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Women's experiences of Equine Assisted Psychotherapy

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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.

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Introduction

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy is a relatively new and little known therapy. It combines the psychotherapeutic knowledge of a practitioner with the instinctual, reactionary nature of a horse to produce a therapy that is both solution focused and experiential. Women in particular seem to be drawn to this field of therapy both as clients and as practitioners.

In this introduction, I outline how I found myself curious about the relationship between women and Equine Assisted Psychotherapy (EAP) and the justifications for this research.

Locating myself

In the context of this project, my own experience with horses has been a starting point to this research. I have always been one of the horsaii - a person who is born loving horses, a person who not out of desire, but out of necessity does whatever possible to be around them. A horseless life for one of the horsaii is not a complete life. Scratches of strangers' horses over a fence eases the ache but does not fill the hole. Having a horse in one's life, not just to ride, but to brush and to smell and to breathe with lends a total sense of completion. As a depressed teenager, my horse was my one bright spot. Riding her I would think "how could I have ever thought about killing myself, this is too wonderful to give up". Now as an adult, I feel healed but I carry the physical and emotional scars from that time. A time when a horse saved my life.

It is my personal experiences that have taken me away from more traditional methods of therapy. My own personal cultural, historical and social narratives have created this avenue for inquiry. At times, I feel out of my depth. The resources seem to be scarce, articles that cover these subjects and people with knowledge about them are few. Even just starting this research was a challenge. Finding a supervisor who thought they could tackle this topic with me was a gift. This is where my passion lies and I was lucky enough to have been given the chance to work with it.

The shape of my research has, therefore, been guided by the resources I have access to. There is a disparity between what occurs on the subject of women and horses in popular culture and in formal psychological literature. In recent years, there has been an increase in articles on the subject published in peer reviewed journals but even so, they are scarce. The research that has been completed, is for the most part, not published. I have found numerous theses on a variety of aspects within the women/girls and horses sphere but these don't translate into published articles. So, the research that is done either isn't being submitted for lack of a place or not deemed good enough research to meet publishing criteria, remaining of the margins of the academy. 'Anthrozoos' and 'Society and Animals' from where many of my articles come, have given authors a place for publication in the area. Yet these journals are only two of many, many hundreds and are not widely cited (impact factor's of 0.725 and 0.704 respectively). This scarcity of options shows that there still seems to be trouble "finding a home" (Beck, 2006, p.40) for these types of studies. It's a blank space in the formal literature. However, there is no shortage of books that cover the topic. This led me to ask, what does it mean when there is little to no research published on a subject? Is the subject seen as not worthy of exploration? Is the research being done flawed? Is it because it's part of women's stuff and that in itself is still a partly cloaked subject. The books and unpublished theses suggest to me that there is something important going on here.

One could argue that women's studies is still a relatively new field, that this one niche of experience isn't really at the top of the priority list (Birke, 2002). Yet there remains the continuing phenomenon of the bond between women/girls and their horses (Lambarth, 2011). While research suggests that over the last three decades there are more women participating in horse related activities than men, resulting in what has been reported in the literature as the feminisation of horse riding, the stereotype that "women love horses while men love riding" (Adelman & Knijnik, 2013, p.6) remains.

I feel that part of this problem is that so much about the interactions between women and horses, both within the EAP setting and outside is unsayable. There

are just no words; there are few representations of women's relationships with horses that provide a framework from which to speak. For psychology, originating from phallogocentric thinking and the emphasis on the mind and therefore voice and language as a way of expressing what is happening in the mind, a focus has largely been on what is sayable. It has created a language that is dominated by a particular way of quantifying the world. It is a language by which women have limited ways of conveying their lived experiences (Adams, 2010; Makaroff, 2013). The experiences of the relationships between women and horses are often experiences of the body, of something outside traditional narratives and it seems as if it is something outside that which can even be explained with words. Therefore, there would be no reason to explore this phenomena. However, I would argue that this *something* with women and horses is a real *something*.

Having both experience as a woman who loves horses and experience as a client of EAP, I have experienced this *something* that is unsayable, and feel it deserves my attention. Telling my story and the story of other women who have experienced EAP may start a dialogue about that experience and allow a glimpse into the therapeutic benefits of EAP. Transcribing my experiences into words was challenging. I didn't feel like I had the capability to capture the essence of what happened. Nevertheless, I have given it my best attempt.

It's like magic - my experience with EAP.

On starting my journey into this research process, I was lucky enough to be able to experience EAP free of charge thanks to a practitioner who generously gave me their time and knowledge. Magic is a word that I don't feel totally comfortable using in the context of writing my thesis, however, I have no other word to describe the experience of EAP. The horses, what *they* know and what *they* do, felt like magic. To have horses come cantering up from the bottom paddock which is out of sight of the paddock that we work in at 10.30am on the dot because that is when the therapist told them I would be here is magic. To ask something of the horses and then have them go ahead and do exactly that

with no other input from me is magic. To have them refuse to move one inch, then follow at my heels because I've asked them if they would like to work with me today, is magic. I was constantly shaking my head in wonder at the experiences I had with the horses. How was this happening? In my logical brain, I still can't make sense of it. Whilst the metaphors that could be used from the same actions of a horse will differ between people, the specificity of what the horses did with me is unexplainable. Was it body language that translated my intent in a way that was too subtle for me to notice I was doing it? What kind of awareness must a horse have to be able to behave in this manner? I tell myself that I'm reading too much into the situation but there is the undeniable feeling of specialness that I felt in all my sessions.

Having my first experience with EAP solidified the theoretical aspects that I had been reading about. I was able to see and understand how the metaphors were created through the exercises and the role of the practitioner in guiding me through them. I felt the release at just being there, with the horses and trees and the grass and the wind. I was able to see all the things that I had written about in action and able to see what needed more emphasis. For example, there is scant literature on the interrelations between the horse, the client and the therapist outside the realm of the therapeutic relationship. The actual relationship with the horse is vital, it's not a tool that you use to do the therapy with, the horse is an active member of the group and forging that relationship is part of the effectiveness of this therapy. Though the therapist seems to be in the background, so much so that I often forgot the important role they play, the relationship with the horses is interwoven with the relationship with the therapist. The therapist helps to translate the wordless experiences of the exercises, guiding the client towards solutions.

Though I had experienced the healing power of a horse, I hadn't had any experience in a formal context. This allowed me to see why many people who experience EAP describe it as spiritual in some way. Spirituality becomes a place from which to articulate some of the events of EAP - a way to make sense of something that feels a bit unexplainable and a bit magic. It utilises the

perceptions of the animal as spiritual in some way to enable the sense making process (Silcox, Castillo, & Reed, 2014).

As I had experienced a different modality of therapy not long before my experience with EAP, I was able to contrast them quite easily. There were a number of parallels between what was talked about in my more conventional therapy session and what happened in my EAP session. The same things were brought up, although in very different ways. In both instances, I came with problems relating to stress. Using my perfectionism as an example, the talk therapy eventually got to that point but it felt like it took a long time and it just didn't have the same impact. EAP laid it right out in front of me. The exercise was to build a box and then move the horse into the box. The first time, Autumn just walked through the box so unprompted I tried again. This time she stayed and let me pat her briefly before walking off again. When the practitioner asked me how I felt about the exercise, I felt uncomfortable with the results because I hadn't been able to get Autumn to stay in the box, I had failed. I hadn't done the exercise right.

I felt, comparing the two, that the EAP sessions had been more beneficial for me. It was enjoyable. I didn't like the other therapy, possibly the modality, possibly the therapist but after two sessions, I didn't go back. I could do EAP forever. EAP was quicker, it got right to the 'meat' as it were of the problem quite early. It also gave me, not quite a solution to the problem, but a clear indication of what I could change to help deal with the stress, and this solution came from me. This was an indication of the usefulness of the problem solving part of EAP. I did the exercise, the horse did things and the therapist pointed out things the horse was doing that I was able to relate to my issues. On another day, whilst I was busily trying to get an exercise done, Autumn kept stopping at the water trough for a drink and stopping for food. I was completely oblivious to this, just trying to get on with the task at hand. The practitioner brought this to my attention and asked what it might mean. The answer was pretty obvious. Talk therapy would surely have applied the same solution but because the horse did

it and I had to interpret it, it was my idea, my solution rather than being told maybe you could take a few more breaks.

Justification for the Study

Just by undertaking a literature search for Equine Assisted Psychotherapy highlights the need for more research. Whilst it is a subject that seems to have been garnering more interest in the last few years, published research and therefore the understanding of how and why this therapy works are not being widely disseminated. This has an effect on the perceived legitimacy of the therapy that filters down to those willing to refer people to EAP practitioners, those that make funding decisions (Internal Affairs NZ, n.d.) and ultimately those that choose to participate in the therapy. For those that practice EAP, there is no doubt about the efficacy of this therapy.

There are many people passionate about this field of therapy but the difficulty comes in being able to pursue this passion whilst still making a living. EAP is still a relatively unknown form of therapy, especially here in New Zealand. There are only a handful of practices in New Zealand that offer it and even fewer that offer it exclusively. Networking and research becomes crucial to expanding the general awareness not only of its efficacy, but of its existence.

EAP fills a void in the current array of therapies available. There is a subgroup of clients that traditional therapies don't seem to work for. Therapists are often faced with clients that don't turn up for sessions (Defife, Conklin & Smith, 2010), clients that don't rebook, clients that are resistant to the work the therapist is trying to do and clients that are wary and untrusting. It seems, therefore, that there is a need that these clients have that is not being met. They are not able to voice their dissatisfaction as they may not even know what is missing. They may articulate things like, they didn't like the therapist, the sessions were too far away, or too difficult to get to, but they aren't able to tell you how to fix it. The only way they have of expressing their dissatisfaction is through their behaviour. EAP practitioners report they work with clients that never miss sessions, clients

that look forward to their next session, and clients that are able to engage with this therapy in a way that they can't with traditional therapies. EAP obviously has something about it that allows the client to connect and therefore make changes. Connection matters.

Through reading the literature and experiencing EAP myself, there were a number of factors that set EAP apart from other therapies. Some therapies use one or another of these things such as wilderness therapy and the use of nature, an experiential modality or the benefits of animal assisted interventions but EAP is unique in that it uses all these things in conjunction. The major point of difference is the incorporation of a horse, which has attributes unique to companion animals such as its size, reactivity and sensitivity. The use of the horse then limits the setting of the therapy. By necessity, the therapy is no longer held in an office room. The setting becomes a barn, an arena or a paddock, often in a rural area. The healing power of touch is able to be utilised without violating any code of conduct or ethics. The bond people feel with the horses is noteworthy in that as well as a traditional therapeutic relationship being formed, often some kind of spiritual connection is also felt. This research explores the connections, horse, nature, therapist to understand the experiences of EAP that culminate in personal change.

Facilitated versus Assisted

In Equine Therapy there is an important difference between facilitating therapy and assisting therapy. There are many examples of assistance animals, guide dogs, pets visiting hospitals and rest homes, the horses used at facilities such as the Riding for the Disabled. When I first started this exploration of equine therapy, I believed that the horses assisted with the therapy. They were a tool or an aid that helped the therapist with the therapy. A lot of the reading incorporated the phrase equine assisted psychotherapy, though now and then I would encounter equine facilitated therapy. Initially I ignored this difference thinking it meant similar things in terms of this type of therapy. Yet after more in-depth reading, I realised that the horses' role was more than a tool or an aid and

began to wonder at the difference. The definition of assisted is to give support or aid. Yes, horses do this in therapy sessions, so this is not a wrong usage. However, horses also facilitate the therapy. They create it, help bring it about. These are fundamentally different things in this context. One is a passive aid, the other an active instrument in the therapy. To understand any kind of equine psychotherapy, the awareness that the horse facilitates the therapy rather than just being a tool is fundamental. There may be times, in certain situations that the horse falls into more of an assistance role, however this does not diminish the capability that a horse can facilitate the therapy. To propose that a horse can only assist with therapy shuts out whole avenues of experience and awareness.

The experience that I have with equine psychotherapy confirms these ideas for me as well as the views of the practitioners I have spoken to. At first, I thought I should change the phrase I used to equine facilitated psychotherapy. However, the phrase equine assisted psychotherapy is most commonly used and is also used by the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA, 2010), although their understanding of assisted incorporates the horses ability to facilitate therapy. Therefore, I will continue to use EAP with the full depth of meaning associated with facilitated therapy.

Chapter One

Literature Review

Companion animals

Despite a large body of interdisciplinary research that supports the impact of human-animal companionship on quality of life outcomes (Fine, 2006), psychological research has not attended to the potential of human-animal relationships on healing. The historical interdependence between humans and animals posit animals as ubiquitous to our lives – they “entertain us, are represented in various forms of art, are part of our collective legends and histories, and they have been used as emblems and symbols of human attributes” (Amiot & Bastian, 2015, p.6). For example, pet ownership as a social practice of the human-animal bond is strongly attributed to overall wellbeing, medical, social, behavioural and psychological. It therefore makes sense that using animals within a therapeutic modality may have the potential for those who may not benefit from traditional forms of therapy. Animal assisted therapy developed formally in the 1960s, with the recognition that the animal is the motivation to enhance treatment provided by the therapist. According to Silcox, Castillo and Reed (2014), animal assisted therapy has been successful for hard to reach clients by increasing trust and facilitating feelings of safety in a therapeutic relationship. However not all animal assisted activities have a specific treatment goal, for example, animal visits to rest-homes may provide residents with relational interactions where it’s “most simplistic, yet powerful, benefit is the ability of the animal to provide touch and give affection” (Silcox et al., 2014, p.31).

Research into the bonds humans have with companion animals such as dogs and cats is well established. The huge percentage of people who include a pet in their family unit show that pet ownership is intertwined with human society,

culture and psychology (Herzog, 2007). Studying this bond therefore gives insights into human nature.

It is unclear exactly how pets improve people's lives but there are numerous studies showing the benefits across a spectrum of areas. There are psychosocial areas such as increased companionship, social buffers for those with inadequate support, providing non-judgemental relationships, improving psychological wellbeing, reduced stress, anxiety, and depression, improved self-esteem and self-worth as well as physiological areas such as lowered blood pressure, better recovery rates after heart events, and surgery (Chalmers & Dell, 2015; Owen, 2008; Peacock, Chur-Hansen, & Winefeild, 2012; Risley-Curtis, Rogge & Kawam, 2009; Sable, 2013; Shiloh, Sorek & Terkel, 2003). The benefits of this bond are also not asymmetrical. The interaction with humans gives benefits to companion animals, not only physical benefits such as regular food and healthcare but also social and emotional benefits (Chalmers & Dell, 2015).

A theme from Johnson's (2013) study was one of 'healing and transformation'. This was unexpected but carried great weight with the participants. It was described as being restorative, sustaining and motivating. These were the participants own animals, none trained in any form of therapy and included dogs, cats and horses. This was also found in another study by Maharaja & Haney (2014) which looked at dogs as companion animals. They also found that many of the participants described the relationships with their dogs as having particular qualities that relationships with people don't have. The dogs were described as always being authentic with their feelings, they were never critical and provided unconditional positive regard. The authors suggest that the dogs provide something unique to their owners' lives.

These aspects of companion animals had led to the introduction of animals into therapy. Animal assisted therapy is used in a variety of ways including again the psychosocial aspects such as visiting rest-homes and helping children to read aloud.

A reduction of anxiety often occurs when the client/patient is interacting within the presence of the therapy animal. Clinicians are more easily able to make judgements as they are given a clearer view into the patient's ordinary demeanour, rather than their presentation in a stressful environment. Without the anxiety, rapport is more easily built and the time can be used more effectively and the client may be more willing to share personal information (Mills & Hall, 2014; Risley-Curtis, Rogge, & Kawam, 2013; Shiloh, Sorek & Terkel, 2003).

There are two hypotheses about the mechanisms underlying this. The attentional shift hypothesis and attachment theory. The attentional shift hypothesis is a cognitive theory that states that therapy animals divert the focus away from the anxiety inducing stimulus which therefore helps to alleviate the anxiety. There is evidence that supports distraction as being useful in reducing state anxiety. Pets are ideally suited for the distraction as they have number of appealing characteristics as well as being interactive and unpredictable (Brickel, 1982; Shiloh et al., 2003).

A focus for much of the companion animal research is Bowlby's theories of attachment. Some research has shown it is the attachment to the animal rather than the ownership that influences the benefits. Bowlby created his theories to explain attachment between humans however it is suggested that any relationship can be defined as an attachment relationship if the purpose of that relationship achieves an outcome such as psychological safety (Peacock, Chur-Hansen, & Winefeild, 2012; Sable, 2013). The bonds between humans and animals possess attributes of attachment as defined by Bowlby (Johnson, 2013; Sable, 2013). The companion animal facilitates an attachment that provides feelings of security, wellbeing and closeness (Mills & Hall, 2014). Neuroscience is also playing a part in the understanding of attachment between humans and animals. When a person is interacting with a dog, the hormone oxytocin is released. Oxytocin induces feelings of pleasure and reduces the production of stress hormones such as cortisol (Sable, 2013). Oxytocin is also released by the dog showing the reciprocal nature of the attachment.

It is acknowledged that the need for positive attachments continues throughout a person's life. Having reliable, responsive relationships allows feelings of safety and connection. Whilst an animal may not be able to provide the full spectrum of a secure attachment with another person, animals can facilitate several important aspects of it (Sable, 2013). For people who are without good attachments to other people, the relationship with animals becomes especially significant as the human-animal relationship can take the place of the human-human relationship and provide some of the emotional closeness and security that they may feel is lacking. Peacock, Chur-Hansen, and Winefeild, (2012) suggest that attachment is an important factor in explaining the relationship between the physical and psychological benefits and those interacting with the animals. What the relationship means to the person will be more important than the ownership of an animal.

For some clients with little experience of positive attachments and low self-esteem, the relationship with a therapist may feel hard. It may be difficult to accept the positive regard and unconditional nature of the relationship. Due to past relationships with people, it may feel as if disclosure would jeopardise acceptance. The ability to accept positive regard from an animal may feel easier as there is not as much history within the human-animal relationship as there is within the human-human relationships. Developing relationship security with the animal first within the therapeutic setting, creates a bridge for the therapist to follow (Burgon, 2003; Chardonnens, 2011; Johnson, 2013). Sable (2010) also suggests that the adult attachment patterns become useful in therapy as the therapist becomes a secure base for the exploration of new ways of behaving and thinking.

Animal assisted interventions create a social ecology or environment within the therapy space. This comes about through the interrelations between the animal, the client, the practitioner and the space in which the therapy is performed. Adams et al. (2015) found in their study with First Nations people in Canada that the mutual interactions of the humans, animals and the environment, contributed to the wellbeing of the participants. For clients that are outside of or

are not well integrated into the ecology of their society this enables them to experience and become part of an ecology (Chalmers and Dell, 2015).

Several studies, Shiloh et al. (2003) and Holmes et al. (2012) have researched the difference between inanimate models and living creatures and the effect on anxiety. Shiloh et al. (2003) undertook laboratory testing, measuring the differences on anxiety reduction with a fluffy rabbit, a tortoise and a toy of each species. The anxiety reduction was increased in the conditions with the living animals and it did not matter whether it was a fluffy animal or a tortoise with a hard shell. Therefore there is some quality about the living things that had an effect on anxiety. The study that Holmes et al. (2012) conducted used a model horse as a control as part of an EAP program. They also found consistent results with the participants reducing trait anxiety on anxiety measures. Shiloh et al. (2003) theorised that it was the feelings of positivity, relaxation and comfort and the reduction of stress, pain and anxiety that can account for the findings.

Such positive findings may be linked to the theory of biophilia, a connection with nature and other living organisms that is considered a fundamental human need. Companion animals may help to fulfil this need, as they are a connection to the natural world. (Chalmers & Dell, 2015). The environment and ecology in which the interactions take place are often not factored into research in the human-animal bond area. An example is dog ownership. The dog requires exercise, which leads the owner outdoors, into the garden, into the park, the beach. There are studies that show the benefits of contact with the natural world on psychological wellbeing. The dog requiring exercise necessitates in most cases, the human exercising. There are also numerous studies showing the benefits of exercise in physiological and psychological areas. The areas in which the dog is exercised will often lead to contact with other dog owners, expanding the social network of the person. These ecological variables are intertwined within the human-animal bond (Chalmers & Dell, 2015).

Interest in the benefits of human-animal interactions has more recently seen a shift through technological advancements. Developed from animal assisted

therapy with the purpose of finding innovative ways to form connections, the use of social robots that mimic the human-animal relationship has opened new potentials in the area of dementia care (Mordoch, Osterreicher, Guse, Roger, & Thompson, 2013). In New Zealand, research on Paro, designed to function as a pet, has been shown to have both physical and psychological health benefits (Robinson, Broadbent & MacDonald, 2015). Technological advancements based on the benefits of animal assisted therapy suggest that human-animal relations are a domain of human life that merits a response in psychological research and practice. This research therefore, aims to consider EAP as a potential site for positive psychological outcomes.

Equine Assisted Psychotherapy

For centuries, the horse has been part of human existence, and permeates diverse social and cultural contexts. They have helped shape history and played an integral part in our technological development. In many developing countries, the horse remains a necessary form of transportation (Burn, Dennison & Whay, 2010). However, in the western world, the horse has taken on a new role. Whilst horses continue to be used as beasts of burden by some members of the hunting and farming communities, the majority are a source of pleasure or entertainment. For a large number of horse owners, horses have taken the role alongside cats and dogs as that of a companion animal. Like the bond that owners of cats and dogs feel with their animals, owners of horses report similar feelings of connectedness. Likewise, the benefits of companion animal ownership can be transferred to the horse. An increasing body of research (Chalmers & Dell, 2015; Owen, 2008; Peacock, Chur-Hansen, & Winefeild, 2012; Risley-Curtis, Rogge & Kawam, 2009; Sable, 2012; Shiloh, Sorek & Terkel, 2003) has shown that having a companion animal can increase both psychological and physical wellbeing. It is from the basis of improving psychological wellbeing that EAP, as we currently know it, has come about.

As the title of Frewin and Gardiner's (2005) article 'New age or old sage?' highlights, the awareness of the positive influence of horses has been long

known. The history of horses being used to help with mental wellbeing go back several thousand years. The ancient Greeks used horses for helping people with “incurable or untreatable illnesses” with the belief that it would elevate their mood (Bizub, Joy & Davidson, 2003, p.378). In the late 1700s, there is documentation of German doctors advising the use of horse riding as a treatment for “hypochondria and hysteria related to mental illness” (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005, p.7; Klontz, Bivens, Leinart & Klontz, 2007). It has been suggested that EAP as we know it evolved in the 1970s from the use of experiential therapy based on ‘therapeutic action’ (Quiroz-Rothe, Vega, Torres, Soler, & Pazoz, 2005; Zugich, Klontz & Leinart, 2002).

Although the current form of EAP is relatively new, it is growing in popularity. EAP can be defined as “a psychotherapeutic program or session that includes the use of a horse as part of the therapeutic team” (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005, p. 6). It is being used to improve psychological outcomes in a variety of situations such as with people with histories of trauma and abuse, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, addiction and substance abuse problems, learning difficulties and juvenile delinquency (Bachi, Terkel & Teichman, 2011; Kakacek, 2007; Mallow, Mattel, & Broas, 2011; Porter-Wenzlaff, 2007; Schultz, Remick-Barlow & Robbins, 2007). These benefits can lead to the reduction of psychological distress and symptoms and improve the quality of life for the participant.

The horse itself is vital to many of the underlying functions of EAP. Entering into this kind of therapy is entering a therapeutic relationship with not only the people who are involved but also the horse. Studies have highlighted a good therapeutic relationship as involving mutual liking, respect, rapport, trust, warmth, acceptance and collaboration. The therapeutic alliance is understood as one of the more effective factors in client change and outcomes (Bizub et al., 2003; Yorke et al., 2008). In many therapeutic programs, the same horse/s are worked with over the course of the therapy and creating a bond with that animal is an important part of the process (Burgon et al., 2003). The experience of clients and their descriptions of their relationships with the horses fit many of the fundamentals of the therapeutic alliance (Yorke, et al., 2008). A relationship with

a horse is completely non-judgmental and accepting, a key feature of a good therapeutic relationship (Bizub, et al., 2003). As well as the therapy that is actively done on and around a horse, the horse influences and teaches with its presence (Burgon et al., 2003; Kakecek, 2007; Lentini & Knox, 2009). The bodily functions of a horse can also stir up issues for a participant but can also induce laughter and play both of which aid the healing process (Zugich et al., 2002).

As a prey animal, horses are primarily concerned for their safety. Their biological makeup is of constant awareness of the world to monitor for threats. Their evolutionary history is of being hunted. Being a prey animal gives certain attributes to a species. Horses have the largest eyes of any land mammal and have a panoramic view of the world with one eye on each side of the head. They have a flexible neck that allows them to turn their head and vibrissae, small whiskers that are connected to nerves, around their muzzle and eyes that allow the horse to feel sensations with incredible sensitivity. These counteract the few blind spots they have. The horse also has excellent hearing with highly mobile ears that are able to turn to locate the source of a sound. Their brain processes sensory information from each side independently allowing a large scope of awareness (Porter-Wenzlaff, 2007). Horses are also extremely sensitive to touch and their hooves are able to pick up vibrations in the ground. Horses are highly social creatures that live in herds that provide safety and companionship. As Porter-Wenzlaff (2007) says, “[t]heir existence depends on constant, collaborative vigilance”. Their social interactions can be quite complex with one horse often taking on the role of the leader. Horses are adept at reading body language, breathing patterns, vocalisations and smells. Tail, ear and body positions, as well as other sensory information from the minute to the dramatic, form a complex language without words. They are extremely adept at picking up disturbances or distress between herd members, which has been a factor in their continuing survival. The combination of the horses’ sensitivity and social and body language skills are how humans are able to communicate with horses and likely one of the ways in which a horse “knows” things. Everyone knows someone with a story about a horse knowing something, whether it was

them being a novice rider and the horse has taken advantage of that or they were vulnerable in a physical or emotional way and the horse has made them feel safe and comforted.

One of the things most commonly noticed about horses is their large size. This can both elicit fear and feelings of respect and awe (Schultz et al., 2005). It can also highlight behaviours in the client such as avoidance, poor awareness of personal safety, and problems with interpersonal boundaries. These feelings can be used to promote self-awareness in the client (Zugich et al., 2002). Horses can weigh in excess of 500 kilograms, yet can be guided by a person weighing less than a fifth of that. Learning this ability is one of the factors in therapeutic benefit. This paradoxical relationship allows exploration of matters surrounding control, power and vulnerability (Lentini & Knox, 2009). Positive qualities often associated with horses are those of power and of nobility. Creating a relationship with an animal that has these attributes can instil feelings of personal power and self-worth (Bachi et al., 2012).

By watching a group of horses interact, a client can gain insight into how social relationships work and translate that to personal issues. As a herd animal, horses in a similar way to dogs, have expanded their herds to include humans (Bachi et al., 2012). This allows bonds to be formed between the two species. The key aspect is to take on the role of the leader. This is both safer for the client and puts the horse in a position to be able to trust the human. The teaching opportunities that come from this are also great, permitting a client to learn leadership qualities, self-control, positive communication and relationships as well as showing the client that they have some control over their situation (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005). All these attributes create the makings of an excellent therapist. Their similarities in social structures and instinctual reactions create behaviours within a therapy session that a client is able to relate to (Shultz et al., 2005).

There are certain clients that may identify with the horse as a prey animal in a more literal sense. Many women and victims of abuse feel that they are like a

prey animal and have had to develop the attributes a horse uses to keep itself safe such as the constant vigilance. Many women also feel a connection with a horse as something that has been dominated (Kohanov, 2001). Being a prey animal, a horse is extremely sensitive to feelings of threat or inconsistencies in behaviour. They are quick to respond with the flight mechanism though when pushed some horses may fight. This fear can be triggered by something that we would consider insignificant or by a person who approaches in a manner that the horse does not feel safe with. It may be that they are moving aggressively or approaching too fast. This reactivity provides immediate feedback to the client as well as creating many metaphors for what the client may be experiencing.

One of the pivotal elements of a horse's usefulness in therapy comes from their non-judgmental nature. Horses do not care what you look like, what problems you are experiencing or where you've come from (Lentini & Knox, 2009). One woman in a study by Meinersmann, Bradberry and Roberts (2008) said, "[t]hey don't care how fat you are, what you look like, how much you cry. They don't care. They are open to you constantly." This feeling of unconditional acceptance is one of the most important features of a therapeutic relationship and horses have the ability to do this by just being what they are. Horses will often actively seek out interactions with people, which helps to improve people feelings of self-worth and self-acceptance (Brandt, 2004; Bachi et al., 2012)

Other aspects that contribute to therapy include the use of touch. The horses have the ability to touch and display behaviours and emotions that a therapist often can't. Animals often elicit feelings of happiness and trigger laughter at their behaviour (Bachi, et al., 2012). Bodily functions, visible genitals, sweat, dirt and hair can stir up issues for some participants as well as laughter. Yet the horse allows interaction with these aspects in a non-threatening manner (Zugich, et al., 2002; Lentini & Knox, 2009). They can help overcome the objections of going to therapy as for many clients it is very different to anything they have experienced before (Bachi, et al., 2012).

Many therapists consider touch as critical to human development (Durana, 1998; Field, 2010; McCormick & McCormick, 1997). The importance of touch as a factor in healing, and physical and emotional wellbeing has empirical support. Within the therapeutic relationship, touch can confer a number of other benefits. Touch provides support, comfort and acceptance to the client and can create increased levels of trust within the therapist-client relationship. As a facilitator of change within therapy (Durana, 1998), touch can allow the client to disclose more and feel on a deeper level (Durana, 1998). The bond that is formed through touch can be powerful and can convey emotions in a reciprocal manner (Rouseeou & Blackburn, 2008). However in most Western therapies, touch is avoided (Bonitz, 2008; Yorke, et al., 2008).

The controversial role of touch in psychotherapy bring about ethical issues. The thought of touch and therapy brings to mind exploitation and harm to clients, inappropriate sexual contact, triggering of traumatic memories and the imposition of power relationships (Bonitz, 2008; Yorke et al., 2008). Durana (1998) states, "touch is complex; and its appropriate and non-detrimental use requires self-knowledge, clinical sensitivity, and skill" (p.278). The horse is unique in this situation as it is outside these narratives of touch in a psychotherapeutic context whilst still being able to provide the benefits. In a way that is both naive and knowledgeable, the horse is able to navigate the grey area around touch.

It is worth noting that though the horse can cross these boundaries, the EAP practitioner is bound by the rules of convention and ethics. For safety reasons the practitioner may be required to touch the clients or horse however the touch isn't used in a healing or therapeutic context. One salient aspect of the therapy is the 'safe' or 'healing touch' of the physical contact with the horse (Bizub et al., 2003). Participants report the importance of touch while riding, and interacting with the horses, suggesting the contact makes them feel safe and gives them a sense of intimacy. The touch is appropriate (Lentini & Knox, 2009) in the context of a horse-human relationship and is unavoidable. The active use of touch within a therapeutic context can help to make up for the lack of positive touching

or to counter experiences with negative touching (Lentini & Knox, 2009; McCormick & McCormick, 1997).

The importance of a touch that can be interpreted as comforting yet non-threatening as may be perceived if it came from another person is clear in cases of trauma such as physical or sexual violence. For example, in their research with adolescents who have experienced violence, Bachi et al., (2012) found that experiencing physical contact with the horses helped their ability to accept touch including setting safe boundaries between touch and emotional responses (Bachi, et al., 2012; Durana, 1998). It is active touching rather than being touched. To be perceived as therapeutic, the client must be in control of the contact. This allows the client to decide how, where and why they are touching the horse. The touch involved in the care of a horse can also be instrumental in teaching clients empathy and how to care for themselves and others.

Most people who own a companion animal will be able to tell of the bond they feel with their animal and it is no different for horse owners. It is reported that horse owners state that the interaction with their horse brings them close together (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005). For riders suffering a trauma, the bond with their horse was accredited to be a huge positive influence on their physical and emotional healing (Yorke, et al., 2008). Touch and mutual exchanges of physical affection are significant in creating a relationship of intimacy with the horse, and it is this difference that sets EAP apart from other therapies (Yorke et al., 2008).

Communication with a horse is intimate and reciprocal. Touch, breath and gesture are shared and exchanged, allowing a feeling of connection (Meinersmann, et al., 2008). This intimate connection is experienced through the body and Birke and Brandt (2009) assert that this can also bring about change in the body. Feelings of groundedness and congruence, where internal feelings and external behaviour match become embodied.

The highly sensitive nature of the horse and the awareness of its surroundings provide feedback of the client's emotions. Horses in therapy are often called mirrors, as they are able to reflect back what our body is telling them (Porter-Wenzlaff, 2007). In this way, mirroring means the client has to find congruence between internal emotions and feelings and the affect that is displayed to the world to work with a horse effectively. A person must be an authentic being (Porter-Wenzlaff, 2007). A horse can pick up on a person's internal emotions through subtle cues that another person may miss and reflect it back in a physical display of communication (Bachi et al., 2012). For a horse, this knowledge of another being's embodiment is about safety. As humans, we are all adept at hiding our true emotions. Being around a horse and doing this creates negative feedback for the horse. This behaviour is confusing to the senses of a horse and by not fully communicating we can't be relied upon to contribute to their safety. If an emotion such as fear or anxiety is being felt, the horses in that location have to be aware of this to reduce the threat to themselves. For many people, hiding emotions is something they have been taught to do often through negative social sanctions. The disconnect between the ability to show what they're feeling and not being able to means they may not even be aware of what emotions they are feeling. This creates a dissonance between behaviour and affect and what the client is actually feeling. The horse however, does know, no matter how well it is disguised (Lentini & Knox, 2009).

A horse is open and honest with its communication. The horse has no duplicity in its nature. Working with horses encourages openness and honesty in the communication of underlying feelings. As the horse mirrors the client's physical and emotional states, it allows the client to achieve a self-awareness of their feelings and helps them to "practice congruence between their feelings and behaviours" (Klontz, et al., 2007, p.259). There must also be a certain calmness and confidence when working with a horse. They look to you as part of their herd. If you approach a horse angry, a horse is likely to withdraw and turn away (Mallow et al., 2011; Kakacek, 2007) and these lessons are valuable in therapy.

For women working with horses, having their feelings acknowledged as present, allows them to create an authentic relationship with the horse. It may often be the first truly authentic relationship they have experienced. Porter-Wenzlaff (2007) suggests that learning this process of congruence and integrity in emotions and behaviours leads to the development of a positive identity, and opens space to develop the capability to recognise and therefore transfer these skills to other relationships in the women's lives.

While there are a number of therapeutic modalities that can be used with horses such as cognitive therapy, play therapy, storytelling and solution focused therapy (Pichot & Coulter, 2007; Quiroz-Rothe et al., 2005) the most common and seemingly most effective type of therapy used with horses is experiential therapy. Experiential therapy is described as “a humanistic-existential approach that uses direct experiences as the primary avenue to change” (Klontz et al., 2007, p.258) or in simpler terms, ‘therapeutic action’. The theory behind experiential therapy is that sometimes just talking is not enough. The aim of experiential therapy is to resolve any unfinished business or issues. The techniques used help clients resolve the unfinished business by re-experiencing significant life events which allows them to work through any conflict (Klontz et al., 2007). This involves integration between the unconscious and conscious mind. Helping the client to make unconscious feelings, thought and behaviours conscious (Hallberg, 2008). The use of the horse can act as a metaphor for a number of things including relationships with significant people, life events including trauma and hidden emotions. Sessions are planned around the ability of the horse to act as a mirror. Individuals are often unaware of the way they act in certain situations and even what they are truly feeling (Schultz et al., 2007). It is the therapist’s role to draw out those metaphors with the horses’ help (Zugich et al., 2002).

EAP is done through the use of a variety of exercises and activities that help to create metaphors. These include choosing a horse, grooming, lunging, riding and games that are combined with experiential techniques such as role-playing, mirroring and role reversal (Klontz et al., 2007). The activities are geared

towards developing specific skills such as assertiveness, problem solving, leadership and ethics or creating situations that will provide relevant metaphors for the clients (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005). Even the simple act of the client choosing a horse from a herd can become a tool that opens up metaphors of a client's image of self and core issues (Quiroz-Rothe et al., 2005) and can be a powerful stimulus to self-discovery (Zugich et al., 2002). The interpretation of a horse's movements and activities can offer opportunities for projection and transference of the client's issues that allow them to be discussed in a non-threatening manner (Klontz et al., 2007). These processes are enabled by the relationships that are built with the horse. Other tasks that are combined with therapy are grooming which introduces safe touch and teaches self-care. Leading a horse through a maze or blindfolded with group support helps overcome fear and mastery of situations. Lunging teaches verbal and non-verbal communication. Through the activities that are done with the horse, the horse is a catalyst which allows clinical issues to come to the fore and discussing the behaviours and emotions that are felt during the course of the activity, clients learn about themselves and resolve their issues (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005; Klontz et al., 2007). In some situations, the horse is able to be a role model for certain behaviour such as interacting positively with other members of a group.

A key aspect of this therapy is the creation of metaphors that relate to the client, their experiences and their problems. This is related to both congruence and embodiment. The horses' responses during a session allow for the creation of metaphors relevant to the client (Kakecek, 2007). Learning about themselves through the actions of the horse (Porter-Wenzlaff, 2007) is often achieved through listening for metaphor, and translates the horse into a unique therapeutic aid. The practitioner focuses on the responses of the client in a way that helps with the construction of metaphors, thus enabling retrieval or acknowledgement of emotional responses (Kakecek, 2007). Metaphor can be used to explain a horse's behaviour, how certain attributes the horse has are like the client, relate lessons learned in therapy to the rest of the client's life, the ability to discuss some of the equipment and processes that surround horses in

analogy to the client's life and experience such as being brushed, led or confined (Kakecek, 2007; Masini, 2010). For example, a client is having a hard time getting a horse to move. The client starts to show signs of frustration, anger or sadness. The practitioner attends to this response, bringing the focus to it by asking something such as "can you relate these feelings to something that is happening in your life?" It creates a link and a comparison between the exercise that the client is doing currently and an issue that they may be facing in their lives. The common characteristics of the exercise and their issues are interpreted by the client in a way that makes the exercise specific to them.

Kakecek, suggests four areas for the practitioner to target: '(1) using metaphors to explain a horse's behaviour (what is the horse running away from?), (2) analogous language to discuss props or tools (what does the halter mean to the horse and what is your halter in life?), (3) clients relating life lessons learned (what does it mean that you all walked to get the horse over the obstacle?), and (4) clients inferring lessons learned in coping (when we work through our obstacles, we succeed)' (2007, p.5). This variety creates a rich tool box from which to create a metaphor that the client is able to relate to their lives in some way thereby enabling awareness and creating solutions which the client can utilise for change.

There are a number of models that provide a structured way of doing EAP across the world. These have been developed slowly over the last few decades and although they rely on similar theoretical basis, the practices can look quite different. In New Zealand, the most common method of EAP is the EAGALA model. From the website "the EAGALA model provides a standard and structure for providing Equine Assisted Psychotherapy and Equine Assisted Learning sessions" (EAGALA, 2010). They have a comprehensive training program that certifies both mental health professionals and equine specialists who work together with the horses as a team. The mental health professional is responsible for the treatment of the clients, attending to the clients' emotional needs, helping with the identification and co-creation of metaphors and facilitating the therapeutic process through the verbal and non-verbal responses

to the horse. The equine specialist looks at the horses' behaviours to provide points that can be used by the mental health professional in the treatment as well as being responsible for the safety of both client and horses. Part of this role includes selecting suitable horses as well as being able to tell if a horse is getting distressed and needs to be removed or needs an extended break (EAGALA, 2010; Kakacek, 2007). EAGALA has a code of ethics with protocols for upholding those standards to ensure they provide best practice (EAGALA, 2010).

The therapy is built around semi-structured activities that enable an experience to learn the ability to solve problems that reflect issues within their own lives. Riding is not part of the EAGALA model nor is it a 'horsemanship' course. Having a blank slate with clients allows them to make their own connections to the situations that they are experiencing (Hallberg, 2008). Because EAGALA is experiential, directions are not given. It is an important note that finishing or completing a task is not as important as the metaphors that are created through the doing of that task (Kakacek, 2007). Directions would minimise the opportunity for the production of metaphors and creative problem solving. The arena becomes a place for the client to explore themselves and their behaviours whilst solving problems they are facing.

Another goal of EAP is to bring the locus of control from external to internal thereby giving the client a sense of power and control over their choices. It is also a holistic therapeutic method, integrating the mind, body and spirit and social relationships. The exercises done in therapy help heal the mind, the riding and other actions work with the physical body, increasing bodily awareness and the connection with the horse is often experienced as something spiritual as well as teaching safe social interacting (Hallberg, 2008). The form that this spiritual interpretation takes depends on the construct of that particular person's beliefs. It is common for a woman to express how connected she feels to her horse in some form of spiritual discourse. They experience a rapport with their animals that somehow goes beyond what they experience in other relationships. Many women report dreams of horses. Other see them as

guides they can access whenever needed or have a sense of connection that lasted even when separated by physical distance (Burgon, 2003; Meinersmann, et al., 2008).

There are a multitude of benefits of EAP that have been documented. There are several studies that have shown clinical improvements in participants of EAP. In a study by Man and Williams (2002), the participants taking part in Equine-Assisted Family Therapy produced significant results. There was an 82% improvement in areas such as mood, conduct and psychotic disorders. Another significant aspect of this study was that years of conventional methods had failed to make improvements to the lives of these people (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005). In a clinical trial of EAP by Klontz et al., (2007), the participants reported fewer psychological symptoms and less psychological distress. They also reported feeling more independent and self-supportive. The improvements made as a result of this study were also stable at a 6 month follow up. Another study by Bizub et al., (2003) with participants with severe mental illnesses, schizophrenia and bi-polar, showed very similar results to Klontz et al., (2007) including the results being stable in a follow up 6 months later.

Other factors reported include mastery of tasks relating to riding or grooming that gives participants self-discipline, a sense of self-efficacy, improves self-esteem and communication. Riding and controlling an animal as large as a horse can give participants a sense of power and achievement. Learning to care for the horse by grooming and feeding can translate to care of self where the participant learns the importance of cleanliness and health (Bizub et al., 2003; Frewin & Gardiner, 2005; Kersten & Thomas, 2000; Quiroz-Rothe et al., 2005; York et al., 2008;). Participants in EAP have shown “clinical improvement in physical, psychomotor and psychological parameters” (Klontz et al., 2007, p. 257).

A comment made frequently is that EAP is able to help where traditional therapy methods have failed or made little impact. One woman cited in Meinersmann et al. (2008) said, “[i]t’s totally more intimate...and it’s more intense and it’s more

focused” (p.41). Another said, “[a]nd it turned out to be a really pretty powerful experience. I’d been in therapy for a while and I had been in therapy before and then had come back because of some crisis that was going on in my life at the time. And I found it to be a faster way of doing therapy (p.41). However, EAP is not suitable for everyone. Firstly, it is essential that the participant understands that the sessions are not a horsemanship program, they are therapy. There are also restrictions to the type of people who qualify as a suitable client of an EAP program. Factors such as allergies, phobias and simply whether the person likes animals are all important considerations in choosing a participant for therapy (Ross, Ross & Mallon, 2006).

Choosing animals for work in therapy is key to a good practice. Not all horses are good at doing therapy and not all of them want to participate and show this in various ways including avoidance and resistance (Fredrickson-MacNamara & Butler, 2006; Serpell, Coppinger, Fine, & Peralta, 2006). There is value in having solid stable horses that are more predictable and easier to work with. There is also value in having horses that have been damaged in some way, through abuse or neglect as this is often able to be related to by clients and used as a healing tool in the therapy (Anderson, Friend, Evans & Bushong, 1999; Kohanov, 2001). Horses, like people, are diverse. Being able to have a variety of horses available allows the therapist and the client to choose the most suitable horse for that situation. Being a therapist can be hard work emotionally and it has been found to be no different for animals (Fredrickson-MacNamara & Butler, 2006; Serpell, Coppinger, Fine, & Peralta, 2006). Horses that can withstand or benefit are best used but the therapist must always be aware when a horse has had enough.

Often just a breath of fresh air and being outside can make you feel better (Burgon, 2003) with the outdoors being utilised in wilderness type therapies. These wilderness and nature therapies have positive effects on mental health and this is incorporated into most EAP programs, whether or not it is realised by the client. An arena or a paddock does not have the same connotations as an office for especially reluctant clients. This aspect of the therapy may be

something the client has never experienced before (Zugich et al., 2002). The environment allows almost a time-out feeling for many clients, they are able to de-stress and take a step outside their day to day life which for many, may be a huge sense of relief and it may allow the clients to express characteristics that they may not be comfortable showing in another setting (Bachi, et al., 2012; Porter-Wenzlaff, 2007).

There is also the physical exercise aspect of this therapy. There is good evidence that physical exercise can improve the mood of those who are mildly to moderately depressed and the release of endorphins can also stimulate feelings of wellbeing in general (Babyak, 2000; Dunn et al., 2005; Scully et al., 1998). Participants in a study on EAP done by Bizub et al., (2003) note that the physical exercise made them feel energised and refreshed and they were able to sleep better at night. To participate in EAP you have to move. It isn't strenuous, your mind is engaged with the tasks so it doesn't feel like exercise but it still transfers some of those benefits. Utilising the horses in this way means creating situations that feel specific for the client and can often bring up things the client may not have otherwise talked about.

Why women?

The number of women taking part in and practicing EAP outnumber men significantly (Kohanov, 2001; Mallow et al., 2011; Masini, 2010; McCormick & McCormick, 1997; Meinersmann et al., 2008). It seems to be a therapy that is referred to and appeals to a certain kind of high needs client, one often suffering from the effects of trauma. This research explores some of the reasons behind that and how women find the experience of EAP from their standpoint. During my time in the horse world, I have noticed the gendered nature of this culture. Merely looking around at a local horse event will show you the difference in gender representation in the sport and this extends to the majority of recreational riders. Men, however are more significantly represented in the professional aspects. They are the farriers, the saddlers, the trainers. There is a larger number of men riding at the top level and areas where there is financial

gain, often significant such as racing and breeding (Birke & Brandt, 2009). EAP also seems to be gendered with the number of therapists and clients being predominantly women. The research on EAP is often done with women, children and youth, which seems to reflect the clients that are most likely to engage in this therapy (Bauducco, 2012; Burgon, 2003; Bachi et al., 2012; Porter-Wenzlaff, 2007; Schultz et al., 2007). This genderedness of EAP leads me to believe that there is something important about EAP and the positive effects it offers for women. So how does EAP fulfil the needs of women clients?

It is often women who end up as both practitioners and clients of EAP. In our culture, there is the narrative of this connection that women/girls and horses have. It is described in many ways including giving the women access to feelings of freedom and power, access to a special relationship, to partnership. This is something that needs to be explored in the context of EAP. What is this connection? Does it influence the therapy that the women are doing?

The goal of this research was to try and translate the feelings and experiences of women who have taken part in EAP into a language that others can access and negotiate. Both the experience of being a woman and the experience of EAP are difficult to convey in written and spoken language, so I wanted to try and translate these unsayable experiences into a text that is accessible to others. I wanted to understand what that unsayable, unexplainable part of EAP is. How does it make women feel? How does it help them to make changes? This research will contribute to the body of knowledge on EAP by articulating the experiences of women who have had participated in this type of therapy. To date there is no basic theory as to why or how EAP works. There are models that are used that form the basis of some of these therapies such as EAGALA and a variety of underlying factors as discussed in the literature review that all seem to play a part in EAP. However there seems something as yet concealed that could contribute to a fundamental theory that could unify all the underlying factors. My overarching aim was to contribute to the body of knowledge regarding the efficacy of EAP in the hope that this therapy will become more accepted in mainstream treatment practices.

Chapter Two

Methodology

The aim of this research was to explore how women experience Equine Assisted Psychotherapy. Given the problems with language and the unsayable, the choice to use a photovoice project was made. It allowed a therapy that is three dimensional to be represented by more than words. At the same time, it allows involvement by the participants in a way that establishes their role as co-researchers in the project. We are co-creating the data that they are supplying, both their interpretations of their images and our words. It allowed the women access to the narrative of their journey and their therapy in a way that they may not have had before.

This chapter presents the primary framework on which my research is based. It outlines why I have chosen to use this methodology and what I am wanting it to do.

Rationale

My interest in researching equine assisted psychotherapy began right at the start of my university journey with a basic research/literature review assignment in year one. Over the years, the papers that I chose influenced how I saw psychology. They opened up a world that seemed to balance the empirical numbers and statistics that I encountered when I first started studying. It was a world of stories, of experiences. I started to ask different questions. My initial research was going to be an evaluation of an EAP program with measures of depression or anxiety or mental wellbeing, before and after. To go through the steps of gathering the numbers, doing the statistics and finding out whether that number was 'significant'. It took several more papers for me to realise that significance had no real meaning in some contexts. I could do this project and find out whether the empirical data showed that the therapy worked, but I came to realise that there is so much more to a therapy, especially a therapy like this,

that statistical analysis could not make meaningful. I started to ask questions such as, how do people feel when they do this therapy? Why do they like it? Why does the anecdotal evidence show such heavy support for this therapy? To me it became obvious that there was something about this therapy that numbers couldn't define. That is what I wanted to explore. I wanted to know about people's experiences, their journey's and transformations. Why they felt it worked, not whether their results on a depression index had improved. I needed to hear their stories. As Creswell (2007) states, "[w]e use qualitative research because quantitative measures and the statistical analysis simply do not *fit* the problem" (p.40).

Quantitative measures are unlikely to make meaningful the full complex nature of the human animal bond (Peacock, Chur-Hansen, & Winefeild, 2012). Measures of anxiety or blood pressure help to understand some of the effects but they are incapable of capturing the whole experience of the bond. Favali and Milton (2010) conducted a phenomenological study, reasoning "there is very little evidence of what people are actually experiencing when they are with animals" (p.252). Other authors suggest that many of the changes that do occur are qualitative and as such are unidentifiable by quantitative measures (Johnson, 2013).

Many of the women who are clients of EAP are used to not being heard. They may have been through a number of therapists/counsellors, they are likely to be dealing with multiple agencies such as WINZ and ACC, just to survive. The therapists they have seen haven't helped them, the agencies are trying to get them onto a narrow pathway that they would describe as 'functioning'. They have been marginalised through the traditional routes of therapy. No one wants them as clients, and they are often perceived as difficult to work with. Whilst the initial aim of the study wasn't to focus on how other modalities contribute to marginalisation, it became apparent through the process of the research that this too was a particular context for the women who participated.

EAP is a therapy that to a certain extent, avoids too much talking. The therapist helps the client to make sense of their actions and the actions of the horses but for the most part the processing is done by the client during the following week. These clients have failed at traditional talk therapy for one reason or another. Utilising a methodology that allows the participants to 'speak' in a different way, enabled here through their photos bypasses the need for traditional talk but still conveys the experience of the clients.

For a group that has been marginalised, had much of their power taken from them, having them be involved in a research project that allows them to tell their side of the story to someone who is actively listening without judgement allows some kind of empowerment. To feel like one has truly been heard is a gift. This process acknowledges their experiences and the stories they have to tell.

Post-positivist epistemology has the view that the 'truth' can be transferred through language and that the language of science is closer to truth than others (Gergen, 1999). They have in effect, created a reality that is considered more valid than others. Doctors, psychologists, sociologists, biologists tell us how we are, what we are, what is normal and abnormal, how you should behave and how you shouldn't, what constitutes an illness, both physical and mental, how that illness is experienced and what treatments should be used and how (Gergen, 1999; Moghaddam, 2005). According to Foucault, we subjugate ourselves, we live the meanings of these discourses and believe that they are true, both of ourselves and others. In many cases, we do not question the rightness of these meanings (Bartky, 1998; Parker, 2005).

EAP lies in a grey area. Psychology is a science! Good therapies meet the standards based scientific knowledge and are given worth based on how well they fit the scientific criteria. But, when the language of science struggles to encompass what EAP is and how it does it, what then? My literature review showed what science has given to EAP theory, but EAP is somehow outside that language also. There is something else, something undefined that needs to be understood. Turning to photovoice, I am able to add another type of

language, another type of text to make sense of the embodied effects, rather than the scientific evidence, of EAP.

Embodiment

Bodies are constructed

Our physical bodies are the primary way in which we interact with the physical world, yet that body also inhabits places within our cultures and societies. Our physical bodies that enable us to live within the physical world and constantly interact with other physical bodies have for a large part of recent history been neglected in favour of the mind, the intellect and reason. Cartesian dualism can be traced back to Greek philosophers but it is the work of Rene Descartes that bought this theory of the separation of the mind and the body to the fore. For Descartes, the mind was the seat of the self rather than the “assemblage of limbs called the human body” (Crossley, 2001, p.34). The mind was the only way to know the body and the world around it as the body couldn't be trusted. The lived body and the embodied experience of a person were seen as flawed and false. Through the dichotomy of the mind and the body, the mind became the favoured aspect, the body relegated to something lesser. The body is full of things to be controlled, emotions and base desires. It is the seat of unrest that distracts from higher functioning (Babb, 2002). Feminist accounts of the relationship between women's bodies and women's psychologies have critiqued the ways women's bodies have been represented as pathological, linking the meaning of women to body (Nicolson, 1992; Ussher, 1991). Morgan (2005) argues that the split between body and mind also positions women as the opposite of reason and rationality. In other words, binary opposites are hierarchically organised through gendered relationships of domination and subordination where one term defines what the other is not. Women become closely connected to irrationality, the body, and emotion, while men are assumed to possess control, reason and rationality. This gendered hierarchy characterises the reductionist, biomedical approach to the body, which reduces the body to a number of 'systems' that can be scientifically categorised.

This system of bodily categorisation is presented as objective 'truth' (Davis & Walker, 2010). The body produced through the scientific gaze that produces the separation of mind and body is also gendered, where the relationship between women's bodies and their psychology have linked the meaning of women to body (Nicolson, 1992; Ussher, 1991). The narrative of a body, the stories that a person tells about themselves and their bodies helps to shape their identity. This narrative body is not isolated, but is influenced by the stories of cultures and societies in which they are embedded. Embodiment can be seen as the lived experience of those narratives, a way of making sense of their place in everything (Brandt, 2006). The narrative of a body is both personal and social.

The biological body is understood through the gendered narrative of science as a fixed "thing" (Coombes & Morgan, 2004). However as Elizabeth Grosz states, "the body is a most peculiar "thing", for it is never quite reducible to being merely a thing, nor does it ever manage to rise above the status of "thing" (1994, xi). The body is therefore, both a thing and a non-thing, both an object and a subject. When trying to understand the body from the perspective of it being a natural "thing", an ahistorical, pre-cultural, "thing", unchangeably immune to cultural, historical and societal factors, any meaning falls short of the complexities of the lived experience of the body. The body is the point of our interaction with the world, it experiences it and it is the centre of our agency, and as we act upon the world, so it acts upon us (Babb, 2002; Grosz, 1994).

The body of a person is a social body, a body that is relating at every moment to the culture, society and history that surround us. "Bodies become meaningful and are transformed and regulated in relation to other bodies" (Hodgetts, Radley, Chamberlain & Hodgetts, 2007, p.710). The body is changeable and mobile, at every point being produced and constructed by the world in which we live (Grosz, 1994; Hodgetts, et al., 2007). This construction produces bodies that are gendered, classed, objectified, commodified, and consuming (Homer & Keane, 2000; Waskul & Vanini, 2006). However, because of the status of the body as a thing but also a non-thing, these factors alone don't produce our embodied experience. Cromby (2005) asserts that as the body is the basis of

our knowing, knowing who and what we are, and our location within the culture we inhabit, so that the meanings we make are shaped by our own personal subjective experience. The gendered body is also a site of resistance to the patriarchal stereotypes of women and femininity (Coombes & Morgan, 2004; Grosz, 1994; Morgan, 2005). Elizabeth Grosz (1994) believes that the body is able to be utilised to question phallogocentric presumptions as it resists splitting experience into the province of only the mind. Embodied experience is a complex interaction with the world that can't be understood by conforming to the mutually exclusive mind/body split. Understanding embodied subjectivity is to understand that it stands on both sides of the binaries, it is both body and mind, individual and society, nature and culture. Cromby states "any adequate theorisation therefore requires both halves of these pairs to be conjoined in a both/and fashion, treated as interdependent and mutually constitutive rather than exclusive and oppositional" (2005, p.134).

The narratives of woman

As women, this means inhabiting a different place to men, although always in relationship to each other. The body of a woman lives with culturally and societally defined norms of 'woman'. Her embodied experience of the world is one that has been shaped to conform/comply to those norms. Their gendered upbringing teaches a certain way of experiencing and using their bodies (Bartky, 1998). It creates a narrative of what it means to be a woman and how to live with and in the body of a woman (Homer & Keane, 2000). To be a woman and to conform to the dominant narrative of what a woman is, requires certain ways of acting and using the body. To be properly 'feminine', a woman has certain ways in which they must walk, sit and carry themselves (Bartky, 1998), in other words, how to occupy space.

These narratives are socially negotiated and reflect and are maintained by the culture, society and history the woman lives in (LaFrance, 2006). Conforming to a particular narrative of embodiment, identifies the individual as part of a group. Displaying particular qualities makes them belong (Radley, 1996) and femininity

becomes the way of doing the cultural and societal norm (Bartky, 1998) at any given time and dependant on social and cultural conditions.

For example, a 'good woman' should have an aspect of fragility and a lack of physical strength. These narratives lead to women experiencing physical capability and power only fragmentarily and influence the way a woman interacts with physical space and other bodies (Bartky, 1998; Cromby, 2005; Grosz, 1994).

One dominant narrative of femininity, is the narrative that women are slaves to their emotions and their unruly bodies. They are unable to let go of their emotions and become purely rational, purely of the mind. EAP promotes communicating with and from emotions and the body as agentic, a positive way of communicating that utilises the body and feelings. This is in contrast to seeing emotions as something that must be kept under the control of the mind, to be reined in and tamed (Brandt, 2006; Birke & Brandt, 2009).

The narratives of horsewoman

Being a horsewoman allows access to a way of being in the world unlike many other women experience. They are able to experience a different narrative and challenge traditional narratives of femininity (Ojanen, 2012). Being in the world of horses allows a girl or woman certain freedoms that they might otherwise be excluded from as in this space, interaction with horses becomes a way experiencing of their bodies as powerful and as capable of agency.

The relationship a woman has with a horse is often misconstrued. These relationships are seen as a substitute for 'normal' human relationships, and are often sexualised through a narrative of misplaced desire (Birke & Brandt, 2009). Horse women do not conform to traditional narratives of woman so their sexuality is often called into question, they are derided as sexually perverse, or suffering from penis envy (Wright, 2012). Most horsewomen, myself included, would laugh at such claims, however it continues to operate as a stereotype.

We are often described as hard or aloof and told we are sacrificing our femininity.

For women around horses, there is an aspect of physical competency, of being tough and capable and not minding dirt on your hands or hay in your hair. Being around horses is a lot of work, mostly physical and that is even before any riding is done. There are hay bales to be carried, mucking out to be done, fences to be fixed, large vehicles and trailers that need manoeuvring. Then there is working with an animal that can weigh ten times as much as the women dealing with them.

In my experience, I find it liberating. A horse really doesn't care what you look like as long as you keep bringing him his food. For the time that you are with the horses, you are outside the traditional narratives of femininity. Taking on the role of horse woman means my body becomes functional rather than aesthetic. It stops being objectified and becomes a point of agency. The active/passive dichotomy of masculinity/femininity is able to be challenged (Wright, 2012).

The body as a vehicle for communication

Horses are a demonstration of embodiment. They live in the world, wholly in their bodies in a synergistic relationship with the environment (Brandt, 2004). Humans have influenced the form that a horse's body takes through selective breeding, however the essential horse stuff is still the same. Their bodies are vehicles for their expression. In contrast, women's bodies in the world seem to be disconnected, our bodies are seen as something to be tamed, controlled, made passive and docile (Bartky, 1998) if we are to fit into the narrative of what it means to be a woman.

Being 'in your body' is hard but some women described the necessity of 'staying in your body' to work with the horse (Meinersmann, et al., 2008). Being in your body, aware of the movements it makes and the context of the surrounding environment is essential in dealing with horses. The body is a place of

communication, a vehicle of expression. To communicate with a horse, your body cannot be passive, cannot be docile.

Communication between the horse and the human is therefore an embodied experience (Brandt, 2004; Bauducco, 2012). Verbal language means little to the horse, however because of a horse's status as a prey animal (Porter-Wenzlaff, 2007), their sensitivity to body language is the key to their survival. This allows the horse to read your body like a book (Brandt, 2004; Schultz, et al., 2007). Because of the unique position a horse and its rider has, there is a high level of body to body contact that has the ability to transmit a wealth of information (Lentini, & Knox, 2009). You can feel each other's breaths, heartbeats and other subtle movements that aren't transmitted without that contact.

The horse teaches verbal and non-verbal communication. It teaches how to be open and honest with communication as a horse can pick up on emotions that the participant may be hiding. A horse acts as a mirror for a person's emotions and actions. If a horse is approached with anger or frustration, the horse will respond immediately in a negative way. This may include walking away, ignoring, sleeping or eating (Zugich et al., 2006). Effective communication with a horse involves patience, understanding, attention, forgiveness and consistency (Quiroz-Rothe et al., 2005). It is only through mutual trust and respect that a productive relationship can be formed. (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005; Quiroz-Rothe et al., 2005). McCormick and McCormick (1997) suggests that riding and working with a horse in EAP can uncover mind/body connections. A horse will be able to help the therapist see and interpret what is going on in a client's mind by the horse's response to body language from the client. Klontz et al (2007) have a similar view, that as the horse mirrors the client's physical and emotional states, it allows the client to achieve a self awareness of their internal feelings and helps them to "practice congruence between their feelings and behaviours" (p.259).

The human has to create a language that the horse can understand. The basis for this interspecies communication becomes the body (Brandt, 2004). Many

horsewomen understand that their bodies are a means of communicating with their animals. They rely on their bodies as a means of accomplishing the transmission of their thoughts and emotions to the horses they work with (Brandt, 2006). Educating a young horse and educating a new rider is similar in the fact that they must each learn how the other communicates with its own body (Birke & Brandt, 2009; Yorke, et al., 2008). This kind of communication allows that language is not solely of the mind but also part of the body (Brandt, 2006). Working and communicating with horses involves a multifaceted in body experience that involves physical, visual and kinaesthetic aspects (Meinersmann, et al., 2008).

The continual perpetuation of the narratives of normative embodied experience for women means that we are constantly tied to a way of being. The horsewoman, with access to counter narratives of the body and embodied experience, have knowledge of the agency and intelligence of their bodies. Having an ingress into these narratives is important for promoting both personal and social change by reframing women's embodied experience in positive ways (Brandt, 2006).

One question my reading has led me to ask is does EAP allow the exploration of other narratives? Birke and Brandt (2009) state "the presence of horses enables a subversion of dominant gender practices particularly at the localised (private) level" (2009, p.189). As horsewomen have access to these alternative narratives, does the contact with horses in a therapeutic context allow the same experience for women clients? Brandt suggests that there is "something about a horse that seems to enable women to feel a positive embodiment that translates to a liberation, a power or strength, a rejection of that docile, passive body" (Brandt, 2006). For women with bodies that are constrained and structured to fit societal narratives and expectations, how might EAP enable participation in embodied communication? Is EAP allowing access to feeling the connectivity of one's body, of being in their own body? Does this perhaps, lead to a narrative of empowered embodiment?

Photovoice

Photovoice is normally used within community psychology as a means of empowering participants and making them agents of change (Wiersma, 2011). Though photovoice has never been used in this context, the technique has advantages over straight interviews that I believe will allow a greater understanding of what is going on for women when they participate in EAP. It can capture the lived experience (Wiersma, 2011) that is important to this project. Photovoice can provide opportunities to communicate more about the experience that the women have had when blending the photos with the narratives than through talk alone (Palibroda, Krieg, Murdock, & Havelock, 2009). It is suited to research that requires a narrative that retains a sense of personal and social context (Bukowski & Buetow, 2011; Hodgetts et al., 2007). Images are also able to convey emotions, experiences and insights in a way that talk and words by themselves can't. The image becomes a symbol that creates a backdrop for that narrative, through evoking a reflexive account between the image and the narrative (Harrison, 2004). Photovoice also acknowledges that those with the experience, such as women experiencing EAP, have an expertise that outsiders and practitioners may lack (Wang & Burris, 1994).

Photos and images are another way of representing narratives of our identity. The creation, selection and display of these images tell a story of us that we have chosen to tell to a particular audience. The format differs from a traditional narrative or story but it is no less of a creation and display of who we are, where we come from, what is important to us and what experiences we've had (Palibroda et al., 2009; Harrison, 2004). It makes visible aspects of the self (Harrison, 2004) and demonstrates some of the answers to "who am I?"

Though photovoice is often used to advocate for change in social or health policy by using images to communicate the impact of social context on health outcomes, this project hopes to change the way that EAP is understood and show the usefulness of such a method of healing. By bringing these "new or

seldom heard ideas, images and conversations” (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001, p.561) to the attention of a wider audience, the use of photovoice for this project can enrich the understanding of how and why EAP works and allow readers to connect to the research through the images in a way that has never been considered (Palibroda, et al., 2009).

The use of images allows the dimensionality of horses to be made meaningful through bringing to life the importance of the women-horse relationship. It allows the texture of the experiences to be demonstrated. Participants in photovoice projects also become co-researchers through selecting what aspect of their experiences they decide, which enables them to have an impact on the research project and provide their personal insights into the question (Liebenberg, 2009; Wiersma, 2011). It promotes empowerment through participation in the research, which is also a principle of the EAGALA model (B. Bader, personal communication, April 4, 2013).

Working in this way is guided by Wang & Burris, (1994) who acknowledge women's subjective experience and research being carried out by and with women. The importance of the women's experiences in this study is in understanding how they are making sense of their world and in particular their experience with EAP. The photographs in this research allow a snapshot of that experience (Brunsden, 2007) and enables a process of narrative inquiry that listens to the voice of the unheard, and enables the multiple and diverse experiences of women to be represented (Harrison, 2004).

Authors such as Liebenberg (2011) argue that the use of images increases the ecological validity of the data produced from this type of research. The image gives a set focus point and a clear link to the emotions, feelings and thoughts that surrounded the creation of the image thereby giving a foundation for transmitting the participants' realities (Brunsden, 2007). The nature of photovoice projects gives the participants a chance for self-reflexivity, a process through which they can think critically about what they will take pictures of and why they want to take those pictures. This enhances the validity by clearly

identifying what the important aspects of the topic in question are in a way that also allows for the communication of those aspects (Liebenberg, 2011).

Photovoice is dynamic (Brunsden, 2007) and allows analysis of the photographs themselves as well as the data that is gathered from the interview. The narrative aspect is a way of exploring experience and making meaning out of the experiences of the person and promoting wider understanding of what those experiences are (Harrison, 2004; Wong-Wylie, 2006). In narrative inquiry, the processes are as important as the results. As the participants take part in storying their experiences with both pictures and words they are able to come to a self-understanding of that experience that they are able to communicate to others (Wong-Wylie, 2006).

Reflexivity

The choices that I have made and the directions that I have taken have influenced the practical design and implementation of the research (Cresswell, 2007). The process could be described as emergent as the characteristics of the research are shaped by the experience in collecting the data.

I wanted to understand the multiple realities of the women's experiences. Using the words and images of the women to explore themes allows their reality to be present in my research. However, my analysis is my presentation and interpretation of these stories and experiences so the results will be informed by my values and experiences

The emphasis on the research being a co-constituted process required that attention must be given to the "realities and relations we are co-creating during the research process" (Hosking & Pluut, 2010, p. 64). The talk between the researcher and the researched is seen to have an influence on the research results. A different researcher may have a different relationship with the participant resulting in different responses, and it is the experience I bring that structures how I understand the women's stories.

As an individual undertaking a research project, I am both a researcher and a person with their own historical and cultural understandings of the world. Taking the role of the researcher does not make this background disappear, it does not automatically make one purely objective. Every person has their own account of the world that for a researcher inherently biases them in some way (Gergen, 1985; Gergen, 1999). Undertaking qualitative research means that as a researcher I understand I will interpret phenomena or experiences through my own world of meanings, I will not simply objectively observe (Myers, 2008). As researcher, my personal interests have informed the project, and my own desire to make the experience of EAP tangible.

The insight into the therapeutic aspects of being around horses as well as the knowledge of a lifetime of horses, has given me a unique perspective in this research. It gave me an insider view that I hoped was valuable in communicating with the women I worked with. Hodgetts and Rua (2010) argue that having a common background allows open communication about a shared experience. It is my hope that this common background and the participatory approach I am taking with the research will lessen the power differential between myself and the participants. My experience also allows a familiarity with horse behaviour and ways of living in the world that are thought to be important in the investigation of human-animal research (Brandt, 2004).

As the researcher, I have to have an understanding that even though in some aspects of my life I have a common ground with the women who participate, I am still other. It is important for me to try not impose my perspective onto the women's experiences. In this type of research, there is a reciprocal relationship between the researcher and the researched. I am not an impartial outside observer, I acknowledge that I come into the research with a certain historical, social and cultural basis that influences everything from my initial interest in the topic, to the way I want to research it and the questions I will ask. In this way, I understand that I shape the research that I do.

As an interviewer, I understand my position of power, and that it will influence the participants' responses both in choosing to participate in the study and in the narrative that is constructed. Identifying as an insider, as someone who had also done this therapy, helped to balance this power, as I was often asked about my experiences. It put me on a level that they could identify with that hopefully reduced the likelihood that they felt under influence to do things or say certain things.

My experience of the research

Participating in a qualitative research project, which initially seemed to have no set steps or procedures like a quantitative project has been extremely challenging. I found that even trying to convey how I was conducting the study, explaining my methods and reasoning was complicated. When there are no rules to follow, how is this piece of work then going to be judged? Whilst I use a photovoice technique as a stepping stone to gather data, it didn't give clear guidelines for analysis.

My experience of this research, even in the writing of the literature review seems to have been about making mental leaps to connect different aspects to make a cohesive project. The lack of depth in a lot of the literature, my lack of experience at interviewing, the things that came out of the photovoice project, challenged me time and time again. There were many times that I lost heart. I couldn't imagine how it was going to come together. But again and again, another thread would be introduced that helped to make sense of what was happening. There was a lot of going back and introducing new literature to match what was happening as I made sense of the narratives but the process got easier and easier as things were rounded off. I will use the metaphor of weaving to make sense of this. What emerged were a few threads that lined up, that connected easily but the majority were loose, left dangling with no place in the pattern. I had to find new information, new threads that linked the two. Interpreting the results therefore was a roundabout, back and forth process.

Chapter 3

Method

Study Design

This study focuses on the narratives of women's journey through EAP. The participants were asked to take part in a photovoice project to understand their experiences of EAP. Producing textual data through participatory methods is a way of developing relationships that inform the interpretation of the story. It involves the participant photographing aspects/events/people and places of importance to their everyday lives (Hodgetts & Rua, 2010). The photo taking period is followed by a photo-elicitation interview that enables the participant and the researcher to talk about the images and what they mean to the participant (Bukowski & Buetow, 2011) valuing participants' embodied knowing in conversation. Through semi-structured interview, the participants' images influenced my questions to allow participants to construct their thoughts and feelings about EAP.

Procedure

Before seeking ethical approval, I was interested in whether I had the support of the EAP community and what research would be useful to them. After contacting several providers, negotiations with Renee (Horsepower Aotearoa) occurred over a period of time, and she provided the support for the project. The practice was an EAGALA model of EAP in New Zealand on the Kapiti Coast. Renee was interested in facilitating the research for the benefit of raising awareness and legitimacy of the therapy she is so passionate about. The EAGALA model is a world-wide, well respected program with a consistent methodology and its own code of ethics. The practitioner was licensed/registered in the mental health field as well as through specific training in the EAGALA model. Using this model gives a sense of confidence in the

capabilities of the therapists as competent practitioners. This model encompasses treatment for mental health and growth and learning experience both of which were useful for this research. It was through this support that I was able to ensure that participant safety could be managed and the project was assessed to be low risk according to the MUHEC guidelines.

Participants: A recruitment poster and information sheet were sent to Renee to disseminate. When the clients had gone through their course of therapy with camera in hand we set up the interviews.

As well as opening her clients to me, she opened her home and I spent two days on the Kapiti Coast interviewing Renee and the participants. I was also able to take part in a group EAP session that Renee facilitated.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations as outlined in the Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations Involving Human Participants (2010) were followed and through a peer review process the research was assessed as low risk.

The participants were given information sheets outlining all the details of the research project so they were able to consent to their participation, including the right to withdraw. All participants were offered a summary of the findings, and the ownership of the images they produced.

All identifying information was removed from the transcripts and research report, and their privacy protected by the use of pseudonyms. All data, including photographs were password protected.

Using photovoice in a research project brings in ethical concerns that may not occur in other research. Images have the potential to identify participants and therefore breach their confidentiality. The participants and the practitioners were

briefed by the researcher as to the safety issues that might arise from using photographs, including the facilitator, including not taking a picture of someone who does not want to be photographed, or any other image that puts the participant at risk. Participants were advised that if they had images of themselves or other people, the features would be digitally disguised to protect their privacy. They were also advised that no incriminating, possibly embarrassing or images that misrepresent a person or facility will be used in the project (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001).

Though some of the participants may have been using EAP for self-actualisation, some participants may have had specific reasons for attending, such as trauma and mental illness. While they are likely to fall into the low to moderate categories of illness and as such not likely to be at risk of harm, working closely with the practitioner and having her as a contact person during the photo-elicitation interviews minimised any risk of harm going unattended. The participants were also able to make email contact with the practitioner immediately following the interview if they had any issues. Disclosure of the reason they are attending EAP was not necessary, although some participants did disclose when contextualising their experience.

Māori values and principles

Any research conducted in NZ should be guided by the principles in the Treaty of Waitangi. In the conduct of this research, and aligned with the principles of EAGALA, and guided by the definition of manaakitanga as put forward by Professor Whatarangi Winiata, president of the Māori Party as “behaviour that acknowledges the mana of others as having equal or greater importance than one’s own, through the expression of aroha, hospitality, generosity and mutual respect” (Māori Party, n.d; Smith, 2003) to ensure that participants of any culture are treated with respect in all situations.

EAGALA is a client led therapy, therefore any expressions and meanings the client made of situations are their own so there is less risk of imposing views

and meanings onto them. This is also true of photovoice and the photo elicitation interviews which are participatory. This works well within the framework of Manaakitanga as respect is accorded to them as creators of their personal narratives. I worked under the protocols of the participating practitioner and had access to cultural advisors throughout the project. While no ethnic group was excluded from participation, with 3 participants cultural diversity was narrow.

Data Collection

Recruitment: The initial phase of recruitment was negotiated through Renee to ensure the safety of potential participants. The criteria for participation were that the women were clients' of an EAGALA model of EAP, and their participation was facilitated through that practice. Renee agreed to provide the information sheet to potential clients. There were no restrictions on the reasons for attending EAP as the research was not interested in any specific condition, but rather it was the experiences of the therapeutic process that were of interest. Once the information sheet was provided and initial interest was gathered, Renee offered cameras to the women and invited them to take photos of any aspect of their engagement with the therapy that they thought would be interesting. This was not consent to participate, and the women were assured the photos belonged to them. I travelled to the Kapiti Coast to meet potential participants, and ensure that they were fully informed of their rights should they decide to participate. From an interested pool of 5 clients, 3 agreed to participate in the interviews. Renee, as facilitator, and with the experience of having worked with multiple clients also participated in an interview to add a voice of expertise to the process as she had both the theoretical aspects of EAP and practice experience.

Interviews: I chose a semi structured interview to allow the participants the opportunity to talk freely about their images and what they meant to them. I followed this up with some questions I had about the process of EAP that I was

interested in, such as what role they felt the horses had, did they learn about body language.

The interviews were scheduled for a time when all participants had finished their journey through therapy. I met with them either at their home or at the facility the therapy was held in a private room. Interviews were digitally recorded. The clients were asked to choose 5 to 7 of their images that best described their experience and were then invited to talk about their images and why they took them and what they meant. Supplementary questions were also used to elicit more information. Several themes started to emerge, such as spirituality and the outdoors so I used these to guide me in further interviews (Brandt, 2004).

Data Analysis

Cresswell explains analysis as not being “off-the-shelf; rather it is custom built, revised, and “choreographed” (2007, p.150). I have found that the whole process of data collection, analysis and writing have all gone on simultaneously, each shaping the other as certain things presented as being of more importance or interest. Because of my topic and the narrative aspects of it, and because it was a photovoice project, it became important to find or integrate a way of doing the analysis what would cater for my research question as well as give me a logical theoretical framework to follow. However, the aim is to get from the data, in my case the transcripts and photographs, to some kind of account or narrative.

From reading other studies, it became clear that there is a sorting process that takes place, and underlying themes emerge. This follows Wang et al.'s (1998) photovoice analysis steps. Whilst these steps have been incredibly useful as a grounding for my analysis, they weren't able to give me the desired depth. This then became an overwhelming demand. How do I integrate the theoretical underpinnings of my literature review with the analyses? Deciphering this puzzle took up large amounts of time. It became about mingling aspects of narrative inquiry with the basic photovoice methodology. Understanding that

photographs are another way of creating a narrative about ourselves helped me to understand how the two could be intertwined.

The three core steps of photovoice (Wang et al., 1998; Palibroda, et al., 2009)

1. Selecting photographs: This stage involves the participant choosing 5-7 photos that they want included and that best represent their experience. This will delineate the areas the participant wishes to talk about.
2. Contextualising and storytelling: This is the interview phase where the participant creates narratives about the photos and the experiences that they show and why these particular images were chosen. The use of the photos gives a physical link between the experiences and the narratives. They story their experience and their identity within this experience. The narratives are an integral part of the photovoice project as the photos alone can be interpreted in a number of ways. It is the participants' creation and interpretation that is key. Narratives are active language, they are not a straight rendition of the past, they are brought into the present and therefore reformed in the present, being influenced by new experiences, and the situations and people around us (Wong-Wylie, 2006). The interview is a conversation between the participant and the interviewer. Because of this, the impact of the interviewer on the conversation must be reflected on (Brunsden & Goatcher, 2007; Hodgetts & Rua, 2010). The narratives of the interviewer become part of the process and have an effect on what questions may be asked and the direction that the interview may take. This also crosses into the codifying process as the narratives and experiences of the researcher influence the importance and meanings of different aspects (Wong-Wylie, 2006).
3. Codifying: This process looks at the stories of the participants and their images and determines what common themes, experiences and issues stand out. The visual data fleshes out the information that is brought in by the verbal data, which allows an expanded analysis (Brunsden & Goatcher, 2007). The codifying will go through processes of within case analysis, looking at each narrative and the elements it contains and between case analysis, comparing and looking for similarities and differences between the

4. narratives (Kako et al., 2012). Combining the within case and across case data allows the contexts of the experiences to remain intact.

After the transcribing process, I found that the data leant itself to case studies. The reasoning was that the women's individual experiences were very different and to keep the context of their stories, they were best left intact. This also enabled me to show the theories presented previously at work within the therapeutic contexts of the clients' experiences.

Renee's case study stands alone as a bridge between my literature review and the case studies of the participants. Her story serves as a lead in to the words of the other women. She has the benefit of the lived experiences of the therapy as well as the theoretical knowledge that informs how EAP works. I was able to use her knowledge to inform me on how the theoretical aspects of EAP were actively working in the client context.

The client participants' case studies are presented as narratives of their experiences. This includes their chosen photographs as they are interwoven with the stories. Each of the case studies was looked at individually and presented, integrating theory and Renee's perspectives. Though the differences were important, there were definite themes that emerged that included common language and similar underpinning feelings across narratives. A codifying process was done to highlight these common themes that ran throughout the narratives and are presented in the discussion.

Chapter 4

Renee's Case Study

Renee has been working in the mental health field since 1997. She has a Bachelor in Alcohol and Drug Studies and is a member of DAPAANZ. She is a practitioner in two types of equine assisted growth, learning and therapy, and is an EAGALA Certified Practitioner and an EponaQuest Instructor. The Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA) trains professionals how to incorporate horses to help address mental health and personal development needs. It is an experiential, solution-focused therapy that uses exercises with horses and the creation of metaphors as part of the therapeutic process. EponaQuest is a personal development method that incorporates working with horses. They have a focus on the spiritual aspects of the connections and relationships with horses. They are also very focused on the embodiment of the clients and the horses and how they can communicate with each other which often culminates in learning to dance with a horse.

At the start of the research program, Renee had a business called HorsePower Aotearoa which she set up in 2008, located on the Kapiti Coast. She did a variety of work including seeing private and referred clients, and group growth and development sessions. She also did a program with inmates at Arohata Women's Prison, which she found very successful.

Renee has worked with several different Equine specialists and their herds as well as her own horses. Within the EAGALA model, two practitioners are present, Renee to look after and notice the client therapeutic processes, the Equine Specialist to look after the horses and notice the horse participation. They work together as a unit.

During the course of our time working together, Renee made the decision to move to Auckland to become a collaborator with a group dedicated to furthering

the influence of equine assisted practices in Aotearoa/New Zealand. I interviewed her on one of her last days before her move. There were moments of sadness as she reflected on what she was leaving behind, and her deep connection with the horses.

When I um first started getting into this work, I leased Foggy and so he was my riding horse and he's one of those old schoolmasters you know and he's just such a dag. Anyway, he's been amazing in the therapy and um he was one of the first horses that we used up there at Mary's and I cry cause he's on his last legs now and he's got heart problems and stuff and I don't know that I'll see him again.

From the other interviews I conducted, it became clear the huge impact that Renee had had on people's lives. The client participants spoke with warmth and love as well as sorrow and disappointment that they were losing her, too.

Renee is the therapist who did the work with the clients who participated in this research. She therefore has an understanding of these specific clients and how their work fitted to the theory. The intention of separating out her interview was to establish a framework for the talk and images that the women produced to provide a way to connect the theoretical and experiential aspects of EAP in practice. Renee comes from a place of knowledge, as a practitioner, as a client and as a horsewoman. She has an understanding of the therapy and the language to be able to communicate the therapeutic process where the clients often had difficulty. In this way, Renee is positioned here as a key informant and her narrative brings to life the context of EAP and how as a therapist, she understands the process for the women.

Renee began her interview telling me about the horses that help her with her work. For Renee, the horses themselves are participants, having their own agency within the human-animal relationship (Overton & Hmilakis, 2013). In her research, Gibson (2015) has argued that the assumption that humans have

autonomy over nature is challenged through the way EAP understands human-animal engagement as “mutually becoming” (p.21).

So there'll be like snapshots of the works I've done. Maybe of what I've noticed the horses, you know, doing and being.

Renee talks about honouring the horses for their work with her, and how they are connected, not only to her, but also through their ability to relate to clients. Gibson (2015) explains that being is an interactive process that involves the human to “interact, connect and think with the horse” (pp.33-34).

The fact that they are the first thing she tells me about highlights the centrality of the horses to the work. The way she describes them “doing” and “being” gives them a ‘personhood’ in their own right. As individuals, they have their own distinctive ways of being in the world and interacting with clients. By beginning with the horses, Renee allows us to engage with the idea of the horses being just as much participants as herself and the clients.

The horses as participants

Foggy

The horse that was most important in Renee’s narrative at the time of the interview was Foggy. Foggy is a grey Connemara Station-bred cross in his late 20s. He and Renee have had a long relationship. He was the first horse that Renee used for her therapeutic work and she also leased him for her own riding horse. This history with Foggy and the relationship between them was realised through a narrative that described an emotional relationship of character and feeling. Renee described him as being “such a dag” and an “amazing old schoolmaster”. In the horse world, a schoolmaster is a horse that has had a lot of training, he knows the ropes and can help teach newer riders how to do things. Here Foggy is attributed with the knowledge to perform, from his being to doing therapeutic work. He was described as patient and totally

unflappable. He 'suffers' through people doing all kinds of things to him like putting halters on backwards so the straps are over his eyes. Renee commented on his kindness and his generosity of spirit. He is great in family therapy, he's always looking out for the kids. He is also excellent at waiting until the families are working together, before cooperating with them. Foggy now has heart problems, and Renee expressed her grief that he was "on his last legs" and as she is leaving, she didn't know whether she would see him again.



Photo 1. Foggy

Lily

Lily is a small grey mare who has her own history of anxiety. Again, the horse is attributed with expertise - Renee positions her strength as working with people who are suffering from anxiety of their own, and with clients with depression.

Renee stated she would often choose her when these are the clients' presenting issues. Renee described her as being able to “*stand[ing] with the clients*” suggesting the horse has the ability to be supportive of clients. Clients also really identify with her when they discover her history. While described as grey, grey is a term used for horses whose colour ranges from white to dark grey. Lily appears white, and therefore is associated with the attribute of “signifying wisdom”.



Photo 2. Renee with Lily with her foal Dandelion

Pepper

Pepper is a black horse who is relatively new to the herd of horses Renee works with. Renee said, “he’s been an amazing horse”, who’s “done some

amazing work with a few clients” She attributed his ability to go in and out of fences to being “smart”.



Photo 3. Pepper

Shannon

Shannon is an older Clydesdale mare that to Renee represents courage. She is as clydesdales are, very large and powerful. She is also the lowest in the herd, being pushed around even by the smallest pony in the herd, Clipper. People identify with her on two levels, one being with her size and perception as being the strongest horse, the other is that of being bullied. Renee talks about her doing work with teenaged boys as they are often drawn to her size as well as her work with bullying.



Photo 4. Shannon

Clipper

Clipper is a small black pony who seems to have a bit of sass as a lot of small black ponies seem to do. He is the smallest in the herd. One of the pieces of work Clipper did was for a teenaged boy that had been institutionalised and spent a lot of time in isolation. Through his work with Clipper, he was able to talk about the trauma of that experience. They formed a close bond and the client was inspired by his work with Clipper to write some poems and songs.

Clipper has since passed away so Renee wasn't able to provide a photo of him. He is however shown in the client Jackie's case study.

Renee attachment to the horses is undeniable, and insatiable; “*oh, I could go on about them all really.*” From Renee talking about them, it becomes clear each horse brings a certain therapeutic aspect with them. This knowledge of their personalities makes it easier to find the right therapeutic companion for her clients.

I chose Lily, I had a feeling that Lily would be the horse for Mary.

This forethought facilitates the bonding process by increasing the likelihood that the person will emotionally connect or identify with the chosen horse. As establishing this bond seems to be an important part of the therapy, this is an important facet of the therapeutic process.

Haraway (2003) describes the Great Divides of which one is the split between the human and the animal. It is similar to the cartesian dichotomy of mind and body. Humans are held above animals, often forgetting the fact that we are animals. It is us and them, and more than that, it is us above them. Animals are often attributed with the characteristic of a machine, capable only of reaction. With these horses, Renee acknowledges that they are ‘someone’ and that ‘someone’ is capable of more than the one dimensional reactions of an automaton. Haraway (2003) talks of many humans who work with and study animals as refusing the risk of an intersecting gaze and all that that entails. Allowing the gazes to meet creates a connection, a knowing of the animal as an individual. An animal that may have its own motivations and ways of being in the world above and beyond the stimuli/response behaviourism is so fond of asserting. These individuals respond, they don't just react. The way Renee articulates how the horses are and what they do, it is clear that she has ‘met the gaze’ of each of the horses she works with and respects and acknowledges them as individuals.

For example, during my talks with another practitioner, she described the situation when her therapy horse was getting her saddle fitted. The mare kept interacting with the saddle fitter in a way that the practitioner understood as her

trying to do her therapy work with him. Whilst entertaining for her, it was not conducive to getting a good fit as the man was getting frustrated. She had to tell her horse that it was not therapy time, that the man was here for another reason, after which the mare settled down and let herself be fitted.

Haraway (2003) articulates the riskiness of this discourse of animals. It feels as if crossing the human-animal divide and acknowledging the personhood of animals challenges what it means to be a person. However, giving this kind of agency, personhood and responsivity to non-human animals explains many of the things that felt so amazing when I was a client. They weren't magical, they were just individuals reacting to individuals. I have always been an animal lover and given a modicum of personhood to animals. However, this understanding takes it to another level. It is clear that others agree with this way of thinking about animals (Brandt, 2006; Birke, 2002; Haraway, 2003; Maurstad, Davis & Cowels, 2013) and it seems this is necessary to the meaningfulness of EAP.

Multi species perspectives are becoming more frequent (Maurstad, Davis & Cowels, 2013) within the literature and they are shedding light on the impact of the interrelationships between species. Maurstad et al., (2013) describe the relationship between horses and humans as co-being. Haraway talks of 'becoming with' (2003). This co-being, this becoming with, is representative of two individuals both with agency of their own engaging in a embodied mutuality where both the human and the other are changed as a result of their interactions. Haraway (2003) described the feeling when she and her dog Cayenne have a gold run in their agility trials. It's a total shared understanding of the moves and the actions of the other. The journey to that point is one of intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity is shared meaning. Intersubjectivity between species is the sharing of embodied communications as Haraway and Cayenne do in the training process of agility sport. The human and the dog must learn the way the other communicates and what the others goals are. Interacting with horses also relies on intersubjectivity to communicate the goals and desires of both the human and animal partners.

Bodily openness and responsivity is essential to these interactions as is the acknowledgement of animals as individuals with their own desires (Brandt, 2004; Warkentin, 2010). For the optimal relationship to be reached, the animal must be able to understand the human and the human able to understand the animal. More importantly, the human must 'hear' what the animal is saying (Gilbert, 2014). For example, a sore horse may buck when asked to do a certain move. This is the horse's only way of communicating what is happening. Understanding what the horse is trying to say means going beyond the surface interpretation of the horse being naughty. This is where the becoming with happens. The bodies communicate and tell things about the other to the owner of that body. It is a co-creation of behaviour and language.

Though none of the horses are her own, the great depth of feeling that Renee expresses when she talks about them highlights the bond and feelings of attachment that can be achieved when having a relationship with a horse. The horses are at liberty within the area of work. At liberty means they are unrestrained with no halter or other means of containment. This is both to give them their autonomy within the practice and to let them look after themselves. Being at liberty allows the horses to engage however and to whatever extent they choose. They can't be forced into any action. This allows the horses to respond to the clients and the exercises in whatever manner they want thus enabling the creation of metaphors. Being free to comply or not comply with the requests of the client triggers emotions that the client can relate to their own lives. For example the client successfully getting the horse to move over an obstacle with no lead rope enables them to feel successful, both in achieving the task and in the bond that they feel with the horse.

It also keeps them safe.

As long as you don't hurt the horses, that's the only rule we have but even that's not respected sometimes you know and that really is a rule you know and that's why the horses are at liberty so they can take care of themselves.

This is another way of showing that the horses are respected as participants in the work; they are more than just a tool. They have the autonomy to take themselves away from situations that they feel threatened by.

Renee's Place

Why she does what she does

Renee has such confidence in EAP. It rings through her words. She considers the work she does life changing.

She was a client that just had again an amazing experience with equine therapy it just changed her life in 6 short sessions you know

This is why Renee continues to work in a field of therapy that has more challenges than traditional methods. It is more expensive to run, the facilities and resources needed are far greater, and as yet, there are few studies that have established empirical evidence that support it. However despite such a lack of empirical evidence, the results that Renee gets through this modality preserve her belief.

Renee has her own story of recovery and she talks about the lessons she learned during that time and how they have influenced the way she works. Renee talked about the connection with the outdoors and the environment, and the importance of being able to create a working environment that reflected that and matched her beliefs. In this creation of a space that matches what is important to her, she also creates a safe space for others.

Because that whole in my own yearning to be um to be you know, to be able to create my own environment that was conducive to my beliefs.

For Renee, opening up spaces for others is also about opening up herself – a process of becoming vulnerable through multiple connections. Renee explained

part of her path to discovering EAP was through the connection to the outdoors she felt as a client.

One of the reasons that I work, I mean was attracted to it in the first place was cause from my own experience of being a client was the only thing that worked for me in treatment was connection with the outdoors. I was really lucky cause we did abseiling and we did kayaking and hiking and we did all sorts of outdoorsy stuff and um we did those horrible rope courses and stuff like that and um that whole um connection with environment is just so, so important.

Having her own experiences of what worked from a therapeutic consumer perspective has given Renee the insight into what might be important for her own clients. This has enabled her to create a space that she believes provides the best possible environment for the therapy to take place.

Her point of difference

Renee comes from the perspective of someone who has experienced recovery from addiction, using the 12-step method. Part of that framework is the concept of the higher power, that there is something outside yourself that can help you overcome your addiction. This means the aspect of spirituality is an important part of her work. In fact Renee frames it as something of a cornerstone. Renee describes her addiction as an obsessive compulsive illness and that she “*can't think my way out of addiction.*” Being taught “*when you wanna have a drink just try and think something else*” by traditional mental health practitioners made her feel patronised and like the practitioners had no idea what the experience of addiction was really like. She goes on to say, “*for me that never worked and good luck to anybody it does work for but I haven't met anybody that it works for.*”

She talked about what the higher power enabled her to do in her recovery process

The belief has to come from somewhere, that something can help me with that and it doesn't reside in me or within my mind, so the whole idea of having to find and incorporate a higher being or a higher energy as a way of counteracting addiction comes from that whole philosophy.

This is why Renee feels it is an important aspect of the therapy. The incorporation of the horses provides a framework for people to experience their own spirituality, as horses seem to have a way of triggering spiritual experiences. Renee or the horses bringing up spirituality without naming it allows it to be there in whatever way the clients want to engage with it.

She states that *“one of the original questions you asked me, what's the difference between talk therapy and this, is this spirit. It's because it's spiritual and it's spirituality in action, it's not just talking about spirituality.”*

When talking about how the spirituality is incorporated into the practice, Renee stated that she works within the framework of spirituality offered by the client, though she is often the one to initially bring up the matter.

I will work with whatever the client's belief is around that stuff and most often people don't have an awareness really. I introduce the concept of spirituality early on in the piece, like I'll say the word or something you know, not anything else.

For some that is a Christian framework, focusing on God and Jesus, for others it is about the connection to the horses, for others still, it is a foreign concept. Renee often uses the idea of energy as a basis to form their discussion.

So that's one way of sought of introducing, you know a lower sort of spiritual concept. People I just, just the variety of things that clients come up with regards to spirituality and what that means for them.

Some clients can experience what Renee describes as an 'Epona connection' with a horse. She is referring to another method of equine assisted therapy that is very focused on forming spiritual and emotional connections with horses. This is an immediate emotional, spiritual response and connection to a particular horse and can have a profound effect on clients.

For example, Renee describes one client's encounter with Pepper

As soon as she saw Pepper and the first time she put her hand on him she was just sobbing. There was a huge amount of stuff happening that she couldn't explain and she reckoned that he was her um I can't remember, she said he was her soul or her something some sort of connection like that anyway.

We talked about the fact that the inclusion of spirituality in the supposedly holistic framework of mental health practice here in New Zealand is a bit tokenistic despite the influence of the Māori culture and through well-being models such as Te Whare Tapa Wha. Traditional therapy covers any spiritual/religious affiliations as part of a person's strengths in treatment and recovery. What it doesn't seem to do very well is utilise it as a part of the healing process. There is also the problem of people feeling some kind of connection to something that isn't named or defined. Traditional therapy may not give a framework for them to experience or incorporate that into the process but EAP and the horses seems to be able to provide this framework.

This may be the case for things like intuition. Intuition is presented as the opposite of rational thought. Men are often given ownership of rational thought which is valued in our society whereas women have emotional or intuitive reactions which makes them lesser. Women may not be open about their beliefs and feeling around things like spirituality because of this stigma. This may mean there is less disclosure unless that option is presented to them. Renee talks about coming back into trusting her intuition after being told to discount it. She

owns it and describes it as a strength of hers. She then includes this as an attribute of the horses.

What I love about this, it's all about intuitive knowing you know. And trusting that and going back to the source of that [be]cause as a woman I believe in my own experience. I was taught to distrust that at a very young age, and discount it. And that was part of my madness you know. But that's actually a strength and that's what I bring to my work now of course so that's my core strength now I think. A lot of the work is intuitive because we go with that knowing and the horses have that too.

Presenting intuition as a strength, creates a discourse of empowerment in something that is often presented as a weakness. Renee embraces these feelings and in turn it is passed onto her clients. They are able to experience and live their spiritual beliefs in a positive way. They are able to experience these as their own strengths.

Where traditional therapy has failed.

Experience as a client and a practitioner enabled Renee insight into traditional methods and finding alternative ways of working with clients, especially those for whom traditional therapy has failed. One of the promising aspects of EAP is that clients seem to be more likely to turn up to sessions. Renee expresses her deep conviction in the efficacy of EAP, stating:

In all my experience of being a practitioner I have never come across anything as good as this, as powerful as, I've got clients who you know, I live, I work in an industry where clients are notorious for no shows. My clients turn up to every session and um and they beg for more you know so even the clients love it so and its therapy that doesn't always feel like therapy so yeah I just can't wait for the world to catch up.

She talks about the focus most therapies have on the client's history

You know how clients want to tell you their life story, that they think it's really important that you know their histories and that's the way we treat them. Because they go into mental health, they have to fill out a life history you know um it's all about where you've come from. Well equine therapy is about where you've come from if that's what comes up but that's not what defines us.

As she is often not the first person the clients have seen she doesn't want to repeat the work that has previously been done and not helped. Her focus is on moving forward.

I'm not a believer in de-validating where we come from, I don't necessarily think the answers are there especially if people have already done all that work with other people.

She talks about the expectations that clients have when they come to therapy. That they expect certain things in order to recover, and sometimes these need to be unraveled.

But we seem to have created a culture in our clients and in our services that that's how you get well.

Renee sees EAP as unique. She understands the place that it fits within the scope of therapeutic practices. EAP is often outside clients' frame of reference as to what therapy is or should be. Even clients attending therapy for the first time will have preconceived ideas as to what happens during a therapy session. This point of difference is a benefit that can create a way for clients to engage with this modality.

When talking about the difference of EAP compared to other therapies, Renee mentioned two things that stood out. The first was the fact that the EAP model

bypasses the head, the other is that it minimises talking. Renee describes the minimisation of talking as “a gift”.

From her experience with wilderness therapy and the 12 step program, Renee knew what she was looking for in a model of therapy. She knew what had and hadn't worked for both herself and others on the journey of recovery.

I was looking for a model that bypassed the head and went straight to the heart or the spirit of things and the horses do that. They just take you straight to your heart. It doesn't matter how much you want to try and stay in your head and especially the nature of it being experiential and it being non talk.

Again we have the head equalling rational thought. It's the foundation of therapy like CBT, which locates both the problem and the solution in dysfunctional thought. Renee called it analysis paralysis. You're so busy thinking about the problem that the solution is never found. Renee says the horses have the ability to cut through all that. This is the benefit of working with an animal that is extremely sensitive to the body language and energy of a person. This enables the horse to respond to the heart of the matter, what the body is saying rather than what the voice is saying. Clients may be focused on their mental ruminations, not aware of how they are really feeling or deliberately hiding how they are feeling. The horse can see through that and communicate the discrepancies to the practitioner who can utilise this in their work with the client.

Renee acknowledges what she says is risky given the focus on thoughts in traditional therapy.

I'm going to make a bit of a risky personal statement but I don't think that self knowledge, knowledge of my condition makes me better. I think it just makes me understand where I stand. I don't think that changes my reality.

For clients with a diagnosis of some kind, whether it is PTSD, depression, or anxiety, Renee feels that knowledge doesn't help them to get better, but rather it holds it in place. So for Renee, ruminating on the problem doesn't create the way forward, it doesn't create the solutions her clients need.

I can't think my way out of obsessions, I can't change my own thinking because I've only got my own thinking as a point of reference, therefore I need help outside of that. So I suppose my work's about trying to help people create new ways of doing things, new ways of thinking.

Psychological therapies are often called talking treatments. Researchers Parry et al. (2014) found that when this course of help goes wrong it can leave clients in more distress than before. For example, it was clear from one particular interview that this had happened to the participant. She felt misunderstood, misdiagnosed, devalued, like she was being forced into a box, like her time had been wasted and completely dismissed. Coming to Renee was the first time that she had felt understood. Her relationship with the therapies and therapists of the traditional modalities may have been strained because of their focus on the thoughts and the talk. They weren't able to get to the heart of the matter so [client] didn't feel understood. Coming to Renee and the horses bypassed this and enabled Renee to connect with what was really going on.

In therapy, the practitioner is in a position of power. This is also true of EAP practitioners, however there seems to be a mediating effect when the horses are involved. Having the power differential lowered, as well as the way issues are approached seems to be a strategy that mitigates exposing the client completely. It allows vulnerable people to approach their issues in a way that doesn't increase that vulnerability, but uses it as a way forward. The horse's presence seems to work around the client's vulnerabilities and allows disclosure without fear. Talk and disclosure especially for people with complex issues such as trauma can be difficult. Not having to verbally disclose can make the client feel safer about approaching their issues.

Renee also emphasises the fact that this therapy is solution focused rather than being defined by where you've come from. She said "*cause people get trapped in their own story and their own history*". EAP is about helping to shape future behaviour and reactions to the world. It's about trying out new behaviours in a safe environment and moving forward.

Equine therapy's not about that, it's about what is that horse bringing up in me and how do I recognise, acknowledge and become aware of that and how do I use that to um to my benefit, to move forward.

For a particular client, her experience with ACC and WINZ had had a huge impact on her life. She came to see Renee and she wanted to talk about these problems.

[Client] was a really good example of this, she wanted to come to me and she wanted to tell me all the bad things about WINZ and all the bad things about ACC and I thought, well I've heard them all before, but there's no answers there you know.

Renee articulates the problem with this as that the answers are sometimes not where the client is focused. For Renee it's about finding a way forward with the client.

Right, this is the reality of where I stand now. How am I going to go forward? And it's about finding a way forward.

Though it was hard for the client to hear, Renee had to redirect her focus to the solutions, to moving forward.

I want us to find a way to try and strengthen your resilience and bring that strong side of you to the fore. And she found that really hard and I explained to her, I said "I am not de-validating your experience with agencies I know about it, I've lived in the world, I've been a client, I know

what it's like" and I said, "but there is no solutions there we have to work with what's going to work," you know.

The experience of EAP is client led. That is, the perceptions of what is happening in the field of therapy, their interpretations of what the horse is doing are taken as their reality.

It's client perception so what she believes is true

Renee describes it as *"allowing their narrative to come forward."* That they follow the horses and the clients' interpretations and experiences *"rather than putting our own experience on them"*. This is how the metaphors are able to be used in therapy. The clients make sense of the metaphors in their own way thus linking it back to their own lives and issues.

Allowing this client led experience may lend itself to feelings of empowerment. The clients become active in the therapeutic processes. Allowing their narratives to come forward gives them the opportunity to re-story themselves. The narratives about themselves that emerge when discovering their strengths for example, can lead to the client being able to integrate that narrative of strength into their wider story.

Why women?

When I talked about women being drawn to the therapy, Renee immediately brought up the early connection to horses that a lot of women and girls have.

Well it's like every little girl wants a pony isn't it. So you've gotta say statistically, I would say 85% of the women I know have had a fantasy about having a horse and a connection to horses and the other 10-15% either have had a bad experience with horses or had absolutely nothing to do with them or are terrified of them so it's a big, there is something, a big connection there anyway.

This highlights how common the stereotype of girls wanting a pony is. It seems to be a normal part of growing up as a girl to have a period of time where they desire a pony.

Probyn (1993) talks about 'girl-lore', mentioning the stories National Velvet and My Friend Flicka as examples. These are only 2 of the more well-known texts relating to girls and horses. Every generation has its own horse stories from the classics to the Pony Pals books my niece is currently reading. It's almost part of the culture of being a girl. As Ojanen (2012) notes, horse toys are placed firmly in the girls sections of the toy stores, locating a cultural narrative that is gendered. As women in the world we are the products of our history, society and culture, and there is a link between femininity and horses. However, much of the narrative of womanhood is about making oneself small, taking up as little space as possible, both physically and mentally. Women are often detached from their body as a physical object. In terms of physical strength, there is a self-perpetuating cycle. Strength is a masculine trait. Women are told they are unfeminine to be strong which leads to actively avoiding doing things that will contribute to gaining strength which make them less physically capable which becomes proof of the inferiority of women's bodies.

Renee talks about the way women and girls present themselves to the world and the cultural expectations of what you should do and be. She talks about finding the real self, teaching women to be women.

It starts with awareness. What if I didn't have to look like Beyonce you know? What if I didn't have to look like Jennifer Lopez? Who am I under all this?

Horses are borderland animals. They live both within our world and outside it. When we are around them, they give us access to other ways of being in the world. In horse riding, part of the training to become proficient is learning to be aware of the functions of your body. How you move and how you carry yourself

are communicated with the horses both on the ground and in the saddle. The traditional narratives of womanhood that restrict access to power momentarily affects the way women interact with other bodies including their relationship with horses.

There is resistance to this narrative in associating with animals as large as a horse. It requires a certain amount of physical strength, and fosters mental strengths such as assertiveness. The girls in Forsberg and Tebelius' (2011) study became independent and competent within the stable environment, which translated into being able to act in autonomous ways outside the stable. Associating with horses takes oneself out of the panopticon, if only for a moment. You dress for functionality, not to impress any societal expectations. The adolescent girls in Forsberg and Tebelius' (2011) study talked about this with one saying, "[t]he stable is the only place where you don't need to care about how you look" (p.51). Ojanen (2012), also found that girls working in stables allowed conventional narratives such as those related to appearance, to be put at a distance.

Renee's words "*Who am I under all this?*" is a question of identity. Who am I? Who is the real me? What story do I want to tell about myself?

Identity is constructed through narratives that produce subject positions rather than in the individual (Malson, 1998). Finding a collective identity can be an important part of resisting a particular narrative. Identity construction can take the form of resistance in the way that a woman can make use of the narratives that are available to position themselves safely outside existing systems and beliefs (Croghan & Miell, 1998). Resistance to a more traditional feminine stereotype does not mean that the woman is resisting all of the narratives of femininity, they are just refusing a particular one. Rather, there are many narratives of femininity, and taking up the position of horsewoman is both feminine and resistance. Having that collective identity allows horsewomen to feel secure within their narratives of identity. Horsewoman gathers qualities deemed both traditionally masculine and traditionally feminine. A huge part of

being a horsewoman is care-taking, nurturing, bonding. Conversely it is also about hard work, dirt, toughness and the outdoors (Ojanen, 2012). She found the girls in the studied stable community said it was a place where they felt free to “be the way they wanted to be” (p.140). The community, hierarchies and the horses help to create the identity of ‘stable girl’. The stable environment creates a place that the girls are able to experience agency and the holding and use of power in a way that they were unable to in the outside world. Just by working with horses and experiencing part of the horsewoman narrative helps clients learn certain positive attributes that can be brought with them from the therapy to their narratives outside the space.

Gendered violence and vulnerability

Renee talked about the vulnerability of women throughout our interview. As she talked about the experiences she has had with clients, there was a strong theme of trauma. Many women presented with PTSD, suffered abuse both physical and sexual, they were afraid, anxious and depressed. Renee described the experience of one client. *“She talked about you know being just being totally unsafe in the world and um being preyed upon and you know all those things”*.

She goes on to expand that not only her clients but most women as having that vulnerability.

Cause most women I would have to say, most women have that sense of having been you know preyed upon or being around predatory behaviour a lot, round male behaviour.

This excerpt reminds me of the #YesAllWomen that trended on Twitter last year. Most women, myself included, have a story to tell about feeling unsafe, feeling preyed upon. The way your mind works in certain situations, walking after dark, walking through groups of men, for me walking past the local that’s on my way to town no matter the time of day, is geared towards defensiveness. There’s a hyper-vigilance, a constant threat analysis. I have a list of do’s and do not’s that

run through my head. Walk quickly, no eye contact, if someone says hello, a quick placating smile. It's shameful to admit that I feel that way and frustrating that I feel like I need to act to keep myself safe.

Violence against women is reaching epidemic levels. In New Zealand one in three women experience physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of their intimate partner (Fanslow et al., 2001), in 2014, 101,981 family violence investigations were recorded by New Zealand Police (Statistics New Zealand, 2015) and 25% of women have experienced one or more sexual offences (Ministry of Justice, 2015). This cultural phenomenon locates women as vulnerable. This highlights how many women have experienced trauma of some kind. These are the kind of clients that Renee saw repeatedly.

For Renee this seemed to highlight how she felt the world was. Everything about the world she traverses has been set up by males including the majority of relationships. She talks of a desire for a relationship where women are respected and revered and speaks of her frustration that the world we live in emphasises dominance over unity and relationship.

But the reality is far removed from that and the reality feels like a cruel joke really when you compare those things and when I, and I see that in my clients all the time as well, and just they can't necessarily verbalise that, but so often they're in you know relationships that are damaging.

Renee has an understanding of gendered structural power relations and that is brought through into the therapeutic relationship. The work with the horses opens up the potential for women who have abusive histories to work on safety. Because of the vulnerability of her clients, the abuse history of many of them, feeling safe becomes an important part of the therapy process. The client has to feel safe to connect, safe to disclose, and safe to try new behaviours. Renee tries to create a safe space within the therapeutic environment by utilising the connections the clients have with the horses and natural spaces. For some

people she has described the arena as being sacred. It becomes a refuge for clients who feel so uncertain in the rest of their lives.

Renee discusses how equine therapy fits into promoting the safety of the client and how that translates into recovery.

Equine therapy provides us with an opportunity to try out new behaviours in a safe environment and because the horses give immediate feedback, if I try something different, the horse will give me some sort of feedback to that. If I get it right so to speak, the horse will respond and then so that's a reward you know, an instant reward. So it's about immediate feedback in the moment and I don't have to practice those behaviours on a human being, I can practice them on a horse so it's you know it's safe emotionally and mentally safe.

EAP and Embodiment

Renee didn't specifically talk about embodiment initially, but through our conversations, it was evident that it was part of the therapeutic relationship. "See that embodiment principle, I really like that ... and this has happened to me a lot on my journey as it will for you probably, is that you come across a term that fits the stuff you've been doing". She had been working with the notion of intuition, of a 'something' being important that she articulated as groundedness. We went on to talk about to way the research and interview process benefits everyone, "it feeds the whole process, like now, from now on I'll really think about that." My introduction of the concept of embodiment has opened up a new avenue of thought for her. It connected my theoretical concepts with her practical knowledge and created something stronger for both of us because of it. She had a word that described what she had been doing, and also one that allowed her to expand on her base of knowledge. For me, I now had her practical knowing of what this concept looked like in therapeutic practice.

Renee talked about the concept of groundedness she uses.

I think that's why I um I've changed through the work too. It's because it really helped me be present, be physical, be in my body. Horses don't want much to do with you if you're ungrounded um so it's one of the fundamentals of working in this way. That one has to be grounded and um and that starts with being planted doesn't it.

Being present was part of her own journey. She had to learn to be grounded, learn to be authentic. She wasn't taught this anywhere, working within this method showed her that it was important.

I had to learn all of that, nobody told me that in an EAGALA session, I didn't learn that in EAGALA training it's all been part of my and I don't know why actually it's all been part of um my development as a practitioner.

Practicing EAP has also changed her. It has meant she has had to learn to be grounded in order to work with the horses and teach it to others. Part of what the grounding does is establish a place for authenticity to happen. *“Being grounded to me is also about being authentic, being who you really are and how you really are in that moment”.*

The grounding and authenticity become part of the mechanisms for change. Grounding comes from being present, being in one's body and connected to your surroundings. Authenticity involves acknowledging and feeling the emotions that are happening rather than shielding oneself from them. It brings internal emotions and external affect into congruence.

When you're in your body you have to feel your feelings of course and all the experiences that come with it

When working towards authenticity, the horses lead by example. Part of the EAP protocols is to allow the horses to be themselves. The horses are modelling both groundedness and authenticity through their being.

Especially with trauma and abuse, just the fact that the horses have permission to be who they are is you know particularly attractive to people who have been abused and traumatised.

She described the relationship between women and groundedness as “so many of our clients, especially our women clients have no idea about being grounded or being connected or being in their bodies”.

She explained this disconnect by linking back to the concept of safety

I think that's why women do spend a lot of time out of their bodies cause ... sometimes it's just not safe being in your body, or most of the time in fact really, you know in society it's not always very safe.

She talked about the effect the presence of a horse can have. For example, a client had a breakthrough influenced by a horse. Renee articulated it as “that must have been something to do with you know helping her be in her body and being in the horses presence somehow gave her permission to actually be in her in herself”. With the work Renee does, she had exposed the vulnerability that her clients have with being in their bodies. Renee is aiming to bring women into their bodies, be being present in the moment and acknowledge their authentic feelings.

For many women, their trauma is a bodily experience that they cannot articulate. Therefore, traditional therapies are not going to work for these people as being able to articulate the trauma is an important facet of the therapy. The theory of Cartesian Dualism is still very much present within psychological circles but for these women, this does not take the fullness of their lived, bodily experiences into account. The assumption that the ‘mind can know itself’ does

not hold out. Cromby (2005) argues that emotions are an important part of embodied experiences. EAP may help women experience their emotions fully and in a safe way.

Renee gives an example of a horse's reaction to someone who is grounded and someone who is not. This client was very physically ungrounded so the change became also a bodily thing.

Anyway she's walking round the arena on her toes and I just saw it and I brought her over and I said to her how about we learn about being grounded in our walk and what we have to do is we have to be connected to the earth and so we talked about this and I said it's like heels down, toes down and we did this walk together and we loosened our hips and loosened our knees and um and she started walking grounded and leading the horse and the horse's response to her was completely different so rather than trying to be sort of avoiding her and pulling away, the horse came alongside her, shoulder to shoulder.

Being grounded and authentic also involves reflexivity on the practitioner's part. The EAGALA model includes having awareness of “my stuff”, stuff that the practitioner brings with them into the session. “ *I can recognise and park it aside but it's with me in some respect*”. The reason is explained by Renee

Because the horses are um energy beings, god that sounds a bit flakey doesn't it, but because they pick up on everything um and they're exquisitely sensitive and that can effect a session and stuff so the way to counteract that is to actually be with what's going on with my life and be with who I am and because that whole, if I'm trying to mask or hide that stuff, the horses respond because they are confused by discrepancy and so we have to be authentic and the more authentic we can be, the more effective we are in the work.

Horses are sensitive to discrepancies in affect, behaviour and emotion. When another animal isn't congruent there is the possibility of risk to the individual and the herd. The horses have to be comfortable with the practitioner and the practitioner's emotions to ensure that they can focus on the client.

Renee also talks about the discomfort of going against the rules, or the perceived rules, and therefore the need to be able to reflect on process.

When you don't give people specifics you don't give them an example or you don't tell them, women especially how to do stuff they're quite lost.....and what happened for me when I was first put in that experience was how do I know that I'm getting it right if you don't tell me how to do it right ... like women find that really really difficult yeah so just the very nature of it actually says actually its ok whatever you do is ok here everything you do is right there is no wrong here you know

Renee mentions the growth aspect of EAP and describes it as coming into yourself, which is a process of embodied knowing.

It just makes me think of all the times in life I feel like that there's an uncomfotablility in doing it my way, or there used to be, there's not now, laughs, but um so that's all part of that whole coming into yourself

Nonverbal communication links to embodiment with the understanding that without being embodied, nonverbal communication is difficult. For horses, nonverbal, bodily communication is their language. For humans and especially for women, this can present as a challenge.

Renee uses the concept of energy when teaching children about nonverbal communication.

Say if I come up to you in the school ground and I say (quiet voice) can I have your sandwiches? Would you give me your sandwiches? Well no,

no way. What about if I come up to you and go (loud voice) give us your sandwiches. And and they'll go, they'll step backwards it doesn't matter what they say and you say can you see the difference? What's the difference between those behaviours and they could say aggressive, assertive and I go what else? That you walked at me really fast and made me walk backwards. But what changed inside me? And so we start talking about energy and that's usually for little kids, usually adults kind of know what you're talking about.

So part of the process translates into communicating with the horses with your energy, getting them to move in a certain direction or way. It becomes a matter of focusing that energy. When I'm working with Fox, who is quite a pushy horse and I want him to move away, I point at his chest and direct energy through that finger towards him. I don't have to say anything, I don't have to touch him. It's hard to translate the feeling and actions into words as it's something that I just do. I've seen trainers more skilled than I, get a horse to move by just looking at the right place.

For Renee, the process of understanding is embedded in bodies.

Again this disembodiment or embodiment, women aren't very good at it and when you wanna move a horse with your energy, like people just don't know what the hell you're talking about.

Women understand the concept of energy as described by Renee above but implementing it when working with the horses is challenging. To be able to use your body and your energy to communicate, you need to be in your body.

Understanding the process is highly dependent then on the use of metaphor, central to EAP. Renee talks about their benefits in the process as *"having those physical metaphors and visual metaphors for people is really helpful"*. Whilst much of traditional therapy is abstract, the metaphors created in EAP are literally laid out in front of the clients. They are physical and visual

representations of issues and solutions. The use of metaphors in this way allow a shift in perspective that can break through resistance or confusion. They can also help unlock feelings and emotions. As they combine different sensory and comprehension elements, they are more powerful than words alone.

Renee has several stories that show the use of metaphors in her work. One client had PTSD from the experience of being stuck in a paddock with cattle who she thought were going to kill her. The fence was electrified and the client thought the shock was strong enough to kill her too. She thought she couldn't escape and was going to die. The horse - Pepper, in the session the client attended, had a trick of going through the tape and standards, getting himself tangled up but then freeing himself and leaving. Renee was able to use the horse doing this in the session to give the client the analogy of being able to escape, to free herself.

So we were able to use that analogy in the therapy for um you know he's showing you how to escape from something that you thought was going to kill you. You know he's going through a fence. So yeah, so spiritually to you know that all of those metaphors and stuff really really worked for [client]. And not only does he step out, he steps back in again. He comes back into the arena when he feels like it as well, so it was a real freeing thing of you know of being able to rescue one's self and save oneself you know all those things.

A common exercise in EAGALA is having the client build a path and then guide the horse through it. In this case, the horse wouldn't enter the path which became a metaphor for where the client was at in her life

So she built a little pathway and Lily wouldn't enter the pathway and we talked about um what Lily was standing in. In her history and in her life and in the stuff she knew and it didn't matter how painful it was, she couldn't move from that place onto the path because of what she didn't know about what was in front of her. What she couldn't control what she

couldn't plan was more frightening than where she stood. And we talked about how, what do we need to get from where we stand and where we're stuck, onto that pathway. And so in the end she got a halter out and she said I don't want to force the horses and I said, why does a halter mean forcing? Why can't a halter be an aid? Why can't it be a tool of recovery? So she put the halter on the horse and she led the horse through the pathway and she got to the end and she said now what do I do? And I said celebrate, you know. And she um I just think that's such a powerful metaphor to work through so a lot of the processing in equine therapy happens outside the session.

Listening to the attributes that a client gives a horse can tell a lot about the person and what their issues might be. One exercise is asking a client which horse they'd like to work with and why. For example, one might say, "I want to work with that one cause he looks big and strong." Or, "I like that one because she looks shy and like she might need a friend." This happens throughout the therapy. The client gives attributes to or identifies with the horse and their behaviour.

Like that woman saying last night that horse is aloof, well she was talking about herself wasn't she, I mean that's all projection

Having a safe object to project feelings onto makes it easier for the therapist to access things the client may be feeling or thinking in a safe way. It may also reveal things to the therapist that the client doesn't consciously know or acknowledge.

The horses themselves just make those subjects accessible. Where like what I've found with young people is that they won't openly talk about their own bullying. Whether they're doing the bullying or experiencing it but they'll do that through a horse you know. So they will talk about the horse getting bullied and that sort of thing so you know and when they're

feeling much more comfortable around that then they're quite easy to to engage in their own experiences.

The horses give another way for the client to see their own behaviours and the reactions and interpretations of that.

They see a lot of their own behaviours in that horse so um yeah the horses will kick back or they'll you know they'll decide they want to do something different yeah so again it's another vehicle which um your client gets to know themselves better and see how they operate in the world.

The horses do a lot of different things during the therapy. When asked to describe their role, Renee explained, *"They're the healers really, and the teachers, the guides... I see them as a vehicle really, by which change occurs and sometimes they take a more active role and sometimes they take a passive role in that and what I see myself as doing is filling in the blanks of understanding of client understanding."*

The horses and the clients create the metaphors together whilst Renee facilitates the client's understanding of what might be going on and guiding them towards discovering solutions. Renee talked about 'horse wisdom'. Whilst some horses are experts at a certain aspect of therapy, others are new at the game. However, they all bring themselves and their horse wisdom. She also described the horses as being intuitive *"A lot of the work is intuitive because we go with that knowing and the horses have that too."*

Renee relates the concept of the 'white horse' to this horse wisdom.

The whole analogy of the white horse, the white horse represents something in peoples' lives, it seems to be a significant colour for people and what I know about white horses myself is of course is that usually the white comes with age so its kind of a wisdom thing as well you know

and the horses although Lily's not that old she's white but Foggy certainly he's got whiter and whiter as he got older yeah so that's something that resonates with people as well.

Having the horses at liberty allows them to get involved at their own discretion. Renee describes this as *"horses choose people. So people think they choose the horses but the horses choose the people they really do."* Here it is the horses knowing/intuition that is attributed with drawing certain horses to certain clients. *"All of a sudden one day a client will walk in and a horse will just beeline for them you know."*

The horses work in tandem with Renee but they are also outside her influence. Occasionally they will do things that stump even Renee.

One session she had in the arena with him and she um I suppose this was the first time that I witnessed something truly truly magical sought of happening and I had no reference point for it really. And um so she stood with him on the surface of the arena and she had her arms around his neck and her chest pressed to his chest and he had his head lowered he had his eyes closed and his lips were moving like really quite um extensively and so it wasn't a licking and chewing motion it was a trembling lip thing you know and um and they just stood like that in this embrace for like it was 10 or 15 minutes. It was a hell of a long time and every so often she would make this little squeal of like delight and um I stood there and I thought what the hell's going on and what should I do and should I intervene or should I leave it and um anyway I let the process um come to its own conclusion and she withdrew from him in the end and said that was amazing. And I said could you tell me what happened? And she said well Foggy just scanned my whole body and healed all of the places that have been hurt and um I just thought to myself you know wow that's just amazing and there was something going on um just by his body language but even, even if there hadn't been, the fact that that was what she believed and that was her perception of what

happened and what she got from that experience was you know, that you know all of that abuse over the many, many years that she'd experienced, it had been healed.

They seem to also work as a support system. Renee said *“the horses seem to be able to help people walk through that extreme stuff.”* As the clients form attachments to the horses, they can become a base of support. This enables the clients to experience their emotions knowing they have someone behind them.

Nature

Renee has talked previously about part of what drew her to EAP was the setting, the outdoors, the nature. She describes the role that this connection with nature has in the therapy

I think the more we live in concrete jungles and the more we shrink ourselves down and limit that ah connection with the stuff that's important of the earth you know I think the more we suffer and um so even coming up to Mary's is therapeutic, even just going to El Rancho is therapeutic you don't have to actually do anything with people.

This access to nature facilitated by EAP may be the only time the clients are in a natural environment. This contact with the outdoors can be healing in and of itself as espoused by wilderness therapies.

Renee's account of EAP suggests that it is the interrelations between the space, the place, the therapist, the horse, and the client that are the foundations for change. To focus on only one aspect of EAP neglects the complex ecology that is created during the EAP process. The clients experience an embodied subjectivity that connects with the ecology of the therapy and the therapist.

Chapter 5

Client Case Studies



Photo 5. A sign at one of the therapy locations - Jackie

To keep the narrative of the women's experiences intact, the analysis is presented on a case by case basis. Their pictures and discourse tell the stories of their experiences with EAP. Keeping the narratives complete allows me to illustrate the therapeutic factors at work within the women's stories. Though the clients' experiences were all so unique, throughout the retelling of their stories, several themes emerged that will be discussed in the next chapter. In telling their stories these women have shown both strength and vulnerability.

Sophie

Sophie was the youngest participant, in her late teens. She took part in the therapy individually and then Renee included her mother in the sessions.. She talked about metaphors, transference and projection, building relationships, and the space in which the therapy was done.

Sophie spoke only briefly about her chosen images. This may have been partly due to the fact that they were all taken during one session. The camera was forgotten until the last session, which also suggests she was engaged in the therapy. As such, the photos used in the interview are all from this session. When asked if Sophie had had the opportunity to take more pictures, she stated she would have liked to take photos of the whole process so she could look at her journey and compare the pictures and have a record of what she did.

I also asked her if taking the photos had any effect on her experience, which I unfortunately neglected to ask the other participants. She found the experience positive as she thought that taking the photos helped her understand the therapeutic process in a different way.

Because you kind of had to step back and then really see what the horses were doing. And then I thought about what I was doing and be like, I could take a photo of this because this resembles such and such and whereas without the photos I probably wouldn't have really thought about it that much until once I had left but I was thinking about it kind of like there and then.

She linked the photo taking to the therapy in a way that the photo taking actually became part of the therapeutic process. This was unintended on my part but seemed to have a positive effect for Sophie, as she was able to reflect in the moment.

She also talked about the photos and how they could be, or demonstrate, the metaphors she found throughout her therapy. Most of her images link to a particular metaphoric moment, which seemed to be what she was trying to capture. My interpretation is that she was trying to show me the process of the therapy with her pictures.



Photo 6: Cocoa making it to the end of the path

For Sophie this photo (photo 6) of Cocoa making it to the end of the path resembled “moving on or moving forward”.

We had to get the horses through that pathway and so that was the moment that it got to the very end of the pathway so it was kind of resembling moving on or moving forward and it took almost the whole session to get both the horses through. It was a really long process. So we weren't allowed to like use any ropes or anything we had to kind of like guide them or um so that was kind of quite tricky.

This photo confers on Sophie the ability to tell the story of that session and what the session meant for her. It let me hear the process of the exercise not just the moment that the photo was taken.

With Sophie's narrative, this photo represented a captured metaphor. The reader can see the path, see the horse at the end and understand the metaphor that was produced with the exercise. It has done what I believe Sophie intended which was to translate and communicate her experience.

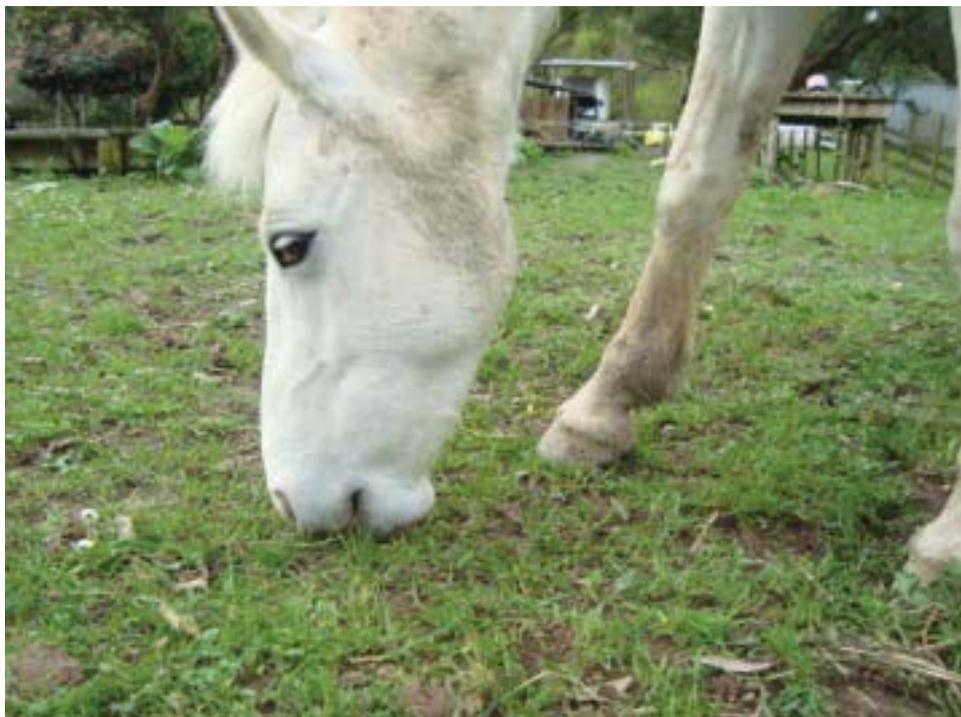


Photo 7: Lily eating

Um I think this one here (indicating photo 7) is Lily and she was just constantly eating like the whole time we tried to get to do anything she was always eating and so it's a real struggle to get her moving and [laughs]

This is a portrait shot of Lily eating (photo 7). It shows her face but with Sophie's description, also paints a picture of her personality and how Sophie interacted with her. You can see Lily is keeping her eye on Sophie.

Having this photo let Sophie describe Lily in a specific way. The photo elicited the feelings that Sophie had when she tried to work with Lily that she was then able to tell me. It let Sophie talk about the frustration that she was experiencing in this moment but the way she talks with the laugh also shows the affection that she had for Lily.



Photo 8: Lily and Sophie making it to the end of the path

In this photo (photo 8), Sophie is standing with her arms around Lily. She has a big smile on her face. In the background is the arena with various objects that are delineating a path.

Sophie talks with great pride about this photo. She has constructed this path, and made it challenging for herself and got Lily to the end thus completing the exercise. She described the path to me that is in the background of the photo, and showed me Lily, the horse she was working with.

Oh that's when Lily gets to the end of the pathway so you can see the pathway starts here comes through the cones and all the way around up

here so it was quite long um and so that's the, Lily is the horse that I was working with pretty much most of the time.

This photo allowed Sophie to talk about the space that her path was in. She was able to use the photo to show me her pathway, even the bits that were outside the photo. It gave her a spatial frame of reference that she wouldn't have had without the photo. This links to the concept of EAP being a complex ecology that is produced from the interrelations between all the participants and the space. Nature and the outdoors has enabled this exercise to take place in a form that provided Sophie with a learning experience.



Photo 9: Cocoa and Sophie's mum

This image (photo 9) shows Sophie's mum resting against Cocoa, who is eating. They are placed in the middle, with the arena to one side and paddock on the other. Above and behind is the tree next to the arena, spreading its branches over the space. Though this is at first glance a photo of Cocoa and [mum], it is also a photo of the space. The angle of the lens is wide and zoomed out showing much of the surroundings. This image shows the natural context

that the therapy takes place in. Though the focus is [mum] and Cocoa, the space in the image translates the space the therapy takes place in.

Sophie doesn't talk explicitly about this photo, she just uses it to introduce her mum and Cocoa and their participation in her therapy. [Mum] was present for the last two sessions during which time they also used another horse, Cocoa for [mum] to work with.

The last two sessions my mum joined in and we used Cocoa as well so we had two horses to work with.

Renee has a way of bringing people surrounding the client into the therapy too. In Sophie's case, it was her mother. This is linked to the relational nature of EAP. The client is part of a wider ecology that includes family members, friends and other societal systems. Expanding the number of relationships that are included in the therapy widens the impact and areas for change that the client can discover.

In this case, the exercises and the horses improved the relationship between Sophie and her mum.

And then Renee was like "oh do you want to join in today?" And she was like "oh yeah ok." So no she's a lot like me. We're very similar actually so she really enjoyed it. She thought it was really good, I think it actually brought us a bit closer as well, kind of working together to work with the horses.

This is just the beginning of the pathway (indicating photo 10) and Lily's started to come in and then decided no, and turned around and walked back out again, "ooooh we're nearly there" [laughs]

The way Sophie talks about this photo (photo 10) includes the moments before and after the shot was taken so it encompasses more than just the moment the

photo shows. Sophie sees the photo as a story of the moments surrounding the image and is thus able to tell me about the situation, about Lily starting on the path but then reversing out. It allows access to what Sophie was feeling when this was happening which seemed to be frustration.



Photo 10: The start of the path

When looked at as a whole, Sophie's images create a narrative of her experience with EAP. Sophie's photos include not just the split second the photo was taken, they are imbued with the meaning and metaphors of that session. This was her last session and stories her journey through the metaphors of frustration to moving forward. Sophie's photo set shows the progression through one exercise, the path building. However, she has put them in the reverse order in her chosen photos with the photos at the end of the session being placed first.

Sophie talks about liking to complete the tasks and that she doesn't feel like she's finished if the exercise isn't done. One facet of the EAP exercises is that the goal isn't to complete the exercise, but to see what metaphors are made

during the process. This can be challenging for some people as Sophie explains.

But I find it frustrating I'm one of those people who likes to finish things so when it was like oh I haven't done it properly, I haven't done it properly and they're like no its fine [laughs]

The order she chose the photos seems to suggest a metaphor for her experience, that she was trying to achieve some kind of closure or completion and the journey of building and guiding the horses through the path served as the way to story this. As such the moment of completion was the most important part of the experience for her.

In the event that the photos didn't illicit much information, I had prepared a number of open ended questions on the topic. Through these questions I was able to attend to the processes that Sophie experienced. I used these questions with all the participants but for Sophie's interview it was where the bulk of the information was. Most of Sophie's discourse was around four themes that related to processes of EAP uncovered throughout my research.

Connecting to the horses

Sophie had a history of having a relationship with horses prior to therapy through her participation in the sport of vaulting which is like gymnastics on a horse's back. She was excited be with them again. When she said this, I made a comment about there being something about a lifelong attraction to horses to which Sophie replied, "*yeah they're like magical*". For some people there is a deep connection to horses that continues even if they haven't had access to a horse for some time.

Sophie explained that she is 'into' the spiritual element of things, so for her the horses and the therapy having a spiritual component suited her.

I'm quite into different kinds of things and kind of I don't know, it's a little bit spiritual kind of, yeah and I'm kind of into that so...

Sophie talks about the connection with the horses as a spiritual experience. The horses and the way they related to her took on spiritual aspects when they did things she asked them to do or they showed her things that she felt were just for her.

Um, I guess cause you can really connect with the horses. They're um yeah, I don't know, it's kind of when you really want them to do something, you can kind of tell them like through your mind and then they kind of go with you and yeah, I mean like "I want you to walk this way" and they start moving that way it's like...

We talked about how sometimes it seemed the horses were specifically telling you something as the stuff they did felt so specific to you and what you were dealing with.

Yeah cause they'd do like a certain little thing and you'd be like "oh my gosh" you know, this is crazy! How is this working? What are these connections? And it's like awww you're like reading my mind [laugh]

This is about the magic of nonverbal communication. Horses are extremely sensitive to the way bodies move and what that might be communicating. When you are thinking about something, for example doing one of the EAP exercises, your body will be changing in a myriad of different ways. These changes can be from large gestures to minute positional changes. Many of these changes are so small you are probably not aware of it happening. You might be focused on the direction you want the horses to go so your body language and energy are pointing the way though you have not consciously indicated. The horses are reacting to these minute bodily communications, though to the client it might feel as if they are reacting to the thing they had in their mind (Birke & Brandt, 2009; Yorke, et al., 2008).

When I asked Sophie about communicating with the horses and body language, learning to read it and using her body to communicate she replied,

Yip [laughs] cause you can't exactly talk to them 'ok like walk'

She understood that communicating with the horses took more than just telling the horse what to do, you had to use other ways of getting it to understand. At various times throughout the interview she talked about pushing, nudging, guiding and leading. These are all various ways of communicating with a body. They range from having physical contact with the 'other's' body to a bodily presence or energy such as when you are guiding a horse from behind.

This kind of communication, like a verbal conversation is reciprocal. Gestures, touch and movement are shared, like a dance with a partner. Learning this type of communication, even unconsciously can lead to changes in the body and the way the client thinks about it and what it can do. There are often reported feelings of being more grounded; that is feeling more in one's body, connected to your physical body and connected to emotions that are housed in that body. Disconnected feelings then become integrated as part of the therapeutic process (Birke & Brandt, 2009; Meinersmann, et al., 2008).

Lily was the horse Sophie worked with the majority of the time. She described their relationship as feeling intimate, *'I actually fell in love with Lily, like she's just the coolest horse'*.

It is common for the clients to spend a lot of time working with one particular horse. This, in their mind, becomes 'their' horse. The creating of this bond is a key part of the therapeutic processes of EAP (Burgon, 2003; Bizub et al., 2003). The strong emotional connection that the clients feel for their horses helps to create the foundation of a good therapeutic relationship, an important factor in client improvements in therapy (Bizub et al., 2003; Yorke et al., 2008).

Sophie recounts the building of her relationship with Lily.

Um, at the beginning, I was a bit kind of unsure, um and then we worked on like a few things that would get the horses to kind of trust us and by the end of it I felt like Lily was my best friend. Like I didn't want to leave, I was like "oh no I'm never gonna see you again".

Sophie expressed that her relationship with Lily felt like the relationship with a best friend, indicating the strength of the bonds that can be created and the personhood of the horse. Lily is experienced by Sophie as an individual with whom she enjoys sharing time.

Sophie equated the building of a relationship with the horse to building of trust. Since it is a relationship, the trust is mutual (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005; Quiroz-Rothe et al., 2005). Sophie wanted to highlight the bond and shared trust she had with Lily by telling me a story about an exercise they were doing using pool noodles to direct the horses.

My mum was using that to try and get the horse to go to where we wanted to go but it actually got really frightened of it and so it kind of ran off, um but it ran straight towards me.

This demonstrates that the reciprocal interactions are mutually beneficial. Not only does the client benefit from the relationships that are formed but the horses also do (Chalmers & Dell, 2015). In this example, Lily has learned to trust Sophie and for a horse, trust is equal to a place of safety. When Lily was given a fright by the pool noodle, she reacted with her flight response but ran to a place of safety, Sophie.

I did think was really cool how um after a few weeks, I guess the horse got to know me a lot more and stuff like that. And so when I did want it to go places or follow me or something, you give it a really good pat and then you kindof walk off and then it would actually want to follow you because it knows you.

As Lily and Sophie got to know each other, they co-created a language. The foundation for this language is their bodies (Brandt, 2004). They learned the way each other's bodies moved and what those movements meant. Sophie articulates this as Lily knowing her so understands what she is wanting her to do.

When we were discussing how women relate to horses, Sophie attributed the way women connect to horses to the horses' spiritual nature.

Um, I think it might be also because you know, the horses, they do have kind of a real spiritual thing and you can bond really well with them, whereas guys, they're kind of too tough and macho to be kind of like on that different level of kind of like connecting.

Sophie draws on her position within a narrative that links spiritual connection with femininity, that is marked by gendered difference. She talked about the difference in a positive way suggesting there is something about the way women relate to the world that makes them able to forge these spiritual connections with horses.

My interpretation of this is that the experience of EAP has allowed Sophie to see a positive way of viewing certain attributes of being a woman, and is connected with an embodied knowing.

Using the Te Whare Tapa Wha model of health, there are four fundamental aspects to health. Taha wairua (spiritual health), taha hinengaro (mental health), taha tinana (physical health) and taha whānau (family health) (Rochford, 2004). EAP is a holistic modality that works with all these dimensions attempting to heal and balance them out thereby creating strong walls to hold up the whare. One wall is not favoured over other walls as perhaps can be a critique of other modalities of therapy (Hallberg, 2008).

For people with religious or spiritual beliefs, these can be integrated easily into the practice of Renee's EAP model. This allows the wall of taha wairua to be strengthened alongside the other walls. Even for those without strong religious beliefs, the connection with the horses is often experienced as having something spiritual about it as in Sophie's case.

The horses and the concept of spirituality seemed to be intertwined for Sophie. Within this narrative, spirituality and healing is enabled through human animal connections (Burgon, 2003; Meinersmann, et al., 2008).

Difference in therapy

Sophie talked a lot about how EAP was different from the other therapy she had done.

I think the really good thing about it was it didn't feel like therapy. So I knew that it was helping me and I could definitely see a difference in myself even after the first week. Um but to me it just felt like I was having fun and I was kind of in my element.

The main point that Sophie makes here is that it didn't feel like therapy to her. She was just enjoying herself. She also talked about being in her element. Sophie has experience being with horses through her vaulting practice so being around horses again made her feel good. Another interpretation of this is perhaps a feeling of wholeness, of feeling like her true self. When you're doing something that feels really right, there can be a sense of homecoming, joy and completeness. Having the client experience fun and play can help with the healing process (Zugich et al., 2002).

For Sophie, there is a big novelty factor to the therapy. It is different from anything else she's done. She would also look forward to it. She was excited about going.

I would actually look forward to it, oh yus! I'm going to horse therapy.

Numerous studies on EAP have shown that there are improvements in feelings of psychological distress and mood disorders as well as feelings of independence, self-esteem and self-efficacy. These results were stable at a 6 month follow up (Bizub et al., 2003; Klontz et al., 2007). Although psychometric testing was not part of my research, and I have no knowledge of why Sophie was at this therapy, Sophie clearly experienced change through the process of EAP rather than talk therapy to which she compared it with.

Um, cause its different to just kind of sitting and like “oh how do you feel about this” and “how are you going to improve it”. You know it was just kind of something different.

For Sophie, the idea of ‘talking’ rather than doing ignores the ‘something’ that EAP offers through the human-animal relationship of mutual becoming (Gibson, 2015). In her research, Gibson (2015) has argued that the assumption that humans have autonomy over nature is challenged through the way EAP understands human-animal engagement as “mutually becoming” (p.21).

Space/nature

Space was important to Sophie’s narrative, and highlights the EAP assumption that nature is necessary to how we understand ourselves through our relationships and connection with others and with nature.

And it was cause up and out and doing things instead of just kind of like sitting down each week with like a person.

This passage emphasises the doing that happens within EAP, which can be linked to research that suggests that physical activity can have a positive effects on mood (Bizub et al., 2003)

Um, I really enjoyed being outside because you had so much space and just room to breathe and think about things, and it was in the fresh air

and you could hear the stream and the birds and it was just really relaxing and um yeah you did just have a whole lot of space that you could work in.

The connection between physical activity and space provides the conditions for experiencing the sensations of the body. The freedom of space, and the experiences of touch and smell and movement interrelate and enable a sense of being in the body.

So it was just cool to be in a different space and work in different surroundings and stuff.

Metaphor

Sophie talks a lot about metaphors. She was quite confident speaking about the way they were used in the therapy and understood how they were beneficial. Compared to the talk of the other participants, Sophie seemed to be able to articulate how they were working. She talked about how the metaphors translated from the horses to her life and how she was able to take away the things she was learning. She makes it sound like the reflexive process was also important to her.

She'll [therapist] give you something to take away and think about and um you don't usually you didn't have to use it in your life but it was something you could think about and relate to and yeah lots of metaphors and stuff like that translate from the horses.

Metaphors are generated through Renee's interpretation of the actions of the horses but Sophie is the one that draws her own meanings from them. This process allows the client to create their own meaning within the space of the arena.

I think cause she was able to see things that I couldn't see. I think cause she's got such a good understanding of the horses and how they work that she could kind of say "oh well you know what do you think of her turning her back to at this point during the session" and stuff. And so then I could relate that back to things in my life. And so she could read the horses where I can't really read horses. I don't know what they mean by things. Yeah just being able to kind of mention a few things and then allowing me to put it into perspective for myself.

One of the key roles of the therapist is to provide metaphors for the client. Sessions can be planned around exercises that will create meaningful metaphors for the client and help the client develop specific skills such as assertiveness or relationship building that relate to the issues the client has (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005). It is also the practitioner's job to help the client see those metaphors by commenting on what the horse is doing in regards to the exercise or the client and seeing how the client relates it to their own lives. If clients are unaware of how they act in certain feelings, or have hidden emotions, the metaphors can help them become aware of these. The scope of the metaphors is only really limited by the experiences of the client. The horses can serve as metaphors for relationships with people or people themselves, trauma, life events, and patterns of behaviour (Kakacek, 2007; Schultz, 2007; Zugich et al., 2002).

This section is also about communication. Sophie talks about the skill difference between herself and Renee regarding 'reading' the horses. Sophie understands that the horses are communicating although she doesn't have the skill to understand what they are saying the way Renee does. As Renee and the horses have been working together for some time, Renee will have a good understanding of the individual horses and the things that they do and what they are trying to communicate. Some horse people also have what seems to a novice, an almost magical ability to read horses.

Sophie talked about the path building exercise. The first part of this exercise is building a path. Sophie explains how this went for her and her mother.

But we both actually had different ideas of how we wanted the trail to be so I wanted to start it off kind of smaller and then just branch off and leave it completely open whereas she wanted it to go kind of towards a tree and so we had to kind of do it together. So we ended up having it starting off small, then one went off the other way and one went towards the tree.

She was then able to tell me that exercise helped her see that everyone has their own perspective on things.

It was realising that everyone has their different their perspectives and where they want things to go. So for me it was kind of like how I wanted my life to be was you know like I'm working towards things but I wanted it open it and I can do whatever I want to do whereas cause my mum's older now, so she's got a goal that she wants to get to.

Building the path with her mum demonstrated in a tangible way how Sophie and her mum can negotiate their differences. Here, in the arena, it was laid out in front of them. Every part of the exercises done in EAP can invoke the potential to change something. It is this flexibility that can be so useful.

One of the aims of EAP is to create solutions to the clients' issues. Here Sophie is talking about how the therapy sets up those solutions through the metaphors.

I think it was the fact that because I'll be working with the horses and Renee would be watching, seeing you know, how the horses interact with me and then she'll come back and give me tips on you know "Lily walked over this way and did such and such" and so I could step back and see that and then actually see myself in that so yeah, you can kind of see yourself in there and you can think oh ok so maybe I could do this and this to help myself.

Everything comes from the client, from the original metaphors to their interpretation and understanding of what the solution might be. In this way interaction and connection with horses offers the opportunity to address therapeutic issues of both projection and transference safely, in a non-threatening way (Klontz et al., 2007). Sophie talks about how Renee elicits the reaction from the client to deal with it in the here and now.

Oh the other cool thing was how the horses interact with you and their surroundings and stuff. But then you can also picture the horse you know someone that you know in your life so you can kindof at the end of the lesson um Renee would be "well who can you imagine this being right now?" And so it'd be like oh yeah that you know seems like my coach, or today it reminds me of my mum and how she does this and this or my grandma.

Sophie was also aware enough about how the therapy worked for her that she was able to reflect on how it's a different experience for everyone as everyone will make their own metaphors.

I thought that was really cool how everyone sees different things in it

Sophie's experience with EAP seemed to have been to her benefit. Part of this success seems to be because of the way she felt about the therapy. Her experience seemed to be one of joy. She looked forward to going, and enjoyed her time there. The smile on her face in photo 3 says it all. She considered it successful and that it taught her a lot.

Jackie

Jackie was a participant in the program as part of a family group with the focus client being her son. She was a woman of few words, there were lots of pauses and stops which indicated to me that she wasn't comfortable disclosing much,

especially about herself and her feelings. She was more open talking about [son] and would often direct my questions back to his experience rather than talking about hers.

Julie's original photo set was the most varied among participants. She was working in a different location than the other two participants. She included photos of a number of different horses and various people interacting with them, a range of exercises and several of the spaces that they were working in. When refining her photos she focused on the horses and the people interacting with them.

Clipper



Photo 11: Clipper, the horse Jackie identified with the most

When Jackie was choosing the photos, this was the first photo she picked (photo 11). Her comment about this image was '*definitely Clipper, he's gorgeous*'. Jackie choosing this photo first showed how important Clipper was

to her. The photo is a portrait of Clipper, highlighting his face and excluding much of the background.

Clipper was the horse that Jackie identified with and had the closest bond to, and she related to him as if he was her own. Her connection was immediate and her relationship with him was so strong that she talked about stealing him several times!

Yeah I don't know why he's just automatically I was drawn to him the day we arrived. As soon as I saw him it was just yes that's mine, my little guy yeah...like I say I'd steal him and take him home but I'm not allowed [laughs]

People partaking in EAP often feel as if they have something in common with their particular horse. When Jackie spoke about why she related to him so well, she identified two parts of Clipper's presentation. One was a physical attribute, that they both shared a small stature, the other was a personality trait, stubbornness. The recognition of herself in the horse opens up a potential for the interrelationship to enable the production of metaphor for change. This potential provides a means for the therapist to identify issues that the client may not reveal consciously (Porter-Wenzlaff, 2007).

I think cause he's small, I relate to short [laughs]

Jackie talks about the trust that built up between her and Clipper. She described having that trust was "quite a nice feeling".

Most of the time, well for me personally I mean, I'd go to Clipper of course and I would just stand there and talk to him and pat him and try get him to take a couple of steps to show yeah, or a couple of times we did actually get to use the holsters.

Because Jackie was in contact with Clipper in a therapeutic context, part of her relationship with him was a therapeutic one. There is strong evidence that the therapeutic alliance is a key factor in client outcomes (Yorke et. al, 2008).

The fact that you've managed to get a horse to do something and you haven't had to drag it along by a lead or whatever they call it, yeah it was quite amazing just that trust.

As they spent time together and built up their relationship, Jackie was able to get Clipper to do things without the use of the lead and the experience of trust induced feelings of pleasure.

Working without the use of the lead rope to get the horses to do something means the client is having to engage other methods of communication. Whilst Jackie may have been speaking, the communication between them was enabled through understanding each other, an embodied experience produced through the exercises and working with the horses.

Jackie described the work that Renee did with her, even though Jackie just thought she was there for [son's] therapy. She talked about how Renee was doing therapeutic work without her even realising and how she picked up on things that Jackie thought she was good at hiding.

Yes I did, which really says especially that last day, that really gave me a lot to think about cause I was like wow! I thought I was a really quite sort of a hide everything person and what you see is what I am but no, Renee certainly seemed to find what was hiding working in the background.

The way Jackie talks in this section, that through her interaction with the horse, Renee was able to glimpse and bring into view what Klontz et al. (2007) states is incongruence between positions she holds. As a therapeutic strategy, the integration between contradictory understandings of self is important for a client to gain insight into their own processes (Hallberg, 2008).

By the time we'd finished and she had a bit of a talk to me and I went home and I thought, wow she just hit it on the head and I wasn't even here for therapy. It was quite scary really. She knew things about me that I didn't think anybody knew and I'd never said anything to her but she'd picked up on it and I thought wow it's just amazing. Yeah so no, I actually got a lot out of something that I wasn't here for [laughs]

Here it shows how the therapy makes issues accessible in a non-threatening way, and in Jackie's case, she didn't even realise what Renee was picking up on (Klontz et al., 2007). In this way, Jackie's response to the therapy was attained through the use of metaphor produced through her relationship with the horse (Schultz, 2007; Zugich et al., 2002).

Jackie's son's interactions with the horses



Photo 12: Jackie's son interacting with a horse on the first day

"[Son] with the hood on" is Jackie's description of this photo (photo 12). Jackie was working with Renee alongside her son as part of a family therapy with [son]

identified as the target client. Although I was asking about Jackie's experience with this therapy, the experience was mediated through her relationship with her son. The picture really clearly demonstrates the way [son] relates to the world, withdrawn and closed off. But it also shows that he is open to the horse. Jackie described that although [son] doesn't talk very much, here, he was engaging with the horse. She said she could faintly hear his voice coming from behind the hood.

Jackie described their relationship with the horse in this picture. Initially they both had a sense of empathy for it after Renee told them it had been beaten so they all went over and fussed over it. However [son] seemed to relate to this one more personally. Jackie's interpretation was that they were similar, so [son] was having a sense of someone who was like himself that he could connect with.

But [son] really seemed to relate to that one, I think because it always looked so withdrawn and he's like that and I think that's how they sort of got on.

Jackie has interpreted [son's] affinity with this horse through their similarities. Through our conversation, one of the most challenging things for Jackie was he didn't talk.

Normally you'll only get a grunt or occasionally, you might get a five word conversation if you're extremely lucky.

What was remarkable for Jackie was that he too presented himself to the horse differently than in his everyday relationships.

For [son], being in an environment with a therapist with therapeutic aims in place must have been difficult given his history with other methods. The anxiety that this can provoke can be assuaged with the presence of the horses. The attention is taken off him and the things that he has to say or do and is shared

with the horses. The horses also provide a focus point that feels neutral, a distraction from focusing on the therapy or the therapist that can elicit anxiety (Brickel, 1982; Shiloh et al., 2003). Here [son] can practice behaviours that increase his communication in a safe way.

[Son] has tried most of the local therapists with no success, working with Renee was literally the last resort. When a client isn't communicative, talk therapy is only going to go so far.

Well it was because as I say, we've had so many different counsellors and when we went back to the doctor and I said "you know he needs more counselling" and she put us through to [organization] I think they're called and he's not there either now. He was good [facilitator] I think his name was. When I rang him and had a talk to him he'd gone through [son's] file and he'd said to me "well you've tried everything" he said "there's only one option left" he said that might help. He said, "how do you feel about horses?" and I thought oh this is weird and I said, "well personally I don't like them cause they don't like me" but I said I'm prepared to try anything.

For those for whom traditional therapies don't work, EAP can provide an alternative. In this instance, Jackie's son had a track record of not attending or walking out on sessions.

I mean other therapy we've been along to that and he's walked out the door and that's it and it's like you know we haven't even been, where at least with this, yeah you would talk about it.

Here Jackie is talking about [son] motivation to go to EAP. Working with Renee seemed to keep him engaged. He was motivated to get up and be ready for his sessions.

As much as he wouldn't admit it, he wouldn't admit it but he would be up on a Monday morning, he'd be up, we'd always be late but he'd be up and ready to go.

This is another common theme among participants of EAP in general where clients that have been recidivist no shows, seem to engage, stay interested and complete the courses of their therapy (Meinersmann et al., 2008).

For Jackie, the experience of working with Renee was strange. She described the difference between going to a talk therapist and working with Renee. All their previous experiences had been with talk therapists so not having that interaction was odd for both Jackie and [son]. However, Jackie thought it suited [son] because of his lack of talking.

Because normally, you know you'll go and see a counsellor or something and you sit there and talk and you can say ok well it was the talking that did it. But there was no talking and that's what on the first day, cause I kept watching sort of the horse and Renee and the other two girls that were there and they would sort of just go off and then towards the end they'd come over and then Renee might ask a couple of questions which none of us could ever answer and you know and that that was it. And on the first day I got in the car and I thought, I said to [son], "did you find that just a bit weird?" He said, "yeah" he said, "she didn't talk to me" and I thought well isn't that a good thing?

Because the modality of EAP is experiential, the client is learning through doing, and given their history, this challenged the expectations of what therapy was. With EAP, talk is only one aspect and allows the client to explore other ways of healing such as the direct experience of working with the horses (Klontz et al., 2007). The novelty of the therapy may also be a factor in keeping clients engaged.

Jackie describes the biggest change in [son] was his talking. He started opening up, started communicating with Renee during the sessions and talking to his mum on the way home. The effects seemed to carry over for a few days following each session.

Just about every day we came, I mean [son] just didn't really say an awful lot but he did after the first day he sort of on the second session would actually kind of answer a question with an answer instead of a grunt but I would say it was once we actually left that's when he was yak yak yak and I thought, wow this is just amazing.

The change in [son] when we'd hop in the car you know, that's when I realised that after day one I thought wow, you know this gonna hopefully work. And I mean it wasn't just for that day that he'd talk, it would be for well for the first time I think we got two days before he sort of went back and after the second session you know it just kept getting bigger and bigger until then on the his fourth session I think when Renee said that she was going to have to leave and that's when yeah he started to withdraw again.

For Jackie, as a mum, this experience was wonderful. She describes it

Oh it was great it was just yeah, amazing in fact, quite emotional really.

The profound change in their relationship that Jackie had experienced and the impact on her son's mental illness was such a huge transformation that happened so quickly that Jackie described the work with Renee and the horses as someone waving a magic wand.

We've tried, I think everything there is, mmm and this seemed to be the one that had the magic wand even though Renee tells me she doesn't have a magic wand. We're convinced that the horses because that very

first day we were here when we left I actually couldn't shut [son] up all the way home.

Previous studies on EAP have shown improvements in self-esteem, communication, self efficacy, mood disorders and anxiety (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005; Quiroz-Rothe et al., 2005; York et al., 2008; Bizub et al., 2003; Kersten & Thomas, 2000). The improvements for [son], although only reported by his mother are in line with these findings. For Jackie, having witnessed her son being referred to therapists over and over with no change, it must have really felt like magic and this was attributed to the horses.

It was just so, there is definitely something about horses that helps people, but I don't know what.

For Jackie and her son, a focus of their therapy was creating bonds with the horses. This established a way for the horses and Renee to work their magic. As the literature states, a relationship with a companion animal has a host of benefits, and Jackie and [son] seemed to be experiencing some of these (Chalmers & Dell, 2015; Owen, 2008; Peacock, et al., 2012; Risley-Curtis et al., 2009; Sable, 2012; Shiloh et al., 2003).

I really do think it's something to do with the horses and they don't actually do anything, but they do something but what, yeah. It's just quite incredible whether it's because you're just switching off from everything else and I don't know. Maybe we are thinking other things that we should be thinking about while we're brushing them or whatever I don't know there's just something whatever it is it works.

Jackie describes the horse as doing nothing but also doing 'something'. In working with the horses, they were able to take part in embodied communication, a co-creation of a new relationship and seemed to be experiencing being fully present.

She also described the experience as *'hard to put into words'* and *'really odd but it works'*. Jackie here is touching on the unsayable aspects of EAP. Because of the complexity of the interactions, the inability to tease out one strand of the EAP process and say "this is the 'magic' bit", it can feel incomprehensible.

Nature



Photo 13: Ducks that were at the stables

When Jackie originally chose this photo (photo 13), she couldn't explain why, but later in the interview she said she wanted to take the picture and include it because she loves animals.

And they were there they happened to wander through as we were talking and doing our thing.

The photo shows a mama duck and her duckling walking by the stable. The photo, although taken opportunistically, clearly indicated the relationship between nature and the physical space where the therapy occurs. While she

was unable to explain this further, I sensed that this was a reference to mothers and babies, and relationships of herding and protecting. I also imagine that Renee might have used this as a metaphor for therapy.

In New Zealand, the majority of our horses are kept outside in paddocks rather than being stabled. It is also uncommon for there to be an indoor facility present, which necessitates that any work with the horses be done outside. Nature and wilderness therapy have been shown to have positive effects on mental wellbeing and these benefits are included in EAP. The space the therapy is done is transferred through to the therapy (Zugich et al., 2002; Burgon, 2003).

The location of EAP and the opportunities such spaces offer can shift fixed understandings of therapy. Jackie described the experience of being outside and how it was helpful for [son] and the relationship between them.

So these old fashioned powers that be need to come into the modern world and realise that there are other things apart from being stuck in a little room talking to someone

Jess - so that was obviously really helpful for you and [son] to be outside and not

Jackie - mmm and that was I think the big thing for him because he was out, he wasn't stuck in this room and having to have to talk and I think that's what it was.

In [son's] case, the benefit came from the multifaceted differences of EAP, communication, space, environment, interactions with animals. Jackie talks about the 'powers that be' and how they need to 'come into the modern world'. When access to therapy is restricted through poverty, it is important that clients have access to therapies that don't repeat the same failures. For this family, EAP was a last resort – and yet many communities may not have access to such resources.

[Son's] girlfriend



Photo 14: [Son's] girlfriend and horses on the second day

Jackie described this photo (photo 14) as '*[son's] girlfriend who's absolutely petrified of all living animals*'.

The photo shows [girlfriend] (who was attended a session of the family therapy group) stroking the face of a horse with their shadows spread out in front of them with another horse in the background. The composition looks planned. Jackie has moved the horse and [girlfriend] off to the side of the picture to be able to fit their shadows into the frame.

Jackie went on to talk about how [girlfriend] is frightened of everything and says she hates horses.

It is an interesting one cause as I say even [girlfriend] who's scared of everything including ducks but yeah and dogs. When I said, well [son] was coming along to this, "well it's to do with horses" and she said "oo do you ride them?" and I said "well I don't think so. I don't know what it is but it's to

do with horses". "Oh well I hate horses." So the first session she didn't come with us and with the second one [son] said to her "I'm not going if you don't come."

Despite [girlfriend's] claim to her dislike of animals, the photo suggests it was more like a fear produced from lack of experience.

And like I say, she reckons she still doesn't like horses. What she says and what the photo shows are two very different things. Yeah quite amazing really, she just walked straight over to the horse and started patting it and talking to it and I thought yeah but no it really is great whatever that little magic thing is that the horses have got its just wonderful.

The horse then, is an opening, a door into the potential of a new experience. Jackie attributes [girlfriend] being drawn to the horse to the horses magic. Although Jackie never mentions spirituality as such, the way she described the horses 'magic' and the something about them, gave what she was trying to describe a certain mysticism. Jackie may not have a spiritual frame of reference in her everyday life, however the connection allowed her to make sense of the feelings of magic (Silcox et al., 2014)

Shannon

Jackie chose the next photo (photo 15) because Shannon was the horse that her son identified with the most and it seems because she is a nice looking horse. She mentions several times that Shannon is "beautiful", "lovely" and "gorgeous" but it was the connection she witnessed that she tried to capture.

They just seemed to have a little connection going I think yeah so yeah so that's why I took that.

This photo, like the photo of Clipper is a portrait. The head or face is the focus of the image. It seems to me to be like taking a picture of a friend, you would

take a picture of their face. Shannon is a Clydesdale and as such is fairly large. Jackie was surprised that her son who had never had anything to do with horses, picked her straight away.



Photo 15: Shannon, the horse Jackie's son connected with the most

It was funny because [son] never had anything to do with horses at all and so for [son], when Renee said to us to go out and pick a horse, he went straight for the biggest and I thought wow!

I know from Renee's interview that while Shannon is the biggest horse, she is also way down the pecking order. She gets pushed around a lot by the other horses. While her size and her strength were recognised by Jackie, it is not necessarily why her son chose it.

Renee talked about horse wisdom and how some horses are drawn to particular clients or will present themselves to be part of the work. The 'choosing' of a horse seems to be reciprocal and is often a communication of identification or aspiration.

Her time with Renee and the horses made Jackie want a horse of her own.

Yeah I'd love one, I mean even that one that [son] liked in (indicating photo 15). I mean I'd go over and pat him but I was absolutely petrified cause he was way up here and his feet are like this but if he picked up on the fear he certainly never showed it.

Jackie described just how big Shannon is, indicating way over her head about how tall she is and using her hands to show me how big Shannon's feet are. Shultz (2005) states that fear in the presence of horses is a common reaction of clients due to their size, though this in itself can be a teaching moment. The horse may offer a reaction to bring the client to awareness of their fear or be a supportive presence for the client so they can work through their fear.

Jackie seemed to find she genuinely liked horses and they liked her back, despite her earlier claims. The experience with EAP helped her rediscover that she liked them and she liked them so much that she was able to face her fear of them to interact with them.

Jackie talked about the relationship and building the connection with the horses as an instrumental part of the therapy. It seemed to give her son a sense of hope. He would talk about the future and how life was actually a bit better.

Well I think it was a bit of everything because you know, he had to take this horse that he didn't know you know he had to befriend it. He then had to try get it to do things without the help of a holster or anything else and he had to gain that horses trust and yeah it just seemed to mmm I don't know

Jess - push the right buttons

Jackie - yeah cause I mean, by the end of the second or third session he was even talking about you know life is actually a bit better

For clients like her son who have problems building relationships with people and are therefore unable to develop a good therapeutic alliance with a traditional therapist, the horses are really important. The therapeutic relationship can be built with the horse and then coupled to the therapist to become the horse, therapist, client relationship triad (Burgon, 2003; Bizub, Joy & Davidson, 2003).

The important process in Jackie's narrative seemed to be that of relationship building. Her focus throughout was the feelings of trust and connection that the horses inspired. It is this that she attributes to the changes in [son] and that she seemed to enjoy about the therapy.

Having the horses involved seems to have made an impact on both Jackie and [son]. The bond that they form with the horses is deep and leaves a lasting impression.

[Son] connected with the big one and he was the same as me. He would have taken him home too if he could've.

Now Jackie has seen that her son can make these connections, it has opened up new possibilities. While she remains frustrated that a therapy that has had a positive impact on their lives is only funded for 6 sessions, she was trying to come up with a plan for her son to keep in contact with horses

From what I can see, if he can make a connection with horses and I'm thinking well if we could find somebody that has horses that could maybe say hey we'll come and brush them but yeah. I don't know anybody and nobody I know knows of anybody and I'm thinking, oh you know and that's where it becomes hard because if you do make that little connection where

you think yeah ok he's gonna respond to it then you've gotta try and find something.

Jackie saw the changes made possible through their work with Renee and the horses. She is convinced of the efficacy of it and would like to 'get it out there' for other people like them.

But yeah I mean if we could get it out there for people like [son] then I think yes, really it would be the best there is around and we have certainly tried I think everything so yeah. I mean if I could write to somebody I would write to them and tell them cause I really think it's just so important because it just changed his attitude completely for that short, short time.

For Jackie, EAP was beneficial to both her and her son in terms of positive effects. Even though Jackie was not the target client, she too benefited from Renee's bit of magic.

Mary/Molly

Mary was quite a different participant than Jackie and Sophie, in as much as she had a lot to say and wasn't afraid to say it. She was working with Renee for a variety of very complex issues. She found the world a really hard place to be and has had some pretty traumatic experiences. I felt almost overwhelmed by how much she was willing to share with me. I found this interview the hardest to analyse as there were times that it was clear that her narrative would be identifiable. Therefore, I tried to stay centred on the photos to keep it focused. Her photos concentrated on the exercises or events that had the most meaning for her. She used them to capture those moments, which she was then able to use as triggers for the events and emotions that surrounded each image.

Lily

The photo (photo 16) is of Lily's face and the front part of her body. Lily is focused on Mary with her eyes and her ears. The background is a dark shadow

against which Lily's whiteness stands out. This photo is another portrait focusing on the head. The purpose of this photo seems to have been to show Lily to me, to introduce her. This was taken on the first day of Mary's therapy and their first time meeting. It started the chronology of Mary's narrative.



Photo 16: Lily

That was from day one when I met Lily

This photo was strongly linked with Mary's spirituality. It provided an opening for her to introduce this to me in a way that felt safe for her. Seeing the white horse Lily on the first day, reinforced for Mary the importance of her spirituality. She felt that this horse was a sign from God that she was on the right path and that equine therapy was the right thing to be doing.

So the first day, well prior to the first day, um the night before I was thinking ok I'm going to this equine therapy what's this going to be like and I thought I bet ya I'm going to get a white horse because I saw a white horse. So I got to equine therapy and met Renee and she's said "well I've picked your horse and here's your horse and her name's Lily"

and of course she's a white horse and I said, "that's so cool you picked a white horse for me" and she said to me, "well actually she presented herself." She said, "I wasn't going to give you this one but when I went to the gates Lily came and put herself forward".

So this was the white horse that first day. It was really important and it made me feel like also about the equine therapy that it was also um like a like kiss on the forehead from God to you know, just to trust enough and just to go with it and that it would be alright.

Mary was referred to equine therapy by her GP with the knowledge that she had a long history of referrals to therapy and was not compliant with medical therapy.

So I went um to the doctor and um feeling very broken, very helpless and she's the one that pushed me forward for the equine therapy which is beautiful... That was the first time I'd been in several years because I don't take medication. I've tried it before I don't want it um because I feel that medication drowns out my spiritual side.

Spirituality is an important part of Mary's everyday life though it is both a source of strength and problematic at the same time. Her experience is that she is split between two worlds, a world where she accepts herself, her spirituality and all that comes with it or a world that others expect her to "unplug" from who she is.

So this really tears me um so part of me wanting to get well is to I guess decide which world I'm going to walk in, whether I'm going to be who I am and be ok with having my little giftings and my creativity and spirituality or whether I'm going to just unplug from who I am and give in take some pills and get a job cleaning toilets or something.

She very much wants to choose the former but feels pressure from society and structural agencies such as WINZ that this isn't the right way. EAP has enabled Mary the opportunity to transform her experiences as it can recognise feelings

of deep connection, dreams and a rapport that goes beyond other relationships they have experienced (Burgon, 2003; Meinersmann, et al., 2008). Mary felt that Lily put herself forward to work with her and that Lily being white was important as the white horse linked Mary to her spiritual realm both in regards to her seeing a white horse before she arrived and what it symbolised for her.

Mary loved Lily immediately and enjoyed getting to know her. After spending some time with Lily, Mary recognised the trauma in Lily's past, which added a more personal aspect to her feelings of connection to her.

And that first day too was beautiful because um the direction I was given was to go over and make a connection with the horse and um so I spent 5-10 minutes just patting it and getting to know it and just observing it and that and um felt like I'd been given like a you know tap on the back from God again because when I went back to Renee she said, "so what do you think?" and I said, "has Lily been traumatised as well?" and she said, "yes she's in recovery."

Renee describes Lily as 'in recovery' rather than recovered. Mary's recognition of trauma in Lily provided Renee with the metaphor of the recovery as a process, introducing Mary to the concept of recovery as a journey. This process sees therapy not as a cure or fix. Given Mary's comments about other therapist wanting to 'fix' her, this discourse may have been valuable for her understanding and acceptance of the therapeutic process.

Horses as prey animals are naturally vigilant and in their communication Mary recognised her feelings of hyper-vigilance. For horses, this is a natural part of their behaviour but for many women and victims of abuse, it is an effect of their abuse histories (Kohanov, 2001; Porter-Wenzlaff, 2007). Mary feels a connection with Lily in the recognition that they both react to the world as prey.

When Mary first met Lily, she spent some time getting to know her. She spent most of this time patting her. The sensual experience of touch established

communication and intimacy. Touch can help connect beings on a deeper level and increase trust (Durana, 1998). In the case of EAP, touch also has a therapeutic value, allowing the client to experience safe touching that can support, comfort or help reintegrate touch into their lives (Yorke et al., 2008).

Mary talks about the connection with animals that she felt as a child. The therapy helped her remember that feeling, but more than that, it connected her to who she used to be, an embodied memory. It made her feel like she was remembering who she really was.

And so in that particular session it was um ok, now I am connected with animals and I always was as a child. Its just as an adult you know that's not really adult stuff to be worrying about you know. So yeah, so kind of like just allowed me who I am that frightened little child on the inside just to I don't know look around and feel like oh this is different, this is this is who I am, I remember this, I remember who I am.

As Renee said, being grounded, or embodied, is learning to be authentic. Here Mary has made a connection to feelings that reflect her true self. This connection to those feelings enabled Mary to be authentic in that moment. There was a recognition of being who she truly is (Bachi et al., 2012; Koontz et al., 2007; Porter-Wenzlaff, 2007). Mary was able to accept the feelings by allowing them to have a place in her body.

Mary describes the day as being really special. After so many years of failed therapy and unsuccessful medicalisation of her mental health issues, EAP presented itself as a place where she could be understood

So yeah that was really really special that first day

Safe space

One of the therapeutic exercises given to clients is to create a space that represents safety that they then have to move the horses into. This photo

(photo 17) shows how Mary interpreted these instructions, by drawing a love heart in the arena floor. For Mary, this represented a safe space both in terms of a physical space that she could move the horse into, but also as a relational space where the heart represents feeling love. The metaphor that was created here can be interpreted as making sense of a desire for love in safe spaces. For Mary, feeling loved meant feeling safe.



Photo 17: Creating a safe space

As an artist, Mary was able to compose how she felt. In the foreground is her safe space, love, represented by the love heart. It is sheltered by a big tree that stretches its branches out over the space. Mary found it beautiful. She linked the tree to Christ, Christ being the tree of life to her and a place of safety. Here, the photo represented a space where the symbols and story enabled her to find meanings of connectedness (Coombes & Morgan, 2015). This photo allowed

Mary to talk about the therapeutic exercise and what it meant to her. It also allowed the introduction of other experiences that happened straight after the safe space exercise.

Part of the EAP exercises is navigating and creating your own interpretations of the instructions.

So um this one (indicating photo 17) I was asked to um build a safe space and very vague instruction ... I don't really get it what you have to do [laughs]

As a experiential therapy, the instructions for tasks are purposefully vague so that the process of building metaphors emerge. How the client enacts their interpretation of the instructions becomes visible to the therapist. Directions would interfere with this process and disconnect the client from solving problems. Open instructions allow the client to explore their own response whilst also creating and testing out solutions (Kakacek, 2007).

Mary talked me through how she decided on her safe space and what it meant.

I sort of said well can I draw something on the ground could I draw a circle and would that be a safe space and she said if that's what you want to do yip and so then the thought came to me love is the safe space and um Christ is the safe space and he's the tree of life really to me. So I just started to draw this great big huge love heart that I knew she was going to tell me to put the horses in the safe space so I made it big enough to fit the horses and you know under this beautiful tree and up here you can't see it but up here it all branches over and it's just a beautiful space and then the next thing she told me was, "right so using anything in the area um I want you to get the horses into the safe space."

The movement within that space of herself and the horses helped her to achieve the knowledge of her own strengths.

But I was already feeling kinda confident because the horses had responded even with the grass, which had reminded me of my own strengths that um, I do have this connection with animals and the animals respond to way better than humans do so um and it was beautiful.

It was the way the horses related to Mary and the space that imparted the lesson. Mary built her space but it was the moving of the horses into that space by Mary that led to her understanding.

Mary used this photo to describe where the horses were in relation to the heart/ safe space in the photo, which enhanced her telling of the story around the moment.

Lily was over in the foreground area here that you can't see and Cocoa was off the other way and so I just walked up to Lily and gave her a pat and then just said oh just told her come with me and she just followed and as she followed um into the love heart Cocoa that's this one Cocoa (pointing to photo of Cocoa) just came of her own accord into the heart as well.

The horses followed Mary with no bribery and no lead, just of their own volition. When the horses seek out interactions with clients it can improve their feelings of self-acceptance and self-worth. The horses can provide an unconditional acceptance of the person, an important part of establishing a therapeutic relationship (Brandt, 2004; Bachi et al., 2012). Here the horses have followed Mary without any bribery or guidance into her safe space. Space became the place of negotiating safety.

During the same session after Mary had gotten the horses into the safe space, there was another important experience.

Renee, she'd been talking to me about all of us have two voices in our head. One that says that you know I wanna do this I'm excited about this and the other one that says you can't do that, you know you get real and she called them the Red Dog and the Blue Dog. The Red Dog being the one that's stronger and goes you can't do it you can't do it and um I'd said to her earlier in the session that I'd been thinking about the Red Dog, Blue Dog and how I had different names for it and those were Faith and Fear and um she said "yip that could be right, that's correct."

EAP, by identifying the metaphors that the client uses, means that the client can interpret the metaphor into their own language of meaning. In this extract, the contest between red and blue dog becomes faith and fear. She was also then able to interpret her feelings based on attributes that she had ascribed to the horses.

I said well Lily is Faith and Cocoa is Fear cause she's a bit bigger and didn't trust me as much.

The process enabled Mary to establish a relationship with Lily based on trust, and a shared understanding of the effects of trauma. For Mary, fear feels bigger than her faith a lot of the time, so Cocoa was a physical representation of fear. The horses provide the metaphor for identifying her feelings.

Lily, the white one, she turned around and stomped her hoof and tried to bite Cocoa. They said "you know we've got tears in our eyes that was really um special" and but more special was that Lily had turned around and tried to bite Cocoa because Lily is the submissive, Cocoa is the dominant and the reason that Renee, I think it was the reason from how I understood it, was the reason she was tearing up was because she had never ever ever seen Lily stand up for herself that way before and so that

really um that was a really special moment. It was like well the horse is connected to me and the horses um feeling safe around me enough to be able to stand up for herself so that was really special.

The lesson in this encounter is showing Mary that she can stand up for herself and her own safety. Creating a space of safety enabled a transformation from fear to faith in her own abilities.

And so sitting down talking about it afterwards she said um, "you know what I saw aye?" and I said "what's that?" And she said, "Faith told Fear to fuck off" [laughs] and so that really touched me, I thought that was that was so cool so yeah that was that day. That was very beautiful [laughs]

In EAP, the horse acts as a catalyst, which brings clinical issues to the attention of the practitioner and the client. Mary had an interpretation of the situation, that being Lily felt safe enough round her to stand up for herself. With Renee's help, she was able to transform that basic interpretation and understand the emotions and behaviours that are brought to the fore. This allows the client to learn about themselves. The horses are also able to model behaviours that are desirable to show the clients ways to behave. This creates a process of resolution (Frewin & Gardiner, 2005; Klontz et al., 2007).

Mary felt loved, connected and safe during this experience. The space enabled her feelings of acceptance and love to be built and felt. Throughout the interview, issues of disconnection from her body emerged, and often she referred to being 'in her head'. The therapeutic process enabled her to feel connected to the earth and her body.

And so the therapy just took me away from all of that bull shit and I was just a human being on earth with another loving creature um and it was really grounding and beautiful and I wanted to stay in that space. I don't want to come back out again so yeah that that was really beautiful whereas I didn't get that with the other therapies at all.

The horses lying down

Photo 18 shows Cocoa lying flat out on the grass, belly towards the camera. The photo is taken from above looking down at Cocoa. The second, (photo 19) is of Lily half lying down with Mary bent over next to her with her hand on Lily's shoulder. Renee has taken this picture. These two pictures together represent two moments that occurred simultaneously. Mary can't recall the exercise due to it being such a memorable moment, so much so that it was Renee that was prompted to get the camera.

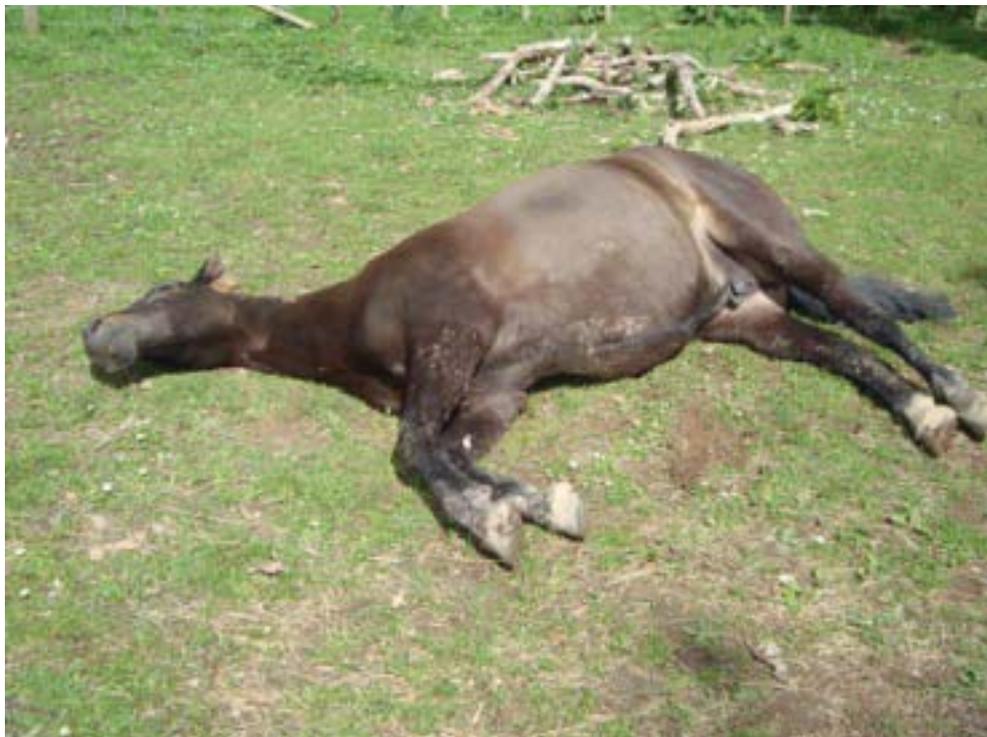


Photo 18: Cocoa lying down during the session

I was with the two horses and both of them decided mid-session they were just gonna lie down and go to sleep and like she did it first (pointing to Cocoa) and I said to Renee, "oh is this normal? What's wrong, what's wrong with this horse because that's not normal?" you know [laugh]

Renee explained to her that although horses do lie down, she had never seen them lie down in a session when there's a client around.

And then Lily lay down as well and the both of them and this is when she went and got the camera and took these photos because she couldn't believe that they'd laid down.



Photo 19: Mary and Lily lying down

Horses normally take turns lying down to rest, someone is generally on look out. It is an incredibly vulnerable position for horse to be in. It is hard for them to get up quickly so they can't rely in their speed to escape and their head, neck and backs, and in the flat out position, bellies, are totally unprotected. For them to lie down during the session with Mary therefore is particularly meaningful.

Mary interprets the horses as being submissive, and said, "so they don't have to be alert". Mary understands what it's like to be alert all the time, and talks about feeling hyper-vigilant and feeling very unsafe in the world. Her interpretation of the horses' behaviour was a recognition of her hyper-vigilance and they demonstrated they did not have to feel alert around her. This ability for the horses to feel safe around her points at a level of trust and acceptance of her for who she is. In that moment, she embodied authenticity.

So for me this kind of, this particular day kind of said ok, well the world accepts me how I am. Yeah so that was a beautiful thing that was kind of a little bit of encouraging that, you know, even though the rest of the world can't see me, look the horses saw me [laughs].

Mary created a metaphor for these actions of the horses as affirmation of her ability to care for the horses, something she was good at. The horses were creating a situation that allowed Mary to feel her sense of ability.

And in some way that's um a reflection of something I'm good at ... I'm really going to hold onto that that even though my family are continually feeding me this no-one cares, no-one wants to know what you think, you can't do anything, that the horses lay down so actually I can do things even without trying, so yeah.

It was an experience to hold on to, a moment where she is validated in and of herself.

This action taken by the horses shows how spontaneous the therapeutic exercises can be and create something meaningful. The horses do things that the client can translate through the mechanism of metaphor into something that is meaningful for them at that time, that relates to their issues and gives a way of understanding or a moment of teaching for the client (Kakecek, 2007; Masini, 2010; Porter-Wenzlaff, 2007).

The Path

Mary had completed a session the morning that I met her. She didn't have the opportunity to take any pictures with the designated camera but she would have taken pictures of the path exercise that she had just done.

The instructions were to make a path with some obstacles. Mary decided to make the path go towards the tree seen in the safe space photo, which she

points out to me as we're talking. She told me how she was having difficulties getting the horses to even move, let alone go onto the path.

Renee stepped in to help her understand what was going on.

So she came to me and said so what's going on here what do you see in here and we were in this big rectangle space with gravel and my path was only in a small part of it and I said I don't know I don't know what this means I don't know and she said, "well what if what she perceives it as is, that the outside around, there's you know there's this pathway and on the outside of it is all I've ever known"

Mary was obviously feeling very stuck, so from this description Renee had to be very active about utilising metaphor. This is the importance of the therapist, though it may seem sometimes that they are in the background, their job is to notice everything that is happening within the session and to help the client make sense of what is going on. Sometimes it might be obvious for the client but there are instances like this example with Mary, the client needs guidance and support to understand the metaphors.

Here Mary's issues have been brought up by the movement or non-movement in this case, of the horses. This allows what is going on for Mary to be brought into the open and discussed in a non-threatening way (Klontz et al., 2007). This exercise and the outcomes of it may not have been brought up in a traditional therapy session as it may not have been something Mary was consciously aware of or something she would have volunteered in talk therapy.

For Mary, the arena represented what she has known and experienced and not being able to get the horses on the path demonstrated how she was feeling. She was stuck, unable to find the path and move forward.

And I don't how to get on the path or I'm frightened to go on the path cause I don't know where the paths going and I've never ever you know, moved out of the mire in my head.

Renee would call this process 'analysis paralysis' where the client stays stuck in their thinking process but trying to find a way out. As Renee said in her interview, this therapy bypasses the head and goes straight to the heart. As the therapist, it was Renee's task to focus Mary on what was happening right then in the moment. So this therapy was able to direct Mary past her 'head stuff' and into the present.

It sort of like, very metaphoric of how, and she said to me - you know it's like how she sees me as she knows I just need to move to this pathway and then I'll be on my way but that means sort of letting go of control of me trying to find the path and me trying to create the path which is very frustrating [laughs].

Through such techniques, the interrelationship between the horse, Mary and the therapist, EAP provides the conditions through which Mary can recognise and transform her old patterns into new.

Eventually Renee got Mary to use a halter to guide the horses through the path to the end. Mary didn't want to force Lily onto the path as that's how she feels she controlled by the rest of the world but Renee used the analogy of the halter being a way to guide the horses.

With this little bit of help because yeah, that's what she'd said about me about getting onto the pathway and you know what is it that I need, and I ended up thinking you know about it and trying to come up with the right answer and I said well what I need is help [laughs] and that is exactly what I need. I need someone to guide me, you know cause yeah, and um so that was evident with the horse but just putting the horses halter on and with the rope and just she went no problems and she stayed there and

um then I just took the halter off her and got the other one, bought the other one back and so then I had my two horses up the pathway

Using the halter allowed Mary to realise that she does need some help to find the path and that needing help can have positive outcomes. The therapeutic moment of this session came about by asking her to relinquish some of that control that she felt she had to maintain. This shows the way EAP uses the exercises and metaphors to help guide the client towards solutions. It allows the client to try out things that might help and through the use of metaphor, are able to translate that to solutions in their lives.

Mary represents a client with complex needs and alongside EAP the therapist also referred her to other appropriate organisations, while at the same time supporting that process.

And I'm going to keep on with those Alanon meetings because she's guiding me with the bridle to the path apparently [laughs].

Having this analogy of the halter guiding her to the path let Mary open up to Renee's suggestions of Alanon meetings. She could understand that she wasn't being forced into anything but merely being guided. This again led to talk that had hope behind it. Before EAP, Mary described the way she was feeling as helpless and broken. Throughout our interview, Mary's narrative included bits of hope and positivity about the future.

That if I go in the right direction if I keep faith and keep believing then I'll stumble over something that will just open the way up.

Mary talked about not wanting to force the horses by using the halter. However, horses are several times bigger and a lot stronger than her, forcing is not really an option. In this exercise and the previous ones where she didn't have to use the halters to get the horses to follow, what Mary had experienced was both communication and control. This allows the client to explore matters such as

power and vulnerability (Lentini & Knox, 2009). Using the halter and lead rope to get the horse through the path gave Mary power over where the horses were going. She was able to exercise this power in a gentle way to guide the horses rather than force them.

After talking about her pictures, I asked Mary why she thought women were attracted to horses. She replied immediately that it was because women and horses were nurturers. My interpretation of this was meaning a way of relating to the world and other beings in the world in a certain way. She went on to say that it was something primal or instinctive that created that nurturing space.

I'm a woman with this horse um and that there's sort of a shift you know and it's when you're round children and things well you just you just stand taller or something there's something. You take on a different role

Mary has a narrative of the nurturing role and the power she felt being able to stand tall as a woman. When she is around the horses or children, she embodies a shift.

Mary talked a lot about her experiences with other therapists and described those sessions as making her feel misunderstood, unheard, and like they cared more about the money they were getting than her. This lack of understanding put her off seeing therapists for a long time. The main difference for Mary was that during her time with Renee, she was able to embody her own story through metaphor. The horse had no agenda and passed no judgments, they were just themselves and let Mary be herself too.

I guess theres no right and wrong with the horses, the horses aren't trying to put me into a box and tell me I'm co-dependent or I've got OCD or anything like that.

The therapy wasn't trying to 'fix' her, but guide her onto a path, to start her process of recovery.

The other therapies, they're kind of trying to fix you or something or trying to stick you in a box or yeah. Whereas, oh so the horses, the relationship with the horses told me there's nothing wrong with me.

For the first time in a long time Mary felt like she was reconnecting with who she is, a part of herself that's real. Just the mere fact that she wasn't being categorised reminded her that she was still human.

Oh yeah I think the biggest help for me with this therapy is um its reconnected me with who I am and it doesn't have to a um mental illness. It doesn't have to have its own little box or anything, it's just reminding me that I'm human.

Mary stated earlier that being in the world makes her feel unsafe a lot of the time. This therapy made Mary feel safe.

Even though it's so easy, I mean everything, everything kind of felt nice and safe there you know.

Mary is another of the clients for whom previous therapies have been unsuccessful. This seems to be a common occurrence (Meinersmann et al., 2008). Mary cites a number of reasons for not having made any progress with other modalities. Underlying all of them is the lack of a therapeutic relationship. Mary, due to feelings she infers the therapist has about her, is unable to trust these practitioners. She cannot see or feel that they care about her as a person. With the experience of EAP, the horses broke through the barriers and allowed Mary to create therapeutic relationships with firstly the horses and then Renee (Bachi et al., 2012).

Feeling connected to the horses enabled Mary to feel more connections with herself in the world. Whilst a horse may never be able to give the full experience of a secure attachment, they can form close bonds with people. For clients like

Mary who likely have few or no secure attachments with people, establishing one with the horses can be significant (Sable, 2013). Creating secure attachments with humans probably feels hard and risky for some clients. Being able to use the horses through creating an attachment to them and utilising that as a starting point, can help induce positive feelings towards the relationship with the therapist (Burgon, 2011; Chardonnens, 2011; Johnson, 2013). As with child development, the secure attachment to the horses and the therapist becomes a base from which to explore the world (Sable, 2010). In the therapeutic context, this entails trying out new ways of thinking and behaving.

Um yeah I kind of felt the horses were very very good at mapping my relationships with humankind um like um, for instance starting out I mean I've got a huge love of animals and one of the things I've identified since I've changed from the court case forward is that I can't attach anymore because instantly um I am aware that if I attach I can get hurt so yeah the horses um even meeting Lily and loving her immediately and wanting to spend time with her um, it mapped over into the fact that I don't have anyone in my life because I can't do relationships anymore.

Mary often reported feeling positioned outside the norms of society. When taking society and the relationships between people and cultures within the society as an ecology, Mary is not well integrated. EAP creates its own ecology with the combination of the horses, the therapist, the space and the context interacting with the client. These interactions along with having attachments to the horses and the therapist, create an ecology that allows Mary feelings of safety and acceptance (Adams, 2015; Chalmers & Dell, 2015) and with opportunities to learn new ways of being in the world. Having positive experiences within an ecologically safe space may enable the client to translate that experience into new spaces.

Mary's narrative is very focused on finding ways that link her spirituality, strength and connectedness through the EAP ecology toward embodying feelings of being safe in the world. It was about transforming her vulnerability

Chapter 6

Discussion

“The still photos are anything but still” (Groot et al., 2011, p.380). This is the essence of a photovoice project and holds true for the photos taken by the participants in my research. They are full of relationships, full of the lives of the horses and the women, full of movement and moments and nature. Using photovoice to explore the experience of women and EAP has created a project where the texture and depth of the therapy can be shown. The use of the photos in this context has rendered the experiences tangible to the consumers of the research.

For the clients, to take part in a photovoice project during their therapy created interactions between the therapy, the camera and the client taking the photos. Sophie’s experience was that the picture taking helped with her insight into the therapy and what was occurring. It helped her make sense of the information in a new way. Sometimes the clients wanted to be in the pictures, so the camera changed hands. It was often Renee that took the images of the participants, adding another relationship into the meanings being generated.

Interestingly, none of the clients took photos of Renee. This could be because it was a boundary they felt they couldn’t cross or perhaps because of the part she plays, she works in the background.

The differences between the participants’ photos and narratives was marked. They focused on different aspects of the therapy and talked about it in very different ways. Although I was the interviewer, the talk was guided by the participants’ narratives. My interviews in terms of questions and reactions therefore varied as I tried to be responsive to the discourse of the participants. There were however, still clear themes that could be found in both the photos and the participants narratives. The photos allowed certain stories to be told - the clients’ own narrative of healing and moments of transformation.

Photo themes

The photos chosen by the participants can be placed in five categories (Table 1). The horses themselves, the horses doing things, the exercises, the space, and the horses' relationships with the participants and their loved ones. These categories are blurred with some photos falling into more than one category. Of the three participants, two or more took photos that covered each category.

Table 1

The participants' photos across categories.

Photo themes	Mary	Sophie	Jackie
The horses themselves	Y	Y	Y
The horses doing things	Y	Y	
The exercises	Y	Y	
The space	Y		Y
The relationships with the horses	Y	Y	Y

The horses themselves

This theme showed pictures of individual horses. The images were portrait style, with the focus on the head of the horse. This way of styling the images reminded me of the way people take photos of each other. The focus is often on the face and head as a way of showing the person's identity as well as their emotions. I can infer that one reason these photos were taken was to show the identity of the horse. This way of depicting them seems to paint them as having their own personhood.

All the participants had taken a shot of the horse that they felt they had the strongest bond to. Jackie also took a shot of the horse her son had bonded with. In two of the cases, this photo was the first chosen out of the participants'

photo sets, in the third case it was the second. This order seemed to be significant. It demonstrated the way the women felt about the horses. My interpretation is that this was one of the most important parts of the women's experience of EAP.

These photos allowed the participants to introduce 'their' horses to me. These photos were accompanied by descriptions of the horses, their personalities or physical characteristics. It also allowed the participants to describe the bond they had with those horses, how they had built that bond and what had triggered it.

Relationships with the horses

The relationships with the horses was represented by pictures of the women or their loved ones interacting with the horses. The pictures show the entirety of both bodies, human and horse. In all the photos, the person is touching the horse. The touch seems to be focused around the head and neck region of the horse's body. Drawing parallels between how people act with each other, the touch seems to be in a safe touch zone. It is an area that touching can convey comfort and love without crossing boundaries into areas too intimate. Touching a face seems very personal, and horses can be just as sensitive as humans to touching here, whereas touching elsewhere on the body doesn't have the significance of connectedness.

These images show the importance of touch in the relationship with the horses, both as a way of getting to know each other and a way of communicating. The horses can cross the boundaries that therapists can't in being able to offer this touch. The clients can get support, comfort and attachment through the mutual touching with the horses (Bizub et al., 2003; Bonitz, 2008; Durana, 1998).

This image set allowed the clients to show their relationships with the horse. It was a tangible demonstration their bond. Showing the moment of touching seemed to be way of demonstrating the bond that was established between

them and the horse. In most cases it was also a demonstration of an important moment. Mary and Sophie's photos included one of themselves and their preferred horse. Both were taken at moments of significance, Mary's when the horses laid down for her, Sophie's after completing the path exercise.

Jackie was the only participant who did not include a photo of herself in her chosen images although there were several in her wider set. This is a parallel with her interview in which she kept very much focused on her son rather than herself. However, the photos she chose to represent the human-animal relationship were important moments in the therapy given that the focus was on her son.

The horses doing things

Horses doing the therapeutic exercises or things the participant thought were important or significant to particular therapeutic moments often were representations of making sense of how metaphor was important to the process. This allowed the women to introduce talk about how the horses were creating the metaphors and what the significance of that was for them. This theme was also a demonstration of how the horses were relating to the women, the exercises and the environment, thus creating a representation of the ecology of the therapy.

The exercises

This was pictures of the therapeutic exercises, both the horses doing them and things the women have created as part of the exercise. This represented engagement with the process of EAP.

The participants were able to use the photo to narrate how the exercise went, what the horses did, what they did and the metaphors that were created in the process. It was a spatial reference to the exercises and the things that were happening in it. They used the photos to show me things that weren't included

in the photo but were included within the moment such as showing me where the horses were in relation to the therapeutic moment that had been created.

The EAGALA model has a number of exercises that the practitioner can utilise to help the clients create their metaphors. The practitioner is able to tailor the exercises they choose to encourage the making of appropriate metaphors or solutions based on their clients' needs.

The space

The photos in this category were things that demonstrated what the space and place meant for the client. These were the only two pictures that didn't include a horse. Mary's photo was of her safe space exercise, the love heart under the tree. Jackie's was the picture of the ducks wandering through the therapy area. While space was also talked about in relation to relationships with horses and exercises, here space took on a wider meaning. Mary had a very strong idea of what the photo meant, it let her talk about her safe space exercise and her safe space in the wider context. Jackie didn't really know why she had taken a picture of the ducks, although she was able to recognise the importance of the mother and the ducklings, representing a space that was meaningful for her relationship with her son. In this way the photos in this category enabled the symbology of the space to be represented as well as the stories and meaning of those spaces (Coombes & Morgan, 2015).

Intertwined with space is place: the place of EAP is the outdoors. Nature is an integral part of the EAP experience and these photos capture some of the aspects of that and how they are integrated into the therapy. Mary literally built her tree into her exercises and metaphors. Without these bits of nature intruding into the space, the depth of the experience would not be so great (Bachi, et al., 2012; Porter-Wenzlaff, 2007).

The eye of the horse

Across the photo sets there were other images that could fit into these themes, but I have distinguished this theme as separate for the feelings it invoked and the way it seemed to link to the processes of EAP. Two of the participants, Mary and Jackie had chosen to take close up pictures of a horse's eye. It is an image I have tried to create numerous times, mostly unsuccessfully. It is hard to describe why one would take this picture but there is something about looking into a horse's eye that triggers emotions.

Jackie took a particularly good image of Shannon's eye (photo 20). Reflected within the eye is Jackie taking the picture. Because of the horses ability to reflect back the actions of the client, they are often called mirrors (Porter-Wenzlaff, 2007). This image is able to literally demonstrate the mirror qualities of the horse.



Photo 20: Shannon's eye

Narrative Themes

Narrative inquiry is suited to research that requires a narrative that retains a sense of personal and social context (Bukowski & Buetow, 2011; Hodgett et al., 2007). Images are also able to convey emotions, experiences and insights in a way that talk and words by themselves can't. The image becomes a symbol that creates a backdrop for that narrative, through evoking a reflexive account between the image and the narrative (Harrison, 2004). Through the combination of the participants interviews and images, the women produced narratives that were able to retain the personal and social context of women's experiences, and one where the participants were able to produce a meaningful representation for the narratives they produced. As the researcher, I was able to ask further questions that were intended to evoke a reflexive account between the image and the talk we produced together. Through this process, I was able to expand on my understanding of some of the themes that have emerged through the EAP literature.

Embodiment

When undertaking my literature review, making sense of how EAP influences feelings of embodiment seemed to fill some of the gaps in the theory. Being such an abstract concept, I did not directly question the client participants. I did however talk to Renee about the connection of EAP and embodiment. Through our conversation, she reflected on how she understood groundedness and talked about feelings of being centred in yourself, connected to your body and the earth and being able to recognise the felt body..

Renee spoke about how the work had changed her and her relationship with her body. It had necessitated her learning this groundedness herself. She had to learn how to be present in her body to do the work. There is an aspect of being in the body, in the moment. Her personal development in this area let her then translate that to her clients. She also linked authenticity with this concept.

Being authentic is being congruent in that internal feelings match external behaviour.

Several studies (Maharaja & Haney, 2014; Porter-Wenzlaff, 2007) speak of the way animals are always authentic in their feelings. They don't have the capability to be duplicitous the way humans are so very good at being. The horses model their authenticity for the clients, showing their true feelings and reactions to situations and circumstances. It is also important for the horses to experience the other being as being authentic. Horses are extremely capable of picking up on incongruence due to their abilities as a prey animal. Safety is their top priority and working with a person that is hiding something can make the horses unsure. They are likely to react to the underlying emotions the client is presenting, anger, anxiety, or fear.

First of all, this enables the client to see and experience what it means to be in a relationship with a being that is truly authentic. There is no hidden agenda. This creates the possibility for the client to experiment with authenticity in their own body and feelings in a way that feels safe to do due to the honesty of the reactions of the horses.

It's also about uncovering what is underneath the facade that many people have. It is common for people to perform an affect that doesn't reflect their true feelings and emotions, whether these feelings are hidden for safety or to meet societal expectations. The horses are able to expose and make both the client and the therapist aware of what is at work within the client. The place the therapist has within horse-human interaction is noticing and making the client aware of these things that are going on underneath the surface.

EAP creates a place for the client to be authentic in what they are feeling. In Mary's case, this was feeling like a scared little kid again. This was something that she had tried to hide or cover with adult stuff. Feeling and acknowledging the underlying emotions helped her to create a path for healing. Experiencing the horses as being themselves also gives permission for the clients to be themselves.

Some horses are also able to support and hold a person's emotions when they are experiencing strong feelings. Jackie's initial position of feeling she was terrified of Shannon, was met with a calm response from the horse resulting in supporting the emotion and therefore enabled Jackie to interact with her. Renee stated that, when needed, the horses do allow the clients to work through emotions whilst remaining a supportive base, especially for those with anxiety.

For some clients like Mary, with histories of complex trauma, present with feeling unsafe in their being in the world. It is not a comfortable place to be. It is a place of vulnerability. Working within the EAP context enables the clients to experience their bodies safely. The therapy helps to let the client feel safe in their flesh and all the sensations and emotions that entails.

Renee talks about EAP bypassing the head and going straight to the heart. EAP is experiential, the clients are doing and experiencing. With an experiential therapy that utilises horses, this experiencing comes about through the therapeutic exercises that then create metaphors. The doing necessitates the clients use their bodies to interact with the horses and their environment. To communicate with a horse, to get them to work with the client in the way that the exercise requires is to utilise more ways of shared understandings than merely verbal language. Much of this language is communicated in and through bodies.

When two beings create an interspecies relationship, they create an embodied mutuality through their communication. Their bodies are the language. The process of co-creating a language that is exclusive to them requires a new form of communication. Cromby (2005) asserts that embodiment is a product of the culture we live in and where we are located in that. Traditional narratives of women and their bodies create a certain way of being. Access to power is fleeting and this translates through to the way in which women use their bodies. The way the client can experience EAP is through the interactions of the space, the bodies within the space, therapist, horses and client, the attributes of the space, nature, safety, the therapeutic exercises and moments creating a cultural and ecological system.

Renee talked about women, as a product of culture, are not good at being in their bodies. As such, at the beginning of the therapy, they often aren't very good at moving horses with their bodies and energy. The EAP process enables women to learn to use their bodies in a powerful way. They can command and communicate with creatures much larger than themselves. This new narrative is a type of resistance to the traditional narratives of womanhood. These learned attributes can then be transferred through to the rest of the client's life.

Cromby's (2005) definition of embodiment places an emphasis on lived experience - the ways in which a body structures and enables experiences. The body informs subjectivity, this includes the influence of our biology. Emotions are a bodily function in that there is a cascade of physiological responses that play a part in the creation of an emotion. It is a reciprocal influence where the emotions and the narratives of the emotions interact. This is the reason that faking a smile can cause the body to create 'happiness'. In EAP, the interaction with horses is both emotional and physiological.

Mary's experience of her body is one of disconnection. As Renee said, many of her women clients have no idea about being grounded or being in their bodies. The effect of trauma likely has exacerbated this disconnection. For Mary, her body is the site of her trauma. EAP allowed her to experience new narratives and to feel strength. The process of EAP has the capacity to transform experience at the site where her narrative and emotions connect.

Relationships with the horses

This seemed to be one of the strongest themes that ran throughout both the pictures and the narratives of the women. All the participants described close relationship with the horses and described one in particular. Having all the clients take photos of relationships with the horses coupled with the amount of talk these relationships generated, highlights how important they felt to the clients. Relationships with the horses enabled the clients to open up space for new narratives and therefore new emotions and ways of doing. The horses

become the conduit that creates a safe way to experience this newness. I interpret this as showing a major agent of change within EAP, the relationships that the clients build with the horses.

Within any therapeutic modality, one of the biggest factors that influence the outcomes is the therapeutic relationship that is built up between the therapist and the client. In the case of EAP, there is another being within the therapeutic context. The introduction of the horses into therapy adds another dynamic, the reciprocity of the horse-human relationship. The important factor here is to create a therapeutic relationship that can support the client through the therapy. The research on the benefits of companion animals supports the use and ability of horses to facilitate these types of relationships.

Within EAP, the way the participants describe their relationships with the horses fits the criteria for a therapeutic relationship. The horses are active members of the therapy, participating as much as the therapist does, though in a different role. In Renee's EAP practice and many others, the clients work with a particular horse throughout their therapy. This encourages the formation of a relationship between the horses and the clients. The horses are accepting of the clients as they are and have no way of passing judgment. These are cited as key factors within a therapeutic relationship (Bizub, et al., 2003). Renee encourages the clients to make connections with the horses, to spend time getting to know them during their first session. She sees this as an important part of the therapeutic process. In this way the horses are positioned within Renee's practice as the teachers, the healers and the guides. Mary talked about her therapeutic relationship with the horses, articulating it as there being no right or wrong with the horses. She felt accepted unconditionally.

The easiness of forming a relationship with a horse can be helpful with clients wary of therapists and therapy. There are a number of clients that find it difficult to build relationships with therapists and as such, see many with no success and often become recidivist no-shows. This may be due to problems with trust, vulnerability, trauma and anxiety. For these clients, interactions with people

trigger their stress responses. The horses don't trigger these things automatically and therefore can be perceived as safe.

Having an individual that the client feels safe with, is an important first step in building a relationship. The client is able to build and experience trust. Their vulnerabilities can be shared and experienced with the horses in a way that enables them to transform their issues into their strengths. Because the therapist comes to be associated with the horses, the trust can be scaffolded over to the therapist thus creating a therapeutic relationship with the therapist also.

Jackie's experience involved her own connection building and opening. She downplays her participation in the therapy by focusing on her son's experiences. As she told me during the interview, she tries to be a closed book. However working with and connecting to the horses allowed some parts of her to be open to Renee's observations and therefore open to change.

Sophie's relationship seemed to be a bit of a homecoming due to her past experiences with horses. She fell in love with Lily and Lily became 'her' horse. This bond is the basis for the therapeutic relationship. Sophie talked about building trust with the horses, creating a stable, secure relationship. She described Lily as being her best friend indicating the human-animal bond is important to relationships. This can be seen in some of the companion animal literature.

Mary, who has had years of unsuccessful therapy, talked about how hard it was for her to form relationships. She 'can't do relationships' anymore as she believes that if she attaches, she will get hurt. For Mary, opening herself up to the horses still felt risky but she was still able to 'fall in love' with Lilly immediately. Being able to build an attachment to a horse may be easier than building attachments to humans especially when there is a history of trauma (Burgon, 2011; Chardonnens, 2011; Johnson, 2013).

Many of Renee's clients have histories of trauma. This can make relationships and therefore therapy challenging. There are often issues with trust and feelings that disclosing their issues - being vulnerable - will make people withdraw from them. Having the horses to safely create a relationship with, one that models non-judgemental behaviour makes opening up less risky. Mary was able to use her relationship with Lily to build a relationship with Renee. She speaks with strong regard for Renee saying it was the first time she felt understood. She felt accepted for who she was by both Renee and the horses. This contributes to the evidence that the EAP process can provide a way for challenging clients to build strong therapeutic relationships that forms a secure base for the rest of their therapy.

All the participants talked about the immediacy of their connection to a horse. This seemed to come in part from identifying with attributes of the horse making it easier to relate to them. The women saw a likeness of themselves in their special horse. Their connections were deep with the word love being used multiple times to describe the relationships.

Secure attachments are an important foundation to feelings of connection and safety within a relationship. Within the adult therapy context, a secure attachment also allows the clients to explore new ways of thinking and behaving. The way the women described their relationships with the horses enabled them to find a safe place from which to explore the world.

Jackie put her son's change down to the relationships that he was building with the horses. He had to come out of his shell to interact with them and the way Jackie described it made it seem easy for him to do this. He was able to make connections with the horses and gain their trust. From Jackie's description, this led to increases in her son's self-esteem and self-efficacy. He started to open up to other people, where previously he had been very isolated, rarely talking.

The space

I initially theorised that space would symbolise being with nature. However, through the narratives, space was more than this. The entire space and ecology of the therapy was important for the participants. There seemed to be three factors at work here, the nature aspect, the fact the space wasn't an office, and what the space came to mean for the clients.

Sophie especially emphasised the nature aspects of the space. She talked about things like being able to hear the birds and smell the air and that it was in the country. Renee also talked about this, saying just coming to the place the therapy was done was beneficial. This connection to nature was also one of the things that attracted her to this kind of therapy. Because of the location of the therapy, the space in the arena, Sophie was able to engage in doing, something she found beneficial. It was active rather than passive which is how she described talk therapy.

All the participants talked about how good it was being out of a box, being outside and doing something different. This was especially important for Jackie and her son. Her talk focused on how the therapy was not in an office. It didn't have any of the connotations other modalities had for him. Experiencing EAP, with the difference in location seemed to make a big difference in [son's] engagement. Because it didn't automatically trigger feelings of defensiveness, it freed him up to be open to the lessons of the EAP sessions.

Mary in particular talked about how important the space was for her by identifying it as a place where she felt safe. Mary was one of the clients for whom Renee described the space as becoming sacred. The space came to be synonymous with safety for her. She was able to create that meaning with the attributes Renee had imbued onto the space combined with nature and the horses presence.

Renee is active in creating an environment that is conducive to her own experience. The location of EAP allows for connections to be created to the outdoors and nature. Within the therapy space, it was a place for Renee to build an environment where the nature, the horses and the clients were able to interact. It became a place of safety for some clients, a refuge from what goes on in their lives outside the space. For Renee, the space is an important aspect of the EAP experience, it isn't just an incidental. Whilst there is a small awareness in the literature of the outdoors aspect of EAP (Bachi, et al., 2012; Porter-Wenzlaff, 2007; Zugich et al., 2002), none seems to have talked about the intentionality of including the space in the therapy as Renee does. For other EAP practices, there will be many of the same benefits but without perhaps the deliberate awareness of the effects that the space may have.

Spirituality

The participants talked about spirituality in diverse ways. EAP claims to be a holistic method that enables integration of spirituality into the practice (Hallberg, 2008). This is one of the differences between EAP and talk therapy. Renee describes it as spirituality in action, allowing it to be utilised as part of the healing process.

Renee's work includes spirituality in part because of her history with the 12-step addiction recovery program but also because it seems to be intertwined with this modality for her. She will purposefully introduce the awareness of spirituality early on in the practice and let the client take the interpretation from there. For some clients, it becomes an important part of their practice. Mary especially embraced the way EAP included her spirituality.

Mary's spirituality or faith was a huge part of how she made sense of the world. Renee was able to incorporate that in a way that was conducive to Mary's healing and transformation.

For Renee and Sophie, the horses themselves have spiritual aspects. Part of this was a horse wisdom or intuition. The horses seemed to know what the

client might need and which horse would be able to provide that for them. Renee gave the example of a horse choosing a particular person. The openness of Renee and the EAP modality to integrate spirituality enables clients to understand the unsayable as a strength.

Talk

The importance of talk or lack of it in EAP was not something that I found during my literature review however from the interviews of the participants and Renee, it was clear that this was an important part of the therapy. EAP is an experiential therapy, therefore talking isn't the main focus. Renee describes that the fact that talk is minimised as a gift. This was important for a number of clients. For example, being able to stay in the experience rather than talk about the past helped Mary to make new pathways and open up new possibilities. Renee is there with words when needed to help the clients make sense of their experiences but her talk isn't the focus of the therapy.

In Jackie's case, though her son was the focus of the therapy, the experiential work of the therapy drew her into making changes for herself. Jackie didn't have to verbalise them, the horses were able to show them. This is what Renee described as the horses going straight to the heart of the matter. At the same time, through the EAP process, her son developed the ability to be able to communicate both with the horses and with Jackie. Keeping talk to a minimum is important for clients that are not comfortable with disclosing. The therapist is able to get an understanding of what might be happening without the client having to initiate talk. The way the clients' issues are brought to light is non-threatening and non-confrontational.

Being aware of the struggles that some people have with talk therapies formed the basis of the use of photovoice as a technique for data collection. The relationship with talk that the clients' had translated into the interview process. It was a challenge to get information, and two interviews in particular were well under an hour. The processes of EAP and the minimisation of talking was

therefore valuable for these clients. They aren't being pushed to talk or disclose, the way the issues are brought to the fore happens in an organic way, evolving out of the exercises and metaphors of EAP.

Transformation/Aims

The aim of the EAGALA model that Renee primarily works with is to allow the client to find their own solutions to their issues. The focus on solutions lends itself well to brief modes of therapy. Renee articulates the client led aspect of her practice as allowing the client's own narratives to come forward. They have their own solutions. Letting the client lead in their interpretations of what is happening empowers them and becomes part of their narratives. Mary's exercises with the Red Dog and the Blue Dog, for example, showed how the client can change the interpretation to be meaningful rather than experiencing the difference as a failure.

Throughout the clients' talk there was a theme of transformation, both overarching and specific moments of transformation at points within the therapy. Renee aims to find a way to strengthen the clients' resiliencies and bring their strong sides to the fore. This creates a way forward for the clients, with knowledge of their strengths and resilience.

Two of the participants and Renee used the word magic to describe their experiences with EAP. Renee talked about moments of transformation that she described as magical. These were things the horses did and the clients' reactions to them. For one particular client who had a unique experience, the horse did something that she felt healed all the places she had been hurt.

Jackie used the word when describing how it felt that something was actually working and how quickly it was working. The journey with her son had been a long one, and a largely unsuccessful one. Through the magical quality of the horses themselves, Jackie witnessed the transformation between herself and her son. Mary was also able to identify some important moments of

transformation. She had finally found something that was working for her, she felt accepted and understood.

The way the participants spoke about their experiences showed they were able to start feeling hopeful about their lives. Although Mary was still in recovery, she talked about having knowledge of her strengths to hold onto and that she knew there were people who accepted her in the world. Jackie's son had started talking about maybe it wouldn't be so bad trying to find a job, he had positive feelings about the future.

Last resort therapy

There are a number of people for whom therapy hasn't worked despite repeated attempts with different modalities and therapists. This isn't generally a problem with the therapist or therapy but an issue that the clients have that they can't overcome. Trust issues or reticence can prevent the client feeling they can be open with the therapist. This was the case for Mary and Jackie and her son, and one of the most successful elements for them was that they looked forward to the therapy.

Renee was more than aware of the 'last chance therapy' category of many of her clients, and was also clear that in her practice, most clients not only showed up every session, but often wanted extended time in therapy. Sophie talked about how fun the therapy was and that it didn't feel like therapy. The differences between EAP and traditional modalities spark people's curiosity and helps keep them interested (Mienermann et al., 2008). The horses, the activities and the contact with nature help it be enjoyable.

EAP has something that makes it work for people who have struggled with other modalities. It encourages a level of engagement not normally seen with other therapies. There are always going to be clients for whom some therapies and therapists don't work for. EAP seems to be able to transcend these barriers and create a place that the clients enjoy coming to.

Metaphor

It is through the use of metaphors that the clients are able to gain knowledge of what is happening for them and to help find solutions. This means metaphors are the main focus of the EAP process. Renee was clear that client generated metaphors create both a physical and visual representation of what is happening for a client in the moment. This lends it to being more powerful than words alone. Without Lily/Faith biting at Cocoa/Fear, Mary may not have got the strength of the message, that faith can be stronger than fear.

The way the exercises are set up is in a conscious effort to provoke metaphors and provide solutions. Renee's role is to encourage the clients to make sense of how the metaphors are meaningful to clients' lives. Through the awareness and the experimentation within the metaphors, the clients can create change.

Renee uses the path exercise near the end of therapy for its symbolic meaning. For Mary, the path exercise was about how to move forward. It was able to bring up her fear and her feeling of being stuck and in that recognition, she was presented with the opportunity to move forward. Sophie was clearly able to articulate how the metaphors worked as a reflection of her life in a tangible way, and she was able to understand differences in a new way.

The active process of metaphors in the therapy provides an opportunity to transform clients' challenges and issues. The exercises and the horses can create innumerable metaphors that can then be interpreted in a myriad of ways by the clients to fit with their lives and enable change.

Loss of the therapy

Towards the end of every interview, the participants talked of feelings of loss. For Mary and Jackie, it may be the last time for a long time that they were going to have access to horses. The loss of the horses that they loved so much was

immense, and so too, was the relationship with Renee, and the space where they developed feelings of safety and acceptance.

The loss of the bond they had formed with the horses can be related to the loss that owners feel for companion animals. Whilst this grief may not be recognised as significant, research shows the impact on owners. The consequences of this loss requires a period of adjustment and mourning (Chur-Hansen, 2010; McCutcheon & Fleming, 2001; Weismann, 1991).

Many clients have trouble dealing with coming to the end of therapy. This is often worked into sessions, giving the clients tools to prepare for life without the therapist. For clients unable to fund the therapy themselves, there are other aspects at work. It isn't a choice for them to leave the therapy, merely that their funded sessions have expired. Six sessions is all that is funded in New Zealand at this time, and this is often not enough. It is an especially challenging time for those for whom this therapy has worked. This funding problem is not something unique to EAP.

Horses and being able to interact with them can be understood as a privilege given their need for land, training, and wellbeing, and limits access to horses for those living in urban areas and for those who do not have the economic resources. Jackie stated that "*I don't know anybody and nobody I know knows of anybody*" when talking about wanting to find horses for her son to continue contact with.

Safety

In my literature review, there were many facets of EAP that seemed to create meaningful changes for clients. These included the space the therapy is done, the horses themselves and what they bring, the way touch can be utilised, the relationships that are forged with the horses and the therapist as well as the meaningfulness of embodiment. They all allow the clients to feel safe. Whatever the clients are feeling unsure about, whether that is creating a relationship with

a practitioner, the fact they have experienced trauma, they are anxious, or that they are not able to talk or disclose very well, EAP seems to create a space that they feel that those challenges can be overcome.

The relationship between the practitioner, the space and the horses create an ecology. This enables the clients to do things such as create therapeutic relationships with both the horses and the practitioner, have a space in the world that they feel safe, a way to disclose without discomfort and to experiment with new ways of behaving. They are in charge of the processes of the therapy, they create their own metaphors and experiences. This is what enables the clients to have their transformations. They are in a space and situation that supports and secures them.

The space and relationships with the horses encourages experiencing their body in a positive way. They are in a place that feels safe, being supported by the horses and the therapist which allows them to feel that embodied subjectivity. It is this positive embodiment that can be converted to feelings of power and strength that can then be transferred from the therapeutic space to the space outside.

The relationships and interconnections between the horse, the therapist and the space create a therapy that is unique. It combines key elements including the positive attributes found in companion animal research, the unique way horses interact with humans, aspects of wilderness therapy, therapeutic relationship building and an experiential therapeutic modality. The result of this is the creation of a space and place that enables the clients to positively engage with the therapy. The result of this is a therapy that in this research has shown the potential for it to be transformative.

Reflection

Since my early undergraduate studies I have been interested in animal assisted therapeutic interventions, in particular equine assisted. My journey through my

studies then drew my attention to the experiences of women. These two interests came to intersect during a research project. The questions I wanted answers to were how does EAP meet the needs of women? How do their experiences enable wellbeing? The answer seemed to be the complex interactions between all the elements of the therapy that created a unique ecology that promoted safety and positive embodiment.

Investigation into the use of animals alongside therapeutic methods is growing more common but is still very much on the outside of traditional therapies. The literature showed there to be a multitude of factors at work when animals are incorporated into therapeutic activities. Separating out horses from other companion animals showed there to be unique attributes in their therapeutic work. There seemed to be something distinctive about EAP that I wanted to explore. If this therapy was as useful as what the available literature had led me to believe, I wanted to be able to contribute to the research to enable more participation in the therapy.

There is a definite use for EAP, both with regular clients and those with trouble engaging with other modalities. Having the knowledge that EAP can help this subset of clients provides a back up when regular therapy fails. It means that in the future, clients that have shown to have little engagement with traditional methodologies can be directed towards therapies like EAP. Understanding different ways of doing therapy can only be beneficial for the clients that need it. Building a strong theoretical base behind EAP means having a supported modality that can complement traditional talk therapy.

Integrating a photovoice project into this research has enabled the participants to narrate their experiences in a way that also creates a way for consumers of the research to experience what the therapy was like for them. It has the potential to open up space for the use of photovoice as a tool in researching the experiences of clients in therapy. The majority of research into therapeutic modalities is quantitative, measuring outcomes over experiences. This is an integral part of finding best practice modalities however neglects the

experiences of the clients in the therapy. This project has shown that a methodology that incorporates photovoice can be used to expand the way therapeutic modalities can be researched.

Photovoice was an effective choice in researching this modality of therapy given that the clients were resistant to talk therapy and meant they would likely not have responded to a straight talk interview. The opportunity for the participants to create their own photos meant they were able to bring a picture that was representative of themselves into the interview. This let them engage in the research interviews through their images. These images set the tone for their interviews and helped them story their experiences.

It was also a way for the unsayable aspects of the experiences to be laid out. The images captured some of the magic that words would not have been adequate for. It deepened the understanding and experiences of the participants and that translated through to the data.

The fact that I used a Photovoice project will have impacted the therapy. Having the camera as part of the therapy changed the relationships the clients had with the therapy and their articulation of it. One of the client participants talked about how it made her experience the therapy differently. She was able to utilise it as a part of the therapeutic process. Art and photography are by themselves used within various therapeutic modalities as part of the healing process. Therefore the results of the EAP could have been impacted by the having the cameras within the therapy. I would assert however, that this was a positive outcome of the photovoice project but it will have changed their experiences and the way they talked about them.

Due to EAP still being uncommon, my research was limited by my access to practitioners and clients. There are only a few organisations that I was able to contact and that were interested in participating in research. I was able to form a relationship with Renee that enabled her to trust me with access to her clients. There are limitations in just having interviewed clients of one practitioner. There

is then the variable of Renee and how she does her work. Though she uses the EAGALA model and as such has a standard of practice, the experience that the clients have with Renee may differ from how clients experience EAP with another practitioner or modality. However the analysis shows that the themes found in the discourse of her clients can be matched to aspects of my literature review suggesting that these findings are generalisable to other women in other EAP practices.

Due to some participants having to pull out, the number of women that took part was very small. This may have created problems with achieving data saturation. Though I am confident that most of the themes were consistent across clients, I am unsure if there were others that may have revealed themselves if there were more participants. As such, research with a bigger scope and more participants would be helpful in identifying if there are any other important aspects of EAP that have been missed. This would also increase the validity of any findings.

There was a lack of ethnic diversity in this study. One of the participants in this research that had to withdraw was a Māori woman and her withdrawal meant the client group lacked diversity. Māori and Pacific people have a higher prevalence in some mental health statistics and have a history of poor engagement with services. Due to the improved engagement of clients that this research showed, future research on EAP that integrates Māori and Pacific people may help to find a modality that increases engagement and helps with mental health outcomes.

In light of the findings here, future directions for research include involving other practitioner and other EAP modalities. This would enable an understanding of what is constant throughout EAP. Such research could take into account the differences and similarities that there might be.

This therapy coming to an end may be more complex than ending regular therapy. Though the client is coached through the termination of their relationship with the therapy and therapist, they are also losing another

significant relationship - their relationship with the horses. Understanding the depth of grief that the loss of a significant companion animal relationship can cause and how that translates to the losses felt by the clients leaving EAP could help practitioners incorporate processes to make this easier for the clients.

Understanding the role that companion animals can play in wellbeing in more detail would also be beneficial. Though there are theories as to why animals seem to improve wellbeing, the biophilia hypothesis and social support theory, the actual mechanisms behind the changes are still unknown.

This process emphasised the importance of the interrelationships of all the aspects of EAP. To pin the success of the therapy on a single factor neglects the complex way all the factors relate to one another. My literature review drew together many of the factors cited in research that were deemed of relevance by other researchers, however to connections did not seem to be given emphasis. The results of this research indicated that these factors were important but it was the relationships and the way they interacted that created a therapy that showed positive results for the clients in this study. It seemed to be especially efficacious for clients who have had difficulty engaging with more traditional methods of therapy. EAP may therefore provide a method that can be utilised in these circumstances leading to improved wellbeing for people not able to benefit from other modalities.

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Participate in Research!



Who?

Women over the age of 18 taking part in Equine Assisted Psychotherapy

What?

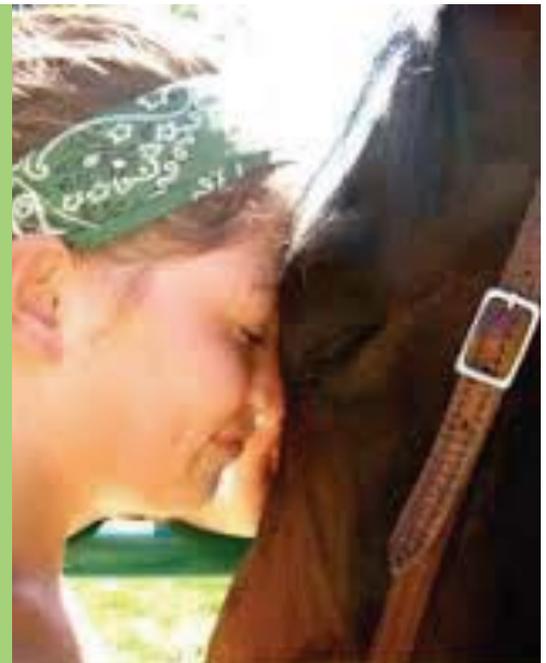
Participate in a photovoice project: this involves taking pictures of things that represent your experience followed by an interview about your photos

Where?

Horsepower Aotearoa with Renee Keenan

Why?

To explore the way women experience equine assisted psychotherapy



Contact us for further information

Jess - Researcher
Email: jessrrance@gmail.com
Phone: 027 355 2383
Renee - Practitioner
Email: rmk65@live.com
Phone: 027 6015 929



Appendix B: Information Sheet



How Equine Assisted Psychotherapy meets the needs of women

Information Sheet

Dear

Researcher: Jessica Rance: School of Psychology, Massey University

I am a Masters student in Psychology at Massey University. I am inviting you to take part in some research that I am doing which is looking at how equine assisted psychotherapy meets the needs of women.

The University requires that ethics approval be obtained for research involving human participants. This research is being supervised by Dr Leigh Coombes from the School of Psychology at Massey University.

I am inviting women aged over 18, who are participating in equine assisted psychotherapy to take part in this study.

What would you have to do?

You are invited to take part in a photovoice project. This entails taking photos that demonstrate your experience with equine assisted psychotherapy followed by a photo-elicitation interview where we talk about the photos you have taken and how they show your experience. The photo taking process will be over the time you spend participating in equine assisted psychotherapy. You do not have to identify why you are taking part in the therapy unless you wish too. You will not be able to take pictures whilst you are in the session as this will interrupt your therapy but you are able to take pictures before, after and at any other time you feel appropriate. The interview will take place after the completion of the photo taking. The interview will take between 1 and 2 hours and will be conducted in a place that you feel most comfortable, whether this is at your house, at the facility you go to for equine assisted psychotherapy or some other location of your choosing. The interviews will be recorded with a digital recorder so that the interview may be transcribed and used for analysis. If at any point during the interview, you wish to turn the recorder off, this is your right. The written transcript will be bought back to you to ensure that what I have written is correct. You will be able to make any changes then that you feel are necessary.

If the interview causes you to feel discomfort or distress I have an agreement with the provider of your equine assisted psychotherapy that you are able to email her directly to ensure your wellbeing.

Extracts of the conversation from the interview and the selected images will form the basis of the research and will be put into a written report. It will not be possible for you to be identified personally, no names or family names will be used throughout the written documents. Audio recordings will be destroyed once they have been transcribed. All material collected will be kept confidential and separate from any identifying data in a secure location. Only myself and my supervisor Dr Leigh Coombes shall have access to the data collected. After 5 years, all data collected for this research will be safely destroyed. A copy of the digital files and/or hard copy of the images taken will be given to you.

Should you choose to take part in the research, we welcome any questions you may have, and it is important for you to understand that you are welcome to withdraw from the study at any point prior to or during the interview. At the completion of this research, everyone who has taken part will be sent a summary of the research findings.

Your Rights:

- You are under no obligation to accept this invitation.
- If you decide to participate, you have the right to decline to answer any particular question.
- You are able to withdraw from the study at any given point prior to the analysis of the data.
- You are able to ask any questions about the study at any time during participation.
- You provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used.
- You provide the use of images taken during the project with the understanding that should you appear in the image, unless signed permission is given, identifying features/faces will be obscured.
- You will be given access to a summary of the research findings when it is complete.

It is important to contact myself as the researcher if you choose to withdraw or if you have any questions regarding the research.

The thesis will be submitted for marking to the School of Psychology and deposited within the University Library. It is intended that the research may be submitted for publication in scholarly journals.

Please consider this information carefully before deciding whether or not you would like to participate, and ensure that you fully understand your rights as the participant. If you have any questions or would like to receive further information regarding this research, please feel free to contact us.

Jessica Rance
School of Psychology
MasseyUniversity

Palmerston North
Phone: 0273552383
Email: jessrrance@gmail.com

Dr Leigh Coombes (supervisor)
School of Psychology
MasseyUniversity
Palmerston North
Phone: 06 350-5799, ext 2058
Email: L.Coombes@massey.ac.nz

Thank you for your time
Regards
Jess Rance
Signed:

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 12/10. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Acting Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 8729, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix C: Participant Consent Form



How Equine Assisted Psychotherapy meets the needs of women

Participant Consent Form

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I do/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me

I do/do not wish to see a copy of the transcript

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet

Signature:

Date:

Full Name - Printed:

Appendix D: Release of Transcripts



How Equine Assisted Psychotherapy meets the needs of women

Authority for the Release of Transcripts

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

I agree that the selected photographic images taken and discussed during this project may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature:

Date:

Full Name - Printed: