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Women's experiences of Equine Assisted Psychotherapy

*A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirement
for the degree of Master of Arts in Psychology at
Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand*

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2016

Abstract

Equine assisted psychotherapy has received little research attention within psychology. This research explores the way women experience this modality. Working alongside Renee, an EAP practitioner, from HorsePower Aotearoa and three of her clients I undertook a photovoice project. Renee participated in both the planning aspects and as a key participant, informing the research through her knowledge of EAP in practice. Drawing on photovoice techniques to gather data with hard to reach groups the information was gathered from participants' images and their photo elicitation interviews. This allowed the narratives of the women's experiences to be communicated on more than one level. The narratives demonstrated the processes of EAP in action as well as revealing some of the fundamental attributes that make this therapy efficacious. The analysis showed that the interrelationships between the therapist, the horses, the space, the place and the client create a complex ecology. What was evidenced was that for meaningful change to be made, the clients need to feel safe to make those changes. EAP seems to provide a space and place that enables this. The implications of this are the spreading awareness of EAP as an effective modality especially for clients with previous difficulties engaging with therapy.

Acknowledgements

To my participants, thank you for engaging with my research. Thank you for sharing your time and experiences with me.

Renee and HorsePower Aotearoa, thank you for making this possible. It has been an honour working with you. Thanks to the horses of Renee's practice that she wanted to honour, Foggy, Lily, Pepper, Clipper and Shannon and all the unnamed others.

And to Dr. Leigh Coombes, I have so much gratitude. Thank you for taking on this project with me. You were patient when I needed patience and pushed me when I needed pushing. We're finally at the end!

Thanks to Amberli, Autumn and Toffee for letting me experience EAP. I couldn't have done it without that insider knowledge.

Thanks to the unwavering support of my husband Ryan - I know it's been a long road. To my daughter Harper, who's birth changed the way I saw the world. Thanks to all the friends and family who have believed in me, offered their words of encouragement and helped look after Harper.

And lastly thanks to all the horses in my life that have helped guide me down this path, Blaze, Charlie, Clover, who was my bright spot in the darkness, Jock, Smurf, and finally Fox.

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