

Phenomenological Narratology Understanding of Clients' Experiences and Perceptions of

Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy

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Quote

Norman Vincent Peale once said, “One of the greatest moments in anybody's developing experience is when he no longer tries to hide from himself but determines to get acquainted with himself as he really is” (About.com, n.d., ¶ 4). How true that statement is, for only when one establishes peace within themselves can they truly reach a state of self-actualization.

Dedication

I am truly grateful to everyone who stood beside me throughout the process of this work and to those who gladly stood behind me to help prevent obstacles from interfering with the completion of the work and lose my bearing. It is to you that I dedicate this work.

Acknowledgements

To my committee whose tireless efforts and support helped this dream of mine to come true; they never faltered during this process, I thank you.

For my grandparents who allotted plentiful opportunities for me to vent frustrations, so that I would be able to move forward with a clear and sound mind. One day I will have my ranch and you can retire on it leaving your frustrations behind.

To the Lakota Elder who, perhaps unknowingly, gave me the signal that I was in the right place, thank you.

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To the horses who have moved so many people, and reminded clients of their unlimited potential, especially Trouble who gave me new hope and a new dream to follow, so that I may positively impact others, may you rest in peace. To Captain, a horse who knows no bounds and touches children's lives in a way no human can, and his ability to carry not only the weight of the client but also the weight of their troubles, so that they found peace, may you always find green pastures.

To the individuals who work providing Equine Assisted Psychotherapy or growth and learning, thank you for your efforts in providing clients the opportunity to reach internal states of peace and happiness; your efforts are not unrecognized.

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Abstract

Research focusing on Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy (EFP) is limited; the research conducted focusing specifically on clients' experiences and perceptions of effectiveness is even more limited. This study set forth to gain insight into participants' experiences during EFP and understand how they perceived the effectiveness of EFP. The results indicate seven themes that emerged in their stories of experience. These are trust, friendship, bravery, alternative fun, responsibility, confronting one's self, and peace. Five of these were supported by previous research that focused on therapists, equine specialists, and volunteers' perceptions: trust, friendship, responsibility, confronting one's self, and peace. The two themes that have not been reported previously are bravery and alternative fun.

Phenomenological Narratology Understanding of Clients' Experiences and Perceptions of Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy

Bonnie Lewis once said, “My horse’s feet are swift as thunder, he carries me away from all my fears, and when the world threatens to fall asunder, his mane is there to wipe my tears” (Unknown, n.d., para 2). What great wisdom she carried with those words, while capturing the power of the horse.

Interconnectedness postulates that everyone and everything in existence is connected. To not be connected is to not exist. Animals and humans are united together just as they are both bonded to the land. This definition of existence is alien to most Western cultures and religions, as, in these cultures, individuals strive for an individuality, “which is not only an ontological impossibility, but the well-spring of all human suffering” (Hawkins, 2003, p.81).

Thus stated, there is a certain intrigue that develops when one thinks of all the ways the physical world influences our own lives. Ponder for a moment, if you will, the last time you found serenity; was it as you watched the sun set behind the mountains or the sight and sound of the waves crashing upon the shore? Perhaps it was hiking trips that led you to a secluded area. That feeling of serenity, that moment of complete peace, is a taste of that interconnectedness when everything exists in perfect harmony. Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy (EFP) is a technique designed to promote just that, the connectedness of the horse and the client.

This connectedness allows clients to work on their symptoms, feelings, and cognitions as their symptoms manifest through the horse. As symptoms, feelings, and thoughts, such as fear, anger, sadness, doubt, and joy, emerge, they are able to confront them, process them, and move forward (Roberts, Bradberry, & Williams, 2004). When the symptoms begin to subside, the bonds between horses and clients grow stronger.

The power of the horse to heal is then revealed as clients develop self-awareness. This power is revealed while clients address their feelings, develop self-love, and take ownership and responsibility of their actions and their ability to make what they want of life. Pam Brown (n.d.) described this when she defined a horse as “the projection of peoples’ dreams about themselves strong, powerful, beautiful, graceful, and spirited” (Unknown, n.d., expression 11). That we may all see some of those traits and qualities in our lives is a goal that is near impossible. However, with the aid of a horse and its incredible ability to heal, slowly, one client at a time, the process of healing occurs.

Clients who begin the process of healing become able to process their feelings and thoughts, thus preparing for future endeavors while finding serenity (Ewing, Fletcher & Scanlan, 2005; MacDonald, Taylor, & Bowers, 2007; Nilson, 2004) in the world around them. Gerald Rafferty described this process when he said, “In riding a horse, we borrow his freedom. Horses love freedom. The weariest old work horse will roll on the ground or break into a lumbering gallop when he is turned loose into the open” (Unknown, n.d., para 8). For a horse to give up their freedom temporarily means that there is a bond between human and horse that has been created where trust and faith have been formed both in themselves and in each other.

General Statement

While there are many cultures that prefer to use what some Western cultures and religions may refer to as “holistic” or “natural” healing such as EFP, there is little to no research on the clients’ perceptions and processes of the treatment. This is particularly true within the specialized field of EFP; there is little to no research defining clients’ perceptions of what experiences they are introduced to as a result of treatment, their experiences during treatment, and perceptions of the outcome of treatment. There are articles and reports focusing their

attention on the facilitator, but to focus attention solely on the clients' perceptions is a virtually untouched database of information waiting to be tapped.

Statement of the Problem

Without a foundation for understanding the process of EFP, there is no foundation for evidence-based practice, and thus no measureable validity. Thus, the process of treatment from clients' perspectives needs to be researched, and an understanding of what clients are experiencing and their perceptions of the outcome must be documented to aid in further research.

Intent of Research

The purpose of this study is to illuminate what clients experience when receiving EFP, to gain insight into their perceptions of EFP, to develop a better understanding of what occurs for clients, and to describe the areas in which the clients perceive change to have occurred. This study seeks to gather naturally generalized data, rather than collecting data designed to be generalized to a large population, as there is no way to measure the transferability of one's experiences to another individual.

Just as a movie is capable of reaching many individuals and influencing them in some manner, the deep and true story of an individual's experiences and perceptions of EFP may be capable of reaching and influencing numerous individuals. It will also expand the understanding of EFP for the specialized area practicing such intervention, as well as the field of psychology as a whole.

Research Questions

Through the semi-structured, open-ended interview process, this study is intended to address the following questions and establish a foundation of insight so that future research may be built upon it:

1. What led the client to EFP?
(Why did you start EFP?)
2. How does the client describe EFP?
(Can you please describe EFP to me in your own words?)
3. What did/does the client experience during the EFP process?
(What did you experience when you first started the EFP Process? What do you experience now?)
4. How did/does the client interpret their relationship with their horse?
(Have you and your horse built a relationship? Would you please tell me about that relationship? What is it like?)
5. What aspects of EFP most influenced the client?
(What areas of EFP would you say most influenced you? What areas of EFP will you remember?)
6. What aspects of EFP did the client least like?
(Were there any parts of EFP that you did not like? Would you please tell me about those?)
7. What changes does the client perceive to have occurred during EFP?
(Did you notice any changes during EFP, anything you felt, thought, and saw, heard differently? Have you noticed any changes from the first time you participated in EFP and now?)
8. What effects, if any, do you perceive that EFP has had on ____ (the reason they began EFP) _____?

The end goal of this study is to gain insight into the experiences and perceptions of clients undergoing EFP.

Definitions

The following are terms that are used throughout the text to describe methods of treatment, therapy goals, and the practice of EFP.

Facilitator. The facilitator is the party responsible for conducting treatment for individuals. In this instance, the “facilitator” is the psychologist who is conducting treatment of an adolescent with the aid of horses to help the adolescent process and grow.

Equine assisted psychotherapy (EAP). Equine assisted psychotherapy is a broad term for any therapeutic measure and activity involving horses (Schultz, Remick-Barlow, & Robbins 2007). Treatment using EAP is conducted using any measure of activity with horses. This includes activities such as grooming, monitoring play, lunging, muscle movement focus, and mounted activities.

Equine assisted psychotherapist. An Equine Assisted Psychotherapist is a psychotherapist who is assisted by a horse or horses while engaging in the therapeutic process with clients.

Equine specialist. An Equine Specialist (ES) is an individual with extensive knowledge about horses, their behaviors and attitudes, as well as extensive horsemanship skills. This individual may aid in conducting EFP sessions.

Equine facilitated psychotherapy (EFP). Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy is therapy in which the horse is the secondary facilitator of psychotherapy. The horse is also the primary tool used to create avenues of change for the client through grooming, riding, story telling,

observation, projection, trust activities, relationship/bonding activities, movement, obstacle work, tactile therapy, and hippotherapy.

Hippotherapy. Hippotherapy is therapy that uses the movement of horses to achieve clients' goals (Gasalberti, 2006). This is an "area of specialization" within EFP (Sullivan, 2007, p. 9). The horse's movements, such as the rolling wave created by a bobbing head or the back and forth rock of the back as the horse meanders throughout the field, can be used to work with mental health illnesses as well as physiological illnesses or injuries. It is through this movement that the body relaxes, as it must for a rider to maintain proper posture and balance. This relaxation can work to manage pain and loosen the body while exercising the core muscles (Gasalberti, 2006), as well as treating anxiety and agitation through its soothing repetitive motion.

Physiotherapy. Physiotherapy is a science that focuses on movement to facilitate treatment (Gasalberti, 2006). Similar to hippotherapy, physiotherapy focuses on using movement to create treatment for clients. Physiotherapy also incorporates touch therapy into treatment, such as the stroking of a horse's mane or the tactile sense of brushing the tail of a horse.

Practicing activities. Practicing activities are activities that are participated in, such as lunging a horse, and that assist in developing more advanced skills while allowing the client an opportunity to process and reflect (Gasalberti, 2006). Practicing activities are a progressive treatment form that allows clients to advance in their activities as they advance in treatment. These activities can include groundwork, bareback mounted work, and saddled work. These activities may be done individually or in a group.

Grooming. Grooming is a method of treatment, which emphasizes tactile sensations, relationships, and the ability of clients to accept their responsibility for their actions. This treatment is executed in such a manner that the clients care for the horse by doing things such as brushing, washing, feeding it, or completing other care activities (Gasalberti, 2006).

Lunging. Lunging occurs when a horse is connected to a client by a line, usually nylon or rope, the client's goal is to make the horse walk, or trot around them in a steady circle (Gasalberti, 2006). This form of treatment falls under the category of practicing activities where the individual advances in activity as they advance in treatment.

Activity scheduling. Activity scheduling is a method of treatment used to teach caring and personal responsibility. Activity scheduling teaches patients understanding through the act of caring for a horse for the day. This occurs when clients will take care of all of the horse's needs throughout the day regardless of how the day unfolds (Gasalberti, 2006).

Play therapy. Play therapy is a form of equine therapy that encourages clients to understand different characteristics of horses and their similarities to humans, such as the instinct to play, the curiosity of new experiences, the idea of freedom, and motivations of behavior (Gasalberti, 2006). For younger children this may be conducted in a play therapy room.

Story telling. Story telling is a technique of play therapy where the client is asked to tell a story using horses and sometimes objects used for equine care (such as buckets of feed) (Gasalberti, 2006). This may be done by giving names or traits to things that are seen as part of the problem, or a solution to a person's problem, with objects and different horses. Individuals are then able to work through their obstacle, identifying the different characteristics and traits that may increase or lessen difficulty in attaining the result.

Assumptions of the Study

This study assumes that the participants who have been selected by their Equine Assisted Psychotherapist have met the required one-month-or-more, previous experience in receiving EFP prior to being selected to participating in the study.

It is assumed that each participant understands and uses the English language enough to knowingly and willingly sign the consent and assent forms and answer the semi-structured questions. The identity of the individual participants will be protected at all times. It is to be assumed that each participant understood that they could withdraw from participating at any time without penalty or impact to their treatment.

Due to the nature of a semi-structured interview process, this study runs under the assumption that all willing participants are truthful and open when speaking of their experiences and perceptions, thus providing data that is reliable and therefore can be naturally generalizable.

Limitations

The very assumptions that are made are limitations to the study. This study relied on participants being truthful about their experiences and perceptions. It should be kept in mind when using the data that it is to be used as a starting point of research and not the definitive answer.

Due to the limited research that is available on EFP in particular and animal assisted therapies in general, there is little information about the process. Thus, the study itself begins with a limited understanding of the treatment of EFP and its effectiveness even from the facilitators' understandings, experiences, and perceptions. There is little to no previous research on the understanding of the treatment of EFP from clients' experiences and perceptions.

Being phenomenological in nature, this study does not provide a random sample of clients, as it is instead based on five EFP clients, who volunteered to participate in the study and who fell between 13 years to 30 years of age. They were willing to participate in a semi-structured, open-ended interview about their experiences in EFP. These individuals were people that an Equine Assisted Psychotherapist believed had excelled in treatment and who had been undergoing or completed EFP treatments for at least a month.

The study is not generalizable to specific ethnicities or specific populations such as age groups or groups based on geographical residency, as there is not enough data collected to make such generalizations. However, the stories of individuals' experiences and perceptions of EFP may be capable of reaching and influencing numerous others while expanding the understanding of EFP for the specialized field of EFP, as well as the field of psychology as a whole. The study is naturally generalizable to society, meaning some individuals will find similarities to that which they or their clients may have experienced, though there is no definite way to tell just how many individuals of future studies the collection of such data may benefit or influence. Such impact will not be able to be studied.

Despite these limitations, the foundation that this study may provide for further research to take place in the specialized field of Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy and the field of psychology as a whole is unprecedented. The research conducted is some of the first of its kind. It will provide the field with a deeper, truer, and unparalleled knowledge of clients' perceptions and experiences in EFP.

Literature Review

Just as Mozart's passion for music led him to compose beautiful pieces of art, so, too, does the passion for horses and psychotherapy lead researchers to compose studies. The sounds of different instruments paint brilliant pictures in our minds as we hear the notes played; these studies begin to form vast and various hues of color which when put together, emerge on canvas as the brilliant picture of beauty that is EFP.

This picture, a masterpiece constructed from research and literature, has yet to be unveiled as it is far from completed. However, the current colors depict intrigue and excitement while the texture yields vast and rich information. Previous literature depicts EFP as follows:

EFP Activities

EFP is an alternative and complementary treatment for working with individuals with a variety of problems (All & Loving, 1999; Bates, 2002; Bizub & Davidson, 2003; Christian, 2005; Esbjorn, 2006; Fleck, 1997; Gasalberti, 2006; Gonzalez & Hudson, 2003; Graham, 2007; Iannone, 2003; Sullivan, 2007). EFP has been conducted with individuals suffering from severe psychiatric disabilities, physical disabilities, developmental disabilities, substance abuse and dependence problems, problems stemming from exposure to trauma, family systems problems, and many other concerns. EFP is capable of reaching individuals from a variety of different activities that create the "existential action-oriented, experientially based, psychotherapeutic method" (Karol, 2007, p. 80). This utilizes the "client's actual experiences with the horse as the foundation for therapeutic exploration" (Karol, 2007, p. 80).

Individuals' connections to the horse then become the tool and motivator for change. Rothe, Vega, Torres, Campos Soler, & Molina Pazos' research in 2005 revealed that the "horse acts as a mirror for the human and his/her deep inner experience. [That] human-horse interaction

can facilitate personal exploration of feelings, powers of intuition and energy, understandings of self, nature, relationships and communication” (p. 375). In doing this, the horse is capable of becoming the catalyst in the development of rapport between clients and equine assisted psychotherapists (Karol, 2007).

By utilizing EFP activities in sessions, one can develop a greater knowledge and work on their overall well-being, while tending to many different needs and overall improving one’s quality of life (Carpenter, 1997; Bizub & Davidson, 2003). EFP activities provide not only a physical aspect of psychotherapy, which is unmet in traditional therapy practice, but also the social aspects of therapeutic healing (Fine, 2000). Remarkably, oftentimes participating in EFP activities may lead to treating not just the psyche, but the body and spirit as well, ending in a more Gestalt-based method of healing. Perhaps that is why one site describes the process as *Reality Gestalt* (Karol, 2007) for its ability to focus on the entirety of the individual in a here-and-now manner. Thus stated, there are many activities that allow this to occur.

Grounded. Most facilities utilizing EFP to treat patients begin with activities that involve the person and horse on the ground. These activities may include such things as becoming “comfortable around such large animals [which] can build confidence” (Roberts et al., 2004, p. 34). The magnificent supremacy of a horse may lead individuals to question and perhaps reassess their conceptualization of their own power and ability (Roberts et al., 2004).

Grounded activities may often lead to catching and haltering their horse(s), an activity that teaches respect, control, communication, and boundaries. Once the horse is haltered, individuals may begin to groom their horse(s). By providing for the basic needs of their horse’s maintenance, a relationship begins to form (Yorke, Adams, & Coady, 2008). The relationship is due to the understanding that the horse’s survival and comfort is dependent on the individual.

The individuals must then be accountable, for, if they want the horse to care for them, the individuals must first provide care for the horse.

In essence, individuals are nurturing the horse while nurturing their internal state depicted by the horse. The horse, representing the internal state of the individual in their external behaviors, is then able to find a connection with the individual. When individuals are ready to find empathy in the horse's state of being, they are able to begin to process their internal state of being. Respect, control, communication, and boundaries can all be processed during this time. The process of grooming a horse may become a form of meditation for clients as "between man and environment there is a rhythmic flow of energy waves" (Roberts et al., 2004, p. 33).

Karol (2007) best described this process when speaking of grooming and grounded activities as:

The foundation of a sense of self, and often when an adult or child is suffering from trauma or an extremely stressful situation, he or she will look for tactile and rhythmical comfort so as to keep from feeling further disorganized... patting or brushing the horse, are comforting to many EFP clients. (p.85)

Through this connection to another being, an individual can develop "a sense of responsibility, autonomy, and awareness of his or her potential importance to another" (Karol, 2007, p. 82).

Other grounded activities such as breath exchange, practice activities, scheduling, story telling, and lunging also focus on building strong relationships with the horse(s), which build self-esteem, self-confidence, a sense of self, respect, boundaries, autonomy, and effective communication skills.

Bareback. Once individuals have begun to build effective relationships with the horse(s) on the ground and are working to master their skills, the relationship can be challenged by

changing dynamics and introducing bareback activities into sessions. This new dynamic in the relationship creates situations of dependency and reliability between clients and their horse(s). Where it was once easy to be friends on the ground, bareback riding requires a new level of trust and the ability to allow something to hold you and the problems you carry with you. “There is a unique opportunity to experience the deeper dimension of the human-animal relationship” (Vidrine, 2002, p. 590).

Gonzalez and Hudson (2003) believed one could experience the therapeutic impact by merely sitting upon the horse. “The sense of freedom, trust, and pleasure the child [or adult] experiences while riding seem impossible to duplicate with other treatment modalities” (Gasalberti, 2006, p. 134). This new dynamic allows for growth between individuals and horse(s), as the persons’ internal world is reflected back to them during sessions, allowing the opportunity to process the struggles they are facing in their lives. This idea is supported by other researchers such as Fletcher & Scanlan, 2005; Gonzalez & Hudson, 2003; Hakanson, Moller, Lindstrom, & Mattsson, 2009; Karol, 2007; Lawrence, 1992; and Rothe et al., 2005.

During the sessions, metaphors that are created through bareback work may then be used to help individuals gain deeper insight into their lives, trials, and tribulations. They may begin to develop a stronger sense of being, and a focus on well being. They may learn about their communication styles and techniques and address them as necessary to establish more effective communication styles and techniques based on the situations they face. In EFP, individuals can be challenged in their ability to form strong and safe bonds while respecting boundaries, and learn the different ways to build those connections. Once individuals are progressing through bareback work, another dynamic becomes available to them.

Saddled. The saddle was an instrument created for armies. It is a weapon of power in the sense that it allows an individual to have more control and movement while riding a horse. It is what allows one to stay upon the horse when moving at high speeds or remain seated upon the horse when struck (G. Kersten, personal communication, September 15, 2009). It is for this reason that a saddle may give individuals a false sense of security, thus the importance of building one's relationship with their horse through some bareback techniques, if they are physically able, prior to beginning this next phase.

Once accomplishing the task of saddling one's horse, individuals may participate in several mounted activities, leading up to Western pleasure courses, and driving or gaming activities (G. Kersten, personal communication, September 15, 2009). These activities strive to teach individuals to work with their horse as a team member, or sacred companion, to accomplish tasks.

Lawrence (1992) described this working relationship stating, "because of the physical as well as psychological unity that can be evoked by sharing the rhythm and motion of riding, [the human-horse bonds] have the potential for what may exemplify the closest fine-tuned, intercommunication between two species" (p. 148). The ability for individuals to communicate with their horse(s) at this level may lead to more effective communication tactics in dealing with individuals of their own species as well. Karol (2007) also addressed this phenomenon in her research saying, "[The] client joins the horse in its movement and so through rhythm and contact experiences, may recapture and repair a deteriorating sense of self" (p. 86). This bond in essence may allow individuals to overcome great tragedy, to learn to cope and process conflicts that arise, and amount to great new heights of accomplishment. Hakanson et al. (2009) described this process when revealing that:

New knowledge paved the way for increasing competence in dealing with daily life.

Helplessness was replaced by virtually taking the reins and steering in the direction of one's own choice, thus replacing powerlessness with a feeling of ability to steer. Better skills in managing the body are gained as well as a feeling for its limitations. (p. 50)

Thus, individuals become able to understand themselves better physically, emotionally, and spiritually through their interactions with their horse.

Individual. As with other psychotherapy methods, the number of individuals taking part in the activities differs. Previous research yields the following information regarding the processes. Individuals may attend sessions where they receive one-on-one treatment. Commonly referred to as individual sessions, these are made up of the patient, the equine assisted psychotherapist, an equine specialist, and the horse(s). Depending on the activity to be worked on during the session, other equipment may also be used.

When individuals work alone with this treatment team, the focus is purely on the metaphors being created that mirror their internal state of being.

When a rider attempts to communicate physically with a horse, he [or she] gets immediate feedback as the horse expresses anger, fear, or forgiveness. The therapy can examine the quality and idiosyncrasies of this communication and can compare it with the client's relationships to humans. (Karol, 2007, p. 80)

This allows individuals to see how others perceive them, and learn how to address the way others behave towards them.

Yorke (2008) illustrated that "recovery from trauma as well as other socio-emotional problems, requires a close personal connection that is caring, consistent, trusting and safe" (p.19). Through individual sessions, one receives just this, an environment in which they can

thrive while addressing personal needs, behaviors, cognitions, and struggles. Individuals may learn to interact and exist around horses in new ways, inherently allowing them to interact and exist in the world in new ways (Barker, 1999; Graham, 2007; Karol, 2007; and Mallon, 1992). Persons may remain in individual treatment throughout the duration of their sessions, or they may invite their family to participate in sessions, or join a group EFP setting.

Group/family. Just as individuals may move into a group or family session from individual sessions, some individuals participate only in group or family EFP sessions. The main difference is that not only will the individuals deal with their own inner being, they will see how their inner being affects and is affected by others through the group or family dynamics of the session.

There are many different group/family activities that may be used during sessions including groundwork, bareback work, bareback and groundwork, bareback and saddled mounted work, saddled and ground work, and saddled mounted work. The different dynamics all allow for different focuses during the sessions. “The success of overcoming any fear or anxiety associated with riding [or horses] is also rewarding. In addition, the social benefits of a group activity are an additional plus” (Gasalberti, 2006, p. 134). Through participating in group/family sessions, “Participants are able to address developmental, personal, and social needs in the context of somatically engaging, challenging, and enjoyable activity” (Vidrine et al., 2002, p. 589). Consequently, group/family work can have a positive effect on the individuals receiving treatment. These individuals can be of all ages and abilities leading to a very diverse and ever-changing approach to treatment.

Participants

EFP is effective with children, adults, families, groups of adolescents, groups of co-workers, soldiers, individuals and groups with physical disabilities or developmental disabilities, and those suffering from psychiatric disorders or illness, from all walks of life (Bates, 2002; Nilson, 2004). It is effective for so many individuals because “horses are wonderful at discerning people’s moods...Horses seem to know what people really need. They ignore the outward form and respond, instead to the person’s inner substance” (McCormick, 1997; as quoted in Roberts, 2004; p. 34).

EFP’s effectiveness with populations that struggle in traditional therapy is partly due to the animal’s natural instinct as a prey animal (Kohanov, 2001). This is what makes it an inherently wonderful tool for working with soldiers returning home, young children, and with individuals who have been incarcerated. Due to the horse’s acute nature, they are able to notice subtle hints that humans may miss. For instance, individuals may respond to something that they heard in a startled fashion; most likely the horse responded in a similar manner, and while they are struggling to associate the sound with their current situation, the horse has already done so. In this instance, the horse is grounded while the individuals are searching for comfortable ground. The horse then becomes able to provide the stability and reassurance that the individuals need.

While individuals engage with the horse(s) in treatment, the horse will display individuals’ internal states to them. This then allows individuals to confront their internal state and develop methods for dealing with their inner self. An adult male who is uncomfortable speaking about his fears may be more likely to work with a horse that appears skittish and afraid. Thus, individuals are afforded the opportunity to externalize their internal state and work with it

outside of them. That state then becomes its own entity, and the individuals may work on it without having to identify themselves as “afraid”. Consequently, this provides the individuals the opportunity and power to overcome their behaviors and emotional states by first addressing the horse’s emotional and behavioral state.

Adults. Through the essence of horses, people can attain a deeper understanding of themselves. This deeper understanding can lead to increased insight in behaviors, cognitions, and the overall well being of individuals. The horse’s ability to channel this change through acknowledging only the inner self of a being is something that is hard to ignore, even for a grown adult who may feel as if the treatment will not yield them any results. Roberts et al. (2004) said:

Their size and sheer presence makes them impossible to ignore. A client may be able to tune out a counselor droning on about taking charge of his [or her] life, but he [or she] can’t tune out a 1200-lb horse in the arena with them. (p. 34)

Aside from the horse being in the arena with the adults, what they receive is a 1200-lb reflection of their inner self. Regardless of their attempts to hide it, the horses acting as “mirrors” reveal all to the beholder (Rothe et al., 2005). Thus, EFP is a very effective technique for working with adults as they are given the opportunity to utilize the dynamics of their relationship with the horse(s), and the metaphors for their life that are exposed before them, to make changes, gain insight, and develop a sense of self. It is through EFP that individuals can become who they are searching to become.

Children/adolescents. Roberts et al. (2004) reported that due to the level of sensitivity horses have and their ability to discern the “internal thoughts of their riders, children must own their feelings and learn to deal with them” (p. 33). Essentially this biofeedback provided by

horses allows children or adolescents to process what is occurring internally, as suddenly their internal processes are revealed in the horse's external behaviors. Consequently, when working with children or adolescents, the horse can be used as a conduit between the individuals' inner process and their recognition and management of those processes.

Using EFP with children and adolescents utilizes the premise that children will see something in the horse that they want to learn from. "The horse is a figure of grace, vulnerability, power, and compassionate patience. The young client... feels that it is this figure that knows something he or she wants to learn" (Karol, 2007, p. 82). With EFP, children are afforded the opportunity to test and challenge, while improving their self-management physically, emotionally, cognitively, and spiritually (Levinson, 1997). Schultz et al. (2007) found that "children demonstrate a quick response" to EFP (p. 270).

When a child is on top of a horse, sometimes for the first time in a child's life, they are looking down onto an adult. He or she can experience the body of the horse as the horse moves under him or her and so is given an enhanced sense of his or her own sense of vulnerability and imperfections. (Karol, 2007, p. 81)

Consequently, EFP provides the opportunity to explore with a child or adolescent this enhanced view, as it is a moment that will be unparalleled in traditional therapeutic settings and may yield an opportunity for great growth and learning.

Individuals with physical or developmental disabilities. Karol (2007) found that "The horse is also a vulnerable creature and so serves as an apt companion for a child [or adult] overwhelmed by his or her own sense of vulnerability and imperfections" (p. 81). This makes the horse a perfect therapeutic tool to elicit growth and learning in individuals with physical or

developmental disabilities. The previous literature on people with disabilities working with horses is indicative of strong and positive results.

In the area of autism, Mallon (1992, as quoted in Rothe et al., 2005) found that EFP has “been effective particularly in the areas of speech and fine gross motor skills” (p. 381). Individuals showed improved speech patterns and an increase in talking when there was limited verbal communication earlier (Mallon, 1992).

For individuals suffering with cerebral palsy, McGibbon, Andrade, Widener, and Cintas (1998) found that EFP, specifically focusing on hippotherapy, allowed for individuals to have improved energy expenditure during activities such as walking. Their data also yielded an improvement in individuals’ gross motor functioning. Consequently, this study yields positive results for the use of horses with such individuals.

All and Loving (1999), along with Hakanson et al. (2009), support the understanding that mounted work has assisted many individuals of all ages undergoing treatment for neurological functioning disorders. The ability to move with a horse and to communicate through rhythm and energy changes not only peoples’ perceptions of being disabled, but their ability to control their motor capacity (All and Loving, 1999).

EFP is effective in these instances as it changes the way individuals look at their own body, their own existence. Hakanson et al. (2009) wrote:

If the body is seen as an object, the experience of pain is intensified and it is more difficult to dissociate from the role of the pain patient. Recognizing the living, feeling subjective body can become a road to health and improved function... [the experience becomes about focusing] on the experience of the body and could create new experiences

of sensory and motor activity, and emotions, thereby inciting an altered experience of one's self and ability. (p. 44)

Thus, just as Hawkins (2003) speaks of peoples' ability to create their own reality, EFP allows individuals to understand and create purpose and meaning in their life, therefore altering their reality. In doing this, individuals may allow themselves to exist in a manner that they deem more enjoyable.

Therapeutic Setting

As one can imagine, the setting in which EFP occurs is far from that of traditional therapies that take place in an office. EFP can occur in numerous places including out in a pasture, in an outdoor arena, in an indoor arena, or in the stables. It is these different settings that allow for different experiences. For instance, if individuals were to attend EFP sessions in an outdoor arena, the surroundings would be in continuous change--the amount of light during the session and perhaps the feeling and temperature of the air. The ground, as it is ever changing throughout the seasons, would be another area of change.

If the session takes place in an indoor arena, individuals would need to be alert to the different sounds, for instance the sound of rain pitter-pattering on the roof, or the neighs from other horses that are safely tucked into their stable, or perhaps the sounds of the heaters or air conditioner kicking on. All of these would have an impact on the rider and the horse. All of these can be used as metaphors for addressing the individuals' internal states.

Hakanson et al. (2009) discuss some of these differences when speaking about the closeness to nature that individuals experience during EFP, as there is a change in the sounds and smells that they would be used to in a traditional therapy setting. There is also an overall different feeling of existence versus what individuals would feel in a clinic or hospital, as well as

the opportunity to experience different tactile sensations that they would not experience during traditional therapy sessions. In addition, there is an added portion to the session, “leisure time”, and a time during EFP when individuals are allowed to spend time with their horse before ending the session (Hakanson et al., 2009). All of these changes are often positive and effective when treating individuals.

Facilitators

The facilitators of EFP consist of the certified equine assisted psychotherapist, an equine specialist, and the horse(s). Oftentimes, there may be trained volunteers who help during the sessions. All of them make up the EFP team, and all of them play a very important role in the therapeutic relationship with each client. Previous research has been gathered on the experiences and perceptions of these individuals. Though it is limited, it begins to create the hues, which in turn create the masterpiece of EFP.

Therapists. Psychotherapists are required to obtain their degrees through a university specializing in psychology, or a therapy-oriented degree, such as counseling or counseling social work. Once they have these degrees, or while attaining the final requirements for their degree in psychology, they may begin the process of becoming a certified equine assisted professional. To complete this certification, the psychologist needs to have knowledge of horses and at least a “basic knowledge of horsemanship is necessary to gain certification” (Bates, 2002, p. 19).

Most psychologists complete several hours of training, specifically in EFP, as it differs from traditional methods of psychotherapy. The therapists must remain attentive to the rapport between the clients and themselves, as well as remaining attentive to interaction between the clients and the horse(s), the horse(s) and themselves, the clients and the equine specialist, the equine specialist and the horse(s). The therapist must also take into account the environmental

factors from the setting of the session, all while analyzing what is taking place and recognizing metaphors that should be remembered, so that they may be processed later in the session.

Through theoretical study and interviews, the therapists' perceptions of interaction between horses and humans and the overall effectiveness of EFP have started to unfold.

Perceptions of interaction. Much of the previous research is focused on the theoretical and therapists' perceptions of interaction between the horse(s) and the clients. During Bates' (2002) research, it was stated, "Physical contact with such a large, warm animal and the experience of being carried greatly influenced these women" (p. 18). Many researchers believe that individuals learn to have an emotional relationship with the horse(s) and that this relationship then influences their relationships with other humans (Barker, 1999; Bates, 2002; Christian, 2005; Ewing et al., 2007; Foley, 2001; Karol, 2007; Kohanov, 2001; Sullivan, 2007).

Rothe (2005) found that it is believed the "bond [between human and horse] can develop the following qualities: mutual trust, respect, affection, empathy, unconditional acceptance, confidence, personal success, responsibility, assertiveness, communication skills, and self control" (p. 376). This belief is shared by many equine assisted psychotherapists and is the reason they choose to utilize this particular treatment method. Through these developments, one is able to grow in unlimited ways, all through the interaction with horses.

Perceptions of effectiveness. The therapists' perceptions of effectiveness of treatment have also been recognized in previous research. Studies reveal that it is believed EFP decreases levels of anger and aggression in individuals of all ages (Kaiser, Spence, Lavergne, & Vanden Bosch, 2004; Hakanson et al., 2009). These decreased levels of anger and aggression have been seen in as little as five days of working with horses (Kaiser et al., 2004), revealing how quickly and effective EFP is at affecting individuals focusing on anger and aggression.

Williams (2004) indicated that therapists believe EFP is effective in teaching children self-care and increasing their self-esteem. EFP has also been shown to reduce impulsivity, improve self-concept, increase communication and appropriate creation of relationships (Hakanson et al., 2009). Overall, previous research suggests that equine assisted psychotherapists believe EFP to be an effective treatment model for individuals of all ages with many different reasons for entering treatment.

Equine specialists. A valuable asset to the treatment team is an equine specialist. An equine specialist is an individual who specializes in understanding horse behavior and has excellent horsemanship skills. These individuals focus their attention on the horses that are in the therapeutic process to ensure safety of the client. Through report of personal experience and interviews, some light has been shed on the perceptions of interaction and effectiveness held by equine specialists.

Perceptions of interaction. Nilson (2004) wrote of his own experiences as an equine assisted professional when he wrote, “Through my experiences in the program I realized that horses were healing people who had never been exposed to them” (p. 42). It is this example of healing through interaction that one sees the unlimited potential of EFP. One need not know much about horses, or have been around them to benefit from the beautiful process that is EFP. They merely need to be willing to participate.

Scheidhacker (1997) addressed the interaction of clients and horses, revealing the clients’ transference, which influences a horse’s behaviors. Thus, it is the clients’ internal state and that which they project upon the horse that causes the different interactions that occur between horse and human.

Perceptions of effectiveness. Nilson (2004) stated, “Come to them [the horses] tired, discouraged, ill and confused. They send us home refreshed, renewed and full of life and hope for tomorrow” (p. 42). With that simple eloquence, Nilson summed up EFP and how he perceived EFP as effective.

Christian (2005) depicted the equine specialists’ perceptions of effectiveness of EFP in stating, “Issues of boundaries (or lack thereof) surrender, and spirituality are uncovered while attempting exercises. Sometimes successfully completing the exercise affords increased self-confidence” (p. 65). EFP yet again yields a positive outcome for those who undergo treatment and an increase in positive regard towards themselves.

Volunteers. Though often unrecognized, volunteers are essential to the successful implementation of an EFP program. Bates (2002) reported:

Most equine facilitated therapy programs depend on volunteers for supporting staffing.

Volunteers care for the horses, often grooming and [sometimes] saddling them before sessions. Trained volunteers may spot riders during exercises or control the horse’s head from the ground, while the therapist works with the patient. (p.19)

Consequently, volunteers are a very valuable asset to EFP treatment teams. During their time as volunteers, they may be taught how to read horses’ body language and how to ensure safety for themselves, the clients, the therapists, and the horses themselves. Volunteers who were interviewed, or who wrote about their experiences, helped to create a better understanding of the interactions and effectiveness of EFP.

Perceptions of interaction. A nurse who was volunteering at an EFP center stated, “The most important thing I learned was that therapy doesn’t have to be conventional to work. This was subtle therapy and it was working” (Roberts et al., 2004, p. 34). Roberts (2004)

gathered information from nursing students who volunteered at a center providing EFP. Through this, new hues of color were added to the painting of EFP. These colors depicted interaction. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen anything as wonderful as a horse and a human hooking up, and the human allowing the horse to create a miracle. Horses can heal you from the inside out” (Roberts et al., 2004, p. 34). This shows another hue of the positive perception of interaction per a volunteer’s report, indicative of volunteers recognizing the benefits of EFP for the individuals undergoing treatment.

Perceptions of effectiveness. Through the study conducted by Roberts (2004), we are able to see the effectiveness of EFP as reported by volunteers. “At first I thought it was silly, but once I got there I saw that it did help the children” (Roberts et al., 2004, p. 34). This is perhaps the best depiction of EFP being effective, as this was reported from an individual who was skeptical of EFP, therefore, containing little if any bias in favor of EFP’s effectiveness. “It [EFP] also helps them to follow directions and work on motor development. This type of therapy can be helpful, no matter what culture the child comes from” (Roberts et al., 2004 p. 34).

These volunteers reported positive affects from EFP based on what they saw occurring before them. While this is the only study to report the volunteers’ perceptions of effectiveness and interaction between human and horses, its information helps to complete the masterpiece of EFP.

Clients. Clients are the most important aspect of EFP. This is because they are the cause of change. Therapists may walk alongside the clients through their journey, assisting them as they learn and develop, and helping them when necessary. The horse is the clients’ catalyst for change, ever guiding, ever revealing. It is the clients who must be willing to accept what needs

to be changed and work towards effectively changing it; thus, they are the most important part of the team.

However, much research still needs to be done to establish what it is that clients experience during the process of EFP and what they perceive to be beneficial and effective. Very little research has been completed focusing solely on the clients' experiences and perceptions of effectiveness. Previous literature sheds little light to this area of EFP through autobiographies and few interviews.

Perceptions of interaction. Fletcher and Scanlan (2005) completed a biography on Fletcher's experiences in EFP. Fletcher focused on overcoming the disfiguring burns she had suffered and found relief from constant scrutiny. "Horses do not stare," she reported (Fletcher & Scanlan, 2005, p. 97). What she learned from understanding this was that "Appearance is superficial, just a veneer... beauty is wisdom, what we do, how we treat others. It is the love we give. Horses know this... I never met a horse with a face-lift yet, or a horse impressed by one" (Fletcher & Scanlan, 2005, p. 141). Through her interactions with her horse, she gained the strength to overcome her situation. The interactions with a horse may afford individuals the ability to find a new self-concept, an increased sense of self, and an insight and wisdom that is often lost to most individuals.

Meinersmann, Bradberry, and Roberts (2008) spoke with women who had suffered abuse and undergone EFP. They reported that clients found a new sense of control and respect for their boundaries and the boundaries of others. The women reported a profound sense of unconditional love and acceptance from their horses.

Yorke (2008) touched on the nature of the equine-human bond enlightening us to the intensity of intimacy and nurturing that stems from interaction with a horse. While relating with

a horse, individuals may develop an identity with their horse, a partnership with their horse, and a bond with their horse while completing tasks and obstacles together.

Perceptions of effectiveness. Fletcher and Scanlan (2005) depicted Fletcher's work with her horse as her sanctuary, a state of being that was unattainable to her through human bonds. She spoke freely of her growth and learning that were triggered through her interactions with her horse. She reported a new depth of insight, and the strength of perseverance that emerged through the interactions with her horse.

Meinersmann et al. (2008) reported that clients' overall perceptions of the effectiveness of EFP are positive ones. "The horses are the key. They are the thing that turned my life around" (Meinersmann et al., 2008, p. 42). The overall findings revealed that clients perceive there to be an improvement in their self-concept, awareness, ability to create relationships, and ability to move forward with lowered depression and anxiety (Meinersmann et al., 2008).

Since research based solely on clients' experiences of their interaction with horses and the effectiveness of EFP is limited, the previous literature search led to searching biographies of clients. The willingness of clients to write about their experiences shows that some are willing to reveal the information being sought, so that the magic and mystery of EFP may be unveiled.

As each bar of music connects to the next to convey a message between the musician and the audience, so too do the hues of color from previous research fit together to compose a message of outstanding proportions of the art which is EFP. Just as the previous brush strokes of rich color come together, this study becomes the next piece of the puzzle, the next color in the painting, to assist in placing another stone in the foundation of the framework that holds the conceptualization that is EFP.

Methodology

To gain true insight is to live through experience and, in the process, to utilize all of one's senses. In an attempt to gain insight into clients' experiences and understand how they view the process of EFP, one must be prepared to walk in the shoes of another. If an understanding of experiences and perception of effectiveness is to be gained, then one needs to listen to the stories of the individuals in depth to gain details pertinent to understanding the individuals' perceptions and experiences.

To gain this pertinent insight into the field of EFP, a qualitative study was done combining phenomenological and narratological approaches. Studying five individuals who received EFP, or are receiving EFP, in great depth will allow the field of EFP to gain insight into the essence of participants' lived experience. After all, Albert Einstein said it best when he said, "the only source of knowledge is experience" (Unknown, n.d., expression 7). Therefore, what better place to gain knowledge than from those who have experienced and are willing to share their new knowledge?

The purpose of conducting research within a qualitative framework is to provide a level of depth and revelation that is unparalleled by quantitative research. Rather than focusing on generalizing the information gathered, it is through qualitative research that true meaning and understanding of the participants' experiences can be revealed and shared. As a result, this research provides a foundation of clients' experiences and perception-focused research, which benefits the practice of EFP and the field of psychology as a whole.

Researcher Biases

As the researcher of this dissertation, I will be the first to tell you that I did not come to this topic of study as a neutral party, as that would truly be an ontological impossibility. For

individuals to have an interest in a subject that they would be willing to dedicate great amounts of their time to, they must have some sort of bias. This could be to shed either a negative or positive light on the subject that they are engaging in research on, or a curiosity that can only be diminished with raw data. Given my immense interest in EFP, it stands to reason that I am definitely vulnerable to possible researcher-bias.

For me, I come to this subject out of personal experience and because of my future goals and dreams. It was a horse and natural EFP, the kind you receive just by being out with your horse, that inspired me to set forth on a new dream. Having just had one dream shattered, this horse gave me new insight. With that insight came the dream to one day own a ranch where I would work with at-risk youth and soldiers, helping them to reestablish their self-concepts, develop and strive for future goals, while overcoming obstacles that have been placed before them.

Through my own experience, I saw the power that working with horses had on me. This power was one that I was blind to for a long time. My great-grandfather had horses and I used to ride with either him or my grandfather. I did not notice at that time what a substantial impact being with horses had on me. That is until I was faced with the obstacle of developing a new dream. Out of nowhere I received the connection I needed, the time away from my obstacles and setbacks that I needed, and lo and behold, a new dream emerged with such prominence that this goal is the one I strive for today.

My experiences sparked a desire to understand this connection between human and horse. As I began my research, my new goals were even more inspired than before, as I found individuals who shared the same passion and believed in the ability of horses to heal. As I continued my research, I was led to take some volunteer positions working with clients in EFP. I

listened to the clients' experiences and became more and more baffled at the lack of research available to people who desire to understand this field.

During the summer of 2009, I had enough faith in myself and the experiences I had been privileged enough to go through to complete my certification and become an Equine Assisted Professional who specializes in equine assisted psychotherapy and equine assisted learning. That September, I finally did just that. The certification process was completed, and it re-instilled in me the faith in my ability to work with people using horses.

However, my curiosity to understand client perceptions of EFP only grew. There was very little new data emerging, and, as my dissertation topic had become focused on EFP, I wanted to ensure that I provided something that could be beneficial to both the field of EFP and psychology as a whole.

Driven to understand the clients' perceptions of EFP, I set off to collect my data. I can honestly say that I was not sure what to expect in data collection. I was aware that I perceived EFP to be effective, but what would other clients say? The research that had been conducted previously weighs oppressively in favor of questioning the professionals, while making what appeared to me to be assumptions of the effectiveness of EFP and what the clients truly gain from EFP.

My hope was that, regardless of whether the data were in favor of EFP or against it, I would gain insight into what made it that way. If the data showed that clients found EFP to be ineffective, I would ask why it is that they perceive it to be ineffective. If the data found EFP to be effective, I would ask what it is that makes it that way and what are clients receiving from EFP sessions. This is what I set out to answer.

I can admit that my research motivations are partially selfish, as I fully intend on using my research to help me better understand EFP and what clients receive from it so that I may be more effective in treatment. Regardless of the outcome, I believe that this research will be significantly beneficial as it will help to structure at least my ranch (as I will know what aspects I would like to focus on minimizing or increasing) and shed light and provide insight into EFP helping to further the research available to those interested in the field.

Data Collection

After informed consent had been gathered from the legal guardians and participants, and assent from the adolescent participants, a semi-structured, open-ended format was used to interview the participants (see Appendix G). Questions focused on why the participants entered EFP, duration of treatment, their memories of interaction with their horse; therapists were discussed as the clients' narratives were told.

To ensure the accuracy of quotes from the participants, the interview process was audio recorded and transcribed, which will be destroyed seven years after the completion of the dissertation process. To ensure that the participants' stories and perceptions are accurately being interpreted, the interpretations were shared and discussed with the participant. Verifying interpretations helped to verify accuracy, enhance authenticity, and provide information as to any differences that arose so that they could be documented and reported. All identifying information remains confidential, and will be destroyed seven years after the completion of the dissertation process to protect the participants' identities.

Participant risks. This study was designed in such a manner as to limit the risk experienced by the participants. The participants underwent interviewing, which may have been uncomfortable at times, such as when they were answering questions that were emotionally

close. A question that may have caused discomfort was, “Why did you start EFP?” In an attempt to ease any discomfort that arose from questions, the participants were able to refuse to answer any question without penalty or negative outcome.

As this study required that individuals reflect on their treatment, there may have been times that individuals felt distressed. To minimize the impact of this risk, all questions were designed in such a way as to be non-specific to the event. Therefore, this allowed the participants to share their stories as they wished to tell it, giving them the ability to control the depth in which they shared their stories.

The participants were free at any time to stop answering or refuse to reflect on a deeper level if there was any discomfort associated in their revelations. Thus, consent to participate was an ongoing process in which the participants’ rights and ability to withdraw from the study, or refrain from discussing distressing issues, were brought up regularly to protect the participant. If at any time the participants asked to omit a portion of their story to prevent distress, their request was honored. Their requests were documented, and the research process continued down a different avenue, allowing them to share the rest of their story without addressing the requested omission, or causing any undue distress to participants.

Benefits. The participants may have benefited from this study by gaining further insight into their results of EFP, and the level to which it may have influenced their lives, possibly resulting in their experiences holding deeper meaning for them. Another benefit that the participants may have experienced was the positive feelings associated with participating in research, the feeling of their stories holding meaning to something larger than just themselves.

This research may have benefited the participants by providing them someone to talk to, with whom to share experiences and new insights. As this study required the participants to take

time and reflect on their experiences, this reflection time may have led to personal growth, as well as a deeper understanding of themselves.

The participants did not receive any monetary gain for participation, nor did they receive any gift for participation. All of the benefits that they received were internal rewards.

Risk-to-benefit ratio. It is believed that the benefits from this study far outweighed the risks associated with conducting such research. As this study focused on the essence of individuals' lived experiences and perceptions, there was little risk of anything more than discomfort from a question, which the participants were able to refuse to answer leading to the dissolution of the discomfort felt.

The only other distinguished possible risk was of physical harm, which would not have been caused by or have been the result of the study being conducted. Rather, it was a possible risk associated with the participants' engagement in EFP. Since this researcher did not conduct the EFP session, and the participants were already undergoing EFP, there is nothing in the research study that caused such harm to come to the participants.

This study aimed to provide a stone in the foundation of EFP research. Upon completion of this research, there will be another stone in the framework of the foundation, upon which further research in EFP may develop with the insights from this study illuminating possible experiences and perceptions that clients may be having. This foundation is much needed in the field of EFP, as well as in the field of psychology as a whole as currently, there is little to no research on EFP, its process, or the clients' perceptions of the treatment.

Samples Employed

Certain criteria were set for the selection of participants. This form of sampling, referred to as criterion-based purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990) is used in qualitative studies to provide

a plethora of information with relatively small samples. Gathering such data out of these samples is possible because the sample criteria sets forth the goal of finding participants who can provide in-depth information on what the focus of research is. By selecting participants who met the criterion of having undergone EFP, but also were able to meet further criteria, this provided the opportunity to collect in-depth information based on their experiences and perceptions, ensuring a level of quality that could have been unmet by other sampling techniques (Patton, 1990).

Five individuals were selected to participate in the research process: two females and three males. These individuals were adolescents or young adults, ages (13-30) who were, or had recently been, participating in EFP. These individuals were people that an EFP certified psychologist believed had excelled in treatment and who had been undergoing or completed EFP treatments for a minimum of 12 weeks.

Upon selection by the psychologist, the legal guardians of the adolescents were contacted, and permission to speak with them was requested. The individuals then reviewed the assent form to ensure that they were aware of their rights, what the study's purpose was, as well as any perceived risks and benefits from the study. The purpose of the study was shared, as well as what would be required of the participants in the study. If the adolescents assented to participate, the research moved forward. In the event that a participant or their family did not consent to participate in the study, another adolescent or young adult meeting the same criteria was selected by the psychologist on site.

The participants were not randomly selected, as predetermined criteria for individual participation had been set. These criteria were established to ensure that the participants sharing their perceptions and experiences had undergone enough time in EFP to be able to speak of the

changes that occurred since the beginning of their treatment. Consequently, this study is not generalizable in a statistical sense, nor does it seek to be. Rather, it is naturally generalizable; this was perhaps best described by Yorke (2000), “Transferability is considered to be the parallel to the positivistic concept of generalizability, except that the reader not the researcher decides if the results can be applied to a second situation (p. 22).” The use of these individuals in the study, rather than a mass of participants being used, was due to the study being designed to illuminate what each participant has experienced. Therefore, this allowed some insight into experiences that other EFP participants may go through during the EFP process.

Participant reward. The participants did not receive any monetary fees or gifts as a reward for participation. Similarly, there was no penalty for withdrawing from the study at any time or requesting to omit certain topics. The participants may have benefited from the study personally through reflection leading to personal insight on their relationship with their horse(s), their experiences, the effectiveness of the treatment, and their personal growth and development.

Participant differences. As these participants were of different heritage, special attention was paid to the way the participants defined information, the differences in language, and the impact that culture had on the individual’s perceptions.

Instruments Used

Individuals completed a semi-structured interview process as administered by the researcher, approximately an hour in length depending on the depth with which experiences and perceptions were shared. The purpose of the interview was to gather the clients’ stories as well as their perceptions and experiences in EFP. Therefore, if individuals decided to share more details about their experiences, they were allotted the time to do so. The semi-structured interview consisted of eight questions that each participant was asked (see Appendix G).

Follow-up questioning was used to gain further insight and/or clarification into the participants' stories and to ensure that their story's integrity and validity remained. This type of questioning is commonly referred to as member checks (Patton, 1990).

Participants' interviews were recorded on a Sony audio recorder so that the data could be immediately placed on the computer and be ready for transcription. Once placed on the computer, the data was entered into NVivo transcription software, so that the interviews were transcribed word-for-word. Upon completion of the transcription, the data analysis phase was conducted by the researcher, who sought patterns in the data. As the patterns began to emerge and the pieces of the puzzle became clearer, the researcher was able to paint a picture of what some clients experience while undergoing EFP, how they perceive the process of EFP, and its impact. This process is described in greater detail below.

Procedures Followed

The following research procedures were implemented to provide conclusive research, thus providing a stone in the framework of the foundation of EFP research while protecting the rights of individuals, and providing justice to their stories:

National Institute of Health/institutional review board. In beginning, the researcher completed the National Institutes of Health Office of Extramural Research training on "Protecting Human Research Participants" (see Appendix A) as a necessary step to conduct research with human participants. Upon completion of this training, the proposal for dissertation research was submitted to the IRB, complete with the eight semi-structured questions for the interview, and consent forms (see Appendix B).

Research participant consent. The research was conducted at an EFP site in the Northern states that has been providing EFP services for over a decade. To recruit participants, a

formal recruitment letter was sent to the site (see Appendix C). An elder consent form was designed should it have been required or requested by a site working with individuals affiliated with a reservation or working with Native American adolescents; an elder may have been asked to grant their blessing on the study, and a consent form (see Appendix D) would have been signed by that individual. The elder would have been asked in that consent to promise to keep the participants' information confidential, thus, allowing the researcher to speak with the family intended for the study.

Adolescent participants. As the study involved working with minors to attain deeper insight into the experiences and perceptions of clients receiving EFP, the consents of the legal guardians or state appointed representatives (see Appendix E) were gathered after the nature of the research had been disclosed. Following the signed consent of the legal guardians or state-appointed representative, the adolescent participants sat down, and the nature of the research was explained. During this time, the participants' roles were explained so that the adolescents were aware of what was being asked of them. Upon completion of the discussion, to ensure that the participants understood what was going to take place, an assent form (see Appendix F) was signed.

Adult participants. For those 18 years of age or older (see Appendix E.2), an adult consent form was designed for them to sign, after discussion of the study and explanation of their role in the study had they chosen to participate. After all informed consent/assent forms were gathered, filed and locked away, as to protect the participants, the research began.

Data monitoring. To ensure the safety of the participants' information, their name was only on the consent/assent form. All notes taken during the interview were locked in a safe to protect the participants' shared information. All audio recordings from the interview processes

were also stored in the safe throughout the dissertation process. Upon completion of the dissertation process, all data that can identify the clients, including the audio recordings and transcriptions will be burned, after seven years of being locked in a safe, to ensure destruction, consequently, protecting the participants' identities from being exposed.

Research committee. To ensure that the information provided by the clients was used for its intended purpose, a research committee was put together consisting of three psychologists. While committee members did not view the raw data, their guidance through the dissertation process ensured that the manner in which the dissertation was written provided justice to the information shared from the participants.

Privacy and confidentiality. As this research was not funded, there were no legal obligations to share any identifying information with anyone. Therefore, all information gathered was and will be held in the strictest of confidence with recordings and notes remaining locked in a safe for seven years, at which point they will be destroyed. In the event that the participants verbalized intent to harm themselves or others, confidentiality would have been broken to their therapists who would then assess the situation and follow protocol and procedure for further treatment of the participants and law-mandated disclosure.

Protection of participant rights. This study's focus was on the experiences and perceptions of individuals receiving EFP; as the research was being conducted, special attention was paid to the participants' identified and cultural ways of living, so that these concepts and traditions aided in the understanding of the participants' perceived experiences. With this in mind, the study was developed in such a way as to protect the participants' rights through multiple safeguards.

Safeguards. The first of these safeguards was in regard to the participants' age. As the participants may have been minors, special interest was paid to ensuring the safety and understanding of their rights. To aid in this, the investigator completed testing and has a certification of completion of the Human Subject Research Participants course offered by the National Institute of Health (NIH) to make sure that she had an understanding of the rights of her participants.

To ensure that the participants had an understanding of their rights, the rights of the participants were discussed at every encounter. This allowed the participants the chance to withdraw from the research at any point in time should they chose to, as well as serve as a reminder of their right to stop divulging information at any time, or to share information in less depth.

The second safeguard was in regard to the participants' cultural background. As the participants hail from different backgrounds, special attention was paid to understanding the participants' cultures. Thus, the research was gathered in a respectful manner, which takes into account the cultural aspects of the information gathered. This researcher sought to further understand the cultural aspects, as to allow for true illumination of the participants' experiences and perceptions.

The third safeguard was set in place to ensure that the participants' socioeconomic standing was not compromised. No report of the participants' socioeconomic standing was focused on, nor did the research infringe upon the families' monetary standings, as participation did not cost the participants or their families anything more than time. Interviews were arranged at the participants' convenience to ensure that data collection for the research was as non-infringing upon their schedules as possible.

As adolescents are viewed as vulnerable participants, susceptible to coercion and undue influence, the following safeguard was designed to minimize any possible coercion or undue influence. To aid in minimization of undue influence and coercion, a validity check known as a “member check” was used to ensure that the interpretation of the experiences and perceptions shared by the participants were truly the participants’ views of EFP. Thus, the information would not be construed to match the researcher’s beliefs rather than those of the participants.

Data Analysis

Each interview was conducted by the researcher who met with participants alone in the afternoon. Participants were introduced briefly to the researcher by the clinical director of their site, and then they sat down to speak with the researcher. Information regarding who the researcher was, what university she was with, and why she was conducting research was disclosed. All participants were informed of the study’s purpose and the nature in which the study would be conducted. The participants’ rights were discussed, as well as their right to choose not to participate.

Individuals who chose to participate in the study signed an assent or consent form and then confirmed their assent verbally on the audio recording, omitting their name for the purpose of confidentiality. This began the semi-structured interview process. Throughout the interview process, the researcher queried about the interpretation of what was being shared. All five individuals confirmed or elaborated on the interpretation.

The recorded interviews were then taken home with the researcher to be transcribed in the NVivo transcription process. A software program was used that allows the recording to be played back as it is being transcribed, so that the researcher may hear the interview while reviewing the transcription. The interviews holding the participants’ stories were then analyzed

by the researcher, who searched for common threads of themes, weaved amidst the participants' perceptions and experiences of EFP. These common threads were broken down into seven themed patterns.

When all of the interviews were completed, they were each transcribed. The sound clips from the interviews were played through NVivo, which allowed the researcher to start and stop the clip as needed to transcribe the data. The audio clip was then listened to again by the researcher to ensure that everything had been transcribed and no words had been missed. Once the transcription was completed, they were printed and placed into folders. NVivo was no longer used at this point.

Each folder was reviewed repeatedly over several days, and different patterns were highlighted by the researcher. These patterns were determined based on whether or not the subject of the pattern emerged in multiple participants' narratives. Each pattern received a certain highlighting color, and that color was then used on all of the folders when identifying sections of the data where the pattern emerged. Seven patterns began to emerge in the data that had been collected.

The themes were common themes that came out in multiple transcripts. They were given a titled based on how the clients referred to them. The number of participants substantiating these patterns was entered into an Excel spreadsheet to depict the total number of participants identifying these patterns and themes in their story. Graphs were created to illustrate the number of participants by gender that identified these patterns and themes. It was these patterns that have been used to paint a picture as to what clients were reporting about their perceptions and experiences of EFP. Through the collection and revelation of these patterns, the individuals'

stories were told, shedding light onto the field of EFP and its perceived impact on the individual psyche, spirituality, and wellness.

This illumination was much needed in the field of EFP, as the amount of research completed based on the facilitators' perceptions weighs oppressively on the untapped data from the clients.

Results

As stated above, five participants took part in the study--two females and three males. The interpretations emerging from the participants' stories were shared with each participant, who confirmed and, in three cases, elaborated on the interpretation, thus helping to ensure that the identified themes were in fact what the clients were reporting.

All five participants were residing in a residential placement program and had received EFP services through their placement setting. All of the participants had previous legal encounters that played a role in their respective placements. Each participant revealed a history of illegal substance use and conduct problems.

While information regarding previous efforts to address these situations was not sought, one participant shared that this was her second time in an EFP program. None of the other participants disclosed such information during the interview process. The participants were not asked about previous equine knowledge or experiences, although two participants, one male and one female, revealed prior knowledge about horses and riding experiences. One male participant shared that prior to EFP he believed, "They were just stupid animals that people broke down and made them do their stuff; like farm, and work."

Seven patterns emerged from within the stories of the individual participants as they spoke about their experiences and perceptions of EFP. These patterns appeared weaved amidst their different stories and emerged in different areas of the participants' experiences.

The patterns that emerged were titled after the participants' descriptions. The following categories comprise the seven patterns:

- Trust
- Friendship

- Bravery
- Alternative Fun
- Responsibility
- Confronting One’s Self
- Peace

These seven patterns emerged in several of the participants’ interviews when discussing both experiences and perceptions of interaction. Experiences and perceptions of effective aspects of EFP, are demonstrated in the graphs below.

Figure 1. Display of the Emerging Patterns

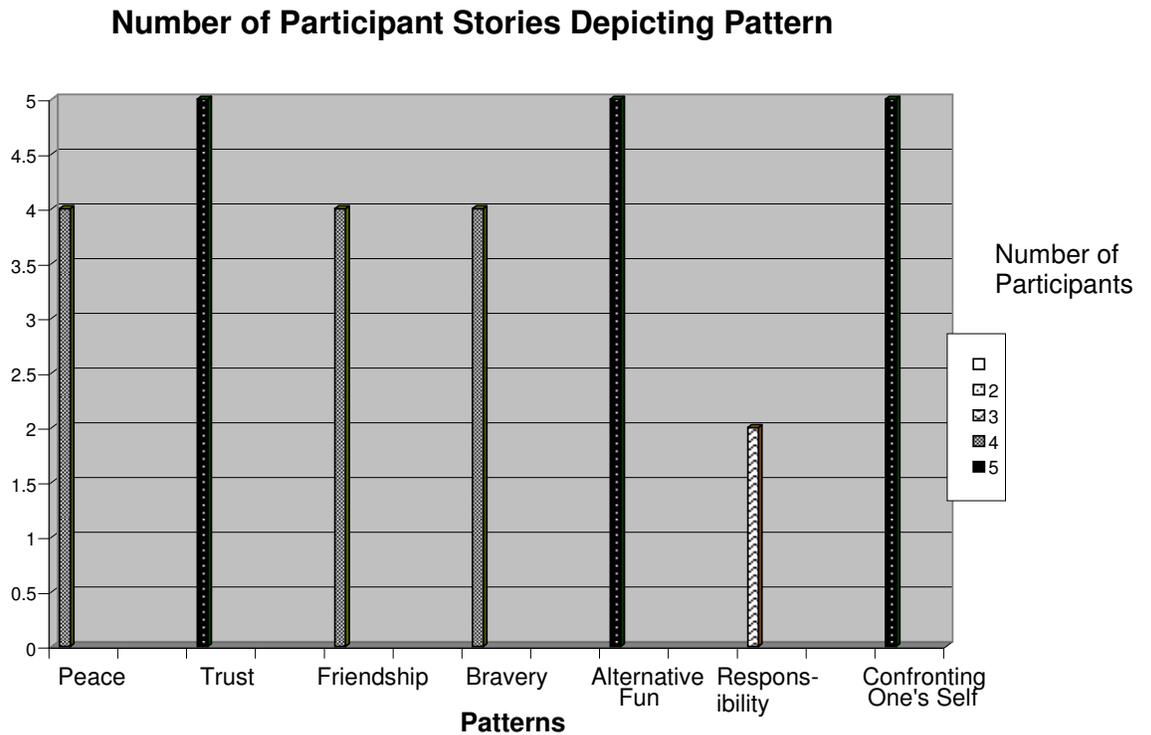
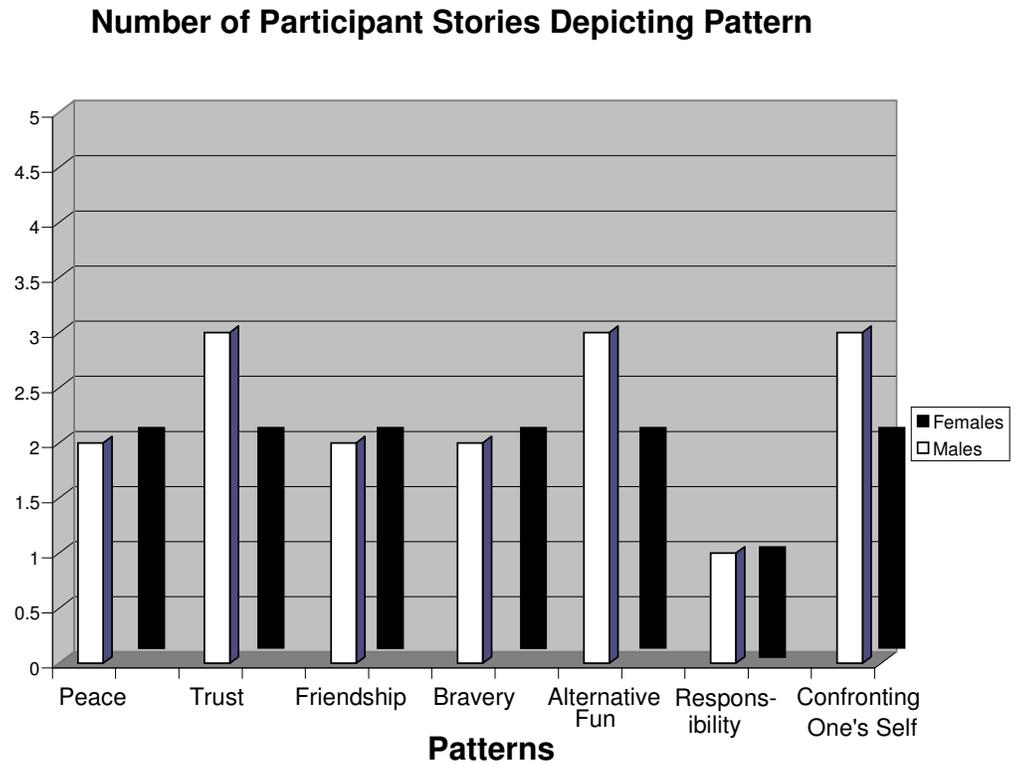


Figure 2. Display of Emergence of Patterns



Client’s Perception of the Seven Patterns in Interaction:

The process of interviewing participants revealed their perceptions and experiences of the seven patterns while interacting with their horse in EFP. These seven different patterns create seven new hues to be incorporated into the overall conception of EFP, where some of these hues serve to confirm previous research, and others lead to new areas in the depiction of EFP.

Trust. Trust was a pattern that was found in all five participants. It is the most recognized aspect of interaction in EFP for all participants. All five participants stated at least once that they trusted their horse and that their horse trusted them. “Building her trust in me was the biggest [thing that impacted me,]” reported one participant.

When asked to describe the relationship between himself and his horse, one participant said:

Trust! ... Like the first time... like my first thought when I started working with my horse, and [then again] when I first tried running with him... I started slipping off and I was like 'oh my god am I going to like fall off, and is he going to trample all over me and stuff' ... I had to trust him and in order for me to trust him, he had to trust me too.

He depicted a time when he was dependent upon the trust that he and his horse had been working on establishing to help him through his activity. This was one of the ways trust influenced him.

All five individuals stated that they learned how to trust and be trusted while engaging in the process of EFP. "I trusted her and she was a good, she was a good horse! I felt comfortable with her," another participant stated. Yet, another individual spoke of an activity where trust influenced both her and her horse: "They had us lay the horse down; that was really awesome. It was very hard but it was very awesome after I got to do it," she said. This experience, then, helped the participants develop a new understanding of trust.

Trust, a concept that creates conflict for so many, is an essential part of the treatment process as reported by the participants. It was this newfound ability to trust, and accountability to ensure that you could be trusted, that changed the process of treatment. This was no longer about one's ability to simply overcome an obstacle, but to grow and transform while overcoming that obstacle.

Friendship. The theme of friendship was evident in participants' stories when they spoke about their interactions with their horse. This common bond was alternatively described as love for their horse, liking their horse, and the shared emotions with their horse that were realized when they learned "just how they are exactly like humans" as stated by one participant.

When asked about their relationship with their horse, participants stated that they either loved their horse, or liked their horse, and had a close connection with the animal. One participant described a time when he realized it was mutual:

One time I fell off... he felt me like start to fall off and stopped. I hit the ground and he turned and started licking me (he smiled and laughed) so it's like I never thought horses were that smart and they really knew what was going on. [I think he licked me] so I wouldn't get mad or something, like letting me know it was an accident... but you can build this friendship, almost like man and his dog.

A female participant shared her story of friendship reporting how it has grown:

The first time I rode him, he took off on me. I didn't like him and I said I would never ride him again.... I worked with him, and now I think he is the best horse ever (she smiled). We're both comfortable with each other now. I wouldn't go back and choose a different horse if I had the chance.

Her experience demonstrates just how the relationship between clients and their horse(s) may blossom over time. Her story sheds light on the valuable experiences that are granted even if an outsider may not perceive certain incidents as beneficial. For instance, an individual may have seen her horse taking off on her as a dangerous experience. However, for her, that experience taught her how to adapt and manage situations when things did not turn out as she had preconceived. It also afforded her the opportunity to grow and experience a relationship that would challenge her and prove to be rewarding. More importantly, it illustrates how the client is able to see the benefit behind every interaction as this participant also described now having the ability to create "real friends."

Bravery. Bravery was an aspect of EFP that emerged in participants' interviews as an area that was developed through interaction with their horse. One participant said, for example, "I was scared at first 'cause they're a lot bigger than me... and [I had to] work through stuff." Another participant also spoke about finding herself to be braver: "[I] thought, 'oh I can't do this,' but it went well...[And then] I was like, 'no, I can do this'." Yet another participant reported, "I feel like I got a little braver with riding my horse." These statements illustrate how bravery played a part in their interactions with horses, and, in some cases, how their interaction with horses created the sense of being braver.

When individuals look at the different obstacles they have had to overcome, bravery is often something that comes to mind. For individuals to overcome an obstacle, they must be brave enough to accept the challenge the obstacle presents, and have faith that they will be able to overcome the obstacle. Once having overcome the obstacle, bravery takes the form of individuals being able to use what they have learned to move onward in their journey through life. Thus, all aspects of bravery acquired in EFP are beneficial.

Alternative fun. A common theme that emerged as a reason for completing EFP was that the participants had a history of substance use and conduct problems. All five participants declared interaction with their horse as an activity that yielded the same feelings of using substances, or breaking rules or laws. "It was fun, and entertaining.... I used to love riding, like it was fun," declared one participant. Similar experiences were articulated in all five participants' stories. "You don't have to do drugs in order to do something fun. Like, there is something to do other than drugs and being with horses really was fun," stated another participant. This understanding of interaction with their horse(s) fueled participants to look

forward to their time with their horses, leading to a more effective therapeutic nature created by the client's desire to partake in session activities.

This desire, then, fostered a positive arena for participants to work on their obstacles while working with their horse. Without this positive motivation to work with their horse, participants' treatment experiences may have been limited.

Responsibility. Responsibility was an identified pattern in participants' stories as an important part of interacting with their horse during EFP sessions. One participant reported, "They teach you, like, parts of the horse. The emotions [and how they are expressing them], how to saddle [a horse]. Basically everything you need to know in order to ride, and take care of a horse." In gaining this education, participants were able to work with their horses and take full responsibility for their interactions with their horses. The other participant who recognized this stated, "We learned how to tie 'em, learned how to clean underneath their hooves, and stuff like that. Like how to back them away without like hitting them [by] using points."

This knowledge prompted clients to be able to help explain what their horse was feeling when queried by the equine assisted psychotherapist and search internally for what they were experiencing that likely made the horse respond this way. Consequently, this led to the clients taking responsibility of their own emotions as well as taking responsibility for the well-being of their horse(s).

Confronting one's self. Confronting one's self was a pattern that had all five participants reporting its occurrence during their interaction with their horses. This was depicted through stories of interaction in all five participants' interviews. One participant reported that what he put forth, he received back. He reported:

With another horse, I probably shouldn't have lost my temper. I got kicked and that horse didn't like me that much. ... I was working with him in the round pen and uh, I got up behind him and gave him a tap on the back and he just came back and gave me a tap back.

While he stated he suffered no real injuries, he recognized the error in his way of dealing with that horse. This experience has led the participant to interact with others differently.

Facing ourselves can be a bit of a struggle, but is something that happens every time individuals interact with a horse. Another participant reported:

There was a day where I was not having a good day, I did not want to ride, I was crabby, I was just... you know... and like the horse was stubborn as all that day. Like, it would not do anything I tried to get it to do.

She spoke about her frustrations:

"I was frustrated a lot 'cause its like I wanted my horse to do something and it, it wouldn't do it, and then that's when we [the equine assisted psychotherapist and the client] got into how like they can feel what we're feeling and stuff."

This realization forced her to address what she was feeling inside, so that she could work with what the horse was expressing outwardly towards her.

Another participant shared his story on an activity where he experienced frustration in having to face his own internal urges. He reported:

There was this bucket, like a game, and like he'd [his horse] always try to go over for the treats and stuff, and I'd be like 'no' and keep pulling him and pulling him, and I'd get him to stop and then he'd just start walking over there, and I'd like keep yanking and yanking and stuff and he keeps pulling. Sometimes it would just annoy me.

This client had to address his internal struggle to recognize what was occurring with his horse.

Peace. Peace was a pattern that emerged in the accounts of participants' stories, as what they experienced while interacting with their horse. "It's like I have no worries [when I'm with my horse], it's almost like I'm in a different world. 'Cause it's with him, it's pretty peaceful" one participant described. "Whenever I rode and stuff it was like I had no worries; it was just like me and my horse. Nothing could really get in the way," he elaborated. This feeling was shared by another participant who elaborated on the feeling of peace while interacting with her horse. She reported, "To me it's like very independent. Like, I like to go off by myself with my horse... they can give you the best time ever." This understanding of finding tranquility while riding a horse depicts the power of the horse to help people work through internal feelings and reach a state of harmony and in some instances serenity. This is possible when the body, mind, and spirit are one and can be attained through EFP while engaging with their horse(s), per the participants' reports.

Overall, these seven patterns came through in the discussion about the experiences and perceptions of interacting with their horses. Not surprising was that the results of these seven patterns also emerged in the participants' reported perception of effective aspects of EFP.

Client's Perception and Experiences of the Seven Patterns in Effectiveness of EFP

Through studying the participants' experiences and understanding their story, the seven patterns identified as threads weaving their way through the stories of the participants were also identified as reemerging when discussing the facets of EFP that the participants believed were most effective.

Trust. A participant described overcoming a general sense of fear and relying on his trust to accomplish a mounted task and how this has changed him and will affect him in the long run:

I had to learn how to ride with no hands. So, I had to like really trust my horse not to make a quick maneuver and throw me off. And that kinda helps me with everyday life because you don't know who you can trust. You have to build a relationship with people and hope it goes through the best.

A female participant shared how trust has affected her for the rest of her life when talking about an experience with her horse:

I had to trust my horse in order to be able to get on him, because if I didn't, then he probably would have taken off on me again. I walked with him a lot, and brushed him, and in the beginning I would not walk behind my horse's butt at all, and like I wouldn't even if I was touching him, and now I do, and I can. I know I can build that [trust] and that's big for me because I don't trust anybody really. So, that trust is huge, I did benefit from that.

When asked about what has most influenced them and what aspects of EFP have had an effect on their lives, trust was the answer that all five individuals brought up repeatedly throughout the interviews. This newfound ability to trust and be trusted can be used elsewhere throughout participants' lives, helping them to establish relationships, increase their self-concept, and overcome obstacles.

Friendship. Friendship as an aspect of effective EFP treatment was demonstrated when participants spoke of how the horse is "exactly like us," thus allowing for the bridge and connection between two species to be made. Four out of five participants shared the perception

that their friendship with their horse(s) is what helped them to grow and learn from their experiences. “How we feel, they feel,” replied one participant.

For some, the ability to trust and have friendships are challenges enmeshed within each other. This is due to the nature of developing meaningful relationships, which requires a level of trust. In the participants’ attainment of trust and establishment of friendships, they begin to grow; their social support network expands, helping them to dissolve feelings of isolation. These abilities can then be used to help them grow and develop throughout their years of existence.

Bravery. The concept of bravery emerged when participants were speaking about their interactions. It also emerged in the perception of participants as having been an effective component in their treatment. One participant shared her experience stating:

They had us take our horses through some obstacles and everything like that, and we had to get them past feeding buckets without talking or anything; and they said like if we’re ready to give up our addictions and stuff, our horse will just walk right by it [the feeding buckets] and if we’re not then they’re going to stop and eat it so... things like that, that really gets you to thinking... like are you really ready for all that kind of stuff.

This participant found her bravery as a tool for overcoming her substance use. Her experience reflects a time when she had to face a tough decision. Therefore, if she had not been able to overcome her desire for substances internally, her horse would always remain finding his way back to the bucket to graze.

Bravery is what helps to move individuals forward. It allows individuals to overcome challenges, adapt to new environmental situations, and excel along life’s journey. The ability to gain a newfound sense of bravery in EFP essentially enables participants to leave treatment with

a new sense of hope for what the future may hold, and it gives them the ability to meet and exceed through the challenges that their journey through life may bring them.

Alternative fun. Participants reported gaining the understanding that activities, such as working with horses, could elicit a natural bodily response that clients find to be enjoyable or pleasurable, rather than participating in illegal activities and other inappropriate behaviors. The knowledge was determined by the participants to constitute a way in which EFP had changed their lives. “When you ride a horse, it is fun and it’s like you’re doing something fun without having to be on the alcohol or like other things [breaking the law],” stated one participant. Each participant brought up this new understanding of fun, as a reason why individuals believe EFP to have a lasting effect. With this new insight, participants are more likely to seek alternative activities to meet their internal needs of pleasure and enjoyment.

Responsibility. Responsibility was recognized as being a facet of EFP that was effective for participants. One participant declared this in saying, “It [EFP] showed me that I have to be more responsible [about] things.... Like [I know] I can be more responsible now.” While “responsibility” was not as prominent as the other six patterns, it was a thread that two participants felt had played a significant role in EFP having a lasting effect on them.

Confronting one’s self. The inner self, even when being hidden, cannot stay hidden for all time. Not surprisingly, “Confronting one’s self” was a pattern that emerged among participants’ reports of effective facets of EFP. All five participants shared stories related to their frustrations and annoyance in dealing with their horses at times, and all five participants were able to recognize that their horses’ outward behavior was a response to them. Thus, in having to face themselves, they established a therapeutic dynamic that changed them each in different ways.

William Shirer, n.d, once said, “Most true happiness comes from one's inner life, from the disposition of the mind and soul. Admittedly, a good inner life is difficult to achieve, especially in these trying times. It takes reflection and contemplation and self-discipline” (About.com, n.d., expression 3). With the ability to confront themselves, address their internal states, and develop ways to manage or change those internal states, individuals can work on becoming happier. In confronting themselves through EFP, individuals may begin to see a change in their mood and/or internal state to a more desired disposition. The ability to confront themselves in an arena allows them to develop the ability to confront and challenge themselves in other life situations.

Peace. Peace was recognized as being an experience following engagement with the horse, revealing its lasting effect on the participants. One participant stated that when interacting with his horse he:

Didn't really have to worry about anything here anymore. I just wanted to spend time with her, and work her, and try to get her to come around. ... After I was done riding, I was more mellow... I got a lot off of my mind when I was working with her... and it helped me to build up patience [and] tolerance.

This was an example of this peacefulness carrying over into his other activities.

Through their reported triumphs in working with their horse, what emerged was the overall belief that EFP had been effective for them. They experienced changes in their activities, their ability to form friendships, to “be more responsible”, to have a “big change in my attitude”, to develop patience and tolerance, and develop the capability of trusting another being, and being trusted.

When asked if there was anything else that they would like to share about their experiences, thoughts, feelings, or their horse, all five participants responded with “I think it’s a good program”, “the program itself is pretty good”, or “I think it’s a pretty good idea to do therapy with them.” These statements are indicative of a generally positive response towards the use of EFP from all participants. Thus, per the participants, EFP is found to be an effective treatment method, which affords them the ability to overcome obstacles while experiencing seven important themes: trust, friendship, bravery, alternative fun, responsibility, confronting one’s self, and peace.

Discussion

The implications of this study augment what has already been identified as the positive results from the use of EFP. This study indicates that clients perceive EFP interactions to hold great meaning for them. The data collected also indicate that clients perceive EFP to be an effective treatment model, though some of their reasons differ from those of the therapists as reported in previous research.

Through the participants' stories, it became clear that seven distinct patterns characterized their experiences. These patterns necessarily shaped their perception of effective facets of EFP. These seven patterns were: trust, friendship, bravery, alternative fun, responsibility, confronting one's self, and peace.

Previous data suggest that therapists perceive the following areas to be effective: tactile sensations (Bates, 2002) and relationships (Barker, 1999; Bates, 2002; Christian, 2005; Ewing et al., 2007; Foley, 2001; Karol, 2007; Kohanov, 2001; Rothe, 2005; Sullivan, 2007). Previous research identifies these facets of EFP as able to influence individuals' perceptions of self, ability to communicate, respect, and behaviors. The previous data support the themes of friendship, trust, peace, and responsibility that emerged from the participants involved in this study.

Previous research details equine specialists as identifying clients' transference (Nilson, 2004; Scheidhacker, 1997) and boundary work (Christian, 2005) as the most effective aspects of EFP. This previous research supports the themes identified by participants as confronting one's self, responsibility, trust, and friendship.

Research on clients' reports is limited. However, what existed prior to this study indicated that clients found relationships (Fletcher & Scanlan, 2005; Meinersmann, Bradberry, & Roberts, 2008; York, 2008), and sense of self (York, 2008) to be the previously identified

effective themes of EFP. This data is also supportive of participants' reported themes of friendship, trust, and confronting one's self.

Thus stated, the previous qualitative findings focusing primarily on therapists', specialists', and volunteers' perceptions is supportive of four out of the seven themes identified specifically by participants. These four supported themes are trust, friendship, responsibility, and confronting one's self.

The identified pattern trust developed as the core necessity in the participants' lives. Trust was essential in EFP sessions for participants to work through different experiences, while learning and growing. This is supported by Gasalberti (2006), Held (2006), and Yorke et al. (2008), who also mentioned trust as a key aspect in the effectiveness of EFP.

The second supported identified pattern was friendship. This pattern depicted the ability of clients to develop meaningful relationships through the process of EFP. The importance of relationships in EFP has been discussed previously by Karol (2007). However, the idea of a friendship similar to the one that "man has with his dog", as stated by a participant, is different from that of just a relationship. Relationships can be so many different things; it could be a friendship, it could be an acquaintance, or it could be a therapeutic rapport built between the horses and the clients.

A friendship is much deeper--a kindred spirit of sorts, to help one when help is needed, to listen when listening is needed and to encourage when encouragement is needed. A friend is there to guide when the path becomes dark and winding, to support when one becomes weary and to share in both the good and bad times. To select friendship is to select a deep relationship, an ongoing relationship, where the kindred hearts of two remain connected even after parting.

The fact that participants identified this friendship, and even referred to it at times as love, shows how truly connected clients may become to their horses.

The third supported pattern was responsibility. While this was not nearly as prevalent among the participants as the other patterns, it was held in high regard for two participants. These two participants shared that their new knowledge helped them to take responsibility not only for themselves, their feelings, and their actions, but also for their horses. This is supported by previous research depicting therapists' perceptions of effectiveness conducted by Carpenter (1997).

The pattern confronting one's self emerged as participants disclosed their stories of frustration, annoyance, and anger, while understanding that their internal states were being reflected back to them by the horse. This pattern matched therapists' perceptions of effectiveness from previous research by Fletcher and Scanlan (2005), Gonzales and Hudson (2003), Rothe et al. (2005), Hakanson et al. (2009), Karol (2007), and Lawrence (1992). This new insight helped participants to deal with the different aspects of their internal state that needed to be dealt with or confronted. Once participants had confronted themselves and addressed their internal states, participants disclosed the different changes that they saw within themselves.

In the final supported-identified pattern peace, the ability for clients to find a sense of tranquility through interacting with their horse was expressed. This tranquility led to altered mood and behavior in the participants. This supports the research by Roberts et al. (2004).

Despite previous research, there were themes that emerged from participants' reports in the current study that were not supported by previous research. This could be due to a couple of reasons. The first reason could simply be that there has only been one other study conducted

focusing only on participants (Meinersmann, Bradberry, & Roberts, 2008), therefore supporting the cognition that more research should be conducted in the field of EFP. The second reason that the data were not supported could be due to the type of data that currently exists; it stands to reason that clients would perceive the areas of effectiveness of EFP to be different than the areas that a therapist, equine specialist, or volunteer would.

The areas that have not yet been supported, but may garner support in future research, are “bravery” and “alternative fun”. These were key themes that emerged in participants’ reports, identifying areas of EFP that were effective for them.

The next prevalent pattern was Bravery. It was in this pattern that the bravery to overcome obstacles was addressed. This newfound ability reportedly gave individuals a sense of accomplishment and faith within themselves to overcome new obstacles. Orison Swett (n.d) said, “Most of our obstacles would melt away if, instead of cowering before them, we should make up our minds to walk boldly through them” (About.com, n.d., expression 8). How true Orison Sweet’s statement is. With bravery comes the ability to overcome, with the ability to overcome comes the responsibility to continue on, and with the responsibility of continuing on, one has a sense of purpose; with a sense of purpose nothing can stand in the way. Oftentimes I find that, with this sense of purpose, a new meaning develops and, when individuals have meaning in their life, they often become driven and motivated to overcome and to impact others, one hopes in a positive way.

If this is true, then EFP in a way not only impacts individuals’ feelings and sense of bravery, but it impacts the obstacles and challenges they will face. It also lends its impact to the participants’ sense of meaning and purpose, creating an impact on individuals that is exponential and unlimited.

“Alternative fun” was another new pattern identified. This theme demonstrated that new insight into the benefits and possibilities of legal and appropriate activities was illustrated. This pattern has not been discussed in any prior research, and, therefore, lends itself to be further researched as a way to attain behavioral modification.

As individual participants who have a history of maladaptive behaviors, illegal behaviors, and participation in inappropriate age-related activities report this, it could be hypothesized that EFP may help lower recidivism rates in adolescents and young adults. The implications of this finding may prove to be essential in EFP programs working to divert adolescent misconduct charges prior to more severe methods of behavioral modification becoming necessary. Further research would afford the opportunity to gather more evidence either for or against the use of EFP as a diversion model of treatment to help lower recidivism rates of young offenders. Through establishing further research focusing on this area, one may be able to identify patterns which would yield support to that hypothesis.

Conclusion and Implications

This data gives the specific field of Equine Assisted Professionals, as well as psychology in general, a glimpse of possible patterns that may characterize clients’ experiences and perceptions of EFP and its effectiveness. Consequently, these findings provide a stone in the foundation of the framework for the masterpiece that is EFP.

This data is ground- breaking, as it focuses purely on the clients’ perceptions and experiences of EFP and the effectiveness of EFP. Only one previous study by Meinersmann et al. (2008) has been done to collect data focusing on clients’ perceptions and its focus was only on females with abuse histories. Therefore, this data can be used to extend insight into EFP and provide different avenues for exploration in the field of research.

This analysis can be used to generate further data collection regarding clients' perceptions of experiences and the effectiveness of EFP. Further research would aid in creating the masterpiece of EFP, and secure a firm understanding of what clients experience while undergoing such processes. As this subfield of psychology is under researched, the importance of continuing such research cannot be stressed enough.

The sample collected is minimal, so it should be noted that the data leave much room for further research. However, it is significant to the field of psychology and its subfield, equine facilitated psychotherapy.

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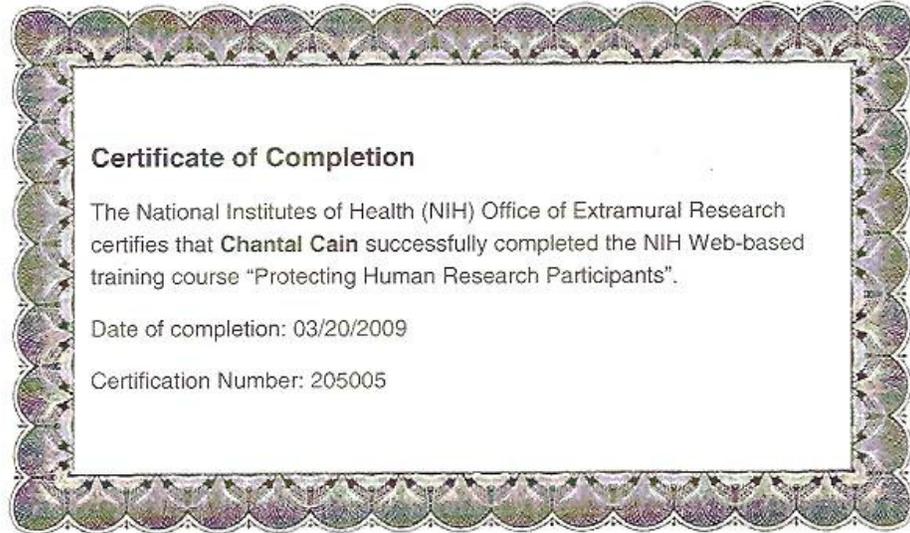
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Appendix A:

NIH

Protecting Human Subject Research Participants

Page 1 of 1



Appendix B

**Memorandum**

TO: Chantal Cain Peterson
FROM:  Lorri White, IRB Chair
DATE: January 19, 2010
RE: **A Phenomenological Narratology Understanding of a Client's Experiences and Their Perceptions of Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy (IRB #09-021)**

Thank you for submitting your Request for IRB Review. The above-referenced study has been approved until 1-19-11. You will have one year to complete your study. Should you need time beyond that date, you will need to submit a Request for Renewal.

Please use University of the Rockies on your consent form.

NOTE: Please include the IRB number and expiration date on your informed consent form.

Once human subjects research has been approved, it is the Principal Investigator's (PI) responsibility to report changes in research activity related to the project. The PI must provide the IRB with all protocol and consent form amendments and revisions. IRB must approve these changes prior to their implementation. All advertisements recruiting study subjects must also receive prior approval by the IRB. The PI must promptly inform the IRB of all adverse and serious adverse events to subjects. Failure to comply with these federally mandated responsibilities may result in suspension or termination of the project.

Thank you for your concern about human subject protection issues, and good luck with your research.

Appendix C:

Recruitment Letter

Date: 2.28.2010

Chantal m. Peterson, M.A., EAP Certified, EAL Certified
318 Saturn Drive
Bismarck, ND. 58503
Cell) 719.235.2302
h/fax)701.751.3118



To Whom It May Concern:

I am a doctoral student at the University of the Rockies studying Clinical Psychology with an emphasis in Neuropsychology and am conducting a qualitative study for my doctoral dissertation titled "*A Phenomenological Narratology Understanding of a Client's Experiences and Their Perceptions of Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy*". This study aims to provide a stone in the foundation of EFP research. Upon completion of this research there will be a foundation upon which further research in EFP may develop with the insights from this study illuminating possible experiences and perceptions that client's may be having. This foundation is much needed in the field of EFP, as well as in the field of Psychology as a whole; as currently, there is little to no research on EFP nor its process or client's perceptions of the treatment.

Just as a movie is capable of reaching many individuals and impacting them in some manner, the deep and true story of an individual's experiences and perceptions of EFP may be capable of reaching and impacting numerous individuals; while expanding the understanding of EFP for the Equine Therapy Community as well as the field of Psychology as a whole.

As there is currently very little research completed in the field of EFP, and almost no research completed on the client's perceptions of EFP, I believe that your client's stories will be an invaluable asset to the field of psychology.

I am seeking 5 individuals that fall between 13 years to 30 years of age that would like to participate in a semi-structured open-ended interview about their experiences in EFP. These individuals will be people that an Equine Assisted Psychotherapist believes has excelled in treatment, and who has been undergoing/ or completed EFP treatments for a month. There are eight questions in the interview, and the duration will be approximately an hour, depending upon how much the participant would like to share.

All interview questions have been designed in such a way as to be non-specific to event. Thus, allowing the participant to share their story as they wish to tell it. Giving them the ability to control the depth in which they share their story to minimize any invasiveness or discomfort they may feel from participating. Names and identities of clients will not be discussed, after receiving all consent/assent forms from willing participants, numbers will be ascribed to each participant for documentation purposes, and the facility will be coded and securely kept in a separate location.

All interviews will be audio recorded to ensure the accuracy and dignity of the participant's story during transcription. These recordings will be ascribed a corresponding number and locked in a safe, until they are destroyed seven years after the completion of the dissertation process. I will be the only individual with access to this information, and it will not be released or discussed. All identifying information will be de-identified. Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Participants may withdraw at any time, or participate and choose to omit certain information.

This study has been approved by the University of the Rockies Institutional Review Board (approval number 09-021) to ensure that presents minimal risk to participants, and follows all ethical guidelines for working with human participants.

If you have any client's who would be willing to participate in this research or if you have any further questions about this study you may contact me at 719.235.2302, 318 Saturn Drive, Bismarck, ND. 58503. You may also e-mail me at Peterson.Research@hotmail.com.

I would be much obliged if you would contact me if you are willing to allow your site to participate in this research, have clients willing to participate in the study, or have any questions or concerns that I may answer.

Thank you for your time and consideration in the matter of this research.

Sincerely,
Miss Chantal m. Peterson, MA, EAP Certified, EAL Certified
Doctoral Student

Appendix D

Elder Consent

Pending your approval a family in your community is going to be invited to participate in a research project conducted by Chantal Cain, who is a doctoral student at the University of the Rockies currently working on her dissertation. The study is to focus on an adolescent undergoing equine facilitated psychotherapy. The participant will be asked to describe their experiences as well as their perceptions of working with a horse. They will be asked for an interview, or three shorter interviews totaling 3 hours, so that Chantal may gain insight into their experiences. Questions such as

1. What lead you to start equine facilitated psychotherapy?
2. What have you done/ do you do when you work with your horse?
3. What did/do you experience or feel during the equine facilitated psychotherapy process?
4. How did/do you interpret your relationship with your horse? Can you describe it to me?
5. What aspects of working with your horse do you think have influenced you most? Will you describe the impact to me?
6. What aspects of working with your horse do you think have influenced you least? Why do you think these had the least impact on you?
7. Have you experienced any changes in you during or after working with your horse? Will you describe them to me?

Upon completion of the interview(s), Chantal may observe the adolescent in treatment. She will not interfere in the process, but will take notes on what is being observed. Following the interview, the participant will be thanked for their time, and the valuable insight they have offered to the researcher.

This study is designed in such a manner as to limit risk experienced by the participant. The participant will undergo interviewing which may become uncomfortable at times, such as when they are answering questions that are emotionally close to them. To ease any discomfort that may arise from questions the participant is able to refuse to answer any question he/she decides without penalty or negative outcome. Thus, allowing the participant to share their story as they wish to tell it. Giving them the ability to control the depth of detail in which they share their story.

The participant may benefit from this study by gaining further insight into their results of working with their horse, and the level to which it may have impacted their life; possibly resulting in their experiences holding deeper meaning for them. Another benefit that the client may experience are the positive feelings associated with participating in research.

This research may benefit the participant by providing them someone to talk to, to share their experiences and new insights. As this study requires the participant to take time and reflect on their experiences, this reflection time may lead to personal growth, as well as a deeper understanding of themselves.

If you approve of this project, please be assured that the participant is voluntary and has the right to withdraw consent or discontinue participation at any time with no penalty. They will have the right to refuse to answer any question(s) for any reason without penalty. In addition, their privacy will be protected and maintained in all publications or presentations resulting from this research. All identifiable information, including consent forms, tape recordings, and notes from the interview and observation session, will kept in a locked safe for seven years. Upon completion, all identifiable information will be burned to ensure the participants anonymity even upon completion of the research. Thus stated, it is asked that you will assist in keeping the participants information confidential, by not sharing the participants name with anyone.

If you have questions regarding the project, you may contact Chantal at 719.235.2302. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant or any concerns regarding this project, you may report them to the UoR Chairperson of the Institutional Review Board at 719.442.0505.

A copy of this consent form will be provided to you.

I understand the above information and give consent for the researcher to conduct the study.

Signature of the Elder: _____ Date: _____.

IRB Approval Number: _____ IRB Expiration Date: _____.

Appendix E

Parent/Legal Guardian Consent Form

Your child is being invited to participate in a research project conducted by Chantal, who is a doctoral student at the University of the Rockies. The purpose of this project is to gain insight into their experiences and perceptions of equine facilitated psychotherapy.

Your child will be asked to describe their experiences, their feelings related to those experiences, and their perceptions of working with a horse. The questions that will be asked are :

1. What lead the client to EFP?
(Why did you start EFP?)
2. How does the client describe EFP?
(Could you please describe EFP to me in your own words?)
3. What did/does the client experience during the EFP process?
(What did you experience when you first started the EFP Process? What do you experience now?)
4. How did/does the client interpret their relationship with their horse?
(Have you and your horse built a relationship? Would you please tell me about that relationship? What is it like?)
5. What aspects of EFP most influenced the client?
(What areas of EFP would you say most influenced you? What areas of EFP will you remember?)
6. What aspects of EFP did the client least like?
(Were there any parts of EFP that you did not like? Would you please tell me about those?)
7. What changes does the client perceive occurred during EFP?
(Did you notice any changes during EFP, anything you felt, thought, and saw, heard differently? Have you noticed any changes from the first time you participated in EFP and now?)
8. What effects, if any, do you perceive that EFP has had on ____ (the reason they began EFP) _____?

These questions will be asked during an interview that may take up to three hours, the interview may be broken into smaller segments of time if it is preferred, to help make scheduling easier. Upon completion of the interview, Chantal may observe your child while they are working with their horse. She will not interfere with this process, she will watch and take notes.

The observation phase will complete the participation requested of your child.

This study is designed in such a manner as to limit risk experienced by the participant. The participant will undergo interviewing which may become

uncomfortable at times, such as when they are answering questions that are emotionally close to them. To ease any discomfort that may arise from questions the participant is able to refuse to answer any question he/she decides without penalty or negative outcome. Thus, allowing the participant to share their story as they wish to tell it. Giving them the ability to control the depth of detail in which they share their story.

The participant may benefit from this study by gaining further insight into their results of working with their horse, and the level to which it may have impacted their life; possibly resulting in their experiences holding deeper meaning for them. Another benefit that the client may experience are the positive feelings associated with participating in research.

This research may benefit the participant by providing them someone to talk to, to share their experiences and new insights. As this study requires the participant to take time and reflect on their experiences, this reflection time may lead to personal growth, as well as a deeper understanding of themselves.

If you approve of your child's participation, please be assured that your child is a voluntary participant and has the right to withdraw consent or discontinue participation at any time with no penalty. They will have the right to refuse to answer any question(s) for any reason without penalty. In addition, their privacy will be protected and maintained in all publications or presentations resulting from this research.

All identifiable information, including consent forms, tape recordings, and notes from the interview and observation session, will kept in a locked safe for seven years. Upon completion, all identifiable information will be burned to ensure your child's anonymity even upon completion of the research.

If you have any questions regarding this project, you may contact Chantal at 719.235.2302. If you have questions regarding your or your child's rights as a research participant or any concerns regarding this project, you may contact the UoR Chairperson of the Institutional Review Board at 719.443.0505. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you.

I understand the above information and voluntarily consent to have my child participate in the research.

Name of Child: _____.

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian: _____.

Date: _____.

IRB Approval Number: 09-021

IRB Expiration Date: 1.19.11

Appendix E.2

Adult Participant Consent

My name is Chantal, and I am a doctoral student at the University of the Rockies. I am conducting research on one's experiences and perceptions (opinions) of equine facilitated psychotherapy. I would like to learn what it is like for you to work with a horse; your thoughts, your feelings, what you experience, what you are doing when you experience those thoughts, or feelings. I would also like to learn what you think about working with horses, and if it influences you and how it influences you.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to take part in an interview, where I will ask you some questions. You will be asked to share your story and experiences with me. If we need to we can always do 2 or 3 short interviews, to help make your participation as non-conflicting with your schedule as possible. I will ask questions such as:

1. What lead the client to EFP?
(Why did you start EFP?)
2. How does the client describe EFP?
(Could you please describe EFP to me in your own words?)
3. What did/does the client experience during the EFP process?
(What did you experience when you first started the EFP Process? What do you experience now?)
4. How did/does the client interpret their relationship with their horse?
(Have you and your horse built a relationship? Would you please tell me about that relationship? What is it like?)
5. What aspects of EFP most influenced the client?
(What areas of EFP would you say most influenced you? What areas of EFP will you remember?)
6. What aspects of EFP did the client least like?
(Were there any parts of EFP that you did not like? Would you please tell me about those?)
7. What changes does the client perceive occurred during EFP?
(Did you notice any changes during EFP, anything you felt, thought, and saw, heard differently? Have you noticed any changes from the first time you participated in EFP and now?)
8. What effects, if any, do you perceive that EFP has had on ____ (the reason they began EFP) _____?

When we finish the interview (it may be a total of 3 hours when finished) I would like to observe you while you work with your horse. I will not interfere, I will just be there to watch.

Some of these questions may be close to you, and you may feel uncomfortable sharing that part of your story. You are able, at any, time to stop answering a question. You may also choose to share something in less detail, sharing your story but at the same time keeping yourself comfortable. Both of these choices will be honored and respected.

Some of the benefits of this study include the positive feeling of being able to share your insight and experience with someone else. By participating, you may gain more insight into yourself and how working with a horse has influenced your life. As you reflect on your personal experiences, you may find yourself going through a transition of personal growth, as well as a deeper understanding of yourself. This study may help the field of psychology and the field of equine facilitated psychotherapy, by providing insight; thus, helping the fields to have a better understanding of what occurs from the client's point of view.

I want to assure you that your identity will remain anonymous. All information that could identify you (such as the consent forms and the tape used to record the interview) will be locked in a safe for seven years. Once the research is finished, all of this information will be burned, to protect your identity after the even after the research is completed.

If you have any questions about the study, at any time, you may ask them and I will try to answer them for you. If you have questions that you think of later, you may call me at: 719.235.2302.

The decision to take part in this study is up to you. You do not have to be in the study, and should you decide later that you do not wish to participate, you can stop at any time. Your information will still remain confidential, and there is no consequence for not participating in the study.

Please mark one of the choices below to indicate what you would like to do:

- No, I do not want to be in this study
- Yes, I want to be in this study

Write your name here: _____ Date: _____.

Signature: _____ Date: _____.

IRB Approval Number: 09-021 IRB Expiration Date: 1.19.11

Appendix F

Child Assent Form

My name is Chantal, and I am a doctoral student at the University of the Rockies. I am conducting research on one's experiences and perceptions (opinions) of equine facilitated psychotherapy. I would like to learn what it is like for you to work with a horse; your thoughts, your feelings, what you experience, what you are doing when you experience those thoughts, or feelings. I would also like to learn what you think about working with horses, and if it influences you and how it influences you.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to take part in an interview, where I will ask you some questions. You will be asked to share your story and experiences with me. If we need to we can always do 2 or 3 short interviews, to help make your participation as non-conflicting with your schedule as possible. I will ask questions such as:

1. What lead the client to EFP?
(Why did you start EFP?)
2. How does the client describe EFP?
(Could you please describe EFP to me in your own words?)
3. What did/does the client experience during the EFP process?
(What did you experience when you first started the EFP Process? What do you experience now?)
4. How did/does the client interpret their relationship with their horse?
(Have you and your horse built a relationship? Would you please tell me about that relationship? What is it like?)
5. What aspects of EFP most influenced the client?
(What areas of EFP would you say most influenced you? What areas of EFP will you remember?)
6. What aspects of EFP did the client least like?
(Were there any parts of EFP that you did not like? Would you please tell me about those?)
7. What changes does the client perceive occurred during EFP?
(Did you notice any changes during EFP, anything you felt, thought, and saw, heard differently? Have you noticed any changes from the first time you participated in EFP and now?)
8. What effects, if any, do you perceive that EFP has had on ____ (the reason they began EFP) _____?

When we finish the interview (it may be a total of 3 hours when finished) I would like to observe you while you work with your horse. I will not interfere, I will just be there to watch.

Some of these questions may be close to you, and you may feel uncomfortable sharing that part of your story. You are able, at any, time to stop answering a question. You may also choose to share something in less detail, sharing your story but at the same time keeping yourself comfortable. Both of these choices will be honored and respected.

Some of the benefits of this study include the positive feeling of being able to share your insight and experience with someone else. By participating, you may gain more insight into yourself and how working with a horse has influenced your life. As you reflect on your personal experiences, you may find yourself going through a transition of personal growth, as well as a deeper understanding of yourself. This study may help the field of psychology and the field of equine facilitated psychotherapy, by providing insight; thus, helping the fields to have a better understanding of what occurs from the client's point of view.

I want to assure you that your identity will remain anonymous. All information that could identify you (such as the consent forms and the tape used to record the interview) will be locked in a safe for seven years. Once the research is finished, all of this information will be burned, to protect your identity after the even after the research is completed.

Please talk to your parents about this study before you decide whether to participate. I will also speak with your parent(s) to make sure it is all right with them for you to take part in this study. If your parent(s) say that you can be in the study, you can still decide not to participate. If you and your parent(s) decide that you will participate, and you later change your mind and decide not to, your decision will be honored and respected.

If you have any questions about the study, at any time, you may ask them and I will try to answer them for you. If you have questions that you think of later, you may call me at: 719.235.2302.

The decision to take part in this study is up to you. You do not have to be in the study, and no one will be mad at you if you do not want to do this. If you want to be in the study, you can say yes. If you say yes, but change your mind later, you can stop at any time you want.

Please mark one of the choices below to tell me what you would like to do:

- No, I do not want to be in this study
- Yes, I want to be in this study

Write your name here: _____ Date:

IRB Approval Number: 09-021

IRB Expiration Date: 1.19.11

Appendix G: Semi-Structured Interview

Interview Questions:

1. What led the client to EFP?
(Why did you start EFP?)
2. How does the client describe EFP?
(Could you please describe EFP to me in your own words?)
3. What did/does the client experience during the EFP process?
(What did you experience when you first started the EFP Process? What do you experience now?)
4. How did/does the client interpret their relationship with their horse?
(Have you and your horse built a relationship? Would you please tell me about that relationship? What is it like?)
5. What aspects of EFP most influenced the client?
(What areas of EFP would you say most influenced you? What areas of EFP will you remember?)
6. What aspects of EFP did the client least like?
(Were there any parts of EFP that you did not like? Would you please tell me about those?)
7. What changes does the client perceive to have occurred during EFP?
(Did you notice any changes during EFP, anything you felt, thought, and saw, heard differently? Have you noticed any

changes from the first time you participated in EFP and now?)

8. What effects, if any, do you perceive that EFP has had on _____ (the reason they began EFP) _____?

The end goal of this study is to gain insight into the experiences and perceptions of a client undergoing EFP.