

Sue emphasized that EAP brings joyfulness to traumatized children who may have not experienced very much happiness in their life. The joyfulness of EAP can be very meaningful for those children. She said, “Even if it is just the moment in time, it is something in a chapter in their life.”

Meaning of EAP. During the interview, Sue mentioned that EAP gives her hope. I encouraged her to explain further. She shared her perspectives about psychotherapy in the mental health system:

Hope about the field that there’s still a valid place for psychotherapy. For example, in the behavioral health care field, there is a huge movement, especially in community mental health, towards physical health and mental health care integration, which is wonderful and great. But a lot of that means you are moving away from providing traditional psychotherapy. Services provided in integrated settings are more about coaching around health and wellness education, and care management. I wonder in the big picture, what is going happen to therapy? And people can really benefit from it. We don’t want that access, you know, good therapy services, to go away.

Sue wonders whether psychotherapy will one day be marginalized in the health care system. The effectiveness of EAP gives her some hope, however, that psychotherapy will continue to have a recognized role.

Meso-zoom.

Key phrases. Sue used many adjectives to express emotions during the interviews. For example, when she described the relationship between her husband, Ted and the horses, she said, “It is just amazing” and “It is fantastic.” When she described EAP, she said, “Powerful, powerful. A lot of healing.” When she described traumatized children’s situations, she said, “Awful, Awful...” It seems that her sentimental personality allows her to have strong feelings on what she has experienced, and it shows in her verbalizations. It was easy for me to understand Sue’s feelings during the interview through the language she chose. Furthermore, I realized why she said, “I am an Aries type, very influential, strong, and can be overpowering ... I think

animal-assisted work really helps me temper this.” A lot of invisible energy was conveyed when Sue used strong adjectives and a solid voice to express emotions.

Narrative process. The interview questions mainly focused on the micro practice of EAP. During the interview, I found Sue shared some of her experiences and perspectives about running an EAP program and her perspectives about psychotherapy in the health care system. I interpreted this to mean that Sue cared about the macro level of EAP because she runs her own EAP program. She understands that EAP practice cannot be isolated from the larger mental health system, and these larger systems directly impact EAP. This probably also represents the aspect of EAP that Sue is most interested in at this stage in her life.

Narrative themes.

Strength perspectives for others. I found Sue sees horses and other people around her from the strengths perspective. For example, when she described her husband, Ted, and her equine specialist, Melissa, she admired who they are. When she talked about horses, she saw horses’ strengths and borrowed from their strengths in EAP. When she designed her program for clients, she focused on how the program can elicit clients’ strengths and use these strengths as a tool for helping clients reach their potential and overcome obstacles. For instance, she said, “We try our best to design activities that help elicit their strengths.”

Micro-level zoom.

Sue sees an arena as like a canvas. She explained, “Because a lot of time I view an arena as a canvas for clients, because they can go and create what they need to heal or to discover.” She had wet eyes when she talked about it. I asked what was happening inside of her, and where the tears came from. She answered, “Because I think that is how change happens and that is how hope is created. You know. That is what we are all about, isn’t it? Relationships and having

relationships and safety.” It is clear that Sue has a lot of passion and emotion for EAP as a setting that that creates a safe space for clients to explore their relationships and find hope.

Interactional-zoom.

For the first interview with Sue, I woke up in the early morning for the six hour drive to her town to meet her. Physically I was tired and sometimes I could not concentrate very well during the interview. There was a question I asked Sue during the interview that actually contained two questions, and she had to point it out to me directly. I asked Sue, “What do horses or EAP work mean to you in your life?” Sue had to clarify my question. She asked, “I think you’re kind of asking two questions. What do my horses mean to me in my life and then there is an EAP work. I think you kind of go after two things. Am I understanding that right?” From Sue’s responses, I could see why she said, “I am so directive, want to help...” Her directness showed in the interview when we were interacting. Sue pointed out that I was asking two different questions and tried to clarify what I was asking. As an interviewer, I felt I might have offended her with those mistakes, but Sue’s attitude seemed very neutral about my mistakes. Sue’s directness elicited and encouraged my directness. This is an interesting observation for myself. For example, I found it was easier for me to understand her experiences through examples. I asked Sue to see whether she could share some cases for our second interview. Sue said, “I am very direct. I am very assertive. I am a bigger person and I think it is the directness. I am fairly direct in therapy as well, but can be very loving with kids, but can be overpowering...” I think Sue sees her characteristics with a certain level of awareness. She notices her characteristics may be overpowering in the therapy. Through our interaction, I can imagine that her directness and assertiveness may empower some clients to be direct and assertive as well, as

I had also been empowered to be direct. Strength and weakness cannot be separated clearly. They are fluid in different situations.

About Julie Anne

Julie Anne is from a diverse background. She majored in zoology and got her veterinary degree with a zoological medicine track. When Julie Anne was about 40, she shifted her career direction from an avian and exotics specialist to a psychotherapist, by going back to school to get her counseling psychology and education degree. Currently Julie Anne works at her private mental health practice four days a week and as an avian and exotics specialist at an animal shelter one day a week.

Julie Anne's experiences and personality influence her therapeutic approaches in mental health. She has been very interested in neuroscience and mindfulness. Because she came from a scientific, neurological, and medical background, she practices eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR), trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy, and emotional freedom technique (EFT) Matrix re-imprinting with her clients. She also likes experiential therapy and present-centered therapy, such as, art therapy, play therapy, and gestalt therapy. I found Julie Anne balances her artistic and scientific sides very well.

Macro-zoom.

Journey of wanting to become an equine veterinarian. Julie Anne has loved horses since she was 10 years old. She said, "I was obsessed with horses. I think I asked my mom for horses every day for about two years. She always said, 'No.' And I have some money; so I pay [for] some lessons to go to learn how to ride." It was interesting because most of participants in this study needed to leave horses temporarily for college or during middle adulthood. In Julie Anne's story, she actually became very involved in working with horses when she went to the college:

In college I started out riding horses, and I started being a weekend manager of the barn. So I did all the treatment and helped vets. I taught some riding classes, but I've never been a good rider, you know. I don't know. I always had that attraction to horses... I started to volunteer at a veterinarian, and then I decided to be a vet. And I wanted to be an equine vet because I loved horses. I got bitten very badly by a horse who was dying. I decided I will not do horses.

I interpreted the above quote to mean that being an equine vet was Julie Anne's dream.

However, after a dying horse bit her badly when she was at a veterinary school working as a Large Animal ICU nurse, she needed to change her career plan. In this case, it seems a girl's dream was taken away by reality. I was surprised that she did not show any emotion when she shared how a horse hurt her.

Self-care issues in veterinarian medicine. From Julie Anne's perspective, veterinary medicine never really taught her about self-care. The horse biting Julie Anne symbolizes to me the self-care and boundary issues in veterinary medicine and in Julie Anne's life:

I think part of it is because vet medicine for me ... I did not learn how to take care of myself. Like everyone talks about self-care, self-care and boundaries and all that, and I did not even know what that was as a veterinarian. I have very little boundaries. As a veterinarian, I work 14 hours without eating. You are just working, working, working... When I started to get burnt out, I noticed that I had compassion fatigue. I was just exhausted... People were just wailing, collapsing and crying because they are losing their pets. They had to euthanize their pets; so I knew I needed to do something differently because I got a headache every day... I could not even have a day off because people would just be blowing up my phone, with calls and paging me. I did not have any boundaries. I took more responsibility than the owner did... I knew I wanted to do something with people because I had people come in who were going through divorces, or drinking and drugging, or sometimes, I think they might beat their children and then beat their animals, or people just emotionally disregulated. And their animals will show their problems... Every time I tried to talk to people, directly, like "Don't call me at 2 o'clock in the morning when you are drunk and ask me to do an emergency on your animals. That happens over and over again...

When Julie Anne was an avian and exotics specialist, she experienced tremendous stress from overwork and carrying clients' emotions. She worked with pet caretakers who had few boundaries, and she described having few boundaries herself. From her veterinary medicine

training, Julie Anne was educated to look outside, which means she was trained to meet clients' and pets' needs instead of looking inside, which means she takes care of her own needs. She said:

I think there's a lot of shame... Shame used in Western medicine. I do not know, maybe it is a lot better than when I was a veterinarian. ... The meaning for shame, would be at the emotional state and cognitive state, which we think we are bad or unworthy or don't deserve something. It is a state that is not guilt like "I make a mistake," but it is like, "I am bad." I think there is an underlying current of shame, like, "if I do not do everything right, or if I do not do everything and more for my patients," for example, then, you know, we try to be perfect or please others to avoid feeling shame, like we feel bad. I think there's a lot of that, pervasive in the health care profession for some people. And that can affect us, as counselors, right? How you behave or the type of pleasing or perfecting, or self-judgments can come out, you know. Especially as we're starting out (uncompleted). So, I do not know, the area interests me because I have been there.

It is shameful in veterinary medicine for a veterinarian to ever put her needs before those of her clients. However, by neglecting her own needs, Julie Anne experienced compassion fatigue and burnout from the work. My interpretation was that this fear of shame may not have been the only reason Julie Anne kept poor boundaries in her job; through the interview, I saw Julie Anne had a deep empathy and sympathy with animals that motivated her to work so hard.

Sensitivity to a horse's suffering. In Julie Anne's story, I saw that she tried different ways to connect with horses in her life. If being an equine vet was not going to be a career direction, she tried another way. One day Julie Anne was a participant in a coaching group that incorporated horses into self-exploration. She experienced a deep connection with a horse during this group:

We spent some time in silence with horses and wrote down all our impressions, feelings, thoughts, images, and body sensations. We came back to the group and did a body scan. I just started crying-just crying, crying and crying. And I had been working at a veterinary emergency clinic at that time. I thought, well you know, I see a lot of dead animals and I am around a lot of people who have a lot of grief. And I am just crying because of all of that ... We spent time with horses again, and then we came back to the group and we reported our impressions. And I was just crying. I don't know, I just, grief took over. The facilitator said, "Could I talk to you at lunch?" So I am thinking like "Uh, oh, what did I do so that you need to talk to me?" And I had picked up in my body exactly what happened to this horse. She (the facilitator) did not want to talk to the whole group

because it involved the trainer. . . . And I picked up exactly what happened to the horse in my body. I thought it was my body stuff, but it freaked me out, how I got the exact trauma that happened to this horse. (the facilitator told Julie this story) So the horse had been in training and reared up and fell over backwards with the trainer on it, and the trainer was not hurt, but she was scared and she. . . I cannot talk about it, that makes me cry (tears in the eyes). She huddled the horse for six hours. She tied the horse's head between his front legs for six hours (sad voice and tear in the eyes).

Even though many years had passed, when Julie Anne talked about how a horse was punished by a trainer she still had tears in her eyes. It was painful for Julie Anne to see animals suffering from pain or mistreatment. I interpreted this sensitivity as another reason that Julie Anne struggled with her boundaries as an avian and exotics specialist. Julie Anne said, "That horse taught me the most invaluable lesson for me. I need to have good boundaries around that stuff and not let my body keep it." From my perspective, the interviews represented two kinds of boundaries in Julie Anne's story. One was the visible boundary, such as, working long hours without rest; the other was the invisible boundary, such as taking animals' and pet caretakers' energy. The second one is much more likely to be neglected because it is invisible, and it can happen in the unconscious or subconscious level.

Aware of self-care issues. The punished horse raised Julie Anne's awareness about how boundaries can be invaded unconsciously or subconsciously because after talking to the facilitator, Julie Anne found she picked up the punished horse's pain. The punished horse also influenced her to be aware of self-care issues. She discusses the concept of self-attunement as self-care:

Self-care can be like getting a massage or doing something like that, or like drinking a lot of water, which I think is biologically important. But what it is for me now is to really listen to myself, like from neuroscience, we talk about self-attunement. If we weren't attuned to as children, emotionally attuned to. . . physically attune to myself: what am I feeling right now? What do I need right now? What do I need to do? Am I dehydrated? I need some water. I need to drink water. Or Am I feeling shame right now? . . . I think that is what self-care is really about. It is about mindfulness and attunement to our internal landscape.

Furthermore, self-care is the main issue in Julie Anne's life, and horses can really help her in this part. She explained how horses help people's physical and emotional attunement to themselves, and how this attunement is related to self-care:

Horses fit to that [mindfulness] perfectly because it is completely present-centered, and aware of who you are, aware of your body, and what is coming up in the inside and in the presence of the horses...I think that is what self-care is really about. It is about mindfulness and attunement to our internal landscape. And, then go back to the horses because the horses read our internal landscape and act it out for us. That does not happen in here (means a therapy room), not exactly...I can be a mirror for someone's internal landscape. You know, mirror back what their feelings are, and what their body is saying, show how the body says one thing, but the word says another ... That is what self-care is. Sometimes people need to see themselves reflect to the horses to really attune.

Less structure. Julie Anne seems to prefer a less structured approach to providing mental health treatment. For example, she said, "I got my EMDR training and doing EMDR and some trauma focused cognitive behavioral therapy, but it is more structure for me." In the second interview, she also mentioned she used to be a North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA, now is PATH Intl.) instructor:

NARHA [therapeutic riding instructor] is just like structuring the class and teaching the class, make sure you close the gate. You know, it is like a behavioral plan to me and I just check out...I don't like it so much because, always something comes up, right? Like the horses won't go, and then the clients get frustrated. And that is what I want to deal with, right? Cause it is such a metaphor for life. And, I just was not satisfied with that...I let my PATH certification lapse and I am keeping up on EAGALA certification...Cause I am not a behavioral person, hahaha, right? It's not like I set this goal, then I reach it, and then I move on.

Being a NARHA therapeutic riding instructor is another example of how Julie Anne tries different ways to work with horses. It is an exploratory process for her. Those two examples (EMDR practitioner and NARHA instructor) really tell me who Julie Anne is, and also makes it clear why EAP fits for her. The nature of EAP is to let sessions unfold naturally. If therapists make a plan and structure for sessions they sometimes interrupt the work.

Neurological perspectives to EAP. Because Julie Anne is from a neurological background, she brings a scientific perspective into EAP; at the same time, the experiential and present-centered components of EAP satisfy her creative and artistic part. She expressed her neurological perspectives in this way:

So my understanding, from a neuroscience background or basis, is that horses have a thousand times more mirror neurons than humans do...I have an article about it. I don't know how scientific it is. We had a lot of mirror neurons when we were babies. And if we were reflected, like if the baby coos, we coo. If the baby smiles, we smile. When it cries, we try to meet its needs. Those mirror neurons continue to grow for a period of time, or they will get pruned. Um~ if we are neglected in that way, the mirror neurons get pruned and that has to do with how our attachment style develops in there. Horses retain their mirror neurons, in order to do this whole herd thing and stay safe.

Later in the interview, she explained more about her perspective:

I like experiential process. I like to let it unfold and see what happens. For some people, that's absolutely frightening. And I think Dr. Dan Siegel's work ... some of the things he said in his play therapy stuff is reflective, like how we read body language. We read body language in a millisecond. Like, in a millisecond, we know whether we feel safe or not with somebody. And that is a protective tool that we have in our brains, hardwired since, probably in-utero. So, I mean, multiply that by the thousands of the horses, right? It is very concrete what the horses do. Like I don't need to make up the story.

I also saw flexibility in Julie Anne's personality. She believes in and accepts EAP and some alternative therapies, which may not be in the mental health mainstream. At the same time, she realizes this can be a limitation to her ability to communicate with other mental health practitioners. She tries to communicate with other mental health practitioners by using their languages. For example, when she talked about her experiences with horses, she said:

It is kind of a very spiritual experience. I don't say that to people, but to me the horses, it seems, like a very spiritual experience. Even with most people, I would not use that word and impose on them. But then I feel I need to have some sort of science behind it. You know, if I try to get psychiatrists or someone to refer people to.

Not afraid to be vulnerable. Julie Anne is a person who is open to sharing the life lessons that she is currently working on. She has a lot of desire to explore herself and is not afraid to be vulnerable. For example, she said:

I did a few [EAP sessions or natural horsemanship] with my co-facilitator, Mel. And I have this experience with ... different horses. And at the same time, that I was actually doing my own work to call in my life partner who I have now...I was working on myself.

Julie Anne and her equine specialist partner Mel have been friends for a long time and Julie Anne trusts her. When Julie Anne wanted to explore herself, she sought help from horses and Mel:

If I am not willing to be as vulnerable, or more vulnerable than my clients, then how am I gonna be a good counselor? So I will purposely put myself in the position to do that, I think that's what equine therapy does. I remember three sessions with Mel and it was like "God, what am I going to learn about me today?" You know. It is scary walking in there. So, I know what it is for people like: what is something horrible that will mirrored back to me today? You know. It takes courage to walk into the arena, right?...And being willing to do my own work, for me, that is integrity for me. Whatever it is for other people, I don't know. If I am not willing to step into the arena and be seen and heard to that degree, then I cannot ask my client to do that. I just don't think it is fair...Cause it is scary...Like everyone sees your stuff, right? Whoever is there.

Metaphor: horses and a man. Intimacy was the life lesson that Julie Anne was working on in her life. She sought help through EAP, which shows she really trusts horses or believes in this work. Julie Anne shared about how horses helped her to see her interpersonal patterns in an intimate relationship. Julie Anne said:

I had experiences with the horse. The horse was, like, really all over me, cuddling me, nurturing, nice. You know just like a man...And it was such a sweet connection. You know, like I want to feel that sweet connection with a guy, and this horse was just like that. We were just joined, and then the next time I had the same experience with the horse...We were doing some natural horsemanship type of work, and she (Mel, equine specialist) was working with me to send the horse away. You know, using my energy. I sent the horse away. And as soon as the horse did what I wanted I turned my back on him. That was the release of the pressure [meaning gave the horse reward]. So we were going very great, and the horse goes over to her (Mel, equine specialist). And the horse kept going to her, and that is not I wanted. I was like, "Wow, are you another woman in the situation?"...Then I realized that was like a premonition for a few months later. Then that actual thing kinda happened. I had to release the pressure [meaning not to put the pressure on the guy].

This story was about a guy Julie Anne dated. One day the guy totally disappeared for about one week. She thought probably he was dating another woman. The session with the horse

reminded her to stop pressuring the guy. They ended up having a deep and genuine conversation and moved the relationship to become her committed partner:

I had a horse that I rode that was someone else's for a year and half. I don't have so much desire to get up on a horse's back anymore, you know. Someday I will have my own horses and I will learn how to ride bareback and to have that intimate relationship, but I already have intimate relationship with my partner and this is what is the most important to me. I moved away from my intimate relationship with that horse to do that (uncompleted) haha, to do that. So I think someday I will have my own ponies.

Julie Anne interpreted her relationship with the horse was similar to the relationship with her partner. It seems that the intimate relationship with the horse and the romantic relationship with her partner all nurture the deep part of her inner world.

Meso-level.

Key phrases. Julie Anne was used to saying "I don't know" during the interviews. For example, she said, "I don't know why I was very interested in helping animals" and "I don't know exactly how this happened, but I mostly see trauma." When interviewees say "I don't know," it seems they show less confidence about the information that they transmit. However, during the two interviews, I did not feel that Julie Anne was not confident about her experiences and knowledge. The way I interpreted "I don't know" in her sentences is that she accepts that people have conscious and subconscious parts. Sometimes the consciousness may override the subconsciousness, which means we may think we know the answer, but it is not the real answer. This can explain why she practices experiential therapy instead of behavioral therapy. Experiential therapy involves different body sensations, which may not be realized by humans' limited minds. Julie Anne seems very comfortable accepting that the human mind is limited, and things sometimes cannot be explained by current science.

Narrative process. When Julie Anne shared how she incorporated horses to call her life partner, she only shared part of the story with me initially. The details were not explained to me. I

chose not to ask about it to protect her privacy. Julie Anne probably noticed the confusion on my face, and then she started to share the details with me. I interpreted her openness as related to the fact that she is not afraid of being vulnerable.

Narrative themes.

Persistence. I saw the persistence in Julie Anne's story. Julie Anne persisted with incorporating horses (or animals) into her life. As a child, she asked her mother for horses every day for about two years. Even if her mother always said, "No," Julie Anne still paid for her riding lessons by herself. When she was at a vet school working as a large animal ICU nurse, she was hurt by a dying horse. Even though she decided not to be an equine veterinarian because of this experience, she still found other ways to connect with horses; such as being an NARHA (now PATH Intl.) instructor and being a member in an equine coaching group. In her life, it seems she always seeks out the best way for her to work with horses. Right now she is an EAP therapist. She said:

I have to drive up to the ranch because my office isn't at the ranch... There is drive time, there is sometimes where I need to shower. There is sometimes I make less money because I am paying for Mel (equine specialist) and the ranch and they are holding the insurance... But I don't want to give up because it is so powerful. I make a lot less money.

Even if it is not convenient, she keeps doing it. Her persistence shows in her whole story.

Micro-level.

When Julie Anne shared a story about the punished horse, she said:

"I cannot talk about it that makes me cry (tears in the eyes). She (horse trainer) huddles the horse for six hours. She tied the horse's head between his front legs for six hours (sad voice and tears in the eyes)." Julie Anne connected to the horse's pain at a deep level. She also showed empathy for the horse's behavior. She said, "It is hard to hear that somebody would hold out their

anger on the animal that is just reacting to flight and fight. Probably like a little rodent or something came out on the ground and the horse reared up.”

Furthermore, when she shared how a dying horse hurt her badly and she decided to change her career plan, she did not show any specific emotion toward the horse. She did not blame the dying horse’s behavior or expect pity that she had to change the career plan. I saw her tenderness and a lot of unconditional love for animals. Perhaps this explains why she still spends one day a week working with animals at an animal shelter.

Interactional-zoom.

When I interacted with Julie Anne, I found she was very hospitable. For example, she had a tight schedule during the first interviews, but after the first interview, she still offered and invited me to visit the farm and introduced the equine specialist that she works with to me. The three of us had dinner together so I had an opportunity to know more about them and their program. The second interview was longer than I planned. She offered me extra interview time during her lunch break. She has a lot of passion for this work and is willing to share her experiences and knowledge with me. As an interviewer, I appreciated her time and her kindness, but at the same time I wondered if she loosened her boundaries for me and my study. I guess the passion and kindness inside of Julie Anne might be another reason for her to lose her boundaries a little bit.

I also found Julie Anne tended to use a question mark at the end of the conversation. For example, she asked, “Have you heard that already?” or “You want some examples of that?” or “Exactly, because it is experiential, right?” Sometimes she maybe did that subconsciously. I interpreted it as a sign to invite me to communicate with her, or it was her interpersonal

communication style. As an interviewer, I felt she created dynamics that shortened the distance between her and me. I realized why she said:

I think that counseling for me is really an extension of who I am because people ALWAYS tell me their stories. I have traveled to foreign countries on the bus and I hear somebody's entire story. You know, I thought I should get paid for this. Haha.

About Thom

Thom started pursuing his master's degree at Arizona State University's School of Social Work when he was 62 years old. Our first interview was conducted on the same day Thom took, and passed, his master social work exam, and he was 65 years old. As a young man, Thom majored in animal husbandry during college and practiced as a ruminant nutritionist and reproductive specialist for dairy cattle. He said,

When we moved here (Arizona), which was in '04, I was still doing international work and I always traveled a lot in my life. It was time ... I wanted to try, just to see what it would be like, to have an interesting life and be at home most nights. Because Kath, my wife, teaches at ASU, she said, 'You know, you can take courses at ASU. It is one of the benefits.' This is why I looked through their program to see what might interest me and that just jumped out to me. The social work just jumped out. I never had any desire. I really don't (uncompleted). It is really not that I desire to be a social worker, but, that is what I need for a license to do what I want to do.

Thom wants to run an EAP program in the future. In order to do that, he has to become a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW) first. On the day of our first interview, Thom passed his social work exam and became a licensed master social work (LMSW). Right now Thom works in an agency that serves people with borderline personality disorders and bipolar disorders to develop his skills working with clients. After one to two years working under supervision, he will become a licensed clinical social worker. He plans to practice EAP so he can keep working animals and people.

Macro-zoom.

First memory of childhood. Thom's first memory of his childhood was being, in his words, a "porcine midwife." His father was a vocational agriculture teacher and they always had a farm and animals that Thom cared for growing up. One night a pig was giving birth to piglets, but Thom's father had a teachers' meeting that night so Thom became a midwife. As he described:

You have to wipe the membrane from the nose so they can breathe. And you have to cut an umbilical cord with the razor blade, and put the iodine on the umbilical cord, and then move the piglet where he can immerse. She probably had 8, 9, 10 pigs that night. ... Sometimes they came fast, two or three at a time. It was a long wait period. And we were just sitting there and the moon came up. And she was very comfortable with me being a midwife. I was a midwife that night. That was my first memory as a child, is as a midwife for a pig giving piglets. So ... but when I became 6 or 7, I wanted to have a horse. Well, horses were not economically viable. They didn't provide any economic benefit.

A young child of 6 or 7 years old became a midwife for a pig. My interpretation of this story is that there was trust between Thom and his father. This story also showed that Thom took a lot of responsibility on the farm even if he was only a young child. When Thom became 6 or 7, he wanted to have a horse. Having a horse on the family farm was not feasible in the beginning because horses were expensive and would not provide any economic benefit other than a little bit entertainment. Ultimately, however, his parents allowed them to get a horse. Asking for a horse was meaningful in Thom's story; it was like he brought other species into the family. Working was the priority on the farm, and horses provided some relaxation from the work. More than the relaxation, horses had made a difference in Thom's life. Thom said:

We bred them, raised colts, and broke the horses, all that. We ended up with 25 horses, finally, before I left home... I ended up shoeing horses, breeding horses, training horses and all that kind of stuff. And then my wife was a horse trainer, and we showed horses.

It appears that Thom was also the midwife for his dream, and that dream "gave birth" to 25 horses at the farm.

Wife passed away. When Thom was in his early 30s, his wife was diagnosed with cancer and died. It was a tough time for him. Thom said:

She arranged for someone for each horse we had. She put somebody that would get along with them. Each one separated because their personality and persons' personality, she matched them up. And then from that day on, emotionally I couldn't be around horses. I just could not handle it. That was too many reminders of the past. That was something that I (paused, uncompleted) for about 30 years. I avoided being around horses.

Thom moved from no horses to 25 horses back to no horses after his wife passed away. The number of horses symbolizes life and death, and gain and loss in Thom's story. Early in his marriage, he was not ready for losing his loved one. Human nature is "fight or flight" when we do not feel safe. It is the natural mechanism to keep ourselves physically or emotionally safe. Horses triggered Thom's emotions after his wife died and for a time, Thom chose to avoid horses that triggered his memories and emotions.

Kill a horse. One day Thom traveled to Kazakhstan to do his work as a reproductive specialist. Horses were used for meat, milk, and riding in that country.

T: I work with mostly the cattle but while I was there I worked with horses. And I was on an assignment. And they told me that they had a surprise for me. An assignment is like three weeks long, where you live with families and work with their horses and cattle and all that. The end of the assignment, they said. "Since you helped us so much, we have a special guest. We have a celebration at the end. And what we are gonna do is we are gonna slaughter a horse."

I: to eat?

T: Ya. "And since you are such a special guest, you get to pick a horse we slaughter tonight."

I: Wow, did you do that?

T: When I am in another country and there is the culture that is different than mine I have to. I have to. I cannot insult them by saying I won't do this. So I go out to the feedlot. I pick a horse. And they said, "Since you are a very, very special guest, you get to cut the throat of the horse."...

T: So, that was my first sign that the horses had power over me because I cannot get around the horses. ...I got push in the point that I had to kill the horse. And this is ok. That is done. Now let's see if we can be more civilized.

I: That is a very meaningful point for you to kill the horse.

T: Yeah.

I: When you say the force (referred to earlier), it also means the power from the God right?

T: Sure.

I: That you cannot resist.

T: Sure. It is everywhere. It is constant. It never stops. I probably miss 90% of it, but I get a little bit of it. I: After you cut the horse, did you notice any change inside?

T: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. This horse, any horse, can't have that kind of power over me. I have to be able to (uncompleted) I cannot allow that. I have to be able to overcome that.

Thom said, "I got push in the point that I had to kill the horse." The word "push" was meaningful in the story. After Thom's wife died, he chose "flight," but in Kazakhstan he was forced to "fight" or "face" any emotions that horses may trigger him. I think "fight" is more suitable than "face," because there are some physical distances for someone to "face" something. When Thom held a knife to kill a horse, there was no safe distance. It was more like a battle. Thom was not ready to fight, but he had to that day. I had an image in mind. People in Kazakhstan invited Thom to cut a horse's throat, but at a deeper level it was more like a force from God who arranged this to happen. After reading Thom's story many times, I interpret "cutting a horse's throat" as a metaphor. When humans suppress emotions without catharsis, normally there is the feeling of a lump in their throat. It is as if Thom cut his own throat when he cut the horse's throat. Cutting a horse's throat and letting the blood flow was like Thom allowing his suppressed emotions out. All of a sudden, he could not avoid the emotions and memories anymore. The red blood was like Thom's emotions and memories. The idea that this event was cathartic of his emotions from his wife's death is seen in his statement:

This horse, any horse, can't have that kind of power over me ... I cannot allow that. I have to be able to overcome that. I have to face it and through that this whole world opens up where I see what the horse can really do.

In Kazakhstan, killing a horse was to celebrate what Thom had accomplished for the people there. On some level, it also seemed to celebrate Thom's catharsis, which means that he started to face his emotions and memories, which he had tried to avoid for a long time. When Thom said, "I got to push in the point that I had to kill the horse. And this is ok. This is done. Now

let's see if we can be more civilized.” “Civilized” is a key word. One antonym of civilized can be barbarous—wild, and cruel. This was a cruel situation for him and the horse. Cutting a horse's throat is considered to be cruel behavior in the United States.

“Vivo flooding” is one of the skills in behavior psychotherapy. Psychotherapists expose their clients to an actual feared situation for a prolonged period without engaging in any anxiety-reducing behaviors (Corey, 2001). That day, Thom was very much exposed to his fears, as if in therapy. He was put in an intense and feared situation and could not run away. When I heard Thom say, “That is what males need to do. Get their stuff out,” I automatically connected to his 30 years of avoidance, and I realized why he can connect to men's sorrow at a deeper level. Thom particularly likes and commits to work with men. He said:

There are a lot of things I can't do, but there are some things I can do. And the things I can do, I get it, and want to do it. I really want to feel the males' release of a lot of that tension and burden that they carry. And it is just a hard thing for a female to do with a male.

Encounter EAP. During the interview, Thom said, “Now let's see if we can be more civilized.” I interpreted this to mean that he found a civilized way now, which is EAP. After killing the horse and years of exploring, Thom said:

I have to deal with it [grief and loss from his wife's death]. I have to confront it. I have to face it, and through that [confronting grief and loss] this whole world opens up where I see what the horse can really do. But, if I am afraid of it [facing grief and loss], I won't get around it [horses] then... I don't get to participate in [EAP] all that.

The ritual of killing the horse allowed Thom to face and work on his emotions and memories related to his wife and horses. It also prepared him to invite EAP into his life. He mentioned there were two opportunities where he was introduced to animals in the social work program. One time was:

When I was in the social work program, for an internship, I wanted to work with young adolescent boys. And I was assigned to work at a center not too far from here. And so I called them about an internship and the director said, “What do you want to be in 10 years?” “I have done what I want to do in my life. I am not a typical student. It took 41

years, an animal husbandry degree and I got into the school of social work, so I am not (uncompleted).” He said, “You did what?” And I told him again and he said, “That’s what I thought you said. How soon can you get out here? We have farms and we have a bunch of horses and we don’t know what we are doing. Would you come out here and take a look?” He just said, “Write a program for us that we can (uncompleted) that you think will be good with what we have to work with, the population we have to work with, come up with something.” So I looked and I saw those horses and then I just, you know, I just knew that match had to happen between the horses and the boys who are most difficult to work with. But I also knew, if I were to do that, I have to deal with those emotions that I have ignored for 30 years. And so it was not easy, but I made a decision that it was time, and I had to figure out how to personally walk through this, so that’s when I started.

The other time was when a classmate gave a presentation in class that was about EAP.

Thom was interested in that presentation and called the classmate to learn more about details.

Before Thom went to the social work program, he did not know anything about EAP. After Thom shared these two experiences, I deeply understood what he meant when he said, “I have to face it, and through that this the whole world opens up where I see what the horse can really do.” The world opened up to Thom where he can stay with animals (animal husbandry degree) and work with people (social work degree) at the same time. It is a “civilized” way for Thom to approach horses. I also see the transition when Thom said, “...it was time, and I had to figure out how to personally walk through this...” This is a huge contrast to the earlier extract where he said, “I got to push in the point...” that was to meet expectations of his hosts.

There is another quote from the interview that presents more details about Thom’s journey with EAP:

My decision was to go into the social work program and my life with animals was probably over. I probably will not work with animals anymore. And that was a tough decision. But if I am gonna stay here and be at home (uncompleted). Then when I got in to the program, the very first thing that happened was I got presented this opportunity for horses and therapy. And so the way that I explained it is: I make a decision to do what I think I needed to do, but then there is another force that is at work that decides what I really need. And that force supersedes me. And it is at play always in my life, that force, some people will call God, whatever. It is at play, and it overrides me at times when it gets important, and that is what happened in this case. It is that if I am gonna really do what I need to do, then this needs to happen. And so that is how it works out. I just need

to accept that. But when it happens it is like “Oh, my gosh, how am I gonna deal with this?” But it is like “Here it is. You ask for it.”

At the end of the second interview, Thom mentioned that he would develop his EAP program after he received his clinical social work license. I have a new image in my mind—Thom is a midwife, again, for his EAP work and for other men who are suffering and ready to get their emotions out.

Listen to God’s messages. Listen to horses’ messages. From listening to Thom’s story, I found there is analogy between God’s message and horses’ message. In the first interview, Thom described that he tries to be a good listener so he can get the messages from God.

I: When you say the force, it also means the power from the God right?

T: Sure.

I: That you cannot resist.

T: Sure. It is everywhere. It is constant. It never stops. I probably miss 90% of it, but I get a little bit of it.

In the second interview, Thom said, “So I will guess maybe in a [therapy] session I may get 10 or 15% of what the horse is doing. Rest of it, I am still learning.” The similarity of description between God’s message and horses’ message did not seem coincidence in Thom’s story even if the analogy was not conscious or intentional. I can tell that Thom highly respects horses. I even think it is possible that Thom sees horses as messengers who transmit messages from the Higher Spirit.

To be an EAP therapist. Religion plays an important role in Thom’s life. The first college he went to was a Benedictine Seminary and he considered becoming a priest. After two years of training, he felt that the priesthood was not his calling. While at the seminary, he needed to follow the structure and agenda. He said, “Cows and theology have always been my interests, and horses. But after two years of that I felt that was not my calling that I need to be more: ‘not as structured.’ I want more flexibility in how I did things rather than become a clergy person.”

From these words, I can see the connection between who Thom is and why he chooses to practice

EAP. Practicing EAP is not about making a plan and following a structure; it is more about staying in the present with horses and clients and creating a safe place for both.

Meso-level.

Key phrases. In Thom's story, he did not share very much about the transition from being upset around horses to not being emotionally triggered by them. He only mentioned that when he conducted EAP with clients, the process also nurtured him. He said:

There were a couple of tough years of reminders and you know the therapy was just as much for me as it was for them; so it was a dual. I saw it a couple times going on there. They didn't know it, but it was for me, too. Not just for them.

Compared to slaughtering a horse, I believe EAP is Thom's "civilized" way to approach horses and to deal with his emotions. During the interview, I was interested in Thom's inner transition, but I thought it was a personal and sensitive topic for me to ask. It may have triggered some emotions, and I was not sure if it was appropriate to start this conversation as part of this study. Because I was not sure whether knowing about Thom's inner transition was for my own needs, for the study, or for Thom during the interview, I chose not to open up the topic.

Narrative process. When I listened to Thom's interviews, one of Thom's perspectives did not seem congruent. I had to re-listen to the interviews several times until I felt I understood his point. Thom mentioned one day he conducted EAP with a teenage client. The client said, "Don't take this the wrong way, but the most [change] seems to happen when you are not talking and I am not talking." Thom has tremendous respect for horses. In EAP, he described his role is to open the gate, and then the rest of it is up to horses and clients. He needs to step back and does not necessarily need to know what is going on. However, my confusion and my question is if Thom believes "the most [change] seems to happen when you are not talking and I am not talking." why do clients need to vent all of their stuff? To use Thom's language, his clients "throw up on him." If quietness makes the most important thing to happen, why does Thom have a problem when his

Native American clients are quiet? Thom was very honest to share his limitation when working with Native Americans. He said:

I think it is my lack of understanding their culture, plus, because my age they respect me a lot. And Whites and Hispanics, they don't mind telling you whatever, just being very blunt. But with Native Americans, it is not gonna to be very blunt. They can stay very quietly and hold it in. And opening up just not the way they do things. I don't know how to work with them.....They have anger, but they don't talk about what makes them angry or anything. They just hold it in. I can work with anyone who talks a lot. As long as they talk, we can get there.

This discrepancy confused me for a long time. My interpretation is there are two different ways of being quiet. The first quietness is clients holding onto their emotions. They are quiet and reserved outside, but their inner world is not quiet because they hold many emotions. The other type of quietness is that clients may act like an emotional person in the beginning, but because they attune to their feelings and vent their emotions, this behavior sooner or later will lead to inner quietness. When the outside world becomes quiet, and clients' inner quietness attunes to the outer quietness, this is the moment for important things to happen. I think this is what "The most [change] seems to happen when you are not talking and I am not talking" means. This can be another metaphor in Thom's story. Before Thom cut the horse's throat, he was in the first quietness. It is the quietness, but it is the repressed quietness. After Thom cut the horse's throat, it is the second quietness. As a therapist, Thom wants to bring an opportunity for clients to experience the second quietness. "Open the gate" is very much like "cut the horse's throat" for emotions to vent, but it is a very gentle and civilized way of relief.

Narrative themes.

Acceptance of the difficult side of the life. After reading Thom's story, I feel he has accepted and surrendered to significant events in his life. This acceptance and surrender probably stems from his religious beliefs or from life lessons. Thom believes God's force supersedes him and sometimes the God's force overrides him. If a warrior's mission is to fight and win battles, I

tend to see Thom is more like a magician in this life stage. He accepts the essence of a life and realizes there is no need to fight back. For example, he said, “Even though I had my wife die, I have had lots of losses, but that is just part of the whole process for me.” In another extract he said, “I got to push in the point that I had to kill the horse, and this is ok. This is done. Now let’s see if we can be more civilized.” When Thom used the terms “part of the whole process” and “this is done,” it seems he accepts the past, and now is now. Even if the past was not very easy, let’s live in the here-and-now. After the second interview, Thom and I had a long personal conversation about life. Part of the conversation still stays vividly in my mind. He said when the wind blows, trees follow the wind. That “acceptance” is the way he leads his life now.

Invite meaningful challenge. Thom pursued his second degree at the age of 62 and passed his social work licensing exam at the age of 65. While completing an internship in the social work program, he chose the toughest client to work with. He shared one of his internship experiences.

When we are having some success working with some of these really difficult cases, the director of treatment called me in and complimented me and said (uncompleted). Because I had written the program for him, and then he said, “If you really want to test what you are doing, pick a person here that you least want to work with.” So I thanked him and left, but that stuck with me for a while. And after two or three weeks, I kept running across this boy. He was a big, tall, African American boy. He was wrecking everything there. He was just a disaster—loud mouth, out of control. So I went to the director, “Remember the question you threw at me. I [would] like to work with David (pseudonym).” He said, “Really.” He said, “You can have him.”

Thom worked with David for a while, and David had an opportunity to talk about his traumatic experiences and vent his emotions. The therapy turned out positively. However, therapy does not always go in that positive direction that Thom expects. He said:

With some others, you know it doesn’t always work. And I have to accept that because that is what needed to happen. That was not the right time whatever. That is hard to do, but that is because I have an agenda.

I found Thom was not afraid of the challenges in his life. Actually, he seeks meaningful challenges. He also believes that there is a higher and an invisible agenda that overrides his personal agenda. Sometimes he may try to set his agenda and want things to turn out positively for his clients. When the agenda does not work, he believes there will be better timing later for positive things to happen for them and he just has to accept that.

To become a licensed clinical social worker and run his EAP program in the future, Thom has to walk away temporarily from EAP because in Arizona there is no one who can supervise him in EAP. Thus, Thom is again seeking a challenge. He works in an agency that serves people with borderline personality disorders and bipolar disorders.

I: Why do you choose to work with very difficult clients?

T: Very simply. To increase my competency. I want to become competent in what I do; so I went to the program that had a good reputation and was tough that was hard to get in to. We have five million people here in this valley, so a lot of programs. And a lot of programs that (uncompleted) I worked with five internships before I got out of the school. I learned a lot of programs and I wanted the one that was worthy of my spending time with, where I can learn a lot. And fortunately they accepted me, fortunately. But I am very proud that I am there. They don't pay much. It is tough, really tough.

I: It is challenging.

T: Very challenging. Yep. And they said if you can make it through (uncompleted). Because some people don't make it through. But I will make it through. I know I will do it. Will I get frustrated? Yes. Will I get tired? Yes. Will I wonder why I did it? Yes. But I don't quit and I will make it through. And two and half to three years I will have my LCSW...I can run my own program.

There is an easier way for Thom to become a licensed clinical social worker, but he chose to go the more challenging route. It seems the meaningfulness and his inner voice guides his decisions. In the beginning of the first interview Thom said, "When I feel called to do something, I wanna go do it. And not be dictated by where and who and what and when and all that. What I say is I wanna make my own mistakes. I don't want to make somebody else's mistakes." After reading his story, I can deeply understand why he said that. Thom's age and the level of challenge will not stop him to do anything if he feels the need to do it.

Micro-zoom.

During the interviews, Thom used one word “wife” to include his first wife (the one who passed away), and his second and current wife (the one of more than 27 years). After listening to his whole story, I guess Thom used the term consciously because a person can pass away, but the connection can last. I guess it also shows how important Thom’s first wife is in his life, and this can explain why Thom needed 30 years to deal with his emotions. In this study, I want to keep this part, but in order to let readers understand the content, I need to give a clear explanation of the word “wife”. Thom said:

After losing my spouse at a young age, someone I was very much in love with, who was my connection with horses ... After that, people ask, “How many horses do you have?” “I don’t have any.” “Are you gonna?” “No, I don’t want it.” I am just very neutral about that. I am just happy it doesn’t bother me to be around them. After losing my wife, it emotionally upset me just to be around them. And now I am able to be around them without being upset.

Interactional-zoom.

Before I invited Thom to join the study, we had known each other from 2012 and 2013 EAGALA conferences. During the interview, Thom invited me to stay with him and his wife in Arizona. When I stayed in their house, we had more conversations and interactions that helped us know more about each other. The level of trust between us really helped the interview process. Thom was very open-hearted to share some significant events in his life. Sometimes the interview content was philosophical or metaphysical. I felt I could relate to Thom’s experiences and thoughts, but honestly I was not sure if Thom felt I could understand him. Because we are both individuals, I may interpret what he says differently than he does. Some conversations I could not totally understand, and it was comfortable for me to ask for more explanation. For example, Thom used the terms “estrogen” and “testosterone” to describe the dynamic between males and females, males and males, and clients and him. I could not understand it in the beginning, and Thom needed to

explain that for me. I also noticed Thom was comfortable to correct me if I only heard the words, not what he was really trying to say. I provided an example here to show how Thom corrected me when I did not really catch what he said.

T: I said, “So David (pseudonym), how do you get from New Orleans to Omaha?” Because it is a puzzle, I cannot figure out.

I: It is not close. It is far away.

T: Well, I didn’t mean that way. He could say I went by bus. That is not my question. My question is, “how do you get from here to here? What is going on?” He looked at me and he said you never heard of Katrina?

Religion can be a sensitive topic in a conversation. Before the interview, I already knew Thom’s religion. Further, in the interview Thom said, “My guidance throughout my life has been my religious beliefs and how to live them and understand how to live them in a better way and that still drive the decision that I make.” I tried to bring the term “God” into the conversation carefully at first. After Thom shared how he got to know EAP, I asked him:

I: Do you call this is the message from God?

T: A-ha. Very much so. Yep. No doubt about it. Because my feeling is that there is a Creator and that Creator is creating. It is not just the one-time thing, and I am invited to be a part of that creating that is going on.

I wondered if Thom chose not to bring the word “God” into our conversation in the beginning because we both know religion can be a sensitive topic in the United States. As an interviewer, I feel it is important for participants to feel free to talk about themselves during the interviews and also to share on their terms, not the interviewer’s terms. If religion is the part of themselves, it is my responsibility to create an open atmosphere.

Summary of Analysis

Human mindscape is idiosyncratic and yet ultimately obedient to biological law. Like the forest of some newly discovered island, it possesses unique contours and previously undescribed forms of life, treasures to be valued for their own sake, but the genetic process that spawned them is the same as elsewhere. Continuity is essential for comprehension; the imagery chosen by the artist must draw on common experience and values, however tortuous the manner of presentation. (Wilson, 1984, p. 80)

Wilson is an evolutionary biologist, and he suggested that continuity is an essential way of understanding the lives of organisms. In other words, Wilson believes past, present and future are interconnected. Through the zoom model analysis, the interconnectedness of past, present, and future is represented in each participant's story, and it is essential for comprehending how participants engage in EAP and who they are. Participants are like artists who presented their individual story in different styles, but they have something in common—the continuity of experience described by Wilson. In this section, I explore the similarities from different participants.

Meaningful coincidence. Synchronicity is a concept from Carl Jung that means “meaningful coincidence” or something that cannot be explained by causality-based science (Jung, 1955). Jung further explained synchronicity:

Although meaning is an anthropomorphic interpretation it nevertheless forms the indispensable criterion of synchronicity. What that factor which appears to us as “meaning” may be in itself we have no possibility of knowing. As a hypothesis, however, it is not quite so impossible as may appear at first sight. We must remember that the rationalistic attitude of the West is not the only possible one and is not all-embracing, but is in many ways a prejudice and a bias that ought perhaps to be corrected. (Jung, 1955, p. 95)

Kriss, Michael, Becky, Jean-Jacques, Sue, and Thom did not necessarily use the term “synchronicity” in their stories to describe how they engaged in EAP, but they all experienced meaningful simultaneities to lead them into EAP. When participants practiced EAP, they also observed meaningful coincidences between horses and clients. Some participants used the term “mysterious” to describe how horses use unusual behaviors or unexplained behaviors to interact with clients and clients' issues. Later I discuss how horses' behaviors influence therapy in thematic analysis.

It is interesting for me to see, as human beings, that we accept how synchronicities create our personal lives and lead us to other new experiences. However, when synchronicities happen in EAP, mysteries become a significant problem because they create a gap between practice and science (evidence-based practice), and a gap between EAP practitioners and non-EAP practitioners. This means non-EAP practitioners may have a hard time understanding and accepting this approach. When Carl Jung suspected the rationalistic attitude is not the only way to explore knowledge, he believed probably there is some knowledge and phenomena that cannot be explained by causality-based science. The rationalistic attitude of the West is the dominant way to explore knowledge, which helps us to gain a sense of control; however, it may not be the only way. Wilson (1984, pp.139-140) noticed how limited our knowledge is, and he said, "The truth is that we never conquered the world, never understood it; we only think we have control. We do not even know why we respond a certain way to other organisms and need them in diverse ways, so deeply." According to Wilson's perspective, there are a lot of unknown interactions and interconnections between humans and other organisms, which cannot be explained by the rationalistic attitude of the Western science yet.

Horses symbolize being settled. In Jean-Jacques, Pia and Sue's stories, I found horses to symbolize being either physically or emotionally settled in their life. When they brought horses as family members, they chose their lifestyle and horses influenced where they chose to live. Horses and the farm lifestyle also influenced their sense of identity. For example, Jean-Jacques and his wife learned how to grow organic hay for horses, and Sue and her husband learned how to irrigate and take care of their farm. They built a deeper connection with the land (or Mother Earth). Jean-Jacques, Pia, and Sue all reconnected with horses when they were in their middle adulthood, and the way they see horses had changed. For example, earlier in life, they saw horses

as playmates or tools for recreation, whereas now they consider horses to be family members or teachers who inspire them.

Horses are bridges. In Jean-Jacques' and Michael's stories, horses bridge the different areas of their life. In Jean-Jacques's story, horses connect his outside world (death) to inner world (birth), public self to private self, first career to second career. In Michael's story, horses bridge different generations together, such as, he and his father-in-law and he and his daughter. In therapy, horses bridge some participants' rational minds to intuitive perceptions.

Analogies between EAP and other areas. Michael and Pia practice natural horsemanship. They both bring insights and knowledge about horsemanship into EAP. From Michael's perspective, horses are like therapists, and working with horses is similar to working with therapists. Both horses and therapists help clients raise their self-awareness. Pia found the analogy between clients and horses. If horses and clients are not willing to try something new, it is because they feel scared and they are not ready to change. In other words, "not willing to try something new" is not an attitude problem. Resistance comes from a fear of change. Pia showed that she has an empathic heart to understand clients and horses and that this is very important. Becky used to be a professional artist. She lets clients paint on horses and sees horses as the canvas for clients to express creativities and emotions. Sue loves art and found the analogy between the canvas and a horse arena. All of them using their creativities bridge two areas and create meaningful analogies. According to Wilson's (1984) and Yukawa's (1973) perspective, an analogy can be superficial, but a deep analogy can be very creative and lead us to unexplored areas, and discover essential features which are hidden beneath the surface. Those participants are like innovators who discover comparisons from different areas and apply these discoveries into their EAP practice.

Driven by a childhood dream. During the interviews, many participants (Kriss, Michael, Pia, Sue, Jean-Jacques, and Julie Anne) shared that their love for horses started from their childhood. In *Biophilia*, Wilson (1984, p. 65) stated, “You start by loving a subject...the odds are that the obsession will have begun in childhood. The subject will be your lodestar and give sanctuary in the shifting mental universe.” From Wilson’s perspective, the love and the obsession for a subject are intrinsic. This obsession will lead people to answer their inner calling. Kriss, Michael, Pia, Sue, Jean-Jacques, and Julie Anne knew they love horses, so when the EAP opportunity arose in their lives they were able to combine their interest with their work. I interpreted their stories to mean that practicing EAP is a way for them to connect with their intrinsic love for being with horses.

Chapter 5: Thematic Analysis

Introduction

After completing the zoom model analysis, a second level of analysis, a thematic analysis, was conducted to explore each research question and sub-question. I combined inductive and deductive analysis together. In the first coding, I conducted deductive analysis. In the second coding, I conducted inductive analysis. After both analysis, I sorted each code to each research question and utilized the computer-assisted qualitative software NVivo 10 to help me organize the data. In the study, I used “keyness” as the guideline to develop themes instead of depending on quantifiable measures. The results of the thematic analysis are reported in question 1.1, question 1.2, question 2.1, question 2.2, and question 3. Three primary research questions guided the inquiry process; four secondary questions allowed for follow up or greater detail. The primary research questions are answered by answering their sub-questions.

1. What are participants’ experiences with horses in their personal lives?
 - 1.1 What are horses’ roles in participants’ lives?
 - 1.2 What experiences led participants to practice EAP?
2. What are participants’ professional experiences with EAP?
 - 2.1 What are therapeutic factors in EAP?
 - 2.2 What are therapists’ strategies in EAP?
3. What are participants’ views about the differences between EAP and traditional psychotherapy (TP)?

Question 1-1: What are Horses’ Roles in Participants’ Lives?

Three main themes related to this question were discovered in the data analysis, and these three themes represent different kinds of relationships between participants and horses. Please

see Chapter Three for description of how themes were determined. These themes were: (a) participants with low awareness about their relationship with horses; (b) participants with high awareness about their relationship with horses; and (c) value of interacting with horses for raising awareness about self and the world. In this study, all participants described relationships with horses that evolved over time. This evolution was often described as initially beginning with participants having low awareness about their relationship with horses, and then having high awareness about their relationships with horses. In the final stage, participants value horses' roles as teachers in their lives

Table 5.1

Horses' Roles in Participants' Lives

Main Themes	Sub-themes
1. Participants with low awareness about their relationship with horses	1.1 Participants simply like horses without having a reason 1.2 Horses provide recreation
2. Participants with high awareness about their relationship with horses	2.1 Horses choose not to connect to participants 2.2 Horses confront participants 2.3 Being attuned to horses' feelings 2.4 Humans and horses have mutual impact in natural horsemanship
3. Value of interacting with horses for raising awareness about self and the world	3.1 Deliberately incorporating horses to work on self-development 3.2 Unintentionally incorporating horses to work on self-development. 3.3 Life lessons from herd animals

Theme 1: Participants with low awareness about their relationship with horses.

Theme 1 reflects comments by participants that indicated that they like to be around or with horses, but they are unaware of the nuanced feelings between them and horses. Because this natural attraction can be pure, strong, and very intuitive, the human mind is unable to consciously recognize the reason for this attraction. In addition, this natural attraction can sometimes reflect an anthropocentric view of horses. Participants did not try to understand how the horses felt.

Participants simply like horses without having a reason. Five participants (Kriss, Michael, Pia, Jean Jacque, and Julie Anne) all liked horses when they were children, and it was hard for them to explain why.

I do not know why. I think like many, many ten year-old girls here in the United States I was obsessed with horses. I think I asked my mom for horses every day for about two years. She always said “No.” And I had some money, so I paid for some lessons to go learn how to ride. In college, I started out riding horses and I started being the weekend manager of the barn. So, I did all the treatment and helped the vets. I taught some riding classes, never being a good rider, you know. I do not know. I always had that attraction to horses. (Julie Anne)

I do not know. I do not know, and I did some drawings with horses, but an equal amount with cats. So, I think it was just the exposure because my parents moved next door to a barn, and all of a sudden I was surrounded by ponies. I spent a lot of time there. (Pia)

These five participants appear to intuitively love horses; the definition of intuition is to know something without knowing how one knows (Erikson, 2011). These participants described knowing they love horses without knowing why they love that way. When Pia said, “I think it was just the exposure.” it means her experiences cannot be isolated from the environment, which reflects Wilson’s biophilia hypothesis and Dewey’s perspective that humans and their environments interact with each other. As an evolutionary biologist, Wilson used the word “co-evolution” to describe the dynamic and evolutionary relationship between humans and their environment. In other words, to understand human behavior, we cannot take it out of context.

Horses provide recreation. Four participants (Julie Anne, Jean-Jacques, Pia and Thom) who said that they liked horses in their childhood or early adulthood, seemed to say that they liked to ride horses. However, riding horses represented a view of the horses as more of a tool than a creature with whom the participants had a mutual relationship.

I lived in Egypt, Cairo, for one year and I leased a horse there. So I had a horse to ride every day in the dessert and in the pyramids. It was beautiful. That was exclusively about riding. It was an Arabian stallion filled with life. It was a dangerous horse. It was easy to ride, but he had a dangerous personality, probably because he had been traumatized by

human beings. And that horse almost killed me once, you know, he charged me, attacked me. It was just about riding. When I went to that stable then the horse would be saddled and prepared. I got on the horse, rode two hours, and brought the horse back. People took the horse back into the stable. So, that was a minimal relationship with the horse...It could be a bicycle. (Jean-Jacques)

After I finished my graduate degree, I went to do an equivalent of outward bound for years, and years and years. I was gone a lot. Whenever I got a chance I would hop on a horse, but that was random. (Pia)

They were Welch ponies, mares. Mine was quite stubborn. She was a double grey. My sister had a little sorrel, a little more calm. We were just out with them a lot. Riding bareback. Just going, go, go, go, out through the ranch. (Sue)

Mostly we rode them. That was our recreation. I never played sports in my life. No sports. That was the relaxation, a break from the work, I ended up shoeing horses, breeding horses, training horses, and all that kind of stuff. And then my wife was a horse trainer and we showed horses. (Thom)

When participants shared those experiences with horses, they did not focus on the relationships between them and the horses. Rather, riding horses was presented as leisure activity for that participants' benefit, and the horses were their playmates. In Jean-Jacques' story, the Arabian stallion was a tool for people to ride and to make money. Drawing from gestalt theory's concept of law of figure-ground (Verstegen, 2005), having fun with horses is the figure (in other words, participants focused on what they can gain from horses), and how the horses are treated by people and the horses' personalities becomes the background (in other words, participants did not focus on mutual relationships). These participants seemed to borrow horses' powerfulness and to gain joyfulness from them. Figure 5.1 represents this anthropocentric dynamic between participants and horses, in which humans are of central importance (hence the larger circle), and horses are perceived in relation to their usefulness to humans (hence the smaller circle).

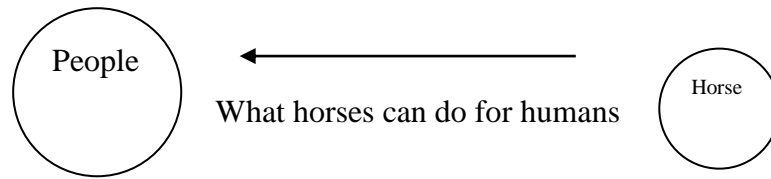


Figure 5.1 Participants with low awareness about their relationship with horses

Theme 2: Participants with high awareness about their relationship with horses.

This theme reflected participants' descriptions of having higher awareness about their interactions with horses than the first theme. In contrast to the low awareness theme, in this theme, participants experienced horses' feelings towards them and the dynamics in their relationship. They had a desire to understand how horses see them as a human being or how they see horses as individuals. The participants indicated the intention of building a mutual relationship with horses instead of viewing horses from an anthropocentric perspective. Participants' descriptions of events that were coded as high awareness always occurred later in time than events that were coded as low awareness, reflecting that participants had an evolving understanding of their relationships with horses.

Horses choose not to connect to participants. Jean-Jacque is the only participant who shared how a horse did not want to connect with him and how the horse's behavior taught him to be genuine in a relationship.

I was stressed. I was angry, frustrated, or depressed by my work...pretending to be happy, and the horse would not have it. She would put ears back, and she would turn around, and she would cringe and hide in the corner of her stall...One day I was alone, no human being. I was with her in her stall, no human being around. It was very late 10:30 at night. And I talked to her, and I said: "I do not understand what is going on. I feel rejected. I feel you do not like me. I feel you might see something ugly in me." And I started crying, you know, I'm standing there with the big roller brushes in the stall with my horse. I was crying. When I started crying the horse came to me for the first time. She came to me. She put her head on my heart and stood right there. She lowered her head and she stood with me.

This quote shows that Jean-Jacques cared about how the horse thought and felt about him. As a human being, he wanted to create a positive relationship between him and another creature. When he felt the relationship did not go well, he found a need to fix the relationship. Jean-Jacques' story reminds me that Wilson (1984) suggested, "to the degree that we come to understand other organisms, we will place a greater value to them and on ourselves" (p. 2). Because Jean-Jacques had a desire to know the horse and the relationship, he engaged in a genuine interaction, and the horse responded to him positively. Jean-Jacques grew from this experience, and this experience led him to pursue his second career as an EAP therapist.

Horses confront participants. Two participants (Kriss and Becky) described that horses acting aggressively pushed them to connect to their genuine feelings and to stay in the here and now.

If you are being trustworthy, you know horses can tell ... A horse that I used to have in Washington... If I was not centered, she would take off and just buck me off. It was just like she can tell. She is not in charge. I am gonna be in charge.... So it really helps me become a very confident rider. (Kriss)

Whenever I am in a bad mood and around my horses, the horses will tell me that I am in a bad mood by doing something—if I would just pay attention to it. Like, I think every time when I have been kicked, bitten, stepped on or thrown off from a horse it's been because I was not with the horse. I was somewhere else in my head and I was not focusing on what I was doing. So, it really helps me to become more focused, even in my everyday life. (Becky)

Kriss' and Becky's experiences show that their horses wanted them to be present, meaning that participants had to be in the here-and-now when they were together. If they were not present, their horses would do something aggressively to bring them back into the moment. Those aggressive behaviors seemed to confront them, implicitly saying, "You stay with me, but you are not really with me." Horses' feedback helped participants raise awareness, the awareness that was critical if they wanted to interact with horses safely.

Being attuned to horses' feelings. Two participants (Jean-Jacque and Julie Anne) described experiencing a deep sense of empathy with individual horses. They could feel how the horses felt and they treated them as sentient beings, meaning that participants cared about horses' emotions. Early in Julie Anne's story, she mentioned how her body picked up a horse's traumatic experience, and that experiencing this taught her about boundaries and self-care because she found she could pick up animals' emotions without realizing that she could carry the horse's emotion. Jean-Jacque saw that his horses each had their own personality; he knew what they liked and disliked. He described how he interacted with one of his mares.

She has a little bit of an eating disorder. [She] eats food for comfort, a little bit for anxiety She needs a very strong connection, in order to be with you. So, for instance, this is the horse I need to talk to with words. I need to massage her eyeballs, and the tips of her ears. [I] hold her head next to me and talk to her, sing to her ears, and then she is completely tuned to me. And she is close to me, and we can play, and like a ride. If I say: "Okay, let's go and ride you." [I] put rope on her. She resents it. She hates it. She has her ears back. Lately, ... [I had] a lot of work and very intense emergencies with clients. I almost could not ride her in a month... She seemed depressed. She was looking at me. She was depressed. One day, I said, "Ok. Come, we're going to spend a good hour just the two of us- not riding, no saddle. Maybe just sitting on your back, doing fun things." And she was jumping up with joy. We played together. She was so happy. So, she needs that type of connection.

In this theme, relationships do not focus only on participants' needs, as they did when they described riding. Rather, participants described taking care of their horses' needs as well. They wanted to know, for example, why a horse might not be unhappy, and relational concerns based on concern about the horse's well being. This reflected a shift from an anthropocentric perspective to a biocentric orientation.

Humans and horses have mutual impact in natural horsemanship. After practicing natural horsemanship, three participants (Jean-Jacques, Michael, and Pia) mentioned that even when they are simply riding their horse, they see the relationship differently than before. The riding is not just about the recreation; it is about learning how to build a trusting relationship.

Participants described that if the horse experienced a difficult emotion like anxiety or fear, then they were probably conveying this to their horses. If a relationship was not going well, they were probably making something difficult for the horses.

I learn to have a horse execute a skill that would be necessary to show in a particular event. As I work that skill, if I got anxious, just before we got to the skill, my horse will get anxious, too. And it is really more about me being anxious than it was about the horse worrying about executing the skill. Because usually the horse does not really care, unless I care...I was causing the problem for the horse, and really understanding that was sort of the beginning of a lot of self-reflection, self-examination, and self-awareness. (Michael)

In addition, sometimes comments about natural horsemanship reflected thoughts about learning how to build a trusting relationship, in addition to comments about how the participant can impact the horse's emotional state.

I have a horse. I like her very much, but she is very sensitive...I ride her now without anything. So, not even a halter. Nothing...If I am not centered or I start thinking about something else, or, even worse, if I became afraid that she might do something like stop running then she will do that...So I have to be completely relaxed, and soft, and trusting. Trusting in myself, trusting in her, and trusting the relationship works...I am scared sometimes, and I notice the fear. I need to tell the horse I am afraid. So I will not try to conceal that from the horse. And I relax into holding my fear. (Jean-Jacques)

In the first theme, participants with low awareness about their relationship with horses, participants interacted with horses because they expected to gain something from horses and from the interaction, whereas in this second theme we saw comments that reflected a dynamic, relational experience with horses. Participants are aware that their emotions and behaviors influence horses' emotions and behaviors. Figure 5.2 represents the shifting dynamic between participants and horses represented by this theme. Their relationship is mutual. Participants have begun to invite a relationship with horses instead of asking for something from horses.

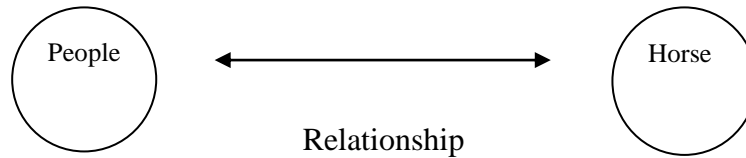


Figure 5.2 Participants with high awareness about their interaction with horses

Theme 3: value of interacting with horses for raising awareness about self and the world.

In this theme, participants knew horses could teach them life lessons, and they were open to experiencing what they could learn from horses. This theme reflects a higher respect for horses than is seen in the first theme and second theme. Participants described interacting with horses intentionally by viewing the horse as a teacher from whom they can learn. They believed horses could make them aware of who they are in interpersonal relationships and aware of the society within which they live. This growing awareness was seen as helping participants to be better people or therapists. They may also appreciate horses' natural characteristics, and view themselves as gaining wisdom from this species. The difference between theme 2 (high-awareness) and theme 3 is that the theme 2 concerns the relationship between horses and participants, while theme 3 concerns the ways that horses can shed light on interpersonal dynamics with other people. In theme 2, participants focused on the relationship between horses and themselves. In contrast, in the theme 3, participants started to apply the awareness that they gained from horses to their self-development and interpersonal relationships. For example, a well know horse trainer, Buck Brannaman (2010), was asked, "how about your favorite horse?" He indicated that he intentionally invited a particular horse in his life to make him a better person and that this horse became his favorite horse.

It's a little hard to narrow it down. There's a horse that's on the front of my book [*the faraway horses*] – Biff. He was a very, very difficult horse to work with. I bought him for that reason cause I knew he'd make me better. He was very dangerous to be around. He'd been treated kinda poorly. He taught me so much. I'll always love that horse. He's now retired at my place – and kinda old. I'll miss that horse when he's gone.

Deliberately incorporating horses to work on self-development. Most of the participants (Jean Jacques, Julie Anne, Pia, Sue, and Thom) intentionally work with horses to promote their self-development. They may just interact or “stay” with the horses while they waited for answers to various questions with which they were struggling, or they may find someone to conduct EAP sessions for them to gain insights. When using the word “wait,” it means participants do not grasp for an answer. By actively seeking to discover an answer, their minds may block it.

For me, still today, when I have a question, which may start with frustration, and may start with: “Gosh, how come this is happening right now?” Then I got to make a question for myself, ... And with that question I go to the horses, and horses do not talk, but they do listen. And something will come from just being around them. When I just sit quietly and mull this, whatever comes to me as an obstacle and consider it, and I always find an answer. (Pia)

What Pia wanted to say is if she is fully present with horses, the answer will come out naturally. If she “wants” to search for an answer, her intention of finding an answer will distract her instead of letting her be fully present in the moment.

I do my equine sessions sometimes. I get my equine specialist to facilitate sessions with me sometimes. Sometimes we use natural horsemanship to do a session, like the round pen kind of stuff, which is different from EAGALA... And I have this different experience with the same horse and different horses. And at that time, I was actually doing my own work to call in my life partner who I have now. (Julie Anne)

Julie Anne intentionally incorporated horses to work on her self growth. She believed that dynamics between horses and her helped raise her awareness of her interpersonal relationships.

Unintentionally incorporating horses to work on self-development. Three participants (Becky, Michael, and Pia) indicated unintentionally gaining awareness about their interpersonal dynamics through working with horses. Participants often worked with horses and they paid attention to what horses wanted them to be aware of. Participants in sub-theme 2 intentionally sought help in self-development through working with horses or being with horses. However, in the theme 3 participants naturally worked with horses, and they realized their interpersonal

relationship through horses' reactions. This awareness helps them to not automatically react using old, problematic behavioral patterns.

I learned from mostly my oldest horse that my approach— a lot of pushing and pulling... When you have a push-pull personality, you go to a place, the place that you go to when you do not know how, well, to respond in a proper way. [You] either push people away and make them stay away from your vulnerability or really want to pull people in, and really want them to know you and be really close with you, and know all about you. So, it is an either or type of thing...Once I have the awareness that is something I did, I started to play with it. I started to play with the idea that I can be with people, with a person, with an individual, without doing any of that, and just kind of feel into the relationship, and say: "Ok, this is what is happening right now." (Pia)

Because horses are powerful animals, their visible resistance to people's "push and pull" communication style provides an opportunity for people to re-assess their communication approach. Pia found that she may push or pull people in interpersonal relationships. After the horses reflected and responded to this behavioral pattern, Pia's awareness was heightened; she then could choose to act or not to act that way.

Horses are built to scan their environment for dangerous things because there is stuff out there that will get horses hurt. If I approach my horse and I am anxious about something, or I am angry about something, or whatever, my horse is gonna think: "there is something there I need to be anxious about and I need to watch out for it." My horse is gonna react to that. And just the way the horse reacts to people around them. So I know if I come home in a bad mood, pretty soon my whole family will be in the bad mood (laughed) because they react to my energy...So I am not perfect about it, but I think I am much better. ... I'll say, "I am going to the gym, or I need to go run or whatever." So I am not like, you know, spewing my own stuff all over everybody else in my family.. (Becky)

Through working with horses, Becky noticed that horses are very sensitive to emotional energy. People also react to emotional energy even if they are not as sensitive as horses. After noticing that invisible emotions could influence horses and her family, Becky became much better at engaging in self-care, meaning that she manages her emotions to the benefit of her family.

Life lesson from herd animals. Most of the participants (Becky, Julie Anne, Jean Jacques, Kriss and Pia) described how horses' natural characteristics as herd animals helped to teach them important life lessons about the importance of relationships. Horses are social animals, and they remind participants of the importance of relationships seen in a bigger community or tribe, as opposed to a more individualistic orientation. The difference between this sub-theme and the sub-theme 1 (deliberately incorporating horses to work on self-development) and 2 (unintentionally incorporating horses to work on self-development) was participants recognized the general characteristics from horses could be different from humans', and horses' natural characteristics could provide life lessons for humans. However, in the sub-theme 1 and 2 participants primarily focused on how horses could help participants' present interpersonal relationships and self-development.

I think that because I have also much more consistent meditation practice now. I bring more into my life what I am learning with the horses, which is being in the moment. As I said, keeping aspirations, but not grasping for the result and developing a soft gaze, not a prey animal's vision. So, instead of having a predatory, you know, goal-oriented view of the world, keep like a horse, eyes on the side of the head. More peripheral vision. Not just what I want and who I am, but of the collective of the environment: me, friends, communities, and nature, and seasons, and weather, and the broad things. (Jean-Jacques)

Jean-Jacques believes in a concept called "interbeing," which means all things are interconnected. Thich Nhat Hanh, a Buddhist monk from Vietnam, created the concept. From Jean-Jacques' perspective, sometimes people act like predators who are too goal-oriented to see relationships and to see how the relationships influence each other.

People say horses are prey. That means they are afraid. No! That really means they are relational. They want to have relationships. They know their safety lies in the relationship, which is true for humans too, but we do not want to admit it. (Kriss)

I really want to learn how to be more like a prey animal than a predator because what I see in a horse that I admire so much is their sense of serenity. Their sense of knowing themselves— their sense of social stability. I really like to live there a lot. Not necessary

want to live with equines all the time, but I like to live in that virtual space so to speak.
(Pia)

From these quotes, Jean-Jacques, Kriss, and Pia all conveyed the concept that relationships and dynamics of prey animals in a herd or in the environment are something from which humans can learn. Humans are social animals, but they can over focus on goals or competition at the cost of losing a relationship. Figure 5.3 represents the dynamic between participants and horses seen in this main theme, “value of interacting with horses for raising awareness about self and the world”, by showing participants taking the humble stance of wondering what they can learn from horses.

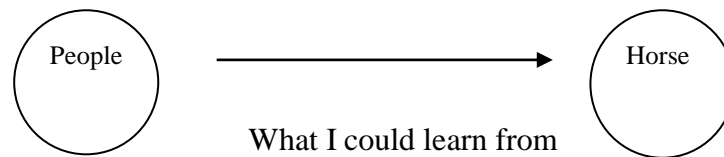


Figure 5.3 Value of Interacting with Horses for Raising Awareness

Wilson (1984) has found that humans primarily interact with nature and other organisms from an anthropocentric orientation. From Wilson’s (1984) perspective, humans resist nature conservation efforts because they believe that humans come first. This is similar to participants’ stance towards horses seen in the first theme, which largely reflected viewing horses in terms of how they can help participants. Further, Wilson (1984) suggested that humans would protect their humanity when they made efforts to respect and conserve other organisms and nature. According to Wilson’s (1984) perspective, the human spirit has a drive toward perpetual expansion (e.g. exploring unknown territories) and personal freedom. My interpretation of “unknown territories” is geographical territories or unexplored human inner worlds, and “personal freedom” can be physical or spiritual freedom. In this study, when participants respect the life lessons that horses can teach them, they gain knowledge about themselves and their

interpersonal relationships. They become less controlled by old behavioral patterns, and hence gain more inner freedom. In other words, when they respect horses, they also protect their humanity.

Question 1-2: What Experiences Led Participants to Practice EAP?

Research Question 1-2 explored what led participants to practice EAP. Humans’ past, present, and future are interconnected, and humans and their environments are also interconnected. Participants’ beliefs and actions cannot be isolated from past experiences and their environments. The research question and the data analysis focused on the past experiences, therapeutic perspectives, and world views that influenced participants to choose to practice EAP. Four main themes were discovered: (a) participants chose to practice EAP from personal reasons; (b) participants chose to practice EAP from professional reasons; (c) participants “borrow” from horses’ strengths; and (d) participants have the sense of being destined to practice EAP.

Table 5.2

Experiences that Led Participants to Practice EAP

Main Themes	Sub-themes
1. Personal reasons for practicing EAP	1.1 Love horses 1.2 Fits well with who I am 1.3 Fits with personal experiences
2. Professional reasons for practicing EAP	2.1 Fits well with therapeutic approach 2.2 Therapy sessions unfold naturally 2.3 Believe EAP works 2.4 EAP speeds up therapy
3. Borrowing from horses’ strengths	3.1 Horses have capabilities that humans do not 3.2 Horses complement participants’ therapeutic work
4. Sense of being destined to practice EAP	

Theme 1: personal reasons for practicing EAP. The kinds of therapeutic approaches that therapists practice usually represent who they are and what they have experienced in their life. The approaches they practice also reflect the level of congruence between their personal life

and their professional life. If therapists choose a therapeutic approach that does not match their world view, they may experience conflict between their personal and professional values. Most of the participants chose to practice EAP because it is congruent with their love of horses.

Furthermore, the methods of EAP fit well with their identity and experiences related to horses.

Love horses. Four participants (Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, Michael, and Kriss) said outright during their interview that they loved horses. Three participants (Becky, Pia, and Sue) did not say directly that they loved horses, but this love was evident in their choice to invite horses into their lives during their middle adulthood, and to live on a farm with them.

I came to this because on one hand I have a passion for human contact– human relation. I also love horses. And I have a very strong aspiration to develop a contemplative practice that involves something, you know, spiritual and separate from my life, but included in my life. So this is why I like doing mindfulness-based psychotherapy with horses.
(Jean-Jacques)

You know I like horses, or I would not be doing this work. I have been with horses, a fanatic, since when I was a baby. (Michael)

The saying, “I love horses” carries a deeper meaning to the participants than it might appear at first. Specifically, when participants love and incorporate horses into their work, they are connecting with something deep inside themselves. I interpreted this congruence between their true selves and their work may serve as an encouragement for their clients to also live in an authentic way.

In contrast, Thom is the only participant who said he is not attracted to horses:

I don't know why I cannot get inside of horses, but I am not attracted to horses. One time I was, but now I am just...after losing my spouse at a young age, someone I was very much in love with, who was my connection with horses. I had a connection before, but she was even stronger. After that, people ask: “how many horses do you have?” I don't have any. “Are you gonna...?” No, I don't want it. I am just very neutral about that. I am just happy it doesn't bother me to be around them. After losing my wife, it emotionally upset me just to be around them. And now I am able to be around them without being upset... You probably won't hear this from everybody else who does this kind of work,

but I just... You know they are part of the team and they are valuable to be part of the team. I could not do it without them, but that is it. (Thom)

Thom loved horses when he was a young man. Now, having lost his wife, horses remind him of old memories of his wife, triggering painful emotions. As a result, right now he values horses' role in therapy, but not in his personal life.

Fits well with who I am. All of the participants noted that the EAP approach matched their lifestyle, learning style, working style, or personality. At first sight, then, while it might seem that these participants were practicing EAP for their benefit, not their clients', I interpreted this match as another way therapists can model congruence for their clients. Therapists will be more effective when they practice an approach that fits well with who they are

I am a kinesthetic learner. I can learn stuff from audio, visual learning, but I am a kinesthetic... I gotta do it. I gotta feel it. So it (means EAP) has taught me about boundary, taught me about self-care. (Julie Anne)

The first college I went to was a Benedictine Seminary and I considered becoming a priest. They also had a dairy farm so I was able to work with cows. Cows and theology have always been my interest, and horses. But after two years of that, I felt that was not my calling that I needed to be not as structured. I wanted more flexibility and how I did things rather than become a clergy person. (Thom)

Julie Anne learns by doing, and Thom is a person who does not like a lot of structure.

EAP is an experiential and creative approach from which they can practice in a way that is congruent with who they are.

Pia: I was really sick of being in an office, and so I started to make a transition. And even today I have some clients, when it goes very cold, they rather come and sit in the office. And it is tough for me... Cause I'd rather just be out there with [my] snowsuit and working with horses because I get so much more out there in comparison to being in the office...

I: What do you mean "you get so much more"? You mean so much more from clients?

Pia: Yep. So much more information from clients. Yes... (Pia)

Because I love it, and I don't love sitting in the office. Hahaha... It is just more fun and stimulating, and not so closed in. And it is something new. And it gets me out moving. It gets clients moving and stimulated. It is motivating for them. (Sue)

Both Pia and Sue are outdoor people. Although practicing EAP might reflect their needs and interests, it also benefits their clients. For example, Pia said she gets much more information from clients by practicing EAP, which might also mean she can understand clients quickly or deeply. Similarly, when Sue said EAP stimulates and motivates clients, it might also mean that clients are more engaged in therapy sessions.

Fits with personal experiences. Most of the participants (Becky, Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, Kriss, Michael, Pia, and Thom) stated that they practice EAP because they found EAP fits with their experience with horses. Specifically, because of their experiences, they understood how helpful horses could be, and this made them motivated to know more about EAP; it became easier for them to learn EAP, practice EAP, and believe in EAP. The difference between the sub-theme 2 (fits well with who I am) and this sub-theme (fits with personal experiences) was the sub-theme 2 focused on participants' personalities, and this sub-theme focused on participants' personal experiences with horses.

I knew nothing about psychotherapy with horses at that time, but I was interested in psychology. And a couple of years later, just by chance, in the most synchronistic way, in Palestine, I happened to read something about equine-assisted psychotherapy... And I remember what my horse had done [the one chose not to connect with Jean-Jacques], and it makes so much sense to me. I said this is what I want to do. So, I resigned from the Foreign Service and I came to Naropa [University], and here I am. (Jean-Jacques)

[I] just understand myself better because what I learn about myself when I work with horses. I have this belief that others can learn some of those things about themselves as well. It may not be exactly the same thing for the same reason, but it would be their relationship and their stuff that they learn... There is no point of being aware of horses, if you are not aware of yourself. Or what you are aware of about the horse will not mean anything unless you are also aware of yourself. (Michael)

Jean-Jacques and Michael are both therapists and horsemen. The terminology, horsemen, means that participants are skilled in riding a horse. Their relationships with horses helped them understand EAP easily. When Jean-Jacques worked with his horse, the horse helped him “tune

in” to his emotions. His experience working with his horse brought him to EAP and influenced how he works with his EAP clients. For example, when he sees his clients are fighting their emotions, he will tell the clients to talk to a horse; in his view, the immediate feedback from the horse helps clients become more attuned to their feelings.

Michael practices natural horsemanship with horses. He has noticed that a good horseperson has a mutual understanding with the horse. In order for someone to have a mutual understanding, they have to be aware of how their behaviors and emotions influence a horse’s behaviors and emotions. I interpreted if clients are aware of horses in EAP, but they are not aware of themselves, therapy will not go well, and vice versa. Thus, the essence of natural horsemanship is similar to the essence of EAP.

Theme 2: professional reasons for practicing EAP. Participants practice EAP from their professional viewpoints. They found the concepts of EAP fit well to their therapeutic approach. Furthermore, participants did not have to do many artificial interventions because mostly horses led sessions and let sessions unfold in a natural way. The effectiveness of EAP let participants believe that therapy works.

Fits well with therapeutic approach. All of the participants described that they practice EAP because the essential concepts and therapeutic perspectives of EAP match their original therapeutic approaches. Seven participants (Kriss, Michael, Pia, Becky, Jean-Jacques, Sue, and Julie Anne) trained initially in traditional psychotherapy and have more years practicing traditional psychotherapy than EAP. When they discovered EAP, they added it to their work. When adding EAP to their practice, participants experienced the process of assimilation and accommodation to their original therapeutic perspectives. To assimilate, participants had to change or adjust what they had learned from EAP to mesh with their original therapeutic

perspectives. To accommodate, the participants had to change or adjust their original therapeutic perspectives in order to process the new information they learned in EAP.

Most of the participants love horses and EAP fits well with who they are and fits with their personal experiences. In other words, participants did not have to change their preexisting beliefs very much in therapy. When they incorporate EAP into their work, it seems there is more assimilation than accommodation. Participants' therapeutic perspectives about EAP tended to be close to their original therapeutic perspectives; otherwise, participants would have had to deal with a tremendous cognitive dissonance. They may have had to adjust their therapeutic skills to practice EAP, but those findings are covered in other sections.

I do mindfulness-based work—mindfulness-based work is all about present-centered and acceptance-based, acceptance for who you are, your emotions, whatever is going on for you in the moment... That acceptance is the first healing step in the therapeutic approach. So, with horses, because horses need us to be authentic and congruent, we need to offer ourselves some acceptance. And we need to be present right now and aware of what is going on, otherwise, we check out. We can be brought back into our body by bites or something. So it ties in nature. The other thing is that in the mindfulness-based approach and transpersonal approach there is a view of inter-being. Interconnectedness... This is the concept which is created by Thich Nhat Hanh, who is the Vietnamese Zen monk... And he sees us as inter-being... what you do, think, or feel affects me, affects horses, and vice versa... Because we are inter-are, we can see that playing out with horses. Not just with the horses. It is nature. It is the weather... so we inter-are with animals and nature. (Jean-Jacques)

Jean-Jacques believes everything is connected at a deeper level, even if the connections are invisible. He did not use the word “harmony,” but the concept of harmony between things that are connected seems to be an underlying idea in this quote. When he talked about working with horses, he noted that we have to offer some acceptance to ourselves because horses need us to be congruent. Harmony in our internal world means we do not try to judge or fight our thoughts or emotions. When he talked about interconnectedness, he was referring to the concept of harmony between human beings and the outside world. From this perspective, anything in

nature can teach us something, not only horses. According to Jean-Jacques' perspectives, the concepts of EAP and the horses' capabilities in EAP support his mindfulness-based work. EAP validates Jean-Jacques' beliefs about oneness and interconnectedness, which is similar to the biophilia hypothesis concept that we live in an interconnected ecological system. The psyche and the ecological system are interconnected (Gullone, 2000; Roszak, 1995).

I was pretty much a student of Carl Rogers—had to be. So what I see with that is unconditional positive regard for clients, being very non-directive, being a listener in all the forms of listening. In the case of horses, we listen with our eyes cause we are observing. The things we can see and the things we can sense, with the other parts of our beings, and the dynamic relationships with the horses. Believing that people can find their answers, I mean that is the corner stone of the client-centered theory. Just it is like the corner stone of equine-assisted psychotherapy. (Michael)

EAP therapists usually give clients the least guidance when the clients interact with horses. Therapists do not care what is the right or wrong ways for clients to interact with horses; they care about what comes out for clients during the process of interaction. This is what it means to be nondirective; to trust that clients can find their own answers. According to Michael's perspectives, the concepts of client-centered therapy are similar to the concepts of EAP. Both client-centered psychotherapy and EAP are non-directive and believe that clients know answers of their questions.

Therapy sessions unfold naturally. Most of the participants (Becky, Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, Kriss, Michael, Pia, and Thom) mentioned that horses help therapy sessions unfold in a very natural way. When they practice EAP, there are few artificial interventions. Specifically, therapists' interventions, horses' reactions, and the environment are described as being natural and organic.

I think the difference is because the horse is just the horse, and it is all trying to be a horse. It is gonna do whatever it does. That is not anything that I am making up in my head. So, like when I am in the office, I am reflecting back to a person what I heard them say or practicing that empathic listening and all that. Sometimes I wonder if I am making up

what the client is trying to say. So when I am just observing the horse, and the horse is doing what it does. When I reflect back to the client, I say “I saw the horse do this.” And then I am saying “What do you think that is about when the horse did that?” Then I know I am not making it up. (Becky)

...But with a horse it is much more difficult [to have an agenda] because horses tell you “I don’t care.” Things unfold in a very organic way. (Jean-Jacques)

Becky’s quote illustrates the idea that therapists’ interventions and horses’ reactions naturally unfold. Becky’s quote also emphasizes the challenges of relying on verbal language in traditional psychotherapy. When Becky said, “Sometimes I wonder if I am making up what the client is trying to say,” the word “trying” is meaningful in the sentence. It means there is a gap between what a client wants to say and what the client actually says. Then, there is another gap between what the client actually says, and what the therapist understands the client to say. Because therapists and clients have their own lenses through which they see and interpret information, therapists may not always understand what clients want to express and vice versa. In contrast, working with horses is more direct and requires less verbal language. Furthermore, horses react to clients quickly and authentically.

The following quotes from Julie Anne and Kriss reflect their beliefs that EAP therapists’ interventions are very natural.

It is organic. I mean, for us we allow sessions to unfold. So, we might have a plan, or an activity or two that might help clients focus on becoming aware of something that they need to become aware of. But, a lot of time the client and the horse will tell us what needs to happen. So, we allow that to happen. And the training in EAGALA too, especially just getting out of horses’ way. Get our stuff out of the way. (Julie Anne)

It is sort of like I do not know what direction it is gonna go. I never do. It is sort of a mystery and a willingness to allow it to unfold rather than, you know, thinking this is the way it’s going to go today—like this. That will be controlling. That inhibits the beauty that comes out from these therapy sessions. (Kriss)

Julie Anne and Kriss expressed that they try not to direct clients in EAP. They often have to consciously “step back” and get out of the horses’ and clients’ way. When Kriss said “I do not

know what direction it is gonna go,” it showed that she had to accept the uncertainty of EAP. When she said, “It is sort of a mystery...,” I interpreted this to mean that she feels comfortable trusting and respecting the unknown journey in EAP. Because EAP unfolds naturally, most of the participants expressed they did not have to do much work during EAP sessions. For instance, Kriss said, “It is just so infinitely easy. People see stuff, get stuff, feel stuff in EAP sessions...” Becky shared, “The sessions themselves are easier for me as a therapist because really what I am doing is just observing. I am not doing a lot of talking at all.”

Believe EAP works. Most of the participants (Becky, Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, Kriss, and Kelly) were straightforward in expressing their belief in EAP during the interviews. Because they believe in EAP, they are encouraged to keep practicing it.

I think I do this work, this therapy, for 5 years...I will say first that the EAP has validated my understanding of precisely oneness because I see proof of that every day, and second I can say for sure that therapy works, which is good. Yep. Because I really believe in what I do or what the horses do. (Jean-Jacques)

The effectiveness of EAP lets Jean-Jacques believe that psychotherapy works and lets him believe that he and horses can help clients.

It [EAP] does impact my office work. I have to drive up to the ranch because my office isn't at the ranch. Ideally, like I said, I would have them together. And I would have a fluid movement between the arena and whatever work I was doing. But there is drive time. There is sometimes I need to shower. There is sometimes I make less money because I am paying for Mel (equine specialist) and ranch and they are holding the insurance. These are all issues that go around doing equine therapy...But I don't want to give up because it is so powerful. (Julie Anne)

Because Julie Anne believes in EAP, she is willing to make some adjustments to life's inconvenience in order to continue conducting this work.

I do not know if we always hear from clients in the office setting, sometimes we do, but not always, hear how much of a difference therapy has made for the clients' life. But there hasn't been a person yet, who has failed to thank me over and over again for the opportunity to work with the horses. So, I know that it has been very impactful in their life in whatever ways. (Becky)

Clients' feedback lets Becky know that EAP influences clients and that she is doing something good for clients.

EAP speeds up therapy. Seven participants (Becky, Julie Anne, Kriss, Michael, Pia, Sue, and Thom) emphasized their belief that EAP helps clients make significant change very quickly, thus shortening the therapy.

And this [EAP] is so fast and brief. And certainly I wish all my clients just wanted to do EAP. A lot of people just "nah, I just want to talk." A lot of people think they just need to talk. So it's influenced me, sometimes we need to stop talking, and start to listen to ourselves. So I think that one huge way it is like therapy should be, fast and it doesn't need to be long...I think especially as we access our true self, which can happen so fast in the field that the answer will come rapidly. So, we don't need to spend months or years talking away just experiencing connecting to your true self, and you do that with horses. (Kriss)

According to Kriss' perspective, horses help clients access to their true selves quickly, allowing clients to progress faster than in traditional psychotherapy. Furthermore, Kriss believes sometimes talking can actually present a barrier for clients to connect to their true selves. This is similar to Julie Anne's statement, "Because we can talk around the whole thing and never go deep in the session. That is the pattern..."

With the horse they have to be who they really are cause if they're not, the horse will show them in some ways...the horse is either not gonna play with them, haha, or the horse is gonna show them somehow that they are not being their true selves. So, people are really able to be their true self more, I think, easily with horses than they are just one-on-one with the therapist. That is my opinion having done this work a few years. I see the result a lot quicker than I do if I'm only meeting in the office with someone. (Becky)

My interpretation from these quotes is that, according to these participants, horses' genuineness encourages clients' genuineness, or that horses push clients to be genuine. In contrast, in a therapy room, therapists may not push their clients to access to their true selves until the rapport is built.

Theme 3: borrowing from horses' strengths. From a biological perspective, different species evolve in different ways for their best adaptation in the environment. Each species has evolved with unique advantages that help to ensure that species' continued existence. Nonhuman species may be better at something than humans are. For instance, horses are more aware of the environment than humans because horses, as herd animals and living in the wild, must be aware of potential predators at all time. Participants in this study described shortcomings that they may bring to the clinical relationship and how the incorporation of horses in EAP can help complement these disadvantages.

Horses have capabilities that humans do not. Five participants (Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, Michael, Pia, and Thom) voiced a belief that horses have natural characteristics that are different from humans, and furthermore that these differences enable horses to help clients in ways that therapists cannot. For example, several participants (Jean-Jacques, Michael, Pia and Thom) described horses as having a nonjudgmental nature, a characteristic that they aspire to have but ultimately believe they are not able to have as naturally as horses can.

As nonjudgmental beings that they (horses) are, they can really give VERY VERY clean and clear responses to the client from what the client is projecting on to the horses... I couldn't do that as a clinician because everything goes through my personal filter. (Pia)

Pia admits that as a human being she is shaped by past experiences that have shaped her perspectives and her own personal filter through which she sees and interprets things. This is similar to the constructivist narrative approach, which posits that everyone sees things through their own lenses and their own angles, and so they have different perceptions and interpretations. These perceptions and interpretations may be related to past experiences and may trigger some emotions, so it is hard to be totally nonjudgmental. However, horses bring fewer preconceived opinions than participants to their interactions with clients. Jean-Jacques verbalized this by saying, "Horses do not respond to 'Oh, this is Ping-Tzu. The doctoral student from Taiwan. So,

yes, we will do this with her.’ It is, again, simply where she is at today.” What Jean-Jacques wanted to express was even though I am still Ping-Tzu, my mind, body, and emotions are not exactly the same today as they were a few weeks ago. Horses perceive a person at a deeper level instead of a superficial or socially ascribed identity.

Julie Anne majored in zoology and had a neurology background, so she is particularly interested in understanding why horses can help people from neuroscience and evolutionary perspectives.

The Institution of Heart Math have done a bunch of studies around the intelligence of the heart, and the electromagnetic field of hearts, and the neurology of hearts. And what we know about the electromagnetic field of hearts is that it goes out in all directions about the length of our arms. The brains have a very little electromagnetic field. The heart has a huge electromagnetic field. So, you can imagine in the presence of a horse how far out that electromagnetic field goes. That is the way I explain myself while being in the presence of a horse. For some reasons, one it brings us present-centered and it can be so calming to be in the presence of a horse...Because we are in that electromagnetic field I believe it pulls us into present state of awareness, and horses often will be so nurturing with people that need that. So, most people do not end up leaving the arena because they get what they need in there. (Julie Anne)

“The brains have a very little electromagnetic field. The heart has a huge electromagnetic field.” The way I interpret this sentence is that, according to Julie Anne, humans tend to trust and rely on minds to process information, but it seems that hearts play the other important role of processing information.

Julie Anne’s perspective reminded me of the Equine Guided Education training that I received from Ariana Strozzi in 2012. Ariana explained that the reason humans feel calm and connected to horses is because horses have a bigger heart than humans, and when humans stand up, our hearts and the horses’ hearts are close to each other and at the same level. In that training, I thought it was a “beautiful” interpretation from a horseperson’s and a poet’s perspective. After interviewing Julie Anne, I found both Julie Anne and Arianna seem to express the same concept

that humans' and horses' hearts play a strong function in an invisible and unconscious way.

Julie Anne described her belief about why horses, from the evolutionary perspective, can read other species' intentions or inner landscapes.

My understanding from a neuroscience background or basis is that horses have a thousand times more mirror neurons than human do ... We have a lot of mirror neurons when we are babies. And if we were reflected, if the baby coos, we coo; if the baby smiles, we smile. When it cries, we try to meet its needs. Those mirror neurons continue to grow for a period of time, or they will get pruned... If we are neglected in that way the mirror neurons get pruned and that has to do with how our attachment styles develop in there. Horses retain their mirror neurons in order to do this whole herd thing and stay safe... Because they have mirror neurons, they are able to read our inner landscape and act it out. (Julie Anne)

Because horses can do something that the participants cannot, they humble the participants. Jean-Jacques said, "It is the humble work." Pia said, "It humbles me both as a clinician and as an individual." Kriss said, "I am like in awe 'cause clients just get what they just need." I found the similar expressions scattered in different participants' transcriptions.

Horses complement participants' therapeutic work. Some participants (Sue and Thom) found they have some disadvantages when they practice therapy. Incorporating horses into therapy complements their disadvantages, and horses and participants form a satisfactory or balanced whole. What I want to clarify is that participants' view of disadvantages may not be drawbacks when they are not in therapy.

I am an Aries type, very influential, strong, and can be overpowering. And so I think animal-assisted work really helps me temper ... I think presence-wise, you know. I am very direct. I am very assertive. I am a bigger person and I think it is the directness. I am fairly direct in therapy as well, but can be very loving with kids, but can be overpowering. So again, bringing a partner in and having the animals or horses really help with like I said tempering that intensity. (Sue)

Sue found when animals are present in therapy, she and the overall dynamic are calmer and softer. She incorporates animals into therapy to help herself become a better therapist by improving the relational dynamics.

Thom, a white male, works with many Native American and Hispanic adolescents, and he notices that race and the gender can be a barrier for him when working with these populations. “White man” symbolizes authority for these adolescents. Especially Thom, who is 65 years old; his age symbolizes and reinforces this authority. Thom and I had a conversation:

I: You mentioned as a White male when you work with minorities that can be a barrier.

T: Sure. I recognize that. I have to have some kind of advantage. If I am gonna do it, I need the advantage. And the horses are my advantage.

I: So it is like the horses fill a gap.

T: Exactly. They are like the catalyst. (Thom)

My interpretation is that in Thom’s view, the horses’ presence decreases the power differential and the barrier. Race, gender, and age are identities derived from the social structure, but horses do not recognize these social identities. According to these participants, when they incorporate horses into therapy, horses cause a change in relational dynamics.

Theme 4: sense of being destined to practice EAP. In addition to practicing EAP from personal and professional viewpoints, six participants (Becky, Jean-Jacques, Kriss, Michael, Sue, and Thom) had a sense of being destined to practice EAP. In other words, it was a meaningful coincidence that the participants learned and still practice EAP. Two participants (Kriss and Thom) used religious terms to describe their journey.

I met a woman who was just two blocks away. It was sort a rural area, and she had 8 horses. Long story short, she and I became best friends. I rode with her every Monday for 5 years. She taught me so much about riding and horse-care, and she actually let me do equine-assisted psychotherapy with her horses even. So it is just like a life changing experience meeting her. Her name is Debbie, and she just changed my life. (Kriss)

The way Kriss described her experiences was: “I met her in 1998. Everything changed for me because I was in such a miraculous situation,” “So serendipitous was my meeting with Debbie,” “Like a just kind of divine meeting. A meeting that was meant to happen.” Thom made a similar association to religion.

I explained I made a decision to do what I think I needed to do, but then there is another force that is at work that decides what I really need. And the force supersedes me and it is at play always in my life that force...some people will call it God whatever. It is at play and it overrides, at times, me when it gets important. (Thom)

Thom believes in a Higher Power and believes God arranged something important to happen for him. In both Thom's and Kriss' stories, the arrangement helps them connect to their selves (see details in chapter 4). I saw there was the appreciation in Kriss' story when she used the word "miraculous" and "serendipitous." There was a sense of surrender to a larger spiritual force in Thom's story when he used the words "supersede" and "override."

Other participants (Becky, Jean-Jacques, Michael and Sue) did not use religious terms during their interview. When they looked back at their journey in EAP, they found there was no explanation. For instance, Sue said:

I just think somehow things that are supposed to happen do. You know? Who knows why I connected with people that chose to do that, chose to certify, chose to pursue it...It was not a planned thing. It is more like just circumstance in my life and the horses come back in and we reconnect with them. (Sue)

Becky shared her career transition from artist to therapist. She said, "It just seems like it was meant to be that happened. It was like I did not really look for it. It just was laid in my lap." I saw "acceptance" in both Becky's and Sue's story, which means they are open to opportunities and respond to them.

The journey that these participants (Becky, Jean-Jacques, Kriss, Sue, and Thom) described taking to learn about and practice EAP is very similar to participants' (Becky, Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, Kriss, and Thom) descriptions of the journey they and their clients experience during EAP sessions. Several participants did not make a rigid plan to achieve a specific result. Rather, they described things happening in a natural and synchronistic way. With EAP, participants realized that they cannot really plan how horses and clients will interact with

each other. Rather, when they respect and trust the process, things will happen in a natural and synchronistic way in therapy. This is illustrated in Kriss' description, "I am like in awe cause clients just get what they need..." In participants' personal lives, participants are in awe. For instance, when Jean-Jacques talked about his new life and new career on the farm, he said, "Thank you, horses." In both cases, participants had a sense of being guided by horses in their personal and professional lives.

Question 2-1: What are Therapeutic Factors in EAP?

Research question 2-1 explored participants' perspectives about therapeutic factors from horses in EAP. If participants incorporate horses into therapy, then the horses themselves must play an important role in the process of change. Yalom (1995) defined therapeutic factors as "the actual mechanisms of effecting change in the patient" (p. xi). Based on this definition, the goal of this research question is to identify the horse-specific therapeutic factors that effect change in EAP. Four themes were discovered in the data related to this research question: (a) horses actively use non-verbal language to communicate with therapists and clients in EAP; (b) horses are naturally therapeutic just by being themselves; (c) clients actively do something with horses in EAP; (d) therapists actively adapt strategies with horses in EAP.

Table 5.3

Therapeutic Factors from Horses in EAP

Main Themes	Sub-themes	Categories
1. Horses actively use non-verbal language to communicate with therapists and clients	1.1 Horses remind therapists when to step back 1.2 Horses confront clients to be authentic 1.3 Horses reflect clients' inner world 1.4. Horses deeply connect with clients	
2. Horses are naturally therapeutic just by being themselves	2.1 Characteristics that are similar across different horses 2.2 Characteristics that are different across different horses	2.1.1 Horses are playful 2.1.2 Horses are big 2.1.3 Horses respond to clients in the present 2.1.4 Horses are calm 2.1.5 Horses raise clients' awareness 2.1.6 Horses' physical presence can be comforting 2.2.1 Horses have different personalities 2.2.2 Horses represent different issues 2.2.3 Horses have different life stories
3. Clients actively do something with horses in EAP	3.1 Clients find metaphors 3.2 Clients project their thoughts or feelings onto horses 3.3 Clients develop empathy toward horses	
4. Therapists actively adapt strategies with horses	4.1 Therapists incorporate horses to provide different levels of challenges for clients. 4.2 Therapists incorporate specific horses to build clients' inner strength	

Theme 1: horses actively use non-verbal language to communicate with therapists and clients. According to the participants, horses actively use non-verbal language to communicate with clients or therapists, meaning that horses use specific behaviors to react to clients' or therapists' needs. Participants varied in terms of viewing horses doing something intentionally for clients' or therapists' needs, or whether horses' specific behaviors came from

the horses just being themselves. I categorized data into theme one and theme two according to how participants interpreted horses' behaviors. If participants believed horses actively use non-verbal language to communicate with them and their clients, data was coded under theme one. If horses are naturally therapeutic just by being themselves and their presence promoted positive changes in therapy, the data belonged to theme two.

Horses remind therapists when to step back. Two participants (Jean-Jacques and Pia) shared that sometimes horses use behaviors to tell participants to step back or send them away, meaning that participants give space to clients and horses. In other words, participants have to listen to horses and understand what horses want to tell them in EAP sessions.

I have another horse, the alpha mare, the big black one ... She is very sensitive to people in distress. So, when a client comes who is either suicidal or very sad, very depressed that horse goes straight to her and stands in between me and my clients. And if I try to process, or talk, that horse just sends me away. She really does. She turns her head to me and pushes me away, so I step back. And I let my client be with that horse. And usually what happens is that when I step back, the horse will come closer, sometimes even curl around the client. And usually people end hugging the horse and crying, and crying and feeling healed and heard and safe while crying. (Jean-Jacques)

Jean-Jacques described how his alpha mare used the slightly aggressive behavior to tell him to stay back and created a space just for himself and clients.

The way horses really help me I would say most profoundly is to know when to back off. We have a tendency to just fill space with words. And when I do EAP, there is an interaction going on whether that horse moves away or toward the clients. It doesn't matter. Any kind of interactions, a pattern and /or shift, or anything that is very unique in that moment. For instance, horses all of the sudden right in front of the client will just drop down and lie down. I just had that happen. That was really interesting. "Wow" So just let that be and not ask questions from my own curiosity. Because as professionals, as we all want to be, we also have natural curiosity that comes up: "What just happened?" Right? I think we have a tendency as clinicians to fill a lot of space with questions that really refer to our curiosity, instead of questions that refer to something that is happening that is profound for the client. So I call it the power pause and horses really do give me that. (Pia)

From Pia's perspective, when horses lie down in front of clients, it symbolizes a pause. It seems that horses tell her to step back and keep quiet in the moment. I interpreted that Pia

believes when horses lie down in front of clients, they create a peaceful atmosphere for clients. They seem to tell her to maintain a sense of tranquility for clients. Pia called it “the power pause.” It is the powerful silence in therapy. It reminded me of Thom’s story when his client told him, “The most [change] seems to happen when you are not talking and I am not talking.”

Horses confront clients to be authentic. Four participants (Becky, Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, and Kriss) shared that horses sometimes behave aggressively to push their clients to connect to their authentic emotions or to work on their issues. The example from Jean-Jacques explained how a horse pushed a client to be congruent. The example from Jean-Jacques explained how a horse represented a client’s issue and pushed the client to work on the issue.

She is perfectly safe to be around. I have children work with her. No problem with children. She is even good with babies, but if you are fighting your emotions or not in touch with your emotions, she can become dangerous. I have seen this horse challenge people, push them with her nose, be very aggressive, start pulling them around. Even sometime she started to strike somebody...but generally horses validate authenticity. So when you are true to yourself, when you are very authentic with your experience in the moment, with your emotions, etc., horses validate that. Some horses will go to the extreme of becoming a little bit defiant with people who suppress their emotions. And these are the same horses that when these people suddenly accept their emotions, are able to name them, these horses’ behavior will change and will become very accepting. To me that is the validation of authenticity. (Jean-Jacques)

Because horses were described as validating authenticity, they were seen as being able to help clients be aware of how they are feeling and what they are thinking in the moment. Julie

Anne said:

J: I had this guy. He got stepped on. He was leading a horse around, and the horse just pushes him, steps on his foot. It is like he could break his foot.

I: On purpose?

J: On purpose. Of course the horse is doing that on purpose because the horse could go to the end of the lead rope. But it pushes this guy and steps on him. He didn’t even notice. And that is what is going on for him is that he would not even notice his own pain. He would numb out and he would not notice his own pain. He did not even try to move the horse...just kept the horse stepping on this foot.

I: No boundary.

J: Yep. No boundary at all. The horse tried to show him. But I am like, “What do we do?”

We intervene?" The horse is gonna break his foot if he does not even feel his own pain.
(Julie Anne)

From Julie Anne's perspective, the client blocked his feelings; he even blocked himself from the outside world. When he led a horse, he did not really connect to the horse. That was the reason he did not even notice the horse was hurting him. Because horses' behavior is concrete, confrontational, and revealing, at some level clients are forced to connect to their inner selves if they want to seek a real connection with the horses. Horses' behaviors also help therapists know more about how their clients connect to the outside world.

Horses reflect clients' inner world. Most of the participants (Becky, Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, Kriss, and Thom) described experiences where horses engaged in unusual behaviors in EAP that reflected clients' issues. They said horses seem to mirror what's inside of clients or how clients feel. They believed the horses did that for the clients' needs, that it did not happen only by coincidence.

I had a session, not with my current equine specialist, a different equine specialist with two girls whose parents were going through a divorce. And their mom had a lot of trauma, sexual trauma, in her childhood and she seems like she has that borderline personality characteristic. And she was constantly just all over the place and angry and sad. And there were so many conflicts between the parents, and they were separated. So, we asked the girls to do an obstacle course. And they build the obstacle course. You have probably seen and done this activity, right? So, they built like stairs, rocks and lava and they have to get across the hot lava on these rocks to this other side. Well, they did not notice they set up the stairs. The stairs are like an escape route from the whole thing. The horse actually picked the stair up and turned them over. Somehow the girls weren't paying attention. They moved away from the obstacles. Two of the horses, Geldings, these are like horses in their twenties [years old]. One of the horses kept grabbing the other horse's front leg and picking it up in its mouth, which is such a weird behavior. Horses do not do that.

I: Yep. Right.

J: He kept picking on his leg and holding it up. Then the horses started rearing up like stallions and fighting.

I: Wow.

J: And they were fighting. I do not know? Like in front of the girls they were going for the jugular veins and they kept rising up. They looked like two stallions fighting.

I: Wow, it is not just play.

J: Ya. These horses live together for the last 20 years.

I: Very unusual.

J: The girls just like, “ah~ (scared).” [I asked] “What does this remind you of?” [They said] “That is just like our parents fighting.” And they felt the same feeling as their parents fighting. The horses act out the parental fight. And we said “what do you need? You know, this is very scary situation for you.” They said “we need a wall.” So, the biggest gelding... There were several horses in the arena, 3 or 4 horses in the arena. The two horses just fighting and fighting, and do this crazy stuff. I do not feel unsafe, so we do not try to stop it. The biggest gelding walks in front of them and creates a wall in between them. And we’re like, “How do you feel now?” They started laughing because they ask for a wall and the horse walks in front of them. The horse is so tall. They can no longer see their parents fighting. From there, we try to figure out what you can do to keep yourself safe, right? What kind of wall do you need to keep yourself safe right now in your situation? It was literal. (Julie Anne)

This is an example that Julie Anne gave me about horses’ unusual behaviors and how they can act out clients’ inner landscapes. During the first interview, Julie Anne said, “My understanding from a neuroscience background or basis is that horses have a thousand times more mirror neurons than human do.” Julie Anne believes this is the reason that horses act unusually for specific clients, and that horses’ behaviors can release the intensity when clients’ emotions overflow. For example, Julie Anne said, “They started laughing because they ask for a wall and the horse walks in front of them” Julie Anne believes that this sort of behavior shows the playfulness of EAP. (More details about the playfulness of horses will be discussed in the theme 2.)

Thom and I also had a conversation about horses using unusual behaviors to reflect the clients’ inner world:

I: You said you don’t know what happen inside of horses?

T: Right. I think we need to grow that area because everyone who does this kind of work I have ever talked to has stories about just phenomenal things that happen to people. But for us to ever get recognized, and for insurance to recognize it ... We need some good research and we need to be able to measure some of the things that happen for the clients, [and] for the horses too. So that is the big challenge that we have ahead of us. (Thom)

Thom pointed out an important issue with EAP. Because EAP therapists do not know why some horses act out or display unusual behaviors to reflect clients’ inner worlds in therapy,

it becomes very hard to share these experiences with other professionals. Kriss described her experiences with horses in EAP, “It is so uncanny sometimes,” and “It is the mystery.”

Jean-Jacques had a sense of humor about his horses’ unexplainable behaviors, he said, “But why, I have no idea. And Ping-Tzu, you are welcome to go in and interview them (means horses).”

Those participants observed how horses’ behaviors reflected clients’ issues, but they expressed that those observations were hard to understand by a rational mind.

Horses deeply connect with clients. Some participants (Becky, Jean-Jacques, Kriss, and Thom) found that some horses respond very well to clients’ specific emotions. Horses might show behaviors that make clients feel the horses are “with them” and understand them. When this happens, clients feel safe to show their authentic emotions to the horses. Often a deep connection forms between clients and horses that helps client feel safe in expressing their emotions.

I have another horse, the alpha mare, the big black one. I will show you now. She is very sensitive to people in distress. So, when a client comes who is either suicidal or very sad, very depressed that horse goes straight to her and stands in between me and my clients. And if I try to process, or talk, that horse just sends me away. She really does. She turns her head to me and pushes me away, so I step back. And I let my client be with that horse. And usually what happens is that when I step back, the horse will come closer, sometimes even curl the neck around the client. And usually people end hugging the horse and crying, and crying and feeling healed and heard and safe while crying. That is that particular horse’s specialty. I will not do it... Since then she has been the most amazing horse. And I can tell you, Ping-Tzu, I think that horse has saved lives. I can think of a number of young women, not just young, who sometimes express intense despair and pain, and she will come and run to them and be with them. (Jean-Jacques)

I always think with the shelter clients it is like a catharsis for them... They need to sob and cry. And that is ok. They can do that here. And the horses are usually ...just there for the clients. I do not know if you have ever had a dog, like you are crying, he will come and sit in your lap, or cat. I think that if horses can get into somebody’s lap they would. So, Willie particularly will just come and stand very close when it happens. The clients will rub their horses when they are crying. I think that helps them to feel that: “[the] horse is there for me, and that horse is taking my emotion. And it is ok with it.” [The horse is] not trying to move away, not do anything mean to defend themselves. Just take the emotions. It is very beneficial to the clients. (Becky)

Both Becky and Jean-Jacques have their own herd with whom they can practice EAP. They know their individual horses very well, and they have found that some of their horses respond very well to clients' specific emotions. When a horse approaches a client and a client ends up hugging or rubbing the horse, it is a visible and mutual connection. When clients feel safe enough to disclose their intense emotions, that is the invisible emotional connection. Both quotes also showed that touch can happen between clients and horses naturally, but it can be an issue between clients and therapists. I will thoroughly discuss on touch issues in question 3.

Theme 2: horses are naturally therapeutic just by being themselves. Whereas the first theme concerned behavior on the part of horses that was actively therapeutic, this theme concerns the idea that horses' mere presence and natural characteristics have an inherently therapeutic quality. In other words, in theme two, horses are not seen as doing something specifically for clients or therapists. Their presence and natural characteristics can simply promote positive changes in therapy. There are two subthemes under this theme: (a) characteristics that are similar across different horses, and (b) characteristics that are different across different horses. "Characteristics that are similar across different horses" means most horses have those natural characteristics to promote healing in therapy. Under this subtheme, I discuss that horses are playful, horses are big, horses respond to clients in the present, horses are calm, horses raise clients' awareness, and horses' physical presence can be comforting. "Characteristics that are different across different horses" emphasizes each horse's individuality. Under this subtheme, I discuss that horses have different personalities, horses represent different issues, and horses have different life stories.

Characteristics that are similar across different horses 1: horses are playful. Four participants (Michael, Pia, Sue, and Thom) reported clients to be more relaxed and able to work

on their issues when they work with horses in EAP than when they don't. They also described clients as being more motivated to engage in therapy because horses are playful or clients might interpret horses' behaviors as being playful. The playfulness from horses brings the joyfulness in clients. Thom shared a related story about working with a 17-year old residential adolescent boy.

He said: "What I want to do more than anything is to laugh." I want to be able to laugh. And he said, "Nothing is funny anymore. I make people laugh, but I want to laugh." And that stuck with me. He said a lot of things, but that stuck with me. So what kind of therapy could someone utilize to get that kind of result? I don't know. If someone cannot laugh, I don't know what to do. So a couple of sessions in, he enjoyed being with horses, he likes being away from the crowd, just the two of us out in the field of the pasture and horses. And about the third time out there this horse all of a sudden just did something bizarre. And we looked at each other, made eye contact and he kind of smiled...and then the horse looked at us. And whatever the bizarre thing was the horse then did it three times stronger. And he started laughing...And I started laughing...I said to him, "How did it go today?" He said, "You know, for a little while out there, all that weight lifted off for me." (Thom)

Michael gave an example to explain how horses relieve clients' intense emotions.

Something special takes place when they (the clients) get out in the arena and essentially play with the horses, and something brings a little bit of joy, a little bit of relief from what they are feeling, and a distraction from the focus on the painful stuff. And so, it kind of helps them get their life back and give children their childhood back. (Michael)

Both quotes illustrate these participants' views that when clients work with horses in EAP, they focused on outside movements, which means their attention is focused on the horses and environment instead of their own pain. They work on their issues and move forward in a relaxed way because sometimes horses' playful behaviors can relieve the intensity of emotions in clients. In other words, they do not have to work on their issues in a painful way.

Characteristics that are similar across different horses 2: horses are big. Five participants (Becky, Jean-Jacques, Julie-Anne, Kriss and Thom) described the horses' size as being potentially clinically helpful.

I think being in the arena with 1,000 pound animals gets the brain very, very alert because the person is out of their comfort zone. And my understanding is that the brain really

turns on for learning when you are out of your comfort zone— but not so far out of your comfort zone that you are in fight, or flight, or freeze. (Julie Anne)

From Julie Anne’s perspective, horses bring clients into the learning zone, but not into the panic zone. I interpreted “the brain really turns on for learning” also means that clients are highly engaged in therapy. Earlier in the interview, Julie Anne said horses symbolize different levels of challenges to different clients. If clients panic around horses, she might have to make some adjustments before clients interact with horses directly.

Particularly for clients who have been direct victims of violence, working with a very large animal and putting your trust and faith in that animal, and also at the end of the session when you have been up close and personal with that very large animal and you have not been hurt. It is very empowering. It builds trust. It builds self-confidence. (Becky)

I have seen a client, at some point, said she is thinking of suicide, and it was hard for her to say it. She said it. She cried. That big mare walked 50 yards and came right next to her and stayed with her, and would not leave her. And because she is the alpha of the herd, all the other horses followed her and they were all around that woman who felt ... Wonderful, wonderful support. (Jean-Jacques)

According to Becky’s and Jean-Jacques’ perspectives, the large size of horses might be perceived as a challenge (Becky’s quote) or the support (Jean-Jacques’ quote) to clients who are suffering from emotional distress. If those clients can build a trusting relationship with horses, they might internalize the strength of big animals or they might build confidence by seeing that they can take care of themselves well.

Characteristics that are similar across different horses 3: horses respond to clients in the present. Six participants (Becky, Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, Kriss, Michael, and Pia) shared that horses respond to who clients are in this moment instead of who clients were in the past or who clients will be in the future. In other words, compared to humans, horses carry fewer preconceptions or expectations into their interactions with clients, and thus are able to interact

with them more fully in the present moment. They meet clients where they are every time when they see them.

The horses give the immediate, present-centered feedback to the client, so we can tell what the client's thoughts will come out and there will be a shift to the horse. And we ask, "What were you thinking just then? What was happening inside of you just then?" And the horse is just like a biofeedback mechanism almost. They will give immediate feedback. So that clients get to see themselves. We don't tell them that the horses are gonna act out what is going on inside. We just let it happen organically. (Julie Anne)

From Julie Anne's perspective, the immediate, present-based feedback from horses not only helps clients know more about themselves, but also give therapists some information to provide interventions. Becky said, "I always say the horses do what they need to do in that moment, and usually not what I think they will do, but whatever they do is what they need to do." This statement showed that Becky has tremendous trust in horses. Becky expressed that it is hard for her to anticipate what will happen in EAP because horses' present and intuitive feedback will tell her what the most important thing is in the moment.

Characteristics that are similar across different horses 4: horses are calm. Half of the participants (Becky, Michael, Pia, and Sue) stated that horses' calm presence help clients and participants mentally and emotionally slow down. When clients calm down, they get in touch with who they are. When participants slow down, they can be fully present with clients.

How equine therapy helps? There is, one of the things that will happen is it is easier for everyone to be receptive to prepare themselves for whatever changes might need to take place. Because there is a calming influence, we do a lot of in-hand work with families with small children, and so they are touching the horses, so they are drawn to that. They seem to be drawn to horses. They want to have that contact and seem to comfort them. Horses are very...are very quiet, so people will tend to quiet a little bit. They will quiet down a little bit. Their anxiety level will lower. That is the first thing that happens. They have a tendency naturally for their anxiety levels to go down...There is a tendency for them to just slow down and be in the moment with horses. So that means they can make that shift from being very logical, very cerebral to being more affectionate, more intimate, more emotional, more in the present with their own emotions and emotions with other family members. And they become more aware of how they are interacting and what the needs of other family members may be. (Michael)

From Michael's perspective, when horses' calmness slows down clients' minds, clients' rational minds no longer occupy their whole attention. A new space will open up for clients to see relationships and accept new possibilities or changes. Michael further described how horses can help him slow down, and become calmer as a therapist.

It slows me down— slows down my thought process. It gives me an opportunity to sort of attend to the client in a different way without sort of that urgency that I have to be affecting changes. We have tendencies, I think in the office, in traditional therapy to always be looking at I have to be affecting changes... And kind of take that pressure off... We put that pressure on ourselves and it can cause [us] to lose our objectivity... When I say I slow myself down I slow myself down in my head more than anything. And that way I am not tempted to try to live up to my own expectations. I am freer to understand what clients' expectations are and try to meet them at that place. (Michael)

When Michael is focused on trying to live up to his own expectations, he is more focused on his expectations than his clients. Thus, when he feels a sense of urgency to affect change, change becomes paradoxically less possible because he is not really present with his clients. In other words, horses' calmness help participants be fully present with their clients.

Characteristics that are similar across different horses 5: horses raise clients'

awareness. Three participants (Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, and Kriss) indicated that horses help clients stay in the present and pay attention to how they are related to the environment, putting them in a state of mindfulness.

Doing this kind of larger than life, 3D kind of exercises, I think it opens you up because you have to be highly aware. For one thing, I mean tell them at the beginning of the session, new clients I may say, "Let's just talk a little bit about safety issues." But mainly you need to pay attention. You need to pay attention to yourself and to the horses and to me. So, that's a lot of stuff to pay attention to. If you don't pay attention, then you will get hurt. But isn't that like life? So you know, it opens you up, it opens the clients up in a way that they maybe don't get opened up all the time. (Kriss)

When clients stay in their head, they block up a lot of information from the outside world. I interpreted "open up" to mean that clients get out of their shells and make a connection with their environment, which reminds me of the training I took from Ariana Strozzi. A goal of

meditation is being highly aware of oneself. Some people meditate with their eyes closed. When working with horses, Strozzi suggested we open our eyes to be aware of the relation between the environment and ourselves. Strozzi believes we can still center ourselves and stay in the state of non-distraction with our eyes open. It is pretty like horses do. Horses open their eyes to be aware of the relation between the outside world and themselves.

Characteristics that are similar across different horses 6: horses' physical presence can be comforting. Four participants (Becky, Jean-Jacques, Kriss, and Michael) shared that clients might pet or brush horses and the horses just stand closely to be with their clients. Michael primarily works with people who suffer from grief and loss. He shared how he combined EAP with grief and loss work.

We have an activity called “grooming and horse talk.” So, we do a lot of memory work while just standing around the horse grooming. “I like to know what your dad likes. Tell me about it. What is his favorite thing? What is his favorite color? Does anybody else in the family have the same color eyes as him? What is your favorite memory of doing something with your dad?” Those are healing memories. So, they have to remember and think about the person and they like to talk about things that are fun memories like that. And they feel the emotions of loss, but also feel the connection. They feel like they are maintaining that connection. And so, it is kind of cognitive, in that they can just talk about it and tell me a story. But it is kind of emotional, in that they are releasing some of the emotion that they might have been holding within, releasing it out into the world, so that it can be examined by other people. And finding out when they (the emotion) gets outside... “It didn’t kill me.” (Michael)

I interpreted grooming horses can be a metaphor. When clients work on their distress and groom horses, they take care of horses and themselves at the same time. Furthermore, the softness and warmth from horses comfort clients. Michael further said:

Horses' bodies are warm. They have hair on them. We got a child... That whenever he was in the arena near the horse, he would just walking over and leaned his face on. We have another one that did that... They just want to lay their face on the horse. It is warm. It is like a pillow. (Michael)

According to these participants, horses naturally provide a comforting stimulation. Touch can be an issue between therapists and clients. Horses provide a warm touch, which participants cannot offer for clients.

Characteristics that are different across different horses 1: horses have different personalities. Jean-Jacques and Becky described how some clients tended to connect to a specific horse based on their personality, and vice versa, and that this connection promotes the healing process. Both Jean-Jacques and Becky have their own horse herd with which to practice EAP. They know their individual horses very well.

This horse is very sensitive. She is an Arabian and she is a little bit passive aggressive. The only client that she really responds well to is a client of mine who might have antisocial personality disorder. It is too early to say because he is too young to be (uncompleted). Clinically cannot be diagnosed antisocial, but he has oppositional (uncompleted) defiance behavior and has a very hard time connecting with emotions. Maybe a little bit Asperger also. And for some reasons, she worked very well with him. Usually when I have groups or even I have individual clients, she will mostly stay away. She will not like to engage too much. (Jean-Jacques)

According to Jean-Jacques' perspective, each horse resonates with a certain type of person. The Arabian mare described above seems to connect with Jean-Jacques' clients very well based on similarities in their personalities.

It can be hard to separate horses' personalities from their issues because extreme personalities often lead to other issues. If horses' external behaviors are likely inherent, I categorized these descriptions into "Horses have different personalities." If horses' external behaviors are acquired and these behaviors are likely related to their external environments, I categorized these descriptions into "Horses represent different issues."

Characteristics that are different across different horses 2: horses represent different issues. Jean-Jacques and Kriss described how different horses might have had different problems or issues to deal with in their lives and that those problems or issues might resonate with

particular clients. When this happens, clients might start to work on their own problems with a specific horse. Kriss lives in Colorado. She puts her horse in a pasture with other horses. In the winter, those horses lose weight because they do not have much fresh grass to eat and they do not like the hay very much.

In the fall, right now it is spectacularly beautiful and horses are in perfect shape. They are not thin. Their winter coat is gone...And in the winter, she is all thin, so people can deal with their thinness. (Kriss)

I interpret the brutal winter that horses have to deal with as symbolizing mental health issues that clients have to deal with, which might cause clients' eating problems. The horses' thinness might stimulate clients to work on their own body image or eating problems.

The problem is they rescue those babies [baby horses] and keep them together without adult horses, so they grow up without any role models. They are never allowed to become horses in society. It is like children living on a street. They do not have emotional maturity to figure out rules for living together. And there's no adult to show them... this horse arrived here was extremely unregulated...Because completely unregulated. Not responding to people. Until I had a couple of borderline clients who are very unregulated immediately connected with that horse. They were able to work together beautifully. (Jean-Jacques)

According to Jean-Jacques, when clients and horses share their same issues, they connect to each other quickly. People with Borderline Personality Disorder are unstable in their emotions and behaviors. According to object relations theory and these participants' perspectives, I interpret that unregulated horses become objects for this population to project their thoughts and emotions subconsciously (Goka, Yuksel, & Goral, 2006).

Characteristics that are different across different horses 3: horses have different life stories. Different clients tend to connect to different horses based on a particular horse's story. One participant (Becky) mentioned she introduces clients to each horse and shares each horse's story the first time a client comes to the farm to conduct EAP. Some clients relate quickly to a specific horse's story, and the therapy can start from there. The difference between "horses

represent different issues” and “horses have different life stories” is that issues are related to psychological or behavioral problems; however, life stories are related to horses’ life histories.

Life stories are not related to problems and issues.

It is interesting to see when people come in how they bond to one of the horses pretty quickly... I think a lot of the time it’s the horse’s story. We have Randa. Her nickname is Panda Bear because she is black and white and she is a big teddy bear, you know. This girl we work with that she mentioned before. She had a tattoo on her arm that was said panda bear. Apparently that what her mother calls her, and she just loved Randa. (Tony, Becky’s husband)

Theme 3: clients actively do something with horses in EAP. Participants described that when clients are in EAP sessions, they actively interact with horses, either consciously or subconsciously. There are three subthemes under this main theme: (a) clients find metaphors, (b) clients project their thoughts or feelings onto horses, and (c) clients develop empathy toward horses. When clients actively interact with horses, it means clients are engaged in the therapy, either consciously or subconsciously.

Clients find metaphors in EAP. Six participants (Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, Kriss, Pia, Sue, and Thom) described that clients might find metaphors for their own situations when they interact with horses.

I have a client on Saturday and her boyfriend just broke up with her in a horrible way. And that is what she wants to deal with. And so, right away there is a very very big horse, big black horse. He is a friendly horse. He’s like a big puppy. He is probably 1,800 pounds, you know. He came to her right away and he only came to do a session. It is all the pasture, so all the horses can come up to us, but I notice this horse came up to the client. He came up and pushed her around like, “Pet me, pet me”. She is like “That is funny, that is funny.” And I said, “Do you really think it is funny?” She said, “No, I don’t think it is funny.” I said, “What does this remind you of?” She goes, “That is exactly what my boyfriend just did to me. Just pushed me out of the way.” So, how can we access that in the office? So, that became a theme. And she is leading Harmony. We then got the connection with Harmony. So, when leading Harmony, she sees how gentle and cooperative Harmony has been. Another paint horse, another mare horse came with us and has been very sweet and gentle, you know. She starts to cry. I said, “What is happening now?” She said, “Gosh, this mare horse has just been so nice, and I think that is what I deserve.” So, you know, all these elements coming into. If she stays in here

(mean therapy room), maybe she would cry whole time, you know. But this way she is crying and move forward to the point where after that one session, she said, “I can see that is from my best. My highest good that he broke with me because he was very rude to me and I really didn’t want to see it. But when the big black horse keeps pushing me around, it is like I cannot ignore it.” You see what I am saying. So, it just makes the truth in 3D. You cannot ignore it. (Kriss)

“Do you really think it is funny?” was the confrontation from Kriss. The question helped the client connect to her own emotions. “What does this remind you of?” was another important question that guided the client to make a metaphor for herself. This story also represented the differences between EAP and traditional psychotherapy, which I will discuss later in this chapter. From Kriss’ perspective, the client made a metaphor between the client-horse relationships and the client-boyfriend relationship, and the metaphor helped the client get an insight and helped the client move forward quickly.

Recently I work with PTSD. This is an adult and he was a veteran. And he has a difficult time. He was with a horse and he started crying. He is a big guy. He was embarrassed because he was crying, but you know, I said, “Tell me what is going on?” And he just started talking about the stuff that he had been through and how he was hurting. And when he got through, the horse defecated and I just said to him, “What did the horse do?” He said, “He took a shit.” I said, “Yep. What if he held that in?” He said, “Well, he cannot do that. He would get sick.” I said, “Do you think he is embarrassed because he did this?” “No, he didn’t care, but it is healthy, right?” I said, “Yep.” He said, “Oh, yep, same thing I did. Yep. Maybe I need to do more that.” “Maybe so.” (Thom)

Thom asked questions to help his client gain insight. The client found the analogy between holding poop and holding tears. Both holding something in your bowels and holding in your tears are related to health issues. Not having a bowel movement is related to physical health and holding tears is related to emotional health. The metaphor or the analogy was there, and the client found it. There are highly technical debates to explore the distinctions between metaphor and analogy (Lopez, 2006), and Lopez (2006) proposed to use both terms interchangeably. In *Biophilia* (1984) and in EAGALA model (2009), metaphor and analogy are used interchangeably; therefore, I did not distinguish the terms metaphor from analogy in this sub-theme.

Wilson (1984), discussing the importance of analogies, said:

On one point both psychologists and successful voyagers agree. The key instrument of the creative imagination is analogy... We have returned to the common, human origin of science and art. The innovator searches for comparisons that no one else has made... Important science is not just any similarity glimpsed for the first time. It offers analogies that map the gateways to unexplored terrain. The comparisons meet the criterion of principal metaphors used by art critics: one commanding image synthesized from several units, such that a single complex idea is attained not by analysis but by the sudden perception of an objective relationship (pp. 66-67).

According to Wilson's perspective, analogies lead innovators to find unexplored terrain and new knowledge. In EAP metaphors help clients get insights and know more about themselves, which they are not aware before. In other words, these metaphors lead clients to find unexplored terrains of their inner worlds.

The "analysis" is operated by rational mind, and the "sudden perception" is operated by intuition from where insights come. According to Wilson's (1984) perspective, an important concept sometimes comes from sudden perception (intuition) instead of logical analysis. Wilson (1984) emphasized the importance of intuition in the process of finding analogies, which can lead innovators to unexplored areas.

Hideki Yukawa (1991), a theoretical physicist and the first Japanese Nobelist, stated:

Intuition has been a little-understood but powerful means of advancing science in quantum steps, yet somehow not considered legitimate. ... Most scientists are uncomfortable with the use of such terms as creativity and intuition, and if they practice them, it is done in Marrano-like secrecy. ... History is replete with great minds, such as Einstein's, resisting the intuition of others, e.g., his refusal to accept quantum theory. (p. 384)

According to Yukawa's (1991) perspective, science emphasizes rational minds; therefore, most scientists are uncomfortable considering that intuition is legitimate. In *Biophilia* (1984), Wilson discussed Yukawa's concept to emphasize the importance of intuition in making analogies and metaphors in science. EAP emphasizes on intuition as seen in these participants'

experiences with their clients. When clients and therapists follow their intuition in EAP, they find metaphors and insights which are related to clients' situations. These metaphors and insights lead clients to a deeper level of self-exploration.

Clients project their thoughts or feelings onto horses. Most of the participants (Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, Kriss, Michael, Pia, and Sue) shared that clients project their feelings or thoughts onto horses subconsciously. This projection provides a means for them to understand clients' inner thoughts or issues. Julie Anne said, "I like them to project to the horses; so they are not talking about themselves. They are talking about the horses. They are talking about themselves, but they do not need to know that, right?" Kriss provided a powerful description of projection in a family session (mother and daughter):

The girl was petting Harmony. ... so the mom is sort of watching. And all of a sudden, Harmony put her head down really low. Her head was about a foot from the ground. And she stood there for about 5 minutes like that. And she was doing that. It was like none of us were talking. And pretty soon, the girl was crying. I was like visibly moved almost into tears. The mom was crying because it was so emotional. We were just feeling it, and then Harmony lifted her head and the girl said, "We need to get Harmony out of this pasture right now." I said, "Ok." I just go with it. I go, "Do you want to put the halter on it?" She says, "Yes, I do." She put the halter on. "Do you want to lead her?" "Yes, I do." So, we walked fast out of the pasture. We moved out of the pasture, completely out, and then we were walking. We were not talking too much. And then I said, "What do you think is going on?" and she said, "Harmony is being harmed at night." She is being harmed by some male horses. She was revealing sexual abuse because she was going through it. (Kriss)

This projection was an opportunity for the client to reveal her inner world with fewer defenses; it also provided Kriss an opportunity to know the client's issue. Projection is a very personal inner process. During the interview, Kriss said she did not know how Harmony's behavior triggered the girl's emotions, and why the girl projected her feelings and thoughts on Harmony that way.

Clients develop empathy toward horses. Two participants (Becky and Sue) shared that their clients develop their empathy towards horses when they interact with horses in EAP. Sue described how she sometimes has children paint on horses, and how children learn to relate to another creature:

I think just painting on a live animal is really unique and new. I mean painting on a paper can be very powerful, too, but it is the same as the office therapy paper. Out with horses, interacting, actually touching, working with live animals. A lot of clients like the kids are really concerned that the paints hurt them (the horses). Of course we use Crayola; so wash it off. It is not gonna hurt them... They are always very concerned about the horses even some of the most aggressive kids... A lot of kids with reactive-attachment disorder or kids with autism. You know those spectrum disorders, or sensory integration, or ability to regulate their emotions. The ability to trust and relate to other human beings— that is the power of EAP. You can start with them trusting and relating to the animals, to the horses in the case of EAP. And then we help them generalize that to other kids in the group or to their families. (Sue)

From Sue's perspective, interacting with horses enables some children to develop empathy toward horses. Sue tries to help clients apply these experiences to their human interactions. However, during our interview Sue did not explain how this transition from horses to humans may happen.

Theme 4: therapists actively adapt strategies with horses. Participants described actively making adjustments with horses to enable the therapy to meet clients' needs. There are two subthemes under this main theme: (a) Therapists incorporate horses to provide different levels of challenges for clients, and (b) therapists incorporate specific horses to build clients' inner strength.

Therapists incorporate horses to provide different levels of challenges for clients. Four participants (Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, Pia, and Sue) described various considerations such as horses' size, horses' personality, or the amount of physical distance between clients and horses that can be used to present different levels of challenges for clients. These participants described

trying to provide different levels of challenges to fit clients' needs, and so clients can start to build confidence or work on their issues from there. Jean-Jacques described using horses' physical size to incrementally challenge participants:

If a child is afraid of picking up the hoof of a horse, we will start from a small, not challenging horse... It is a very small and sweet one; so you can start with that. And the satisfaction of having mastered his or her fear in doing that activity, then we move on to a bigger horse. So they can measure simply. Before I cannot pick any horses' hoof; now I can pick that pony's hoof. Well, maybe next time I can try that big grey horse. Ok. So their self-esteem and confidence grows and it is measureable. (Jean-Jacques)

Horses' sizes symbolize different levels of challenges. A horse is a concrete sentient being instead of an abstract concept that can be seen and touched. Using something concrete like size of the horse makes it is easier for children to recognize their improvement. Julie Anne described working with a different aspect of challenge with horses— personality.

We have this one pony for a while. He is just being a pill. He is just biting and pushing and... We want that for some of the sessions, right? We want a pushy horse for some of the sessions, but we would not pick him if he is in a bad mood that day, right? (Julie Anne)

Julie Anne sometimes picks a challenging horse for clients because she believes some clients need those horses' reactions to really work on their issues. The concept is similar to Kriss' example of how one of her clients suddenly recognized, after a horse kept pushing her, how her boyfriend treated her rudely because in both cases horses invaded clients' boundaries to represent interpersonal relationships

Therapists incorporate specific horses to build clients' inner strength. Five participants (Becky, Jean-Jacques, Kriss, Michael, and Pia) described their incorporation of specific horses to assist clients to build or reconnect with their inner strength.

Because I work with a lot of women who were traumatized, incest and sexual abuse, I want to...I have this vision that I want to have a big black draft horse, draft mare, ok. I want to have a female horse, powerful, grounded, quiet, and gentle. So these women

could integrate, internalize, the power of the horse in themselves, and feel their own power. Sort of empower them. (Jean-Jacques)

In a different section of the interview transcription with Jean-Jacques, he referred to this horse as the lead mare in a herd. He contrasts the vulnerable women with the big, powerful, grounded, quiet, and gentle lead mare. Those traumatized women might see themselves or be seen as victims in a society. On the contrary, a lead mare is the leader in a herd. I interpreted this example as showing that working with a horse of the same gender help these women develop the connection with the horse. Based on this connection, the lead mare becomes a role model, and those women can integrate and internalize the strengths of the horse into themselves.

Question 2-2: What are Therapists’ Strategies in EAP?

The research question includes what participants (therapists) have to do and adjust when they practice EAP. Two themes were discovered: (a) therapists practice therapeutic skills on themselves, and (b) therapists practice therapeutic strategies on clients.

Table 5.4

Therapists’ Strategies in EAP

Main theme	Sub-theme	Categories
1. Therapists practice therapeutic skills on themselves	1.1 Therapists listen to horses 1.2 Therapists stay quiet	
2. Therapists practice therapeutic strategies on clients	2.1 Therapists’ concrete strategies 2.2 Therapists’ abstract strategies	2.1.1 Incorporate different elements 2.1.2 Cooperate with an equine specialist 2.1.3 Choose an appropriate setting 2.2.1 Provide different levels of structure 2.2.2 Adjust EAP to meet clients’ needs in the moment 2.2.3 Manage risk 2.2.4 Therapists restructure clients’ beliefs 2.2.5 Therapists ask important questions

Theme 1: Therapists practice therapeutic skills on themselves. As therapists, the participants have to pay attention to or adjust some of their therapeutic skills when they practice EAP. There are two subthemes under this main theme: (a) Therapists listen to horses; (b) therapists stay quiet.

Therapists listen to horses. Three participants (Becky, Jean-Jacques, and Thom) shared that they believe horses know what the best is for clients. Participants learn to listen to the messages that horses want to convey.

This man was coming for his first session with horses. He has no idea about horses. And I thought I am gonna take my grey mare because she is sensitive. She is sweet. I did not know her that well at the time. So I groomed her in the pasture with my halter, and I tried to come to her. I said: "Look, I have this guy coming." I kept the client in mind. "When he comes, you will be the perfect horse for him." And she put her ears back, and she walked away from me, ... I walked behind her, I said: "No. Come on. I really want you to come because blah blah blah." All that time, I was followed by my Asperger horse ... And I asked him. I said, "Do you want to come?" But I did not trust that horse because he bites sometimes. He can be very intrusive, and that client was suffering from severe depression. He [the client] was very weak, and I thought "I do not think you are a good match." That horse did not leave me. That was my head. That was my agenda. And that horse did not leave me. I said, "Ok. I will take you." We went to the covered area. I turned him loose without a halter in there. And my client arrived, and we walked to the arena. And the horse was waiting at the gate, looking at my client. My client stopped and started crying, and said: "I feel that I am seen by this horse like I have never been seen before." ... We were going to the arena, and I told this man, "Please create a space in the arena. You know, there are cones, poles. With the poles and cones and chairs create a space for us to be together and name that space." So, in the middle of the arena, he put [J started drawing]. That is the arena, ok. He put four cones, like this. Four poles and one chair here, there, and one chair there, ok? And the gate is here. [He created a square out of the poles and the chairs were inside this square] And the horse is somewhere here. And he said, "This is the space of my depression, and this is where I need to be witnessed by you. So, let's go and sit here." ... Client sits here and I sit here. And he starts telling me about his life. That is our first session. The horse comes, takes this cone with his mouth, throws it, takes this cone, and throws it. Throw the four cones. With the feet, he rolls the poles. After a minute, the space of depression looks like this. [The space became chaotic because the horse dismantled the objects that clients built in the arena.] We still have two chairs. And the horse comes in right between him and me. So, this man said, "Well, I guess there must be something in my life that I do not see. And the space of depression has been literally dismantled physically. And he said, "Look, could I just be with that horse for a while and I continue to talk with you at the next session? I just feel being with that horse." And he spent the rest of the session with that horse... And that session was

transformative for him. He went back to his house and he started doing things that he likes...And that was literally the kick start of a healing process for him because of that horse. Had I stuck to my agenda, and said: “No, I will not use this horse because he will bite him. He was unreliable.” He could in some situations be a dangerous horse. I wanted to take my grey mare. This would not happen. (Jean-Jacques)

From Jean-Jacques’ perspective, the horses communicated with him. If he had kept to his plan without listening to both horses, the transformative session would not have happened. When the horse came between the client and Jean-Jacques, I interpreted this as a sign that the horse reminded Jean-Jacques to step back.

Therapists stay quiet. Most of the participants (Julie Anne, Kriss, Pia, Sue, and Thom) said they try not to talk too much in EAP sessions. They spend time observing clients’ and horses’ interactions, creating a safe and quiet place for clients to explore themselves.

Just keep your mouth shut. It feels very great actually. I talk more in [traditional psychotherapy] sessions than I do in the equine sessions. Mel [equine specialist] and I are so intentional about if I am gonna say anything or interrupt anything going on in the arena, I want to be very clear about what I am saying, and when I am saying it, and how I am asking a question. (Julie Anne)

Julie Anne expressed that it is important for her and the equine specialist to create a silent space for clients when they work with horses. If she needs to say something, it must be helpful for the session and the client; otherwise, she tends to step back.

Theme 2: therapists practice therapeutic strategies on clients. As EAP therapists, participants described needing to pay attention to or adjust therapeutic strategies for clients’ needs. There were two subthemes under this main theme: (a) therapists’ concrete strategies, and (b) therapists’ abstract strategies.

Concrete strategies exist in physical or material form that can be touched or felt. There are three categories under this subtheme: (a) therapists incorporate different elements, (b) therapists cooperate with an equine specialist, and (c) therapists choose an appropriate setting.

Abstract strategies exist as therapists' thoughts or ideas, rather than physically. There are five categories under this sub-theme: (a) Therapists provide different levels of structure, (b) therapists adjust EAP to meet clients' needs in the moment, (c) therapists manage risk, (d) therapists restructure clients' beliefs, and (e) therapists ask important questions.

Therapists' concrete strategies 1: incorporate different elements. Three participants (Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne and Michael) shared that they may incorporate props, such as wet chalk and foam noodles, or different animals in EAP to assist the therapeutic process.

Sometimes when clients are frozen or inhibited, inhibited also is the relation to me, thinking I am the equine specialist, I am the guy who knows horses, so, they want to make sure to do things well. You know, when they have some kind of performance anxiety around horses, and then I say: "Let's go to the goats." I know these two goats, but I know nothing about goats in general. And so, we are on the same level. We are equal... And goats are very playful. Sometimes they can challenge you. They can butt you. They will put their horn and butt you. They will push. You are gonna do something about it. You are gonna have to move. You know. They invite you to play. So, sometimes people who are a little bit inhibited ... self-conscious, they have to get moving and it rekindles their playfulness to be with the goats. So, be with the goats and then go back to the horses, but bring that kind of goats' energy. (Jean-Jacques)

From Jean-Jacques' perspective, when clients do not know anything about horses, they might feel awkward or uncomfortable interacting with horses in front of him because they might worry what he will think about them. There are power differentials between clients' and therapists' roles in therapy and there are power differentials about clients' and therapists' knowledge regarding horses. When working with goats, neither Jean-Jacques nor the clients have knowledge about this animal. It relieves the clients' self-consciousness, and the goats' playfulness also serves as an icebreaker in therapy.

Therapists' concrete strategies 2: cooperate with an equine specialist. Five participants (Becky, Julie Anne, Kriss, Pia, and Sue) mentioned the advantages of working with a trusted

equine specialist. For instance Kriss said, “You have two humans and two sets of human eyes.”

Sue said, “We can give each other constructive criticism.”

We always...see the world through our lens because of our experiences. There is not a neutral for us. As much as we try to be neutral, you can't be. We are not a blank page. So when you have the ideal situation of having horses as facilitators and co-facilitators then you can also check in and say: “I try to be here, but I keep on thinking about the dentist appointment that I am very worried about.” Your co-facilitator can say: “Ok, I have that pre-awareness right now about you, and so if I need to step up a little bit I will.” We all have good, better and not so great days. So, if you know that from each other and like say I am having a bad physical day, or something like that, or had a death in the family, I am just preoccupied with something, it is not ideal, but you have your co-facilitator that can help and keep things in check. So, that we don't block the flow for the clients. (Pia)

From Pia's perspective, she has emotions and she is influenced by the environment. When she has a bad day, and she accepts and admits that, her co-facilitator can support her, and vice versa. Therefore, her personal situation will not influence the quality of therapy for clients.

Therapists' concrete strategies 3: choose an appropriate setting. Seven participants (Becky, Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, Michael, Pia, Sue, and Thom) found that different settings influenced how horses interact with clients, and vice versa. Becky, Kelly, and Pia shared that the number of people and horses in a group influences how they choose a setting, which means they need to have a larger space if there are more clients.

It seems to make more sense to use the round pen if you work with individuals because the space is easier for them to manage. They do not need to cover the whole arena. But, last night when we were working with kids in the mentoring program, I think we had about 12 kids out here. So, we used the indoor arena because we need that big space for everybody to be able to be in the arena to work with horses. So, I think that you know just being able to have the clients feel like the space is manageable. This is how we choose where we are going to work. (Becky)

Jean-Jacques and Michael found that when horses are in a pasture, they are more likely focused on eating. Jean-Jacques said, “In the pasture, horses graze. That is the main focus, and connection with humans becomes secondary. Michael said, “Whereas they walk into a pasture,

sometimes I don't think they always feel that presence of the horses; they may feel like it is harder to engage horses.”

Becky, Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, Pia, and Sue discussed that sometimes clients need a smaller space to feel safe.

With children, teenagers and people in a very unstable condition, I will try to find a more structure and contained space ... Smaller container. No pasture. It is just the round pen or here (meaning the counseling room). The larger arena will be too large, it depends, but not the pasture, not the corral with children. (Jean-Jacques)

The container is too big and the person doesn't feel held. I think it is important for them to have a sense of safety...I don't like the space to be too big. One weakness is I feel like I lose a little bit of connection with the client, even though we are often at a distance or the horses just get really far away. And I think the person feels like it is just too much space. (Julie Anne)

Jean-Jacques found that a client's age and the functional level (e.g. a client works on basic needs or work on the higher level of self-exploration.) will guide him on how to choose a setting for the client. Julie Anne found that the settings not only influence the dynamic between clients and horses, but also clients and her. If the space is very big, she loses some connections with clients.

Both Julie Anne and Sue considered horses' needs as well. For example, Sue shared:

We prefer to work in the safety of a round pen. It is a large round pen where movement can happen. Then horses can have a distance if they need to. We have seen, over time, working with severely troubled kids or populations it is hard on the horses. We have to really take care of the horses too. We always want to have, if the horses need to move away and get some space they need to be able to do that. (Sue)

Sue found that when horses work with clients who have severe mental health issues, it is hard on the horses. I interpret this to mean that the horses might sense a client's emotions; therefore, they need to have a space within which to move away and take care of themselves.

Therapists' abstract strategies 1: provide different levels of structure. Most of the participants (Becky, Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, Michael, and Sue) described providing different

levels of structure to different clients according to those clients' ages (Becky, Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne; Michael, and Sue), functional levels (Jean-Jacques), cognitive levels (Julie Anne), stages of therapy (Julie Anne and Pia), and levels of rapport (Jean-Jacques). For children and adolescents, participants tend to give more structure.

Generally, I would say with children and teenagers, I will have more structured sessions where we are going to do this, this and that. And this is what you are gonna try to do and we will see what happens. If you can not do it, I will work with your frustration or how can we improve this to do that. So, clear goals, clear expectations, and clear measurement, you know? So, at the end of the session, the child said, "Wow, I could do this and that where last time I can only do this." So, they get the sense of progression. (Jean-Jacques)

Clients who have lower functioning levels were described as needing more structure than those who have higher functioning levels.

If you work with clients who are at the first level— people who are completely either dysfunctional, or working with extreme distress, or whose life is completely hectic. You want to create and bring structure and clarify your expectations so that they feel held... The second level of people— they have reached a certain level of stability and safety in their life, a certain measure of predictability, and we are working on insights and improving things... Maybe that is the level of working with anxiety or depression, but they are not too debilitated. People are functional. They have jobs. They have places where they live. They are not living in somebody's place, not homeless... They may be profoundly unhappy, but there is some stability in their life... We can open a little bit, have a session with less structure, little less. For people in the third category, people who are working on further personal development, or insights, or transitions, who generally are living a fulfilling life, but would like to deepen their understanding of certain aspects, improve some aspects in the relationship, intimacy or whatever. Then you can have very unstructured sessions. And let things unfold and see where it is that this person's awareness goes— self-awareness or what's happening outside with horses. (Jean-Jacques)

Clients who have lower cognitive level were described as needing to have more structure.

Not all clients can have insight, right? Not all clients are cognitively aware enough. Or maybe they are too young. So in those sessions we may structure the sessions a little bit more. (Julie Anne)

Clients who are in the very early stage of EAP were described as needing more structure.

For the first session with a little kid, he is never been around a horse. So, we might do a more structured thing, like how to brush a horse, make it like "how do you like your hair brushed?" "How do you like to be touched?" (Julie Anne)

Clients who have a higher level of rapport with therapists were described as needing less structure.

The safer they feel with the therapist, the more comfortable and safe they feel, the more willing they are to explore, to step outside of their comfort zone. . . . Because they have that safety, they know that I am not there to judge them. They can feel safe with me. So, they can venture to that uncertain world with horses and do things more challenging.
(Jean-Jacques)

Therapists' abstract strategies 2: therapists adjust EAP to meet clients' needs in the moment. Seven participants (Becky, Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, Kriss, Pia, Sue, and Thom) shared how they adjust their EAP methods to meet their clients' needs. Most of the participants said every client is individual and different, and they need to meet their clients where they are. For instance Kriss said, "It is needs-based and it varies with every single session." Julie Anne said, "Adjustments happen in the moment." Pia said, "Wherever they are, is where we go." Participants described making some adjustments to their work with clients based on those clients' different issues. Thom incorporated horsemanship into EAP, which provided the structure to work with adolescent boys. Whether he teaches boys how to lunge a horse or not is decided by clients' personality.

They were very just lethargic, and so what I did with them is...taught them how to lunge a horse. A horse is not going to lunge unless you push them a little bit. And when they are able to see the horse actually respond and they have the control to tell the horse when to stop, turn around, and do the opposite direction it gives them some more of sense of control over their life...Whereas for other guys that is the last thing they need. They are already running over everybody. You know? That gives them even more power; so I won't do that with them. (Thom)

I interpreted Thom's quote to mean that lunging a horse helps clients build self-efficacy and generate energy. Lunging a horse is beneficial to those lethargic boys. In contrast, Thom believes that overpowering boys require different activities to help them temper their energy and dominance.

Therapists' abstract strategies 3: therapists manage risk. Six participants (Becky, Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, Kriss, Pia, and Sue) indicated that they have to pay attention to potential risks that horses may pose for specific clients. Furthermore, these methods for managing risks were unique to each participant. For instance, Pia said, "Young children only work with the smallest horse who is 40 inches." Kriss discussed an important question, which is about how to balance between managing risks and giving clients a space.

When I work with three year olds, which I have, I stand between the horse and the three year old. Like here is me, here is the three year old, and horse. I will let the little girl lead the horse and she may think and sense she is completely in charge of the horse, but I work there between her and the horse. You know, so just being confident in the moment, listening to the inner guidance about what is the right thing to do...If I don't completely put myself in the way, they (means clients) will get something out of it. Maybe they will get more out of it if I focus a little bit less on safety. But with seniors or young children, I am gonna be more aware of safety. (Kriss)

If therapists are overly sensitive about safety issues, they might interrupt the clients' and horses' interaction. If therapists do not pay much attention to safety issues, they might put their clients at risk.

Therapists' abstract strategies 4: therapists restructure clients' beliefs. Four participants (Becky, Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, and Michael) stated that working with horses helps them understand clients' maladaptive beliefs and restructure those beliefs.

With depression and anxiety, I will, I might direct my attention on cognitive styles and have people regularly conduct reality checks between what they think, they saw, and what is truly happening right there, between perception— I mean raw perception, bare awareness, and interpretation. "That horse doesn't like me because he walks away from me." "Well, look again, there is another horse come in, behind. So, is that horse walking away from you or is that horse walking away from another horse?" So, constantly people start having, gaining awareness of their interpretation styles. Ok? When they are at work, for instance, or in the family, and people look at them in certain ways, they would question the validity of their interpretation. They will become aware that they produce a certain interpretation and, thanks to that awareness, they have the possibility of questioning the validity of that interpretation. So, that is what I will do with depression and anxiety. And have people when they have an impression tell them: "Ok, you think that horse don't like you? Why don't you go and tell that horse?" So, people go and tell

the horse: “I think you don’t like me.” And the horse starts to lick them. “Oh, maybe I was wrong after all.” So, little more of a cognitive thing. (Jean-Jacques)

Jean-Jacques tried to be an objective observer, and he shared what he has observed with his clients. Through this, clients could learn how to observe and interpret horses’ behaviors in an objective way. This reminded me of a conversation with Julie Anne. I asked Julie Anne, “What kind of skills do you need to have when you practice EAP?” she answered, “I think our ability to just describe and observe what is happening without putting any meanings, interpretations, or analysis on it.” When clients have an opportunity to find discrepancies between participants’ (therapists’) descriptions and clients’ own interpretations based on horses’ behavior, restructuring clients’ beliefs will happen naturally.

We are trained not even to say: “The horse is licking and chewing.” We just say, “We notice the horse is moving his mouth in a certain way.” We don’t want to say licking and chewing because we are labeling it in that way. We want the client to figure out what that means— those movements in the horse’s mouth. So, the horses yawn a lot and people always ask us. But sometimes we are trained to not even say: “it is yawning.” Because that has a certain meaning already. (Julie Anne)

Both Jean-Jacques and Julie Anne emphasized that EAP therapists serve as a “reflector,” which means therapists try not to interpret what horses are doing to clients. Instead they describe what horses are doing to help clients see discrepancies between clients’ attributional patterns and participants’ (therapists’) objective reflections.

I will use a term: “personality disorder.” People with personality disorders because they have...depending on the personality disorder they can have such a difficult time getting accurate feedback about themselves from other human beings. But they have that opportunity to get that from their interaction with horses. That will get through their barriers. (Michael)

According to Jean-Jacques’ and Michael’s quotes, I explained that when clients work with horses, they project their thoughts or their interpretations onto horses. Participants can observe clients’ attributional patterns and help clients notice these patterns, or clients can simply

get authentic feedback from horses and this feedback helps clients to be aware of their patterns. When clients are aware of how their attributional styles influence their emotions and behaviors, clients have an option to change the way they think and construct adaptive beliefs.

Therapists' abstract strategies 5: therapists ask important questions. Five participants (Becky, Julie Anne, Kriss, Sue, and Thom) described how they ask important questions to help clients gain insights or move forward during EAP sessions. Kriss shared how a client got out of being stuck in her job search after she asked important questions.

I have one client. She lost her job... we were walking. We were literally walking in a circle. Like a big circle. And I am sort of like: "I am just going with it."...And pretty soon, she said, "This is sort of stupid. Why we are walking in a circle? Is this what EAP is? Is Harmony (horse's name) always doing this?" I go, "No, she has never done this. Literally she has never." And then I go, "Is there anything in your life that makes you sort of feel like you are walking in a circle?" She starts to cry cause that is what she's doing [meaning, that she is going in circles in her life, and not progressing towards her goals]. Literally for some reasons she didn't stop Harmony walking in a circle. I said, "What do you want to do?" She goes: "Well, I can go anywhere in this pasture. I can go this way, that way, you know. I can go outside of the pasture." And she said: "I want to go over there." I go: "Ok, let Harmony know you want to go over there." And we started to walk again, and she was walking in circles. So, I let her explore how she could get centered and confident so they can go in straight line, and lo and behold, she changed her job search method and she got job in three weeks. (Kriss)

Kriss' interpretation of the client walking in a circle with the horse was that the client was acting out something that was happening in her life. Kriss asked, "Is there anything in your life that makes you sort of feel like you are walking in a circle?" I think that this question helped the client bring her subconscious behavior into conscious level. The client had an insight and made a connection between walking in a circle and searching for a job. Kriss asked, "What do you want to do?" This question helped the client break the old pattern and find a new way to move forward.

From reading Wilson's (1994) book, *Naturalist*, I found the similarities between naturalists (or evolutionary biologists) and EAP therapists. Wilson (1994) said:

The most important evolutionary biologists are those who invent the most important questions. They look for the best stories Nature has to tell us, because they are above all storytellers. If they are also naturalists—and a great majority of the best evolutionary biologists are naturalists—they go into the field with open eyes and minds, complete opportunists in all directions for the big questions, for the main chance. (p. 167)

Wilson (1994) suggested that asking the right questions is an important invention because these questions will direct naturalists or evolutionary biologists to find new stories in nature. The concept is similar to EAP. EAP therapists usually stay quiet, but they ask the right questions to lead clients into a higher level of awareness and help clients get some insights. They ask important questions to seek for a main chance for clients to find new parts of themselves.

Question 3: What are the Differences Between EAP and Traditional Psychotherapy from Participants' Perspectives?

Research Question 3 explored the differences between EAP and traditional psychotherapy from the participants' perspectives. Three main themes were discovered: (a) The relationship between therapists and clients, (b) therapeutic techniques, and (c) characteristics of therapy.

Table 5.5

The Differences between EAP and Traditional Psychotherapy

Main Themes	Sub-themes	Categories
1. Relationships between therapists and clients	1.1 Different degree of activeness from therapists 1.2 Power differential	
2. Therapeutic techniques	2.1 Clients talk to therapists versus horses 2.2 Talk versus do 2.3 Touch issues 2.4 Individual versus team	
3. Characteristics of therapy	3.1 Characteristics pertaining to clients 3.2 Characteristics pertaining to therapeutic approaches	3.1.1 Rational versus holism approach 3.1.2 Different ways of out of the comfort zone 3.1.3 Different levels of resistance 3.2.1 Different types of matches 3.2.2 Different lenses to understand clients 3.2.3 Feminine versus masculine 3.2.4 Number of uncontrollable variables 3.2.5 Different self-care issues

Theme 1: relationships between therapists and clients. This theme explored the differences of therapeutic relationships in EAP and in traditional psychotherapy. Two subthemes are under this main theme: (a) different degree of activeness from therapists, and (b) power differential.

Different degree of activeness from therapists. Six of the participants (Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, Kriss, Michael, Pia, and Thom) described their role in EAP sessions as being much less active than in traditional psychotherapy sessions. Instead, they viewed their roles as being more to step back and let the process naturally unfold between the client and horse. Six of the participants (Becky, Kriss, Pia, Jean-Jacques, Julie-Anne, and Thom) described either in a direct or in an indirect way that they are being humbled by this process because they are not guiding

the direction that it takes. In EAP, participants do not emphasize their importance, and they primarily let horses guide the direction. In traditional psychotherapy, therapists tend to actively engage in a conversation with their clients. Therapists take a more active role when interacting with clients in a therapy room compared to EAP.

It sort of goes back to the recognizing that in EAP, the mental health person is not superior to the horses... Again that means to throw your own agenda away... just being able to turn the reign over back to the horse. Let the horse guide the whole process, and it becomes fresh and new. And to me, it is exciting. So I think it is just a matter of turning the reins over, not having to be in charge. Because it is not something that can't happen with a client, it is just not likely to be coming from within them intrinsically. I think that what we should hope for is that real change, real evolvement [improvement] is happening inside. (Thom)

From Thom's perspective, a therapist may set an agenda, but horses do not make a plan before therapy. Thom perceived that therapy is fresh and new when it is guided by horses. I interpreted that an agenda is planned from a rational mind. Horses do not make a plan; they naturally react to the environment based on their intuition. When therapists let horses set a direction for therapy, horses might perceive something differently from therapists' perspectives because horses do not react to clients' verbal information. Therapists might make an agenda or a plan according to clients' presenting problems. Thom tends to not work on those presenting problems. Thom said when he talks about clients' problems, he loses the battle. The way that Thom described his role in therapy is "I know that something happens without my being, without me running the show. I am involved, but I am involved in an involved way, not in a directive way." Thom further said:

I say my role is to simply open the gate. That is all I see as my role... If they accept coming in, I see that— as the simple fact that they walk through the gate. I take that as a sign that they want to deal with something. I don't even need to know what they want to deal with, but they are accepting that invitation. That to me is exciting. (Thom)

Julie Anne has a similar description. She said:

We try to let horses do their work and stay out of the way, and we also try to let the clients calibrate when they are ready to go somewhere; so I will not bring up in the horse sessions necessarily. All we do is to make observation. (Julie Anne)

Therapists' role in EAP is in some ways similar to evolutionary biologists' (or naturalists') role in nature. Wilson (1994, p.167) said, "They [evolutionary biologists or naturalists] look for the best stories Nature has to tell us...they go into the field with open eyes and minds, complete opportunities in all directions for the big questions, for the main chance." From Wilson's (1994) perspective, naturalists (or evolutionary biologists) are observers and discoverers instead of creators and inventors in nature. They invent questions to explore nature, but they do not invent nature. Naturalists are humble in front of nature. Most of the participants in my study have the same attitude of humbleness. They are humble in front of the EAP and horses. They shared that their roles are observers and gate openers. They try not to direct sessions and let sessions unfold naturally. For instance, Pia said, "I am not a fixer. I am not a doctor who is going to fix patients...A lot of people in our field feel burdened by the idea that they are 'It' for their clients..."

Power differential. Four participants (Kriss, Pia, Sue, and Thom) shared that when they are outside a therapy room, there is less of a power differential between them and their clients. From Pia's perspective, many things in her office symbolize power and authority. When she is outside with clients, it provides a neutral setting. She and clients are more equal.

I think it is my personality. I am not comfortable sitting together with clients. That is not me. I feel more comfortable when I can be on level playing field with the client... I feel the power differential isn't so big. For instance, I sit there at my desk and client sits there, over there in the couch... I feel the power differential. I just feel they know they are in my office and this is my office. My question is the one which has validity. My diploma hanging there. (Pia)

Thom described how horses and the outside environment decrease power differences between clients and him.

I am an older White male. Any adolescent male is gonna just come in and sit down and open up to me? ... Get out there, get with the horses, and we have fun. The age difference goes away, the ethnic difference goes away, and it just becomes spontaneous. And the horse does it. The horse figures out how to do it. And all I do is bear witness to it and then ask questions: "Wow, what was that about?" And they will tell me, and they will be excited to tell me. (Thom)

In Thom's quote, he made two points about how horses help reduce the power differential. First, when clients and he stay outside to work with horses, horses guide sessions instead of him. His older, White, and male authorities are decreased. Second, horses act as a catalyst. The atmosphere is less serious for clients, and so the power differential is decreased.

Theme 2: therapeutic techniques. This theme explored the differences of therapeutic techniques in EAP and in traditional psychotherapy. Four subthemes of practical therapy methods were identified: (a) clients talk to therapists versus horses, (b) talk versus do, (c) touch issues, and (d) individual versus team.

Clients talk to therapists versus horses. Jean-Jacques and Pia stated that in EAP, clients can talk directly to the horses. They indicated that, therapists, they do not necessary need to know the content of the clients' conversations because the horses will give clients authentic and immediate feedback. Jean-Jacques shared why and how he led a client to talk to a horse:

I told her: "Look, try to find words to express what is going on for you. You don't have...you don't tell me, tell the horse." I stepped back. When she tells the horse, and when she can name what is happening, the horse's behavior will change, become soft and kind. Imagine what validation that is? So, for that person, it is an experience of being accepted as she is— in the moment with her anger, with her sadness, whatever it is, with resentment, jealousy, with anxiety, you name it, by this big animal. No judgment. I do not care what they really said, but it is so good...when you recognize, when you acknowledge, when you accept your emotion. So, that is the step that does not exist in the talk therapy, traditional therapy, because you are a little bit on the spot. Counselor is right there. You are gonna say something and because you are a polite young woman, you will

feel compelled to say something. Silence is not comfortable. Especially for us Westerners. (Jean-Jacques)

Jean-Jacques noticed that clients might feel more comfortable talking to a horse instead of him because clients may be afraid of being judged, but horses are nonjudgmental and allow clients to express and check their feelings. Pia has the same perspective. She said, “Sometimes they cannot talk to us, but they can talk to a horse.”

Talk versus do. Seven participants (Becky, Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, Kriss, Michael, Pia, and Thom) indicated that in traditional psychotherapy, clients talk to therapists and therapists primarily rely on what clients say to know more about clients. In EAP, clients are described as working with horses, with therapists who observe what clients do in the arena. For example, Becky described how she can further tell if there is any discrepancy between what clients say to her and what they actually do in EAP.

What happened was the little girl was working with Rissy, and Rissy sometimes just decides she’s not gonna participate, and she will just plant her feet and stand there. You cannot move her when she decides she is not gonna move. So, they got about half way around. The son was in the lead and mom was making sure the son was ok. Daughter’s horse was frozen and would not move, and nobody went to help her. Nobody stopped. Nobody said: “Can I give you a suggestion? Do you want some help?” They finished the race and they sat there and watched the little girl cry because the horse wouldn’t move. And those are the kind of things that you cannot deny. In the office, if I was sitting in the office and the son said: “I do not leave her out, you know? We take care of her. We make sure she is ok.” If they said that I would have no way to say “No, you don’t.” haha. But when I saw that happen out there. I can say, “You guys, no wonder she feels left out. She is left out. She is here all alone by her horse, crying her horse is not moving. Nobody is going there to offer her the assistance, so no wonder she felt left out.” (Becky)

According to Becky, EAP helps her get more objective information from clients, and because clients are in the present when working with horses, they can get immediate feedback from the horses. In traditional psychotherapy, family members might argue with each other, and therapists do not have very much objective information from their observation. When working

with horses, horses magnify these family dynamics and help therapists and family members see these dynamics more clearly. Jean-Jacques had a similar perspective. He said:

It allows you to see your clients under different lights, and if we are sitting here and having a conversation, a perfectly civilized conversation, you will know of me what I choose to say to you. But when you see me with a big animal that takes me outside of my comfort zone, you will see many other things about me, ok? Including not just what I say about my relationship and interaction outside of the therapy, but also how I do interact and relate with another sentient being. How do I work with fear? I can tell you with the straight face, you know, what is Ping-Tzu, what I am absolutely fearless, and show you something quite difference when we are with horses. (Jean-Jacques)

Both Becky and Jean-Jacques noted maybe there are some discrepancies between what clients say and what they actually do. Seeing what clients do provides extra information for Becky and Jean-Jacque to know more about clients. Furthermore, clients can choose what they want to say in a therapy room, but when they are outside with horses, they show their interaction with horses consciously and subconsciously. This provides therapists with information about how clients interact with the real world.

Thom found that some clients are not comfortable talking about their distress. By working with horses, clients can still work on their issues and move forward without talking to therapists about their painful experiences.

I think those who have been in traditional therapy and it is not so working for them, they are amazed at what happens without a lot of effort on their part. In other words, they show up, the exercise is set up, and they get involved, they get engaged., things start happening, And then when we process at the end they cannot believe where they are now. “When I was coming here, I thought this way. And once I work with the horse, now I feel this way.” Whereas in traditional therapy, it is just kind of boring and painful to cover a lot of the ground. (Thom)

From Thom’s perspective, some clients might resist talking about their issues because it can be painful. In EAP, clients do not necessary need to talk. I interpreted when working with horses (i.e., doing versus talking), sometimes horses can bring clients’ subconscious issues to the

surface. Clients can get insights through the interaction with horses and move forward without talking about painful experiences.

Touch issues. Five participants (Becky, Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, Kriss, and Michael) indicated that touching horses is naturally healing for clients. Two participants (Jean-Jacques and Julie Anne) indicated that touch can be a sensitive issue between therapists and clients in therapy. In traditional psychotherapy, it is not appropriate for therapists to work on clients' boundary issues through touch. In EAP, clients can touch horses, and it can be therapeutic for clients. Five participants (Becky, Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, Kriss, and Michael) described how touch helps clients in EAP. Jean-Jacques discussed the touch issue from the gender perspective:

How do I let myself be touched? How do I set my boundaries and enforce respectfully my boundary? ...I am a male therapist, but, majority of my clients are females, majority of them have been sexually abused...touch does not feel ok to them, it's...very sensitive thing. It is the boundary issue. It is complicated. With animals, it is not. (Jean-Jacques)

Michael discussed the benefit of touch from the neuroscience perspective:

They are grooming a horse. They are kind of doing something for the horse, but there is also something about using hands that helps stimulate both globes of the brain, which, in any kind of trauma treatment, you're diffusing the traumatic impulse throughout the region of the brain, where the higher functioning part of the brain can take that information and do something better with it. (Michael)

Individual versus team. Traditional psychotherapy is usually conducted by one profession (therapists) and one species (humans); EAP is practiced across professionals (therapists and equine specialists) and across species (humans and horses). Five participants (Julie-Anne, Jean Jacques, Pia, Sue, and Michael) shared their thoughts about the team approach. The team approach was described as being either an advantage (Julie-Anne, Pia, and Sue) or a challenge (Julie-Anne, Jean-Jacques, and Michael) depending on the situation.

From Julie-Anne's, Pia's, and Sue's perspectives, having the other person in EAP helps them support each other. For example, from Julie Anne's perspective, when horses act unusually

in EAP, it is helpful to have another person from a different profession to discuss the situation with the therapist. They can exchange perspectives. Moreover, they can support each other when another person is not centered. These ideas are illustrated in the following quote:

I love co-therapy. She (Mel, the equine specialist) is not doing therapy. The horses are doing the therapy really. She notices things in a particular way. She is able to keep her mirror pretty clean too. When there is time stuff is coming up for her, like horses sometimes act like their belly is hurting, but it is really the client. But she had a horse die of the colic, and then another horse keeps lying down and was kicking his belly. And I am a veterinarian. I know what the colic looks like. It is the horse or it is the clients. We talk about that. So, she had a lot that came up because she just lost one of her sweetest horses to colic. So, it is very important she and I can talk about that and not let our stuff impacts clients' experiences. (Julie Anne)

Julie Anne further indicated that sometimes she had difficulty to work with equine specialists.

I worked with some other people (equine specialists) I felt like they want to jump, they want to talk, they just want to do it in different ways. It is not the EAGALA model. It is just the way they do things. (Julie Anne)

Jean-Jacques and Michael indicated that sometimes incorporating horses into therapy can be a challenge for them and other therapists:

If I am not quite comfortable with my limitations, I might tend to gently push people to traditional therapy rather than horses. Because working with horses is more challenging and demands more clarity from the therapist. You need to know your limitations and have acceptance, NOT indulgence, for them. (Jean-Jacques)

I actually have student interns, and when they first go into the arena because they are studying very hard to be good therapists, sometimes their first session with horses present, there is so much going on ... The horses are alive. All dynamics to these living animals and living people and more than one person, and you have a therapy team, just more than one person. And sometimes they are overwhelmed because it is so dynamic, but I enjoy it. (Michael)

I interpreted Jean-Jacques needs to have the higher awareness about himself and his limitations when he practices EAP than he practices traditional psychotherapy. If he is not aware of his emotions or limitations, horses might react to his unawareness and discrepancies. This to mean that if therapists are not aware what they bring into an arena with horses, horses might

react to the therapists' emotions or issues instead of the clients' in EAP. Before therapists incorporate horses into therapy, they need to work on their own issues. According to Michael's perspective, the team approach can bring a lot of dynamics into therapy, which might overwhelm some EAP therapists.

Theme 3: characteristics of therapy. This theme explores the differences between characteristics in EAP and traditional psychotherapy. Two subthemes are under this main theme: (a) characteristics pertaining to clients, and (b) characteristics pertaining to therapeutic approaches. Some of the differences between EAP and traditional psychotherapy have to do with different ways that the clients are challenged or changed in EAP in comparison with traditional psychotherapy. Characteristics pertaining to clients have to do with characteristics of EAP and traditional psychotherapy that directly come from clients themselves. Characteristics pertaining to therapeutic approaches have to do with differences that directly come from therapeutic approaches.

Characteristics pertaining to clients 1: rational versus holism approach. Five participants (Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, Kriss, Michael, and Thom) indicated that in traditional psychotherapy, clients are primarily working from their rational minds. In contrast, EAP helps clients access different layers of resource (e.g. five senses). Clients in EAP were described by two participants (Jean-Jacques and Kriss) as having to open up their whole being (e.g. mind, body, and spirit) to interact with horses. Jean-Jacques indicated why it is important to access clients' different senses during therapy.

My view of therapy is that it cannot be just talking. Talking is important, but words, being able to put our experiences into words is important, but should not be the whole story because the body is important. Connection is important. Five senses are important, nature. The environment is important. And working outside with animals, we NEED to get out of our little shells. We cannot see ourselves as completely isolated from the rest of the world. My anxiety, depression is my world. My anxiety is my world. There is much more in the

world. This form of therapy whether with horses, or animals, or wilderness therapy, outside, working with world, but with your body, with your senses, with contact... it does activate your whole being, not just your rational...mind. (Jean-Jacques)

Jean-Jacques sees clients' problems from a holistic perspective, which means the problems do not belong to clients, clients are not isolated from the environment. When working with horses, clients have to get out of their shells and connect to a bigger world. I interpreted his quote to mean that in EAP, clients get an opportunity to see how they really interact with the world, because horses and therapists will give them immediate and genuine feedback, in a healing way, allowing clients to then repair their relationships with the world.

Kriss indicated that EAP is a form of experiential therapy which helps clients access their mind, body, and spirit.

Well, I think if we are willing to get out of our mind, just our thinking nature, maybe in the fullness...experiential therapy means mind, body, spirit, feelings, ourselves holistically. And then in the mystery with the horses because we do not know exactly what the horse is thinking, but being in that relationship for me— to support that it is sort of like, I do not know what direction it is gonna go. I never do. It is sort of mystery and a willingness to allow it to unfold, rather than, you know, thinking this is the way it's going to go today...That will be controlling ... They (horses) help people get in touch with their feelings in the way...The office sessions their minds can sort of get in the way ... (Kriss)

I interpreted talking as a means of communication that clients are familiar with and clients can feel a sense of control through talking. When working with horses, clients have less control about what will happen in EAP than in traditional psychotherapy. In EAP, clients engage their minds, bodies and spirits in this experiential therapy. According to Kriss' perspective, it is a holistic approach.

Characteristics pertaining to clients 2: different ways of out of the comfort zone. Five participants (Becky, Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, Kriss, and Pia) found clients feel less in control and more vulnerable in EAP because they are exposed to horses into an authentic interaction, and they cannot anticipate how horses will interact with them. In contrast, in traditional

psychotherapy, clients were seen as being able to choose how much they want to go outside their comfort zone.

According to Jean-Jacques' perspective, clients feel more vulnerable in EAP sessions because when clients work with horses, they are engaging the minds, emotions, and bodily sensations. It can be more challenging for clients in EAP, but clients can retrieve these experiences later in their real life more easily because their learning happens at a deeper level.

EAP engages your whole being, your thought, but also your emotion, your body. Whatever happens in the session with horses it happens at a deeper level. It is a felt experience, not just mind, but in the mind and body. I think it has a more transformative value so people respond to that accordingly. It is also more challenging. It is more challenging... Some (clients) of them react with... and bring into it an increased sense of vulnerability. They feel more exposed, which also means that the restorative value of a good session with horses is much deeper because, precisely, people feel more vulnerable and exposed at the beginning... This is how the experiences with horses transfer to your everyday life. When they get into a challenging situation they often remember what happened with horses, when they face those kinds of challenges... they remember the deeper level to access their resources more easily... Because it is not just a rational memory, it is a somatic memory. (Jean-Jacques)

From Julie Anne's perspective, the novelty wakes brains up so people are ready to learn new experiences. This concept is similar to Jean-Jacques' concept of engagement. Because clients' brains are woken up, clients have more motivation to engage in therapy.

Novelty, it is a weird word. Most people don't know what that means. From my training in neuroscience... The amygdala is there to keep us safe, right? It is on alert, looking for danger. If it feels like a lot of danger there, we are gonna go to fight, or flight, or freeze. And this is super simplified because the freeze response is actually a totally different system. The other thing the amygdala does is that... it looks for novelty. It looks for something new or changed. I think that is one of the key pieces of the equine therapy. Because it is so new and it is so different it wakes the brain up in the way that allows for learning... we give them (the clients) so little information, we do a little bit at the beginning. We just do a very basic safety piece and we tell them what Mel and I are gonna be doing. Most of the time people don't notice we are there. They are so in the moment with the horses, but there is definitely the vulnerability because you don't know what is gonna happen. You never have done this before, the first time anyway. And even after that, you don't know what is gonna happen. And you are not in control in the way you can be in the control in the session. (Julie Anne)

The concept of novelty, in terms of helping people to engage in therapy, is also similar to the biophilia hypothesis. Wilson (1984) defined the biophilia hypothesis as, “[People have] the innate tendency to focus on life and lifelike processes.” The brief meaning of this sentence is that novelty triggers humans’ curiosity, and the curiosity leads humans to explore other lives. In *Biophilia*, Wilson (1984, p. 2) said:

From infancy we concentrate happily on ourselves and other organisms. We learn to distinguish life from the inanimate and move toward it like moths to a porch light. Novelty and diversity are particularly esteemed; the mere mention of the word *extraterrestrial* evokes reveries about still unexplored life...

What Wilson means is that curiosity about novelty and diversity is an innate aspect of human nature. Both novelty and diversity motivate humans to explore new areas, and both novelty and diversity are elements of EAP.

Characteristics pertaining to clients 3: different levels of resistance. Four participants (Becky, Kriss, Michael, and Thom) shared that clients are less resistant in EAP in comparison to traditional psychotherapy. One participant (Thom) indicated that clients were sometimes viewed as having stereotypes about traditional psychotherapy. In contrast, clients were described as generally not viewing EAP as a therapy, and as a result were described as being less resistant. For instance, Thom, who primarily works with adolescent boys, said: “It is a therapy, but it isn’t seen that way to the client.” Furthermore, three participants (Becky, Kriss, and Michael) indicated that clients are more sensitive and defensive to verbal feedback from therapists in traditional psychotherapy than they are to the kinds of nonverbal feedback they receive in EAP.

They tend to be more relaxed [in EAP]. It tends to seem like they have more fun with it, even if it is challenging. You know, the activity can present challenges for them that they seem more willing to embrace than if it was a verbal challenge. In other words, if the intervention was to have them see that they were being too pushy with their kids, they can see that and the experience. The feedback that they give from that can be: “Well, I was being a little forceful with the horse and I notice he was kind of laying back. I am wondering sometimes if I don’t have to be that forceful.” Whereas if we are sitting in the

office, I can say: “I notice you have been a little forceful with your son.” They are likely to be more defensive, a little bit more worry about those words. That is kind of thing. (Michael)

According to Michael’s perspective, when clients work with horses, horses’ behaviors actually open up clients’ curiosity so that they are willing to see what it is going on. However, clients are more sensitive to his verbal feedback.

Michael’s quote reminded me of when Pia said:, “There is way less about what’s being said, and it is way more about what is going on because I really believe that the language is the interference, because it makes it very complicated...”

Wilson (1984) had his opinion about verbal languages from evolutionary perspective. Wilson stated, “If certain human feelings are innate, they might not be easily expressed in rational language” (p. 109). According to Wilson’s perspective, verbal languages are rational and limited, and feelings carry much more information than rational languages can convey. The noted horse trainer Buck Brannaman (2001) had the same perspective. He said:

You can ask another person to dance, but even through you say the right words, the way you say them may not attract him or her. On the other hand, the right “feel” can be sensed across a room without a word being spoken...And how do you know? You feel it. “Feel” is the spiritual part of a person’s being...Horses have it, and they use it all the time. You can’t conceal anything from a horse: he’ll respond to what’s inside of you—or he won’t respond at all. (p. 178)

Brannaman’s perspective is that humans and horses catch more information through “feeling” than through verbal languages. Pia, Wilson, and Brannaman all suggested that human feelings convey much more information than we can articulate through languages.

Characteristics pertaining to therapeutic approaches 1: different types of matches.

Three participants (Becky, Jean-Jacques, and Julie Anne) described how different horses have different personalities, and this allows each client to select a particular horse to work with who that client deeply connects. Their descriptions of this highlights the fact that in traditional

psychotherapy, there is usually only one therapist, and the therapist represents one type of personality.

Usually when we begin the work with the clients, very first session we have horse, we put the whole herd in the area together, and we just observe them and have them interact with each other. So, after the client hears the horses' stories and observe to see how the horses react in the herd. That is when they usually pick the horse they feel mostly like them. (Becky)

According to Jean-Jacques's perspective, when clients move from one horse to another horse, it symbolizes clients' inner shifts.

I have some clients who at the beginning of their treatment will connect with one horse particularly. As they move through the treatment, they change and bond with other horses. So, they began with one horse and they end up with another one. They have difficulties at one stage with one particular horse, and then they move to some issues will be able to connect with that horse. (Jean-Jacques)

In traditional psychotherapy, there is only one type of client-therapist match. In contrast, participants described that there are many types of client-horse match for clients to choose from in EAP.

Characteristics pertaining to therapeutic approaches 2: different lenses to understand clients. Four participants (Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, Pia and Thom) discussed how in EAP, the horse and equine specialist provide additional perspectives through which to see clients. As a result, therapists have more opportunities to be aware of their biases. In traditional psychotherapy, only the therapist is present in the session with the client, and thus only one perspective (the therapist's) is available to shed light on the client.

Julie Anne stated that in her practice, equine specialists do not read clients' documents and they do not know clients' history; therefore, they are less likely to bring assumptions or stereotypes to their work with clients.

We help each other notice things that horses are doing, and we may look at it in different ways. When Mel doesn't know the clients, and I do know the clients, that is so helpful because she only sees what is going on with the horses and she is able to be like "oh, it's

so interesting that this client didn't do anything in the situation." So, I might be a little bias right? My mirror might be a little bit dirty cause I know the clients. (Julie Anne)

Compared to therapists and equine specialists, horses have the "cleanest" lenses through which to see clients because they are nonjudgmental and present (i.e., not basing understanding on prejudices or biases). The way horses react to clients provides therapists extra information to know more about clients.

As a non-judgmental being that they are, they can really give very very clean and clear responses to the client from what the client is projecting on to the horses...I couldn't do that as a clinician because everything goes through my personal filter. (Pia)

Characteristics pertaining to therapeutic approaches 3: feminine versus masculine.

From Thom's perspective, some males do not feel comfortable going to a therapy room and talking about their emotions. They feel more comfortable going to a farm to work with horses.

I am old and sort of have understanding of how males work. I think [traditional] therapy for males is hard to accept, but I think it can be done in a very masculine way. I think therapy for males is a little bit of feminine, seems a little bit of feminine exercise ... (Thom)

Thom later described how he thought EAP can be a more masculine approach that is easier for males to work with.

It (therapy) can still be done in a masculine way which I feel like it can be more effective. Estrogen and Testosterone mixtures can be challenging. And testosterone and testosterone can be challenging... Estrogen is just a primary of female hormone... And testosterone is a very strong male hormone. And those hormones create either friction or a lot of adhesion. But with the guys I work with have been a lot of friction... As long as I don't compete with them, can be understanding, empathetic... because males are as a hole don't want to open up and share. But if we can get them right in the environment around the horses, it is amazing what they talk about. And then my calling is to listen, to really listen and hear more than just the words, hear what they really try to say. (Thom)

According to Thom's perspective, when male clients work with horses, these male clients tend to open up easier than they do in traditional psychotherapy.

Characteristics pertaining to therapeutic approaches 4: number of uncontrollable variables. In traditional psychotherapy, there are fewer uncontrollable variables, meaning

something that is subject to variation, to influence the therapy, and therapists and clients have more control over the setting. Six participants (Becky, Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, Michael, Pia and Thom) indicated that there are more uncontrollable variables, such as horse feeding time and weather, to deal with in EAP.

I think the only difference is you are allowing this very dynamic environment sort of into your space as a therapist because usually in an office we close everything out... In talk therapy we close out the whole world. It is just me and my clients, and so that is the only space that we need to concern ourselves with. Now we have another human being. We have at least one horse, possibly many horses. You have the elements. You have movement and what comes with movement and that kind of thing. So, I think you have to have the skill of flexibility... You have to be flexible... I am just aware of the environment and the fact that clients have less to deal with, less to stimulate them, less to think about in the office. (Michael)

I interpret this to mean that EAP is closer to reality, which means the outside world interacts with clients and therapists all the time. They have to deal with the outside world whether they like it or not. However, the outside world is not totally uncontrollable. For instance, previously I discussed how therapists choose different settings and how they provide different levels of structure for clients according to clients' ages and functioning levels. In traditional psychotherapy, clients and therapists block themselves from the outside world temporarily. The participants perceive, and also have, a greater degree of control over the environment in this setting.

Characteristics pertaining to therapeutic approaches 5: different self-care issues.

According to six participants, (Becky, Jean-Jacques, Julie Anne, Pia, Sue, and Thom) fewer self-care issues will naturally arise in traditional psychotherapy than in EAP. Specifically, EAP presents an opportunity for clients to learn how to take care of themselves, as well as an opportunity for therapists to observe how clients take care of themselves.

From Becky's perspective, as herd animals, horses care about their safety; therefore, they are good models to show clients how to take care of themselves.

We always talk about how horses are very good at keeping themselves safe, and we talk about the way they do that. They will run away if they can. But if they cannot run away, they will kick, bite, rear up whatever they're going to do to keep them safe. We also tell clients because horses are very good at keeping themselves safe, we want clients to keep themselves safe; so if they ever feel they are in the unsafe situation, they get to step out of the arena. They get to take a timeout. They get say "I am done for today." But that is on them to say that. That is part of empowering the clients to be able to have voices because most of our clients feel they do not have voice either in their marriage or as a kid watching the parents fight or scream each other. They feel they have not been able to do what they need to do to keep themselves safe; so that is a big learning piece of this whole program, too, is safety and respect...Not just physical safety, but emotional safety for animals and humans. (Becky)

I interpreted Becky's quote to mean that if clients learn how to take care of themselves in an arena, they are more likely to transfer these experiences into their life. The metaphor for clients is that if I can keep myself safe in front of big horses in an arena, I have the ability to keep myself safe in front of someone in my life. In other words, clients develop self-efficacy when they work with horses.

Sue mainly talked about physical self-care in EAP, which goes beyond concern in relation to horses only.

The bug spray, appropriate shoes, appropriate clothes, sunscreen, a hat, all that stuff around being outside. That is one of the beauties and it is about self-care. We incorporate that, too. How do you take care of yourself when you are outside for an hour and half even if it is in the morning? (Sue)

According to Sue's perspective, working with horses in the outside environment gave her an opportunity to discuss self-care issues with clients.

Conclusion

According to the findings from research question 1.1 (What are horses' roles in participants' lives?), participants have evolving relationships with horses. Participants moved from low awareness to high awareness regarding their relationship with horses, and then

participants described intentionally and unintentionally incorporating horses to raise awareness about themselves and the world. The findings from the research question 1.1 are related to the findings from the research question 1.2 (What experiences led participants to practices with EAP?) because they both show the evolving relationships. Participants also described having an evolving sense of self. Participants described being self-aware, about their choices to incorporate EAP into their mental health practice; they realize that the EAP modality fits well with who they are and fits well with their personal experiences. Participants described being motivated to practice EAP because they believe that interacting with horses helps to raise self awareness. Participants draw from horses' strengths in their EAP practice, and they believe EAP works.

Research question 2.1 explored therapeutic factors from horses in EAP, while research question 2.2 discussed therapists' strategies in EAP. During the interviews, all participants tended to emphasize horses' roles in EAP instead of theirs. Several participants (e.g. Jean-Jacques, Pia, and Thom) indicated that EAP humbles them as a therapist. This phenomenon is related to the findings from research questions 1.1 and 1.2 because when participants have the higher awareness of themselves and their relationships with horses, they are less likely to emphasize the importance of their roles as a therapist and a human being. They respect other species' roles in their personal lives and therapy. Combining the findings from research question 3 (what are the differences between EAP and traditional psychotherapy?), I created figure 5.4 and figure 5.5 to explain the relationship between therapists and clients in traditional psychotherapy and in EAP. According to participants' perspectives, there are more power differentials between therapists and clients in traditional psychotherapy than in EAP. In traditional psychotherapy, therapists were viewed as being professionals who cure or relieve clients' mental health issues. The big circle in the figure 5.4 presented therapists' power and ability in traditional psychotherapy. In

EAP, participants intended to de-emphasize their roles (small circle in the figure 5.5). In contrast to their role in traditional psychotherapy, they described their role in EAP using terms such as gate opener or facilitator. They simply open a gate for clients and create a neutral space for clients and horses to interact with each other. Participants described adopting various strategies to facilitate EAP sessions, and they described horses as having many therapeutic factors.

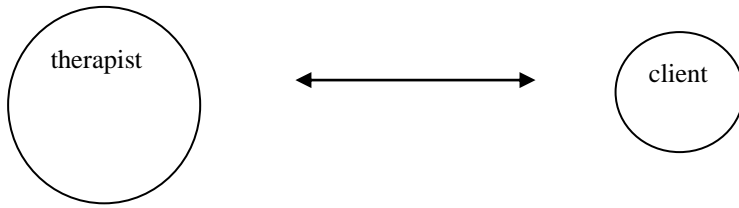


Figure 5.4 The relationship between therapists and clients in traditional psychotherapy

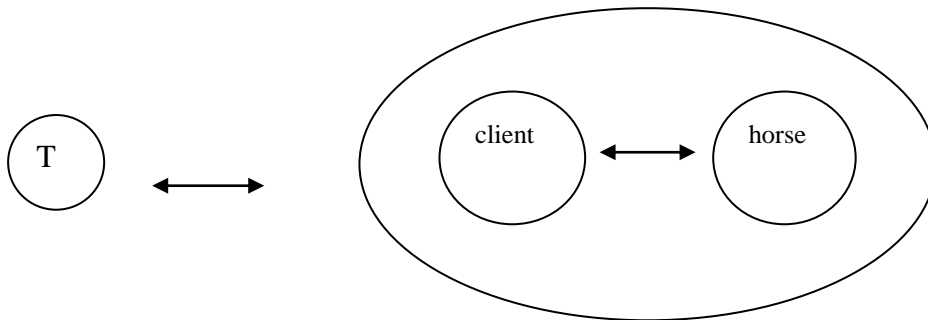


Figure 5.5 The relationship between therapists and clients in EAP

Chapter Six: Discussion

Introduction

This study explored equine-assisted psychotherapy (EAP) mental health practitioners' experiences with EAP. I examined participants' experiences with horses in their personal lives using a constructivist narrative approach that suggested past and present cannot be separated. I explored horses' roles in participants' past and current lives and investigated why participants practice EAP. Participants' past personal experiences with horses played an important role in their decision to incorporate horses into their therapy practices. This study also explored participants' professional experiences with EAP, including therapeutic factors and strategies. Finally, I examined the differences between EAP and traditional psychotherapy.

In this chapter, I explore the relationship between zoom model and thematic analysis from the perspectives of biophilia hypothesis. I summarize and discuss how the findings of this study addressed the research questions and examine how the findings connect to the EAP research literature, which consisted primarily of published articles and unpublished dissertations and master's theses focused on EAP. I also included some equine-facilitated psychotherapy (EFP) literature related to my study. In areas below where there is no reference to or comparison with the literature, then these areas had no relevant prior research. Following the summary of findings is a discussion of the connections between these findings and the biophilia hypothesis, and a discussion of study limitations. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications of the study, and recommendations for future research.

The Relationship between Zoom Model and Thematic Analysis

I conducted both a zoom model and thematic analysis to answer research question 1:

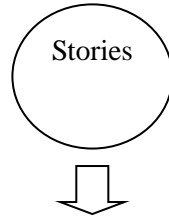
What are participants' experiences with horses in their personal lives? This research question

was answered by answering its two subquestions: *What are horses' roles in participants' lives? What experiences and reasons led participants to practice EAP?* In *Biophilia*, Wilson (1984) describes similarities and differences between science and art (see Figure 6.1). As a constructivist narrative researcher, I noticed an analogy between science and thematic analysis, and between art and the zoom model (see Figure 6.2). Wilson (2013) argued, "In the early stage of creation of both art and science, everything in the mind is a story." I interpreted this to mean that knowledge is originated in stories. Humans use two different means, science and art, to explore and express knowledge. According to Wilson's (1984) perspective, intuition plays an important role in execution of both art and science. I found the process of conducting the zoom model analysis to be similar to creating art. When I conducted the zoom model, I was like an artist. What I did was to represent the uniqueness of individual stories. Conducting the zoom model analysis to represent participants' stories created interactions between participants and me that could be emotionally evocative to participants. For example, Thom said, "In fact, I found your analysis to be emotional and humbling for me. I can only imagine what your journey has been like in this very important personal journey." The interactions I created with my research participants represented a meaningful journey for me as a constructivist narrative researcher.

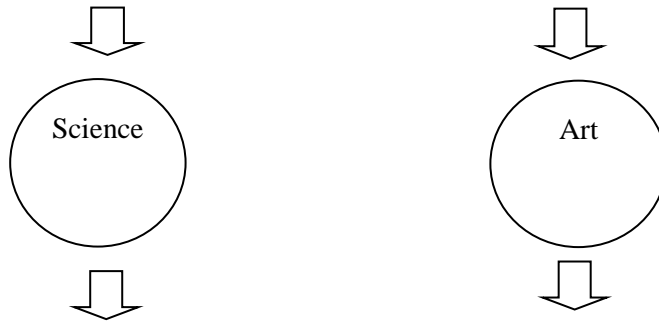
When I conducted the thematic analysis, I generated codes, developed a codebook, read each sentence and coded transcripts. This process is similar to Wilson's description of analysis, which he describes as being the early stage of science. Wilson (1984, p. 54) said, "In the early stages, individual behavior can be analyzed to the level of genes and neurosensory cells, where upon the phenomena have indeed been mechanically reduced." In my study, codes are like genes and cells. When I focused on each code and sentence, I focused on segments of each transcript,

rather than the transcripts in their entirety. The process of searching for categories, sub-themes, and main themes across different transcripts is similar to the synthetic phase of science (the phase involving synthesis). Wilson (1984, p. 54) said, “In the synthetic phase, though, even the most elementary activity of these biological units creates rich and subtle patterns at the levels of organism and society.” Similar to Wilson’s description of seeking patterns, in the thematic analysis, I looked for the patterns across the eight participants’ stories. While the zoom model and thematic analysis are basically different in execution, they are convergent in what they might eventually disclose about human nature—the aspect of human nature that was explored in my study was about participants’ experiences with horses in their personal lives. The aspect of human nature that was revealed by both the zoom and thematic analyses in my study was participants’ drive to examine unexplored human inner worlds and to reconnect with their inner selves. In other words, participants have a tendency to explore unknowns and are attracted to the novelty, which are consistent with biophilia hypothesis.

Importance of story: “In the early stage of creation of both art and science, everything is the mind is a story”. (Wilson, 2013)
“The two vocations [art and science] draw from the same subconscious wellsprings and depend upon similar primal stories and images.” (Wilson, 1984, p. 62)



Importance of instincts: “The biologist knows this relation by intuition during the course of field work, as he struggles to make order out of the infinitely varying patterns of nature.” (Wilson, 1984, p.51)
“Science is not just analytic; it is also synthetic. It uses artlike intuition and imagery.” (Wilson, 1984, p. 54)



Analysis: “In the early stages, individual behavior can be analyzed to the level of genes and neurosensory cells, whereupon the phenomena have indeed been mechanically reduced.” Wilson, 1984, p. 54)

Individual cases: “Artists invent special cases...the aim of art is not to show how and why an effect is produced (that would be science) but literally to produce it” (Wilson, 1984, p. 62)

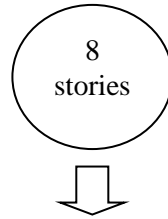
Synthesis: “In the synthetic phase, though, even the most elementary activity of these biological units creates rich and subtle patterns at the levels of organism and society.” (Wilson, 1984, p. 54)

Interaction between artists and audience: “The artist knows which sensibilities shared by his audience will permit the desired impact.” (Wilson, 1984, p. 63)
“The symbols of art gather human experience into novel forms in order to evoke a more intense perception in others.” (Wilson, 1984, 74)

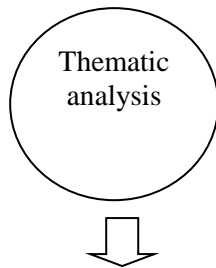
“Whereas art and science are basically different in execution, they are convergent in what they might eventually disclose about human nature.” (Wilson, 1984, 76)

Figure 6.1 The Relationship between Art and Science

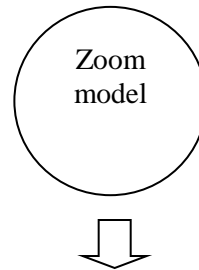
Importance of story: I went to the field to collect 8 participants' stories about their experiences with EAP



Importance of instincts: I consciously used the rational mind to organize the data, but I also noticed intuitions and creative ideas that guided me in the process of data analysis.



Analysis: In the analysis phase, I developed codes and focused on each segments of individual stories. The phenomena have been reduced by focusing on the segments instead of sequences of the stories.



Individual cases: I wrote participants' individual stories. The aim of the stories is to retain their uniqueness and sequences.



Synthesis: In the synthetic phase, I searched for categories, sub-themes, and main themes across 8 participants' stories.



Interaction between artists and audience: Writing participants' stories became the mediums for me to interact with participants and other audiences. The stories evoked emotions in participants and audiences.



Whereas zoom model analysis and thematic analysis are basically different in execution, they are convergent in what they might eventually disclose about human nature.

Figure 6.2 The Relationship between Zoom Model and Thematic Analysis

Summary and Discussion of Research Questions

The summary of the zoom and thematic analyses are reported here for questions 1.1 and question 1.2. The summary of the thematic analysis are reported for questions 2.1, question 2.2, and question 3. Three primary research questions and four sub-questions guided the inquiry process. The primary research questions are summarized by summarizing their sub-questions.

Research question 1-1: what are horses' roles in participants' lives? This primary research question (What are horses' roles in participants' lives?) was comprised of two sub-questions, and by summarizing the findings about the two sub-questions, I summarized the findings to the primary question.

All participants in this study have an evolutionary relationship with horses. They started from the low awareness to the high awareness about their relationships with horses, and then they also described coming to value horses' roles as teachers in their lives. Three main themes were discovered. The first main theme was that participants described low awareness about their relationship with horses, which means that although they love horses, they do not understand the reason for this attraction. Furthermore, participants liked to ride horses, and they saw horses as a form of recreation. These ideas reflected an anthropocentric view, meaning that participants love horses and love to spend time with horses, but the relationship tended to be one-directional rather than mutual in nature. In other words, participants did not really understand how horses felt or how horses view them, and they were not focused on a mutual relationship. Instead, participants mainly focused on what the horses could do for them.

The second main theme was participants with high awareness about their relationship with horses. Some of the participants found that the horses reacted aggressively towards them or did not want to connect with them, leading participants to wonder what was happening in the

relationship. One participant (Julie Anne) could feel a horse's pain through her body and was deeply sympathetic about what happened to the horse. Some participants (Michael and Pia) practiced natural horsemanship and experienced interconnected relationships. They became more aware of how their emotions and behaviors influenced the horses' behaviors. Participants tended to seek an equal and mutual relationship with horses. They did not only focus on riding; they cared about how horses perceived them and they took care of the horses' needs.

The third main theme was that participants interacted with horses to raise awareness about themselves and the larger social world. There were three subthemes under this main theme: (a) Participants deliberately incorporated horses to work on self-development; (b) Participants unintentionally incorporated horses to work on self-development; and (c) the participants learned life lessons from herd animals.

Deliberately incorporating horses to work on self-development. Five participants shared that they intentionally incorporated horses into their own self-development. If they felt confused or needed help, they would bring their questions to horses, and then they waited for an answer to come out. Sometimes they found another therapist to conduct EAP sessions with themselves as clients.

Unintentionally incorporating horses to work on self-development. Three participants shared that they became aware of their interpersonal dynamics through working with horses in their lives. In other words, they made an analogy between their interaction with horses and their interpersonal relationships with humans.

Life lessons from herd animals. Five participants shared that horses are herd animals, and that horses taught them important life lessons from their natural herd characteristics. Some participants said that humans are social animals, but that sometimes humans are too

individualistic to see the importance of relationships, or they do not want to accept that they need relationships. Devon (2011), Esbjorn (2006), Frame (2006), and Gilbert (2013) also discussed the characteristics of horses as herd animals from the therapeutic perspective of EAP. They found that the equine social system served as a metaphor for human social systems. Clients can find analogies between herd socialization and interpersonal dynamics. Pugh (2010) suggested that as herd animals, horses are very sensitive to other horses and to their environments. When clients are in their field, they are sensitive to the clients' presence. Previous studies primarily focused on how horses as herd animals can help "clients", with less focus on what "therapists" can learn from herd animals. Thus, the current study makes a new contribution to the literature by adding the focus of what therapists can learn from herd animals.

In this study, most of the participants seemed to follow a common developmental trajectory in which they experienced theme one prior to themes two and three. Participants evolved from having low awareness to high awareness about their relationship with horses, and then they interact with horses with the goal of raising awareness about themselves and the world. Participants described understanding that different species evolve different characteristics and herd dynamics in the environment in order to raise the chance of survival. Through this evolutionary relationship with horses, participants' perspectives shifted from an anthropocentric to biocentric orientation.

Combining the findings from the zoom model and thematic analysis, I interpreted that the evolutionary relationship between horses and participants is symbolic of a similar evolutionary relationship between participants and themselves (see Figure 6.3). For example, Julie Anne's high awareness about her relationship with herself helps her with her self-care issues based on

her interaction with horses. In other words, the attunement between participants and their inner selves is related to the attunement between participants and their outside worlds, and vice versa.

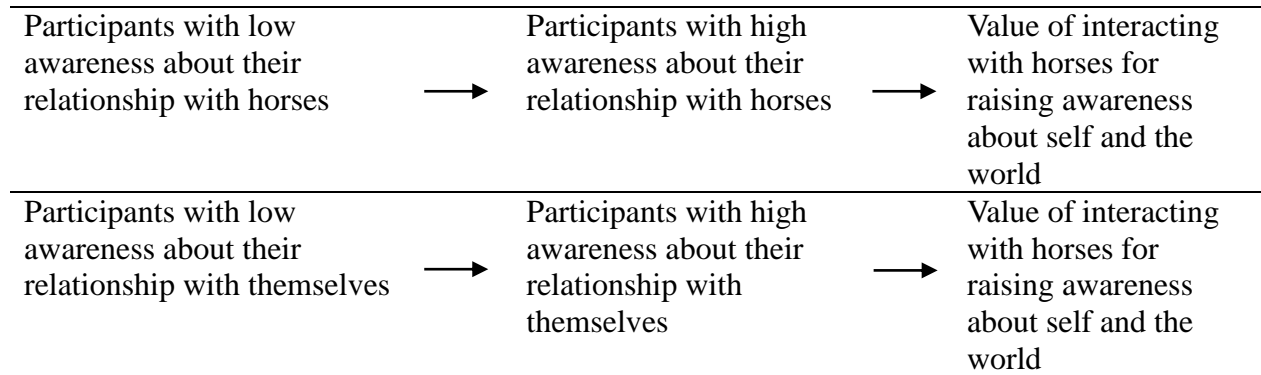


Figure 6.3 Participants’ Evolutionary Relationship with Horses and with Themselves

While this evolutionary relationship occurred in this study, EAP mental health practitioners outside of the study might experience these same steps but in a different order. For example, I started at theme three, meaning that I received EAP training first, and then I invited a horse into my life, meaning that I started to experience theme one and theme two in my daily life.

Research question 1-2: what experiences led participants to practice EAP? This research question explored what experiences led participants to practice EAP. From the thematic analysis, four themes were discovered. The first theme was that participants practice EAP for personal reasons. Three subthemes are under this main theme: (a) participants love horses; (b) EAP fits well with who participants are; and (c) EAP fits with participants’ personal experiences.

Love horses. Seven participants practice EAP because they love horses. One participant only values horses’ role in therapy, but not in his personal life because horses remind him of losing his wife. The findings in this study echo those seen in other research. Devon (2011) similarly explored how EAP practitioners became familiar with EAP. All of participants in Devon’s study stated that they loved horses, and after they observed one session of EAP, they

were sold. Frame (2006) investigated how therapists became involved in EAP/EFP. Frame (2006) found that most of the participants stated they loved horses and felt a need to incorporate horses into their clinical work.

Fit well with who I am. All of the participants mentioned that the EAP approach matched who they were, which included their personality, their working style, and their lifestyle. One participant in Frame's (2006) study stated that she struggled with the confines of staying in an office. Consistent with Frame's (2006) study, in the current study, Pia's and Sue's personalities served as one of the reasons they chose to practice EAP. Therapists' personalities influenced their decision to enter an EAP practice.

Fit with personal experiences. Seven participants indicated that their foundational personal experiences with horses led them to learn more about and believe in EAP. This finding is consistent with Abrams' (2013) and Frame's (2006) studies, in which the majority of participants had previous experience with horses which influenced them to practice EAP. Participants in Abram's (2013) and Frame's (2006) studies were curious about how EAP might work with their clients. Their curiosity motivated them to train in EAP. They thought the combination of psychotherapy and horses was a perfect match. Two therapists in Frame's (2006) study, however, had no prior experience with horses. These two were involved in EAP because they had previously practiced another experiential therapy (e.g. art therapy) and believed in experiential therapy. EAP is another one of the experiential therapies.

Abrams (2013) found that mental health practitioners had chosen to practice EAP because they had positive personal experiences with horses. This finding largely, but not totally, consists with my finding. In my study, Thom had to overcome his sorrow when he was around horses. Thom said, "You probably won't hear this from everybody else who does this kind of work ...

they (horses) are part of the team, and they are valuable to be part of the team. I could not do it without them, but that is it.” Although Thom believes horses can help clients, his personal associations with horses are painful because they reminded him of his wife who passed away when they were young. On the other hand, the other seven participants described having positive personal experiences with horses similar to Abrams’ (2013) findings.

The second theme about experiences that led participants to practice EAP was that participants practice EAP from professional reasons. Four subthemes emerged under this main theme: (a) EAP fits well with participants’ therapeutic approach; (b) therapy sessions unfold naturally; (c) participants believe that EAP works; and (d) EAP speeds up therapy.

Fit well with therapeutic approach. All of the participants described that they practice EAP because the essence and therapeutic perspectives of EAP match their original therapeutic approaches. While existing literature (Gergely, 2012; McConnell, 2010) investigated what theoretical orientations therapists selected when they practiced EAP, the existing studies did not explore how therapists’ previous therapeutic approaches influenced their choice to practice EAP. Thus, this sub-theme makes a new contribution to the EAP knowledge base.

Therapy sessions unfold naturally. Seven participants found that horses help therapeutic sessions unfold naturally, and they found they did not have to do much work during EAP sessions. Therapists’ interventions, horses’ reactions, and environments are natural in EAP.

Believe EAP works. Five participants said they practice EAP because they believe it works. Their belief is based on clients’ feedback and the therapeutic outcomes they have seen.

EAP speeds up therapy. Most of the participants noted that EAP “speeds up” the therapy process because horses help clients connect to their true selves. Clients were believed to improve faster than when they are in traditional psychotherapy. Abrams’ (2013) study found that EAP

provided a fast track to healing because clients learn to safely and quickly experience their emotions when they are with the horses. This finding is similar to Julie Anne's perspective. Julie Anne said that in EAP, clients are more vulnerable because they do not know what is going to happen, and horses usually show clients the key issues. At the same time, however, the horses' presence can comfort clients. Even if clients are more vulnerable, they feel safe at the same time. The coexistence of vulnerability and safety might speed up the therapy. Frame's (2006) study also found that clients "move" quicker in EAP because EAP accesses different levels of the mind and body. Lujan's (2012) study found that EAP creates immediate transformative experiences for clients. Even if different researchers have different perspectives to explain why EAP speeds up healing, they all agree that EAP helps clients improve more quickly. Findings from the current study support this conclusion.

The third theme was that participants borrow from horses' strengths in EAP. Most of the participants believed that horses have certain natural characteristics that humans do not. Two subthemes were: (a) horses have capabilities that humans do not; and (b) horses complement participants' therapeutic work.

Horses have capabilities that humans do not. Five participants emphasized that horses can be nonjudgmental, whereas humans see everything through their personal filters, which include judgment. Because participants accept and admit that horses can do something that they cannot do, they become humble in front of horses. Some of the participants in Gilbert's (2013) study said horses know what clients need, and horses play a role in shaping therapy and determining outcomes. The importance of horses' nonjudgmental nature, which provides acceptance and helps clients progress in EAP, has been explored in previous research (Chardonens, 2009; Devon, 2011; McConnell; 2010; Pugh, 2010). For frequently socially

rejected children, a nonjudgmental horse can help build self-confidence (Chardonens, 2009). Pugh (2010) further stated nonjudgment may be more of a perception than reality. Even if clients' belief that horses are nonjudgmental is a perception rather than reality, this perception still helps clients feel safe and understood.

Julie Anne explained how, from neuroscience and evolutionary perspectives, horses can read humans' inner landscapes. She noted horses possess mirror neurons, a condition that has evolved in order to help horses survive in the wildness. The existing research in EAP has not really explored horses' role in therapy from a neuroscience perspective. Cook (2012) defined the concept of mirror neurons in humans is:

The hard wiring in the brain that connects our nervous systems to this sensorimotor relationship between inside-outside are the mirror neurons...Mirror neurons play out the external actions that we observe other people making as if we were doing them ourselves. Mirror neurons play out what we are imagining ourselves doing "as if" we are moving, without the need to actually carry out the movement. (p. 2)

Cook's (2012) standpoint is based on evolutionary perspective, and he said, "Many of the aspects of awareness and other mental processes are based on biological requirements for survival, adaptation and the necessary level of responsiveness to the external environment" (p.2). This concept is adoptable to human animals and non-human animals because from an evolutionary perspective all organisms look for survival to pass down their genes in the environment. Cook (2012) further suggested:

The primary survival interest of our body/being is in determining meaning... The most important aspect of meaning is the relationship between ourselves and the perceived environment. One way that a sense of meaning and relationship comes about is through the action of mirror neurons. Put in a simple way – these play out external scenes, noises, maybe even scents and tastes, as if they were happening internally. Mirror neurons take everything personally. (p. 2)

According to Cook's perspective, I interpreted that when horses interact with clients, horses perceive clients as a part of their external environment. Horses make a meaning for the

relationship between clients and themselves, and then horses' mirror neurons play out how horses' perceive clients. Perkins (2010) gave a presentation on neurophysiological mechanisms in horses at the European Federation for Animal Science (EAAP) annual conference. She explored mirror neurons in horses, and suggested that these mechanisms can help inform a possible theoretical framework for incorporating horses into therapy.

Horses complement participants' therapeutic work. Two participants accepted having certain disadvantages when they practice therapy, such as being overpowering (Sue) and being an "old White man" (Thom). Sue found that horses balanced out her overpowering personality, such that she was softer when she incorporated animals into therapy. Thom found horses' presence decreased the racial, gender, and age gaps between him and his young clients. Both Sue and Thom incorporated horses into their practices to complement their disadvantages. This is a new finding that was discovered from my study, and was not identified in the existing literature, creating a new contribution to the knowledge base in this area.

The fourth theme is that participants believed they had been guided by destiny to practice EAP. Recalling their journey, most of the participants believed that it had been a form of synchronicity for them to encounter EAP. Kriss and Thom used religious terms to describe their journey. Thom has religious beliefs and believes God arranged for him to practice EAP. While other participants did not use religious terms to describe their journey, they still viewed being introduced to EAP as being something meant to happen. The sense of being destined to practice EAP is another finding not previously identified in the literature.

Combining the findings from zoom model and thematic analysis, I found that participants indicated more struggles when they loved horses earlier in life than they did in adulthood. The struggles in their childhood were about how they pursued what they wanted. When participants

were children, they had less autonomy than they did as adults. Childhood was a preparative stage when participants developed skills to achieve their dreams and goals later on. For example, Julie-Anne and Pia begged their parents for the possibility to get horseback riding lessons. Similarly, Thom had to negotiate with his father to have a horse on their farm. However, when participants were adults, they had the skills and autonomy to pursue their goals. Their stories were now about how to incorporate horses into their work despite some of the challenges this presented. For example, Becky described some potential risks and losses in privacy when she brings clients to her farm. Julie Anne described the inconvenience of conducting EAP because she had to drive to a farm and hire an equine specialist to work with her.

In synthesizing the findings of zoom model and thematic analysis, I found that participants' personal experiences with horses seemed to influence the way that they practice EAP. For example, Jean-Jacques described an important event when he talked to his mare about how he genuinely felt and he believed that this helped the mare to connect with him. The experience deeply influenced how Jean-Jacques sees horses' roles in psychotherapy. If clients are not attuned to their own emotions, Jean-Jacques encourages them to talk to horses and let horses help them be congruent. Similarly, Michael and Pia practice natural horsemanship in their personal lives, and their knowledge of natural horsemanship influences their observations of human-horse interactions in EAP sessions.

Research question 2-1: what are therapeutic factors in EAP? Participants described incorporating horses into their therapy practices, which means horses played an important role in influencing clients' change. The research question explored therapeutic factors from horses are in EAP. Four main themes were discovered in the thematic analysis. The first main theme was that horses actively use non-verbal language to communicate with therapists or clients in EAP.

Participants interpreted horses' behavior as intentional; they believed that horses were actively doing something for them or for their clients, even if they did not know why. There were four subthemes under this main theme: (a) Horses remind therapists when to step back; (b) horses confront clients to be authentic; (c) horses reflect clients' inner world; and (d) horses deeply connect with clients.

Horses remind therapists when to step back. Two participants shared that horses used their behaviors to tell the participants when they should step back. Horses might use aggressive behaviors to send participants (therapists) away. Horses might lie down in front of clients to symbolize a pause, and this pause seemed to tell participants (therapists) to step back and keep quiet.

Horses confront clients to be authentic. Four participants shared that sometimes horses act aggressively to push clients to connect to their emotions or remind clients to stay in the present. The results of this study are related to and consistent with findings from previous studies. The existing literature found horses have the ability to discern emotional incongruence in humans, which means if the emotions that clients present on the outside do not match the emotions clients are experiencing on the inside, horses will react to the incongruence because they do not feel safe (Chardonens, 2009; Gilbert, 2013). Shultz's (2005) study found that if clients are apathetic, depressed, or hopeless and behave passively, horses might cross clients' boundaries by behaviors such as stepping on clients or biting.

Horses reflect clients' inner world. Five participants shared that horses engage in unusual behaviors that reflect clients' issues. Horses seem to mirror clients' internal world, which provides therapists with information about what is going on inside of clients and helps clients know more about themselves. Devon (2011), McConnell (2010), Shultz (2005), and Whitely

(2009) similarly suggested that horses mirror clients' behaviors, which help clients gain awareness of how their behaviors affect horses, and then clients can alter the maladjusted behaviors in order to get the desirable responses from horses. The finding of this study confirms previous research.

Horses deeply connect with clients. Four participants observed that some horses respond very well to clients' specific emotions. For instance, if a client feels sad, a horse might curl its neck around the client and the client might end up hugging the horse. It is a mutual relationship. Gilbert (2013) also found that horses and clients connect on an emotional level, which let clients identify with horses and become emotionally engaged. Similarly, Dell et al. (2011) used the terms "spiritual exchange" and "bond" to describe deep connections between clients and horses.

The second main theme about therapeutic factors from horses in EAP was that horses are naturally therapeutic just by being themselves, which means horses do not necessary need to actively do anything in EAP to support clients' changes. When they are present in therapy, their characteristics can naturally promote positive changes. There were nine characteristics identified that can promote changes in clients.

Characteristics that are similar across different horses 1: horses are playful. Four participants observed that horses' playfulness helped clients relax when they worked on their issues, and this reduced tension and motivated clients to engage in therapy. This finding was consistent with findings in the existing literature. Some therapists in Abrams' (2013) study found that EAP involves physical movement and pleasurable activities, which helps veterans engage in the intervention. Gilbert (2013) found that the fun of working with horses balanced out clients' difficulty in doing therapeutic work. Esbjorn (2006) and Frame (2006) noted that horses motivate

clients to move physically and emotionally. If clients want to sit in the arena without doing anything, horses will do something to respond to clients' unwillingness to engage.

Characteristics that are similar across different horses 2: horses are big. Five participants shared that the horses' big size can be clinically helpful. Even if horses are a challenge in the beginning, through working with these big animals, clients can build confidence in the whole process. The existing literature (Esbjorn; 2006; Trotter, Goodwin-Bond, & Casey, 2008) found that horses' size can be a potential threat to clients. Gilbert (2013) noted that the size of the horse is not the only intimidating factor with regard to horses; clients can also be uneasy about the unpredictability of horses. Participants in the current study indicated that when clients can build a trusting relationship with horses, they might internalize the strength of horses and might translate that positive experience by seeing that they can take care of themselves well in front of big animals. Previous studies (Dell et al., 2011; Frame, 2006; Trotter, Goodwin-Bond, & Casey, 2008; Whitely, 2009) similarly found that working with horses enhanced clients' self-esteem or self-confidence. In my study, I found a big and gentle horse can support and comfort clients when they explore their issues in the beginning and throughout the therapy process. Clients do not all necessarily experience horses as a threat and have to overcome that fear.

Characteristics that are similar across different horses 3: horses respond to clients in the present. Six participants shared the belief that horses do not carry expectations or memories into their interactions with clients. Instead, horses interact with clients in the present, and their feedback from present-moment interactions can help clients raise their awareness. Pugh (2010) also identified that because horses are present, they have the ability to stay with clients in the

moment. Because horses respond to the present, they provide clients opportunities to explore how actions can create reactions from horses (Frame, 2006).

Characteristics that are similar across different horses 4: horses are calm. Four participants shared the belief that horses' calm presence can help participants and clients calm down and slow down in EAP. Furthermore, participants identified that this calming and slowing down gave them and clients the chance to connect to their inner selves. The participants similarly noted that they as therapists are also more present with clients when they slow down. Dell et al. (2011) used the term "calm presence" to describe this quiet characteristic of horses, which results in clients just wanting to "be" with them. Previous study (Dell et al., 2011) only explored how horses' calmness influences clients in therapy. How horses' quiet presence influences therapists is a new finding that was discovered from my study.

Characteristics that are similar across different horses 5: horses raise clients' awareness. Three participants shared that when clients work with horses, clients have to be aware of the horses and themselves in the environment in order to have a relationship with the horse. This causes clients to enter a state of mindfulness when working with horses. Gilbert (2013) noted that horses function independently and unpredictably; therefore, clients do not have any script to follow. Gilbert (2013) described, "This state of not knowing creates unique challenges with natural consequences." I interpret this to mean that "the state of not knowing" creates a novel situation that causes clients to become alert so that they are aware of what is going on. Devon (2011) explored therapists' experiences of using EAP with adolescents who have been diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The therapist participants in Devon's (2011) study stated that when clients ran around and spoke loudly, horses moved away from them. The interaction provided clients with concrete information on how their

behavior influenced horses' reactions. If they wanted to have a connection with horses, they had to change their behaviors. In Pugh's (2010) study, participants incorporated rescued and hypersensitive foals to work with adolescents, helping these adolescents learn to slow down and be quiet when they approached the foals. As with previous research, the current research supports the notion that horses raise clients' awareness.

Characteristics that are similar across different horses 6: horses' physical presence can be comforting. Four participants said sometimes clients might pet or brush horses as they work on their issues. Horses' quietness, warmth, and softness can comfort clients.

Characteristics that are different across different horses 1: horses have different personalities. Two participants indicated that clients have the tendency to connect to a specific horse quickly based on the horse's personality, or conversely, that horse connects to a specific client quickly based on the client's personality. The quick connection between horse and client helps speed clients' movement forward in the healing process. The findings between this study and previous studies were consistent. One of the therapists in Esbjorn's (2006) study similarly indicated that they usually bring clients to a pasture to observe the herd dynamics. The horse that a client picks from the herd to work with can provide the therapist with information about the client; that information can provide the therapist with a starting point for therapy. Trotter, Chandler, Goodwin-Bond, and Casey's study (2008) similarly found that after clients observe and interact with horses, clients are often instinctively attracted to a horse that has characteristics similar to their own.

Characteristics that are different across different horses 2: horses represent different issues. Two participants stated that horses have their own issues, and when a client's issues are close to a particular horse's issues, that clients will often quickly connect with the specific horse

who has the same issue. The finding was consistent to the existing literature. For example, based on a similar recognition, therapists in Pugh's (2010) study incorporated rescued foals that had attachment issues to work with adolescents who had been abused or in foster care. It was an intervention model based on reciprocity between adolescent and horse; adolescents took care of the foals and the foals nurtured the adolescents. Similarly, Frame (2006) noted that clients with interpersonal problems were able to identify with the struggles that a specific horse experienced in a herd.

Characteristics that are different across different horses 3: horses have different life stories. One participant mentioned that she shares every horse's story with clients when clients first come to her farm. Sometimes clients might resonate to a specific horse's story immediately, and they choose to work with the specific horse in EAP. Whitely (2009) investigated the therapeutic benefits of EAP in the treatment of at-risk adolescents and found that clients often asked about horses' backgrounds and discussed the horses' similarities to their own lives. Having a connection with a specific horse helps clients work on their issue quickly, no matter whether the connection is based on horses' personalities, issues, or backgrounds. Similarities seem to create some level of empathy and resonance between clients and horses.

The third main theme about therapeutic factors from horses in EAP was that clients actively do something with horses in EAP. Three subthemes were under this main theme: (a) clients find metaphors in EAP; (b) clients project their thoughts or feelings onto horses; and (c) clients develop empathy towards horses.

Clients find metaphors. Six participants shared that clients might find metaphors for their own situations in EAP. Making or discovering a metaphor is related to the creativity. When clients get a metaphor in EAP, it usually becomes an insightful moment for them. The finding is

consistent with findings in the existing literature. Lujan (2012) suggested that finding a metaphor is an “aha” moment for clients in EAP. Several studies found that clients can often recognize a metaphorical relationship between their personal lives and their interactions with horses (Lujan, 2012; Trotter, Goodwin-Bond, & Casey et al., 2008). In other words, metaphors only possess value when clients are able to interpret their own experiences in EAP. EAGALA (2012) suggested that two types of metaphors are used in EAP. The first are the nondirective metaphors, which are created by clients and prompted by therapists. They are generally based on analogies between clients’ present interactions with horses and their real life situations. For example, some children might see a big and unpredictable horse as the huge grief that they have to deal with in real life (Gilbert, 2013). Then there are the directive metaphors, which are set up intentionally by therapists to match clients’ needs in the treatment. For instance, therapists might put food in EAP session and let the food distract horses from working with clients. When horses are “addicted” to food in EAP sessions, it is an analogy to clients’ addiction (Shultz, 2005). In my study, participants preferred to let their clients create or discover metaphors by themselves. Participants might ask some questions to help clients find analogies and metaphors, but fewer participants use directive metaphors.

Clients project their thoughts or feelings onto horses. Six participants shared that clients project their thoughts or feelings onto horses. When clients use the mechanism of projection, it provides more information for participants to understand clients. This finding is consistent with existing research that suggested that projection in EAP provides clients an indirect, depersonalized method to express their thoughts and emotions (Gilbert, 2013), as well as their unconscious worries and fears (Trotter, Goodwin-Bond, & Casey, 2008). The way clients views horses conveys the enormous information about clients (Pugh, 2010).

Clients develop empathy toward horses. Two participants shared that clients develop empathy towards horses. Clients were concerned about how horses might feel if they did something to them (e.g. painting on a horse). Participants suggested it was meaningful for some clients, who learned to relate to another creature. Previous research (Chardonens, 2009; Dell et al., 2011; Frame, 2006; Trotter, 2006; Whitely, 2009) identified that establishing a bond with horses in therapy encourages the development of empathy. Chardonens (2009) found that the empathy between clients and horses was reciprocal in nature, with clients trying to understand horses' behaviors and vice versa. The results of the current study support the idea that EAP promotes the therapeutic outcome of being able to experience another sentient being's thoughts and emotions.

The fourth main theme about therapeutic factors from horses in EAP was therapists actively adapt strategies with horses, meaning that therapists make adjustments with horses based on the particular clinical needs of individual clients. Two subthemes were under this main theme: (a) therapists incorporate horses to provide different levels of challenges for clients; and (b) therapists incorporate specific horses to build clients' inner strength.

Therapists incorporate horses to provide different levels of challenges for clients. Four participants said different horses provided different challenges for clients, such as challenges about horses' size, horses' personality, or the amount of physical distance between clients and horses. These participants described intentionally adjusting the level of challenges they presented for clients, by incorporating different horses at different times, thereby allowing clients to gradually build confidence.

Therapists incorporate specific horses to build clients' inner strength. Five participants described their incorporation of specific horses to help the client build or reconnect with their

inner strength. For example, one participant incorporated a lead mare to assist vulnerable women to build their inner strength.

Research question 2-2: what are therapists' strategies in EAP? Even if four participants said that they “throw away” their agenda when they practice EAP, they still described using certain strategies to help them conduct better EAP sessions for clients. This research question explored what participants do to create better EAP sessions. Two main themes were discovered in the thematic analysis. The first main theme was therapists practice therapeutic skills on themselves, and included two subthemes: (a) therapists listen to horses; and (b) therapists stay quiet.

Therapists listen to horses. Three participants shared that horses know what is best for clients. Sometimes they have to pay attention to what horses want to tell them and let horses lead an EAP session. In other words, participants admitted that they need to adopt a more holistic view of roles in an EAP session in which they listen to guidance from horses.

Therapists stay quiet. Five participants said they try not to talk very much in EAP sessions because when they talk, they lead clients and themselves to connect to rational minds. Participants primarily spend time observing clients' and horses' interactions, and they create a quiet space for clients to interact with horses.

The second main theme about therapists' strategies on clients in EAP was that therapists practice therapeutic strategies on clients. There were two subthemes: (a) therapists' concrete strategies; and (b) therapists' abstract strategies. Categories of participants' concrete strategies included: (a) participants incorporate different elements in EAP; (b) participants cooperated with an equine specialist; and (c) participants choose an appropriate setting.

Therapists' concrete strategies 1: incorporate different elements. Three participants shared that sometimes they incorporated other elements in an EAP session. For example, they might include some art materials if they combine art with EAP, or they might include another species (e.g., a goat) as an icebreaker in EAP. Trotter, Goodwin-Bond, and Casey (2008) similarly included some equipment, such as jump poles and cones to work on team-building in their study about equine-assisted counseling (EAC) with at-risk adolescents.

Therapists' concrete strategies 2: cooperate with an equine specialist. Five participants discussed the value of working with a trusted equine specialist. Equine specialists do not know clients' history and do not read documents about clients. They can provide different perspectives to participants according to what they observe from clients in EAP. From EAGALA's (2008) standpoint, and Devon's (2011) and Frame's (2006) studies, there are clear boundaries between mental health practitioners and equine specialists. Mental health practitioners primarily focus on clients, and equine specialists focus on horses. However, my study and other existing literature (Gilbert, 2013) indicated that some EAP practitioners think boundaries are "fuzzy" in practice. Gilbert's (2013) study further found that mental health practitioners and equine specialists have to negotiate roles in the moment and respect who is the authority in the moment. Furthermore, Gilbert (2013) stated that there is the knowledge gap for equine specialists. Because equine specialists might not come from a mental health background, they need support and to learn self-care when they work with clients with severe behavioral or emotional challenges.

Therapists' concrete strategies 3: choose an appropriate setting. Seven participants shared how they chose EAP settings for clients depending on clients' age and functional levels. Usually participants chose smaller settings for children, adolescents, and lower functioning clients because clients feel safer and have a feeling of control in a smaller setting.

The second subtheme for the main theme about therapists' strategies on clients was that therapists need to employ abstract strategies in EAP. Therapists' abstract strategies include: (a) therapists provide different levels of structure in EAP; (b) therapists adjust EAP to meet clients' needs in the moment; (c) therapists manage risk in EAP; (d) therapists restructure clients' beliefs; and (e) therapists ask important questions for clients.

Therapists' abstract strategies 1: therapists provide different levels of structure. Five participants described providing different levels of structure to fit individual clients' needs. For children and adolescents, lower functioning adults, and clients with lower cognitive levels, participants indicated that they tended to conduct more structured EAP sessions to meet clients' needs. An example of incorporating more structure would be therapists provide more guidelines to clients when they work with horses. Similarly, during the early stages of therapy when there were lower levels of rapport between clients and participants, participants also indicated that they tended to incorporate more structure in EAP sessions to create a sense of safety for clients.

Therapists' abstract strategies 2: therapists adjust EAP to meet clients' needs in the moment. Seven participants described making adjustments in EAP to meet clients' needs in the moment, which meant that these adjustments did not follow a specific pattern. Instead, participants had to be very flexible and creative in EAP. An example of such an adjustment is if clients are lethargic, therapists might let clients lunge a horse to generate energy.

Therapists' abstract strategies 3: Therapists manage risk. Six participants shared that they paid attention to potential risks that specific horses might bring to specific clients. Participants wanted to create a safe place for clients, but they did not want to be overly sensitive about safety issues because doing so could reflect therapists' personal unsolved issues, and it could interrupt the interaction between clients and horses. Esbjorn's (2006) study which explored

perceptions of the major benefits and clinical outcomes of EAP/EFP as perceived by therapists also concerned safety issues and found risk management to be a consideration for EAP practitioners deciding whether or not to intervene in a potentially risky situation. The practitioners in Esbjorn's (2006) study indicated that, if they intervened before clients noticed a risk themselves, the risk was less likely to become the clients' own experience. In contrast, Esbjorn (2006) found that sometimes EAP practitioners tried not to over protect their clients, and instead to let clients notice the danger by themselves. Trotter, Chandler, Goodwin-Bond and Casey (2008) suggested that therapists discuss with clients how to keep safe when clients are around horses in the first session. In my study, two of the participants (Becky and Kriss) indicated that they discussed safety issues with clients in the first session to let clients learn how to take care of themselves.

Therapists' abstract strategies 4: therapists restructure clients' beliefs. Four participants shared that when clients work with horses, it provides opportunities for them to observe how clients interpret life events. Participants were objective observers, and they shared what they observed with their clients. This provided clients with the opportunity to notice their attributional styles and construct adaptive beliefs. Gergely (2012) surveyed 191 equine-assisted therapy service providers from different equine-assisted modalities. One hundred and fifty participants completed the survey question asking which intervention strategies they used, and 116 participants responded that they conduct cognitive restructuring with their clients. According to my study and Gergely's research (2012), restructuring cognitive beliefs is an important strategy for EAP therapists who incorporate cognitive behavioral approaches into their practice.

Therapists' abstract strategies 5: Therapists ask important questions for clients. Five participants described the need to ask important questions in EAP. These participants indicated

that, although they try to be quiet in EAP, they also ask questions to help clients gain insight and make connections between what happens in EAP and what happens in their real life. The finding supports findings from previous studies (Chardonnens, 2009; Frame, 2006; Trotter, Goodwin-Bond, & Casey, 2008). Chardonnens (2009) used the term “noninterpretive questions” to express the same concept, which means therapist asks noninterpretive questions based on the observations in EAP, and these questions help clients verbalize their psychological perceptions. I gave an example to explain Chardonnens’ (2009) perspective. A therapist might ask a client in an EAP session, “You work with horses and you know horses well. Why do you put yourself between two horses when they are negotiating positions?” This question can help the client think about why he/she put him/herself in danger.

Research question 3: what are the differences between EAP and traditional psychotherapy from participants’ perspectives? EAP and traditional psychotherapy are different psychotherapeutic modalities. Research Question 3 explored the differences between EAP and traditional psychotherapy from these participants’ perspectives. Three main themes were discovered in the thematic analysis. The first main theme concerned the relationship between therapists and clients. There were two subthemes: (a) different degree of activeness from therapists; (b) power differential.

Different degree of activeness from therapists. Six participants shared that they and the clients are the primary participants in traditional psychotherapy, but when they practice EAP, their role becomes secondary to clients and horses. Thom had an explanation about his role in EAP. He said, “I am involved, but I am involved in an involved way, not in a directive way.” The underlying meaning of this theme is about trust. Therapists let horses and clients lead sessions, and therapists trust the horses to know where to go. The therapist research participants in

Gilbert's (2013) and Lujan's (2012) studies similarly described learning to trust the process and the horses. Some participants in both Gilbert's (2013) and Lujan's (2012) studies voiced believing that horses know what is happening with clients before therapists, and they also voiced that trusting the process is a key component in an experiential therapy. The therapist research participants in studies by Abrams (2013), Chardonnen (2009), Dell et al. (2011), Devon (2011), Esbjorn (2006), and Gilbert (2013) tended to see horses as co-therapists or co-facilitators in EAP. In contrast, some of the therapist research participants in studies by Dell et al. (2011) and Devon (2011) saw horses as a tool to be used in therapy. Different researchers and therapists have different interpretations for the term "co-therapist." Some believe that horses share the role equally with therapists, whereas others see horses as the primary therapists. Still other therapists believe that they are sometimes the primary therapist and horses are sometimes the primary therapist. Most of the participants in my study emphasized the horses' role instead of their role in EAP. It seems horses not only co-facilitate therapy, but they also primarily lead therapy. The participants in my study described taking a different role, and this role is to hold a space for therapy to unfold naturally between clients and horses.

Power differential. Four participants noticed that when they are outside of a therapy room, there is less power differential between them and their clients. In traditional psychotherapy, clients walk into a therapist's office, which symbolizes the therapist's power and authority. When they are outside in nature, it is a neutral setting. The atmosphere decreases the power differential.

The second main theme about differences between EAP and traditional psychotherapy concerned therapeutic techniques between EAP and traditional psychotherapy. Four subthemes under this main theme were identified in the analysis: (a) clients talk to therapists versus horses; (b) talk versus do; (c) touch issues; and (d) individual versus team.

Clients talk to therapists versus horses. Two participants shared that clients sometimes talk to horses, and they do not necessarily know what the clients have shared with the horses. When clients interact with horses, clients become part of the horses' outside world. If clients are not attuned to their emotions, horses feel it and react to it. Because horses can give clients immediate and authentic feedback through their nonverbal language, clients learn how to become attuned to their emotions by reading horses' feedback. Gilbert (2013) did not discuss clients talking with horses in EAP to learn how to become attuned to their own emotions. In Gilbert's study, therapist research participants stated that clients talked to horses to share thoughts and feelings around feeling shameful. Clients talk freely to horses because horses will not violate their confidentiality. In Dell's et al. (2011) study, adolescent clients described talking to horses as if horses are their children. The nurturing seems to be reciprocal between clients and horses. Gilbert's (2013), Dell's et al (2011) and my study found that clients talk to horses for different reasons, and that clients do so for three different purposes: (a) express shameful thoughts and feelings, (b) express love, and (c) seek attunement. The third purpose has not been previously identified in the research and so represents new knowledge development in EAP.

Talk versus do. Seven participants said that in traditional psychotherapy they rely on what clients say to understand their clients, but in EAP they observe what clients do to understand them. Further, in EAP, participants can tell if there is any discrepancy between what clients say to them and what clients actually do. Thus, EAP provides more objective information for therapists. In my study, Thom worked with veterans who suffer from PTSD. He found that his clients avoided talking about their traumatizing experiences because talking about them would be too painful. When clients worked with horses, they engaged with horses and they gain insights from the interaction without verbalizing their trauma. Abrams (2013) explored

therapists' conceptions of equine facilitated/ assisted psychotherapy for combat veterans experiencing posttraumatic stress disorder. Similar to Thom's description in my study, all five therapists in Abrams' (2013) study identified the importance of nonverbal communication in equine facilitated/ assisted psychotherapy with veterans. These five therapists emphasized that equine facilitated/ assisted psychotherapy enabled clients to work on their traumatized experience, but they could do so without having to verbalize their traumas.

Touch issues. Five participants talked about touch as a sensitive issue in therapy. For example, the participants described that it is not easy to work on clients' boundary issues through touch in traditional psychotherapy. In EAP, horses are good at working on boundary issues through challenging clients' physical boundaries. Furthermore, clients touching horses in EAP can be therapeutic because horses are warm and soft. Dell et al. (2011) found physical touch to be a vulnerable area for adolescent clients who have experienced physical and sexual abuse. Touching horses gives them an opportunity to express their affection in a way that feels safe to them. Sexauer (2011) found that clients touching horses carries no social pressure and provides non-erotic contact. Furthermore, some clients whose physical boundaries have been violated can learn what positive and painful touches are (Sexauer, 2011). Touching horses can help them have a corrective experience and learn to set boundaries. Some children with sensory issues like to touch horses because it is soothing (Sexauer, 2011). Similarly, in my study, Sue incorporated horses into her sensory integration work with children.

Chardonens (2009), Gilbert (2013) and Shultz (2005) found that horses might push clients to test their boundaries, and horses might become a metaphor that symbolized a threat in a client's life. Clients have to learn how to be assertive instead of aggressive, and to set boundaries for themselves. Julie Anne shared the same concept in my study. She said sometimes she acts

like a horse to test a client's boundaries, but it is hard for her to do it in a therapy room because she is not as big as a horse. Furthermore, clients tend to think it is fake because clients know that Julie Anne crosses their boundaries on purpose. It is also a touch issue because challenging clients' physical boundaries can be sensitive for some clients whose physical boundaries have been violated. According to previous studies and my current research, the issue of "touch" introduces a variety of applications and discussions in EAP.

Individual versus team. Five participants said working with a different professional (i.e., equine specialist) and a different species can be an advantage or a challenge. In traditional psychotherapy, participants (i.e., therapists) are the only professional present and only one species is present. In contrast, EAP is inclusive of different professions (therapist and equine specialist) and species (humans and horses). Participants described the advantage as being that equine specialists and horses provide different lenses to understand clients. However, participants indicated the challenge is that they need to have the greater awareness about themselves and their limitations. Otherwise, horses might react to their unsolved limitations and their incongruence instead of clients'

The third main theme about differences between EAP and traditional psychotherapy concerned the characteristics in both therapies. There were two subthemes under this main theme: (a) characteristics pertaining to clients; and (b) characteristics pertaining to therapeutic approaches. Characteristics pertaining to clients included: (a) rational versus holism approach; (b) different ways of out of the comfort zone; (c) different levels of resistance.

Characteristics pertaining to clients 1: rational versus holism approach. Five participants stated that in EAP clients have to open up their whole being to interact with horses, which helps clients to work with themselves in emotional, cognitive, physical, and relational

ways. In traditional psychotherapy, clients mainly rely on talking and their rational mind. Excessive talking and rationality can be a pattern for some clients and a way of avoiding reaching a deeper level in therapy. Esbjorn (2006) discussed EAP as a mind and body approach that brings a holistic perspective to seeing clients. In Esbjorn's (2006) study, some participants combined energy concepts (e.g. Tai Chi) into EAP, and the therapy transcended the verbal language. Dell et al. (2011) found that when clients work with horses, they are engaged at multiple different levels as opposed to just talking. My finding that EAP is a holistic approach is consistent with these previous studies.

Characteristics pertaining to clients 2: different ways of out of the comfort zone. Five participants stated that clients have less control in EAP because they cannot anticipate what will happen and how horses will react to them in therapy. Furthermore, the novelty of EAP “wakes up” clients’ minds. These characteristics about EAP enable clients to engage more deeply in therapy and to become more ready to explore themselves. In traditional psychotherapy, clients can control and choose how much they want to explore outside their comfort zone. If they are not ready to commit, they can keep talking and circling on the surface. Gilbert’s (2013) therapist participants stated that because clients know that interactions between horses and them are not under a therapists’ plan, they tend to see EAP as something that they actively engage in creating. Clients are more likely to trust their experiences with horses and to perceive these experiences as “theirs.” Thus, clients take more responsibility for their growth and learning. Trotter, Goodwin-Bond, and Casey (2008) suggested that therapists deliberately bring clients out of their comfort zones by preventing them from using tools that they are familiar with in relationships, such as touch and talking, when clients work with horses. When clients are out of their comfort

zone, the learning starts (EAGALA, 2009). Thus, findings from my study are congruent from other research on this topic.

Characteristics pertaining to clients 3: different levels of resistance. Four participants indicated that clients show less resistance in EAP than in traditional psychotherapy. Some clients might avoid going to a therapy room, but they tend to accept EAP because it does not fit their stereotypes of psychotherapy. Some clients are more sensitive and defensive to participants' verbal feedback, but clients are curious about horses' behaviors and willing to see what is going on. This finding is consistent with other research. Abrams' (2013) therapist participants found that there is less stigma in EAP compared with traditional psychotherapy. Dell et al. (2011) found that horses react to clients in an innocent and honest way; therefore, clients are more open to accept the feedback from horses than therapists.

The second subtheme within the main theme characteristics of therapy is characteristics pertaining to therapeutic approaches included: (a) different types of matches; (b) different lenses to understand clients; (c) feminine versus masculine; (d) number of uncontrollable variables; and (e) different self-care issues.

Characteristics pertaining to therapeutic approaches 1: different types of matches. Three participants shared that different horses represented different personalities, allowing different types of client-horse matches in therapy. Clients can choose to work with a horse that they might have a deeper connection with. In contrast, in traditional psychotherapy, usually there is only one type of client-therapist match.

Characteristics pertaining to therapeutic approaches 2: different lenses to understand clients. Four participants said they know their clients' histories, and so they might bring assumptions into their work. Equine specialists and horses, in contrast, were described as

bringing fewer assumptions to their work, and bringing unique lenses for understanding clients. Equine specialists do not know clients' histories so they provide another lens through which to understand clients. These participants particularly view horses as present and nonjudgmental. The way horses react to clients was viewed as providing extra information to participants.

Characteristics pertaining to therapeutic approaches 3: feminine versus masculine.

One participant, Thom, is a male and he primarily works with male clients. He shared that traditional psychotherapy is a little bit feminine for some male clients, and he believed that psychotherapy can be conducted in a masculine way. In EAP, clients work with horses, and they do not necessarily need to talk about their feelings. This was viewed by Thom as being a neutral or a masculine way to conduct therapy.

Characteristics pertaining to therapeutic approaches 4: number of uncontrollable variables. Six participants said they have less control and there are more uncontrollable variables in EAP; therefore, they have to be very flexible. For instance, weather is one of the biggest variables. In traditional psychotherapy, clients and therapists temporarily shut themselves off from the outside world; therefore, many variables are under control.

Characteristics pertaining to therapeutic approaches 5: different self-care issues. Six participants shared that more self-care issues arise in EAP; these issues are related to emotional safety and physical safety. For example, clients might ask: How do I stay safe in front of horses? How do I take care of myself when I have an EAP session on a chilly day? EAP provides an opportunity to explore self-care in real life. In traditional psychotherapy, fewer self-care issues arise naturally.

No previous research focused on exploring the differences between EAP and traditional psychotherapy. Thus, my study makes a new contribution to the EAP knowledge base.

Connections between Findings and Biophilia Hypothesis

Research question 1.1 explored horses' roles in participants' lives. The findings indicated that participants interacted with horses first through an anthropocentric orientation and then through a biocentric orientation. In *Biophilia*, Wilson (1984) stated that when humans interact with nature and other organisms, their initial instinct is to believe that humans' needs come first, reflecting an anthropocentric orientation. However, after humans realize that respecting nature and other organisms protects humanity, they come to hold a biocentric perspective that values and conserves other organisms in the environment. Thus, the participants described developing a more evolved, or biocentric, relationship with horses over time, consistent with idea proposed in the biophilia hypothesis that humans will naturally evolve from an anthropocentric to a biocentric perspective over time.

In *Biophilia*, Wilson (1984) used the term "hunter-in-naturalist" to describe his role as a naturalist (an expert on plants and animals in their natural setting). When hunters go to a field, they are quiet and they dress in camouflage. After conducting the thematic analysis, I noticed many similarities between EAP therapists and Wilson's description of naturalists as hunters (Table 6.1). I created the term "hunter-in-EAP therapist" to describe these similarities. As EAP therapists, participants indicated that they are less active than they are in traditional psychotherapy. When clients interact with horses, participants sometimes described wishing that they could be invisible in EAP sessions to decrease interference and enhance natural interactions between clients and horses. Participants described being fully present with their clients and horses. They let their eyes and minds be open in EAP sessions. This description is similar to the way that Wilson (1984, p. 103) described a hunter/naturalist/evolutionary biologist going into a field:

The naturalist is a civilized hunter. He goes alone into a field or woodland and closes his mind to everything but that time and place, so that life around him presses in on all the senses and small details grow in significance. He begins the scanning search for which cognition was engineered. His mind becomes unfocused, it focused on everything, no longer directed toward any ordinary task or social pleasantries. . . . His [hunter's] eye travels up the trunk to the first branch and out to a spray of twigs and leaves and back, searching for some irregularity of shape or movement of a few millimeters that might betray an animal in hiding. He listens for any running rational thought: the ancient olfactory brain speaks to the modern cortex. The hunter-in-naturalist knows that he does not know what is going to happen.

Wilson (1994, p. 167) further said:

A great majority of the best evolutionary biologists are naturalists—they go into the field with open eyes and minds, complete opportunists in all directions for the big questions, for the main chance.

In the first quote, Wilson used the term “closes his mind”. I interpreted this to mean naturalists go to a field knowing that their rational and analytic minds may take them away from being fully present in nature. Therefore, they consciously work to not let their minds dominate their relationships with nature. However, in the second quote, Wilson used the term, “with open eyes and minds.” I interpreted this to mean naturalists are aware of their running rational minds. They notice their running thoughts, and they simply accept the thoughts and open their minds to other possibilities. Both concepts seem contradictory from the first sight, but actually they share the same concept in that accepting and noticing what is running in a rational mind and then let it go.

EAP therapists are like naturalists in that they are acute observers. Naturalists searching for “irregularity of shape or movement” in a field are similar to EAP therapists who search for unique dynamics or shifts in EAP. This search for unique dynamics or shifts is part of the SPUDS (Shift, Patterns, Unique, Discrepancy, and Self-Awareness) model of shifts, patterns, and unique, discussed in the chapter two. I interpreted the comment that “the ancient olfactory brain speaks to the modern cortex” to mean that naturalists connect their primal emotions, minds or

instincts with their rational minds. Similarly, participants in this study described being in a state of mindfulness when they practice EAP. They are aware of their running rational minds, but they are also guided by their instincts and primal emotions. In this state of mindfulness, they are open to seeing synchronicities, which might be considered to be mysterious, in EAP sessions. Jung (1955, p. 118) explained the concept of synchronicity.

On the primitive level, of course, synchronicity does not appear as an idea by itself, but as “magical” causality. This is an early form of our classical idea of causality, while the development of Chinese philosophy produced from the connotation of the magical the “concept” of Tao, of meaningful coincidence, but no causality-based science.

According to Jung’s definition, synchronicity occurs at the primitive level, and not from causality-based science. In EAP, participants open to seeing synchronicities and they accept that meaningful coincidences happen in a way that their logical minds cannot explain. Just as the “hunter-in-naturalist knows that he does not know what is going to happen,” hunter-in EAP therapists similarly do not know what is going to happen in EAP.

Furthermore, naturalists identify themselves as finders instead of problem solvers (Wilson, 1994)). Before they go to nature, nature is already there. Naturalists go to a field to discover something new for human knowledge. They bring the right questions when they go to a field. Similarly, the participants indicated that their role in EAP is not to fix clients’ problems. Instead, they are observers and finders who identify patterns, shifts, and uniqueness, and then they are facilitators who share their observations with clients. This means that these patterns, unique, and shifts were already present in clients, but the clients were not aware of them before.

Naturalists are not like experimental biologists who control variables and predict the outcome of experiments in a laboratory. On the contrary, naturalists go to a field and accept uncontrollable variables. EAP therapists are also like naturalists in that they do not try to control

variables in the environment. For example, the weather influences EAP sessions and horses' behavior, and EAP therapists do not try to control these variables.

Table 6.1

The similarities between naturalists and EAP therapists

	Hunter-in-naturalists	Hunter-in- EAP therapists
Follow instincts	<p>The biologist [naturalist] knows this relation by intuition during the course of field work, as he struggles to make order out of the infinitely varying patterns of nature. (Wilson, 1984, p.51)</p> <p>Our intrinsic emotions drive us to search for fresh habitats, to cross unexplored terrain, but we still crave the sense of a mysterious world stretching infinitely beyond. (Wilson, 1984, 76)</p>	<p>Participants are guided by their instincts (e.g. choose a specific horse to work with client).</p> <p>Participants are guided by horses' instincts (e.g. horses remind participants when to step back).</p>
Be present	<p>The naturalist is a civilized hunter. He goes alone into a field or woodland and closes his mind to everything but that time and place, so that life around him presses in on all the senses and small details grow in significant. (Wilson, 1984, p. 103)</p>	<p>Participants indicated that they have to be fully present with clients and horses when they practice EAP.</p>
Connect to primal emotions	<p>I formed the habit of quietude and concentration into which I still pass my mind during field excursions, having learned to summon the old emotions as part of the naturalist's technique. (Wilson, 1984, p. 90)</p>	<p>Participants are in the state of mindfulness. Their ears and eyes are open to connect to themselves and the environment spiritually. They are open to seeing synchronicities which might be considered to be mysterious when considered using logical minds.</p>
Not a problem solver	<p>A naturalist, real and then more metaphorical, a civilized hunter, I was destined to be more of an opportunist than a problem solver... I just wanted to be the first to find something, anything, the more important the better, but something as often as possible. (Wilson, 1994, p. 210)</p>	<p>Participants indicated that they were not there to fix clients' problems. They are observers who find patterns and the uniqueness in EAP. (Identifying patterns and unique is the skill in EAP.)</p>
Storytellers	<p>Every practicing naturalist has favorite stories to tell about the rewards of chance in the field. (Wilson, 1984, p. 103)</p> <p>I was a storyteller, sorting and arranging pieces of nonfiction, dreaming in order to fill in the gaps.</p>	<p>Participants shared their stories with me. I also conducted the interview with each participant to generate a unique story about him or her and their clients and horses.</p>

Metaphors & analogies	(Wilson, 1994, p. 206) The innovator searches for comparisons that no one else has made...Important science is not just any similarity glimpsed for the first time. It offers analogies that map the gateways to unexplored terrain. (Wilson, 1984, p. 67)	Participants and clients created metaphors/analogies in EAP.
Patterns	I would collect samples of every species. I found and write notes on all the aspects of ecology and behavior I observed, all the while watching for patterns in the form of geographic trends and adaption of species to the environment. (Wilson, 1994, p. 168)	Participants looked for patterns in clients' and horses' behaviors and interactions between clients and horses.
Novelty	From infancy we concentrate happily on ourselves and other organisms. We learn to distinguish life from the inanimate and move toward it like moths to a porch light. Novelty and diversity are particularly esteemed; the mere mention of the word extraterrestrial evokes reveries about still unexplored life. (Wilson, 1984, p. 2)	EAP is a new approach for clients. The novelty wakes brains up, and so clients are ready to explore themselves and the environment. They have more motivation to engage in therapy.
Uncontrollable variables	Whereas most biologists vary a few factors under controlled conditions and observe the effects of each deviation...the evolutionary biologist predicts the outcome of experiments...unlike experimental biologist, ...[naturalists] they go into the field with open eyes and minds, complete opportunities looking in all directions for the big questions, for the main chance. (Wilson, 1994, p. 167)	Participants are not like traditional therapists, which means they cannot control variables in the environment. They go to fields and accept the uncontrollable variables, which become part of the EAP sessions.
Non-verbal language	If certain human feelings are innate, they might not be easily expressed in rational language. (Wilson, 1984, p. 109)	Participants believed that language can be a barrier. They value that other senses play important roles in EAP.
Does not make a plan	From time to time he [naturalist] translates his running impressions of the smell of soil and vegetation into rational thought: the ancient olfactory brain speaks to the modern cortex. The hunter-in-naturalist knows that he does not know what is going to	Participants indicated that it is hard for them to make a plan and anticipate what will happen in EAP. They hold their plan for each session lightly in EAP, and let sessions unfold naturally.

	happen. (Wilson, 1984, p.103)	
	I was well aware of existing theory and the conventional wisdom of my discipline, but I would hold my mind open to any phenomena a congenial enough to enter it. (Wilson, 1994, p. 168)	
Scientific and artistic mind	I [Wilson] was the naturalist-scientist, in agreement on the need for strict logic and experimental testing but expansive in spirit and far less prone to be critical of hypotheses in the early stages of investigation. (Wilson, 1994, p. 345)	Participants find a need to have more studies to support their practice in EAP, but when they practice EAP, they are open to unsolved mysteries that have not yet been studied.
Ask important questions	What they most need are the right questions. They most important evolutionary biologists [naturalists] are those who invent the most important questions. (Wilson, 1994, p. 167)	Participants ask important questions to help clients gain insights and to promote self-exploration.
	Go into the field with open eyes and minds, complete opportunists looking in all directions for the big questions, for the main chance (Wilson, 1994, p.167)	

Limitations of the Study

Overreaching of findings from the data is a potential limitation of this study. As a doctoral dissertation, this was a study conducted by one person; I conducted and transcribed interviews, and then analyzed the data by myself. As an EAP learner and researcher, who has attended numerous EAP trainings, I began the study with previous knowledge and experiences that may have influenced my interpretations and overall data analysis. Because I was close to the data, I may at times have overreached the analysis or not clarified when an aspect of the data analysis came from my study participants versus my own personal interpretation. My advisor and committee members served as auditors of my study's data analysis. They read my data analysis and provided me with extensive feedback about it. Their feedback promoted greater trustworthiness of findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition, as discussed in the chapter three,

this study was based on a constructivist epistemology, which suggests that a transcript can be interpreted many ways. From this standpoint, I recognized and accepted various possible interpretations of the data as an assumption of my chosen methodology.

“Catalytic authenticity” means the process of research stimulates and evokes action on participants; “tactical authenticity” means that the process of research may empower action on the part of the participants (Lincoln et al., 2011; Rodwell, 1998). In this research, I did not conduct follow-up study; therefore, I did not know if the study achieved both criteria for quality.

Implications of the Study

Theoretical implications. EAP researchers and practitioners express difficulty in finding a solid theory to support EAP practice and research. In this study, I used the biophilia hypothesis as a theoretical framework to explore and support EAP. This is the first study to really explore how the relevance of the biophilia hypothesis to EAP.

Perspective from instinct. In 1873, Darwin advanced the idea that human animals’ and nonhuman animals’ instincts evolved by natural selection, which aided survival and reproduction (Darwin, 1998; Wilson, 2012). B. F. Skinner’s perspectives that humans’ brains were like blank slates was defeated by the idea of instinct shaped by natural selection (Wilson, 2012). In other words, the mind is influenced by forces shaping the evolution of the species. Humans and animals are born with instincts to help survival before they learn or are taught the skills they need to survive. Instinct and social behavior have a genetic basis rooted in evolution (Wilson, 2012). Humans and horses live in different environments. Thus, humans and horses have evolved survival instincts that are unique to each species and based on the particular survival advantages that these survival instincts confer to each species. When EAP therapists incorporate horses into therapy, they borrow horses’ instincts, which are different from humans’. Because horses follow

their instincts, they can give clients immediate and authentic feedback. Their feedback opens up clients' curiosity and clients want to know what is going on between horses and them. On the contrary, participants in this study indicated clients are more sensitive or defensive to their verbal feedback.

Perspective from therapeutic factor. Wilson (1984) noted that analogies and metaphors are key instruments of the creative imagination. Innovators search for comparisons that no one else has made, and these comparisons can create new knowledge or bring an old idea to a new level. In EAP, when clients create or discover analogies or metaphors—an important part of EAP identified by participants in this study—this creativity can bring them into a different level of understanding about themselves. When adding horses into therapy, horses' spontaneous behavior creates many opportunities for clients to find metaphors in therapy. In other words, horses are easily able to serve as a metaphor which traditional psychotherapy does not have this.

Perspective from therapists' role. Wilson (1994) identified himself as a naturalist (hunter-in-naturalist) who goes into the field with open eyes, looking for questions. Wilson forms the habit of quietude when he goes into the field because he wants to conceal his existence from other species and just to be an observer. He also wants to interfere with fields as less as possible (Wilson, 1984). The roles of naturalists are similar to EAP therapists (hunter-in-EAP therapists). In EAP a therapist has more of an observer role—more like naturalist (Table 6.1). In traditional psychotherapy, a therapist has a more active role, less like a naturalist. When EAP therapists practice EAP, they learn to be quiet and open up their senses to connect with the environment. This quietness and openness helps them ask important questions of clients, and see opportunities for clients to achieve changes and gain insights. The theoretical findings in this study can help EAP researchers and practitioners explain why they incorporate horses into therapy, why

metaphors and asking important questions are important in changes, and why EAP therapists act like naturalists in the field. The concepts of biophilia hypothesis combine two subjects: biodiversity and sociobiology (Wilson, 2000). When therapists incorporate horses into EAP, it is related to the disciplines of biodiversity and sociobiology. For example, participants indicated that they learn life lessons from horses as herd animals. The dynamics of herd animals imply the areas of biodiversity and sociobiology. The biophilia hypothesis could be further developed or explored for EAP by studying both disciplines.

Practice implications.

Knowing therapists' metacognitions. This study will be helpful for EAP trainers, practitioners, and novice learners. As a student of EAP, I had difficulty finding resources that focus on the practice and essential features of EAP and that describe details of therapists' thoughts and clients' transitions in EAP. Some practitioners (Keeler & Russell, 2010; Mandrell & Mandrell, 2008) have developed clinical guides for EAP, which mainly focus on introducing EAP activities. Those books can be very practical and helpful for EAP practitioners, but they miss the "art" piece of EAP. Kriss has practiced EAP more than 12 years and she said, "It takes for a while, you know. I think it's just been in the last 2 or 3 years that I can really deeply and intuitively understand this kind of work." Any therapist can receive EAP training and start to practice it in a short time, but it is not easy for them to really get the essence of it in a short time. When I was in EAP training, I learned how trainers practiced EAP, but many times I did not understand why they did one thing instead of another. I wanted to understand their thinking process, even if most of the participants said EAP was not about making a plan, it was more about being present with clients and horses and holding a space for them. As experts, these trainers' skills and techniques become part of who they are, as natural as their breathing. Part of

my interest in this study, then, was to learn about experts' metacognitions about EAP. The definition of metacognition is knowledge about one's cognitive activities in learning processes (Flavell, 1979). In my study when I used quotes from an interview, I tried to keep the context as complete as possible so readers could understand participants' cognitive processes, or understand how participants know their cognitive process. If participants can share their metacognitions to novice learners or other EAP practitioners, it will help the learners develop their metacognitions. In order to access this information, some of my interview questions were not only about exploring participants' experiences, but also about investigating their metacognitions. For instance, I asked, "How do different EAP settings influence clients and horses?" In order to answer this question, participants had to know how their knowing about how different settings might influence clients and horses, and how they (participants) make a decision. I found that the questions that I asked participants could also be helpful for the participants themselves. For example, Jean-Jacques gave me feedback at the end of the second interview, saying, "Because I am an extrovert, talking out loud allows me to refine my thinking ... it helps me see more clearly where I am now at this juncture in my life with this work." I interpreted this to mean that Jean-Jacques experienced using his higher-order cognition to govern and overlook his cognitive system when he was interviewed.

Kleitman and Stankov (2007) found there was a highly positive correlation between self-confidence and metacognition. In other words, if novice EAP practitioners have knowledge about their own cognitive process, they might have higher self-confidence when they practice EAP, and vice versa.

Implications for social work. Social workers view clients from the "person in environment" framework, which is the system perspective and ecological perspective. In EAP,

therapists accept many variables from the environment, and they let the variables become parts of the EAP. In other words, EAP is conducted from the system and ecological perspective, which matches to the core concept of social work.

In the chapter two, I discussed the concept of social justice in social work practice. If social workers are aware of themselves as powerful and privileged, they are less likely let their clients increase the psychological experience of injustice (Swenson, 1998). Participants in this study indicated that there is less of a power differential between clients and them in EAP. One reason for this is that EAP provides a neutral setting for clients. Furthermore, participants seemed to intentionally take their authority off when they conduct EAP, as seen in the view of EAP therapist as a facilitator rather than as someone who fixes or cures clients. I interpreted that practicing EAP is a way for social workers to enhance social justice. The greater balance of power between client and therapist in EAP promotes client empowerment that is also at the heart of social work practice (Robbins, Chatterjee, & Canda, 2012).

Recommendations for Future Research

Study equine specialists. Tony, Becky's husband, joined the first interview with Becky, and he shared his perspectives and observations of EAP. The experience from the interview further confirmed my perspective that equine specialists' experiences in EAP are important to be investigated. During my work on the literature review, I found that most research about EAP reflects the viewpoints of mental health practitioners whose backgrounds are primarily from social work, counseling, and psychology. An EAP team consists of one mental health practitioner and one equine specialist, so it is fundamentally an interdisciplinary area of mental health practice. Equine specialists primarily work with horses, and there is very little research about their views or contributions to the EAP team. When mental health practitioners invite

equine specialist to join their work, mental health practitioners have the responsibility to educate them and listen to them. Gilbert's (2013) research is the only qualitative study that recruited five equine specialists to be participants in the study. Gilbert (2013) conducted in-depth interviews to explore equine specialists' experiences with EAP. The findings from Gilbert's (2013) study show that both mental health practitioners and equine specialists have unique roles in EAP, but their roles are not always clear-cut. In my study, three participants (Julie Anne, Pia, and Sue) shared the similar perspective that sometimes they seek their equine specialist's perspective to know more about clients. Gilbert's (2013) study found sometimes it is challenging for both professions to work together. For example, an equine specialist might feel frustrated because a mental health practitioner fears a particular horse or horses, which might limit what an equine specialist and horses can do in EAP. An equine specialist may feel overwhelmed by some clients' mental health symptoms. One participant in Abrams' (2013) study noted that she worked with an equine specialist and the experience was not positive. The participant felt the equine specialist was not trained properly. My perspective is that just as client-therapist match is one of the important topics in traditional psychotherapy, therapist-equine specialist match is important in EAP and can be a topic for future study in EAP.

Because equine specialists come from a variety of backgrounds, such as equine science and engineering, which typically differ from EAP mental health practitioners' backgrounds, such as social work and counseling, they may have unique and valuable insights that deserve exploration. Studying equine specialists' experiences will be important for understanding and improving EAP. Furthermore, studying equine specialists' experiences can be a resource for other equine specialists. Many EAP programs are small; therefore, an equine specialist might be

the only equine specialist in a program. They can be isolated from other equine specialists. Research is a way for them to understand other equine specialists' experiences.

Study across disciplines. EAP is conducted as team work which includes another nonhuman species. As indicated earlier, there have been some discussion and hypothesis (Perkins, 2010) about the potential relevance of mirror neurons for explaining the therapeutic dynamics of EAP. One of the participants, Julie Ann, also discussed the idea that mirror neurons could help explain the common observation that horses are very sensitive to people's emotional states. Although there has been little research in this area, the concept of mirror neurons applied to horses is intriguing. A valuable contribution to the development of EAP would be neuroscience research that explored some of the underlying physiological mechanisms. It is important to conduct interdisciplinary studies on EAP from a neuroscience perspective.

Most of the participants described unexplainable experiences with horses in EAP. For example, they described believing that horses specifically address clients' needs, but they do not understand what exactly happens between horses and clients. This relates to Erickson's (2011) exploration of intuition, telepathy, and interspecies communication. Erickson (2011) defined intuition as "knowing something without knowing how one knows." In other words, intuition is largely unconscious. From an evolutionarily adaptive process, nonhuman animals and human animals seem to maintain those characteristics (such as intuition and telepathy). Long (1919) said, "That the animals inherit this power of silent communication over great distance is occasionally manifest even among our half-natural domestic creatures" (p. 77). This seems to posit that wild animals have stronger telepathy than domestic animals. As human beings, we can sometimes experience telepathy. Some researchers (McCraty, Atkinson, & Bradley, 2004; McCraty, Bradley, & Tomasino, 2005) investigated the psychophysiological basis of intuition. They found the

human heart has an electromagnetic field, and that the magnetic field in a human heart is about 5,000 times stronger than the magnetic field in a human brain. They also found the heart's field is directly involved in intuitive perception and the heart receives intuitive information more quickly than the brain. Horses have much bigger hearts than humans. In addition to talking about mirror neurons, Julie-Anne also talked about this area of research. Little research has been done on this topic in horses. A potential area for future inquiry would be research that explored the psychophysiological basis for characteristics such as intuition, that participants commonly ascribed to horses. For example, how do horses' electromagnetic fields influence them and the humans around this? This would be an interdisciplinary approach to exploring the therapeutic factors of EAP from the psychophysiological perspective.

Study the uniqueness of EAP. This study's third research question was: *What are the differences between EAP and traditional psychotherapy from participants' perspectives?* While the findings from this study helped to answer this question, they also raised more questions about the unique characteristics of EAP that could be examined in future research. For example, Thom worked with many traumatized adolescents boys and veterans. He found that sometimes males have a hard time accepting traditional psychotherapy because they view going to a therapy room and talking about their feelings to be feminine. In EAP, clients go to a farm with horses, and Thom described this as a more masculine approach to therapy, and that because of this males are less resistant to EAP than traditional psychotherapy. Based on these observations, a potential area for research could be to empirically examine compare males' openness towards traditional psychotherapy versus their openness towards seeking EAP.

This study had several findings that suggest the potentially unique effectiveness of EAP compared to traditional psychotherapy. For example, Thom believes that EAP may be a

particularly valuable therapeutic modality for adolescent and adult males who have experienced trauma. Future research could compare the relative effectiveness of EAP and traditional psychotherapy for males with trauma history. As another example, five participants in this study indicated that their clients showed less resistance to horses' behaviors than to their (participants') verbal reflections or confrontations. These participants indicated that even if therapists try to be nonjudgmental, clients tend to be very sensitive to humans' verbal language or to humans' perceived judgments. Future research should examine clients' levels of resistance in EAP compared with traditional psychotherapy. In other words, the future studies have to validate the uniqueness of EAP, and then the studies can help clarify the specific value of EAP within the larger field of mental health treatment.

Conclusion

This study had interconnected findings. Participants' evolutionary relationships with horses (finding from research question 1.1) primarily became their personal reasons for practicing EAP (finding from research question 1.2) and partly became their professional reasons for practicing EAP (finding from research question 1.2). Participants' personal experiences with horses (finding from research question 1.1) also influenced their strategies (finding from research question 2.2) and their roles as therapists in EAP compared to traditional psychotherapy (finding from research question 3). For example, in participants' personal lives, they brought questions to horses, and they found that the concept of "action through non-action" created the most possibility for their questions to unfold naturally. When they practice EAP, they intentionally decrease the degree of activeness as a therapist. Furthermore, participants practice EAP because they can borrow horses' strengths (finding from research question 1.2) that they do not have. The research question 2.1 was to explore the therapeutic factors from horses, which expanded the

discussion of the strengths and characteristics that horses naturally have in EAP.

The findings from this study tied closely to the biophilia hypothesis through the parallel drawn between the description of naturalists seen in the biophilia hypothesis and the description of EAP therapists provided by the research participants. The view of EAP presented in the analogy of EAP therapists as naturalists represents a unique new view of mental health treatment. This study contributes to the development of EAP by building a theory and exploring diverse perspectives from the participants.

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Appendix A: Guide for Interviews

Guide for Interviews

Interview Session	Focus	Questions
1. Life Story Interview	1.1 To build rapport 1.2 To understand participants' life stories as related to equine 1.3 To elicit some of the EAP experiences among EAP therapists	1.1 Tell me anything about you that you would like me to know more about. 1.2 What are your experiences with horses? 1.3 What kinds of experiences (e.g., training or volunteer experiences) brought you into EAP or an EAP-related area? 1.4 What was the turning point that led you to begin to incorporate horses in your practice? 1.5 How has EAP influenced you in your personal life?
2. Experiences and Perspectives on EAP	2.1 To further elicit participants' EAP experiences 2.2 To elicit what participants feel about and gain from the interview process	2.1 From your perspective, how do horses help you when you conduct EAP sessions? 2.2 From your perspective, how do horses help your clients in EAP sessions? 2.3 How do horses react differently to different clients in your EAP sessions? 2.4 How do you incorporate EAP into your personal therapeutic approach or theory? 2.5 How have your experiences practicing EAP influenced your views of therapy? 2.6 From your perspective, what kinds of skills do EAP mental health practitioners specifically need to have that are different from skills needed by traditional mental health practitioners? 2.7 From your perspective, how do clients react differently to EAP versus traditional psychotherapy? 2.8 From your perspective, what kinds of clients are more suitable for EAP, and what kinds of clients are more suitable for traditional psychotherapy?

-
- 2.9 What, if any, limitations have you encountered when practicing EAP?
 - 2.10 What kinds of adjustments do you need to make when conducting EAP with different age groups (e.g., children, teenagers, and adults)?
 - 2.11 What kinds of adjustments do you need to make when conducting EAP with populations who have different presenting mental health symptoms (e.g., eating disorders, trauma, and ADHD)?
 - 2.12 What have you observed about how different populations have reacted differently in EAP sessions?
 - 2.13 How do different EAP settings (e.g. arena, round pen, pastures, indoor setting or outdoor setting) influence clients and horses?
 - 2.14 How was it for you to be talking to me in this way?
 - 2.15 What questions do you have for me as we end our time together?
-

Appendix B: Recruitment Letters

E-mail to recruit equine-assisted psychotherapy (EAP) mental health practitioners. This recruitment script will be sent to those potential participants who are already known to Ping-Tzu Lee.

Hello:

I hope this email finds you well. We met at X (specify EAGALA conference or training, or Equine Guided Education (EGE) training) in X (date/year).

I am currently writing to you in the context of my doctoral work at Colorado State University's School of Social Work, where I am conducting my doctoral research on EAP mental health practitioners' experiences with equine-assisted psychotherapy (EAP). The title of my research study is "From traditional to equine-assisted psychotherapy: mental health practitioners' experiences," and the Principal Investigator is my advisor, Emily Dakin, Ph.D., Assistant Professor in the CSU School of Social Work.

For this research, I will be interviewing up to 10 EAP mental health practitioners, each of whom will have at least two years of experience practicing both traditional psychotherapy and EAP as well as a professional background within social work, counseling, marriage and family therapy, or psychology. Internship experiences can be included in the required two years of experience, and you can have experience practicing both therapies simultaneously. I plan to interview participants during the summer of 2013, and I will be conducting two interviews with each participant. The purpose of these interviews will be to learn both about experiences that led participants to become EAP practitioners, as well as practitioners' views of and experiences with EAP and traditional psychotherapy. The interviews will be audio recorded and will take place in person at a location and time of participants' choosing. I anticipate that each interview will last approximately one to one and a half hours each.

Do you think that you might be willing to participate in this study? If you have any questions or would like to know more about my study before deciding whether or not to participate, you are welcome to let me know via email or phone at [REDACTED].

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ping-Tzu Lee

Doctoral Student and Co-Principal Investigator

[REDACTED]

pingtzu0604@yahoo.com.tw

Emily Dakin, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor and Principal Investigator

School of Social Work

Emily.Dakin@colostate.edu

970-491-2565

If receive a no response back, will respond: Thank you for your consideration and for letting me know that you have decided not to participate. Take care, Ping-Tzu Lee

If receive a yes response back, will respond: Thank you very much. Shall we set up a day, time, and place for the interviews?

E-mail to recruit equine-assisted psychotherapy (EAP) mental health practitioners. This recruitment script will be sent to attendees of the 2011, 2012, and 2013 EAGALA annual conferences.

Hello:

My name is Ping-Tzu Lee, and I am a doctoral candidate at Colorado State University's School of Social Work conducting research for my doctoral dissertation on EAP mental health practitioners' experiences with equine-assisted psychotherapy (EAP). This email is being sent to attendees of the EAGALA annual conferences in 2011, 2012, and 2013.

For my doctoral research, I will be interviewing up to 10 EAP mental health practitioners, each of whom will have at least two years of experience practicing both traditional psychotherapy and EAP as well as a professional background within social work, counseling, marriage and family therapy, or psychology. Internship experiences can be included in the required two years of experience, and you can have experience practicing both therapies simultaneously. The title of my research study is "From traditional psychotherapy to equine-assisted psychotherapy: mental health practitioners' experiences," and the Principal Investigator is my advisor, Emily Dakin, Ph.D., Assistant Professor in the CSU School of Social Work.

I plan to interview participants during the summer of 2013, and I will be conducting two interviews with each participant. The purpose of these interviews will be to learn both about experiences that led participants to become EAP practitioners, as well as practitioners' views of and experiences with EAP and traditional psychotherapy. The interviews will be audio recorded and will take place in person at a location and time of participants' choosing. I anticipate that each interview will last approximately one to one and a half hours each.

Do you think that you might be willing to participate in this study? If you have any questions or would like to know more about my study before deciding whether or not to participate, you are welcome to let me know via email or phone at [REDACTED].

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ping-Tzu Lee

Doctoral Student and Co-Principal Investigator

[REDACTED]
pingtzu0604@yahoo.com.tw

Emily Dakin, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor and Principal Investigator

School of Social Work

Emily.Dakin@colostate.edu

970-491-2565

If receive a no response back, will respond: Thank you for your consideration and for letting me know that you have decided not to participate. Take care, Ping-Tzu Lee

If receive a yes response back, will respond: Thank you very much. Shall we set up a day, time, and place for the interviews?

E-mail to recruit equine-assisted psychotherapy (EAP) mental health practitioners. This recruitment script will be sent to potential participants who have been identified through an internet search.

Hello:

My name is Ping-Tzu Lee, and I am a doctoral candidate at Colorado State University's School of Social Work conducting research for my doctoral dissertation on EAP mental health practitioners' experiences with equine-assisted psychotherapy (EAP). I got your name through an internet search of EAP mental health practitioners. The X (name of website) website indicates that you are an EAP mental health practitioner and therefore potentially eligible to participate in my research.

For my doctoral research, I will be interviewing up to 10 EAP mental health practitioners, each of whom will have at least two years of experience practicing both traditional psychotherapy and EAP as well as a professional background within social work, counseling, marriage and family therapy, or psychology. Internship experiences can be included in the required two years of experience, and you can have experience practicing both therapies simultaneously. The title of my research study is "From traditional psychotherapy to equine-assisted psychotherapy: mental health practitioners' experiences," and the Principal Investigator is my advisor, Emily Dakin, Ph.D., Assistant Professor in the CSU School of Social Work.

I plan to interview participants during the summer of 2013, and I will be conducting two interviews with each participant. The purpose of these interviews will be to learn both about experiences that led participants to become EAP practitioners, as well as practitioners' views of and experiences with EAP and traditional psychotherapy. The interviews will be audio recorded and will take place in person at a location and time of participants' choosing. I anticipate that each interview will last approximately one to one and a half hours each.

Do you think that you might be willing to participate in this study? If you have any questions or would like to know more about my study before deciding whether or not to participate, you are welcome to let me know via email or phone at [REDACTED].

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ping-Tzu Lee

Doctoral Student and Co-Principal Investigator

[REDACTED]

pingtzu0604@yahoo.com.tw

Emily Dakin, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor and Principal Investigator

School of Social Work

Emily.Dakin@colostate.edu

970-491-2565

If receive a no response back, will respond: Thank you for your consideration and for letting me know that you have decided not to participate. Take care, Ping-Tzu Lee

If receive a yes response back, will respond: Thank you very much. Shall we set up a day, time, and place for the interviews?

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy Mental Health Practitioner FYI Announcement to be posted on EAGALA Community Network

ANNOUNCEMENT: RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS FOR EAP RESEARCH

My name is Ping-Tzu Lee, and I am a doctoral candidate at Colorado State University's School of Social Work conducting research for my doctoral dissertation on EAP mental health practitioners' experiences with equine-assisted psychotherapy (EAP).

For my doctoral research, I am seeking to recruit up to 10 EAP mental health practitioners, each of whom will have at least two years of experience practicing both traditional psychotherapy and EAP as well as a professional background within social work, counseling, marriage and family therapy, or psychology. Internship experiences can be included in the required two years of experience, and you can have experience practicing both therapies simultaneously. I plan to interview participants during the summer of 2013, and I will be conducting two interviews with each participant. The purpose of these interviews will be to learn both about experiences that led participants to become EAP practitioners, as well as practitioners' views of and experiences with EAP and traditional psychotherapy. The interviews will be audio recorded and will take place in person at a location and time of participants' choosing. I anticipate that each interview will last approximately one to one and a half hours.

If you think you might like to participate in this research or are interested in learning more, please contact me by email (pingtzu0604@yahoo.com.tw) or phone (██████████). The Principal Investigator for this research is: Emily Dakin, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, School of Social Work; Emily.Dakin@colostate.edu

Appendix C: Demographic Form

EAP Mental Health Practitioners Demographic Form

Name and preferred pseudonym	
Age	
Gender	
Ethnicity	
Years of practicing traditional psychotherapy	
Years of practicing equine assisted psychotherapy	
Educational background (degrees earned beginning with bachelor's degree and in which fields; please indicate also if you are currently working towards a degree)	
Do you possess a professional license, and if so which	
Any training in equine assisted psychotherapy or related training	
Therapeutic approaches or specialities	

Appendix D: Codebook

Codebook

Concepts related to biophilia hypothesis: participants' theoretical backgrounds or concepts related to biophilia hypothesis.

Occupational background: Participants' past and current occupations.

Therapeutic approach or philosophy: Therapeutic approaches and perspectives that participants' hold in their therapy practice.

-Before EAP

-After EAP

Social and cultural background: Any information related to participants' social and cultural background.

Educational background: Any information related to participants' education.

Different from EAGALA: Participants' perspectives which are different from EAGALA.

Sub-question 1-1 What are horses' roles in participant's lives?

Horses' roles in participants' lives

1. Childhood dream: Participants just loved horses without any reason when they were children.
2. Tool: Participants see horses as machine. Horses are only for riding or economics. Participants lack emotional and physical contact with horses.
3. Recreation: Horses provide relaxation. Participants may have some level of connection with horses. Horses are not only for riding.
4. Emotional connection: Horses help participants connect to participants' feelings, and participants feel horses understand them or they understand horses. E.g. horses are sentient beings.
5. Confrontation: Horses use aggressive behaviors to push participants to work on their own issues or help participants connect to their feelings. => Horses seek authenticities and congruence from participants.
6. Disconnection: Horses do not use aggressive behaviors to push participants, but horses are not willing to connect to participants. Participants feel ignored or rejected by horses' behaviors. => Horses seek authenticities and congruence from participants.
7. Guidance: Horses guide participants' decisions in their life. E.g. career decisions or living places.
8. Danger: Horses hurt participants or put participants in danger, or participants put horses in danger.
9. Bridge: Horses provide a connection between participants' past lives and current or future lives.

10. Feel how clients feel: Participants see themselves as a client, so they interact with horses to understand how clients may feel in EAP sessions.
11. Self-development: Participants work with horses to work on their personal issues or self-improvement. Horses bring participants out of their comfort zone. => openness; willing to be vulnerable
12. Horsemanship: A horse and a human go willingly together which means participants practice any unmounted and mounted skills with the horse and the participants and the horse accomplish a task together.
13. Self-awareness: Through interacting with horses, participants know more about themselves, and they are aware of who they are.
14. Present: Horses are present-centered. Horses help participants stay in the present and pay attention to what is going on inside of them.
15. Emotional trigger: When participants are around horses, horses trigger their specific emotions. (e.g. Participants feel sad when they are around horses)
16. Cooperation between participants and their partner: Participants' partner join participants' dream to invite horses in their lives, or participants join their partner's dream to invite horses in their lives.

Sub-question 1-2 What experiences led participants to practice EAP?

Reason practice EAP

1. Love horses: Participants love horses. When they heard of the EAP approach, participants thought it was a good fit for them.
2. Emotions connect to horses: From personal connection with horses, participants believe clients will benefit from EAP.
3. Fit well to therapeutic approach: participants' therapeutic approach or therapeutic philosophy fit into EAP.
4. Fit with life philosophy or experiences: EAP philosophy is similar to participants' life philosophy and experiences.
5. Simultaneity (Cooperation with the Universe): Participants believe that simultaneity has meaning beyond mere coincidence. Participant cannot explain why it happened, but it really helps participants move forward in the path of learning or practicing EAP. (e.g. partner's dream becomes each other's dream).
 - religion: cooperation with the God
 - non-religion: calling
6. Horses can do something that human cannot: Participants believe horses are more sensitive than humans, so they can help participants or clients in some levels that participants or clients are not aware of. (Humble, awe...)
7. Naturally unfold: EAP is produced or practiced with less artificial intervention. When participants practice this approach, it is less work for them. (e.g. organic therapy)
8. Believe therapy works: Participants sometimes may doubt whether therapy works or not. After they practice EAP, they believe therapy works for clients.

9. Start from therapeutic riding or hippotherapy: Participants knew and got involved in therapeutic riding or hippotherapy first, and then they find EAP fits better for them.
10. Fit well with who I am: The essence of EAP fit well with Participants' personalities

Sub-question 2-1 What are therapeutic factors in EAP?

Therapeutic factors (horses' role) in EAP:

1. Represent different horse personalities: Different clients tend to connect to a specific horse based on their personalities. Different horses tend to connect to different clients. (Clients do not know horses' life histories. They observe horses' behavior and connect to them.)
2. Remind the priority for therapists: Horses let participants know when they need to throw away their agenda and when they need to step back. => a lot of trust; respect horses.
3. Provide different levels of challenge: horses size, activity, different distance to horses
4. Represent different issues: Different horses have their own histories or problems. Clients may connect to horses' histories or problems. (Clients know horses' life histories.)
5. Mindfulness: Horses help therapists and clients stay in the present and pay attention to themselves and their environment; raise awareness. (e.g. help client out of the shell; open your eyes, but still connect to yourself and environment)
6. Metaphor in life: Horses and horses' behavior are used in an imaginative way to describe sb/sth. Clients create their own meanings when they work with horses. Things happen between clients and horses are similar to clients' lives.
7. Projection: Clients project what they think and how they feel onto horses.
8. Confrontation: horses use an aggressive way to push clients to work on their own issues or to connect to their feelings. => seek real contact; validate authenticity
9. Disconnection: Horses do not use an aggressive way to push participants, but horses are not willing to connect to participants. Participants feel ignored or rejected by horses' behavior. => validate authenticity.

10. Sacred beings: Therapists or clients respect horses' presence and believe horses have the power to help people reconnect to their inner truth.
11. Horses' unusual behavior: Horses represent unusual behavior to respond to clients' issues or horses challenge clients (e.g. bite client) but therapists don't know why that happens.
12. Deep connection: Horses shows some behaviors which make clients feel horses understand them, and clients feel safe to show their authentic feelings to the horses. (mutual relationship). Some horses respond well to clients' specific emotions.
13. Playfulness: Horses are playful. When clients work with horses, clients are more relaxed to work on their issues. Horses are like the catalyst.
14. Touch: Clients touch horses or horses touch clients. This can comfort clients. Therapists touching clients can be a sensitive issue.
15. The meaning of big size: Horses are big, which can be the huge support or challenge for clients.
16. Speed up: Horses help clients improve fast. Clients will not be stuck with their issues very long.
17. Comfort: horses provide comfort and acceptance to clients.
18. Respond to presence instead of past or future: Horses' responses toward people are changing. Horses respond to who you are today instead of who you were in the past or who you will be in the future.
19. Empower: Horses assist clients to reconnect to their strengths, and then they help clients overcome their challenges.

20. Complement: Participants may have some weakness or they may be not always in good situation. Horses or equine specialists help participants in some ways to better the therapy.
21. Slow down: Horses help clients and therapists slow down.
22. Genuineness encourages genuineness: Horses' genuine behaviors invite clients' genuine behaviors.
23. Present different life stories: Each horse has different life stories, which help clients connect with a specific horse.

Sub-question 2-2 What are therapists' strategies in EAP?

Therapists' strategies in EAP

1. Levels of structure: Participants provide different levels of structure to different clients according to clients' age, clients' functional levels, clients' mental health status, stages of therapy, levels of rapport, or clients' preference.
2. Match: Participants have knowledge to know which horses fit with a specific client.
3. Incorporate different elements: Therapists incorporate planned elements or unplanned natural elements in sessions (e.g. built obstacle).
4. Listen to horses: Therapists believe horses know what the best is for the therapy and for clients. Therapists respect horses' spontaneous behavior. => Trust horses.
5. Therapists cooperate with equine specialists: Any advantages and disadvantages for therapists to work with equine specialists.
6. Adjust EAP to individual needs: Therapists adjust their EAP methods to meet clients' needs (e.g., some clients need to work on their boundary issues or safety issues).
7. Be quiet: Therapists try not to talk very much. They spend time observing clients and horses, and they try to be quiet.
8. Ask important questions: Therapists ask clients questions to help clients get insights in EAP.
9. Act like a horse: Therapists mimic horses' behaviors or horses' characteristics in EAP or in traditional psychotherapy.
10. Therapists listen to themselves: Therapists follow their intuitions to make a decision instead of following their logical minds.
11. Risk management: Safety issues in EAP.

12. Choose settings: Therapists choose different settings to match clients' or horses' needs.
13. Reflector: Therapists describe and observe what is happening without personal interpretations.

Question 3: What are the differences between EAP and TP from participants' perspectives?

Differences between TP and EAP

1. Clients talk to whom: TP: Talk to therapists EAP: talk to horses.
2. Mind vs. other senses: TP: Participants can be limited by their minds. EAP: Horses respond to people and environment intuitively. (Rational mind v.s. whole being)
3. Priority of roles: TP: Clients and therapists are the leading roles. EAP: Therapists do not emphasize their roles. Clients and horses are the leading roles.
4. Different levels of diversity: TP: Only one therapist, and one personality. EAP: Different horses have different horsenalities. Clients can find a horse that they have a deep connection to work with.
5. Lens to understand clients: TP: Therapists carry personal perspectives to understand clients. They are more judgmental than horses; EAP: Horses see clients with a fresh eye in each session (less judgmental).
6. Talk vs. do: TP: Therapists focus on what clients say; EAP: Therapists focus on what clients do.
7. Touch issues: TP: Touch can be a sensitive issue between therapists and clients. EAP: Clients can touch horses to comfort themselves.
8. Level of out of the comfort zone: TP: Clients are out of their comfort zone, but they are still in a setting where they are familiar; EAP: Clients are out of their comfort zone, and they feel much more vulnerable to work with horses because they cannot anticipate what will happen.

9. Power differential: TP: Clients feel therapists have more power according to gender, age, skin color, etc. EAP: Clients feel the relationship between them and therapists are more equal.
10. Feminine vs. masculine: TP: seems more feminine → talking feelings; EAP: can be more masculine or neutral → working with horses.
11. Level of resistance: TP: Clients may have some stereotypes about therapy. They don't feel comfortable to seeking help. →Stigma. EAP: Clients tend to think EAP is not a therapy. Clients go to a farm and work with horses.
12. Variable: TP: Less uncontrollable variables. Therapists and clients have more control in an artificial setting; EAP: more uncontrollable variable and less control (e.g. Privacy, weather, feeding time.)
13. Individual vs. team: TP: One professional and one species. EAP: cross professionals and cross species.
14. Self-care issues: TP: Less self-care issues naturally arise. EAP: More self-care issues naturally arise.

Appendix E: Consent Form

Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Colorado State University

TITLE OF STUDY: FROM TRADITIONAL TO EQUINE ASSISTED PSYCHOTHERAPY: MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONERS' EXPERIENCES

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

Emily Dakin, Ph. D., Assistant Professor, School of Social Work; Phone: 970-491-2565, E-mail: Emily.Dakin@colostate.edu

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

Ping-Tzu Lee, M.A., School of Social Work, Doctoral Candidate. Phone: [REDACTED] E-mail: pingtzu0604@yahoo.com.tw; Ben Granger, Ph. D., Professor, School of Social Work; E-mail: Ben.Granger@colostate.edu

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

You are being invited to participate in this study because you are a mental health practitioner who has at least two years of experience with practicing both traditional psychotherapy and equine assisted psychotherapy (EAP). Learning about your background and experiences with practicing EAP will help to fill in research gaps in this developing treatment approach.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

This study is being conducted by Co-Principal Investigator Ping-Tzu Lee, Ph. D. Candidate at Colorado State University, under the supervision of her doctoral committee advisors, Emily Dakin, Ph.D. and Ben Granger, Ph.D. This study is being conducted for Ping Tzu's doctoral dissertation. Ping-Tzu will be interviewing up to 10 people for this study. The "I" used throughout this document refers to Ping-Tzu.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The purpose of this study is to learn about your experiences with horses and with practicing traditional psychotherapy and EAP. I hope to use the information gained from this study to better understand what led you to become an EAP practitioner, how you incorporate EAP into your work, and the differences that you perceive between EAP and traditional psychotherapy.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

I will interview you two times, and each interview will last one to one and a half hours. These two interviews will be audio recorded with your permission and will be conducted in your therapy room or any other preferred setting which is quiet and provides privacy.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?

You will be asked to share your personal stories and professional experiences with EAP and traditional psychotherapy. The first interview will be very open-ended in that you will be able to share anything about yourself that you would like me to know more about. The second interview will be more directed, and we will focus more on your experiences with EAP and traditional psychotherapy. After the interviews have been completed, I may contact you via email, telephone, or Skype if there are any questions that need to be clarified, and you are also welcome to contact

me if you have any additional comments or questions. I will send the interview transcriptions to you for your review and to provide any recommended edits (including requests to remove any comments that you made that you would like to remain “off the record”). I will also send you a summary of the initial data analysis after it has been completed, and you will be invited to provide any comments or feedback about this that you would like.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

You may not want to participate in this study if you are not comfortable sharing about yourself, your background with horses, or your experiences with EAP and traditional psychotherapy. If you do not have at least two years of experience practicing both EAP and traditional psychotherapy, you will not be eligible to participate in this study.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

Although we do not anticipate any risks to you from participating in this study, it is possible that you could disclose emotionally distressing information during your interviews. We can proceed with the interviews at a pace that is comfortable to you, and you are welcome to share only those portions of your story that you would like. In addition, you can end an interview at any time.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

While there is no direct benefit to you from participating in this study, we anticipate that some participants could value having the opportunity to reflect on their experiences relative to their work as an EAP practitioner.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of compensation for your participation.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?

We will keep all identifying records about your participation in this study confidential. At the outset of this study, you will select a pseudonym, which will be used to disguise your identity. This pseudonym will be used in all interview transcripts, replacing your real name. You will have the opportunity to review and edit the interview transcriptions. All written reports (my dissertation and any subsequent publications) or presentations will use only the pseudonym that you have selected. We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from having access to information about your identity as a participant in this study. For example, the electronic files that contain your interview recordings and associated pseudonym will be kept separate from the list that links your name to your pseudonym. The data will be password protected, and only members of the research team will have access to this password. The CSU Institutional Review Board ethics committee may also have access to the research files for audit purposes, if necessary. These files will be destroyed three years after the study ends. The audio files will be transcribed, and only the transcriptions will remain after these other electronic files have been destroyed. At no time will the audio tape transcriptionist have access to a list that links your pseudonym to your name.

